

Lies in Shakespeare's 'Othello'

Audioscript

Man: You know the story of Othello, don't you?

Woman: Yes, more or less. Why? Don't you?

Man: Not really. We learned about it at school, but I can't say I remember much. I remember there's a problem between Othello and ...

Woman: Iago.

Man: The one who's in Othello's army?

Woman: Right. Well, Iago explains that he doesn't like Othello because Othello hasn't promoted him, you see, and has instead promoted Cassio, and Cassio's much younger, and less experienced – not the obvious choice. So, Iago promises he will have his revenge.

Man: Right. That sounds familiar.

Woman: Anyway, so, as part of his plan, Iago gets Cassio drunk and he gets into a street fight. As a result of this, Othello strips him of his position as lieutenant. Iago then starts to lie to Othello. He makes him believe that his wife ...

Man: Desdemona?

Woman: That's it, Desdemona ... that she is unfaithful, that she's having an affair.

Man: But she isn't.

Woman: No, that's right, she isn't. Iago manipulates Othello by making him think that Desdemona and Cassio are lovers. Othello trusts Iago and so because he's going mad with jealousy promotes Iago, and also asks him to help kill Cassio and Desdemona.

Man: Wow! I'd forgotten that.

Woman: So, Iago puts Desdemona's handkerchief in Cassio's room and Othello believes that this is proof that Desdemona and Cassio are in love with each other. And Othello is so convinced that he is right that he abuses his wife in public, and shocks people because, you know, here was this guy who'd always been very courteous and noble and then suddenly, here's this aggressive and abusive husband.

Man: Right. And is Cassio killed in the end?

Woman: Well, they try, but Iago's plans to have Cassio killed by someone else go wrong and Cassio is only injured in a fight that was meant to kill him. Othello hears Cassio cry out and

believes he has been killed, so he's satisfied that Desdemona's lover is now dead, and he goes home to face her and possibly kill her.

Man: Right.

Woman: So, when Othello gets home to Desdemona, she is asleep. He kisses her, wakes her up, and accuses her again. Desdemona tells him again and again that she is innocent and doesn't have another lover, but Othello doesn't believe her, and he ...

Man: Oh yes ... kills her with a pillow.

Woman: That's it! He smothers her with a pillow, killing her. Desdemona's servant comes into the room, and Desdemona comes back to life just for a few minutes ...

Man: As you do!

Woman: So, she tells the servant that she's been faithful to Othello, and that, you know, although she has been killed by Othello, her death isn't really his fault.

Man: So, he murders her with a pillow, but it wasn't his fault? Not entirely convincing.

Woman: Well, maybe, but anyway, when Iago enters the room, it now becomes clear that he lied to Othello and the two men fight. Othello tries to kill him before guards come in and drag Iago away. So, of course, Othello is full of guilt at what he's done and ...

Man: Kills himself?

Woman: Exactly.

Man: I mean, how else could the story end?