

Original Text

Modern Text

*TITANIA sleeps. Enter the clowns: **BOTTOM, QUINCE, FLUTE, SNUG, SNOUT, and STARVELING***

*While **TITANIA** is asleep onstage, the clowns—**BOTTOM, QUINCE, FLUTE, SNUG, SNOUT, and STARVELING**—enter.*

BOTTOM

Are we all met?

QUINCE

Pat, pat. And here's a marvelous 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.

BOTTOM

Peter Quince—

QUINCE

What sayest thou, bully Bottom?

BOTTOM

- 5 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. How answer you that?

SNOUT

By 'r lakin, 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. 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.

BOTTOM

Are we all here?

QUINCE

Right on time. This is the perfect place to rehearse. This clearing will be the stage, and this hawthorn bush will be our dressing room. Let's put on our play exactly as we'll perform it for the duke.

BOTTOM

Peter Quince—

QUINCE

What is it, jolly Bottom?

BOTTOM

There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisbe that will never work. First of all, Pyramus has to take out a sword to kill himself, which the ladies in the audience won't be able to stand. What should we do about that?

SNOUT

By God, that's a real problem, it's true.

STARVELING

I think we'll have to leave out all the killing, come to think of it.

BOTTOM

Not at all! I've got a plan that will fix everything. Write me a prologue that I can recite to the audience before the play starts. I'll tell them that we won't hurt anyone with our swords, and that Pyramus isn't really dead. And to make it even clearer, we can tell them that I'm playing Pyramus but I'm not really Pyramus—really, I'm Bottom the weaver. That'll keep them from being afraid.

Act 3, Scene 1, Page 2

QUINCE

Well. We will have such a prologue, and it shall be written in eight and six.

BOTTOM

- 10 No, make it two more. Let it be written in eight and eight.

SNOUT

Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

STARVELING

I fear it, I promise you.

BOTTOM

Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves. To bring in—God shield us!—a lion among ladies is a

QUINCE

All right, we'll have a prologue then. We'll write it in alternating eight- and six-syllable lines, just like in a ballad.

BOTTOM

No, add a couple more syllables. Make it eight and eight.

SNOUT

Won't the ladies be scared of the lion?

STARVELING

I'm really worried about that.

BOTTOM

Sirs, you ought to think to yourself, bringing in—God forbid!—a lion amongst ladies is really

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most dreadful thing. For there is not a more fearful wildfowl than your lion living. And we ought to look to 't.

SNOUT

Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

BOTTOM

- 15 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—"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 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.

Act 3, Scene 1, Page 3

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!

QUINCE

(takes out a book) Yes, it doth shine that night.

BOTTOM

- 20 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 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

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terrible. There's no scarier wild bird than the living lion, and we should remember that.

SNOUT

So we need another prologue to tell everyone he's not a real lion.

BOTTOM

No, we can just announce the actor's name, and let his face show through the lion costume, and have him say something himself. He should say the following, or something else to the same defect—"Ladies," or "Lovely ladies," "I would like to ask you" or "I would like to request of you" or "I would like to beg you" "not to be afraid, and not to tremble with fear. I value your lives as highly as my own. If you thought I was a real lion, I would be risking my life. But no, I am not at all a lion. I am a man, just like other men." And then he should say his name, and tell them plainly that he's Snug the carpenter.

QUINCE

All right, that's what we'll do then. But there are two things we still have to figure out. How are we going to bring moonlight into a room? Because, you know, Pyramus and Thisbe meet by moonlight.

SNOUT

Will the moon be shining on the night we're performing our play?

BOTTOM

We need a calendar! Look in the almanac. Look up moonshine, look up moonshine!

QUINCE

(he takes out a book) Yes, the moon will shine that night.

BOTTOM

Well then, you can leave one of the windows open in the big hall where we'll be performing, and the moon can shine in through the window.

QUINCE

Yes, or else someone will have to come in carrying a bundle of sticks and a lantern and say he's come to **disfigure**, or represent, the character of Moonshine, because the man in the moon is supposed to carry sticks and a lantern. But there's still another problem: we need to have a wall in the big hall, because according to the story, Pyramus and Thisbe talked through a little hole in a wall.

SNOUT

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

BOTTOM

Some man or other must present Wall. And let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some roughcast about him to signify wall. And let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus 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.

Act 3, Scene 1, Page 4

*Enter **ROBIN** unseen*

ROBIN

- 25 *(aside)* What hempen homespuns have we swaggering 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.

BOTTOM

- 30 *(as PYRAMUS)* Thisbe, the flowers of odious savors sweet—

QUINCE

"Odors," "odors."

BOTTOM

(as PYRAMUS)
—odors savors sweet,
So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisbe dear.
And by and by I will to thee appear.

- 35 But hark, a voice!
Stay thou but here awhile,

*Exit **BOTTOM***

ROBIN

(aside) A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here.

*Exit **ROBIN***

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 come again.

FLUTE**Modern Text**

You'll never be able to bring in a wall. What do you think, Bottom?

BOTTOM

Someone should play the part of Wall. He can have some plaster or clay or limestone or something on him to show the audience he's a wall. He can hold his fingers in a V-shape like this, and Pyramus and Thisbe can whisper to each other through that little crack.

QUINCE

If we can do that, everything will be all right. Now sit down, everybody, and rehearse your parts—Pyramus, you start. When you have said your lines, go hide in that bush.—Everyone else, go there too when you're not onstage.

***ROBIN** enters, unseen by the characters onstage.*

ROBIN

(to himself) Who are these country bumpkins swaggering around so close to where the fairy queen is sleeping? What? Are they about to put on a play? I'll watch. And I'll act in it, too, if I feel like it.

QUINCE

Speak, Pyramus.—Thisbe, come forward.

BOTTOM

(as PYRAMUS) Thisbe, flowers with sweet odious smells—

QUINCE

"Odors," "odors."

BOTTOM

(as PYRAMUS) —odors and smells are like your breath, my dearest Thisbe dear. But what's that, a voice! Wait here a while. I'll be right back!

***BOTTOM** exits.*

ROBIN

(to himself) That's the strangest Pyramus I've ever seen.

***ROBIN** exits.*

FLUTE

Am I supposed to talk now?

QUINCE

Yes, you are. You're supposed to show that you understand that Pyramus just went to check on a noise he heard and is coming right back.

FLUTE

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(as THISBE) Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white
 40 of hue,
 Of color like the red rose on triumphant brier,
 Most brisky juvenal and eke most lovely Jew,
 As true as truest horse that yet would never tire.
 I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb.

Modern Text

(as THISBE) Most radiant Pyramus, you are as
 white as a lily, and the color of a red rose on a
 splendid rosebush, a very lively young man and
 also a lovely Jew. You are as reliable as a horse
 that never gets tired. I'll meet you, Pyramus, at
 Ninny's grave.

Act 3, Scene 1, Page 5

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."

FLUTE

45 Oh. (as thisbe) As true as truest horse that yet would
 never tire.

Enter BOTTOM, with an ass's head, and ROBIN

BOTTOM

(as PYRAMUS) If I were fair, Thisbe, I were only
 thine.

QUINCE

Oh, monstrous! Oh, strange! We are haunted. Pray,
 masters! Fly, masters! Help!

*Exeunt QUINCE, FLUTE, SNUG, SNOUT,
 and STARVELING*

ROBIN

I'll follow you. I'll lead you about a round
 Through bog, through bush, through brake, through
 50 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,
 Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn.

Exit ROBIN

BOTTOM

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

Enter SNOUT

QUINCE

That's "Ninus's grave," man. And don't say all of
 that yet. You're supposed to say some of it as a
 reply to Pyramus. You just said all your lines at
 once, cues and all.—Pyramus, enter. You missed
 your cue. It's "never get tired."

FLUTE

Oh! (as THISBE) As reliable as a horse that
 never gets tired.

*ROBIN enters with BOTTOM, with a donkey's
 head instead of a human head.*

BOTTOM

(as PYRAMUS) If I were handsome, my lovely
 Thisbe, I would still want only you.

QUINCE

Help! It's a monster! We're being haunted. Run,
 everyone, run!

*QUINCE, FLUTE, SNUG, SNOUT,
 and STARVELING exit.*

ROBIN

I'll follow you. I'll run you around in circles,
 through bogs and bushes and woods and thorns.
 Sometimes I'll take the shape of a horse,
 sometimes I'll take the shape of a hound or a pig
 or a headless bear. Sometimes I'll turn into fire!
 And I'll neigh like a horse and bark like a hound
 and grunt like a pig and roar like a bear and burn
 like a fire at every turn.

ROBIN exits.

BOTTOM

Why are they running away? This is some joke of
 theirs to scare me.

SNOUT enters.

Act 3, Scene 1, Page 6

SNOUT

55 O Bottom, thou art changed! What do I see on thee?

BOTTOM

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

Exit SNOUT

SNOUT

Oh, Bottom, you've changed! What have you got
 on your head?

BOTTOM

What do you think I've got on my head? You're
 acting like an ass, don't you think?

SNOUT exits.

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*Enter QUINCE**QUINCE enters.***QUINCE**

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

QUINCE

God bless you, Bottom, God bless you. You've been changed. Reborn.

*Exit QUINCE**QUINCE exits.***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 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 ouzel cock, so black of hue
With orange-tawny bill,
The throstle with his note so true,
The wren with little quill—*

BOTTOM

I see what they're up to. They want to make an ass of me, to scare me if they can. But I won't leave this spot, no matter what they do. I'll walk up and down and sing a song, so they'll know I'm not afraid.

*(singing)
The blackbird with its black feathers
And its orange-and-tan beak,
The thrush with its clear voice,
The wren with its small, piping chirp—*

TITANIA

60 (waking) What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

TITANIA

(waking up) What angel is this who's waking me up from my bed of flowers?

BOTTOM

(sings)

*The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The plainsong cuckoo gray,
Whose note full many a man doth mark
And dares not answer "Nay"—*

BOTTOM

(singing)

*The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The gray cuckoo with his simple song
That many men hear
But they don't dare say no to it—*

Act 3, Scene 1, Page 7

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?

Of course they don't say "no"! Who'd waste his time talking to such a stupid bird? Who'd bother to accuse a bird of lying, even if the bird were telling him that his wife was cheating on him?

TITANIA

I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again.

65 Mine ear is much enamored of thy note.

So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape.

And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me

On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.

TITANIA

Please sing again, sweet human. I love to listen to your voice, and I love to look at your body. I know this is the first time I've ever seen you, but you're so wonderful that I can't help swearing to you that I love you.

BOTTOM

70 Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that.

And yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together nowadays. The more the pity that some honest neighbors will not make them friends. Nay, I can gleek upon occasion.

BOTTOM

I don't think you've got much of a reason to love me. But to tell you the truth, reason and love have very little to do with each other these days. It's too bad some mutual friend of theirs doesn't introduce them. Ha, ha! No, I'm just kidding.

TITANIA

Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

TITANIA

You're as wise as you are beautiful.

BOTTOM

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

BOTTOM

No, that's not true. But if I were smart enough to get out of this forest, I'd be wise enough to satisfy myself.

TITANIA

Out of this wood do not desire to go.

TITANIA

Don't bother wishing you could leave this forest,

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Thou shalt remain here whether thou wilt or no.
 75 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,
 80 And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep.
 And I will purge thy mortal grossness so
 That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.—
 Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed!

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because you're going to stay here whether you want to or not. I'm no ordinary fairy. I rule over the summer, and I love you. So come with me. I'll give you fairies as servants, and they'll bring you jewels from the depths of the ocean, and sing to you while you sleep on a bed of flowers. And I'll turn you into a spirit like us, so you won't die as humans do.—Come here, Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed!

Act 3, Scene 1, Page 8

*Enter four
 fairies: PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH,
 and MUSTARDSEED*

PEASEBLOSSOM

Ready.

COBWEB

And I.

MOTH

And I.

MUSTARDSEED

And I.

ALL

85 Where shall we go?

TITANIA

Be kind and courteous to this gentleman.
 Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes.
 Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
 With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries.
 90 The honey bags steal from the humble-bees,
 And for night tapers crop their waxen thighs
 And light them at the fiery glowworms' eyes
 To have my love to bed and to arise.
 And pluck the wings from painted butterflies

95 To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes.
 Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

PEASEBLOSSOM

Hail, mortal.

COBWEB

Hail.

MOTH

Hail.

MUSTARDSEED

Hail.

BOTTOM

I cry your worships' mercy, heartily.—I beseech your worship's name.

*Four fairies—
 PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH,
 and MUSTARDSEED—enter.*

PEASEBLOSSOM

Ready.

COBWEB

Me too.

MOTH

Me too.

MUSTARDSEED

And me too.

ALL

Where should we go?

TITANIA

Be kind and polite to this gentleman. Follow him around. Leap and dance for him. Feed him apricots and blackberries, with purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries. Steal honey from the bumblebees, and make candles out of the bees' wax. Light them with the light of glowworms, so my love will have light when he goes to bed and wakes up. Pluck off colorful butterfly wings, and use them to fan moonbeams away from his eyes as he sleeps. Bow to him, fairies, and curtsy to him.

PEASEBLOSSOM

Hello, mortal!

COBWEB

Hello!

MOTH

Hello!

MUSTARDSEED

Hello!

BOTTOM

I beg your pardon, sirs.—Please tell me your name, sir?

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COBWEB

Cobweb.

BOTTOM

- 100 I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good Master
Cobweb. If I cut my finger, I shall make bold 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 acquaintance too.— Your name, I beseech you, sir?

MUSTARDSEED

- 105 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 you your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now. I desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Mustardseed.

TITANIA

- Come, wait upon him. Lead him to my bower.
The moon methinks looks with a watery eye.
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,
110 Lamenting some enforced chastity.
Tie up my love's tongue. Bring him silently.

Exeunt

Modern Text

COBWEB

Cobweb.

BOTTOM

I'd like to get to know you better, Mr. Cobweb. If I cut my finger, I'll use you as a bandage to stop the bleeding.—And your name, sir?

PEASEBLOSSOM

Peaseblossom.

BOTTOM

Please, give my regards to your mother, Mrs. Peapod, and your father, Mr. Peapod. Good Mr. Peaseblossom, I'd like to get to know you better too.—And you, may I ask what your name is, sir?

MUSTARDSEED

Mustardseed.

BOTTOM

Good Mr. Mustardseed, I know you very well. Those cowardly, gigantic sides of beef have been responsible for many of your family members getting eaten as a condiment on beef. I swear to you, many members of your mustard family have made my eyes water before. I look forward to getting to know you better, Mr. Mustardseed.

TITANIA

Take good care of him. Take him to my sleeping area. The moon looks sad to me. When she cries, all the little flowers cry too. They're sad because someone is prevented from having sex—or is having it against her will. Keep my lover quiet. Bring him to me in silence.

They all exit.