

MACMILLAN READERS
INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Othello

Retold by Chris Rose

 MACMILLAN

The People In The Play



Othello
the general
of the Venetian army



Desdemona
Othello's wife



Cassio
Othello's lieutenant



Iago
Othello's standard-bearer



Emilia
Iago's wife

Roderigo – a rich man from Venice

Brabantio – a senator and Desdemona's father

Duke – the duke of Venice

Montano – the governor of Cyprus

Lodovico – a senator

Bianca – Cassio's girlfriend

Soldiers

Senators

Men from Cyprus

A messenger¹²

Act 1, Scene 1

[Enter Iago and Roderigo, walking through Venice at night.]

Roderigo: I don't believe you! She's run away and married the Moor? I thought you hated him.

Iago: I do. I am the best soldier in his army, so when he needed a new lieutenant, I believed I was the man. But then he said, 'I have already chosen my new lieutenant.'

Roderigo: No! Who is it?

Iago: Michael Cassio from Florence, a man with no experience of fighting. He's read about being a soldier but has none of the practice. But he got the job when it's I who have shown I've got the experience of lots of battles, like Rhodes and Cyprus.

Roderigo: That's not fair or right!

Iago: The world is not fair or right, Roderigo.

Roderigo: Why do you stay with him?

Iago: Don't worry, Roderigo. In following him, I follow only myself. Let it be said: I am not what I seem.

Roderigo: But how lucky he is to marry her!

Iago: Come! Let's visit Desdemona's father. Let's give him some trouble, and poison¹³ the Moor's happiness while we're there.

Roderigo: Here is her father's house; I'll call out loud.

Iago: Make a noise as if there were a fire!

Roderigo: Brabantio! Hey, Signior Brabantio!

Iago: Wake up, Brabantio! Thieves¹⁴! There are thieves about! Your house and your daughter are in danger!

[Brabantio looks out of a window above the street.]

Brabantio: What's happening? What are you shouting about?

Roderigo: Sir, is all your family inside?

Iago: Are your doors locked?

Brabantio: Why? Why are you asking me this?

Iago: You have been robbed, sir! They have taken half of

your heart and half of your soul¹⁵! Quickly, wake everyone in the house! Get up!

Brabantio: What are you talking about? Are you mad?

Roderigo: Don't you know my voice, sir?

Brabantio: No. Who are you?

Roderigo: My name is Roderigo.

Brabantio: Oh no! I told you not to come here again. My daughter won't marry you. But you've come back here to make trouble, waking me up in the middle of the night!

Roderigo: Please be patient, sir, and listen to us.

Brabantio: Why are you talking about thieves? This is Venice, not the middle of the countryside!

Iago: Sir, you are wrong! We have come to help you.

Brabantio: And who on earth are you?

Iago: I am someone who can tell you that your daughter has married the Moor.

Brabantio: You're a villain¹⁶ and a liar¹⁷! You'll pay for this!

Roderigo: Sir, believe us. Your lovely daughter has got up in the middle of the night and run away. A common gondolier¹⁸ has taken her to be with the Moor. But if you already know all this, we apologize for disturbing you.

Brabantio: I dreamed about something terrible like this happening ... Help! Give me some light – bring torches! Help!

[Brabantio goes inside his house.]

Iago: Roderigo, I must go back to the Moor now. I need to keep my job and I need him to trust¹⁹ me. Venice can't do without him because he is the best general they've got for the Cyprus war. I must do my job of standard-bearer and pretend to be his friend – although it is only a sign.

[Exit Iago. Enter Brabantio and his servants, carrying torches.]

Brabantio: It's true! She's gone! My life is ruined! Roderigo, where did you see her? Oh, unhappy girl! Who would be a father! Are you sure it was her? Oh! She has lied to me!

What did she say to you? Get some more torches, find people to help me! Are they married, do you think?

Roderigo: Truly I think they are.

Brabantio: Oh no! How did she get out? Fathers, never trust your daughters! Oh Roderigo, I wish I had let you marry her! At least you are from Venice. Do you know where we can find them?

Roderigo: Yes, I know where they are. They are at an inn²⁰ in the city. Get some men together and come with me.

Brabantio: Yes – we'll follow you! We'll call at every house on the way and ask more of my friends to come with us.

Thank you, good Roderigo!

[Exit all.]

Act 1, Scene 2

[Enter Othello, Iago and some soldiers, outside an inn.]

Iago: Roderigo spoke so badly of you, sir. I would never murder anyone except in battle, but nine or ten times I would have stabbed²¹ him, hearing the things he said of you.

Othello: It is better as it is.

Iago: But tell me, sir, are you definitely married? Brabantio is powerful and will try to break up your marriage.

Othello: Let him do as he wishes. I have done good service in Venice and my actions will speak for me more than his words will speak against me. I am descended²² from kings, I have nothing to be ashamed²³ of. Know that I love Desdemona very much, and I would not have given up my life as a single man for any other woman. But look – torches. Who is this?

Iago: That will be Brabantio, her angry father, and his friends. You'd better go into the inn, sir.

Othello: Not I; I must be found. I have nothing to hide. Is it them?

Iago: By Janus²⁴, I think no.

[Enter Cassio, Othello's lieutenant, and some soldiers.]

Othello: The duke's men and my new lieutenant! Good evening to you, my friends. What is the news?

Cassio: The duke wishes to see you immediately, general.

Othello: What do you think is the matter?

Cassio: A dangerous situation in Cyprus. Our ships in the Mediterranean have sent many messages and the duke has called all the senators to a meeting. He has sent us to find you urgently. We went to your house but could not find you there. They have sent others to look for you, too.

Othello: It is good you found me. Wait here a moment and then I will come with you. [Othello goes into the inn.]

Cassio: Iago, why is he staying here?

Iago: If what he's done is legal, he's made forever!

Cassio: I do not understand.

Iago: He's got married.

Cassio: To who?

Iago: To – [Enter Othello.] – Are you ready, general?

Othello: Yes, let us go.

Cassio: Wait. Here are some more looking for you.

[Enter Brabantio, Roderigo and soldiers with torches and swords²⁵.]

Iago: It is Brabantio. Be careful, general, he's angry with you.

Othello: Stop there!

Roderigo [to Brabantio]: Signior, it is the Moor.

Brabantio: Get the thief!

[Everyone raises their swords.]

Othello: Put your bright swords away. Sir, I will listen to you because I respect your age and not because your men are armed with swords.

Othello: Keep up your bright swords, for the **dew** will **rust** them.
Good signior, you shall more command with years
Than with your weapons.

dew = small drops of water that form on the ground during the night

rust = to become damaged by rust, the rough red substance that forms on iron or steel

Brabantio: You foul²⁶ thief! What have you done with my daughter? Where is she? Such a beautiful and happy girl! She didn't want to get married, even to the most handsome young men in Venice! So why would she choose you? You're frightening, not handsome! You tricked²⁷ her. You must have put a spell on her, some bad magic. Or drugged her with something, you villain! [To his soldiers] Get him! And if he tries to resist²⁸, let him have it^P!

[Brabantio's soldiers go towards Othello; Othello's soldiers raise their swords to defend him.]

Othello: Stop. Let me go, all of you. If it was the right time to fight, I would have known it without your help. [To Brabantio] Where do you want me to go?

Brabantio: To prison!

Othello: But if I go to prison, I can't go to the duke. What will these soldiers, who have come to bring me to the duke's meeting, say to him?

Cassio [to Brabantio]: It is true, sir. The duke is holding an urgent meeting – there is no time to lose^P. I am sure he wants you there, too.

Brabantio: What, a meeting at this time of night? We will all go and I will tell the duke and the other senators about how he tricked my daughter into this terrible marriage. They will help me, I am sure of it.

[Exit all.]