

## The Story of Pyramus and Thisbe

Pyramus and Thisbe, the most beautiful youths in all of Babylon, lived next door to each other. Because they lived so close to each other, they met and quickly fell in love. Over time, their love only increased. They would have been married, but their fathers forbade it.

The wall shared by both of their houses had been split by a thin crack that had developed long ago when the houses were built. Throughout all the years that the houses existed, no one ever noticed that defect – but what do lovers not find? Pyramus and Thisbe noticed it before their parents did and began to speak through it to each other. They would stand at the wall and say things like, “O hateful wall, why are you an obstacle for lovers! Why can’t you open up so we can see each other?! But we are still thankful: we need you, because you give us a passageway for our words of love.”

Eventually, the two lovers decided that they would try to deceive their parents at night and silently leave the city. They would meet at the tomb of Ninus, where they could hide beneath the shadow of a tree. The tree was very rich in fruits; it was a bountiful mulberry tree, close to a chilly stream.

Crafty Thisbe opened the door, walked through the shadows, and veiled her face. She traveled to the tomb and sat beneath the tree. Her love made her brave. A lioness, whose face was smeared with blood from a recent kill, came to drink from the water of a nearby fountain. Thisbe fled into a nearby cave, and while she was fleeing, she accidentally dropped her shawl. After the savage lioness quenched her thirst and as she was about to return to the woods, she picked up Thisbe’s shawl with her bloody mouth.

Later, Pyramus walked by and saw the footsteps of a fierce beast in the deep sand and he became scared. Then he discovered the shawl tinged with blood. He picked it up and carried it to the tree, where he wept and kissed the shawl. He thought that Thisbe was dead and was so overcome with grief that he plunged his sword into his own body. The white mulberries became soaked with his blood, and turned purple in color – the color that mulberries are today.



At this point, Thisbe returned to the tree. She did not know what had happened and wanted to tell her lover how she had avoided the lioness. But she no longer recognized the mulberry tree, since its fruit had changed color – she couldn’t tell if this was the right tree! While she hesitated, she saw the body of Pyramus on the ground. She recognized him and began to weep, shouting “Pyramus! Why have we been torn apart? Pyramus, talk to me! O my dearest, it’s Thisbe, listen and raise your head!” Hearing her, Pyramus raised his eyes to look at her. But as soon as he saw her, he closed them again.

After she found her shawl and saw the bloody sword on the ground, Thisbe realized why Pyramus had killed himself. She knew that she was the cause of his death and threw herself on the sword, taking her own life as well.

