

Othello, the moor of venice



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Your Number 22 March 2007 Othello + Desdemona Forever From the first page of Shakespeare's Othello, Iago schemes to destroy Othello. Knowing that Othello's weak spot is his love for Desdemona, he uses that knowledge to bring about Othello's downfall. However, Othello and Desdemona share a great love. If not for Iago, they would have a strong, unbreakable relationship.

Through his ability to survive and his power to recount his adventures, Othello makes himself lovable. He says of his stories, " These things to hear would Desdemona seriously incline" (1. 3. 144-5) and " She gave me for my pains a world of kisses" (1. 3. 158). These lines indicate Desdemona's interest in Othello as a man. She finds him fascinating and worthy of love and makes the first move. As Othello says later, " she had eyes and chose me" (3. 3. 189).

Othello also explains the mutual nature of their regard: " She loved me for the dangers I had passed, and I loved her that she did pity them" (1. 3. 167-8). Desdemona sees Othello as the bravest and most accomplished man she has ever met. Othello, an outsider in Venice, is flattered that his life could affect a woman this way. He does not expect to be admired-he has fought for everything he ever received-and Desdemona's love binds his heart. Without the forces working against them, they have a strong basis for a successful marriage.

Othello is not easily brought to suspect betrayal. When Desdemona first asks for a favor, Othello tells her twice, " I will deny thee nothing" (3. 3. 76; 3. 3. 84). Without Iago, there is no doubt in his mind as to Desdemona's motivation. In the same scene, he remarks to himself, " when I love thee not, Chaos is come again" (3. 3. 91). This line gives us insight into Othello's heart.

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Desdemona is, to him, a goddess of civilization who transforms him from a despised Moor into an honored Venetian. Until Iago skews the balance, Othello's love for Desdemona is stable and grateful.

Even when Iago plants seeds of doubt in his mind, Othello has trouble believing Iago's lies. He says, "I do not think but Desdemona's honest" (3. 3. 225). He demands proof, and threatens Iago with his wrath if these accusations are groundless. Once the physical evidence of the handkerchief seems to prove her faithlessness, he abuses her, but she defends herself and tolerates his cold behavior. This is a quarrel that, without Iago's further intervention, would most likely die down.

At the last, when Othello is convinced she must die for her sins, he still says, "I'll not shed her blood, Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow. Yes she must die, else she'll betray more men" (5. 2. 3-6). His love runs deep, and he must persuade himself that killing her is a moral act. Othello is a man of reason and action; love is a new emotion to him, and circumstantial evidence overwhelms the emotional truth of his heart.

Moments before his death Othello claims, "naught I did in hate, but all in honor" (5. 2. 291). His actions were those expected of a lover betrayed, although Desdemona would not have betrayed him, and their love would have grown stronger with time. Othello speaks of himself as "one that love not wisely, but too well; Of one not easily jealous, but, being wrought, threw a pearl away" (5. 2. 340-3). It is because he adored Desdemona so much that he was stirred to such great extremes.

Othello's last act, and last words, demonstrate his continuing love for Desdemona and his regret at being misled. He dies "upon a kiss" (5. 2. 355) reserving for himself the punishment he would mete out to any man who

harmd his beloved. Through the entire play, Desdemona and Othello, despite the misunderstandings and disagreements, continue to love one another.