

VOLUMNIA – CORIOLANUS – WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

“Nay, go not from us thus.
If it were so, that our request did tend
To save the Romans, thereby to destroy
The Volsces whom you serve, you might condemn us,
As poisonous of your honour: no; out suit
Is, that you reconcile them: while the Volsces
May say “This mercy we have shew’d” the Romans,
“This we received” and each in either side
Give the all-hail to thee, and cry, “Be blest
For making up this peace!” Thou know’st, great son,
The end of war’s uncertain; but this certain,
That, if thou conquer Rome, the benefit
Which thou shalt thereby reap is such a name
Whose reputation will be dogg’d with curses;
Whose chronicle thus writ: “The man was noble,
But with his last attempt he wiped it out;
Destroy’d his country; and his name remains
To the ensuing age abhorr’d.” Speak to me, son:
Thou hast affected the fine strains of honour,
To imitate the graces of the gods;
To tear with thunder the wide cheeks o’ the air,
And yet to charge thy sulphur with a bolt
That should but rive an oak. Why dost not speak?
Think’st thou it honourable for a noble man
Still to remember wrongs? – Daughter, speak you:
He cares not for your weeping. – Speak thou, boy:
Perhaps thy childishness will give him more
Than can our reasons. – There’s no man in the world
More bound to his mother, yet here he lets me prate
Like one i’ the stocks. Thou hast never in thy life
Shew’d thy dear mother any courtesy;
When she, poor hen, fond of no second brood,
Has cluck’d thee to the wars, and safely home,
Loaden with honour. Say my request’s unjust,
And spurn me back: but if it be not so,
That thou restrain’st from me the duty which
To a mother’s part belongs – He turns away:
Down, ladies; let us shame him with our knees.
To his surname Coriolanus ‘longs more pride
Than pity to our prayers. Down; and end:
This is the last: - so we will home to Rome,
And die among our neighbours. – Nay, behold us:
This boy, that cannot tell what he would have,
But kneels and holds up hands for fellowship,
Does reason out petition with more strength
Than thou hast to deny’t. – Come, let us go:
This fellow had a Volscian to his mother;
Like him by chance. – Yet give us our deparch:

I am hush'd until our city can be afire,
And then I'll speak a little."