

HERMIONE

By
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CAST OF CHARACTERS (In order of appearance):

6 Actors: 2 Women, 4 Men - 9 characters

EMILIA/HERMIONE: 40, Female - Former Queen of Sicilia

ANTIGONUS: 50's - 60's, Male - Former Lord at King Leontes Court

IAGO: 28, Male - A soldier who secretly hates Othello

OTHELLO: 50ish, Male - A Moorish general in love with Desdemona

CASSIO: 20's, Male - A recently promoted Florentine Officer

DESDEMONA: 18, Female - An innocent damsel in love with Othello

RODRIGO: 30's, Male - A Venetian nobleman in love with Desdemona

GUARD: 20-30, Any gender - A guard

NOTE ON CASTING:

The roles of Cassio, Rodrigo and the Guard are all played by the same actor. The race of the characters Emilia, Cassio, Rodrigo, the Guard and Antigonus does not have to be caucasian though it shouldn't be black, as Othello should be the only black character. Desdemona and Iago should be caucasian.

In a dream sequence, there are roles for King Leontes, an Officer, Cleomenes and Dion, which should be played by the actors playing Othello, Iago, Cassio and Antigonus respectively.

SETTING:

The story takes place in and near Venice and then Cypress.

BRIEF SYNOPSIS:

Revenge, absolution, and racism are all front and center in this Shakespeare-inspired comedy that combines and reimagines the Bard's *The Winter's Tale* and *Othello*. The story follows Emilia, a woman seeking vengeance on her husband, the King of Sicilia, after he falsely accuses her of adultery and sentences her to death. In her quest for retribution, she joins forces with a man named Iago, who has a revenge scheme of his own.

SCRIPT GRAMMAR:

In general, the whole play wants to move very swiftly, without breath, except where the play tells you take a breath or pause or silence. An ellipsis (...) indicates a moment of thinking either before or after a bit of dialogue. Dashes at the ends of lines indicate an unfinished thought, either because a character halts herself or because another character interrupts. Slashes (/) indicate the point at which the following character's line cuts in.

ACT 1

SCENE 1

This is a dream. We are on A SAILING SHIP.
Late at night. On deck, asleep, is ANTIGONUS.
He is precariously holding a bottle of rum in his
hand.

EMILIA comes out of hiding. She quietly goes
to a rig holding up a life raft, careful not to wake
the sleeping Antigonus. She lowers the raft onto
the water.

Just as she finishes, ANTIGONUS awakes and
notices her. He is still very drunk.

ANTIGONUS

Hey! What do you think you're doing? You're not supposed to be here.

She turns to him.

EMILIA

Antigonus. It's me!

Antigonus drops his bottle in shock.

ANTIGONUS

Oh my God! My Queen? It's not possible. You're... You're dead! They told me you were
dead! Unless...

(A frightened gasp)

I'm looking at a ghost!

EMILIA

What? No. I'm not a ghost. It's me! I'm just here for my baby!

ANTIGONUS

(Frightened)

I have heard, but not believed the spirits o' the dead may walk again. And here you are. A
hideous apparition!

EMILIA

I'm not a ghost!

(Then, slightly insulted)

What do you mean hideous?

ANTIGONUS

Death has not been kind to you I see. I have to shield my eyes from your disgusting, decomposed flesh.

EMILIA

Wow. That- You're going to be really embarrassed when you realize how you're talking to me.

ANTIGONUS

And the gasses emitting from your body are putrid.

EMILIA

That is definitely not me.

ANTIGONUS

What will you do, you succubus? Haunt me forever with your stench?

EMILIA

I am not going to haunt you. I just want my baby.

ANTIGONUS

(To himself, crying)

The baby. How am I to abandon a baby?

EMILIA

I won't let you abandon my child.

ANTIGONUS

How can I not? I have been ordered by my King!

EMILIA

And I am your Queen!

ANTIGONUS

But you are a ghost.

EMILIA

I'm not a ghost!

ANTIGONUS

I see right through you.

EMILIA

Fine! I am an evil spirit. And if you DON'T give me my child I will make you suffer, do you understand? You will never return home! You will never see your wife again! I will haunt you for the rest of your days!

He cries.

ANTIGONUS

You can't haunt me more than I am already haunted by my own guilt.

EMILIA

Oh for crying out loud-

ANTIGONUS

I know I won't return home. I know I won't see my wife again. How can I? What would she think of me?

(Crying to the Gods)

Cruel fate, why have you thrust this terrible business upon me? To have me take an innocent newborn and abandon her that she should forever be mislaid until she is dead.

EMILIA

(Pleading)

Antigonus, please. Give me my child. Give me Perdita.

ANTIGONUS

Perdita. What a perfect name.

(Then)

But I'm afraid there is no point in giving you the child. She would slip right through your spectral fingers.

Emilia starts to look around the boat.

ANTIGONUS (CONT'D)

Take solace though that soon she will be a spirit like yourself and therefore able to nestle at your ghostly bosom. Until then though, you can not hold the child any more than she could push you away. Her hands would go right through you. It would be like pushing the air.

EMILIA

Dammit Antigonus! Give. Me. Perdita!

ANTIGONUS

Pushing the air. Like so.

He demonstrates by pushing her, knowing that his hands will go right through her. However, his hands do not go right through her.

She is pushed. Pushed hard. And falls off the side of the boat SCREAMING.

ANTIGONUS (CONT'D)

The air is quite dense.

SCENE 2

16 years later. The small impoverished home of EMILIA. She is lying in bed. A MAN lays asleep next to her. Suddenly, she wakes up SCREAMING as she did in her dream.

EMILIA
(Screaming)

Ahh!

MAN
(Wakes)

What the hell! What? What is it?

He sees her sitting up in bed.

MAN (CONT'D)

What's wrong with you?

EMILIA
I had a dream. Or was it... a memory? Oh my God! I remember.

He sits up next to her.

MAN
(Excitedly)

You remember? That's incredible!

(Then)

What do you remember? I know it's not common courtesy because it's impolite to scream when someone's sleeping.

EMILIA

You have to go.

MAN

What? No. That's very impolite.

EMILIA

I'm sorry. You can't stay.

MAN
Why?

EMILIA
Because... I remember.

MAN
Oh...
Yeah, that's not a reason. That's barely a sentence. Just a noun and a predicate. You have six other parts of speech at your disposal, surely you can come up with something more specific than "I remember."

EMILIA
You have to go.

MAN
What do you remember?

EMILIA
Everything.

MAN
Well, then you should remember I paid for the full night. If you double booked and think you can send me home, you are deeply mistaken.

EMILIA
Fine. You can stay.

MAN
Good.

EMILIA
But I must go.

MAN
What? No. I'm not paying for the room, I'm paying for the company.

EMILIA
What do you care if I'm here or not, we don't even have sex.

MAN
Don't short change yourself. I like you for reasons other than sex.

EMILIA
Such as?

MAN

Discretion.

EMILIA

I don't say a word about your presence here.

MAN

I don't care if people know I'm here. I just don't need them knowing we're not having sex.

EMILIA

I don't say a word about anything.

MAN

Good. Now tell me, where is it you must go?

EMILIA

Sicilia.

MAN

At this time of night?

EMILIA

The sooner the better.

MAN

What reason could possibly take you all the way to Sicilia?

EMILIA

...Revenge!

Beat.

MAN

Revenge? Wow. That's very ominous. You don't strike me as the vengeful type.

EMILIA

You don't know me.

MAN

I think I know you pretty well, Ammonia.

EMILIA

Emilia.

MAN
Emilia.

EMILIA
You don't know anything.

MAN
This would be a good opportunity to get to know you. Tell me about yourself.

EMILIA
I'd rather not.

MAN
I know you're a prostitute. I know you want revenge. And I know your name is pneumonia-

EMILIA
Emilia! We've been together five times!

MAN
Emilia. I've got it locked in now.
(Then, continuing)
What I don't know is anything about your hobbies, or your political ideologies, or who you want revenge on-

EMILIA
I'm not going to tell you that.

MAN
Maybe I can help you.

EMILIA
How can you help me?

MAN
Revenge is kind of my specialty.

EMILIA
Your specialty? You've revenged before?

MAN
Many times. In fact, I'm plotting a revenge right now. Perhaps we can help each other.

EMILIA
I don't need your help.

MAN
Oh? Do you have a plan for your revenge?

EMILIA

Yes. I am going to go to Sicilia. I'm going to find the man I am looking for and I'm going to kill him.

MAN

How are you going to kill him? With a sword?

EMILIA

Yes. With a sword.

MAN

What kind of sword? A Linzer? A Lebkuchen? A Spritz?

EMILIA

(Randomly)

A Linzer.

MAN

Good. Very good.
Those are all types of cookies.

EMILIA

I don't care what they are. I will kill him just the same!

MAN

OK. Kill him with a cookie. I love it.
...This is a different side of you. I haven't noticed it before. Don't get me wrong, I'm into it I just don't know why this is the first I am seeing it. I pride myself on being able to size people up right from the start, yet here we are on our fifth encounter and I feel like I don't know who you are at all.

EMILIA

I didn't know who I was. I've had amnesia for 16 years.

MAN

Amnesia?

EMILIA

That's not my name, in case you're wondering.

MAN

I know what amnesia is. How did you- I mean, can we unpack this a little or do you want to stay mysterious?

Emilia sighs. Then sits.

EMILIA

16 years ago my husband tried to kill me.

Your husband? MAN

King Leontes of Sicilia. EMILIA

King Leontes. Is he the one with the hump? MAN

No. EMILIA

The engorged tongue. MAN

No. EMILIA

The misshapen jaw. All of these royals, you know, have some sort of deformity. It's all the inbreeding. Were you two brother and sister? MAN

We were husband and wife. EMILIA

It's fine either way. MAN

It's not fine. I wouldn't sleep with my brother. EMILIA

Do you have a brother? MAN

No. EMILIA

Then how do you know? MAN

We were just husband and wife. EMILIA

Ok. Wonderful. And he is a King? MAN

Yes. EMILIA

MAN
(Realizing)

So that would make you a queen.

EMILIA

It would.

MAN

And now you're a prostitute. A curious career trajectory.

EMILIA

Don't judge me.

MAN

It's just this story is hard to believe. It sounds like a winter's tale.

EMILIA

I swear to you it's not.

MAN

Very well. Why did your husband want to kill you? Did he find out you aspired to be a prostitute?

EMILIA

I didn't aspire to be a prostitute. And secondly, I prefer the term courtesan.

MAN

A courtesan is for men with a higher social standing. Not to put myself down, but I'm just a soldier. I should be an officer, but I was overlooked and someone else promoted in my place.

EMILIA

I can't imagine why.

MAN

Just as well. If not for that, we would have never met.

EMILIA

Oh?

MAN

Of course. If I was an officer I'd be sleeping with a high-class courtesan not some cheap prostitute. But tell me more about your husband. Why did he want to kill you? What did you do?

EMILIA

I didn't do anything. He thought I was having an affair with another man. His jealousy got the better of him and the only thing that would satisfy his rage was my death.

MAN

(Intrigued)

Jealousy sparked such fire?

EMILIA

Yes. Unwarranted jealousy, no less. It is a powerful, if not unstoppable force.

MAN

...Noted.

EMILIA

We had a son. Mamillius. Only a child at the time, he watched as his father threw me in jail, tried me for adultery and sentenced me to death.

MAN

I don't have kids but that doesn't sound like something a mother should let a child watch.

EMILIA

I didn't want him to watch it.

MAN

It could affect his development.

EMILIA

It killed him.

MAN

See?

EMILIA

He died... of grief.

MAN

Yeah, that's... not how I want to go.

EMILIA

I was pregnant with our second child when my husband threw me in jail. I gave birth to her in prison. I had hoped that upon seeing his new daughter his heart might soften.

MAN

Did it?

EMILIA

It did not. It only made him angrier. Convinced that the child was fathered by another man, he ordered our daughter be taken out to sea and abandoned. Lost forever! I couldn't bear the thought of losing a second child, so with the help of a friend, I faked my death, snuck onto the boat she was on, and tried to save her.

MAN

What happened?

EMILIA

I failed. I was knocked off the boat, fell into a life raft I had prepared for our escape, hit my head on the side, rendered unconscious and floated away. When I woke, I couldn't even remember that I had a daughter, let alone one that needed saving. I didn't know who I was at all.

MAN

Until just a few moments ago?

EMILIA

After 16 years it finally all came back to me in a flood of memories. My husband. My children. My true name.

MAN

Emilia is not your real name?

EMILIA

Of course not.

MAN

So what, it's like your hooker name?

EMILIA

No- I had amnesia. I didn't know what my name was. I had to pick one. Emilia was a good a name as any. My real name is-

MAN

No, no. Please don't. It took me this long just to remember Emilia. Can we just stick with that?

EMILIA

Oh my God. Fine. Whatever.

MAN

So... What happens now?

EMILIA

Now?

She considers the question.

EMILIA (CONT'D)

For the past 16 years, I did what was necessary to survive. I traveled all over the continent. I was a nurse in Verona. A tavern proprietor in London. An actor in Denmark. And now a prostitute just outside Venice.

MAN

It all makes sense.

EMILIA

What does?

MAN

Well, to go from Queen to prostitute, that was an unlikely jump. But from actor to prostitute, that's basically a lateral move.

EMILIA

What happens now is I stop trying to simply survive. I have meaning and purpose now. And that is to get revenge on the man responsible for the death of my children.

Beat.

MAN

Ok... Though I'm afraid meaning and purpose are not enough. If you go to Sicilia without a plan, without a strategy, without my help, with nothing but a sword in one hand and a cookie in the other, you will fail. The only thing you will succeed in doing is allowing your husband to finally kill you after 16 years. The rightful vengeance you seek will be lost forever.

He moves close to Emilia.

MAN (CONT'D)

I can get you into Sicilia, under cover, close to the King.

EMILIA

How close?

MAN

A blade's distance away. So you can make him suffer, as he deserves to suffer. But you have to help me first.

EMILIA

Help you with what?

MAN

Righting a wrong and getting some vengeance of my own.

EMILIA

Against whom?

MAN

A monster of a man, coming from a part of the world where witchcraft and wizardry are real and their affects tragic. A young woman's life hangs in the balance. I've discovered this beast has bewitched this innocent, young girl with his black magic, made her think she is in love with him. If she stays with him, chained by his enchantment, I fear what will happen to her. He is violent and vile. Perhaps a fate much worse than yours even. I want to save her. I need to break the spell in order to do it, and show her and the rest of the world his true colors.

EMILIA

And how can I help?

MAN

I want you to be my wife.

EMILIA

I'm already married and my first husband is trying to kill me. I'm not inclined to take on a second.

MAN

I want you to be my *pretend* wife. In order to expose this ugly devil, I need him to trust me, not think I'm trying to steal his enchanted love. Under the cover of marriage, I won't be a threat. Also... I need you to get close to her. Report to me everything she says and does while under his spell.

EMILIA

I don't even know her, how do you expect me to get close to her?

MAN

I have a plan for that. You'll see I have a plan for everything. That's the key to a successful revenge. That's what I can teach you.

EMILIA

So this is an apprenticeship of sorts. One where we help save a woman who may get killed by her husband.

MAN

Yes. And if you do this for me, be my wife and my spy, see it through till the end and help me get the vengeance and justice I seek, I will use my superior, strategic brain, go with you to Sicilia and help you kill your King Leontes.

He holds out his hand. She takes it.

EMILIA

I'll do it. What's the name of the man who is the target of your revenge?

MAN

His name... is Othello.

SCENE 3

Venice, a street. OTHELLO is here with two others.

OTHELLO

(To the Man)

Iago.

The Man, who we now realize is IAGO, stands at attention.

IAGO

Yes, my Lord.

OTHELLO

(To Cassio)

Cassio.

Another man, CASSIO also stands at attention.

CASSIO

My General.

OTHELLO

My sources tell me the Turks are planning an imminent attack either against Rhodes or Cyprus. I suspect it's only a matter of time before our senate takes action to defend our territories and sends us to one of those two regions.

CASSIO

I hope it's Cypress.

(To Iago, excitedly)

There's a courtesan there I'm seeing.

IAGO

A courtesan?

CASSIO

Well, she was a prostitute, but now that I've been promoted-

OTHELLO

Gentlemen, please.

CASSIO

I'm sorry to bring up my promotion.

(To Iago)

I assume it must be a painful topic for you, Iago.

IAGO

Why do you assume that?

CASSIO

If the roles were reversed, and I'd been passed up by Othello, I'd be plotting bloody murder.

OTHELLO

The important thing is we must be prepared- Plotting bloody murder? Against me?

CASSIO

No. What? Did I say that out loud? That's embarrassing. No, of course not, sir. Not against you.

IAGO

Against who?

CASSIO

Not against anyone. I wouldn't plot bloody murder. I don't even like blood.

IAGO

So you'd plot a non-bloody murder.

CASSIO

I wouldn't plot any kind of murder. I'd be disappointed. That's all I meant to say. If I were Iago.

OTHELLO

Are you disappointed, Iago?

IAGO

Not in the slightest. I trust your judgment and remain loyal and faithful in my duty, patient in the knowledge that when it's my time to be promoted, I'll be promoted.

OTHELLO

That is exactly how you should feel.

(To Cassio)

Take note, Cassio.

CASSIO

Why? I'm not the one who wasn't promoted.

OTHELLO

All things given, can be taken away.

CASSIO

Noted, sir.

OTHELLO

Including our Christian country, which the Turkish fleet hopes to take for their very own. We won't let them. We like our way of life and we mean to preserve it.

CASSIO

Absolutely. This courtesan in Cypress, she is just delightful.

IAGO

Now we know what we're fighting for. Cassio's Christian right to bed courtesans.

CASSIO

As if you're not bedding one now!

OTHELLO

We've all bed our share of courtesans!

The men look at Othello with some surprise.

CASSIO

Certainly not you, sir?

OTHELLO

Why not me? Am I so different from you? I mean, obviously I haven't been with one recently. I've confided in you both my affection for Desdemona, information I trust you have kept to yourselves.

IAGO

Absolutely, sir.

CASSIO

Not a word.

OTHELLO

Prior to her, however, what man wouldn't enjoy making the Beast with Two Backs with an experienced lady of the evening?

CASSIO

I find that position a little too tame for me, the Beast with Two Backs. The One-Legged Stork on the other hand. Or the Crouching Tiger. The Leaning Tower of Pisa! You need a temptress with a strong core for that one.

OTHELLO

I may be too conventional for all of that, but yes, I have indulged in a courtesan or two.

CASSIO

Two? That doesn't sound conventional.

IAGO

Sounds chafing.

OTHELLO

In fact, there was once this lovely woman just outside Venice.

IAGO

(Concerned)

I beg your pardon.

OTHELLO

This was some time ago, of course.

IAGO

(Concerned)

Just... You said just outside Venice? What was her name?

OTHELLO

I don't recall. I couldn't even tell you what she looked like, the room was always so dark.

IAGO

That's a relief.

CASSIO

That's a relief?

IAGO

(Covering)

I mean, that's annoying. A dark room? That's the worst.

CASSIO

I agree. I like the lights on. I'm very visually stimulated. Unless I'm drunk, in which case it doesn't matter.

OTHELLO

Because either way it's pleasurable?

CASSIO

No, because I can't get erect. Alcohol really messes with me. I'm also an angry drunk. It's the worst.

IAGO

We're learning so much about you, Cassio.

CASSIO

I believe in transparency. I've got nothing to hide. Secrets are weapons other people use against your good name. My reputation is very important to me so I try to be an open book... Though let's not mention all the hookers I've dated. They all think they're the only one.

IAGO

You have nothing to worry about, my friend. I will not disclose or take advantage of any of your indiscretions.

(To Othello, leading)

Or yours, my Lord...

OTHELLO

Mine are all in the past now. The love of a good woman has changed me to the core. I'll leave the courtesans to you both.

CASSIO

I will take them.

IAGO

I will pass.

CASSIO

More for me.

IAGO

I have also found the love of a good woman has changed me to the core and have secretly gotten myself married.

CASSIO

What? You sly dog.

OTHELLO

Iago, that's wonderful news. Who is the woman? What's her name?

IAGO

Her name is Emilia.

OTHELLO

Emilia. Lovely. What does she do?

IAGO

She is a lady in waiting.

OTHELLO

Wonderful! A lady in waiting for whom?

IAGO

She is currently between ladies.

CASSIO

(With innuendo)

Between ladies? That's my favorite position. Also known as the Swinging Bishop.

OTHELLO

Desdemona I believe is in need of a new attendant.

IAGO

Is she? That would be fantastic. I mean, I don't want to impose.

OTHELLO

No imposition. I will talk to her father. I'm actually heading there now.

IAGO

Thank you so much!

OTHELLO

(Heading for the exit)

Gentlemen, don't forget what I told you. Stay alert and be prepared for travel should the Senate summon us to fight the Turks. It could happen within the next week or two.

CASSIO

I don't wish for war, General, but if there has to be one... Let's hope it's in Cypress. I don't know any hookers in Rhodes.

OTHELLO

Iago, I should know later today if I have good news for your Emilia.

IAGO

There'd be no better news than working for your Desdemona.

SCENE 4

A week later. Emilia is tidying a much nicer bedroom. DESDEMONA has rushed in beaming, carrying a garment bag of sorts.

DESDEMONA
(Excitedly)

Emilia! Emilia!

EMILIA

Desdemona, what's the matter?

DESDEMONA
(Suddenly trying to play it cool)

...Nothing.

EMILIA

...OK.

DESDEMONA
(Unable to contain herself)

Maybe something.

(Then, cautiously)

Is my father here?

EMILIA

No.

DESDEMONA

Or your husband?

EMILIA

Iago?

DESDEMONA
Of course, Iago. How many husbands do you have?

EMILIA

Just the one.

DESDEMONA

Where is he?

EMILIA

Iago?

DESDEMONA

Yes. Your husband.

EMILIA

He's out. What is it? What's going on with you?

DESDEMONA

I have a secret that I am not supposed to tell anyone but I want to tell someone but it has to be someone I know I can trust.

EMILIA

You can tell me. You are my mistress. I would never betray your confidence.

DESDEMONA

I want to believe that, though I've only known you a week, though in that week, I have come to think very highly of you, though I have been burned before, though I should have seen that coming, my astrologist warned me someone who works for me would betray me and tell my father that I had dropped out of school. He was so angry when he found out.

EMILIA

Who told him?

DESDEMONA

My astrologist! Now I don't know who to trust.

EMILIA

I'd like to think you can trust me.

DESDEMONA

I'd like to think it's because of gravity we are not all floating up into space.

EMILIA

You... don't think that?

DESDEMONA

No, I do. And when I do, I like it. I'm afraid of heights. I'm also afraid I won't be able to tell my secret to anyone. If only Barbary was still here.

EMILIA

Barbary?

DESDEMONA

Our old maid.

EMILIA

You confided in her?

DESDEMONA

Of course. She was like a mother to me. I mean a good mother. Not the one I had. You remind me of her.

EMILIA

Your mother?

DESDEMONA

Barbary. She was from Africa.

EMILIA

(Confused)

Is that why I remind you of her?

DESDEMONA

You remind me of her because... I think I can trust you.

EMILIA

You can!

DESDEMONA

Are you willing to swear?

EMILIA

Fuck yeah!

DESDEMONA

I mean swear an oath that you won't tell a soul what I'm about to tell you. Swear on something you love. Your husband!

EMILIA

Iago?

DESDEMONA

Is there another?

EMILIA

I swear on Iago.

(Earnestly)

You can count on me, Desdemona. I will always act in your best interest.

She takes a breath then beams.

DESDEMONA

I'm getting married!

EMILIA

What?

DESDEMONA

I'm getting married! Tonight!

EMILIA

Tonight?

DESDEMONA

I've been secretly dating Othello and we've decided to get married tonight. You won't tell anyone, will you?

EMILIA

No, of course not.

(Then, suddenly)

You have reminded me though...

She grabs a pen and paper and starts writing.

EMILIA (CONT'D)

I do have to write an urgent note to my husband.

DESDEMONA

Iago?

EMILIA

That's the one.

DESDEMONA

(Worried)

Not about me getting married?

EMILIA

No, no. Something entirely different. Nothing to do with you.

(Covering)

Iago is... going to the market and I... neglected to tell him to get milk.

DESDEMONA

Oh. I reminded you of that? How?

EMILIA

(Covering... poorly)

When you said that thing about secretly dating Othello... I was reminded of a young man I once secretly dated and... on our very first secret date he... took me to... a dairy farm.

(Then, re: the finished note)

I'm just going to hand this note to your man outside to deliver to Iago.

Emilia steps out for a moment to give instructions to an attendant outside.

DESDEMONA

(Excitedly, calling offstage)

I want to show you what I got. For tonight.

Desdemona unzips the garment bag to reveal a wedding gown, as well as some other garments.

Emilia returns.

DESDEMONA (CONT'D)

This is what I'm wearing for the wedding!

She shows off the gown.

EMILIA

Very classy.

DESDEMONA

This is what I am wearing after the wedding?

She shows off some skimpy lingerie.

EMILIA

Slightly less.

DESDEMONA

Do you think Othello will like it?

EMILIA

I can't imagine he wouldn't, though I've only known him for a week. I don't know yet what he likes or doesn't like.

DESDEMONA

I'm not sure I know either. We haven't been dating that much longer.

EMILIA

And yet you're getting married?

DESDEMONA

When you know, you know!

Besides, though we've only dated a short amount of time, he's been in my life forever. He works with my father.

EMILIA

(Facetiously, re: the skimpy lingerie)

Maybe your father would know if he'd like this outfit.

DESDEMONA

If my father found out Othello and I were getting married he would... disown me!

EMILIA

(Skeptically)

I highly doubt that. You should tell him.

DESDEMONA

Absolutely not! My father... and everyone else in this town... they don't see Othello the way I do.

EMILIA

How do they see him?

DESDEMONA

They're scared of him. Which is tragic, don't you think? People being scared of you, and for no other reason than just being you.

EMILIA

You think people are scared of him? I would assume they respect him. They made him a general.

DESDEMONA

They respect his prowess on the battlefield. And so long as he's willing to fight for them, they accept him. But as a husband for a Senator's daughter?

(Shaking her head)

I don't think they believe he has the same capacity for love as they do.

Desdemona hangs the dress on a nearby hook.

EMILIA

I think parents just want to ensure their children's marriages have the highest chance of success, and what better way to do that than to make sure they have a lot in common.

DESDEMONA

Othello and I do have a lot in common.

EMILIA

Such as?

DESDEMONA

Food.

EMILIA

You both like the same food?

DESDEMONA

Not the same food. But we both like food.
We do both like the same type of tree: Cherry. We both have the same favorite color:
Purple. We both are fire signs, if you believe that sort of thing?

EMILIA

Do you?

DESDEMONA

I do. He doesn't.

EMILIA

What about religion?

DESDEMONA

He's a Christian just like me.

EMILIA

Born a Christian?

DESDEMONA

He was born a Muslim, but he's since converted to Christianity.

EMILIA

Muslim, right. Which is it they believe again? Voodoo or witchcraft?

DESDEMONA

I don't think they believe either.

EMILIA

It's so hard to keep track. When did he convert?

DESDEMONA

When he was very young? Like 18.

EMILIA

So... Your age.

DESDEMONA

(Realizing)

Oh. I guess that's right.

EMILIA

Is the age difference an issue?

DESDEMONA

Between me and Othello? I barely notice. Probably because we have so much in
common.

EMILIA

Some people might judge it. You know, an older man pursuing a much younger woman.

DESDEMONA

I didn't think that was unusual. Besides I don't care what people think.

EMILIA

Then why are you keeping your wedding a secret?

DESDEMONA

He cares what they think. He can be insecure about such things. Hard to imagine, I know. This General whose fought such battles and seen such horrors concerns himself with the judgement of people who claim to be his friends, but judge him all the same. I don't suppose it would put those people at ease to know he didn't pursue me. I pursued him.

Desdemona absentmindedly takes out a handkerchief and starts nervously wrapping it around her fingers.

DESDEMONA (CONT'D)

(Innocently)

Of course, now that I have him, I'm nervous. About tonight.

EMILIA

The wedding?

DESDEMONA

After the wedding.

(Whispers coyly)

I've never been with a man before. I don't know how to please him.

EMILIA

That you've never been with a man before I'm sure will please him enough.

DESDEMONA

Emilia, please! Advise me! You're married. What do men like?

Emilia considers the question.

EMILIA

What do you like? You worry about you. If he's any kind of decent man, it will please him to know you're happy. Genuinely happy. Not pretending to be happy because you think that's how you're supposed to feel...

(Probing)

Or perhaps brainwashed to think that's how you do feel.

Desdemona considers the comment. Then:

DESDEMONA

(Re: The lingerie, excitedly)

Did you know you can eat this underwear? It tastes like licorice, though it's like 100 grams of sugar if you eat the whole thing.

EMILIA

I'm sure Othello will appreciate the spike in energy.

DESDEMONA

I should get ready.

EMILIA

Can I help?

DESDEMONA

I think I can manage.

(Then, re: the handkerchief in her hand)

Though where am I to put this?

EMILIA

Your handkerchief?

DESDEMONA

Yes, this dress has no pockets.

EMILIA

I think you can do without it for one night.

DESDEMONA

Absolutely not! It's a love token given to me by Othello. He insists I carry it where ever I go.

EMILIA

He insists you carry that handkerchief where ever you go? Why would he insist that?

DESDEMONA

He's a romantic. Like me. Isn't it crazy? This morning I was an innocent damsel. After tonight I will be a married woman. What a difference a day can make.

SCENE 5

A Day Later.

A sailing ship. The horn blows. Iago lies sleeping on a deck chair.

RODRIGO is at the far side of the stage unnoticed. He occasionally looks over to Iago, though is out of earshot.

Emilia looks out on the ocean.

EMILIA

(With regret)

What a difference a day can make.

She turns to see Iago sleeping on a deck chair.

EMILIA (CONT'D)

Hey! Wake up!

She kicks the chair.

EMILIA (CONT'D)

Wake up!

IAGO

Why are you always screaming when I want to sleep?

EMILIA

(Frustrated)

Tell me again why we're on a boat heading to Cypress!

IAGO

You didn't understand the first time?

EMILIA

I don't understand what it has to do with me?

IAGO

The Turks are invading Cypress. We have to defend it.

EMILIA

I have to defend it? I'm not a soldier.

IAGO

(He laughs)

Of course you're not. A woman would make a terrible soldier.

EMILIA

Please don't.

IAGO

Though Cassio makes a terrible soldier and he was promoted, so there may be hope for you yet.

EMILIA

I'm not interested.

IAGO

You can join Othello and Cassio and the rest of our Navy as they fight off those Mongolian bastards.

EMILIA

They don't trust you with such a task?

IAGO

I have a more important task. Protecting the General's most prized possession sleeping in the berth below. And of course her Lady in Waiting.

EMILIA

Waiting is the operative word. Why aren't we on our way to Sicilia so I can kill Leontes?

IAGO

Because the Turks are invading Cypress.

EMILIA

So I have to put my life on hold because you all are at war with the Ottoman Empire? What about me getting my revenge?

IAGO

The deal was you help me get my revenge first. We can't do that while Othello is off fighting the Turks. So I'm sorry, we have to wait.

EMILIA

You understand the last war with the Ottoman Empire lasted six hundred years.

IAGO

Hopefully we won't wait quite as long.

EMILIA

My husband will be dead of natural causes before this war is done.

IAGO

So long as he's dead, mission accomplished.

EMILIA

I don't understand why you're so calm. You're revenge is put on hold, as well.

IAGO

I'm a working class person. I'm used to getting screwed and having things not go my way. You seem to be channeling your ruling class roots. You want what you want and you want it now. You have no patience, discipline or desire to earn your prize, you just want to take it. Get that promotion. Kill that King. But it doesn't work like that in the real world, when you're not living in your castle with people waiting on you hand and foot.

EMILIA

I haven't lived in a castle for 16 years. I know what it's like to live in the real world. Do you not remember how we met? I got screwed for a living?

IAGO

So I would expect you to understand. We have to go with the flow. That's part of the process. You were an actor. Surely there were nights when not everything went right. What would you do then?

EMILIA

When I was an actor? I don't know. I would grab hands and pass a pulse. Where are you going with this?

IAGO

I was hoping you'd say, "I would improvise."

EMILIA

Look, you asked me to pretend to be your wife, I did that. You asked me to work for Desdemona and spy for you, I did that. When do we go to Sicilia?

IAGO

(Getting irritated)

When the job is done! You promised to see this through to the end. Othello is in Cypress and his beguiled wife naturally wants to be there for him when the battle is won. So that's where we must go.

Beat.

EMILIA

(Ruefully)

Of course she wants to be there. Where else would she be? Her father disowned her.

IAGO

(A hint of glee, in spite of himself)

What a difference a day can make.

EMILIA

She said he would do that and I didn't believe it. I thought she was being dramatic.

IAGO

Women have a penchant for drama.

EMILIA

(Dramatically)

I'm responsible for what's happened to her!

IAGO

Case in point.

EMILIA

She told me not to tell anyone. I told you and her father has turned his back on her.

IAGO

It's only temporary.

EMILIA

Is it?

IAGO

You need to relax.

EMILIA

No, I don't! I need to make something very clear. The fight is with Othello. He's the monster. Desdemona is the victim. I don't want anything to happen to her.

IAGO

If nothing happened to her she wouldn't be a victim.

EMILIA

I don't want her to get hurt!

IAGO

You think I do?

EMILIA

I don't know what to think. But she just lost her father, and you act as if things are working out exactly as planned.

Beat.

IAGO

When we break the spell and she sees Othello for what he really is, her father will take her back.

EMILIA

You promise she won't get hurt? I need you to swear. Swear on something you love.

IAGO

And if I told you I loved her, would that put your mind at ease? For how can one wish pain on that which he loves?

EMILIA

...Fine. Then let's break this God damn spell!

IAGO

Finally, you're on board.

EMILIA

The handkerchief. I think it might be the key.

IAGO

What handkerchief?

EMILIA

Othello gave her an embroidered napkin with instructions she carry it with her where ever she goes. Odd, right? She thinks it's a token of love. I think it's enchanted. Or voodoo'd or whatever you call it. It's what keeps her under his spell.

Iago considers this.

IAGO

I think you may be right. You need to steal it from her and get it to me.

EMILIA

Why do I have to steal it from her? Why can't you do it?

IAGO

Because you are her lady in waiting. You have access. This should be easy for you.

EMILIA

It's not! She doesn't let it out of her sight.

IAGO

I'm sure you'll think of something.

EMILIA

And why do I need to get it to you? Isn't taking it from her enough? Once it is out of her possession won't that break the spell?

IAGO

(Condescending)

Oh, you understand how the witchcraft works? You're suddenly an expert on Moorish sorcery?

EMILIA

Please don't condescend me. And no, I don't understand how any of this works. I didn't even know Moors did magic until you told me. I didn't even know they liked being called Moors.

IAGO

They do. And he does. Othello performs all sorts of wizardry. So steal the handkerchief and get it to me.

EMILIA

And what will you be doing while I am stealing from that innocent girl? What's your job in all of this?

IAGO

My job is to come up with the plan. Do you have a plan?

EMILIA

No.

IAGO

So I have to come up with the plan. That's my job. It's your job to execute that plan. To do what you're told, and right now what I am telling you is to steal the handkerchief and get it to me.

EMILIA

I heard you the first hundred times you told me!

IAGO

This is the third time I told you- You really have a tendency to hyperbolize!

EMILIA

That's like the millionth time you've told me that!

IAGO

What are we arguing about? This is supposed to be a pretend marriage. Why are we fighting?

(Then, gently)

Look... I am trying to help you. The sooner we get this done, the sooner we go to Sicilia to kill your husband. That is still what you want?

EMILIA

Yes, of course it is.

Beat.

EMILIA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I have been a little confused lately. A week ago I didn't know who I was. Then I remembered. Now I feel I am starting to forget again.

IAGO

Let me remind you. You're the woman whose children died because your husband accused you of something you did not do. That is unforgivable. A reckoning must be made and justice must be done. With any luck, our fleet will defeat the Turks handily and quickly. In the mean time...

EMILIA

Steal the handkerchief and get it to you. I'll do my best.

IAGO

Good girl.

Emilia notices Rodrigo.

EMILIA

That man. He keeps looking at you.

Iago turns and sees Rodrigo.

IAGO

That's Rodrigo. A Venetian nobleman.

EMILIA

Oh. Yes. I've heard you mention him.

IAGO

I don't think I've ever mentioned him to you.

EMILIA

Well actually... You uhm... You talk in your sleep.

IAGO

Do I?

EMILIA

From time to time. Just last night you screamed, "that dimwit Rodrigo!"

IAGO

(Laughs)

I'm sure that's not what I said.

(MORE)

IAGO (CONT'D)

(Lying)

He is actually quite brilliant.

Rodrigo removes his pants and shirt leaving on only his leopard print bikini underwear.

EMILIA

Perhaps I misheard you. I actually try not to listen. I don't want to invade your privacy. Heaven knows what one might reveal in their sleep.

Iago considers this.

IAGO

What an intriguing notion.

EMILIA

And why is he coming with us to Cypress?

IAGO

...There is some... property in Cypress that he is interested in. As Cypress is now potentially a war zone, I told him I would escort him and help him procure it.

Rodrigo looks about ready to jump.

IAGO (CONT'D)

I should talk to him actually. Why don't you go down below and check on Desdemona.

EMILIA

Yes. I'll do that.

She turns to go, but then turns back.

EMILIA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry we argued.

She exits. Iago rushes over to Rodrigo.

IAGO

What are you doing?

RODRIGO

I am going to jump!

IAGO

Because...?

RODRIGO

I can't live without Desdemona's love!

IAGO

Did we not talk about this yesterday?

RODRIGO

I can't remember everything we talk about! All I remember is I paid you a lot of money to help me steal Desdemona from Othello and now she is married to him.

IAGO

First of all, it wasn't a lot of money. I actually gave you a deal. Stealing another man's woman is specialized work. But I cut you a break because I like you and I hate Othello. Do I get a "thank you?" No. I get whining. I get,

(A mocking impersonation)

"I can't live without Desdemona's love!"

RODRIGO

I don't sound like that.

IAGO

(Mocking impersonation)

"I paid you to help me steal Desdemona from Othello and now she is married to him."

RODRIGO

That's a legitimate complaint.

IAGO

It's not a legitimate complaint. You just don't understand this work. You don't understand what's involved.

RODRIGO

Maybe if you explained it-

IAGO

I explained all this yesterday. Must I remind you?

RODRIGO

Please.

IAGO

Fine! Fine! You were all weepy.

(Mocking impersonation of Rodrigo)

"I will incontinently drown myself" you said.

RODRIGO

That does not sound like me.

IAGO

(Mocking impersonation of Rodrigo)

“It is silliness to live when to live is torment.”

RODRIGO

You do horrible impersonations, you know that?

IAGO

To which I replied, “that’s the stupidest thing I’ve ever heard!”

RODRIGO

(Conceding)

That does sound like you.

IAGO

I’d rather be a baboon than kill myself out of love for some woman I can’t have.

RODRIGO

Your impersonation of you is much better than your impersonation of me.

IAGO

She will get tired of Othello, I said.

RODRIGO

You said that?

IAGO

I said that. He is old. She is young. It is only a matter of time before she leaves him for a much younger man.

RODRIGO

I want to be that younger man.

IAGO

You can be. If you don’t kill yourself and you keep paying me.

RODRIGO

Fine. I will keep paying you. When will she be mine?

IAGO

As soon as she is done with Othello...
And right after she’s with Cassio.

RODRIGO

Good. Wait. Cassio?

IAGO

(Breaking the bad news)

I'm afraid she is in love with him.

RODRIGO

You didn't tell me that.

IAGO

I only just made it up.

RODRIGO

What?

IAGO

(Quickly covering)

I only just discovered it recently.

RODRIGO

How do you know she's in love with him?

IAGO

I saw them flirting with one another.

RODRIGO

What kind of flirting? The good kind?

IAGO

...Yes. Moreover, it was confirmed last night by Cassio himself. He talks in his sleep.

RODRIGO

You slept with Cassio?

IAGO

We were on duty together and he took a nap as he is wont to do, during which I heard him say, "Desdemona, we must hide our love!" And then, he took my hand, put his leg over mine and kissed me. Deep. On the mouth.

RODRIGO

This is why I never joined the navy.

IAGO

It was plainly clear they have a history. Mark my words, she is in love with him.

RODRIGO

But she is married to Othello.

IAGO

She is a complicated woman, Rodrigo. I presume that's one of the things you like about her.

RODRIGO

Not really, no. But the heart wants what the heart wants and it should never be questioned.

IAGO

Her heart wants Cassio.

RODRIGO

I have questions about that! How is that possible?

IAGO

Well... he is incredibly good looking.

RODRIGO

I think we're equally good looking.

IAGO

He has a way with words.

RODRIGO

I would say I'm even gooder looking.

IAGO

He is empathetic.

RODRIGO

Who cares about that?

IAGO

Generous.

RODRIGO

I give things all the time.

IAGO

He is a risk taker.

RODRIGO

I'm a risk giver.

IAGO

The bottom line is she loves him. But that does not mean she can't be yours.

RODRIGO
Go on.

IAGO
Once Othello returns from battle-

RODRIGO
Oh Christ! We have to wait till then? You know the last war with the Ottomans lasted six hundred years.

IAGO
(Continuing)
You are going to provoke Cassio.

RODRIGO
How am I going to do that?

IAGO
I will get him drunk. He is an angry drunk.

RODRIGO
Me too.

IAGO
He will be easy to rile.

RODRIGO
I also can't get erect.

IAGO
(Continuing)
Once Othello sees Cassio lose control, Cassio will be out of the picture. Desdemona, who clearly wants to leave Othello for a younger man, will have no one else to choose, but you.

RODRIGO
So I love her and she merely settles for me? Is that it?

IAGO
Yes.

RODRIGO
I can live with that.

IAGO
Good. Now go get some rest. You're going to need it once this battle is won.

RODRIGO

So some time in the next six hundred years.

IAGO

Go!

Rodrigo exits.

IAGO (CONT'D)

Good grief, the things one must endure to get some revenge. But at least now I can get some revenge on Cassio, as well. Promoted? Over me? Just because of who is family is, no doubt! Well, he'll get what he deserves. And the Moor? Do I even need to say my reasons for hating him? Is it not plain as the nose on his face? I mean, he may have slept with my wife for one thing. And though she is not my real wife, it hurts all the same. And he favored Cassio over me, that shows poor judgment. And now he has me talking to myself. God knows that'll become a habit. So he has no one to blame but himself. He has triggered my rage. Sparked my fire. Turned me on! And now there's no turning me off until vengeance is mine. Jealousy will be my weapon of choice. It's a powerful, if not unstoppable force. I'll plant the seed that his wife Desdemona is running around with Cassio. Once I get that top spinning, all I need do is watch as Othello's world reels out of control. Sorry Emilia. Your mistress Desdemona might get caught in the vortex.

SCENE 6

Desdemona's room. DESDEMONA and OTHELLO enter. Othello is still wearing his battle armor. He takes off his helmet.

OTHELLO

It was a tempest! The likes of which I've never seen before. The worst storm in a hundred years perhaps.

DESDEMONA

It's a miracle you're alive.

OTHELLO

I know. I can't believe it damaged only Turkish ships and spared everyone else.

She moves a little closer to him.

DESDEMONA

(Suggestively)

God clearly wants us to be together.

He moves closer to her, nodding

OTHELLO

(Suggestively)

Yes. So we can consummate our marriage.

She moves closer to him, also nodding.

DESDEMONA

(Suggestively)

I don't know what that means.

He moves closer to her.

OTHELLO

(Suggestively)

You're about to find out.

He takes her in his arms. They kiss.

DESDEMONA

(Rapturous)

Finally, we're alone and uninterrupted.

EMILIA enters.

EMILIA

Hellooo!

DESDEMONA

Emilia. What are you doing here?

EMILIA

I am your attendant waiting to attend. Is this not where I should be?

DESDEMONA

Othello just returned from battle.

EMILIA

I know.

(To Othello)

I bet you have some stories. I'd love to hear them.

OTHELLO

I don't have any stories. We were very fortunate. A storm wiped out every Turkish ship.

EMILIA

That sounds like a story.

DESDEMONA

Emilia... Othello and I were hoping to spend some time alone. It will be the first we've had since exchanging vows.

EMILIA

Of course. I understand. Say no more...
What kind of vows? Original or traditional?

DESDEMONA

Emilia.

EMILIA

(To Othello)

Oh, you have a little cut on your face.

OTHELLO

I do?

DESDEMONA

I don't see a cut.

EMILIA

A battle wound, no doubt.

OTHELLO

There was no battle.

EMILIA

(To Desdemona)

Have you a handkerchief?

DESDEMONA

I don't see a cut on his face.

EMILIA

Either way we should get it cleaned up. We don't want it to go septic. Your handkerchief?

DESDEMONA

There is no cut.

OTHELLO

Desdemona... I wonder if I could have a moment alone with Emilia.

DESDEMONA

She gets a moment alone with you?

OTHELLO

I won't be long. I promise.

Desdemona exits.

Beat.

OTHELLO (CONT'D)

I know what you're doing.

EMILIA
(Guilty)

You do?

OTHELLO

It's pretty clear.

EMILIA
(Covering)

I don't know what you're referring to. I am merely trying to tend to your wounds. I was a nurse, you know. In Verona. I see a cut and my medical training kicks in. I immediately want to stitch it up. Administer medication. Change your bedpan. That sort of thing.

OTHELLO

There is no cut.

EMILIA

We should get you to the infirmary just in case. You know what happens if these things aren't monitored. Cancer.

OTHELLO

You're trying to keep us apart. Desdemona and I. You don't want her alone with me.

EMILIA

Why would I not want that?

OTHELLO

I assume you think you're protecting her.

EMILIA

Well, that is my job.

OTHELLO

I find it troubling you feel the need to protect her from me.

EMILIA

...I don't think that's what I'm doing, but... if it is, I suppose it's just my maternal instinct. I mean, you are much older than her, that's concerning.

OTHELLO

It's actually quite common.

EMILIA

You're also much bigger.

OTHELLO

Also common.

EMILIA

There are other things.

OTHELLO

(Accusingly)

I'm much darker?

EMILIA

(Nervously)

What? No! My God, no! I would never think that. I'm not- That didn't even register- I wouldn't- That would never occur to me.

OTHELLO

You'd be in the minority.

EMILIA

And as a minority, I would never do what you're suggesting.

OTHELLO

Most people don't think much of Moors around here.

EMILIA

Well, I'm not most people. I love them. The Moors. The Moor the merrier, I always say.

OTHELLO

They certainly don't think much of a Moor married to a white woman.

EMILIA

I've never heard that.

OTHELLO

And yet it's true. Why do you think her father disowned her? He used to be my friend. Till he found out we were married. Then he somehow got it into his head that I put a spell on her, of all things. Can you imagine that? Something so ridiculous.

EMILIA

Absurd.

OTHELLO

That in order to get Desdemona to fall in love with me, I must have seduced her with some black magic. As if there is such a thing.

EMILIA

You don't believe in magic?

OTHELLO

I don't believe in black magic.

(Then, accusatory)

Tell me truly now, does it make you suspicious of me that I am a black man?

EMILIA

(Weakly)

...No.

OTHELLO

Don't lie to me!

Emilia recoils. Beat.

EMILIA

...That you're a man is enough to make me suspicious.

OTHELLO

You must know I would never hurt her.

EMILIA

I don't know that. I don't make assumptions as to what a man would never do.

OTHELLO

I'm not just any man. I'm her husband.

EMILIA

Especially a married man. I've known many that have done horrible things. Desdemona is fortunate enough to be ignorant of such atrocities. I'd like to keep it that way. She is young and innocent. I love that about her. That's how I want her to stay.

OTHELLO

And yet every second that passes, you fail. At least regarding her youth. You can not stop time. As for her innocence, I love that, too. She doesn't know how terrible people can be.

EMILIA

I don't want her to find out.

OTHELLO

She's a white woman married to a black man. People are bound to be terrible. She's going to find that out.

Beat.

EMILIA

So what happens now?

OTHELLO

Now? You leave. I am grateful that your concern for her is so deep. It's clear bringing you on as her attendant was the right choice. For the moment, however, rest assured she is safe and well attended to.

Emilia reluctantly nods.

EMILIA

I'll let you have your time alone then.

OTHELLO

Thank you. God knows it is limited enough as it is.

EMILIA

Oh? You have some place to be?

OTHELLO

The infirmary.

EMILIA

Because of your cut-

OTHELLO

After the Turkish fleet was destroyed, we fished a man out of the water.

EMILIA

A Turkish man or one of yours?

OTHELLO

Not one of mine. Best I can tell, he was a prisoner, enslaved by the Turks. Freed by the storm that wiped out their ships. He's unconscious at the moment, but as soon as he's revived I'm sure I'll need to interrogate him, see what he knows of his captors.

EMILIA

Perhaps I should attend to him then? If it can help get him revived and talking faster.

OTHELLO

That would be helpful. Though you should know this man looks like he was treated quite poorly.

EMILIA

I'm not worried. There's very little a good nurse can't cure.

OTHELLO

He's missing an arm.

EMILIA

That is challenging. Nevertheless, I will make sure he is getting the care he needs so you can interrogate him as soon as possible, and I can get back to waiting on my lady.

OTHELLO

Very good.

EMILIA

Till then.

Emilia exits.

OTHELLO

(Calling offstage)

Desdemona! I'm all yours now!

Desdemona enters wearing her sexy lingerie.

DESDEMONA

I'm ready.

OTHELLO

Come, my dear love, the purchase made, the fruits are to ensue;
That profit's yet to come 'tween me and you.

DESDEMONA

You have a way with words, my sweet.

An alarm bell can be suddenly heard outside.

OTHELLO

What in the cockblock?

Desdemona peers out a window.

DESDEMONA

Something is happening outside! I think there's some kind of scuffle! Don't they know we are trying to consomme our marriage?

OTHELLO

Consommé is a type of chicken soup.

DESDEMONA

But that won't go with my panties at all! They're licorice flavored!

OTHELLO

Who would dare scuffle on tonight of all nights?

DESDEMONA

(Looking out the window)

What if it's the Turks?

OTHELLO

Impossible! They're all at the bottom of the sea.

Off stage we hear Rodrigo yell:

RODRIGO (O.S.)

Mutiny! Mutiny!

DESDEMONA

I hear someone yelling mutiny!

OTHELLO

I must go uncover the source of this. I'll be back anon!

A disappointed Desdemona watches as Othello exits urgently.

SCENE 7

An infirmary. On one side of the room lies a PATIENT in a bed. His face remains unseen. On the other side, standing behind a desk, a GUARD is anxiously looking out a window.

GUARD

(Tense)

I knew this day would come! Beware the ides of March, I told them. But did they listen? No! They mocked me! "What a superstitious little man, you are" they joked. But you don't have to be superstitious to know the history of this day has been wrought with peril! Just look outside! Chaos and mutiny! I won't let it come in here. You hear me? You can not come in here!

Emilia enters.

EMILIA

Hellooo.

The guard quickly turns around and draws his weapon, shakily pointing it at Emilia.

GUARD

Who goes there?

EMILIA

(Startled)

Holy Helen of Troy! You startled me!

GUARD

I'll do more than that lest you tell me who goes there!

EMILIA

Who goes where?

GUARD

Who goes here?

EMILIA

Me. Is that not obvious?

GUARD

Lady, you don't want to play this game. I am already tense from what's going on outside, plus I slept very poorly last night, and I am dealing with personal issues. My sister hasn't spoken to me in a week! God only knows why! Some imagined slight on my part, no doubt. Lord only knows what I did this time. All this to say, I'd appreciate some cooperation. You see I'm holding a sword. Please don't make me use it.

EMILIA

I have no intention of doing so. I certainly am not a threat. I can't even imagine why one would need an armed guard at an infirmary.

GUARD

You have no idea the kind of people we get in here.

EMILIA

I'm assuming they're sick people.

GUARD

You're damn right they are. Now, who are you?

EMILIA

Emilia.

GUARD

Friend or foe, Emilia?

EMILIA

Of yours? I don't know you. How am I supposed to answer that question?

GUARD

(His patience waning)

What is your intention here?

EMILIA

Oh. Othello sent me. To check on a patient.

GUARD

(Lowering his sword)

Oh for crying out loud! Why didn't you say so?

EMILIA

I'm sorry. I didn't realize there'd be such security.

GUARD

Be grateful there is. You see what's happening outside. Chaos and mutiny.

EMILIA

I saw it up close. I couldn't tell who started it though or who was even involved. Do you know?

GUARD

I was in here, I'm sure I know less than you.

He picks up a notebook.

GUARD (CONT'D)

I did however manage to write down what little I could see through that window there.

EMILIA

You wrote it down.

GUARD

I write everything down. This way, when I report to my superior about the incident, I can tell him exactly what I observed, which as I mentioned, wasn't much.

(Perusing his notes)

Best I could tell, Cassio, who looked drunk, got provoked by some guy, I think his name was Rodrigo, and they started fighting.

The Guard shrugs as if to say, "That's all I know." Then:

GUARD (CONT'D)

(Flips a page)

Then Rodrigo ran off and Cassio started fighting Montano, who is the Governor of Cypress and was just there to break up the fight. That's it. That's all I know.

Slight pause.

GUARD (CONT'D)

(Flips a page)

Oh, I did also notice that then Othello came out, saw Cassio fighting with the Governor, got very angry, demoted Cassio, who...

(Flips a page)

Consequently got really upset because he thought he's permanently tarnished his reputation, so he...

(Flips a page)

Talked to Iago about how he can get his rank back, and Iago advised him...

(Flips a page)

To appeal to Desdemona because she commands Othello's attention and maybe she...

(Flips a page)

Can talk to Othello on Cassio's behalf.

(Then, closing the notebook)

Beyond that I have no idea what happened.

EMILIA

Good thing you managed to capture that much.

GUARD

I try to capture everything in my notebook. You never know where a good story might come from. After I finish my service here, I am hoping to become a writer.

EMILIA

Not stay in the military?

GUARD

No. I don't think I have the temperament for it. Plus, I'm not much for fighting.

EMILIA

You could have fooled me by the way you handled that sword.

GUARD

I actually don't care for the violence. Words are my preferred weapon of choice.

EMILIA

They can be just as damaging, depending on who is wielding them.

GUARD

I couldn't agree more. There are too many people issuing half truths and ill-gotten conclusions that don't serve humanity at all. I'd like to use my words for good. Shine a light on something important. I recently wrote about today, this day, the ides of March and how fraught with danger it is. Had my compatriots outside heeded my warnings, the chaos and mutiny we just witnessed might have all been avoided. Don't you agree?

EMILIA

I might be inclined to agree if today were the ides of March. It's actually only the 14th.

GUARD

What?

EMILIA

The ides of March is the 15th of March, but today is only the 14th.

GUARD

Today's not the 15th?

EMILIA

No. It was a leap year this year.

GUARD

It was a leap year?

EMILIA

There were 29 days in February, so today is only the 14th of March.

GUARD

I've had the wrong date for two weeks?

EMILIA

I guess so.

GUARD

That's why my sister was so angry with me. I missed her wedding last weekend! I must send her a note immediately and apologize.

The Guard heads for the exit.

EMILIA

Wait, your going? What about standing guard? Don't you have to watch the patient?

GUARD

I wasn't posted here. I just didn't want to be outside during the ides of March. You'll be all right. The patient is unconscious. He shouldn't be a problem. And there is a weapon in the drawer over there in case he wakes up and gets all handsy.

EMILIA

Handsy? He's only got one arm.

GUARD

Then in case he wakes up and gets all... handy. Good luck.

The Guard exits. Emilia checks the drawer and pulls out a dagger.

EMILIA

I can't imagine I'd have a use for this.

The patient lying in bed starts to revive.

PATIENT

Oooh. My head.

EMILIA

(To herself)

What luck! The patient is coming to. I can get Othello here sooner than I thought and get back to the task of trying to steal my mistress' handkerchief.

The patient sits up, his back to Emilia.

PATIENT

Where am I?

EMILIA

Cypress. You fell off a Turkish boat and were rescued.

PATIENT

I'm not dead?

EMILIA

It seems the Turks preferred you alive. Though not in one piece I'm afraid. They did cut your arm off.

PATIENT

The Turks didn't do this. They're not barbarians.

EMILIA

Oh. Either way, you're safe now. I guess the Gods were not ready to take you.

PATIENT

I can't imagine why. They should strike me down this very moment!

EMILIA

Come now. What could you have possibly done to warrant that?

He turns and we see it is Antigonus.

EMILIA (CONT'D)

Antigonus?

ANTIGONUS

My Queen? You're alive? They told me you were dead.

Emilia picks up the knife from the drawer.

ANTIGONUS (CONT'D)

Is this a dream? Or... are you a ghost? I will feel you to see if my hands pass right through your spectral body-

Before he can touch her to see if she's real,
Emilia kicks him in the balls.

ANTIGONUS (CONT'D)

(Doubled over)

You don't feel like a ghost.

EMILIA

You'll be a ghost, you son of a bitch! You pushed me off a boat!

ANTIGONUS

I did? That doesn't sound like something I would do.

EMILIA

16 years ago! When I was trying to save my daughter. Where is she?

He looks up at her shaking his head.

ANTIGONUS

Oh my Queen.

EMILIA

Where is Perdita?

ANTIGONUS

I'm so sorry.

EMILIA

Don't you dare apologize to me! I will cut you!

She stands him up, puts the knife to his throat.

ANTIGONUS

Please!

EMILIA

Where is she?

ANTIGONUS

Please... Cut me! I want you to!

EMILIA

Don't tempt me! I will sheath this happy dagger right in your chest where it will rust and let you die.

ANTIGONUS

Good!

She pushes him up against a wall.

EMILIA

Where is Perdita?

Antigonus starts to cry.

ANTIGONUS

She is gone! She's gone.

EMILIA

No!

ANTIGONUS

I had done as my King ordered and left her abandoned on a beach.

EMILIA

You bastard!

ANTIGONUS

I left gold with her in the hopes that someone might find her and take care of her, but...

EMILIA

But what?

ANTIGONUS

I realized only too late that place was famous for the creatures of prey that keep upon't.

EMILIA
(Distressed)

Creatures of prey?

ANTIGONUS

I wanted to stay to make sure someone found her, but I was chased off by a bear.

EMILIA

A bear? There were bears on that beach?

ANTIGONUS

It attacked me. Dug its teeth into my shoulder and ripped my arm right off.

EMILIA
(With venom)

I wish it killed you!

ANTIGONUS
(Still crying)

I do, too... I do, too.

Emilia turns away from Antigonus.

ANTIGONUS (CONT'D)

I should have never done what the king asked of me. I should have stood up to him right then and there and said no.

EMILIA

You should have!

ANTIGONUS

Though it would have meant my death, a much better fate I think, than having to suffer through the shame and guilt for doing such an unforgivable act.

EMILIA

You think you've suffered? You have no idea.

ANTIGONUS

But fate now has brought us together. It all makes sense. When the bear attacked me, I thought, "this is right. This is what I deserve. This is how it should end for me." But it's so much better that it's you.

She looks at him, then puts the knife down on a nearby table.

EMILIA

It won't be me. You will have to suffer on. We both will.

ANTIGONUS

I don't think so.

EMILIA

I don't care what you think.

She turns to head towards the exit.

ANTIGONUS

As the bear chewed on my grizzled, old flesh, a band of Turkish pirates came along and chased it away.

EMILIA

I don't care.

ANTIGONUS

They took me on their ship. For 16 years I was forced to work for them. And when their ship was commissioned by the Turkish government, I was forced to fight with them.

EMILIA

I said I don't care!

ANTIGONUS

Though I was a prisoner, they treated me well. Yet, I wish they never found me.

EMILIA

Are you not hearing me?

ANTIGONUS

You see, when they chased the bear away, it ran off back toward the beach.

EMILIA

Stop it!

ANTIGONUS

It headed right where I left your daughter.

EMILIA

Stop talking!

ANTIGONUS

If the bear had only eaten all of me-

EMILIA

I don't want to hear it!

ANTIGONUS

It might not have been hungry for her!

EMILIA

Damn you, Antigonus!

ANTIGONUS

It's time, my Queen.

EMILIA

You stupid man!

ANTIGONUS

It's time!

EMILIA

All you stupid men!

ANTIGONUS

Heal our pain!

She grabs the knife again.

EMILIA

Damn you all to hell!

She raises the knife above her head and plunges it down towards the crying Antigonus.

Black out.

ACT 2

SCENE 1

This is a dream. We are in A COURTROOM in Sicilia. In the courtroom is KING LEONTES, who looks curiously a lot like Othello. Also present is an OFFICER, who resembles Iago, and two other gentlemen named CLEOMENES and DION, who resemble Cassio and Antigonus, respectively.

KING LEONTES

This sessions, to our great grief we pronounce,
Even pushes 'gainst our heart: the party tried
The daughter of a king, our wife, and one
Of us too much beloved. Produce the prisoner.

OFFICER

It is his highness' pleasure that the queen
Appear in person here in court. Silence!

EMILIA enters. She is shackled.

KING LEONTES

Read the indictment.

OFFICER

(Reads)

Queen to the worthy Leontes, king of Sicilia, thou art here accused and arraigned of high treason, in committing adultery and conspiring to take away the life of our sovereign lord the king, thy royal husband.

DESDEMONA enters unseen from the shadows.
She looks out of place.

EMILIA

Since what I am to say must be but that
Which contradicts my accusation and
The testimony on my part no other
But what comes from myself, it shall scarce boot me
To say 'not guilty' -

DESDEMONA
(Whispering to get Emilia's attention)

Emilia.

EMILIA
(Trying to continue)

...But thus: if powers divine
Behold our human actions, as they do...

DESDEMONA
(Whispering once again)

Emilia.

EMILIA
I doubt not then but innocence shall make
False accusation blush and tyranny
Tremble at patience.

Desdemona is now trying to wave to get
Emilia's attention.

DESDEMONA
Psst!

EMILIA
(To the court room)
Will you excuse me for a moment?
(To Desdemona)
Desdemona? What are you doing here?

DESDEMONA
I had some more questions about sex. Since you're so experienced, I thought I'd ask you.

EMILIA
This really isn't the time.

DESDEMONA
Othello and I still haven't "consommé'd" our marriage.

EMILIA
Consummated?

DESDEMONA
Consu-nothing! He hasn't even consu-touched my boobs!

EMILIA
We really need to talk about this later.

DESDEMONA

Why? What's going on here? Who are all these people.

EMILIA

I have been put on trial.

DESDEMONA

You? What for? You're the most honest person I know.

(To the Officer)

Officer, I don't know what this is about, but I can assure you, Emilia is innocent.

OFFICER

Who's Emilia?

KING LEONTES

May we continue?

EMILIA

Yes, my lord.

(She continues with her defense)

You, my lord, best know,
Who least will seem to do so, my past life
Hath been as continent, as chaste, as true,
As I am now unhappy-

DESDEMONA

This is soooo stupid!

EMILIA

Desdemona!

KING LEONTES

Who is this girl?

EMILIA

...This is my mistress, Desdemona.

KING LEONTES

The queen has a mistress?

DESDEMONA

That's right. She works for me.

KING LEONTES

I did not know this.

DESDEMONA

There seems to be a lot of things you don't know about her because anyone who knows her knows that she is nothing if not loyal and true.

KING LEONTES

I wonder how well you know her.

DESDEMONA

I know she would never do what you're accusing her of.

(To Emilia)

What are they accusing you of?

EMILIA

Cheating on my husband.

DESDEMONA

Iago?

EMILIA

My other husband.

DESDEMONA

You have more than one husband?

KING LEONTES

Seems like you don't know her as well as you think.

DESDEMONA

I know enough. If she says she didn't do it, that's all I need to hear.

(To Emilia)

Did you do it?

EMILIA

I did not.

DESDEMONA

The defense rests!

King Leontes walks up to Emilia.

KING LEONTES

(To Emilia)

You will not own it?

EMILIA

I swear on my children the accusations are false!

KING LEONTES

(Pointedly)

What children? Do you not remember what happens next?

EMILIA

...Cruel, my lord.

DESDEMONA

What happens next?

KING LEONTES

(To Desdemona)

Whatever happens next, it falls on your lady in waiting.

EMILIA

It's not my fault.

KING LEONTES

Isn't it?

EMILIA

I do refer me to the oracle:
Apollo be my judge!

OFFICER

This your request is altogether just: therefore bring forth,
And in Apollos name, his oracle.

Cleomenes and Dion approach and hand the
statement from the Oracle to the Officer.

EMILIA

Break up the seals and read.

OFFICER

(Reads)

The queen is chaste;
Leontes a jealous tyrant; his innocent babe truly begotten;
And the king shall live without an heir, if that
Which is lost be not found.

KING LEONTES

(To Emilia)

This means nothing!

EMILIA

It means I'm innocent. The Oracle of Apollo confirms it!

KING LEONTES

What happens next still falls on you.

EMILIA

You're wrong. I am not responsible for the death of our children.

KING LEONTES

I am not talking about the death of our children. I am talking about what happens next.

He points to Desdemona.

KING LEONTES (CONT'D)

I am talking about her.

Desdemona looks at Emilia confused.

DESDEMONA

What happens to me?

The lights go black on all but Emilia, who has awakened from the dream, breathing heavy.

EMILIA

What have I done?

SCENE 2

EMILIA returns to the infirmary. It looks empty at first, but then from the shadows, ANTIGONUS moves into the light. He is holding a bottle of booze.

ANTIGONUS

Looking to finish what you started.

EMILIA

Antigonus.

ANTIGONUS

You know I won't object. The knife is even there where you left it.

He points to a part of the wall where a knife is sticking out just above where Antigonus' head was when last they met.

EMILIA

I'm not here to kill you.

ANTIGONUS

No? Why not?

EMILIA

(Sharply, re: his missing arm)

I can't kill an unarmed man.

Besides, Leontes is the villain here, that remorseless son of a bitch. He is the one that deserves to die. I will have my revenge on him.

ANTIGONUS

Careful, my Queen. Confucius says, "Before you embark on a journey of revenge, dig two graves."

EMILIA

I already did! For my children!

ANTIGONUS

OK. Sorry. Confucius said it, not me.

...Not for nothing though, you should know King Leontes is not without remorse.

EMILIA

How would you know that?

ANTIGONUS

The Turks who held me captive traveled all over the continent on their pirate ship, selling or stealing goods where ever they could. One day, not long ago, I found myself in Sicilia.

EMILIA

You've been back to our beloved Sicilia?

ANTIGONUS

To our docks anyway. I never got off the boat, my captors made sure of that. Not that I would have if I were free, for fear that I would run into my wife or children and be forced to tell them what I had done.

EMILIA

What does this have to do with Leontes?

ANTIGONUS

At the dock, I heard some men talking. About the King. How he's shown a saintlike sorrow.

EMILIA

A saintlike sorrow? Saintlike? Really. Are you sure they didn't say SATAN-like?

ANTIGONUS

I'm not one hundred percent sure, no-

EMILIA

Because Saints don't usually try to kill their wives! They're usually good people!

ANTIGONUS

They said he had been remorseful. For years he'd been that way. Since the day you died, in fact. He paid more penance than he had done wrong, according to them.

EMILIA

Well, they sound like a couple of imbeciles who knew not what they spoke.

ANTIGONUS

I would have thought the same... had I not seen with my own eyes, the King, himself.

EMILIA

...You saw Leontes?

ANTIGONUS

He came to the dock. He sent the men away. And then wept while looking out to sea.

She considers this for a moment.

EMILIA

...Crocodile tears! From a cold-blooded bastard!

ANTIGONUS

(Shaking his head)

He cried for his son. He cried for his daughter. He cried for you, "the sweetest companion that a man could hope would bear his children."

EMILIA

What you saw was a show. Nothing more.

ANTIGONUS

A show for who? He didn't know I was there.

EMILIA

Yahweh. Jesus. Allah. Take your pick.

ANTIGONUS

I would pick Dionysus, the God of wine-

It was an act.

ANTIGONUS

It was a good act.

EMILIA

If he had the chance, he would kill me where I stand. Believe me, Antigonus.

ANTIGONUS

My Queen... I recall the abhorrent King that did such heinous acts 16 years ago. I tell you, this man I saw at the dock was not him. His grief didn't appear to me to be like so many men, put on for convenience, all the while waiting for the opportunity to be abusive again. Whatever demon it was that had possessed him, the spell was broken. The green-eyed monster was gone, and in its place, where your husband once was, now stood a person torn asunder, held together by grief and remorse.

EMILIA

So what! So what of his grief and remorse! Someone must be held to account for Mamillius and Perdita. Who better than my husband?

ANTIGONUS

Me! Hold me to account. At least for Perdita. I was not under any such spell. I was clear headed, following orders that I knew to be wrong but followed all the same.

EMILIA

I want the man who gave the orders. Neither of my children would have died had it not been for him. Is there enough penance a man can do to make up for murdering his children? I think not. Vengeance is coming for him, Antigonus. Mark my words.

ANTIGONUS

Why are you here then, if not to kill me?

EMILIA

I need your help.

ANTIGONUS

To murder a King?

EMILIA

No. To save a woman.

ANTIGONUS

...What woman?

On the other side of the stage, lights up on DESDEMONA in her room. Emilia crosses over and attends to her.

We are seeing what Emilia is clearly recounting to Antigonus.

OTHELLO enters.

OTHELLO

Desdemona!

DESDEMONA

How now, my dear Othello?
Your dinner, and the generous islanders
By you invited, do attend your presence.

OTHELLO

(Faintly)

I am to blame.

DESDEMONA

Why do you speak so faintly?
Are you not well?

OTHELLO

I have a pain upon my forehead, here.

DESDEMONA

Let me but bind it hard, within this hour
It will be well.

She takes out her handkerchief and wraps it
around his head.

OTHELLO

(He snaps)

Your napkin is too little!
Let it alone!

He takes the handkerchief and tosses it to the
ground. Then exits into another room.

DESDEMONA

(Stunned)

...I am very sorry that you are not well.

Desdemona exits after him. Emilia picks up the
handkerchief.

EMILIA

I am glad I have found this napkin,
My wayward husband hath a hundred times
Woody me to steal it-

Lights up on Antigonus.

ANTIGONUS

Tell me again why this Iago wanted you to steal the handkerchief.

EMILIA

I told you...

IAGO enters. Emilia hands him the
handkerchief and he quickly leaves.

EMILIA (CONT'D)

To break the spell the African Moor put on Desdemona.

ANTIGONUS

You know, I've been to Africa. I've never known anyone to possess such magic.

EMILIA

Fine! I was an idiot. I see that now. I was told Othello put a spell on her and I believed it.

ANTIGONUS

You need to re-examine your personal biases.

EMILIA

Someone has been pulling my strings from the start. And Iago's as well obviously, for he believes it, too. But it's clear now the only person actually under a spell... is Othello.

ANTIGONUS

What kind of spell?

EMILIA

The same one Leontes fell victim to. The green-eyed monster!

Lights up on Othello and Desdemona as they re-
enter. Emilia crosses to them.

DESDEMONA

I have sent to bid Cassio come speak with you.

OTHELLO

I have a salt and sorry rheum offends me.
Lend me thy handkerchief.

DESDEMONA

Here, my lord.

She hands him a different handkerchief.

OTHELLO

That which I gave you.

DESDEMONA

I have it not about me.

OTHELLO

Not?

DESDEMONA

No, indeed, my lord.

OTHELLO

Is 't lost? Is 't gone? Speak, is 't out o' th' way?

DESDEMONA

It is not lost, but what and if it were?

OTHELLO

Fetch 't, let me see 't.

DESDEMONA

Why so I can, sir, but I will not now.
This is a trick to put me from my suit.
Pray you, let Cassio be received again.

OTHELLO

(Upset)

Fetch me the handkerchief—my mind misgives!

The lights shift.

ANTIGONUS

That's a lot of fuss over a handkerchief.

EMILIA

I know. I don't understand it. I should have just told Othello I took it and gave it to Iago, but Iago told me not to.

ANTIGONUS

Why?

EMILIA

Because he thought it would break the spell. As did I.

ANTIGONUS

But there is no spell.

EMILIA

Iago thinks there is. The same way Desdemona's father thought there was a spell, the same way I thought there was a spell. We have been played by someone, I know not who, but now I fear... I am complicit.

ANTIGONUS

Complicit in what?

EMILIA

Othello now thinks Desdemona's cheating on him with Cassio.

ANTIGONUS

What does that have to do with the handkerchief? It makes no sense.

EMILIA

I don't know! Someone has been whispering in Othello's ear, that much is clear, and Othello's mind is now possessed.

ANTIGONUS

Can't you talk some sense into him?

EMILIA

Talk some sense into him? Really? Did Leontes listen to reason? He wouldn't even listen to the oracle. Apollo himself told him I was innocent, but he would not hear it. You think I can talk some sense into Othello?

ANTIGONUS

It's worth a try.

EMILIA

I've already tried!

The lights shift to Othello on the other side of the stage. Emilia joins him.

OTHELLO

You have seen nothing then?

EMILIA

Nor ever heard, nor ever did suspect.

OTHELLO

Yet, you have seen Cassio and she together.

EMILIA

But then I saw no harm, and then I heard
Each syllable that breath made up between them.

OTHELLO

What, did they never whisper? Nor send you out o' th' way?
To fetch her fan, her gloves, her mask, nor nothing?

EMILIA

Never, my lord.

OTHELLO

That's strange.

EMILIA

I durst, my lord, to wager she is honest,
Lay down my soul at stake. If you think other
Remove your thought, it doth abuse your bosom.
If any wretch have put this in your head
Let heaven requite it with the serpent's curse
For if she be not honest, chaste, and true
There's no man happy.

Lights shift back.

ANTIGONUS

That did not convince him?

EMILIA

Not in the slightest. Not two minutes later, he hurled accusations at her in a most hateful way. I listened at the door.

Lights shift to Othello and Desdemona.

OTHELLO

Come, swear it, damn thyself. Lest, being like one of heaven, the devils themselves
Should fear to seize thee. Therefore be double damned, swear thou art honest!

DESDEMONA

Heaven doth truly know it.

OTHELLO

Heaven truly knows that thou art false as hell.

DESDEMONA

By heaven, you do me wrong!

OTHELLO

Are you not a strumpet?

DESDEMONA

No, as I am a Christian.

OTHELLO

I cry you mercy, then,
I took you for that cunning whore of Venice
That married with Othello.

The lights shift back.

ANTIGONUS

He is far gone.

EMILIA

You know what happens next.

ANTIGONUS

Hopefully they seek counseling.

EMILIA

He is going to kill her!

ANTIGONUS

Then they definitely should seek counseling.

EMILIA

Antigonus, it will be just like Leontes and me all over again.

ANTIGONUS

Just because your husband went mad doesn't mean hers will.

EMILIA

He is going to kill her. I can't let that happen. She is far too innocent. You should have seen her tonight as I was putting her to sleep. She had me make her bed with her wedding sheets. She has no idea what he's planning.

ANTIGONUS

Neither do you.

EMILIA

Oh but I do. I don't know when it's going to happen, tomorrow or the next day or the day after that, but he will murder her.

ANTIGONUS

Not every jealous husband murders his wife.

(Then)

Although, as coincidence would have it, I did accidentally overhear one jealous man plot to kill his wife earlier today.

EMILIA

What?

ANTIGONUS

During my morning walk I stumbled on a man, a black man I think. I saw him only from behind. He was talking to a fellow I did not recognize.

EMILIA

No doubt that was the person behind all of this. What did they say?

The light shifts to Othello talking with Iago.

OTHELLO

I will chop her into messes! Cuckold me?
With mine officer!
Get me some poison, this night.

IAGO

Do it not with poison. Strangle her in her bed, even the bed she hath contaminated.

OTHELLO

Good, good, the justice of it pleases! Very good! And for Cassio, you be his undertaker.

IAGO

Yes, my General.

OTHELLO

You shall hear more by midnight.

The lights shift back.

EMILIA

He is going to kill her. I told you! Strangle her by midnight. What time is it now?

ANTIGONUS

Not to worry, you have plenty of time. It's... a quarter to 12.

EMILIA

Dammit! We have to hurry!

ANTIGONUS

What do you need of me?

EMILIA

I need you to find us a boat. We are going to get out of here. You, me and Desdemona!

SCENE 3

Desdemona's room. Desdemona lies asleep in her bed. Emilia enters and gently wakes her.

EMILIA

Mistress. Mistress you must wake now.

DESDEMONA

Who's there? Othello?

EMILIA

It's me. Emilia.

DESDEMONA
(Half asleep)

Why... what? What time is it?

EMILIA

It's nearly midnight. We must go.

DESDEMONA

Go where? Why are you here?

EMILIA

I'm here to get you out of harm's way.

DESDEMONA

What harm? I'm in bed. I was having the best dream. I was dancing with Othello. That dance everyone is doing today.

EMILIA

Othello is coming to kill you!

DESDEMONA

No. I think it was a minuet.

EMILIA

Desdemona, you're husband is going to murder you!

DESDEMONA

That's ridiculous. He wouldn't do that.

EMILIA

He would and he will, if you don't come with me.

DESDEMONA

Why would he kill me? I'm his wife. Husbands don't kill their wives.

EMILIA

Tell that to Anne Boleyn.

DESDEMONA

Maybe I will.

EMILIA

She's dead.

DESDEMONA

Oh my God. How?

EMILIA

We don't have time for this. Your husband thinks you've been unfaithful.

DESDEMONA

I know what he thinks.

EMILIA

Did you know in many cultures infidelity is a crime punishable by death.

DESDEMONA

But I committed no such crime. I can't be killed for something I didn't do.

EMILIA

Tell that to Anne Boleyn.

DESDEMONA

You just told me she was dead!

EMILIA

It doesn't matter what you did or did not do. It only matters what he thinks. It only ever matters what men think.

DESDEMONA

I will make him think otherwise. I didn't do anything wrong. I can't leave here with him thinking I did.

EMILIA

He is going to murder you.

DESDEMONA

No one is going to get murdered tonight.

From outside the room we hear Cassio yell:

CASSIO (O.S.)

Help! Murder! Murder!

DESDEMONA

...That's disconcerting.

EMILIA

That was Cassio's voice!

DESDEMONA

Cassio?

EMILIA

Othello wants him dead, too. He thinks Cassio is the one that's been sleeping with you.

DESDEMONA

Cassio has done no such thing.

EMILIA

I know that and you know that, but your husband does not. Mark me, Desdemona, Othello is coming to kill you. If we don't leave this instant, it will be too late. We will both wind up dead.

SCENE 4

The hallway outside Desdemona's room. The Guard, despondent, sits on a chair outside Desdemona's room. He is looking at his hands. Antigonus rushes in.

ANTIGONUS

Guard! Guard! I need your help. It's an emergency. I have to find Desdemona's room.

GUARD

(Near tears)

...This is Desdemona's room. I am guarding it.

ANTIGONUS

You have to let me inside.

GUARD

I wouldn't be a very good guard if I did that!

The Guard starts to cry.

ANTIGONUS

...Are you crying?

GUARD

It's allowed!

ANTIGONUS

Listen, I am a friend of the Queen's- I mean, Emilia's, Desdemona's Lady in Waiting. I believe she is in there with Desdemona.

GUARD

She is. They both are.

ANTIGONUS

I need to speak with them both before Othello arrives.

GUARD

It's not possible.

ANTIGONUS

It is a matter of life and death!

GUARD

I can assure you, sir, it is not. It is only a matter of death!

ANTIGONUS

(Suddenly frightened)

What do you mean?

GUARD

I mean I am not a very good guard! They're dead! All of them!

ANTIGONUS

(In despair)

Please say it isn't so.

GUARD

What would be the point of that? The truth is plain.

The Guard shows Antigonus his hands covered with blood. Antigonus recoils in despair.

ANTIGONUS

Whose blood is that? Tell me! Everything!

The Guard nods.

GUARD

I was at my sister's house having dinner. I missed her wedding last week and she had been mad at me, so when I received the invite I thought it was the perfect opportunity to make amends. But she has such odd tastes when it comes to food, or perhaps my palette is simply not so sophisticated because she was serving a jellied moose nose and a yak's penis and my stomach simply could not handle it.

ANTIGONUS

Tell me everything only as it relates to what happened inside that room.

GUARD

I was returning from my sister's on my way to my quarters when Othello himself stopped me just outside this door. He was dressed for battle. Head to toe. He asked me to guard the room and not to let anyone inside. I was off duty at the time. I didn't even have a weapon. He went inside the room. I ran to retrieve my sword. And use the bathroom. As I said, the jellied moose nose and yak's penis did not sit well with me. When I returned, I gently rapped on the door to tell the General I was at my post. There was no answer. I went inside. They were dead! Othello. Desdemona.

ANTIGONUS

Emilia?

GUARD

All of them. Two by the blade. And the young Desdemona, her flesh cold, her heart ceasing to beat, her breath choked from her body. All because I wasn't at my post.

ANTIGONUS

(Guilt-ridden)

I am too late then. I found a boat. As quickly as I could but alas it wasn't quick enough. Emilia warned me of this. I didn't believe her and now it's too late. Othello has clearly killed them both.

GUARD

Bite your tongue, sir! Othello would never do what you're suggesting.

ANTIGONUS

You think not?

GUARD

I know for certain. He was not just my general, he was my friend. And sadly, now nothing more than just a memory. The memory of a kind and gentle man. I remember the last words he said to me. He said, "I will kill her for this betrayal!"

Beat, as the guard considers what he just said.

He slowly starts to connect the dots.

GUARD (CONT'D)

You know, our friendship was actually pretty new.

ANTIGONUS

Did Othello say anything else?

GUARD

Oh yes.

The Guard pulls out his notebook.

GUARD (CONT'D)

(Perusing his notes)

He told me to guard the room. Then went on to say how his wife was cheating on him with Cassio. I remember thinking, "Why he is telling me this? We've never spoken before. Certainly not about something so personal. Are we becoming friends?" Then I remember thinking, "That would be wonderful to be the general's friend." Then I remember thinking, "I have to go to the bathroom. It's an emergency. It's not a number 1. Definitely a number 2. Possibly a number 5."

ANTIGONUS

(Impatiently)

What did he say next?

GUARD

(Perusing his notes)

Othello then said he knows Desdemona was cheating on him because he saw Cassio with her handkerchief, a love token given to her by Othello himself. Desdemona must have passed it along to Cassio in the heat of passion.

ANTIGONUS

Wait, that's not possible. Desdemona couldn't have given Cassio her handkerchief because...

(Realizing)

Iago had it.

For the following dialogue, lights rise to half on the other side of the stage. Othello, dressed in armor, Desdemona and later Iago all mime out what's described and their dialogue from Shakespeare's Othello can be faintly heard.

GUARD

Othello clearly went in there...

DESDEMONA

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

OTHELLO

Down, strumpet!

Othello smothers Desdemona with a pillow.

GUARD

Killed his wife and then... What?

ANTIGONUS

And then Emilia called for help.

EMILIA

Help! Help!

ANTIGONUS

Called for her husband, Iago.

Iago enters and mimes along, as well.

ANTIGONUS (CONT'D)

Only to realize it's been Iago pulling the strings all along. Manipulating Othello into believing his wife was unfaithful. She was not! No doubt Emilia told Othello as much-

EMILIA

(To Othello)

O thou dull Moor! That handkerchief thou speak'st of I found by fortune and did give my husband;

ANTIGONUS

And Iago killed her for it.

LAGO

Villainous whore!

Iago stabs Emilia with a sword.

GUARD

And then Othello, realizing his folly, took his own life.

OTHELLO

I took by the throat the circumcised dog, and smote him, thus.

Othello stabs himself with a knife.

GUARD

He became judge, jury and executioner, imposing a sentence on himself appropriate for the murder of your own wife.

Othello collapses onto the floor.

GUARD (CONT'D)

All this time, I had assumed some outsider, a Turk perhaps, snuck inside and killed them and was able to do so because I wasn't at my post. But that's not what happened at all. They'd be dead regardless of my being here. What a fantastic relief!

(Then, somberly)

And yet, still very tragic.

ANTIGONUS

(With venom)

What of the villain Iago? Is he in the room?

GUARD

(Shaking his head)

No, he's not in there. He must have escaped.

ANTIGONUS

He must be held to account!

GUARD

Agreed. I will see to it he is hunted down. He will have his day in court and our judges will mete out a swift and appropriate justice. I bet he gets demoted.

ANTIGONUS

Demoted? He should be executed!

GUARD

Yeah, our judicial system here is not great. But not to worry, I will make sure everyone knows what happened here. I will write the story of Othello and it shall be told for years to come. Words are my weapons! Justice will be done!

ANTIGONUS

(Sadly)

Good. You do that.

(Then)

If it's all right with you, I'd like to go inside the room and say goodbye to my friend Emilia.

GUARD

It's all right with me. Though I wouldn't recommend it. Not unless you have a strong stomach. And it's not because they're serving a jellied moose nose or yak's penis in there-

ANTIGONUS

I understand. I'll take my chances.

GUARD

I am sorry for the loss of your friend.

The Guard exits.

SCENE 5

Desdemona's room. DESDEMONA, EMILIA and OTHELLO, dressed in armor from head to toe all lie motionless.

ANTIGONUS enters. He crosses to Emilia.

ANTIGONUS

Oh my Queen! Is this yet another tragedy for which I should hold myself responsible? If only I had gotten to you quicker. But alas, look on the tragic loading of this bed. Is this my work? My poor Queen, this exploited general, and this young girl, who from what I've been told, was just so full of life.

Suddenly Desdemona sits up and gasps.

ANTIGONUS (CONT'D)

(Recoils in fear)

What the fu....!

Beat.

DESDEMONA

(Confused)

Who are you?

ANTIGONUS

I am Antigonus.

DESDEMONA

You look like you've seen a ghost, Antigonus.
...I don't know you, do I?

ANTIGONUS

We've never met. I am a friend of Emilia's. I was to take you and she away from here.

DESDEMONA

Where is she, Emilia?

ANTIGONUS

She's... By your side.

Desdemona sees Emilia.

DESDEMONA

Oh no! She's bleeding.

ANTIGONUS

She's dead... And your husband, as well.

She turns and sees Othello.

DESDEMONA

Oh my God! How did this happen?

ANTIGONUS

Emilia was killed by Iago.

DESDEMONA

Iago?

ANTIGONUS

I'm pretty sure.

DESDEMONA

And my husband?

ANTIGONUS

Well, after he attempted to murder you-

DESDEMONA

I still don't want to believe that he would do that.

ANTIGONUS

Up until this moment, I thought he had succeeded.

DESDEMONA

That he would try is loathsome enough. I don't know whether to feel happy he's dead... or sad. Who did this to him?

ANTIGONUS

He did it to himself out of remorse for killing you.

DESDEMONA

(Genuine)

...Sad, I think.

ANTIGONUS

That you feel anything at all is a wonder. Your heart was still. Your breath was gone. How you're still alive is a miracle.

DESDEMONA

A miracle? My husband has killed himself. He tried to kill me. Emilia has been murdered. This sure doesn't look like an act of God. I am bewildered by all of this, Antigonus. I am not sure what I am supposed to feel. Mournful for my husband? Grateful for my life? Angry that it was nearly taken from me?

ANTIGONUS

All of that is appropriate. Though you should know, Othello is not solely responsible.

DESDEMONA

No?

ANTIGONUS

While there is plenty of blame to go around and much more to this story, it was in fact Iago who was the mastermind behind everything. He had been poisoning your husband's mind, making him think you had been unfaithful.

DESDEMONA

Why would he do that?

ANTIGONUS

I don't know. But by the time your husband learned of his treachery, it was too late. You were gone and Othello himself was to blame. A fact he could not live with.

DESDEMONA

But I'm not gone. I'm right here.

She grabs Othello's hand tenderly.

DESDEMONA (CONT'D)

I'm right here, my Lord.

She removes his glove.

DESDEMONA (CONT'D)

His hand is so cold.

ANTIGONUS

A mark of the dead. His body has lost all warmth.

DESDEMONA

It is also so white. Has it lost all color, too?

She holds up the dead hand and it is white.

ANTIGONUS

White?

Antigonus walks over and removes the helmet from the dead body.

DESDEMONA

That's not my husband. That's...

OTHELLO

Iago.

Othello has discretely entered the room. He is holding a shovel.

Black out.

SCENE 6

In the darkness we can hear Emilia talking as she did at the end of Act 2 scene 3.

EMILIA

Mark me, Desdemona, Othello is coming to kill you. If we don't leave this instant, it will be too late. We will both wind up dead.

The lights fade up and we see the two women as they were at the end of Act 2 scene 3.

DESDEMONA

You can go if you want to but I am not leaving. I don't believe he would do as you say and try to murder me. I can't believe that. You simply think the worst of him. Just like all the others.

EMILIA

I am just trying to keep you alive.

DESDEMONA

And yet your accusations of him cut me so deep.

(Coldly)

You want to do something for me, fetch me a glass of water and some aspirin. I have a terrible headache now from talking about this so much.

EMILIA

(A lightbulb)

...As you wish

Emilia retrieves a potion from her person and hands it to Desdemona.

EMILIA (CONT'D)

Here. Drink this. It should help.

DESDEMONA

It's medicine?

EMILIA

Of a sort.

Desdemona drinks the potion.

DESDEMONA

That was vile. What was it?

EMILIA

It was a potion.

DESDEMONA

It helps with headaches?

EMILIA

It helps with many things. It might just save your life.

DESDEMONA

How will it do that?

EMILIA

It will kill you.

DESDEMONA

That seems excessive. It's just a tension headache.

EMILIA

You may want to lie down. The potion will make your pulse stop. Your breathing, too. Your flesh cold.

DESDEMONA

Where would you get such a thing?

EMILIA

I got it when I was a nurse in Verona. This potion will make it look as if you are dead.

DESDEMONA

Why would you give me that?

EMILIA

You will thank me later.

DESDEMONA

Later? I'll be dead.

EMILIA

It's not permanent.

DESDEMONA

How long does it last?

EMILIA

I've tweaked it so it doesn't last long at all, but will take effect much sooner.

DESDEMONA

How soon?

Desdemona suddenly faints comically onto the floor.

EMILIA

I told you to lie down.

Emilia quickly places Desdemona in her bed.

Suddenly, there is a gentle knock on the door.

OTHELLO
(Softly)

Desdemona.

Emilia hides in the shadows. Othello enters.

OTHELLO (CONT'D)

Are you awake, my love?

He goes to her and gently tries to wake her.

OTHELLO (CONT'D)

Please wake up my dear. I can't do this while you sleep. Desdemona?

Emilia steps out of hiding.

EMILIA

You are too late.

OTHELLO

Emilia? What are you doing here this hour?

EMILIA

You can't kill her now.

OTHELLO

What? Kill her?

EMILIA

That's right. It's too late for that. She's already dead!

OTHELLO

No. What are you talking about?

He tries to wake Desdemona.

OTHELLO (CONT'D)

Desdemona.

EMILIA

Don't play innocent, old man. I know what you came here to do.

OTHELLO

Are you insane?

EMILIA

She knew it, too.

OTHELLO

Please say this is not happening. Desdemona!

EMILIA

She's dead!

OTHELLO

(Crying)

No! Desdemona! Wake now, please!

He shakes her.

EMILIA

It won't do you any good. Poison has been her untimely end.

OTHELLO

(Crying)

Why would she do that?

EMILIA

I tried to stop her. But she knew you were coming to kill her.

OTHELLO

Why would I be coming to kill her?

EMILIA

Because you thought she was having an affair.

OTHELLO

And?

EMILIA

That's what men do when they think their wives are cheating on them.

OTHELLO

They do? Have they never heard of divorce?

EMILIA

What? You weren't going to kill her?

OTHELLO

Of course not!

EMILIA

You were going to divorce her?

OTHELLO

I wasn't going to do either, actually. I came here to apologize.

EMILIA

Apologize?

Beat.

OTHELLO

(Mournfully)

I said some awful things to her earlier. I called her a whore. It's unforgivable.

EMILIA

You were going to apologize to her?

OTHELLO

I wanted to win her back. I don't blame her for cheating on me with Cassio. Though the idea of it makes me sick, the fact is, I'm old. I'm not around. I'm off fighting wars. She deserves someone who is with her and attentive... and young, if only in spirit, and I wanted to tell her I can be that man. I can do better. I can be the husband she deserves.

EMILIA

Oh my God!

OTHELLO

And now she's dead!

EMILIA

Well, only slightly.

OTHELLO

My heart is broken. This must be what she felt before she died. I'm so sorry. The pain is so great. I suspect it will be the death of me, too.

EMILIA

Othello, there is something you should know.

OTHELLO

I welcome it!

EMILIA

Please don't say that. I can make things right.

OTHELLO

There is no making this right. My love is gone. My love is gone! The pain is so great.

He grabs his heart and starts to convulse.

OTHELLO (CONT'D)

Oh Devil!

EMILIA

What's happening?

He reaches for Desdemona but then clutches his chest again and collapses on the floor.

EMILIA (CONT'D)

...Oh fuck!

What have I done? This is not good. This is bad. I don't think it can get any worse.

Suddenly just outside Desdemona's bedroom door we hear:

IAGO (O.S.)
(Impersonating Othello)

You. Guard.

EMILIA

Oh shit!

The lights rise on the other side of the stage outside Desdemona's room. Iago is dressed in Othello's armor, head to toe including a helmet covering his face. He stops the Guard who happens to be passing by.

IAGO

Guard, I say!

GUARD

Yes, my lord.

IAGO

It is I, Othello.

GUARD

I assumed as much. Who else would be wearing his armor?

IAGO

I want you to stand this post.

GUARD

Me, sir?

IAGO

Do you see any other guard here?

GUARD

No, it's just, I'm not on duty, sir.

IAGO

A soldier in the Venetian army is always on duty.

GUARD

Of course, though I don't even have my weapon.

IAGO

Get yourself a weapon and stand this post! I am going inside and not to be disturbed.

Emilia mouths an expletive and quickly drags Othello's body out of sight.

IAGO (CONT'D)

I have to spend some time with my wife. You understand?

GUARD

I understand. Say no more.

IAGO

She has been cheating on me with Cassio.

GUARD

Wow! That is... the exact opposite of saying no more.

IAGO

I saw Cassio with my wife's handkerchief. A love token I gave her.

At hearing this Emilia looks up.

IAGO (CONT'D)

I told her never to part with it, yet there was Cassio waving it around like a trophy. How did he get it if not from Desdemona herself?

GUARD

You know what, I love that you're opening up to me about this because to be honest, I never thought you liked me.

IAGO

It is the ocular proof of her infidelity.

GUARD

Unfortunately, I'm having a hard time focusing because of some serious stomach issues.

IAGO

She is an adulteress! A fornicatress! A strumpet!

GUARD

I clearly have some sort of allergy to either / jellied moose nose or yak's penis.

IAGO

So what's a husband to do? Leave her to betray more men?

GUARD

In any case, I have to go to the bathroom / something fierce.

IAGO

Mark my words, she will betray more men.

GUARD

It's not a number 1. Definitely a number 2. Possibly a number 5.

IAGO

I am left with only one choice and I think you know what that is.

GUARD

That's two 2s and a 1.

IAGO

I will kill her for this betrayal... Or my name isn't Othello. Guard the room.

The guard salutes. Iago enters the room. Emilia is once again hiding in the shadows.

GUARD

(Calling after him)

I'll just run and grab my sword, use the privies posthaste and be back faster than you can say jellied moose nose or yak's penis.

The Guard exits.

Iago lifts his helmet shield to reveal his face. He walks over to Desdemona "dead" in her bed.

IAGO

Ah Desdemona... You were so innocent... so pure... so white. And now so ruined.

He grabs a nearby pillow off a chair.

IAGO (CONT'D)

So consider this a charity. Like destroying a horse with a broken leg, so you too, shall be put out of your misery.

Emilia comes out of hiding.

EMILIA

This was never about saving her, was it?

IAGO

What are you doing here?

EMILIA

My job. Taking care of my mistress.

IAGO

That's not your job. You're a prostitute. You do what I pay you to do.

EMILIA

And what would that be? To look the other way? So you can kill this innocent woman and frame her husband? You planted that handkerchief in Cassio's room. You've been manipulating Othello from the start. All to drive him mad. Drive him to murder.

IAGO

Guilty as charged.

EMILIA

But he won't murder her. Your little plan won't work.

IAGO

It will work as soon as I am through here. There are plenty who will say it was Othello who killed Desdemona. The guard outside. Even an old man from earlier today will attest that he overheard the Moor make threats.

(Impersonating Othello)

"I will chop her into messes! Cuckold me?"

(Then, as himself)

It's a pretty good impersonation, don't you think. Othello was actually unconscious at the time, owing to another one of his epileptic fits. Propped up like a puppet. And I the puppet master. Or ventriloquist, in this case.

EMILIA

No one will believe Othello killed his wife.

IAGO

Oh? A violent and dangerous moor, is that really so hard to swallow? You were prepared to believe it from day one.

EMILIA

To my great shame.

IAGO

Your great wisdom. You know all too well the power of jealousy.

EMILIA

Othello's a decent man.

IAGO

Who fell victim to a terrible force that takes otherwise decent men and makes them out to be monsters.

EMILIA

Is that jealousy you're talking about? Or bigotry?

Emilia stands between Iago and Desdemona.

EMILIA (CONT'D)

I won't let you do this. I will tell everyone!

IAGO

Well, Lord knows you do get around.

EMILIA

I'm not joking. I won't let you hurt her.

Iago places the pillow back on the chair.

IAGO

I was planning on smothering her with a pillow, but I think now I'll run her through.

He draws his sword and slowly crosses to them.

EMILIA

...She's already dead. What would be the point?

IAGO

(Re: The sword)

This would be the point.

EMILIA

She's dead I tell you!

IAGO

Let's hope so or this will be quite painful.

EMILIA

You don't believe me?

IAGO

Should I? You're going to an awful lot of trouble protecting a dead woman. I know you're practiced at faking death, so... Better safe than sorry.

EMILIA

I thought you loved her!

Iago laughs.

EMILIA (CONT'D)

Right. I see now you're not driven by love. Only hate.

IAGO

I have good reason to hate that foul Moor and his filthy wife.

EMILIA

It's not them you hate. It's yourself. Why, I wonder? For not being good enough for her? No. More likely for not being good enough for him.

Iago smiles at her.

IAGO

I see now why you're husband wants you dead.

Iago suddenly stabs Emilia.

IAGO (CONT'D)

Sorry to deny him. This is the fruits of whoring.

EMILIA

(Weakly, clutching her wound)

Everyone will know what you've done.

IAGO

How? You won't be alive to tell them.

Emilia collapses on the bed next to Desdemona.

IAGO (CONT'D)

They will only have me to listen to. My words. And my words can talk people into anything.

Othello emerges from the shadows.

OTHELLO

Iago!

IAGO

(Innocently)

Othello... Thank God you're here...

(Then)

How long have you been standing there?

Othello pulls out a knife.

IAGO (CONT'D)

I see.

(Then)

Whatever you think you know, I promise you it's not the truth. You have been manipulated from the start. I am the only one you can trust. I alone have the answers you seek. Before you act hastily here, I demand you put your weapon down and let me tell you everything. Everything I know.

Othello nods and lowers his knife. Iago lowers his sword. Then, without warning Othello raises the blade and stabs Iago in the chest.

OTHELLO

Demand me nothing. What you know, you know.
From this time forth you never will speak another fucking word.

Othello lowers Iago's face mask and kicks him to the ground.

The lights shift as Antigonus enters and hands Othello the shovel he initially came with.
Desdemona is once again alive.

ANTIGONUS

So, you killed Iago?

OTHELLO

I did. Then went to bury my wife. I found a spot underneath the most beautiful cherry tree for which to dig her grave. Cherry trees were always our favorite.

(Then, to Desdemona)

I thought I lost you.

DESDEMONA

You never did. Not to Iago, nor Cassio.

OTHELLO

I am so sorry for everything I said. For everything I thought. I let his poison infect me, never realizing you alone were the antidote.

DESDEMONA

Oh my love!

They embrace for a long beat.

ANTIGONUS

My friends. I don't wish to rush this moment. But Iago is dead. While he deserved no less for his villainy, he is still a white man killed by a black man. I have traveled the world enough to know they will make you answer for that.

DESDEMONA

I fear he speaks the truth. Right or wrong, they will make you account.

OTHELLO

...Not if we don't stay.

DESDEMONA

You mean leave? For good? You're a general here. You would leave everything behind?

OTHELLO

If you are with me, I have everything I need.

She takes Othello's hands and smiles. Then:

DESDEMONA

Antigonus, you said you were to take me away from here?

ANTIGONUS

It was Emilia's last wish that I should take you some place safe. I'd like to honor it. I have a boat. You both would be welcome.

DESDEMONA

I'll say goodbye to her first.

Antigonus lowers his head mournfully.

ANTIGONUS

That you have to say goodbye to her at all... is such a tragedy.

Desdemona walks to Emilia.

ANTIGONUS (CONT'D)

I had a dream about her just last night. My sweet Queen. She was back home in Sicilia. Frozen as she is now, like a statue. But then... her daughter... Perdita... returned.

(MORE)

ANTIGONUS (CONT'D)

She was alive and well, after all, 16 years older and beautiful like her mother.

Perdita went up to the Queen.

Desdemona kneels before Emilia.

ANTIGONUS (CONT'D)

She touched the Queen's hand.

Desdemona grabs Emilia's hand.

ANTIGONUS (CONT'D)

And she said-

DESDEMONA

She's warm!

ANTIGONUS

Yes! That's right!

DESDEMONA

If this be magic, let it be an art as lawful as eating.

ANTIGONUS

Were you in my dream? How do you know this?

DESDEMONA

She's warm! Iago's hand was cold, as if all life had drained from it, but Emilia's...

Othello rushes over and feels Emilia's neck,
looking for a pulse.

OTHELLO

She's alive!

ANTIGONUS

She's alive?

Othello nods.

ANTIGONUS (CONT'D)

Miracle upon miracle, she is alive!

SCENE 7

A horn blows. We are once again on a ship.
DESDEMONA and OTHELLO look out to sea.

ANTIGONUS enters assisting EMILIA.

Look who's finally awake.

ANTIGONUS

You look well, *Your Highness*.

DESDEMONA

"*Your Highness?*"

EMILIA

(To Antigonus)

I see you all have been speaking.

I thought some context might be important for them.

ANTIGONUS

Antigonus sets Emilia on a nearby chair.

Where are we, Antigonus?

EMILIA

Well a ways from Cyprus. We have in fact come to the sea's equivalent of a crossroad. I need a heading, my Queen.

ANTIGONUS

I'll think on it. In the mean time, could you be so kind and fetch me a blanket. I find it a bit chilly.

EMILIA

Of course. It's the last days of winter. Soon it will be warm again.

ANTIGONUS

Antigonus exits.

...How are you feeling?

DESDEMONA

I am alive. Thanks to you.

EMILIA

Consider it retribution for my life.

DESDEMONA

EMILIA

(Distraught, re: Othello)

And what retribution will you give for his near death? Or yours. I don't know how to face you both for what I've done. I betrayed your trust. I don't know why you didn't just let me die.

OTHELLO

Iago was the villain.

EMILIA

And I was his conspirator. Is it fair that he's dead and I'm not?

DESDEMONA

Many things are unfair. It's unfair that your son is dead. That your daughter was abandoned on some beach. That your husband tried to kill you.

EMILIA

It doesn't make what I did right.

OTHELLO

And yet context is important.

Emilia shakes her head shamefully.

EMILIA

I thought you were a monster before I even met you. I never thought I could be duped so easily. But he used my anger and my prejudice against me.

OTHELLO

As I said, Iago is the villain.

EMILIA

But it's still my anger and my prejudice that I have to account for. It nearly cost you both your lives. If it helps balance the scale, you can take mine.

She stands and heads to the boats rail.

EMILIA (CONT'D)

You could... push me off this boat.

DESDEMONA

...No. We can't do that.

EMILIA

Why?

OTHELLO

Why didn't you kill Antigonus?

Beat.

DESDEMONA

Barbary, our old maid, used to say to me, "the noblest vengeance... is to forgive."

Emilia turns to Othello and Desdemona.

EMILIA

I am so sorry. For everything.

Desdemona grabs Emilia's hands.

DESDEMONA

We forgive you.

Antigonus returns.

ANTIGONUS

Your blanket.

EMILIA

Thank you. I'm actually not as cold as I once was.

ANTIGONUS

Have you settled on a destination?

EMILIA

I have. Let's go home.

ANTIGONUS

Sicilia?

EMILIA

It's time.

ANTIGONUS

Your majesty, I won't help you kill your husband.

EMILIA

I no longer wish to do so. I see now that path only leads to tragedy. So... I've decided to try a different way. See where that leads.

ANTIGONUS

I'll take you there. But... I don't think I should stay. It's been 16 years. No doubt, my wife thinks I'm dead. I'm sure she's found another.

EMILIA

Maybe not. Stay on the boat a day or two. I will find out.

ANTIGONUS

My family must hate me for what I've done.

EMILIA

You saved your family's life. If you disobeyed the king in that state of his, he would have not only killed you, but them, as well. I'm sure your family will absolve you. I know I have. I think it's time for you to forgive yourself.

ANTIGONUS

...Yes, my Queen.

EMILIA

(To Desdemona and Othello)

Will you join us, as well? Start anew?

OTHELLO

What is Sicilia like?

EMILIA

It will be spring by the time we arrive. I've always said there's nothing quite as lovely as Sicilia in the springtime.

DESDEMONA

We will join you. *My Queen.*

EMILIA

I am not your queen.

(To Antigonus)

Nor yours, either.

(To all)

Nor anyone's. So let's dispense with the dignitaries. I don't know what will become of King Leontes and I. I can try and forgive the past, but I certainly won't forget it. Whatever will become of us, I know this: It won't be how it was.

DESDEMONA

So what should we call you?

HERMIONE

Call me by my name. Hermione.

End of play.