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SF PERUSALS

Katherine Howard

A play

William Nicholson

Samuel French — London

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KATHERINE HOWARD

First performed at the Chichester Festival Theatre on the 9th September 1998 with the following cast:

Henry VIII	Richard Griffiths
Katherine Howard	Emilia Fox
Thomas Culpeper	Julian Rhind-Tutt
Anne of Cleves	Selina Griffiths
Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk	Denis Quilley
Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury	Jonathan Coy
Lady Jane Rochford	Frances Tomelty
Sir Thomas Wriothesley	Roger Booth
Mrs Mary Hall	Rachel Lumberg
William	James Benson
Captain of the King's Guard	Andrew McDonald
Ladies in Waiting	Sarah Beckett Lucy Chalkley
Page/Soldier	William Buckhurst
Servants/Guards	Renata Champion, Jo Horstead, Becci Pritchard, Amy Stacy, Anna Walton, Chris Gibbs, Dominic Godfree, Adie Luff, Luke Osborne, Sam Tazzyman, Ben Thompson, James Thorpe

Directed by Robin Lefèvre
Designed by Liz Ascroft
Lighting designed by Mick Hughes

CHARACTERS

Henry VIII; 50
Katherine Howard: Henry's fifth wife, and niece of the Duke of Norfolk; 18
Thomas Culpeper: Katherine Howard's lover; 20s
Anne of Cleves: Henry's fourth wife, a German; 25
Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk: leader of the Catholic faction; 60s
Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury: leader of the Reformist faction; 50s
Lady Jane Rochford: Queen's lady-in-waiting; 40s
Sir Thomas Wriothesley: Privy Councillor, Reformist faction; 50s
Mrs Mary Hall: a chatterer; 20s
William: Cranmer's private secretary
Captain of the King's Guard
Menservants/Guards/Courtiers
Maidservants/Ladies of the court

The action of the play takes place in the royal palace between 6th January 1540, the wedding night of Henry VIII and his fourth wife, Anne of Cleves; and 13th February 1542, the execution of his fifth wife, Katherine Howard

Other plays by William Nicholson published by Samuel French Ltd

Map of the Heart
Shadowlands

ACT I

The royal palace. 6th January 1540. Night

There is a curtained pavilion C

When the play begins the stage is in darkness and the pavilion's front curtains are open. The king, Henry VIII, kneels at prayer, accompanied by his favourite, young Thomas Culpeper. One of Henry's legs is heavily bandaged from thigh to calf, but this is not noticeable at this stage. Henry and Culpeper are, as yet, unlit

We hear the sound of voices chanting the Mass

A procession of courtiers, and servants carrying candles, enters from either side

The Lights come up inside the pavilion to reveal Henry and Culpeper. The members of the procession kneel and the Mass proceeds

Henry completes his prayers, rises, and, assisted by Culpeper, makes his way off

The Lights go down inside the pavilion and the front curtains close

The courtiers rise and process off and the chanting comes to an end

A fanfare sounds. The curtains on the pavilion draw back and the Lights come up on the whole stage. A handsome royal bed is revealed in the pavilion. In the bed, bolt upright, sits the new queen, Anne, a German. She wears a nightgown, and her hair falls loose over her shoulders. She is rigid with apprehension. On either side of the bed, equally motionless, stand her two ladies-in-waiting: Lady Jane Rochford, once a beauty, no longer young, and Katherine Howard, eighteen years old, and charmingly lovely

A second procession now enters, and makes its solemn way towards the pavilion. In the lead is the Captain of the King's Guard, followed by his men; then the Duke of Norfolk, an aristocrat of the old style, leader of the Roman Catholic faction; then Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, leader of the Reformist

faction, in sober black, with Sir Thomas Wriothesley, whose subdued costume shows that he too inclines towards reform. After them comes Henry, assisted by Culpeper. Henry wears a nightgown over his vast bulk, and moves with difficulty. His bandaged leg is now more obvious. Two Servants bring up the rear

Henry is not happy, and cares very little who knows it. When he is in sight of the ladies in the pavilion, but not yet in earshot, he stops, and gives vent to a long groan. The procession stops, in delayed reaction, ahead of him

Henry Do you love me, Thomas?

Culpeper You know I do, sir.

Henry Then do it for me, eh? She's a virgin, they tell me. You like virgins, don't you?

Cranmer (*turning back, smiling with anxiety*) We should proceed, sire. The people wait to celebrate tonight.

Henry It's all right for them. They don't have to share her bed. (*He gives another groaning sigh, and waves for the procession to continue*) Have you smelt her, Thomas? She stinks of rancid butter. Virginity does that. They have to be uncorked before they're twenty, or something curdles inside.

The Captain, at the procession's head, now reaches the pavilion, and comes smartly to attention. The Duke of Norfolk bows to the new queen. The protocol of the royal wedding night proceeds in formal style. Anne watches from the bed in bewilderment

Norfolk His royal majesty greets his gracious queen, and begs of the unquenchable love he feels for her pure and honoured person, that he may share with her the godly joys of matrimony on this his wedding night.

Lady Rochford Her royal majesty the queen receives the king's suit with rapture in her heart, and places her person humbly at his disposal, on this night and all succeeding nights.

Norfolk Captain.

The Captain of the Guard steps forward and raises his sword. First he holds the blade upright, and salutes the King

Captain Your majesty. (*Saluting Anne*) Your majesty. (*He thrusts his sword deep into the bed with a blood-curdling yell*)

Anne jumps with fright. No-one else seems to think the Captain's behaviour unusual, so she says nothing

(*Sheathing his sword and bowing to Norfolk*) The royal bed is purged, your grace.

Norfolk (*bowing to Henry*) The royal bed is purged, your majesty.

Henry (*turning to Anne*) Madam. With your permission.

Anne What? Oh! Yes.

The coverlet is drawn back by Lady Rochford and Katherine Howard and Henry climbs into the bed, with some difficulty. He sits there, beside Anne but not touching her, as stiff as she is. Cranmer, the Archbishop, now steps forward

Cranmer May Almighty God bless this union of his beloved children, Henry and Anne. May the joys of this night bring forth in due season the fruitful issue for which two nations pray. In Jesus's name. Amen.

There is a fanfare and the curtains close over the pavilion. The pavilion Lights fade

The procession makes its formal exit

The Lights fade to night

Thomas Culpeper enters, and paces in the darkness, clearly waiting for someone

Katherine Howard enters, carrying a candle. She goes to Culpeper, stepping softly, and they kiss. They speak in low voices

Culpeper Blow out the candle.

Katherine Then we'll have no light.

Culpeper We don't need light. (*He takes the candle from her and blows it out*)

Katherine moves into Culpeper's arms, and they kiss again, more intensely

Isn't that better?

Katherine So long as you're here.

Culpeper You're not afraid of the dark, are you, Kate?

Katherine Sometimes. Not now.

Culpeper The dark's kind to us. It takes away the unkind world. Look — no palace. No king. No family, or duty, or God.

Katherine Shush, Tom. Don't say such things. I don't want there to be nothing.

Culpeper Nothing can be anything, Kate. Anything we want. What do you

want? A summer day in the countryside? A quiet river winding through fields of corn? You and me ...

Katherine Could it be winter?

Culpeper You want winter?

Katherine White frost over the land. Red sun rising.

Culpeper There it is. The dawn light turning the white world rosy. Just for us.

They stand together gazing at their imaginary world

Katherine When I was young, in Horsham, I would go to my window every morning when I woke, and if there was a clear sky I'd dress quickly, and hurry out into the park, and run towards the big red rising sun. It seemed so near.

Culpeper It's as near as you want it to be. This is our world.

Katherine Does the grass crackle when we step on it?

Culpeper Yes.

Katherine Does our breath smoke in the air?

Culpeper Yes.

Katherine And when I go back into the big dark lonely house, will I find you?

Culpeper Yes.

Katherine (*taking him in her arms*) We'll kneel in front of a fire together.

Culpeper I'll kiss your icy cheeks until they're warm again.(*He kisses her cheeks*)

Katherine Oh, Tom. I wish you had been there.

There is the sound of approaching footsteps. Katherine and Culpeper separate hastily

It'll be Jane. Don't let her see you.

Culpeper slips away to hide himself

Lady Rochford enters, carrying a candle

Lady Rochford Kate? In the dark?

Katherine My candle blew out.

Lady Rochford lights Katherine's candle from her own

Lady Rochford You should be in bed. You know the king will be up for Mass at six, wedding or no wedding.

Katherine I'm not tired.

Lady Rochford Not tired? Oh, I suppose you have a rendezvous with Culpeper.
Katherine How did you know?
Lady Rochford Good Lord, my dear, you didn't think it was a secret, did you? Thomas Culpeper is good enough in his way, but don't let him take liberties with you. I hope you know how to say no.
Katherine Yes, of course.
Lady Rochford It's a little word, but for a girl your age it's as good as a suit of armour. Kiss him, by all means. Bed with him. But if he asks you to marry him, the answer must be no.
Katherine Oh no, he wouldn't ask that.
Lady Rochford That's what all you girls think. But men are all the same. They only want one thing: an advantageous marriage. You belong to one of the first families in the land, Kate.
Katherine But I have no fortune.
Lady Rochford And the boy would like to marry money, of course.
Katherine Of course.
Lady Rochford Ah well, then, you're safe. Congratulations. Quite by chance, and at an unusually young age, you seem to have fallen into the most suitable circumstances for a love affair. All the charm and none of the danger. (*She sighs, remembering her youth*) Ah, well. I have no rendezvous, so I shall go to bed. Good-night, my dear.
Katherine Good-night.

Lady Rochford exits

Culpeper emerges from hiding

Culpeper Will she tell your uncle?
Katherine No. Jane can keep a secret.
Culpeper She's right. You must marry well. But you're to go on loving me.
Katherine Whether I want to or not?
Culpeper You want to, Kate. You know you want to.
Katherine I might. And then again, I might not.
Culpeper No lady's refused me yet.
Katherine Then go to your ladies. You don't need me.
Culpeper No, I don't *need* you. Anne Bassett is prettier, and richer ——
Katherine Have her. Everyone else at court has.
Culpeper So why am I creeping down dark corridors in the middle of the night to meet you?
Katherine Insomnia, I expect. Try warm milk and brandy.
Culpeper Why am I only easy when I'm with you?
Katherine I don't know, Tom. It's beyond comprehension.

Culpeper Tell me you'll go on loving me after you're married. I want to hear you say it.
Katherine You're so vain! You don't want me. You just can't bear to think of some other man having me.
Culpeper What other man? Tom Paston?
Katherine You see!
Culpeper Tom Paston has made a bet he'll have all six of the new queen's maids of honour, in order of seniority ——
Katherine What do I care for Tom Paston? Just because he has the best legs at court ——
Culpeper I challenge that! His thighs are positively fat! Are my thighs fat?
Katherine My sweet fool. Why do I love you so much?
Culpeper So you admit it?
Katherine I've loved you since I first saw you. I'll love you as long as I live.
Culpeper And after?
Katherine What? You want more?
Culpeper More, and more, and more.
Katherine (*taking his arm*) Come on. It'll be morning soon.
Culpeper I wish it were our wedding night.
Katherine Let's not wish for what we haven't got. Let's wish for a warm bed, and you in my arms, and the night not over yet.

They exit, arm in arm

The Lights come up: it's early morning

A fanfare sounds

The procession of the previous night enters: the Captain of the King's Guard with drawn sword, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Duke of Norfolk, Sir Thomas Wriothesley, Thomas Culpeper, Lady Jane Rochford, and Katherine Howard. The procession advances to the pavilion

The fanfare reaches its final flourish, the pavilion curtains are drawn back and the pavilion Lights come up. There on the great royal bed sit Henry and Anne, looking very much as they did the night before

Henry Well, well. About time.
Cranmer I trust his majesty passed the night well.
Henry Well enough. Now get me out. No, I want Culpeper. Where's my Thomas?

Culpeper comes forward and lends his arm to Henry. At the same time the ladies-in-waiting, Lady Rochford and Katherine Howard, take up their places by Anne

Norfolk May I express the dearest wish of all his majesty's loyal subjects, that the joys of his wedding night are the commencement of a greater joy, and that in due course her majesty will present the nation with a prince?
Henry Why not? The mother of God managed it, so why shouldn't she?

Henry climbs out of bed, leaning on Culpeper's arm. He turns to Anne and bows

Madam.

Anne inclines her head

The procession re-forms, minus Lady Rochford and Katherine Howard, with Henry bringing up the rear on Culpeper's arm

Filthy business, this sleeping in other people's beds. The poor do it in their poverty, and the beasts in their bestiality, but I'm the king. You'd think I'd be allowed to sleep alone.
Cranmer I believe some very well-born people sleep with their wives, majesty.
Henry Really? Who? Norfolk doesn't, he told me so. He has a little laundry maid who comes to his bed, but only for as long as it takes.

The procession exits, leaving Anne with Lady Rochford and Katherine in attendance

Anne speaks with a German accent

Anne Are they gone?
Lady Rochford Yes, your majesty.
Anne Then I shall rise.

The two ladies help the Queen to rise, and proceed to dress her for the day

Lady Rochford Your majesty passed the night comfortably?
Anne Oh, yes. More so than I had been expecting. You know, Lady Rochford, you will laugh at me, but I had been a little bit fearing of the king. The wedding night, you know. One gets such fearing ideas into one's head.
Lady Rochford I cried myself to sleep the night I first lay with my late husband.
Anne Did you so? That is terrible. Was he so unkind?
Lady Rochford The pain, ma'am. I was not ready for him.
Anne The pain?
Lady Rochford Your majesty felt no pain?

Anne No. I did not.
Lady Rochford But the king did honour your majesty with his — his conjugal attentions?
Anne Naturally he did. He put one hand on my body, like this. (*She places a hand on her breasts*) He touched me, like this. (*She moves her hand down to feel her stomach*) And so we slept.

A silence

Lady Rochford Nothing else, your majesty?
Anne What else should there be? Is this not enough?

Lady Rochford and Katherine shake their heads

Anne (*sighing*) I knew it was too good to be true.
Lady Rochford Did your mother not tell you of the duties of marriage, ma'am?
Anne She told me my husband was obliged by God to do a terrible thing to me, and I must endure and think of the sufferings of Christ on the cross.
Lady Rochford But she did not tell you what the terrible thing was?

Poor Anne shakes her head

Would your majesty like to know?
Anne (*looking at Katherine*) Do you know this thing, Katherine?
Katherine Yes, your majesty.
Anne Then I had better know too. (*She composes herself in the posture of one who expects to receive bad news*) Proceed.
Lady Rochford Your majesty will know that for any of nature's crops to grow, a seed must first be sown in fertile ground.
Anne Yes ...
Lady Rochford Our Creator has so ordained that woman is the fertile ground, and man the sower of the seed.
Anne I see.
Lady Rochford Your majesty will have observed that male animals differ from female animals.
Anne I have so observed.
Lady Rochford Sometimes, beneath the belly of a male horse, for example, there appears a — a sort of pipe.
Anne (*delighted to be following the clues so well*) I have seen it!
Lady Rochford Very good. Men too, your majesty, have just such a pipe.
Anne Are you sure?
Lady Rochford Perhaps your majesty has seen little boys at play in the river? In summer?

Anne (*searching her memory*) Yes ... But there were no pipes. A sort of little tassel, I think ...

Lady Rochford That's it, your majesty. A very good description. A little tassel. This tassel performs the work of the seed drill, ma'am ——

Anne No, no, Lady Rochford, you must be mistaken. A tassel cannot be a drill. It is too gentle.

Lady Rochford It grows fierce, ma'am.

Anne So!

Lady Rochford And just as the seed-drill is driven into the soft yielding soil, so does this angry extremity come close to defenceless womanhood and —— (*She makes a quick stabbing gesture*)

Anne jumps

Anne Where?

Pause. A rapid look from Lady Rochford. Anne misses it; tries to repeat the look; gets the wrong destination. Lady Rochford repeats her look, playing out the pantomime. Anne copies her. And so gets there at last

Ah.

Pause. Anne composes herself

It is not for us to question the unknowable mind of God.

Lady Rochford No, ma'am.

Anne When I consider all these things, I find I think more highly of the human race. Clearly in order to carry out God's will, we are called upon to suffer, and this we do willingly and repeatedly, men and women alike. For see how many babies are born.

Lady Rochford The men do not suffer, ma'am.

Anne Do they not?

Lady Rochford They like it.

Anne They like it?

Lady Rochford It gives them pleasure, ma'am.

Anne How very odd. What sort of pleasure?

Lady Rochford I have absolutely no idea.

Anne The king did nothing of this sort with me last night.

Lady Rochford Then there will be no prince, ma'am.

Anne Ah.

Lady Rochford And there must be a prince, ma'am.

Anne Ah.

Lady Rochford But there is time. The king will return to your majesty's bed.

Anne He will? And he will drill me? Oh, blessed Jesus! Does it take long?

Lady Rochford Happily, ma'am, no. No longer than it takes to say a single Hail Mary.

Anne says the prayer, and the other two dutifully join her. All three instinctively speed up as it goes along, ending in a gabble and a rush, as if to get the terrible act over with as quickly as possible

Anne Hail Mary, full of grace ——
Anne
Lady Rochford } (*together*) {
Katherine
— the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

All three release their breath together, in a single sigh of relief

Anne Well, ladies. We must be brave, and do our duty. Shall we go down?

They exit

The pavilion curtains close and the pavilion Lights fade

Henry enters, followed by the members of his Privy Council, Norfolk, Cranmer and Wriothesley

Cranmer It's an official arrangement, sire. A matter of state. One does not look for personal feelings when performing in one's official capacity.
Henry Am I to perform in my official capacity in the queen's bed, Cranmer?
Cranmer His majesty has risked his person on the field of battle for the honour of his country. He will not refuse to risk his person in the lists of love.
Henry Whoof, whoof, whoof.
Cranmer Sire?
Henry Empty breath, Cranmer. And pompous, if I may say so. Ratherunlike you. Norfolk, you tell him.
Norfolk His majesty does not feel love for the queen.
Henry Does not. Can not. The fellow down there won't take orders, you know.
Cranmer You don't think, sire, that a little more time ——
Henry For what?
Cranmer You have only been married for one day, sire. Might not the view be taken that despair is still premature?

Henry I consider this so-called marriage a lie, a sin, and an abomination. Would you have me wade daily deeper into the mire? I am not married, do you hear? In the eyes of God, this is no marriage.
Cranmer But Germany ——
Henry I will not fornicate for Germany!
Norfolk If I may speak for his majesty. He is not in debate with his Privy Council, he is merely stating a fact. He is not married. Our job is to discover why.
Henry Exactly. Thank you, my wise old friend. I am the patient, you are the doctors. I tell you I am in pain, you seek out the cure. Excellent. I feel better already. Let me know when you have the solution.

Henry exits

Norfolk (*turning to Cranmer with a look of satisfaction*) You're the theologian, your grace, not I. But surely this is a simple matter. No consummation, no marriage.
Cranmer No marriage, no queen. No queen, a vacancy in the king's bed. And you, my lord, have long taken pleasure in filling vacancies.
Norfolk He's his own master. He'll do as he pleases.
Cranmer He's the king. He'll do his duty for his country.
Norfolk Not this time. Your Protestant wife revolts him.
Cranmer He has no quarrel with her religion.
Norfolk You think not? You've heard him complain of her sour smell. That's the reek of reform.
Cranmer Better than the sweet sickly incense of Rome.

Lady Rochford enters, and stands waiting to one side

Cranmer That river is crossed, my lord, and the bridges burned. There's no going back.
Norfolk Those with faith, your grace, have been known to walk on water.

Cranmer bows angrily, and he and Wriothesley exit

Lady Rochford approaches Norfolk, silently waiting on his instructions. Norfolk is deep in thought. After a moment:

Norfolk So. How's the queen?
Lady Rochford As virtuous this morning as she was last night.
Norfolk You're sure of that?
Lady Rochford I have her word for it.

Katherine and Culpeper enter, far off, walking together, talking softly, but not displaying any undue intimacy

Norfolk (*following Katherine with his eyes*) That can change. You women have your ways.
Lady Rochford Some do. Some don't.
Norfolk Elaborate?
Lady Rochford The queen's a good woman, but she lacks experience, elegance, and allure. Like all Germans, she has the dress sense of a parcel. That can be remedied, of course. She's almost childishly eager to learn.
Norfolk Save yourself the effort. The king has instructed his council to undo the marriage.
Lady Rochford Already?
Norfolk The king is impatient. We have very little time. There'll be no more diplomatic marriages. Next time, it's for love.
Lady Rochford For love?
Norfolk So who's it to be? She must be pretty, she must be willing, and she must be ours. What do you say to my niece Katherine?
Lady Rochford Katherine? She's very young.
Norfolk The younger the better. Will she do? That's the question. What do you make of her, since she came to court?

Now Lady Rochford too turns to watch Katherine, considering her in this new light

Lady Rochford Charming. Impressionable. Modest in her ambitions. Almost entirely uneducated.
Norfolk Wilful? Proud?
Lady Rochford Not proud, no. Vain, definitely, but it's a rather touching vanity. The pretty child who expects to be admired.
Norfolk Sensible?
Lady Rochford Yes.
Norfolk What about the boy?
Lady Rochford There is an attachment.
Norfolk I can always have him posted to Ireland. Very well. Leave her to me.

Lady Rochford exits

Norfolk strolls forward to intercept the young couple

So there you are, niece.
Katherine (*curtsying*) Uncle.

Culpeper (*bowing*) Your grace.
Norfolk Good morning, Mr Culpeper. They say Ireland can be very wet at this time of the year.
Culpeper I know nothing of Ireland, sir.
Norfolk Yet. (*He smiles thinly at Culpeper, and puts an avuncular arm round Katherine*) Allow us a few moments alone, Mr Culpeper. Family matters.

Culpeper bows again, and exits

Norfolk Now, niece. We haven't talked in a while, have we?
Katherine You were so kind as to hear me recite the Lord's Prayer on my sixth birthday, uncle.
Norfolk Yes, well, well. The burdens of office, and so forth. Still, here you are, grown into a beautiful woman, and the talk of the court.
Katherine Oh, no, uncle ——
Norfolk Oh, yes, uncle. You are talked of, Kate, you are asked after. Men say, who will she marry?
Katherine I've heard none of this, uncle.
Norfolk Why should you? Your marriage is none of your business, not until it's settled. But it is my business, Kate. Your father is dead, and I'm the head of the family. Your marriage must advance our family, and our faith. You do understand that?
Katherine Yes, uncle.
Norfolk Now, I've been looking over some suitable husbands for you. You're a Howard, which is good. You're pretty, which is good. But you're penniless, which is bad. This limits the field to the already-rich, which means, of course, the more mature men. The Duke of Carrara, for example. They say he's not altogether deaf. Or possibly the Count of Seville. Do you speak Spanish? No, why should you? His last wife, from Bruges, I think it was, died before she was even moderately fluent.
Katherine Must I marry a Spaniard, uncle?
Norfolk Yes, Kate, yes. Politics, you know. And soon, I think. After all, your youth and beauty won't last. They must be traded at the very point of ripeness, and for the very best price. Once the fruit is handled, it bruises.

Katherine turns away, not wanting her uncle to see how angry this makes her

Norfolk (*seeming not to notice*) How shall you like Spain? Hot, they say, out in the sun. Not that that should trouble you. I believe the custom there is for the women to remain indoors. Dressed entirely in black.
Katherine I know it's not my place to question your choice, sir. But is there no politics in England?

Norfolk Is there no politics in England? Now there's a question for an innocent young maid to ask.

Katherine I am happy in England, sir.

Norfolk I don't see how that affects matters. But still, you ask an interesting question. Is there no politics in England? Well, of course, there's always ... No, no, impossible ... But then again, why not?

Katherine What, uncle?

Norfolk I've just had a sort of a notion — I hardly know whether to tell you ... Let me ask you this, Kate. If you set your mind to making a man want you, do you think you could do it?

Katherine What man, uncle?

Norfolk A very rich, very powerful, and very proud man. There's an art to these matters, I know. Do you have it?

Katherine I don't know, uncle.

Norfolk I wonder if there's more to you than you let on? I wonder if beneath that sweet smile there's a woman who knows what she's worth, and means to get it?

Katherine I know this is a matter in which I have no freedom, sir. Tell me what you want of me, and if I can do it, I will.

Norfolk Good. good. This is very good. Down to business, eh, niece? Here we are, then. The king can't abide the queen. Does that surprise you?

Katherine No, sir.

Norfolk He'll put her away, Kate. He'll marry again. Does that surprise you?

Katherine No, sir.

Norfolk Why shouldn't he marry you?

Katherine Me!

Norfolk Ha! You didn't follow me over that jump, did you? Why shouldn't you be queen, Kate? I'll tell you why not. Because the king doesn't love you. The thought of it hasn't so much as entered his head. But it could. And if he should come to love you, there's nothing in the world to stop him making you queen. He has no need of money. What he wants is beauty, youth, happiness, and fertility.

Katherine Me!

Norfolk There's a battle being waged for the soul of England, Kate. Here! Now! Archbishop Cranmer and his reformers mean to strip the glory from us, and dress us in drab, and tell us our prayers in German. But the Howards are the first family of the faith. We stand firm. The German heresies must be expelled. Whoever has the heart of the king has the soul of the kingdom. Marry Henry, Kate, and give us a Catholic England once more!

Katherine But sir, the king doesn't want me.

Culpeper enters and waits in the background for Katherine to come free again

Norfolk I know the man. He pines for love. The bed business would be hard, of course. (*He spots Culpeper and presses his advantage*) But at least it wouldn't carry you off to Spain.
Katherine Uncle, I must have time to think about this.
Norfolk Think. By all means think. "Is there no politics in England?". The king is just fifty years old, but his health is very poor. He can't live another ten years. And then — a dowager queen, fabulously rich, and not yet thirty — you could take your pick of England's manhood. (*He kisses her hand*)

Norfolk exits

Culpeper moves to Katherine. She takes his hands in hers, and draws deep breaths to calm herself

Katherine I'm frightened, Tom.
Culpeper Your uncle is making plans for your marriage?
Katherine Yes.
Culpeper We knew it would come. Who's it to be?
Katherine My uncle is very ambitious. But his plan will come to nothing. I'll make sure of that.
Culpeper Kate, why anger your uncle? You must marry somebody. We'll go on loving each other.
Katherine You don't understand.
Culpeper What don't I understand?
Katherine We may not have much more time alone. Please, Tom, don't ask me any more. Will you do something for me? Now?
Culpeper Of course.
Katherine We can't be married. But we can exchange vows.
Culpeper Of course, but ——
Katherine Now, Tom, now. "I, Katherine Howard, do swear ——"
Culpeper Wait.
Katherine Let me say it! Before it's too late!
Culpeper I will, I will. But look. (*He takes a ring from his pocket, and shows it to her*) We have to have a ring.

Katherine takes the ring, amazed

Look inside.

Katherine tries to make out the engraved letters

Katherine What does it say?
Culpeper T, K. Thomas, Katherine.

Katherine I see it. T, K. And there's more. *Fidus* ...
Culpeper *Fidus ultra finis.* Faithful beyond the end. I'll not let anyone else have you.
Katherine Oh, Tom.
Culpeper There's a kind of fidelity that needs no marriage, Kate.
Katherine I know it. (*She puts the ring on her finger*)

Katherine and Culpeper hold hands, and exchange solemn vows

Katherine I, Katherine Howard, do swear that Thomas Culpeper is my one true love, now and for ever.
Culpeper I, Thomas Culpeper, do swear that Katherine Howard is my one true love, now and for ever. Amen.
Katherine Amen, my darling. Amen.

Henry and Anne enter, accompanied by a train of attendants: Norfolk, Cranmer, Wriothesley, and Lady Rochford

Henry and Anne walk hand in hand, formally on display as a newly-married couple. Henry's manners are exemplary. He is affable and courteous to his queen, though there are signs that his leg is hurting him. As they approach, Katherine sinks into a curtsy, and Culpeper bows low. The royal party does not notice them at first

Henry I'm told you no longer burn your heretics in Germany, ma'am. A mistake, if I may say so. A heretic is a teacher — of error, but still a teacher — and the burning is his final lesson. The lesson is, "Don't teach heresy", and a fearful flaming memorable lesson it is. (*His eyes fall on Katherine, but she means nothing to him, and he continues with his train of thought*) So by this arrangement the man who in life taught false lessons, in death teaches a true lesson. I have no doubt that when he faces his Maker, this final act of witness to the truth is taken into account. Wouldn't you say, Archbishop?
Cranmer We can't know, your majesty.
Henry Of course we can't know. We surmise. God is merciful. I surmise that He looks on the heretic with a more kindly eye, after a burning. I would, if I were God. Therefore I consider a burning an act of mercy. This is theology, ma'am. I think it bores you.
Anne No, sir. It seems to be a most dangerous sort of study.
Henry It is, it is. How could it not be? It is our window into eternity. Men become giddy leaning out of it. Is that Culpeper? Thomas! Give me your arm. My leg begins to hurt me.

Culpeper goes to the King's side, and the royal party makes its way off

Four years ago this month I got this wound. Thrown from my horse, smack, dead. Two hours, dead. Ask Norfolk, he was there. But my work wasn't finished, so here I am, born again, you might say. Four years old! That's even younger than you, Thomas ...

The royal party exits. Norfolk and Katherine remain behind

Norfolk (*looking Katherine up and down with a professional air*) Well?
Katherine Uncle?
Norfolk Have you thought?
Katherine Uncle, the king doesn't even see me.
Norfolk Don't worry about the king. Make him believe that you love him — not the king of England, but Henry Tudor, fat Henry Tudor, old Henry Tudor; love that lonely ageing carcass, and he'll give you the world.
Katherine How am I to make him believe that I love him, sir, when I don't love him?
Norfolk You'll be advised. There are ways and ways. I don't say, love the king. I say, make him feel loved. Good God, girl, it's a work of charity, and not a hard one, he's not a leper. (*He claps his hands*) Hoy! Anyone out there?

A servant comes running

Find Lady Rochford. I want her here. Right away.

The servant bows, and exits at a run

Jane understands these things. Do exactly as she says. She's served three queens now, she knows how it's done. For myself, I'll only say this. The king believes in order. He loves an independent mind, and a lively spirit, but he expects and requires a submissive will. Whatever he says to the contrary, Kate: submission, submission, submission.
Katherine Uncle, I don't think I'm clever enough to pretend to be any other than I am.
Norfolk You don't know till you try. Don't be so sincere, it's unattractive.

Lady Rochford enters, followed by two maidservants, carrying a gorgeous gown

Norfolk Jane. I give you your pupil.
Lady Rochford Good. Take off your dress, my dear.

The maidservants unlace Katherine's dress during the following. Katherine is bewildered, but doesn't resist

Katherine Jane? You know about this plan?
Lady Rochford Yes, dear. Your uncle consulted me as to your suitability.
Katherine You think me suitable?
Lady Rochford You will be.
Norfolk I really think, you know, Kate, that we've heard enough of this self-doubt. The point is taken. Here are two veterans of court warfare telling you you'll do, so you'll do, you know, and that's that.
Katherine Yes, uncle.
Norfolk Good. That's the spirit. I shall leave you to your lessons.

Norfolk exits

Lady Rochford (*looking at Katherine with a professional eye*) Yes, good. Now the gown.

The maidservants proceed to put the gown on Katherine

Katherine I can't do this, Jane.
Lady Rochford Of course you can. If I was your age, I could do it. Your looks, my experience, and we'll make the perfect wife between us.
Katherine But the king doesn't know I exist.
Lady Rochford We'll soon change that. He may be the king, but he's also a man, and all men work the same way. Listen to me, child. It isn't difficult.

Katherine is unhappy with both the dress and the proposed plan. Lady Rochford realizes this, but chooses to ignore it. During the following, the dress is laced tightly

There are three arrows in your quiver. First, you have Desire. All men crave physical love. That is of little interest, and less duration. Second, you have Anxiety. All men fear rejection. That is useful. Third, you have Vanity. All men want what is just out of reach, that they can admire themselves for getting. That is invaluable. The sensible woman therefore proceeds as follows. She shoots her first arrow ——(*She inspects Katherine's growing decolletée, as the dress is laced ever tighter. She gives some small tweaks to the dress to enhance the swell of the breasts*) Yes ... Do remember to smile, my dear. The gentleman needs to be assured in advance that his wooing will be welcome, or he will not woo.
Katherine Men aren't such great fools as you think, Jane.
Lady Rochford Not fools, perhaps. But ... unawakened, one might say. So: you have brought your gentleman to the pitch of complacent desire. Now you shoot your second arrow. You remove yourself from his reach. Not too far; men are easily discouraged. Perhaps you accept a rendezvous, and fail

to appear. He waits in vain. He begins to be anxious. You come at last, you are sweet. A smile, and you withdraw again. His anxiety grows. Again, you smile and withdraw. Repeat until all he thinks of is winning you. His anxiety peaks. You yield. He is flooded with relief. And heavens, how proud of himself he is! For you see, my dear, it all comes down to this: if you can make a man's good opinion of himself depend upon your kindness to him, you have him for life.

Katherine's gown is now fully laced. Lady Rochford dismisses the maidservants

The maidservants bob and exit

Lady Rochford (*submitting Katherine to yet another critical scrutiny*) Yes, it will do.
Katherine I know myself, Jane. I can't perform as you describe.
Lady Rochford Why ever not?
Katherine This is the king! How can I be easy before him?
Lady Rochford Ah, I understand. You're shy. Of course you are. Well, we can use that. Watch me. (*She steps a pace away from Katherine, and adopts a timid posture, eyes cast down*) You're very young. The king over-awes you. But at the same time, you long to look at him.

Lady Rochford sneaks a quick look, meets Katherine's gaze, and looks down again in confusion

You look. You're dazzled. You blush, you look down. But what you've seen makes you long to see more. You dare to look again. (*She looks up again, and again retreats in confusion*) It's really just a variant on smile-and-withdraw. I think it could do very well.

Henry enters, some way off, walking with Norfolk

Lady Rochford takes Katherine and positions her where the king will see her as he passes. Katherine finds all this humiliating

Lady Rochford Do just as I say, Kate. I guarantee you he'll take the bait.
Katherine I tell you, I can't.
Lady Rochford Hush, hush. Remember: look down.

Henry and Norfolk approach. Katherine stands stiff as a post, looking down. Norfolk pretends surprise at the sight of her

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