

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

A Humorous Reading

by
William Shakespeare



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The Duke of Athens, having decided that he would “wed with pomp, with triumph, and with reveling,” a group of “hard-handed” workmen gather to rehearse a play. Quince the carpenter, is in charge.

QUINCE: Is all our company here? Here is the scroll of every man's name, which is thought fit to play in our interlude before the duke and duchess on his wedding-day at night. Our play is the most lamentable comedy of Pyramus and Thisby--Answer, as I call you.--Nick Bottom, the weaver.

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

Q: You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

B: What is Pyramus? a lover, or a tyrant?

Q: A lover, that kills himself most gallantly for love.

B: 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;--yet my chief humor 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 Phibbus' car
With shivering shocks,	Shall shine from far,
Shall break the locks	And make and mar
Of prison gates:	The foolish Fates

Now, name the rest of the players.

Q: Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

FLUTE: Here, Peter Quince.

Q: You must take Thisby on you.

F: What is Thisby: a wandering knight?

Q: It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

F: Nay, faith, let me not play a woman; I have a beard coming.

Q: You shall play it in a mask, and may speak as small as you will.

B: An I may hide my face, let me play Thisby too: I'll speak in a monstrous little voice;--“Thisne, Thisne.--Ah, Pyramus, my lover dear; thy Thisby dear! and lady dear!”

Q: No, no, you must play Pyramus; and, Flute, you Thisby.--Robin Starveling, the tailor.

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