

# Othello, the Moore of Venice

[Shakespeare homepage](#) | [Othello](#) | Act 5, Scene 2  
[Previous scene](#)

## SCENE II. A bedchamber in the castle: DESDEMONA in bed asleep;

a light burning.

*Enter OTHELLO*

### OTHELLO

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul,--  
Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars!--  
It is the cause. Yet I'll not shed her blood;  
Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,  
And smooth as monumental alabaster.  
Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.  
Put out the light, and then put out the light:  
If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,  
I can again thy former light restore,  
Should I repent me: but once put out thy light,  
Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,  
I know not where is that Promethean heat  
That can thy light relume. When I have pluck'd the rose,  
I cannot give it vital growth again.  
It must needs wither: I'll smell it on the tree.

*Kissing her*

Ah balmy breath, that dost almost persuade  
Justice to break her sword! One more, one more.  
Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,  
And love thee after. One more, and this the last:  
So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep,  
But they are cruel tears: this sorrow's heavenly;  
It strikes where it doth love. She wakes.

### DESDEMONA

Who's there? Othello?

### OTHELLO

Ay. Desdemona.

### DESDEMONA

Will you come to bed, my lord?

### OTHELLO

Have you pray'd to-night, Desdemona?

**DESDEMONA**

Ay, my lord.

**OTHELLO**

If you bethink yourself of any crime  
Unreconciled as yet to heaven and grace,  
Solicit for it straight.

**DESDEMONA**

Alas, my lord, what do you mean by that?

**OTHELLO**

Well, do it, and be brief; I will walk by:  
I would not kill thy unprepared spirit;  
No; heaven forbid! I would not kill thy soul.

**DESDEMONA**

Talk you of killing?

**OTHELLO**

Ay, I do.

**DESDEMONA**

Then heaven  
Have mercy on me!

**OTHELLO**

Amen, with all my heart!

**DESDEMONA**

If you say so, I hope you will not kill me.

**OTHELLO**

Hum!

**DESDEMONA**

And yet I fear you; for you are fatal then  
When your eyes roll so: why I should fear I know not,  
Since guiltiness I know not; but yet I feel I fear.

**OTHELLO**

Think on thy sins.

**DESDEMONA**

They are loves I bear to you.

**OTHELLO**

Ay, and for that thou diest.

**DESDEMONA**

That death's unnatural that kills for loving.  
Alas, why gnaw you so your nether lip?  
Some bloody passion shakes your very frame:  
These are portents; but yet I hope, I hope,  
They do not point on me.

**OTHELLO**

Peace, and be still!

**DESDEMONA**

I will so. What's the matter?

**OTHELLO**

That handkerchief which I so loved and gave thee  
Thou gavest to Cassio.

**DESDEMONA**

No, by my life and soul!  
Send for the man, and ask him.

**OTHELLO**

Sweet soul, take heed,  
Take heed of perjury; thou art on thy deathbed.

**DESDEMONA**

Ay, but not yet to die.

**OTHELLO**

Yes, presently:  
Therefore confess thee freely of thy sin;  
For to deny each article with oath  
Cannot remove nor choke the strong conception

That I do groan withal. Thou art to die.

**DESDEMONA**

Then Lord have mercy on me!

**OTHELLO**

I say, amen.

**DESDEMONA**

And have you mercy too! I never did  
Offend you in my life; never loved Cassio  
But with such general warranty of heaven  
As I might love: I never gave him token.

**OTHELLO**

By heaven, I saw my handkerchief in's hand.  
O perjured woman! thou dost stone my heart,  
And makest me call what I intend to do  
A murder, which I thought a sacrifice:  
I saw the handkerchief.

**DESDEMONA**

He found it then;  
I never gave it him: send for him hither;  
Let him confess a truth.

**OTHELLO**

He hath confess'd.

**DESDEMONA**

What, my lord?

**OTHELLO**

That he hath used thee.

**DESDEMONA**

How? unlawfully?

**OTHELLO**

Ay.

**DESDEMONA**

He will not say so.

**OTHELLO**

No, his mouth is stopp'd;  
Honest Iago hath ta'en order for't.

**DESDEMONA**

O! my fear interprets: what, is he dead?

**OTHELLO**

Had all his hairs been lives, my great revenge  
Had stomach for them all.

**DESDEMONA**

Alas! he is betray'd and I undone.

**OTHELLO**

Out, strumpet! weep'st thou for him to my face?

**DESDEMONA**

O, banish me, my lord, but kill me not!

**OTHELLO**

Down, strumpet!

**DESDEMONA**

Kill me to-morrow: let me live to-night!

**OTHELLO**

Nay, if you strive--

**DESDEMONA**

But half an hour!

**OTHELLO**

Being done, there is no pause.

**DESDEMONA**

But while I say one prayer!

**OTHELLO**

It is too late.

*He stifles her*

**EMILIA**

[Within] My lord , my lord! what, ho! my lord, my lord!

**OTHELLO**

What noise is this? Not dead? not yet quite dead?  
I that am cruel am yet merciful;  
I would not have thee linger in thy pain: So, so.

**EMILIA**

[Within] What, ho! my lord, my lord!

**OTHELLO**

Who's there?

**EMILIA**

[Within] O, good my lord, I would speak a word with you!

**OTHELLO**

Yes: 'tis Emilia. By and by. She's dead.  
'Tis like she comes to speak of Cassio's death.--  
The noise was here. Ha! no more moving?  
Still as the grave. Shall she come in? were't good?--  
I think she stirs again:--no. What's best to do?  
If she come in, she'll sure speak to my wife:  
My wife! my wife! what wife? I have no wife.  
O insupportable! O heavy hour!  
Methinks it should be now a huge eclipse  
Of sun and moon, and that the affrighted globe  
Should yawn at alteration.

**EMILIA**

[Within] I do beseech you  
That I may speak with you, O, good my lord!

**OTHELLO**

I had forgot thee: O, come in, Emilia;  
Soft; by and by. Let me the curtains draw.  
Where art thou?

*Unlocks the door*

*Enter EMILIA*

What's the matter with thee now?

**EMILIA**

O, my good lord, yonder's foul murders done!

**OTHELLO**

What, now?

**EMILIA**

But now, my lord.

**OTHELLO**

It is the very error of the moon;  
She comes more nearer earth than she was wont,  
And makes men mad.

**EMILIA**

Cassio, my lord, hath kill'd a young Venetian  
Call'd Roderigo.

**OTHELLO**

Roderigo kill'd!  
And Cassio kill'd!

**EMILIA**

No, Cassio is not kill'd.

**OTHELLO**

Not Cassio kill'd! then murder's out of tune,  
And sweet revenge grows harsh.

**DESDEMONA**

O, falsely, falsely murder'd!

**EMILIA**

Alas, what cry is that?

**OTHELLO**

That! what?

**EMILIA**

Out, and alas! that was my lady's voice.  
Help! help, ho! help! O lady, speak again!  
Sweet Desdemona! O sweet mistress, speak!

**DESDEMONA**

A guiltless death I die.

**EMILIA**

O, who hath done this deed?

**DESDEMONA**

Nobody; I myself. Farewell  
Commend me to my kind lord: O, farewell!

*Dies*

**OTHELLO**

Why, how should she be murder'd?

**EMILIA**

Alas, who knows?

**OTHELLO**

You heard her say herself, it was not I.

**EMILIA**

She said so: I must needs report the truth.

**OTHELLO**

She's, like a liar, gone to burning hell:  
'Twas I that kill'd her.

**EMILIA**

O, the more angel she,  
And you the blacker devil!

**OTHELLO**

She turn'd to folly, and she was a whore.

**EMILIA**



Thou dost belie her, and thou art a devil.

**OTHELLO**

She was false as water.

**EMILIA**

Thou art rash as fire, to say  
That she was false: O, she was heavenly true!

**OTHELLO**

Cassio did top her; ask thy husband else.  
O, I were damn'd beneath all depth in hell,  
But that I did proceed upon just grounds  
To this extremity. Thy husband knew it all.

**EMILIA**

My husband!

**OTHELLO**

Thy husband.

**EMILIA**

That she was false to wedlock?

**OTHELLO**

Ay, with Cassio. Nay, had she been true,  
If heaven would make me such another world  
Of one entire and Perfect chrysolite,  
I'd not have sold her for it.

**EMILIA**

My husband!

**OTHELLO**

Ay, 'twas he that told me first:  
An honest man he is, and hates the slime  
That sticks on filthy deeds.

**EMILIA**

My husband!

**OTHELLO**

What needs this iteration, woman? I say thy husband.

**EMILIA**

O mistress, villany hath made mocks with love,  
My husband say that she was false!

**OTHELLO**

He, woman;  
I say thy husband: dost understand the word?  
My friend, thy husband, honest, honest Iago.

**EMILIA**

If he say so, may his pernicious soul  
Rot half a grain a day! he lies to the heart:  
She was too fond of her most filthy bargain.

**OTHELLO**

Ha!

**EMILIA**

Do thy worst:  
This deed of thine is no more worthy heaven  
Than thou wast worthy her.

**OTHELLO**

Peace, you were best.

**EMILIA**

Thou hast not half that power to do me harm  
As I have to be hurt. O gull! O dolt!  
As ignorant as dirt! thou hast done a deed--  
I care not for thy sword; I'll make thee known,  
Though I lost twenty lives.--Help! help, ho! help!  
The Moor hath kill'd my mistress! Murder! murder!

*Enter MONTANO, GRATIANO, IAGO, and others*

**MONTANO**

What is the matter? How now, general!

**EMILIA**

O, are you come, Iago? you have done well,  
That men must lay their murders on your neck.

**GRATIANO**

What is the matter?

**EMILIA**

Disprove this villain, if thou be'st a man:  
He says thou told'st him that his wife was false:  
I know thou didst not, thou'rt not such a villain:  
Speak, for my heart is full.

**IAGO**

I told him what I thought, and told no more  
Than what he found himself was apt and true.

**EMILIA**

But did you ever tell him she was false?

**IAGO**

I did.

**EMILIA**

You told a lie, an odious, damned lie;  
Upon my soul, a lie, a wicked lie.  
She false with Cassio!--did you say with Cassio?

**IAGO**

With Cassio, mistress. Go to, charm your tongue.

**EMILIA**

I will not charm my tongue; I am bound to speak:  
My mistress here lies murder'd in her bed,--

**All**

O heavens forfend!

**EMILIA**

And your reports have set the murder on.

**OTHELLO**

Nay, stare not, masters: it is true, indeed.

**GRATIANO**

'Tis a strange truth.

## **MONTANO**

O monstrous act!

## **EMILIA**

Villany, villany, villany!

I think upon't, I think: I smell't: O villany!--

I thought so then:--I'll kill myself for grief:--

O villany, villany!

## **IAGO**

What, are you mad? I charge you, get you home.

## **EMILIA**

Good gentlemen, let me have leave to speak:

'Tis proper I obey him, but not now.

Perchance, Iago, I will ne'er go home.

## **OTHELLO**

O! O! O!

*He falls on the bed*

## **EMILIA**

Nay, lay thee down and roar;

For thou hast kill'd the sweetest innocent

That e'er did lift up eye.

## **OTHELLO**

[Rising] O, she was foul!

I scarce did know you, uncle: there lies your niece,

Whose breath, indeed, these hands have newly stopp'd:

I know this act shows horrible and grim.

## **GRATIANO**

Poor Desdemona! I am glad thy father's dead:

Thy match was mortal to him, and pure grief

Shore his old thread in twain: did he live now,

This sight would make him do a desperate turn,

Yea, curse his better angel from his side,

And fall to reprobation.

## **OTHELLO**

'Tis pitiful; but yet Iago knows  
That she with Cassio hath the act of shame  
A thousand times committed; Cassio confess'd it:  
And she did gratify his amorous works  
With that recognizance and pledge of love  
Which I first gave her; I saw it in his hand:  
It was a handkerchief, an antique token  
My father gave my mother.

**EMILIA**

O heaven! O heavenly powers!

**IAGO**

Come, hold your peace.

**EMILIA**

'Twill out, 'twill out: I peace!  
No, I will speak as liberal as the north:  
Let heaven and men and devils, let them all,  
All, all, cry shame against me, yet I'll speak.

**IAGO**

Be wise, and get you home.

**EMILIA**

I will not.

*IAGO offers to stab EMILIA*

**GRATIANO**

Fie!  
Your sword upon a woman?

**EMILIA**

O thou dull Moor! that handkerchief thou speak'st of  
I found by fortune and did give my husband;  
For often, with a solemn earnestness,  
More than indeed belong'd to such a trifle,  
He begg'd of me to steal it.

**IAGO**

Villanous whore!

**EMILIA**

She give it Cassio! no, alas! I found it,  
And I did give't my husband.

## **IAGO**

Filth, thou liest!

## **EMILIA**

By heaven, I do not, I do not, gentlemen.  
O murderous coxcomb! what should such a fool  
Do with so good a woman?

## **OTHELLO**

Are there no stones in heaven  
But what serve for the thunder?--Precious villain!

*He runs at IAGO IAGO, from behind, stabs EMILIA, and exit*

## **GRATIANO**

The woman falls; sure, he hath kill'd his wife.

## **EMILIA**

Ay, ay: O, lay me by my mistress' side.

## **GRATIANO**

He's gone, but his wife's kill'd.

## **MONTANO**

'Tis a notorious villain. Take you this weapon,  
Which I have here recover'd from the Moor:  
Come, guard the door without; let him not pass,  
But kill him rather. I'll after that same villain,  
For 'tis a damned slave.

*Exeunt MONTANO and GRATIANO*

## **OTHELLO**

I am not valiant neither,  
But ever puny whipster gets my sword:  
But why should honour outlive honesty?  
Let it go all.

## **EMILIA**

What did thy song bode, lady?  
Hark, canst thou hear me? I will play the swan.

And die in music.

*Singing*

Willow, willow, willow,--  
Moor, she was chaste; she loved thee, cruel Moor;  
So come my soul to bliss, as I speak true;  
So speaking as I think, I die, I die.

*Dies*

**OTHELLO**

I have another weapon in this chamber;  
It is a sword of Spain, the ice-brook's temper:--  
O, here it is. Uncle, I must come forth.

**GRATIANO**

[Within] If thou attempt it, it will cost thee dear:  
Thou hast no weapon, and perforce must suffer.

**OTHELLO**

Look in upon me then and speak with me,  
Or, naked as I am, I will assault thee.

*Re-enter GRATIANO*

**GRATIANO**

What is the matter?

**OTHELLO**

Behold, I have a weapon;  
A better never did itself sustain  
Upon a soldier's thigh: I have seen the day,  
That, with this little arm and this good sword,  
I have made my way through more impediments  
Than twenty times your stop: but, O vain boast!  
Who can control his fate? 'tis not so now.  
Be not afraid, though you do see me weapon'd;  
Here is my journey's end, here is my butt,  
And very sea-mark of my utmost sail.  
Do you go back dismay'd? 'tis a lost fear;  
Man but a rush against Othello's breast,  
And he retires. Where should Othello go?  
Now, how dost thou look now? O ill-starr'd wench!  
Pale as thy smock! when we shall meet at compt,  
This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven,  
And fiends will snatch at it. Cold, cold, my girl!  
Even like thy chastity. O cursed slave!

Whip me, ye devils,  
From the possession of this heavenly sight!  
Blow me about in winds! roast me in sulphur!  
Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire!  
O Desdemona! Desdemona! dead!  
Oh! Oh! Oh!

*Enter LODOVICO. MONTANO, CASSIO carried in a chair, and Officers with IAGO, prisoner*

**LODOVICO**

Where is this rash and most unfortunate man?

**OTHELLO**

That's he that was Othello: here I am.

**LODOVICO**

Where is that viper? bring the villain forth.

**OTHELLO**

I look down towards his feet; but that's a fable.  
If that thou best a devil, I cannot kill thee.

*Wounds IAGO*

**LODOVICO**

Wrench his sword from him.

**IAGO**

I bleed, sir; but not kill'd.

**OTHELLO**

I am not sorry neither: I'd have thee live;  
For, in my sense, 'tis happiness to die.

**LODOVICO**

O thou Othello, thou wert once so good,  
Fall'n in the practise of a damned slave,  
What shall be said to thee?

**OTHELLO**

Why, any thing:  
An honourable murderer, if you will;  
For nought I did in hate, but all in honour.



**LODOVICO**

This wretch hath part confess'd his villany:  
Did you and he consent in Cassio's death?

**OTHELLO**

Ay.

**CASSIO**

Dear general, I never gave you cause.

**OTHELLO**

I do believe it, and I ask your pardon.  
Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil  
Why he hath thus ensnared my soul and body?

**IAGO**

Demand me nothing: what you know, you know:  
From this time forth I never will speak word.

**LODOVICO**

What, not to pray?

**GRATIANO**

Torments will ope your lips.

**OTHELLO**

Well, thou dost best.

**LODOVICO**

Sir, you shall understand what hath befall'n,  
Which, as I think, you know not. Here is a letter  
Found in the pocket of the slain Roderigo;  
And here another: the one of them imports  
The death of Cassio to be undertook  
By Roderigo.

**OTHELLO**

O villain!

**CASSIO**

Most heathenish and most gross!

**LODOVICO**

Now here's another discontented paper,  
Found in his pocket too; and this, it seems,  
Roderigo meant to have sent this damned villain;  
But that belike Iago in the interim  
Came in and satisfied him.

**OTHELLO**

O the pernicious caitiff!  
How came you, Cassio, by that handkerchief  
That was my wife's?

**CASSIO**

I found it in my chamber:  
And he himself confess'd but even now  
That there he dropp'd it for a special purpose  
Which wrought to his desire.

**OTHELLO**

O fool! fool! fool!

**CASSIO**

There is besides in Roderigo's letter,  
How he upbraids Iago, that he made him  
Brave me upon the watch; whereon it came  
That I was cast: and even but now he spake,  
After long seeming dead, Iago hurt him,  
Iago set him on.

**LODOVICO**

You must forsake this room, and go with us:  
Your power and your command is taken off,  
And Cassio rules in Cyprus. For this slave,  
If there be any cunning cruelty  
That can torment him much and hold him long,  
It shall be his. You shall close prisoner rest,  
Till that the nature of your fault be known  
To the Venetian state. Come, bring him away.

**OTHELLO**

Soft you; a word or two before you go.  
I have done the state some service, and they know't.  
No more of that. I pray you, in your letters,  
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,  
Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,  
Nor set down aught in malice: then must you speak

Of one that loved not wisely but too well;  
Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought  
Perplex'd in the extreme; of one whose hand,  
Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away  
Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,  
Albeit unused to the melting mood,  
Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees  
Their medicinal gum. Set you down this;  
And say besides, that in Aleppo once,  
Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk  
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,  
I took by the throat the circumcised dog,  
And smote him, thus.

*Stabs himself*

## **LODOVICO**

O bloody period!

## **GRATIANO**

All that's spoke is marr'd.

## **OTHELLO**

I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee: no way but this;  
Killing myself, to die upon a kiss.

*Falls on the bed, and dies*

## **CASSIO**

This did I fear, but thought he had no weapon;  
For he was great of heart.

## **LODOVICO**

[To IAGO] O Spartan dog,  
More fell than anguish, hunger, or the sea!  
Look on the tragic loading of this bed;  
This is thy work: the object poisons sight;  
Let it be hid. Gratiano, keep the house,  
And seize upon the fortunes of the Moor,  
For they succeed on you. To you, lord governor,  
Remains the censure of this hellish villain;  
The time, the place, the torture: O, enforce it!  
Myself will straight aboard: and to the state  
This heavy act with heavy heart relate.

*Exeunt*