

Act 1, Scene 2 Somewhere in Athens*(QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT and STARVELING.)*

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 Thisby.'

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!
To the rest.*
Yet my chief humor* is for a tyrant. I could play Ercles* rarely.*generally* - Bottom means the opposite (individually),*To the rest* - he means name the rest of the players but he interrupts before Quince has a chance,*humor* - temperamental bent, *Ercles* - Hercules

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 Hercules' vein, a tyrant's vein. A lover is more condoling.*

QUINCE

Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

FLUTE

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

Flute, you must take Thisby on you.

FLUTE

What is Thisby? A wandering knight?

QUINCE

It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

FLUTE

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

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

And I may hide my face, let me play Thisby too. I'll speak in a monstrous little voice.
 'Thisne, Thisne!' 'Ah, Pyramus, lover dear, thy Thisby dear, and lady dear.'

QUINCE

No, no. You must play Pyramus; and, Flute, you Thisby.

BOTTOM

Well, proceed.

QUINCE

Robin Starveling, the tailor.

STARVELING

Here, Peter Quince

Phibbus' car - chariot of Apollo the sun god, *condoling* - sorrowing

QUINCE

Robin Starveling, you must play Thisby's mother.
Tom Snout, the tinker.

SNOUT

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

You, Pyramus' father; myself, Thisby'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

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

BOTTOM

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

And 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

I grant you, friends, if 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 and 'twere any nightingale.

QUINCE

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

Well, I will undertake it.
What beard were I best to play it in?

QUINCE

Why, what you will.
Masters, here are your parts;* and I am to entreat you to learn them by tomorrow night;
and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight.

extempore - improvise (make it up), *parts* - each actor is given only his character's lines and the cue lines

There will we rehearse; for if we meet in the city we will be dogged with company.
In the meantime I will draw a list of props, such as our play needs.
I pray you fail me not.

BOTTOM

We will meet, and there we may rehearse most obscenely* and courageously.
Take pains, be perfect. Adieu.

QUINCE

At the Duke's oak we meet.

(Exeunt.)