

DOGBERRY Truly, by your office you may, but I think 55
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.

VERGES You have been always called a merciful man, 60
partner.

DOGBERRY Truly, I would not hang a dog by my will,
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. 65

WATCHMAN 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.

VERGES 'Tis very true.

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. 75

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

DOGBERRY Five shillings to one on 't, with any man that
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 offense to stay a 80
man against his will.

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

DOGBERRY Ha, ah ha!—Well, masters, goodnight. If
there be any matter of weight chances, call up me.
Keep your fellows' counsels and your own, and 85
goodnight.—Come, neighbor.

Dogberry and Verges begin to exit.

SEACOAL 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 90
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.

Dogberry and Verges exit.

Enter Borachio and Conrade.

BORACHIO What, Conrade!

SEACOAL, *aside* Peace, stir not. 95

BORACHIO Conrade, I say!

CONRADE Here, man, I am at thy elbow.

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

SEACOAL, *aside* Some treason, masters. Yet stand 105
close.

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

CONRADE Is it possible that any villainy should be so
dear? 110

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 they will.

CONRADE I wonder at it. 115

BORACHIO Thou
knowest that the fashion of a doublet, or a hat, or a
cloak, is nothing to a man.

CONRADE Yes, it is apparel.

BORACHIO I mean the fashion. 120

CONRADE 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?

WATCHMAN, *aside* I know that Deformed. He 125
has been a vile thief this seven year.
I remember his name.

BORACHIO Didst thou not hear somebody?

CONRADE No, 'twas the vane on the house.

BORACHIO Seest thou not, I say, what a deformed thief 130
this fashion is, how giddily he turns about all the
hot bloods between fourteen and five-and-thirty?

CONRADE All this I see,
But art not thou 140
thyself giddy with the fashion too, that thou hast
shifted out of thy tale into telling me of the
fashion?

BORACHIO Not so, neither. But know that I have tonight
wooded Margaret, the Lady Hero's gentlewoman, 145
by the name of Hero. She leans me out at
her mistress' chamber window, bids me a thousand
times goodnight. 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 150
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; 155
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 meet her as he was 160
appointed next morning at the temple, and there,
before the whole congregation, shame her with
what he saw o'ernight and send her home again
without a husband.

WATCHMAN We charge you in the Prince's name 165
stand!

SEACOAL Call up the right Master Constable.
We have here recovered the most
dangerous piece of lechery that ever was known in
the commonwealth. 170