

Henry V abbreviated

Act 3, Scene 3

Counsel

Situation: To the surprise of the French, ill prepared as they were for this bold move by the young English king, Henry V offers the city's governor the opportunity to turn the city over to him, his troops ready if necessary to take the city of Harfleur by force.

HENRY: How yet resolves the Governor of the town.

Henry V to the men of Harfleur

**This is the last conference we will admit.
Therefore to our best mercy do submit,
Or to men of proud destruction defy
Us to our worst. If I begin batt'ry
Again, I'll not leave till Harfleur doth lie
Buried in her ashes; gates of mercy
Shall be shut up. So, you men of Harfleur,
Take pity of your people whilst I were
Yet in command of my soldiers. If shrouds
Cover your wives and young, what's it to me?
Relent whiles grace o'erblows contagious clouds
Of heady murder, spoil and villainy.
What say you? Will you yield and this avoid,
Or, guilty in defense, be thus destroyed?**

The Governor enters.

GOVERNOR: The Dauphin returns us that his powers are yet not ready to raise so great a siege. Therefore, great king, we yield our town and lives to thy soft mercy?

HENRY: Open your gates.

Governor exits.

HENRY: Come, uncle Exeter, go you and enter Harfleur. There remain, and fortify it strongly 'gainst the French. Use mercy to them all for us, dear uncle. The winter coming on and sickness growing upon our soldiers, we will retire to Calais.