

The Watch.

[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.

VERGES Well, give them their charge, neighbour Dogberry.

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

1ST WATCHMAN Hugh Oatcake, sir, or George Seacoal, for they can write and read.

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

SEACOAL 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. 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.

SEACOAL How if he 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 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.

2ND 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.

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.

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.

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.
VERGES	You have been always called a merciful man, partner.
DOGBERRY	Truly, I would not hang a dog by my will, much more a man who hath any honesty in him.
VERGES <i>[to the Watch]</i>	If you hear a child cry in the night, you must call to the nurse and bid her still it.
2ND 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, for the ewe that will not hear her lamb when it baas will never answer a calf when he bleats.
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.
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 man against his will.
VERGES	By 'r Lady, I think it be so.
DOGBERRY	Ha, ah ha! – Well, masters, goodnight. An there be any matter of weight chances, call up me. Keep your fellows' counsels and your own, and goodnight. – Come, neighbour.