

Troilus and Cressida

2.2

[Sennet.] Enter King Priam, Hector, Troilus, Paris, and Helenus

PRIAM

After so many hours, lives, speeches spent,
Thus once again says Nestor from the Greeks:
`Deliver Helen, and all damage else±±
As honour, loss of time, travail, expense,
Wounds, friends, and what else dear that is consumed 5
In hot digestion of this cormorant war±±
Shall be struck off.' Hector, what say you to't?

HECTOR

Though no man lesser fears the Greeks than I,
As far as toucheth my particular, yet, dread Priam,
There is no lady of more softer bowels, 10
More spongy to suck in the sense of fear,
More ready to cry out, `Who knows what follows?'
Than Hector is. The wound of peace is surety,
Surety secure; but modest doubt is called
The beacon of the wise, the tent that searches 15
To th' bottom of the worst. Let Helen go.
Since the first sword was drawn about this question,
Every tithe-soul, 'mongst many thousand dimes,
Hath been as dear as Helen±±I mean, of ours.
If we have lost so many tenths of ours 20
To guard a thing not ours±±nor worth to us,
Had it our name, the value of one ten±±
What merit's in that reason which denies
The yielding of her up?

TROILUS

Fie, fie, my brother!
Weigh you the worth and honour of a king 25
So great as our dread father in a scale
Of common ounces? Will you with counters sum
The past-proportion of his infinite,
And buckle in a waist most fathomless
With spans and inches so diminutive 30
As fears and reasons? Fie, for godly shame!

HELENUS

No marvel though you bite so sharp at reasons,
You are so empty of them. Should not our father
Bear the great sway of his affairs with reason
Because your speech hath none that tells him so? 35

TROILUS

You are for dreams and slumbers, brother priest.
You fur your gloves with `reason'. Here are your
reasons:

You know an enemy intends you harm,
You know a sword employed is perilous,
And reason flies the object of all harm. 40
Who marvels then, when Helenus beholds
A Grecian and his sword, if he do set
The very wings of reason to his heels
And fly like chidden Mercury from Jove,
Or like a star disorbed? Nay, if we talk of reason, 45
Let's shut our gates and sleep. Manhood and honour
Should have hare hearts, would they but fat their
thoughts
With this crammed reason. Reason and respect
Make livers pale and lustihood deject.

HECTOR

Brother, she is not worth what she doth cost 50
The holding.

TROILUS What's aught but as 'tis valued?

HECTOR

But value dwells not in particular will.
It holds his estimate and dignity
As well wherein 'tis precious of itself
As in the prizer. 'Tis mad idolatry 55
To make the service greater than the god;
And the will dotes that is inclinable
To what infectiously itself affects
Without some image of th'affected merit.

TROILUS

I take today a wife, and my election 60
Is led on in the conduct of my will;
My will enkindled by mine eyes and ears,
Two traded pilots 'twixt the dangerous shores

Of will and judgement. How may I avoid±±
 Although my will distaste what it elected±± 65
 The wife I chose? There can be no evasion
 To blench from this and to stand firm by honour.
 We turn not back the silks upon the merchant
 When we have spoiled them; nor the remainder viands
 We do not throw in unrespective sewer 70
 Because we now are full. It was thought meet
 Paris should do some vengeance on the Greeks.
 Your breath of full consent bellied his sails;
 The seas and winds, old wranglers, took a truce
 And did him service. He touched the ports desired, 75
 And for an old aunt whom the Greeks held captive
 He brought a Grecian queen, whose youth and freshness
 Wrinkles Apollo's and makes stale the morning.
 Why keep we her? The Grecians keep our aunt.
 Is she worth keeping? Why, she is a pearl 80
 Whose price hath launched above a thousand ships
 And turned crowned kings to merchants.
 If you'll avouch 'twas wisdom Paris went±±
 As you must needs, for you all cried, 'Go, go!';
 If you'll confess he brought home noble prize±± 85
 As you must needs, for you all clapped your hands
 And cried, 'Inestimable!'±±why do you now
 The issue of your proper wisdoms rate,
 And do a deed that never fortune did:
 Beggar the estimation which you prized 90
 Richer than sea and land? O theft most base,
 That we have stol'n what we do fear to keep!
 But thieves unworthy of a thing so stol'n,
 That in their country did them that disgrace
 We fear to warrant in our native place. 95

CASSANDRA *[within]*

Cry, Trojans, cry!

PRIAM What noise? What shriek is this?

TROILUS

'Tis our mad sister. I do know her voice.

CASSANDRA *[within]* Cry, Trojans!

HECTOR It is Cassandra.

[Enter Cassandra raving, with her hair about her

ears]

CASSANDRA

Cry, Trojans, cry! Lend me ten thousand eyes 100
And I will fill them with prophetic tears.

HECTOR Peace, sister, peace.

CASSANDRA

Virgins and boys, mid-age, and wrinkled old,
Soft infancy that nothing canst but cry,
Add to my clamours. Let us pay betimes 105
A moiety of that mass of moan to come.
Cry, Trojans, cry! Practise your eyes with tears.
Troy must not be, nor goodly Ilium stand.
Our firebrand brother, Paris, burns us all.
Cry, Trojans, cry! Ah Helen, and ah woe! 110
Cry, cry `Troy burns!'±±or else let Helen go.

Exit

HECTOR

Now, youthful Troilus, do not these high strains
Of divination in our sister work
Some touches of remorse? Or is your blood
So madly hot that no discourse of reason, 115
Nor fear of bad success in a bad cause,
Can qualify the same?

TROILUS

Why, brother Hector,
We may not think the justness of each act
Such and no other than the event doth form it,
Nor once deject the courage of our minds 120
Because Cassandra's mad. Her brainsick raptures
Cannot distaste the goodness of a quarrel
Which hath our several honours all engaged
To make it gracious. For my private part,
I am no more touched than all Priam's sons. 125
And Jove forbid there should be done amongst us
Such things as might offend the weakest spleen
To fight for and maintain.

PARIS

Else might the world convince of levity
As well my undertakings as your counsels. 130
But I attest the gods, your full consent
Gave wings to my propension and cut off

All fears attending on so dire a project.
For what, alas, can these my single arms?
What propugnation is in one man's valour 135
To stand the push and enmity of those
This quarrel would excite? Yet I protest,
Were I alone to pass the difficulties
And had as ample power as I have will,
Paris should ne'er retract what he hath done 140
Nor faint in the pursuit.

PRIAM Paris, you speak
Like one besotted on your sweet delights.
You have the honey still, but these the gall.
So to be valiant is no praise at all.

PARIS
Sir, I propose not merely to myself 145
The pleasures such a beauty brings with it,
But I would have the soil of her fair rape
Wiped off in honourable keeping her.
What treason were it to the ransacked queen,
Disgrace to your great worths, and shame to me, 150
Now to deliver her possession up
On terms of base compulsion? Can it be
That so degenerate a strain as this
Should once set footing in your generous bosoms?
There's not the meanest spirit on our party 155
Without a heart to dare or sword to draw
When Helen is defended; nor none so noble
Whose life were ill bestowed or death unfamed
Where Helen is the subject. Then I say:
Well may we fight for her whom we know well 160
The world's large spaces cannot parallel.

HECTOR
Paris and Troilus, you have both said well,
But on the cause and question now in hand
Have glossed but superficially±±not much
Unlike young men, whom Aristotle thought 165
Unfit to hear moral philosophy.
The reasons you allege do more conduce
To the hot passion of distempered blood
Than to make up a free determination

'Twixt right and wrong; for pleasure and revenge 170
 Have ears more deaf than adders to the voice
 Of any true decision. Nature craves
 All dues be rendered to their owners. Now,
 What nearer debt in all humanity
 Than wife is to the husband? If this law 175
 Of nature be corrupted through affection,
 And that great minds, of partial indulgence
 To their benumbed wills, resist the same,
 There is a law in each well-ordered nation
 To curb those raging appetites that are 180
 Most disobedient and refractory.
 If Helen then be wife to Sparta's king,
 As it is known she is, these moral laws
 Of nature and of nations speak aloud
 To have her back returned. Thus to persist 185
 In doing wrong extenuates not wrong,
 But makes it much more heavy. Hector's opinion
 Is this in way of truth±±yet ne'ertheless,
 My sprightly brethren, I propend to you
 In resolution to keep Helen still; 190
 For 'tis a cause that hath no mean dependence
 Upon our joint and several dignities.

TROILUS

Why, there you touched the life of our design.
 Were it not glory that we more affected
 Than the performance of our heaving spleens, 195
 I would not wish a drop of Trojan blood
 Spent more in her defence. But, worthy Hector,
 She is a theme of honour and renown,
 A spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds,
 Whose present courage may beat down our foes, 200
 And fame in time to come canonize us±±
 For I presume brave Hector would not lose
 So rich advantage of a promised glory
 As smiles upon the forehead of this action
 For the wide world's revenue.

HECTOR

I am yours, 205
 You valiant offspring of great Priamus.
 I have a roisting challenge sent amongst

The dull and factious nobles of the Greeks
Will shriek amazement to their drowsy spirits.
I was advertised their great general slept
Whilst emulation in the army crept;
This I presume will wake him.

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[Flourish.] Exeunt