

OTHELLO

Translated

William Shakespeare

translated by

SJ Hills

Faithfully Translated
into Performable Modern English
Side by Side with Original Text

Includes Stage Directions



THE TRAGEDY OF OTHELLO,
The Moor of Venice

Book 12 in a series of 42



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Translated from
The Tragedy of Othello, The Moor of Venice,
by Shakespeare, circa 1602-04.
Additional material by SJ Hills

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Dedicated to my four little terrors;

Melody

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“From an ardent love of literature, a profound admiration of the men who have left us legacies of thought and beauty, and, I suppose, from that feature in man that induces us to strive to follow those we most admire, and looking upon the pursuit of literature as one of the noblest in which no labour should be deemed too great, I have sought to add a few thoughts to the store already bequeathed to the world. If they are approved, I shall have gained my desire; if not, I shall hope to receive any hints in the spirit of one who loves his work and desires to progress.”

R. Hilton. 1869

PREFACE

When we studied Shakespeare at school we had to flick back and forth to the notes at the back of the book to understand a confusing line, words we were not familiar with, expressions lost in time, or even current or political references of Shakespeare's time.

What if the text was rewritten to make each line clear without looking up anything?

There are plenty of modern translations just for this. But they are cumbersome to read, no flow, matter of fact translations (and most this author has found are of varying inaccuracy, despite being approved by exam boards).

As a writer and producer of drama, I wanted not only to translate the play faithfully line by line, but also to include the innuendos, the political satire, the puns and the bawdy humour in a way which would flow and bring the work to life for students, actors prepping for a performance or lovers of the work to enjoy today, faithful to the feel and meaning of the original script and language without going into lengthy explanations for a modern day audience.

A faithful line-by-line translation into modern phrasing that flows, along with additional staging directions making the play interesting to read, easy to understand, and very importantly, an invaluable study aid.

For me it all started at about eight or nine years of age. I was reading a comic which contained the story of Macbeth serialized in simple comic strip form. I could not wait to see what happened next so I rushed out to the public library to get a copy of the book. Of course, when I got it home I didn't even recognise it as being the same story. It made no sense to me, being written in 'Olde English' and often using 'flowery' language. I remember thinking at the time that one day I should write my version of the story for others to understand.

Years went by and I had pretty much forgotten my idea. Then quite by chance I was approached by Encyclopaedia Britannica to produce a series of dramatised classic dramas as educational aids for children learning English as a second language. Included in the selection was Romeo And Juliet which I was to condense down to fifty minutes using modern English.

This brought flooding back the memories of being eight years old again, reading my comic and planning my modern version of Shakespeare. In turn it also led me to the realisation that even if a reader could understand English well, this did not mean they could fully understand and enjoy Shakespeare. I could understand English, yet I did not fully understand some of Shakespeare's text without serious research. So what hope did a person whose first language was not English have?

After some investigation, I discovered there was a great desire around the world to understand the text fully without the inconvenience of referring to footnotes or side-lines, or worse still, the internet. How can one enjoy the wonderful drama with constant interruption? I was also surprised to discover the desire was equally as great in English speaking countries as ones whose first language was not English.

The final kick to get me started was meeting fans of Shakespeare's works who knew scripts off by heart but secretly admitted to me that they did have trouble fully understanding the meaning of some lines. Although they knew the storyline well they could miss some of the subtlety and innuendo Shakespeare was renowned for. It is hardly surprising in this day and age as many of the influences, trends, rumours, beliefs and current affairs of Shakespeare's time are not valid today.

I do not pretend my work is any match for the great master, but I do believe in the greater enjoyment for all. These great works deserve to be understood by all, Shakespeare himself wrote for all levels of audience, he would even aim his work to suit a particular audience at times – for example changing historical facts if he knew a member of royalty would be seeing his play and it would cause them any embarrassment, or of course to curry favour with a monarch by the use of flattery.

I have been as faithful as possible with my version, but the original, iambic pentameter, (the tempo and pace the lines were written for), and other Elizabethan tricks of the trade that Shakespeare was so brilliant at are not included unless vital to the text and meaning. For example, rhyming couplets to signify the end of a scene, for in Shakespeare's day there were no curtains, no lights and mostly static scenery, so scene changes were not so obvious, these couplets, though not strictly necessary, are included to maintain the feel of the original.

This makes for a play that sounds fresh to today's listening audience. It is also a valuable educational tool; English Literature courses often include a section on translating Shakespeare. I am often asked the meaning of a particular line, sometimes scholars argue over the meaning of particular lines. I have taken the most widely agreed version and the one which flows best with the story line where there is dispute, and if you read this translation before reading the original work or going to see a stage version, you will find the play takes on a whole new meaning, making it infinitely more enjoyable.

SJ Hills. London. 2018

Author's Note:

This version contains stage directions. These are included purely as a guide to help understand the script better. Any director staging the play would have their own interpretation of the play and decide their own directions. These directions are my own personal interpretation and not those of Shakespeare. You may change these directions to your own choosing or ignore them completely. For exam purposes these should be only regarded as guidance to the dialogue and for accuracy should not be quoted in any studies or examinations.

Othello (or to give the play its full title, *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*) is a tragedy. A tragedy is typically a serious drama based around a central character, usually flawed, culminating in an unhappy or disastrous ending. The origin of tragedies can be traced back to ancient Greece, particularly Aristotle in his work, *Poetics*. The tragic hero would usually be a great man who made a grave mistake, and have weaknesses we as an audience can relate to or sympathise with. The four major tragedies Shakespeare wrote are *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *King Lear*. Although *Romeo and Juliet* has a tragic end, it is in essence a romance, a combination not usually depicted in stage plays up till that time. *Othello* is a play about jealousy. Characters who are normally good make bad decisions due to jealousy in the play.

There were two versions of *Othello* published after Shakespeare's death. The first version (the Quarto) was shorter than the later edition (the Folio), which was published by two of Shakespeare's fellow actors one year later, by 160 lines. But the later version omits about 12 lines that appeared in the earlier version. There are also numerous word changes between the two. The version of *Othello* we now refer to (with minor differences between present day editions) is a combination of these two early versions.

To aid in understanding speeches and for learning lines, where possible, speeches by any character are not broken over two pages unless they have a natural break. As a result of this, gaps will be noticeable at the bottom of pages where the next speech will not fully fit onto the page. This was intentional. A speech cannot be fully appreciated if one has to turn the page back and forth when studying or learning lines.

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Historical Notes

Venice is well known as a city in north-eastern Italy, but back in the 16th century it was a powerful, independent state under the rule of a *doge*, (a duke) and governed by a *Grand Council* of senators. Due to its location on the Adriatic Sea, Venice was an important trading port, importing spices from the East and commodities from the Muslim world to Europe, and ruling over Mediterranean islands such as Crete and Cyprus.

The Venetians were Christian, and constantly at war over ownership of Mediterranean islands with the Turks from the Ottoman Empire who were Muslim. The Ottoman Empire covered vast areas of Europe, the Middle East and Asia. In England, the Turks were remembered as the enemy Christians had fought during the Holy Crusades.

Othello is sent to defend Cyprus against a Turkish invasion. This is based on an actual battle that took place in 1571 where the Turks defeated the Venetians and captured Cyprus. In Othello the outcome is different.

Due to inaccuracies in Shakespeare's descriptions of Venice we must assume he got his information from books rather than having visited the place himself. Most likely the books referred to were *De magistratibus et republica Venetorum* (*The Commonwealth and Government of Venice*) written in 1543 by Gasparo Contarini, and translated into English by Lewis Lewkenor in 1599. The plot and main characters for Othello were lifted from 'Gil Hecatommithi', a collection of stories by Cinthio, written in Italian in 1565, one story being "Un Capitano Moro" (A Moorish Captain). Shakespeare's adaptation is closer to the original Italian tale than the more readily (at the time) available French translation.

The first recorded performance of Othello was on 1st November 1604 by the King's Majesty's players at the Banqueting House at Whitehall. It was listed as 'The Moor of Venice by Shaxberd'. This location was within the London palace of James I, and it is likely to have been first performed before the King. It would become one of Shakespeare's most popular plays.

Othello would go on to be performed at both the open-air *Globe* playhouse and the indoor *Blackfriars Theatre* with slight differences between the performances, most notably the section now known as 'Unpinning Desdemona' (see Act 4, Scene 3). The play was also performed by the *King's Men* to celebrate the 1612 wedding of Princess Elizabeth to Frederick V of the Palatine, who would seven years later become the King of Bohemia. It was performed regularly until the onset of the English Civil War when, in 1642, Parliament banned the staging of plays in London theatres.

In early productions the parts of Othello and Desdemona would have both been played by white men. Richard Burbage, a leading actor of the day, was almost certainly the first Othello, while Desdemona would have been acted by a young male actor from the troupe, as it was illegal for women to appear on a public stage in England until the second half of the 17th century.

A modern reader cannot approach Othello for the first time without noticing the racial overtones and slurs. Iago and Roderigo start the play with verbal attacks on Othello's heritage. Iago describes him in racial and sexual

terms. Othello himself blames his heritage for his quick temper and his jealousy. In Shakespeare's time, dark skinned people were often associated in literature with savagery and associated with the Devil. This was part based on the stories from explorers and traders, who to the native peoples of lands they were invading, upon seeing for the first time a white skinned person wearing strange clothing and wielding sticks that fired thunder and lightning, must have felt frightened and confused and naturally wished to defend themselves. Tales were probably blown out of all proportion, as it makes for better stories, such as cooking captured men in pots and eating them, and many tales of barbaric behaviour, and most importantly to the English public of the day, they were not Christians, hence them being termed 'savages'.

Previously, black characters in Elizabethan dramas were often devilish and cruel characters, however, Shakespeare made Othello the first black stage character of the new Jacobean era that an audience could empathise with, and the white skinned Desdemona's love for him is true and heartfelt, not in any way forced. In Shakespeare's day a mixed race marriage was very rare and likely to be shunned by others. So Shakespeare in his own way, and with the relevance of his own time, was doing quite a bit to help relations between races.

The first black actor to play Othello on stage in England was Ira Aldridge. Born in 1825 in New York, he travelled to Europe to further his acting career and enjoyed a long career on stage there. He would sometimes 'white up' to take on the role of a white character while the white lead of Othello would 'black up' to play the role.

Shakespeare's use of pre-existing material was not considered a lack of originality. In Elizabethan times copyright law did not exist, copying whole passages of text was frequently practiced and not considered theft as it is today. Nowadays, stage and movie productions are frequently 'adaptations' from other sources, the only difference being the need to obtain permission or rights to do so, unless the work is out of copyright.

The real skill Shakespeare displays is in how he adapts his sources in new ways, displaying a remarkable understanding of human psyche and emotion, and including a talent at building characters, adding characters for effect, dramatic pacing, tension building, interspersed by short bouts of relief before building the tension even further, and above all of course, his extraordinary ability to use and miss-use language to his and dramatic, bawdy or playful advantage.

It has been said Shakespeare almost wrote screenplays, predating modern cinema by over 400 years, however you view it, he wrote a powerful story and understood how to play on human emotions and weaknesses.

This play was written during the reign of King James. As Shakespeare often referred to the reigning monarch in his plays indirectly and often performed his plays before the monarch this is useful to know.

Dramatis Personae

OTHELLO,	The Moor. A general in the service of the Duke of Venice.
DESDEMONA,	Wife to Othello, daughter to Brabantio.
IAGO,	A villain. Ensign to Othello.
EMILIA,	Wife to Iago.
CASSIO,	An honourable Lieutenant to Othello.
BIANCA,	A Courtesan. Mistress to Cassio.
CLOWN,	Servant to Othello.
DUKE,	Duke of Venice.
BRABANTIO,	A Senator. Father to Desdemona.
GRATIANO,	Brother to Brabantio. } Two noble
LUDOVICO,	Kinsman to Brabantio. } Venetians
RODERIGO,	A wealthy gentleman of Venice.
MONTANO,	Governor of Cyprus.
A HERALD.	
A SAILOR.	
1 ST SENATOR, 2 ND SENATOR, and other Senators.	
1 ST OFFICER, and other Officers.	
1 st Gentleman, 2 nd Gentleman, 3 rd Gentleman, and other Gentlemen.	
1 ST MUSICIAN, and other Musicians.	
Messengers, Servants and Attendants.	

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Scene.

The First Act is set in Venice.

The rest of the play is set at a seaport in Cyprus.

16th Century.

ACT I



VENICE

WHERE OUR FIRST ACT IS SET

*“BUT I WILL WEAR MY HEART
UPON MY SLEEVE”*

ACT I

ACT I SCENE I

VENICE. A STREET. LATE EVENING.

Note: 'Moor' – a person of North African origins. From the Greek for Mauretania, which today is where Morocco and Algeria are located. It was also a colloquial term in Shakespeare's day for a person with darker skin than the fairer skinned Northern Europeans, and along with 'Ethiophe' and 'gypsy' (originally slang for Egyptian) it could be used for any person from African, Middle Eastern, Indian or Mediterranean areas. It is also worth noting that in Shakespeare's London, being a major sea port, darker skinned people were reasonably commonplace, mainly due to trade and import of workers - not as slaves, a popular misconception.

The part of Othello has been played by both black and white actors through history, originally played by a white member of the theatre company. Male members also played all female parts. In more recent times 'blacking up' is a controversial subject.

To show characters are comedic or to vary the overall structure of the play, Shakespeare sometimes writes lines in prose rather than the usual blank verse (a form of poetry which doesn't rhyme except for dramatic effect). He moves between prose and verse to give his characters depth and variety by breaking the rhythm.

Deliberate bawdy use of words is underlined, rhymed lines are in italics.

IT IS EVENING, RODERIGO, AN HONEST BACHELOR, AND IAGO, A DEVIOUS MILITARY MAN, ARE TALKING ABOUT OTHELLO THE MOOR, A VENETIAN ARMY COMMANDER OF AFRICAN DESCENT. THEY STAND OUTSIDE THE HOUSE OF BRABANTIO, A VENETIAN SENATOR, FATHER OF A YOUNG DAUGHTER.

RODERIGO

Pah! I don't take it kindly that you, Iago, so close you are almost tied to me by my purse strings, should know of this but weren't going to tell me.

IAGO

Strewth, you're not listening to me. If I ever dreamed of doing such a thing, you can despise me forever.

RODERIGO

Tush, never tell me; I take it much unkindly That thou, Iago, who hast had my purse As if the strings were thine, shouldst know of this.

IAGO

'Sblood*, but you will not hear me. If ever I did dream of such a matter, Abhor me.

**Note: "Sblood" – God's blood. A law in 1606 banned bad language on stage, though Shakespeare only used mild expletives in his previous plays. All plays were vetted before they could be performed for obscenity, blasphemy and anti-royal content.*

Act I Scene I. Venice. A Street.

RODERIGO

You told me you hated him.

IAGO

Hate me if I don't. Three leading figures in the city, personally went cap-in-hand to put me forward as his lieutenant. On my oath, I know my value, I'm worthy of the position. But he, full of his own importance and self-interests, evaded their advances with pretentious words stuffed with military jargon, resulting in... my backers being rejected.

RODERIGO

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

IAGO

Despise me if I do not. Three great ones of the city,
In personal suit to make me his lieutenant,
Off-capped to him; and, by the faith of man,
I know my price, I am worth no worse a place.
But he, as loving his own pride and purposes,
Evades them with a bombast* circumstance
Horribly stuffed with epithets of war;
And in conclusion,*
Non-suits my mediators.

**Note: 'Bombast' – cotton stuffing or pretentious, inflated language with no substance. From which we get the word 'bombastic'.*

"And in conclusion" – a half line, indicating the actor should pause for effect.

IAGO IMITATES THE MOOR (OTHELLO) SARCASTICALLY.

IAGO (CONT' D)

(Imitating the Moor) "Indubitably", he says,
"I have already chosen my First Officer".
(as himself, sarcastic) And who was he? It
was indeed, that great thinker and theorist,
one Michael Cassio, a peaceful 'Florentine', a
man soon to endure the troubles of
marrying a beautiful wife, a man who has
never commanded a squadron on a
battlefield, a man who knows no more about
the makeup of a battalion than an old maid,
apart from the theory he studied from a
book – politicians could profess to be as
knowledgeable as he. Mere idle words with
no experience is his military qualification.

IAGO

For "Certes," says he
"I have already chose my officer".
And what was he?
Forsooth, a great arithmetician,
One Michael Cassio, a Florentine*,
A fellow almost damned in a fair wife*,
That never set a squadron in the field,
Nor the division of a battle knows
More than a spinster*; unless the bookish
theoric,
Wherein the toged* consuls can propose
As masterly as he. Mere prattle without practice
Is all his soldiership.

**Note: 'A Florentine' – from Florence, a commercial city, unlike warlike Venice.*

"Damned in a fair wife" – From an Italian expression "damned is he who has a beautiful wife". She will have more opportunity and temptation to stray.

'Spinster', a woman who spun yarns, or an unmarried woman. Iago compares Cassio to one suggesting neither is suitable for the position of wife or lieutenant.

'Toged' - wearing a toga, therefore a counsellor, not a warmonger.

Othello Translated

IAGO (CONT' D)

But Cassio was chosen, sir, and I, whose experience Othello has seen with his own eyes at Rhodes, at Cyprus, and other countries both Christian and heathen, must have the wind knocked out of my sails by a bookkeeper. This bean-counter will shortly be his lieutenant, and I, God help me, only his Moorship's ensign.

IAGO

But he, sir, had th' election,
And I, of whom his eyes had seen the proof
At Rhodes, at Cyprus, and on other grounds
Christian and heathen*, must be belee'd* and
calmed
By debtor and creditor; this counter-caster*,
He, in good time, must his lieutenant be,
And I, God bless the mark*, his Moorship's
ancient*.

**Note: 'Heathen' – Muslims, notably the Ottoman Turks. Heathen then meant anyone not baptised as a Christian. Now it means a follower of alternative religions such as a pagan.*

'Belee'd' – the wind is taken from the sails of a ship, preventing it advancing. There are many seafaring references throughout the play.

'Counter-caster' – a derogatory name for an accountant, a lot of accounting terms are used by Iago to describe Cassio, emphasising he is more concerned with accounting for costs than winning battles.

'God bless the mark' – used in place of a crude expletive. Said by midwives to babies born with birthmarks to 'ward off the devil', as birthmarks were once considered the mark of the devil, and by archers to promote accuracy - the 'mark' being the target.

'Ancient' – Ensign, the lowest commissioned rank (officer) in the navy, one level below lieutenant. Iago is suggesting throughout that Cassio is unsuitable for the job as he is no more than a pen pusher without combat experience. We can't be certain this is factual, as Iago was not one to let the truth get in the way of a damning story.

RODERIGO

By heavens, I would rather have been his hangman.

IAGO

Well, there's no way round it, it's the curse of life in service. Promotion goes by way of personal recommendation and favouritism, not by the old grading method, where each second-in-command inherits the title of first. So, sir, you be the judge of whether I have any good reason to like the Moor.

RODERIGO

I would not serve under him then.

RODERIGO

By heaven, I rather would have been his hangman.

IAGO

Why, there's no remedy; 'tis the curse of service:
Preferment goes by letter and affection,
Not by the old gradation, where each second
Stood heir to the first. Now, sir, be judge yourself
Whether I in any just term am affined
To love the Moor.

RODERIGO

I would not follow him then.

Act I Scene I. Venice. A Street.

IAGO

Oh, don't worry, sir, I serve him only to get my revenge on him. We can't all be masters, nor can all masters be faithfully served. You'll see many a dutiful and grovelling servant, dedicating his life to his master, wearing himself out - much like his master's mule - for nothing but food, and when he's old he is dismissed with nothing. Let those fools be whipped. And others who, though decked out in the uniforms of service, serve only their own interests, making a show of serving their lords, and thriving well from them, and when they've filled their pockets they become their own lord and master. These fellows have some character at least, and this is how I see myself.

IAGO

O sir, content you;
I follow him to serve my turn upon him.
We cannot all be masters, nor all masters
Cannot be truly followed. You shall mark
Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave
That, doting on his own obsequious bondage,
Wears out his time, much like his master's ass,
For naught but provender; and when he's old,
cashedier.
Whip me such honest knaves. Others there are
Who, trimmed in forms and visages of duty,
Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves,
And, throwing but shows of service on their
lords,
Do well thrive by them; and, when they have
lined their coats,
Do themselves homage. These fellows have some
soul;
And such a one do I profess myself.

IAGO PUTS HIS HAND TO HIS CHEST PROUDLY.

IAGO (CONT'D)

Because, sir, as sure as you are Roderigo, if I were the Moor I would not hire Iago.

IAGO

For, sir,
It is as sure as you are Roderigo,*
Were I the Moor I would not be Iago.*

**Note: "I would not be Iago" – Iago would not be hired. Pairs with "you are Roderigo".*

IAGO (CONT'D)

In serving him I serve only myself. Heaven is my judge, I'm not one for love and duty, I only 'seem' to be that way for my own personal gain. If ever my actions outwardly display the true nature of my heart, it will not be long till I'm wearing my heart on my sleeve for the crows to peck at. I am not what I seem.

IAGO

In following him I follow but myself.
Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,
But seeming so for my peculiar end;
For when my outward action doth demonstrate
The native act and figure of my heart
In compliment extern, 'tis not long after
But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve*
For daws* to peck at. I am not what I am.

**Note: 'Wear my heart on my sleeve' – showing a person's emotions, as opposed to hiding them, a phrase still in use today. Othello is the first recorded use of the expression in print, though it was probably an expression in use before this.*

Othello Translated

RODERIGO

The dark skinned one is a lucky man if he can get away with this!

RODERIGO

What a full fortune does the thick-lips* owe*,
If he can carry't thus!

**Note: 'Thick-lips' – a derogatory term for a person of African descent.*

'Owe' – own. Originally, 'owe' meant 'to have', the 'n' being dropped from 'owen'.

Now that Iago has revealed his true character and false purpose, we go back to the initial lines of the play – the secret Iago hadn't divulged before that point, namely Othello eloping with Brabantio's daughter which the audience is still unaware of.

IAGO

Shout up to her father. Then go wake Othello, follow him, ruin his pleasure, denounce him in the streets, upset her family. Though he lies in blissful peace, plague him with flies, though he lives in joyful happiness, throw in disruption so it loses its shine.

IAGO

Call up her father*.
Rouse him, make after him, poison his delight,
Proclaim him in the streets, incense her kinsmen,
And, though he in a fertile* climate dwell,
Plague him with flies*; though that his joy be joy,
Yet throw such changes of vexation* on't
As it may lose some colour*.

**Note: 'Father' – Brabantio, the father of Othello's new wife, Desdemona, though her has no idea at this point in time she has eloped.*

'Plague him with flies' – the fourth biblical plague of Egypt. God unleashed a plague of flies against the Egyptians to force them to free the Israelites. The Pharaoh agreed to grant their freedom if the plague was removed, but went back on his word. 'Fertile climate dwell' also hints at the sexual activities Othello is engaged in.

A 'vexation' is a source of annoyance – to disturb the happiness, and 'lose some colour' – off-colour is when something is not good, and a racial slur.

RODERIGO POINTS AT THE HOUSE THEY STAND IN FRONT OF.

RODERIGO

This is her father's house. I'll shout for him.

RODERIGO

Here is her father's house; I'll call aloud.

IAGO

Do. But yell out with an anxious tone, as if a negligent night fire has been spotted in a built up city.

IAGO

Do; with like timorous accent and dire yell
As when, by night and negligence, the fire
Is spied in populous cities*.

**Note: This is in reference to the requirement in London that all house fires should be covered at night. A curfew bell was rung to cover over all fires at 8pm. This allowed heat with no flame, preventing fire from unattended fireplaces in wood built houses. Sixty-two years later would be the Great Fire of London in 1666.*

Venice has a warmer climate than England, though very few audience members back then would have known this, but fires were still used there for cooking purposes.

Act I Scene I. Venice. A Street.

THEY BOTH SHOUT UP AT THE HOUSE.

RODERIGO

Hey, Brabantio! Signor Brabantio, hey!

IAGO

Wake up! Wake up, Brabantio! Thieves!
Thieves! Look out for your house, your
daughter and your money! Thieves! Thieves!

RODERIGO

What ho, Brabantio! Signor Brabantio, ho!

IAGO

Awake! What ho, Brabantio! Thieves! Thieves!
Look to your house, your daughter, and your
bags!
Thieves, thieves!

BRABANTIO (A VENETIAN SENATOR) APPEARS AT AN OPEN WINDOW ABOVE.

VENICE IS IN A WARMER CLIMATE THAN ENGLAND SO THE
WINDOW MIGHT WELL BE OPEN AT NIGHT.

BRABANTIO

What is the meaning of this terrible
commotion? What is the matter?

RODERIGO

Signor, is all your family indoors?

IAGO

Are all your doors locked?

BRABANTIO

What? Why do you ask?

IAGO

Strewth, sir, you're being robbed! – For the
sake of decency, put on your gown. – Your
heart is broken, you've lost half your soul.
Now, even now, this very instant, an old
black ram is mating with your white ewe.
Get up! Get up! Awake the snoring citizens
with the alarm bell. Or else the devil will
make a grandfather of you. Get up, I say!

BRABANTIO

What is the reason of this terrible summons?
What is the matter there?

RODERIGO

Signor, is all your family within?

IAGO

Are your doors locked?

BRABANTIO

Why, wherefore ask you this?

IAGO

Zounds, sir, you're robbed; for shame put on
your gown;
Your heart is burst, you have lost half your soul.
Even now, now, very now, an old black ram*
Is tugging* your white ewe*. Arise, arise!
Awake the snoring citizens with the bell,
Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you*.
Arise, I say.

**Note: 'Tugging' – a 'tup' was a male ram set free among ewes (female sheep) to mate with them, hence a 'tugging ram'. Bawdy lines are underlined.*

'Old black ram' – Othello, who was considerably older than his young bride, referred to as the 'white ewe'. White also suggests innocence.

'Devil will make a grandsire of you' – Othello and Brabantio's daughter will produce grandchildren of mixed race. The devil was depicted as being black.

BRABANTIO

What? Have you lost your senses?

RODERIGO

Most reverend, signor, do you recognise my voice?

BRABANTIO

I don't. Who are you?

RODERIGO

My name is Roderigo.

BRABANTIO

A name not welcome! I've told you before not to loiter around my house. You have heard me say plainly and openly that my daughter is not for you. And now in madness, and full of supper and alcohol, you find the malicious bravery to come and disturb my peace.

RODERIGO

(under Brabantio's speech) Sir, sir, sir!

BRABANTIO

(continuing his lecture) But be assured that I have the way and means to make you regret this.

RODERIGO

Calm down, good sir.

BRABANTIO

Why are you telling me about burglary? This is Venice. My house is not in the countryside.

BRABANTIO

What, have you lost your wits?

RODERIGO

Most reverend signor, do you know my voice?

BRABANTIO

Not I. What are you?

RODERIGO

My name is Roderigo.

BRABANTIO

The worser welcome.
I have charged thee not to haunt about my doors.
In honest plainness thou hast heard me say
My daughter is not for thee; and now, in
madness,
Being full of supper and distempering draughts,
Upon malicious bravery dost thou come
To start my quiet.

RODERIGO

Sir, sir, sir!

BRABANTIO

But thou must needs be sure
My spirit and my place have in them power
To make this bitter to thee.

RODERIGO

Patience, good sir.

BRABANTIO

What tell'st thou me of robbing? This is Venice;
My house is not a grange*.

**Note: 'Grange' – a farmhouse.*

RODERIGO

Most honourable Brabantio, I come to you as an honest and sincere soul...

RODERIGO

Most grave Brabantio,
In simple and pure soul I come to you.

Act I Scene I. Venice. A Street.

IAGO

(interrupting) Strewth, sir, you are one of those who would deny God if the devil told you too. Because we come to you to help you, you think we are villains. You'll have your daughter mounted by a Barbary horse, you'll have your grandchildren (*imitates a horse neigh*) neighing at you, you'll have race horses for nephews and ponies for relatives.

IAGO

Zounds, sir, you are one of those that will not serve God if the devil bid you. Because we come to do you service and you think we are ruffians, you'll have your daughter covered with* a Barbary horse*; you'll have your nephews neigh to you; you'll have coursers* for cousins and gennets* for Germans*.

**Note: 'Barbary horse' – a breed of North African origin, typically brown or black in colour, noted for its speed and stamina. Popular among Italian nobility for racing, and by royalty in England, from which was bred the 'Thoroughbred' race horse.*

'Covered with a Barbary horse' – a euphemism for having sex with Othello.

'Coursers' are fast horses, and a 'gennet' is a jennet, a small Spanish horse used by Berber horsemen.

'Germans' means close relations, sharing parents or grandparents.

BRABANTIO

What kind of obscene wretch are you?

IAGO

I am one, sir, who comes to tell you that your daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs.

BRABANTIO

What profane wretch art thou?

IAGO

I am one, sir, that comes to tell you your daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs*.

**Note: 'Beast with two backs' – euphemism for sex. Two people entwined as one, having two backs. It first appears in print in England here in Othello, but a French version of the saying appeared fifty years earlier in 'Gargantua and Pantagruel' by Francois Rabelais; "la beste à deux doz".*

BRABANTIO

You are a scoundrel.

IAGO

You are... (*avoiding being rude*) a senator.

BRABANTIO

You shall answer for this. I know your type, Roderigo.

BRABANTIO

Thou art a villain.

IAGO

You are ~ a senator.

BRABANTIO

This shalt thou answer; I know thee, Roderigo.

RODERIGO

Sir, I shall answer to any charge, but I ask you, if with your permission and wise consent – as I suspect now it was – that your beautiful daughter, at this late hour of the night, has been taken with nothing better to protect her than a dubious hired servant, a gondolier no less, to the filthy embraces of a lustful Moor? If this is known to you, and has your permission, then we have wronged you most openly and rudely. But if you know nothing of this, common decency tells me that we have been wrongly rebuked. I would not break the bounds of decency by playing a prank on your exalted self. I say again, if you have not given your daughter permission, then she has made a shameful rebellion against you. Her duty, beauty, sense and fortune is tied to a low class, roving foreigner of no fixed abode. Go put your mind at rest. If she is in her bedroom or in your house, bring the justice of the state down upon me for so deluding you.

**Note: 'Odd-even and dull watch of the night' – around midnight, one day or the next, a quiet time for a night watchman.*

'Gondolier' – a Venetian who rows a gondola. Not someone you would hire to escort your daughter.



RODERIGO

Sir, I will answer anything. But I beseech you, If't be your pleasure and most wise consent - As partly I find it is - that your fair daughter, At this odd-even and dull watch o'the night*, Transported with no worse nor better guard But with a knave of common hire, a gondolier*, To the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor - If this be known to you, and your allowance, We then have done you bold and saucy wrongs; But if you know not this, my manners tell me We have your wrong rebuke. Do not believe That from the sense of all civility I thus would play and trifle with your reverence. Your daughter, if you have not given her leave, I say again, hath made a gross revolt; Tying her duty, beauty, wit, and fortunes In an extravagant and wheeling stranger Of here and everywhere. Straight satisfy yourself. If she be in her chamber or your house, Let loose on me the justice of the state For thus deluding you.

BRABANTIO

(calling inside) Strike up a light there! Give me a torch. Wake up all my staff!
(to self) This incident is not unlike a dream I had. I'm worried it may now be coming true.
(calling inside) A light, I say! A light!

**Note: At night a light would be carried. A nobleman would have servants carry lights for him.*

BRABANTIO

Strike on the tinder, ho!
Give me a taper; call up my all people.
This accident is not unlike my dream;
Belief of it oppresses me already.
Light, I say! Light!*



Act I Scene I. Venice. A Street.

EXIT BRABANTIO FROM THE WINDOW ABOVE, BACK INDOORS.

IAGO

(to Roderigo) Farewell, Roderigo, I must leave you now. It would not be appropriate or helpful to my career if I were called as a witness against the Moor, which I shall be if I stay. I know the Venetian rulers, they may reprimand him, but they cannot safely be rid of him because by common consent he is to command the Cyprus wars, which are now in full conflict, and, for their pains, they have no other of his calibre to take his place. And in this regard, though I hate him as much as I hate the fires from hell, for the good of my present situation I must make a show of support and loyalty, which is indeed no more than a show. To make sure he is found, lead the search party to Archer's Inn. There I will be found with him. So, farewell.

IAGO

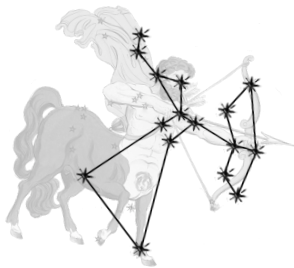
Farewell, for I must leave you.
It seems not meet nor wholesome to my place
To be produced, as if I stay I shall,
Against the Moor; for I do know the state,
However this may gall him with some check*,
Cannot with safety cast him; for he's embarked
With such loud reason to the Cyprus wars*,
Which even now stand in act, that, for their
souls,
Another of his fathom they have none
To lead their business; in which regard,
Though I do hate him as I do hell-pains,
Yet, for necessity of present life,
I must show out a flag and sign of love,
Which is indeed but sign. That you shall surely
find him,
Lead to the Sagittary* the raised search,
And there will I be with him. So, farewell.

**Note: 'Gall him with some check' – reprimand Othello, for eloping with a nobleman's daughter, a punishable act.*

'Cyprus wars' – Venice ruled Cyprus and were defending it against invasion by Turks.

'Sagittary' – The name of the inn where Othello and Desdemona are staying.

The inn is named after the constellation, Sagittarius, (Latin for archer) who is often depicted as a centaur with a drawn bow. The centaur is a mythical creature with a man's head and torso, a horse's body and legs, and a warlike temperament, further suggesting that Desdemona's relationship with Othello is bestial.



Othello Translated

LAGO HURRIES AWAY.

BRABANTIO COMES OUT IN HIS NIGHTGOWN, WITH SERVANTS AND TORCHES.

BRABANTIO

It is too wickedly true. She is gone! All that's left for me in my miserable life is bitterness.

(to Roderigo) Now, Roderigo, where did you see her?

(to self) Oh, wretched girl!

(to Roderigo) With the Moor, you say?

(to self) Who would be a father?

(to Roderigo) How did you know it was her?

(to self) Oh, it's beyond belief how she deceives me!

(to Roderigo) What did she say to you?

(to staff) Get more lights! Wake my family!

(to Roderigo) Do you think they're married?

RODERIGO

To be honest, I think they are.

BRABANTIO

(to no one) Oh, heavens above! How did she get out? Oh, treachery to her own flesh and blood! Fathers, henceforth do not trust your daughters' minds by their actions. Are there magic charms that can so deceive the character of youth and virginity?

- Roderigo, have you read of such things?

RODERIGO

Yes sir, I have indeed.

BRABANTIO

(to staff) Wake up my brother, Gratiano.

(to Roderigo) Oh, I wish you had had her now, Roderigo!

(to staff) Some of you go one way, some another.

(to Roderigo) Do you know where we can find her and the Moor?

BRABANTIO

It is too true an evil. Gone she is;

And what's to come of my despised time

Is nought but bitterness. Now, Roderigo,

Where didst thou see her? O unhappy girl!

With the Moor, sayst thou? Who would be a father?

How didst thou know 'twas she? O, she deceives me

Past thought! What said she to you? Get more tapers.

Raise all my kindred. Are they married, think you?

RODERIGO

Truly I think they are.

BRABANTIO

O heaven! How got she out? O, treason of the blood!

Fathers, from hence trust not your daughters' minds

By what you see them act. Is there not charms

By which the property of youth and maidhood

May be abused? Have you not read, Roderigo, Of some such thing?

RODERIGO

Yes, sir, I have indeed.

BRABANTIO

Call up my brother. O that you had had her!*

- Some one way, some another. - Do you know Where we may apprehend her and the Moor?

*Note: 'Had had her' – he wishes Roderigo had married her instead, but with a double meaning of 'had sex with her'.

Act I Scene I. Venice. A Street.

RODERIGO

I think I can find him, if you'd be so good as to assemble some good strong men to go with me.

BRABANTIO

(to Roderigo) Lead the way. I'll call at every house. I have influence at most houses.

(to staff) You men, get weapons. And call for some officers of the night watch.

(to Roderigo) Onwards, good Roderigo. I'll reward you for your efforts.

RODERIGO

I think I can discover him, if you please To get good guard and go along with me.

BRABANTIO

Pray you lead on. At every house I'll call; I may command at most. Get weapons, ho! And raise me special officers of night.* On, good Roderigo; I'll deserve your pains.

**Note: 'Special officers of night' – In Lewkenor's English translation of The Commonwealth and Government of Venice, which Shakespeare referred to when writing Othello, it explains that "officers of the night" were elected from the six tribes of the city. Their role being to ensure "there be not any disorder done in the darkness of night, which always emboldens men ill disposed to naughtiness". Some editions replace the word 'night' with 'might' but night would seem more likely as this matches the original work.*

EXEUNT.



ACT I SCENE II

VENICE. ANOTHER STREET.

OTHELLO (THE MOOR), IAGO, AND ATTENDANTS WITH TORCHES STAND
OUTSIDE THE INN WHERE OTHELLO STAYS WITH HIS NEW BRIDE, DESDEMONA.

IAGO

(to Othello) In the battlefield of war I have slain men, but I do not have it within my conscience to commit a premeditated murder. I lack the corrupt morality, sometimes to my own detriment. Nine or ten times I had thought about stabbing him right here, under the ribs.

IAGO

Though in the trade of war I have slain men,
Yet do I hold it very stuff o'th' conscience
To do no contrived murder. I lack iniquity,
Sometime, to do me service. Nine or ten times
I had thought t'have yerked him here, under the ribs.

IAGO INDICATES ON HIS BODY WHERE HE WOULD AIM THE KNIFE.

OTHELLO

It's better left that way.

IAGO

But he berated you with such malicious insults against your honour that it took all my will and the little godliness I still have in me to endure him.
But if I may ask you sir, are you legally married? Because you can be assured that the powerful Brabantio is much respected, his wealth gives him influence double that of the duke. He will force you to divorce, or place upon you whatever restraint or punishment the law, with all his power to enforce it, makes available to him.

OTHELLO

'Tis better as it is.

IAGO

Nay, but he prated,
And spoke such scurvy and provoking terms
Against your honour
That, with the little godliness I have,
I did full hard forbear him. But I pray you, sir,
Are you fast married? Be assured of this:
That the magnifico* is much beloved,
And hath in his effect a voice potential
As double as the duke's. He will divorce you,
Or put upon you what restraint or grievance
The law, with all his might to enforce it on,
Will give him cable*.

**Note: 'The magnifico' – Brabantio, who apparently has twice as much influence as the duke (the ruler of Venice). Magnifico is a very powerful, important, or eminent person, originally used as a title for a Venetian magnate.*

'Cable' – scope. A nautical term for a unit of length – UK; 200 yards (182.8m), US; 240 yards (219.4m).

Act I Scene II. Venice. Another Street.

OTHELLO

Let him do his worst. My service to the Venetian Government speaks louder than his complaints. It's not public knowledge – but when I hear that boasting is honourable I may publicise it – that I come from royal descent, and my noble status ranks as highly in esteem as my achievements here have earned. Know this, Iago, if it were not for the love of the gentle Desdemona, I would not limit my freedom and independence for all the treasure in the sea.

OTHELLO

Let him do his spite.
My services which I have done the signory
Shall outtongue his complaints. 'Tis yet to know -
Which, when I know that boasting is an honour,
I shall promulgate - I fetch my life and being
From men of royal siege, and my demerits
May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune*
As this that I have reached. For know, Iago,
But that I love the gentle Desdemona
I would not my unhoused free condition
Put into circumscription and confine
For the seas' worth.

**Note: There is disagreement into the meaning of the speech above. One school believes Othello means he is from royal descent so he is worth as much money as Desdemona – i.e. he didn't marry her for her money. The other school of thought is that he is of high birth, but even so he has earned as much respect from his military achievements as from his royal birth. The meaning revolves around how 'fortune' is chosen to be interpreted, as either wealth or success.*

ENTER A GROUP OF MEN WITH TORCHES AT A DISTANCE
WHICH MAKES THEM IMPOSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY AS YET.

Note: The timing of the arrival of Lieutenant Cassio and his men varies in the original texts, and in editions today. The exact point of time they first appear is not overly important, but for dramatic effect it is best if the audience is aware of the approaching men and can assume who they are before Othello notices and comments, and before Iago identifies who they are - to the audience's surprise.

OTHELLO (CONT'D)

But look. What are those lights approaching?

IAGO

They are the men raised by her father and his friends. You'd best go in.

OTHELLO

Not I. I must be found here. My qualities, my rank, and my unblemished soul show my character is true. Is it them?

OTHELLO

But look, what lights come yond?

IAGO

Those are the raised father and his friends.
You were best go in.

OTHELLO

Not I; I must be found.
My parts, my title, and my perfect soul
Shall manifest me rightly. Is it they?

IAGO STUDIES THE APPROACHING GROUP.

HE REALISES THEY MIGHT NOT BE THE MEN FROM
BRABANTIO HE HAD BEEN EXPECTING.

Othello Translated

IAGO

(surprised) By Janus, I don't think they are.

IAGO

By Janus,* I think no.

**Note: 'Janus' – Roman god and gatekeeper of Rome who has two faces looking forwards and backwards. His name is used to describe people who say one thing but mean another, it is apt Iago swears by Janus.*



LIEUTENANT CASSIO, SECOND IN COMMAND TO OTHELLO, AND HIS ATTENDANTS CARRYING TORCHES, HAVE NOW COME CLOSE ENOUGH TO BE RECOGNISED BY OTHELLO AS HIS FRIEND AND NOT HIS ENEMY.

OTHELLO

It's the duke's men, with my lieutenant.
(calls to men) The goodness of the night be upon you, my friends! What news is there?

OTHELLO

The servants of the duke, and my lieutenant*.
The goodness of the night upon you, friends!
What is the news?

**Note: 'Lieutenant' – first syllable is pronounced 'lef' in Britain, 'loo' in USA.*

CASSIO

(ignoring Iago) The duke sends greetings, general, and he requires your immediate presence, post-haste.

CASSIO

The duke does greet you, general,
And he requires your haste-post-haste appearance
Even on the instant.*

**Note: 'Post-haste' - Post horses were especially chosen for their speed, strength and stamina for delivering mail. From this we get the phrase 'post-haste', meaning with great speed, the words then being written on urgent letters.*

OTHELLO

What do you think is the matter, Cassio?

OTHELLO

What is the matter, think you?

CASSIO

Something to do with Cyprus, as far as I can tell. It's a serious matter though. The naval ships have exchanged a dozen messages in fast succession with each other tonight, and many of the senators have been awoken and are meeting at the duke's already. You have been urgently called for, and when not found at your lodgings, the senate sent out three search parties to find you.

CASSIO

Something from Cyprus, as I may divine;
It is a business of some heat: the galleys*
Have sent a dozen sequent messengers
This very night at one another's heels,
And many of the consuls, raised and met,
Are at the duke's already. You have been hotly called for.
When being not at your lodging to be found
The senate sent about three several quests
To search you out.

**Note: 'Galleys' – Mediterranean naval ships.*



Act I Scene II. Venice. Another Street.

OTHELLO

It's good that you found me. I'll have a quick word in this house here, then go with you.

OTHELLO

'Tis well I am found by you.
I will but spend a word here in the house,
And go with you.

EXIT OTHELLO INTO THE HOUSE, LEAVING IAGO WITH
HIS NEW COMMANDING OFFICER, CASSIO.

CASSIO

(to Iago) Ensign, why is he here?

IAGO

Goodness, tonight he has boarded a land ship. If it turns out to be a lawful prize, he's made forever.

CASSIO

Ancient, what makes he here?

IAGO

Faith, he tonight hath boarded a land-carrack*;
If it prove lawful prize, he's made for ever.

**Note: 'Carrack' – A carrack was an ocean going cargo ship common in the Mediterranean. Here used again as another euphemism for sex. It was also used as a naval ship before the galleon was developed from it.*

CASSIO

I don't understand.

IAGO

He's married.

CASSIO

To who?

CASSIO

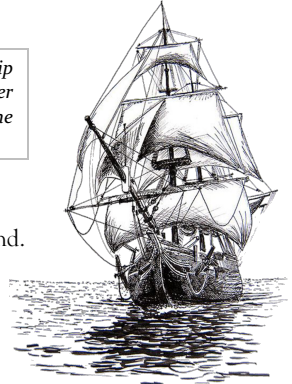
I do not understand.

IAGO

He's married.

CASSIO

To who?



RE-ENTER OTHELLO FROM THE HOUSE.

IAGO

Marry, to...
(to Othello) Come, captain, shall we go?

IAGO

Marry,* to - Come, captain, will you go?

**Note: 'Marry' was an common exclamation, corrupted from 'By (the Virgin) Mary'. So this line is an exclamation and also a pun. An equivalent expression today would be 'jeez', short for 'Jesus'.*

OTHELLO

I'm ready.

OTHELLO

Have with you.

SOUNDS OF AN APPROACHING MOB CAN BE HEARD AND TORCHES SEEN.

Othello Translated

CASSIO

Here comes one of the other groups looking for you.

CASSIO

Here comes another troop to seek for you.

ENTER BRABANTIO, RODERIGO, WITH OFFICERS, AND TORCHES.

IAGO

(to Othello) It is Brabantio, General. Be careful, he comes with bad intentions.

IAGO

It is Brabantio. General, be advised; He comes to bad intent

OTHELLO

Hey there! Stop there!

OTHELLO

Holla, stand there!

RODERIGO

(to Brabantio) Signor, it is the Moor.

RODERIGO

Signor, it is the Moor.

BRABANTIO

Get him, the thief!

BRABANTIO

Down with him, thief!

BOTH GROUPS DRAW THEIR SWORDS.

IAGO

You, Roderigo? Come, sir, I will fight you!

IAGO

You, Roderigo!* Come, sir, I am for you.*

**Note: This is a pretence of surprise by Iago. He arranged for Roderigo to bring Brabantio here, his act is to pretend he had nothing to do with the arrival of the mob. Some texts use a question mark, others an exclamation mark.*

OTHELLO

(calmly, with authority) Put away your polished swords before the morning dew rusts them. Good signor, you earn more respect from your aged years than from your weapons.

OTHELLO

Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust 'em.
Good signor, you shall more command with years
Than with your weapons.

BRABANTIO

Oh, you foul thief! Where have you hidden my daughter?

BRABANTIO

O thou foul thief! Where hast thou stowed* my daughter?

Note: 'Stowed' – stored. Another nautical term of the time (now used for planes and cars as well). Shakespeare is emphasising that they are naval officers.

OTHELLO, WHO HAS NOT DRAWN HIS SWORD, DOES NOT IMMEDIATELY ANSWER, WHICH IRRITATES BRABANTIO EVEN MORE.

OTHELLO STANDS COMMANDINGLY, HANDS ON HIPS.

Act I Scene II. Venice. Another Street.

BRABANTIO (CONT'D)

You are in league with the devil, and now you have bewitched her. If she wasn't imprisoned under the spell of some magic charm, I ask anyone with an ounce of sense, whether a maiden so gentle, beautiful, and happy, so opposed to marriage that she shunned the most eligible wealthy bachelors of our nation, would ever have exposed herself to public ridicule by running from the safety of my parentage to the (*sarcastic*) sooty bosom of such a 'thing' as you! To live in fear not happiness. Let the world judge if it is not obvious that you have practiced your foul magic on her, corrupted her delicate youth with drugs and potions that weakened her resistance. I'll have it decided in court. It's the only possible reason and plain to any common sense. I therefore arrest you and charge you as a physical and sexual abuser, and practiser of the illegal dark arts. Hold him men. If he resists, subdue him by whatever means necessary.

BRABANTIO

Damned as thou art, thou hast enchanted her, For I'll refer me to all things of sense, If she in chains of magic were not bound, Whether a maid so tender, fair, and happy, So opposite to marriage that she shunned The wealthy curled* darlings of our nation, Would ever have, t'incur a general mock, Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom* Of such a thing as thou - to fear, not to delight. Judge me the world if 'tis not gross in sense That thou hast practised on her with foul charms, Abused her delicate youth with drugs or minerals That weakens motion.* I'll have't disputed on; 'Tis probable, and palpable to thinking. I therefore apprehend and do attach thee For an abuser of the world, a practiser Of arts inhibited and out of warrant. Lay hold upon him. If he do resist, Subdue him at his peril.

**Note: 'Wealthy curled' - eloquently and ostentatiously dressed. Brabantio is saying that even (what he considers) the best men for his daughter were shunned by her, so for Othello to have seduced her he must have used some kind of magic and imprisonment.*

'Sooty bosom' is another unkind reference to the Moor being dark skinned.

'That weakens motion' - 'motion' could have been a typesetting error for 'notion' which would then mean he weakens her judgement and understanding.

BOTH GROUPS OF MEN DRAW THEIR SWORDS, OTHELLO'S MEN
TO DEFEND HIM, AND BRABANTIO'S MEN TO ARREST OTHELLO.

OTHELLO

Hold it right there, both my men and yours. When it is time to fight I will decide without someone telling me.
(to Brabantio) Brabantio, where do I go to answer this charge?

OTHELLO

Hold your hands,
Both you of my inclining and the rest.
Were it my cue to fight I should have known it
Without a prompter. Where will you that I go
To answer this your charge?

BRABANTIO

To prison, until such time as the law and the courts are ready to call you to answer the charges.

OTHELLO

What if I do obey? Then how will the Duke be served too. His messengers are here by my side summoning me to him for urgent business of the state.

OFFICER

It's true, most honourable signor. The duke has called a meeting, and you, your noble self, I am sure has been sent for too.

BRABANTIO

What? The duke in a meeting? At this time of night?

(*about Othello*) Take him away. My issue with him is not trivial.

(*to all*) The Duke himself, or any of my fellow senators, cannot help but feel this wrong I have suffered as if it were their own.

For if such actions are left to run free

*Servants and heathens shall run the country.**

BRABANTIO

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

OTHELLO

What if I do obey?
How may the duke be therewith satisfied,
Whose messengers are here about my side,
Upon some present business of the state
To bring me to him?

OFFICER

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

BRABANTIO

How, the duke in council?
In this time of the night? Bring him away.
Mine's not an idle cause; the duke himself,
Or any of my brothers of the state,
Cannot but feel this wrong as 'twere their own;
*For if such actions may have passage free,
Bondslaves and pagans shall our statesmen be**



**Note: Rhyming couplets here signify the end of a scene. In Shakespeare's day there were no curtains, no lights and mostly static scenery – so scene changes were not so obvious. The rhyming lines, though not strictly necessary, are included in the translation to maintain the feel of the original.*

Audiences were conditioned to hear the rhyme and knew the significance. The remainder of the play would be mostly written in blank verse, which is not rhymed, so the contrast was apparent. Shakespeare also used rhyme for certain characters, most often mad, evil or supernatural characters, or in the case of lovers, the rhyme was in the format of a sonnet.

Important Note: *The stage directions (between main text in capital letters) are included purely as the author's guide to understand the script better. Any director staging the play would have their own interpretation of the play and decide their own directions. These directions are not those of Shakespeare. You can change these directions to your own choosing or ignore them completely. For exam purposes these should be only regarded as guidance to the dialogue and should not be quoted in any studies or examinations.*