

Romeo and Juliet Notes

THE PROLOGUE

The narrator of the prologue, known as chorus, gives the audience a preview of the play. The prologue is in the form of a sonnet, a 14 lined poem with a special rhyming scheme. It does not give an adequate summary of the plot although it draws attention to its tragic theme. This however HAS NO REFERENCE to the Nurse, Mercutio, and friar Lawrence. The first four lines of the prologue refer to this old quarrel, between the Montagues and the Capulets. This resulted in that generation that whenever they see each other it would result in a bloody brawl. The second four introduce the two lovers, Romeo and Juliet, whose deaths, are linked to the feuds, bring about its end and the reconciliation of the Montagues and Capulets. This outcome is described in lines 8-11. An important purpose of the prologue is to suggest that what happens to Romeo and Juliet is inevitable, and that there is nothing that they can do to avoid their dreadful faith.

ACT 1 SCENE 1

This scene expands on what we have been told in the prologue about the effects of the feud between the Montagues and Capulets. Nobody knows when, how or why this feud began. The two Capulet servants, Sampson and Gregory, boast about their part in the feud with the Montagues. As soon as the two Montague servants, Abram and Balthasar, approach, the Capulets try and start a fight. Benvolio, a Montague, tries to keep peace between the two sides. The arrival of Tybalt, A Capulet, converts and extends the fight into a public brawl and invites the two family leaders into the brawl. When the prince of Verona arrived he told that any brawls in the future will result in a death as a penalty of disturbing the peace. Meanwhile Romeo is walking at the edges of the city because he loves Rosaline but she doesn't love him back. Benvolio knows better than Romeo and gives him advice.

ACT 1 SCENE 5

This scene reveals an astonishing change in Romeo and shows how unreal his love for Rosaline has been. The change in his outlook is brought about by his sight of Juliet dancing with a nobleman. Now as Romeo looks at Juliet, she appears like a snowy dove trooping with crows. He quickly makes his feelings known to Juliet, who feels as strongly about him as he does to her. When each find out who the other is, a terrible truth becomes obvious. Romeo realises that his life and happiness are in the hands of the Capulets, the sworn enemies of his family. In despite for their overwhelming love for each other, they both feel deeply troubled about the results it may have. The rude, aggressive behaviour that Tybalt has shows that Romeo and Juliet have good reason to worry. In this scene, the seeds of tragedy for Romeo and Juliet have already been sown.

ACT 2 SCENE 2

Inside the Capulets garden Romeo observes Juliet at her window., He marvels at her beauty, which he celebrates in images of brightness. She is not aware as that Romeo is there when she expresses her feelings for Romeo in the balcony.

**‘DENY THY FATHER AND REFUSE THY NAME
OR, IF THOU WILT NOT, BE BUT SWORN MY LOVE,
AND I WILL NO LONGER BE A CAPULET.’**

(LINES 34-6)

Although Juliets love for Romeo is, even at this stage, unconditional, she is fearful. Her fears are well founded. She does not exaggerate when she tells Romeo that her kinsmen will murder him if they see him in the grounds of her home. While she is overjoyed at his declaration of love, she realises that their exchange of lovers voe is too rash, too unadvised. Too sudden. Romeo makes his way to the friars cell, to tell him the good news and to seek his advice.

ACT 3 SCENE 1

Up to this point the play has been mainly comic in tone. Much of it has been taken up with crude jokes and puns. We have had the coarse, double meaning talk of the nurse and of Romeo's friends, particularly Mercutio. So far, the feuding family's have not shown a sign of disobeying the prince's order, given in act 1 scene 1 to refrain from conflict. Everything changes in this scene. The change is brought about by Tybalt who is determined by not to let the feud between the Capulets and Montagues die.

ACT 3 SCENE 5

Just before dawn, Romeo prepares to lower himself from Juliet's window to begin his exile. Juliet tries to convince Romeo that the birdcalls they hear are from the nightingale, a night bird, rather than from the lark, a morning bird. Romeo cannot entertain her claims; he must leave before the morning comes or be put to death. Juliet declares that the light outside comes not from the sun, but from some meteor. Overcome by love, Romeo responds that he will stay with Juliet, and that he does not care whether the Prince's men kill him. Faced with this turnaround, Juliet declares that the bird they heard was the lark; that it is dawn and he must flee. The Nurse enters to warn Juliet that Lady Capulet is approaching. Romeo and Juliet tearfully part. Romeo climbs out the window. Standing in the orchard below her window, Romeo promises Juliet that they will see one another again, but Juliet responds that he appears pale, as one dead in the bottom of a tomb. Romeo answers that, to him, she appears the same way, and that it is only sorrow that makes them both look pale. Romeo hurries away as Juliet pulls in the ladder and begs fate to bring him back to her quickly.

Lady Capulet calls to her daughter. Juliet wonders why her mother would come to speak to her so early in the morning. Unaware that her daughter is married to Romeo, Lady Capulet enters the room and mistakes Juliet's tears as continued grief for Tybalt. Lady Capulet tells Juliet of her deep desire to see "the villain Romeo" dead (3.5.80). In a complicated bit of punning every bit as impressive as the sexual punning of Mercutio and Romeo, Juliet leads her mother to believe that she also wishes Romeo's death, when in fact she is firmly stating her love for him. Lady Capulet tells Juliet about Capulet's plan for her to marry Paris on Thursday, explaining that he wishes to make her happy. Juliet is appalled. She rejects the match, saying "I will not marry yet; and when I do, I swear / It shall be Romeo—whom you know I hate— / Rather than Paris" (3.5.121–123). Capulet enters the chamber. When he learns of Juliet's determination to

defy him he becomes enraged and threatens to disown Juliet if she refuses to obey him. When Juliet entreats her mother to intercede, her mother denies her help.

ACT 4 SCENE 3

In her bedchamber, Juliet asks the Nurse to let her spend the night by herself, and repeats the request to Lady Capulet when she arrives. Alone, clutching the vial given to her by Friar Lawrence, she wonders what will happen when she drinks it. If the friar is untrustworthy and seeks merely to hide his role in her marriage to Romeo, she might die; or, if Romeo is late for some reason, she might awaken in the tomb and go mad with fear. She has a vision in which she sees Tybalt's ghost searching for Romeo. She begs Tybalt's ghost to quit its search for Romeo, and toasting to Romeo, drinks the contents of the vial.

ACT 5 SCENE 3

In the churchyard that night, Paris enters with a torch-bearing servant. He orders the page to withdraw, then begins scattering flowers on Juliet's grave. He hears a whistle—the servant's warning that someone is approaching. He withdraws into the darkness. Romeo, carrying a crowbar, enters with Balthasar. He tells Balthasar that he has come to open the Capulet tomb in order to take back a valuable ring he had given to Juliet. Then he orders Balthasar to leave, and, in the morning, to deliver to Montague the letter Romeo had given him. Balthasar withdraws, but, mistrusting his master's intentions, lingers to watch.

From his hiding place, Paris recognizes Romeo as the man who murdered Tybalt, and thus as the man who indirectly murdered Juliet, since it is her grief for her cousin that is supposed to have killed her. As Romeo has been exiled from the city on penalty of death, Paris thinks that Romeo must hate the Capulets so much that he has returned to the tomb to do some dishonor to the corpse of either Tybalt or Juliet. In a rage, Paris accosts Romeo. Romeo pleads with him to leave, but Paris refuses. They draw their swords and fight. Paris's page runs off to get the civil watch. Romeo kills Paris. As he dies, Paris asks to be laid near Juliet in the tomb, and Romeo consents.