

Act 3, Scene 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 chosen for the Prince's watch. 5

VERGES Well, give them their charge, neighbor Dogberry.

DOGBERRY First, who think you the most desartless man to be constable? 10

FIRST WATCHMAN Hugh Oatcake, sir, or George Seacoal, for they can write and read.

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

SEACOAL Both which, master constable—

DOGBERRY You have. I knew it would be your answer. Well, for your favor, 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. 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. 20 25

SEACOAL How if he will not stand?

DOGBERRY Why, then, take no note of him, but let him

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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 of the Prince's subjects. 30

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

HUGH OATCAKE/SECOND 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, you are to call at all the alehouses and  
bid those that are drunk get them to bed. 40

SEACOAL 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

SEACOAL 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, why, the more is for your honesty. 50

SEACOAL 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 way for you, if you do take a thief, is to  
let him show himself what he is and steal out of  
your company. 55

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

HUGH OATCAKE/SECOND WATCHMAN How if the nurse be asleep and 65  
will not hear us?

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 baas will never answer a  
calf when he bleats.