

Audition Side for Alais and Eleanor

ELEANOR

No one else is caroling tonight. It might as well be Lent. When I was little, Christmas was a time of great confusion for me: the Holy Land had two kings, God and Uncle Raymond, and I never knew whose birthday we were celebrating.

ALAIS

Henry isn't here.

ELEANOR

Good; we can talk behind his back.

ALAIS

He's outside, walking.

ELEANOR

In this cold?

ALAIS

He'll never notice it. What happened?

ELEANOR

Don't you know?

ALAIS

He came and stood awhile by the fire and went away. You would have liked the way he looked.

ELEANOR

There was a scene with beds and tapestries and many things got said. Spiced wine; I'd forgotten Henry liked it. May I stay?

ALAIS

It's your room just as much as mine: we're both in residence.

ELEANOR

Packed in, like the poor, three to a bed.

ALAIS

Did you love Henry---ever?

ELEANOR

Ever? Back before the flood?

ALAIS

As long ago as Rosamund.

ELEANOR

Ah, that's pre-history, lamb; there are no written records or survivors.

ALAIS

There are pictures. She was prettier than you.

ELEANOR

Oh, much. Her eyes, in certain light, were violet and all her teeth were even. That's a rare fair feature, even teeth. She smiled to excess but she chewed with real distinction.

ALAIS

And you hate her even now.

ELEANOR

No, but I did. He put her in my place, you see, and that was very hard. Like you, she headed Henry's table; that's my chair.

ALAIS

And so you had her poisoned.

ELEANOR

That's a folk tale. Oh, I prayed for her to drop and sang a little when she did but even Circe had her limits. No, I never poisoned Rosamund. Why aren't you happy? Henry's keeping you. You must be cleverer than I am.

ALAIS

Green becomes you. You must always wear it.

ELEANOR

Are you dressing me in envy?

ALAIS

I've tried feeling pity for you but it keeps on turning into something else.

ELEANOR

Why pity?

ALAIS

You love Henry but you love his kingdom, too. You look at him and you see cities, acreage, coastline, taxes. All I see is Henry. Leave him to me, can't you?

ELEANOR

But I left him years ago.

ALAIS

You are untouchable. And I thought I could move you. Were you always like this? Years ago, when I was young and worshiped you, is this what you were like?

ELEANOR

Most likely. Child, I'm finished and I've come to give him anything he asks for.

ALAIS

Do you know what I should like for Christmas? I should like to see you suffer.

ELEANOR

( *Nodding* )

Alais, just for you.

ALAIS

( *Throwing herself into ELEANOR' s arms* )

*Maman, oh, Maman.*

END OF SIDE