

*Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see:
She has deceived her father, and may thee.*

(I,iii,18)

Brabantio casts this warning at the end of Act I as he realizes his accusation of Othello's theft of Desdemona has no merit. While it is unclear whether Brabantio cautions Othello out of spite or concern, this emphatic use of rhyming couplet serves as a seed that will germinate into the doubt and jealousy that will overwhelm the general by Act III. In fact, Iago refers to Brabantio's warning when he remarks to Othello that, "[Desdemona] did deceive her father, marrying [him]" (III, iii, 47). However, rather than illuminate the infidelity of Desdemona, or the duplicity of Iago, Brabantio's words underpin the hamartia of the Moor's tragic character: his naivete for someone of his station. A general of the age would hopefully possess more cunning and artfulness to discern the truth in others, but as Montano questions in Act II, Othello "[p]rizes the virtue that appears in Cassio / And looks not on his evils" (II, iii, 32). This observation was already made by Iago in Act I, where he notes that "[Othello] is of a free and open nature,/ That thinks men honest that but seem to be so" (I, iii, 20). Perhaps Othello's blind faith in others stems from his desire to treat others better than he himself has been treated in his rise up the ranks of the Venetian military. If this is so, then Iago magically manipulates the love and kindness of another central character "into pitch" (II, iii, 38), and further reinforces the theme that powerful revenge and cunning deception can turn bright virtue into dark vice.

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