

TROY STORY 3

Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* in blue.

Other Shakespeare texts in plum.

Immortals plot in black.

Scene 1

A tremendous peal of thunder. Lights up on All-Seeing ZEUS, god of the heavens, King of Olympus, clutching his thunderbolt and sitting atop the huge boulders on which are built the towering Cyclopean walls of Troy – Marlowe's 'topless towers of Ilium' – which loom solidly behind him.

Next to Zeus, and slightly below, sits HERMES, the messenger god, holding a rolled-up scroll. Beneath them is an old woman, asleep.

Both Zeus and Hermes stare impassively out at the audience as clouds swirl around their feet and lightning splits the Olympian sky.

The thunder rumbles. After a while in which they both sit staring into the audience, Hermes speaks.

HERMES Looks like rain again.

Pause.

Staying in tonight?

Zeus nods slowly.

Monopoly?

ZEUS (*Shakes his head slowly.*) Apollo always wins.

HERMES You're Zeus. Can't you rig it?

ZEUS Never play a game of chance, Hermes, with a god who has the gift of prophecy.

HERMES (*Nods. Pause. He opens the scroll – which the keen-sighted might decipher as being *The Daily Argus* - and reads.*) I see the Greeks are kicking up again.

ZEUS (*Heavy sigh.*) What is it this time?

HERMES Usual stuff. Paris has run off with King Menelaus's wife.

ZEUS Paris who?

HERMES Trojan prince – the pretty one.

ZEUS And Menelaus is upset, is he?

HERMES You know what the Spartans are like. It suddenly becomes a matter of "family honor".

Zeus scoffs.

His brother has to pitch in.

ZEUS Agamemnon? Bore. Never did like him much.

HERMES Before you know where you are, they've got this huge army – Achilles, Nestor... (*Can't remember the name*) the one from Ithaca –

ZEUS Ulysses.

HERMES That's him.

ZEUS Windbag.

HERMES You said it. Anyway, there's now legions of angry Greeks parked outside the walls of Troy and –

ZEUS What does... Wosname say?

HERMES Who?

ZEUS You know, Trojan king.

HERMES Oh, Priam. Well, he's not happy, is he? Anyway –

ZEUS What's the time?

HERMES (*Looks at the moon.*) Getting to be midnight.

ZEUS Put on the oracle. See what she says about it.

HERMES Sybil!

Hermes kicks the sleeping old woman, who starts awake and, without the slightest pause, jerks into TV anchor mode and delivers the news.

SIBYL ...And scattered showers over the northern part of the Mediterranean. In other news...

She leaps to her feet and adopts a suitably oracular pose as the lights change and we hear atmospheric MUSIC.

In Troy, there lies the scene. From isles of Greece
Proud Agamemnon and his brother king
Have from the port of Athens sent their ships,
Fraught with the ministers and instruments
Of cruel war; and now their vow is made
To ransack Troy, within whose strong immures
The ravish'd Helen, Menelaus' queen,
With wanton Paris sleeps; and that's the quarrel.
To –

Zeus clicks his fingers. She breaks off, the former lighting is restored and the music ends abruptly.

ZEUS (*Thoughtfully.*) Helen, is it?

HERMES Is what?

ZEUS Menelaus's wife, who's been stolen by Paris: she's called Helen?

HERMES That's right.

ZEUS (*Trying to recall something.*) Isn't she related to me?

HERMES In a way.

ZEUS What do you mean, "In a way"?

HERMES Remember Leda?

ZEUS No.

HERMES Remember changing yourself into a swan?

Pause.

ZEUS Oh, *that* Leda.

HERMES Yes, *that* Leda.

ZEUS What about her?

HERMES Well, after your ornithological adventure, she laid two eggs.

ZEUS You're kidding me.

HERMES Out of one came Clytemnestra –

ZEUS Now married to Agamemnon, yes.

HERMES And out of the other –

TOGETHER Helen!

ZEUS Well, there's a thing.

HERMES As you say. So, in answer to your question – Yes: she's your daughter... Or, if you prefer, cygnet.

ZEUS You think I ought to take an interest?

HERMES Well, a card and a small check at birthdays would be nice.

ZEUS I mean in the war. Given that my eggy daughters have ended up married to the Greek King and his brother.

HERMES And that one of them has precipitated an international incident by running off with a Trojan prince? Yes, since you ask.

ZEUS (*With obvious reluctance.*) All right. Better get down there, I suppose. See what's happening. What have I got on tomorrow?

HERMES (*Kicking Sybil again.*) Sybil?

SYBIL (*Instantly awake and in PA mode.*) 7:30 a.m.: Business breakfast with Rosy-fingered Dawn, followed by –

ZEUS Cancel it. Cancel the whole day: I'm out of the office. Sorting this Greeks and – who did you say – ?

HERMES Trojans.

ZEUS Greeks and Trojans business, right.

As he is leaving.

Oh, one other thing.

HERMES Yes?

TOGETHER (*Hermes knows him of old.*) Not a word to Hera.

Zeus exits. Hermes kicks Sybil back into life.

Scene 2

SYBIL

...leading to serious congestion across the Straits of Corinth.

She clicks into declamatory mode again.

And so our scene must to the battle fly;
Where - O for pity! - we shall much disgrace
With four or five most vile and ragged foils,
Right ill-disposed in brawl ridiculous,
The name of Agincourt.

HERMES Wrong battle.

SYBIL What?

HERMES That's *Henry the Fifth*.

SYBIL (*Seriously.*) It's all the same, really, isn't it? Nothing changes.

HERMES (*Pause.*) I take your point.

SYBIL (*Shrugs.*)

Like or find fault; do as your pleasures are.
Now good or bad, 'tis but the chance of war.

Hermes nods grimly.

Scene 3

MUSIC as the scene changes.

There is a scene of violent battle (during which Hermes and Sybil unobtrusively leave the stage) in which several of the more famous Greek and Trojan warriors strut their stuff. They exit fighting, and the sounds of battle lessen (with corresponding change in lighting) as...

Scene 4

[T&C, 1.1]

TROILUS enters, removing his armor. In the background we hear the continuing noise of battle as PANDARUS enters.

TROILUS

Call here my varlet; I'll unarm again:
Why should I war without the walls of Troy,
That find such cruel battle here within?

PANDARUS

Troilus -

TROILUS

At Priam's royal table do I sit;
And when fair Cressid comes into my thoughts -

PANDARUS

Well, she looked yesternight fairer than ever I saw
her look, or any woman else. But, for my part, she
is my kinswoman; I would not praise her.

TROILUS

O Pandarus! I tell thee I am mad
In Cressid's love: thou answer'st, 'she is fair'.

PANDARUS

I speak no more than truth.

TROILUS

Thou dost not speak so much.

PANDARUS

Faith, I'll not meddle in't. She's a fool to stay behind her
father; let her to the Greeks; and so I'll tell her the next time I
see her. For my part, I'll meddle nor make no more i' the
matter.

TROILUS

Pandarus -

PANDARUS

Not I.

TROILUS

Sweet Pandarus -

PANDARUS

Pray you, Troilus, speak no more to me: I will leave all as I
found it, and there an end.

*Trumpets and a great shout. Enter AENEAS.
During the dialogue he is mopped down and given drinks like
a boxer between rounds.*

AENEAS

How now, Prince Troilus! Wherefore not afield?

TROILUS

What news, AENEAS, from the field to-day?

AENEAS

That Paris is returned home and hurt.

TROILUS

By whom, AENEAS?

AENEAS

Troilus, by Menelaus.

TROILUS

Let Paris bleed; 'tis but a scar to scorn;
Paris is gored with Menelaus' horn.

Another great shout.

AENEAS

Hark, what good sport is out of town to-day!

TROILUS

Are you bound thither?

AENEAS

In all swift haste.

TROILUS

Come, go we then together.

They exit.

[T&C, 1.2]

*ANDROMACHE runs past with some attendants as
CRESSIDA appears on the upper level with HELENUS, a
priest and Troilus's brother.*

CRESSIDA

Who was that went by, Helenus?

HELENUS

Hector's wife, Andromache.

CRESSIDA

And whither goes she?

HELENUS

Up to the eastern tower, Lady Cressida,
To see the battle. Hector, whose patience
Is, as a virtue fix'd, to-day was moved:
He chid Andromache and struck his armourer.

CRESSIDA

What was his cause of anger?

HELENUS

The noise goes, this: there is among the Greeks
A lord of Trojan blood, nephew to Hector;
They call him Ajax.

CRESSIDA

Good; and what of him?

HELENUS

They say he is a very man per se,
And stands alone.

CRESSIDA

So do all men, unless they are drunk, sick, or have no legs.

HELENUS

This man, lady, is as valiant as the lion, churlish as the bear,
slow as the elephant. There is no man hath a virtue that he
hath not a glimpse of, nor any man an attainment but he carries
some stain of it.

CRESSIDA

But how should this man, that makes
me smile, make Hector angry?

HELENUS

They say he yesterday coped Hector in the battle and
struck him down, the disdain and shame whereof hath
ever since kept Hector fasting and waking.

CRESSIDA

Who comes here?

HELENUS

Madam, your uncle Pandarus.

Enter PANDARUS.

CRESSIDA

Hector's a gallant man.

HELENUS

As may be in the world, lady.

PANDARUS

What's that? What's that?

CRESSIDA

Good morrow, uncle Pandarus.

PANDARUS

Good morrow, cousin Cressid: what do you talk of?

Good morrow, Helenus.

Helenus bows to Pandarus and leaves.

How do you, cousin?

What were you talking of when I came?

CRESSIDA

That Hector was angry.

PANDARUS

I know the cause too: he'll lay about him to-day, I can tell them that: and there's Troilus will not come far behind him: let them take heed of Troilus, I can tell them that too.

CRESSIDA

What, is he angry too?

PANDARUS

Who, Troilus? Troilus is the better man of the two.

CRESSIDA

Excuse me?

PANDARUS

Hector shall not have Troilus's wit this year.

CRESSIDA

He shall not need it, if he have his own.

PANDARUS

Nor his beauty.

CRESSIDA

'Twould not become him; his own's better.

PANDARUS

You have no judgment, niece: Helen herself praised Troilus's complexion above Paris.

CRESSIDA

Why, Paris hath colour enough.

PANDARUS

I swear to you. I think Helen loves him better than Paris.

CRESSIDA

Then she's a merry Greek indeed.

PANDARUS

Nay, I am sure she does. I think his smiling becomes him better than any man in all Troy.

CRESSIDA

O, he smiles valiantly.

PANDARUS

Does he not?

CRESSIDA

O yes, an 'twere a cloud in autumn.

PANDARUS

Why, go to, then: but to prove to you that Helen loves Troilus, I cannot choose but laugh, to think how she tickled his chin. But there was such laughing! Queen Hecuba laughed that her eyes ran o'er.

CRESSIDA

With mill-stones.

PANDARUS

And Cassandra laughed.

CRESSIDA

Did her eyes run o'er too?

PANDARUS

And Hector laughed.

CRESSIDA

At what was all this laughing?

PANDARUS

Marry, at the white hair that Helen spied on Troilus' chin.

CRESSIDA

An't had been a green hair, I should have laughed too.

PANDARUS

They laughed not so much at the hair as at his pretty answer.

CRESSIDA

What was his answer?

PANDARUS

Quoth she, 'Here's but two and fifty hairs on your chin, and one of them is white. 'Two and

fifty hairs' quoth he, 'and one white: that white hair is my father, and all the rest are his sons.' 'Great Zeus!' quoth she, 'which of these hairs is Paris, my husband?' 'The forked one,' quoth he, 'pluck't out, and give it him.' But there was such laughing! and Helen so blushed, an Paris so chafed, and all the rest so laughed, that it passed.

CRESSIDA

So let it now; for it has been while going by.

PANDARUS

Well, cousin. I told you a thing yesterday; think on't.

CRESSIDA

So I do.

PANDARUS

I'll be sworn 'tis true.

A retreat sounded

PANDARUS

Hark! They are coming from the field: shall we stand up here, and see them as they pass toward Troy? Good niece, do, sweet niece Cressida.

CRESSIDA

At your pleasure.

PANDARUS

Here, here, here's an excellent place; here we may see most bravely: I'll tell you them all by their names as they pass by; but mark Troilus above the rest.

CRESSIDA

Speak not so loud.

AENEAS passes.

PANDARUS

That's AENEAS: is not that a brave man? He's one of the flowers of Troy, I can tell you: but mark Troilus; you shall see anon.

ANTENOR passes.

CRESSIDA

Who's that?

PANDARUS

That's Antenor: he's one o' the soundest judgments in Troy. When comes Troilus? I'll show you Troilus anon: if he see me, you shall see him nod at me.

HECTOR passes

PANDARUS

That's Hector! There's a fellow! (*Shouts out.*) Go thy way, Hector! There's a brave man, niece. O brave Hector! Is't not a brave man?

CRESSIDA

O, a brave man!

PANDARUS

It does a man's heart good. Look you what hacks are on his helmet!

CRESSIDA

Be those with swords?

PANDARUS

Swords! Any thing, he cares not. Yonder comes Paris, yonder comes Paris.

PARIS passes.

Look ye yonder, niece; is't not a gallant man too, is't not? Why, this is brave now. Who said he came hurt home to-day?

He's not hurt: why, this will do Helen's heart good now, ha!
Would I could see Troilus now! You shall see Troilus anon.
DEIPHOBUS passes.

CRESSIDA

Who's that?

PANDARUS

That's Deiphobus. I marvel where Troilus is. That's Deiphobus. I think he went not forth to-day. That's Deiphobus.

CRESSIDA

Is Deiphobus a good fighter, uncle?

PANDARUS

Deiphobus? No. Yes, he'll fight indifferent well. I marvel where Troilus is. Hark! Do you not hear the people cry "Troilus"?

CRESSIDA

What sneaking fellow comes yonder?

TROILUS passes.

PANDARUS

Where? 'Tis Troilus! There's a man, niece! (*Shouts.*) Brave Troilus! The prince of chivalry!

CRESSIDA

Peace, for shame, peace!

PANDARUS

Mark him; note him. O brave Troilus! Look well upon him, niece: look you how his sword is bloodied, and his helm more hacked than Hector's, and how he looks, and how he goes! O admirable youth! He ne'er saw three and twenty. Go thy way, Troilus, go thy way! O admirable man! Paris? Paris is dirt to him.

CRESSIDA

Here come more.

More warriors pass by.

PANDARUS

Asses, fools, dolts! Chaff and bran, chaff and bran! Porridge after meat! I could live and die i' the eyes of Troilus. I had rather be such a man as Troilus than Agamemnon and all Greece.

CRESSIDA

There is among the Greeks Achilles, a better man than Troilus.

PANDARUS

Achilles! A drayman, a porter, a very camel.

CRESSIDA

Well, well.

PANDARUS

'Well, well!' Why, have you any discretion? Have you any eyes? Do you know what a man is?

You are such a woman!

Enter Troilus's Boy

Boy

Sir, my lord Troilus would instantly speak with you.

PANDARUS

Where?

Boy

At your own house; there he unarms him.

PANDARUS

Good boy, tell him I come.

Exit boy.

I doubt he be hurt. Fare ye well, good niece.

CRESSIDA

Adieu, uncle.

PANDARUS

I'll be with you, niece, by and by.

CRESSIDA

To bring, uncle?

PANDARUS

Ay, a token from Troilus.

CRESSIDA

By the same token, you are a bawd!

Exit PANDARUS

Words, vows, gifts, tears, and love's full sacrifice,

He offers in another's enterprise;

But more in Troilus thousand fold I see

Than in the glass of Pandar's praise may be;

Yet hold I off. Women are angels, wooing:

Things won are done; joy's soul lies in the doing.

That she beloved knows nought that knows not this:

Men prize the thing ungain'd more than it is:

Then though my heart's content firm love doth bear,

Nothing of that shall from mine eyes appear.

Cressida remains deep in thought.

Scene 5

There is a clap of thunder. Cressida notices it, but not the fact that Zeus has appeared, accompanied by Hermes.

ZEUS (*Sighs.*) I do wish we could travel more quietly. Who's this?

HERMES Cressida.

ZEUS Fill me in.

HERMES She has an uncle, Pandarus –

ZEUS Pandar-us, Pandar... Sounds familiar.

HERMES One day it will be. Are you following?

ZEUS Yes, go on.

HERMES Pandarus is a friend of Troilus, one of the Trojan princes.

ZEUS Good.

HERMES Troilus has a huge thing for Cressida, so Pandarus is putting in a few good words on Troilus's behalf.

ZEUS But presumably her affections lie elsewhere.

HERMES No. Why should you think that?

ZEUS Because that's the way these stories usually go.

HERMES Ah, I see. No, in fact she secretly loves Troilus.

ZEUS I feel a 'but' coming on.

HERMES But is unwilling to declare her love, fearing that he will then take her for granted.

ZEUS Sensible girl.

Cressida nods, as though having made up her mind about something, and exits. Zeus follows her with his eyes.

Pretty little thing.

HERMES Not now.

ZEUS What?

HERMES Keep your mind on the job.

ZEUS (*Sighs.*) Which is what exactly?

HERMES To sort out the war? Get them all to make peace or something?

ZEUS Where do you suggest we start?

HERMES Let's listen to what the Greeks have to say.

ZEUS All right. But I'm warning you: I can only take so much of that windbag Ulysses... And as for Agamemnon...

They remain in place as...

Scene 6

[T&C, 1.3]

Enter AGAMEMNON, NESTOR, ULYSSES, MENELAUS, HELENUS and others. There is a general babble of argument.

AGAMEMNON

Princes! Is it matter new to us
That after seven months' siege yet Troy walls stand?

ULYSSES

Agamemnon,
Thou great commander, nerve and bone of Greece,
Heart of our numbers, soul and only spirit.
In whom the tempers and the minds of all
Should be shut up, hear what Ulysses speaks.

ZEUS See what I mean? How does his wife cope with him?

HERMES Weaves a lot, I think.

AGAMEMNON

Speak, prince of Ithaca.

ULYSSES

Troy, yet upon its basis, had been down,
And the great Hector's sword had lack'd a master,
But for these instances.
The specialty of rule hath been neglected.

ZEUS I feel a very long speech coming on.

ULYSSES

The heavens themselves, the planets and this centre
Observe degree, priority and place,
Office and custom, in all line of order.
Take but degree away, untune that string,
And, hark, what discord follows!

And 'tis this fever that keeps Troy on foot,
Not her own sinews. To end a tale of length,
Troy in our weakness stands, not in her strength.

NESTOR

Most wisely hath Ulysses here discover'd
The fever whereof all our power is sick.

AGAMEMNON

The nature of the sickness found, Ulysses,
What is the remedy?

ZEUS Here we go again.

ULYSSES

The great Achilles, whom opinion crowns
The sinew and the forehand of our host,
Having his ear full of his airy fame,
Grows dainty of his worth, and in his tent
Lies mocking our designs: with him Patroclus.

NESTOR

And in the imitation of these twain -
Who, as Ulysses says, opinion crowns
With an imperial voice - many are infect.
Ajax is grown self-will'd, and bears his head
In such a rein, in full as proud a place
As broad Achilles.

ULYSSES

They tax our policy, and call it cowardice.
They call this "bed-work, mappery, closet-war".
Trumpets sound.

AGAMEMNON

What trumpet? Look, Menelaus.

MENELAUS

It is the Prince Aeneas from Troy.

Enter AENEAS.

AGAMEMNON

What would you 'fore our tent?

AENEAS

Is this great Agamemnon's tent, I pray you?

AGAMEMNON

Even this.

AENEAS

May one, that is a herald and a prince,
Do a fair message to his kingly ears?

AGAMEMNON

With surety.

AENEAS

How may
A stranger to those most imperial looks
Know them from eyes of other mortals?

ZEUS He's a cheeky boy, isn't he?

AGAMEMNON

(*Angrily.*) How!

AENEAS

Ay. Which is the high and mighty Agamemnon?

AGAMEMNON

This Trojan scorns us; or the men of Troy
Are ceremonious courtiers.

HERMES I think you'll find it's the former.

Sir, you of Troy, call you yourself Aeneas?

AENEAS

Ay, Greek, that is my name.

AGAMEMNON

What's your affair I pray you?

AENEAS

Sir, pardon; 'tis for Agamemnon's ears.

AGAMEMNON

He hears naught privately that comes from Troy.

AENEAS

Trumpet, blow loud,

Send thy brass voice through all these lazy tents;

And every Greek of mettle, let him know,

What Troy means fairly shall be spoke aloud.

Trumpet sounds.

We have, great Agamemnon, here in Troy

A prince call'd Hector - Priam is his father -

Who in this dull and long-continued truce

Is rusty grown: he bade me take a trumpet,

And to this purpose speak. Kings, princes, lords!

If there be one among the fair'st of Greece

That holds his honour higher than his ease,

That seeks his praise more than he fears his peril,

That knows his valour, and knows not his fear,

To him this challenge.

Hector, in view of Trojans and of Greeks,

Shall make it good, or do his best to do it,

He will to-morrow with his trumpet call

Midway between your tents and walls of Troy.

If any come, Hector shall honour him.

AGAMEMNON

This shall be told our warriors, Lord Aeneas.

To our pavilion shall I lead you, sir.

Achilles shall have word of this intent;

So shall each lord of Greece, from tent to tent:

Yourself shall feast with us before you go

And find the welcome of a noble foe.

Exeunt all but ULYSSES and NESTOR.

ULYSSES

Nestor!

NESTOR

What says Ulysses?

ULYSSES

I have a young conception in my brain;

Be you my time to bring it to some shape.

NESTOR

What is't?

ULYSSES

This challenge that the gallant Hector sends,

However it is spread in general name,

Relates in purpose only to Achilles.

NESTOR

Yes, 'tis most meet. Whom may you else oppose,

That can from Hector bring his honour off,

If not Achilles? It will be supposed

He that meets Hector issues from our choice

And choice, being mutual act of all our souls,

Makes merit her election, of a man distill'd

Out of our virtues.

ULYSSES

Therefore 'tis meet Achilles meet not Hector.

What glory our Achilles gets from Hector,

Were he not proud, we all should share with him:

But he already is too insolent.

No, make a lottery;

And, by device, let blockish Ajax draw

The lot to fight with Hector; among ourselves

Give him allowance for the better man.

If the dull brainless Ajax come safe off,

We'll dress him up in voices: if he fail,

Yet go we under our opinion still

That we have better men. But, hit or miss,

Our project's life this shape of sense assumes:

Ajax employ'd plucks down Achilles' plumes.

NESTOR

Ulysses,

Now I begin to relish thy advice;

And I will give a taste of it forthwith

To Agamemnon. Go we to him straight.

Two curs shall tame each other: pride alone

Must spur the mastiffs on, as 'twere their bone.

Exit ULYSSES and NESTOR.

Scene 7

ZEUS Clever. Is Achilles really such a pain?

HERMES Oh, I think so.

Enter AJAX in a foul temper.

ZEUS Who's this lump?

HERMES Ah. This is Ajax. Should be entertaining.

Scene 8

[T&C, 2.1]

Enter Ajax in a foul mood.

AJAX

Thersites! Thersites!

Enter Thersites.

Dog, canst thou not hear? (*Beating him.*) Feel, then!

THERSITES

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

AJAX

Toadstool, learn me the proclamation.

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 and I had

the scratching of thee; I would make thee the

loathsomest scab in Greece.

AJAX

I say, the proclamation!

THERSITES

Thou grumblest and railest every hour on Achilles, and thou art as full of envy at his greatness. But he would pun thee into shivers with his fist, as a sailor breaks a biscuit.

AJAX

You whoreson cur!

He beats him again.

THERSITES

Ay, do, do; thou sodden-witted lord! Thou hast no more brain than I have in mine elbows. Thou art here but to thrash Trojans.

AJAX

[*Beating him.*] You cur!

THERSITES

Ares's idiot!

Enter ACHILLES and PATROCLUS.

ACHILLES

Why, how now, Ajax! How now, Thersites! what's the matter, man?

THERSITES

You see him there, do you?

ACHILLES

Ay; what's the matter?

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

This lord, Achilles, Ajax, who wears his wit in his belly and his guts in his head, I'll tell you what I say of him.

ACHILLES

What?

THERSITES

I say, this Ajax--

Ajax threatens to beat him again.

ACHILLES

Nay, good Ajax.

THERSITES

Has not so much wit -

ACHILLES

Nay, I must hold you.

THERSITES

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

ACHILLES

Peace, fool!

PATROCLUS

Good words, Thersites.

ACHILLES

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. I serve here voluntarily.

ACHILLES

'Tis not voluntary: no man is beaten voluntary.

THERSITES

E'en so; a great deal of your wit, too, lies in your sinews, or else there be liars. Hector have a great catch, if he 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 mouldy ere your grandsires had nails on their toes, yoke you like draught-oxen and make you plough up the wars.

ACHILLES

What, what?

THERSITES

Yes, good sooth. To, Achilles! To, Ajax! To!

AJAX

I shall cut out your tongue.

THERSITES

'Tis no matter! I shall speak as much sense as thou afterwards.

PATROCLUS

No more words, Thersites; peace!

THERSITES

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

ACHILLES

There's for you, Patroclus.

THERSITES

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

Exit Thersites.

PATROCLUS

A good riddance.

ACHILLES

Marry, this, sir, is proclaim'd through all our host:

That Hector, by the fifth hour of the sun,

Will with a trumpet 'twixt our tents and Troy

To-morrow morning call some knight to arms

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 lottery; otherwise

He knew his man.

AJAX

(Slow to catch on. Then -) O, meaning you. I will go learn more of it.

Exeunt.

ZEUS Not very bright, is he - Ajax?

HERMES Not very, no.

ZEUS What do you make of Achilles?

HERMES Hard to say.

ZEUS Try.

HERMES (*Brief pause.*) Conceited, vain, narcissistic, arrogant, egotistical, self-absorbed, ignoble, dishonorable, treacherous and generally not very nice.

ZEUS Not that hard to say, then. Where next?

HERMES There's an assembly of the Greeks coming up. We ought to be there.

ZEUS I won't have to listen to Ulysses, will I?

HERMES Probably.

As they exit.

ZEUS I mean, what's the point in being able to turn yourself into a swan, if you have to sit through... And didn't anybody ever tell him that "Brevity is the soul of..."?

Blackout and huge thunderclap. When the lights come up...

Scene 9

An Assembly of the remaining Olympian gods is in progress: many are present, notable exceptions being Hermes and Zeus (visiting Troy), POSEIDON (at sea), HEPHAESTUS (under Mount Etna) and DEMETER and HESTIA (who always have better things to do). On one side is the pro-Greek faction: HERA and ATHENE. On the other, the gods supporting the Trojans: ARES, APHRODITE, ARTEMIS and APOLLO. HEBE the cup-bearer moves gracefully around filling goblets with nectar.

The scene opens amidst a general confused hubbub.

APOLLO My sister Artemis will now speak.

ARTEMIS I just wanted to say that it's been going on for seven years already. What's the problem now?

HERA My hus -

APOLLO (*Talking over her.*) My mother Hera will now reply.

HERA My husband is sticking his nose in – that's the problem.

ARES Assumed -

APOLLO (*Talking over him.*) My cousin Ares, god of War, will now –

HERA (*At the end of her tether.*) Apollo, will you please stop predicting who is going to speak next –

APOLLO And what –

HERA And what they are going to say.

APOLLO Sorry.

HERA Ares?

ARES (*His utterances are always in clipped, military style.*) Assumed Father was just having a recce. Fact-finding mission.

HERA Zeus doesn't do fact-finding missions. If he's there, he's interfering.

ARTEMIS Thing is, mother, he is King of the gods.

Several intakes of breath followed by a terrified silence.

HERA (*With ominous restraint.*) I beg your pardon?

APOLLO Artemis will now back down.

ARTEMIS (*Tiny voice.*) I just meant...

HERA Hunting, the moon and virginity, dear – those are your jobs. You are required to look pretty and carry a rather fetching bow.

ATHENE I say we get down there and kick some Trojan ass.

HERA Thank you, Athene. Spoken like the goddess of Wisdom. You and I will go together, I think.

APOLLO You're not going to want one of us men to come with you.

HERA No, thank you, Apollo.

APOLLO Oh... That wasn't a question. Sorry.

HERA (*As she exits with Athene.*) Too damn clever by half, that one...

The pro-Trojan faction are clearly not happy.

APOLLO She'll interfere, you know.

ARTEMIS Well, of course she will. You don't need the gift of prophecy to see that coming. It's what our mother does best.

ARES So what's our strategy?

APOLLO Follow, I suppose.

Artemis, Ares and Apollo start to leave.

ARTEMIS Yes... But at a safe distance. Come on, Aphrodite.

Aphrodite has been buffing her nails and looks up to realize she is alone. She exits, calling after them.

APHRODITE Where are we going..? (*Sighs.*) You three always do this...

Exits.

Scene 10

[T&C, 2.2]

Enter 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
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
Yet, dread Priam, let Helen go.
Since the first sword was drawn about this question,

We have lost so many men of ours,
To guard a thing not ours nor worth to us.
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
So great as our dread father in a scale
Of common ounces?

HELENUS

(To Troilus.) No marvel, though you bite so sharp at reasons,
You are so empty of them.

TROILUS

You are for dreams and slumbers, brother priest;
Nay, if we talk of reason,
Let's shut our gates and sleep.

HECTOR

Brother, she is not worth what she doth cost
The holding. 'Tis mad idolatry
To make the service greater than the god.

TROILUS

It was thought meet
Paris should do some vengeance on the Greeks:
Your breath of full consent bellied his sails.
He brought a Grecian queen, whose youth and freshness
Wrinkles Apollo's, and makes stale the morning.
Why keep we her? Why, she is a pearl,
Whose price hath launch'd above a thousand ships,
And turn'd crown'd kings to merchants.
If you'll avouch 'twas wisdom Paris went -
As you must needs, for you all cried 'Go, go!' -
Why do you now

Beggar the estimation which you prized
Richer than sea and land? O, theft most base,
That we have stol'n what we do fear to keep!

CASSANDRA

[Outside.] Cry, Trojans, cry!

PRIAM

What noise? What shriek is this?

TROILUS

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

CASSANDRA

[Outside] Cry, Trojans!

HECTOR

It is Cassandra.

Enter CASSANDRA, raving.

She is followed in by Hera and Athene (both invisible).

CASSANDRA

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

HECTOR

Peace, sister, peace!

CASSANDRA

Cry, Trojans, cry! Practise your eyes with tears!
Troy must not be, nor goodly Ilion stand;
Our firebrand brother, Paris, burns us all.
Cry, Trojans, cry! A Helen and a woe!
Cry, cry! Troy burns, or else let Helen go.
Exit.

The remaining Trojans freeze.

ATHENE What is with that girl?

HERA Cassandra? Oh, one of Apollo's little games. Gave her
the power of prophecy...

ATHENE But?

HERA But cursed her so that nobody would ever believe a
word she said.

ATHENE *(Slight pause.)* He really is a brat, isn't he?

The Trojans unfreeze.

HECTOR

Now, youthful Troilus, do not these high strains
Of divination in our sister work
Some touches of remorse?

TROILUS

Why, brother Hector,
We must not once deject the courage of our minds,
Because Cassandra's mad.

PARIS

And I attest the gods, your full consent
Gave wings to my propension and cut off
All fears attending on so dire a project.

PRIAM

Paris, you speak
Like one besotted on your sweet delights:
You have the honey still, but these the gall.

HECTOR

Paris and Troilus, you have both said well.
But nature craves
All dues be render'd to their owners. Now,
What nearer debt in all humanity
Than wife is to the husband?
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 return'd. Thus to persist
In doing wrong extenuates not wrong,
But makes it much more heavy. Hector's opinion
Is this in way of truth.

*A general cheer from all those in favor of returning Helen to
the Greeks.*

Yet ne'ertheless,

My spritely brethren, I propend to you
In resolution to keep Helen still.

*A louder cheer from Troilus and Paris and others who support
keeping her.*

For 'tis a cause that hath no mean dependance
Upon our joint and several dignities.

TROILUS

Why, there you touch'd the life of our design:
She is a theme of honour and renown,
A spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds.

HECTOR

I am yours,
 You valiant offspring of great Priamus.
 I have a roisting challenge sent amongst
 The dun and factious nobles of the Greeks
 Will strike amazement to their drowsy spirits.
 I was advertised their great general slept,
 Whilst emulation in the army crept:
 This, I presume, will wake him.
Exeunt.

ATHENE If the Trojans had sent Hector to Sparta instead of that perma-tanned pretty-boy brother of his, they wouldn't be in this mess. Does Helen have any brain at all?

HERA No. Just keeps mooning about the palace, apparently, crooning "I love Paris...".

ATHENE And what's Aeneas up to, offering this challenge?

HERA (*Her mind on other matters.*) And, more importantly, where's my husband?

They exit as...

Scene 11

[T&C, 2.3]

Enter ACHILLES and PATROCLUS.

Others are heard approaching.

PATROCLUS

Look you, Achilles - who comes here?

ACHILLES

Patroclus, I'll speak with nobody.

Exits into his tent.

Enter AGAMEMNON, ULYSSES, NESTOR, DIOMEDES, and AJAX

AGAMEMNON

Where is Achilles, Patroclus?

PATROCLUS

Within his tent; but ill disposed, my lord.

AGAMEMNON

Let it be known to him that we are here.

PATROCLUS

I shall say so to him.

Exit.

ULYSSES

We saw him at the opening of his tent:

He is not sick.

AJAX

Yes, lion-sick, sick of proud heart: you may call it melancholy, if you will favour the man; but, by my head, 'tis pride.

ULYSSES

Here comes Patroclus.

Re-enter PATROCLUS.

NESTOR

No Achilles with him.

PATROCLUS

Achilles bids me say, he is much sorry,
 If any thing more than your sport and pleasure
 Did move your greatness and this noble state

To call upon him; he hopes it is no other
 But for your health and your digestion sake,
 And after-dinner's breath.

AGAMEMNON

Hear you, Patroclus:

We are too well acquainted with these answers:

Go and tell him,

We come to speak with him; and you shall not sin,

If you do say we think him over-proud

And under-honest. Go tell him this.

PATROCLUS

I shall; and bring his answer presently.

Exit.

AGAMEMNON

In second voice we'll not be satisfied;

We come to speak with him. Ulysses, enter you.

ULYSSES enters Achilles's tent. AJAX is offended.

AJAX

What is Achilles more than another?

AGAMEMNON

No more than what he thinks he is.

AJAX

Is he so much? Do you not think he thinks himself a better man than I am?

AGAMEMNON

No question.

AJAX

Will you subscribe his thought, and say he is?

AGAMEMNON

No, noble Ajax; you are as strong, as valiant, as wise, no less noble, much more gentle, and altogether more tractable.

AJAX

Why should a man be proud? How doth pride grow? I know not what pride is.

AGAMEMNON

Your mind is the clearer, Ajax, and your virtues the fairer.

AJAX

I do hate a proud man, as I hate the engendering of toads.

NESTOR

(*Aside.*) Yet he loves himself: is't not strange?

Re-enter ULYSSES.

ULYSSES

Achilles will not to the field to-morrow.

AGAMEMNON

What's his excuse?

ULYSSES

He doth rely on none.

AGAMEMNON

Why will he not upon our fair request

Untent his person and share the air with us?

ULYSSES

Things small as nothing, for request's sake only,
 He makes important. What should I say?

He is so plagu' proud that the death-tokens of it
 Cry 'No recovery.'

AJAX

If I go to him, with my armed fist I'll pash him o'er the face.

AGAMEMNON

O, no, you shall not go.

AJAX

An a' be proud with me, I'll pheeze his pride:

Let me go to him.

ULYSSES

Not for the worth that hangs upon our quarrel.

AJAX

A paltry, insolent fellow!

NESTOR

(Aside.) How he describes himself!

AJAX

Can he not be sociable?

ULYSSES

(Aside.) The raven chides blackness.

AJAX

An all men were o' my mind -

ULYSSES

(Aside.) Wit would be out of fashion.

DIOMEDES

Our noble general,

You must prepare to fight without Achilles.

ULYSSES

There is no tarrying here. Please it our great general

To call together all his state of war;

Fresh kings are come to Troy: to-morrow

We must with all our main of power stand fast.

And *(Pointing to Ajax.)* here's a lord! Come knights from east to west, Ajax shall cope the best.

AGAMEMNON

Go we to council. Let Achilles sleep:

Light boats sail swift, though greater hulks draw deep.

Exeunt.

[T&C, 3.1 - omitted]**Scene 12****[T&C, 3.2]**

Enter PANDARUS and Troilus, meeting

PANDARUS

How now, how now! Have you seen my niece?

TROILUS

No, Pandarus: I stalk about her door,

Like a strange soul upon the Stygian banks

Staying for waftage. O gentle Pandarus,

From Cupid's shoulder pluck his painted wings

And fly with me to Cressid!

PANDARUS

Walk here i' the orchard, I'll bring her straight.

Exit

TROILUS

I am giddy; expectation whirls me round.

The imaginary relish is so sweet

That it enchants my sense: what will it be,

When that the watery palate tastes indeed

Love's thrice repurèd nectar?

Re-enter PANDARUS.

PANDARUS

She's making her ready, she'll come straight: you

must be witty now. She does so blush. I'll fetch her.

It is the prettiest villain: she fetches her breath as short as a new-ta'en sparrow.

Exit.

TROILUS

Even such a passion doth embrace my bosom:

My heart beats thicker than a feverous pulse.

Re-enter PANDARUS with CRESSIDA.

PANDARUS

Come, come, what need you blush? Shame's a baby.

Here she is now: swear the oaths now to her that

you have sworn to me. What, are you gone again?

Come your ways, come your ways; an you draw backward,

we'll put you in reins. Why do you not speak to

her? If 'twere dark, you'd close sooner.

So, so; rub on, and kiss the mistress. Go to, go to.

TROILUS

You have bereft me of all words, lady.

PANDARUS

Words pay no debts, give her deeds!

Come in, come in: I'll go get a fire.

Exit.

CRESSIDA

Will you walk in, my lord?

TROILUS

O Cressida, how often have I wished me thus!

CRESSIDA

Wished, my lord! The gods grant – *(Suddenly fearful.)* O my lord!

TROILUS

What should they grant? What too curious dreg espies my sweet lady in the fountain of our love?

CRESSIDA

More dregs than water, if my fears have eyes.

TROILUS

O, let my lady apprehend no fear.

Re-enter PANDARUS.

PANDARUS

What, blushing still? Have you not done talking yet?

CRESSIDA

Well, uncle, what folly I commit, I dedicate to you.

PANDARUS

I thank you for that: if my lord get a boy of you, you'll give him me.

CRESSIDA

Boldness comes to me now, and brings me heart.

Prince Troilus, I have loved you night and day

For many weary months.

TROILUS

Why was my Cressid then so hard to win?

CRESSIDA

Hard to seem won: but I was won, my lord,

With the first glance that ever - pardon me -

If I confess much, you will play the tyrant.

Why have I blabb'd? Who shall be true to us,

When we are so unsecret to ourselves?

But, though I loved you well, I wo'd you not;

And yet, good faith, I wish'd myself a man,

Or that we women had men's privilege

Of speaking first. Sweet, bid me hold my tongue,

For in this rapture I shall surely speak

The thing I shall repent. Stop my mouth.

TROILUS

And shall, albeit sweet music issues thence.

He kisses her.

PANDARUS

Pretty, i' faith.

CRESSIDA

My lord, I do beseech you, pardon me;

'Twas not my purpose, thus to beg a kiss:

I am ashamed. O heavens! what have I done?

For this time will I take my leave, my lord.

TROILUS

Your leave, sweet Cressid!

PANDARUS

Leave! An you take leave till to-morrow morning -

CRESSIDA

Pray you, content you.

TROILUS

What offends you, lady?

CRESSIDA

Sir, mine own company.

TROILUS

You cannot shun yourself.

CRESSIDA

Let me go and try:

Where is my wit? I know not what I speak.

TROILUS

Well know they what they speak that speak so wisely.

O, Cressida, I am as true as truth's simplicity

And simpler than the infancy of truth.

CRESSIDA

In that I'll war with you.

If I be false, or swerve a hair from truth,

When time is old and hath forgot itself,

When waterdrops have worn the stones of Troy,

And blind oblivion swallow'd cities up,

And mighty states characterless are grated

To dusty nothing, yet let memory,

From false to false, among false maids in love,

Upbraid my falsehood! When they've said "as false

As air, as water, wind, or sandy earth,

Yea," let them say, to stick the heart of falsehood,

"As false as Cressid."

PANDARUS

Go to, a bargain made: seal it, seal it; I'll be the witness. Here I hold your hand, here my cousin's.

If ever you prove false one to another, since I have

taken such pains to bring you together, let all

pitiful goers-between be called to the world's end

after my name; call them all Pandars; let all

constant men be Troiluses, all false women Cressids,

and all brokers-between Pandars! Say, amen.

TROILUS

Amen.

CRESSIDA

Amen.

PANDARUS

Amen. Whereupon I will show you a chamber with a bed; which bed, because it shall not speak of your pretty encounters, press it to death! Away!

And Cupid grant all tongue-tied maidens here

Bed, chamber, Pandar to provide this gear!

Exeunt.

Scene 13

Enter CALCHAS, nervously pacing. Then enter ZEUS and HERMES.

ZEUS Who's this?

HERMES Calchas. Trojan priest.

ZEUS What's he doing with the Greeks?

HERMES He defected when he foresaw that Troy was going to be destroyed. Hah! "Des-Troyed". Did you see what I did there? (*Getting a frosty look from Zeus.*) Moving on. But ever since he joined the Greeks, he's been agitating to get his daughter over.

ZEUS His daughter.

HERMES Cressida, yes. She's still in Troy.

ZEUS Oh, that pretty one we saw earlier. Her uncle's the pandar.

HERMES Well done!

ZEUS So this is her father...

[T&C, 3.3]

Enter AGAMEMNON, ULYSSES, DIOMEDES, NESTOR, AJAX, MENELAUS.

CALCHAS approaches them.

CALCHAS

Now, princes, for the service I have done you,

The 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 love,

I have abandon'd Troy, left my possession,

Incurr'd a traitor's name;

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.

AGAMEMNON

What wouldst thou of us, Trojan? Make demand.

CALCHAS

You have a Trojan prisoner, call'd Antenor,

Yesterday took. Troy holds him very dear.

Oft have you - often have you thanks therefore -

Desired my Cressid in right great exchange,

Whom Troy hath still denied. But this Antenor,

I know, is such a key in their affairs

That their negotiations all must slack,

Wanting his manage. And they will almost

Give us a prince of blood, a son of Priam,

In change for 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.

Brief discussion among the Greek leaders.

AGAMEMNON

Let Diomedes bear him,

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 to-morrow

Be answer'd in his challenge: Ajax is ready.

DIOMEDES

This shall I undertake; and 'tis a burden

Which I am proud to bear.

Exeunt DIOMEDES and CALCHAS.

Enter ACHILLES and PATROCLUS, before their tent

ULYSSES

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

AGAMEMNON

We'll execute your purpose, and put on
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 look'd on. I will lead the way.

ACHILLES

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

AGAMEMNON

What says Achilles? Would he aught with us?

NESTOR

Would you, my lord, aught with the general?

ACHILLES

No.

NESTOR

Nothing, my lord.

AGAMEMNON

The better.

Exeunt AGAMEMNON and NESTOR (privately chuckling).

ACHILLES

Good day, good day.

MENELAUS

How do you? How do you?

Exit

ACHILLES

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

What mean these fellows? Know they not Achilles?

PATROCLUS

They pass by strangely: they were used to bend
To send their smiles before them to Achilles;
To come as humbly as they used to creep
To holy altars.

ACHILLES

What, am I poor of late?

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

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

Writes me: "That man, how dearly ever parted,
Cannot make boast to have that which he hath,
Nor feels not what he owes, but by reflection."
I was much wrapt in this;

And apprehended here immediately

The unknown Ajax.

Heavens, what a man is there! A very horse,
That has he knows not what. Now shall we see to-morrow -
An act that very chance doth throw upon him -
Ajax renown'd. O heavens, what some men do,
While some men leave to do!

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

And great Troy shrieking.

ACHILLES

I do believe it; for they pass'd by me

As misers do by beggars, neither gave to me

Good word nor look. What, are my deeds forgot?

ZEUS You've played right into his hands, Achilles. Here we go...

ULYSSES

Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,

Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,

A great-sized monster of ingratitude.

Those scraps are good deeds past; which are devour'd

As fast as they are made, forgot as soon

As done. Perseverance, dear my lord,

Keeps honour bright: to have done is to hang

Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail

In monumental mockery. 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

That one by one pursue: if you give way,

Or hedge aside from the direct forthright,

Like to an enter'd tide, they all rush by

And leave you hindmost. O, let not virtue seek

Remuneration for the thing it was;

For beauty, wit, high birth, desert in service,

Love, friendship, charity, are subjects all

To envious and calumniating time.

The present eye praises the present object.

Then marvel not, thou great and complete man,

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

And case thy reputation in thy tent.

Farewell, my lord: I as your lover speak;

The fool slides o'er the ice that you should break.

Exit

ZEUS I have to admit, that was rather good.

HERMES Mmm. Long... but good.

PATROCLUS

To this effect, Achilles, have I moved you.
I stand condemn'd for this;
They think my little stomach to the war
And your great love to me restrains you thus.
Sweet, rouse yourself.

ACHILLES

Shall Ajax fight with Hector?

PATROCLUS

Ay, and perhaps receive much honour by him.

ACHILLES

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

PATROCLUS

O, then, beware;

Those wounds heal ill that men do give themselves.

ACHILLES

Go call Thersites hither, sweet Patroclus:
I'll send the fool to Ajax and desire him
To invite the Trojan lords after the combat
To see us here unarm'd. I have a woman's longing,
An appetite that I am sick withal,
To see great Hector in his weeds of peace,
To talk with him and to behold his visage,
Even to my full of view.

Enter THERSITES.

A labour saved!

THERSITES

A wonder!

ACHILLES

What?

THERSITES

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

ACHILLES

How so?

THERSITES

Why, he stalks up and down like a peacock. The man's undone forever; for if Hector break not his neck i' the combat, he'll break 't himself in vain-glory. 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? 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.

ACHILLES

To him, Patroclus; tell him I humbly desire the valiant Ajax to invite the most valorous Hector to come 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.

THERSITES

Let Patroclus make demands to me, you shall see the pageant of Ajax.

Patroclus practises what he will say – Thersites plays Ajax.

PATROCLUS

Jove bless great Ajax!

THERSITES

Hum!

PATROCLUS

I come from the worthy Achilles -

THERSITES

Ha!

PATROCLUS

Who most humbly desires you to invite Hector to his tent.

THERSITES

Hum!

PATROCLUS

And to procure safe-conduct from Agamemnon.

THERSITES

Agamemnon!

PATROCLUS

Ay, my lord.

THERSITES

Ha!

PATROCLUS

What say you to't?

THERSITES

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

PATROCLUS

Your answer, sir.

THERSITES

If to-morrow be a fair day, by eleven o'clock it will go one way or other.

PATROCLUS

Your answer, sir.

THERSITES

Fare you well, with all my heart.

ACHILLES

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

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.

ACHILLES

Come, thou shalt bear a letter to him straight.

THERSITES

Let me bear another to his horse; for that's the more capable creature.

ACHILLES

My mind is troubled, like a fountain stirr'd;

And I myself see not the bottom of it.

Exeunt ACHILLES and PATROCLUS.

THERSITES

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

Exit.

Scene 14

Enter Iris, panting.

IRIS Most royal Zeus, Great Thunderer and bearer of the –

ZEUS Yes, yes, get on with it.

IRIS (*Shyly.*) Oh, hello, Hermes.

HERMES (*Pleased to see her.*) Hello, Iris... That rainbow thing really suits you, you know...

IRIS Thanks.

ZEUS When you two have quite finished!

IRIS Sorry. I come with message from Phoebus Apollo. He bids you know your gracious Queen –

ZEUS (*Erupts.*) I told you she'd get wind of it! She always does. Go on.

IRIS Has descended to Troy in company of Athene –

ZEUS Now there's a trouble-maker –

IRIS In order to support the Greeks in battle.

ZEUS Why, why, why?

HERMES Well, it was that business of the Judgement of Paris.

ZEUS The what?

HERMES You know – when Hera, Athene and Aphrodite staged a beauty contest and got Paris to judge it.

ZEUS What, Paris the Trojan prince?

HERMES There is but one Paris.

ZEUS And he of course chose Aphrodite.

Hermes merely smiles and shrugs. 'Who wouldn't?'

Idiot! So now the whole of Troy is subject to the implacable hatred of my dear wife and psychopathic daughter –

HERMES Who just love the Greeks –

ZEUS And that's what this war is all about!

HERMES In a nutshell.

ZEUS (*To Iris.*) Where are the Trojans now?

IRIS The last time I saw Paris –

ZEUS I didn't ask for a song.

IRIS In the palace.

ZEUS We need to talk!

They exit swiftly.

Scene 15

[T&C, 4.1]

Enter, from one side, AENEAS; from the other, PARIS, DEIPHOBUS, ANTENOR, DIOMEDES, and others.

PARIS

Who comes here?

DEIPHOBUS

It is the Lord Aeneas.

DIOMEDES

Good morrow, Lord Aeneas.

PARIS

A valiant Greek, Aeneas, take his hand.

AENEAS

Health to you, valiant sir.

DIOMEDES

Our bloods are now in calm; and, so long, health!

But when contention and occasion meet,

By Jove, I'll play the hunter for thy life

With all my force, pursuit and policy.

AENEAS

And thou shalt hunt a lion, that will fly

With his face backward. In humane gentleness,

Welcome to Troy! By Zeus's hand I swear,

No man alive can love in such a sort

The thing he means to kill more excellently.

DIOMEDES

We sympathize! Jove, let Aeneas live,

If to my sword his fate be not the glory,

A thousand complete courses of the sun!

But, in mine emulous honour, let him die,

With every joint a wound, and that to-morrow!

AENEAS

We know each other well.

DIOMEDES

We do; and long to know each other worse.

PARIS

This is the most spiteful gentle greeting,

The noblest hateful love, that e'er I heard of.

What business, lord, so early?

AENEAS

I was sent for to the king; but why, I know not.

PARIS

His purpose meets you: 'twas to bring this Greek

To Calchas' house, and there to render him,

For the enfreed Antenor, the fair Cressid.

My brother Troilus lodges there to-night:

Rouse him and give him note of our approach

With the whole quality wherefore. I fear

We shall be much unwelcome.

AENEAS

That I assure you:

Troilus had rather Troy were borne to Greece

Than Cressid borne from Troy.

PARIS

There is no help;

The bitter disposition of the time

Will have it so. On, lord; we'll follow you.

AENEAS

Good morrow, all.
Exit with Servant.

PARIS

And tell me, noble Diomed, faith, tell me true,
Even in the soul of sound good-fellowship,
Who, in your thoughts, merits fair Helen best,
Myself or Menelaus?

DIOMEDES

Both alike:
He merits well to have her, that doth seek her,
And you as well to keep her, that defend her.
Both merits poised, each weighs nor less nor more;
But he as he, the heavier for a whore.

PARIS

You are too bitter to your countrywoman.

DIOMEDES

She's bitter to her country. Hear me, Paris:
For every false drop in her bawdy veins
A Grecian's life hath sunk; for every scruple
Of her contaminated carrion weight,
A Trojan hath been slain. Since she could speak,
She hath not given so many good words breath
As for her Greeks and Trojans suffer'd death.

PARIS

(Lost for an answer.) Here lies our way.
Exeunt.

Scene 16

Enter HERA, followed by ATHENE.

HERA Where is he?

ATHENE With the Trojans – meddling.

HERA Come on.

ATHENE Where are we going?

HERA To do some meddling of our own.

ATHENE *(As they exit.)* Do I get to kill anybody..?

Scene 17

[T&C, 4.2]

Enter TROILUS and CRESSIDA

TROILUS

Dear, trouble not yourself: the morn is cold.

CRESSIDA

Then, sweet my lord, I'll call mine uncle down;
He shall unbolt the gates.

TROILUS

Trouble him not;
To bed, to bed: sleep kill those pretty eyes!

CRESSIDA

Are you a-weary of me?

TROILUS

O Cressida! But that the busy day,
Waked by the lark, hath roused the ribald crows,
And dreaming night will hide our joys no longer,
I would not from thee.

CRESSIDA

Night hath been too brief.
Prithee, tarry. You men will never tarry.
O foolish Cressid! I might have still held off,
And then you would have tarried. Hark!
There's one up.

TROILUS

It is your uncle.

CRESSIDA

A pestilence on him! Now will he be mocking:
I shall have such a life!
Enter PANDARUS.

PANDARUS

How now, how now! How go maidenheads? Here, you
maid! Where's my cousin Cressid?

CRESSIDA

Go hang yourself, you naughty mocking uncle!
You bring me to do, and then you flout me too.

PANDARUS

To do what? To do what? Let her say what: what have I
brought you to do?

CRESSIDA

(To Troilus.) Did not I tell you?

Someone knocks at the front door.

Who's that at door? Good uncle, go and see.

Exit Pandarus.

My lord, come you again into my chamber:
You smile and mock me, as if I meant naughtily.

TROILUS laughs.

Come, you are deceived, I think of no such thing.
Knocking.

How earnestly they knock! Pray you, come in:
I would not for half Troy have you seen here.

Exeunt TROILUS and CRESSIDA.

Re-enter PANDARUS with AENEAS.

AENEAS

Good morrow, lord, good morrow.

PANDARUS

My Lord Aeneas! What news with you so early?

AENEAS

Is not Prince Troilus here?

PANDARUS

Here! What should he do here?

AENEAS

Come, he is here, my lord; do not deny him.
It doth import him much to speak with me.

PANDARUS

Is he here, say you? 'Tis more than I know, I'll
be sworn: for my own part, I came in late.

Re-enter TROILUS.

TROILUS

How now! What's the matter?

AENEAS

My lord, I scarce have leisure to salute you,
My matter is so rash. There is at hand
Paris your brother, and Deiphobus,
The Grecian Diomed, and our Antenor
Deliver'd to us; and for him forthwith,
Ere the first sacrifice, within this hour,
We must give up to Diomedes' hand
The Lady Cressida.

TROILUS

Is it so concluded?

AENEAS

By Priam and the general state of Troy.

They are at hand and ready to effect it.

TROILUS

How my achievements mock me!

I will go meet them: and, my Lord AENEAS,

We met by chance; you did not find me here.

AENEAS

Good, good, my lord; the secrets of nature

Have not more gift in taciturnity.

Exeunt TROILUS and AENEAS.

PANDARUS

Is't possible? No sooner got but lost? The devil take Antenor!

The young prince will go mad. A plague upon Antenor!

I would they had broke his neck!

Re-enter CRESSIDA.

CRESSIDA

How now! What's the matter? Who was here?

PANDARUS

Ah, ah!

CRESSIDA

Why sigh you so profoundly? Where's my lord? Gone!

Tell me, sweet uncle, what's the matter?

PANDARUS

Would I were as deep under the earth as I am above!

CRESSIDA

O the gods! What's the matter?

PANDARUS

Prithee, get thee in - would thou hadst ne'er been born! I knew

thou wouldst be his death. O, poor gentleman! A plague upon

Antenor!

CRESSIDA

Good uncle, I beseech you, on my knees! What's the matter?

PANDARUS

Thou must be gone, wench, thou must be gone. Thou

art exchanged for Antenor: thou must to thy father, and be

gone from Troilus. 'Twill be his death; 'twill be his bane; he

cannot bear it.

CRESSIDA

O you immortal gods! I will not go.

PANDARUS

Thou must.

CRESSIDA

I will not, uncle: I have forgot my father;

I know no touch of consanguinity;

No kin no love, no blood, no soul so near me

As the sweet Troilus.

MUSIC plays through the remainder of her speech.

O you gods divine!

Make Cressid's name the very crown of falsehood,

If ever she leave Troilus!

Tear my bright hair and scratch my praised cheeks,

Crack my clear voice with sobs and break my heart

With sounding Troilus. I will not go from Troy.

Exeunt.

Music ends as...

INTERMISSION

Scene 18

MUSIC.

Nine women stand grouped in a selection of comely but strikingly artificial poses. They are the Muses and each one carries a prop to signify her role – in addition to wearing an extremely helpful lapel badge. They are (with role, prop and personality):

Calliope (epic poetry - writing tablet; very keen),

Clio (history – scroll; efficient),

Euterpe (lyric poetry - aulos, a Greek flute; a bit dreamy),

Thalia (comedy and pastoral poetry - comic mask; cheerful),

Melpomene (tragedy - tragic mask; gloomy),

Terpsichore (dance – lyre; dramatic),

Erato (love poetry - cithara, a Greek type of lyre; sexy),

Polyhymnia (sacred poetry – veil; shy, sympathetic), and

Urania (astronomy - globe and compass; a bit terse).

The music ends. Long silence. Until –

MELPOMENE Is this all we get to do?

URANIA What did you expect? Some charmingly archaic choreography? A tap dance?

MELPOMENE Just asking.

Silence.

It's just that –

URANIA God, she's off again.

MELPOMENE I mean, what are we *for*?

URANIA We're the Muses.

MELPOMENE But we don't actually *do* anything.

CLIO That's our job.

ERATO We look decorative.

EUTERPE and TERPSICHORE We muuuuuuse.

MELPOMENE So we – what? Just decorate the place until some mortal needs inspiring?

URANIA You have a better idea?

MELPOMENE It's just that –

URANIA (*Simultaneously: sarcastic echo.*) "It's just that"

MELPOMENE It's just that, well, it's not a career option for a young woman with drive, is it?

Pause.

CLIO Could be worse. Could be a Grace.

MELPOMENE A what?

CLIO A Grace. One of the Three Graces. Standing around in a decorative little circle for all eternity.

EUTERPE At least we get invoked.

THALIA Yes, being invoked is nice.

POLYHYMNIA I was invoked once.

General sympathetic noises: 'Aah, Bless!', 'Miskeena' etc.

CLIO ('Sensing' something.) Hang on, there's somebody getting through.

There is a flurry as the Muses adjust their dresses and get back in formation.

They wait.

CALLIOPE Is it for me?

URANIA Oh, be quiet, Calliope.

An old man appears in a spotlight, carrying a scroll and stylus. He strikes a heroic gesture and intones.

HOMER Sing, Muse of Epic Poetry! –

CALLIOPE It is for me!

HOMER I, Homer, invoke you -

THALIA He's invoking! It's so nice when they invoke.

HOMER - to sing of the rage of Achilles, that murderous anger which condemned the Greeks to countless agonies and threw many warrior souls deep into Hades, leaving their bodies carrion food for dogs and birds —

ERATO Boring! (*She exits.*)

HOMER - all in fulfillment of the will of Zeus.

URANIA (*Emits a bored sigh. To the others.*) Come on.

All the others exit, leaving CALLIOPE on stage.

HOMER Start at the point where Agamemnon, that king of men, quarreled with noble Achilles. Tell -

CALLIOPE (*Joining Homer.*) Are you sure you want to start there?

HOMER (*Slightly bewildered.*) What?

CALLIOPE I mean, it's up to you, you're the poet, this is just a suggestion, having been (*fluttery hands*) invoked, but I think you'll find that, instead of telling everybody what's going to happen, you could keep up the suspense by...

HOMER But it's not about suspense. It's about –

CALLIOPE I mean, did you think of serializing it?

HOMER What?

CALLIOPE Does it have a title yet?

HOMER *The Iliad.*

Pause. She takes his arm, as though helping an old man across the street, and leads him offstage...

CALLIOPE Let's work on that, shall we..?

As they exit, SYBIL enters and strikes a pose.

SYBIL

It is great morning, and the hour prefix'd
Of Cressida's delivery to the valiant Greek Diomedes
Comes fast upon.

She remains on stage, watching the action.

Scene 19

[T&C, 4.3.]

Enter PARIS, TROILUS, AENEAS, DEIPHOBUS, ANTENOR, and DIOMEDES

PARIS

Good my brother Troilus,
Tell you the lady what she is to do,
And haste her to the purpose.

TROILUS

Walk into her house;
I'll bring her to the Grecian presently:
And to his hand when I deliver her.
Think it an altar, and thy brother Troilus
A priest there offering to it his own heart.
Exit.

PARIS

I know what 'tis to love;
And would, as I shall pity, I could help!
Please you walk in, my lords.
Exeunt.

SYBIL (*To the audience.*)

This really isn't going to end well, is it?

She sighs and exits.

Scene 20

[T&C, 4.4]

Enter PANDARUS and CRESSIDA

PANDARUS

Be moderate, be moderate.

CRESSIDA

Why tell you me of moderation?
The grief is fine, full, perfect, that I taste.
My love admits no qualifying dross;
No more my grief, in such a precious loss.

PANDARUS

Here, here, here he comes.

Enter TROILUS.

Ah, sweet ducks!

CRESSIDA

(Embracing him.) O Troilus! Troilus!

PANDARUS

What a pair of spectacles is here!

Let me embrace too. How now, lambs?

TROILUS

Cressid, I love thee in so strain'd a purity,
That the bless'd gods, as angry with my fancy,
More bright in zeal than the devotion which
Cold lips blow to their deities, take thee from me.

CRESSIDA

And is it true that I must go from Troy?

TROILUS

A hateful truth.

CRESSIDA

What, and from Troilus too?

TROILUS

From Troy and Troilus.

CRESSIDA

Is it possible?

TROILUS

And suddenly.

We two, that with so many thousand sighs
Did buy each other, must poorly sell ourselves
With the rude brevity and discharge of one.

AENEAS

[Outside.] My lord, is the lady ready?

TROILUS

Hark! You are call'd.

(To Pandarus.) Bid them have patience; she shall come anon.

PANDARUS

Where are my tears? Rain, to lay this wind, or
my heart will be blown up by the root.

Exit.

CRESSIDA

I must then to the Grecians?

TROILUS

No remedy.

CRESSIDA

When shall we see again?

TROILUS

Hear me, my love: be thou but true of heart -

CRESSIDA

I true! How now! What wicked deem is this?

TROILUS

I speak not "be thou true" as fearing thee,
But, be thou true, and I will see thee.

CRESSIDA

O, you shall be exposed, my lord, to dangers
As infinite as imminent! But I'll be true.

TROILUS

And I'll grow friend with danger. Wear this sleeve.

CRESSIDA

And you this glove. When shall I see you?

TROILUS

I will corrupt the Grecian sentinels,
To give thee nightly visitation. But yet be true.

CRESSIDA

O heavens! 'be true' again!

TROILUS

Hear while I speak it, love:

The Grecian youths are full of quality;

They're loving, well composed with gifts of nature -

CRESSIDA

O heavens! you love me not!

TROILUS

Die I a villain, then!

In this I do not call your faith in question
So mainly as my merit: but be not tempted.

CRESSIDA

Do you think I will?

TROILUS

No.

But something may be done that we will not:
And sometimes we are devils to ourselves -

AENEAS

[Outside.] Nay, good my lord -

TROILUS

Come, kiss; and let us part.

PARIS

[Outside.] Brother Troilus!

TROILUS

Good brother, come you hither;
And bring AENEAS and the Grecian with you.

CRESSIDA

My lord, will you be true?

TROILUS

Who, I? Alas, it is my vice, my fault.

Fear not my truth: the moral of my wit

Is 'plain and true;' there's all the reach of it.

Enter AENEAS, PARIS, ANTENOR, DEIPHOBUS, and DIOMEDES.

Welcome, Sir Diomed! Here is the lady
Which for Antenor we deliver you.

At the port, lord, I'll give her to thy hand,
And by the way possess thee what she is.
Entreat her fair; and, by my soul, fair Greek,
If e'er thou stand at mercy of my sword,
Name Cressida and thy life shall be as safe
As Priam is in Ilion.

DIOMEDES

Fair Lady Cressid,

So please you, save the thanks this prince expects.
The lustre in your eye, heaven in your cheek,
Pleads your fair usage; and to Diomed
You shall be mistress, and command him wholly.

TROILUS

Grecian, thou dost not use me courteously,
To shame the zeal of my petition to thee
In praising her. I tell thee, lord of Greece,
She is as far high-soaring o'er thy praises
As thou unworthy to be call'd her servant.
I charge thee use her well, even for my charge;
For, by the dreadful Hades, if thou dost not,
Though the great bulk Achilles be thy guard,
I'll cut thy throat.

DIOMEDES

O, be not moved, Prince Troilus:

Let me be privileged by my place and message,
To be a speaker free. When I am hence
I'll answer to my lust. And know you, lord,
I'll nothing do on charge. To her own worth

She shall be prized; but that you say 'be't so,
I'll speak it in my spirit and honour, 'no.'

TROILUS

Come, to the port. I'll tell thee, Diomed,
This brave shall oft make thee to hide thy head.
Lady, give me your hand, and, as we walk,
To our own selves bend we our needful talk.
Exeunt TROILUS, CRESSIDA, and DIOMEDES
A trumpet sounds.

PARIS

Hark! Hector's trumpet.

AENEAS

How have we spent this morning!
The prince must think me tardy and remiss,
That swore to ride before him to the field.

PARIS

'Tis Troilus' fault: come, come, to field with him.

DEIPHOBUS

Let us make ready straight.

AENEAS

Let us address to tend on Hector's heels.
The glory of our Troy doth this day lie
On his fair worth and single chivalry.
Exeunt.

Scene 21

[T&C, 4.5]

*Enter AJAX, armed; AGAMEMNON, ACHILLES,
PATROCLUS, MENELAUS, ULYSSES, NESTOR, and others*

AGAMEMNON

Give with thy trumpet a loud note to Troy,
Thou dreadful Ajax; that the appalled air
May pierce the head of the great combatant
And hale him hither.

AJAX

(To a Trumpeter.) Thou, trumpet, there's my purse.
Now crack thy lungs, and split thy brazen pipe:
Blow, villain:
Come, stretch thy chest and let thy eyes spout blood;
Thou blow'st for Hector.
Trumpet sounds.

ULYSSES

No trumpet answers.

ACHILLES

'Tis but early days.

AGAMEMNON

Is not yond Diomed, with Calchas' daughter?

ULYSSES

'Tis he, I ken the manner of his gait;
He rises on the toe: that spirit of his
In aspiration lifts him from the earth.
Enter DIOMEDES, with CRESSIDA.

AGAMEMNON

Is this the Lady Cressid?

DIOMEDES

Even she.

AGAMEMNON

Most dearly welcome to the Greeks, sweet lady. *(Kisses her.)*

NESTOR

Our general doth salute you with a kiss.

ULYSSES

Yet is the kindness but particular;
'Twere better she were kiss'd in general.

NESTOR

And very courtly counsel: I'll begin. *(Kisses her.)*
So much for Nestor.

ACHILLES

I'll take what winter from your lips, fair lady:
Achilles bids you welcome. *(Kisses her.)*

MENELAUS

I had good argument for kissing once.

PATROCLUS

(Kisses her.) The first was Menelaus' kiss; this, mine:
Patroclus kisses you. *(Kisses her again.)*

MENELAUS

O, this is trim!

PATROCLUS

Paris and I kiss evermore for him.

MENELAUS

I'll have my kiss, sir. Lady, by your leave.

CRESSIDA

In kissing, do you render or receive?

MENELAUS

Both take and give.

CRESSIDA

The kiss you take is better than you give;
Therefore no kiss.

The other Greeks laugh at Menelaus.

DIOMEDES

Lady, a word: I'll bring you to your father.
Exit with CRESSIDA.

NESTOR

A woman of quick sense.

ULYSSES

Fie, fie upon her!
There's language in her eye, her cheek, her lip,
Nay, her foot speaks; her wanton spirits look out
At every joint and motive of her body.
O, these encounterers, so glib of tongue,
That give accosting welcome ere it comes,
And wide unclasp the tables of their thoughts
To every ticklish reader! Set them down
For sluttish spoils of opportunity
And daughters of the game.
Trumpet within.

NESTOR

The Trojans' trumpet.

AGAMEMNON

Yonder comes the troop.

*Enter HECTOR, armed; AENEAS, TROILUS, and other
Trojans, with Attendants.*

AENEAS

Hail, all you state of Greece! Will you the knights
Shall to the edge of all extremity
Pursue each other, or shall be divided
By any voice or order of the field?
Hector bade ask.

AGAMEMNON

Which way would Hector have it?

AENEAS

He cares not; he'll obey conditions.

ACHILLES

'Tis done like Hector.

AENEAS

If not Achilles, sir, what is your name?

ACHILLES

If not Achilles, nothing.

AENEAS

Therefore Achilles: but, whate'er, know this:

This Ajax is half made of Hector's blood:

In love whereof, half Hector stays at home;

Half heart, half hand, half Hector comes to seek

This blended knight, half Trojan and half Greek.

AGAMEMNON

So be it; either to the uttermost,

Or else a breath: the combatants being kin

Half stints their strife before their strokes begin.

Re-enter DIOMEDES as AJAX and HECTOR prepare to fight.

ULYSSES

They are opposed already.

AGAMEMNON

What Trojan is that same that looks so heavy?

ULYSSES

The youngest son of Priam, a true knight,

Not yet mature, yet matchless, firm of word,

Not soon provoked nor being provoked soon calm'd;

Manly as Hector, but more dangerous;

They call him Troilus.

Trumpet. Hector and Ajax fight.

AGAMEMNON

They are in action.

NESTOR

Now, Ajax, hold thine own!

TROILUS

Hector, thou sleep'st! Awake thee!

AGAMEMNON

There, Ajax!

DIOMEDES

You must no more.

Trumpets end the fight.

AENEAS

Princes, enough, so please you.

AJAX

I am not warm yet; let us fight again.

DIOMEDES

As Hector pleases.

HECTOR

Why, then will I no more.

Thou art, great lord, my father's sister's son,

and the just gods gainsay

That any drop thou borrow'dst from thy mother,

My sacred aunt, should by my mortal sword

Be drain'd! Let me embrace thee, Ajax.

By him that thunders, thou hast lusty arms;

Hector would have them fall upon him thus:

Cousin, all honour to thee!

AJAX

I thank thee, Hector

Thou art too gentle and too free a man.

I came to kill thee, cousin, and bear hence

A great addition earn'd in thy death.

AENEAS

There is expectance here from both the sides,

What further you will do.

HECTOR

We'll answer it;

The issue is embracement: Ajax, farewell.

AJAX

If I might in entreaties find success -

As seld I have the chance - I would desire

My famous cousin to our Grecian tents.

DIOMEDES

'Tis Agamemnon's wish, and great Achilles

Doth long to see unarm'd the valiant Hector.

HECTOR

Aeneas, call my brother Troilus to me,

And signify this loving interview

To the expecters of our Trojan part.

Desire them home. Give me thy hand, my cousin;

I will go eat with thee and see your knights.

AJAX

Great Agamemnon comes to meet us here.

AGAMEMNON

Worthy of arms! Great Hector, welcome.

HECTOR

I thank thee, most imperious Agamemnon.

AGAMEMNON [*To Troilus.*]

My well-famed lord of Troy, no less to you.

MENELAUS

Let me confirm my princely brother's greeting:

You brace of warlike brothers, welcome hither.

HECTOR [*Aside, to Aeneas.*]

Who must we answer?

AENEAS [*Aside, to Hector.*]

The noble Menelaus.

HECTOR

O, you, my lord? By Ares' gauntlet, thanks!

Your quondam wife swears still by Aphrodite's' glove:

She's well, but bade me not commend her to you.

MENELAUS

Name her not now, sir; she's a deadly theme.

HECTOR

O, pardon; I offend.

NESTOR

I knew thy grandsire,

And once fought with him: he was a soldier good;

But, by great Ares, captain of us all,

Never saw like thee. Let an old man embrace thee;

And, worthy warrior, welcome to our tents.

AENEAS [*Aside, to Hector.*]

'Tis the old Nestor.

HECTOR

Let me embrace thee, good old chronicle,

That hast so long walk'd hand in hand with time.

ULYSSES

I wonder now how yonder city stands

When we have here her base and pillar by us.

HECTOR

I know your favour, Lord Ulysses, well.

Ah, sir, there's many a Greek and Trojan dead,

Since first I saw yourself and Diomed.

ULYSSES

Sir, I foretold you then what would ensue:
My prophecy is but half his journey yet;
For yonder walls, that pertly front your town,
Yond towers, whose wanton tops do buss the clouds,
Must kiss their own feet.

HECTOR

I must not believe you:
There they stand yet, and modestly I think,
The fall of every Phrygian stone will cost
A drop of Grecian blood. The end crowns all,
And that old common arbitrator, Time,
Will one day end it.

ULYSSES

So to him we leave it.
Most gentle and most valiant Hector, welcome:
After the general, I beseech you next
To feast with me and see me at my tent.

ACHILLES

I shall forestall thee, Lord Ulysses, thou!
Now, Hector, I have fed mine eyes on thee;
I have with exact view perused thee, Hector,
And quoted joint by joint.

HECTOR

Is this Achilles?

ACHILLES

I am Achilles.

HECTOR

Stand fair, I pray thee: let me look on thee.

ACHILLES

Behold thy fill.

HECTOR

Nay, I have done already.

ACHILLES

Thou art too brief: I will the second time,
As I would buy thee, view thee limb by limb.

HECTOR

Why dost thou so oppress me with thine eye?

ACHILLES

Tell me, you heavens, in which part of his body
Shall I destroy him? Whether there, or there, or there?
That I may give the local wound a name
And make distinct the very breach whereout
Hector's great spirit flew: answer me, heavens!

HECTOR

It would discredit the blest gods, proud man,
To answer such a question. Stand again.
Think'st thou to catch my life so pleasantly
As to prenominate in nice conjecture
Where thou wilt hit me dead?

ACHILLES

I tell thee, yea.

HECTOR

Wert thou an oracle to tell me so,
I'd not believe thee. Henceforth guard thee well;
For I'll not kill thee there, nor there, nor there;
But, by the forge that stithied Ares' helm,
I'll kill thee every where, yea, o'er and o'er.
I pray you, let us see you in the field:
We have had pelting wars, since you refused
The Grecians' cause.

ACHILLES

Dost thou entreat me, Hector?
To-morrow do I meet thee, fell as death;
To-night all friends.

HECTOR

Thy hand upon that match.

AGAMEMNON

First, all you peers of Greece, go to my tent.
Beat loud the tabourines, let the trumpets blow,
That this great soldier may his welcome know.
Exeunt all except TROILUS and ULYSSES.

TROILUS

My Lord Ulysses, tell me, I beseech you,
In what place of the field doth Calchas keep?

ULYSSES

At Menelaus' tent, most princely Troilus:
There Diomed doth feast with him to-night;
Who neither looks upon the heaven nor earth,
But gives all gaze and bent of amorous view
On the fair Cressid.

TROILUS

Shall sweet lord, be bound to you so much,
After we part from Agamemnon's tent,
To bring me thither?

ULYSSES

You shall command me, sir.

As gentle tell me, of what honour was
This Cressida in Troy? Had she no lover there
That wails her absence?

TROILUS

O, sir, to such as boasting show their scars
A mock is due. Will you walk on, my lord?
She was beloved, she loved; she is, and doth:
But still sweet love is food for fortune's tooth.
Exeunt.

Scene 22

Enter three hags. They are the Fates: CLOTHO (spins the thread of life – the most upbeat of the three), LACHESIS (she measures out the thread – a dull job that has made her somewhat irritable) and ATROPOS (she cuts it off – the team leader). LACHESIS carries a huge cauldron, which she dumps centre stage, before intoning...

LACHESIS When shall we three meet again?
In thunder, lightning or in -

ATROPOS Nooooo, I don't think so.

LACHESIS What?

ATROPOS We're not that three.

Pause.

LACHESIS What three are we then?

ATROPOS The Greek ones.

LACHESIS You mean the ones with the spinning and stuff?

ATROPOS Yep.

LACHESIS So we don't need the cauldron.

ATROPOS Nope.

LACHESIS Or the eye of newt. (*Atropos shakes her head.*) Right. And no 'Hubble, bubble, toil and trouble' business either... (*Pause.*) We just spin.

CLOTHO It's spinning with a purpose, though, isn't it? I mean, we're the Fates. We don't just *spin for kicks*.

Enter ATHENE. She is not popular.

ATROPOS Oh, hello again, Athene. What's up this time?

ATHENE (*Handing her a scroll.*) From Hera.

LACHESIS Not another one!

ATHENE You're busy? You have other things to do? And what's the cauldron for?

CLOTHO Identity crisis. (*Ditsy.*) You know how it is.

LACHESIS (*To Atropos, who is reading the scroll.*) Who is it?

ATROPOS Hector. (*To Athene.*) So Hera wants to know - ?

ATHENE How long he's got, yes.

Clotho has been sifting through a huge card index and has brought out a single card.

CLOTHO Hector? (*Reading from the card.*) Son of Priam? Prince of the House of Troy, Balwark of -

ATHENE Yes, yes. How many Hectors are there?

Clotho stretches out a strand of wool, attached to the card. The other two gather round and all three examine it.

Well? When will he die?

All three are still perusing the thread.

LACHESIS (*Mumbles.*) Can't rush these things, you know.

They murmur to each other.

CLOTHO Hmmmm...

LACHESIS Would you say - ?

ATROPOS Probably...

CLOTHO Though there's this...

LACHESIS Ignore that.

CLOTHO Right.

ATROPOS So it's...?

Pause. They all look up.

TOGETHER Pretty soon.

ATHENE (*Erupts.*) Pretty soon? What does that mean? Days? Months? Some time after breakfast?

ATROPOS That's the best we can do.

CLOTHO Sorry.

ATHENE Can't you measure it? We do live in the age of rulers. Archimedes and all that!

ATROPOS We're not store assistants, Athene.

ATHENE But you must have measured it before you cut it. That's how you Fates work, isn't it?

CLOTHO Sorry.

ATHENE (*Gritted teeth.*) Right. (*Rolling up the scroll.*) 'Pretty soon' will have to do. Hera will not be happy.

LACHESIS Can't help that.

ATROPOS We're the Fates.

As Athene storms out.

LACHESIS (*Calling out.*) Complain to Zeus.

ATROPOS (*Checking that Athene has gone.*) Well, that was fun.

Atropos and Lachesis giggle...

But their merriment is cut off by Clotho, who has been rereading the thread.

CLOTHO Only a couple of days.

LACHESIS What?

CLOTHO Hector. (*Handing over the card and pointing to the thread.*) He's got a couple of days tops.

Hector enters and waits. The Fates, invisible to Hector, study him seriously for a moment.

ATROPOS Harsh.

They exit with their paraphernalia, while Hector exits in another direction, as...

Scene 23

[T&C, 5.1]

Enter TROILUS, AJAX, AGAMEMNON, ULYSSES, NESTOR, MENELAUS, THERSITES and DIOMEDES, with lights. They join HECTOR.

AGAMEMNON

We go wrong, we go wrong.

AJAX

No, yonder 'tis - there, where we see the lights.

HECTOR

I trouble you.

AJAX

No, not a whit.

ULYSSES

Here comes himself to guide you.

Re-enter ACHILLES.

ACHILLES

Welcome, brave Hector; welcome, princes all.

AGAMEMNON

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.

MENELAUS

Good night, my lord.

HECTOR

Good night, sweet lord Menelaus.

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.

HECTOR

Give me your hand.

ULYSSES

[Aside to TROILUS.] Follow his torch; he goes to Calchas' tent. I'll keep you company.

TROILUS

Sweet sir, you honour me.

HECTOR

And so, good night.

Exit DIOMEDES; ULYSSES and TROILUS following.

ACHILLES

Come, come, enter my tent.

Exeunt ACHILLES, HECTOR, AJAX, and NESTOR

THERSITES

That same Diomed's a false-hearted rogue, a most unjust knave. I will no more trust him when he leers than I will a serpent when he hisses. They say he keeps a Trojan drab, and uses the traitor Calchas' tent. I'll after. Nothing but lechery! All incontinent varlets!
Exit.

Scene 24

[T&C, 5.2]

Enter DIOMEDES.

DIOMEDES

What, are you up here? Speak.

CALCHAS

[Inside.] Who calls?

DIOMEDES

Calchas, I think. Where's your daughter?

CALCHAS

[Inside.] She comes to you.

Enter TROILUS and ULYSSES, at a distance; after them, THERSITES.

ULYSSES

Stand where the torch may not discover us.

Enter CRESSIDA.

TROILUS

Cressid comes forth to him.

DIOMEDES

How now, my charge!

CRESSIDA

Now, my sweet guardian! Hark, a word with you.

Whispers.

TROILUS

Yea, so familiar!

DIOMEDES

Will you remember?

CRESSIDA

Remember! Yes.

DIOMEDES

Nay, but do, then;

And let your mind be coupled with your words.

TROILUS

What should she remember?

ULYSSES

List.

CRESSIDA

Sweet honey Greek, tempt me no more to folly.

THERSITES

Roguery!

DIOMEDES

Nay, then -

CRESSIDA

In faith, I cannot: what would you have me do?

DIOMEDES

What did you swear you would bestow on me?

CRESSIDA

I prithee, do not hold me to mine oath;

Bid me do any thing but that, sweet Greek.

DIOMEDES

Good night.

TROILUS

Hold, patience!

ULYSSES

How now, Trojan!

CRESSIDA

Diomed -

DIOMEDES

No, no, good night: I'll be your fool no more.

CRESSIDA

Hark, one word in your ear.

TROILUS

O plague and madness!

ULYSSES

You are moved, prince; let us depart, I pray you,

Lest your displeasure should enlarge itself

To wrathful terms. This place is dangerous;

The time right deadly; I beseech you, go.

TROILUS

Behold, I pray you!

ULYSSES

You have not patience; come.

TROILUS

I pray you, stay; by hell and all hell's torments

I will not speak a word!

DIOMEDES

And so, good night.

CRESSIDA

Nay, but you part in anger.

TROILUS

Doth that grieve thee? O wither'd truth!

ULYSSES

Why, how now, lord!

TROILUS

By Jove, I will be patient.

CRESSIDA

Guardian! Why, Greek!

DIOMEDES

Foh, foh! Adieu; you palter.

CRESSIDA

In faith, I do not: come hither once again.

TROILUS

She strokes his cheek!

ULYSSES

Come, come.

TROILUS

Nay, stay; by Jove, I will not speak a word.

THERSITES

How the devil Luxury, with his fat rump and potato-finger, tickles these together! Fry, lechery, fry!

DIOMEDES

But will you, then?

CRESSIDA

In faith, I will, la; never trust me else.

DIOMEDES

Give me some token for the surety of it.

CRESSIDA

I'll fetch you one.

Exit.

ULYSSES

You have sworn patience.

TROILUS

Fear me not, sweet lord;

I will not be myself, nor have cognition

Of what I feel: I am all patience.

Re-enter CRESSIDA.

THERSITES

Now the pledge; now, now, now!

CRESSIDA

Here, Diomed, keep this sleeve.

TROILUS

O beauty! Where is thy faith?

ULYSSES

My lord -

TROILUS

I will be patient; outwardly I will.

CRESSIDA

You look upon that sleeve; behold it well.

He loved me - O false wench! Give't me again.

DIOMEDES

Whose was't?

CRESSIDA

It is no matter, now I have't again.

I will not meet with you to-morrow night:

I prithee, Diomed, visit me no more.

THERSITES

Now she sharpens: well said, whetstone!

DIOMEDES

I shall have it.

CRESSIDA

What, this?

DIOMEDES

Ay, that.

CRESSIDA

O, all you gods! O pretty, pretty pledge!

Nay, do not snatch it from me;

He that takes that doth take my heart withal.

DIOMEDES

I had your heart before, this follows it.

TROILUS

I did swear patience.

CRESSIDA

You shall not have it, Diomed; faith, you shall not;

I'll give you something else.

DIOMEDES

I will have this: whose was it?

CRESSIDA

It is no matter.

DIOMEDES

Come, tell me whose it was.

CRESSIDA

'Twas one's that loved me better than you will.

But, now you have it, take it.

DIOMEDES

Whose was it?

CRESSIDA

By Artemis's waiting-women yond,

And by herself, I will not tell you whose.

DIOMEDES

To-morrow will I wear it on my helm,

And grieve his spirit that dares not challenge it.

TROILUS

Wert thou the devil, and worst it on thy horn,

It should be challenged.

CRESSIDA

Well, well, 'tis done, 'tis past: and yet it is not;

I will not keep my word.

DIOMEDES

Why, then, farewell;

Thou never shalt mock Diomed again.

CRESSIDA

You shall not go: one cannot speak a word,

But it straight starts you.

DIOMEDES

I do not like this fooling.

THERSITES

Nor I, by Hades: but that that likes not you pleases me best.

DIOMEDES

What, shall I come? The hour?

CRESSIDA

Ay, come. O Jove! Do come - I shall be plagued.

DIOMEDES

Farewell till then.

CRESSIDA

Good night: I prithee, come.

Exit DIOMEDES.

Troilus, farewell! One eye yet looks on thee

But with my heart the other eye doth see.

Exit.

THERSITES

A proof of strength she could not publish more,
Unless she said ' My mind is now turn'd whore.'

ULYSSES

All's done, my lord.

TROILUS

It is.

ULYSSES

Why stay we, then?

TROILUS

To make a recordation to my soul
Of every syllable that here was spoke.
Was Cressid here?

ULYSSES

I cannot conjure, Trojan.

TROILUS

She was not, sure.

ULYSSES

Most sure she was. Cressid was here but now.

TROILUS

This she? No, this is Diomed's Cressida:
If beauty have a soul, this is not she;
If souls guide vows, if vows be sanctimonies,
This is not she. This is, and is not, Cressid.
Cressid is mine, tied with the bonds of heaven:
Instance, O instance! strong as heaven itself;
The bonds of heaven are slipp'd, dissolved, and loosed;
And with another knot,
The fragments, scraps, the bits and greasy relics
Of her o'er-eaten faith, are bound to Diomed.
O Cressid! O false Cressid! false, false, false!
Let all untruths stand by thy stained name,
And they'll seem glorious.

ULYSSES

O, contain yourself
Your passion draws ears hither.

Enter AENEAS.

AENEAS

I have been seeking you this hour, my lord:
Hector, by this, is arming him in Troy;
Ajax, your guard, stays to conduct you home.

TROILUS

Have with you, prince. My courteous lord, adieu.
Farewell, revolted fair! And, Diomed,
Stand fast, and wear a castle on thy head!

ULYSSES

I'll bring you to the gates.

TROILUS

Accept distracted thanks.

Exeunt TROILUS, AENEAS, and ULYSSES.

THERSITES

Would I could meet that rogue Diomed! I would
croak like a raven; I would bode, I would bode.
Lechery, lechery; still, wars and lechery; nothing
else holds fashion: a burning devil take them!
Exit.

When was my lord so much ungently temper'd,
To stop his ears against admonishment?
Unarm, unarm, and do not fight to-day.

HECTOR

You train me to offend you; get you in:
By all the everlasting gods, I'll go!

ANDROMACHE

My dreams will, sure, prove ominous to the day.

HECTOR

No more, I say.
Enter CASSANDRA.

CASSANDRA

Where is my brother Hector?

ANDROMACHE

Here, sister; arm'd, and bloody in intent.
Consort with me in loud and dear petition,
for I have dream'd
Of bloody turbulence, and this whole night
Hath nothing been but shapes and forms of slaughter.

CASSANDRA

O, 'tis true.

HECTOR

Be gone, I say: the gods have heard me swear.

CASSANDRA

The gods are deaf to hot and peevish vows.

ANDROMACHE

O, be persuaded!

CASSANDRA

Unarm, sweet Hector.

HECTOR

Hold you still, I say.

Enter TROILUS.

How now, young man! mean'st thou to fight to-day?

ANDROMACHE

Cassandra, call my father to persuade.

Exit CASSANDRA.

HECTOR

No, faith, young Troilus; doff thy harness, youth;
I am to-day i' the vein of chivalry:
Let grow thy sinews till their knots be strong,
And tempt not yet the brushes of the war.
Unarm thee, go, and doubt thou not, brave boy,
I'll stand to-day for thee and me and Troy.

TROILUS

Brother, you have a vice of mercy in you,
Which better fits a lion than a man.

HECTOR

What vice is that, good Troilus? Chide me for it.

TROILUS

When many times the captive Grecian falls,
Even in the fan and wind of your fair sword,
You bid them rise, and live.

HECTOR

O, 'tis fair play.

TROILUS

Fool's play, by heaven, Hector.

HECTOR

How now! How now!

TROILUS

For the love of all the gods,
Let's leave the hermit pity with our mothers,
And when we have our armours buckled on,
The venom'd vengeance ride upon our swords.

Scene 25

[T&C, 5.3]

Enter HECTOR and ANDROMACHE

ANDROMACHE

HECTOR

Fie, savage, fie!

TROILUS

Hector, then 'tis wars.

HECTOR

Troilus, I would not have you fight to-day.

TROILUS

Who should withhold me?

Not fate;

Not Priamus and Hecuba on knees,

Not you, my brother, with your true sword drawn,

Opposed to hinder me, should stop my way,

But by my ruin.

Re-enter CASSANDRA, with PRIAM.

CASSANDRA

Lay hold upon him, Priam, hold him fast:

He is thy crutch; now if thou lose thy stay,

Thou on him leaning, and all Troy on thee,

Fall all together.

PRIAM

Come, Hector, come, go back:

Thy wife hath dream'd; thy mother hath had visions;

Cassandra doth foresee; and I myself

Am like a prophet suddenly enrapt

To tell thee that this day is ominous:

Therefore, come back.

HECTOR

Aeneas is a-field;

And I do stand engaged to many Greeks,

Even in the faith of valour, to appear

This morning to them.

PRIAM

Ay, but thou shalt not go.

HECTOR

I must not break my faith.

You know me dutiful; therefore, dear sir,

Let me not shame respect; but give me leave

To take that course by your consent and voice,

Which you do here forbid me, royal Priam.

CASSANDRA

O Priam, yield not to him!

ANDROMACHE

Do not, dear father.

HECTOR

Andromache,

Upon the love you bear me, get you in.

Exit ANDROMACHE.

CASSANDRA

O, farewell, dear Hector!

Look, how thou diest! Look, how thy eye turns pale!

Look, how thy wounds do bleed at many vents!

Hark, how Troy roars! How Hecuba cries out!

How poor Andromache shrills her dolours forth!

And all cry, Hector! Hector's dead! O Hector!

TROILUS

Away! away!

CASSANDRA

Farewell - yet, soft! Hector! Take my leave:

Thou dost thyself and all our Troy deceive.

Exit.

HECTOR

You are amazed, my liege, at her exclaim:

Go in and cheer the town: we'll forth and fight,

Do deeds worth praise and tell you them at night.

PRIAM

Farewell: the gods with safety stand about thee!

Exeunt PRIAM and HECTOR in different directions.

Trumpets. Sound of battle.

TROILUS

They are at it, hark! Proud Diomed, believe,

I come to lose my arm, or win my sleeve.

Enter PANDARUS.

PANDARUS

Do you hear, my lord? Do you hear?

TROILUS

What now?

PANDARUS

Here's a letter come from yond poor girl.

TROILUS

Let me read.

PANDARUS

(Coughing.) A whoreson tisick, a whoreson rascally tisick so troubles me, and the foolish fortune of this girl; and what one thing, what another, that I shall leave you one o' these days: and I have a rheum in mine eyes too, and such an ache in my bones that, unless a man were cursed, I cannot tell what to think on't. What says she there?

TROILUS

Words, words, mere words, no matter from the heart.

Tearing the letter.

My love with words and errors still she feeds;

But edifies another with her deeds.

Exit Troilus.

PANDARUS

Is this the generation of love? Hot blood, hot thoughts, and hot deeds? Why, they are vipers. Is love a generation of vipers?

Exit Pandarus.

Scene 26

Enter Calliope - still striving keenly to improve Homer's planned epic - and Homer, resisting as best he can.

HOMER I am not adding in a comedy sub-plot!

CALLIOPE Well, let's revisit that.

HOMER Or "give it a more cheerful ending".

CALLIOPE Finishing with a funeral is such a bummer. Just saying.

HOMER *(At the end of his patience.)* All right, all right, Calliope. Here's a deal.

CALLIOPE Terrific!

HOMER I will *(he plainly hates the word)* "serialize" it into twenty-four books.

CALLIOPE Episodes, right. Each with a cliff-hanger. Like "Who *really* killed Hector?"

HOMER (*Battling against her inanity.*) I will, as you put it, “ramp up the love interest”.

CALLIOPE (*Visualizing it.*) Paris and Helen; Hector and... Mrs Hector -

HOMER (*Nodding.*) Achilles and Patroclus.

CALLIOPE (*Unconvinced.*) Still not sure your public are ready for that one.

HOMER I will plan the sequel.

CALLIOPE Publishers love sequels!

HOMER And I will remember that I am not writing for – Who did you say, again?

CALLIOPE A bunch of crusty old scholars.

HOMER Indeed.

CALLIOPE Homer, you won't regret invoking me!

HOMER I will do all those things. (*Raising a finger.*) On condition!

CALLIOPE On condition what?

HOMER On condition I can keep in “all the mighty bits”, as you call them -

CALLIOPE (“OK, but...”) Your choice.

HOMER And I am not required to change the title.

CALLIOPE Just don't reject *Game of Trojans*.

HOMER And on condition you will now go away and leave me.

CALLIOPE But I'm your Muse.

HOMER Calliope, for now your job as a Muse is over. I have had more inspiration than I could possibly cope with in a lifetime.

CALLIOPE (*Charmingly unaware that it's a criticism.*) You're very sweet: we aim to please. OK. But promise you'll get in touch when you need me for the sequel.

HOMER As if I could do it without you.

CALLIOPE Exotic locations next time, remember? And more women -

HOMER Off you go!

CALLIOPE And a one-eyed monster or something.

HOMER (*Under his breath.*) As if.

CALLIOPE (*As she exits.*) Thanks for the invoking!

HOMER It's been real.

Homer sighs heavily and turns to go, running into Thersites as he enters. They stare at each other.

Who are you?

THERSITES (*Grins wickedly.*) Your comedy sub-plot.

HOMER (*This is breaking-point.*) Apollo give me strength! *Exits.*

Scene 27

[T&C, 5.4]

Sound of battle.

THERSITES

Now they are clapper-clawing one another; I'll go look on. That dissembling abominable varlets Diomed, has got that same scurvy doting foolish young knave's sleeve of Troy there in his helm: I would fain see them meet. Soft! Here comes sleeve, and t'other. *Enter DIOMEDES, TROILUS following.*

TROILUS

Fly not; for shouldst thou take the river Styx, I would swim after.

DIOMEDES

I do not fly. Have at thee!

THERSITES

Hold thy whore, Grecian! Now for thy whore, Trojan! Now the sleeve, now the sleeve! *Exeunt TROILUS and DIOMEDES, fighting. Enter HECTOR.*

HECTOR

What art thou, Greek? Art thou for Hector's match? Art thou of blood and honour?

THERSITES

No, no, I am a rascal; a scurvy railing knave: a very filthy rogue.

HECTOR

I do believe thee: live. *Exit.*

THERSITES

God-a-mercy, that thou wilt believe me; but a plague break thy neck for frightening me! What's become of the wenching rogues? I think they have swallowed one another: I would laugh at that miracle: yet, in a sort, lechery eats itself. I'll seek them. *Exit.*

More fighting – in which Hector kills Patroclus.

Scene 28

[T&C, 5.5]

Enter AGAMEMNON and others.

AGAMEMNON

Renew, renew! Polyxenes is slain,
 Patroclus ta'en or slain. Haste we, Diomed,
 To reinforcement, or we perish all.
Enter NESTOR.

NESTOR

Go, bear Patroclus' body to Achilles;
 And bid the snail-paced Ajax arm for shame.
 There is a thousand Hectors in the field.
 And all our strawy Greeks, ripe for his edge,
 Fall down before him, like the mower's swath.
Enter ULYSSES.

ULYSSES

O, courage, courage, princes! Great Achilles
 Is arming, weeping, cursing, vowing vengeance:
 Patroclus' wounds have roused his drowsy blood,
 Together with his mangled Myrmidons,
 That noseless, handless, hack'd and chipp'd, come to him,
 Crying on Hector. Ajax hath lost a friend
 And foams at mouth, and he is arm'd and at it,
 Roaring for Troilus, who hath done to-day
 Mad and fantastic execution.
Enter AJAX.

AJAX

Troilus! Thou coward Troilus!
Exit.
Enter ACHILLES.

ACHILLES

Where is this Hector?
 Come, come, thou boy-queller, show thy face;
 Know what it is to meet Achilles angry:
 Hector? Where's Hector? I will none but Hector.
Exit.

Scene 29

[T&C, 5.6]

Enter AJAX

AJAX

Troilus, thou coward Troilus, show thy head!
Enter DIOMEDES.

DIOMEDES

Troilus, I say! Where's Troilus?
Enter TROILUS.

TROILUS

O traitor Diomed! Turn thy false face, thou traitor,
 And pay thy life thou owest me!

AJAX

I'll fight with him alone: stand, Diomed.

DIOMEDES

He is my prize; I will not look on.

TROILUS

Come, both you cogging Greeks; have at you both!
Exeunt, fighting.
Enter HECTOR.

HECTOR

Yea, Troilus? O, well fought, my youngest brother!

Enter ACHILLES, exhausted.

ACHILLES

Now do I see thee, ha! Have at thee, Hector!

HECTOR

Pause, if thou wilt.

ACHILLES

I do disdain thy courtesy, proud Trojan:
 Be happy that my arms are out of use:
 My rest and negligence befriends thee now,
 But thou anon shalt hear of me again;
 Till when, go seek thy fortune.
Exit.

HECTOR

Fare thee well:

I would have been much more a fresher man,
 Had I expected thee.

Exit Hector.

Re-enter TROILUS and others.

TROILUS

Ajax hath ta'en AEneas: shall it be?
 No, by the flame of yonder glorious heaven,
 He shall not carry him: I'll be ta'en too,
 Or bring him off: fate, hear me what I say!
 I reck not though I end my life to-day.
Exit.

Scene 30

[T&C, 5.7]

Enter ACHILLES, with Myrmidons.

ACHILLES

Come here about me, you my Myrmidons;
 Mark what I say. Attend me where I wheel:
 Strike not a stroke, but keep yourselves in breath:
 And when I have the bloody Hector found,
 Empale him with your weapons round about;
 In fellest manner execute your aims.
 Follow me, sirs, and my proceedings eye:
 It is decreed Hector the great must die.

Exeunt.

Enter MENELAUS and PARIS, fighting: then THERSITES.

THERSITES

The cuckold and the cuckold-maker are at it. Now,
 bull! now, dog!

Exeunt PARIS and MENELAUS, fighting.

Enter MARGARELON.

MARGARELON

Turn, slave, and fight.

THERSITES

What art thou?

MARGARELON

A bastard son of Priam's.

THERSITES

I am a bastard too; I love bastards: I am a bastard
 begot, bastard instructed, bastard in mind, bastard
 in valour, in every thing illegitimate. One bear will
 not bite another, and wherefore should one bastard?

Farewell, bastard.

Exit.

MARGARELON

The devil take thee, coward!

Exit.

Scene 31

HECTOR enters, exhausted, sits and drinks.

*The FATES enter from one side, the MUSES from another.
They all look at Hector.*

MELPOMENE (*To the Fates.*) Isn't there anything you can do about this?

CLOTHO Really sorry.

ATROPOS It's fated.

POLYHYMNIA Well, it's terribly unfair.

URANIA All's fair in love and war, Polyhymnia.

POLYHYMNIA Spare me the victors' clichés, Urania. And anyway, it isn't.

URANIA Isn't what?

POLYHYMNIA All fair.

ATROPOS No. Way too random. But, as I said, there's nothing we can do. (*To the Muses generally.*) It's your province now.

LACHESIS Yes: inspire somebody to write about it.

CALLIOPE Actually, I am seeing someone...

THALIA She was invoked!

CALLIOPE But he seems to want to give away the ending...

CLIO Never a good move.

CLOTHO (*Ever upbeat.*) What about a play? A play would be nice.

MELPOMENE (*Shakes her head.*) Too grim for a play. Too much talking. Too much killing.

THALIA A comic play!

CLIO Hector dies and she wants a comedy.

THALIA (*Timidly.*) A sort of comedy..?

Pause.

POLYHYMNIA I don't think I want to watch this...

Led by POLYHYMNIA, the Fates and Muses disperse, all except THALIA, muse of Comedy and the Fate CLOTHO.

Scene 32

[T&C, 5. 8]

HECTOR

Now is my day's work done; I'll take good breath:
Rest, sword; thou hast thy fill of blood and death.
*Puts off his helmet and hangs his shield behind him
Enter ACHILLES and Myrmidons.*

ACHILLES

Look, Hector, how the sun begins to set;
How ugly night comes breathing at his heels.
Even with the vail and darkening of the sun,
To close the day up, Hector's life is done.

HECTOR

I am unarm'd; forego this vantage, Greek.

ACHILLES

Strike, fellows, strike; this is the man I seek.
HECTOR is killed.

Now, Troy, sink down!

Here lies thy heart, thy sinews, and thy bone.
On, Myrmidons, and cry you all amain,
'Achilles hath the mighty Hector slain.'

A retreat sounded.

Hark! A retire upon our Grecian part.

MYRMIDON

The Trojan trumpets sound the like, my lord.

ACHILLES

The dragon wing of night o'erspreads the earth.
My half-suppl'd sword, that frankly would have fed,
Pleased with this dainty bait, thus goes to bed.
Sheathes his sword.

Come, tie his body to my horse's tail;

Along the field I will the Trojan trail.

Exeunt.

THALIA Tell me Achilles isn't going to last long, Clotho.

CLOTHO He'll die.

THALIA When?

CLOTHO As we say in the business... Pretty soon.

They nod at each other and exit their different ways.

Scene 33

[T&C, 5.9]

*Enter AGAMEMNON, AJAX, NESTOR, and others, marching.
Distant shouts.*

AGAMEMNON

Hark! Hark! What shout is that?

Enter MENELAUS.

MENELAUS

The bruit is, Hector's slain, and by Achilles.

AJAX

If it be so, yet bragless let it be;
Great Hector was a man as good as he.

AGAMEMNON

March patiently along: let one be sent
To pray Achilles see us at our tent.

If in his death the gods have us befriended,
Great Troy is ours, and our sharp wars are ended.

They exit, as...

Scene 34

Apollo enters, followed by Artemis, Ares and Aphrodite.

APOLLO Oh no, they're not.

ARTEMIS Is that a prophecy or just wishful thinking?

APOLLO You know me, sister.

ARTEMIS But they'll win in the end, right?

APOLLO The Greeks? Yes, I'm afraid so.

ARTEMIS As Zeus wills?

APOLLO As Hera wills.

APHRODITE And all because Paris chose me in that beauty contest. Get over it!

ARTEMIS Our mother doesn't 'get over' anything.

ARES Strategy?

ARTEMIS Make things as hard for the Greeks as possible.
Ares?

ARES Roger that. Hector might be out of the picture, but I fancy the others to keep things going for a year or two. That Troilus could cause some tasty mayhem given the motivation.

ARTEMIS Oh, I think he has the motivation...

They remain, watching, as...

Scene 35

[T&C, 5.10]

Enter AENEAS and Trojans, PANDARUS with them.

AENEAS

Yet are we masters of the field!

Enter TROILUS.

TROILUS

Hector is slain.

ALL

Hector! The gods forbid!

TROILUS

He's dead; and at the murderer's horse's tail,
In beastly sort, dragg'd through the shameful field.
Frown on, you heavens, effect your rage with speed!
Sit, gods, upon your thrones, and smile at Troy!
I say, at once let your brief plagues be mercy,
And linger not our sure destructions on!

AENEAS

My lord, you do discomfort all the host!

TROILUS

You understand me not that tell me so:
I do not speak of flight, of fear, of death,
But dare all imminence that gods and men
Address their dangers in. Hector is gone:
Who shall tell Priam so, or Hecuba?
Let him that will a screech-owl aye be call'd,
Go in to Troy, and say there, Hector's dead:
There is a word will Priam turn to stone;
Make wells and Niobes of the maids and wives,
Cold statues of the youth, and, in a word,
Scare Troy out of itself. But, march away:
Hector is dead; there is no more to say.
Exeunt AENEAS and Trojans. PANDARUS remains.

PANDARUS

But Troilus - !

TROILUS (*Throwing Pandarus roughly from him.*)

Hence, broker-lackey! Ignomy and shame
Pursue thy life, and live aye with thy name!

Exit.

PANDARUS

A goodly medicine for my aching bones! O world!
World! World! Thus is the poor agent despised!
O traitors and bawds, how earnestly are you set
a-work, and how ill requited! Why should our
endeavour be so loved and the performance so loathed?

He turns to the audience.

As many as be here of pander's hall,
Your eyes, half out, weep out at Pandar's fall;
Or if you cannot weep, yet give some groans,
Though not for me, yet for your aching bones.
Brethren and sisters of the hold-door trade,
Some two months hence my will shall here be made:
Till then I'll sweat and seek about for eases,
And at that time bequeathe you my diseases.
Exit.

Scene 36

ARTEMIS Well, that was a downer.

APHRODITE What will become of Troilus? He's cute.

Aphrodite, Artemis and Ares turn to look at Apollo. He smiles weakly and shrugs.

Oh.

Clotho appears, holding a file-card to which a thread is attached.

CLOTHO A short life... But "Better to have loved and lost..." (Shrugs.) You know...

A great hubbub is heard offstage. Enter the remaining gods and the Muses, arguing. Behind them trails Sybil. Atropos and Lachesis enter and stand by Clotho.

HERA Well, I have a right to know what's going to happen.

ATHENE We all have a right to know. (*Turning to Zeus.*)
Father?

ZEUS It's complicated...

ATHENE Typical! (*Turns to the Fates.*) You three?

THE THREE FATES What?

ATHENE You're supposed to be in charge of lives, aren't you?

ATROPOS We just dictate the lengths, not the whys and wherefores.

HERA But you must at least know -

APOLLO (*Interrupting – loudly.*) The Trojans lose – heavily. What else do you need to know? (*More subdued.*) Troilus and Paris die in battle, King Priam is slaughtered. The city is razed to the ground. Only Prince Aeneas escapes.

HERA (*Heavy irony.*) I trust he has a happy future.

APOLLO In a way. He goes on to found Rome.

THALIA Oh, that's nice!

ATHENE Typically you haven't said anything about the women.

APOLLO Hecuba and Clytemnestra are both taken as slaves.

ARES And the Greeks?

APOLLO Well, they win – obviously... However -

ARTEMIS Oh, I'm liking 'However'.

APOLLO Achilles dies, killed by Paris.

ARES I thought he was invulnerable.

APOLLO Yes... Something to do with a heel...

HERA The others?

APOLLO Only Nestor and Diomedes have easy journeys home.

ARTEMIS That's nice for the old man, not so sure about the smoothie.

HERA Ulysses? Ajax?

APOLLO Ajax dies at sea, having gone mad, poor chap.

HERA What?

APOLLO Long story. As for Ulysses, the tale of his journey home to his faithful Penelope is worth an epic in itself.

CALLIOPE I've already had a word with my little poet man.

ARES What about Agamemnon?

APOLLO He gets home but comes to a very sticky end.

ARTEMIS Best news I've heard in an age!

APOLLO Among other things, his wife Clytemnestra –

ZEUS (*Clicks his fingers as he remembers.*) Clytemnestra! Helen's twin sister – right? My other cygnet - (*Instantly corrects himself.*) – Daughter!

APOLLO Yes. She murders Agamemnon – in the bath.

HERMES A clean end, at least. (*Hera frosts him.*) Sorry. (*Apologizing generally.*) Sorry.

HERA (*Turns to Apollo.*) You haven't told us about Helen.

APOLLO Ah, Helen. (*He smiles and shakes his head ruefully.*)

ARTEMIS Torn to pieces by the Trojans, if they've any sense.

ARES More likely killed by her cuckold husband.

Apollo's hesitation is picked up by Athene.

ATHENE I bet she gets away with it... (*Apollo looks at her.*) She does, doesn't she?

APOLLO (*Nods.*) She returns to Sparta with Menelaus. (*General reaction.*) Yes. But not the most harmonious of marital relationships, I gather.

ARTEMIS Even so -

ZEUS How many mortals died in this war?

Silence.

URANIA Clio?

CLIO More than any mortal could imagine.

ARES And all for Helen.

ARTEMIS (*Bitterly.*) The face that launched a thousand ships.

HERMES (*To Artemis, approvingly.*) That's good!

From this point, an argument blows up. The lines of dialogue should overlap and get more and more heated.

ATHENE If we're assigning blame, I don't see why Paris should get off scot-free.

ARES Classic feminist: blame the man!

HERA He was a fool.

APOLLO And who set him up? Aphrodite!

APHRODITE Sorry – What?

ATHENE He made a bad choice.

APOLLO What would have been a good choice?

ARTEMIS And anyway, if you three women hadn't been bickering over that stupid apple -

HERA, ATHENE It wasn't stupid!

APHRODITE It wasn't stupid! Sorry – What wasn't?

HERA I blame Eris, she gave it to us.

ARTEMIS (*Heavy sarcasm.*) Oh, yes – very clever to take a gift from the goddess of Discord!

Together:

ATHENE It's easy for you -

HERA We didn't know –

ARTEMIS Well that's always the problem, isn't it?

Everyone wades in. The noise of disputation increases to an unbearable level until -

ZEUS (*Thunderous – possibly amplified.*) Silence!.. (*Subdued.*) I'm tired. Go, all of you.

The gods, Fates and Muses disperse silently. Only Hermes remains with Zeus, though the small figure of Sybil can be seen huddling at Hermes' feet. Zeus sighs heavily.

Not our finest hour, all things considered.

Zeus rises and looks around, depressed.

Who will mortals blame for all this, Hermes, when they no longer believe in the gods?

HERMES As the man said, we'll always have Paris.

Sybil jerks into life.

SYBIL

Like or find fault; do as your pleasures are.

Now good or bad, 'tis but the chance of war.

ZEUS What did she say?

HERMES I don't know. Sounds like a repeat. Sometimes she gets interference.

ZEUS Should we take note?

HERMES (*Shakes his head.*) Hardly worth the effort. (*Pause.*) You go. I'll look after her.

Zeus nods and exits wearily. Hermes sits and watches Sybil. There is a sudden discordant noise and she suddenly squeezes her eyes shut and clutches her head with both hands as though in pain.

From here on, her utterances are increasingly manic. They are interspersed with – and overlapped by - soundtrack clips from Shakespeare films and newsreel war reportage.

SYBIL

When the hurly-burly's done,
When the battle's lost and won.

OLIVIER (recording from *Henry V*)

Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more;
Or close the wall up with our English dead!

NEWS REPORT (VIETNAM)

“US jets were striking North Vietnam...”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11Img_ApVUU

ORSON WELLES (recording from *Chimes at Midnight*)

Is there not wars? Is there not employment?

From here on there is a continuous soundtrack of battle noises from different historical periods. It gets louder and louder.

SYBIL

He is come to open
The purple testament of bleeding war!

NEWS REPORT (THE BLITZ)

“Preceded by a shower of flares, German bombers raid...”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clKxrDza1d8>

BRANAGH (recording from *Henry V*)

Take heed how you awake our sleeping sword of war...

SYBIL

Sound trumpets! Let our bloody colors wave!
And either victory, or else a grave!

MICHAEL WILLIAMS (recording from BRANAGH'S *Henry V*)

There are few die well that die in a battle.

NEWS REPORT (IRAQ, 2003)

“The attack on Iraq has begun...”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmDyO1ChS3c>

(from 35 seconds)

Add in here a news report of any current conflict.

By this time, the recordings are creating a frightening cacophony. Sybil screams the final line.

SYBIL

Cry "Havoc", and let slip the dogs of war!

Hermes gently touches Sybil's shoulder and there is immediate silence.

Recovering instantly, she resumes news-reader mode.

...And patchy fog across the plains of Ilium which should disperse by midday. (*Slight pause.*) In other news, King Priam of Troy has ordered that a huge wooden horse, left behind

after the sudden and unforeseen departure of the Greek fleet, should be dragged inside the city walls and dedicated to the goddess Athene. Despite vociferous opposition to the plan from Trojan military advisers, sections of the ancient walls are now being dismantled in preparation for the horse's ceremonial entry into the city. Speaking from the palace, King Priam said, "Thanks to All-Seeing Zeus, the ten-year siege is ended and victory is ours." (*MUSIC starts to fade up.*) In the financial markets, there was a sharp fall on the Asia Minor 100 Index this morning after...

Her voice is drowned by music as, behind her, the walls of Troy crack open and the lights dim to black.

THE END.