

# Much Ado About Nothing

## 3.3

*Enter Dogberry and his compartner Verges, with the Watch*

**DOGBERRY** Are you good men and true?

**VERGES** Yea, or else it were pity but they should suffer salvation, body and soul.

**DOGBERRY** Nay, that were a punishment too good for them if they should have any allegiance in them, being 5  
chosen for the Prince's watch.

**VERGES** Well, give them their charge, neighbour Dogberry.

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

**SECOND WATCHMAN** Hugh Oatcake, sir, or George Seacoal, 10  
for they can write and read.

**DOGBERRY** Come hither, neighbour Seacoal, God hath blest you with a good name. To be a well-favoured man is the gift of fortune, but to write and read comes by nature. 15

**FIRST WATCHMAN** Both which, Master Constable±±

**DOGBERRY** You have. I knew it would be your answer. Well, for your favour, sir, why, give God thanks, and make no boast of it. And for your writing and reading, let that appear when there is no need of such vanity. 20  
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 stand, in the Prince's name. 25

**FIRST WATCHMAN** How if a will not stand?

**DOGBERRY** Why then take no note of him, but let him go, and presently call the rest of the watch together, and thank God you are rid of a knave.

**VERGES** If he will not stand when he is bidden he is none 30  
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 for the watch to babble and to talk

is most tolerable and not to be endured. 35

**A WATCHMAN** We will rather sleep than talk. We know what belongs to a watch.

**DOGBERRY** Why, you speak like an ancient and most quiet watchman, for I cannot see how sleeping should offend. Only have a care that your bills be not stolen. Well, 40 you are to call at all the alehouses and bid those that are drunk get them to bed.

**A WATCHMAN** How if they will not?

**DOGBERRY** Why then, let them alone till they are sober. If they make you not then the better answer, you may say they are not the men you took them for. 45

**A WATCHMAN** Well, sir.

**DOGBERRY** If you meet a thief you may suspect him, by virtue of your office, to be no true man; and for such kind of men, the less you meddle or make with them 50 why, the more is for your honesty.

**A WATCHMAN** If we know him to be a thief, shall we not lay hands on him?

**DOGBERRY** Truly, by your office you may, but I think they that touch pitch will be defiled. The most peaceable 55 way for you if you do take a thief is to let him show himself what he is, and steal out of your company.

**VERGES** You have been always called a merciful man, partner.

**DOGBERRY** Truly, I would not hang a dog by my will, 60 much more a man who hath any honesty in him.

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

**A WATCHMAN** How if the nurse be asleep and will not hear us? 65

**DOGBERRY** Why then, depart in peace and let the child wake her with crying, for the ewe that will not hear her lamb when it baes will never answer a calf when he bleats.

**VERGES** 'Tis very true. 70

**DOGBERRY** This is the end of the charge. You, constable, are to present the Prince's own person. If you meet the Prince in the night you may stay him.

**VERGES** Nay, by'r Lady, that I think a cannot.

**DOGBERRY** Five shillings to one on't with any man that 75  
knows the statutes he may stay him. Marry, not without  
the Prince be willing, for indeed the watch ought to  
offend no man, and it is an offence to stay a man  
against his will.

**VERGES** By'r Lady, I think it be so. 80

**DOGBERRY** Ha ha ha! Well, masters, good night. An there  
be any matter of weight chances, call up me. Keep  
your fellows' counsels, and your own, and good night.  
Come, neighbour.

**[FIRST] WATCHMAN** Well, masters, we hear our charge. 85  
Let us go sit here upon the church bench till two, and  
then all to bed.

**DOGBERRY** One word more, honest neighbours. I pray you  
watch about Signor Leonato's door, for the wedding  
being there tomorrow, there is a great coil tonight. 90  
Adieu. Be vigilant, I beseech you.

*Exeunt Dogberry and Verges. [The Watch sit]  
Enter Borachio and Conrad*

**BORACHIO** What, Conrad!

**[FIRST] WATCHMAN** *(aside)* Peace, stir not.

**BORACHIO** Conrad, I say.

**CONRAD** Here, man, I am at thy elbow. 95

**BORACHIO** Mass, an my elbow itched, I thought there  
would a scab follow.

**CONRAD** I will owe thee an answer for that. And now,  
forward with thy tale.

**BORACHIO** Stand thee close, then, under this penthouse, 100  
for it drizzles rain, and I will, like a true drunkard,  
utter all to thee.

**A WATCHMAN** *(aside)* Some treason, masters. Yet stand  
close.

**BORACHIO** Therefore, know I have earned of Don John a 105  
thousand ducats.

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

**BORACHIO** Thou shouldst rather ask if it were possible any  
villainy should be so rich. For when rich villains have  
need of poor ones, poor ones may make what price 110  
they will.

**CONRAD** I wonder at it.

**BORACHIO** That shows thou art unconfirmed. Thou knowest that the fashion of a doublet, or a hat, or a cloak is nothing to a man. 115

**CONRAD** Yes, it is apparel.

**BORACHIO** I mean the fashion.

**CONRAD** Yes, the fashion is the fashion.

**BORACHIO** Tush, I may as well say the fool's the fool. But seest thou not what a deformed thief this fashion is? 120

**A WATCHMAN** (*aside*) I know that Deformed. A has been a vile thief this seven year. A goes up and down like a gentleman. I remember his name.

**BORACHIO** Didst thou not hear somebody?

**CONRAD** No, 'twas the vane on the house. 125

**BORACHIO** Seest thou not, I say, what a deformed thief this fashion is, how giddily a turns about all the hot-bloods between fourteen and five-and-thirty, sometimes fashioning them like Pharaoh's soldiers in the reechy painting, sometime like god Bel's priests in the old church window, sometime like the shaven Hercules in the smirched, worm-eaten tapestry, where his codpiece seems as massy as his club? 130

**CONRAD** All this I see, and I see that the fashion wears out more apparel than the man. But art not thou thyself giddy with the fashion, too, that thou hast shifted out of thy tale into telling me of the fashion? 135

**BORACHIO** Not so, neither. But 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. 140 145

**CONRAD** And thought they Margaret was Hero?

**BORACHIO** Two of them did, the Prince and Claudio, but the devil my master knew she was Margaret, and partly by his oaths, which first possessed them, partly by the dark night, which did deceive them, but chiefly by my villainy, which did confirm any slander that Don John had made, away went Claudio enraged, swore he would 150

meet her as he was appointed next morning at the temple, and there, before the whole congregation, shame her with what he saw o'ernight, and send her<sup>155</sup> home again without a husband.

**[FIRST] WATCHMAN** (*coming forward*) We charge you in the Prince's name. Stand.

**[A WATCHMAN]** Call up the right Master Constable. We have here recovered the most dangerous piece of lechery<sup>160</sup> that ever was known in the commonwealth.

**[FIRST] WATCHMAN** And one Deformed is one of them. I know him±±a wears a lock.

**CONRAD** Masters, masters!

**[A WATCHMAN]** You'll be made bring Deformed forth, I<sup>165</sup> warrant you.

**[CONRAD]** Masters±±

**[A WATCHMAN]** Never speak. We charge you. Let us obey you to go with us.

**BORACHIO** (*to Conrad*) We are like to prove a goodly<sup>170</sup> commodity, being taken up of these men's bills.

**CONRAD** A commodity in question, I warrant you. Come, we'll obey you.

*Exeunt*