

Henry V abbreviated

Act 5, Scene 2.1

Proposal

Situation: Henry V sends his brothers and his uncle Exeter to negotiate the final terms of a peace agreement with the French principals, keeping the French king's daughter Katherine and her English teacher Alice with him as "our capital demand." He makes a request to Katherine.

HENRY: Fair Katherine, will you vouchsafe to teach a soldier terms to plead his love-suit to her gentle heart?

KATHERINE: I cannot speak your England.

HENRY: Do you like me, Kate?

KATHERINE: I cannot tell what is "like me."

HENRY: An angel is like you, Kate, and you are like an angel.

Henry V to Katherine, No. 1

I'm glad thou canst speak no better English;
If thou couldst, thou surely wouldst wish
To find me a less plain king, one who could
Say "I love you" with more eloquence than
I. I've not rhymes of a poet and should
Have more measure in my step. If a man
Who could win at leapfrog, I'd soon a wife.
I've oaths before God, Kate, which in this life
I use not till urged and never break for
Urging. There are men of varied tongues who
Can rhyme themselves to ladies' favors; or,
Take a plain and constant man who must do
Thee right, for he hath, with all God's graces,
Not the gift to woo in other places.

KATHERINE: I cannot tell what is dat.

Henry V to Katherine, No. 2

These men of infinite tongue do always
Reason themselves out again. Rhymers gaze
As idle praters; poems are but ballads,
A straight back will stoop, a good leg will wear
Thin, a full black beard will turn white, a lad's
Pate of curly hair will grow bald, a fair
Face'll wither and a full eye wax hollow,
But a good heart, as the sun, doth shine so

Bright and never changes but keeps its course
Truly. If thou would have such a one, take
Me. Kate, do dare to love England's new force
For France? You should love me for France's sake,
For I love France, to be mine, which is fine;
I'm yours, then yours is France, and you are mine.