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Introduction

This play is set in Venice, Italy, and the island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean Sea. The time is the early 1600s. Othello, a Moor from northwest Africa, is the great army general of Venice. As the play opens, Othello's ensign Iago has been passed over for a promotion. Instead, Othello has promoted Cassio, a younger man. Iago is very angry. To get revenge, he plans to drive a wedge between Othello and his bride, Desdemona, by playing on Othello's jealousy. As the play continues, the noble Moor falls into Iago's trap, and tragedy follows.



—Cast of Characters🎧—



DUKE OF VENICE

BRABANTIO: Desdemona's father, a senator

GRATIANO: Brabantio's brother; a noble Venetian

LODOVICO: a relative of Brabantio; a noble Venetian

OTHELLO: a noble Moor in the military service of Venice

CASSIO: Othello's honorable lieutenant

IAGO: Othello's ensign; a villain

RODERIGO: an easily fooled young gentleman

MONTANO: the governor of Cyprus before Othello

CLOWN: Othello's servant

DESDEMONA: Brabantio's daughter; Othello's fair
young bride

EMILIA: Iago's wife

BIANCA: a prostitute

**GENTLEMEN, SAILORS, OFFICERS, MESSENGER, HERALD,
MUSICIANS, SERVANTS, and SENATORS (SIGNIORS)**



ACT 1

Summary

Iago is angry because Othello has picked Cassio as his lieutenant. He tells Roderigo that he will get back at Othello for this. Iago has the idea of waking up Desdemona's father and telling him that his daughter and Othello have run off. When the enraged Brabantio finds out that Othello and Desdemona are married, he accuses Othello of having used drugs to cast a spell on her.

Forced to defend himself, Othello describes how the love between him and Desdemona had grown. In Brabantio's presence, Desdemona backs up his story and declares her loyalty to her husband.

Othello must leave for Cyprus to defend the island against the Turks, and Desdemona promises to join him. Then Iago describes his evil plan: He will make Othello jealous by suggesting that Desdemona has been unfaithful.





Scene 1



(Enter **Roderigo** and **Iago** on a street in Venice.)

RODERIGO: Why didn't you say so earlier?

IAGO: You never listen to me anyway.

RODERIGO: But you told me you hated him—

IAGO: I do. I deserve to be his lieutenant.

Yet he picked Michael Cassio instead.

Cassio has never proved himself in battle.

And I, who led men on many battlefields,

Will be Othello's mere ensign, the lowest
rank of officer!

RODERIGO: I would rather be his hangman.

IAGO: A new system is in place.

It's who you know that counts—not what
you can do.

Now, sir, judge for yourself whether I have
any reason

To love the Moor.

RODERIGO: Why do you follow him, then?

IAGO: Don't be fooled. I only follow him to
get back at him.



We can't all be in charge—nor can all those in
charge be truly followed.

In following him, I'm looking out for my
own good.

As heaven is my judge, I act not out of
love and duty,

Even though I must make a show of
service.

I am never what I seem to be.

RODERIGO: We can't let him get away with this!

IAGO: Let us wake up Desdemona's father.

Making him angry will lessen Othello's joy.

RODERIGO: Here is her father's house.

IAGO: Wake him! Yell as if the town is on fire!

RODERIGO: Hello! Brabantio! Signior
Brabantio! Hello!

IAGO: Wake up, Brabantio! Thieves! Thieves!

BRABANTIO (*appearing above, at a window*): Why all
the noise? What's wrong?

RODERIGO: Heavens, sir, you've been robbed!

Your heart is burst. You have lost half your
soul.





Even now, an old black ram is mating
with your white ewe.

Arise! Wake your neighbors with the bell,
Or else the devil may make you a
grandfather.

BRABANTIO: Have you lost your mind? Who are
you?

RODERIGO: I am Roderigo, sir. Don't you know
my voice?

BRABANTIO: You are not welcome here!
I've told you my daughter is not for you.

RODERIGO: I have come to you with simple and
pure reasons.

IAGO (*supporting Roderigo*): We're here to help
you. If you don't act quickly, your
daughter will be mated with a Moorish
horse. You'll have chargers for grandsons.

BRABANTIO: What kind of foul talk is that?

IAGO: It is the truth, sir. Your daughter and
the Moor are now making the beast with
two backs.



BRABANTIO: Villain! You'll answer for this.

RODERIGO: Sir, I will answer anything. Maybe

it is your wish

That your fair daughter, in the middle of
the night,

Has been carried off in the gross embrace
of a lustful Moor.

If so, we must apologize for bothering
you.

But if you did not know about it, then
you should thank us.

Why don't you find out for yourself?

If she is in her room or your house,
Bring the justice of the state against me
for thus lying to you.

BRABANTIO: Give me a candle! Wake up the
household!

Light, I say! Light!

(**He** exits from the balcony above.)

IAGO (to Roderigo): Farewell, for I must leave you.

It wouldn't help me to be used as a
witness against Othello.





I know that he is in favor with the state.
Oh, he might get some slight punishment.
But the state needs him to lead in the
Cyprus wars.
Though I hate him, I must show outward
signs of love.
Bring the search party to the inn. I will be
there with him. Farewell!

(**Iago** exits. **Brabantio** enters below. **Servants**
carrying torches are with him.)

BRABANTIO: It is too true an evil. She is gone!
What's left of my life will be nothing but
bitterness.
Now, Roderigo, where did you see her?
Oh, the foolish girl!
With the Moor, you said? Oh, treason of the
blood!
How did you know it was she? Oh, she
deceived me!
Wake up my family! Are they already
married, do you think?

RODERIGO: Truly, I think they are.



BRABANTIO: Oh, heavens! How did she get out?

Such deception!

Fathers, from now on, do not trust your
daughters' minds

Based on how you see them act. Is there
not magic

By which the nature of youth and
virginity

May be abused? Haven't you, Roderigo,
read of such things?

RODERIGO: Yes, sir, I have indeed.

BRABANTIO: Oh, if only she had been yours!

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

RODERIGO: I think I can find them.

BRABANTIO: Please, lead on! Good Roderigo,
I'll reward you for this.

