

Troilus and Cressida

3.3

*Flourish. Enter Ulysses, Diomedes, Nestor,
Agamemnon, Menelaus, Ajax, and Calchas*

CALCHAS

Now, princes, for the service I have done you,
Th'advantage of the time prompts me aloud
To call for recompense. Appear it to your mind
That through the sight I bear in things to come
I have abandoned Troy, left my profession, 5
Incurred a traitor's name, exposed myself
From certain and possessed conveniences
To doubtful fortunes, sequest'ring from me all
That time, acquaintance, custom, and condition
Made tame and most familiar to my nature, 10
And here to do you service am become
As new into the world, strange, unacquainted.
I do beseech you, as in way of taste,
To give me now a little benefit
Out of those many registered in promise 15
Which you say live to come in my behalf.

AGAMEMNON

What wouldst thou of us, Trojan? Make demand.

CALCHAS

You have a Trojan prisoner called Antenor,
Yesterday took. Troy holds him very dear.
Oft have you±±often have you thanks therefor±± 20
Desired my Cressid in right great exchange,
Whom Troy hath still denied. But this Antenor
I know is such a wrest in their affairs
That their negotiations all must slack,
Wanting his manage, and they will almost 25
Give us a prince of blood, a son of Priam,
In change of him. Let him be sent, great princes,
And he shall buy my daughter, and her presence
Shall quite strike off all service I have done
In most accepted pain.

AGAMEMNON

Let Diomedes bear him, 30

And bring us Cressid hither; Calchas shall have
What he requests of us. Good Diomed,
Furnish you fairly for this interchange;
Withal bring word if Hector will tomorrow
Be answered in his challenge. Ajax is ready. 35

DIOMEDES

This shall I undertake, and 'tis a burden
Which I am proud to bear.

Exit with Calchas

Enter Achilles and Patroclus in their tent

ULYSSES

Achilles stands i'th' entrance of his tent.
Please it our general pass strangely by him,
As if he were forgot; and, princes all, 40
Lay negligent and loose regard upon him.
I will come last. 'Tis like he'll question me
Why such unplausive eyes are bent, why turned on
him.

If so, I have derision medicinal
To use between your strangeness and his pride, 45
Which his own will shall have desire to drink.
It may do good. Pride hath no other glass
To show itself but pride; for supple knees
Feed arrogance and are the proud man's fees.

AGAMEMNON

We'll execute your purpose and put on 50
A form of strangeness as we pass along.
So do each lord, and either greet him not
Or else disdainfully, which shall shake him more
Than if not looked on. I will lead the way.

They pass by the tent, in turn

ACHILLES

What, comes the general to speak with me? 55
You know my mind: I'll fight no more 'gainst Troy.

AGAMEMNON (to Nestor)

What says Achilles? Would he aught with us?

NESTOR (to Achilles)

Would you, my lord, aught with the general?

ACHILLES

No.

NESTOR (to Agamemnon)

Nothing, my lord.

AGAMEMNON The better.
[Exeunt Agamemnon and Nestor]

ACHILLES *[to Menelaus]* Good day, good day.

MENELAUS How do you? How do you? 60
[Exit]

ACHILLES *(to Patroclus)*
 What, does the cuckold scorn me?

AJAX How now, Patroclus?

ACHILLES
 Good morrow, Ajax.

AJAX Ha?

ACHILLES Good morrow.

AJAX Ay, and good next day too.
Exit

ACHILLES *(to Patroclus)*
 What mean these fellows? Know they not Achilles?

PATROCLUS
 They pass by strangely. They were used to bend, 65
 To send their smiles before them to Achilles,
 To come as humbly as they use to creep
 To holy altars.

ACHILLES What, am I poor of late?
 'Tis certain, greatness once fall'n out with fortune
 Must fall out with men too. What the declined is 70
 He shall as soon read in the eyes of others
 As feel in his own fall; for men, like butterflies,
 Show not their mealy wings but to the summer,
 And not a man, for being simply man,
 Hath any honour, but honour for those honours 75
 That are without him±±as place, riches, and favour:
 Prizes of accident as oft as merit;
 Which, when they fall, as being slippery standers±±
 The love that leaned on them, as slippery too±±
 Doth one pluck down another, and together 80
 Die in the fall. But 'tis not so with me.
 Fortune and I are friends. I do enjoy
 At ample point all that I did possess,
 Save these men's looks±±who do methinks find out
 Something not worth in me such rich beholding 85

As they have often given. Here is Ulysses;
I'll interrupt his reading. How now, Ulysses?

ULYSSES Now, great Thetis' son.

ACHILLES What are you reading?

ULYSSES A strange fellow here 90

Writes me that man, how dearly ever parted,
How much in having, or without or in,
Cannot make boast to have that which he hath,
Nor feels not what he owes, but by reflection±±
As when his virtues, shining upon others, 95
Heat them, and they retort that heat again
To the first givers.

ACHILLES This is not strange, Ulysses.

The beauty that is borne here in the face
The bearer knows not, but commends itself
To others' eyes. Nor doth the eye itself, 100
That most pure spirit of sense, behold itself,
Not going from itself; but eye to eye opposed
Salutes each other with each other's form.
For speculation turns not to itself
Till it hath travelled and is mirrored there 105
Where it may see itself. This is not strange at all.

ULYSSES

I do not strain at the position±±
It is familiar±±but at the author's drift;
Who in his circumstance expressly proves
That no man is the lord of anything, 110
Though in and of him there be much consisting,
Till he communicate his parts to others.
Nor doth he of himself know them for aught
Till he behold them formeÁd in th'applause
Where they're extended±±who, like an arch, reverb'rate 115
The voice again; or, like a gate of steel
Fronting the sun, receives and renders back
His figure and his heat. I was much rapt in this,
And apprehended here immediately
The unknown Ajax. 120
Heavens, what a man is there! A very horse,
That has he knows not what. Nature, what things
there are,

Most abject in regard and dear in use.
What things again, most dear in the esteem
And poor in worth. Now shall we see tomorrow 125
An act that very chance doth throw upon him.
Ajax renowned? O heavens, what some men do,
While some men leave to do.
How some men creep in skittish Fortune's hall
Whiles others play the idiots in her eyes; 130
How one man eats into another's pride
While pride is fasting in his wantonness.
To see these Grecian lords! Why, even already
They clap the lubber Ajax on the shoulder,
As if his foot were on brave Hector's breast 135
And great Troy shrinking.

ACHILLES I do believe it,
For they passed by me as misers do by beggars,
Neither gave to me good word nor look.
What, are my deeds forgot?

ULYSSES Time hath, my lord,
A wallet at his back, wherein he puts 140
Alms for oblivion, a great-sized monster
Of ingrattitudes. Those scraps are good deeds past,
Which are devoured as fast as they are made,
Forgot as soon as done. Perseverance, dear my lord,
Keeps honour bright. To have done is to hang 145
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail
In monumental mock'ry. Take the instant way,
For honour travels in a strait so narrow,
Where one but goes abreast. Keep then the path,
For emulation hath a thousand sons 150
That one by one pursue: if you give way,
Or hedge aside from the direct forthright,
Like to an entered tide they all rush by
And leave you hindmost;
Or, like a gallant horse fall'n in first rank, 155
Lie there for pavement to the abject rear,
O'errun and trampled on. Then what they do in
present,
Though less than yours in past, must o'ertop yours.
For Time is like a fashionable host,

That slightly shakes his parting guest by th' hand 160
And, with his arms outstretched as he would fly,
Grasps in the comer. Welcome ever smiles,
And Farewell goes out sighing. O let not virtue seek
Remuneration for the thing it was;

For beauty, wit, 165
High birth, vigour of bone, desert in service,
Love, friendship, charity, are subjects all
To envious and calumniating time.

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin±±
That all with one consent praise new-born gauds, 170
Though they are made and moulded of things past,
And give to dust that is a little gilt
More laud than gilt o'er-dusted.

The present eye praises the present object.
Then marvel not, thou great and complete man, 175
That all the Greeks begin to worship Ajax,
Since things in motion sooner catch the eye
Than what not stirs. The cry went once on thee,
And still it might, and yet it may again,
If thou wouldst not entomb thyself alive 180
And case thy reputation in thy tent,
Whose glorious deeds but in these fields of late
Made emulous missions 'mongst the gods themselves,
And drove great Mars to faction.

ACHILLES Of this my privacy
I have strong reasons.

ULYSSES But 'gainst your privacy 185
The reasons are more potent and heroical.
'Tis known, Achilles, that you are in love
With one of Priam's daughters.

ACHILLES Ha? Known?

ULYSSES Is that a
wonder?

The providence that's in a watchful state
Knows almost every grain of Pluto's gold, 190
Finds bottom in th'uncomprehensive deeps,
Keeps place with aught, and almost like the gods
Do infant thoughts unveil in their dumb cradles.
There is a mystery, with whom relation

Durst never meddle, in the soul of state, 195
Which hath an operation more divine
Than breath or pen can give expressure to.
All the commerce that you have had with Troy
As perfectly is ours as yours, my lord;
And better would it fit Achilles much 200
To throw down Hector than Polyxena.
But it must grieve young Pyrrhus now at home,
When fame shall in his island sound her trump
And all the Greekish girls shall tripping sing,
'Great Hector's sister did Achilles win, 205
But our great Ajax bravely beat down *him*'.
Farewell, my lord. I as your lover speak.
The fool slides o'er the ice that you should break.

Exit

PATROCLUS

To this effect, Achilles, have I moved you.
A woman impudent and mannish grown 210
Is not more loathed than an effeminate man
In time of action. I stand condemned for this.
They think my little stomach to the war
And your great love to me restrains you thus.
Sweet, rouse yourself, and the weak wanton Cupid 215
Shall from your neck unloose his amorous fold
And like a dew-drop from the lion's mane
Be shook to air.

ACHILLES Shall Ajax fight with Hector?

PATROCLUS

Ay, and perhaps receive much honour by him.

ACHILLES

I see my reputation is at stake. 220
My fame is shrewdly gored.

PATROCLUS

O then beware:

Those wounds heal ill that men do give themselves.
Omission to do what is necessary
Seals a commission to a blank of danger,
And danger like an ague subtly taints 225
Even then when we sit idly in the sun.

ACHILLES

Go call Thersites hither, sweet Patroclus.

I'll send the fool to Ajax, and desire him
T'invite the Trojan lords after the combat
To see us here unarmed. I have a woman's longing, 230
An appetite that I am sick withal,
To see great Hector in his weeds of peace,

Enter Thersites

To talk with him and to behold his visage
Even to my full of view.±±A labour saved.

THERSITES A wonder! 235

ACHILLES What?

THERSITES Ajax goes up and down the field, as asking for
himself.

ACHILLES How so?

THERSITES He must fight singly tomorrow with Hector, 240
and is so prophetically proud of an heroical cudgelling
that he raves in saying nothing.

ACHILLES How can that be?

THERSITES Why, a stalks up and down like a peacock±±a
stride and a stand; ruminates like an hostess that hath 245
no arithmetic but her brain to set down her reckoning;
bites his lip with a politic regard, as who should say
`There were wit in this head, an't would out'±±and so
there is; but it lies as coldly in him as fire in a flint,
which will not show without knocking. The man's 250
undone for ever, for if Hector break not his neck i'th'
combat he'll break't himself in vainglory. He knows
not me. I said, `Good morrow, Ajax', and he replies,
`Thanks, Agamemnon'. What think you of this man
that takes me for the General? He's grown a very land- 255
fish, languageless, a monster. A plague of opinion! A
man may wear it on both sides like a leather jerkin.

ACHILLES Thou must be my ambassador to him, Thersites.

THERSITES Who, I? Why, he'll answer nobody. He
professes not answering. Speaking is for beggars. He 260
wears his tongue in's arms. I will put on his presence.
Let Patroclus make demands to me. You shall see the
pageant of Ajax.

ACHILLES To him, Patroclus. Tell him I humbly desire the
valiant Ajax to invite the most valorous Hector to come 265
unarmed to my tent, and to procure safe-conduct for

his person of the magnanimous and most illustrious
six-or-seven-times-honoured captain-general of the
Grecian army, Agamemnon; et cetera. Do this.

PATROCLUS (to *Thersites*) Jove bless great Ajax! 270

THERSITES H'm.

PATROCLUS I come from the worthy Achilles±±

THERSITES Ha?

PATROCLUS Who most humbly desires you to invite Hector
to his tent±± 275

THERSITES H'm!

PATROCLUS And to procure safe-conduct from Aga-
memnon.

THERSITES Agamemnon?

PATROCLUS Ay, my lord. 280

THERSITES Ha!

PATROCLUS What say you to't?

THERSITES God b'wi' you, with all my heart.

PATROCLUS Your answer, sir?

THERSITES If tomorrow be a fair day, by eleven o'clock it 285
will go one way or other. Howsoever, he shall pay for
me ere he has me.

PATROCLUS Your answer, sir?

THERSITES Fare ye well, with all my heart.

ACHILLES Why, but he is not in this tune, is he? 290

THERSITES No, but he's out o' tune thus. What music will
be in him when Hector has knocked out his brains, I
know not. But I am feared none, unless the fiddler
Apollo get his sinews to make catlings on.

ACHILLES

Come, thou shalt bear a letter to him straight. 295

THERSITES Let me carry another to his horse, for that's
the more capable creature.

ACHILLES

My mind is troubled like a fountain stirred,
And I myself see not the bottom of it.

Exit with Patroclus

THERSITES Would the fountain of your mind were clear 300
again, that I might water an ass at it. I had rather be
a tick in a sheep than such a valiant ignorance.

Exit