

OTHELLO: Act 5, Scene 2 (excerpt) – Emilia’s Rebellion

Othello confesses that he killed Desdemona. He tells her it was Iago who told him of Desdemona’s infidelity. Emilia cries for help and upon Iago’s entrance, challenges him. Iago attempts to silence her and eventually stabs her. Emilia dies professing Desdemona’s innocence.

OTHELLO

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

EMILIA

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

OTHELLO

She turned to folly, and she was a whore.

sin

EMILIA

Thou dost belie her, and thou art a devil.

tell lies about

OTHELLO

She was false as water.

(a proverbial saying at that time)

EMILIA

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

OTHELLO

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

have sex with her / if you don't believe it

except

final punishment

EMILIA

My husband!

OTHELLO

Thy husband.

EMILIA

That she was false to wedlock?

OTHELLO

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

pure/semi-precious stone

EMILIA

My husband!

OTHELLO

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

told me about

EMILIA

My husband!

OTHELLO

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

repetition

EMILIA

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

mocked

OTHELLO

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

EMILIA

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

*evil
extremely slowly/completely
Infatuated with
(she paid a heavy price in choosing her husband)*

OTHELLO

Ha!

EMILIA

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

damnable

OTHELLO

Peace, you were best.

you'd better shut up

EMILIA

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

*fool / idiot
(she's not threatened by his sword)*

[Enter MONTANO, GRATIANO, IAGO and others]

MONTANO

What is the matter? How now, general!

EMILIA

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

blame you for their murders

GRATIANO

What is the matter?

EMILIA

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

unfaithful

IAGO

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

reasonable

EMILIA

But did you ever tell him she was false?

IAGO

I did.

EMILIA

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

IAGO

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

hold still

EMILIA

I will not charm my tongue; I am bound to speak:
My mistress here lies murdered in her bed –

All

O heavens forfend!

EMILIA

And your reports have set the murder on.

caused this murder

OTHELLO

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

GRATIANO

'Tis a strange truth.

unbelievable

MONTANO

O monstrous act!

EMILIA

Villainy, villainy, villainy!

I think upon't, I think: I smell't: O villainy!

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

O villainy, villainy!

IAGO

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

EMILIA

Good gentlemen, let me have leave to speak:

'Tis proper I obey him, but not now.

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

it is right that

OTHELLO

O! O! O!

[He falls on the bed]

EMILIA

Nay, lay thee down and roar;

For thou hast kill'd the sweetest innocent

That e'er did lift up eye.

howl

OTHELLO

[Rising] O, she was foul!

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

Whose breath, indeed, these hands have newly stopped:

I know this act shows horrible and grim.

I hardly recognized you

appears

GRATIANO

Poor Desdemon. I am glad thy father's dead:

Thy match was mortal to him, and pure grief

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

This sight would make him do a desperate turn,

Yea, curse his better angel from his side,

And fall to reprobance.

fatal

tore him apart/if he were alive today

*drive his guardian angel away
state of damnation*

OTHELLO

'Tis pitiful; but yet Iago knows

That she with Cassio hath the act of shame

A thousand times committed; Cassio confessed it:

adultery

And she did gratify his amorous works
With that recognizance and pledge of love
Which I first gave her; I saw it in his hand:
It was a handkerchief, an antique token
My father gave my mother.

*reward / love-making
keepsake*

EMILIA

O God! O heavenly God!

IAGO

Zounds, hold your peace!

EMILIA

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

*the truth will come out
north wind or people of the north*

IAGO

Be wise, and get you home.

EMILIA

I will not.

[IAGO offers to stab EMILIA]

GRATIANO

Fie,
Your sword upon a woman!

EMILIA

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

by chance

IAGO

Villainous whore!

EMILIA

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

IAGO

Filth, thou liest!

EMILIA

By heaven, I do not, I do not, gentlemen.
O murderous coxcomb, what should such a fool

fool

Do with so good a wife?

OTHELLO

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

thunderbolts

[He runs at IAGO. IAGO, from behind, stabs EMILIA, and exits]

GRATIANO

The woman falls; sure, he hath killed his wife.

EMILIA

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

GRATIANO

He's gone, but his wife's killed.

MONTANO

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

*absolute
taken away from
from the outside / get away*

[Exeunt MONTANO and GRATIANO]

OTHELLO

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

*youngster
reputation for honour outlast possession of it*

EMILIA

What did thy song bode, lady?
Hark, canst thou hear me? I will play the swan
And die in music: *[Singing]*
Willow, willow, willow –
Moor, she was chaste; she loved thee, cruel Moor;
So come my soul to bliss, as I speak true;
So speaking as I think, I die, I die.

*foretell
sing on the verge of death*

may my soul be saved

[EMILIA dies]