

### **The Story of Pyramus and Thisbe**

In Babylon, where first her queen, for state  
Rais'd walls of brick magnificently great,  
Liv'd Pyramus, and Thisbe, lovely pair!  
He found no eastern youth his equal there,  
And she beyond the fairest nymph was fair.  
A closer neighbourhood was never known,  
Tho' two the houses, yet the roof was one.  
Acquaintance grew, th' acquaintance they improve  
To friendship, friendship ripen'd into love:  
Love had been crown'd, but impotently mad,  
What parents could not hinder, they forbad.  
For with fierce flames young Pyramus still burn'd,  
And grateful Thisbe flames as fierce return'd.  
Aloud in words their thoughts they dare not break,  
But silent stand; and silent looks can speak.  
The fire of love the more it is suppress,  
The more it glows, and rages in the breast.  
When the division-wall was built, a chink  
Was left, the cement unobserv'd to shrink.  
So slight the cranny, that it still had been  
For centuries unclos'd, because unseen.  
But oh! what thing so small, so secret lies,  
Which scapes, if form'd for love, a lover's eyes?  
Ev'n in this narrow chink they quickly found  
A friendly passage for a trackless sound.  
Safely they told their sorrows, and their joys,  
In whisper'd murmurs, and a dying noise,  
By turns to catch each other's breath they strove,  
And suck'd in all the balmy breeze of love.  
Oft as on diff'rent sides they stood, they cry'd,  
Malicious wall, thus lovers to divide!  
Suppose, thou should'st a-while to us give place  
To lock, and fasten in a close embrace:  
But if too much to grant so sweet a bliss,  
Indulge at least the pleasure of a kiss.  
We scorn ingratitude: to thee, we know,  
This safe conveyance of our minds we owe.  
Thus they their vain petition did renew  
'Till night, and then they softly sigh'd adieu.  
But first they strove to kiss, and that was all;  
Their kisses dy'd untasted on the wall.  
Soon as the morn had o'er the stars prevail'd,  
And warm'd by Phoebus, flow'rs their dews exhal'd,  
The lovers to their well-known place return,  
Alike they suffer, and alike they mourn.  
At last their parents they resolve to cheat  
(If to deceive in love be call'd deceit),  
To steal by night from home, and thence unknown  
To seek the fields, and quit th' unfaithful town.  
But, to prevent their wand'ring in the dark,  
They both agree to fix upon a mark;  
A mark, that could not their designs expose:  
The tomb of Ninus was the mark they chose.

There they might rest secure beneath the shade,  
 Which boughs, with snowy fruit encumber'd, made:  
 A wide-spread mulberry its rise had took  
 Just on the margin of a gurgling brook.  
 Impatient for the friendly dusk they stay;  
 And chide the slowness of departing day;  
 In western seas down sunk at last the light,  
 From western seas up-rose the shades of night.  
 The loving Thisbe ev'n prevents the hour,  
 With cautious silence she unlocks the door,  
 And veils her face, and marching thro' the gloom  
 Swiftly arrives at th' assignation-tomb.  
 For still the fearful sex can fearless prove;  
 Boldly they act, if spirited by love.  
 When lo! a lioness rush'd o'er the plain,  
 Grimly besmear'd with blood of oxen slain:  
 And what to the dire sight new horrors brought,  
 To slake her thirst the neighb'ring spring she sought.  
 Which, by the moon, when trembling Thisbe spies,  
 Wing'd with her fear, swift, as the wind, she flies;  
 And in a cave recovers from her fright,  
 But drop'd her veil, confounded in her flight.  
 When sated with repeated draughts, again  
 The queen of beasts scour'd back along the plain,  
 She found the veil, and mouthing it all o'er,  
 With bloody jaws the lifeless prey she tore.  
 The youth, who could not cheat his guards so soon,  
 Late came, and noted by the glimm'ring moon  
 Some savage feet, new printed on the ground,  
 His cheeks turn'd pale, his limbs no vigour found;  
 But when, advancing on, the veil he spied  
 Distain'd with blood, and ghastly torn, he cried,  
 One night shall death to two young lovers give,  
 But she deserv'd unnumber'd years to live!  
 'Tis I am guilty, I have thee betray'd,  
 Who came not early, as my charming maid.  
 Whatever slew thee, I the cause remain,  
 I nam'd, and fix'd the place where thou wast slain.  
 Ye lions from your neighb'ring dens repair,  
 Pity the wretch, this impious body tear!  
 But cowards thus for death can idly cry;  
 The brave still have it in their pow'r to die.  
 Then to th' appointed tree he hastes away,  
 The veil first gather'd, tho' all rent it lay:  
 The veil all rent yet still it self endears,  
 He kist, and kissing, wash'd it with his tears.  
 Tho' rich (he cry'd) with many a precious stain,  
 Still from my blood a deeper tincture gain.  
 Then in his breast his shining sword he drown'd,  
 And fell supine, extended on the ground.  
 As out again the blade lie dying drew,  
 Out spun the blood, and streaming upwards flew.  
 So if a conduit-pipe e'er burst you saw,  
 Swift spring the gushing waters thro' the flaw:

Then spouting in a bow, they rise on high,  
 And a new fountain plays amid the sky.  
 The berries, stain'd with blood, began to show  
 A dark complexion, and forgot their snow;  
 While fatten'd with the flowing gore, the root  
 Was doom'd for ever to a purple fruit.  
 Mean-time poor Thisbe fear'd, so long she stay'd,  
 Her lover might suspect a perjur'd maid.  
 Her fright scarce o'er, she strove the youth to find  
 With ardent eyes, which spoke an ardent mind.  
 Iready in his arms, she hears him sigh  
 At her destruction, which was once so nigh.  
 The tomb, the tree, but not the fruit she knew,  
 The fruit she doubted for its alter'd hue.  
 Still as she doubts, her eyes a body found  
 Quiv'ring in death, and gasping on the ground.  
 She started back, the red her cheeks forsook,  
 And ev'ry nerve with thrilling horrors shook.  
 So trembles the smooth surface of the seas,  
 If brush'd o'er gently with a rising breeze.  
 But when her view her bleeding love confest,  
 She shriek'd, she tore her hair, she beat her breast.  
 She rais'd the body, and embrac'd it round,  
 And bath'd with tears unfeign'd the gaping wound.  
 Then her warm lips to the cold face apply'd,  
 And is it thus, ah! thus we meet, she cry'd!  
 My Pyramus! whence sprung thy cruel fate?  
 My Pyramus!- ah! speak, ere 'tis too late.  
 I, thy own Thisbe, but one word implore,  
 One word thy Thisbe never ask'd before.  
 At Thisbe's name, awak'd, he open'd wide  
 His dying eyes; with dying eyes he try'd  
 On her to dwell, but clos'd them slow, and dy'd.  
 The fatal cause was now at last explor'd,  
 Her veil she knew, and saw his sheathless sword:  
 From thy own hand thy ruin thou hast found,  
 She said, but love first taught that hand to wound,  
 Ev'n I for thee as bold a hand can show,  
 And love, which shall as true direct the blow.  
 I will against the woman's weakness strive,  
 And never thee, lamented youth, survive.  
 The world may say, I caus'd, alas! thy death,  
 But saw thee breathless, and resign'd my breath.  
 Fate, tho' it conquers, shall no triumph gain,  
 Fate, that divides us, still divides in vain.  
 Now, both our cruel parents, hear my pray'r;  
 My pray'r to offer for us both I dare;  
 Oh! see our ashes in one urn confin'd,  
 Whom love at first, and fate at last has join'd.  
 The bliss, you envy'd, is not our request;  
 Lovers, when dead, may sure together rest.  
 Thou, tree, where now one lifeless lump is laid,  
 Ere-long o'er two shalt cast a friendly shade.  
 Still let our loves from thee be understood,

Still witness in thy purple fruit our blood.  
She spoke, and in her bosom plung'd the sword,  
All warm and reeking from its slaughter'd lord.  
The pray'r, which dying Thisbe had preferr'd,  
Both Gods, and parents, with compassion heard.  
The whiteness of the mulberry soon fled,  
And rip'ning, sadden'd in a dusky red:  
While both their parents their lost children mourn,  
And mix their ashes in one golden urn.  
Thus did the melancholy tale conclude,  
And a short, silent interval ensu'd.