

ALEX. [to the light booth] Bob, can we have some stage lights, please?

DANIELLE. Ross? Uh... what are you doing?

ALEX. What's with the boats?

ROSSNER. I'm Othello, the Moor of Venice.

DANIELLE. I don't think you got 'moor' right...

ROSSNER. ~~[Does his Wiki bit] [into cell phone] Alexa, define 'moor'.~~

~~ROSS'S PHONE. Moor: make fast a boat by attaching it by cable or rope to the shore or to an anchor.~~

~~[ROSSNER makes a "See!" gesture towards his phone.]~~

ALEX. Lose the boats. [ROSSNER slinks off. To audience] Sorry, Rossner can be really ignorant sometimes. [To DANIELLE] So, what is a 'moor'?

DANIELLE. Well, interestingly, this is the subject of a blazing scholarly debate. For Elizabethans, 'moor' could refer either specifically to the Berbers of North Africa, or more generally, to any people of sub-Saharan African descent.

ALEX. So, Othello's black.

DANIELLE. Well...

ALEX. Wait, Justin Bieber isn't black!

DANIELLE. [after puzzling it out] No, not Bieber. Berbers, indigenous North Africans.

ALEX. Okay, so Othello's black. So are we... Do we... do blackface?

DANIELLE. Do you want to be on a split-screen on CNN tomorrow morning apologizing? Absolutely not!

ALEX. Sorry. No, no one here wants to be on cable news.

[ROSSNER enters, sans boats]

ROSSNER. Well then, who gets to play Othello?

[If there is a black audience member, they all look at them for a few seconds. Then]

DANIELLE. It's not that easy. Look, people expect sensitive, ethnically appropriate casting of minority characters. In today's political climate, even talking about minorities or marginalized peoples requires a delicate touch and certain level of care.

ALEX. We could rap about Othello!

ROSSNER and DANIELLE. NO!

DANIELLE. Sorry, folks. You have to understand that at this point in "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)", traditionally, the actors rap about Othello.

ROSSNER. The show was written in 1987, which, coincidentally was the last time that white people trying to rap ironically was funny.

ALEX. Okay, you guys keep poo-pooing on the rap, but what should we do instead? It can't be "The COMPLETE Works of William Shakespeare" without Othello.

*[DANIELLE and ROSS agree reluctantly, then the three think in silence for a couple seconds]*

DANIELLE. Well, we just need something related to the story then, right? Pick a facet from the story of Othello and grow from there. What do you think of when you hear the word, 'Othello'?

ALEX. Iago. Then Jaffar. Then Aladdin. Can we just do Aladdin?

DANIELLE. No.

ROSSNER. Pillows? Othello smothers his wife Desdemona with a pillow. *[DANIELLE looks progressively more horrified as he continues.]* We could do like a Home Shopping Network thing where Othello is up there and he's selling pillows and people are calling in and asking normal questions but he keeps telling them which would be best for smothering their wives, like which stuffing blocks the most air and which fabrics slide around the least and oh my god, yes, no, I hear it now. Bad idea. Forget I said anything.

DANIELLE. Yikes.

ALEX. There's a *town* of Othello in eastern Washington?

DANIELLE. How do we incorporate that? *[ALEX shrugs]* Come on guys, there's got to be something. Othello marries Desdemona in secret, her dad warns him that she's untrustworthy—

ROSSNER. Terms and conditions joke? No...

DANIELLE. Iago uses that distrust out of envy, sets up Othello to think Desdemona is cheating on him—

ALEX. Jerry Springer? Steve Wilco? Cheaters?

DANIELLE. Othello loses is, kills Desi, Iago attacks and kills a bunch of people to cover his tracks—

ROSSNER. Game of Thrones?

DANIELLE. Ooo, no. Too soon. That wound is still fresh. Othello injures Iago so he'll live in suffering and then kills himself. Anything?

*[All three think again for a couple seconds]*

ROSSNER. I mean... you, kinda, just did Othello.

DANIELLE. Huh?

ROSSNER. Right here, just now, you just bullet pointed the whole show, right? Right here in front of everybody.

DANIELLE. I mean, yeah, I did, but we didn't really do a 'take' on it.

ALEX. You want to count all this pointless discussion as 'doing' Othello. Just us here talking, no jokes? Like some kind of Wes Anderson film?

DANIELLE. You don't think the audience will expect more from us than just Seinfeld-ing our way through Othello?

*[All three look at the audience for a second, back to each other, then back to the audience]*

ROSSNER. So, moving on!

DANIELLE. How disappointing...

ALEX. Just like a Wes Anderson film...