

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

Lyric drama in four acts by Giuseppe Verdi to a libretto by Arrigo Boito after William Shakespeare's play *Othello*, or *The Moor of Venice*

Premiered on February 5, 1887 at the Teatro alla Scala, Milan.

The Opera takes place in Cyprus, late 15th century.

ACT I

Cypriots watch anxiously from shore as a storm batters the Venetian fleet sent to defend their island from the invading Turks. The Moor Othello, a Venetian general and newly-appointed governor of Cyprus, lands his flagship safely in the port and announces the destruction of the Turkish fleet ("Esultate!"). Iago, confers with the wealthy Roderigo, who is in love with Desdemona, Othello's new wife. Promising to help him, Iago assures Roderigo that Desdemona will soon tire of her husband. He reveals his hatred for Othello, who he believes slept with his wife, Emilia, and who just promoted Cassio to be his captain, instead of Iago. While the citizens celebrate the victory, Iago proposes a toast. Cassio declines to drink, but Iago argues he cannot refuse to toast Othello's new wife. Cassio acquiesces and grows tipsy. Iago provokes Roderigo to fight with Cassio. When swords are drawn, Montano tries to separate them and is wounded. The alarm is sounded. Othello appears from the castle to restore order. Furious, he demotes Cassio and charges Iago to restore order. Desdemona enters, disturbed by the commotion. Othello orders everyone to go to their homes. Alone, Desdemona and Othello recall their courtship and assure each other of their love (Duet: "Già nella notte densa").

Intermission

ACT II

Iago advises a dispondent Cassio to present his case to Desdemona. He argues that her influence on the general will certainly get Cassio reinstated. As soon as Cassio is out of sight, Iago declares his belief that a cruel God created man wicked, and life has no meaning ("Credo in un Dio crudel"). He watches as Cassio approaches Desdemona in the garden. When Othello enters, Iago casually remarks about Desdemona's fidelity. Othello greets her lovingly, but when she brings up the question of Cassio's demotion, he remembers Iago's comments and is angered. He complains of a headache. Knowing he is afflicted with epilepsy, she offers the handkerchief he gave her as a wedding present to cool his forehead. Out of control, he throws it to the ground. Her attendant, Emilia, who is Iago's wife, picks it up. As Desdemona tries to calm Othello, Iago secretly takes the handkerchief from Emilia (Quartet: "Se inconscia contro te, sposo"). Othello sends everybody out, except for Iago, who remains to observe Othello's growing suspicion. To fan the flames, he invents a story of how Cassio spoke of Desdemona in his sleep; he mentions that he saw her handkerchief in Cassio's hand. Exploding with rage and jealousy, Othello swears vengeance, and Iago joins in taking an oath of revenge (Duet: "Sì, pel ciel marmoreo giuro").

Intermission

ACT III

A herald informs Othello of the imminent arrival of an ambassador from Venice. Iago tells Othello that soon he will have further proof of his wife and Cassio's betrayal. Desdemona enters, and Othello speaks calmly until she revives the subject of Cassio (Duet: "Dio ti giocondi, o sposo"). When Othello demands the handkerchief he gave her, she again pleads for Cassio. Othello accuses her of infidelity and dismisses her. Left alone, he suffers a fit of desperation ("Dio! mi potevi scagliar"), then hides as Iago returns with Cassio. Iago flashes the handkerchief he stole and leads the conversation with Cassio in such a way that

Othello overhears only fragments and incorrectly assumes that they are talking about Desdemona. As trumpets announce the dignitaries from Venice, Othello vows to kill his wife that very night. He then greets the ambassador Lodovico, who recalls him to Venice and appoints Cassio to govern Cyprus. Losing control at this news, Othello pushes his wife to the floor, hurling insults. He orders everyone out and collapses in a seizure, while Iago gloats over him.

ACT IV

Preparing for bed, the frightened Desdemona sings of a maiden forsaken by her lover (“Piangea cantando”). Startled by the wind, she says an emotional goodnight to Emilia and recites her prayers (“Ave Maria”). As soon as she has fallen asleep, Othello enters and kisses her. Desdemona awakens and insists on her innocence, but Othello strangles her. Emilia knocks, bearing news that Cassio has killed Roderigo. Entering, she is horrified to find the dying Desdemona and summons help. When she reveals that Iago took the handkerchief from her, Othello realizes what he has done. He pulls his dagger and warns everyone stand back (“Niun mi tema”). Othello stabs himself and with his last breath, he gives his wife a final kiss.

THE CHARACTERS

Otello (tenor) - A Moor. General in the Venetian army, appointed Governor of Cyprus. He is deeply in love with his new wife, Desdemona.

Iago (baritone) - Otello's counselor, referred to as his ‘ancient’. Believes Othello has slept with his wife Emilia. This outrage is compounded by his jealousy of Cassio, and his desire for advancement.

Desdemona (soprano) - Daughter of Venetian senator Brabantio.

Cassio (tenor) - Otello's subordinate, promoted by Othello to be his captain.

Emilia (mezzo-soprano) - Iago's wife. Desdemona's lady-in-waiting.

Roderigo (tenor) - A Venetian gentleman, and former suitor of Desdemona’s.

Montano (bass) - The previous Governor of Cyprus and faithful lieutenant to Othello.

Lodovico (bass) - the Venetian ambassador and friend to Senator Brabantio.

People of Cyprus

Giuseppe Verdi

OTELLO

English Translation by James Meena

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Act I *The castle at Cyprus, overlooking the sea, in the midst of a great storm*

Chorus There -- A Sail !
 There -- A Banner !

Montano It's the Winged Lion !

Cassio We can see it when the lightning flashes.

Chorus A trumpet call !
 A cannon shot !

Cassio It's Othello's ship.

Montano The violent waves
 make it rise and fall.

Cassio They lift the bow skyward !

Chorus The clouds and sea conceal it.
 And lightning now reveals it.
 Lightning. Thunder. Vortex.
 All the tempest's fury.

 The waves tremble. The sky trembles.
 The world itself trembles to its core.
 With blind rage the waves make the heavens spin.
 The gods shake the callous sky
 like a bleak, billowing veil.

 All is smoke. All is fire.
 An inferno that enflames and engulfs all.
 The Universe itself shakes.
 The Northwind soars like a phantom.
 The Titans strike the anvil, and the heavens roar.

 God, in the midst of the storm smile upon us.
 Save the banner of Venetian glory !
 Thou, who reigns over the Heavens and the Earth.
 Calm the gale.
 Place the anchor true in the midst of the sea.

Iago The mast is breaking.

Rodrigo The ship will crash on the rocks.

Iago (May the sea be Othello's grave.)

Chorus They are saved !
 They're manning the rowboats.
 They're approaching shore !
 They're at the docks. Evviva !

Othello Rejoice !
 The pride of the Ottomans
 rests at the bottom of the sea.

Our glory is from Heaven.
For the storm
has destroyed our enemy.

Chorus Evviva Othello !
 Victory !
 The enemy is destroyed, buried in the deep sea.
 For a *Requiem* they have the crash of the waves.
 The abyss of the sea. Victory !
 Our enemy is buried at sea.
 The storm is calmed at last.

Iago Rodrigo -- what are you thinking?

Rodrigo I'm drowning.

Iago It's a fool who drowns for the love of a woman.

Rodrigo I cannot win her.

Iago Come now. Your time will come.
 For the beautiful Desdemona,
 who is the secret object of your dreams
 Soon will tire of the dark kisses
 from those thick lips.
 Good Rodrigo. I am your true friend,
 and offer my help for your success.

 For the fragile vow of a woman
 is weak before my genius.
 I pledge that woman will be yours.

 Listen. I only pretend to love the Moor.
 And there is my reason.
 That strutting captain took what is mine --
 my rank !
 The promotion that I earned in a hundred battles !
 That is how Othello rewards me.
 And I am reduced to being his
 Moorish Excellency's advisor.
 But as it is true you are Rodrigo,
 So it is true that if I were the Moor
 I would not want an Iago near me.
 If you follow my advice . . .

Chorus Joyous fire of victory.
 Your splendor merrily dances in the night.
 Flash. Sparkle. Crackle.
 Shining brilliance that invades the heart.
 The final sparks flash, and die away.

Iago Rodrigo, drink up.
 Here -- a cup, captain.

Cassio No more for me.

Iago Here, drain this cup.
 Look. All Cyprus rejoices.
 It's a night of joy -- so drink . . .

Cassio Stop ! My head is already spinning
 from a glass of wine.

Iago Come -- you must drink --
 To the wedding of Othello and Desdemona.

Cassio She is a flower on this island.

Iago (Rodrigo, listen to him.)

Cassio Her radiance warms all hearts.

Rodrigo Yet she's modest and virtuous.

Cassio Iago. Sing a song extolling her virtue.
Iago I am a better critic than poet.

Cassio And no song could do her justice.

Iago (Be careful of this Cassio.)

Rodrigo (Why should I fear him ?)

Iago (He speaks with too much passion for the lovely Desdemona. He is an astute seducer who stands in your way. Watch him. Once he's drunk, he's finished.)
Hey -- friends. Bring wine !

Surrender to the ineffable call,
Drink -- Drain your glass !
From the first sip, song flows from my glass.

Cassio This glass, filled with wine, brings cares to an end.

Iago Every sorrow vanishes with each morsel of Dionysus -- Drink with me !

Chors Yes. Sorrow vanishes with each sip from Dionysus. Drink with him.

Iago (One more glass and he'll be drunk.)
The world throbs when I drink !
I challenge the fickle gods and destiny.

Cassio As a celestial lute vibrates, joy shakes my steps.

Iago Every sorrow vanishes with each morsel of Dionysus -- Drink with me !
Sorrow vanishes with every sip.
We drink with you.
(Another glass and he will lose control.)

Only cowards refuse to drink,
They hide their cowardice in their hearts.

Cassio Everyone knows my dreams,
I'm not afraid to admit my dreams.

Iago (Now he's drunk. Go provoke him. He's ready for a fight. We'll disturb Othello's wedding night.)

Rodrigo (That thought inspires me.)

Montano Captain -- the guards await your command on the ramparts.

Cassio Let's go !

Montano What's this ?

Iago Each night, Cassio drinks himself to sleep.

Montano Othello must be told.

Cassio Come on. Off we go.
Who's laughing ?

Rodrigo I laugh at a drunkard.

Cassio Watch your tongue.

Rodrigo Drunken sot !
Cassio Rogue. Nothing can save you now.

Montano Restrain yourself, Captain.

Cassio I'll split your skull if you interfere.

Rodrigo The words of a drunk !

Cassio A drunk you say !

Iago (Go to the port. With all your strength cry: *Rebellion !* Spread chaos. Sound the alarm.)
Brothers -- Stop this inhuman conflict !
Gods -- Montano is wounded.
Stop this fury !
No one can stop this storm cloud.
Alarm ! Satan rules here !

Chorus Alarm ! Help us ! Put down your swords !

(At this, Othello enters and silences the crowd)

Othello You ! What is this ?
Am I among the Saracens ?
Or have you become rabble Turks,
who fight each other like dogs ?

Honest Iago. By the love and loyalty that you have for me. Speak.

Iago I don't know . . .
We all were just celebrating, as friends.
Then, as if a malicious star fell upon us,
a quarrel broke out.
Weapons were drawn -- Chaos ensued.
I would rather cut these legs off,
for having brought me to witness this.

Othello Cassio -- How could you forget yourself like this?

Cassio Pardon, my Lord. I do not know . . .

Othello Montano ?

Montano I am wounded, and cannot speak.

Othello Wounded ! By Heaven, my blood rages.
Yet my better angels restrain me.
(Desdemona enters)

What -- My sweet Desdemona.
She too was awoken by this outrage.
Cassio. No longer are you my captain !

Iago (Oh, my first triumph !)

Othello Iago -- Take a squadron and restore order.
See to Montano.
Everyone return to your homes.
I will remain here until the streets are deserted,
and calm reigns once more.

(Othello and Desdemona are left alone)
The vast night sky extinguishes all strife,
And my trembling heart is calmed by its embrace.

Yet, from such immense hatred
comes our immense love.

Des. My superb warrior.
Many torments, and such sadness,
And much hope have brought you
to this blessed embrace.
How sweet when we whispered together:
Remember now with me.

Othello I painted a canvas of armies,
of weapons poised to attack,
The assault -- of terrible victory --
cutting to the rampart -- killing the foe.

Des. Then you would guide me
to the shining deserts of your homeland,
At last sharing your suffering --
in chains, as a slave.

Othello Your tears ennobled my story.
Your beautiful visage, and your sighs
Descended upon my darkness
a blessed glory -- a paradise -- and the stars.

Des. And I saw in your brow
a genius of eternal beauty.

Othello And you loved me for my misfortunes;
And I loved you that you pitied them.

Des. And I loved you for your misfortunes:
And you loved me that I pitied them.

Othello Truly you loved me.
Come, death.
Take me in this moment of supreme ecstasy.
For my soul fears
that I will never again be granted. . .
A divine moment as this,
in my unknown destiny.

Des. Dispel such anguish.
Our love will not change from year to year.

Othello Upon this prayer,
the ranks of angels respond: *Amen*.

Des. *Amen*, they respond.

Othello Ah. Such joy overcomes me.
So vehemently. I cannot bear it.

A kiss.

Des. Othello.

Othello Yet another kiss.
The stars of the Pleiades descend toward the sea.

Des. It is late.

Othello Come. Venus shall guide us.

Act II *Early the next morning*

Iago (*with Cassio*)
Don't worry. If you take my advice,
in no time you'll be romping
with the lovely Bianca.
My proud captain;
with your shining sword and dashing uniform.

Cassio Do not flatter me.

Iago Listen to what I tell you.
You must realize that Desdemona
rules our ruler.
He lives only for her.
Entreat her . . .
Her compassionate heart
will intercede for you.
And your pardon is assured.

Cassio But how can I approach her ?

Iago It is her custom to walk in this garden
each noon with my wife.
Approach her here.
Then the road to your salvation will open up.
Go on !

Yes -- Go on. Your goal I set before you,
And your demon pushes you onward.
For I am your demon.
And I drag my own demon along
in my belief in a ruthless god.

I believe in a cruel god,
who made me in his image.
And I call him "Hatred".
From the vileness of a germ,
Every atom of my being --
I was born wicked.
I am a villain because I am man,
and I feel the primordial slime in me.
Yes. This is my faith !

I believe this, just as a young widow
believes in church.
And the evil I believe proceeds
from me -- to fulfill my destiny.
I believe Justice is a laughing comedian
and in my heart . . .
I believe that Justice brings honor through
lies -- tears -- kisses -- sacrifice.

And I believe man is fortune's fool
from cradle to grave.
Food for worms.
And after a life of derision -- Death.
And then ? After death -- Nothing.
It is all a lie of Heaven.

(*Desdemona approaches*)
There she is. Cassio. This is your chance.
Go on. Desdemona approaches.

He's going to her.
Now he greets her - and draws closer.
Now to draw Othello here.
Satan, help me in this enterprise.
Yes -- they're speaking.
And she lowers her lovely face and smiles.
That flash of a smile is all I need

to drag Othello to his ruin. To work.
Events progress in my favor.
(Othello enters)

Here he comes.
Places -- To action.

I like that not.

Othello What did you say ?

Iago Nothing.
Oh, it is you, my lordship.
Just a vain word escaping from my lips.

Othello Was that not Cassio who just left my wife ?

Iago Cassio ? No. Why would Cassio
slink away when he saw you ?

Othello I believe it was Cassio.

Iago My lord.

Othello What is it ?

Iago Cassio . . . Did he know Desdemona
before you loved her ?

Othello Yes. Why ask me such a question ?

Iago Just my idle thoughts.
I mean no harm.

Othello Idle thoughts, Iago ?

Iago Do you trust Cassio ?

Othello Often, as I courted her,
he would take gifts on my behalf.

Iago Truly ?

Othello Yes, truly.
Do you not think him honest ?

Iago Think him honest ?

Othello What is buried in your heart?

Iago What is buried in your heart ?

Othello "What is buried in your heart."
By God, you echo my own words.
What horrid monster is cloistered in your soul ?
Yes. When you said: "I like that not"
you looked worried.
And when you speak the name "Cassio"
you furrow your brow.
Come. Speak if you love me.

Iago You know I am loyal to you.

Othello Then without ambiguity,
express your thoughts.
Let your cruel thoughts flow
from your gullet with cruel words.

Iago I hold my thoughts and will not betray them.
Beware, my lord, of jealousy.

It is a dark hydra, blind,
whose poison can consume you.
It's piercing pain rips your breast.

Othello I am betrayed ?
No. I will not succumb to vain suspicion.
Before doubt comes the search for truth.
After truth -- the proof. After the proof --
Othello's word will be law.
Love and jealousy both will be set aside.

Iago Such noble words soothe my hesitation.
(Desdemona enters with a group of villagers)

Yet, I do not speak of proof.
But, generous Othello, be vigilant.
So often honest and trusting men
cannot see deception. Be vigilant.
Scrutinize Desdemona's words.
One word can confirm fidelity. . .
Or affirm your suspicions.
Here she comes. Be vigilant.

Villagers Where you look,
your shining eyes brighten every heart.
Where you pass, clouds of flowers descend.
Here, between lilies and roses, like a pure altar
Parents, children, lovers come to sing.

Des The clear sky, gentle breeze, fragrant flowers.
Joy, love and hope sing in my heart.

Iago (Beauty and love in sweet, innocent accord.)

Othello (If she is deceiving me, Heaven itself is false.)
Her song conquers my heart.

Des. *(To Othello)*
From one who groans at your disdain,
I carry his prayers.

Othello Who's prayers ?

Des. Cassio.

Iago Then it was he with whom you were speaking ?

Des. Yes, Cassio. His sadness instilled such pity,
that I came to intercede for him. Forgive him.

Othello Not now.

Des. Do not give me your denial. Forgive him.

Othello I said not now !

Des. Why his harshness ?
What afflicts you, my husband ?

Othello *(A seizure overtakes him)*
My head burns !

Des. The pain will subside when you
wrap your brow with this handkerchief.

Othello I have no need of it !
(He throws the handkerchief to the ground)

Des. You suffer, my lord.

Othello	Leave me ! Leave me !		the ardent kisses of Cassio. And now . . . Now and forever, farewell blessed memories. Farewell sublime enchantment of my thoughts. Farewell my glorious troops, farewell victories. Arrows flying, and galloping stallions. Farewell banners triumphant and godly. Farewell revelry at dawn. Songs and cries of battle -- Farewell. For the glory of Othello is at its end.
Des.	If, unknowingly, I have offended you, my husband, forgive me. Grant me the sweet words of your forgiveness.		
Othello	(Perhaps I cannot discern her deception.)		
Iago	<i>(To Emilia, who has picked up the handkerchief)</i> Give me the handkerchief you picked up.		
Des.	I am your humble, meek and loving wife.	Iago	Peace, my lord.
Othello	(Perhaps I have grown bitter and morose.)	Othello	Villain. Find proof that she is impure. Don't dare run. If you lie, nothing will save you ! I want a sure, visible proof. Or upon your head will fall the fury of Hell !
Iago	Obey me, Emilia, no need for suspicion. Give me that handkerchief. Obey me or you will regret it.		
Emilia	I am your wife, not your slave.	Iago	Heavenly grace, save me. May God protect you. For I resign my commission. The world must testify that one honest man remains.
Iago	You are the impure, unfaithful slave of Iago.		
Emilia	(A foreboding bids me refuse him.)		
Iago	Do not provoke me !	Othello	No. Stay. Perhaps you <u>are</u> honest.
Des.	Come, husband, so I can lighten your sorrow.	Iago	Would you rather I be an imposter ?
Othello	(Has she betrayed me ? My heart breaks at the thought.)	Othello	By Heaven ! I believe Desdemona is loyal, yet I believe her false. I believe you to be honest, yet believe you dishonest. Proof I must have. I must be certain.
Des.	Grant me the sweet words of your pardon.		
Othello	Get out ! Leave me alone.		
Iago	<i>(to Emilia)</i> Not a word of this. You understand ?	Iago	My lord, you are too impatient. And what proof do you seek ? Do you want to watch him have her ? That would be difficult to arrange.
Othello	Desdemona -- unfaithful !		
Iago	<i>(Holding the handkerchief)</i> With this delicate lace I will spin the tale of a sinful love. In Cassio's apartments I will plant it.	Othello	Ah -- Death. Damnation !
Othello	Monstrous -- horrid thought.	Iago	And what certainty can you have if that filthy truth eludes you ? Yet . . . if truth follows reason, a strong conjecture can direct you to certainty. Listen carefully.
Iago	(My poison takes hold.)		
Othello	Untrue -- untrue to me !		
Iago	(Suffer and roar !)		
Othello	A nightmare !		
Iago	Think no more of this, my lord.		
Othello	You. Get away. Out ! You have placed me on the cross ! The most horrid insult of all insults is suspicion. In the unknown hours of her lust (hours stolen from me), Did I hold the slightest suspicion ? No. I was happy, light hearted. I knew nothing. I did not sense on her divine body (that intoxicates me), Nor in her deceitful lips,		The other night, Cassio was sleeping. I was near him. His voice, halting, betrayed his intimate thoughts. His lips slowly moved, in his ardent, passionate sleep. And then he spoke, in a feeble voice: "Sweet Desdemona, we must hide our love. Cautiously. The ecstasy of your love envelopes me." Then followed a whimper, with soft anguish -- broken hearted. And he spoke: "I curse the destiny that gave you to the Moor." And after this dream of his, blind slumber.
		Othello	Oh, monstrous betrayal.
		Iago	I only retell a dream.
		Othello	A dream that reveals a truth.

Iago Yes. This dream can give shape
to the proof you seek in another way.

Othello And how is that ?

Iago At times, I have seen in
Desdemona's possession
a lovely silken handkerchief,
embroidered with flowers and berries.

Othello Yes, it was my first gift to her.
Given as a token of my love.

Iago That handkerchief -- yesterday --
I'm certain -- I saw in the hand of Cassio.

Othello Ah ! Give me a thousand lives, O God,
For one life is too weak to hold my fury !
Iago. My heart is ice.
Far from me is any shred of pity.
All my vain dreams of love
I now exile to the stars. Look at me.
That man in love is gone !
He is ensnared by the coils of your hydra !
Ah -- Blood -- Vengeance !

By the eternal Heavens,
By this horrid wrong,
By the Earth itself, and
By the immortal sea,
By hatred and by this powerful rage,
Like lightning this hand
that I now raise will strike !

Iago Do not rise yet, my lord.
As witness, the Sun
that shines upon us, animates me.
O'er the land and the vast sphere of the Creator.
To Othello I give a sacred pledge.
That my heart, my arms and my soul
Join in this bloody vindication.
They await your command !

Together We pledge this by the
God of Vengeance !

Act III Late afternoon of the same day

Messenger The lookout has signaled approaching ships,
bringing emissaries from Venice.

Iago I will bring Cassio here,
and astutely get him to confess.
You must hide over there. Observe him --
his words, his laughter and his gestures.
But be patient, or the proof will allude you.
It's Desdemona. Be agreeable.
I will leave and get Cassio. *The handkerchief.*

Othello Go ! Oh, gladly would I forget
that handkerchief.

Des. God bring you joy, my husband,
lord of my soul.

Othello Thank you, my lady.
Let me hold your fair hand.
It's warmth soothes every care.

Des. It has yet to feel the stress of age, and of despair.

Othello And yet, within it nestles a gentle demon --
an ivory claw.
Softly -- to prayer it assumes a pious fervor.

Des. And with this hand,
I gave you my heart.
But now to speak again of Cassio.

Othello Again my head is burning.
Place the kerchief on my brow.

Des. Gladly.

Othello No. The handkerchief I gave you.

Des. I do not have it.

Othello Desdemona: Woe if you have lost it.
A powerful witch enchanted its fibers.
In them is held a great magic, dark and deadly.
Careful. If you lost it -- or gave it away,
misfortune will befall you.

Des. Is this true ?

Othello I speak the truth !

Des. You're scaring me.

Othello Why ? Did you lose it ?

Des. No. I will get it -- later.

Othello Go get it then - Now !

Des. You're playing a joke on me,
to avoid speaking of Cassio.
Very clever, my husband.

Othello By Heaven. You make my blood boil.
Get the handkerchief.

Des. Cassio has been your true, beloved friend.

Othello Get the handkerchief.

Des. To Cassio grant your pardon.

Othello Get the handkerchief !

Des. My God. I have never heard
such menace in your voice.

Othello Raise your eyes.

Des. Such menace -- what can you be thinking ?

Othello Look at me.
Tell me who you are.

Des. The faithful wife of Othello.

Othello Swear it and damn yourself.

Des. Believe me. I am faithful.

Othello I believe you are not.

Des. God help me.

Othello Rush now to your damnation –
Say that you are chaste.

Des. Chaste -- I am.

Othello Swear it and be damned !

Des. Terrifying -- still . . .
Your expression trembling . . .
In you is speaking a madness.
I hear it -- but do not understand it.
Behold me.
I open my soul to you.
My broken heart is here for you to see.
I pray to God for you with these tears,
that bitterly sprinkle the ground.
Behold -- the first tears born of sorrow.

Othello If you now perceive your demon,
an angel may believe you.

Des. The Eternal sees my innocence.

Othello No. Hell sees you.

Des. Your justice, I implore, my husband.

Othello Ah -- Desdemona. Leave me.

Des. You're weeping.
Your heart is breaking in silent torment.
Am I the innocent cause of such sorrow ?
What crime have I committed ?

Othello You can ask that ?
The darkest of all crimes.
On your pale brow it is written.
Are you not a vile whore ?

Des. No - no !
By my Christian faith - No !
Ah ! I am not that horrid name you call me.

Othello Then give me your hand once more.
I wish to make amends. I believe you.
Pardon me if my thoughts
mislead me to believe . . .
That a vile whore is Othello's wife.
(He pushes Desdemona out of the room)

God. You could have hurled all evils –
all misery at me.
You could have made
all my triumphs rubble -- lies.
And I would have carried
that cruel cross of anguish
With calm resignation.
And submitted to the will of Heaven.

But, not sorrow, nor tears . . .
Instead, you stole my illusion where I
was happy - which appeased my angry soul.
Gone is that sunshine, that smile,
that ray which gave me life.
You, angelic Desdemona -- while smiling
paint your saintly face with rouge.
Ah ! Damnation !
First a confession. Then death.
Confession ! The proof !

Iago Cassio is here.

Othello Here ! Heaven I thank thee.
No. What a horrid supplication.

Iago Gather yourself, and hide.
(Cassio enters, Othello observes, unseen)

Enter, we are alone.
Come in then, dear captain.

Cassio I am no longer worthy
of the honorable title, 'captain'.

Iago Take heart. Your cause is in her hands.
Victory is certain.

Cassio I thought I'd find Desdemona here.

Othello *(Eavesdropping)*
He speaks her name.

Cassio Have I been forgiven?

Iago Wait here for her.
Meanwhile. You never tire of
boasting of your conquests . . .
Regale me with tales of your love.

Cassio Of who ?

Iago *(Bianca.)*

Othello *(He's laughing !)*

Cassio Nonsense.

Iago She enralls you with her flirting glances.

Cassio She makes me smile.

Iago The conqueror smiles.

Cassio You're observant, my friend.
But it's the one who smiles that conquers.

Othello *(Impious seducer. His mockery cuts
through me. God restrain my hand.)*

Cassio I'm smothered by her kisses -- so boring.

Iago You make me laugh.
So you long for the reign
of another queen of your heart?
Ha ! That's it. Cupid has already struck.

Othello *(Impious derision. His mockery kills me.
God, restrain me from killing him now !)*

Cassio Yes, his arrow has struck me. I confess it.
Listen to this . . .

Iago *(Speak softly. I'm listening.)*

Cassio Iago, you know where I live, don't you ?

Othello *(Now he'll confess
where, when, how he seduced her.)*

Cassio A secret love left something

in my apartment for me . . .

Othello (I cannot hear him. But I must hear this !)

Cassio An embroidered handkerchief . . .

Iago How strange.

Othello (Iago signals me to come closer.)

Iago A secret lover. Nonsense.

Cassio It's true. I can't wait to see her.

Iago (Othello's in position.)
Do you have it with you ?

Cassio Just look at it.

Iago How lovely.
(Othello is eavesdropping - good.
He shrewdly inches closer.)
Handsome captain. The angels
themselves would submit to your charm.
(Iago holds the handkerchief over his head)

Othello (He has it ! The handkerchief. Ruin - death.)

Iago (Suffer, Othello !)

Othello (All is over. Love -- pain -- my soul is empty.)

Iago This lace is a spider web where your
entangled heart moans and dies.
Don't admire it too much.
Be careful of its delirious, vain lies.
A spider web where your heart moans and dies.

Cassio Mysterious miracle of needle and thread,
that rays of sunshine have transformed.
Lighter, softer than a snowflake.
The clouds weaved into a heavenly halo.

Othello (Betrayed -- the proof has been revealed.)

(Trumpets are heard in the distance)

Iago There - This signals the arrival
of the Venetian emissaries.
Listen. The castle trumpets respond.
If you want to avoid Othello, leave now.
(Cassio leaves)

Othello How shall I kill her ?

Iago Did you hear him laugh ?
And the handkerchief ?

Othello I saw everything.
She stands convicted.
Bring me a phial of poison for tonight.

Iago Poison ? No.
Much better to strangle her.
There -- in her bed -- where she sinned.

Othello I admire your sense of justice.

Iago And I will take care of Cassio.

Othello Iago, henceforth you shall be my captain.

Iago All thanks, my lord.
The Ambassador is here. Go receive him.
But to avoid suspicion,
Desdemona should stand beside you.

Othello Agreed. Escort her yourself.

(The Cypriots assemble to greet Lodovico and his entourage from Venice)

Chorus Evivva. Glory to the Lion of Venice.

Lodovico The Doge and the Senate
salute the triumphant hero of Cyprus.
It is my honor to present
this message from the Doge.

Othello *(Accepting the message)*
I kiss the symbol of my Sovereign Majesty.

Lodovico *(Approaching Desdemona)*
My lady, may God grant you His blessing.

Des. May He hear your prayer.

Emilia How sad you are.

Des. Emilia, a dark cloud surrounds Othello's heart,
And my destiny.

Iago Lordship. I am glad to see you.

Lodovico Iago. What news ?
Why is Cassio not among you ?

Iago He has fallen from Othello's favor.

Des. I believe he will soon return to his favor.

Othello *(While reading the message)*
Are you so sure ?

Des. What did you say ?

Lodovico He's absorbed in reading the message.

Iago Perhaps he will return to his favor.

Des. Iago, I hope so, you know what a special affection
I hold for Cassio.

Othello Hold your tongue, woman.

Des. Pardon, my lord.

Othello Demon -- silence !

Lodovico Stop it -- Horror !
Do I dare believe what I see before me?

Othello Bring Cassio to me.
(Watch her reaction when he arrives.)

Lodovico Can this be the hero ?
The great warrior -- The great leader !

Iago He is as you see him.

Lodovico Tell me what you know.

Iago Lordship, my honor demands discretion.

Othello (Here he is. Observe them both.)
The Doge. . . (how well you feign tears)
. . . has recalled me to Venice.

Rodrigo (Wretched luck.)

Othello And assigned as governor of Cyprus . . . Cassio.

Iago (Again -- promoted above me !)

Othello (Did you see him ? He is disappointed.)
The garrison. . . (continue your whining)
The fleet and the castle,
I entrust to the new governor.

Lodovico Othello, for pity's sake, comfort your wife.

Othello We set sail tomorrow.
(*At this, Othello goes to Desdemona and strikes her
across the face*)

On your knees -- and weep !

Des. Humbled -- Yes -- My heart broken.
His anger -- I tremble.
My tears turn to ice as my blood goes cold.
Once, my smile brought him hope, and kisses.
And now, anguish alone is on his face,
and agony is in his heart.
That serene sun above,
that gladdens the sky and sea,
Cannot dry the bitter tears of my sorrow.

Chorus That saintly face - pale - white - in tears.
The Moor's look is deadly.
The Angels weep when one as pure
as she lies before a sinner.

Othello Get out !
All - flee the wrath of Othello.

Iago Forgive him -- He suffers from seizures.

Othello Whoever stays will be imprisoned !

Lodovico (*To Desdemona*)
Come with me.

Des. My husband.

Othello By my soul -- I curse you !
I cannot escape this demon. Blood !
Ah. Despicable thoughts:
"I like that not" he said,
To see her in Cassio's arms.
The handkerchief ! Ah -- Ah !
(*Othello falls into an epileptic fit*)

Iago (*Standing over the prostrate body of Othello. Cries of
glory and fame praising Othello are heard in the distance*)
My poison has worked.
Echoes of victories past.
Pour out your praise to him.
Who could deny that this brow
is pressed by my talons.

Chorus Evivva Othello !
Glory to the Lion of Venice.

Iago Here is your lion !

Act IV *That night. The bedchamber.*

Emilia Was he more calm this evening ?

Des. He ordered me to wait for him.
Emilia, if you please.
Lay out my wedding veil on the bed.
If I must die before you,
promise it will be buried with me.

Emilia Stop these thoughts.

Des. Ah, I am so sad, and alone.
My mother once had a servant.
She was lovely, and in love.
Her name was Barbara.
She loved a man who abandoned her.
She would sing a song.
The song of the willow.
Help me loosen my hair.
Strangely, after all these years,
that song fills my thoughts tonight.

"Sighing, a poor soul sat upon the heath.
Sing willow, willow, willow.
She sat upon the heath, her head on her knees.
Sing willow, willow, willow.
Together we sing.
The weeping willow as garland, and I."

Quickly. Othello will arrive soon.

"The fresh streams ran by her,
and murmured her moans.
And from her lashes flowed waves of bitter tears.
Sing willow, willow, willow.
Together we sing.
The weeping willow as garland, and I."

"Sweet birds fly to her bending branches
to hear her sweet song.
And the cliffs echo her sighing,
as her eyes fill with tears."

Take care of this ring for me.
Unhappy Barbara.
Her song ended with this simple cadence:

"He was born for glory, and I to love him."

Listen. Did you hear that crying ?
Who is knocking ?

Emilia It's only the wind.

Des. "I to love him, and to die.
Together we sing . . .
Sing willow, willow, willow."

Emilia, farewell. Oh, how my eyes are burning.
As they do before crying.
Good night, then.
Ah, Emilia, farewell !
(*Emilia leaves.*)

*Hail Mary full of grace,
The Lord is with Thee.
Blessed art Thou among women,
And blessed is the fruit of Thy womb.*

Pray for those who kneel before Thee,
Pray for the sinner - for the innocent.
Pray for the weak, and the powerful,
Grant them Thy pity.
Pray for those who bend
under the weight of a cruel fate.
Pray for us, at all times,
and at the hour of our death.

*(Desdemona, having finished her prayers, goes to sleep.
Othello enters, and gently kisses her.)*

Who is it ? Othello ?

Othello Yes. Have you said your prayers ?

Des. I have.

Othello Should you recall any sin against
Heaven, beg Heaven for forgiveness now.

Des. Why ?

Othello Quickly. I do not wish to kill your soul.

Des. You speak of killing ?

Othello I do.

Des. Have pity, dear God.
And you, husband, have pity.

Othello Think of your sins.

Des. My only sin is love.

Othello And for that love you die.

Des. I die because I love you ?

Othello You love Cassio !

Des. No. I swear it.

Othello I saw the handkerchief I gave you
in his hands !

Des. That's not true. I am guiltless !

Othello I saw it. Confess !
Don't lie. For you are on your death bed !

Des. But not to die.

Othello To die at once !

Des. Help me ! I don't love Cassio.
Call him ! Ask him !

Othello He has been silenced.

Des. Heavens. He's dead ?

Othello Dead.

Des. He is betrayed !

Othello You dare weep for him ?

Des. Othello, don't kill me.

Othello You plead in vain -- prostitute !

Des. Have pity. Let me live a moment --
an hour -- Let me say one prayer.

Othello No. Too late !
(He strangles her)

Still as the tomb.

(Knocking)

Emilia Open, my lord.

Othello Who is it ?

Emilia My lord. I beg you. Please open.
Allow me to speak to you.

Othello *(Opening the door)*
Emilia. What is it ?

Emilia A great crime. Cassio has killed Rodrigo.

Othello And Cassio ?

Emilia He lives.

Othello Cassio lives !

Des. *(With her last breath)*
Falsely, falsely murdered.

Emilia What cry is that ?

Des. I die a guiltless death.

Emilia My God. Who has done this ?

Des. No one. . . My own hand. . .
To my husband . . . say I die innocent. *(dies)*

Othello Even now she lies. I killed her.

Emilia Vile assassin !

Othello She was unfaithful with Cassio.
Iago told me.

Emilia Iago ! Fool. And you believed him ?

Othello You dare deny it ?

Emilia I'm not afraid of you.
Où -- Help. Help.
Othello has killed Desdemona.

(Enter Iago, Lodovico and Cassio)

Together What is this -- A nightmare !

Emilia Iago. Refute this assassin's claims.
Do you believe Desdemona unfaithful ?
Tell us.

Iago Yes. I believed it.

Othello She gave Cassio the handkerchief I gave her.

Emilia Oh, no. Heavenly powers help us.

Iago Be quiet !

Emilia No - I will reveal everything.
Iago took the handkerchief from me,
and forced my silence.

Cassio And I found it in my apartment.

Montano (*Entering*)
Rodrigo, dying, claims Iago
mised and cheated him.

Othello Ah. Refute this charge.

Iago No. (*Rushes from the room*)

Lodovico Stop him !

Othello Has God no more thunderbolts ?
(*Drawing his sword*)

Lodovico Give me your sword.

Othello You dare ?
No one need fear me or my sword.
Behold the end of my journey.
The glory of Othello is over.

And you -- so pale -- so lifeless -- silent --
and yet so beautiful.
Poor creature -- born under a dark star.
Cold, as your chaste life.
Now you go to Heaven.
Desdemona. Beloved. Ah !
Dead, dead, dead.

(*Drawing a dagger, he stabs himself*)

I have one more blade !
Before I killed you, wife,
I kissed you.
Now, dying, in the darkness
that surrounds me. . .
A kiss. . .
Once more. . . A kiss. . .
One final kiss.

End