

# A Midsummer Night's Dream

## 3.1

*Enter the clowns: Quince, Snug, Bottom, Flute, Snout, and Starveling*

**BOTTOM** Are we all met?

**QUINCE** Pat, pat; and here's a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn brake our tiring-house, and we will do it in action as we will do it before the Duke. 5

**BOTTOM** Peter Quince?

**QUINCE** What sayst thou, bully Bottom?

**BOTTOM** There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisbe that will never please. First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself, which the ladies cannot abide. 10  
How answer you that?

**SNOUT** By'r la'kin, a parlous fear.

**STARVELING** I believe we must leave the killing out, when all is done.

**BOTTOM** Not a whit. I have a device to make all well. 15  
Write me a prologue, and let the prologue seem to say we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and for the more better assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver. This will put them out of fear. 20

**QUINCE** Well, we will have such a prologue; and it shall be written in eight and six.

**BOTTOM** No, make it two more: let it be written in eight and eight.

**SNOUT** Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion? 25

**STARVELING** I fear it, I promise you.

**BOTTOM** Masters, you ought to consider with yourself, to bring in±God shield us±a lion among ladies is a most dreadful thing; for there is not a more fearful wild fowl than your lion living, and we ought to look to't. 30

**SNOUT** Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

**BOTTOM** Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck, and he himself

must speak through, saying thus or to the same defect: 35  
`ladies', or `fair ladies, I would wish you' or `I would  
request you' or `I would entreat you not to fear, not  
to tremble. My life for yours. If you think I come hither  
as a lion, it were pity of my life. No, I am no such  
thing. I am a man, as other men are'±±and there, 40  
indeed, let him name his name, and tell them plainly  
he is Snug the joiner.

**QUINCE** Well, it shall be so; but there is two hard things:  
that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber±±for  
you know Pyramus and Thisbe meet by moonlight. 45

**[SNOUT]** Doth the moon shine that night we play our  
play?

**BOTTOM** A calendar, a calendar±±look in the almanac,  
find out moonshine, find out moonshine.  
*[Enter Robin Goodfellow the puck, invisible]*

**QUINCE** *[with a book]* Yes, it doth shine that night. 50

**BOTTOM** Why, then may you leave a casement of the great  
chamber window where we play open, and the moon  
may shine in at the casement.

**QUINCE** Ay, or else one must come in with a bush of  
thorns and a lantern and say he comes to disfigure, or 55  
to present, the person of Moonshine. Then there is  
another thing: we must have a wall in the great  
chamber; for Pyramus and Thisbe, says the story, did  
talk through the chink of a wall.

**SNOUT** You can never bring in a wall. What say you, 60  
Bottom?

**BOTTOM** Some man or other must present Wall; and let  
him have some plaster, or some loam, or some rough-  
cast about him, to signify `wall'; and let him hold his  
fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus 65  
and Thisbe whisper.

**QUINCE** If that may be, then all is well. Come, sit down  
every mother's son, and rehearse your parts. Pyramus,  
you begin. When you have spoken your speech, enter  
into that brake; and so everyone according to his cue. 70

**ROBIN** *(aside)*  
What hempen homespuns have we swagg'ring here  
So near the cradle of the Fairy Queen?

What, a play toward? I'll be an auditor±±  
An actor, too, perhaps, if I see cause.

**QUINCE** Speak, Pyramus. Thisbe, stand forth. 75

**BOTTOM** (*as Pyramus*)

Thisbe, the flowers of odious savours sweet.

**QUINCE** Odours, odours.

**BOTTOM** (*as Pyramus*) Odours savours sweet.

So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisbe dear.

But hark, a voice. Stay thou but here a while, 80

And by and by I will to thee appear.

*Exit*

**[ROBIN]** (*aside*)

A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here.

*Exit*

**FLUTE** Must I speak now?

**QUINCE** Ay, marry must you. For you must understand  
he goes but to see a noise that he heard, and is to 85  
come again.

**FLUTE** (*as Thisbe*)

Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue,  
Of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier;

Most bristly juvenile, and eke most lovely Jew,  
As true as truest horse that yet would never tire: 90

I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb.

**QUINCE** Ninus' tomb, man!±±Why, you must not speak  
that yet. That you answer to Pyramus. You speak all  
your part at once, cues and all.±±Pyramus, enter: your  
cue is past; it is `never tire'. 95

**FLUTE** O.

(*As Thisbe*) As true as truest horse that yet would  
never tire.

*Enter [Robin leading] Bottom with the ass-head*

**BOTTOM** (*as Pyramus*)

If I were fair, Thisbe, I were only thine.

**QUINCE** O monstrous! O strange! We are haunted. Pray,  
masters; fly, masters: help! 100

*[The clowns all exeunt]*

**ROBIN**

I'll follow you, I'll lead you about a round,  
Through bog, through bush, through brake,

through brier.

Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,  
A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire,  
And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn, 105  
Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn.

*Exit*

*[Enter Bottom again, with the ass-head]*

**BOTTOM** Why do they run away? This is a knavery of  
them to make me afeard.

*Enter Snout*

**SNOUT** O Bottom, thou art changed. What do I see on  
thee? 110

**BOTTOM** What do you see? You see an ass-head of your  
own, do you?

*[Exit Snout]*

*Enter Quince*

**QUINCE** Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee. Thou art translated.

*Exit*

**BOTTOM** I see their knavery. This is to make an ass of me,  
to fright me, if they could; but I will not stir from this 115  
place, do what they can. I will walk up and down here,  
and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid.  
(Sings)

The ousel cock so black of hue,  
With orange-tawny bill;  
The throstle with his note so true, 120  
The wren with little quill.

**TITANIA** (*awaking*)

What angel wakes me from my flow'ry bed?

**BOTTOM** (*sings*)

The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,  
The plainsong cuckoo grey,  
Whose note full many a man doth mark, 125  
And dares not answer `Nay'±±  
for indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a bird?  
Who would give a bird the lie, though he cry `Cuckoo'  
never so?

**TITANIA**

I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again. 130  
Mine ear is much enamoured of thy note;

So is mine eye enthralleÁd to thy shape;  
And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me  
On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.

**BOTTOM** Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason 135  
for that. And yet, to say the truth, reason and love  
keep little company together nowadays±±the more the  
pity that some honest neighbours will not make them  
friends. Nay, I can gleek upon occasion.

**TITANIA**

Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful. 140

**BOTTOM** Not so, neither; but if I had wit enough to get  
out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own  
turn.

**TITANIA**

Out of this wood do not desire to go.  
Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no. 145  
I am a spirit of no common rate:  
The summer still doth tend upon my state;  
And I do love thee. Therefore go with me.  
I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee,  
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep, 150  
And sing while thou on presseÁd flowers dost sleep;  
And I will purge thy mortal grossness so  
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.  
Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Mote, and Mustardseed!

*Enter four fairies: Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Mote, and  
Mustardseed*

**A FAIRY**

Ready.

**ANOTHER** And I.

**ANOTHER** And I.

**ANOTHER** And I.

**[ALL FOUR]** Where shall we go? 155

**TITANIA**

Be kind and courteous to this gentleman.  
Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes.  
Feed him with apricots and dewberries,  
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;  
The honeybags steal from the humble-bees, 160  
And for night tapers crop their waxen thighs

And light them at the fiery glow-worms' eyes  
To have my love to bed, and to arise;  
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies  
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes. 165  
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

**A FAIRY** Hail, mortal.

**[ANOTHER]** Hail.

**ANOTHER** Hail.

**ANOTHER** Hail. 170

**BOTTOM** I cry your worships mercy, heartily.±±I beseech  
your worship's name.

**COBWEB** Cobweb.

**BOTTOM** I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good  
Master Cobweb. If I cut my finger, I shall make bold 175  
with you.±±Your name, honest gentleman?

**PEASEBLOSSOM** Peaseblossom.

**BOTTOM** I pray you commend me to Mistress Squash, your  
mother, and to Master Peascod, your father. Good  
Master Peaseblossom, I shall desire you of more 180  
acquaintance, too.±±Your name, I beseech you, sir?

**MUSTARDSEED** Mustardseed.

**BOTTOM** Good Master Mustardseed, I know your patience  
well. That same cowardly giantlike ox-beef hath  
devoured many a gentleman of your house. I promise 185  
you your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now.  
I desire you of more acquaintance, good Master  
Mustardseed.

**TITANIA** (*to the Fairies*)

Come, wait upon him, lead him to my bower.  
The moon, methinks, looks with a wat'ry eye, 190  
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,  
Lamenting some enforceÁd chastity.  
Tie up my love's tongue; bring him silently.

*Exeunt*