

Much Ado Act III, scene 3 (for audition purposes, several comic lowlife roles have been combined into one “Constable”)

At auditions you will be asked to read at least one part of in one of the scenes included at this link. For scene context, consider consulting one of the dozens of scene-by-scene summaries online. One free source is <https://www.sparknotes.com/nofear/shakespeare/muchado/>

DOGBERRY

Are you good men and true?

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.

CONSTABLE

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.

CONSTABLE

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.

If he will not stand when he is bidden, he is none of the Prince’s subjects.

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.

CONSTABLE

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.

CONSTABLE

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.

CONSTABLE

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.

CONSTABLE

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.

CONSTABLE

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

CONSTABLE

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.

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.

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.

Well, masters, goodnight. An

there be any matter of weight chances, call up me.

Keep your fellows' counsels and your own, and goodnight.