THE TRAGEDY OF

Othello



A CARD GAME FOR 2-6 PLAYERS

The Play's the Thing

In The Tragedy of Othello, you and your opponents are actors auditioning for the lead role of the villainous Iago, trying to impress the casting director with your ability to embody Iago's treachery and deceit!

You will play script cards from the cast of characters to gain points as you advance Shakespeare's script and play staging cards to disrupt the play of your rivals. You can also play intrigue, character, and spotlight tokens to strategically improve your position. Try to wound characters and leave them for dead, and revive them later for points. When you control the lead character in each act, your opportunities to gain points increase. You will want to control Iago as much as possible in Acts I–IV. Then control Othello in Act V, so you can strike the final tragic blow!

Alas, opportunities exist to steal points, so take heed! Opponents playing the other characters as "The Company" will try to upstage you.

Objective

The actor who accumulates the most points at the end of Act V wins the game.



The Characters

There are ten character cards, one for each character in the story:

Othello – a general in the Venetian military, married to Desdemona.

Iago - Othello's advisor

Cassio - Othello's lieutenant

Roderigo – a Venetian in love with Desdemona

Brabantio – a Venetian senator; Desdemona's father

Desdemona - Othello's wife; Brabantio's daughter

Montano – the governor of Cyprus before Othello

Bianca - Cassio's lover

Emilia – Iago's wife; maidservant to Desdemona
Lodovico – a messenger from Venice to Cyprus

They appear in the following acts:

- Othello, Iago, Cassio, Roderigo, Brabantio, Desdemona
- II Othello, Iago, Cassio, Roderigo, Montano
- III Othello, Iago, Cassio, Desdemona, Bianca, Emilia
- IV Othello, Iago, Cassio, Desdemona, Bianca, Emilia, Roderigo, Lodovico
- V Othello, Iago, Cassio, Desdemona, Bianca, Roderigo, Emilia

Setting the Stage

Before you begin, sort the script cards by act into five piles. Set the piles for Acts II–V on the Stage. Keep Act I in hand.



Setting the Stage, continued

For players new to the game or to The Tragedy of Othello, have a player read the Play Synopsis aloud. Place the Act synopsis cards on the appropriate Act deck on the board. Before each act begins, have a player read the Act synopsis for the act aloud.

Levels of play

There are three levels of play that have increasing degrees of complexity. For the first couple of games or if you want to play a shorter game, start with Wicked. This game is more of a 'take that' game and keeps things simple. After your group understands the core mechanics of the game, jump up to Evil and add the character tokens. After a couple of games at this level, you'll have the feel of the character tokens and you'll be ready for Villainy & Treachery. This level has all of the components included. You and your opponents will require more devious thinking to embody Iago's treachery, outwit each other, and successfully land the role of Iago! For the most fun, embrace the theme and read off the cards; both the actions and the quotes at the bottom.

Wicked Level

Set all the character tokens, the Villainy cards and the Revive cards aside. They aren't used in this game. Ignore any character token icons on cards, rules about character tokens play, and skip the Character Tokens section in the rules for now. In this level, Cassio dies when he has two wound tokens on him in Act V.

Evil Level

Set up as for Wicked and include all of the character tokens except for the Iago tokens, in an organized pile next to the game board. Read the Character tokens section to understand how they work except for the Iago tokens. As in Wicked, Cassio dies when he has two wound tokens on him in Act V.

Villainy & Treachery Level

Set up as for Evil, include the Iago tokens with the other character tokens next to the game board, and include the Villainy and Revive cards into the Staging card deck. Unlike Wicked and Evil levels, Cassio does not die when he has two wound tokens on him in Act V.

Casting the Lead

Iago is the lead character in Acts I–IV. Othello is the lead in Act V. Whoever controls these characters is considered the *Lead Player*.

To begin the game, you need to determine the *Lead Player* for Act I. Shuffle the six character tiles for Act I (see p. 2 or the game board under Act I) and deal one to each player until Iago is dealt. The player who receives Iago starts Act I as the *Lead Player*. Arrange the remaining character tiles for Act I face up, and not dead, on

the stage for everyone to see. The character tile for the Lead is kept off the board and in possession of the current Lead. When the Lead changes during the game, the character tile for the Lead is passed to the player who took it.

For Acts II–IV, the player with the fewest points starts as the lead character. In the event of a tie, the first player with the fewest points to the left of the previous lead player takes on the lead role.

Tokens & Prompt Cards

Give each player a spotlight token, three intrigue tokens, and a prompt card.



Set the remaining spotlight tokens, intrigue tokens, and handkerchief token in organized piles next to the game board.

Dealing

Shuffle the script cards for Act I, deal them according to the table below, then set the remainder, if any, face down on the Script Card draw space on the left side of the stage. Then, deal one (1) Take the Lead staging card to every player, shuffle the remaining staging cards, deal additional cards based on the table below, then set the remainder on the Staging Card draw space on the right side of the stage.

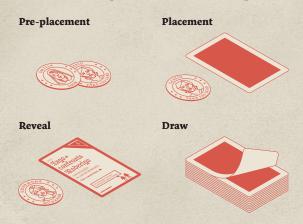
Table 1

# of Players	# of Script cards	# of add'l Staging cards	Total number of cards to start each round
2	4	2	7 in Acts I/II 8 in Acts III - V, take one add'l script card
3	3	2	6 in Acts I/II 7 in Acts III - V, take one add'l script card
4	2	1	4
5	2	1	4
6	2*	1	4

*In a six-player game, one player will get only one (1) script card and two (2) additional staging cards to start Act I.

Acts & Rounds

The Tragedy of Othello progresses through five acts. Each act includes multiple rounds, each with four phases:



Pre-placement: Starting with the player to the left of the Lead and progressing clockwise, players that have character tokens may play as many of these tokens as they choose until no more character tokens are played.

Placement: Each player selects either a script or a staging card from their hand and plays it, face down, in front of them. Once everyone has put a card down, players that have character tokens, starting with the player to the left of the Lead and progressing clockwise, may once again play as many of these as they choose until no more character tokens are played. The *Lead Player* may now be different than at the start of the round if one or

more players has played an Othello token.

Reveal: The player to the left of the Lead reveals their card and follows the instructions. The round then progresses clockwise until the Lead has played and revealed a card. Players may also play character tokens during this phase. The first player to the left of the player that reveals a card get precendence to play an interrupt action, like a No Drama card or token, or Seize card. Note that only a No Drama token can be played as an instant to disrupt a player as or after they reveal. For example, a player cannot use a Take the Lead token as an instant when they see that the Lead has revealed a Lead character card, to prevent the Lead from successfully playing the card.

Each time you play a script card successfully, you advance the plot and gain points. Certain cards in the deck are designed to be played by the Lead, others by the company. If you successfully play a script card as the corresponding role, you keep the card and gain points. There are more opportunities to gain points when you are the Lead.

When the reveal phase ends, put any played staging cards into the discard pile, face up, next to the staging card draw pile. Put any script cards that were not played successfully, face up, into the discard pile next to the script card draw pile.

Draw: Each player will draw cards until they have the total required for the act and number of players in the game according to Table 1 under *Dealing* on p. 5, based on what they played in the placement phase. If you played a script card, draw a staging card; if you played a staging card, draw a script card. It does not matter if the script card was played successfully or not unless it was Seized.

When a Seize card is successfully played on either a script or staging card, the player of the Seize card draws from the staging pile. The player who was seized draws from the script pile or staging pile, their choice, regardless of the card they played. If either draw pile is depleted, shuffle the corresponding discard pile to form a new draw pile. When no script cards remain, draw all cards from the staging card pile.

Script Cards

Script cards progress the plot and earn points. There are five types: confronts, convinces, conspires, wounds, and kills.

Confronts No special instructions

Convinces These cards can be seized but cannot be blocked by *Stealing the Spotlight*.

Conspires These cards can be seized but cannot be blocked by *Stealing the Spotlight*.

Wounds Place a wound token on the wounded character's tile. In the *Wicked* and *Evil* level games,

Cassio is killed if the second wound token is placed on his character tile in Act V. If this happens, the player who placed the second wound token takes both wound tokens and scores them at the end of the game.

Kills Take any wound tokens (including Iago tokens if playing *Villainy & Treachery*) on the deceased character's tile and turn that tile over to the "dead" side.

On all script cards, Character 1 acts upon Character 2. If you control Character 1 and play a script card successfully, you earn points. Cards marked with a crown can only be successfully played by the Lead, while the cards without the crown can only be successfully played by the Company. Keep the card and set it aside, face up, in a pile next to you so that other players can see it. Take the reward(s) listed on the card.

You can follow the progress of the play with the progress bar in the lower left of each script card.

The number of script cards in each act varies:

I 11

II 12

III 15

IV 15

V 16

Script Cards, continued



Position of this card in the act

Specific Script cards referenced in these instructions are notated as "Act.Position". Examples - The fifth card in Act I is notated I.5; the first card in Act V is notated V.1.

Staging Cards

Staging cards add strategy to the game. Cards marked with a crown can only be successfully played by the Lead, while the cards without the crown can be suc-

cessfully played by anyone. If a player needs to draw a staging card and there are none in the draw pile, then shuffle the discarded staging cards and place them face down on the staging card draw pile for players to draw from.

There are seven types of Staging card:

Exchange (5) Blindly select a card from another player's hand; give a card from your hand in return. Look at the card you took before choosing one to give. You cannot return the card you took unless you already had that card in your hand. For the price of two (2) intrigue tokens, you may look at the other player's hand and select the card you want before you give them one from you hand. Put your tokens in the unclaimed pile on the board.

Missed Entrance (3) This card causes a player to miss their entrance on the stage. They must swap their face down card with one from their hand. The player cannot improvise to swap out this new card. The player who revealed Missed Entrance discards it, draws a new staging card, and selects a new card from their hand to play. They reveal it and play continues.

No Drama (3) For the price of one intrigue token paid into the pile of unclaimed tokens on the board, you may reveal this card from your hand to block a player from impacting you this turn when they attempt to do so. This includes script or staging cards, character tokens, spotlight tokens, or any custom cards develped by your gaming friends. By playing this card,

you block every player from impacting you during the round. A player cannot play a No Drama to block an action on another player. Leave the card up on the table as a reminder until the end of the round. At the end of the round, discard No Drama along with your other played card and draw a staging card in addition to whichever card you draw based on the facedown card that you revealed.

Revive (3) For the price of three intrigue tokens, the Lead may revive a character left for dead. Turn the revived character's tile back over and take any script cards set aside for this player and add them to your successfully played script cards. If any of these cards are Wounds or Kills, then immediately take those actions including placing wound tokens or leaving a character for dead if appropriate. You do not get the rewards listed on these cards. Any player may instead exit the scene and collect an intrigue token if they do not revive a character. Revive can cannot be blocked by a spotlight token.

Take the Lead (7) Take the lead character tile for the current act from the *Lead Player*. If you are the lead, give the character tile to another player. The lead change takes place immediately and may affect an opponent's ability to play a card successfully.

Seize (5) This nullifies any staging card earlier in the round order except *No Drama* or another *Seize*. If you seize a script card, take it, along with any rewards and wound or Iago tokens if the card killed a character,

and add it to your pile of successfully played script cards. All script cards are full point value regardless of who played or seized them. If you seize a staging card, take a spotlight token from the pile on the board as your reward. Note: Seize cards cannot stop Improv or Stealing the Spotlight.

There will be occasions when a player cannot play a *Seize* card successfully because a player before them has played a *Seize* card. In these instances, use *Improv* if you can to save your Seize for another round. You must be vigilant and pay attention if you play a *Seize* so as to not forget to seize someone's action ahead of you in the turn order.

Villainy (3) This card allows the Lead to play two Iago tokens or reduces by one the number of wound tokens required to leave a character for dead. You may then play your Iago token on a character tile. You may pay three (3) Intrigue tokens to play Treachery. This allows the Lead to play three (3) Iago tokens or reduce by two (2) the number of wound tokens required to leave a character for dead. Any player may instead exit the scene and collect an intrigue token if they do not wound a character. Villainy cannot be blocked by a Steal the Spotlight token.

Playing Cards Successfully

A card is played successfully if the appropriate conditions are met and another player does not seize or otherwise block the card. Remember that when you are the *Lead Player*, you can only successfully play script cards featuring the lead character as Character 1, as indicated by the crown image.

If you're in the Company, script cards for all other characters in the act can be played successfully. There will be occasions when you have no option but to play a script card that does not correspond to your role (e.g. you're in the Company and play *Iago confronts Roderigo [I.1]* in Act I). In such instances, exit the scene, collect an intrigue token, and discard the script card. You do not collect any other rewards.

For detail on playing script cards on a character *Left for Dead*, see p. 13

Tokens

There are four basic types:



Intrigue (42) These are awarded when you successfully play most script cards or by exiting a scene with certain staging cards. These are used as currency and are required for *Improv* and to play some staging cards. They are not meant to be limited in number so if you need more, get creative and use something else.



Spotlight (24) When an opponent reveals a card, you can say, "I'm stealing the spotlight!" and pay a spotlight token to block their card.



Wound (4) Place these on a character's card when a character is wounded.



Handkerchief (1) This coveted token is awarded when you successfully play script cards in the handkerchief subplot.

This is some minx's token!



Character Tokens













There are six special tokens associated with six characters in the play: Othello, Cassio, Desdemona, Emilia, Roderigo, and Iago. When you play a script card successfully for one of these characters, you gain a corresponding token. For example: if you play Desdemona confronts Othello (III.4), in addition to the standard rewards, you will get a Desdemona token. Iago tokens are only awarded when Iago convinces or conspires against another character. The powers of each character token are listed below, as well as on the tokens:

Othello (5) Take the Lead

Cassio (3) Improv, without paying an intrigue token

Desdemona (3) No Drama, without paying an intrigue token

Emilia (3) Take a character token from another player. This action cannot be blocked except by No Drama.

Roderigo (3) Exchange, like the staging card

Iago (24) Played as a wound token on a character tile on the board.

Using Character Tokens

You can use character tokens as soon as you earn them or at almost any point during a future round. A player may use as many character tokens as they have, and of any type during a round, except for Iago tokens, which a player may only play one of per round. The corresponding rules for stealing the spotlight for those actions apply. Except for Iago tokens, used character tokens are returned to the pile of unclaimed tokens after use. Unused character tokens have no value between rounds and at the end of the game. Character tokens are a limited resource. If there isn't one available and you've earned it by successfully playing a card, you don't get the token. There are exactly enough Iago tokens though, as there is one token for every Convince or Conspires card playable as Iago.

Iago tokens are played as would tokens on characters during the play. Each character except Othello has a hit point value listed on their tile. These are:

Montano (1)

Brabantio (2)

Lodovico (2)

Bianca (3)

Emilia (4)

Roderigo (4)

Cassio (5)

Desdemona (5)

Iago (10)

Only one Iago token may be played by a player per round. Iago tokens may only be played on characters in the act at the time the token is played. Iago tokens stay on the character tile as the character moves into and out of an act. Once a character has accumulated wound tokens of any type equal to the hit point value listed, that character's tile is turned over and they are left for dead. The player who played the final wound token on that character takes the accumulated tokens, turns the Iago tokens over showing the +1 side, and adds them to their collection of scored points. At least one wound token needs to be played on a character tile that round in order for the character to be left for dead. Some characters only appear in one act, so any Iago wound tokens played on those characters are lost if the character is not left for dead by the end of the act in which they appear.

Wound tokens played on Iago follow the tile as the Lead changes players in Acts I-IV. If Iago is left for dead before Act V, turn his character tile over and continue to pass the tile to the Lead as before. This does not affect the assignment or actions of the Lead.

If a Revive card is successfully played on a character left for dead, the player who played the Revive card collects the accumulated Script cards for that character yet not the rewards associated with the cards. A character can be left for dead and revived multiple times. A character can only be revived if they are in the current act.

If Desdemona, Emilia, or Roderigo are killed in Act V

with a Script card, the player who killed the character gets any accumulated wound tokens including Iago tokens.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

No Drama

If you played this card to protect yourself from another player, play resumes with the player who would have taken continued their turn before the *No Drama* card was played. A *No Drama* card or Desdemona token successfully blocks an opponent from taking the handkerchief too. The player who played the script card while attempting to claim the handkerchief from you, still successfully plays the script card and collects the other rewards. <u>Note:</u> *No Drama* cards cannot be seized or blocked. Desdemona tokens can be used by a player to block a Seize card or spotlight token.

Seize

If an opponent reveals a card and you follow them in the turn order, you may reveal a *Seize* card if you have played one, without waiting for your turn. Play resumes with the next player who would have taken their turn before the Seize card was revealed. When it's your turn, take no action since you already revealed your card. Note: Seize cards cannot stop another Seize, No Drama, Improv, Stealing the Spotlight, or the placing of a wound token on a character card.

Stealing the Spotlight

If an opponent reveals a card, uses a character token, or Improvs, you may say, "I'm stealing the spotlight!" and pay a spotlight token to block their action. You may do this before or after your turn or out of turn order. A blocked card goes into the discard pile; your spotlight token goes into the pile of unclaimed tokens. Play resumes with the next player after the blocked player. Note: Spotlight tokens cannot stop Convinces, Conspires, Seize, Act Ending, or No Drama cards, a Desdemona token or another spotlight token. Spotlight tokens can stop Improv.

Improv

Once per round, you may Improvise. There are two ways:

I. During the Pre-placement phase, you may pay an intrigue token to exchange a card with one from the draw piles. If you exchange a script card, draw either a script or staging card. If you exchange a staging card, draw a staging card. Place the exchanged card, face down, on the bottom of the draw pile.

II. Between Placement and Reveal, you may pay an intrigue token to exchange your unrevealed card with another from your hand. The new card is played face down. Play resumes as normal.

<u>Note:</u> *Improv* cannot be seized, but it can be blocked by a spotlight token. You cannot improv if a Missed Entrance staging card was played on you.

Playing a Script card for a Character Left for Dead

Characters Left for Dead or Killed aren't able to recite their lines or be the subject of another character's actions. So for the rest of the game, until they are revived, any Script cards played by a character Left for Dead or Killed as Character 1 or Character 2 (see p. 8) are set aside next to the game board. If the Script card is a Wounds or Kills card, then those actions don't take effect. The player who revealed the Script card does get all the rewards indicated on the card.

Example - In Act V, Desdemona is Left for Dead and a Company player reveals Desdemona confronts Othello (V.8). The card is set aside next to the board and the player takes a Desdemona token and the handkerchief.

O, I am spoil'd, undone by villains!



Act Endings

Each act ends when the *Act End* card has been played successfully. This card may only be played after a *Prerequisite Act End* card has been played successfully first:

Table 2

Act	Prerequisite Act End Card (half curtain)	Act End Card (full curtain)
I	Desdemona confronts Brabantio (I.9)	Iago conspries (I.11)
II	Othello confronts Cassio (II.10)	Iago conspires (II.12)
III	Iago conspires (III.7)	Bianca confronts Cassio (III.15)
IV	Othello wounds Desde- mona (IV.8)	Desdemona confronts Emilia (IV.5)
V	Othello confronts the truth (V.13)	Othello kills humself (V.16)

The two cards do not need to be played in the same round. In a *Villainy & Treachery* level game, if any of these cards were played on the table by a character left for dead, then the cards are considered successfully played for the purposes of ending the act.

How to End an Act

In a Wicked level game, The Act End and Prerequisite Act End cards may be successfully played by any character

before the script card pile is depleted. In an *Evil* or *Villainy & Treachery* level game, while the script card draw pile has cards in it, the *Act End* card must be played by the corresponding character (the Lead for Acts I, II, V; a Company player for Acts III, IV). Once the last script card has been drawn, any player may play the *Prerequisite Act End* card and the *Act End* card if they have it. In all levels, the remaining script cards may still only be successfully played by the corresponding roles.

An act automatically ends if, after the last script card has been drawn, the staging card deck is depleted two times. In this instance, once the last staging card is drawn for a second time, no other cards are played and the game proceeds to the next act, or ends if in Act V. A discarded script card during the staging card depletion countdown does not reset the countdown.

When the Act End card for Act I is played successfully, gather all remaining unplayed Act I script cards in players' hands as well as in the draw and discard piles and set them in the Act I box on the stage. Players keep face up for all players to see, any script cards they successfully played or seized. Players keep staging cards in their hands.

Act End cards are worth more points if played by the corresponding character. If an Act End card is successfully played by a character other than the one specified, the player should place the card in their

pile sideways as a reminder to score the card properly between acts and at the end of the game.

Intermission

Each player tallies their current points as described below under *Scoring*, and shares the total for all to hear.

Each player discards staging cards of their choice until they reach the total number required to start the next act as described in Table 1. Players draw up to that number if they have fewer that the starting amount.

Between acts, a player may exchange three intrigue tokens for one spotlight token. A player may make this exchange as many times as they want, provided they have enough intrigue tokens.

Beginning the Next Act

To begin the next act, determine the Lead (see p. 4), then shuffle the script cards for the act and set them face down on the board to form a draw pile. Starting with the Lead, each player draws script cards until they have the total number needed to start the act as listed in Table 1 under the *Dealing* section (see p. 5) for the number of players in the game. Repeat for Acts III through V noting that in 2- and 3-player games each player draws one more script card than in Acts I and II. Using the board as a guide, place the appropriate character tiles on the stage for that act. Play then resumes in a series of rounds as before.

The Final Act

In Act V, Desdemona, Roderigo, and Emilia can be killed by other characters in the game. Cassio can also be killed if he receives two wounds in a *Wicked* or *Evil* level game. When one of these characters dies in this fashion, turn their character tile over to the Left for Dead side. The player who killed the character takes any wound or Iago tokens on the character tile. Note: For the rest of the game, cards played as these characters are set aside as described under *Playing a Script Card for a Character Left for Dead* on p. 13

Ending the Game

When Othello kills himself (V.16), the game ends. As in the other acts, no player may take another turn after an act's final card has been revealed.

Any script cards set aside for characters left for dead are not awarded to any player.

Scoring

Each player tallies their points. The player with the most points wins. Script cards are worth the value in the upper right corner of the card. Note the *Act End* cards and Prerequisite Act Ending cards that have a different point value depending on which character played the card. Other than the Iago tokens scored during the game, character tokens have no point value at the end of the game.

Scoring, continued

Intrigue tokens = 1 point for every three tokens

Spotlight tokens = 1 point each

Wound tokens = 1 point each

Handkerchief = 3 points

Players earn a Lead Character script card bonus according to the table below. Only those cards that were played as the lead count toward the total:

Table 3

Number of different	Bonus
Acts* with at least one	Points
Lead Character script	
card	
Zero or One	0
Two	1
Three	2
Four	4
Five	7

*Iago cards from Acts I through IV and Othello cards from Act V only

Lastly, two points are awarded to a player who successfully played three or more cards from one of the following characters as Character 1: Othello, Cassio, Emilia, Desdemona, Roderigo. A player gets two points for each of these characters for which they played three or more cards.

Tiebreaker

The player who controls *Othello* wins. If none of the winners controls *Othello*, they share the win. An excellent courtesy!

GAME VARIATIONS

Table Read

As you play, read the cards and quotes aloud.

Playwright's Challenge

In this variation, script cards must be played in the order that Shakespeare wrote them.

The sequence of each act is indicated by the progress bar in the lower left corner of each script card. If a script card is played out of sequence, it is not considered successfully played and it is placed into the Script card discard pile.

At the beginning of the Act I, starting with the Lead player, deal out all of the script cards to the players, one *Take the Lead* staging card, and additional staging cards as described Table 1 under *Dealing* (p. 5) based on the number of players. At the start of Acts II - V, deal out all of the script cards. In some acts, some players may need an additional staging card so that they have the same number of cards as the other play-

ers to start the act. Play continues as normal.



Extra Lead Villainy

The Lead gets extra power in this variation. When the Lead plays a *Seize*, instead of taking a spotlight token when they seize a staging card, they may instead play the staging card seized as if they reveleed it themselves. Play continues as normal after the seized card is played.

Blank Cards

This edition comes with four (4) blank cards for you and your gaming friends to introduce your own script or staging cards into the game. Get creative and tweet your ideas to @nodramagames for others to see! For best results, use an ultra-fine point permanent marker rather than a ballpoint pen, and don't press too hard to avoid creating a telltale groove visible on the back of the card.

Now art thou my lieutenant.



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Special Thanks

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