

from **The History of TROILUS AND CRESSIDA, ACT III, scene iii**

CHARACTERS:

ACHILLES—Greek commander

ULYSSES—Greek commander

Scene: The Greek camp near the city of Troy, during the Trojan war.

ACHILLES, Greek champion, has recently chosen to indulge his personal whims and not participate in the ongoing battle. ACHILLES has just been snubbed by his fellow chieftains, causing him to reflect on the possibility of his falling out of their favour. Believing that he can speak freely to ULYSSES, ACHILLES proceeds thus:

**ACHILLES:** Here is Ulysses; I'll interrupt his reading.

How now, Ulysses.

**ULYSSES:** Now, great Thetis'<sup>1</sup> son.

5 **ACHILLES:** What are you reading?

**ULYSSES:** A strange fellow here

Writes me that man, how dearly ever parted,  
How much in having, or without or in,  
Cannot make boast to have that which he hath,  
10 Nor feels not what he owes<sup>2</sup> but by reflection;  
As when his virtues aiming upon others  
Heat them, and they retort that heat again  
To the first giver.

**ACHILLES:** This is not strange, Ulysses.

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

*Continued*

<sup>1</sup>Thetis—the sea nymph in Greek mythology who was the mother of Achilles. His father was a Thessalian king

<sup>2</sup>owes—owns

**ULYSSES:** I do not strain at the position,  
25 It is familiar, but at the author's drift;  
Who in his circumstance expressly proves  
That no man is the lord of anything—  
Though in and of him there be much consisting—  
Till he communicate his parts to others;  
30 Nor doth he of himself know them for aught  
Till he behold them formed in th' applause

Where the' are extended; who, like an arch, reverb'rate  
 The voice again, or, like a gate of steel  
 Fronting the sun, receives and renders back  
 35 His figure and his heat. I was much rapt in this,  
 And apprehended here immediately  
 Th' unknown Ajax.<sup>3</sup>  
 Heavens, what a man is there! A very horse,  
 That has he knows not what. Nature, what things there are  
 40 Most abject in regard and dear in use!  
 What things again most dear in the esteem  
 And poor in worth! Now shall we see to-morrow,  
 An act that very chance doth throw upon him,  
 Ajax renowned. O heavens, what some men do,  
 45 While some men leave to do!  
 How some men creep into skittish Fortune's hall,  
 Whiles others play the idiots in her eyes!  
 How one man eats into another's pride,  
 While pride is fasting in his wantonness!  
 50 To see these Grecian lords—why, even already  
 They clap the lubber<sup>4</sup> Ajax on the shoulder,  
 As if his foot were on brave Hector's<sup>5</sup> breast,  
 And great Troy shrinking.  
**ACHILLES:** I do believe it; for they passed by me  
 55 As misers do by beggars, neither gave to me  
 Good word nor look. What, are my deeds forgot?  
**ULYSSES:** Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,  
 Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,  
 A great-sized monster of ingratitude.  
 60 Those scraps are good deeds past, which are devoured

*Continued*

<sup>3</sup>Ajax—one of the Greek commanders

<sup>4</sup>lubber—awkward

<sup>5</sup>Hector—the Trojan champion, son of Priam, who is the King of Troy

As fast as they are made, forgot as soon  
 As done. Perseverance, dear my lord,  
 Keeps honor bright; to have done, is to hang  
 Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail  
 65 In monumental mock'ry. Take the instant way;  
 For honor 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,  
 70 Or hedge aside from the direct forthright,  
 Like to an ent'red tide they all rush by  
 And leave you hindmost;  
 [Or, like a gallant horse fall'n in first rank,

Lie there for pavement to the abject rear,  
 75 O'errun and trampled on.] Then what they do in present,  
 Though less than yours in past, must o'ertop yours;  
 For time is like a fashionable host,  
 That slightly shakes his parting guest by the' hand,  
 And with his arms outstretched, as he would fly,  
 80 Grasps in the corner. The welcome ever smiles,  
 And farewell goes out sighing. Let not virtue seek  
 Remuneration for the thing it was. For beauty, wit,  
 High birth, vigor of bone, desert in service,  
 Love, friendship, charity, are subjects all  
 85 To envious and calumniating time.  
 One touch of nature<sup>6</sup> makes the whole world kin,  
 That all with one consent praise new-born gawds,  
 Though they are made and moulded of things past,  
 And give to dust that is a little gilt  
 90 More laud than gilt o'er-dusted.  
 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  
 95 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;

*Continued*

<sup>6</sup>One touch of nature—one common weakness

Whose glorious deeds, but in these fields of late,  
 100 Made emulous missions 'mongst the gods themselves  
 And drave great Mars to faction.<sup>7</sup>  
**ACHILLES:** Of this my privacy  
 I have strong reasons.  
**ULYSSES:** But 'gainst your privacy  
 105 The reasons are more potent and heroical.  
 'Tis known, Achilles, that you are in love  
 With one of Priam' s daughters.<sup>8</sup>  
**ACHILLES:** Ha! known!  
**ULYSSES:** Is that a wonder?  
 110 The providence<sup>9</sup> that's in a watchful state  
 Knows almost every grain of Pluto's gold,'-°  
 Finds bottom in th' uncomprehensive deeps,  
 Keeps place with thought, and almost, like the gods,  
 Does thoughts unveil in their dumb cradles.  
 115 There is a mystery—with whom relationH  
 Durst never meddle—in the soul of state,

Which hath an operation more divine  
Than breath or pen can give expressure to.  
All the commerce that you have had with Troy  
120 As perfectly is ours as yours, my lord;  
And better would it fit Achilles much  
To throw down Hector than Polyxena  
But it must grieve young Pyrrhus<sup>12</sup> now at home,  
When fame shall in our islands sound her trump,  
125 And all the Greekish girls shall tripping sing,  
“Great Hector’s sister did Achilles win,  
But our great Ajax bravely beat down him.”  
Farewell, my lord; I as your lover speak;  
The fool slides o’er the ice that you should break. (Exit.)

*William Shakespeare*

<sup>7</sup>drive great Mars to faction—inspired the support of Mars, god of war

<sup>8</sup>one of Priam’s daughters—Polyxena

<sup>9</sup>providence—here, timely care rather than foresight

<sup>10</sup>Pluto’s gold—the author has confused Pluto, god of the underworld, with Plutus, god of wealth

<sup>11</sup>relation—open statement

<sup>12</sup>Pyrrhus—son of Achilles