

Troilus and Cressida

5.1

Enter Achilles and Patroclus

ACHILLES

I'll heat his blood with Greekish wine tonight,
Which with my scimitar I'll cool tomorrow.
Patroclus, let us feast him to the height.

PATROCLUS

Here comes Thersites.

Enter Thersites

ACHILLES

How now, thou core of envy,
Thou crusty botch of nature, what's the news? 5

THERSITES Why, thou picture of what thou seemest, and
idol of idiot-worshippers, here's a letter for thee.

ACHILLES From whence, fragment?

THERSITES Why, thou full dish of fool, from Troy.

Achilles reads the letter

PATROCLUS Who keeps the tent now? 10

THERSITES The surgeon's box or the patient's wound.

PATROCLUS Well said, adversity. And what need these
tricks?

THERSITES Prithee be silent, boy. I profit not by thy talk.
Thou art thought to be Achilles' male varlet. 15

PATROCLUS `Male varlet', you rogue? What's that?

THERSITES Why, his masculine whore. Now the rotten
diseases of the south, guts-griping, ruptures, catarrhs,
loads o' gravel i'th' back, lethargies, cold palsies, and
the like, take and take again such preposterous 20
discoveries!

PATROCLUS Why, thou damnable box of envy thou, what
mean'st thou to curse thus?

THERSITES Do I curse thee?

PATROCLUS Why, no, you ruinous butt, you whoreson 25
indistinguishable cur, no.

THERSITES No? Why art thou then exasperate? Thou idle
immaterial skein of sleeve-silk, thou green sarsenet flap
for a sore eye, thou tassel of a prodigal's purse, thou!
Ah, how the poor world is pestered with such waterflies! 30

Diminutives of nature.

PATROCLUS Out, gall!

THERSITES Finch egg!

ACHILLES

My sweet Patroclus, I am thwarted quite
From my great purpose in tomorrow's battle. 35
Here is a letter from Queen Hecuba,
A token from her daughter, my fair love,
Both taxing me, and gaging me to keep
An oath that I have sworn. I will not break it.
Fall, Greeks; fail, fame; honour, or go or stay. 40
My major vow lies here; this I'll obey.±±
Come, come, Thersites, help to trim my tent.
This night in banqueting must all be spent.±±
Away, Patroclus.

Exeunt Achilles and Patroclus

THERSITES With too much blood and too little brain these 45
two may run mad, but if with too much brain and too
little blood they do, I'll be a curer of madmen. Here's
Agamemnon: an honest fellow enough, and one that
loves quails, but he has not so much brain as ear-wax.
And the goodly transformation of Jupiter there, his 50
brother the bull, the primitive statue and oblique
memorial of cuckolds, a thrifty shoeing-horn in a chain,
hanging at his brother's leg: to what form but that he
is should wit larded with malice and malice farced with
wit turn him to? To an ass were nothing: he is both 55
ass and ox. To an ox were nothing: he is both ox and
ass. To be a dog, a mule, a cat, a fitchew, a toad, a
lizard, an owl, a puttock, or a herring without a roe,
I would not care; but to be Menelaus!±±I would
conspire against destiny. Ask me not what I would be 60
if I were not Thersites, for I care not to be the louse of
a lazar, so I were not Menelaus.±±Hey-day, sprites and
fires.

*Enter Hector, Ajax, Agamemnon, Ulysses, Nestor,
Menelaus, Troilus, and Diomedes, with lights*

AGAMEMNON

We go wrong, we go wrong.

AJAX

No, yonder 'tis:

There, where we see the light.

HECTOR I trouble you. 65

AJAX
No, not a whit.
Enter Achilles

ULYSSES Here comes himself to guide you.

ACHILLES
Welcome, brave Hector. Welcome, princes all.

AGAMEMNON *(to Hector)*
So now, fair prince of Troy, I bid good night.
Ajax commands the guard to tend on you.

HECTOR
Thanks and good night to the Greeks' general. 70

MENELAUS
Good night, my lord.

HECTOR Good night, sweet Lord Menelaus.

THERSITES *(aside)* Sweet draught! 'Sweet', quoth a? Sweet
sink, sweet sewer.

ACHILLES
Good night and welcome both at once, to those
That go or tarry. 75

AGAMEMNON Good night.
Exeunt Agamemnon and Menelaus

ACHILLES
Old Nestor tarries, and you too, Diomed.
Keep Hector company an hour or two.

DIOMEDES
I cannot, lord. I have important business
The tide whereof is now. ±± Good night, great Hector. 80

HECTOR Give me your hand.

ULYSSES *(aside to Troilus)*
Follow his torch, he goes to Calchas' tent.
I'll keep you company.

TROILUS *(aside)* Sweet sir, you honour me.

HECTOR *(to Diomedes)*
And so good night.

ACHILLES Come, come, enter my tent.
Exeunt Diomedes, followed by Ulysses and
Troilus, at one door; and Achilles, Hector,
Ajax, and Nestor at another door

THERSITES That same Diomed's a false-hearted rogue, a 85

most unjust knave. I will no more trust him when he
leers than I will a serpent when he hisses. He will spend
his mouth and promise like Brabbler the hound, but
when he performs astronomers foretell it: that is
prodigious, there will come some change. The sun 90
borrows of the moon when Diomed keeps his word. I
will rather leave to see Hector than not to dog him.
They say he keeps a Trojan drab, and uses the traitor
Calchas his tent. I'll after.±±Nothing but lechery! All
incontinent varlets! 95

Exit