

OTHELLO ACT II

SCENE 1

A Sea-port in Cyprus. An open place near the Bay. [Enter MONTANO and two Gentlemen]

MONTANO

What from the cape can you discern at sea?

FIRST GENTLEMAN

Nothing at all. The storm is too great.

MONTANO

If the fleet be not sheltered, they are lost.

[Enter a second man]

SECOND GENTLEMAN

News, lads! The desperate tempest hath caused a grievous wreck and sufferance on most part of their fleet.

MONTANO

Is this true?

SECOND GENTLEMAN

The ship is here put in, and Michael Cassio, Lieutenant to the warlike Moor Othello, is come on shore. The Moor himself is yet at sea.

[Enter CASSIO]

CASSIO

Thanks, you the valiant of this warlike isle. Let the heavens give him defense against the elements, for I have lost us him on a dangerous sea.

MONTANO

Is he well shipped?

CASSIO

His ship is stoutly timbered.

[A cry within 'A sail, a sail, a sail!']

MONTANO

I see women on board the ship. Is your general wived?

CASSIO

Most fortunately.

SECOND GENTLEMAN

'Tis one Iago, ancient to the general. He accompanies Desdemona and her attendant Emilia.

[Enter DESDEMONA, EMILIA, IAGO, RODERIGO, and Attendants]

CASSIO

Hail to thee, lady!

DESDEMONA

I thank you, valiant Cassio. What can you tell me of my lord?

CASSIO

He is not yet arrived.

CASSIO

Good ancient, you are welcome.

IAGO

Good morrow, lieutenant.

CASSIO

[To EMILIA]

Welcome, mistress - good wife of Iago.

[Kissing her]

DESDEMONA

How say you, Cassio?

CASSIO

Good morrow.
[Cassio kisses Desdemona's hand]

IAGO *[Aside]*

He takes her by the palm. Ay, whisper. With as little a web as this will I ensnare as great a fly as Cassio.

[Trumpets sound in the distance]

SAILOR

The Moor!

CASSIO

'Tis truly so.

DESDEMONA

Let's meet him.

[Enter OTHELLO and Attendants]

OTHELLO

[Comes ashore and greets Desdemona first]

O my fair warrior!

DESDEMONA

My dear Othello!

OTHELLO *[addressing the people]*

Good people of Cyprus! The Turks are drowned! Our fleet is victorious! This desperate tempest hath caused a grievous wreck and sufferance on most part of their fleet.

[to Desdemona]

It gives me wonder great as my content to see you here before me.
I cannot speak enough of this content. It is too much of joy.

IAGO *[Aside]*

O, you are well tuned now! But I'll set down the notes that make this music as honest as I am.

OTHELLO

News, friends; our wars are done. The Turkish fleet is sunk! This night we shall celebrate our victory.

[Exit OTHELLO, DESDEMONA, and Attendants]

IAGO [to Roderigo]

Listen to me: The lieutenant tonight watches on the court of guard. First, I must tell thee this - Desdemona is directly in love with him.

RODERIGO

With him! why, 'tis not possible.

IAGO

Let thy soul be instructed. Mark me with what violence she first loved the Moor. Her eye must be fed, and what delight shall she have to look on the devil? When her blood is made dull with the act of sport, there should be a fresh appetite. Her delicate tenderness will find itself abused, begin to disrelish and abhor the Moor. Nature will compel her to some second choice. Now, sir, who stands so perfectly in the degree of this fortune as Cassio does? The knave is handsome, young, and the woman hath found him already.

RODERIGO

I cannot believe that in her; she's full of most blessed condition.

IAGO

Blessed! If she had been blessed, she would never have loved the Moor. Blessed! Didst thou not see her paddle with the palm of his hand? Didst not see that?

RODERIGO

Yes, that I did; but that was but courtesy.

IAGO

They met so near with their lips that their breaths embraced together. Roderigo, watch you tonight for the command. Cassio knows you not - Find some occasion to anger Cassio.

RODERIGO

Well...

IAGO

Sir, he is rash when drunk and very sudden in anger, and may strike at you. Provoke him. For even out of that will I cause these men of Cyprus to mutiny. That will lead to the displacing of Cassio. So shall you have a shorter journey to your desires.

RODERIGO

I will do this, if I can bring it to any opportunity.

IAGO

I promise thee. Meet me by and by at the citadel. Farewell.

RODERIGO

Adieu.

[Exit]

IAGO [alone]

That Cassio loves her - people can believe it. Now, I do love her too - not out of absolute lust, but to aid my revenge: for that I do suspect the Moor hath leaped into my bed - the thought whereof doth, like a poison, gnaw my inwards; and nothing can or shall content my soul till I am even with him, wife for wife.

So ...

I'll put the Moor into a jealousy so strong that judgment cannot cure. I'll abuse Michael Cassio to the Moor. For I fear Cassio with my night cap too. I'll make the Moor thank me, love me and reward me - For making him an ass.

[Exit]

SCENE 2 A street in Cyprus

[Enter a Herald with a proclamation; People following]

HERALD

It is Othello's pleasure, our noble general,
that, upon certain tidings now arrived importing
the destruction of the Turkish fleet, every man
put himself into a triumph - some to dance,
some to make bonfires - each man to what sport
he pleases. For, besides these beneficial news, it is
the celebration of his marriage. There is full liberty
of feasting from this present hour of five till the
bells have tolled eleven. Heaven bless the isle of
Cyprus and our noble general Othello!

SCENE 3 A hall in the castle

[Enter OTHELLO, DESDEMONA, CASSIO, and Attendants]

OTHELLO

Good Michael, look you to the guard tonight.

CASSIO

Iago hath direction what to do.

OTHELLO

It pleases me. Iago is most honest. Michael, good night.

[To DESDEMONA]

Come, my dear love.

[Exit OTHELLO, DESDEMONA, and Attendants]

[Enter IAGO and Cassio – out and among the soldiers]

CASSIO

Welcome, Iago. We must to the watch.

IAGO

Not this hour, lieutenant; 'tis not yet ten o' the clock. Our general cast us thus early for the love of his Desdemona. He hath not yet made wanton the night with her; and she is sport for Jove.

CASSIO

She's a most exquisite lady.

IAGO

And, I'll warrant her, full of game.

CASSIO

Indeed, she's a most fresh and delicate creature.

IAGO

What an eye she has!

CASSIO

An inviting eye; and yet methinks right modest.

IAGO

Well, happiness to their sheets! Come, lieutenant, I have a cup of wine; and here without are a brace of Cyprus gallants that would gladly drink to the health of black Othello.

CASSIO

Not tonight, good Iago. I have very poor and unhappy brains for drinking. I could well wish courtesy would invent some other custom of entertainment.

IAGO

O, they are our friends; but one cup: I'll drink for you.

CASSIO

I *have* drunk but one cup tonight, and dare not task my weakness with any more.

IAGO

What, man! 'Tis a night of revels; the gallants desire it.

CASSIO

Where are they?

IAGO

Here at the door; I pray you, call them in.

CASSIO

I'll do it; but it dislikes me.

[*Exit*]

IAGO

If I can fasten but one cup upon him! With that which he hath drunk tonight already, Cassio will be as full of quarrel and offense as my young mistress' dog. Now, my sick fool Roderigo, whom love hath turned almost the wrong side out, and three lads of Cyprus have I tonight flustered with flowing cups of wine, and they watch too. Now, amongst this flock of drunkards am I to put our Cassio in some action that may offend the isle. But here they come. If consequence do but approve my dream, my boat sails freely, both with wind and stream.

[Re-enter CASSIO, MONTANO (temporary military governor of Cyprus) and sailors - all drunk.]

[An hour later]

CASSIO [drunkenly]
'Fore God, they've given me a rouse already!

MONTANO
Good faith, a little one; not past a pint.

IAGO
Some wine, boys!

CASSIO
'Fore God, an excellent song! Drink to the health of our general!

MONTANO
I am for it, lieutenant; and I'll do you justice drinking.

[Montano and Casio engage in a wine chugging contest.]

CASSIO
Let's have no more of this. Let's to our affairs...Forgive us our sins! Gentlemen, let's look to our business.

[Cassio staggers in his drunkenness]

Do not think, gentlemen, that I am drunk. I am not drunk now; I can stand well enough, and speak well enough.

ALL THE MEN
Excellent well!

CASSIO
Why, very well then; you must not think then that I am drunk.

[Cassio angrily exits]

MONTANO
To the platform, masters; come, let's set the watch.

IAGO

You see this fellow that is gone before; he is a soldier fit to stand by Caesar and give direction. And do but see his vice with wine. I fear the trust Othello puts him in.

MONTANO

But is he often thus drunken?

IAGO

'Tis evermore the prologue to his sleep.

MONTANO

It were well the general were put in mind of it.

[Enter RODERIGO]

IAGO *[aside to Roderigo]*

How now, Roderigo! After the lieutenant. Go! *[Exit RODERIGO]*

MONTANO

As to Cassio's drinking. It were an honest action to say so to the Moor.

IAGO

Not I, for this fair island. I do love Cassio well; and would do much to cure him of this evil-- But, hark! what noise?

[Cry within: 'Help! help!']

[Re-enter CASSIO, beating upon RODERIGO]

CASSIO

You rogue! you rascal!

MONTANO

What's the matter, lieutenant?

CASSIO

I'll beat the knave!

RODERIGO

Beat me!

CASSIO

Dost thou prate, rogue? *[Striking RODERIGO]*

MONTANO

Nay, good lieutenant; *[Stopping Cassio]* I pray you, sir, hold your hand.

CASSIO

Let me go, sir, or I'll knock you o'er the mazzard.

MONTANO

Come, come. You're drunk.

CASSIO

Drunk! *[Cassio swings drunkenly. They fight]*

IAGO

[Aside to RODERIGO]

Away, I say; go out, and cry a mutiny.

[Exit RODERIGO]

Nay, good lieutenant - alas, gentlemen - Help, - Lieutenant, - Montano - sir... Help, masters!

[Bell rings] [Re-enter OTHELLO and Attendants]

OTHELLO

What is the matter here?

MONTANO

'Zounds, I bleed still; I am hurt to the death. *[Faints]*

OTHELLO

Hold, for your lives!

IAGO

Hold! Lieutenant,--sir--Montano,--gentlemen, have you forgot all sense of place and duty?

OTHELLO

For Christian shame, put by this barbarous brawl! He that stirs next to fight for his own rage holds his soul light. Silence that dreadful bell! What is the matter, masters? Honest Iago, speak, who began this?

IAGO

I do not know

OTHELLO

How comes it, Michael, you are thus forgot?

CASSIO

I pray you, pardon me; I cannot speak.

OTHELLO

Worthy Montano. What's the matter that you unlace your reputation thus and spend your rich opinion for the name of a night brawler?

MONTANO

Worthy Othello, I am hurt to danger. Your officer, Iago, can inform you, of all that I do know.

OTHELLO

Now, by heaven, my blood begins my safer guides to rule. Give me to know how this foul fight began. 'Tis monstrous. Iago, who began it?

MONTANO

If thou deliverest more or less than truth, thou art no soldier.

IAGO

Touch me not so near: I had rather have this tongue cut from my mouth than it should do offense to Michael Cassio...

Yet, I persuade myself, to speak the truth. Thus it is, general:
Montano and myself being in speech, there comes a fellow crying out for help, and Cassio following him with determined sword, to execute upon him. Sir, this gentleman Montano steps in to Cassio, and entreats his pause. They fell then together into blow and thrust; even as they were when you yourself did part them. More of this matter cannot I report.

But men are men – imperfect. Hold him not in your hatred.

OTHELLO

I know, Iago, thy honesty and love doth mince this matter, making it light to Cassio.

OTHELLO

Cassio, I love thee but never more be officer of mine.

[DESDEMONA - awakened by the noise - runs onto the scene]

Look, if my gentle love be not raised up! I'll make thee an example! *[strikes Cassio]*

DESDEMONA

What's the matter?

OTHELLO

All's well now, sweeting; come away to bed.

[Now Othello turns to Iago]

Iago, look with care about the town, and silence those whom this vile brawl distracted.

[Exit all but IAGO and a now sobering CASSIO]

IAGO

What, are you hurt, lieutenant?

CASSIO

Ay, past all surgery.

IAGO

Marry, heaven forbid!

CASSIO

Reputation, reputation, reputation! Oh, I have lost my reputation! I have lost the immortal part of myself, and what remains is bestial. My reputation, Iago, my reputation!

IAGO

As I am an honest man, I thought you had received some bodily wound. There is more sense in that than in reputation. Besides, you have lost no reputation at all, unless you make yourself such a loser. What, man! There are ways to recover the general again.

CASSIO

I! Drunk!

IAGO

What was he that you followed with your sword? What had he done to you?

CASSIO

I know not.

IAGO

Is't possible?

CASSIO

I remember a mass of things, but nothing distinctly - a quarrel, but nothing wherefore.

IAGO

I could heartily wish this had not befallen; but since it is as it is, mend it for your own good.

CASSIO

Ha! I will ask him for my place again; he shall tell me I am a drunkard!

IAGO

Come, come, good lieutenant, I think you think I love you.

CASSIO

I have well approved it, sir... I! Drunk! Damnable wine!

IAGO

You or any man living may be drunk at a time, man. Good wine - used wisely - is a good companion. I'll not have you rail against it.

Come now: There are ways to recover the general.

I'll tell you what you shall do. Our general's wife is now the general: confess yourself freely to her. Importune her help to put you in your place again. She is of so free, so kind, so apt, so blessed a disposition, she holds it a vice in her goodness not to do more than she is asked. This broken joint between you and her husband entreat *her* to repair, And, my fortunes against any bet worth naming, this crack of your love shall grow stronger than it was before.

CASSIO

You advise me well.

IAGO

I protest, in the sincerity of love and honest kindness.

CASSIO

I think it freely. I will beseech the virtuous Desdemona to undertake for me. I am desperate of my fortunes.

IAGO

You are in the right. Good night, lieutenant; I must to the watch.

CASSIO

Good night, honest Iago.

[Exit]

IAGO *[Alone – speaking in a sarcastic tone]*

And what's he then that says I play the villain? When this advice I give is free and honest, helpful to thinking and indeed the course to win the Moor again? For it is most easy the inclining Desdemona to subdue in any honest suit. She's framed as fruitful as the free elements. And for her to win the Moor - his soul is so enfeathered to her love that she may make, unmake, do what she wish with his weak function. How am I then a villain to counsel Cassio to this parallel course, directly to his good?

Divinity of hell!

When devils will the blackest sins put on, they do suggest at first with heavenly shows, as I do now. For while this honest fool asks Desdemona to repair his fortunes, and she for him pleads strongly to the Moor, I'll pour this pestilence in Othello's ear - that she appeals for Cassio to satisfy her body's lust. And by however much she strives to do him good, she shall undo her credit with the Moor. So will I turn her virtue into pitch, And out of her own goodness make the net that shall enmesh them all.

[Re-enter RODERIGO]

How now, Roderigo! How dost thou?

RODERIGO

Not well! My money is almost spent; I have been tonight exceedingly well cudgeled; and I think the issue will be, I shall have so much experience for my pains, and so, with no money at all and a little more wit, return again to Venice.

IAGO

How poor are they that have not patience! What wound did ever heal but by degrees? Thou know'st we work by wit, and not by witchcraft; and wit depends on time.

Does it not go well? Cassio hath beaten thee? And thou, by that small hurt, hast suspended Cassio. Content thyself awhile.

By the mass, 'tis morning. Pleasure and action make the hours seem short. Retire thee. Away, I say. Thou shalt know more hereafter. Get thee gone.

[Exit RODERIGO]

[Iago speaks to himself alone]

Two things are to be done: My wife must move for Cassio to her mistress; I'll set her on. Myself the while to draw the Moor apart, and bring him jump when he may Cassio find soliciting his wife.

Ay, that's the way - dull not device by coldness and delay.

[Exit]

End Act II