

Much Ado Act III, scene 3

At auditions you will be asked to read at least one part 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/>

*Enter Borachio and Conrade.*

BORACHIO

What, Conrade! Conrade, I say!

CONRADE

Here, man, I am at thy elbow.

BORACHIO

Mass, and my elbow itched, I thought there would a scab follow.

CONRADE

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

BORACHIO

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

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

CONRADE

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 they will.

CONRADE

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.

CONRADE

Yes, it is apparel.

BORACHIO

I mean the fashion.

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?... Didst thou not hear somebody?

CONRADE

No, 'twas the vane on the house.

BORACHIO

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

CONRADE

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?

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 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  
Don John, saw afar off in the orchard this amiable  
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;  
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  
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.