

A Midsummer Night's Dream, Act 5  
by William Shakespeare

Abridged for performances for children by T.Q. Townsend

THESEUS

Come now, what masques, what dances shall we have  
To wear away this long age of three hours  
Between our after-supper and bedtime?  
Where is our usual manager of mirth?  
What revels are in hand? Is there no play  
To ease the anguish of a torturing hour?  
Call Philostrate.

PHILOSTRATE, (*coming forward*)

Here, mighty Theseus.

THESEUS

Say what abridgment have you for this evening,  
What masque, what music? How shall we beguile  
The lazy time if not with some delight?

PHILOSTRATE

A play there is, my lord, some ten words long  
But by ten words, my lord, it is too long.

THESEUS

What are they that do play it?

PHILOSTRATE

Hard-handed men that work in Athens here,  
Which never labored in their minds till now.

THESEUS

I will hear that play,  
For never anything can be amiss  
When simpleness and duty tender it.  
Go, bring them in—and take your places, ladies.

*PHILOSTRATE exits.*

HIPPOLYTA

I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharged,  
And duty in his service perishing.

THESEUS

Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing.

HIPPOLYTA

He says they can do nothing in this kind.

*Enter PHILOSTRATE.*

PHILOSTRATE

So please your Grace, the Prologue is addressed.

THESEUS

Let him approach.

*Enter the PROLOGUE.*

PROLOGUE

If we offend, it is with our goodwill.  
That you should think we come not to offend,  
But with goodwill. To show our simple skill,  
That is the true beginning of our end.  
Consider, then, we come but in despite.  
We do not come, as minding to content you,  
Our true intent is. All for your delight  
We are not here. That you should here repent you,  
The actors are at hand, and, by their show,  
You shall know all that you are like to know.

*PROLOGUE exits.*

THESEUS

This fellow doth not stand upon points.

LYSANDER

He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt;  
he knows not the stop. A good moral, my lord: it is  
not enough to speak, but to speak true.

## HIPPOLYTA

Indeed he hath played on this prologue like  
a child on a recorder—a sound, but not in government.

## THESEUS

His speech was like a tangled chain—nothing  
impaired, but all disordered. Who is next?

*Enter PYRAMUS, and THISBE, and WALL, and  
MOONSHINE, and LION, and PROLOGUE.*

## PROLOGUE

Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show.  
But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.  
This man is Pyramus, if you would know.  
This beauteous lady Thisbe is certain.  
This man with lime and roughcast doth present  
“Wall,” that vile wall which did these lovers sunder;  
And through Wall’s chink, poor souls, they are content  
To whisper, at the which let no man wonder.  
This man, with lantern, dog, and bush of thorn,  
Presenteth “Moonshine,” for, if you will know,  
By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn  
To meet at Ninus’ tomb, there, there to woo.  
This grisly beast (which “Lion” hight by name)  
The trusty Thisbe coming first by night  
Did scare away or rather did affright;  
And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall,  
Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.  
Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,  
And finds his trusty Thisbe’s mantle slain.  
Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,  
He bravely broached his boiling bloody breast.  
And Thisbe, tarrying in mulberry shade,  
His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,  
Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain  
At large discourse, while here they do remain.

## THESEUS

I wonder if the lion be to speak.

DEMETRIUS

No wonder, my lord. One lion may when many asses do.

*LION, THISBE, MOONSHINE, and PROLOGUE exit.*

WALL

In this same interlude it doth befall  
 That I, one Snout by name, present a wall;  
 And such a wall as I would have you think  
 That had in it a crannied hole or chink,  
 Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe,  
 Did whisper often, very secretly.  
 This loam, this roughcast, and this stone doth show  
 That I am that same wall. The truth is so.  
 And this the cranny is, right and sinister,  
 Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.

THESEUS

Would you desire lime and hair to speak better?

DEMETRIUS

It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard discourse, my lord.

THESEUS

Pyramus draws near the wall. Silence.

PYRAMUS

O grim-looking night! O night with hue so black!  
 O night, which ever art when day is not!  
 O night! O night! Alack, alack, alack!  
 I fear my Thisbe's promise is forgot.  
 And thou, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall,  
 That stand'st between her father's ground and mine,  
 Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,  
 Show me thy chink to blink through with mine eyne.  
 Thanks, courteous wall. Jove shield thee well for this.  
 But what see I? No Thisbe do I see.  
 O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss,  
 Cursed be thy stones for thus deceiving me!

THESEUS

The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse again.

PYRAMUS

No, in truth, sir, he should not. "Deceiving me" is Thisbe's cue. She is to enter now, and I am to spy her through the wall. You shall see it will fall pat as I told you. Yonder she comes.

*Enter THISBE.*

THISBE

O wall, full often hast thou heard my moans  
For parting my fair Pyramus and me.  
My cherry lips have often kissed thy stones,  
Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee.

PYRAMUS

I see a voice! Now will I to the chink  
To spy an I can hear my Thisbe's face.  
Thisbe?

THISBE

My love! Thou art my love, I think.

PYRAMUS

Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's grace,  
And, like Limander, am I trusty still.

THISBE

And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill.

PYRAMUS

Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true.

THISBE

As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.

PYRAMUS

O kiss me through the hole of this vile wall.

THISBE

I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all.

PYRAMUS

Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway?

THISBE

'Tide life, 'tide death, I come without delay.

*PYRAMUS and THISBE exit.*

WALL

Thus have I, Wall, my part dischargèd so,  
And, being done, thus Wall away doth go.

*WALL exits.*

THESEUS

Now is the wall down between the two neighbors.

HIPPOLYTA

This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

THESEUS

The best in this kind are but shadows, and  
the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.

HIPPOLYTA

It must be your imagination, then, and not theirs.

THESEUS

If we imagine no worse of them than they of  
themselves, they may pass for excellent men. Here  
come two noble beasts in, a man and a lion.

*Enter LION and MOONSHINE.*

LION

You ladies, you whose gentle hearts do fear  
The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,

May now perchance both quake and tremble here,  
When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.  
Then know that I, as Snug the joiner, am  
A lion fell, nor else no lion's dam;  
For if I should as lion come in strife  
Into this place, 'twere pity on my life.

THESEUS

A very gentle beast, and of a good conscience.

DEMETRIUS

The very best at a beast, my lord, that e'er I saw.

THESEUS

Let us listen to the Moon.

MOONSHINE

This lanthorn doth the hornèd moon present.

DEMETRIUS

He should have worn the horns on his head.

THESEUS

He is no crescent, and his horns are invisible  
within the circumference.

MOONSHINE

This lanthorn doth the hornèd moon present.  
Myself the man i' th' moon do seem to be.

THESEUS

This is the greatest error of all the rest; the  
man should be put into the lanthorn. How is it else  
"the man i' th' moon"?

DEMETRIUS

He dares not come there for the candle,  
for you see, it is already in snuff.



HIPPOLYTA

I am aweary of this moon. Would he would change.

THESEUS

It appears by his small light of discretion that he is in the wane; but yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay the time.

LYSANDER

Proceed, Moon.

MOONSHINE

All that I have to say is to tell you that the lanthorn is the moon, I the man i' th' moon, this thornbush my thornbush, and this dog my dog.

DEMETRIUS

Why, all these should be in the lanthorn, for all these are in the moon. But silence. Here comes Thisbe.

*Enter THISBE.*

THISBE

This is old Ninny's tomb. Where is my love?

LION

O!

*The LION roars. Thisbe runs off, dropping her mantle.*

DEMETRIUS

Well roared, Lion.

THESEUS

Well run, Thisbe.

HIPPOLYTA

Well shone, Moon. Truly, the Moon shines with a good grace.

*LION worries the mantle.*

THESEUS

Well moused, Lion.

*Enter PYRAMUS.*

DEMETRIUS

And then came Pyramus.

*LION exits.*

LYSANDER

And so the lion vanished.

PYRAMUS

Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams.  
I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright,  
For by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams,  
I trust to take of truest Thisbe sight.—  
But stay! O spite!  
But mark, poor knight,  
What dreadful dole is here!  
Eyes, do you see!  
How can it be!  
O dainty duck! O dear!  
Thy mantle good—  
What, stained with blood?  
Approach, ye Furies fell!  
O Fates, come, come,  
Cut thread and thrum,  
Quail, crush, conclude, and quell!

THESEUS

This passion, and the death of a dear friend,  
would go near to make a man look sad.

HIPPOLYTA

Beshrew my heart but I pity the man.

PYRAMUS

O, wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame,  
 Since lion vile hath here deflowered my dear,  
 Which is—no, no—which was the fairest dame  
 That lived, that loved, that liked, that looked with cheer?  
 Come, tears, confound!  
 Out, sword, and wound  
 The pap of Pyramus;  
 Ay, that left pap,  
 Where heart doth hop.

*PYRAMUS stabs himself.*

Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.  
 Now am I dead;  
 Now am I fled;  
 My soul is in the sky.  
 Tongue, lose thy light!  
 Moon, take thy flight!

*MOONSHINE exits.*

Now die, die, die, die, die.

*PYRAMUS falls.*

HIPPOLYTA

How chance Moonshine is gone before  
 Thisbe comes back and finds her lover?

THESEUS

She will find him by starlight.

*Enter THISBE.*

Here she comes, and her passion ends the play.

HIPPOLYTA

Methinks she should not use a long one for  
 such a Pyramus. I hope she will be brief.

LYSANDER

She hath spied him already with those sweet eyes.

THISBE

Asleep, my love?  
 What, dead, my dove?  
 O Pyramus, arise!  
 Speak, speak. Quite dumb?  
 Dead? Dead? A tomb  
 Must cover thy sweet eyes.  
 These lily lips,  
 This cherry nose,  
 These yellow cowslip cheeks  
 Are gone, are gone!  
 Lovers, make moan;  
 His eyes were green as leeks.  
 O Sisters Three,  
 Come, come to me  
 With hands as pale as milk.  
 Lay them in gore,  
 Since you have shore  
 With shears his thread of silk.  
 Tongue, not a word!  
 Come, trusty sword,  
 Come, blade, my breast imbrue!

*THISBE stabs herself.*

And farewell, friends.  
 Thus Thisbe ends.  
 Adieu, adieu, adieu.

*THISBE falls.*

THESEUS

Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

DEMETRIUS

Ay, and Wall too.

*PYRAMUS and THISBE arise.*

PYRAMUS

No, I assure you, the wall is down that parted their fathers. Will it please you to see the Epilogue or to hear a Bergomask dance between two of our company?

THESEUS

No epilogue, I pray you. For your play needs no excuse. Never excuse. For when the players are all dead, there need none to be blamed. Marry, if he that writ it had played Pyramus and hanged himself in Thisbe's garter, it would have been a fine tragedy; and so it is, truly, and very notably discharged. But, come, your Bergomask. Let your epilogue alone.

*Dance, and the players exit.*

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve.  
Lovers, to bed! 'Tis almost fairy time.  
I fear we shall outsleep the coming morn  
As much as we this night have overwatched.  
This palpable-gross play hath well beguiled  
The heavy gait of night. Sweet friends, to bed.  
A fortnight hold we this solemnity  
In nightly revels and new jollity.

*They exit.*