

William Shakespeare

Othello



+ Sidney Lee

**The Classic Biography:
The Life of William Shakespeare**

William Shakespeare and Sidney Lee

Othello (The Unabridged Play) + The Classic Biography: The Life of William Shakespeare

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Othello

Persons Represented

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DUKE OF VENICE

BRABANTIO, a Senator

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GRATIANO, Brother to Brabantio

LODOVICO, Kinsman to Brabantio

OTHELLO, a noble Moor, in the service of Venice

CASSIO, his Lieutenant

IAGO, his Ancient

MONTANO, Othello's predecessor in the government of Cyprus

RODERIGO, a Venetian Gentleman

CLOWN, Servant to Othello

Herald

DESDEMONA, Daughter to Brabantio and Wife to Othello

EMILIA, Wife to Iago

BIANCA, Mistress to Cassio

Officers, Gentlemen, Messenger, Musicians, Herald, Sailor, Attendants, &c.

SCENE:

The First Act in Venice;

during the rest of the Play at a Seaport in Cyprus.

ACT I

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SCENE I. Venice. A street.

[Enter Roderigo and Iago.]

RODERIGO

Tush, never tell me; I take it much unkindly
That thou, Iago, who hast had my purse
As if the strings were thine, shouldst know of this,—

IAGO

'Sblood, but you will not hear me:—
If ever I did dream of such a matter,
Abhor me.

RODERIGO

Thou told'st me thou didst hold him in thy hate.

IAGO

Despise me, if I do not. Three great ones of the city,
In personal suit to make me his lieutenant,
Off-capp'd to him:—and, by the faith of man,
I know my price, I am worth no worse a place:—
But he, as loving his own pride and purposes,
Evades them, with a bumbast circumstance
Horribly stuff'd with epithets of war:
And, in conclusion, nonsuits
My mediators: for, "Certes," says he,
"I have already chose my officer."
And what was he?
Forsooth, a great arithmetician,
One Michael Cassio, a Florentine,

A fellow almost damn'd in a fair wife;
That never set a squadron in the field,
Nor the division of a battle knows
More than a spinster; unless the bookish theoric,
Wherein the toged consuls can propose
As masterly as he: mere prattle, without practice,
Is all his soldiership. But he, sir, had the election:
And I,—of whom his eyes had seen the proof
At Rhodes, at Cyprus, and on other grounds,
Christian and heathen,—must be belee'd and calm'd
By debtor and creditor, this counter-caster;
He, in good time, must his lieutenant be,
And I—God bless the mark! his Moorship's ancient.

RODERIGO

By heaven, I rather would have been his hangman.

IAGO

Why, there's no remedy; 'tis the curse of service,
Preferment goes by letter and affection,
And not by old gradation, where each second
Stood heir to the first. Now, sir, be judge yourself
Whether I in any just term am affin'd
To love the Moor.

RODERIGO

I would not follow him, then.

IAGO

O, sir, content you;
I follow him to serve my turn upon him:
We cannot all be masters, nor all masters
Cannot be truly follow'd. You shall mark
Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave
That, doting on his own obsequious bondage,
Wears out his time, much like his master's ass,

For nought but provender; and when he's old, cashier'd:
Whip me such honest knaves. Others there are
Who, trimm'd in forms and visages of duty,
Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves;
And, throwing but shows of service on their lords,
Do well thrive by them, and when they have lin'd their
coats,
Do themselves homage: these fellows have some soul;
And such a one do I profess myself. For, sir,
It is as sure as you are Roderigo,
Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago:
In following him, I follow but myself;
Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,
But seeming so for my peculiar end:
For when my outward action doth demonstrate
The native act and figure of my heart
In complement extern, 'tis not long after
But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve
For daws to peck at: I am not what I am.

RODERIGO

What a full fortune does the thick lips owe,
If he can carry't thus!

IAGO

Call up her father,
Rouse him:—make after him, poison his delight,
Proclaim him in the streets; incense her kinsmen,
And, though he in a fertile climate dwell,
Plague him with flies: though that his joy be joy,
Yet throw such changes of vexation on't
As it may lose some color.

RODERIGO

Here is her father's house: I'll call aloud.

IAGO

Do; with like timorous accent and dire yell
As when, by night and negligence, the fire
Is spied in populous cities.

RODERIGO

What, ho, Brabantio! Signior Brabantio, ho!

IAGO

Awake! what, ho, Brabantio! thieves! thieves! thieves!
Look to your house, your daughter, and your bags!
Thieves! thieves!

[Brabantio appears above at a window.]

BRABANTIO

What is the reason of this terrible summons?
What is the matter there?

RODERIGO

Signior, is all your family within?

IAGO

Are your doors locked?

BRABANTIO

Why, wherefore ask you this?

IAGO

Zounds, sir, you're robb'd; for shame, put on your gown;
Your heart is burst, you have lost half your soul;
Even now, now, very now, an old black ram
Is tupping your white ewe. Arise, arise;
Awake the snorting citizens with the bell,
Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you:
Arise, I say.

BRABANTIO

What, have you lost your wits?

RODERIGO

Most reverend signior, do you know my voice?

BRABANTIO

Not I; what are you?

RODERIGO

My name is Roderigo.

BRABANTIO

The worser welcome:

I have charged thee not to haunt about my doors;
In honest plainness thou hast heard me say
My daughter is not for thee; and now, in madness,
Being full of supper and distempering draughts,
Upon malicious bravery dost thou come
To start my quiet.

RODERIGO

Sir, sir, sir,—

BRABANTIO

But thou must needs be sure
My spirit and my place have in them power
To make this bitter to thee.

RODERIGO

Patience, good sir.

BRABANTIO

What tell'st thou me of robbing? this is Venice;
My house is not a grange.

RODERIGO

Most grave Brabantio,
In simple and pure soul I come to you.

IAGO

Zounds, sir, you are one of those that will not serve God if the devil bid you. Because we come to do you service, and you think we are ruffians, you'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse; you'll have your nephews neigh to you; you'll have coursers for cousins and gennets for germans.

BRABANTIO

What profane wretch art thou?

IAGO

I am one, sir, that comes to tell you your daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs.

BRABANTIO

Thou art a villain.

IAGO

You are—a senator.

BRABANTIO

This thou shalt answer; I know thee, Roderigo.

RODERIGO

Sir, I will answer anything. But, I beseech you,
If 't be your pleasure and most wise consent,—
As partly I find it is,—that your fair daughter,
At this odd-even and dull watch o' the night,
Transported with no worse nor better guard
But with a knave of common hire, a gondolier,

To the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor,—
If this be known to you, and your allowance,
We then have done you bold and saucy wrongs;
But if you know not this, my manners tell me
We have your wrong rebuke. Do not believe
That, from the sense of all civility,
I thus would play and trifle with your reverence:
Your daughter,—if you have not given her leave,—
I say again, hath made a gross revolt;
Tying her duty, beauty, wit, and fortunes
In an extravagant and wheeling stranger
Of here and everywhere. Straight satisfy yourself:
If she be in her chamber or your house
Let loose on me the justice of the state
For thus deluding you.

BRABANTIO

Strike on the tinder, ho!
Give me a taper!—Call up all my people!—
This accident is not unlike my dream:
Belief of it oppresses me already.—
Light, I say! light!
[Exit from above.]

IAGO

Farewell; for I must leave you:
It seems not meet nor wholesome to my place
To be produc'd,—as if I stay I shall,—
Against the Moor: for I do know the state,—
However this may gall him with some check,—
Cannot with safety cast him; for he's embark'd
With such loud reason to the Cyprus wars,—
Which even now stand in act,—that, for their souls,
Another of his fathom they have none
To lead their business: in which regard,
Though I do hate him as I do hell pains,
Yet, for necessity of present life,

I must show out a flag and sign of love,
Which is indeed but sign. That you shall surely find him,
Lead to the Sagittary the raised search;
And there will I be with him. So, farewell.

[Exit.]

[Enter, below, Brabantio, and Servants with torches.]

BRABANTIO

It is too true an evil: gone she is;
And what's to come of my despised time
Is naught but bitterness.—Now, Roderigo,
Where didst thou see her?—O unhappy girl!—
With the Moor, say'st thou?—Who would be a father!
How didst thou know 'twas she?—O, she deceives me
Past thought.—What said she to you?—Get more tapers;
Raise all my kindred.—Are they married, think you?

RODERIGO

Truly, I think they are.

BRABANTIO

O heaven!—How got she out?—O treason of the blood!—
Fathers, from hence trust not your daughters' minds
By what you see them act.—Are there not charms
By which the property of youth and maidhood
May be abused? Have you not read, Roderigo,
Of some such thing?

RODERIGO

Yes, sir, I have indeed.

BRABANTIO

Call up my brother.—O, would you had had her!—
Some one way, some another.—Do you know
Where we may apprehend her and the Moor?

RODERIGO

I think I can discover him, if you please
To get good guard, and go along with me.

BRABANTIO

Pray you, lead on. At every house I'll call;
I may command at most.—Get weapons, ho!
And raise some special officers of night.—
On, good Roderigo:—I'll deserve your pains.
[Exeunt.]

SCENE II. Venice. Another street.

[Enter Othello, Iago, and Attendants with torches.]

IAGO

Though in the trade of war I have slain men,
Yet do I hold it very stuff o' the conscience
To do no contrivèd murder: I lack iniquity
Sometimes to do me service: nine or ten times
I had thought to have yerk'd him here under the ribs.

OTHELLO

'Tis better as it is.

IAGO

Nay, but he prated,
And spoke such scurvy and provoking terms
Against your honor,
That, with the little godliness I have,
I did full hard forbear him. But, I pray you, sir,
Are you fast married? Be assured of this,
That the magnifico is much beloved;
And hath, in his effect, a voice potential
As double as the duke's: he will divorce you;
Or put upon you what restraint and grievance
The law,—with all his might to enforce it on,—
Will give him cable.

OTHELLO

Let him do his spite:

My services which I have done the signiory
Shall out-tongue his complaints. 'Tis yet to know,—
Which, when I know that boasting is an honor,
I shall promulgate,—I fetch my life and being
From men of royal siege; and my demerits
May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune
As this that I have reach'd: for know, Iago,
But that I love the gentle Desdemona,
I would not my unhousèd free condition
Put into circumscription and confine
For the sea's worth. But, look! what lights come yond?

IAGO

Those are the raisèd father and his friends:
You were best go in.

OTHELLO

Not I; I must be found;
My parts, my title, and my perfect soul
Shall manifest me rightly. Is it they?

IAGO

By Janus, I think no.

[Enter Cassio and certain Officers with torches.]

OTHELLO

The servants of the duke and my lieutenant.—
The goodness of the night upon you, friends!
What is the news?

CASSIO

The duke does greet you, general;
And he requires your haste-post-haste appearance
Even on the instant.

OTHELLO

What is the matter, think you?

CASSIO

Something from Cyprus, as I may divine:
It is a business of some heat: the galleys
Have sent a dozen sequent messengers
This very night at one another's heels;
And many of the consuls, rais'd and met,
Are at the duke's already: you have been hotly call'd for;
When, being not at your lodging to be found,
The senate hath sent about three several quests
To search you out.

OTHELLO

'Tis well I am found by you.
I will but spend a word here in the house,
And go with you.

[Exit.]

CASSIO

Ancient, what makes he here?

IAGO

Faith, he tonight hath boarded a land carack:
If it prove lawful prize, he's made forever.

CASSIO

I do not understand.

IAGO

He's married.

CASSIO

To who?

[Re-enter Othello.]

IAGO

Marry, to—Come, captain, will you go?

OTHELLO

Have with you.

CASSIO

Here comes another troop to seek for you.

IAGO

It is Brabantio.—General, be advis'd;

He comes to bad intent.

[Enter Brabantio, Roderigo, and Officers with torches and weapons.]

OTHELLO

Holla! stand there!

RODERIGO

Signior, it is the Moor.

BRABANTIO

Down with him, thief!

[They draw on both sides.]

IAGO

You, Roderigo! come, sir, I am for you.

OTHELLO

Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them.—

Good signior, you shall more command with years

Than with your weapons.

BRABANTIO

O thou foul thief, where hast thou stow'd my daughter?

Damn'd as thou art, thou hast enchanted her;

For I'll refer me to all things of sense,

If she in chains of magic were not bound,

Whether a maid so tender, fair, and happy,
So opposite to marriage that she shunn'd
The wealthy curlèd darlings of our nation,
Would ever have, to incur a general mock,
Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom
Of such a thing as thou,—to fear, not to delight.
Judge me the world, if 'tis not gross in sense
That thou hast practis'd on her with foul charms;
Abus'd her delicate youth with drugs or minerals
That weaken motion:—I'll have't disputed on;
'Tis probable, and palpable to thinking.
I therefore apprehend and do attach thee
For an abuser of the world, a practiser
Of arts inhibited and out of warrant.—
Lay hold upon him: if he do resist,
Subdue him at his peril.

OTHELLO

Hold your hands,
Both you of my inclining and the rest:
Were it my cue to fight, I should have known it
Without a prompter.—Where will you that I go
To answer this your charge?

BRABANTIO

To prison; till fit time
Of law and course of direct session
Call thee to answer.

OTHELLO

What if I do obey?
How may the duke be therewith satisfied,
Whose messengers are here about my side,
Upon some present business of the state,
To bring me to him?

FIRST OFFICER

'Tis true, most worthy signior;
The duke's in council, and your noble self,
I am sure, is sent for.

BRABANTIO

How! the duke in council!
In this time of the night!—Bring him away:
Mine's not an idle cause: the duke himself,
Or any of my brothers of the state,
Cannot but feel this wrong as 'twere their own;
For if such actions may have passage free,
Bond slaves and pagans shall our statesmen be.
[Exeunt.]

SCENE III. Venice. A council chamber.

[The Duke and Senators sitting at a table; Officers attending.]

DUKE

There is no composition in these news
That gives them credit.

FIRST SENATOR

Indeed, they are disproportion'd;
My letters say a hundred and seven galleys.

DUKE

And mine a hundred and forty.

SECOND SENATOR

And mine two hundred:
But though they jump not on a just account,—
As in these cases, where the aim reports,

'Tis oft with difference,—yet do they all confirm
A Turkish fleet, and bearing up to Cyprus.

DUKE

Nay, it is possible enough to judgement:
I do not so secure me in the error,
But the main article I do approve
In fearful sense.

SAILOR

[Within.] What, ho! what, ho! what, ho!

FIRST OFFICER

A messenger from the galleys.

[Enter a Sailor.]

DUKE

Now,—what's the business?

SAILOR

The Turkish preparation makes for Rhodes;
So was I bid report here to the state
By Signior Angelo.

DUKE

How say you by this change?

FIRST SENATOR

This cannot be,
By no assay of reason: 'tis a pageant
To keep us in false gaze. When we consider
The importance of Cyprus to the Turk;
And let ourselves again but understand
That, as it more concerns the Turk than Rhodes,
So may he with more facile question bear it,
For that it stands not in such warlike brace,
But altogether lacks the abilities

That Rhodes is dress'd in. If we make thought of this,
We must not think the Turk is so unskilful
To leave that latest which concerns him first;
Neglecting an attempt of ease and gain,
To wake and wage a danger profitless.

DUKE

Nay, in all confidence, he's not for Rhodes.

FIRST OFFICER

Here is more news.

[Enter a Messenger.]

MESSENGER

The Ottomites, reverend and gracious,
Steering with due course toward the isle of Rhodes,
Have there injointed them with an after fleet.

FIRST SENATOR

Ay, so I thought.—How many, as you guess?

MESSENGER

Of thirty sail: and now they do re-stem
Their backward course, bearing with frank appearance
Their purposes toward Cyprus.—Signior Montano,
Your trusty and most valiant servitor,
With his free duty recommends you thus,
And prays you to believe him.

DUKE

'Tis certain, then, for Cyprus.—
Marcus Luccicos, is not he in town?

FIRST SENATOR

He's now in Florence.

DUKE

Write from us to him; post-post-haste despatch.

FIRST SENATOR

Here comes Brabantio and the valiant Moor.

[Enter Brabantio, Othello, Iago, Roderigo, and Officers.]

DUKE

Valiant Othello, we must straight employ you

Against the general enemy Ottoman.—

[To Brabantio.] I did not see you; welcome, gentle signior;
We lack'd your counsel and your help tonight.

BRABANTIO

So did I yours. Good your grace, pardon me;

Neither my place, nor aught I heard of business

Hath rais'd me from my bed; nor doth the general care

Take hold on me; for my particular grief

Is of so floodgate and o'erbearing nature

That it engulfs and swallows other sorrows,

And it is still itself.

DUKE

Why, what's the matter?

BRABANTIO

My daughter! O, my daughter!

DUKE and SENATORS

Dead?

BRABANTIO

Ay, to me;

She is abused, stol'n from me, and corrupted

By spells and medicines bought of mountebanks;

For nature so preposterously to err,

Being not deficient, blind, or lame of sense,

Sans witchcraft could not.

DUKE

Whoe'er he be that, in this foul proceeding,
Hath thus beguiled your daughter of herself,
And you of her, the bloody book of law
You shall yourself read in the bitter letter
After your own sense; yea, though our proper son
Stood in your action.

BRABANTIO

Humbly I thank your grace.
Here is the man, this Moor; whom now, it seems,
Your special mandate for the state affairs
Hath hither brought.

DUKE and SENATORS

We are very sorry for't.

DUKE

[To Othello.] What, in your own part, can you say to this?

BRABANTIO

Nothing, but this is so.

OTHELLO

Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors,
My very noble and approv'd good masters,—
That I have ta'en away this old man's daughter,
It is most true; true, I have married her:
The very head and front of my offending
Hath this extent, no more. Rude am I in my speech,
And little bless'd with the soft phrase of peace;
For since these arms of mine had seven years' pith,
Till now some nine moons wasted, they have us'd
Their dearest action in the tented field;
And little of this great world can I speak,

More than pertains to feats of broil and battle;
And therefore little shall I grace my cause
In speaking for myself. Yet, by your gracious patience,
I will a round unvarnish'd tale deliver
Of my whole course of love: what drugs, what charms,
What conjuration, and what mighty magic,—
For such proceeding I am charged withal,—
I won his daughter.

BRABANTIO

A maiden never bold:
Of spirit so still and quiet that her motion
Blush'd at herself; and she,—in spite of nature,
Of years, of country, credit, everything,—
To fall in love with what she fear'd to look on!
It is judgement maim'd and most imperfect
That will confess perfection so could err
Against all rules of nature; and must be driven
To find out practices of cunning hell,
Why this should be. I therefore vouch again,
That with some mixtures powerful o'er the blood,
Or with some dram conjur'd to this effect,
He wrought upon her.

DUKE

To vouch this is no proof;
Without more wider and more overt test
Than these thin habits and poor likelihoods
Of modern seeming do prefer against him.

FIRST SENATOR

But, Othello, speak:
Did you by indirect and forcèd courses
Subdue and poison this young maid's affections?
Or came it by request, and such fair question
As soul to soul affordeth?

OTHELLO

I do beseech you,
Send for the lady to the Sagittary,
And let her speak of me before her father.
If you do find me foul in her report,
The trust, the office I do hold of you,
Not only take away, but let your sentence
Even fall upon my life.

DUKE

Fetch Desdemona hither.

OTHELLO

Ancient, conduct them; you best know the place.—
[Exeunt Iago and Attendants.]
And, till she come, as truly as to heaven
I do confess the vices of my blood,
So justly to your grave ears I'll present
How I did thrive in this fair lady's love,
And she in mine.

DUKE

Say it, Othello.

OTHELLO

Her father lov'd me; oft invited me;
Still question'd me the story of my life,
From year to year,—the battles, sieges, fortunes,
That I have pass'd.
I ran it through, even from my boyish days
To the very moment that he bade me tell it:
Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents by flood and field;
Of hair-breadth scapes i' the imminent deadly breach;
Of being taken by the insolent foe,

And sold to slavery; of my redemption thence,
And portance in my travels' history:
Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,
Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads touch
heaven,
It was my hint to speak,—such was the process;
And of the Cannibals that each other eat,
The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders. This to hear
Would Desdemona seriously incline:
But still the house affairs would draw her thence;
Which ever as she could with haste despatch,
She'd come again, and with a greedy ear
Devour up my discourse; which I observing,
Took once a pliant hour; and found good means
To draw from her a prayer of earnest heart
That I would all my pilgrimage dilate,
Whereof by parcels she had something heard,
But not intentively; I did consent;
And often did beguile her of her tears,
When I did speak of some distressful stroke
That my youth suffer'd. My story being done,
She gave me for my pains a world of sighs:
She swore,—in faith, 'twas strange, 'twas passing
strange;
'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful:
She wish'd she had not heard it, yet she wish'd
That heaven had made her such a man: she thank'd me;
And bade me, if I had a friend that lov'd her,
I should but teach him how to tell my story,
And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake:
She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd;
And I lov'd her that she did pity them.
This only is the witchcraft I have us'd:—
Here comes the lady; let her witness it.
[Enter Desdemona, Iago, and Attendants.]

DUKE

I think this tale would win my daughter too.—
Good Brabantio,
Take up this mangled matter at the best.
Men do their broken weapons rather use
Than their bare hands.

BRABANTIO

I pray you, hear her speak:
If she confess that she was half the wooer,
Destruction on my head, if my bad blame
Light on the man!—Come hither, gentle mistress:
Do you perceive in all this noble company
Where most you owe obedience?

DESDEMONA

My noble father,
I do perceive here a divided duty:
To you I am bound for life and education;
My life and education both do learn me
How to respect you; you are the lord of duty,—
I am hitherto your daughter: but here's my husband;
And so much duty as my mother show'd
To you, preferring you before her father,
So much I challenge that I may profess
Due to the Moor, my lord.

BRABANTIO

God be with you!—I have done.—
Please it your grace, on to the state affairs:
I had rather to adopt a child than get it.—
Come hither, Moor:
I here do give thee that with all my heart
Which, but thou hast already, with all my heart
I would keep from thee.—For your sake, jewel,
I am glad at soul I have no other child;

For thy escape would teach me tyranny,
To hang clogs on them.—I have done, my lord.

DUKE

Let me speak like yourself; and lay a sentence
Which, as a guise or step, may help these lovers
Into your favour.
When remedies are past, the griefs are ended
By seeing the worst, which late on hopes depended.
To mourn a mischief that is past and gone
Is the next way to draw new mischief on.
What cannot be preserved when fortune takes,
Patience her injury a mockery makes.
The robb'd that smiles steals something from the thief;
He robs himself that spends a bootless grief.

BRABANTIO

So let the Turk of Cyprus us beguile;
We lose it not so long as we can smile;
He bears the sentence well, that nothing bears
But the free comfort which from thence he hears;
But he bears both the sentence and the sorrow
That, to pay grief, must of poor patience borrow.
These sentences, to sugar or to gall,
Being strong on both sides, are equivocal:
But words are words; I never yet did hear
That the bruised heart was piercèd through the ear.—
I humbly beseech you, proceed to the affairs of state.

DUKE

The Turk with a most mighty preparation makes for
Cyprus.—Othello, the fortitude of the place is best known
to you; and though we have there a substitute of most
allowed sufficiency, yet opinion, a sovereign mistress of
effects, throws a more safer voice on you: you must
therefore be content to slubber the gloss of your new

fortunes with this more stubborn and boisterous expedition.

OTHELLO

The tyrant custom, most grave senators,
Hath made the flinty and steel couch of war
My thrice-driven bed of down: I do agnize
A natural and prompt alacrity
I find in hardness; and do undertake
These present wars against the Ottomites.
Most humbly, therefore, bending to your state,
I crave fit disposition for my wife;
Due reference of place and exhibition;
With such accommodation and besort
As levels with her breeding.

DUKE

If you please,
Be't at her father's.

BRABANTIO

I'll not have it so.

OTHELLO

Nor I.

DESDEMONA

Nor I. I would not there reside,
To put my father in impatient thoughts,
By being in his eye. Most gracious duke,
To my unfolding lend your prosperous ear;
And let me find a charter in your voice
To assist my simpleness.

DUKE

What would you, Desdemona?