

Troilus and Cressida



William Shakespeare

Act I

PROLOGUE

In Troy, there lies the scene. From isles of Greece
The princes orgulous, their high blood chafed,
Have to the port of Athens sent their ships,
Fraught with the ministers and instruments
Of cruel war: sixty and nine, that wore
Their crownets regal, from the Athenian bay
Put forth toward Phrygia; and 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 Tenedos they come;
And the deep-drawing barks do there disgorge
Their warlike fraughtage: now on Dardan plains
The fresh and yet unbruised Greeks do pitch
Their brave pavilions: Priam's six-gated city,
Dardan, and Tymbria, Helias, Chetas, Troien,
And Antenorides, with massy staples
And corresponsive and fulfilling bolts,
Sperr up the sons of Troy.
Now expectation, tickling skittish spirits,
On one and other side, Trojan and Greek,
Sets all on hazard: and hither am I come
A prologue arm'd, but not in confidence
Of author's pen or actor's voice, but suited
In like conditions as our argument,
To tell you, fair beholders, that our play
Leaps o'er the vaunt and firstlings of those broils,
Beginning in the middle, starting thence away
To what may be digested in a play.
Like or find fault; do as your pleasures are:
Now good or bad, 'tis but the chance of war.

SCENE I. Troy. Before Priam's palace.

Enter TROILUS armed, and PANDARUS

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?
Each Trojan that is master of his heart,
Let him to field; Troilus, alas! hath none.

PANDARUS

Will this gear ne'er be mended?

TROILUS

The Greeks are strong and skilful to their strength,
Fierce to their skill and to their fierceness valiant;
But I am weaker than a woman's tear,
Tamer than sleep, fonder than ignorance,
Less valiant than the virgin in the night
And skillless as unpractised infancy.

PANDARUS

Well, I have told you enough of this: for my part,
I'll not meddle nor make no further. He that will
have a cake out of the wheat must needs tarry the grinding.

TROILUS

Have I not tarried?

PANDARUS

Ay, the grinding; but you must tarry
the bolting.

TROILUS

Have I not tarried?

PANDARUS

Ay, the bolting, but you must tarry the leavening.

TROILUS

Still have I tarried.

PANDARUS

Ay, to the leavening; but here's yet in the word
'hereafter' the kneading, the making of the cake, the
heating of the oven and the baking; nay, you must
stay the cooling too, or you may chance to burn your lips.

TROILUS

Patience herself, what goddess e'er she be,
Doth lesser blench at sufferance than I do.
At Priam's royal table do I sit;
And when fair Cressid comes into my thoughts,—
So, traitor! 'When she comes!' When is she thence?

PANDARUS

Well, she looked yesternight fairer than ever I saw
her look, or any woman else.

TROILUS

I was about to tell thee:—when my heart,
As wedged with a sigh, would rive in twain,
Lest Hector or my father should perceive me,
I have, as when the sun doth light a storm,
Buried this sigh in wrinkle of a smile:
But sorrow, that is couch'd in seeming gladness,
Is like that mirth fate turns to sudden sadness.

PANDARUS

An her hair were not somewhat darker than Helen's—
well, go to—there were no more comparison between
the women: but, for my part, she is my kinswoman; I
would not, as they term it, praise her: but I would
somebody had heard her talk yesterday, as I did. I
will not dispraise your sister Cassandra's wit, but—

TROILUS

O Pandarus! I tell thee, Pandarus,—
When I do tell thee, there my hopes lie drown'd,
Reply not in how many fathoms deep
They lie indrench'd. I tell thee I am mad
In Cressid's love: thou answer'st 'she is fair;'
Pour'st in the open ulcer of my heart
Her eyes, her hair, her cheek, her gait, her voice,
Handlest in thy discourse, O, that her hand,
In whose comparison all whites are ink,
Writing their own reproach, to whose soft seizure
The cygnet's down is harsh and spirit of sense
Hard as the palm of ploughman: this thou tell'st me,
As true thou tell'st me, when I say I love her;
But, saying thus, instead of oil and balm,
Thou lay'st in every gash that love hath given me
The knife that made it.

PANDARUS

I speak no more than truth.

TROILUS

Thou dost not speak so much.

PANDARUS

Faith, I'll not meddle in't. Let her be as she is:
if she be fair, 'tis the better for her; an she be
not, she has the mends in her own hands.

TROILUS

Good Pandarus, how now, Pandarus!

PANDARUS

I have had my labour for my travail; ill-thought on of her and ill-thought on of you; gone between and between, but small thanks for my labour.

TROILUS

What, art thou angry, Pandarus? what, with me?

PANDARUS

Because she's kin to me, therefore she's not so fair as Helen: an she were not kin to me, she would be as fair on Friday as Helen is on Sunday. But what care I? I care not an she were a black-a-moor; 'tis all one to me.

TROILUS

Say I she is not fair?

PANDARUS

I do not care whether you do or no. 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, speak no more to me: I will leave all as I found it, and there an end.

Exit PANDARUS. An alarum

TROILUS

Peace, you ungracious clamours! peace, rude sounds!

Fools on both sides! Helen must needs be fair,

When with your blood you daily paint her thus.

I cannot fight upon this argument;

It is too starved a subject for my sword.

But Pandarus,—O gods, how do you plague me!

I cannot come to Cressid but by Pandar;

And he's as tetchy to be woo'd to woo.

As she is stubborn-chaste against all suit.

Tell me, Apollo, for thy Daphne's love,

What Cressid is, what Pandar, and what we?

Her bed is India; there she lies, a pearl:

Between our Ilium and where she resides,

Let it be call'd the wild and wandering flood,

Ourselves the merchant, and this sailing Pandar

Our doubtful hope, our convoy and our bark.

Alarum. Enter AENEAS

AENEAS

How now, Prince Troilus! wherefore not afield?

TROILUS

Because not there: this woman's answer sorts,
For womanish it is to be from thence.

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.

Alarum

AENEAS

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

TROILUS

Better at home, if 'would I might' were 'may.'
But to the sport abroad: are you bound thither?

AENEAS

In all swift haste.

TROILUS

Come, go we then together.

Exeunt

SCENE II. The Same. A street.

Enter CRESSIDA and ALEXANDER

CRESSIDA

Who were those went by?

ALEXANDER

Queen Hecuba and Helen.

CRESSIDA

And whither go they?

ALEXANDER

Up to the eastern tower,
Whose height commands as subject all the vale,
To see the battle. Hector, whose patience
Is, as a virtue, fix'd, to-day was moved:
He chid Andromache and struck his armourer,
And, like as there were husbandry in war,
Before the sun rose he was harness'd light,
And to the field goes he; where every flower
Did, as a prophet, weep what it foresaw
In Hector's wrath.

CRESSIDA

What was his cause of anger?

ALEXANDER

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?

ALEXANDER

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.

ALEXANDER

This man, lady, hath robbed many beasts of their
particular additions; he is as valiant as the lion,
churlish as the bear, slow as the elephant: a man
into whom nature hath so crowded humours that his
valour is crushed into folly, his folly sauced with
discretion: 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: he is melancholy without
cause, and merry against the hair: he hath the
joints of every thing, but everything so out of joint

that he is a gouty Briareus, many hands and no use,
or purblind Argus, all eyes and no sight.

CRESSIDA

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

ALEXANDER

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?

ALEXANDER

Madam, your uncle Pandarus.

Enter PANDARUS

CRESSIDA

Hector's a gallant man.

ALEXANDER

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, Alexander. How do you, cousin? When
were you at Ilium?

CRESSIDA

This morning, uncle.

PANDARUS

What were you talking of when I came? Was Hector
armed and gone ere ye came to Ilium? Helen was not
up, was she?

CRESSIDA

Hector was gone, but Helen was not up.

PANDARUS

Even so: Hector was stirring early.

CRESSIDA

That were we talking of, and of his anger.

PANDARUS

Was he angry?

CRESSIDA

So he says here.

PANDARUS

True, he was so: 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

O Jupiter! there's no comparison.

PANDARUS

What, not between Troilus and Hector? Do you know a man if you see him?

CRESSIDA

Ay, if I ever saw him before and knew him.

PANDARUS

Well, I say Troilus is Troilus.

CRESSIDA

Then you say as I say; for, I am sure, he is not Hector.

PANDARUS

No, nor Hector is not Troilus in some degrees.

CRESSIDA

'Tis just to each of them; he is himself.

PANDARUS

Himself! Alas, poor Troilus! I would he were.

CRESSIDA

So he is.

PANDARUS

Condition, I had gone barefoot to India.

CRESSIDA

He is not Hector.

PANDARUS

Himself! no, he's not himself: would a' were himself! Well, the gods are above; time must friend or end: well, Troilus, well: I would my heart were in her body. No, Hector is not a better man than Troilus.

CRESSIDA

Excuse me.

PANDARUS

He is elder.

CRESSIDA

Pardon me, pardon me.

PANDARUS

Th' other's not come to't; you shall tell me another tale, when th' other's come to't. Hector shall not have his wit this year.

CRESSIDA

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

PANDARUS

Nor his qualities.

CRESSIDA

No matter.

PANDARUS

Nor his beauty.

CRESSIDA

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

PANDARUS

You have no judgment, niece: Helen herself swore th' other day, that Troilus, for a brown favour—for so 'tis, I must confess,—not brown neither,—

CRESSIDA

No, but brown.

PANDARUS

'Faith, to say truth, brown and not brown.

CRESSIDA

To say the truth, true and not true.

PANDARUS

She praised his complexion above Paris.

CRESSIDA

Why, Paris hath colour enough.

PANDARUS

So he has.

CRESSIDA

Then Troilus should have too much: if she praised him above, his complexion is higher than his; he having colour enough, and the other higher, is too flaming a praise for a good complexion. I had as lief Helen's golden tongue had commended Troilus for a copper nose.

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. She came to him th' other day into the compassed window,—and, you know, he has not past three or four hairs on his chin,—

CRESSIDA

Indeed, a tapster's arithmetic may soon bring his particulars therein to a total.

PANDARUS

Why, he is very young: and yet will he, within
three pound, lift as much as his brother Hector.

CRESSIDA

Is he so young a man and so old a lifter?

PANDARUS

But to prove to you that Helen loves him: she came
and puts me her white hand to his cloven chin—

CRESSIDA

Juno have mercy! how came it cloven?

PANDARUS

Why, you know 'tis dimpled: I think his smiling
becomes him better than any man in all Phrygia.

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,—

CRESSIDA

Troilus will stand to the proof, if you'll
prove it so.

PANDARUS

Troilus! why, he esteems her no more than I esteem
an addle egg.

CRESSIDA

If you love an addle egg as well as you love an idle
head, you would eat chickens i' the shell.

PANDARUS

I cannot choose but laugh, to think how she tickled
his chin: indeed, she has a marvellous white hand, I
must needs confess,—

CRESSIDA

Without the rack.

PANDARUS

And she takes upon her to spy a white hair on his chin.

CRESSIDA

Alas, poor chin! many a wart is richer.

PANDARUS

But there was such laughing! Queen Hecuba laughed
that her eyes ran o'er.

CRESSIDA

With mill-stones.

PANDARUS

And Cassandra laughed.

CRESSIDA

But there was more temperate fire under the pot of her eyes: 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.'

CRESSIDA

This is her question.

PANDARUS

That's true; make no question of that. 'Two and fifty hairs' quoth he, 'and one white: that white hair is my father, and all the rest are his sons.' 'Jupiter!' 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; he will weep you, an 'twere a man born in April.

CRESSIDA

And I'll spring up in his tears, an 'twere a nettle against May.