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- INTRODUCTION -

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

- CAST OF CHARACTERS -

DUKE OF VENICE

BRABANTIO Desdemona's father, a senator

GRATIANO Brabantio's brother; a noble Venetian

LODOVICO a relative of Brabantio; a noble Venetian

OTHELLO a noble Moor in the military service of
Venice

CASSIO Othello's honorable lieutenant

IAGO Othello's ensign; a villain

RODERIGO an easily fooled young gentleman

MONTANO the governor of Cyprus before Othello

CLOWN Othello's servant

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

EMILIA Iago's wife

BIANCA a prostitute

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

ACT 1

| Scene 1 |

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

RODERIGO: Why didn't you say so earlier?

IAGO: You never listen to me anyway.

RODERIGO: But you told me you hated him—

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

Yet he picked Michael Cassio instead.
Cassio has never proved himself in battle.
And I, who led men on many battlefields,
Will be Othello's mere ensign, the lowest
rank of officer!

RODERIGO: I would rather be his hangman.

IAGO: A new system is in place.

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

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

To love the Moor.

RODERIGO: Why do you follow him, then?

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

We can't all be in charge—nor can all
those in charge be truly followed.
In following him, I'm looking out for my
own good.

As heaven is my judge, I act not out of
love and duty,
Even though I must make a show of
service.

I am never what I seem to be.

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

IAGO: Let us wake up Desdemona's father.
Making him angry will lessen Othello's joy.

RODERIGO: Here is her father's house.

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

RODERIGO: Hello! Brabantio! Signior
Brabantio! Hello!

IAGO: Wake up, Brabantio! Thieves! Thieves!

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

RODERIGO: Heavens, sir, you've been robbed!
Your heart is burst. You have lost half your
soul.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BRABANTIO: What kind of foul talk is that?

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

BRABANTIO: Villain! You'll answer for this.

RODERIGO: Sir, I will answer anything. Maybe it is your wish
That your fair daughter, in the middle of the night,
Has been carried off in the gross embrace
of a lustful Moor.
If so, we must apologize for bothering you.
But if you did not know about it, then you should thank us.