

Troilus and Cressida

2.1

Enter Ajax and Thersites

AJAX Thersites.

THERSITES Agamemnon±±how if he had boils, full, all
over, generally?

AJAX Thersites.

THERSITES And those boils did run? Say so, did not the 5
General run then? Were not that a botchy core?

AJAX Dog.

THERSITES Then there would come some matter from him.
I see none now.

AJAX Thou bitch-wolf's son, canst thou not hear? Feel 10
then.

He strikes Thersites

THERSITES The plague of Greece upon thee, thou mongrel
beef-witted lord!

AJAX Speak then, thou unsifted leaven, speak! I will beat
thee into handsomeness. 15

THERSITES I shall sooner rail thee into wit and holiness.
But I think thy horse will sooner con an oration than
thou learn a prayer without book.

[Ajax strikes him]

Thou canst strike, canst thou? A red murrain o' thy
jade's tricks. 20

AJAX Toad's stool!

[He strikes Thersites]

Learn me the proclamation.

THERSITES Dost thou think I have no sense, thou strikest
me thus?

AJAX The proclamation. 25

THERSITES Thou art proclaimed a fool, I think.

AJAX Do not, porcupine, do not. My fingers itch.

THERSITES I would thou didst itch from head to foot. An
I had the scratching of thee, I would make thee the
loathsomest scab in Greece. 30

AJAX I say, the proclamation.

THERSITES Thou grumblest and railest every hour on

Achilles, and thou art as full of envy at his greatness
as Cerberus is at Proserpina's beauty, ay, that thou
barkest at him.

35

AJAX Mistress Thersites.

THERSITES Thou shouldst strike him.

AJAX Cobloaf.

THERSITES He would pun thee into shivers with his fist,
as a sailor breaks a biscuit.

40

AJAX You whoreson cur.

[He strikes Thersites]

THERSITES Do! Do!

AJAX Thou stool for a witch.

[He strikes Thersites]

THERSITES Ay, do, do! Thou sodden-witted lord, thou hast
in thy skull no more brain than I have in mine elbows.
An *asnico* may tutor thee. Thou scurvy valiant ass,
thou art here but to thrash Trojans, and thou art
bought and sold among those of any wit like a barbarian
slave. If thou use to beat me, I will begin at thy heel
and tell what thou art by inches, thou thing of no
bowels, thou.

45

50

AJAX You dog.

THERSITES You scurvy lord.

AJAX You cur.

[He strikes Thersites]

THERSITES Mars his idiot! Do, rudeness! Do, camel, do, do!

Enter Achilles and Patroclus

ACHILLES

Why, how now, Ajax? Wherefore do ye thus?

How now, Thersites? What's the matter, man?

THERSITES You see him there? Do you?

ACHILLES Ay. What's the matter?

60

THERSITES Nay, look upon him.

ACHILLES So I do. What's the matter?

THERSITES Nay, but regard him well.

ACHILLES `Well'? Why, I do so.

THERSITES But yet you look not well upon him. For
whosomever you take him to be, he is Ajax.

65

ACHILLES I know that, fool.

THERSITES Ay, but 'that fool' knows not himself.

AJAX Therefore I beat thee.

THERSITES Lo, lo, lo, lo, what modicums of wit he utters. 70
His evasions have ears thus long. I have bobbed his
brain more than he has beat my bones. I will buy nine
sparrows for a penny, and his *pia mater* is not worth
the ninth part of a sparrow. This lord, Achilles±±Ajax,
who wears his wit in his belly and his guts in his 75
head±±I'll tell you what I say of him.

ACHILLES What?

THERSITES I say, this Ajax±±
[Ajax threatens to strike him]

ACHILLES Nay, good Ajax.

THERSITES Has not so much wit±± 80
[Ajax threatens to strike him]

ACHILLES (to Ajax) Nay, I must hold you.

THERSITES As will stop the eye of Helen's needle, for whom
he comes to fight.

ACHILLES Peace, fool.

THERSITES I would have peace and quietness, but the fool 85
will not. He, there, that he, look you there.

AJAX O thou damned cur I shall±±

ACHILLES (to Ajax) Will you set your wit to a fool's?

THERSITES No, I warrant you, for a fool's will shame it.

PATROCLUS Good words, Thersites. 90

ACHILLES (to Ajax) What's the quarrel?

AJAX I bade the vile owl go learn me the tenor of the
proclamation, and he rails upon me.

THERSITES I serve thee not.

AJAX Well, go to, go to. 95

THERSITES I serve here voluntary.

ACHILLES Your last service was sufferance. 'Twas not
voluntary: no man is beaten voluntary. Ajax was here
the voluntary, and you as under an impress.

THERSITES E'en so. A great deal of your wit, too, lies in 100
your sinews, or else there be liars. Hector shall have a
great catch an a knock out either of your brains. A
were as good crack a fusty nut with no kernel.

ACHILLES What, with me too, Thersites?

THERSITES There's Ulysses and old Nestor, whose wit was 105

mouldy ere your grandsires had nails on their toes,
yoke you like draught oxen and make you plough up
the war.

ACHILLES What? What?

THERSITES Yes, good sooth. To Achilles! To, Ajax, to±± 110

AJAX I shall cut out your tongue.

THERSITES 'Tis no matter. I shall speak as much wit as
thou afterwards.

PATROCLUS No more words, Thersites, peace.

THERSITES I will hold my peace when Achilles' brach bids 115
me, shall I?

ACHILLES There's for you, Patroclus.

THERSITES I will see you hanged like clodpolls ere I come
any more to your tents. I will keep where there is wit
stirring, and leave the faction of fools. 120

Exit

PATROCLUS A good riddance.

ACHILLES *(to Ajax)*

Marry, this, sir, is proclaimed through all our host:
That Hector, by the fifth hour of the sun,
Will with a trumpet 'twixt our tents and Troy
Tomorrow morning call some knight to arms 125
That hath a stomach, and such a one that dare
Maintain±±I know not what. 'Tis trash. Farewell.

AJAX Farewell. Who shall answer him?

ACHILLES

I know not. 'Tis put to lott'ry. Otherwise,
He knew his man. 130

[Exeunt Achilles and Patroclus]

AJAX O, meaning you? I will go learn more of it.

[Exit]