

OTHELLO - THE MOOR of VENICE
ACT I

SCENE I. Venice. A street.

[Enter *RODERIGO* and *IAGO*]

RODERIGO

I take it much unkindly that thou, Iago, who hast had my purse as if the strings were thine, shouldst know of this.

IAGO

If ever I did dream of such a matter, abhor me.

RODERIGO

Thou told'st me thou didst hold him in thy hate.

IAGO

Despise me, if I do not. I am worth no worse a place than the Moor's lieutenant. But one Michael Cassio, that never set a squadron in the field, must his lieutenant be. And I - God bless the mark - his Moorship's ancient.

RODERIGO

By heaven, I rather would have been his hangman.

IAGO

Why, there's no remedy. Tis the curse of service.

RODERIGO

I would not follow him then.

IAGO

Sir, content you: I follow him to serve my turn upon him. Now call up her father.

RODERIGO

Brabantio! Signior Brabantio!

IAGO

Awake now Brabantio! Thieves! Look to your house, your daughter, and your bags!

[BRABANTIO appears above, at a window]

BRABANTIO

What is the reason of this terrible summons?

RODERIGO

Signior, is all your family within?

BRABANTIO

Why? Wherefore ask you this?

IAGO

Because you're robbed. Even now an old black ram is topping your white ewe.

BRABANTIO

What profane wretch art thou?

RODERIGO

Most reverend signior, do you know my voice?

BRABANTIO

Roderigo! I have charged thee not to hang about my doors. In honest plainness thou hast heard me say - my daughter is not for thee!

IAGO

Beware Brabantio! You're losing your child! Your daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs!

BRABANTIO

Thou art a villain! This thou shalt answer. I know thee, Roderigo.

RODERIGO

Sir, I beseech you - if your daughter be in her chamber or your house, let loose on me the justice of the state for thus deluding you. But look to her!

BRABANTIO

Give me a candle! Call up all my people! Light, I say! light!

[He leaves his balcony, entering his house]

IAGO

Farewell Roderigo. I must to our damned Moorship, and give out a false show of loyalty to the devil.

[Enter, at the door, BRABANTIO, ready to search for Desdemona, with servants]

BRABANTIO

It is too true an evil. Gone she is. Now, Roderigo, Where didst thou see her? With the Moor, say'st thou?

RODERIGO

I think they are married.

BRABANTIO

O heaven! How got she out? O treason of the blood! Fathers, from hence trust not your daughters' minds by what you see them act. Are there not drugs by which the purity of a girl's youth may be abused?

RODERIGO

Yes, sir.

BRABANTIO

Do you know where we may find her and the Moor?

RODERIGO

I think I can.

BRABANTIO

Lead on. Men! Get weapons for me!

SCENE II. Another street.

[Enter OTHELLO, IAGO.]

[Enter CASSIO, and certain officers with torches]

OTHELLO

The goodness of the night upon you friends. What is the news?

CASSIO

The Duke does greet you, general, And he now requires your appearance.

OTHELLO

What is the matter, think you?

CASSIO

Something from Cyprus.

IAGO

Come, captain, will you go?

CASSIO

Here comes another troop to seek for you.

IAGO

No! It is Brabantio. General, be advised: he comes to bad intent.

[Enter BRABANTIO, RODERIGO, with men and weapons]

BRABANTIO

Down with him, thief!

[They draw weapons - on both sides]

OTHELLO

Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them. Good signior, you shall more command with years than with your weapons.

BRABANTIO

O thou foul thief, where hast thou hid my daughter? Damned as thou art, thou hast enchanted her. Never would a maid so tender, fair, and happy run from her parent to the sooty bosom of such a thing as thou!

OTHELLO

Sir!

BRABANTIO

Thou hast practiced on her with foul charms, abused her delicate youth with drugs. I therefore apprehend and do attach thee.

[Brabantio speaks to his men]

Lay hold upon him: if he do resist, subdue him at his peril.

[Othello's men prepare to fight. Brabantio's men prepare to fight.]

OTHELLO

Hold your hands, both you of my inclining, and the rest: Were it my cue to fight, I should have known it without a prompter. Sir, where will you that I go to answer this your charge?

BRABANTIO

To prison, till fit time of law and course of direct session call thee to answer.

OTHELLO

What if I do obey? How may the Duke be therewith satisfied; whose messengers are here about my side upon some present business of the state?

CASSIO

'Tis true, most worthy signior. The Duke's in council and your noble self, I am sure, is sent for.

BRABANTIO

How? The Duke in council? This time of the night! Bring him away. Mine's not an idle cause. For if such actions may have passage free, bond-slaves and pagans shall our statesmen be.

[All leave to appear before the Duke of Venice]

SCENE III. A council-chamber.

*[The DUKE and Senators are sitting at a table,
[preparing for naval war against The Ottoman Empire.]*

SENATOR

My letters say a hundred and seven galleys.

DUKE OF VENICE

And mine, a hundred and forty. Yet do they all confirm a Turkish fleet - And bearing up to Cyprus. Send for Othello.

SENATOR

Here comes Brabantio and the valiant Moor.

[Enter BRABANTIO, OTHELLO, IAGO, RODERIGO, and officers]

DUKE OF VENICE

Valiant Othello, we must straight employ you against the general enemy Ottoman.

[Then the Duke speaks to BRABANTIO]

DUKE OF VENICE

I did not see you; welcome, gentle signior. We lacked your counsel and your help tonight.

BRABANTIO

So did I yours. Good your grace, pardon me. Neither my place nor aught I heard of business hath raised me from my bed. For mine own grief is of such an overbearing nature that it swallows other sorrows.

DUKE OF VENICE

Why, what's the matter?

BRABANTIO

O, my daughter!

DUKE OF VENICE

Dead?

BRABANTIO

Ay - to me. She is abused, stolen from me.

DUKE OF VENICE

Whoever he be that in this foul proceeding hath thus beguiled your daughter, the bloody book of law you shall yourself read in the bitter letter after your own sense.

BRABANTIO

Humbly I thank your grace. Here is the man, this Moor.

DUKE OF VENICE [To *Othello*]

Othello, what, in your own part, can you say to this?

OTHELLO

Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors; my very noble and approved good masters: that I have taken away this old man's daughter, 'tis most true. True, I have married her. Yet, by your gracious patience, I will a round, unvarnished tale deliver of how I won his daughter.

BRABANTIO

A maiden never bold... and she, in spite of nature – of everything – to fall in love with what she feared to look on!

DUKE

Othello, speak: Did you, as he says, subdue and poison this young maid's affections? Or came it by request?

OTHELLO

I do beseech you, send for the lady, and let her speak of me before her father:

DUKE OF VENICE

Fetch Desdemona hither.

OTHELLO

Her father loved me, oft invited me, still questioned me the story of my life from year to year -- The battles, sieges, fortunes that I have passed. I ran it through, even from my boyish days to the very moment that he bade me tell it - wherein I spoke of most disastrous chances, of moving accidents by flood and field, of being taken by the insolent foe and sold to slavery, and of my redemption thence.

This to hear would Desdemona seriously incline. She'd come again, and with a greedy ear devour up my discourse, which I observing, took once a pliant hour and found good means to draw from her a prayer of earnest heart that I would all my pilgrimage relate,

I did consent, and often did beguile her of her tears, when I did speak of some distressful stroke that my youth suffered.

My story being done, she gave me for my pains a world of sighs: She swore, in faith, 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange, 'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful.

She thanked me, and bade me, if I had a friend that loved her, I should but teach him how to tell my story – And *that* would woo her.

Upon this hint I spoke. She loved me for the dangers I had passed, And I loved her that she did pity them. This only is the witchcraft I have used.

OTHELLO

Here comes the lady; let her witness it. *[Enter Desdemona and Iago]*

DUKE OF VENICE

I think this tale would win my daughter too. Good Brabantio, take up this mangled matter at the best.

BRABANTIO

I pray you, hear her speak! *[Brabantio speaks directly to Desdemona]* Come hither, gentle mistress. Do you perceive in all this noble company where most you owe obedience?

DESDEMONA

My noble father, I do perceive here a divided duty: To you I am bound for life and education. I am hitherto your daughter. But here's my husband, and so much duty as my mother showed to you - preferring you before her father - so much I challenge that I may profess due to the Moor, my lord.

BRABANTIO

God be with you! I have done! I had rather adopt a child than be a father!

[Brabantio speaks to Othello]

Come hither, Moor: I here do give thee that with all my heart which, but thou hast already, with all my heart I would keep from thee.

[to Desdemona]

For your sake, jewel, I am glad at soul I have no other child.

DUKE OF VENICE

Let me speak like yourself, and lay a sentence, which may help these lovers into your favor. When remedies are past, the griefs are ended. To mourn a mischief that is past and gone is the next way to draw new mischief on.

BRABANTIO

I humbly beseech you: proceed to the affairs of state.

DUKE OF VENICE

The Turk with a most mighty preparation makes for Cyprus. Othello, the fortitude of the place is best known to you. You must therefore be content to hold off the joy of your new fortunes with this more stubborn and boisterous expedition.

OTHELLO

I'll undertake these present wars for you. But I ask fit disposition for my wife -- as levels with her breeding.

DUKE OF VENICE

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

BRABANTIO

I'll not have it so.

OTHELLO

Nor I.

DESDEMONA

Nor I. I would not there reside to put my father in impatient thoughts by being in his eye. Most gracious Duke...

DUKE OF VENICE

What would you, Desdemona?

DESDEMONA

That I did love the Moor to live with him, my downright violence and storm of fortunes may trumpet to the world. My heart's subdued even to the very quality of my lord: Let me go with him.

OTHELLO

Let her have your voices.

DUKE OF VENICE

Be it as you shall privately determine, but you must away tonight.

OTHELLO

With all my heart.

DUKE OF VENICE

At nine in the morning here we'll meet again. Good night to everyone.

[The Duke speaks now to Brabantio]

And, noble signior: if virtue no delighted beauty lack, your son-in-law is far more fair than black.

BRABANTIO *[coldly]*

Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see:

She has deceived her father, and may thee.

OTHELLO speaks to Brabantio

My life upon her faith!

OTHELLO Speaks to Iago

Honest Iago: My Desdemona must I leave to thee. I prithee, let thy wife attend on her, and bring them to Cypress in their best advantage.

OTHELLO Speaks to Desdemona

Come, Desdemona: I have but an hour of love to spend with thee. We must obey the time. *[Exit OTHELLO and DESDEMONA]*

[Iago and Roderigo now stand alone in the senate chamber]

RODERIGO

Iago,--

IAGO

What say'st thou, noble heart?

RODERIGO

I've lost the love of Desdemona. What will I do, thinkest thou?

IAGO

Why, go to bed, and sleep.

RODERIGO

I will pathetically drown myself.

IAGO

Why, thou silly gentleman?

RODERIGO

It is silliness to live when to live is torment.

IAGO

O villainous! I have looked upon the world for four times seven years; and since I could distinguish betwixt a benefit and an injury, I never found man that knew how to love himself.

RODERIGO

What should I do? I confess it is my shame to be so fond, but it is not in my virtue to amend it.

IAGO

Virtue! Ha! 'Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus. We have reason to cool our raging emotions. I take this pain of yours to be but a sickness of the blood.

RODERIGO

It cannot be.

IAGO

It is merely a lust of the blood. Come, be a man. Drown thyself? Drown cats and blind puppies. I have professed me thy friend and I could never better help thee than now. It cannot be that Desdemona should long continue her love to the Moor. When she is sated with his body, she will find the error of her choice. She must have change; she must: Therefore Roderigo: put money in thy purse. Pay me to procure her for thee. I shall pay her father and then persuade her to love thee. Then thou shalt enjoy her. A pox of drowning thyself! It is clean out of the way.

RODERIGO

Wilt thou be true to my hopes, if I depend on the issue?

IAGO

Thou art sure of me. I have told thee often, and I tell thee again: I hate the Moor. If thou canst cuckold him, thou dost thyself a pleasure, and me a sport. Go, provide thy money to me. I will provide thee Desdemona. We will have more of this. Adieu.

RODERIGO

Where shall we meet in the morning?

IAGO

At my lodging.

RODERIGO

I'll be with thee betimes.

IAGO

Go to; farewell. Do you hear, Roderigo? No more of drowning, do you hear?

RODERIGO

I am changed.

[Roderigo exits]

IAGO *[Alone]*

Thus do I ever make my fool my purse. For I mine own gained knowledge should profane if I would time expend with such a snipe - but for my sport and profit. But ...

I HATE THE MOOR!

And it is thought abroad, that 'twixt my sheets he has done my office. I know not if it be true, but I, for mere suspicion in that kind, will do as if for surety.

Othello holds me well; the better shall my purpose work on him.

Now Cassio... hmm ... Cassio's a proper man... Let me see now... to get his place and to plume up my will in double knavery... How... how? Let's see...

I have it: after some time, to abuse Othello's ear – saying that Cassio's too familiar with his wife. The Moor is of a free and open nature that thinks men honest who but seem to be so; he will as tenderly be led by the nose as asses are.

I have it! It is engendered. Hell and night must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light.

End Act One