

*Desdemona steps forward.
She is soft.
Her voice husky.
Bed tussled.
There are sheets.*

DESDEMONA

The trouble is you want a man who's strong. A man of power. The trouble is you want a man to have you like he can't have anyone else.

Like you can't.

Believe me, ladies, I'm not in anything I want to get out of.

And haven't you ever loved someone who hurt you?

Let me go with him, I said. Let me be surrendered to his hands.

That I did marry the Moor to live with him, gentlemen.

I said those words.

I said them.

Let him. Let him. Come to my bed and take my body.

Take my body and I will be the tonic to his raging brain, the voice that tells him,

Be strong. Be violent. Take no prisoners and you will be a man.

The trouble is we want a man to be strong.

And then we make ourselves their softness.

How many boys have we bred into violence in the name of Patriotism. Pugilism.

National security.

And so I found a man who was complicated and scarred and so deeply wanted to be good but boarded it up behind those words that men like to use for being broken..

Honor. Valor. Pride.

And I lusted.

Even in his stubbornness, his checks, his frowns he did unpin me.

I wanted him to leave my body like jelly.

Like sap between my thighs...gentle shuddering breaths...

The trouble is you want a man who's strong...so much stronger than you...

Sometimes I would whisper into his ear *take me, take me like I'm yours* just to feel him press, peel, pull my body until he would curl at my breast like a baby, spent and searching.

I will be insatiate. I will let him pin my thighs like butterflies and grow as potent as a God, begging him to break, blow, burn against my skin until the battered heart of my sex swells like a happy animal.

The delicate heart of a sea frond, twitching open beneath his fingers.

I will not apologize for wanting him that way

But I will die for it. I think.
I will die.
He'll hate you once you go to bed with him, my mother told me.
They always do, a little.
And I said, bring it on then.
I am not afraid.

A noise. She starts. Is someone coming?

Oh kill me tomorrow.
Let me live tonight.
Let me lust tonight and let me feel it
All I ever wanted was a lover – the keen delight men know when they grunt and rut
and swear like animals, getting just a little closer to the earth, a little closer to their
death.
A hundred little deaths between my legs and still God fashioned us so that we could
keep on coming.
Why? If not to let us test the very limits of our love.

I loved him then and I love him still, you understand?
Don't wrap me up in white and call me fair just to make your pity easier to swallow.
I did marry the Moor to live with him, didn't I?

And haven't you ever loved someone who hurt you?

Shift

*Emilia counters.
Her eyes are sharp.
She will confide the truth to you.
It doesn't please her, but you need to know.*

EMILIA

You don't know her the way I know her.
You haven't been there when she's hunched over the toilet from one too many wine coolers and starts talking about how her mother never stayed around to hold her long enough.
You haven't seen her table-dancing in a crop top while sweaty, beefcake men are getting hard for her and you can almost smell the wetness from between her thighs. No shade.

Or when she gets drunk on something bitter and her tone goes hard.
That's when she gets that same look in her eyes her father has, though she won't admit it.

The night before they got married she was in a gay bar with her girlfriends crowing about how much she loved his big black cock.
It wasn't cute.
But no one said anything, because it was an open bar and why ruin her "special day"

I tried to tell her about it once and those big brown baby eyes of hers welled up while she held my forearms and I could feel the bones in my wrists getting jumpy and scared but I just sat there and let her drip an apology into my lap.
She doesn't mean to be an asshole.
But they never do.
And as much as I loved her she was still the kind of well-to-do slacktivist who thought the best way to tackle racism was to put on her pussy hat and her Black boyfriend and go out calling it revolution.
But let her catch a whiff of her own hypocrisy and everything crumbled into tears and white guilt.

But can you blame her, when she was raised by a man who hosts charity balls for Save the Children or whatever but sent his only daughter to a private school that hosts purity balls for 10 year olds and their daddies at \$200 a plate.

I'd probably be fucking my face off with daddy's worst nightmare too, if I were her.

Although. If we're comparing like with like, I guess I already am.
My father would have thrown a shit-fit if he were alive to see my courthouse wedding.
My Iago.

That was the biggest joke of all to her.

"Em," She says, *"I just can't believe, you can even stand him."* She says.

What she really meant was

"Don't you wish you had a man like mine?"

Well. I know who my husband is in the end.

Do you?

By the time the police came through the door he had already half crushed her windpipe and was crying like a little boy.

I'm not saying that she deserved it, just...It would have been nice if she had listened when we told her to something wasn't right between them anymore.

Things might've ended up differently for all of us.

And now another Black boy goes to jail behind some reckless white girl and her fucked up family.

Beat

She wasn't anybody's victim is all I'm saying.

Not even close.

