

***A Midsummer Night's Dream***

**ACT I. SCENE II. Athens. QUINCE'S house.**

*Enter QUINCE the carpenter, SNUG the joiner, BOTTOM the weaver, FLUTE the bellows-mender, SNOUT the tinker, and STARVELING the tailor.*

**QUINCE** Is all our company here?

**BOTTOM** You were best to call them generally, man by man, according to the scrip.

**QUINCE** Here is the scroll of every man's name, which is thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our interlude before the duke and the duchess, on his wedding-day at night.

**BOTTOM** First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on, then read the names of the actors, and so grow to a point.

**QUINCE** Marry, our play is, "The most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe."

**BOTTOM** A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll. Masters, spread yourselves.

**QUINCE** Answer as I call you. Nick Bottom, the weaver.

**BOTTOM** Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

**QUINCE** You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

**BOTTOM** What is Pyramus—a lover, or a tyrant?

**QUINCE** A lover, that kills himself most gallant for love.

**BOTTOM** That will ask some tears in the true performing of it. If I do it, let the audience look to their eyes. I will move storms; I will condole in some measure. To the rest—yet my chief humour is for a tyrant. I could play Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split:

*The raging rocks  
And shivering shocks  
Shall break the locks  
Of prison gates;  
And Phibbus' car  
Shall shine from far  
And make and mar  
The foolish Fates.*

This was lofty! Now name the rest of the players. This is Ercles' vein, a tyrant's vein. A lover is more condoling.

**QUINCE 2** Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

**FLUTE** Here, Peter Quince.

**QUINCE 2** Flute, you must take Thisbe on you.

**FLUTE** What is Thisbe? A wandering knight?

**QUINCE 2** It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

**FLUTE** Nay, faith, let me not play a woman. I have a beard coming.

**QUINCE 2** That's all one. You shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will.

**BOTTOM 2** An I may hide my face, let me play Thisbe too, I'll speak in a monstrous little voice. "Thisne, Thisne!"—"Ah, Pyramus, lover dear! Thy Thisbe dear, and lady dear!"

**QUINCE 2** No, no, you must play Pyramus—and, Flute, you Thisbe.

**BOTTOM 2** Well, proceed.

**QUINCE 2** Robin Starveling, the tailor.

**STARVELING** Here, Peter Quince.

**QUINCE 2** Robin Starveling, you must play Thisbe's mother. Tom Snout, the tinker.

**SNOUT** Here, Peter Quince.

**QUINCE 2** You, Pyramus' father. Myself, Thisbe's father. Snug, the joiner: you, the lion's part. And, I hope, here is a play fitted.

**SNUG** Have you the lion's part written? Pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

**QUINCE 2** You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

**BOTTOM 2** Let me play the lion too. I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me. I will roar, that I will make the Duke say "Let him roar again. Let him roar again!"

**QUINCE 2** An you should do it too terribly, you would fright the Duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek; and that were enough to hang us all.

**ALL** That would hang us, every mother's son.

- BOTTOM 3** I grant you, friends, if that you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us. But I will aggravate my voice so that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you an 'twere any nightingale.
- QUINCE 3** You can play no part but Pyramus, for Pyramus is a sweet-faced man, a proper man, as one shall see in a summer's day, a most lovely gentleman-like man. Therefore you must needs play Pyramus.
- BOTTOM 3** Well, I will undertake it. What beard were I best to play it in?
- QUINCE 3** Why, what you will.
- BOTTOM 3** I will discharge it in either your straw-colour beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown-colour beard, your perfect yellow.
- QUINCE 3** Some of your French crowns have no hair at all, and then you will play bare-faced. But, masters, here are your parts, and I am to entreat you, request you and desire you, to con them by to-morrow night, and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight. There will we rehearse, for if we meet in the city, we shall be dogged with company, and our devices known. In the meantime I will draw a bill of properties, such as our play wants. I pray you, fail me not.
- BOTTOM 3** We will meet, and there we may rehearse most obscenely and courageously. Take pains. Be perfect. Adieu.
- QUINCE 3** At the Duke's Oak we meet.
- BOTTOM 3** Enough. Hold, or cut bow-strings.

*Exeunt*