

Othello

CHARACTERS

- DUKE OF VENICE.
- BRABANTIO, A senator, Desdemona's father.
- GRATIANO, Brabantio's brother. } two noble
- LODOVICO, a relative of Brabantio. } Venetians.
- OTHELLO, the Moor, in the military service of Venice.
- CASSIO, his respected lieutenant.
- IAGO, Othello's ensign; a villain.
- RODERIGO, a gullible gentleman.
- MONTANO, the governor of Cyprus before Othello.
- CLOWN, Othello's servant.
- DESDEMONA, Brabantio's daughter and Othello's wife.
- EMILIA, Iago's wife.
- BIANCA, a prostitute.
- Gentlemen of Cyprus, sailors, officers, messenger, herald, musicians, attendants, and senators.

SCENE: Venice; Cyprus.

Act I, Scene i: A street in Venice. Enter RODERIGO and IAGO.

RODERIGO  
What! Not tell me? I take it very badly that you, Iago, who have had my money as if it were your own, would know about this.

IAGO  
By God, you just won't listen to me! If I ever dreamed up such a thing, you can hate me for it.

RODERIGO  
You told me you hated him.

IAGO  
Despise me if I don't. Three great men in the city personally asked him to make me his lieutenant and took off their hats to him; and, by God, I know what I'm worth; I deserve no lower rank. But he, in love with his own pride and purposes, evades my friends with roundabout talk, overblown with lots of epithets of war; and, to sum up, he denies my mediators. "Certainly," he says, "I've already picked my officer." And who is he? No one but a great tactician, a certain Michael Cassio, a Florentine (a man whose good-looking wife spells trouble for him) who never led a squadron on the field, and doesn't know the first thing about war no more than a spinster does—unless you mean book learning, in which elderly statesmen are just as learned as he is. Just talk and no experience: that's the kind of soldier he is. But he, sir, was chosen; and I (whose abilities he has seen at Rhodes, Cyprus, and in other countries both Christian and heathen) must be stopped head-on

by this accountant, this bookkeeper.  
He (lucky me!) will be his lieutenant,  
and I (God help us all!), the noble Moor's ensign.

RODERIGO  
By heaven, I would rather be his hangman.

35 IAGO  
Well, there's nothing to be done; this is what comes of good  
service.  
Promotion comes from influence and personal liking  
and not from good old seniority, where a man second in line  
is heir to the one in first place. Now, sir, judge for  
yourself  
40 if I am bound by any good reason  
to love the Moor.

RODERIGO  
I wouldn't follow him, then.

IAGO

Oh, sir, rest assured.

I'll follow him to get back at him.  
We can't all be in charge, and some who are in charge  
45 can't be honestly followed. You will notice  
many a dutiful, bowing rascal  
who, delighting in his own subservience,  
uses up his time much like his master's donkey does,  
for nothing except his feed. And when he's old, he's  
dismissed.

50 You can whip those honest rascals for all I care! There are others  
who, putting on a good show of duty,  
are really looking out for their own interests;  
and, giving their lords just a hollow show of duty,  
they get along quite well. When they've stuffed their pockets,  
55 they serve themselves and no one else. These fellows have  
some spirit,  
and I consider myself to be one of their sort. Because, sir,  
as sure as your name is Roderigo,  
if I were the Moor, I wouldn't be Iago.  
In following him, I'm really following my own desires.  
60 As heaven is my judge, I'll not act with sincere love and duty,  
but I'll seem to, for my own personal ends;  
for when my behavior truly reflects  
the real motives of my heart

65 in outward appearance, it won't be long  
before I wear my heart on my sleeve  
for jackdaws to peck at. I'm never what I seem to be.

RODERIGO  
What good luck the thick-lips has  
if he can get away with this!

70 IAGO  
Wake up her father:  
get him riled. Chase after Othello and ruin his joy,  
mock him in the streets, outrage her relatives,  
and though he lives in a pleasant climate,  
annoy him with flies. If we can't stop his joy from being joy,  
75 we can at least cause him enough trouble  
to make it lose some of its flavor.

RODERIGO  
Here's her father's house. I'll call out.

IAGO  
Do so, and with a terrifying voice and a desperate yell,  
as when, because of some carelessness at night, a fire  
has been spotted in a populous city.

80 RODERIGO  
Hello! Brabantio! Signior Brabantio! Hello!

IAGO  
Wake up! Hello, Brabantio! Thieves! Thieves! Thieves!  
Check your house, your daughter, and your money!  
Thieves! Thieves!

*Enter BRABANTIO at an upstairs window.*

85 BRABANTIO  
What's the reason for this awful racket?  
What's the matter here?

RODERIGO  
Signior, is all your family indoors?

Moslem people living in northwest Africa—are not black. However, Shakespeare quite possibly did not know or was not discriminating about the racial appearance of Moors. Also, references such as Roderigo's here, as well as later remarks about Othello's "sooty" and "black" coloring, seem to indicate that Shakespeare pictured Othello as black. See A.C. Bradley's discussion of the issue in *Shakespearean Tragedy*.

IAGO  
Are your doors locked?

BRABANTIO  
Why? What's your reason for asking?

IAGO  
Heavens, sir, you've been robbed! For shame, put on your gown!  
Your heart has been burst, you've lost half your soul.  
Even now, now, right now, an old black ram  
is mating with your white ewe. Get up, get up!  
Wake up your snoring neighbors with the bell,  
or else the devil will make you a grandfather.  
Get up, I tell you!

BRABANTIO  
What, are you out of your mind?

RODERIGO  
Most honored gentleman, don't you know my voice?

BRABANTIO  
No. Who are you?

RODERIGO  
My name is Roderigo.

BRABANTIO  
You're not welcome here!  
I've told you not to hang around my door!  
You've heard me say quite plainly  
that my daughter is not for you. And now, like a crazy man  
full of supper and intoxicating drink,  
you come here with dangerous mischief  
to disrupt my peace.

RODERIGO  
Sir, sir, sir—

BRABANTIO  
But you should be told  
that, with my temper and my position, I have it in my power  
to make you pay for this.

RODERIGO  
Be patient, good sir.

BRABANTIO  
Why do you talk to me of robbing? This is Venice,  
not some out-of-the-way farmhouse.

RODERIGO  
Most reverend Brabantio,  
I have come here with pure and simple motives.

IAGO  
Heavens, sir, you're one of those who wouldn't serve God if the  
devil told you to. Because we have come to help you, and you think  
we are ruffians, you'll let your daughter be mated with a Moorish  
horse. You'll have your grandsons neigh at you. You'll have  
chargers  
for relations and Spanish horses for your nearest family.

BRABANTIO  
What kind of foul-mouthed creature are you?

IAGO  
I am a man, sir, who has come to tell you that your daughter  
and the Moor  
are now making the beast with two backs.

BRABANTIO  
You are a villain.

IAGO  
You are—a senator.

BRABANTIO  
You'll answer for this. I know who you are, Roderigo.

RODERIGO  
Sir, I'll answer everything. But I beg you,  
if it is with your desire and your wise consent  
(as I'm starting to think it is) that your lovely daughter,  
at this strange hour between night and morning,  
has been carried off with no worse or better a guard  
than a lowly, hired rascal, a gondolier,  
and delivered to the repulsive embraces of a lascivious Moor—  
if you know this already, and you allow it,  
we then have done you a bold and insolent wrong.

But if you do not know this, my sense of fair play tells me that you rebuke us wrongly. Don't believe that, from a feeling of propriety alone, I would come like this to tease and play games with a respectable man like you.

140 Your daughter, if you haven't given her permission, I tell you again, has rebelled outrageously, trying her duty, beauty, intelligence, and fortunes to a wandering and vagrant stranger who lives here and everywhere. Go see for yourself at once. If she is in her room, or your house, bring the justice of the state against me for deceiving you like this.

145

BRABANTIO

Light the kindling, now!  
Give me a candle! Wake up the household!  
What you've said is not unlike my dream;  
I'm already disturbed by my belief in it.  
Light, I say! Light!  
*He exits from above.*

150

IAGO

Goodbye, for I must leave you.  
It doesn't seem proper or beneficial to my position to be a witness (as I will be if I stay) against the Moor. For I know that the state, though it might give him a slight reprimand, can't dismiss him safely. For I know he's on his way with a great to-do to the Cyprus wars, which are going on right now. And to save their souls, they don't have another man with his abilities to take charge of their business. Therefore, though I hate him as much as I hate the pains of hell, still, the present circumstances make it necessary for me to put on an outward appearance of love—which is really just a show. To be sure that you'll find him, bring your search party to the Sagittary, and I'll be with him there. So, goodbye.  
*He exits.*

160

BRABANTIO enters below in his nightgown, with  
SERVANTS carrying torches.

170 BRABANTIO  
This evil thing is all too true. She's gone; and what's left of my wretched life will be nothing but bitterness. Now, Roderigo, where did you see her?—Oh, the unfortunate girl!—With the Moor, you said?—Who would want to be a father?—How did you know it was her?—Oh, she deceives me beyond imagining!—What did she say to you?—Get more candles! Wake up my family!—Are they already married, do you think?

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RODERIGO

Indeed, I think they are.

BRABANTIO

180 Oh, heavens! How did she get out? Oh, to have my own flesh and blood rebel like this! Fathers, from now on, never trust your daughters' minds on the basis of what you see them do. Aren't there magical spells by which the nature of youth and virginity can be deluded? Haven't you read, Roderigo, about this sort of thing?

RODERIGO

Yes, sir, I certainly have.

BRABANTIO

185 Wake up my brother.—Oh, if only she had been yours!—  
*(To his servants)* Some of you go one way, and some of you go another. *(To Roderigo)* Do you know where we may apprehend her and the Moor?

RODERIGO

I think I can find him if you will get a good escort and come along with me.

BRABANTIO

190 Please lead on. I'll call out at every house; I'm influential enough to get help from most of them. *(To his servants)* Get weapons at once, and wake up the special night guards! Let's go, good Roderigo. I'll reward your efforts.  
*They exit.*

*Act I, Scene ii: Another street. Enter OTHELLO, IAGO, ATTENDANTS, with torches.*

IAGO

Though in the practice of war I have killed men, still, I consider it the very essence of principle to not commit premeditated murder. Sometimes I don't have enough wickedness to serve my own needs. Nine or ten times I considered jabbing him right here, under the ribs.

OTHELLO

It's better as it is.

IAGO

No, but he spoke rudely and said such insulting and provoking things against your honor that, with what little patience I have, I could scarcely stop from attacking him. But I ask you, sir, are you securely married? You can be sure of this: Brabantio is much loved and has enough of a voice in things to match the duke. He'll see to it that you're divorced, or bring whatever restraints and charges against you which the law, with all his power to enforce it, will allow him to do.

OTHELLO

Let him do his worst. The services which I have performed for the state will speak louder than his complaints. It's not yet known—but when I find out it's honorable to boast, I will proclaim it—that I am descended from men of royal rank. And for my just deserts, I have the right to claim (without apology) as fine a fortune as the one I have gained by marriage. Be sure of this, Iago: if I didn't love the gentle Desdemona so much, I wouldn't have my unconfined, free condition put into boundaries and confines for all the treasure in the sea. But look; some torchbearers are coming.

*Enter CASSIO and OFFICERS with torches.*

IAGO

They are the awakened father and his friends. You'd better get inside.

OTHELLO

Not I. I must be found. My talents, my title, and my clean conscience will speak well of me. Is it them?

IAGO

By Janus, I don't think so.

OTHELLO

The duke's servants? And my lieutenant? Best wishes of the night to you, friends! What's the news?

CASSIO

The duke sends his greetings, general; and he asks that you immediately appear before him this very instant.

OTHELLO

What do you think is the matter?

CASSIO

Some news from Cyprus, I imagine. It's urgent business. The officers of the galleys have sent a dozen messengers consecutively, this very night, at one another's heels. And many of the consuls, awake and gathered, are already at the duke's. You have been urgently called for. When you were not to be found at your home, the senate sent out three separate parties to search for you.

OTHELLO

It's good that you have found me. I have just a word to say inside, and then I'll go with you.

*Exit*

CASSIO  
Ensign, what's he doing here?

IAGO  
To tell the truth, he has boarded a rich vessel tonight.  
If it proves a lawful prize, he's set for life.

CASSIO  
I don't understand.

IAGO  
He's married.

CASSIO  
To whom?  
*Enter OTHELLO.*

IAGO  
Why, to—Come, captain, are you ready to go?

OTHELLO  
Let's be gone.

CASSIO  
Here comes another group of searchers.  
*Enter BRABANTIO, RODERIGO, and OFFICERS  
with torches and weapons.*

IAGO  
It's Brabantio. General, be warned;  
he comes with bad intentions.

OTHELLO  
Hello! Stand right there!

RODERIGO  
Signior, it is the Moor.

BRABANTIO  
Down with him, the thief!  
*(Both groups of men draw their swords.)*

IAGO  
You, Roderigo! Come, sir, I'll fight you.

OTHELLO  
Put away your shining swords; the dew will rust them.  
Good signior, you'll do better to command on the authority of  
your age  
than with your weapons.

BRABANTIO  
Oh, you foul thief, where have you hidden my daughter?  
75 Damned as you are, you've put a spell on her!  
For I ask you in the name of common sense,  
if she weren't bound in the chains of magic,  
would a girl so tender, lovely, and happy,  
so opposed to marriage that she shunned  
the wealthiest young beaus of our nation,  
would she have ever (at the threat of public shame)  
run from her safety to the sooty bosom  
of such a thing as you—worthy of fear, not delight?  
80 Let the world judge for me if it isn't grossly obvious  
that you have practiced foul spells on her,  
deceiving her delicate youth with drugs or minerals  
that weaken the will—I'll have it argued legally.  
85 It's probable and all too clear to see.  
Therefore, I arrest and charge you  
as a deceiver of the world, a practitioner  
of forbidden and illegal arts.  
90 Lay hold of him. If he resists,  
let it be at his own risk.

OTHELLO  
Leave your swords alone—  
95 both those of you on my side and the rest.  
If it were my cue to fight, I would have known it  
without a prompter. Where do you want me to go  
to answer this charge of yours?

BRABANTIO  
100 To prison, till the proper time  
of law and the regular session of court  
call you to trial.

OTHELLO

What if I obey?

What will I answer to the duke,

whose messengers are here at my side

on some pressing business of state,

waiting to bring me to him?

10 there are often inconsistencies), still, they all confirm  
that a Turkish fleet is approaching Cyprus.

DUKE

Yes, that seems likely enough upon consideration.

I'm not so comforted by the fact that these estimates differ  
that I fail to see the news

as alarming.

OFFICER

This is true, most worthy signior.

The duke's in council, and you, noble sir,

have been sent for, I'm sure of that.

15 SAILOR (*Calling from offstage*)  
Hello! Hello! Hello!  
*Enter a SAILOR.*

BRABANTIO

What? The duke in council?

At this time of the night? Call him away!

Mine is not a frivolous case. The duke himself,

or any of my fellow senators,

cannot help but feel this wrong as if it were their own;

for if such actions are allowed,

our statesmen will all be bondslaves and pagans.

*They exit.*

20 SAILOR  
The Turkish fleet is headed for Rhodes.  
I was sent to report this to the leaders of the state  
by Signior Angelo.

Act I, Scene iii: A council chamber. Enter DUKE and SENATORS,  
sitting at a table, with lights, and OFFICERS in attendance.

DUKE

What do you say about this change?

DUKE

There is not enough consistency to these reports

to give them credibility.

FIRST SENATOR

This makes  
no sense at all. It's just a pretense

to keep us looking the wrong way. If we consider

the importance of Cyprus to the Turk

and remind ourselves again

that, not only is it of greater concern to the Turk than Rhodes,

but also that the Turk may take Cyprus more easily

because it is not militarily prepared

and altogether lacks the warlike capabilities

that Rhodes has—If we think about this,

we cannot believe that the Turk is inept enough

to leave for the last the thing which concerns him first,

neglecting an enterprise which is easy and worthwhile

in order to pursue a profitless danger.

DUKE

And mine a hundred and forty.

SECOND SENATOR

And mine two hundred.

But although they don't agree on a certain number

(since in cases where approximation is relied on,

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DUKE  
No, we can be sure he's not headed for Rhodes.

OFFICER  
Here's more news.  
*Enter a MESSENGER.*

MESSENGER  
The Ottomites, you reverend gentlemen,  
steering with a due course toward the island of Rhodes,  
have joined up there with an approaching fleet.

FIRST SENATOR  
Yes, just as I thought. How many, do you guess?

MESSENGER  
About thirty sails; and now they are sailing  
in the opposite direction, very obviously  
headed for Cyprus. Signior Montano,  
your most worthy and most valiant servant,  
sends word of this out of his unbounded duty to you  
and begs you to believe him.

DUKE  
It's certain then it's heading for Cyprus.  
Isn't Marcus Luccicos in town?

FIRST SENATOR  
He's now in Florence.

DUKE  
Write to him for me; send the letter off immediately.

FIRST SENATOR  
Here come Brabantio and the valiant Moor.  
*Enter BRABANTIO, OTHELLO, CASSIO, IAGO,  
RODERIGO, and OFFICERS.*

DUKE  
Valiant Othello, we must enlist you right away  
against our enemy, the Ottoman.  
*(To Brabantio)* I did not see you. Welcome, gentle signior.  
We missed your counsel and help tonight.

BRABANTIO  
And I missed yours. Your good grace, pardon me.  
Neither my position, nor anything I heard of your business,  
has raised me from my bed; nor do public concerns  
disturb me now. My personal grief  
is of such an intense and overflowing nature  
that it drowns and swallows all other sorrows,  
and it still hangs on.

DUKE  
Why, what's the matter?

BRABANTIO  
My daughter! Oh, my daughter!

SENATOR  
Dead?

BRABANTIO  
Yes, to me!  
She has been deceived, stolen from me, and corrupted  
by spells and medicines bought from mountebanks. ¶  
It's not in her nature to behave so outrageously—  
when she's not deficient, blind, or half-witted—  
without the influence of witchcraft.

DUKE  
Whoever he is that, with this foul action,  
has tricked your daughter out of her self-possession,  
and you of her, the severe book of our laws  
shall be read to him by you yourself to the strictest letter  
according to your own interpretation—yes, even if it were my  
own son  
who stood accused by you.

BRABANTIO  
I humbly thank you, your grace.  
Here is the man—this Moor, whom now, it seems,  
your special command for state business  
has brought here.

ALL  
We are very sorry for it.



DUKE (*To Othello*)

What can you say for yourself about this?

85 BRABANTIO Nothing, except that it's true.

OTHELLO

Most powerful, grave, and reverend signiors,  
my very noble and proven good masters:that I have taken away this old man's daughter  
is very true; it is true that I have married her.

90 The extent of my offense

amounts to no more than this. I am not articulate  
and not very gifted with the soft-spokenness of peace  
because between the time my arms had seven years of strength95 until about nine months ago, they have done  
their most important work in the battlefield.I can speak very little of this great world  
that doesn't pertain to deeds of battle and struggle.100 For that reason, I won't much help my cause  
by speaking for myself. Still, if your gracious patience allows it,  
I will tell a plain and honest story  
of the whole course of my love—what drugs, what charms,  
what conjurations, and what mighty magic  
(for these are the things I'm charged with)  
I used to win his daughter.

BRABANTIO

105 This girl was never bold.

She was of a temper so quiet and modest that she  
blushed at every impulse. And she—in spite of her nature,  
of her age, of country, reputation, everything—  
has fallen in love with what she was afraid to look at!

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It is a foolish and inaccurate assumption  
to suggest perfection could go wrong  
against all the rules of nature, and one is driven  
to find out what tricks of cunning hell  
could have led this to happen. So I insist again  
that, with some potion that controls the blood,

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or with some drink brewed for this purpose,  
he has worked his will on her.

DUKE

To swear this is not proof.

120 Without more sure and extensive tests  
than these frail assumptions and slight possibilities  
of ordinary appearance, you can hardly speak against him.

FIRST SENATOR

But speak up, Othello.

125 Did you, by dishonest and deceptive methods,  
control and poison this young girl's affection?  
Or did it come at your request and with the proper kind of  
discussion  
that one person should have with another?

OTHELLO

I ask you

130 to send to the Sagittary for the lady  
and let her speak about me in front of her father.  
If you find that her report of me is evil,  
then let not only the trust and title you have given me  
be taken away, but let your sentence  
be passed against my life.

DUKE

Bring Desdemona here.

*Two or three ATTENDANTS exit.*

OTHELLO

135 Ensign, lead them; you know the place best.

*IAGO exits.*140 And until she comes, as sincerely as if to heaven  
I will confess to you all the wickedness of my blood,  
and speak honestly to your serious ears  
of how I succeeded in gaining this fair lady's love,  
and she mine.

DUKE

Tell us, Othello.

OTHELLO

143 Her father loved me and often invited me over.  
He always asked me for the story of my life  
from year to year—the battles, sieges, and fortunes  
I've experienced.

150 I told it all, starting with my childhood days and continuing  
up to the moment that he asked me to tell it.  
I told of very dangerous situations;  
of terrible accidents in floods or on the field;  
of hairbreadth escapes in threatening and deadly battle;  
of being taken prisoner by my insolent enemy  
and sold into slavery; of my escape from that  
and my behavior throughout my travels.

155 Vast caves and desolate deserts,  
rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose peaks reach to heaven—  
all these were spoken of; that's how it went—  
and of cannibals who eat each other,  
the Anthropophagi, and men whose heads  
grow below their shoulders. To hear all this,  
160 Desdemona would lean forward intently;  
but still, the business of the house would call her away.  
She'd finish her work as quickly as she could  
and come back again, and with a greedy ear,  
devour my story. I noticed this,

165 found a convenient time, and managed  
to elicit from her an earnest request  
that, at one sitting, I would tell her all my travels,  
which she had heard something of piecemeal  
but not without interruptions. I consented  
170 and often brought tears from her  
when I spoke of some serious danger  
I suffered in my youth. When my story was over,  
she gave me a world of sighs for my trouble.

175 She swore, in truth, that it was strange, that it was very strange,  
that it was sad; that it was terribly sad.  
She wished she hadn't heard it; and yet she wished  
that heaven had made such a man for her. She thanked me  
and told me that if I had a friend who loved her,

180 I should just teach him how to tell my story,  
and he could woo her with it. I took this opportunity to speak.

and I loved me because of the dangers I had experienced,  
and I loved her because she was moved by them.  
This is the only witchcraft I have used.  
Here comes the lady: let her confirm it.

*Enter DESDEMONA, IAGO, and ATTENDANTS.*

DUKE

185 I think this story would win my daughter, too.  
Good Brabantio,  
make the best of this difficult situation.  
Men prefer to use their broken weapons  
rather than their bare hands.

BRABANTIO

190 I ask you to hear her speak.  
If she admits that she was half the wooer,  
may I be damned for bringing my unjust accusation  
against this man! Come here, gentle lady.  
Do you know, in all this noble gathering,  
195 to whom you owe the most obedience?

DESDEMONA

My noble father,  
I see that I have a divided obligation here.  
I am indebted to you for my life and education;  
my life and education both teach me  
200 to respect you: you are the lord of my duty;  
before now, I was only your daughter. But here's my husband;  
and as much obedience as my mother showed  
to you, offering more to you than to her father,  
the same, I insist, I now consider  
205 due to the Moor, my lord.

BRABANTIO

God be with you! I'm done with it.  
If it please you, your grace, let's get on with state business.  
I'd rather adopt a child than beget one.  
Come here, Moor.

210 I now give to you with all my heart  
that which, if you didn't already have her, with all my heart  
I would keep from you. (*To Desdemona*) Because of you, my jewel,  
I am glad in my heart that I have no other children,  
since your escape would make me tyrannical  
and lead me to put shackles on them. I am finished, my lord.

DUKE

Let me speak as you should and repeat a proverb  
which, one way or another, might help these lovers  
find your favor.

220 When remedies are useless, grief is killed  
by seeing the worst—a grief which was kept alive by hope.  
To complain of a misfortune that is done and over with  
is the best way to bring on more misfortunes.  
When fortune takes something and one can't get it back,  
one makes a mockery of the injury by enduring it patiently.  
225 A person who's been robbed and smiles steals something from  
the thief.  
A person robs himself who persists in grieving pointlessly.

BRABANTIO

230 So let the Turks trick us out of Cyprus;  
we won't lose it, as long as we can smile about it.  
He endures the sentence well who doesn't suffer anything  
except the comfort of freedom when he hears it.  
But he endures both the sentence and the suffering  
when he has to pay his grief by borrowing from poor patience.  
235 This advice contains sweetness and bitterness,  
both very strong, in equal amounts.  
But words are only words: I haven't yet heard of a  
bruised heart being treated through the ear.  
I humbly beg you, get on with business of state.

DUKE

240 The Turks with a very mighty force are heading for Cyprus.  
Othello, you best know the strength of the place; and  
though I have a very capable viceroy in power there,  
yet public opinion—the final word on how matters will be  
decided—declares you are  
the best man for the job. So you'll have to content yourself  
to dull the shine  
on your new-found luck with this rough and violent  
expedition.

245 OTHELLO  
That tyrant, Habib, most serious senators,  
has made the flinty and steel couch of war  
a carefully prepared feather bed to me. I recognize in myself  
a natural and eager willingness  
to suffer hardship. I will take part  
250 in this current war against the Ottomies.  
And so, most humbly bowing before your majesty,  
I ask for proper treatment of my wife;  
appropriate regard for her rank, and an allowance of money,  
with the kind of residence and company  
that fits with her breeding.

DUKE

If it please you,  
let it be at her father's.

BRABANTIO

I won't have that.

OTHELLO

Nor I.

DESDEMONA

260 And I won't stay there  
and make my father impatient  
by being in his sight. Most gracious duke,  
listen to my appeal with favor  
and use your voice to give me permission,  
265 smoothing out my inept pleading.

DUKE

What do you want, Desdemona?

DESDEMONA

270 That I have loved the Moor enough to live with him,  
my violent behavior and reckless chance-taking  
declares to all the world. My heart has been won and converted  
even to my lord's (soldiering) profession.  
I saw Othello's qualities beyond his appearance,  
and to his reputation and military abilities,  
I have dedicated my fortunes and my soul.

275 And so, dear lords, if I am left behind,  
 an idle creature of peace, and he goes to the war,  
 the rights I have as his wife will be taken away from me,  
 and I will suffer a sad time  
 during his absence. Let me go with him.

OTHELLO

Let her have your permission.

280 I assure you by heaven, I am not asking this  
 out of my longing for her  
 or to suit my lust—this new passion  
 which has not been consummated—  
 but to give her freely and generously what she wants.  
 285 And heaven forbid that you good men should think  
 I will neglect your great and serious business  
 if she is with me. No; when light-winged toys  
 of feathered Cupid close up with lustful blindness  
 my alert and dutiful eyes,  
 290 and my pastimes corrupt and interfere with my business,  
 let housewives make a skillet of my helmet  
 and all kinds of unworthy and evil adversities  
 attack my reputation!

DUKE

You may decide for yourselves  
 whether she goes or stays. This business demands haste,  
 and speed is necessary.

FIRST SENATOR

You must leave tonight.

DESDEMONA

Tonight, my lord?

DUKE

This night.

OTHELLO

300 With all my heart.

DUKE

At nine in the morning we'll meet here again.

Othello, leave some officer behind,  
 and he will bring our commission to you  
 and other things which are proper  
 305 for you to have.

OTHELLO

If it please you, your grace, use my ensign.

~ He is a trustworthy and honest man.

310 I give my wife over to his escort  
 and whatever else you think, your good grace, it is necessary  
 to be sent to me.

DUKE

It's settled, then.

Good night to everyone. (*To Brabantio*) And, noble signior,  
 if virtue is a sign of beauty,  
 your son-in-law is far lighter than he is black.

FIRST SENATOR

315 Goodbye, brave Moor. Take care of Desdemona.

BRABANTIO

Watch her, Moor, if you have eyes to see.

She has deceived her father and might deceive you, too.

BRABANTIO, DUKE, SENATORS, OFFICERS, etc., exit.

OTHELLO

I'll stake my life on her fidelity!—Honest Iago,  
 I must leave my Desdemona to your care.

320 I ask you to please let your wife attend to her  
 and bring them along when the time is best.

Come along, Desdemona. I have just an hour left  
 for love, and for practical business and instructions,  
 to spend with you. We must obey time.  
*Exit OTHELLO and DESDEMONA.*

RODERIGO

325 Iago—

IAGO

What do you say, noble fellow?

RODERIGO

What do you think I should do?

IAGO

Why, go to bed and sleep.

RODERIGO

I'll go drown myself at once.

IAGO

If you do, I'll not love you anymore.

Why, what a foolish gentleman you are!

RODERIGO

It is foolish to live when living torments me. And we have a prescription to die when Death is our doctor.

IAGO

How villainous! I have lived in this world for twenty-eight years; and ever since I could distinguish between a benefit and an injury,

I've never met a man who knew how to love himself. Before I'd say I'd drown myself for the love of a guinea hen, I'd change places with a baboon.

RODERIGO

What should I do? I confess it is to my shame to be so foolish, but I don't have the strength to change it.

IAGO

Strength? A fig! It is in our own natures that we are who we are. Our bodies

are our gardens, to which our wills are gardeners. So, if we want to plant nettles or sow lettuce, put in spices and harvest thyme,

grow one kind of herb or grow many, either have it barren because of laziness or rich through hard work—why, the power and corrective authority to do so lies in our wills. If the balance of our lives didn't have one scale of reason to counterbalance the other scale

of sensuality, the basic savagery of our natures would lead us into the most outrageous situations. But we have reason to cool our raging appetites, our carnal desires, and our unchecked lusts. Therefore, I conclude that what you call love is a cutting or offshoot.

RODERIGO

It can't be.

IAGO

It is just lust of the blood and permission of the will. Come on, be a man! Drown yourself? Drown cats and blind puppies! I've called myself your friend, and I assure you, I'm bound to you by cords of enduring toughness. I could never serve you better than right now. Put money in your purse. Go to the wars; disguise

your good looks by wearing a beard. I tell you, put money in your purse. It isn't possible that Desdemona will continue to love the Moor for long—put money in your purse—nor be her. It had an explosive beginning for her, and you'll see it end much the same way. Just put money in your purse. These Moors are changeable in their lusts. Fill your purse with money. The food that now seems as sweet as fruit to him will soon seem as bitter as a sour apple. She must grow to prefer someone younger. When she

is wearied with his body, she'll see the error of her choice. She'll need a change, that's certain. So put money in your purse.

If you have to damn yourself, do it in a more delicate way than drowning. Make all the money you can. If sacred bonds and a frail vow made between a wandering barbarian and a Venetian

is not too much for me and all the devils in hell, she will be yours. So get money. Forget about drowning yourself! It's completely ridiculous. Take your chances on being hanged for trying to get what you want instead of drowning and going without her.

RODERIGO

375 Will you steadfastly support my hopes if I rely on the outcome?

IAGO

You can count on me. Go, get money. I've often told you, and I'll say it again and again, I hate the Moor. I hate him from the bottom of my heart, and you have cause to as well. Let us work together to get revenge on him. If you can cuckold him, you'll give yourself pleasure and me amusement. There are many things just waiting to be born which will come to pass soon. Move! Go! Get yourself money!

We'll talk more about this tomorrow. Goodbye.

RODERIGO

Where will we meet in the morning?

IAGO

At my lodging.

RODERIGO  
385 I'll meet you early.

IAGO  
Go on, goodbye. Wait, do you hear me, Roderigo?

RODERIGO  
What is it?

IAGO  
No more talk of drowning, do you hear?

RODERIGO  
I've changed my mind. I'll go sell all my land.  
*Exit* RODERIGO.

IAGO  
390 This is how I always make my living off some fool;  
for I would insult my own practical wisdom  
if I spent my time with such a fool  
just for my amusement and profit. I hate the Moor;  
and it is rumored around that, in my own bed,

395 he has taken my place. I don't know if it is true;  
but just out of sheer suspicion, I  
will act as if I were sure of it. He esteems me highly;  
that will make it easier to work my purpose against him.  
Cassio's a handsome man. Let me see now;  
400 to get his position and gratify myself  
by double villainy—How, how? Let's see.

After awhile, I'll deceive Othello by telling him  
that Cassio is too familiar with his wife.  
His good looks and fine manners  
405 make it seem possible—he's built to make women turn unfaithful.

-The Moor is free and open-minded  
-and thinks men are honest when they only seem to be,  
-so he will be as easily led by the nose  
as asses are.

410 I have it! It's planned! Hell and night  
must bring this wicked plot to the light of day.  
*Exit.*

*Act II, Scene i: A seaport in Cyprus. An open place near the harbor.  
Enter MONTANO and two GENTLEMEN.*

MONTANO

What can you view of the sea from the cape?

FIRST GENTLEMAN

Nothing at all; it is a wild and terrible downpour.  
I cannot, between the sky and the water,  
make out a sail.

MONTANO

I think the wind has spoken aloud to the land.  
A storm like this has never before shaken our battlements.  
If it has caused as much turbulence upon the sea,  
what oak hulls—when mountains are melted by the rain—  
could hold together? What can we expect to happen?

SECOND GENTLEMAN

The Turkish fleet will be scattered.  
If you just stand on the storm-washed shore,  
the beaten waves themselves seem to strike the clouds.  
The wind-shaken tide, with high and huge crests,  
seems to throw water on the shining Bear  
and drown the guardian stars of the Pole Star.  
I have never seen such turmoil  
on the angry water.

MONTANO

If the Turkish fleet  
is not protected or at bay, they have been drowned.  
It's impossible that they could survive this.  
*Enter a third GENTLEMAN.*

THIRD GENTLEMAN

News, lads! Our wars are over.  
This terrible tempest has damaged the Turks so much,  
they've been halted in their intentions. A noble Venetian ship  
has seen the terrible wrecks and sufferings  
of most of their fleet.

MONTANO

Really? Is this true?

THIRD GENTLEMAN

The ship has landed here,  
a ship from Verona. Michael Cassio,  
lieutenant to the warlike Moor, Othello,  
has come on shore. The Moor himself is still at sea,  
fully commissioned to come to Cyprus.

MONTANO

I'm glad to hear it. He'll make a worthy governor.

THIRD GENTLEMAN

But the same Cassio I mentioned, although he tells good news  
about the Turkish loss, is very worried  
and prays that the Moor is safe, for they were separated  
by a terrible and violent storm.

MONTANO

Let's pray heaven that he is;  
for I have served under him, and the man commands  
like a real soldier. Let's go to the seaside, come!  
Not only to meet the vessel that's come in,  
but also to look for the brave Othello,  
and watch until we can't tell the sea and the blue sky  
apart from one another.

THIRD GENTLEMAN

Come, let's do so;  
for every minute we are expecting  
more arrivals.  
*Enter CASSIO.*

CASSIO

Thanks, you valiant men of this war-torn island,  
who so honor the Moor! Oh, let heaven  
give him defense against the elements,  
for I have lost him on a dangerous sea!

MONTANO

Is he in a good ship?

CASSIO  
His ship has strong timbers, and his pilot  
has very expert and proven abilities.  
And so my hopes, not dead yet,  
may well be restored.  
(*Offstage a voice cries, "A sail, a sail!"*)  
*Enter a fourth GENTLEMAN.*

CASSIO  
What's this noise?

FOURTH GENTLEMAN  
The town is empty. At the edge of the sea,  
ranks of people are standing, and they cry "A sail!"

CASSIO  
My hopes for the governor grow stronger.  
(*A shot is heard offstage.*)

60 SECOND GENTLEMAN  
They fire a shot of greeting.  
At least we know they are friends.

CASSIO  
I ask you to go there, sir,  
and truly report back to us who has arrived.

SECOND GENTLEMAN  
I will.  
*He exits.*

65 MONTANO  
But, good lieutenant, is your general married?

70 CASSIO  
Well married. He has won a girl  
who surpasses description and exaggerated gossip;  
one who exceeds the fancy descriptions of praising pens.  
In her basic qualities,  
she defies the imagination of an ingenuous praiser.  
*Enter second GENTLEMAN*  
What now? Who has landed?

SECOND GENTLEMAN  
It's a certain Iago, ensign to the general.

75 CASSIO  
He's had a most favorable and fortunate arrival.  
The tempests themselves, the high seas and howling winds,  
the jagged rocks and gathered sand—  
hidden traitors to ensnare the innocent keel—  
as if they had a sense of beauty, have forgotten  
their deadly natures and let safely pass  
the divine Desdemona.

80 MONTANO  
Who is she?

85 CASSIO  
She's the one I spoke of, our great captain's captain,  
left in the protection of the bold Iago,  
whose arrival here comes at least  
a week earlier than expected. Great Jove, guard Othello,  
and fill his sail with your powerful breath  
so he might bless this bay with his brave ship,  
pant his love in Desdemona's arms,  
renew the fire of our exhausted spirits,  
and bring all Cyprus comfort!

*Enter DESDEMONA, EMILIA, IAGO, and RODERIGO with  
ATTENDANTS.*

90 Oh, look!  
The riches of the ship are now on shore!  
You men of Cyprus, bow down before her.  
Greetings to you, lady! And may the grace of heaven  
be in front of you, behind you, and on both sides of you,  
and utterly surround you!

95 DESDEMONA  
Thank you, valiant Cassio.  
What news can you give me of my husband?

CASSIO  
He's not yet arrived; I know nothing  
except that he's well and will be here shortly.

100 DESDEMONA  
Oh, but I'm afraid! How did you get separated?



CASSIO

The great quarrel between the sea and the sky parted us from one another.—But listen. A sail!  
(*Offstage a voice cries, 'A sail, a sail!'*)  
(*A shot is also heard.*)

SECOND GENTLEMAN

They give their greeting to the fortress.  
This is a friend, too.

CASSIO

Go see what's the news.

Exit GENTLEMAN.

Good ensign, you are welcome. (*To Emilia*) Welcome, madam.  
I hope it doesn't try your patience, good Iago, if I stretch my manners. It's my upbringing that teaches me to make such a bold display of courtesy.  
(*He kisses her.*)

IAGO

110 Sir, if she gave you as much of her lips as she often gives me of her tongue, you'd have plenty.

DESDEMONA

But really, she doesn't chatter at all!

IAGO

115 I tell you, she talks too much.  
Even when I want to sleep, she's still talking.  
Though, indeed, in front of your ladyship, I'll admit that she hides her tongue in her heart a little and scolds me only in her thoughts.

EMILIA

You have little reason to say that.

IAGO

120 Come, come! You women are the picture of virtue away from home, lifting when playing the hostess, wildcats in your kitchens, saints when you criticize, devils when you're offended, slack in your household duties, but really earnest in bed.

DESDEMONA

Oh, shame on you, slanderer!

IAGO

125 No, it's true, or else I am a Turk.  
You get up in the morning to play, and go to bed to work.

EMILIA

I won't let you write my praises.

IAGO

No, I won't.

DESDEMONA

What would you write about me, if you were to praise me?

IAGO

130 Oh, gentle lady, don't ask me to do it, for I am nothing if not critical.

DESDEMONA

Come on, try it.—Has someone gone to the harbor?

IAGO

Yes, madam.

DESDEMONA (*To herself*)

135 I am not merry; but I'll forget the way I really feel by seeming to be otherwise.  
(*To Iago*) Come now, how would you praise me?

IAGO

140 I'm thinking about it, but really, my ideas are as hard to pull out of my head as birdlime from a heavy cloth—they pull out my brains and everything. But my Muse is in labor, and here is what she gives birth to:  
If she is pretty and clever, beauty and cleverness;  
The beauty is to be used, the cleverness is for using it.

DESDEMONA

Well praised! What if she is ugly and clever?

IAGO

145 If she is ugly but clever too,  
She'll find a man who will be happy with her.

DESDEMONA  
Worse and worse.

EMILIA  
What if she's pretty and foolish?

IAGO  
No woman has ever been foolish who was also pretty,  
For even her foolishness helped her to have an heir.

DESDEMONA  
150 These are old, silly sayings to make fools laugh in the bar.  
What miserable praise do you have for a woman who's ugly and  
foolish?

IAGO  
There's no one who is so ugly and so foolish as well,  
Who doesn't do the same naughty things that pretty and  
wise women do.

DESDEMONA  
155 What terrible ignorance! You've praised the worst the most  
highly. But what praise  
would you give to a woman who really deserves it—one who, by  
virtue of all her good qualities, can justifiably claim the  
praise of even  
the most malicious?

IAGO  
She who was always pretty, but never boastful;  
Could speak well, but never talked too much;  
Never lacked gold and yet never was extravagantly dressed;  
160 Denied her desires, but yet said, "Now I may have this";  
She who being angered and her opportunity for revenge at hand  
Made herself hold her temper and forget her anger;  
She who in her wisdom never made the mistake  
Of trading something good for something bad;  
165 She who could think, but never let her thoughts be known;  
See suitors following her and not look behind her;  
She was a person (if there ever was such a person)—

DESDEMONA  
To do what?

IAGO  
170 —To coddle fools and keep household accounts.

DESDEMONA  
Oh, what a flat and pointless conclusion! Don't believe him,  
Emilia, even though he is your husband. What do you think, Cassio?  
Isn't he  
a most worldly and lewd advisor?

CASSIO  
175 He does talk some common sense, madam. He's easier to appreciate  
as a soldier  
than as a scholar.

IAGO (*To himself*)  
180 He takes her by the hand. Yes, very good, whisper to her! With  
this little web, I'll catch a fly as big as Cassio. Yes,  
smile at her, go ahead! I'll catch you in your own filtration.  
You agreed with me; and I was right indeed! If this behavior of  
yours causes you to  
lose your lieutenantcy, you'll wish you hadn't acted  
185 the gallant so much. And even now you're acting like  
the courtly gentleman. Very good! Well kissed! What lovely manners!  
I really  
mean it! What, are you blowing her another kiss? Better that your  
fingers were  
an enema tube! (*A trumpet blows offstage.*) It's the Moor! I know  
his trumpet.

CASSIO  
It's really him.

DESDEMONA  
Let's go and greet him.

CASSIO  
Look, he's coming!  
*Enter OTHELLO and ATTENDANTS.*

OTHELLO  
Oh, my pretty warrior!

DESDEMONA  
190 My dear Othello!

OTHELLO  
195 I'm as surprised as I am happy  
to find you waiting for me. Oh, the joy in my soul!  
If every tempest ended with such happiness,  
I wish the winds would blow until they'd wakened the dead!  
And that struggling ships would climb upon waves

as tall as Olympus, and fall down as low  
as hell is from heaven! If I were to die right now,  
I would die perfectly happy; for I'm afraid  
I am so splendidly content  
that I won't have another joy like this one  
for the rest of my life.

DESDEMONA

Heaven forbid!  
Our love and our happiness should get stronger  
with every day!

OTHELLO

By heaven, I say amen to that!  
I can't speak enough of my delight;  
it fills my heart; it is too much joy.  
And this, and this, is the greatest discord (*They kiss.*)  
that our hearts will ever make!

IAGO (*To himself*)

Oh, you are in tune with each other now!  
But I'll untune the strings that make this music,  
as honest as I am.

OTHELLO

Come, let's go to the castle.  
News, friends! Our wars are over; the Turks have been drowned.  
How are all my old friends here on this island?—  
(*To Desdemona*) My dear, you'll be well beloved in Cyprus;  
I've found great love here. Oh, my sweet,  
I ramble on unsuitably, and I act foolishly  
because of my delight. Good Iago, I ask you  
to go to the bay and get my money from the ship.  
And bring the master to the castle.  
He's a good man, and his fine qualities  
command much respect. Come, Desdemona.  
Oh, it is good to see you here in Cyprus.  
*Everyone exits except IAGO and RODERIGO.*

IAGO

Meet me soon at the harbor. Be sure to come. If you

are brave (and they say cowardly men who are in love have more  
nobility in their natures than usual), listen to me.  
The lieutenant keeps watch on the guardhouse tonight. First, I'd  
better tell you this: Desdemona is madly in love with him.

RODERIGO

With him? Why, it isn't possible.

IAGO

Keep mum, and just listen. Remember how  
violently she first loved the Moor, and just because he  
bragged and told  
her fantastic lies? Will she keep loving him just because he  
continues to babble? Don't  
you believe it. She needs a handsome man; and what joy will  
she have to look at the devil? When the appetite tires of  
love-making, one needs something to spark it again and  
renew one's appetite—like good looks, and sameness of age,  
manners, and appearances. The Moor has none of these. Now  
because she lacks these desirable advantages, her delicate sensibilities  
will feel abused and reject, hate, and despise  
the Moor. Nature itself will teach her to act this way and  
force her to

seek out someone else. Now, sir, if you'll admit this (since  
it's an obvious  
and logical conclusion), who possesses these qualities  
to a greater degree than Cassio? A very flattering rascal;  
having no more  
conscience than to put on a mask of civility and politeness,  
just to achieve his lecherous and secret  
immoral intentions? Why, no one! No one! A slippery and subtle  
rascal; a true opportunist; a man who knows how to sniff out an  
advantage, even if a real advantage never turns up;  
a devilish rascal! Besides, this rascal is handsome, young, and has  
all those qualities about him that foolish and young minds  
are always looking for.  
A completely rotten rascal! And the woman has fallen for him  
already.

RODERIGO

I can't believe that about her. She's blessed with a most  
admirable character.

IAGO

Blessed, my eye! The wine she drinks is made of grapes. If she  
were so blessed, she wouldn't have fallen in love with the  
Moor. Blessed,  
my foot! Didn't you see her holding his hand?  
Didn't you see that?

RODERIGO  
Yes, I did; but that was just politeness.

260 IAGO  
It was lechery, I tell you! Just the indication and secret  
prologue to a

history of lust and filthy thoughts. Their lips were so close  
that their breaths embraced. Wicked thoughts,  
Roderigo! When these mutual courtesies show the way, hard by  
comes the lead and main event, the carnal conclusion.

265 Bah! But, sir, you do exactly as I say. I've brought you here  
from Venice. Take good care tonight; as to your orders, I'll  
give them

270 to you. Cassio doesn't know you. I'll be close by. Figure  
out some way to make Cassio angry, either by talking too  
loud or slandering his conduct or whatever way you  
can think of when the time is most favorable.

RODERIGO  
Well?

IAGO  
Sir, he is hotheaded and very short-tempered, and perhaps he'll try  
to hit you with his baton. Provoke him to that. That's all I  
need to start

275 a mutiny among those of Cyprus, who won't be happy until  
Cassio is thrown out. So you will  
have a quicker route to what you desire by the means I'll then  
suggest. And we'll have removed most profitably the one obstacle  
which might have made it impossible for either of us to achieve our  
hopes.

280 RODERIGO  
I'll do this if it will bring me any advantage.

IAGO  
I guarantee it. Meet me at the castle soon. I have to bring  
his belongings ashore. Goodbye.

RODERIGO  
Goodbye.  
*Exit RODERIGO.*

285 IAGO  
That Cassio loves her, I really do believe;  
that she loves him too is natural and likely.  
The Moor (as much as I may hate him)  
is of a dedicated, loving, and noble nature,  
and I'm sure he'll prove to Desdemona

290 a very costly husband. I love her too;

not completely out of lust (although it's likely  
that I'm guilty of a sin just as great),  
but partly because she'll help me get revenge,  
since I suspect the lusty Moor

295 has taken my place. The thought of that  
gnaws at me like a poisonous mineral,  
and nothing can or will satisfy me  
till we are even, wife for wife.

Or if I fall short of that, I'll still put the Moor  
in a state of jealousy so extreme

300 that good sense won't cure it. In order to do this,  
if this worthless Venetian, whom I'm hounding  
to keep him on the track, will only do as I've urged him,  
I'll have Michael Cassio in my pocket,  
slander him to the Moor in the proper fashion

(because I'm afraid Cassio has been in my bed too),  
make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me  
for making a complete fool of him  
and scheming against his peace and quiet—

310 even to the point of madness. That's the plan, though the  
details must be flushed out.

Villainous work is never recognized until the villainy's been done.  
*Exit IAGO.*

*Act II, Scene ii: A street. Enter Othello's HERALD, with a  
proclamation; people are following him.*

HERALD  
It is the wish of Othello, our noble and brave general, that,  
because of the  
news we've just heard, telling of the total destruction of the  
Turkish fleet, everyone should rejoice. Some should dance,  
some should make bonfires, and everyone should engage in  
whatever amusement and celebration

5 that is to their taste. Because, besides this welcome news, it's also his wedding celebration. His joy is so great, he wants it proclaimed. All kitchens are open, and there's free feasting from the present hour of five until the bell rings eleven. Heaven bless the island of Cyprus and our noble general Othello!

*Exit.*

*Act II, Scene iii: A hall in the castle. Enter OTHELLO, DESDEMONA, CASSIO, and ATTENDANTS.*

OTHELLO

Good Michael, you are in charge of the guard tonight. Let's make sure things don't get out of hand and no one celebrates indiscreetly.

CASSIO

Iago already has instructions to do so. Nevertheless, I'll see to it myself.

OTHELLO

Iago is very honest. Good night, Michael. The first thing tomorrow morning, come and talk to me. *(To Desdemona)* Come, my dear love. Once the purchase has been made, the fruits will follow; the two of us have not yet enjoyed our profits. Good night.

*Exit OTHELLO, DESDEMONA and ATTENDANTS.  
Enter IAGO.*

CASSIO.

Welcome, Iago. We'd better go on watch.

IAGO

15 Not at this hour, lieutenant; it's not ten o'clock yet. Our general dismissed us early because of his love for Desdemona; but let's not blame her for that. He hasn't yet enjoyed the night with her, and she's a lover worthy of Jove.

CASSIO  
She's a very beautiful lady.

IAGO  
And I'll bet she's full of fire.

20 CASSIO  
Certainly, she's a very young and refined creature.

IAGO  
What an eye she has! I think it's downright provocative.

CASSIO  
An inviting eye; but a modest one, I think.

IAGO  
And when she speaks, isn't it a temptation to love?

CASSIO  
She is certainly perfect.

25 IAGO  
Well, happiness to their sheets! Come, lieutenant, I have a cup of wine, and just outside are a few fellows of Cyprus who would like to drink to the health of black Othello.

CASSIO  
Not tonight, good Iago. Wine goes straight to my head. I really wish there was some other means of courteous entertainment.

30 IAGO  
But they are our friends. Just one cup! I'll drink when you make a toast.

CASSIO  
I've had just one cup tonight and that was quite diluted. But look how flushed I am just from that. I really can't handle wine and must not overdo it with any more.

35 IAGO  
What! This is a night of celebration. The fellows wish it.

CASSIO  
Where are they?

IAGO  
Right here at the door. Please, call them in.

CASSIO

I'll do it, but I don't like the idea.

*Exit CASSIO.*

IAGO

40 If I can get him to drink just one more cup  
on top of what he's had to drink tonight already,  
he'll be as quarrelsome and disagreeable  
as my young lady's dog. Now my sick fool Roderigo,  
who has been turned almost inside out by love,  
has been toasting Desdemona tonight  
and draining many cups to the bottom; and he's supposed to be  
45 on guard.

Three boys of Cyprus—fine and noble fellows,  
who are very quick to respond to an insult,  
and of a very suitable temperament to this warlike island—  
I've made tipsy tonight with overflowing cups,  
50 and they're on guard, too. Now, amid this flock of drunkards,  
I'll provoke Cassio to some action  
that's bound to cause offense on this island. But here they come.

*Enter CASSIO, MONTANO, and several*

GENTLEMEN. *SERVANTS follow with some wine.*

If things only go the way I hope,  
my boat will sail freely, with both the wind and the stream.

CASSIO

55 By God, they've given me a huge cup already.

MONTANO

Really now, it's just a little one; no more than a pint, or  
I'm not a soldier.

IAGO

Some wine over here!

*(He sings,)*

And let me clink the cup, clink;

And let me clink the cup.

A soldier's a man;

A life is short,

So then let a soldier drink.

Some wine, boys!

CASSIO

By God, that's an excellent song!

IAGO

65 I learned it in England, where they really know how to  
drink. Your Danes, your Germans, and your pot-bellied  
Hollanders—Drink up!—are nothing compared to your English.

CASSIO

Is your Englishman such an expert drinker?

IAGO

70 Why, he'll drink your Dane dead drunk with no trouble; it's no  
sweat for him to outdo your German; he'll have your Hollander  
vomiting before the next cup gets filled.

CASSIO

To the health of our general!

MONTANO

I'll drink to that, lieutenant, and I'll match your toast.

IAGO

Oh, sweet England!

*(He sings,)*

King Stephen was a worthy gentleman;

His pants only cost him a crown;

He thought they were a sixpence too expensive,

So he called the tailor a lout.

He was a man of great renown,

And you are but of low birth.

It's pride that's ruining this country;

So keep wearing your old coat.

Some wine, over here!

CASSIO

By God, this is an even better song than the other one.

IAGO

Do you want to hear it again?

CASSIO

85 No, because I don't think a man who does those things is  
worthy of his  
rank. Well, God's above us all; and there are souls that will  
be saved,  
and there are souls that will not be saved.

IAGO  
That's the truth, good lieutenant.

90 CASSIO  
For my own part—I mean no offense to the general, nor to any other man of high rank—I hope to be saved.

IAGO  
And so do I, lieutenant.

95 CASSIO  
Yes, but if you don't mind, not before me. The lieutenant has to be saved before the ensign. Let's not talk about this anymore; let's get down to business. God forgive us for our sins! Gentlemen, let's see to our business. Gentlemen, don't think I'm drunk. This is my ensign. This is my right hand, and this is my left. I'm not drunk now. I can stand well enough and speak well enough.

ALL  
Extremely well.

CASSIO  
100 Well, very good then. As long as you don't think I'm drunk.  
*Exit CASSIO.*

MONTANO  
Let's go on guard, gentlemen. Come, let's begin the watch.

105 IAGO  
Take a look at this fellow who has gone ahead. He is a soldier fit to stand beside Caesar and give orders; and take a look at this vice of his. It's the exact counterpart of his virtue—the one's the equal of the other. It's a pity about him. I'm afraid that the trust Othello puts in him, due to his infirmity, will one of these days cause trouble on this island.

110 MONTANO  
But is he like this very often?

IAGO  
All the time, before he goes to bed. He'd watch the clock for twenty-four hours if his drinking didn't put him to sleep.

115 MONTANO  
It would be a good idea to let the general know about this. Maybe he doesn't know about this, or his good nature values Cassio's good qualities and overlooks his evils. Isn't this true?  
*Enter RODERIGO.*

120 IAGO (*Aside to Roderigo*)  
What is this, Roderigo? I'm telling you, go after the lieutenant!  
*Exit RODERIGO.*

125 MONTANO  
It's a terrible pity that the noble Moor should risk the position of his own second in command to a man with such an ingrained infirmity. It would be an honest deed to say so to the Moor.

IAGO  
I wouldn't do it for this entire lovely island! I love Cassio very much, and will do what I can to cure him of this problem.—But listen! What's that noise?  
(*A voice from offstage cries "Help! Help!"*)  
*Enter CASSIO, chasing RODERIGO.*

CASSIO  
Damn, you villain! You rascal!

130 MONTANO  
What's the matter, lieutenant?

CASSIO

Do I need some villain to teach me my duty?  
I'll beat this villain until he's ready to crawl inside a  
wicker-covered bottle.

RODERIGO

Beat me?

CASSIO

Still rattling on, rascal?  
*(He strikes Roderigo.)*

MONTANO

135 No, good lieutenant!

*(Grabs Cassio by the arm.)*

Please, sir, stop fighting.

CASSIO

Let go of me, sir,  
or I'll beat you over the head.

MONTANO

Come, come, you're drunk!

CASSIO

140 Drunk?

*(MONTANO and CASSIO fight.)*IAGO *(Aside to Roderigo)*

Get going, I tell you! Go and warn everybody of a mutiny!

*Exit Roderigo.*

Stop, good lieutenant. For God's sake, gentlemen!

Help, please!—lieutenant—sir—Montano—sir—  
Help, gentlemen!—This is certainly a fine watch!

*(A bell rings.)*

145 Who's that ringing the bell? Oh, the devil!

The whole town will be awakened. For God's sake, lieutenant, stop!  
You'll be humiliated forever.

*Enter OTHELLO and ATTENDANTS.*

OTHELLO

What's the matter here?

MONTANO

Damn, I'm bleeding! I'm fatally wounded! He'll die for it!

OTHELLO

150 Stop, if you want to live!

IAGO

Stop, stop! lieutenant—sir—Montano—gentlemen!  
Have you lost all sense of your positions and duty?  
Stop! The general is talking to you. Stop, stop, shame on you!

OTHELLO

Why, what is this? How did this get started?

Have we turned into Turks, and are we doing to ourselves

what heaven has stopped the Ottomies from doing?

Out of Christian dignity, stop this barbarous fighting!

The man who next makes a move to vent his anger

values his life lightly; he'll be killed at once.

Silence that awful bell! It scares the island

out of its peace and quiet. What's the matter, gentlemen?

Honest Iago, you look like you're sick with grief.

Speak up. Who started this? If you love me, I command you to

IAGO

I don't know. They were friends just a moment ago,

at peace, just like a bride and groom

getting ready for bed; and then, the next moment,

(as if the influence of some planet had made them crazy)

their swords were out and pointed at each other's chests

in a bloody fight. I can't tell you

how this silly quarrel started,

but I wish I had lost in glorious battle

these legs that brought me here to take part in it.

OTHELLO

Michael, why have you forgotten yourself like this?

CASSIO

Please, pardon me; I cannot speak.

OTHELLO

175 Worthy Montano, you've always been well-behaved.



180 The seriousness and earnestness of your younger days  
was noted by the world, and your name is always mentioned  
by people with the best judgment. What happened  
to cause you to ruin your reputation this way  
and waste the value of your good name to become known as  
a night-brawler? Give me an answer.

MONTANO

185 Worthy Othello, I am seriously hurt.  
Your officer, Iago, can tell you,  
while I spare myself from talking—which is painful to me—  
of everything I know. And I don't know anything  
I've said or done that's wrong tonight,  
unless it's not right to look out for one's safety  
and if it's a sin to defend oneself  
when one is violently attacked.

OTHELLO

190 /Now, by God,  
my anger is starting to overcome my prudence,  
and passion, blotting out my better judgment,  
is taking charge. If I just make a move  
or only lift this arm, the best of you  
will be cut down by my sword. I want to know  
195 how this disgusting fight began and who started it.

And the one who is proved at fault,  
even if he were my twin, born from the same mother,  
will lose my friendship. I can't believe that in a garrison town,  
200 still on edge and filled with frightened people,  
you'd start a private, personal fight like this.  
At night, and while you're on guard and at headquarters?  
This is outrageous. Iago, who started it?

MONTANO

205 If you're biased because of friendship or comradeship  
and tell more or less than the truth,  
you're no real soldier.

IAGO

210 Please, that comes too close to the truth.  
I'd rather have this tongue cut out of my mouth  
than say anything to hurt Michael Cassio.<sup>1</sup>  
Still, I've convinced myself that speaking the truth  
will do no harm to him. So here it is, general.  
As Montano and I were talking,  
a young fellow, crying for help, came upon us,  
with Cassio following him with a drawn sword  
trying to kill him. Sir, this gentleman  
215 stepped up to Cassio and begged him to stop.  
I chased down the fellow who'd been crying out,  
to see that the terrible racket he was making (but it did anyway)  
wouldn't frighten the whole town. He, being fast-footed,  
got away from me, and I returned quickly  
because I heard the clanking and rattling of swords  
and Cassio swearing loudly—which until this night,  
220 I could never have said about him. When I came back  
(and I was fast about it), I found them close together  
thrusting and striking at each other, just as they were  
when you yourself parted them.  
I have nothing more to report about this matter;  
but men are like that—even the best sometimes slip.  
While Cassio did Montano a small injustice,  
as enraged men will strike those who only wish them the best,  
230 I still believe that Cassio received  
an insult of some sort from the man that ran away,  
which was beyond his patience to tolerate.

OTHELLO

235 I know, Iago,  
that, in your honesty and love, you make light of this matter,  
making it easier on Cassio. Cassio, I love you,  
but you will never again serve as my officer!  
*Enter DESDEMONA, with ATTENDANTS.*  
Look; my gentle love has been awakened!  
I'll make an example of you.

240 DESDEMONA  
What's the matter, dear?

OTHELLO

Everything's all right now, sweetheart; let's go to bed.  
(*To Montano*) Sir, I'll personally see to your injuries.  
Help him away.

*Exit MONTANO, attended.*

245 Iago, look carefully around the town  
and calm down those who have been disturbed by this terrible fight.  
Come, Desdemona. It's the story of a soldier's life  
to have a quiet sleep disturbed with fighting.  
*Everyone exits except Iago and Cassio.*

IAGO

Why, have you been hurt, lieutenant?

CASSIO

Yes, beyond any hope of recovery.

IAGO

250 Oh, God forbid!

CASSIO

Reputation, reputation, reputation! Oh, I have lost my reputation!  
I've lost the one immortal part of myself, and everything  
that remains is  
bestial. My reputation, Iago, my reputation!

IAGO

255 As sure as I'm honest, I thought you'd been physically  
wounded; that's more serious than your reputation. Reputation  
is a foolish thing, falsely imposed by others; it's often  
gained without merit  
and lost undeservedly. You haven't lost your reputation at all  
unless you really believe you have lost it. Come on, man! There are  
ways to get back in the general's favor again. You were only  
dismissed because of his  
260 anger—more as a disciplinary example than because of real  
resentment, just as  
one might beat an innocent dog to scare off a threatening lion.  
Appeal to him, again, and he'll listen.

CASSIO

265 I'd rather appeal to him to hate me than deceive such a good  
commander with a weak, drunken, and indiscreet officer like  
me. Drunk? And babbling? And quarreling? Swagging? Swearing?

And talking nonsense with my own shadow? Oh, you unseen  
spirit of wine, if you have no name to be known by, let us call  
you the devil!

IAGO

270 Who was the man you were chasing with your sword? What had he  
done to you?

CASSIO

I don't know.

IAGO

Is that possible?

CASSIO

I remember a lot of things, but nothing clearly; a quarrel,  
but I don't know why. Oh, God, why do men drink an enemy  
to steal their brains! To think that we should, with  
275 joy, merriment, celebration, and applause, turn ourselves into  
beasts!

IAGO

Well, you seem a lot better now. How did you recover so  
quickly?

CASSIO

280 That devil of drunkenness has been so kind as to make way for  
the devil  
of anger. One flaw in myself leads me to another, and I'm  
starting to really  
285 hate myself.

IAGO

Come, you're being too moralistic. As far as the time, place,  
and the way things stand in this country, I certainly wish  
290 this hadn't happened. But since it has, make the best of it.

CASSIO

I'll ask him for my position again. He'll tell me I'm a drunkard!  
If I had as many mouths as Hydra, I'd have nothing to say to  
that. To be a sensible man one minute, a fool the next, and soon  
295 after  
a beast! How strange! Every excess cup of wine is wicked  
and contains the devil.

IAGO

290 Come, come, good wine is a very friendly thing if it's wisely

taken. Don't say anything else against it. And, good lieutenant, I'm sure you realize that I love you.

320 to any honest cause. She is as generous as nature itself. And then it's easy for her to persuade the Moor—even to renounce his baptism, or his entire religious faith—

CASSIO I can testify to that, sir. But even when I'm drunk?

because his soul is so infatuated with her that she can help him, ruin him, or do whatever she pleases; her wishes completely control his weak reason. Why, then, should I be called a villain for advising Cassio to take this same way

IAGO

295 You or any other man alive may be drunk on occasion, man. I'll tell you what to do. <sup>say</sup> The general's wife is practically in charge. The reason I

325

300 this is he has completely given himself over to contemplating, observing, and cataloging her wonderful qualities. Tell her everything freely. Ask for her help to get your position back. She is of such a generous, kind, sympathetic, and blessed temper that she considers it wrong not to do more than people ask her to do. Ask her to put a splint on this

330 that is directly in his best interests? Why, that's hell's own preaching! When devils urge you to do the most wicked things, they tempt you by making everything seem heavenly—the same as I'm doing now. Because while this honest fool is appealing to Desdemona to make things better for him, and she pleads strongly to the Moor on his behalf, I'll tell him this poisonous thing about Cassio—

break

305 between you and her husband; and I'll bet all my fortune against any wager you want to make, this break in your love will grow back stronger than it was before.

335 And the more good she tries to do for him, the worse she'll look in the eyes of the Moor. This is how I'll turn her virtue into wickedness, and, out of her own goodness, make a net to catch everyone in.

CASSIO You give me good advice.

340 *Enter RODERIGO.*  
What is it, Roderigo?

IAGO I assure you, it is out of the sincerest love and honest kindness.

340

CASSIO

310 I'm convinced of that; and first thing in the morning, I'll beg the virtuous Desdemona to speak on my behalf. I'll be in a very bad way if I'm stopped by this.

RODERIGO

I've come here after the chase, not like a real tracker, but like one which does nothing but bark. My money is almost gone, I've been

IAGO You're making the right choice. Good night, lieutenant; I must go on guard duty.

345 thoroughly beaten tonight, and I think the result will be that I'll have nothing to show for my trouble except my pains. And so, with no

CASSIO Good night, honest Iago.  
*Exit CASSIO.*

money at all and just a little more wit, I'll end up going back to Venice.

IAGO

315 And why would anyone say I'm playing the villain when I give away such free and honest advice, so sensible when you think about it, and obviously the way to get back in the Moor's good favor? Because it's very easy to win over the agreeable Desdemona

IAGO

350 How pathetic are people who don't have any patience! What wound doesn't take some time to heal? You know we accomplish things by scheming and not by witchcraft, and our schemes need time to unfold. Didn't things go well? Cassio has beaten you, and because of that small hurt, you've ruined Cassio.

*Act III, Scene i* 109

355 No matter how things seem to be going,  
things will come to pass in their own sweet time.  
Be patient awhile. Good Lord, it's morning!  
Pleasure and action make the time pass quickly.

Get to bed; go to where you've been put up.  
Go on, I say! You'll know more later on.  
Go on, get going! (*Exit RODERIGO*) Two things have to be done;  
my wife must intercede on Cassio's behalf to her mistress;  
I'll put her up to it.

360 In the meantime, I'll work on the Moor separately  
and bring him in at the very moment when he'll find Cassio  
appealing to his wife. Yes, that's how to do it!  
I won't spoil this plan by hesitation or delay.  
*Exit IAGO.*

*Act III, Scene i: Cyprus, in front of the castle. Enter CASSIO, with several MUSICIANS.*

CASSIO

Gentlemen, play here, I'll reward your efforts.  
Play something short, and say good day to the general.

*(They play.)*

*Enter the CLOWN.*

CLOWN

Well, gentlemen, is it because your instruments have been to  
Naples that they  
have that nasal sound?

FIRST MUSICIAN

What do you mean, sir?

CLOWN

I ask you, aren't these called wind instruments?

FIRST MUSICIAN

They certainly are, sir.

CLOWN

Well, there's a tail hanging from that.

FIRST MUSICIAN

Where does a tale hang, sir?

CLOWN

10 Why, sir, from many wind instruments I know about. But  
here's some money for you, gentlemen. The general likes your  
music so much that  
he asks, for the respect you bear for him, that you not play  
anymore.

FIRST MUSICIAN

Well, sir, we won't.

CLOWN

15 If you know any music that can't be heard, go right ahead. But,  
as they say, the general doesn't much care for music.

FIRST MUSICIAN

We don't know any music like that, sir.

CLOWN

Then put your instruments back in your bags, because I must  
leave. Go, vanish  
into thin air, go on!  
*The MUSICIANS exit.*

CASSIO

Can you hear (me), my honest friend?

CLOWN

20 No, I don't hear your honest friend. I hear you.

CASSIO

Please, keep your puns to yourself. Here's a little gold  
piece for you.  
If the lady that waits on the general's wife is awake,  
tell her a certain Cassio begs to talk to her for a bit.  
Will you do that?

CLOWN

25 She's awake, sir. If she comes this way, I'll agree to notify her.

CASSIO

Do so, good friend.  
*Exit CLOWN.*

*Enter* IAGO.

What luck meeting with you, Iago.

IAGO

You haven't been to bed, then?

CASSIO

Why, no. Day had come before we left each other. Iago, I have been so bold as to ask to see your wife. What I wish to ask from her is that she will arrange for me, to talk to the virtuous Desdemona.

IAGO

I'll have her come to you right away, and I'll figure out some means to get the Moor out of the way so that your business and your conversation won't be interrupted.

CASSIO

I humbly thank you. (*Exit* IAGO.) I never knew any Florentine who was as kind and honest.

*Enter* EMILIA.

EMILIA

Good day, good lieutenant. I'm sorry that you've been disgraced; but everything will be better soon. The general and his wife are talking about it, and she's strongly defending you. The Moor has replied that the man you hurt is very famous in Cyprus, with a good family, and for the sake of discretion, his only choice is to refuse you. But he still says he loves you, and he needs no other suitor than his own feelings to find the best possible moment to reinstate you.

CASSIO

Still, I beg you, if you think it appropriate or possible, give me a chance to talk a little alone to Desdemona.

EMILIA

Please come in, then. I'll take you to where you'll have the time to freely speak your mind to her.

CASSIO

I'm very indebted to you.  
*They exit.*

*Act III, Scene iii: Inside the castle. Enter* OTHELLO, IAGO, and GENTLEMEN.

OTHELLO

Iago, give these letters to the pilot so that my duties in the senate will be taken care of. When you've finished, I'll be walking on the castle walls. Come and see me there.

IAGO

Certainly, my good lord; I'll see to everything.

OTHELLO

Shall we examine the fortifications, gentlemen?

GENTLEMEN

Whatever you wish, your lordship.  
*They exit.*

*Act III, Scene iii: The castle garden. Enter* DESDEMONA, CASSIO, and EMILIA.

DESDEMONA

Good Cassio, rest assured that I'll do everything in my power that I can for you.

EMILIA

Please do, dear lady. I tell you, it makes my husband so unhappy, you'd think it was his own cause.

DESDEMONA

Oh, there's an honest fellow. You can be certain, Cassio, that I'll make sure that you and my lord will be as friendly as ever.

CASSIO

10 Generous lady,  
whatever else might happen to Michael Cassio,  
he'll never be anything but your faithful servant.

DESDEMONA

I know that and thank you. You love my lord;  
you've known him for a long time; so be assured  
that he'll only be cold to you  
for the sake of appearance.

CASSIO

15 Yes, but lady,  
that attitude might exist for a long time,  
or be fed by small and trifling considerations,  
or grow out of all proportion due to some new circumstances,  
so that, while I'm gone and my position is filled by another,  
my general will forget my love and good service.

DESDEMONA

20 Don't worry about that. As Emilia here is my witness,  
I guarantee you your position. Rest easy;  
when I promise something out of friendship, I'll see it through  
to the last detail. My lord won't get any rest;  
I'll keep him awake and talk enough to him to wear out his  
patience;

25 his bed will seem like a school and his table like a confessional.  
With everything he does, I'll mix in talk  
of Cassio's suit. So cheer up, Cassio,  
for your intercessor would rather die  
than fail in your cause.

Enter OTHELLO and IAGO.

EMILIA

Madam, here comes my lord.

CASSIO

Madam, I'll leave now.

DESDEMONA

Why, stay here and listen to me speak.

CASSIO

35 Not now, madam. I'm very ill at ease,  
which won't help my situation at all.

DESDEMONA

Well, do as you think best.  
Exit CASSIO.

IAGO

Ha! I don't like the looks of that.

OTHELLO

What did you say?

IAGO

Nothing, my lord; or maybe—I just don't know.

OTHELLO

Wasn't that Cassio who just left my wife?

IAGO

Cassio, my lord? No, surely not, I can't believe  
he'd sneak away so guilty-looking  
when he saw you coming.

OTHELLO

I really think it was him.

DESDEMONA

45 How are you doing, my lord?  
I have been talking to a man who has a problem here,  
someone who suffers from your disapproval.

OTHELLO

Who do you mean?

DESDEMONA

50 Why, your lieutenant, Cassio. My good lord,  
if I have any ability or power to persuade you,  
take his apology at once.  
Because if he doesn't love you very sincerely,  
and if he hasn't erred out of ignorance and not deliberately,  
then I can't tell an honest face when I see one.  
Please, call him back.

55

OTHELLO  
Was that him who left just now?

DESDEMONA  
Yes, it was; and he was so humbled  
that he made me feel his grief  
and suffer with him. My love, call him back.

OTHELLO  
Not now, sweet Desdemona; some other time.

DESDEMONA  
But will it be shortly?

OTHELLO  
As soon as possible, sweetheart, on your account.

DESDEMONA  
Will it be tonight at supper-time?

OTHELLO  
No, not tonight.

DESDEMONA  
Before dinner tomorrow, then?

OTHELLO  
I will not dine at home.  
I'm meeting the captains at the castle.

DESDEMONA  
Well then, make it tomorrow night, or Tuesday morning,  
or Tuesday noon or night, or Wednesday morning.  
Please name the time, but don't let it  
be more than three days. Really, he's very sorry;  
and his crime, by everyday standards  
(except that, as they say, military order demands that  
the best men serve as examples), isn't even enough of a fault  
to merit a private scolding. When will he come?

OTHELLO  
Tell me, Othello. In my heart, I wonder  
what kind of thing you might ask of me that I would deny  
or hesitate so much about as you do. What? Michael Cassio,  
who came wooing with you, and so many times  
when I've said disagreeable things about you,

took your part—why is it so much trouble  
to make up with him? Trust me, I could do much—

OTHELLO  
Please, say no more. He can come when he wants to!  
I won't deny you anything.

DESDEMONA  
Why, I'm not asking for some favor.  
It's as if I were telling you to wear your gloves,  
or eat nourishing food, or stay warm,  
or ask you to do something helpful  
for yourself. No, when I want to ask something  
and appeal to you out of your love,  
it will be a weighty and serious thing  
and difficult to grant.

OTHELLO  
I won't deny you anything!  
And so I ask you to do this for me;  
just leave me alone for a little while.

DESDEMONA  
Would I refuse you? No. Goodbye, my lord.

OTHELLO  
Goodbye, Desdemona. I'll join you at once.

DESDEMONA  
Emilia, come along. (*To Othello*) Do whatever you like.  
Whatever you want, I'll obey you.  
*Exit DESDEMONA and EMILIA.*

OTHELLO  
You sweet thing! Hell take me,  
but I really love you! And when I don't love you,  
chaos will have come again.

IAGO  
My noble lord—

OTHELLO  
What is it, Iago?



105 IAGO  
When you wooed my lady, did Michael Cassio  
know about your love for her?

OTHELLO  
Yes, from beginning to end. Why do you ask?

IAGO  
I just wanted to satisfy my curiosity about something;  
nothing important.

110 OTHELLO  
What were you curious about, Iago?

IAGO  
I didn't realize that he had known her.

OTHELLO  
Oh, yes, and he often served as our go-between.

IAGO  
Really?

115 OTHELLO  
Really? Yes, really! Do you see anything wrong with that?  
Isn't he honest?

IAGO  
Honest, my lord?

OTHELLO  
Honest? Yes, honest.

IAGO  
For all I know, my lord.

OTHELLO  
What are you thinking?

120 IAGO  
Thinking, my lord?

OTHELLO  
Thinking, my lord?  
By God, he's echoing me  
as if he had something so awful on his mind

that he was afraid to tell me. You have something on your  
mind.

125 I heard you say just a moment ago that you didn't like it  
when you saw Cassio leaving my wife. What didn't you like?  
And when I told you that he was in my confidence  
during my whole courtship, you cried, "Really?"

130 And you wrinkled your forehead  
as if you had shut up inside your brain  
some terrible thought. If you love me,  
tell me what you're thinking.

IAGO  
My lord, you know I love you.

135 OTHELLO  
I believe you do;

and, because I know you are full of love and honesty  
and weigh your words carefully before you say them,  
I'm all the more frightened by your hesitation.  
This kind of behavior in a dishonest, disloyal rascal  
is a customary trick; but in a good man,  
140 it is a true sign of secret concern, coming from the heart  
in spite of one's intentions.

IAGO  
As for Michael Cassio,  
I'd venture to swear that I think he is honest.

OTHELLO  
I think so too.

145 IAGO  
Men should be what they seem to be;  
and men who aren't men shouldn't seem like men.

OTHELLO  
Certainly, men should be what they seem to be.

IAGO  
Well then, I think Cassio's an honest man.

150 OTHELLO  
No, you're still not telling me something.  
Please, tell me what you're thinking.

what's on your mind, and give me your worst thoughts as bluntly as you can.

IAGO

My good lord, pardon me.

155 Though I am obliged to perform all sorts of duties to you, I am not obliged to do something even slaves are free not to do.

Tell my thoughts? Why, suppose they are rotten and untrue?

And what palace is so secure that bad things don't sometimes get in? Who has such a pure heart that unclean ideas

160 don't keep regular session, sitting side by side with better thoughts?

OTHELLO

You are doing an injustice to a friend, Iago, if you believe he's been wronged and you won't tell him what you're thinking.

IAGO

165 I beg you—

since I may be wrong in my suspicion (and I admit it is a flaw in my nature

170 to seek out wrongs, and often my suspicious mind finds faults that aren't real)—that, in your wisdom, you keep in mind that I often imagine things,

and take no notice, and don't get worked up about my random and doubtful observations.

175 It's not good for your peace of mind or your best interests, or for my manhood, honesty, or wisdom, to tell you what I'm thinking.

OTHELLO

What do you mean?

IAGO

A man or a woman's good name, my dear lord, is the most important thing they have.

Someone who steals my money steals trash; it was something, now it's nothing.

180 it was mine, now it's his—and has belonged to thousands of others. But someone who takes my good name away from me

robs me of something which does him no good and leaves me very poor indeed.

OTHELLO

By God, I want to know what you're thinking!

IAGO

185 You couldn't, even if you were holding my heart in your hand; and you won't as long as it's in my custody.

OTHELLO

Ha!

IAGO

Oh, watch out for jealousy, my lord!

190 It is a green-eyed monster, and it laughs at the meat it eats. A cuckold can be happy

who, sure of his situation, hates the man who wrongs him.

But, oh, how time drags on for the man who adores, but doubts; suspects, but loves strongly!

OTHELLO

Oh, misery!

IAGO

195 To be poor and happy is to be rich, and plenty rich; but limitless wealth is just so much poverty

to a man who is frightened he'll wind up poor. May heaven protect the souls of everyone I know from jealousy!

OTHELLO

200 Why, why do you say this?

Do you think I'd choose to live for jealousy, to constantly change like the moon,

205 feeling new suspicions? No! To be in doubt once is to be satisfied as to the truth. Exchange me for a goat

when I would become obsessed with such inflated and far-fetched thoughts

as you suggest. You won't make me jealous by saying that my wife is lovely, dines elegantly, likes company, speaks freely, sings, plays, and dances well.

210 These good qualities make a virtuous person all the more virtuous.

And though I might not be the best-looking man alive,

I won't fear rejection on that account

because she had eyes and chose me. No, Iago;

I must see evidence before I doubt, and when I doubt, I must

have proof;

and when there's proof, that's the end of it—

and that's the end of love or jealousy!

IAGO

I'm glad to hear that; now I have cause

to show the love and duty that I owe you

more openly. Therefore, since I'm obliged,

listen to me. I've no proof yet.

Watch your wife; observe her carefully when she's with Cassio;

just keep your eyes open, neither suspicious nor careless.

I don't want your generous and noble nature

to be abused because of your natural kindness.

Keep your eyes open.

In Venice, women let heaven see them do wicked things

that their husbands never see. The height of their morality

is not to do no wrong, but to not get caught.

OTHELLO

Do you really mean it?

IAGO

She deceived her father by marrying you;

and when she seemed most frightened by your looks,

she really loved them most.

OTHELLO

And so she did.

IAGO

Well, there you have it!

235 Here's a girl who is so young but could still put on an appearance

to completely hoodwink her father;

he thought it was witchcraft—but I shouldn't be saying this.

I humbly beg your pardon

for being too concerned about you.

240 OTHELLO

I'm forever indebted to you.

IAGO

I see this has dampened your good spirits a little.

OTHELLO

Not a bit, not a bit.

IAGO

Really, I'm afraid it has.

I hope you'll remember that what I've said

was spoken simply out of love. But I see you're disturbed.

I really beg you not to apply what I've said

to larger issues or to go further

than my suspicions.

OTHELLO

I will not.

IAGO

If you should do that, my lord,

my words would have evil consequences

that I really didn't intend. Cassio's my very good friend—

My lord, I see you're disturbed.

OTHELLO

No, not terribly disturbed.

I can't think that Desdemona's anything but honest.

IAGO

And long may she live so! And long may you live to think so!

OTHELLO

But still, one can sometimes forget oneself—

IAGO

Yes, that's the point! Since (to be quite blunt)

she hasn't shown an inclination toward another match

of her own temperament, nature, and social status,

which is simply the tendency of all things in nature—

Really! One might smell in that kind of desire rotten

and foul abnormalities, unnatural thoughts—

265

But pardon me—in delivering this argument, I don't specifically speak about her; although I'm afraid that her desires, overwhelming her better judgment, might bring her to compare you to men of her own race and perhaps lead her to reject you.

OTHELLO

Goodbye, goodbye!

270 If you see anything else, let me know.

Tell your wife to keep her eyes open too. Leave me alone, Iago.

IAGO (*Walking away from him*)

My lord, I'll take my leave.

OTHELLO

Why did I get married? This honest man doubtless has seen and knows more, much more, than he's told me.

IAGO (*Returning*)

275 My lord, I would really like to beg your honor to think no more about this business. Give it time.

Though it's right that Cassio should have his position back, for he certainly does his job well,

still, if you'll only make him wait awhile,

280 you'll get a chance to watch him and see how he goes about appealing to you.

Watch if your lady pushes for his reappointment too strongly or too vehemently.

You'll be able to tell much by that. In the meantime,

just assume that my fears are groundless

(as I have good cause to think they are)

285 and consider her innocent, I beg you, your honor.

OTHELLO

Don't worry about my self-control.

IAGO

Once again, I'll take my leave.

Exit IAGO.

OTHELLO

This fellow's exceptionally honest

and knows all types of people, as well as having a keen eye

290

295

for human behavior. If I find out she's unfaithful, even if she was tethered to me by my own dear heartstrings, I'd pack her off and let her fend her own way against fortune. Possibly because I'm black and don't have that gentle way of behaving which gallants have, or because I'm getting along in years (though still not very old),

she's betrayed me. I've been wronged, and my only comfort will be to hate her. Oh, what a curse of marriage

that we can call these delicate creatures our own

and not control their longings! I'd rather be a toad

and live in some damp dungeon

than let a part of something I loved

be used by others. Yet this is the curse of those in high positions;

they're less likely to be free of it than the low born.

It's an inescapable destiny, like death:

we're doomed to wear the horns of the cuckold

from the moment we're born. Desdemona is coming.

*Enter DESDEMONA and EMILIA.*

If she's unfaithful, oh, then heaven has given itself an insult!

I won't believe it.

310

DESDEMONA

How are you, my dear Othello?

Your dinner and the noble islanders

you've invited are waiting for you to come.

OTHELLO

I am to blame.

DESDEMONA

315 Why are you speaking so softly?

Aren't you well?

OTHELLO

I have a pain in my forehead, here.

DESDEMONA

Well, that's from staying up too long; it will go away.

I'll bind it up, and in less than an hour,

320 it will be just fine.

To fly down the wind was a phrase that indicated someone was facing formidable odds.

307 *forked plague* a reference to the tradition that cuckolds supposedly had horns.

317 *I have a pain . . . here* Othello is pointing to the place on his head where his cuckold's

"horns" would be.

OTHELLO

Your handkerchief isn't large enough.

*(He pushes it away and it falls to the ground.)*  
Don't bother with it. Come along, I'll go with you.

DESDEMONA

I'm very sorry you're not feeling well.

*Exit OTHELLO and DESDEMONA.*EMILIA *(Picking up the handkerchief)*

I'm glad I've found this handkerchief.

This was her first gift from the Moor.

My willful husband has asked me a hundred times  
to steal it. But she loves it so much*(since Othello made her promise she would always keep it)*  
that she keeps it with her all the time  
to kiss and talk to. I'll have the embroidery copied  
and give it to Iago.

What he'll do with it, heaven knows; I don't.

I want nothing but to please his whims.  
*Enter IAGO.*

IAGO

What is this? What are you doing here alone?

EMILIA

335 Don't scold me; I've got something for you.

IAGO

Something for me? It's an ordinary something—

EMILIA

What?

IAGO

To have a foolish wife.

EMILIA

340 Oh, is that all? What would you give me  
for that handkerchief?

IAGO

What handkerchief?

EMILIA

What handkerchief?

Why, the one the Moor gave to Desdemona;  
the one you've asked me to steal so often.

IAGO

345 Have you stolen it from her?

EMILIA

Certainly not; she dropped it by accident,  
and I was lucky enough to be on hand to pick it up.  
Look, here it is.

IAGO

Good girl! Give it to me.

EMILIA

350 What do you want to do with it after insisting all this time  
that I steal it?IAGO *(Snatching it away from her)*

Why, what's it to you?

EMILIA

355 If it's not for anything important,  
give it back to me. The poor lady; she'll go crazy  
when she finds out she's lost it.

IAGO

Don't let on that you know anything; I have use for it.  
Go on, leave me alone.  
*Exit EMILIA.*360 I'll put this handkerchief in Cassio's lodging  
and let him find it. Little things like this  
are as convincing to those of a jealous nature  
as the Holy Scriptures themselves. This might have an effect.  
The Moor already shows some change, due to my poisonous  
influence.365 Dangerous ideas are poisonous by nature;  
at first they do not even taste bad,  
but in a short time, they get into the blood  
and burn like sulfur mines. I said as much.  
*Enter OTHELLO.*

Look at him coming! Neither poppies nor herbs  
nor all the sleeping potions in the world  
will ever restore you to that sweet sleep  
which you knew only yesterday.

OTHELLO

What! What! Unfaithful to me!

IAGO

Why, what is it, general? No more of that kind of talk!

OTHELLO

Away! Be gone! You have put me on the rack.  
I swear, it's better to be greatly wronged  
than to know anything about it.

IAGO

What do you mean, my lord?

OTHELLO

What did I know about her secret hours of lust?  
I didn't see it, didn't suspect it, and wasn't hurt by it.  
I slept well that night and was free and happy;  
I didn't know that Cassio had been kissing her.  
If a man's been robbed and has no need of what's been stolen,  
he shouldn't be told; then he's not really robbed at all.

IAGO

I'm sorry to hear this.

OTHELLO

I'd have been happy if the whole army,  
foot soldiers and everyone, had made love to her,  
as long as I didn't know. Oh, now I must say  
farewell to peace of mind forever! Farewell to contentment!  
Farewell to the glorious troops and the great wars  
that make ambition into a virtue! Oh, farewell!  
Farewell to the neighing horse and the shrill trumpet,  
to the spirit-stirring drum, and the ear-shattering fife,  
the royal banner, and all the good men,  
pride, pomp, and pageantry of glorious war!  
And, oh, you deadly cannons whose horrible voices

395 imitate the thunderclaps of the god Jove,  
farewell! Othello's occupation is gone!

IAGO

Can this be possible, my lord?

OTHELLO

Villain, you'd better be sure you prove my love's a whore!  
Be sure of it; give me visible proof;  
or, by the value of a man's eternal soul,  
you would have been better off to have been born a dog  
than to face my roused wrath!

IAGO

Has it come to this?

OTHELLO

405 Make me see it; or at least prove it so well  
that there's no hinge or loop in the proof  
to hang a doubt on—or woe upon your life!

IAGO

My noble lord—

OTHELLO

410 If you're slandering her and torturing me,  
never pray again; stop feeling remorse;  
heap new horrors on top of horrors;  
do deeds that will make heaven weep, and shock the world into  
speechlessness;  
for you can't add anything to your own damnation  
greater than that.

IAGO

415 Oh, God! Oh, heaven forgive me!  
Are you a man? Have you a soul or reason?  
May God be with you! You do my duty. What a fool I am,  
who has lived to see his honesty become a vice!  
Oh, monstrous world! Take note, take note, world:  
to be truthful and honest is not safe.  
420 I thank you for teaching me this lesson; and from now on,  
I'll love no friend, since love causes such offense.

OTHELLO  
No, stay. You should be honest.

IAGO  
I should be wise; honest men are fools  
and lose what they try to gain.

425 OTHELLO  
By all the world,  
I believe my wife to be honest, and I believe that she is not;  
I believe that you are truthful, and believe that you are not.  
I must have some proof. Her name used to be as clean  
as Diana's face, but is now as grimy and black  
430 as my own face. As long as there are ropes, knives,  
poison, fires, or rivers where I can drown myself,  
I won't suffer this. I wish I were certain!

IAGO  
I see, sir, that you are eaten up by your emotions.  
I'm very sorry that I brought this on.  
435 Do you really want to be certain?

OTHELLO  
Want to be? No, I will be.

IAGO  
And you might be. But how? How will you be certain, my lord?  
Do you want to be an onlooker, grossly staring at it all?  
Do you want to see her in the act?

440 OTHELLO  
Death and damnation! Oh!

IAGO  
I think it would be very difficult  
to get them to do it where they can be seen. Damn them, then,  
if mortal eyes ever do see them go to bed  
other than their own! So how? How then?  
445 What's there to say? How will you be satisfied?  
It's impossible that you would see it happen,  
even if they were as ready as goats, as hot as monkeys,  
as lustful as wolves in heat, and as stupidly foolish

450 as if they were drunk. But still, let me tell you,  
if accusation and the strongest circumstantial evidence  
which point straight to the truth of the matter  
will satisfy you, you may have that.

OTHELLO  
Give me absolute proof that she's unfaithful.

455 IAGO  
I don't like being put in this position.  
But since I'm so deep into this business already,  
driven on by my foolish honesty and love,  
I'll continue. I was lying next to Cassio recently,  
and since I had a terrible toothache,  
I couldn't sleep.  
460 There's a certain kind of man of so loose a soul  
that he'll talk about his private business in his sleep.  
Cassio is this kind of man.  
In his sleep, I heard him say, "Sweet Desdemona,  
let's be careful, let's hide our love!"  
465 And then, sir, he'd grip and wring my hand,  
cry "Oh, sweet creature!" and then kiss me hard,  
as if he were pulling up kisses by the roots  
which grew on my lips. Then he laid his leg  
over my thigh and sighed and kissed me, and then  
cried "Curse the fate that gave you to the Moor!"

OTHELLO  
Oh, monstrous! Monstrous!

IAGO  
Still, this only happened in his dream.

OTHELLO  
But it told of something which had already actually occurred.  
It's very suspicious, even though it was only a dream.

475 IAGO  
And we might use this to strengthen other evidence  
of a flimsier nature.

OTHELLO

I'll tear her all to pieces!

IAGO

480 No, be sensible. We haven't seen anything done;  
she still might be faithful. Just tell me this—  
haven't you sometimes seen a handkerchief  
decorated with strawberries in your wife's hand?

OTHELLO

I gave her one like that; it was my first gift to her.

IAGO

485 I didn't know that; but I saw a handkerchief like that  
(and I'm sure it was your wife's) just today;  
Cassio wiped his beard with it.

OTHELLO

If it's the same one—

IAGO

490 If it's the same one, or any one that belongs to her,  
it speaks against her, along with the other evidence.

OTHELLO

495 Oh, I wish the wretch had forty thousand lives!  
One is too little, too small to satisfy my revenge.  
Now I see that it's true. Look here, Iago:  
all my dear love for her I send straight to heaven.  
It's gone.

Black vengeance, arise out of the depths of hell!

495 Oh, love, give up your crown and your throne in my heart  
to tyrannous hatred! Breathe, swell up with your burden;  
it's filled with the poison of vipers.

IAGO

Still, calm yourself.

OTHELLO

Oh, blood, blood, blood!

IAGO

500 Be patient, I tell you. You might change your mind.

OTHELLO

505 Never, Iago. Just like the Black Sea's  
icy current and relentless course,  
which never ebbs but keeps moving on  
toward the Sea of Marmora and the Bosphorus,  
that's what my bloody thoughts are, moving violently  
and never looking back, never ebbing to love's gentleness  
until complete and far-reaching revenge  
swallows them up. Now, by the cloud-streaked heavens,  
I sacredly and reverently promise *(He kneels.)*  
to make good my words.

IAGO

510 Do not rise yet.  
Be witness, you ever-burning stars in the sky,  
and you elements that embrace us, *(He kneels.)*  
be witness that Iago is now dedicating  
the use of his intelligence, hands, and heart  
to the wronged Othello's service! Let him command me,  
and I'll obey out of pity,  
no matter how bloody the deed may be.  
*(They rise.)*

OTHELLO

520 I'll match your love,  
not with useless thanks, but with complete acceptance,  
and I'll put you to work at it immediately.  
Before three days are up, come to me and say  
that Cassio's no longer alive.

IAGO

525 My friend is as good as dead; it's done at your request.  
But let her live.

OTHELLO

530 Damn her, the lewd minx! Oh, damn her!  
Come, step aside with me. I will leave  
so I can think up some quick means to kill  
that lovely devil. You are my lieutenant now.

IAGO

530 I'm your servant forever.  
*They exit.*



Act III, Scene iv: In front of the castle. Enter DESDEMONA, EMILIA, and CLOWN.

DESDEMONA

Do you know, fellow, where Lieutenant Cassio lies?

CLOWN

I don't dare say he lies anywhere.

DESDEMONA

Why, man?

CLOWN

He's a soldier; and to say a soldier lies could get me stabbed.

DESDEMONA

Don't talk nonsense! Where is he staying?

CLOWN

To tell you where he's staying would be to tell you where I lie.

DESDEMONA

What's that supposed to mean?

CLOWN

I don't know where he's staying; and for me to make up an address and say he lies here or lies there, I'd be lying for sure.

DESDEMONA

Can you enquire around for him, and be instructed by report?

CLOWN

I'll interrogate the world to find him; that is, I'll make up questions and come back with answers.

DESDEMONA

Find him, and tell him to come here. Tell him I've persuaded my lord on his behalf and have reason to hope that all will be well.

CLOWN

It's within the range of human intelligence to do that, so I'll give it a try.

Exit CLOWN.

DESDEMONA

Where could I have lost that handkerchief, Emilia?

EMILIA

I don't know, madam.

DESDEMONA

Believe me, I'd rather have lost my purse full of gold coins. If my noble Moor were not sensible and were made of the same bad stuff as jealous creatures are, this would be enough to put evil thoughts in his head.

EMILIA

Isn't he jealous?

DESDEMONA

Who? Him? I think the sun where he was born dried all such tendencies out of him.

EMILIA

Look, he's coming.  
Enter OTHELLO.

DESDEMONA

I won't leave him until Cassio is summoned. (*To Othello*) How are you, my lord?

OTHELLO

Well, my good lady. (*To himself*) Oh, how hard it is to pretend!— How are you doing, Desdemona?

DESDEMONA

Well, my good lord.

OTHELLO

Give me your hand. Your hand is moist, my lady.

DESDEMONA

It hasn't yet felt age or known sorrow.

OTHELLO

This suggests fruitfulness and a generous heart. Hot, hot and moist. This hand of yours requires a separation from the world, fasting and praying, mortification of spirit and devout duties; because I see a young, sweating devil here

35

40 who often rebels. This is a good hand,  
a frank one.

DESDEMONA  
You have good reason to say so;  
this was the hand that gave away my heart.

45 OTHELLO  
A generous hand! In the past, hearts gave away hands.  
But the new custom is to give the hands, not necessarily the hearts.

DESDEMONA  
I don't know anything about this. Come, now, your promise!

OTHELLO  
What promise do you mean, dear?

DESDEMONA  
I have sent for Cassio to come and speak to you.

50 OTHELLO  
I have a terrible head cold bothering me.  
Lend me your handkerchief.

DESDEMONA  
Here it is, my lord.

OTHELLO  
I mean the one I gave you.

DESDEMONA  
I don't have it with me.

OTHELLO  
You don't?

55 DESDEMONA  
I really don't, my lord.

60 OTHELLO  
That's wrong of you. That handkerchief  
was given to my mother by a gypsy.  
She was a magician and could almost  
read people's thoughts. She told her that, as long as she kept it,  
it would make her desirable and cause my father  
to love her completely. But if she lost it

65 or gave it as a gift, my father's eyes  
would find her loathsome, and he'd begin  
to seek out other women. She gave it to me when she was dying,  
and asked me, when it came time for me to marry,  
to give it to my wife. I did so; so remember what I said—  
consider it as precious to you as your own eye.  
If you were to lose it or give it away, that would be a loss  
that you could never make up.

70 DESDEMONA  
Is it possible?

75 OTHELLO  
It's true. There's magic in the weaving of it.  
A prophetess who had lived  
two hundred years  
sewed this handkerchief while she was possessed and able to  
prophesy.  
The silk came from sacred worms,  
and it was dyed in a liquid skillfully drained  
and preserved from maidens' hearts.

DESDEMONA  
Really? Is that true?

80 OTHELLO  
Very true. So take good care of it.

DESDEMONA  
Then I wish to God I'd never seen it!

OTHELLO  
What? Why is that?

DESDEMONA  
Why are you speaking so angrily and abruptly?

85 OTHELLO  
Have you lost it? Is it gone? Tell me, have you left it somewhere?

DESDEMONA  
Heaven help us!

OTHELLO  
What did you say?

DESDEMONA

It hasn't been lost. But what if it had been?

OTHELLO

What?

DESDEMONA

I tell you, it's not lost.

OTHELLO

Go get it; let me see it!

DESDEMONA

Well, I can do that, sir, but I won't right now.

This is just a trick to distract me from my appeal.  
Please, reinstate Cassio.

OTHELLO

Get me the handkerchief! I'm very mistrustful.

DESDEMONA

Come, come!

You'll never meet a more capable man.

OTHELLO

The handkerchief!

DESDEMONA

Please, let's talk about Cassio.

OTHELLO

The handkerchief!

DESDEMONA

A man who, all his life,

has depended on your love for everything he has,  
shared dangers with you—

OTHELLO

The handkerchief!

DESDEMONA

Really, you have no reason to act like this.

OTHELLO

Get away from me!

*Exit OTHELLO.*

EMILIA

105 And this man isn't jealous?

DESDEMONA

I've never seen this side of him.

There must be something magical about this handkerchief.  
I'm very unlucky to have lost it.

EMILIA

110 It doesn't take a year or two to find out what a man's like.

They are only stomachs, and we are only food.

They eat us hungrily, and when they are full,  
they belch us.

*Enter IAGO and CASSIO.*

Look, Cassio and my husband!

IAGO

115 There is no other way; she must be the one to do it.  
And then you'll be happy! Go to her and ask her.

DESDEMONA

How are you, good Cassio? What's new with you?

CASSIO

120 Madam, the same appeal as before. I beg you  
that, with your good help, I might  
exist again and be one of those loved

by a man whom, with all my heart,  
I deeply honor. I don't want to wait.

If my offense is of such a serious nature  
that neither my past service nor my present sorrow

nor my promises of worthy behavior in the future  
can restore me to his love again,

it would at least help me to know it.  
Then I can resign myself to the situation

and accept whatever kind of life  
fortune has in mind for me.

DESDEMONA

130 Oh, gentle Cassio!

My pleading won't help at the moment.

My lord is not himself; and I wouldn't recognize him

135 if he were as altered in looks as he is in mood.  
I swear by every sacred spirit  
that I've said everything I can for you  
and found myself to be the target of his anger  
because of what I frankly said! You must be patient awhile.  
I'll do what I can; and I'll do more  
than I'd dare to do for myself. Please be content with that.

IAGO  
140 Is my lord angry?

EMILIA  
He left just now,  
certainly very strangely agitated.

IAGO  
145 How can he be angry? I've seen him at times when cannons  
have blown his troops sky high  
and, like some devil, blasted his own brother  
standing at his arm—so can he really be angry?  
There's something seriously wrong, then. I'll go meet him.  
There's something very urgent, indeed, if he is angry.  
*Exit IAGO.*

DESDEMONA  
150 *(Calling after him)* Please, do so. Surely some business of state,  
either in Venice, or some unexecuted plot  
just now revealed here in Cyprus to him,  
has muddled his clear mind. In such cases,  
it's man's nature to become obsessed with little things,  
through important things are really the problem. This is the truth.  
If one of your fingers hurts, it causes  
your other healthier fingers to feel  
that pain as well. No, we mustn't think that men are gods,  
nor expect the same kind of consideration from them  
that one expects from a bride. Be the first to scold me, Emilia,  
since I (unsportsmanlike warrior that I am!)  
thought his judgment against me was unkind of him.  
Now I realize that I misunderstood him,  
and accused him unfairly.

EMILIA  
165 Pray to heaven that it really is state business, as you think,  
and no ideas or jealous whims  
concerning you.

DESDEMONA  
Heaven forbid! I never gave him cause.

EMILIA  
170 But jealous minds won't take that for an answer.  
They are never jealous for the apparent reason,  
but they are really jealous because they are jealous. It's a  
monster that creates more of itself and was born of itself.

DESDEMONA  
May heaven keep that monster away from Othello's mind!

EMILIA  
Amen to that, lady.

DESDEMONA  
175 I'll go look for him. Cassio, stay near here.  
If I find him receptive, I'll bring up your appeal  
and try my best to win it for you.

CASSIO  
I thank your ladyship very humbly.  
*Exit DESDEMONA and EMILIA.*  
*Enter BIANCA.*

BIANCA  
God save you, my friend Cassio!

CASSIO  
180 Why are you away from home?  
How are things with you, my most lovely Bianca?  
As a matter of fact, sweet love, I was just coming to your house.

BIANCA  
185 And I was going to your lodging, Cassio.  
Why have you been away for a week? For seven days and nights?  
One hundred sixty-eight hours? When an hour in the absence of  
a lover  
is more tedious than a hundred sixty days?  
Oh, what tiring addition!

CASSIO

Pardon me, Bianca.  
During this time, I've been weighed down by heavy thoughts;  
but, when things are better,  
I'll make up for this period of absence. Sweet Bianca,  
(*Gives her Desdemona's handkerchief.*)  
copy this embroidery for me.

BIANCA

Oh, Cassio, where did you get this?  
This is a gift from some new friend.  
Now I know the cause of your absence.  
Has it come to this? Well, well.

CASSIO

Go on, woman!  
Throw your wicked ideas back into the devil's teeth,  
where you got them in the first place. Now you're jealous  
that this is from some mistress of mine, that it's a remembrance.  
No, honestly, Bianca.

BIANCA

Well, whose is it?

CASSIO

I don't know, sweetheart. I found it in my bedroom.  
I like the embroidery very much. Before it is reclaimed,  
which it probably will be, I'd like to have it copied.  
Take it and do it, and leave me alone awhile.

BIANCA

Leave you alone? Why?

CASSIO

I'm waiting here for the general  
and don't think it would be to my credit, nor is it my wish,  
that he should see me with a woman.

BIANCA

210 Why, please tell me?

CASSIO

It's not that I don't love you.

BIANCA

You seem not to love me!  
Please walk with me a little way,  
and tell me if I will see you soon at night.

CASSIO

215 I can only walk a little way  
since I'm waiting here; but I'll see you soon.

BIANCA

That's very good. I must accept things as they are.  
*They exit.*

*Act IV, Scene i: In front of the castle. Enter OTHELLO and IAGO.*

*Act IV, Scene i 177*

IAGO  
Do you think so?

OTHELLO  
Do I think so, Iago?

IAGO  
Well,  
just a kiss in private?

5 OTHELLO  
An improper kiss.

IAGO  
Or maybe to be naked with her friend in bed  
for an hour or so, but not really meaning any harm?

10 OTHELLO  
Naked in bed, Iago, and not really meaning any harm?  
They'd be putting on a show of wickedness without meaning it.  
People who have virtuous intentions but act that way  
will be tempted by the devil, and they will tempt heaven.

IAGO  
Yet suppose they don't do anything; that's a forgivable sin.  
But if I've given my wife a handkerchief—

OTHELLO  
What then?

15 IAGO  
Well, then it's hers, my lord; and as long as it's hers,  
she has the right, I think, to give it to any man.

OTHELLO  
Her honor belongs to her as well.  
Does she have the right to give that away?

20 IAGO  
Her honor is a quality you cannot see.  
Some seem to have it when they really don't.  
But as for the handkerchief—

25 OTHELLO  
By heaven, I'd gladly have forgotten all about it!  
You told me (Oh, it comes over my memory  
like a raven over a house of death,  
boding ill to all!) that he had my handkerchief.

IAGO  
Yes, what of it?

OTHELLO  
That's not so good now.

30 IAGO  
What  
if I were to tell you that I had seen him do you wrong?  
Or heard him say—since there are such rascals around  
who once they have succeeded, by means of their persistence  
or by the weakness of will of some lady,  
in seducing and satisfying them, can't help it  
but they have to blab—

35 OTHELLO  
Has he said anything?

IAGO  
He has, my lord; but you can be very sure  
that he'll unsay everything.

OTHELLO

What has he said?

IAGO

To tell the truth, that he did—I don't know what he did.

OTHELLO

What? What?

IAGO

Lie—

OTHELLO

With her?

IAGO

With her, on her; what you will.

OTHELLO

Lie with her? Lie on her? We say this while she continues to seem innocent.

Lie with her! By God, that's repulsive.—Handkerchief—confessions—handkerchief!—He should confess and be hanged for this

deed—hanged first, and confess later! It makes me tremble.

I wouldn't be so angered by this if there

weren't some truth in it. It isn't just the words themselves that make me shake like this.

What! Noses, ears, and lips? Is it possible?—Confess?—Handkerchief?—Oh, devil!

(*He falls into a trance.*)

IAGO

Keep working,

my medicine, keep working! This is how gullible fools are caught

and how many worthy and chaste women,

all guiltless, wind up accused.—What is it? My lord!

My lord, listen! Othello!

*Enter CASSIO.*

What is it, Cassio?

CASSIO

What's the matter?

IAGO

My lord has fallen into an epileptic seizure.

This is his second one; he had one yesterday.

CASSIO

Rub his temples.

IAGO

No, don't do that.

This coma must run its course quietly.

If it doesn't, he'll foam at the mouth, and soon he'll explode into savage madness. Look, he's stirring.

Step out of the way for a little while.

He'll recover soon. When he's gone,

I need to talk to you about something very important.

*Exit CASSIO.*

How are you, general? Have you hurt your head?

OTHELLO

Are you mocking me?

70

IAGO

I, mock you? No, by heaven.

I wish you would bear your fortune like a man!

OTHELLO

A man with cuckold's horns is a monster and a beast.

IAGO

Then there are many beasts in any populous city and many civilized monsters.

75

OTHELLO

Did he confess it?

IAGO

Good sir, take it like a man.

Remember, take any mature man, and if he's married, he's probably in the same position. There are millions of men alive

who go to beds every night that are not solely their own, which they'll insist are theirs alone. Your case is better.

Oh, it's a curse of hell, the supreme mockery of fiends,

to kiss a wanton woman in a carefree bed

and imagine her to be chaste! No, I'd rather know the truth;

and as long as I know what I am, I'll know what she is, too.

80

85

OTHELLO

Oh, you are wise! That's certain.

IAGO

Step aside for a while;  
contain yourself within the bounds of patience.  
While you were lying here, overwhelmed with your grief  
(in a fit most unworthy of a man like yourself),  
Cassio came along. I got him away on some pretext  
and came up with a good excuse for the trance you were in.  
I told him to come back soon and to speak with me here;  
he promised that he would. Go hide yourself  
and observe the sneers, the contempt, and the obvious scorn  
which you can see all over his face.  
I'll make him tell the story all over again—  
where, how, how often, how long ago, and when  
he has, and will again, encounter your wife.  
I tell you, just watch how he acts. Please, be patient!  
Or I'll have to conclude that you're overwhelmed by rage  
and not a man at all.

OTHELLO

Do you hear me, Iago?  
I will prove to be very cleverly patient  
but (do you hear me?) very vengeful.

IAGO

That's quite appropriate;  
but still, think before you act. Won't you hide yourself?  
(OTHELLO hides himself.)  
Now I'll ask Cassio about Bianca,  
a hussy who, by selling herself to him,  
buys herself bread and clothes. She's a creature  
who loves Cassio. It's the typical curse of whores  
to gain the love of many men and only love one.  
When a man hears about her love, he can't help  
but laugh uncontrollably. Here he comes.  
*Enter CASSIO.*  
When he smiles, Othello will go mad;  
and his naive jealousy will interpret

poor Cassio's smiles, gestures, and frivolous behavior  
quite the wrong way. How are you doing, Lieutenant?

CASSIO

120 All the worse since you call me by that title,  
the lack of which is killing me.

IAGO

Work on Desdemona well, and you're sure to get it back.  
(*Speaking lower.*) Now if this appeal were something Bianca had  
charge of,  
everything would be taken care of quickly!

CASSIO

Oh, the poor wretch!

OTHELLO

125 Look! He's laughing already!

IAGO

I never knew a woman to be so in love with a man.

CASSIO

Oh, the poor rascal! I really do believe she loves me.

OTHELLO

Now he's feebly denying it and laughing about it.

IAGO

Haven't you heard, Cassio?

OTHELLO

130 Now he's begging him  
to tell it over again. Go on! Well said, well said!

IAGO

She's spreading it around that you're going to marry her.  
Do you really intend to?

CASSIO

Ha, ha, ha!

OTHELLO

135 Are you gloating, conqueror? Are you gloating?

CASSIO

I, marry her? What, a prostitute? Please give me credit for  
some intelligence; don't think I'm that stupid. Ha, ha, ha!



OTHELLO

So, so, so. Let the winner laugh!

IAGO

Really, rumor has it that you will marry her.

CASSIO

Come, tell the truth.

IAGO

I'm a true villain otherwise.

OTHELLO

Have you branded me? Well.

CASSIO

This is the monkey's own idea. Out of her own love and vanity, she thinks that I'll marry her, not because of any promise I've made.

OTHELLO

Iago's signaling me. Now Cassio's starting the story.

CASSIO

She was here just now; she follows me everywhere. The other day I was talking on the sea bank with some Venetians, and there came the little plaything and threw her arms around my neck—

OTHELLO

Crying, "Oh, dear Cassio!" as it were. His gestures say as much.

CASSIO

She hangs and droops and weeps all over me; she calls and pulls at me.  
Ha, ha, ha!

OTHELLO

Now he's telling how she took him to my bedroom. Oh, I see that nose of yours but not yet the dog I'll throw it to.

CASSIO

Well, I must get rid of her company.

IAGO

Well look! Here she comes.  
*Enter BIANCA.*

CASSIO

What a polcat!—though she tries to hide it. What are you doing, chasing after me?

BIANCA

Let the devil and his mother chase you! What was the idea, giving me that handkerchief just now? I was a fine fool to take it. I'm supposed to copy the embroidery? A likely story that you found it in your bedroom and don't know who left it there! Some hussy gave it to you, and I'm supposed to copy the embroidery?  
There! Give it to your whore. Wherever it came from, I'm not copying the embroidery.

CASSIO

165 What is this, my sweet Bianca? What is this? What is this?

OTHELLO

By heaven, that looks like my handkerchief!

BIANCA

If you want to come to supper tonight, you may. If you don't, then come back again when you're invited.  
*Exit BIANCA.*

IAGO

After her, after her!

CASSIO

170 Really, I'd better; she'll be yelling in the streets otherwise.

IAGO

Will you have supper there?

CASSIO

Yes, I intend to.

IAGO

Well, I might see you; for I am really eager to talk to you.

CASSIO

175 Please come. Will you?

IAGO

Certainly! Say no more.  
*Exit CASSIO.*

OTHELLO (*Coming forward*)  
How shall I murder him, Iago?

IAGO  
Did you see how he laughed at his sin?

OTHELLO  
Oh, Iago!

IAGO  
And did you see the handkerchief?

OTHELLO  
Was that mine?

IAGO  
Yours, I swear! And look how much he values that foolish woman,  
your wife! She gave it to him, and he's given it to his whore.

OTHELLO  
I wish I could spend nine years killing him!  
A fine woman! A lovely woman! A sweet woman!

IAGO  
No, you must forget all that.

OTHELLO  
Yes, let her rot and perish and be damned tonight, for she's  
not going to live. No, my heart has been turned to stone:  
when I strike it, it hurts  
my hand. Oh, there's not a sweeter creature in the world! She could  
lie beside an emperor and give him commands.

IAGO  
No, that's not the right attitude.

OTHELLO  
Hang her! I'm only saying what she's like. So skillful with  
her needle!  
An admirable musician! Oh, she could sing the savageness  
right out of a  
bear! Such lofty and abundant intelligence and imagination!

IAGO  
She's all the worse because of this.

OTHELLO  
Oh, a thousand, thousand times! And then she has such a gentle  
temperament!

IAGO  
Yes, too gentle.

OTHELLO  
Yes, that's for certain. But what a pity, Iago! Oh, Iago, what a pity,  
Iago!

IAGO  
If you're going to be so foolish about her crime, why don't  
you give her a license to sin?  
If it doesn't bother you, it won't bother anyone.

OTHELLO  
I'll chop her up in little bits! Cuckold me!

IAGO  
Oh, it's evil of her.

OTHELLO  
With my officer!

IAGO  
That's even worse.

OTHELLO  
Get some poison for me tonight, Iago. I won't discuss this with  
her for fear that her body and beauty might weaken my resolve  
again.  
Tonight, Iago!

IAGO  
Don't do it with poison. Strangle her in her bed, the very bed she  
has contaminated.

OTHELLO  
Good, good! The justice of that pleases me. Very good!

IAGO  
As for Cassio, let me take care of him. You'll know more  
by midnight.  
(*A trumpet blows offstage.*)  
*Enter LODOVICO, DESDEMONA, and ATTENDANTS.*

OTHELLO  
Very good! What was that trumpet?

IAGO  
Surely someone from Venice. It's Lodovico; he's come  
from the duke. Look, your wife's with him.

LODOVICO  
God save you, worthy general!

OTHELLO  
I welcome you with all my heart, sir.

LODOVICO (*Giving Othello a letter*)  
The duke and senators of Venice send greetings.

OTHELLO  
I kiss this letter. (*He opens the letter and reads it.*)

DESDEMONA  
So what's the news, good cousin Lodovico?

IAGO  
I am very glad to see you, signior.  
Welcome to Cyprus.

LODOVICO  
Thank you. How's Lieutenant Cassio doing?

IAGO  
He lives, sir.

DESDEMONA  
Cousin, there has occurred between him and my lord  
an unfortunate quarrel. But you will make all that well.

OTHELLO  
Are you sure of that?

DESDEMONA  
My lord?

OTHELLO (*Reading*)  
"Don't fail to do this, as soon as you can—"

LODOVICO  
He wasn't speaking to you; he's busy with his letter.  
Has there been a falling out between my lord and Cassio?

DESDEMONA  
A very unfortunate one. I'd do a great deal  
to reconcile them because of the love I feel for Cassio.

OTHELLO  
Fire and brimstone!

DESDEMONA  
My lord?

OTHELLO  
Are you sane?

DESDEMONA  
What, is he angry?

LODOVICO  
Maybe the letter has upset him.  
I think they have commanded him to go home  
and turn his position here over to Cassio.

DESDEMONA  
Well really, I'm glad to hear it.

OTHELLO  
Indeed?

DESDEMONA  
My lord?

OTHELLO  
I'm glad to see you've gone mad.

DESDEMONA  
Why, sweet Othello!

OTHELLO (*Striking her*)  
Devil!

DESDEMONA  
I've done nothing to deserve this.

LODOVICO  
My lord, no one would believe this in Venice,  
even if I swore I saw it. This is too much.  
Apologize to her; she's weeping.

OTHELLO  
Oh, devil, devil!  
If the earth could be sown by a woman's tears,

255 every drop that falls from her eyes would become a crocodile.  
Out of my sight!

DESDEMONA (*Starting to go*)  
I won't stay to offend you.

LODOVICO  
Really, she's an obedient lady.  
I beg your lordship to call her back.

OTHELLO  
Lady!

260 DESDEMONA  
My lord?

OTHELLO  
What do you want with her, sir?

LODOVICO  
Who? I, my lord?

265 OTHELLO  
Yes! You wanted me to make her turn back.  
Sir, she can twist and turn and yet keep moving ahead  
and continue to deceive you. And she can weep, sir, weep.  
And she's obedient; just as you said, obedient,  
very obedient. (*To Desdemona*) Go ahead and cry.

(*To Lodovico*) Concerning this letter, sir. (*To Desdemona*)  
Oh, well-acted grief!  
(*To Lodovico*) I've been commanded home. (*To Desdemona*) Go  
away;

270 I'll send for you soon. (*To Lodovico*) Sir, I'll obey this command  
and go back to Venice. (*To Desdemona*) Go, get away from me!  
*Exit DESDEMONA.*

Cassio will take my place. And, sir, tonight  
I hope we can have supper together.  
Sir, you are welcome to Cyprus.—Goats and monkeys!  
*Exit OTHELLO.*

LODOVICO  
275 Is this the same noble Moor whom our senate unanimously  
called completely capable? Is this the man  
who could not be shaken by anger? Whose solid virtue  
an accidental shot or a chance arrow  
could neither graze or pierce?

280 IAGO  
He is much changed.

LODOVICO  
Is his mind all right? Has he gone mad?

IAGO  
He's what he seems to be. I musn't pass judgment.  
The man he could be—if he is not such a man—  
I wish to heaven he really were!

285 LODOVICO  
And he struck his wife?

IAGO  
Really, that wasn't so good; yet I wish I knew  
that blow would prove to be his worst action.

290 LODOVICO  
Is he usually like this?  
Or did the letter make him angry  
and just create this fault?

295 IAGO  
Oh, no, no!  
It would not be honorable of me to speak  
of the things I've seen and known. Observe him for yourself,  
and his own actions will tell you enough about him  
so that I can remain silent. Just follow him  
and watch what he does.

LODOVICO  
I'm sorry that I was wrong about him.  
*They exit.*

*Act IV, Scene ii: Inside the castle. Enter OTHELLO  
and EMILIA.*

OTHELLO  
You haven't seen anything, then?

EMILIA  
Nor ever heard or even suspected anything.

OTHELLO  
Yes, but you have seen Cassio and her together.

EMILIA  
But I saw no harm in it, and I heard every syllable that they said to each other.

OTHELLO  
What, didn't they ever whisper?

EMILIA  
Never, my lord.

OTHELLO  
Nor tell you to go away?

EMILIA  
Never.

OTHELLO  
To get her fan, her gloves, her mask, or some other trifle?

EMILIA  
Never, my lord.

OTHELLO  
That's strange.

EMILIA  
My lord, I would dare wager that she is faithful—I'd bet my very soul on that. If you think otherwise, then get that thought out of your head; it troubles you to no purpose.

15 If some villain has put this idea in your head, let heaven repay him with the curse laid on the serpent! If she isn't faithful, chaste, and true, there's not a lucky man in the world; the most innocent of wives is as wicked as any rumor says.

OTHELLO  
Tell her to come here. Go.  
*Exit EMILIA.*  
What she says sounds good; yet it would be a stupid procuress who couldn't make up such a story. This is a sly whore,

25 a locked room and key with all kinds of villainous secrets; but still, she kneels and prays; I've seen her do it.

*Enter DESDEMONA and EMILIA.*

DESDEMONA  
My lord, what do you wish?

OTHELLO  
Please, my dear, come here.

DESDEMONA  
What do you desire?

OTHELLO  
30 Let me see your eyes.  
Look at my face.

DESDEMONA  
What horrible ideas do you have?

OTHELLO (*To Emilia*)  
See to your duty, madam.  
Leave the lovers alone and shut the door; cough or cry "ahem," if anybody comes.  
Your trade, your trade! Come on, get to it!  
*Exit EMILIA.*

DESDEMONA  
I ask you on my knees, what did you mean by that? I understood the fury in your words but not the words themselves.

OTHELLO  
Tell me, what are you?

DESDEMONA  
40 Your wife, my lord; your true and loyal wife.

OTHELLO  
Come, swear it, and damn yourself for fear that, since you look like an angel, the devils themselves will be afraid to seize you. So damn yourself a second time—  
45 swear you are faithful.

DESDEMONA

Heaven truly knows I am.

OTHELLO

Heaven truly knows that you are as unfaithful as hell.

DESDEMONA

To whom, my lord? With whom? How am I unfaithful?

OTHELLO

Ah, Desdemona! Get away from me! Away! Away!

DESDEMONA

Oh, what a sad day! Why are you weeping?

Am I the cause of these tears, my lord?

If you perhaps suspect that my father  
might have had something to do with your recall,  
don't blame me for it. If you have lost his affection,  
then I have lost it too.

OTHELLO

Had it been heaven's wish  
to persecute me with illness, if it had rained  
all kinds of sores and shames on my bare head,  
buried me in poverty up to the lips,  
or given me and my highest hopes over to captivity,  
I would have found in some part of my soul  
a drop of patience. But to turn me into  
a kind of target for scornful time  
to point his slowly moving finger at!

Yet I could bear that too; and well, very well.  
But that place that I have gathered up my heart,  
that place that gives me reason to live or not live at all,  
that fountain from which my life flows  
or else dries up—to be driven away from there,  
or to have it used as a reservoir for horrible toads  
to churn and mate in, that would even turn  
Patience, that young and rosy-lipped angel, pale!  
This makes me grim as hell!

DESDEMONA

My noble lord, I hope you think me faithful.

OTHELLO

Oh, yes! Just like flies near a slaughterhouse,  
which conceive even while they lay their eggs. Oh, you weed,  
who are so beautifully lovely and smell so sweet  
that you make the senses ache, I wish you'd never been born!

DESDEMONA

Oh, what kind of sin have I unknowingly committed?

OTHELLO

Was this fine paper, this handsome book,  
made to write "whore" upon? What have you committed?  
Committed? Oh, you common whore!  
It would make my cheeks into furnaces  
to burn up modesty into cinders  
if I even spoke of your deeds. What have you committed?  
Heaven holds its nose at it, and the moon closes its eyes;  
the promiscuous wind, which kisses everything it meets,  
hides itself inside the earth  
and refuses to hear of it. What have you committed?  
You impudent harlot!

DESDEMONA

By God, you do me wrong.

OTHELLO

Are you not a harlot?

DESDEMONA

No, I swear to you as I am a Christian!  
If keeping this body for my lord  
from any other wicked, improper touch  
means not to be a harlot, then I am not one.

OTHELLO

What, you're not a whore?

DESDEMONA

No, I swear by my salvation!

OTHELLO

Is it possible?

DESDEMONA  
Oh, heaven help us!

OTHELLO

I ask your pardon, then.  
I thought you were that conniving whore of Venice  
who married Othello. (*Shouting*)  
You, woman,

105 *Enter EMILIA.*  
who has the opposite job of Saint Peter's  
and keeps the gate of hell! You, you, yes, you!  
We're finished with our business. Here's money for your  
trouble.  
Please, lock up your lips and keep this meeting secret.

*Exit* OTHELLO.

EMILIA  
My God, what is this gentleman thinking?  
110 Are you all right, madam? Are you all right, my good lady?

DESDEMONA  
Really, I'm in a daze.

EMILIA  
Good lady, what's the matter with my lord?

DESDEMONA  
With whom?

EMILIA  
Why, with my lord, madam.

115 DESDEMONA  
Who is your lord?

EMILIA  
The man who is yours too, sweet lady.

DESDEMONA  
I have none. Don't talk to me, Emilia.  
I can't weep; and I can't say anything  
that shouldn't be said with tears. Please, tonight  
120 make up my bed with my wedding sheets; remember to do it.  
And call your husband here.

EMILIA  
Things are certainly changed!  
*Exit* EMILIA.

DESDEMONA  
125 It's proper that I should be treated this way, very proper.  
What have I done that he could find  
the slightest reason to think me unfaithful?  
*Enter* IAGO *and* EMILIA.

IAGO  
What can I do for you, madam? How are you?

DESDEMONA  
I don't know. Those who teach young babies  
do it by gentle means and easy lessons.  
He should have scolded me that way since, really,  
130 I'm a child when it comes to scolding.

IAGO  
What's the matter, lady?

EMILIA  
Oh, Iago, my lord has so cruelly called her a whore  
and thrown such spiteful and horrible names  
that innocent hearts can't bear it.

DESDEMONA  
135 Do I deserve that name, Iago?

IAGO  
What name, lovely lady?

DESDEMONA  
The one Emilia said my lord called me by.

EMILIA  
He called her a whore. A drunken beggar  
wouldn't have called his slut by those names.

IAGO  
140 Why did he do this?

DESDEMONA  
I don't know. I'm sure I am not that.

IAGO  
Don't weep, don't weep. Oh, what a sad day!

EMILIA  
Has she refused so many noble matches,  
her father, her country, and all her friends  
to be called a whore? Doesn't she have a right to weep?

DESDEMONA  
This is my awful fortune.

IAGO  
Curse him for it!  
What made him say this?

DESDEMONA  
Heaven knows.

EMILIA  
You can hang me if some thoroughgoing villain,  
some nosy, gossiping rascal,  
some cheating, conniving scoundrel hasn't come up with this lie  
to get himself ahead. You can hang me otherwise.

IAGO  
Nonsense, there's no such man as that! It's impossible.

DESDEMONA  
If there is, let heaven forgive him!

EMILIA  
May a noose forgive him! And may hell gnaw on his bones!  
Why would he call her a whore? Who's been keeping her company?  
Where did it happen? When? In what way? And how likely is it?  
The Moor has been misled by some villainous rascal,  
some low, infamous rascal, some low-life character.  
Oh, heaven, I wish you'd expose such villains  
and put a whip in the hand of every honest person  
to whip these naked rascals around the world  
all the way from the East to the West!

IAGO  
Watch your tongue.

EMILIA  
Oh, to hell with them! It was just this kind of man  
that turned your thoughts to foul ideas  
and made you think I was the Moor's lover.

IAGO  
You are a fool. Watch yourself.

DESDEMONA  
Oh, good Iago,  
what should I do to win back the trust of my lord again?  
Good friend, go talk with him; I tell you, by the light of heaven,  
I don't know how I lost his affection. I'm on my knees.  
If I ever deliberately did anything to betray his love,  
either in thought or in action,

or if my eyes, my ears, or any of my other senses  
were ever attracted to any other man,  
or if I don't now, and always have,  
and always will (even if he force me into  
a penniless divorce) very dearly love him,  
let me never know peace again! Unkindness may do much harm,  
and his unkindness may destroy my life,  
but it will not affect my love. I can't say the word "whore."  
It disgusts me even now that I've said that word.  
To actually do the act that would earn me that title—  
not all the hollow treasure in the world could make me do it.

IAGO  
Please, don't get upset. It's just a mood of his.  
Business of state has made him angry,  
and he's taking it out on you.

DESDEMONA  
If it's just that—

IAGO  
It's just that, I guarantee you.  
(*Trumpets blow offstage.*)

Listen. The trumpets are calling you to supper.  
The Venetian messengers are staying to eat.  
Go in, and stop crying. Everything will be all right.  
*Exit DESDEMONA and EMILIA.*



195 *Enter RODERIGO.*  
What is it, Roderigo?

RODERIGO I've found out that you haven't been dealing with me honestly.

IAGO In what way?

RODERIGO Every day you've put me off with some excuse, Iago, and it seems to me now that you've been trying to cheat me out of every opportunity, rather than give me the smallest reason for hope. I won't put up with this anymore; and I'm not going to peacefully accept what I've already foolishly suffered.

IAGO Will you just listen to me, Roderigo?

RODERIGO I've been listening to you too much. What you say and what you do are not connected.

IAGO You're accusing me unjustly.

RODERIGO Only with the truth. I've wasted everything I have. The jewels you've received from me to give to Desdemona would have half-corrupted a nun. You've told me that she's received them, and led me to have hopes to the comfort of speedy consideration and acquaintance. But it hasn't happened.

IAGO Well, take it easy; things are all right.

RODERIGO All right! Take it easy! I can't take it easy, man; and things aren't all right. No, I think it's a rotten business, and I'm starting to feel like I've been duped.

IAGO All right, then.

RODERIGO I'm telling you, it's not all right. I'm going to confront

Desdemona. If she'll give me back my jewels, I'll give up wooing her and apologize for my improper proposal. If not, you can be sure that I'll make you pay.

IAGO You've had your say now.

RODERIGO

Yes, and I haven't said anything. I don't intend to carry out.

IAGO

Well, now I can see that you've got some grit; and from this moment on, I have a better opinion of you than ever before. Give me your hand, Roderigo. You have good cause to say all this. Still, I assure you, I've been very straightforward with you.

RODERIGO

It doesn't look like it.

IAGO

I'll admit that it doesn't, and your suspicions are not foolish or improbable. But, Roderigo, if you've got some of that stuff in you which I'm more convinced than ever that you really have (I mean determination, courage, and valor), show it tonight. If Desdemona isn't yours tomorrow night, you can treacherously kill me and plot against my life.

RODERIGO

Well, what do you want me to do? Is it reasonable and possible?

IAGO

Sir, there's been an official order from Venice for Cassio to take Othello's place.

RODERIGO

Is that true? Why, then Othello and Desdemona will be returning to Venice.

IAGO

Oh, no. He'll go to Mauritania and take the lovely Desdemona with him—unless he has to stay here because of some accident. Nothing can be more certain to bring that about than getting rid of Cassio.

RODERIGO

What do you mean, getting rid of him?

IAGO

Why, by making him unable to take Othello's place—by beating out his brains.

RODERIGO

And that's what you want me to do?

IAGO

Yes, if you dare to do the best and most profitable thing for yourself. He's eating tonight with a hartol, and I'm going to meet him there. He hasn't heard the news of his good luck yet. If you'll wait for him to leave, which I'll arrange to have happen between twelve and one, you can finish him off at your leisure. I'll be nearby to back you up, and between the two of us, he'll die. Come on, don't stand there dumbfounded, but come with me. I'll give you such good reasons for killing him that you'll feel obligated to slay him. It's supertime now, and the night is going to waste. Let's get to it!

RODERIGO

I want to hear more reasons for this.

IAGO

255 You'll hear them.  
*They exit.*

*Act IV, Scene iii: Another room in the castle. Enter OTHELLO, LODOVICO, DESDEMONA, EMILIA, and ATTENDANTS.*

LODOVICO

Please, sir, don't trouble yourself any further.

OTHELLO

No, allow me; the walk will do me good.

LODOVICO

Good night, madam. Thank you for the lovely evening.

DESDEMONA

You are very welcome, your honor.

OTHELLO

5 Will you walk with me, sir?  
Oh, Desdemona—

DESDEMONA

Yes, my lord?

OTHELLO

Go to bed at once. I'll be back soon. Send your servant away. Be sure to do it.

DESDEMONA

10 I will, my lord.

*Exit OTHELLO, LODOVICO, and ATTENDANTS.*

EMILIA

How is it going now? He seems to be in a better mood than before.

DESDEMONA

He says he'll be back immediately. He's commanded me to go to bed and to send you away.

EMILIA

15 Send me away?

DESDEMONA

That's what he told me to do. So, good Emilia, give me my night clothes, and goodbye. We must be careful not to displease him now.

EMILIA

I wish you had never seen him!

DESDEMONA

20 But I don't. I love him so much that even his roughness, his criticisms, and his frowns (please unpin me) have something graceful and good about them.

EMILIA (*Helping her change for bed*)

I've put those sheets on the bed which you told me to.

DESDEMONA

25 It doesn't matter. My goodness, how foolish we are! If I die before you do, please wrap me in one of these sheets.

EMILIA

Come, come! What kind of talk is that?

DESDEMONA

My mother had a maid named Barbary.

She was in love; and the man she was in love with turned out to be mad

30

and left her. She sang a song called "Willow."

It was an old song, but it told her sad story,

and she died singing it. I can't get that song out of my mind tonight. I can barely stop myself

from hanging my head to one side

35

and singing it like poor Barbary. Please hurry.

EMILIA

Should I go get your nightgown?

DESDEMONA

No, unpin me here.

That Lodovico is a fine man.

EMILIA

A very handsome man.

DESDEMONA

He speaks well.

40

EMILIA

I know a Venetian lady who would walk barefoot to Palestine for just one kiss.

DESDEMONA (*Singing*)

A poor soul sighing sat by a sycamore tree;

Let's all sing of a green willow.

Her hand was on her bosom and her head was on her knee;

Sing of a willow, willow, willow.

The fresh stream ran by her and echoed her moans;

Sing of a willow, willow, willow.

Her salt tears fell from her eyes and softened the stones;

Sing of a willow—

(*Handing Emilia her clothes.*) Put these away.(*Singing*)—willow, willow—

50

Please go; he'll be coming soon.

(*Singing*)

Let's all sing of a green willow, which will be my funeral wreath.

Let nobody blame him; I understand his scorn for me—

No, that's not what comes next. Listen! Who is that knocking?

55

EMILIA

It's just the wind.

DESDEMONA (*Singing*)

I called my lover unfaithful; but what did he say to that?

Sing of a willow, willow, willow.

If I pursue other women, you'll sleep with other men.

(*To Emilia*) Well, get going; good night. My eyes are itching.

Does that mean I'll soon cry?

60

EMILIA

That has nothing to do with it one way or the other.

DESDEMONA

I've heard it did. Oh, these men, these men!

Do you honestly think—tell me the truth, Emilia—

that there are women who mistreat their husbands

in such an awful way?

65

EMILIA

There are some; there's no question about it.

DESDEMONA

Would you do such a thing for all the world?

EMILIA

Why, wouldn't you?

70

DESDEMONA

No, I swear by the light of the stars I wouldn't!

EMILIA

Well, I wouldn't do it by the light of the stars.

It would be easier to do in the dark.

DESDEMONA

Would you really do such a thing for all the world?

75 EMILIA  
The world's a huge thing. It would be a great payment  
for a little sin.

DESDEMONA  
Really, I don't think you would.

80 EMILIA  
Really, I think I would; and I'd make up for it once it was  
done. Of course,  
I wouldn't do such a thing for a little ring, or for a  
great deal  
of linen, or for dresses, petticoats, or caps, or any trivial  
gift. But for the whole world? For God's sake! Who wouldn't  
be unfaithful to her husband to make him a king? I'd risk  
going to purgatory for that.

DESDEMONA  
Curse me if I would do a wrong like that  
for the whole world.

EMILIA  
Why, that wrong is just one of many in the world. And if you  
got the whole world  
for your trouble, then it's wrong in your own world, and you can  
quickly make everything right again.

DESDEMONA  
I don't really think there is such a woman.

90 EMILIA  
Yes, there are at least a dozen—and enough others  
to fill up the world they schemed to get.  
But I really think it's the fault of the husbands  
if wives do wrong. Suppose they shuff off their duties,  
or give our valuables to other women,  
or else have a fit of foolish jealousy  
and restrain our comings and goings. Or suppose they hit us,  
or deprive us of things we usually have out of spite—  
Well, we can become resentful too; and while we are ladylike,  
we can be vengeful as well. So let all husbands know  
their wives have feelings like them. They see, smell,  
and have a taste for both sweet and sour things  
just like their husbands. What's behind their actions  
when they reject us for other women? Is it an amusement?

105 I think so. And does it result from desire?  
I think it does. Is it frailty that leads them to sin?  
It certainly is. And don't we have longings,  
a desire for amusement, and frailties just like men?  
Then they'd better treat us well; otherwise, let them know  
the bad things we do are things we learned from them.

110 DESDEMONA  
Good night, good night. I hope that heaven teaches me  
how not to return evil with evil but to make myself better  
by it!  
*They exit.*

IAGO

Here, hide behind this corner; he'll be here any minute. Keep your sword out, and be ready to use it. Quick, quick! Don't be afraid! I'll be right at your elbow. This will either bring us success or ruin us—remember that, and resolve yourself to it.

RODERIGO

Stay close by. I might make a mistake.

IAGO

I'll be right here. Be bold, and be ready to fight.  
(IAGO hides himself.)

RODERIGO

My heart really isn't in doing this; but still, he's given me good reasons for it. It will be just another man dead. My sword is drawn! He'll die!

IAGO

I've rubbed this young pimple almost raw, and he's getting angry. It doesn't matter if he kills Cassio or if Cassio kills him or if they kill each other—it'll be good for me in any case. If Roderigo lives, he'll expect me to give back all the gold and jewels I swindled him out of as gifts to Desdemona. That must not happen. If Cassio survives,

20

he has such an everyday beauty in his life that he makes me look ugly. And besides, the Moor might reveal my lies to him; that's a very great risk for me. No, he has to die. But I hear him coming.  
Enter CASSIO.

RODERIGO

I know his walk. It's him. Villain, get ready to die!  
(RODERIGO attacks Cassio with a sword.)

CASSIO

That thrust would have really done me in if my armor weren't better than you expected. I'll see how good yours is.  
(CASSIO draws his sword and wounds Roderigo.)

25

RODERIGO

Oh, I've been killed!  
(IAGO comes forward, wounds Cassio from behind, and exits.)

CASSIO

I've been badly wounded. Help! Murder! Murder! (He falls.)  
Enter OTHELLO.

OTHELLO

That's Cassio's voice. Iago has kept his promise.

RODERIGO

Oh, what a villain I am!

30

OTHELLO

It's really been done.

CASSIO

Oh, help! Give me some light! Bring me a surgeon!

OTHELLO

It's really him. Oh, noble Iago, you honest and just man, you really feel for a friend who has suffered a wrong! You're my teacher. Hussy, your lover lies dead and your own death is near. Harlot, I'm coming. Those charming eyes of yours are blotted out of my heart. Your lust-stained bed will soon be stained with your lustful blood.  
Exit OTHELLO.

35

*Enter* LODOVICO and GRATIANO.

CASSIO  
What's this? No one on watch? No passers-by? Murder! Murder!

40 GRATIANO  
Something terrible has happened. That's a very frightening cry.

CASSIO  
Oh, help!

LODOVICO  
Listen!

RODERIGO  
Miserable villain!

45 LODOVICO  
There are two or three men groaning. It's a very dark night. They might be faking in order to trap us. We'd better not try to approach the ones who are crying without others to help us.

RODERIGO  
Won't anybody come? Then I'll bleed to death.  
*Enter* IAGO with a light.

LODOVICO  
Listen!

GRATIANO  
A man is coming in his nightshirt, with a lamp and weapons.

50 IAGO  
Who's there? Whose voice is it that's crying out murder?

LODOVICO  
We don't know.

IAGO  
Didn't you hear a cry?

CASSIO  
Over here, over here! For heaven's sake, help me!

IAGO  
What's the matter?

55 GRATIANO  
This is Othello's ensign, I assume.

LODOVICO  
Yes it is; he's a very noble fellow.

IAGO  
Who is that who's crying so miserably?

CASSIO  
Iago? Oh, I have been mutilated and killed by villains! Give me some help.

60 IAGO  
Oh, no, lieutenant! What villains have done this?

CASSIO  
I think one of them is nearby and can't get away.

IAGO  
Oh, the treacherous villains!  
*(To Lodovico and Gratiano)* Who's over there? Come and give me some help.

65 RODERIGO  
Oh, help me here!

CASSIO  
That's one of them.

IAGO  
You murderous scum! You villain! *(He stabs Roderigo.)*

RODERIGO  
Damn you, Iago! You inhuman dog! *(He dies.)*

70 IAGO  
The idea of killing men in the dark! Where are these bloodthirsty thieves?  
The town is so silent! Hey! Murder! Murder!  
Who are you? Are you good or evil?

LODOVICO  
You can judge us by what we do.

IAGO  
Signior Lodovico?

LODOVICO  
That's me, sir.

IAGO  
75 I beg your pardon. Here's Cassio, who's been hurt by villains.

GRATIANO  
Cassio?

IAGO  
How are you, brother?

CASSIO  
My leg has been cut in two.

IAGO  
80 Really, heaven forbid!  
Give me some light, gentlemen. I'll bandage it with my shirt.  
*Enter BIANCA.*

BIANCA  
What's the matter here? Who did I hear crying out?

IAGO  
Who did you hear crying out?

BIANCA  
Oh, it's my dear Cassio! My sweet Cassio!  
Oh, Cassio, Cassio, Cassio!

IAGO  
85 You notorious harlot!—Cassio, do you have any idea  
who it was that injured you like this?

CASSIO  
No.

GRATIANO  
I'm sorry to find you like this. I've been looking for you.

IAGO  
90 Somebody lend me a garter. Good. Oh, if only we had a sedan  
chair  
so we could carry him away more easily!

BIANCA  
Oh, he's fainted! Oh, Cassio, Cassio, Cassio!

IAGO  
95 Gentlemen, I suspect this slut  
to have had a hand in this attack.—  
Be patient awhile, good Cassio.—Come, come!  
Give me some light. *(He goes over to Roderigo.)* Do we know  
this man, or not?  
Oh, is it my friend and my dear countryman  
Roderigo? It can't be. Yes, it surely is. Oh, heavens! Roderigo.

GRATIANO  
You mean from Venice?

IAGO  
That's the man, sir. Did you know him?

GRATIANO  
100 Know him? Yes.

IAGO  
Signior Gratiano? I must ask you to pardon me.  
These bloody actions have made me forget my manners  
and neglect you.

GRATIANO  
I'm glad to see you.

IAGO  
105 How are you, Cassio? *(To the others)* Oh, get a chair, a chair!

GRATIANO  
Roderigo!

IAGO  
110 Yes, it's him, it's him. *(A chair is brought in.)* Yes, well  
done! The chair.  
Some good men carry him carefully away from here.  
I'll get the general's surgeon. *(To Bianca)* And as for you,  
woman,  
don't bother to help. *(To Cassio)* The man lying dead here,  
Cassio,  
was my dear friend. What kind of quarrel did you have with  
him?

CASSIO  
None at all; I don't even know the man.

IAGO (*To Bianca*)

Why, you're looking very pale. (*To the others*) Carry him away.

(*Cassio and Roderigo are carried off.*)

Wait, gentlemen. (*To Bianca*) Are you looking pale, woman?

(*To the others*) Don't you see the terror in her eyes?

(*To Bianca*) Well, if you keep staring like that, we'll soon know more.

(*To the others*) Take a good look at her; I ask you to look at her.

Do you see, gentlemen? Guiltiness will speak for itself, even if people stop talking altogether.

*Enter* EMILIA.

EMILIA

120 Oh, what's the matter? What's the matter, husband?

IAGO

Cassio was attacked here in the dark

by Roderigo and some others who escaped.

He was almost killed, and Roderigo is dead.

EMILIA

Oh, such a good gentleman! Oh, good Cassio!

IAGO

This is what comes of whoring. Please, Emilia,

go ask where Cassio had supper tonight.

(*To Bianca*) What, does my question cause you to shake?

BIANCA

He had supper at my house; but I'm not shaking because of that.

IAGO

Oh, he did? I order you to come with me.

EMILIA

130 Curses, curses on you, harlot!

BIANCA

I am no harlot; I live as honestly  
as you people who accuse me.

EMILIA  
As I? Nonsense! Curses on you!

IAGO

Kind gentlemen, let's go see that poor Cassio is tended to.

(*To Bianca*) Come along, woman. You'd better come up with another story.—

Emilia, run to the castle

and tell my lord and lady what has happened.—

Won't you go on ahead? (*To himself*) This is a night which will either make me or destroy me.

*They exit.*

*Act V, Scene ii: A bedchamber in the castle. DESDEMONA is in bed asleep. OTHELLO enters with a candle.*

OTHELLO

I know the cause of all this; I know the cause, my soul.

I won't say its name before you, you chaste stars!

I know the cause. Still, I won't shed her blood

or scar that skin of hers, which is whiter than snow

and as smooth as the alabaster of a monument.

Still, she has to die or else she'll betray more men.

I'll put out this light and then put out her light.

If I extinguish your light, flaming servant,

I can always relight you again

if I regret my action. But once I put out your light,

you skillfully designed creation of nature,

I don't know where to find that divine fire

that can relight you again. When I've picked a rose,

I can't make it grow again;

it's doomed to wither. I'll smell it on the tree. (*He kisses her.*)

Her sweet breath would almost persuade

Justice to break her sword! One more kiss, one more!

Be like this when you're dead, and I'll kill you

and love you afterwards. One more kiss, and this is the last!

Such sweetness has never before been so fatal. I must weep,

but I cry cruel tears. My sorrow is like that of God

when punishing his beloved sinners. She's awakening.



DESDEMONA  
Who's there? Othello?

OTHELLO  
Yes, Desdemona.

25 DESDEMONA  
Won't you come to bed, my lord?

OTHELLO  
Have you prayed tonight, Desdemona?

DESDEMONA  
Yes, my lord.

30 OTHELLO  
If you can think of any crime  
which you haven't yet confessed to heaven,  
ask forgiveness for it now.

DESDEMONA  
Oh, my lord, what do you mean by that?

OTHELLO  
Well, get on with it, and be quick; I will wait nearby.  
I don't want to kill your unrepentant spirit.  
No, heaven forbid! I don't want to kill your soul.

35 DESDEMONA  
Do you talk of killing?

OTHELLO  
Yes, I do.

DESDEMONA  
Then heaven  
have mercy on me!

OTHELLO  
I say amen, with all my heart!

40 DESDEMONA  
If you mean that, I hope you will not kill me.

OTHELLO  
Hum!

DESDEMONA  
Still, I'm afraid of you; you are dangerous  
when your eyes roll like that. I don't know why I fear you,  
since I don't know of what I'm guilty. Still, I'm afraid.

45 OTHELLO  
Think about your sins.

DESDEMONA  
They are all the different loves I've had for you.

OTHELLO  
Yes, and that's why you'll die.

50 DESDEMONA  
It's unnatural to kill out of love.  
Oh, why are you gnawing on your lower lip like that?  
Some violent anger is causing you to shake.  
These are bad signs. But still I hope, I hope,  
they won't mean any harm to me.

OTHELLO  
Hold your tongue and be still!

DESDEMONA  
I will do so. What's the matter?

55 OTHELLO  
The handkerchief I loved so much and gave to you,  
you gave to Cassio.

DESDEMONA  
No, I swear by my life and soul!  
Send for the man and ask him.

60 OTHELLO  
Sweet soul, be careful,  
be careful of perjury; you're on your deathbed.

DESDEMONA  
Yes, but it's not time for me to die.

OTHELLO  
Yes, immediately.  
Therefore, confess your sins openly,

65 since solemnly denying each charge  
won't lift or kill the set purpose  
that causes me to groan like this. You must die.

DESDEMONA

Then may the Lord have mercy on me!

OTHELLO

I say amen.

DESDEMONA

70 And may you have mercy too! I never  
offended you in my life. I never loved Cassio  
except in such a way that heaven  
would find permissible. I never gave him a token of love.

OTHELLO

75 By heaven, I saw my handkerchief in his hand!  
You lying woman! You have turned my heart into stone  
and make me call what I intend to do  
a murder, when I intended it as a sacrifice.  
I saw the handkerchief.

DESDEMONA

80 He must have found it then.  
I never gave it to him. Summon him here.  
Let him confess the truth.

OTHELLO

He has confessed already.

DESDEMONA

To what, my lord?

OTHELLO

That he has had you.

DESDEMONA

How? Improperly?

OTHELLO

Yes.

DESDEMONA

85 He won't say that.

OTHELLO

No, his mouth has been stopped.  
Honest Iago was given orders to see to that.

DESDEMONA

Oh, my fear makes me wonder. Is he dead?

OTHELLO

90 If all of his hairs had been lives, my vengefulness  
would have killed them all.

DESDEMONA

Oh, he has been betrayed, and I am finished!

OTHELLO

Enough, harlot! Are you weeping for him to my very face?

DESDEMONA

Oh, banish me, my lord, but don't kill me!

OTHELLO

95 Down with you, harlot!

DESDEMONA

Kill me tomorrow; let me live tonight!

OTHELLO

No, if you even try—

DESDEMONA

Just half an hour!

OTHELLO

Since this is the end, there can be no delay.

DESDEMONA

100 Just let me say one prayer!

OTHELLO

It's too late for that.  
(OTHELLO smother's Desdemona.)

EMILIA (At the door)

My lord, my lord! Can you hear me? My lord, my lord!

OTHELLO

105 What is this noise? Isn't she dead? Not yet quiet dead?  
I may be cruel but I'm also merciful;  
I won't allow you to suffer anymore.  
There, there.

EMILIA (*From offstage*)

Can you hear me? My lord, my lord!

OTHELLO

Who's there?

EMILIA (*From offstage*)

Oh, my good lord, I would like to have a word with you!

OTHELLO

(*Calling to her*) Yes. (*To himself*) It's Emilia.

110 It's likely that she's come to tell me of Cassio's death;  
she called very loudly. What! Have you stopped moving?  
You're as still as the grave. Should I let her in? Is that wise?  
I think she's moving again. No. What's the best thing to do?  
If she comes in, she'll surely speak to my wife.  
My wife! My wife! What wife? I do not have a wife.  
115 Oh, this is unbearable! Oh, what a terrible hour!  
I think that now a complete eclipse should come  
of the sun and moon and the frightened world  
should gape with an earthquake.

EMILIA (*From offstage*)

I beg you  
to let me talk with you, my good lord!

OTHELLO

120 I'd forgotten you. Oh, come in, Emilia.  
Just a moment, I'll be right there. (*To himself*) I'll pull the curtains.  
(*To Emilia*) Where are you? (*He opens the door.*)

Enter EMILIA.

What's the matter with you now?

EMILIA

Oh, my good lord, a foul murder has been committed!

OTHELLO

What? Now?

EMILIA

Just now, my lord.

OTHELLO

130 This is due to the irregular course of the moon.  
It has come closer to earth than usual  
and makes men mad.

EMILIA

My lord, Cassio has killed a young Venetian  
named Roderigo.

OTHELLO

135 Has Roderigo been killed?  
And Cassio's been killed?

EMILIA

No, Cassio's not been killed.

OTHELLO

Cassio's not been killed? Then the wrong murder has been  
committed,  
and my sweet revenge has turned bitter.

DESDEMONA

140 Wrongly, wrongly murdered!

EMILIA

Oh, lord! What is that cry?

OTHELLO

That? What?

EMILIA

Oh, no! That was my lady's voice.  
(*Pulling back the bed curtains*) Help! Help, somebody!  
Help! Oh, lady, speak again!

145 Sweet Desdemona! Oh, sweet lady, speak!

DESDEMONA

I shall die guiltless.

EMILIA

Oh, who has done this deed?

DESDEMONA

Nobody. I, myself. Goodbye.  
Speak well of me to my kind lord. Oh, goodbye! (*She dies.*)

150 OTHELLO Why, how could she have been murdered!

EMILIA  
Oh, who knows?

OTHELLO You heard her say herself, it wasn't me who did it.

EMILIA  
She did say so; I'd testify to that.

155 OTHELLO She's like a liar who's gone to burning hell!  
It was I who killed her.

EMILIA  
Oh, then she's all the more an angel,  
and you're an even blacker devil!

OTHELLO  
She became an adulteress; she was a whore.

EMILIA  
You are slandering her, and you are a devil.

160 OTHELLO She was as inconstant as water.

EMILIA  
You are as rash as fire to say  
that she was inconstant. Oh, she was as true as heaven!

165 OTHELLO  
Cassio made love to her. Ask your husband if that isn't true.  
Oh, I would be damned to the lowest depths of hell  
if I hadn't proceeded upon just grounds  
to such an extreme action. Your husband knew all about it.

EMILIA  
My husband?

OTHELLO  
Your husband.

EMILIA  
That she was unfaithful to her marriage vows?

170 OTHELLO  
Yes, with Cassio. No, if she had been true,  
heaven could have made me another world  
entirely out of perfect topaz,  
and I wouldn't have sold her for it.

EMILIA  
My husband?

175 OTHELLO  
Yes, he told me first.  
He's an honest man, and he hates the slime  
that sticks to filthy deeds.

EMILIA  
My husband?

OTHELLO  
Why do you repeat yourself, woman? I said your husband.

180 EMILIA  
Oh, my lady, a villain has toyed with your love!  
My husband said she was unfaithful?

185 OTHELLO  
It was he, woman.  
I said your husband. Do you understand the word?  
My friend, your husband; honest, honest Iago.

EMILIA  
If he said so, I hope his lying soul  
rots little by little! He's lying in his heart.  
She was all too devoted to her filthy marriage.

OTHELLO  
Hai!

EMILIA  
Do your worst.

190 This deed you've done is no more worthy of heaven  
than you were worthy of her.

OTHELLO  
You'd better be quiet.

EMILIA  
You can only hurt my body;  
you can't harm my soul. You fool! You dolt!  
You're as ignorant as dirt! You've done a deed—  
I'm not afraid of your sword. I'll make your murder known,  
even if you kill me twenty times. Help! Help, somebody! Help!  
The Moor has killed my lady! Murder! Murder!  
*Enter MONTANO, GRATIANO, IAGO, and others.*

MONTANO  
What's the matter? What is it, general?

EMILIA  
Oh, you've come too, Iago? You've done very well  
to have other men blame their murders on you.

GRATIANO  
What's the matter?

EMILIA (*To Iago*)  
Prove this villain wrong if you are a man.  
He says you told him that his wife was unfaithful.  
I know you didn't; you are not such a villain.  
Tell me; my heart is in anguish.

IAGO  
I told him what I thought and told no more  
than what he himself found to be perfectly true.

EMILIA  
But did you ever tell him she was unfaithful?

IAGO  
I did.

EMILIA  
You told a lie, a foul, damned lie!  
By my very soul, a lie! A wicked lie!  
She, unfaithful with Cassio? Did you say with Cassio?

IAGO  
With Cassio, woman. Calm down and hold your tongue.

EMILIA  
I will not hold my tongue; I have to speak.  
My mistress is lying here, murdered in her bed—

ALL  
Oh, heaven forbid!

EMILIA  
And things you said brought about this murder.

OTHELLO  
Stop staring, gentlemen. It is really the truth.

GRATIANO  
It is a terrible truth.

MONTANO  
A monstrous act!

EMILIA  
Villainy, villainy, villainy!  
I sense it—I think I smell it!—Oh, villainy!  
I realize it now—I'll kill myself out of grief!—  
Oh, villainy, villainy!

IAGO  
What's the matter? Are you mad? I order you to go home.

EMILIA  
Good gentlemen, just let me speak.  
It's proper that I obey him, but not now.  
Perhaps, Iago, I'll never go home.

OTHELLO  
Oh! Oh! Oh!  
*(He falls on the bed.)*

EMILIA  
Go right ahead and lie there roaring!  
You've killed the sweetest, most innocent creature  
who ever looked upward.

OTHELLO  
*(He rises)* Oh, she was wicked!

235 *(To Gratiano)* I hardly recognized you, uncle. There lies  
your niece,  
whose breath has, indeed, just been stopped by these hands.  
I know this act appears to be horrible and grim.

GRATIANO

240 Poor Desdemona! I'm glad your father is already dead.  
Your marriage killed him and sheer grief  
cut his thread of life in two. If he were still alive,  
this sight would cause him to do something desperate—  
he might even have renounced his better nature  
and given himself up to damnation.

OTHELLO

245 It's a pitiful thing; but still, Iago knows  
that she committed adultery with Cassio  
a thousand times. Cassio confessed it;  
and she rewarded his acts of love  
with a present and token of love  
which I first gave to her. I saw it in his hand.  
It was a handkerchief, an old gift  
which my father gave to my mother.

EMILIA

Oh, God! Oh, heavenly powers!

IAGO

By God, keep quiet!

EMILIA

255 It will all come out, it will all come out! I, hold my tongue?  
No, I'll speak as freely as the north wind.  
Let angels, men, and devils, let all of them—  
all, all—denounce me for it, but I'll still speak.

IAGO

Be wise and go home.

EMILIA

I will not.  
*(IAGO draws his sword and threatens Emilia.)*

GRATIANO

260 For shame!  
Would you use your sword against a woman?

265 EMILIA  
Oh, you stupid Moor, the handkerchief you speak of  
I found by luck, and I gave it to my husband  
because he often, and with deadly earnestness  
(more than seemed appropriate for such a small thing),  
asked me to steal it.

IAGO

You villainous whore!

EMILIA

Did she give it to Cassio? No, sadly, I found it,  
and I gave it to my husband.

IAGO

270 You filthy thing, you lie!

EMILIA

By heaven, I do not, I do not, gentlemen.  
Oh, you murderous idiot! What was a fool like you  
doing with such a good wife?

OTHELLO

275 Aren't there any bolts in the sky  
except those used for thunder? You clever villain!  
*(OTHELLO attacks Iago, but is disarmed by MONTANO.  
IAGO stabs Emilia.)*

GRATIANO

The woman has fallen. He has certainly killed his wife.

EMILIA

Yes, yes. Oh, lay me by my lady's side.  
*Exit IAGO.*

GRATIANO

He's gone, but his wife's been killed.

MONTANO

280 He's a complete villain. Take this weapon,  
which I just took away from the Moor.  
Come, guard the outside door. Don't let him pass;  
if he tries, kill him. I'll go after the villain myself;  
he's a damned scoundrel.  
MONTANO and GRATIANO exit with others, leaving  
*Othello and Emilia alone.*

OTHELLO

285 My courage is gone along with everything else;  
any contemptible fellow can get my sword now.  
But why should my good reputation outlive what I really am?  
Let me lose it all.

EMILIA

290 What was that song you sang to me, lady?  
Listen, can't you hear me? I'll pretend to be a swan  
and die with music. *(She sings.)* "Willow, willow, willow."  
Moor, she was faithful; she loved you, cruel Moor.  
As I hope for eternal happiness, I'm telling the truth.  
So, speaking my mind, I die, I die. *(She dies.)*

OTHELLO

295 I have another weapon in this room;  
it's a Spanish sword, tempered in ice-cold water.  
Oh, here it is. *(Calling outside)* Uncle, I must come out.

GRATTIANO *(From offstage)*

If you try it, you'll pay for it dearly.  
You don't have a weapon, so you'll undoubtedly suffer.

OTHELLO

300 Come in here, then, and talk to me,  
or I'll attack you, even though I'm unarmed.  
*Enter GRATIANO.*

GRATTIANO

What's the matter?

OTHELLO

305 Look, I do have a weapon.  
A better sword was never carried  
at a soldier's side. I have seen a day  
when, with this little arm and this good sword,  
I've fought my way past more obstacles  
than twenty of your kind. But what a useless boast!  
Who can control his fate? It's not like that now.  
Don't be afraid, though you see me with a weapon.  
This is my journey's end, this is my arrow's target,  
310 the landmark of my ship's final destination.

Are you backing away from me out of fear? No need.

315 If you attack Othello with only a reed,  
he'll retreat. Where should Othello go?  
*(To Desdemona)* How do you look now? Oh, unfortunate woman!  
As pale as your gown! When we meet at the Judgment Day,  
this innocent look of yours will cause my soul to be damned,  
and devils will snatch at it. Are you cold, cold, my girl?  
Just like your good virtue. Oh, what a cursed fool I am!  
Devils, whip me  
320 the sight of this heavenly vision from my mind!  
Blow me about with the wind! Roast me in sulfur!  
Wash me down into deep seas of liquid fire!  
Oh, Desdemona, Desdemona! Dead!  
Oh! Oh! Oh!

*Enter LODOVICO, MONTANO, CASSIO, in a chair, and OFFICERS with IAGO as a prisoner.*

LODOVICO

Where is this rash and very unfortunate man?

OTHELLO

You're speaking of the man who used to be Othello. Here I am.

LODOVICO

Where is that snake, Iago? Bring the villain forward.

OTHELLO

330 I'm looking at his feet—but that's only a myth.  
If you really are a devil, I can't kill you. *(He stabs Iago.)*

LODOVICO

Get that sword away from him.  
*(Othello is disarmed.)*

IAGO

I'm bleeding, sir, but I've not been killed.

OTHELLO

I'm not sorry to hear that. I'd rather you lived on.  
From my point of view, it would be happiness to die.

LODOVICO

335 Oh, Othello, you used to be so good,  
but you've fallen prey to the plot of a damned villain.  
What can I say to you?

OTHELLO

Why, anything.  
Call me an honorable murderer, if you wish,  
for I did nothing out of hate but everything out of honor.

LODOVICO

This wretch has partially confessed to his villainy.  
Did you and he plot to kill Cassio?

OTHELLO

Yes.

CASSIO

Dear general, I never gave you any cause.

OTHELLO

I believe you, and I ask your pardon.  
Please, will you ask that half-devil  
why he trapped me, soul and body, into this?

IAGO

Don't ask me any questions. You know everything you'll ever know.  
I'll never say a word from now on.

LODOVICO

What, you won't even pray?

GRATIANO

Torture will make you talk.

OTHELLO

You are right not to speak (of such horrible crimes).

LODOVICO

Sir, I'll try to explain what has happened,  
since I don't believe you understand. I have a letter here,  
which was found in the pocket of the slain Roderigo;  
and here is another. One of them orders  
that Cassio be killed  
by Roderigo.

OTHELLO

Oh, you villain!

CASSIO

360 An unholy and horrible villain!

LODOVICO

365 And here's another disturbing letter  
which was found in his pocket too. It seems that this one  
Roderigo meant to have sent to this damned villain,  
but perhaps before it was delivered,  
Iago spoke with him and convinced him.

OTHELLO

Oh, you despicable coward!  
Cassio, how did you get that handkerchief  
that belonged to my wife?

CASSIO

370 I found it in my room;  
and he himself confessed just now  
that he left it there deliberately  
in order to carry out his plan.

OTHELLO

Oh, I am a fool! A fool! A fool!

CASSIO

375 Also in Roderigo's letter,  
he angrily criticized Iago for making him  
bait me while I was on guard duty, which led  
to my dismissal. So even now he speaks,  
long after he seemed to be dead. Iago ruined him;  
Iago led him on.

LODOVICO

380 You must leave this room and come with us.  
Your authority and power have been taken away,  
and Cassio is now ruler of Cyprus. As for this scoundrel,  
whatever elaborate torture  
can be devised to torment him a great deal and for a long time  
will be used against him. You'll be kept a closely guarded prisoner  
until the nature of your crimes is known  
by the government of Venice. Come, let's go.

385



OTHELLO

But wait! Just a word or two before you go.

I have done some service for the state, and they know it.

But leave all that aside. I beg you, in your letters

telling of these unfortunate deeds,

speaking of me as I am. Don't mitigate anything

or write anything out of malice. You must describe me

as one who loved not wisely, but too much;

as one not easily made jealous, but, being manipulated,

became distracted in the extreme; as one whose hand

(like an ignorant Indian) threw a pearl away

worth more than all his people; as one whose humbled eyes,

not normally given to weeping,

let drop tears as fast as Arabian trees

drop their medicinal gum. Write all this;

and also tell how, in Aleppo once,

when a vicious Turk wearing a turban

attacked a Venetian and insulted the state,

I took the circumcised dog by the throat

and stabbed him—like this. *(He stabs himself.)*

LODOVICO

Oh, what a bloody end!

GRATIANO

Words can't describe it.

OTHELLO

I kissed you before I killed you. Now this is the only way:

as I kill myself, I'll die with a kiss.

*(OTHELLO falls on the bed and dies.)*

CASSIO

I was afraid of this—but I thought he had no weapon—  
for he had a noble heart.

LODOVICO *(To Iago)*

Oh, you Spartan dog,

more cruel than anguish, hunger, or the sea!

Look at the tragic victims on this bed.

This is your doing. This sight is too horrible to look at;

let it be hidden. Gratiano, you guard the house

and take possession of the Moor's property,

since you are the heir. *(To Cassio)* Lord governor, it is up to you

to see that this hellish villain is punished.

Decide on the time, the place, and the means of torture—make

sure it is enforced!

As for myself, I'll leave at once and report to the state

these sad acts with a sad heart.

*Everyone exits.*

