The house of Pyramus\(^1\) and that of Thisbe\(^2\) stood side by side within the mighty city ringed by the tall brick walls Semíramis had built—so we are told. If you searched all the East, you'd find no girl with greater charm than Thisbe; and no boy in Babylon was handsomer than Pyramus. They owed their first encounters to their living close beside each other—but with time, love grows.

Their's did—indeed they wanted to be wed, but marriage was forbidden by their parents: yet there's one thing that parents can't prevent: the flame of love that burned in both of them. They had no confidant—and so used signs: with these each lover read the other's mind: when covered, fire acquires still more force.

The wall their houses shared had one thin crack, which formed when they were built and then was left; in all these years, no one had seen that cleft; but lovers will discover every thing: you were the first to find it, and you made that cleft a passageway which speech could take. For there the least of whispers was kept safe: it crossed that cleft with words of tenderness.

And Pyramus and Thisbe often stood, he on this side and she on that; and when each heard the other sigh, the lovers said: “O jealous wall, why do you block our path? Oh wouldn't it be better if you let our bodies join each other fully or, if that is asking for too much, just stretched your fissure wide enough to let us kiss!

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1. **Pyramus** (pɪˈrəməs).
2. **Thisbe** (θɪzˈbɛ).
3. **the mighty city ... had built**: the walled city of Babylon (bæˈbən), the ruins of which are south of Baghdad, Iraq. In Greek mythology, it was founded by Semíramis (saˈmɪrəmɪs), a powerful Assyrian queen.