The Mechanicals, Quince, Bottom, Flute, Starveling, Snout, Snug

Act III, Scene 1. In the woods at night, the mechanicals rehearse. Bottom is full of ideas for fixing the play. Puck, invisible, is listening.

BOTTOM
There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisby 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.

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

BOTTOM
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 most dreadful thing; for there is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living; and we ought to look to 't.

SNOUT

Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

BOTTOM
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 Thisby meet by moonlight.

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
Yes, it doth shine that night.

BOTTOM
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 lanthorn, 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 Thisby says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

SNOUT
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 rough-cast
about him, to signify wall; and let him hold his
fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus
and Thisby 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 every one
according to his cue.

Enter PUCK behind. He says somethings about how he is going to be mischievous.

QUINCE
Speak, Pyramus. Thisby, stand forth.

BOTTOM
Thisby, the flowers of odious savours sweet,--

QUINCE
Odours, odours.

BOTTOM
--odours savours sweet:
So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisby dear.
But hark, a voice! stay thou but here awhile,
And by and by I will to thee appear.

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
Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue,
Of colour 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.

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
O,--As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire.

Re-enter PUCK, and BOTTOM with an ass's head

BOTTOM
If I were fair, Thisby, I were only thine.

QUINCE
O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted. Pray, masters! fly, masters! Help!

Exeunt QUINCE, SNUG, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING. PUCK says somethings about following The MECHANICALS around and scaring them.

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

Re-enter SNOUT

SNOUT
O Bottom, thou art changed! what do I see on thee?

BOTTOM
What do you see? you see an asshead of your own, do you?