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## Debate Between Tybalt and Capulet: a Foreshadowing Conversation

In *Romeo and Juliet*, many ironic situations foreshadowing their doomed result. In the passage where Tybalt and Capulet debate at the masquerade feast, there are many lines that directly foreshadow two important components of the play: Romeo's murder of Tybalt, and Romeo and Juliet's efforts to hide their romance from their families. Their confrontation also introduces one of the play's themes, the idea of adult wisdom over youth naiveté.

*Romeo and Juliet* follows the story of two lovers who are bound apart by their rival families, the Montagues and the Capulets, who have been perpetually feuding for reasons unknown. Every character of the play is very loyal to their family. The play begins with Romeo's infatuation with Rosaline; he says she is the most beautiful girl he has ever laid his eyes on, and her lack of reciprocal feelings makes him very upset. Benvolio, Romeo's cousin, is determined to help Romeo overcome his feelings for Rosaline. They acquire invitations to the Capulet masquerade party, where Benvolio intends to distract Romeo with girls that are more beautiful than Rosaline, but Romeo just wants to go to the ball as an excuse to see her.

As Romeo is making his way through the crowd, he lays his eyes on Juliet for the first time, and vocalizes his sudden infatuation with her. Tybalt, Juliet's cousin and a confrontational fighter with a history with Romeo, identifies his voice, and immediately prepares to fight, as Capulet tells him to leave Romeo alone.

In the passage in question, Tybalt hears Romeo and immediately asks his page to fetch his rapier. He explains to Capulet, his aunt's husband, that this man is a Montague, and prepares to fight him. Capulet tells Tybalt to calm down, that Romeo is indeed a good man. "[Romeo] bears him like a portly gentleman, and, to say truth, Verona brags of him to be a virtuous and well-governed youth". (V.iii.65-67) He says that he would never dare insult Romeo in his own house for all the wealth in the town, and tells Tybalt to tolerate him, and leave him alone. Capulet is the boss, after all, and Tybalt must not cause a riot among his guests. He talks down on Tybalt, telling him that he is a rude little boy and that his stupidity will come back to bite him (ironically, the very next day). At the end of the passage, Tybalt hints that Romeo's appearance at the party will hurt him later.

Capulet's surprising praise of Romeo to Tybalt foreshadows two vital plot elements. Capulet tells Tybalt in this scene that Romeo is a well-revered gentleman, and that there is nothing to worry about regarding him—this is ironic because the very next day, Tybalt provokes Romeo in a

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fight (again), and Romeo ends up killing him. When one initially reads this scene, it just seems that Capulet is exhibiting his wisdom by being accepting of a rival family, but in hindsight, it is evident that Capulet's praising of Romeo to Tybalt is just ironic foreshadowing pointing to his death around the corner. "You are a saucy boy. Is 't so, indeed? This trick may chance to scathe you" (I.v.82-83). Capulet warns Tybalt that his confrontational nature with Romeo will have its consequences shortly.

Capulet's praising of Romeo is also ironic because the whole effortful privatization of Romeo and Juliet's relationship could have essentially been avoided if Juliet knew how her father truly felt about Romeo. With that knowledge, she likely would have told her parents about Romeo from the start, and never had to go through with Friar Lawrence's crazy plan involving the sleeping potion, which resulted in both her and Romeo's death. It is ironic that moments after Romeo first lays his eyes on Juliet, and begins the hiding of their relationship, Capulet praises the very man that Juliet is afraid will be unacceptable by her family.

This confrontational scene also introduces the theme of adult wisdom verses childhood naiveté. Capulet speaks to Tybalt, "He shall be endured. What, Goodman boy! I say, he shall. Go to. Am I the master here, or you? Go to." (I.v.76-78) He is setting his power straight with teenager, and making it clear that he must do as he says. He rhetorically questions, is it he in charge of the house, or naïve Tybalt? He affirms his authority, and then tells Tybalt that he is rude, and will pay for his actions. "You are a saucy boy. Is 't so, indeed? This trick may chance to scathe you" (I.v.82-83). Capulet warns Tybalt that he is more naïve than he thinks.

This theme is exhibited through other characters too. When Romeo consults Friar Lawrence about his newfound love for Juliet and begs Lawrence to marry them, Friar Lawrence comments how suddenly his attention has shifted from Rosaline to Juliet. He comments on how recently he loved a different women, that "here upon thy cheek the stain doth sit/ Of an old tear that is not washed off yet." (II.III.75-76) He questions how Romeo, with tears still on his cheek that he shed over his last woman, could possibly love this new woman already, and gives his opinions on relationships. He uses his authority to talk down to young Romeo, almost in a mocking way. They argue about what advice Lawrence had previously given Romeo, and Lawrence tells Romeo he told him to "bury" his love for Rosaline, not to replace it with another equally foolish alternative. "Not in a grave/ To lay one in, another out to have." (II.iii.83-84) Even though he treats Romeo as a friend when he agrees to secretly marry them, he speaks to him as a father when he scolds him for loving so foolishly, and in such a fickle way.

Right before Juliet arrives at the confession cell to be married, Friar Lawrence warns Romeo to be cautious about this seemingly perfect romance. "These violent delights have violent ends/ And in their triumph die, like fire and powder,/ Which, as they kiss, consume. The sweetest honey/ Is loathsome in his own deliciousness/ And in the taste confounds the appetite.

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Therefore love moderately. Long love doth so. Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow. “ (II.v.9-15) He feels the need to give Romeo excessive amounts of romantic advice, because he has obviously exhibited childish, impulsive behavior throughout the play. Between committing his undying love for Rosaline, and then instantly declaring that he must marry Juliet, he is clearly not a rational thinker.

This father-child theme of wisdom is also displayed when Capulet becomes upset that Juliet does not initially comply with his wishes and agree to marry Paris. When Juliet becomes enraged with this decision, Capulet gives her an earful for daring to defy his authority. He becomes upset that she is not acknowledging his authority and effort in finding her a suitable husband. “Mistress minion you/ Thank me no thankings, nor proud me no prouds,” (III.v.152-153). He scolds her for not thanking him, and condescends her childhood immaturity.

He barely defends his argument as to why Paris would be a good suitor; rather, he preserves his position as her father, and that she should unconditionally accept his opinions as correct, and be grateful for his help. He essentially mocks her for being so naïve, and continues this theme of adults knowing best.

Even when Romeo dies, his father becomes angry that Romeo got to the grave first; instead of being upset because of his death, his first remark is “O thou untaught! What manners is in this/ To press before thy father to a grave?” (V.iii.229-231). The play contains numerous examples of the adults patronizing the young characters’ impulsivity, and naiveté.

This conflict between Capulet and Tybalt seems like a basic exchange, but it foreshadows future plot events by providing situational irony regarding things that happen in the near future. It also introduces one of the play’s key themes of adult wisdom over childhood naïveté, which appears multiple times throughout the rest of the play.

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