

Act Five • Scene 1 scene description

This scene takes place in the palace of the Duke. Theseus, Hippolyta, the lovers and Philostrate are gathered after dinner. Theseus asks Philostrate if there is a play to help wear away the evening between the wedding supper they have just finished and bedtime.

Philostrate says that while there is a play, it is not very good. Theseus wants to see it anyway and sends Philostrate to get the *actors*.

The actors enter and Quince proceeds to read the introductory speech that they have written which sums up the story of the play they are about to perform.

Snout comes forward and reads his speech which explains that he is portraying the wall that separates the two lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe.

Pyramus then comes on to his side of the wall and asks the wall to show the hole through which he might look to see Thisbe, which wall does. Pyramus looks through the hole and announces that he sees nothing.

Thisbe enters and chats with the wall. Pyramus hears her voice and asks her to meet him at Ninny's tomb. Thisbe agrees and they exit. Wall then exits.

Snug and Starveling come on representing Lion and Moonshine and both explain to the audience who they are. Then on comes Thisbe who lets the audience know that the setting is now "old Ninny's tomb."

Lion roars and scares Thisbe who drops her cloak and runs off. Lion then chews on the cloak leaving bloodstains on it—no doubt from previous kills—and he exits. Then Pyramus enters and when he sees the cloak stained with the blood. Pyramus assumes Thisbe has been killed and he proceeds to kill himself.

Thisbe then enters and sees that Pyramus is dead and she too commits suicide.

The actors all bow and the audience applauds and Bottom asks the Duke if he would like to see an encore piece. The Duke says no and the actors leave. Theseus announces that it is bedtime and all depart.

The fairies come on and at Oberon and Titania's command they bless the marriages and then depart leaving Puck alone onstage to bid farewell to the real audience.

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[enter Hippolyta and Theseus]

HIPPOLYTA:

It's odd, Theseus, what these lovers speak of.

THESEUS:

More odd than true. I can never believe these fantastical stories, or these fairytales. Lovers and madmen both have such seething brains, such bizarre fantasies, that they conceive more than cool reason can ever dream of.

[the lovers and Philostrate enter]

THESEUS:

Joy, dear friends! joy and fresh days of love live in your hearts!
[to Philostrate] What shall we do to wear away the time between supper and bedtime? What entertainment is there? Is there a play?

PHILOSTRATE:

There is, my lord, one that is brief, but dull: none of it makes any sense and the actors are dreadful.

THESEUS:

Who are the actors?

PHILOSTRATE:

Hard-working men from Athens who never used their brains till now.

THESEUS:

We'll hear it.

PHILOSTRATE:

No, my noble lord, you won't like it. I've heard it, and there's nothing to it; unless you'd enjoy making fun of them.

THESEUS:

I will hear that play; for nothing can be wrong when it is offered with sincerity and duty. Go, bring them in.

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PHILOSTRATE:

With your Grace's permission, the
Prologue.

QUINCE: *[as the prologue, he reads
from his script]*

Gentles, this man is Pyramus, This
beautiful lady, Thisbe. This man,
with the lime and plaster, represents
Wall, that vile wall which kept these lovers
apart: and through the crack in
the wall, they whispered. This man
represents Moonshine: since by
moonshine they did meet at Ninus'
tomb, in order to woo. This grisly beast,
[Lion roars gently] Lion is his name, scared
away Thisbe, who had arrived first,
but as she fled, her cloak fell down,
and Lion, stained it with his bloody mouth.
Later, Pyramus comes and finds his trusty
Thisbe's cloak chewed up. He then, bravely
brings out his blade and bloodies his own
breast. Then Thisbe draws his dagger
and dies. Lion, Moonshine, Wall and
the lovers will fill in the rest of the
story. *[all exit except Wall]*

SNOUT: *[as Wall, reading from his
written speech]*

In this little play, it befalls, that
I, Snout's my name, must play a wall;
and such a wall as I would have you
think, that had in it a cranny, hole,
or chink, through which the lovers,
Pyramus and Thisbe, did often whisper,
very secretly.

BOTTOM: *[as Pyramus]*

Oh night, with sky so black—alack,
alack, alack! I fear my Thisbe's
promise is forgot! Oh wall, Oh lovely

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wall, that stands between her
father's ground and mine, Oh wall,
Oh lovely wall, show me your chink
to blink through with my eye. *[wall shows
chink]* Thanks, courteous wall.
But what do I see? No Thisbe do I see.
[Flute enters]

FLUTE: *[as Thisbe]*
Oh wall, often have you heard my
moans for parting my fair Pyramus
and me.

BOTTOM: *[perks up at the sound of
Thisbe's voice]*
I see a voice! I will go to the
chink to spy if I can hear my Thisbe's
face. Thisbe!

FLUTE:
My love!

BOTTOM:
Oh, kiss me through the hole of this
vile wall.

FLUTE:
I kissed the wall's hole, not your
lips at all.

BOTTOM:
Will you meet me at Ninny's tomb right
away?

FLUTE:
I'll come without delay. *[they both
exit]*

SNOUT:
Now I, Wall, have done my part; and
so, being done, now I Wall, will go.
[he exits]

THESEUS:
Here come two noble beasts, a man
and a lion. *[Lion and Moonshine enter]*

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SNUG: *[as Lion, reads his speech]*
You ladies, who fear the smallest mouse that creeps on floors, may now quake and tremble, when the rough lion roars. But know that I am Snug, the furniture-maker; and that I would never come in strife—if I did, it would probably cost me my life.

THESEUS:
A very gentle beast, and with a good conscience. Let us hear the moon.

STARVELING: *[as Moonshine]*
All that I have to say, is to tell you, that the lantern is the moon and I am the man in the moon.

DEMETRIUS:
Here comes Thisbe. *[Flute enters]*

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

SNUG:
Oh! *[Lion roars and Thisbe exits]*

DEMETRIUS:
Excellent roaring, lion.

HIPPOLYTA:
Excellent shining, moon.

BOTTOM: *[entering]*
Sweet moon, I thank you for shining so bright; for by your gracious gleams I trust to take a taste of Thisbe's sight. But wait! What sorry sight is this! Your cloak and hood—what, stained with blood? Oh, Nature, why did you make lions, since it is a vile lion that has

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deflowered my dear: who is—
 no, no—who was the fairest dame that
 lived. Out, sword, and wound the breast
 of Pyramus: yes, that left breast where
 the heart does hop. Thus die I, thus, thus,
 thus. Now I am dead, now I am fled, my
 soul is in the sky. Tongue, lose your light!
 Moon, take flight! *[the moon exits]*
 Now die, die, die, die, die.

FLUTE: *[entering]*
 Asleep, my love? *[realizing he is dead]*
 What, dead, my dove? Oh Pyramus, arise!
 Speak, speak. Quite dumb? Dead? Dead?
 Tongue, not a word? Come, trusty sword;
 come, blade, my breast cut through! Adieu,
 adieu, adieu. *[Thisbe dies]*

BOTTOM:
 Would you like to see the
 epilogue?

THESEUS:
 No epilogue, I beg you; your play needs
 no explanation. For when all the players
 are dead, what more need be said? *[players exit]*
 Lovers, it's time for bed: it's almost fairy
 time. *[they exit and the fairies enter]*

TITANIA:
 Hand in hand, with fairy grace, we
 will dance and bless this place.

OBERON:
 So shall all the couples three
 Ever true in loving be;
 Go away; do not stay;
 But meet again by break of day.
[they exit]

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PUCK:

If we spirits have offended,
Think of this and all is mended:
That you have just slumbered here,
While these visions did appear.
Honest puck, they do me call,
So good night to you all.

[he exits]