



**PENGUIN READERS**



# **Othello**

William Shakespeare

# *Othello*

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Level 3

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## *Introduction*

*'The richest man on earth is poor if he is jealous. God save us all from jealousy.'*

Othello is a happy man. A brave soldier who has fought in many wars, he is now a general. The Duke of Venice needs him in his wars against the Turks, and the people of Venice love him. Now Othello also has a personal reason to be happy. He has fallen in love with Desdemona, a beautiful and clever young woman, and she loves him with all her heart.

But there are problems in Othello's life, too. He is fighting the Turks, but he is an outsider in Venice; he is a black man from north Africa. Desdemona's father, Brabantio, welcomed him to his house as a friend, but he doesn't want a black husband for his daughter. And Othello has some enemies – men like Roderigo, who wanted to marry Desdemona.

Luckily Othello has good friends, soldiers like himself: Michael Cassio, his lieutenant, for example, and Iago, his ensign. Othello thinks that Iago is a wise and honest man. He always believes what Iago tells him. When Iago tells him an unpleasant story about his new wife, what should Othello do? Who can he believe – his friend or his wife? Is Iago the honest man he seems? Or is he playing an evil game with Othello's mind?

*Othello* is one of Shakespeare's best-loved plays, and is still full of meaning for us today. It shows us a man who is good – even great. And it shows how an evil man can destroy him. Othello makes one terrible mistake; he believes the wrong person. He is told lies, and these change him. He becomes more and more jealous, and by the end of the play the good, brave man has become very dangerous.

This is a dark story, with little hope in it. Good people suffer and die for their mistakes. At the heart of the story there are many questions that we still ask ourselves today: Can we really love people who are different from us in some way? Why does one man want to destroy another? Are some people simply evil? Why is jealousy sometimes so strong? How can love change so quickly into hate?

Shakespeare wrote about twenty other plays before *Othello*. He was about forty years old and already a well-known actor and writer when he wrote it, in 1603 or 1604. As he usually did, he took an earlier story for his play. The story of *Othello* comes from Giovanni Battista Giraldi's *Ecatommiti* (*One Hundred Tales*, 1566).

*Othello* is still popular in the theatre. Verdi also put the story to music for his *Otello*, and there have been many films made. One famous film was made by Orson Welles in the United States in 1952. Welles also plays *Othello*. In 1965 the famous British actor Laurence Olivier was a very successful *Othello*, both at the National Theatre in London and in a film, with Maggie Smith as Desdemona. It seems strange now that in the past the part of *Othello* was so often played by a white actor. That has now changed, and in Oliver Parker's 1995 film, the black actor Laurence Fishburne played *Othello*.

William Shakespeare (1564–1616) is the most famous writer of plays in the English language. He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in England. He went to a good school, but did not go to university. In 1582 he married Anne Hathaway and they had three children. By 1592, he was in London; there he acted in plays and wrote them. In the next twenty years he wrote thirty-seven plays and many poems. He sometimes wrote three plays in one year. His plays were very popular, and many of them were acted in front of Queen Elizabeth I and, later, King James I.

## *Reading and acting the play*

You can read *Othello* silently, like every other story in a book. You will have to imagine the places, the people's clothes and their voices from the words on the page.

But Shakespeare did not write *Othello* as a story book to read at home. He wrote it for actors on a theatre stage. You can read the play in a group with other people. This is very different from silent reading. You can speak the words and bring the people in the play to life. They can sound happy or sad, worried or angry. You can add silences or noises, like the sound of guns. You can also stop and discuss the play. What does this person mean? Why does he/she say that?

But you can have more fun if you act the play. *Othello* has a lot of exciting scenes, and also some quiet, personal times. The people in the play have to show a lot of different feelings. If you act the play, you can show these feelings by your words and actions.

The story happens in the streets, houses and palaces of Venice and Cyprus. You should find out what those places looked like. You should also think about the clothes that the people in the play wear. Some of them are soldiers, but rich and important people had beautiful, brightly-coloured clothes. The men wore swords, and you will have to plan some fights. In some scenes many people come onto and leave the stage; in others, two people talk softly together; and sometimes there are songs or short poems.

*Othello* is an important play, and everyone can enjoy it and learn from it. Have fun with it!

## *The People in the Play*

OTHELLO, a Moor; a general, fighting for Venice

DESDEMONA, Othello's wife

CASSIO, Othello's lieutenant

IAGO, Othello's ensign

EMILIA, Iago's wife

BIANCA, Cassio's lover

RODERIGO, a young Venetian, in love with Desdemona

### THE DUKE OF VENICE

BRABANTIO, a rich Venetian, Desdemona's father

GRATIANO, Brabantio's brother

LODOVICO, Desdemona's cousin

MONTANO, an important man in Cyprus

OFFICER, under the Duke

1ST OFFICER, under Montano

2ND OFFICER, under Montano

A MESSENGER

SOLDIERS

SERVANTS

## Act 1 Love and War

### Scene 1 A street in Venice

[Roderigo and Iago are walking along the street together.]

RODERIGO [*angrily*]: Iago, I thought we were friends. You happily spend my money, but you knew ...

IAGO: Why don't you listen to me? I didn't know about it.

RODERIGO: Do you really hate him? Can I believe that?

IAGO: Of course I do! Three of the most important men in this city wanted to make me his lieutenant, but he refused to listen. 'I've already picked my officer,' he said. And who was the chosen man? Michael Cassio! A man who has never even been to war. And what job do I get after all my years as a soldier? I'm an *ensign*, that's what! The Moor's\* *ensign*. Now, Roderigo, tell me, do I love him or do I hate him?

RODERIGO: So why are you working for him?

IAGO [*laughing*]: Oh, don't worry! I have my reasons. My face doesn't show what's in my heart. [*stopping and pointing*] Look! Here's her father's house. Why don't we wake him up and destroy his happiness?

RODERIGO [*shouting*]: Brabantio! Signor† Brabantio! Wake up!

IAGO: Thieves, Brabantio, thieves! They are robbing your house, stealing your daughter and your money.

[Brabantio opens an upstairs window and looks out.]

BRABANTIO [*angrily*]: What's the matter? Why are you shouting?

RODERIGO [*sounding worried*]: Are all your family at home, sir?

\* Moor: the name used at the time for a man from North Africa

† Signor: the Italian for Mr or sir



BRABANTIO: Why do you ask?

IAGO [*sounding very worried*]: Bad news, sir, bad news. Your heart will break when you hear it. An old black cat has your little white bird in his mouth. Get up, before it's too late!

BRABANTIO: What are you talking about? Who's there?

RODERIGO: Sir, don't you know my voice?

BRABANTIO: Oh, so it's *you*. You are not welcome here, Roderigo. I've been honest with you. You can't marry my daughter.

RODERIGO [*politely*]: Sir, sir, please listen. We only want to tell you ...

IAGO [*very roughly*]: Your daughter is riding a big black horse. Do you want grandchildren with black tails and four legs?

BRABANTIO: What's that? What are you telling me?

IAGO: Oh sir, the Moor. Your daughter is with the Moor.

BRABANTIO [*angrily*]: What? Lies! You'll pay for this!

RODERIGO: Sir, please tell us, have you given permission for your daughter to marry the Moor? If not, your daughter is giving herself to a stranger. Is she in her room?

BRABANTIO [*frightened*]: Call my servants! Bring lights! This is my worst dream. Oh, what shall I do if it is true! Light, I say, light!  
[*He goes away from the window to search his house.*]

IAGO: I must leave you now, Roderigo. I can't safely speak against the Moor yet. He is the best general we have in our war with the Turks. The people love him. Bring Brabantio's men to the bar called the Rose. I will be there with him. Goodbye.

[*He leaves. Brabantio runs out into the street in his night-clothes, followed by servants with lights.*]

BRABANTIO [*to Roderigo, sounding heart-broken*]: It's true. She's gone, and my life is at an end. Where did you see her, Roderigo? With the Moor? How could she do this to her father? [*to the servants*] Bring more lights! Oh, my heart! How did she get out? Fathers – never believe your daughters! [*to Roderigo*] Did he use magic, Roderigo? Is it possible?

RODERIGO: Yes, sir, I think it is.

BRABANTIO: Call my brother! Oh, Roderigo, why didn't I give her to you ... Do you know where they are?

RODERIGO: Yes. Bring your men and follow me.

BRABANTIO: Take me to them. [*to the servants*] Call more men! Bring your swords!

## Scene 2 *The street outside the Rose*

[*Othello and Iago are standing in the street talking. Servants are holding lights.*]

IAGO: I have killed men in times of war, but I could not murder him. Sometimes, I think I'm too soft. I should kill him.

OTHELLO: No, no. It's better this way.

IAGO: Oh, you don't know the terrible things he said about you. I hated listening to them. Tell me, sir, are you already married? If not, Brabantio will try to stop you. He's an angry man.

OTHELLO: Oh, he can try ... I have helped Venice win a war, and I come from a family of princes. I am as proud and successful a man as Brabantio. I loved my free life at sea, but now I love his daughter Desdemona more. What are these lights? Who's coming? Is it Brabantio?

IAGO: No, I don't think so.

[*Cassio comes along the street, with men carrying lights.*]

OTHELLO: The Duke's servants and Cassio, my lieutenant! Good evening, friends. What's the news?

CASSIO: The Duke needs you immediately, General. Messengers have arrived with news of the war, and they've all been searching for you.

OTHELLO: Good. I must speak to someone here for a minute, and then I'll go with you. [*He goes into the Rose.*]

CASSIO: Iago, what's he doing here?

IAGO: He's taken a great ship, but on land, not at sea.

CASSIO: I don't understand.

IAGO: He's married.

CASSIO: What? Who is she?

IAGO: It's [seeing Othello] – wait!

[As Othello returns, Roderigo and Brabantio walk towards them. With the new arrivals are officers carrying lights.]

CASSIO: General, here are some more people who want to speak to you.

OTHELLO [to Roderigo and Brabantio]: Stop there!

RODERIGO [to Brabantio]: Signor, it's the Moor.

BRABANTIO [shouting at Othello]: You thief!

IAGO [pulling out his sword]: Roderigo? Stand there and fight me!

OTHELLO: Stop! Put away your swords. [sounding friendly] Signor Brabantio, we do not need to fight.

BRABANTIO: Thief! What have you done with my daughter? You have used magic on her. She has refused to marry so many fine young men here in Venice. She could never love a black man like you! I'll throw you into prison for this.

OTHELLO: Stop! I won't fight you. Look, the Duke's messengers are here. He needs to see me on some urgent business.

BRABANTIO: What? The Duke? At this time of night? Then I'll speak to him, too.

[They all leave.]

### Scene 3 The Duke's palace

[The Duke and officers are sitting around a table, with lights, and servants standing around them. A messenger comes in.]

DUKE: What news?

MESSENGER: More Turkish ships, my lord. They are attacking Cyprus. Signor Montano asks you to send help.



*'Thief! What have you done with my daughter?'*

DUKE: We must do something quickly. [*Brabantio, Othello, Iago, Roderigo and other officers come into the room.*] Brave Othello, we must send you to war immediately. You must sail against our enemies, the Turks. Brabantio – welcome. We have missed your wise words this evening.

BRABANTIO: My lord, forgive me. I am not here because of the Turkish attack. I have trouble of another kind.

DUKE [*surprised*]: Why? What's the matter?

BRABANTIO [*crying out*]: My daughter! Oh, my daughter!

DUKE: Dead?

BRABANTIO: Yes, dead to me. A thief has stolen her from me with his evil magic.

DUKE [*angrily, standing up*]: Who is this man? He will suffer for this.

BRABANTIO: My lord, I thank you. [*He points at Othello.*] Here is the man – this Moor!

DUKE: I am sorry to hear this, Othello. What do you say?

OTHELLO [*calmly*]: My lord, it is true. I have taken this old man's daughter. True, I have married her. I cannot speak fine words. I'm just a soldier. But I can tell you the story of my love for Desdemona and how I won her heart.

BRABANTIO: My daughter is a quiet, shy girl. She can't love this man. He has used magic on her – I know it!

DUKE [*quietly*]: You believe that, but it may not be true.

OFFICER: Tell us, Othello. Did you use magic on the girl, or did her love for you come naturally?

OTHELLO: Please, my lords, send a servant to the Rose. Bring the lady here. If she doesn't love me – then take away my life.

DUKE [*to his servants*]: Bring Desdemona here.

OTHELLO: Iago, take them to her. You know the place best. [*Iago and some servants go out.*] While we wait, I will tell you the story of our love.

DUKE [*sitting down*]: Tell us, Othello.

OTHELLO: Her father was a friend to me and often invited me to

their home. He asked me to tell him about my life. I told him everything. I have seen war on land and sea. I spoke about terrible accidents and wonderful adventures, great danger and greater successes. I have known strange countries where the mountains touch the sky. I have seen men with heads that grow below their shoulders. Desdemona loved listening to my stories. Then she began to love me for my stories, and I loved her for that. My lord, that is my only magic – the story of my life.

[*Desdemona, Iago and the servants arrive.*]

DUKE: What do you say now, Brabantio? Othello has explained everything. Do you believe him?

BRABANTIO: Desdemona, come here and tell us. What do you want?

DESDEMONA: Dear father, you have given me life, and I must love you as a daughter. [*looking at Othello*] But here's my husband. My mother left her father and followed you. Now I must follow the Moor.

BRABANTIO [*coldly*]: Goodbye, then! Come here, Moor. I give you my daughter. [*He gives Othello her hand.*] I do not want to lose her, but you have already taken her from me.

DUKE: Brabantio, don't be angry. If a robbed man smiles, he steals something from the thief. We can't always change things, but we can hide our sadness. But now let us talk about the war. The Turkish ships will soon reach Cyprus. Othello, you know that island. You must forget your new happiness for some time, and sail to war.

OTHELLO [*proudly*]: I am a soldier, and I know war best. I am glad to go. But, please, find a safe and comfortable place for my wife while I am away.

DUKE: Her father's house is the best place for her.

BRABANTIO [*coldly*]: No. She can't go there.

OTHELLO: I agree. That is not the right place for her.

DESDEMONA: And I agree, too. If Othello goes to sea, I must go with him.

OTHELLO: Please give her permission to come, my lord. I'm not a young man, thinking of love. I'm going to sea to fight our enemies. I will never forget that. But I need her with me.

DUKE: You can decide, Othello. But this is an urgent matter, and you must leave tonight.

DESDEMONA [*surprised*]: Tonight, my lord?

OTHELLO: With all my heart.

DUKE: Men, we'll meet again at nine in the morning. Othello, leave an officer here to bring your wife to you.

OTHELLO: My lord, I choose Iago, my ensign, for that job. He is a good and honest man. I will leave my wife with him. He can bring her, with messages from you.

DUKE: Excellent! Good night to you all. [*to Brabantio*]

Brabantio, try to see what others can.

Othello's black – but a good man.

BRABANTIO [*to Othello*]:

Oh Moor, you think your love is true.

But as she's done to me, she'll do to you.

[*The Duke, Brabantio, officers and servants all leave the room.*]

OTHELLO: Never! [*to Iago*] Honest Iago, I must leave Desdemona with you. Ask your wife to look after her. Come, Desdemona, my love. We have only an hour together before I leave.

[*Othello and Desdemona leave.*]

RODERIGO: Iago!

IAGO: What, friend?

RODERIGO [*crying*]: Oh, what shall I do?

IAGO [*impatiently*]: Go to bed and sleep.

RODERIGO: I shall kill myself.

IAGO: What are you talking about? Kill yourself for a woman?

A dog in the street has more sense!

RODERIGO: What can I do? My heart is broken.

IAGO: Your heart! What is that? We must follow our heads, not our hearts and our hot blood. [*laughing*] And that's what love is – just hot blood.

RODERIGO [*sadly*]: You're wrong.

IAGO: No, I'm not. [*roughly*] Be a man! Kill yourself? Never! Remember, I'm your friend. I'm here to help you. [*seeming to remember*] But you'll need money. Desdemona won't love the Moor for ever, and he won't love her. It started quickly, and it will end quickly, too. Then you'll need money in your purse. Be patient, and you will have her. [*putting his arm around Roderigo*] But money – you'll need that. We'll talk again tomorrow at my house.

RODERIGO: I'll be there.

IAGO [*warmly*]: Good man! No more talking about death, do you hear me?

RODERIGO [*quietly*]: No. I've changed.

IAGO: Goodbye. Oh, and put some money in your purse!

RODERIGO: I'll sell all my land. [*He leaves.*]

IAGO [*to himself*]: Excellent work! I'll soon have his money. It's the only reason I spend time with a man like him. Oh, it's almost too easy. I hate the Moor. Some people say he's my wife's lover. Is it true? I don't know – but I'll finish him. He likes me – good! [*laughing*] That makes my job easier. Now, how will I do it? Here's an idea. I'll use Cassio, and bring *him* down, too. Cassio likes women, and they like him. Perhaps he's a little too friendly with Desdemona. I must tell Othello. He'll believe me, because I'm Iago, his honest friend. That's it! I have my plan.

Now deepest hell and blackest night

Will take away the day's clear light.



## Act 2 A Storm and a Fight

### Scene 1 Cyprus, near the sea

[Montano and some of his officers are looking out to sea.]

MONTANO: What can you see?

1ST OFFICER: Nothing. The weather is too wild.

MONTANO: The waves are like mountains. Ships are easily lost in this weather.

[Another officer comes to talk to them]

2ND OFFICER: News, my friends! Our wars with the Turks are at an end. They have lost their ships in the storm.

MONTANO [excited]: Is this true? How do you know?

2ND OFFICER: A ship has arrived from Venice. Michael Cassio, lieutenant to the brave Moor, Othello, is here. Othello is still at sea, on his way to us.

MONTANO: I hope he is safe. I know Othello. He is a great man.

[Cassio comes to them.]

CASSIO: Thank you, good men of Cyprus, for your kind words about the Moor. Oh, God help him! I lost him on a wild and dangerous sea.

MONTANO: Does he have a good ship?

CASSIO: Yes, his ship is strong, and he has fine sailors with him. I still hope to see him safely on land. [Voices call: A sail! A sail!] What's that?

1ST OFFICER: The town is empty. All the people are at the beach. They've seen a ship!

CASSIO: I hope it's Othello's!

[There is the sound of guns.]

2ND OFFICER: Guns! That means it's a friendly ship, not an enemy.

CASSIO: Please see who it is.

2ND OFFICER: I'll go now. [*He goes.*]

MONTANO: Lieutenant, is your general married?

CASSIO: Yes. He has found a wonderful wife – the perfect woman for him. [*The 2nd officer returns.*] Who's on the ship?

2ND OFFICER: It's Iago, the general's ensign.

CASSIO: He is very lucky. Even the screaming winds and rough, rocky coast do not want to hurt the beautiful Desdemona.

MONTANO: Who is she?

CASSIO: The lady I told you about – our general's wife. Iago is looking after her and bringing her to her husband. Please God, protect Othello's ship and bring him safely to land.

[*Desdemona, Emilia, Iago, Roderigo and servants arrive.*]

CASSIO: Look! They are here! Let us fall to our knees to welcome this lady to Cyprus. [*He goes down on his knees.*]

DESDEMONA: I thank you, brave Cassio. What news do you have of my lord Othello?

CASSIO [*standing*]: He is not here yet, but he will arrive soon.

DESDEMONA: Oh, but I feel afraid! How did you lose him?

CASSIO: The storm carried my ship away from his. [*Voices call: A sail! A sail!*] But listen! The people can see a ship!

1ST OFFICER: I can hear guns. This is a friendly ship, too.

CASSIO: Go and get the latest news. Iago, good Ensign, welcome to Cyprus. Welcome, Emilia. Let me kiss your wife, Iago. In Florence we always greet our friends like this. [*He kisses Emilia on the mouth.*]

IAGO: Oh, be careful, sir. Her tongue never stops moving.

DESDEMONA: But Emilia is saying nothing.

IAGO: She usually talks too much. I can't sleep because of it. I hear her voice even when she is silent.

EMILIA [*hurt*]: You are unkind to me.

DESDEMONA: Don't listen to your husband, Emilia. Cassio, isn't he terrible?

CASSIO [*smiling, taking her hand*]: Remember, lady, he's just a soldier.

IAGO [*to himself*]: He's taking her hand. Yes, touch her. Yes, smile at her, kiss her hand. Excellent! It all helps me to destroy you. [*There is the sound of shouting.*] [*to the others*] The Moor! He's coming!

DESDEMONA [*excited*]: Let's hurry to meet him!

[*Othello and some soldiers come in.*]

OTHELLO [*holding out his arms*]: Oh, my Desdemona!

DESDEMONA [*running to him*]: My dear Othello!

OTHELLO [*taking Desdemona in his arms*]: How wonderful it is to see you, my dearest wife. If you are there after every storm, I welcome the wild winds and waves. If I die now I will die happy.

[*They kiss.*]

IAGO [*to himself*]: Oh, you are making sweet music now, but soon you'll sing a different song.

OTHELLO: Friends, the wars are at an end. The Turks have gone. Their ships are all destroyed. How are all my old friends here? Come, Desdemona. It's wonderful to be here with you.

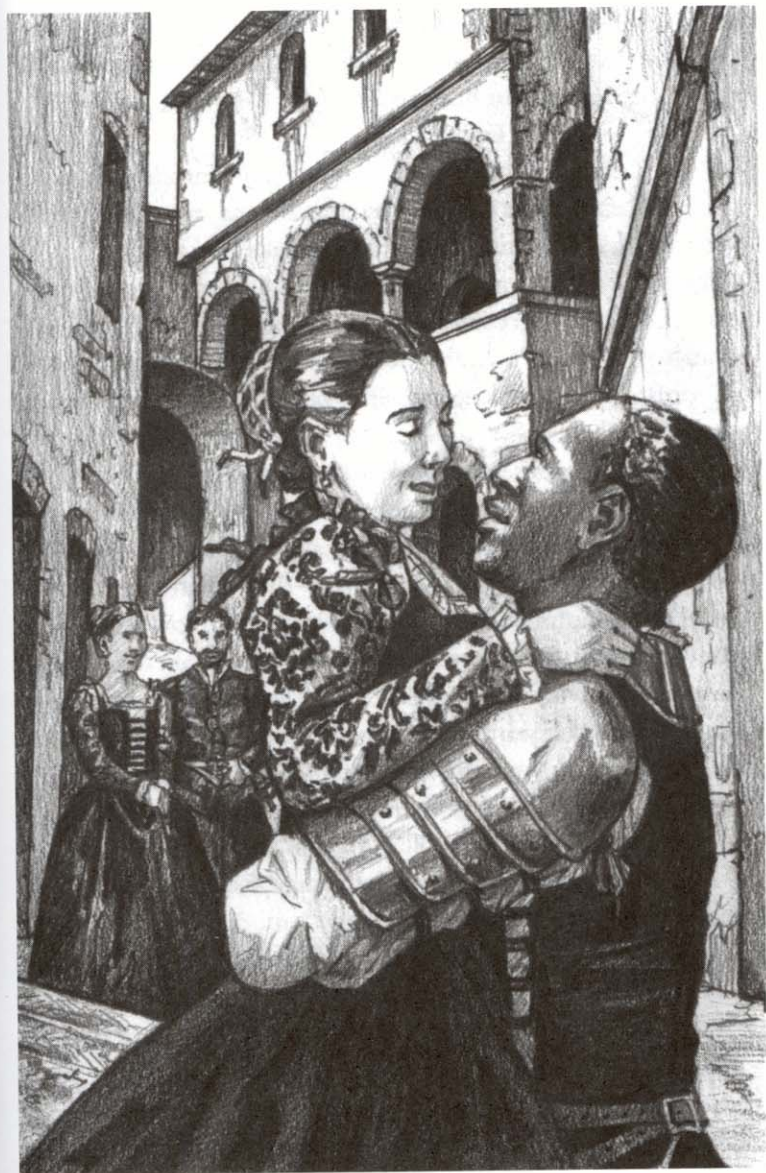
[*They all go, except Iago and Roderigo.*]

IAGO: Come here, Roderigo. Are you a brave man? Well, they say love makes men brave. Listen. Cassio is our chief guard tonight, and I must tell you this. Desdemona is in love with him.

RODERIGO [*very surprised*]: With him? That isn't possible!

IAGO: She loved the Moor because he told her a lot of silly stories. He isn't handsome or young, and she'll soon grow tired of him. It's natural! She'll look around for another man, and who will she find? Cassio! He's young, good-looking – everything that women like. In fact, she's after him already.

RODERIGO: I can't believe that of her. She isn't like that.



*'My dear Othello!'*

IAGO: Not like that? She's a woman, isn't she? And a woman who's loved the Moor. Didn't you see her hold Cassio's hand?

RODERIGO: She was just being polite.

IAGO: No she wasn't! Didn't you see how close she put her face to his? Listen, sir. Stay awake tonight. Wait outside the guard-house. Cassio doesn't know you. He'll come out of the guard-house. Then you must find a way to make him angry.

RODERIGO: Why? I don't understand.

IAGO: Sir, he gets angry very easily. He'll hit you. Good! We want him to! Then he'll be in trouble. They'll throw him out of Cyprus. Then I'll be able to help you. You'll get what you want.

RODERIGO: I'll do it.

IAGO: Good! I promise you success. Meet me later, and we'll talk more about this. [*Roderigo leaves.*] I believe that Cassio does love her. And it's possible that she loves him. I know the Moor loves her. He is a loving, kind man – but I hate him. Now, I love Desdemona, too – or I want to have her. Why? I think the Moor has had my wife. So I will either take his wife or destroy him with jealousy. That's why I need Roderigo. First I must destroy Cassio. I fear he's been running after Emilia, too. I'll destroy him, and the Moor will thank me for my good work. [*He laughs.*] Then I'll drive him crazy.

## Scene 2 *The soldiers' guard-house*

[*Othello is talking to Cassio. Desdemona is with him, and some servants.*]

OTHELLO: Good Michael, you will be chief of the guards tonight. Cyprus is safe and it will be a happy night for everyone. Some people will drink too much. Make sure there is no fighting.

CASSIO: Iago knows what to do. But I will watch the guards personally.

OTHELLO: Iago is an honest soldier. Good night, Michael.

[to Desdemona] Come, my dear love.  
After the wind and rain the sea is calm;  
Tonight I'll hold my sweet wife in my arms.

[Othello, Desdemona and the servants leave. Iago comes in.]

CASSIO: Welcome, Iago. We must guard the town together.

IAGO: Not yet, Lieutenant. It's too early. Our general is in a hurry to get to bed with his new wife. We can understand why. She's a lovely woman.

CASSIO [seriously]: She is a very fine lady.

IAGO: And I'm sure she enjoys the game of love.

CASSIO: She is a fresh, sweet girl.

IAGO: Even her voice seems to call for love.

CASSIO: Yes, she is perfect.

IAGO: Well, I hope they're happy together. Come, Lieutenant. I have some wine, and our friends will soon be here. We'll all drink to the health of black Othello and his new wife.

CASSIO: Not tonight, good Iago. I can't drink much. It's sad, but I have a weak head for wine.

IAGO: Oh, just one cup. This isn't an ordinary night. Your friends need you to drink with them.

CASSIO: Where are they?

IAGO: Here at the door, already. Call them in.

CASSIO: Well, I'll do it, but I fear... [He goes out.]

IAGO [to himself]: Some good men of Cyprus are on guard tonight. They've already drunk a lot. When Cassio is with them, trouble is sure to follow. Ah, here they come.

[Cassio comes in with Montano, some other officers and servants with wine.]

CASSIO: They've given me a cup of wine already.

MONTANO: Only a little one, a very little one!

IAGO: Bring more wine! [He sings.]

A soldier's life is very hard  
He has no time to think.  
So open up a bottle, boys  
And give the men a drink!

CASSIO: An excellent song, my dear old friend. I drink to the health of our general!

IAGO [*singing*]:  
Oh, hold your wine cups high  
And let us drink them dry.  
This life is so fine  
If we have enough wine –  
So hold your wine cups high!

CASSIO: This is a better song than the other!

IAGO: Shall I sing it again?

CASSIO: No. I don't want to go to hell. I must not drink any more.

IAGO: True, good Lieutenant.

CASSIO: Well, enough of this. We must guard the town. I am not drunk. This is my ensign and this is my right hand and this is my left. I can stand. And I can speak. Yes, I'm not drunk at all!  
[*He leaves.*]

MONTANO: Let's all go to guard the town.

IAGO: You see how Cassio is, Montano? He's a good soldier, but he always drinks too much. I hope he won't do anything stupid.

MONTANO: You should tell Othello about this. Perhaps he doesn't see it. Be honest with him about Cassio's problem.

IAGO: Oh no. I couldn't do that. Cassio's my friend. [*cries of: Help! Help!*] What's happening? [*Roderigo runs in. He is followed by Cassio, holding his sword.*]

CASSIO: Fight, man!

MONTANO: What's the matter, Lieutenant?

CASSIO: He says I'm drunk! I'll kill him!

RODERIGO [*very frightened*]: Kill me?

CASSIO: Quiet, you dog! [*He hits Roderigo with his sword.*]

MONTANO [*taking Cassio's arm*]: Stop, good Lieutenant!

CASSIO: Take your hands off me! I'll kill you, too!

MONTANO: Stop! You *are* drunk!

IAGO [*quietly to Roderigo*]: Go! Shout and wake the town!

[*Roderigo runs off.*] Good Lieutenant, put down your sword.

Help! Stop, Lieutenant! [*Cassio wounds Montano.*] Montano!

Help! Oh, God. Lieutenant, you're in big trouble now!

[*Othello comes in, with servants.*]

OTHELLO [*loudly*]: What is happening here?

MONTANO: Oh, God, I'm hurt. Look at all the blood! I'm dying!

OTHELLO [*shouting*]: All of you, stop! Listen to me!

IAGO: Lieutenant! Montano! The General's speaking to you.

OTHELLO: What is happening here? Are we becoming worse than our enemies, the Turks? What is the reason for all this shouting and fighting? Honest Iago, can you tell me?

IAGO: I don't know. These men are all good friends, but suddenly they started fighting. I didn't see how it began.

OTHELLO: Michael Cassio, can you tell me?

CASSIO [*quietly*]: Forgive me, my lord, I cannot speak.

OTHELLO: Montano, you are a good man. Why are you fighting?

MONTANO [*weakly*]: Othello, sir, I am hurt. My life is in danger. I can't say much. I was attacked. I had to fight.

OTHELLO: Now I am becoming angry. This island has been at war. The people were full of fear of a Turkish attack. And now the guards are fighting! Iago, you must tell me. Who began it?

MONTANO: You must tell him, Iago.

IAGO: I'll cut out my tongue before I'll hurt Michael Cassio. But I must be honest. General, it happened like this. I was talking to Montano. Then we heard shouts. We found Cassio and another man fighting. Montano tried to stop Cassio. I ran after the other man, but I lost him. That's all I know. Perhaps Cassio has done wrong, but he had a good reason for it, I'm sure.



OTHELLO: Iago, Cassio is your friend. You don't want him to suffer for this. But I must punish him. [*turning to Cassio*] Cassio, after this, you cannot be my lieutenant. [*Desdemona comes in, with servants.*] Look, the noise has woken my dear wife.

DESDEMONA: What's the matter, my dear?

OTHELLO: Nothing, my love. Come back to bed. [*to Montano*] We will send a doctor to you.

[*Servants carry Montano away.*]

OTHELLO: Iago, tell the people their streets are safe.

Come, Desdemona; soldiers live to fight.

We cannot always lie in bed all night.

[*Everyone leaves, except Iago and Cassio.*]

IAGO: Are you hurt, Lieutenant?

CASSIO [*very quietly*]: I am hurt to death.

IAGO: No, don't say that.

CASSIO [*sadly*]: My good name, Iago, I have lost my good name.

The best part of myself is gone.

IAGO: I thought you were hurt! The General is angry with you now, but he'll soon forgive you.

CASSIO: No, I can't ask him to forgive me. How could I be so stupid! A drunken animal – that's what I am. Oh, wine is a devil! I'm not drunk any more, but now I hate myself.

IAGO [*warmly*]: Don't say that! It isn't the end of the world! Lieutenant, you know I'm your true friend. I'll tell you what to do. You know, our general's wife is now *his* general. He'll do anything she asks. Ask her to help you. She won't refuse.

CASSIO: That's a good idea. I will go tomorrow morning and ask Desdemona to speak for me.

IAGO: That's right, Lieutenant. I must go now to the guards.

CASSIO: Good night, honest Iago. [*Cassio leaves.*]

IAGO: How kind I am! And I am being honest. Desdemona is

a sweet person, and she will try to help Cassio. But there is a black devil in my heart. When Desdemona talks about Cassio to the Moor, I will speak, too. I will tell him she loves Cassio. Then Othello will begin to hate her. I will use her goodness to destroy them all. Now, I have two things to do. My wife must speak to Desdemona and ask her to help Cassio. And I must show Othello Cassio and Desdemona talking together -

Yes, that's the way.

The evil's growing stronger every day.

### Act 3 A Jealous Man

*Scene 1 Early morning, outside Othello's house*

*[Cassio is waiting for Iago.]*

CASSIO: Greetings, Iago.

IAGO: Haven't you been to bed?

CASSIO: No. Iago, I need to speak to Desdemona. Emilia can help me with that.

IAGO: I'll send her to you. And I'll get the Moor out of the way. Then you'll be able to speak freely to Desdemona.

CASSIO *[putting a hand on Iago's arm]*: I thank you with all my heart. *[Iago goes.]* I never knew a better, more honest man.

*[Emilia comes in.]*

EMILIA: Good morning, good Lieutenant. I am sorry to hear about your troubles. Desdemona is asking Othello to forgive you. Wait a little and all will be well.

CASSIO: Emilia, I must speak to Desdemona. Can you help me?

EMILIA: Of course. Please come in. I'll take you to her.

CASSIO: A thousand thanks.

*[They leave.]*

Scene 2 In Othello's house

[Desdemona, Cassio and Emilia are talking.]

DESDEMONA: Good Cassio, I will do everything possible to help you. [putting her hand on his arm] Believe me, Cassio, you and Othello will soon be friends again.

CASSIO: Good lady, I will always be your true servant.

DESDEMONA: I know you will. You love my lord Othello, and he will soon forgive you.

CASSIO [unhappily]: But first he must punish me. He will send me away. Then he will forget me.

DESDEMONA: No, Cassio, that will not happen. I will talk to Othello about you day and night. I will die before I fail you.

[Othello and Iago come in.]

CASSIO: I must go, my lady. I feel uncomfortable here. I will leave you. [He walks quickly away.]

IAGO [quietly, to himself]: Ah! I don't like that.

OTHELLO: What?

IAGO: Nothing, my lord. Or if – no. Nothing.

OTHELLO: Was that Cassio I saw? Was he talking to my wife?

IAGO [sounding surprised]: Cassio? No, my lord, that man ran away when he saw you. And he looked guilty. It can't be Cassio.

OTHELLO: Yes, it was Cassio.

DESDEMONA [coming and taking Othello's hand]: My husband! I was talking a minute ago to someone you are angry with.

OTHELLO: Who do you mean?

DESDEMONA: Your lieutenant, Cassio! My dear lord, please forgive him. Cassio loves you and is a true friend to you.

OTHELLO: Was he here a minute ago?

DESDEMONA: Yes, he was. Oh, Othello, he is suffering so badly. It made me sad, too. Please call him to you and forgive him.

OTHELLO: Not now, sweet Desdemona, some other time.

DESDEMONA [*smiling at him*]: But soon?

OTHELLO: For you, my love, yes.

DESDEMONA: Will you do it tonight?

OTHELLO [*coldly*]: No, not tonight.

DESDEMONA: Please tell me when. Othello, it's Michael Cassio, your old friend! He often came with you to my father's house.

OTHELLO [*impatiently, pushing her away*]: Enough, Desdemona. I will never say 'no' to you. But please leave me alone now.

DESDEMONA [*surprised, to Emilia*]: Come with me, Emilia. I will do what my husband asks.

[*Desdemona and Emilia go. Othello watches them.*]

OTHELLO [*quietly*]: Excellent woman! How I love you! If my love for you ever dies, my life will be at an end.

IAGO [*sounding serious*]: My lord?

OTHELLO [*turning to look at him*]: What, Iago?

IAGO: Cassio went with you to visit Desdemona at her father's house. Did he know then that you loved her?

OTHELLO: Yes, he often took my love letters to Desdemona, and brought her letters to me.

IAGO [*suddenly sounding worried*]: Oh, did he?

OTHELLO: Yes. Are you surprised? Is he not an honest man?

IAGO: Honest, my lord? Yes, I *think* he is.

OTHELLO: You think he is? What does that mean? What are you telling me, Iago? I heard you say, 'I don't like that', when Cassio left my wife. Then you asked, 'Did Cassio know you loved Desdemona?' Why? What is worrying you? Tell me!

IAGO: My lord, you know I love you.

OTHELLO: I think you do. That is why I am so afraid. If you are worried, there is a good reason for it.

IAGO: I believe Cassio is honest.

OTHELLO: I think so, too.

IAGO: Well then, I think Cassio is honest.

OTHELLO: Iago, please tell me what you really think.

IAGO: My lord, I do not want to tell you. It's easy to make a mistake.

OTHELLO: Iago, as my friend, you must tell me.

IAGO: My good name, my lord, is the dearest thing I own. A thief steals nothing if he steals my purse. It was mine; now it's his. But if he steals my good name – well, then I'm lost.

OTHELLO: You must tell me, Iago.

IAGO: No, I can't.

OTHELLO [*shouting*]: You must!

IAGO: Please, my lord, don't be jealous. That is a sickness that eats men's hearts. Oh, how jealous men suffer!

OTHELLO: Oh, what pain is in my heart!

IAGO: The richest man on earth is poor if he is jealous. God save us all from jealousy.

OTHELLO: Why are you saying this? Do you think I am a jealous husband? I am not. My wife is beautiful, popular, loves to talk, sings and dances well. And she chose to marry me. Why should I be jealous? If there *is* a reason, you must tell me.

IAGO: I am glad to hear this. Now it is easier for me to speak. Watch your wife with Cassio.

OTHELLO: Can it be true?

IAGO: She fell in love with you and married you. And her own father knew nothing about it. You see how clever she is? But I must stop talking like this. I do it out of love for you.

OTHELLO: No, you are right to speak.

IAGO: I can see that you are worrying now.

OTHELLO: Not at all, not at all.

IAGO: That isn't what I want. Cassio's my friend. My lord, you are troubled, I can see.

OTHELLO [*clearly worried*]: Not really. I believe Desdemona is honest. But it is only natural ...

IAGO: Yes, that's exactly my point. Was it natural for her to refuse to marry a young Venetian? Was it natural for her to choose

you? But forgive me, I shouldn't talk like this.

OTHELLO: If you discover more, tell me. Ask your wife to watch Desdemona. Now leave me, Iago. [*Iago goes.*] Oh, why did I marry her? This honest man knows more than he says.

[*Iago comes back.*]

IAGO: My lord, please forget what I said. Wait a little before you bring Cassio back as your lieutenant. If Desdemona tries to help him – well, watch her. But she's innocent, I'm sure.

OTHELLO [*coldly*]: Leave everything to me.

IAGO: Once again, goodbye. [*He goes.*]

OTHELLO: This honest man understands people so well. If she is unfaithful to me, she must go. I chose this lovely woman to be my wife. But is she really mine? Do other men enjoy what belongs to me? Ah, she is coming. [*Desdemona and Emilia come in.*] How innocent she looks. I do not want to believe it ...

DESDEMONA [*smiling warmly at him*]: My dear Othello, your dinner and your guests are waiting for you.

OTHELLO: No, I am wrong.

DESDEMONA: What did you say? Are you ill?

OTHELLO [*touching his head*]: I have a pain here, in my head.

DESDEMONA: It will soon go. Let me tie this handkerchief around it. [*She tries to tie it, but can't.*]

OTHELLO: Your handkerchief is too small. [*He pushes it away, and she drops it.*] Leave it. Come, I'll go to dinner with you.

DESDEMONA: I am sorry that you are not well.

[*Desdemona and Othello go.*]

EMILIA [*picking up the handkerchief*]: I'm happy to have this. It was Desdemona's first gift from the Moor. Iago has asked me a hundred times to steal it. But she always has it in her hand. She even kisses it and talks to it. I'll give it to Iago. I have no idea why he wants it.



*'I am sorry that you are not well.'*

[*Iago comes in.*]

IAGO: Oh, it's you. What are you doing alone here?

EMILIA: Don't be angry, I've got something for you.

IAGO [*coldly*]: Really? I don't think so.

EMILIA: Yes, really. What will you give me for that handkerchief?

IAGO [*suddenly sounding interested*]: What handkerchief?

EMILIA: The one the Moor gave to Desdemona!

IAGO: What? Have you stolen it from her?

EMILIA: No. She dropped it by accident, and I picked it up.

IAGO: Good girl! Give it to me!

EMILIA: Why? What will you do with it?

IAGO [*taking the handkerchief from her*]: Why should I tell you?

EMILIA: If it isn't important, give it back. [*She tries to take it but can't.*] Poor lady! She'll cry when she can't find it.

IAGO: Say nothing to her. Now go. Leave me alone. [*Emilia goes.*]

I'll drop this in Cassio's bedroom and he'll find it. Little things like this feed jealousy. The Moor is changing already. The sickness is in his blood, and it will burn him like fire. [*Othello comes in. Iago hides the handkerchief and speaks more quietly.*] No more sweet sleep for Othello! No medicine can help you now.

OTHELLO [*clearly suffering*]: Oh, she is unfaithful to me!

IAGO: No, General, never say that.

OTHELLO [*shouting*]: Get away from me! You are killing me!

IAGO: What, my lord?

OTHELLO: When I knew nothing, nothing could hurt me. I could sleep, I could enjoy life. I did not taste Cassio's kisses in my wife's mouth. Oh, it is better not to know!

IAGO: I'm sorry to hear this.

OTHELLO: Oh, my quiet mind has gone for ever. Goodbye to happiness, goodbye to my life as a soldier, to my success in the wars. Othello is finished!

IAGO [*happily, to himself*]: Is this possible?



OTHELLO: Show me, Iago. I want to see the worst with my own eyes. If you cannot prove it, I will kill you.

IAGO [*sounding frightened*]: Oh, God help me! How wrong I was to be honest! In this world, no honest man is safe. I'll be no man's friend if this is the result.

OTHELLO: No, stop! You should be honest.

IAGO: I should be wise. I was stupid to be honest.

OTHELLO: My wife is faithful! No, she is not! You are right! No, you are wrong! Oh, I need to be sure! Her lovely name is now as black as my own face! I cannot live like this! I must know!

IAGO: I see, my lord, how much you are suffering. I'm sorry I ever spoke. Do you want to be sure?

OTHELLO: Want to be sure? I *will* be sure!

IAGO: Yes, but how? Do you want to see them in bed together?

OTHELLO [*crying out*]: Oh, the pain!

IAGO: It will be difficult to catch them like that. No – impossible. But I can tell you something.

OTHELLO: What?

IAGO: A few days ago I stayed the night at Cassio's house and slept in his bedroom. I had toothache and didn't sleep well. Cassio talks in his sleep. 'Sweet Desdemona,' he said, 'we must be careful. We must hide our love.' Then he took my hand and cried, 'Oh, sweet lady!' Then he cried, 'Oh, why did you marry the Moor!'

OTHELLO [*crying out*]: Oh God, God!

IAGO: He was only dreaming.

OTHELLO: But his dream was true!

IAGO: It may be.

OTHELLO [*very angry*]: I'll cut her into pieces!

IAGO: No, be wise. We aren't sure yet. She may be honest. But tell me this: have you seen a pretty piece of cloth, a red and white handkerchief, in your wife's hand?

OTHELLO: I gave it to her. It was my first gift to her.

IAGO: Ah. I didn't know that. I saw that handkerchief today. I'm sure it was your wife's. I saw Cassio clean his beard with it.

OTHELLO: Now I see it all. Oh, Iago, how she will suffer for this. One death is not enough; I will give her fifty. Now all my love is gone and my heart is full of hate.

IAGO: But wait ...

OTHELLO [*shouting*]: Oh, blood, blood, blood!

IAGO: Be patient. You may change your mind.

OTHELLO: Never, Iago, never. I am like the ice-cold waves of an angry sea. Nothing can change me, nothing can stop me. Now I cry to God for blood. [*He falls to his knees.*]

IAGO: Don't stand up yet. [*He also falls to his knees.*] I promise here to help my lord Othello. My head, my hand and my heart are all his. I am with him, in the bloodiest of fights.

[*They both stand.*]

OTHELLO: I will not offer empty thanks, but ask you for something immediately. You have three days to kill Cassio.

IAGO: Then my friend must die. But please, let her live.

OTHELLO: That evil woman will go to hell. I must find a quick death for the lovely devil. Now you are my lieutenant.

IAGO [*quietly*]: I am yours, for ever.

[*Iago and Othello leave.*]

### Scene 3 In the street

[*Desdemona and Emilia are walking.*]

DESDEMONA [*worried*]: Oh where did I leave that handkerchief, Emilia?

EMILIA: I don't know, my lady.

DESDEMONA: Well, I am lucky my Othello is not a jealous man.

EMILIA: Is he never jealous?

DESDEMONA [*smiling*]: Who? Othello? No, never.

EMILIA: Look, here he comes.

[*Othello comes in.*]

DESDEMONA: Now I will talk to him about Cassio. I will not take 'no' for an answer.

OTHELLO [*coldly*]: How are you, Desdemona?

DESDEMONA: Well, my good lord.

OTHELLO: Give me your hand. Your hand is warm, my lady.

DESDEMONA [*smiling*]: It is a young, happy hand.

OTHELLO: A free and hot hand, an open and giving hand.

DESDEMONA: The hand that gave you my heart. Now, Othello, your promise to me.

OTHELLO: What promise, my love?

DESDEMONA: I have sent a servant to bring Cassio to you.

OTHELLO: My eyes are watery. Lend me a handkerchief.

DESDEMONA: Here, my lord.

OTHELLO: Not that one. The pretty handkerchief I gave you.

DESDEMONA [*nervously*]: I have not got it with me.

OTHELLO: A wise old woman gave that handkerchief to my mother. That woman knew magic ways to keep a man's love. My mother gave it to me for my wife. You must never lose it. If you do, the most terrible things will happen.

DESDEMONA [*frightened*]: Is it true?

OTHELLO: It is. Look after it well.

DESDEMONA: Oh God! Then I am lost.

OTHELLO [*shouting*]: Have you lost it? Tell me!

DESDEMONA: Oh God! It is not lost. But if one day ...

OTHELLO: Get it! Show it to me!

DESDEMONA: I can do that, my lord, but not now. Now I want to talk to you about Cassio.

OTHELLO: Get me the handkerchief.

DESDEMONA: You will never find a better man.

OTHELLO: The handkerchief!

DESDEMONA [*crying*]: Why are you doing this?

OTHELLO: Oh, the devil! [*He goes.*]

EMILIA [*very surprised*]: Is this man jealous?

DESDEMONA: I have never seen this before. There surely is magic in that handkerchief. I must find it again.

EMILIA: Men are full of surprises. First they are hungry and we are their meat. But when they are full they become sick of our taste. Look. Here are Cassio and my husband.

[*Iago and Cassio come in.*]

IAGO [*to Cassio*]: There's no other way. Go and ask her.

CASSIO [*to Desdemona*]: My lady, I hope once again to be Othello's friend. Please help me.

DESDEMONA [*sadly*]: Oh, good Cassio, I cannot help you today. You must be patient. I will try another day.

IAGO: Is my lord angry?

EMILIA: When he left us, a minute ago, he seemed strange.

IAGO: What can it be? I will go to him and find out the reason.

DESDEMONA: Please do. [*Iago goes.*] Perhaps some business in Venice or here in Cyprus is troubling him.

EMILIA: I hope you are right.

DESDEMONA: I gave him no reason to be jealous.

EMILIA: Men need no reason to be jealous. It is a sickness in their minds.

DESDEMONA: God save Othello from that sickness. I will go to him. Cassio, stay here. If I can, I will talk to him about you.

CASSIO: I thank you, my lady.

[*Desdemona and Emilia go. Bianca comes to Cassio.*]

BIANCA [*smiling*]: Greetings, my dear Cassio.

CASSIO [*kissing her*]: How are you, sweet Bianca? My love, I was on my way to your house.

BIANCA: And I to yours, Cassio. I haven't seen you for a week.  
Seven days and nights! It's a long time to a lover.

CASSIO: I'm sorry, Bianca. I have a problem that fills my head  
with troubles. I'll soon come to you again. Now, Bianca, take  
this handkerchief. [*He gives it to her.*]

BIANCA: What's this, Cassio? A gift from a new friend? [*angrily*]  
Ah, now I understand what's happening.

CASSIO: Silence, woman! [*more kindly*] You're jealous. You think  
another woman gave this to me. You're wrong.

BIANCA: Who does it belong to, then?

CASSIO: I really don't know. I found it in my room. I like it very  
much. [*smiling at her*] Can you copy it for me, sweetheart?  
Take it now, and leave me here.

BIANCA: Leave you? Why?

CASSIO: I'm waiting to see Othello. I want to see him alone. I'll  
see you soon, Bianca. [*He walks away from her.*]

BIANCA [*sadly*]: Well, I must be patient.

## Act 4 The End of Love

### Scene 1 A street in Cyprus

[*Iago and Othello are talking.*]

IAGO: A kiss doesn't matter.

OTHELLO: Doesn't matter?

IAGO: But if I give my wife a gift ...

OTHELLO: What then?

IAGO: Then it belongs to her, my lord. It's hers and she can give it  
to any man.

OTHELLO: Her body is hers, too. Can she give that away?

IAGO: Oh, that's another question. But the handkerchief ...

OTHELLO: Oh, the handkerchief. I cannot stop thinking about it.

You say he has it?

IAGO: Yes. And he says ...

OTHELLO [*shouting*]: What has he said? Tell me!

IAGO: He says he ... I don't know.

OTHELLO: What? What did he do?

IAGO: He was in bed ...

OTHELLO [*screaming*]: He was in bed with her! With my wife! Oh, he must die for this crime! [*He falls down, shaking.*]

IAGO: Work well, my medicine! [*shouting*] Oh, my lord! My lord Othello! [*Cassio comes in.*] Oh, Cassio! My lord is sick.

CASSIO: Put something under his head.

IAGO: No, leave him to sleep. If he wakes he will scream and shout.

Leave us now. I must talk to you later. [*Cassio goes.*] [*to Othello*]

How are you, General? Do you have a pain in your heart?

OTHELLO [*sitting up*]: Are you laughing at me?

IAGO: Laughing at you? No, of course not.

OTHELLO: I am hurt in my heart.

IAGO: While you were sick, my lord, Cassio was here. He's coming back soon. Quickly! Hide here, by this door. When he comes, I'll question him about your wife. Watch him when he talks about her. But be patient, my lord. Be a man.

OTHELLO: Are you listening, Iago? I will be patient. But I will – are you listening? – I will have blood for this.

IAGO: You are right. But wait. Now you must hide. [*Othello hides in the doorway of a house.*] [*quietly*] Now I'll talk to Cassio about Bianca, a poor girl who sells her body for bread. The silly thing is in love with Cassio, but he just laughs at her. Here he comes. [*Cassio comes in.*] Othello will see his face and go crazy with jealousy. [*to Cassio*] Hello, Lieutenant. How are you?

CASSIO: I am not the lieutenant, and that is killing me.

IAGO: Keep asking Desdemona for help. That's the way to succeed. [*smiling*] It's a pity Bianca can't help you!

CASSIO [*laughing*]: Oh, that girl!

OTHELLO [*to himself*]: He is laughing already!

IAGO: Well, Bianca really loves you. She says you're going to marry her. Is it true?

CASSIO: Ha, ha, ha!

OTHELLO [*angrily, to himself*]: Oh, you look happy now ...

CASSIO: Marry her? Marry a whore? What a joke! Ha, ha! She follows me everywhere. The other day, I was talking to some men. She came and put her arm around me.

OTHELLO: He is showing how she touched him.

CASSIO: She kissed my hand and cried, and pulled my arm.

OTHELLO: She pulled him into my bedroom! Oh, I will throw your nose to the dogs in the street!

[*Bianca arrives.*]

CASSIO: Bianca! Why are you following me?

BIANCA: Why did you give me this handkerchief? A girl gave it to you. And now you ask me to copy it for you! Here, take it! I don't want the thing! [*She throws it at him.*]

OTHELLO: My God, it is my handkerchief. My gift to Desdemona.

IAGO [*to Cassio*]: Run after her!

CASSIO: Yes, I must, or there'll be more talk about me!

IAGO: Will you eat at her house tonight?

CASSIO: Yes.

IAGO: I may see you there. I must talk to you.

CASSIO: I'll see you there, then. [*He goes.*]

OTHELLO [*leaving the doorway*]: How shall I murder him, Iago?

IAGO: Did you see him laughing?

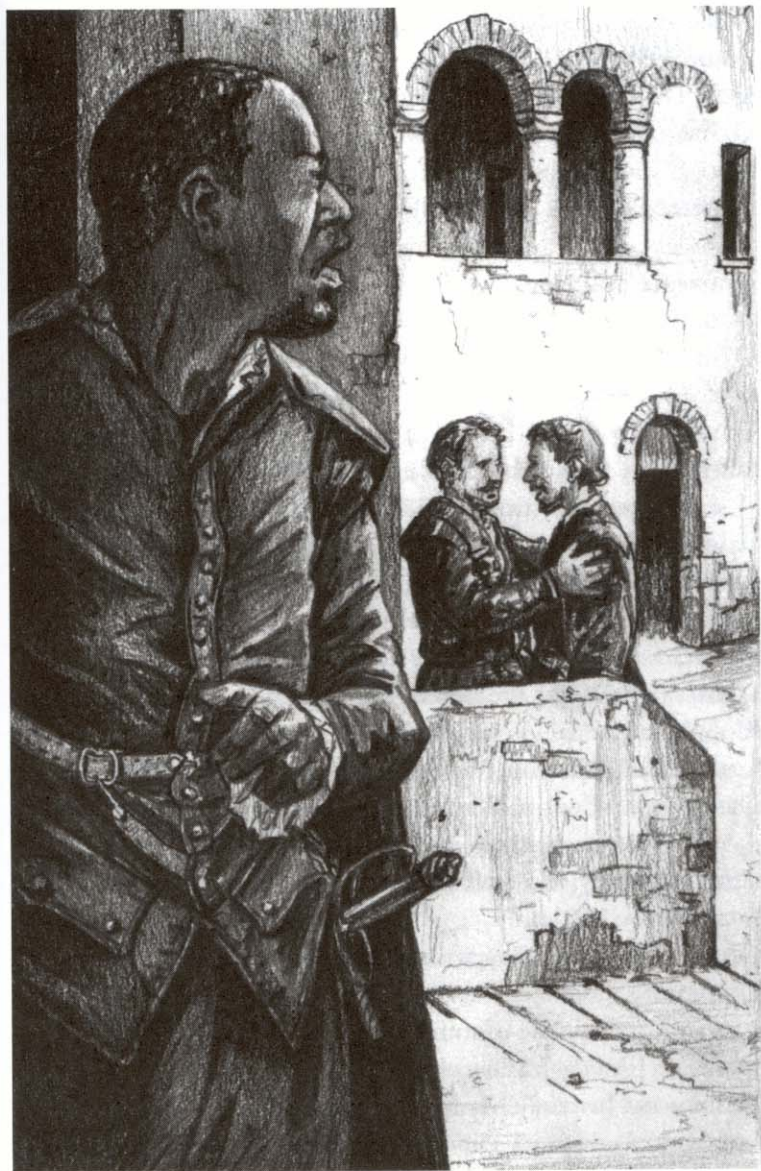
OTHELLO [*putting his hands over his face*]: Oh, Iago!

IAGO: And did you see the handkerchief?

OTHELLO: Was that mine?

IAGO: Yes! Your poor, silly wife gave it to him, and he's given it to his whore!

OTHELLO: I want to kill him slowly. My sweet, lovely wife! Oh,



*'He is showing how she touched him.'*



she must die tonight. My heart has turned to stone. Oh, but she is the sweetest lady! A wife for a king!

IAGO: That only makes her worse.

OTHELLO: Yes, you are right. Oh, but the pain in my heart, Iago!

IAGO: If you love her so dearly, you may forgive her.

OTHELLO: Forgive her! I will cut her to pieces! I must kill her tonight. I will not speak to her first. If I do, her lovely face may weaken me.

IAGO: Kill her in her bed, the bed where she wrongs you.

OTHELLO: Good, good! That idea pleases me!

IAGO: Leave Cassio to me.

OTHELLO: Excellent! [*They hear shouting.*] What is that?

IAGO: News from Venice, I think. [*Lodovico, Desdemona and some servants come in.*] Look, the Duke has sent Lodovico. And your wife is with him.

LODOVICO: God save you, General. The Duke of Venice greets you. [*He gives Othello a letter.*]

OTHELLO: I kiss his words. [*He reads the letter.*]

DESDEMONA: What's the news, good cousin Lodovico?

IAGO: I am glad to see you, Signor. Welcome to Cyprus.

LODOVICO: Thank you. How is Lieutenant Cassio?

DESDEMONA: Cousin, he and my lord Othello are not friends now. But you can help me to change that.

OTHELLO [*coldly*]: Are you sure of that?

DESDEMONA: My lord?

LODOVICO: Is something wrong between my lord and Cassio?

DESDEMONA [*warmly*]: Yes, and I want to put an end to it. Cassio is a great favourite of mine.

OTHELLO [*shouting*]: Silence!

DESDEMONA [*worried*]: My lord? Are you angry?

LODOVICO: Perhaps it's something in the letter. The Duke is calling Othello back to Venice. Cassio will stay here in his place.

DESDEMONA: I am glad to hear that.

OTHELLO: Are you? You devil! [*He hits her across the face.*]

DESDEMONA [*touching her face, very unhappy*]: There is no reason for this.

LODOVICO [*very surprised*]: My lord, I cannot believe you are doing this. Look at your wife. She's crying.

OTHELLO [*screaming at Desdemona*]: Get away from me, woman! Leave us!

DESDEMONA [*looking very pale but calm*]: I will go. I hate to see you angry. [*She starts to go.*]

LODOVICO: Please, my lord, call the lady back.

OTHELLO [*shouting roughly*]: Woman!

DESDEMONA [*turning back to him*]: My lord?

OTHELLO [*to Lodovico*]: Well, what do you want to do with her?

LODOVICO [*looking very surprised*]: Who? I, my lord?

OTHELLO: Yes. You asked me to call her back. Oh, she will do anything a man asks. Now she is crying. Well, I must go home.

Yes, cry, woman! I will return to Venice. Away, woman! Get out! [*Desdemona goes.*] Cassio will have my place. [*to Lodovico*] Please come to dinner tonight, Signor. Welcome to Cyprus! [*He leaves.*]

LODOVICO: Is this the great Moor, the brave General who wins wars for Venice? Is he sick? Has he gone out of his mind?

IAGO: He is what he is. I can't say any more.

LODOVICO: He hit his wife! Is he often like this?

IAGO: I can't honestly tell you what I've seen here. You must watch him and see for yourself.

LODOVICO: I am sorry to find him like this.

[*Lodovico and Iago leave.*]

## Scene 2 *A room in Othello's house*

[*Othello is talking to Emilia.*]

OTHELLO: You have seen her and Cassio together?

EMILIA: Yes, but they did nothing wrong. I heard every word they spoke.

OTHELLO: Did they never send you out of the room? To bring a drink, perhaps, or glasses, or her hat?

EMILIA: Never, my lord.

OTHELLO: That's strange.

EMILIA: My lord, on my life, I believe she is faithful. A devil has put these ideas into your head.

OTHELLO: Send her to me. Go! [*Emilia goes.*] Emilia is just a simple woman. A clever whore can hide all sorts of secrets.

[*Desdemona and Emilia come in.*]

DESDEMONA [*coldly*]: My lord, what do you want?

OTHELLO [*softly*]: Come here, my dearest. Look at me.

DESDEMONA [*frightened*]: What are you doing?

OTHELLO [*to Emilia*]: Go and shut the door. Call me if anyone comes. Go!

[*Emilia leaves them.*]

DESDEMONA [*falling to her knees*]: I am on my knees, Othello. I hear your angry words, but I do not understand them.

OTHELLO [*slowly*]: Who are you?

DESDEMONA: Your wife, my lord, your faithful wife.

OTHELLO: Yes, tell me your lies. Tell me you are honest!

DESDEMONA: God knows, I am.

OTHELLO: God knows, you are evil.

DESDEMONA: How, my lord? What have I done?

OTHELLO [*crying*]: Ah, Desdemona! Away, away, away!

DESDEMONA: Why are you crying, my lord? Are you angry with my father? Did *he* call you back to Venice? Is that what you believe? My lord, I lost my father when I married you.

OTHELLO: Oh God, make me sick, make me poor, destroy all my hopes – and I will be patient. But how can I live like this?

DESDEMONA [*crying*]: What have I done?

OTHELLO: What have you done? I cannot say the words. The smell of your crimes sickens God himself. Are you not a whore?

DESDEMONA [*crying*]: No. I am faithful to my husband.

OTHELLO: Then you must forgive me. I was mistaken. You look like Othello's wife – the whore from Venice. [*He calls Emilia.*] You, woman, come. [*Emilia comes in.*] Stay here with her and lock the door. [*He goes.*]

EMILIA: What's happening? How are you, my lady?

DESDEMONA [*pale and speaking slowly*]: I think I am dreaming.

EMILIA: What's the matter with my lord?

DESDEMONA: With who?

EMILIA: Your husband, my lady.

DESDEMONA: I have no husband. Do not talk to me now, Emilia. Tonight, put my wedding sheets on my bed. Now call your husband.

[*Emilia leaves, and returns with Iago.*]

IAGO: What do you want, my lady? How are you?

DESDEMONA: I cannot say. I have never suffered like this before.

IAGO: What's the matter, lady?

EMILIA [*very worried*]: Iago, my lord called her a whore. Now her heart is breaking.

IAGO: Why did he do that?

DESDEMONA [*crying*]: I do not know. It is not true.

IAGO: Don't cry, don't cry. How has this happened?

DESDEMONA: Only God knows.

EMILIA [*angrily*]: I know! An evil man, a dirty dog, has told Othello lies about my lady. That's what has happened!

IAGO: No, that's not possible.

DESDEMONA: If it is true, God forgive that man.

EMILIA: No, he should die and go to hell! She's done nothing wrong.

IAGO: Quiet, woman!

DESDEMONA: Oh, good Iago, go to Othello now. Tell him I will always love him dearly. I am not a whore. How I hate that word!

IAGO: Don't cry, my lady. I don't believe he is angry with you. Something is worrying him. Everything will soon be all right again.

*[Desdemona and Emilia leave. Iago goes out into the street and meets Roderigo.]*

IAGO: Hello, my friend. How are you?

RODERIGO *[coldly]*: Tired of listening to your lies, Iago. You've taken all my money, and I haven't even spoken to Desdemona.

IAGO: Roderigo, listen. *[He puts his hand on Roderigo's arm.]*

RODERIGO: I want my money back. If I don't get it, you will feel my sword.

IAGO *[warmly]*: Now you're speaking like a man! Give me your hand, friend. You've waited a long time for this, but now success is coming. Tonight, Roderigo, your luck will change.

RODERIGO: How? Tell me more.

IAGO: Listen. Othello is leaving Cyprus, and Cassio will take his place. But if Cassio dies, Othello will stay – and Desdemona, too. You must kill Cassio. I know where he's eating tonight – with his girl, Bianca. I'll be there to help you. Let's go, it's almost dinner-time. We have work to do!

*[They leave.]*

### *Scene 3 At the door of Othello's house*

*[Lodovico and his servants are leaving Othello and Desdemona, after dinner with them. Emilia is with Desdemona.]*

LODOVICO: Good night, my lady, and thank you for this evening.

DESDEMONA: You are welcome, Signor.

OTHELLO: I will walk with you, Lodovico. Oh, Desdemona.

DESDEMONA: My lord?

OTHELLO: Go to bed. I will return soon. And tell Emilia to go.

[*Othello, Lodovico and servants leave. Desdemona and Emilia go inside, into the bedroom.*]

EMILIA: He looks calmer, my lady.

DESDEMONA: He told me to go to bed. And I must send you away. Good Emilia, give me my nightclothes and then leave. We must not make him angry again.

EMILIA [*angrily*]: I hope he never comes back!

DESDEMONA [*warmly*]: Don't say that. I love everything about him – good and bad. Here, help me undress. [*She sits on the bed.*]

EMILIA: I've put your wedding sheets on the bed.

DESDEMONA: Good. Emilia, if I die, cover me with one of those sheets.

EMILIA [*taking Desdemona's shoes and ring.*]: My lady, don't talk like that.

DESDEMONA: My mother had a servant girl called Barbary. She was in love, and her lover left her. She always sang the same old song – she died singing it. Tonight I cannot stop thinking about Barbary and her song.

EMILIA: Shall I go and get your nightdress?

DESDEMONA: No. Stay here. [*singing*]

Oh, down by the river a girl sat alone;

Her eyes were all water, her heart was all stone.

[*speaking*] Take my dress. [*Emilia takes it.*] Quickly. He'll soon be back. [*singing*]

Oh, cover me over with roses so sweet;

Put some at my head and put some at my feet.

[*speaking*] Can you hear him? He's at the door.

EMILIA: No, it's only the wind.

DESDEMONA [*singing*]:

The sun has gone in, and the moon's in the sky;

My lover has left me, and now I must die.

[*speaking*] Good night, Emilia. My eyes hurt. Does that mean I shall soon cry?

EMILIA [*very worried*]: I don't know, my lady.

DESDEMONA: Oh, Emilia! These men, these men! Tell me, are there really women who are unfaithful to their husbands?

EMILIA: There are, I'm sure. But I think bad husbands make bad wives. Our husbands run after other women, or get jealous, or hit us. Well, that's asking for trouble. We change – just like men.

DESDEMONA: Good night, good night. These times are sad. But still I love what's good – and hate what's bad.

## Act 5 Death

### Scene 1 In the street at night

[*Roderigo and Iago are waiting for Cassio by a street corner.*]

IAGO: Here, hide in this dark corner. He'll come soon. Have your sword ready. Don't be afraid – I'm here.

RODERIGO [*nervously*]: Stay near. I may need you. [*to himself*] I have no great problem with Cassio. But Iago tells me I must kill him. So he will die.

IAGO [*to himself*]: It doesn't matter to me who kills who. No, Cassio must die. [*He looks around the corner.*] Here he comes.

[*Cassio arrives.*]

RODERIGO [*running forward*]: It's Cassio! Now, die! [*He attacks him with his sword.*]

CASSIO: My coat is thick and protects me. Let's see if yours is the same! [*He cuts Roderigo with his sword. Roderigo falls.*]

RODERIGO [*screaming*]: Oh, he's killed me!

[*Iago runs to them, wounds Cassio in his leg, and hides again.*]

CASSIO [*falling down*]: Oh, I am hurt. Help! Murder! Murder!

[*Othello comes in.*] Help! Light! Someone get a doctor!

OTHELLO [*to himself*]: Excellent! Iago has killed Cassio. Your lover is dead, whore, and you will soon follow him.

[*Othello leaves, and Lodovico and Gratiano arrive.*]

CASSIO: Are there no guards? Lights! Murder! Murder!

GRATIANO: What's happening? Someone's hurt.

RODERIGO [*weakly*]: Oh, help!

LODOVICO: Two or three people are wounded.

[*Iago comes in with a light.*]

IAGO: Who's there? Who's hurt?

LODOVICO: We don't know. We can't see them.

CASSIO [*calling from the ground*]: Here, here! Help me!

IAGO: What's the matter?

GRATIANO [*to Lodovico*]: It's Othello's ensign. I know his voice.

RODERIGO [*calling from the ground*]: Oh, help me here!

IAGO [*seeing Roderigo*]: Ah! Here's the killer! [*He kills Roderigo with his sword.*] Help! Is anyone there? [*Lodovico and Gratiano come to him.*] Signor Lodovico, is it you? [*He sees Cassio.*] Here's poor Cassio, badly wounded.

GRATIANO: Cassio?

IAGO [*sounding very sad*]: Cassio, what have they done to you?

CASSIO [*weak and in pain*]: My leg is cut in two.

IAGO: God help us! Bring more light! [*taking off his shirt*] I'll tie my shirt around the wound. Bring a chair for him! Be calm, good Cassio, help is coming. Who is the dead man? [*He holds the light over Roderigo.*] Oh! My dear friend Roderigo!

GRATIANO: Roderigo, from Venice! I knew him well!



[*Some servants arrive with a chair.*]

IAGO: Oh, the chair, at last. [*He helps to lift Cassio.*] Carry him carefully. I'll get the General's doctor for him. Cassio, this man was my friend. Why were you fighting?

CASSIO: I don't know! I don't know the man! He suddenly attacked me!

IAGO [*to the servants*]: Be careful with him! [*The servants carry Cassio away.*]

[*Emilia arrives.*]

EMILIA [*worried*]: Oh, Iago, what's the matter?

IAGO: Roderigo and his friends have attacked Cassio in the dark. Roderigo is dead, and Cassio badly wounded. The others have escaped.

EMILIA: Oh, poor Cassio!

IAGO [*to Gratiano and Lodovico*]: Signors, let's go to Cassio. Emilia, go and tell my lord and my lady about this. [*to himself*] At last I see that everything is going well for me.

## Scene 2 *In the bedroom of Othello's house*

[*Desdemona is asleep in bed. Othello comes in with a light and locks the door behind him.*]

OTHELLO: How pale and innocent she looks, lying here asleep. But she must die, or she will do more evil to men. Before I pick this lovely rose, I'll smell it one last time. [*He kisses her.*] Oh, she is so sweet! One more kiss, one more.

DESDEMONA [*waking up*]: Who's there? Othello?

OTHELLO [*quietly*]: Yes, Desdemona.

DESDEMONA: Come to bed, my lord.

OTHELLO: Are you ready to meet God, Desdemona? You must ask Him to forgive you before I kill you.

DESDEMONA [*sitting up, frightened*]: Are you talking of killing?

OTHELLO: Yes, I am.

DESDEMONA: Then God help me. I know I am innocent. But I am afraid of you. Will you kill me for loving you?

OTHELLO [*loudly*]: Quiet, woman!

DESDEMONA: Why are you shaking? Why are you angry?

OTHELLO: That handkerchief I gave you. You gave it to Cassio.

DESDEMONA: No, on my life! Send for him and ask him!

OTHELLO: Speak carefully and do not lie. You are on your deathbed.

DESDEMONA [*very frightened*]: Oh, God help me! I never loved Cassio, never gave him anything!

OTHELLO: I saw the handkerchief in his hand – saw it with my own eyes. Oh, your lies turn my heart to stone.

DESDEMONA: He found it then. I never gave it to him! Call him here! Ask him to explain!

OTHELLO: He has spoken. I know he has enjoyed your body.

DESDEMONA: No! It isn't true! He can't say that!

OTHELLO [*laughing*]: You're right! He cannot say anything. Honest Iago has silenced him for me.

DESDEMONA: Oh, I am full of fear! Is he dead?

OTHELLO: Yes, a thousand times dead.

DESDEMONA: Oh, there is some evil here, some terrible lie!

OTHELLO: What, are you crying for your lover?

DESDEMONA: Oh, my lord, I want to live! Do not kill me!

OTHELLO: No, you must die. [*He pushes her down on the bed, and holds his hand over her mouth.*]

EMILIA [*calling from outside the room*]: My lord, my lord!

OTHELLO: Who's there?

EMILIA: Oh my lord, I must speak to you.

OTHELLO [*to himself*]: It's Emilia – [*looking at Desdemona*] Ah, she's dead – She's bringing the news that Cassio is dead. No more movement? She's gone. If Emilia comes in, she'll speak to my

wife. Wife? I have no wife. Oh, God, are the sun and moon still in the sky, and Desdemona gone?

EMILIA: Please, my lord, I must speak to you!

OTHELLO: Come in. [*He unlocks the door and Emilia comes in.*]

EMILIA: Oh my lord, there's been a terrible murder. Cassio has killed a young man called Roderigo.

OTHELLO: Roderigo dead? And is Cassio dead?

EMILIA: No.

OTHELLO: Cassio not dead? Then the wrong man has died!

DESDEMONA [*weakly*]: Oh murder, murder!

EMILIA: Oh God! That was my lady's voice! [*She runs to the bed, finds Desdemona, and tries to lift her.*] Help, oh help! Sweet Desdemona, talk to me!

DESDEMONA [*falling back on the bed*]: I am dying an innocent death.

EMILIA: Who has done this?

DESDEMONA [*very softly*]: Nobody. I myself. Goodbye, Emilia. Goodbye to my kind lord. [*She dies.*]

EMILIA [*screaming at Othello*]: You killed her. Oh, you are the blackest devil in hell!

OTHELLO [*shouting*]: She was a whore. Cassio had her. She was guilty. Ask your husband – he knew it all.

EMILIA [*very quietly*]: My husband?

OTHELLO: Yes. He told me. He is an honest man. He hates the evil these women do.

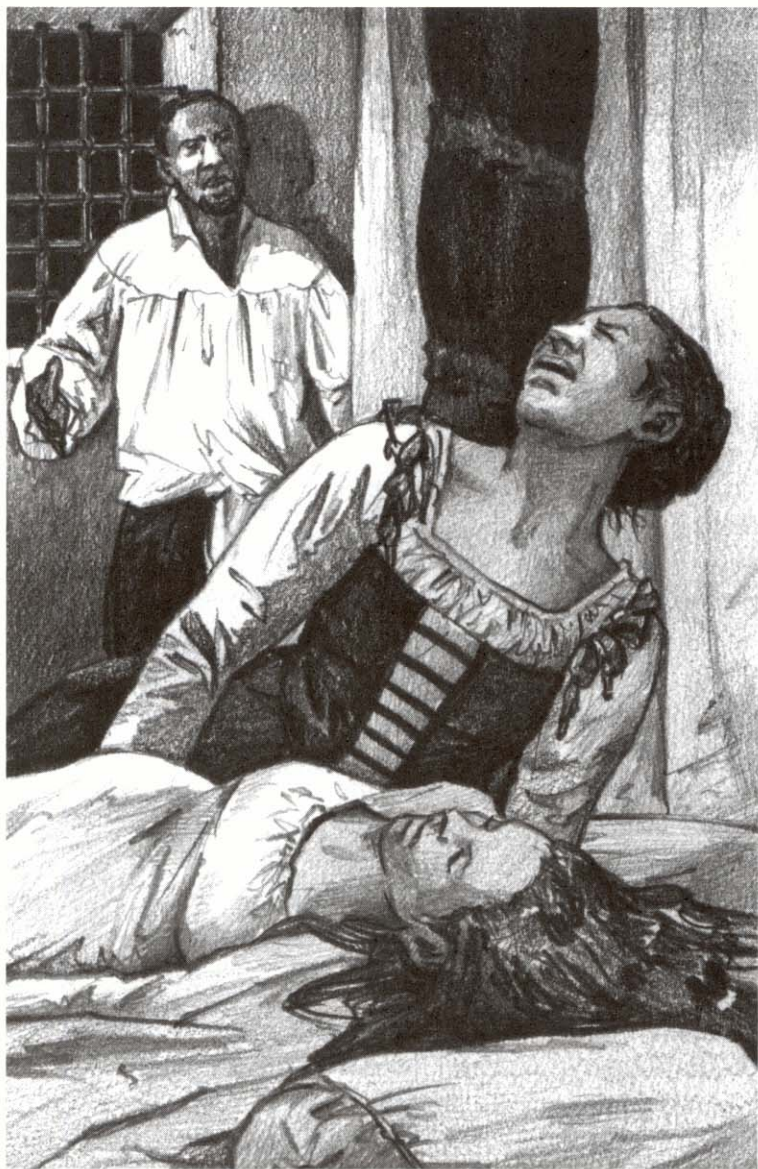
EMILIA [*crying*]: Oh, my poor lady! My husband told you she was unfaithful?

OTHELLO [*impatiently*]: Yes, yes, woman! My friend, your husband – honest, honest Iago!

EMILIA [*shouting*]: Oh, how could you believe him! He lied to you!

OTHELLO: Silence, woman!

EMILIA: Oh, you can't hurt me now. I'm not afraid of your sword! I'll tell the world! [*shouting*] Help, help! The Moor has killed my lady! Murder! Murder!



*'You killed her.'*

[*Montano, Gratiano and Iago come in.*]

MONTANO: What's the matter? What's happening, General?

EMILIA [*turning to Iago*]: Iago, what have you done? Did you tell my lord that my lady was unfaithful to him with Cassio?

IAGO: Yes. It's true. Be quiet, woman! [*He pushes her away.*]

EMILIA: No! You told a lie, a terrible, evil lie. I will not be quiet. Here she is, murdered in her bed. [*She points to the bed.*]

MONTANO AND GRATIANO: Oh, God help her!

OTHELLO [*calmly*]: It is true, sirs.

EMILIA: This is a terrible crime, and you are guilty, Iago.

IAGO: Are you out of your mind? Go away! Go home!

EMILIA: Sirs, I must speak. Perhaps I shall never go home again.

OTHELLO [*falling onto the bed and crying*]: Oh, oh, oh!

EMILIA: Yes, that's right, scream and cry! You have killed the sweetest, most innocent lady in the world.

OTHELLO: She was guilty! I killed her, but she was guilty!

GRATIANO: Poor Desdemona, I am glad your father's dead. Your marriage broke his heart. Thank God he cannot see this.

OTHELLO: Yes, she died a terrible death. But Iago knows what she did. She loved Cassio. She even gave him my gift to her, the handkerchief my mother gave me.

EMILIA [*putting her hands over her mouth*]: Oh my God!

IAGO [*holding her by her arms*]: Shut your mouth, woman!

EMILIA [*pushing him away*]: No! I will speak!

[*Iago takes out his sword*]

GRATIANO [*to Iago*]: Stop! Put down your sword!

EMILIA [*to Othello*]: You stupid, stupid man! I found your handkerchief and gave it to my husband. He often asked me to steal it.

IAGO [*screaming at Emilia*]: You're lying, whore!

EMILIA: I am not. [*to Othello*] Murderer! You have killed your wife for nothing.

OTHELLO [*to Iago*]: You must die for this.

[*Othello starts to take out his sword but Montano stops him. Iago runs at Emilia and wounds her with his sword, then runs out.*]

EMILIA [*weakly, falling by the bed*]: I will die by my lady's side.

MONTANO [*to Gratiano*]: Take the Moor's sword. Come, guard the door. I must stop Iago escaping.

[*Montano and Gratiano run out.*]

OTHELLO: I cannot live now. The end must come.

EMILIA: What were the words of your song, lady? Can you still hear me? I will die singing to you. [*singing softly*] Oh, cover me over with roses so sweet. [*speaking*] Moor, she was innocent. Moor, she loved you. [*She dies.*]

OTHELLO [*calling to Gratiano*]: Come in. I want to speak to you.

[*Gratiano comes in.*]

GRATIANO: What do you want to say?

OTHELLO: I have a good sword. Shall I fight you? For what? Do not fear me. This is the end of my journey. [*He goes to the bed, and looks at Desdemona.*] Oh, poor lady. Your face is as pale as the sheets you lie on. [*He takes her hand.*] Cold, cold, my girl, my innocent girl. Oh devils, burn me with all your fires! Throw me into the deepest hell, to suffer for ever! Oh, Desdemona, oh!

[*Lodovico and Montano come in. Servants carry in Cassio in a chair. Two soldiers bring Iago in.*]

LODOVICO [*looking around*]: Where is Othello?

OTHELLO: Here I am. I am the man who was Othello. [*He runs at Iago and wounds him with his sword.*]

LODOVICO [*to Montano*]: Take his sword.

IAGO: I'm wounded, but not killed.

OTHELLO: I am glad! I want you to live and suffer, not to die! For

me now, death means happiness.

LODOVICO: Iago has told us part of the story. Did you and he plan Cassio's death?

OTHELLO: Yes.

CASSIO: Dear General, I did nothing to hurt you.

OTHELLO: I believe it now, and ask you to forgive me. Will you ask this devil, Iago, why he did it?

IAGO: Ask me nothing. I will never speak again.

GRATIANO: You will speak. Pain will open your mouth.

LODOVICO [*to Othello*]: You do not yet understand everything. We have found letters in Roderigo's pockets. One of them shows he meant to kill Cassio. And here's one he wrote to Iago.

OTHELLO: That devil! But Cassio, how did you get the handkerchief I gave to my wife?

CASSIO: I found it in my bedroom. Iago says he put it there.

OTHELLO: Oh, how could I believe him!

CASSIO: And Iago used that poor silly young man, Roderigo. Roderigo attacked me when I was drunk. Iago told him to do it.

LODOVICO: Othello, you must go with us. Cassio is now the general here. And we will throw Iago into prison. Come!

OTHELLO: Wait. A word or two before you go. I have been a faithful soldier for Venice. Well, all that is finished now. Do not try to excuse what I did. I killed my love, and now I must die.  
[*He takes out a knife and wounds himself in the chest.*]

[*to Desdemona*]

I kissed before I killed you. Now see this.

Killing myself, I die with one last kiss.

[*He falls onto the bed next to her and dies.*]

LODOVICO [*to Iago*]: Look, you dog, at what you have done. Here, on this bed, lie the people you have destroyed. Cassio, you must punish this devil from hell. He must suffer, as these poor people suffered. I will now sail to Venice, for my part –  
To tell the story with a heavy heart.

# ACTIVITIES

## Act 1

### *Before you read*

- 1 *Othello* is a famous play by William Shakespeare. Work with another student and discuss these questions.
  - a Do you know the names of any other plays by Shakespeare? Make a list.
  - b Which of the plays on your list have you seen in a theatre or as a film (in any language)?
  - c Talk about one of these plays. Is it happy or sad? Did you enjoy it? Describe some of the people in the play, and what happens to them.
  - d Compare your list with the lists of other students. Which plays do most people know? Which play is the most popular with your class?
- 2 Look at the Word List at the back of the book. Which words are:
  - a for people's jobs, or the positions that they have?
  - b for parts of a play?
  - c about fighting?
  - d about good and bad?
- 3 Read the Introduction to the play and answer these questions.
  - a How is *Othello* helping the Duke and people of Venice?
  - b In what way is *Othello* different from most people in Venice?
  - c What is the feeling that destroys *Othello*?
  - d Circle the words that describe *Othello* when the play begins.  
brave      cold      successful      happy      lonely
  - e When was *Othello* written?
  - f
    - 1) Where was Shakespeare living when he wrote the play?
    - 2) How was he earning money?
  - g Who plays *Othello* in the 1952 film of the story?
- 4 Act 1 is called 'Love and War'. *Othello* is a general and he must go to war. What will happen to the woman he loves? How will she feel? What do you think?



*While you read*

- 5 Are these sentences true (✓) or untrue (X)?
- a Iago is happy to be Othello's ensign. ....
  - b Roderigo wanted to marry Desdemona. ....
  - c Brabantio knows where his daughter is. ....
  - d Othello wants to fight Brabantio. ....
  - e The Turks are attacking Venice. ....
  - f Othello has married Desdemona. ....
  - g Othello and Desdemona often met at Brabantio's house. ....
  - h Desdemona wants to go to Cyprus with Othello. ....
  - i Othello asks Iago to look after his wife. ....
  - j Iago wants to get his hands on Roderigo's money. ....

*After you read*

- 6 Correct these sentences.
- a Brabantio calls Othello a murderer.
  - b Brabantio says that his daughter could never love an old man.
  - c Desdemona loved listening to Othello's songs.
  - d The Duke tells Brabantio not to be friendly with Othello.
  - e The Duke tells Othello to sail to war the next day.
  - f Iago tells Roderigo to follow his heart.
- 7 Describe these people's feelings for the other person. Give reasons for your opinions.
- a Othello and Iago
  - b Iago and Roderigo
  - c Brabantio and Othello
  - d Cassio and Iago
  - e Brabantio and Desdemona
- 8 Discuss these questions. Give reasons for your opinions.
- a Is Desdemona right to marry Othello in secret? Is her father right to be angry?
  - b How can parents make sure that their children don't marry secretly?

## Act 2

### Before you read

- 9 Discuss these questions with another student. What do you think?
- What will Iago do to make trouble for Cassio?
  - What will he plan to do to Othello?
  - How will he use Roderigo in his plans?

### While you read

- 10 Put these sentences in the correct order, 1–9.
- Cassio and Roderigo fight, and Cassio hits Roderigo. ....
  - Iago and Desdemona arrive in Cyprus. ....
  - Cassio wounds Montano with his sword. ....
  - Iago tells Cassio to ask for Desdemona's help. ....
  - Iago makes Cassio drunk. ....
  - Othello arrives in Cyprus and meets Desdemona there. ....
  - Cassio arrives in Cyprus. ....
  - Othello is angry with Cassio and punishes him. ....
  - Iago tells Roderigo that he must start a fight with Cassio. ....

### After you read

- 11 Discuss these questions with another student. What do you think?
- What mistakes does Cassio make?
  - Do Iago and Emilia have a good marriage?
  - Does Cassio really love Desdemona?
  - How does Desdemona feel about Cassio?
- 12 Work with another student. Have this conversation. One of you is a friend of Montano's. He is badly wounded after the fight, and you are visiting him.
- Student A:* You are Montano's friend. Ask what has happened to him.
- Student B:* You are Montano. Answer your friend's questions.

### Act 3

#### *Before you read*

- 13 Which of these will happen? What do you think?
- a Cassio will ask Desdemona to speak to Othello for him.
  - b Emilia will help Iago with his evil plan.
  - c Othello will begin to get angry with Desdemona.
  - d Iago will tell Othello not to be a jealous husband.
  - e Othello will believe that Desdemona is unfaithful to him.
  - f Othello will continue to believe that Iago is his friend and an honest man.

#### *While you read*

- 14 Who says these words? Who or what are they talking about?
- a 'I never knew a better, more honest man.'  
..... / .....
  - b 'He will send me away. Then he will forget me.'  
..... / .....
  - c 'Please call him to you and forgive him.'  
..... / .....
  - d 'If my love for you ever dies, my life will be at an end.'  
..... / .....
  - e 'That is a sickness that eats men's hearts.'  
..... / .....
  - f 'Do other men enjoy what belongs to me?'  
..... / .....
  - g 'She dropped it by accident, and I picked it up.'  
..... / .....
  - h 'He was only dreaming.'  
..... / .....
  - i 'I gave him no reason to be jealous.'  
..... / .....
  - j 'What's this, Cassio? A gift from a new friend?'  
..... / .....

*After you read*

**15** Put these words in the right places in the sentences below. Use each word only once.

from with to of about for at on in

- a Emilia is sorry to hear ..... Cassio's problem.
  - b Cassio often went ..... Othello to Desdemona's house.
  - c Othello begins to feel a pain ..... his heart.
  - d Desdemona tells Othello that his guests are waiting ..... him.
  - e Desdemona's first gift ..... Othello was a handkerchief.
  - f Othello thinks Desdemona is unfaithful ..... him.
  - g Iago once stayed the night ..... Cassio's house.
  - h Othello says his heart is now full ..... hate.
  - i Cassio meets Bianca ..... the way to her house.
- 16** Discuss these questions with another student. What do you think?
- a Who is (or are) suffering from jealousy? Why are they jealous and who are they jealous of?
  - b Who is (or are) feeling sad? Why?
  - c Who is (or are) telling lies?

**Act 4**

*Before you read*

**17** Discuss these questions with another student. Give reasons for your answers.

- a How will Iago use Cassio and Bianca in his plan to destroy Othello?
- b Will Desdemona understand why Othello is changing?
- c Will either Roderigo or Emilia start to understand Iago's plans?

*While you read*

**18** Circle the correct words.

- a Othello cannot stop thinking about *a letter* / *a handkerchief*.
- b Othello says that he feels a pain in *his heart* / *his head*.
- c Iago talks to Cassio about *Desdemona* / *Bianca*.
- d Bianca is *happy* / *angry* when she sees Cassio.

- d What is your opinion of Othello? Do you feel sorry for him?
- e Was Emilia guilty in any way, or is she completely innocent?

### Writing

- 25 Write a letter from Othello to Desdemona, asking her to marry him in secret. Then write her reply.
- 26 Compare Desdemona and Emilia. In what ways were the two women different? Which did you like best?
- 27 After Othello's death, write about him for a newspaper. Give the news of how he died. Tell the story of his life.
- 28 Write a letter from a worried Lodovico to his relatives in Venice after he has seen Othello hit Desdemona.
- 29 In your opinion, who is the most interesting person in this play? Explain why.
- 30 Lodovico has to take the news of Othello's death to the Duke of Venice. Write the speech that he will make.
- 31 Write a modern short story about jealousy for a student magazine. Your story can be sad or funny.
- 32 Imagine that you are going to make a film of this play. Which actors will you choose? Will you leave the story in Shakespeare's time or change it to the present day? Will you change the story in any way?
- 33 Write the story of Desdemona's death for a popular newspaper. Call it 'The Handkerchief Murder'.
- 34 Cassio has now taken Othello's place as general. Write the speech that he makes to his soldiers.

Answers for the activities in the book are available from the Penguin Readers website. A free Activity Worksheet is also available from the website. Activity Worksheets are part of the Penguin Teacher Support Programme, which also includes Progress Tests and Graded Reader Guidelines. For more information, please visit:  
[www.penguinreaders.com](http://www.penguinreaders.com).

## WORD LIST

- act** (n) one of the main parts of a play
- devil** (n) something or someone that does very bad things. Devils live in hell.
- duke** (n) a man with a high position. In the past, a duke was often the most important man in the government of a city.
- ensign** (n) a position for a soldier which is lower than the position of lieutenant
- evil** (adj) very, very bad
- faithful** (adj) having sex only with your husband or wife; being a good friend to someone at all times
- God** (n) the one who made the world
- guilty** (adj) having broken a rule or a law
- handkerchief** (n) a small piece of cloth; you use it to clean your nose or face
- hell** (n) the place where bad people go after death
- innocent** (adj) having done nothing wrong
- jealousy** (n) the angry, unhappy feeling that your husband or wife is more interested in another person than in you. You may also be jealous about other things that people have. You want them too.
- lieutenant** (n) quite a high position for a soldier
- lord** (n) a man with a high position because of the family he comes from
- magic** (n) the skill of doing strange or impossible things
- scene** (n) a short part of a play without any change in time or place
- servant** (n) someone who works in another person's house
- sword** (n) a long, sharp piece of metal like a big knife, used for fighting
- whore** (n) a woman who sells her body for money
- wound** (v) to hurt someone; for example, with a knife or a gun