

# Act 3 scene 4 analysis

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Act 3 scene 4 analysis This unhappy scene focuses on Desdemona; she has become an innocent victim of Iago and Othello. From the moment he enters, Othello takes on the role of a persecutor. His first words in line 30 "O Hardness to dissemble!" not only comments on what he thinks is Desdemona's "false seeming" but also reveals how difficult it is to control his feelings when he is in Desdemona's presence. He proceeds to describe Desdemona's hand as "hot" and "moist" in line 32. This is an allusion to a belief in the time, that when someone's hand was "hot" and "moist" they were of a lustful nature. At this point Desdemona is perplexed by Othello and makes the grave mistake of trying to change the path of their conversation by pressing Othello about Cassio. Othello responds to the mention of Cassio by setting a trap for Desdemona, stating in line 46 "I have a salt and sorry rheum offends me/lend me thy handkerchief". Upon Desdemona's failure to give him the strawberry printed handkerchief, Othello goes into a rage, telling Desdemona of the significance of the handkerchief and that she should not have lost it. The handkerchief is an extremely important symbol in the play. This handkerchief that an "Egyptian charmer to my mother give" represents Othello's mysterious and exotic heritage. More importantly in this scene, Othello reveals that the handkerchief symbolises his love for Desdemona and Desdemona's chastity. His belief that she has given it away means the break in their love, the giving away of her body. The dramatic irony is that although the handkerchief is lost, Desdemona still loves Othello. The theme of appearance vs. reality is clear in the scene, for although Desdemona appears to be covering up for her sins when in reality she is completely pure and blameless. Othello's claim that "there's magic in the

web of" the handkerchief (line 65), reintroduces the theme of magic. This can be contrasted to Act 1, when Othello claimed ignorance and disregard for magic when Brabantio accused him of witchcraft. In this scene he takes the opposite position; although the handkerchief does not embody magic, it has a magic, a hold on Othello. He believes fervently that the loss of the handkerchief represents Desdemona's betrayal and seems to be enchanted by the token. Later he is seen repeating the line " The handkerchief" three times in an uncontrolled fury. The innocent Desdemona is fearful of its loss cries out " Then would to God that I had never seen it" in line 73. Frightened by his rash words, Desdemona lies about the handkerchief and states " It is not lost, but what and if it were? " in line 79. This is tragically consequential and makes the audience wonder that if she had told the truth there may have been hope in averting this tragedy. Othello leaves at the end of the scene enraged, exclaiming " Zounds! "