

Audition Side for Henry and Alais

ALAIS

He won't like losing me.

HENRY

He's lost a damn sight more than you. I've corked him up.

ALAIS

You've what?

HENRY

He's in the cellar with his brothers and the wine. The royal boys are aging with the royal port. You haven't said "yes." Would you like a formal declaration?

(*Kneeling, giving her his profile*)

There---my finest angle; it's on all the coins. Sad Alais, will you marry me?

ALAIS

I can't believe it.

HENRY

Be my Queen.

ALAIS

I never hoped for this. I mean, I always hoped but never thought---I mean---

HENRY

We'll love each other and you'll give me sons.

ALAIS

I don't know what I mean.

HENRY

Let's have five; we'll do Eleanor one better. Why, I'll even call the first one Louis if you like. Louis le Premier: how's that for a King of England?

ALAIS

Henry---you can't ever let them out.

HENRY

You've lost me. Let who out?

ALAIS

Your sons. You've put them in the dungeon and you've got to keep them there forever.

HENRY

Do I now?

ALAIS

If they're free when you die, it's the dungeon or the nunnery for me. I don't care which---a cell's a cell---but, Henry, what about the child?

HENRY

Don't bother me about the child. The damn thing isn't born yet.

ALAIS

If they're free, they'll kill it. I'm the one who'll live to see that and I will not see our children murdered.

HENRY

You don't make the ultimatums: I do.

ALAIS

Not this time. Either you keep them down forever or you find yourself another widow. I don't want the job.

HENRY

Do you know what you're asking me to do?

ALAIS

You locked your Queen up.

HENRY

But my boys---how can I?

ALAIS

That's for you to face.

HENRY

You have no children.

ALAIS

And I never will.

HENRY

But they're my sons.

ALAIS

I hate your sons. I'm not the one who wants a new line. If you want it, that's the price.

HENRY

You'll come to Rome if I say so. You'll marry me if I say so. The boys go free if I say so. My terms are the only terms. The difficulty is, you see, the difficulty is you're right.

(*So weary*)

Incredible, but I have children who would murder children. Every time I've read *Medea*, I've thought: "No; the thing's absurd. Fish eat their young, and foxes: but not us." And yet she did it. I imagine she was mad; don't you? Yes, mad she must have been.

(*He moves to go*)

ALAIS

Henry---are you going down?

HENRY

Down? Yes.

ALAIS

To let them out or keep them in?

HENRY

Could you say, to a child of yours, "You've seen the sunlight for the last time?"

ALAIS

Can you do it, Henry?

HENRY

Well, I'd be a master bastard if I did.

ALAIS

I must know. Can you?

HENRY

I shall have to, shan't I?

(*He goes*)

Dim and blackout

END OF SIDE