

Act 3, Scene 3 The town square

(Enter DOGBERRY, VERGES, SIMPLE, NYM, HUGH OATCAKE and GEORGE SEACOLE.)

DOGBERRY

Are you good men and true?

VERGES

Yea, or else it were pity but they should suffer salvation.*

DOGBERRY

Nay, that were a punishment too good for them.

VERGES

Well, give them their charge,* neighbor Dogberry.

DOGBERRY

First, who think you the most desertless* man to be constable?

NYM

Hugh Oatcake sir, or George Seacole, for they can write and read.

DOGBERRY

Come hither, neighbor Seacole.

You are thought here to be the most senseless* and fit man for the constable of the watch, therefore bear you the lantern.

This is your charge.

You shall comprehend* all vagrom* men.

You are to bid any man stop, in the Prince's name.

SEACOLE

How if he will not stop?

DOGBERRY

Why then, take no note of him, but let him go, and thank God you are rid of a knave.

VERGES

If he will not stop when he is bidden, he is none of the Prince's subjects.

DOGBERRY

True, and they are to meddle with none but the Prince's subjects.

You shall also make no noise in the streets;

for the watch to babble and to talk is most tolerable,* and not to be endured.

SIMPLE

We will rather sleep than talk.

salvation - he means damnation, *charge* - orders, *desertless* - he means deserving, *senseless* - he means sensible, *comprehend* - he means apprehend, *vagrom* - vagrant, *tolerable* - he means intolerable

DOGBERRY

Why you speak like an ancient and most quiet watchman, for I cannot see how sleeping should offend.
Only have a care your pikes be not stolen.
You are to call at all the ale-houses and bid those that are drunk get them to bed.

SEACOLE

How if they will not?

DOGBERRY

Why then, let them alone till they are sober.

SEACOLE

Well, sir.

DOGBERRY

If you meet a thief, you may suspect him to be no true man;
and the less you meddle with him the more is for your honesty.

SIMPLE

If we know him to be a thief, shall we not lay hands upon him?

DOGBERRY

Truly you may, but I think they that touch pitch shall be defiled.
The most peaceable way for you, if you do meet a thief,
is to let him show himself what he is, and steal out of your company.

VERGES

If you hear a child cry in the night, you must call to the nurse and bid her still it.

SEACOLE

How if the nurse be asleep and will not hear us?

DOGBERRY

Why then, depart in peace and let the child wake her with crying.
Well masters, good night. If there be any matter of weight chances, call up me.
Come, neighbor.

SEACOLE

Well masters, we hear our charge.
Let us go sit here upon the church-bench till two, and then all to bed.

DOGBERRY

One word more, honest neighbors. I pray you watch about Signior Leonato's door;
for the wedding being there tomorrow, there is a great coil* tonight.
Adieu. Be vigilant,* I beseech you.

(Exeunt DOGBERRY and VERGES.)

coil - confusion; bustle, *vigilant* - he means vigilant

(Enter BORACHIO and CONRADE.)

BORACHIO

Conrade!

CONRADE

Here man. I am at thy elbow.

BORACHIO

Stand thee close; and I will, like a true drunkard, utter all to thee.

SEACOLE

(*Aside.*) Some treason masters. Stand close.

BORACHIO

Therefore know I have earned of Don John a thousand ducats.

CONRADE

Is it possible that any villainy should be so dear?*

BORACHIO

Didst thou not hear somebody?

CONRADE

No; 'twas the vane on the house.

BORACHIO

Know that I have tonight wooed Margaret, the Lady Hero's gentlewoman, by the name of Hero. She leans me out at her mistress' chamber-window, bids me a thousand times good night—I tell this tale vilely—I should first tell thee how the Prince, Claudio and my master, planted and placed and possessed* by my master Don John, saw afar off in the orchard this amiable encounter.

CONRADE

And thought they Margaret was Hero?

BORACHIO

Two of them did, the Prince and Claudio; but the devil my master knew she was Margaret. Away went Claudio enraged; swore he would meet her, as he was appointed, next morning at the temple, and there before the whole congregation, shame her with what he saw overnight and send her home again without a husband.

SEACOLE

We charge you in the Prince's name, stand!

dear - expensive, *possessed* - deluded

OATCAKE

Call up the right master constable.

We have here recovered* the most dangerous piece of lechery* that ever was known in the commonwealth.

CONRADE

Masters, masters—

NYM

Never speak! We charge you let us obey you* to go with us.

(Exeunt.)