

Sexual Perversity and Iago

by David J. Loehr

Two men, alone at a bar. One is Othello, the other is David Mamet. Don't ask.

OTHELLO Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul,
But I do love thee! and when I love thee not,
Chaos is come again.

MAMET Lush.

OTHELLO Certain, men should be what they seem.

MAMET So about last night--

OTHELLO What dost thou say, Iago?

MAMET Who?

OTHELLO *Who* wouldst be the man on first,
And thou, I faith, thou art Iago.

MAMET Ah. Yes. Roleplay. Great.

OTHELLO What dost thou say? Or durst?

MAMET Durst?

OTHELLO Thou, thou whoreson durst,
Thy wit's on end this whitsun second,
And by my troth, these Ides do not know--

MAMET Stop it.

OTHELLO Forgive me, Iago, I know not what
Peculiar fever has gripped my speech--

MAMET About last night--

OTHELLO Speak the speech, I pray you--

MAMET How'd you do last night?

OTHELLO Art thou jesting with me?

MAMET Yeah?

OTHELLO Art thou pucking, jesting with me?

MAMET Yeah?

OTHELLO Why of thy thought, Iago?

MAMET I just thought, you know, you might want to know.

OTHELLO You speak in simple words and yet
Your meaning is oft impenetrable.

MAMET I'm talking about Cassio here.

OTHELLO Ay, Cassio.

MAMET The way he was eyeballing your wife.

OTHELLO Ay.

MAMET Looked for all the world like he thought "eye"
Was a prefix in the word "eyeballing."

OTHELLO He was of good counsel
When I did woo fair Desdemona.

MAMET Did woo?

OTHELLO O, yes; and went between us very oft.

MAMET Getting oft?

OTHELLO Nothing so crude, Iago, please forswear 't.

MAMET Indeed.

OTHELLO Indeed! ay, indeed: discern'st thou aught in that?
Is he not honest?

MAMET Are you fucking kidding me?

OTHELLO Honest! ay, honest.

MAMET Let me guess. He was just helping you, right?

OTHELLO Ay, and good counsel, that.

MAMET Shit.

OTHELLO Trippingly off the tongue, sir.
What of Michael Cassio?

MAMET My lord, for aught I know.

OTHELLO What dost thou think?

MAMET I think I just used the word *aught*.

OTHELLO Indeed.

MAMET Well, fuck me.

OTHELLO Thou hast found a strange poetry
In thy repeat'd words of coition,
But by my own volition, I must refuse
Thy generous if misalign'd and much malign'd offer--
But I will come to Desdemona straight--

MAMET My lord. Think on it.

OTHELLO Think, my lord!
By heaven, he echoes me,
As if there were some monster in his thought
A pigeon too hideous to be shown. Thou dost mean something:
I heard thee say even now, thou likedst not that,
When Cassio left my wife: what didst not like?
And when I told thee he was of my counsel
In my whole course of wooing, thou criedst 'Indeed!'
And didst contract and purse thy brow together,
As if thou then hadst shut up in thy brain
Some horrible conceit: if thou dost love me,
Show me thy thought.

MAMET Are you asking me about the leads?

OTHELLO Indeed, ay, indeed;
And, for I know thou'rt full of love and honesty,
And weigh'st thy words before thou givest them breath,
Though terse thy words may be, both curse and worse,
Therefore these stops of thine fright me the more:
For such things in a false disloyal knave
Are tricks of acting, but in a man that's just
They are close deletions, writing from the brain
That passion cannot rule.

MAMET It's just--

OTHELLO Yes--

MAMET I like it when--see--there's a poetry, a flow if you will--shit--I mean--

OTHELLO Iago!

MAMET --sort of a jagged rhythm that, you know, sets things off--
Curses and pauses--over and--over--that is--I mean--

OTHELLO Nay, yet there's more in this:
I prithee, speak to me as to thy thinkings,
As thou dost ruminate, and give thy worst of thoughts
The worst of words.

MAMET --over and over, till you say, "Fuck it, it's done."
But this isn't about me, is it?

OTHELLO Iago, good Iago, dost thou string me along?
Dost thou take me for thy doll, thy mammet,
A plaything whereby to catch the unconscionable?

MAMET I'm just saying. Is all I'm saying.

OTHELLO What dost thou mean?

MAMET Cassio. Desi. Tab A, slot B. Put it together, dipshit.

OTHELLO By heaven, I'll know thy thoughts.

MAMET You cannot, if my heart were in your hand;
Nor shall not, whilst 'tis in my custody.

OTHELLO Ha!

MAMET What, you think I can't do Shakespeare? Fuck you.

OTHELLO O misery!

MAMET I do Shaw, I do Chekov, I can fucking well do Shakespeare,
You impotent mammering jolthead.

OTHELLO Why, why is this?
Think'st thou I'd make a lie of jealousy,
To follow still the changes of the moon
With fresh suspicions? No; to be once in doubt
Is once to be resolved: exchange me for a goat,
When I shall turn the business of my soul

To such exsufflicate and blown surmises,
Matching thy inference.

MAMET "Exchange me for a goat?" What the fuck talk is that?

OTHELLO Listen, Iago--

MAMET And I'll tell you this, friend,
Surmises are not the only things getting blown,
If you get my drift, in a manner of speechifying--

OTHELLO 'Tis not to make me jealous
To say my wife is fair, feeds well, loves company,
Is free of speech, sings, plays and dances well;
Where virtue is, these are more virtuous:
Nor from mine own weak merits will I draw
The smallest fear or doubt of her revolt;
For she had eyes, and chose me. No, Iago;
I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove;
And on the proof, there is no more but this,--
Away at once with love or jealousy!

MAMET What I'm saying is, it's fucked.

OTHELLO Dost thou say 'tis so?

MAMET She's a woman. He's a man. You're an archetype.

OTHELLO Indeed.

MAMET Don't fucking "indeed" me, Poitier.
Guess who's coming to dinner now.

OTHELLO Surely not--

MAMET It's these young broads. They
Knoweth not what the fuck they want.

OTHELLO Dost thou think she to be a pro?

MAMET Forsooth.

OTHELLO Fuck.

And scene.

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