

Callback Side for Richard and Eleanor

*ELEANOR' s chamber, some time later. A plain and pleasant room, it holds a chair, a table and a low wood chest. Soft tapestries give warmth and color. As the lights rise , ELEANOR is seated at the table wrapping Christmas presents. She looks up as RICHARD appears .*

RICHARD

All right. I've come. I'm here. What was it you wanted?

ELEANOR

Just to talk. We haven't been alone, the two of us, in---How long is it, lamb? Two years? You look fit. War agrees with you. I keep informed. I follow all your slaughters from a distance. Do sit down.

RICHARD

Is this an audience, a goodnight kiss with cookies or an ambush?

ELEANOR

Let us hope it's a reunion. Must you look so stern? I sent for you to say I want your love again but I can't say it to a face like that.

RICHARD

My love, of all things. What could you want it for?

ELEANOR

Why, for itself. What other purpose could I have?

RICHARD

You'll tell me when you're ready to.

ELEANOR

I scheme a lot; I know. I plot and plan. That's how a queen in prison spends her time. But there is more to me than that. My mind's not disembodied. Can't I say I love a son and be believed?

RICHARD

If I were you, I'd try another tack. I have no dammed-up floods of passion for you. There's no chance I'll overflow.

ELEANOR

You are a dull boy.

RICHARD

Am I?

ELEANOR

Dull as plainsong: la, la, la, forever on one note. I gave the Church up out of boredom. I can do as much for you.

RICHARD

You'll never give me up; not while I hold the Aquitaine.

ELEANOR

You think I'm motivated by a love of real estate?

RICHARD

I think you want it back. You're so deceitful you can't ask for water when you're thirsty. We could tangle spiders in the webs you weave.

ELEANOR

If I'm so devious, why don't you go? Don't stand there quivering in limbo. Love me, little lamb, or leave me.

RICHARD

( *Not moving* )

Leave you, madam? With pure joy.

ELEANOR

Departure is a simple act. You put the left foot down and then the right.

END OF SIDE