

RICHARD THE FIRST

PART 1: TAKING UP THE CROSS

written by

Gary Graves

in collaboration with Milissa Carey, Armando McClain,
John Patrick Moore, Greg Scharpen, Josh Schell,
Megan Trout, Kat Zdan, and Jan Zvaifler.

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© CENTRAL WORKS
P.O. Box 9771
Berkeley CA 94706
510-558-1381
gary@centralworks.org

A Note About the Play:

Most people know very little about England's King Richard the First, known as "The Lionheart." Or perhaps they may remember that Richard is the absent king in the story of Robin Hood—"Good King Richard" who returns at the end of the story. But where was Richard all the while Robin was busy robbing the rich to give to the poor? He was on crusade.

Richard was the principal European figure in what historically has come to be known as the Third Crusade. The First Crusade took place almost a century before Richard's, beginning in 1095 with Pope Urban's call to all Christians to join in Holy War against the forces of Islam. At the pope's instigation a vast army gathered in France, marched overland to Palestine, and eventually captured Jerusalem. For almost ninety years thereafter the Christians maintained a kingdom in Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital.

But in 1187, the sultan Saladin united the armies of Syria and Egypt and obliterated the Christians at the battle of Hattin. With the recapture of Jerusalem by Saladin, once again another pope called for yet another Holy Crusade to take back the Christian possessions in the Holy Land from the armies of Islam.

King Richard of England and Aquitaine (much of western France), was the first noble in Europe to answer the pope's call. He joined with King Philip of France, and King Frederick of Germany, and together these three kings amassed an awesome array of forces that set out for Palestine.

But King Frederick died on the way, and political (and personal) tensions between Richard and Philip soon led to division among the Christians. In 1191 the crusade reached a stalemate, and halted on the coast, just thirty miles from inland Jerusalem.

It was then that an extraordinary peace initiative emerged. The fact that this proposal was made is virtually incontestable, as numerous references to the plan appear in both Christian and Muslim sources. But historians have puzzled and debated over the actual motive and intent behind the initiative ever since.

Our play takes this historical mystery as its departure point, and looks at the conflict from several different viewpoints. There were other interests at stake besides those of just Christians and Muslims—as there still are today. In fact, in many ways, the situation in the Middle East today has its roots in this struggle begun a thousand years ago. —Gary Graves

CAST OF CHARACTERS

RICHARD, king of England and part of France, a cockney.

ELEANOR, Richard's mother, French.

JOANNA, Richard's sister, also a cockney.

PHILIP, king of France, and LEOPOLD, duke of Austria.

RACHEL, a Jew, and PETER, a boy.

KALIL, an Arab, brother of the sultan, Saladin, and JOACHIM, a mystic.

SETTING

PART 1: "TAKING UP THE CROSS"

Various locations in England, France, and Sicily, on the journey to Palestine, 1187 to 1191.

PART 2: "LIONHEART"

Various locations in *Outremer*, the "Land Beyond the Sea" (Palestine), 1192.

PART 3: "A KING'S RANSOM"

A prison cell in Austria, September 1192 to June, 1193.

PART 1: TAKING UP THE CROSS

ACT ONE

1

JERUSALEM FALLS

1

(Jerusalem, 1187.)

Lights up on KALIL, a Saracen general. He addresses the audience as his captives.)

KALIL

Praise be to Allah. Jerusalem is returned to the faithful. And you are our prisoners. Recall the days eighty and eight years ago, when your Crusader forefathers stood where I now stand. Recall the frenzied bloodbath when you Christians first took this city from us. As children, we are raised on the tales of your barbarity then. How you slaughtered four times ten thousand. Men, women and their children, too. Opening up their insides with your blades to search for gold coins in the entrails of the dead. In the Temple and the porch of Solomon, your men rode in blood up to their knees, to their bridle reins even. You looted the mosque of the Prophet, destroyed the tomb of Abraham. And while you did so, you danced, and you sang, and you laughed. You praised your God for these atrocities. Eighty and eight years ago. But my brother, by the mercy of God, sultan of all Islam, has decided to resist the temptation to exact revenge upon you for the crimes of your forefathers, no matter how righteous it might appear. Instead, following the example of Allah, the Compassionate, he will be merciful. You have surrendered to us. Those who can ransom themselves shall be set free--in return for a price: ten gold bezants for each man, five for each woman, one for each child. Those who lack the means to pay the ransom shall be sold as slaves. There will be no slaughter in the name of Saladin. In this manner, shall Jerusalem be restored to Islam, by the grace of the one true god.

(Blackout.)

2

A NEW KING

2

(Lights up in the palace of
Chinon, France.)

RICHARD enters. He kneels and
prays.

A dark figure enters and stands
in the shadows.)

RICHARD

Mum?

(Reveal ELEANOR, Richard's
mother, just arrived at the
palace.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Bloody hell.

ELEANOR
(with a French accent)

Bonjour, Richard.

RICHARD

I thought you was a bleedin' ghost.

ELEANOR

Not yet, son.

RICHARD

How'd you get out?

ELEANOR

Once the news arrived...

RICHARD

Oh. Right. I meant to see about you me-self,
but...well...so much as been...sixes and sevens, eh?

ELEANOR

You sound just like him.

RICHARD

Who?

ELEANOR

Your father.

RICHARD

Oh. Is that right.

ELEANOR
How is your French?

RICHARD
Not so good.

ELEANOR
I wish you would speak French.

RICHARD
Don't start, Mum.

ELEANOR
I always detested the way he spoke. Well, not always. I suppose I thought it was amusing, or endearing, or something. At one time. When I first met him, I suppose. In a dirty sort of way. Now you sound just like him.

RICHARD
Are ya happy, Mum?

ELEANOR
Happy? You mean, now that he's dead?

RICHARD
No. Now that you're out.

ELEANOR
Is your claim secure?

RICHARD
Oh, it's secure, all right.
(beat)
What--you don't believe me?
(beat)
He named me heir in front of the bloody king of France, and all his lords. Put his name to the document, a signed oath. Ask the Archbishop of Canterbury if my claim is secure.

ELEANOR
What about Marechal?

RICHARD
Oh, we're fast friends now.

ELEANOR
Salisbury?

RICHARD
Eating out of my hand.

ELEANOR
And John?

RICHARD
John? Oh, brother John has had a change of heart.
He's...content. For the moment.

ELEANOR
Where is he?

RICHARD
Upstairs. Skulking about.

ELEANOR
How did you do it?

(beat)

RICHARD
How'd I do what?

ELEANOR
How did you get your father to name you?

RICHARD
Oh. Philip.

ELEANOR
Ah.

RICHARD
You don't approve?
(beat)
What else could I do--let Dad give it to John?

ELEANOR
How did he die?
(beat)
Where you there at the end?

(RICHARD shakes his head, no.)

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
How did he die?

RICHARD
Me and Philip got the best of him at Lyon, and took off after
him at Tours. Finally, I had him on the run. It was all
catching up with Dad. Death riding at his shoulder. Fading
ever faster. All the old lads deserted him at the end, all
of 'em--cept Marechal. We chased him through the Vexin, put
the torch to Chateau Rouge, and finally cornered him in an
old Templar house in the forest near Columbiere. There was a
mist hanging in the air that morning. And there he was.
Dad. Good as dead, he was. Face white as ash. Couldn't
even stand on his own. Flies buzzing about him like a dead
thing. Old King Henry. My Dad.
(MORE)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Nothing but a shadow of the man he once was. Wracked by pain. An abscess in his bowels, it was. His whole body on fire, he said.

ELEANOR

God.

RICHARD

You think he deserved it?

(beat)

Philip made him say the words. Everyone heard it. England, Normandy, and Aquitaine. To Richard. All. Put his name to it, with a trembling hand. Signed, Henry Plantagenet.

ELEANOR

He loved you once.

RICHARD

You as well, Mum.

ELEANOR

When we were young. Perhaps. How did he die?

RICHARD

A little while later. There at the house in the woods. He just...quit. And it was over.

ELEANOR

God rest his soul.

RICHARD

Yeah. The last thing he said to me was, "May God grant I be revenged upon you." Whispered it in my ear. May God grant I be revenged upon you.

(Thunder rumbles in the distance.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Don't worry, Mum. The claim is secure.

ELEANOR

There is talk. At the funeral. There was a scene of some sort.

RICHARD

Oh?

ELEANOR

I was told, when you knelt beside his body...there was blood...blood dripped from the face of his corpse.

RICHARD

Who told you that?

ELEANOR
De Barri.

RICHARD
Huh. I'll have to have a word with him.

ELEANOR
Is it true?

RICHARD
No. That's a lie.

ELEANOR
There are superstitions about such things.

RICHARD
It's a lie.

(Beat.

He sinks to his knees, and begins
to cry.

She comforts him.

He hugs her tightly.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)
I love ya, Mum. I'm glad you're out.

ELEANOR
You are my little love. You will always be my little love.

RICHARD
I'm so sorry.

ELEANOR
There, there. I understand. Believe me, I understand.

(beat)

And what have you promised Philip in return?

(He pulls away.)

Richard?

RICHARD
I'm to marry Alice.

(beat)

It's final.

(beat)

There was no other way. That's what he wanted. A small
price to pay for the throne of England and Aquitaine, I
should say.

ELEANOR
No.

RICHARD

It's settled, Mum. There's no goin' back on that. Philip's very particular about this. And he's got the pope's blessing. You'll just have to swallow it. We both will. Everything comes at a price, eh?

(Beat.

She smiles.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I'm king.

ELEANOR

(removing her cape)

Not till the archbishop of Canterbury puts the crown on your head.

RICHARD

Right.

ELEANOR

I understand there is some trouble in Sicily. Have you heard from your sister?

RICHARD

No, not a word. But I have it that William's dead, and his bastard son has made a play for Messina.

ELEANOR

Is Joanna safe?

RICHARD

Not exactly clear.

ELEANOR

We will have to send someone.

RICHARD

I'm attending to that. What I really need is to go down there myself, and sort the whole thing out, proper like.

ELEANOR

You cannot leave now, Richard. You have not even been crowned.

RICHARD

This is not the sort of thing you can trust to others. She's the rightful queen of Sicily--and this smarmy little upstart means to snatch it from us.

ELEANOR

I will write His Holiness on the matter.

RICHARD

All right, you do that, Mum. In the meantime, I'll make me own plans.

ELEANOR

What sort of plans?

(More thunder in the distance.)

RICHARD

(looks out the window)

You know, they say the whole world is coming to an end. "Things which will shortly come to pass...for the time is at hand...So saithe Him that was the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of kings upon the earth, Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

ELEANOR

You have been reading Saint John the Divine.

RICHARD

I've taken up the cross.

ELEANOR

I see.

RICHARD

You ought to be able to appreciate that, eh?

(beat)

I'll be leaving soon.

ELEANOR

How soon?

RICHARD

On the Feast of Epiphany.

ELEANOR

That is impossible.

RICHARD

Is it? Watch me.

ELEANOR

You must solidify things first. They do not know you.

RICHARD

Who don't?

ELEANOR

Your subjects, Richard. Especially the English. They know your father, but they do not know you. And there was little love for your father at the end. You must gain their loyalty first. Their respect.

RICHARD

I've taken up the cross, haven't I? I'm the first in all Christendom to answer the pope's call. The devil's in Jerusalem. And I will smite him. For our lord, Jesus Christ. That should command the respect of my subjects, eh?

ELEANOR

Where will you get the money?

RICHARD

I'm selling everything.

ELEANOR

You are what?

RICHARD

You know how many castles I've got now? You know how many forests? Farmlands? Not to mention offices--they can be sold, too.

ELEANOR

You cannot be serious.

RICHARD

To the right man, of course. God's bollocks, I'll sell London itself, if I can find a buyer. Ha!

ELEANOR

You are not thinking clearly--

RICHARD

I need money fast, and I mean to raise it.

ELEANOR

First things first, Richard--

RICHARD

I'm instituting a special tax.

ELEANOR

A new tax? The crown is not yet on your head--have you lost your mind?

RICHARD

I'm calling it the Saladin Tax--one tenth of all every bloke in the kingdom possesses goes to the crusade, to the rescue of our brothers in the Holy Land--unless he comes along. No tax if you join up. That's how you raise an army. And I mean to raise an army the likes of which this world has never seen. No one knows more about siege warfare than me. It's in me blood. I been at it all me bloody life, ain' I?

ELEANOR

Look at me. Richard. Listen to me. I understand why you... I know that you are... I understand. But you must put the welfare of your kingdom first. Do not squander the gifts that God has granted you.

RICHARD

Don't worry, Mum. The investment'll pay off tenfold before I'm done. Jerusalem needs a new king. You know what that's worth? There's no limit to what that's worth. I mean to pray in the tomb of the Holy Sepulcher. Where all is forgiven. You done it, in your time--to the everlasting disgrace of us all. Now it's my time. I'm taking up the cross.

ELEANOR

What about Philip?

(PHILIP appears, as if in his bedchamber. He smiles at Richard, and sips a cup of wine.)

RICHARD smiles back.

ELEANOR cannot see him.)

RICHARD

Oh. Don't worry about Philip.

ELEANOR

He's the king of France, Richard. You must always be worried about him.

RICHARD

Things have changed, Mum. You've been locked up a long, long time. These days England has nothing to fear from France. We're friends.

(PHILIP smiles and lifts his cup to Richard, then disappears.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I've got Philip...right where I want him.

ELEANOR

You are too close to him, Richard. Distance yourself.

RICHARD

I need someone to take charge here while I'm gone. Someone I can trust. Someone to keep an eye on John.

ELEANOR

Someone?

RICHARD

You, Mum. You're the only one I can trust. You're the only one who's done it before. You're still the queen.

ELEANOR

Say it again.

RICHARD

What?

ELEANOR

Say it again.

RICHARD

You're the queen.

(She kisses him on the lips.)

ELEANOR

Fortune is yours, son. God has graced you. But we must take the reins now. And act wisely. First we must present you in the proper light, that your new subjects may come to better know their new king. We must put to rest, once and for all, the memory of your father. Henry was old, and sick, and cruel, a sad relic of better days long gone. The people of England must have a fine new king, a handsome, young, defender of the cross. A welcome change from the memory of old Henry.

RICHARD

There is a stain upon my soul, Mother.

ELEANOR

We all have sins upon us, my child. You will pray in the tomb of the Holy Sepulcher, where all is forgiven. God wills this.

(putting on her cape)

But first, to Westminster. And your coronation.

(Lights change.)

3

CORONATION

3

(ELEANOR steps into a spotlight.)

RICHARD strips to the waist.)

ELEANOR

We are now at liberty, after sixteen long years of confinement. As one who knows well, I can say with authority, how hateful prisons are. It has been brought to our attention that a number of English dungeons are now swollen with subjects awaiting royal judgement, owing to the state of confusion in my late husband's political affairs. For the good of our dear departed King Henry's soul, those to whom justice has been delayed, a general writ of clemency is granted. By order of the new sovereign, Good King Richard the First.

(Reveal RICHARD, in his coronation ceremony.)

ELEANOR steps into a different spotlight.)

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Know this, my friends: he that King Henry imprisoned, King Richard will set free. Whom Henry dispossessed, Richard will restore. Whom the father banished, the son welcomes home. You that Henry afflicted, Richard will send rejoicing.

RICHARD

(he kneels)

The Archbishop of Canterbury anoints me with holy oil. This act confers upon me the divine sanction of kingship. I am draped in ceremonial robes.

ELEANOR

(moving to another spotlight)

All nobles and churchmen of the kingdom will swear this oath before me personally: I vow to be faithful...and bear true allegiance...to his Majesty King Richard...on pain of death...so help me / God.

RICHARD

God touches my face. Lord, I am your servant. Forgive me.

ELEANOR

(yet another spotlight)

As they see you, so they deem you.

RICHARD

I feel the crown upon my head.

ELEANOR

Listen to me, Richard. Above all else: tend to the matter of your succession. You must have a son.

(ELEANOR exits.)

Sounds of a Latin Mass, Gregorian chants.)

RICHARD

I hear the words of a Holy Mass.

(Lights out on RICHARD.)

RACHEL enters a spotlight. She is a Jewish girl, with a cockney accent.)

RACHEL

It is the day the new Christian king is to be crowned. A solemn occasion in the ancient church of Westminster Abbey. We come in a long procession. Our whole community. We come to offer gifts to honor the new king. My father is one of the first in the procession. My mother, my brother, and me far behind.

(RICHARD enters a different spotlight, re-dressed, with a big ale tankard in hand.)

RICHARD

Welcome, my subjects, men of the kingdom, come we'll banquet together. No women, though. And no Jews.

(He laughs, and drinks.

Party music.)

We'll have dancing. I dance!

(He dances.)

RACHEL

There is a raucous banquet within.

RICHARD

Every man drink his fill!

RACHEL

Much laughing, and dancing, and good cheer. Men drinking. But the carousing turns to contempt.

RICHARD

The Jews have come to honor me? Me? Not now, I'm drunk!

(More laughter. He drinks, as Rachel continues, till finally, he passes out on the floor, dead drunk.)

RACHEL

Someone in the crowd spits upon my father. They begin to hit us. Everyone runs. Children cry. My mother screams. I see them beating my neighbor's grandfather, Kadmon Levi. We all run. But they chase us. Up Saint Giles-without-Cripplegate, to Jewry street, all the way into our homes. They kill Zaken Issac, the tailor. I see his body. Angry people. Cruel people. They hate us. Rabbi Yosef has his teeth pulled out one by one. They storm into our neighborhood. It goes on through the night. Beating and killing, wrecking our houses, stealing anything of value, houses burn, my father leads us away. Where will we go, Father? We run. All of us. All together. To York Tower. We will be safe here, my father tells me. Here we all huddle inside. Up above. High up above. But a man, they call him the Hermit, he shouts horrible words at us. Burn them, he says. Burn them. They deserve it. Some of us surrender, promising to take Christ into their hearts. But they are all killed. Struck down with rocks and boards, slaughtered like animals. My father tells me we will all take our own lives before we will let them murder us, or burn us alive. It begins. Husbands strangle their wives, their own children, and then hang themselves from the rafters. As the tower begins to burn. There is smoke. Flames. Father tells me to wait. But I disobey. While he is strangling my brother, Ephraim, I crawl away. Choking on the smoke. There is a sewer pipe. I crawl inside. The smell is foul. But I crawl into the darkness. Down, down I go, falling, I am stuck, further I fall, it seems a hundred miles down I go, into the earth, into a great cistern. I am in a cellar, somewhere down below. In darkness. Up above, the fire rages on. All through the night, in the filthy water, cold and dark, and fiery, and the screams, and the silence, and the smoke, and the stink of death. And soot. I shiver through the night. In the morning, I spill out, like a new born babe. Cold and wet. Amid the ashes. Of my family.

(beat)

They say this new king means to go on crusade. I've a mind to have a word with him about that. This Richard the First. *Bashanah haba'ah biyrushalayim. Next year, in Jerusalem.*

(RICHARD wakes and sits up.)

RICHARD

Oh, my bloody noggin. What day is it?

(Blackout.)

4

THE TRUCE OF GOD

4

(Lights up in the woods near
Gisors, in Normandy.)

RICHARD steps into the light,
with a goatskin of wine in hand.

PHILIP, the king of France, meets
him in the woods.

They stand apart, regarding each
other.

RICHARD takes a drink from the
wineskin.)

RICHARD

Drink?

(RICHARD squirts some of the wine
into Philip's mouth.)

They laugh.

They embrace.)

PHILIP

(with a French accent)

Not bad. Not good. But not bad.

RICHARD

Ce n'est pas mauvais? [It's not bad?]

(More laughter.)

Suddenly, they wrestle together,
fun but rough.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I've got ya.

(RICHARD releases him, and the
two sit apart, catching their
breath, smiling.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Good to see you...brother.

(beat)

Sorry 'bout Margaret.

(beat)

In childbirth, was it?

(beat)

Is the child well?

PHILIP

A son. Dead.

RICHARD

Bad luck. Sorry.

(beat)

I'm glad you're here. I've missed you. I keep thinking about him. What we done.

PHILIP

He would have done the same to you.

RICHARD

I know. I know.

PHILIP

Now you are king. Now we are both kings, eh?

(beat)

RICHARD

I mean to put this Saladin bloke in his place.

PHILIP

You alone?

RICHARD

If I must.

(PHILIP laughs.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

What are you laughing at?

PHILIP

You.

RICHARD

I've got the means to do it. If you're with me.

PHILIP

How?

RICHARD

My men-at-arms assemble at Vezelay, with your permission, and march south to Marseille. There they converge with my fleet, which sails from Dover, by way of the Pillars. Then it's south, to Sicily--where I straighten out a few things concerning my sister and the flippin' usurper of Messina--then the whole bloody armada sails east, through the Greek isles to Cyprus, which I will liberate from the shackles of Byzantium. Cyprus is the key. Cyprus will be my launch point for a strike on Acre.

(MORE)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

If we can get into Acre, we can promenade down the coast, and sweep into the Holy City before they know what's hit'em.

PHILIP

From Cyprus to Acre?

RICHARD

It's the only way to crack it. From the sea. The German's already on his way.

PHILIP

Fredrick?

RICHARD

Already on his way.

PHILIP

He's seventy years old.

RICHARD

Don't expect that to stop him. He's taken up the cross, I tell you. I have it from a very reliable source.

PHILIP

Your mother?

(beat)

Hm.

RICHARD

The German means to be in Palestine before Easter. All in all, it's the makings of the greatest military force the world has ever seen. Since the kings of old first set out for the Holy Land.

PHILIP

You and Frederick both?

RICHARD

Only I intend to get there first. I want a promise from you. While I'm gone, I want your solemn vow, that you won't go mucking about in the Aquitaine.

PHILIP

I want to go with you.

RICHARD

What?

PHILIP

I, too, have taken up the cross. The same as you.

RICHARD

You what--since when?

PHILIP
Saint Gregoire's Day.

RICHARD
The day I was coronated?

PHILIP
Was it?

RICHARD
You want to go on crusade?

PHILIP
Why should I not?

RICHARD
Are you daft? This is blood n' guts, Donny. Filth n' shit,
rot n' mud, killing with sword n' mace. Starvation, disease,
wrath n' suffering. Death. Not exactly your element, deary.

PHILIP
I want to go.

RICHARD
Hold on, a campaign like this is for hardened souls. You've
never even killed a man.

PHILIP
You are not the only one who wishes to pray in the tomb of
Christ. We all dream of it, Richard. Even me.

RICHARD
I don't know what to say.

(PHILIP takes a ring off his
finger.)

PHILIP
Here. I want to give this to you.

RICHARD
(taking the ring)
Why?

PHILIP
It is my gift. A token of my faith in you. And my
affection.

RICHARD
This is your signet, Philip.

PHILIP
Take it.

RICHARD

I can't do that. This is your seal. It's the symbol of your...

PHILIP

I want you to have it.

RICHARD

Look, I'm deeply touched. I'm moved. But it wouldn't be right. You can't give this to me. What would people think?

PHILIP

I don't care what they think.

RICHARD

You have to care. Ya sod. You're the bloody king of France.

PHILIP

(an exhalation)

Puh.

RICHARD

I love you like a brother, Philip. More even, eh?
(gives the ring back)

Put the ring on.

(beat)

All right then. We'll go together. Brothers. Suppose I'll have to keep an eye out for you. No whining. This is going to test you, Donny. Like nothin' you never done before. We'll make a pact, eh? A bond between our two kingdoms. We'll call it...the "Truce of God." A pledge of lasting peace between England and France--so long as we're away together in the service of the Lord. A promise to support one another in need, and to act in good faith. See what old Fredrick thinks of that.

PHILIP

A public declaration?

RICHARD

Why not?

PHILIP

What would people think?

(RICHARD laughs.)

PHILIP (CONT'D)

We divide equally all spoils that result from the crusade.

RICHARD

Divide equally?

PHILIP

Half for you. Half for me. Equal risk. Equal reward.

RICHARD

How many men-at-arms can you muster?

PHILIP

Two corps. Fully armed and out-fitted.

RICHARD

My, you've been busy.

PHILIP

As have you.

RICHARD

All right. Equals.

(beat)

But what if one of us don't make it back? There's lots of men die in these efforts. What if you or I is killed? Then what?

(beat)

If one of us is killed, or dies, or what have you...the other one takes charge of his forces and redoubles his efforts on behalf of Christ.

PHILIP

I agree.

RICHARD

Pity the poor army should you be in charge.

PHILIP

And he that breaks this pledge shall be excommunicate.

RICHARD

Excommunicated. Right. Naturally. The pope is gonna love this.

PHILIP

Bon. Now...when will you marry *Alais*?

RICHARD

Oh. That.

PHILIP

Yes, that.

RICHARD

It's almost Lent. It'll have to wait.

PHILIP

All right, then after Lent.

RICHARD

No, no. We've got to be on our way long before that. Not a day later than the Feast of Epiphany.

PHILIP

Why the rush?

RICHARD

I told you, I've got to be in the Holy Land before Fredrick gets there. I can't afford to delay.

PHILIP

We'll be better prepared. Epiphany is too soon.

RICHARD

I'm fully prepared, down to the last bleedin' crossbow bolt.

PHILIP

It is not wise to rush.

RICHARD

It is cowardly to hold back.

PHILIP

I am a coward?

RICHARD

You don't understand these things.

PHILIP

What is to understand?

RICHARD

Are you shouting at me?

PHILIP

I am not shouting.

RICHARD

Yes, you are, you are shouting!

PHILIP

You are shouting!

RICHARD

Shut your bleedin' hole!

PHILIP

You cannot speak to me that way!

RICHARD

I can speak any flippin' way I chose, you silly French slapper!

(PHILIP swings at RICHARD, but RICHARD blocks the blow, and grabs him in a hold.

Beat.)

PHILIP
You swore that you would marry Alais.

RICHARD
I know what I swore.
(releases him)

PHILIP
The pope will demand it.

RICHARD
Not if he knows what you and I both know good and well about Alice.

PHILIP
You made a promise to me.

RICHARD
I don't know why this is so bleedin' important to you.

PHILIP
It is a matter of family honor. She has suffered enough.

RICHARD
I will marry Alice after I return from the Holy Land.

PHILIP
When after?

RICHARD
Within forty days of my arrival back home.

PHILIP
And if you do not make it back? As you said, there are many men who die in these efforts.

RICHARD
If I don't make it back, then John will marry her.

PHILIP
Will you swear to this?

RICHARD
Before Christ in Heaven.

PHILIP
Very well. We shall put this in your Truce of God, as well. Agreed?

RICHARD

Yeah. Agreed.

(PHILIP takes the wineskin,
squirts some in Richard's mouth,
then takes a drink himself.

They grasp hands.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

The kings of England, France and Germany will band together
as one, and rout the infidel from the Land Beyond the Sea.

(Lights change.)

5

THE STRAIGHT OF MESSINA

5

(RICHARD steps onto the deck of his flagship.

PHILIP behind.)

RICHARD

Raise sail, my brothers. Our course is due south, along the coast of It'ly, across the Etruscan Sea, down to the Toe of the Boot, and into the strait of Messina, through the clashing rocks of Scylla and Charybdis, like brave Ulysses among the ancients.

(PHILIP exits.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

(sighting the palace)

There, just off the starboard bow, atop the shimmering cliffs, have a glance at the palace of Messina. Below, opening before us now, the finest harbor west of Constantinople.

(calling to his secretary)

Lucius, take a letter: to the usurper of Messina: I, Richard the First, of England and Aquitaine, have come to pay a call on you. Behold my fleet, mightier than the Greek one of old, what took the heroes of yore to the shores of lofty Troy. Mind you what happened to lofty Troy in the end.

(to his crew)

Helmsman, make for the harbor, directly. We will announce ourselves to these geezers.

(back to Lucius)

You will release the queen of Sicily with all due haste. Or we will obliterate you. And woe be to you, my little man, if she has been ill-treated.

(Lights change.)

6

LA BAGNARA

6

(JOANNA enters and looks out
across the straight of Messina
from the convent of La Bagnara.)

JOANNA

(a cockney accent)

He kept me in a room, in the tower of the palace. I was all alone up there. God knows how many months it's been. I started talking to me-self. To pass the time. No word from nobody. You start to despair. What if they should kill me? Snuff me out, just to get rid of me? One night, I remember, I nearly hanged me-self. Sittin' up there, looking out that window, at the sea, day after day, far as your eye can see. Should I just make the leap? Down I'd go. Into the salty brine, breakin' on the rocks below... Then the sun come up this morning, and out there rounding the cape, a thousand sails, as far as the eye could see. And streaming from the mast of the lead frigate, three gold lions on a field of scarlet. I knew it was you. It's Rick, I said to me-self. Come to save your sister from the hell I been through. And cor blimey what a navy he's got with him. What a king is here. My brother, Rick. And I weren't the only one. The whole town could see it. What a panic. They was all scramblin', cryin' out, sounding alarms, manning the battlements--runnin' for their bloody lives, they was!

(laughs)

When the noon bells rung, the monkey hisself come up to me room. In he comes. I could see him sweating. All polite and courtly-like he bows and smiles. And before I knows it, I'm being rowed across the straight out there, and I'm free. With the wind at my back, and the sun on my face, and here I am. Thank you, brother.

RICHARD

You're beautiful. All grown up.

JOANNA

And you're king.

RICHARD

Yeah.

JOANNA

(looking out the window)

What you gonna do about him?

(beat)

He's got to pay for this.

(beat)

You can't leave him there.

RICHARD

Not such an easy question, is it?

JOANNA

He stole the throne, and locked me away in a tower.

RICHARD

And here you are.

JOANNA

But he's still in my palace.

RICHARD

That's right, and by the look of things, he's willing to put up a fight.

JOANNA

He's a gutless coward. With the brain of a monkey, I tell ya.

RICHARD

He's a garrison in that palace, and I'm told these blokes'll fight for him. They think he's one of their own.

JOANNA

I'm the bleedin' queen of Sicily, Rick. It's an insult. You can't let this stand.

RICHARD

Did he...hurt you?

JOANNA

What--you mean, like--?

(beat)

No, not like that, if that's what you mean.

RICHARD

Good.

JOANNA

This is the kingdom of Sicily, Rick. You can't just piss it away.

RICHARD

I've no intention of pissing it away, your royal highness, but I've a crusade on me hands, at the moment, and we're late for departure to the other side of the world. So if it's all right with you, I'd just as soon not get all tangled up in a bloody little war here in Sicily. Is that all right with you?

JOANNA

Put me back in Messina.

RICHARD

What--married to who?

Just me. JOANNA

Are you barmy? RICHARD

It's rightly mine. JOANNA

You haven't got a claim. You haven't got a son. RICHARD

What's he got? JOANNA

He's got the palace, and an army ready to fight--that's what he's got! RICHARD

(beat)

What about me? JOANNA

You'll stay here, for the time being. Till we decide what's best. RICHARD

Here? In a convent? JOANNA

Don't worry. La Bagnara's under the protection of the duke of Calabria. He's a good man. I'd trust 'em with me life. The Mother Superior's in there. Sister Maria something-or other. She and her girls will see to your needs. RICHARD

A convent? JOANNA

Go on. She's waiting. RICHARD

Where you off to? JOANNA

To see the men. Decide what to do about this monkey in the palace. RICHARD

I'm not staying here. JOANNA

RICHARD
You what?

JOANNA
I'll go with you.

RICHARD
I said go.

JOANNA
What about my things?

RICHARD
What things?

JOANNA
My gold.

RICHARD
Gold?

JOANNA
I've got a solid gold chair. My throne, actually. I've got a solid gold banquet table. Twelve foot long, that table is. Twenty-four gold cups. Twenty-four gold plates. Got a very nice tent--pure cloth of gold. You know what all that's worth? Dad give me all that when I went to marry William.

RICHARD
What's that--your dowry?

JOANNA
All mine.

RICHARD
Technically, all that belongs to the crown of England.

JOANNA
Technically, that monkey's taken it all for himself, at the moment.

RICHARD
That's a pretty penny, that is.

JOANNA
A pretty penny indeed.

RICHARD
Hm.

(looks out the window)
Tell me more about this monkey in Messina--this Lord Tancredi.

JOANNA

He's a goat-herder from Palermo. The product of an indiscretion on the part of my late husband, during his earlier days, when he was a bit more spry.

RICHARD

Has he a talent for military affairs?

JOANNA

He took the palace quick enough after William dropped dead. But we was unprepared.

RICHARD

Is he...unmarried?

(beat)

JOANNA

You can put that thought right out of your head.

RICHARD

Joan.

JOANNA

Not on your life.

RICHARD

I'm only trying to consider this from all sides.

JOANNA

Well, you can leave that side right out of it. He barely comes up to here on me. One eye goes this way, the other like that. He's a bloody monkey with a crown on his head, I tell you. I will not be wedded to that grunting little beast.

RICHARD

You don't quite seem to understand how these things work, love. We're not in the business of finding your true love to cuddle up with so's you can sing songs between the sheets to your little heart's content. / We are trying to rule a delicate system of alliances carefully balanced against a wide array of ruthless adversaries who are constantly looking for clever ways to cut off my bleedin' head and strip our family naked of everything we possess!

JOANNA

I don't need you to find me someone to make me happy down there, thank you very much, but I refuse to be married to a beastly little mug what don't know his arse from a bunghole, and what kept me prisoner like a common criminal till I almost cracked me nut!

(beat)

I'm sister to the king of England.

(MORE)

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Me mum is Eleanor of the Aquitaine--only woman in the world who can say she was married first to the king of France and then to the king of England. And I've got a fortune in gold for a dowry. I'm a Plantagenet. Given a husband what can do his business proper-like, I can make beautiful babies, I can, so help me God. I'm a right fine prize, Rick. As fine as any other girl in Christendom. And I won't be wasted on the likes of that little monkey. Not bloody likely.

RICHARD

You'll marry who I say.

(beat)

There are stories goin' round about you.

JOANNA

Stories--what cha mean, stories?

RICHARD

Word is, you had your own little circle in Messina, your own little "Court of Love," just like mum used to, when we was little.

JOANNA

I happen to like poetry. And music. Don't you? You was always writing poems and singing songs with Mum.

(beat)

Well there you are, have you got your own little "Court o' Love," then?

RICHARD

"Court of Love."

JOANNA

We had a little fun. That's all. It was like a game. Who could sing the best. Love poems and the like. I suppose it was a little like it used to be with Mum. Back then. It's hot as blazes here in the summer. Daytimes ya have to lay about quite a lot. But the nights. The nights are much different. It's magical then. Looking out at the moon, sparkling on the waves, listening to poetry, gentle music. It was all quite magical. Till William up and died.

RICHARD

Mother Superior's waiting, Joanna. Go along.

JOANNA

What's the trouble between you and Philip?

RICHARD

Trouble? What trouble?

JOANNA

You know where he is?

RICHARD

We split up in Marseille, according to plan. He made his own arrangements, and I came south with the fleet. We meet up here. Then it's off to the east, *en masse*.

JOANNA

You don't know, do ya?

RICHARD

Know what?

JOANNA

He's already here.

RICHARD

Who--Philip? Where?

JOANNA

He's in Messina. He's a guest in the palace.

RICHARD

Tancredi's guest? Since when?

JOANNA

Two days ago. I thought you would've heard.

RICHARD

No, I was not aware of that.

(looks out the window)

Huh. Well, he is the king of France.

JOANNA

You still...friends?

RICHARD

Yeah, that's right. Why?

JOANNA

Well, now you're both king. Don't that change things?

(beat)

Perhaps I should marry Philip.

(beat)

Why not?

RICHARD

Stop talking rubbish.

JOANNA

Would you be jealous?

RICHARD

Put a sock in it.

(beat)

JOANNA

What happened at the end...with Dad?

(beat)

I've heard stories of me own.

RICHARD

He was gonna give it to John.

JOANNA

John--over you--why?

(RICHARD shakes his head, no.)

JOANNA (CONT'D)

He always loved John best.

RICHARD

They all turned against him at the end. Even John. That was the last straw for the old man. Even John. The snake. He'd turn against Christ his-self for a farthing.

JOANNA

How's Mum?

RICHARD

Never better. Free as a bird. Still queen of England. I expect she'll outlive us all.

JOANNA

I miss her.

RICHARD

I don't.

(She hugs him.)

Time I was off.

(pointing to the door)

It's that way for you.

JOANNA

I want to go with you. I'm your sister, Rick. You can talk to me. I'd do anything for you. You know I would.

RICHARD

You'll be safe here.

JOANNA

Sailing east. Then what?

RICHARD

Hm?

JOANNA

What's the plan?

RICHARD

We're taking back Jerusalem.

JOANNA

Jerusalem. Cor blimey. Then what?

RICHARD

Hm?

JOANNA

Who'll be the new king there?

RICHARD

Well, that's complicated.

JOANNA

Who'll be queen?

(beat)

RICHARD

Go. Stay here till I sort things out in Messina. I will send for you when it's safe.

JOANNA

I'm the only one you can trust, Rick. I'm your sister.

(She kisses him.)

I love you. I do. Take me with you.

(She exits.)

RICHARD looks out the window at Messina across the straight.

Lights change.

RICHARD steps into a spotlight, and straps on his sword.

He looks about, and addresses his troops.)

RICHARD

Brothers. Strength of my kingdom. You have endured much at my side. Times we've seen together. Battles fought, and won. Tyrants toppled, cities and lands restored. This false lord of Messina has insulted us. His subjects spit at us in the streets, hurling curses at the soldiers of Christ. Can we be a terror to our enemies, make our way across the world for the cross of Christ, and restore the kingdom of Jerusalem, when we have turned our backs on these insults? I love you. As your king. I will protect your honor, as I trust you will mine.

(MORE)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I tell you, if we depart here, un-revenged, the mention of our flight will both precede and accompany us hereafter. Old women and children will laugh at us, and a new found strength will quicken in our foe. Will you run away? I will retain none of you against your will. Follow who you wish. Choose. As for me, I will either die here, or I will avenge these wrongs done us. If hereafter I depart alive, the sultan will see me only as a conqueror. As I am. Will you join me?

(He steps into a different spotlight, at the gates of Messina.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Knights at the ready. Archers let fly. Forward with the ram. The dragon roars. Through the gate, my brothers. They scatter like sheep before wolves. We will take this citadel quicker than a priest can say his daily prayers. On, brothers--I will take the point!

(Blackout.)

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

7

RACHEL TAKES UP THE CROSS

7

(Rachel enters a spotlight,
dressed in traveling clothes,
with a satchel slung over her
shoulder.)

RACHEL

I make my way toward the Holy Land. In France, I join a band
of pilgrims. I learn to pray in the Christian fashion. Take
the wafer when I must. No one suspects me. We follow the
road, south through Italy. But word arrives the English
fleet is in Sicily, to the west, making war on the local
tyrant. My pious companions are bound for the port of
Taranto, there to take ship to Palestine. I head west. On
my own. To join the crusade. Take up the cross, eh?

(beat)

Leaving my party of pilgrims behind--with their "Ave Marias"
and their "Sancty, sancty, sancties"--I make for Sicily, and
the port of Messina. There to find Richard the First. King
of the dogs. Amen.

(She crosses herself, and exits
on her way.)

8

THE PALACE OF MESSINA

8

Lights up in the palace of
Messina.

PHILIP waits, angrily.

RICHARD enters.)

RICHARD

So this is the palace of Messina. God's bleedin' eyes. I'm impressed. It's all Arab-like. Saracen arcades, and those mosaics. How do they do that? All them tiny little pieces. Millions of 'em. All gold and color. It's like we died and went to heaven, eh?

(looks out a window)

It's a strange place, this island. All them Arabs and Greeks mixed in with everybody else. How do they all get along?

PHILIP

The count of Champagne refused to allow Burgundy to raise my banner over the palace.

RICHARD

Did he?

PHILIP

Why?

RICHARD

Well, I suppose that's cause the Duke of Burgundy didn't help to win it, did he?

PHILIP

My banner should be up there right along side yours.

RICHARD

Your blokes didn't fight.

PHILIP

You did not consult me.

RICHARD

I don't need to consult you.

PHILIP

I am the king of France.

RICHARD

Sod off.

PHILIP

This is outrageous. You have stormed in here, launched an all out assault on a Christian ally without the slightest effort to resolve the matter diplomatically. I was not even consulted. Now we have an hostile local population all around us, and we do not even know how long we are going to have to remain here to put this mess back in order. What is the matter with you?

RICHARD

He put my sister in prison.

PHILIP

And he released her.

RICHARD

I've got a long list of grievances against that skivy todger.

PHILIP

All of which could have been negotiated without storming the city. This is outrageous.

RICHARD

I won't speak for them twee totties of yours out there, but my men fought like princes in this little exercise.

PHILIP

Exercise?

RICHARD

At's right, an exercise. In martial discipline. You see, what you wouldn't know, Donny, is an army's got to be tested. You've got to put them into action to learn what they're capable of, and what you need to jimmy up. And what this little exercise has made clear to me, is that my boys are all tickety-boo to go up against the sultan's best. Did you see the way we landed, fanned out--we had the engines assembled in two hours--it was like bloody clockwork. Skill and bravery. And the finest weaponry money can buy. We are ready, my friend. Ready in deed. That's plain to see. Plain to all Messina, you can be sure. Your hostile local population. Let'em try me. Ha.

(JOANNA enters.)

JOANNA

Oh.

(beat)

PHILIP

Bonjour.

Your Majesty. JOANNA

Yes? RICHARD

I was just... JOANNA

Yes, Joanna? RICHARD

On my way to the chapel. To give thanks for your great JOANNA
victory.

You are all grown up. PHILIP

So everyone keeps telling me. JOANNA

Matters of state, Joan. RICHARD

Oh, right. JOANNA
(to Philip)
Very sorry about Margaret...your Majesty.

Thank you. PHILIP

Joanna. Please. RICHARD

About my things? JOANNA
(to Richard)

I'm working on that. RICHARD

Things? PHILIP

Not important, really. Go on, Joan. RICHARD

Have you got him up in the tower? Really? Ha! JOANNA
(she laughs)
What cha gonna do with him?

RICHARD

On your way, love.

JOANNA

Nothing's too good for that little monkey. Nothing.

RICHARD

Go.

JOANNA

All right, all right, keep your britches on.
(to Philip)

Ta!

(JOANNA exits.)

PHILIP

Well. She is all grown up.

RICHARD

I don't like the way you say that.

PHILIP

What are you planning to do with her?

RICHARD

I haven't decided.

PHILIP

Hm.

RICHARD

I definitely don't like the way you say that. Don't get any ideas about Joanna.

PHILIP

I am just...thinking.

RICHARD

Well, you can put a stop to that right quick.

PHILIP

What finer way to truly bind our two kingdoms together, hm? You marry Alais. And I wed Joanna. Each marries the sister of the other.

RICHARD

Sounds a bit incestuous to me.

PHILIP

Hm.

(beat)

I understand you seized the palace treasury.

RICHARD
Why wouldn't I?

PHILIP
I will send Burgundy for my half.

RICHARD
Your half of what?

PHILIP
Of what was taken.

RICHARD
But you and yours didn't have a hand in the fight.

PHILIP
The terms of the truce, Richard. An even split.

RICHARD
Bollocks.

PHILIP
Furthermore, my banner flies along side yours above this palace. We are equals in this enterprise, according to our agreement. Need I send someone to read you the words written on the document--signed by your hand?

(beat)

RICHARD
All right. Fair enough. Just like we said. Equals.

PHILIP
And next time, consult me before launching an invasion.

RICHARD
I've made Tancredi a guest of honor in the palace tower. The same accommodations he provided Joanna with. I haven't decided what exactly I'll do with him. Any thoughts on that?

PHILIP
Get rid of him. Quickly.
(starts out)

RICHARD
Where are you going?

PHILIP
I think I shall visit the chapel. And say a prayer of thanks. For our swift and decisive victory over the tyrant of Messina.

RICHARD
You leave Joanna be.

PHILIP

God be with you...Brother.

(PHILIP exits.)

A church bell rings in the distance.)

RICHARD

Dad? Are you there? Can you hear me? I love ya, Dad. I'll set it right. I swear. Dad?

(JOANNA enters the room, speechless.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

What's wrong with you?

(JOANNA points at the door.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

What is it?

JOANNA

She's here!

(ELEANOR enters, in traveling clothes.)

ELEANOR

Bonjour, Richard.

RICHARD

What the bloody hell are you doin' here?

ELEANOR

I must speak with you.

RICHARD

How in Farquar's nuts did you get here?

ELEANOR

I rode here. On a horse.

RICHARD

You crossed the Alps?

ELEANOR

Yes, it's faster.

RICHARD

In winter?

ELEANOR
I admit, it was cold.

RICHARD
Pinch me. I'm dreamin'.

ELEANOR
J'ai soif.

RICHARD
What?

JOANNA
She's thirsty. Hello, Mum.

ELEANOR
Joan. Ma petite fille. [My little girl.]
(They embrace.)
You are all grown up.

JOANNA
I've missed you. They put me in prison.

ELEANOR
Oh, ma pauvre petite fille. [Oh, my poor little girl.]

JOANNA
I was so scared.

ELEANOR
Of course, you were. What happened to William?

JOANNA
He died.

ELEANOR
Oh, I am so sorry--there, there. Is there a child?

JOANNA
No.

ELEANOR
Hm.

RICHARD
(to Joanna)
Get her something to drink.

JOANNA
Hm?

RICHARD
She's thirsty, you said.

JOANNA
Oh. Right. You fancy a cup o' tea, Mum?

ELEANOR
Is there any wine?

RICHARD
Get her a cup o' red.

JOANNA
Of course, a bit o' wine.

ELEANOR
Merci, ma chere.

JOANNA
I love ya, Mum.

(JOANNA exits.)

RICHARD
What's the meaning of this?

ELEANOR
I have brought you something.

RICHARD
What?

ELEANOR
A new bride.

RICHARD
A what?

ELEANOR
Berengaria, the princess of Navarre. You remember her.

RICHARD
You've brought me what?

ELEANOR
You met her. When we where in Navarre. It was years ago. You were just a boy then. But I am sure you remember. She has grown into a very beautiful woman.

RICHARD
You've ridden here on horseback, by way of Spain? And you've brought me a new bride? I'm already engaged to the sister of the bleedin' king of France.

ELEANOR
No. You are not. Not anymore.
(beat)
I have been to see the pope.

RICHARD
No. No.

ELEANOR
We are old friends, you know?

RICHARD
What have you done?
(beat)
Does Philip know you're here?

ELEANOR
How should I know?

RICHARD
Oh, Christ.

ELEANOR
You don't look well, Richard. Have you been eating properly?
What are they feeding you here?

RICHARD
Mum! Stop! What have you done?

ELEANOR
You cannot marry that woman.

(JOANNA enters with a cup of wine.)

JOANNA
Here, Mum. Have a taste of this.

ELEANOR
Is there somewhere to sit?

(JOANNA finds a bench.)

RICHARD
God, Christ in Heaven, help me.

JOANNA
There. Is that to your liking, Mum?

ELEANOR
(sits)
What is this?

JOANNA
Sicilian red. It's quite good.

ELEANOR
(tasting it)
This is wine?

JOANNA
You don't like it? Shall I fetch you something stronger?

ELEANOR
No, no. This will do.
(sips)
Ugh.

JOANNA
I'll get you something better.

ELEANOR
No, Joan, listen to me. I want you to visit with the princess of Navarre. She is waiting in the room at the end of the hall. She is alone. Comfort her. See to her needs. Become friends with her. I want to know what she is thinking. What troubles her. Keep me informed. Hm?

JOANNA
What's her name?

ELEANOR
Berengaria.

JOANNA
Berengaria. Pretty. Princess of Navarre, did you say?
(looks at Richard)
Hm.

ELEANOR
She is a lovely girl.

JOANNA
I'm sure she is.

ELEANOR
On your way.

JOANNA
Yes, Mum.
(starts out, but stops)
Oh. Mum. By the by. We was chatting, Rick and me was, about Philip.

RICHARD
Joan.

JOANNA

What would you think if Philip and me was to... well, you know--

RICHARD

Joan!

JOANNA

Just a thought, eh? I'll see to the princess. Mum.

(JOAN exits.)

ELEANOR

(downs the wine)

Philip and Joan? Whose idea was this?

RICHARD

No one's.

ELEANOR

Philip and Joan?

RICHARD

I said--

ELEANOR

C'est folie. [This is madness.]

RICHARD

Mum.

ELEANOR

Has he so completely deceived you?

RICHARD

Wouldn't you like to lie down and give it a rest, Mum?

ELEANOR

Do you not understand, everything he does, he does to regain / Normandy, and Aquitaine, and all of ancient France?

RICHARD

All right, Mum, that'll do. I said, that'll do!

ELEANOR

He cannot be trusted in anything.

RICHARD

You are beginning to aggravate me.

ELEANOR

Where I have encouraged you to distance yourself from Philip, you have moved increasingly closer to him.

RICHARD
Who's the bleedin' king here?

ELEANOR
You are no longer just boys together.

RICHARD
Stop.

ELEANOR
Now you are both kings.

RICHARD
Did you hear me?

ELEANOR
You must not trust him, Richard.

RICHARD
Am I talking to my bloody self! No, I am not. I am talking to you. And I will thank you to stop meddling in my affairs. Are you trying to run my flippin' life? Of course, you are. Just like you have ever since I was old enough to... to... bollocks. God's flippin' bollocks. You rode across the bloody Alps in winter, stopped off in Spain to pick up a new bride for me, and dropped in on the bleedin' pope to say Codswollop, do as I say--Christ!
(beat)
Will you...leave me...alone.

ELEANOR
I am only thinking of what is best for you.

RICHARD
Will you please--

ELEANOR
And what is best for our family.

RICHARD
What--you're some sort of expert on that, are you? Our family. You've been locked away in prison for almost twenty years. I think you've cracked your nut.

ELEANOR
His Holiness has given his blessing to the breach of promise.

RICHARD
The breach of promise?

ELEANOR
You are no longer bound to marry the whore.

RICHARD
What have you done?

ELEANOR
I told him the truth about her.

RICHARD
You told him.

ELEANOR
She was your father's mistress. She had a child with Henry.
You cannot marry such a woman. God would vomit.

RICHARD
I hate you.

ELEANOR
You cannot produce a legitimate heir to the throne of England
with a common street whore.

RICHARD
She's sister to the king of France.

ELEANOR
She is a whore.

RICHARD
I've a mind to snap your neck. You did this. And you didn't
even consult me. Not so much as a peep, or a how'd you do.
Damn your bleedin' eyes.

ELEANOR
Richard, the princess of Navarre is a far more worthy match
for you. An alliance with Navarre will secure the southern
border--

RICHARD
Damn your bleedin' eyes!

ELEANOR
She is the perfect opportunity. Now. At this very moment.
You must be married immediately.

RICHARD
Absolutely impossible.

ELEANOR
Do not wait.

RICHARD
I have to leave for Palestine. Sorry, Mum, but I've a
crusade in me hands at the moment.

ELEANOR

You must secure an heir. Nothing is more important at this moment. And it must not be done with Philip's sister. The filthy whore.

RICHARD

Talkin' to you is like talkin' to a stone. A bloody stone. When word gets out that you're here... You know what they'll say? We're cursed. That's what they'll say. What you done to Louis' crusade, you'll do to this one.

ELEANOR

Lies. All lies.

RICHARD

You went sleepin' with my uncle in Antioch and brought disaster on the whole enterprise. Disaster. You're a curse, and everybody knows it.

ELEANOR

Who has fed you these lies? Your father?

RICHARD

It's common knowledge.

ELEANOR

That was more than thirty years ago. I was still a girl.

RICHARD

I will not be the leader of a failed crusade.

ELEANOR

They had to blame someone. So they blamed it on me.

RICHARD

You have jeopardized the success of this holy enterprise.

ELEANOR

Marry this girl. Turn away from Philip.

RICHARD

I am the king. We will do what I say.

ELEANOR

Marry her tonight. And be off with the tide in the morning. Take her with you. Till it is certain.

RICHARD

Take her along?

ELEANOR

Till you have a son.

RICHARD

Ha! Come along girls, a primrose crusade, hollyhocks and biscuits, Mum's Court of Love, sing along! Perhaps we'll go dancing with Saladin, and have him up for tea!

ELEANOR

Do as I say!

RICHARD

Ha!

ELEANOR

He is deceiving you.

RICHARD

And what of you?

ELEANOR

Listen to me, Richard. I am your mother.

RICHARD

Don't start with that.

ELEANOR

You must at least meet with her. You must pay her that respect. These things matter. You must at least...greet her. Like the king that you are. Her father is the king of Navarre. A better friend to you than the king of France will ever be--

RICHARD

There it is, there it is again--

ELEANOR

Just say hello. This is all I ask. She has grown into a beautiful young woman.

RICHARD

What do I care?

ELEANOR

Just say hello.

RICHARD

I made a solemn vow to Philip.

ELEANOR

Yes. A solemn vow. I understand that girls hold little interest for you. Ever since you were little. I know.

RICHARD

It's not like that.

ELEANOR

Has there never been a girl?

RICHARD

There's been lots of 'em.

ELEANOR

There was that girl in Cognac--what was her name?

RICHARD

I don't remember.

ELEANOR

She had a child.

RICHARD

It weren't mine.

ELEANOR

Then why is her family on the royal payroll?

RICHARD

I don't know nothin' 'bout the girl from Cognac--

ELEANOR

Philip is no different than all the other kings of France. I know. I was married to one.

RICHARD

I know that.

ELEANOR

His father!

RICHARD

You don't need to remind me.

ELEANOR

They all dream of the lost empire of Charlemagne. They all long to be the one who will resurrect the great empire of antiquity, the mythic empire that stretches from the Pyrenees to the Rhine. He is using you to this end.

RICHARD

Who--Philip? Ha! No. Philip ain't no Charlemagne. I know Donny. I know him far better than you ever will. And I can tell you, he's nothing of the kind. Philip don't even like bein' king. He'd rather just lounge about. Having sport and good time. No. You've got him pegged all wrong. I know. And I'm not about to break my solemn vow to him. No matter what you say.

ELEANOR

Listen to me.

RICHARD

No. I've got plans of me own. Pity you've come all this way.

ELEANOR

Recall the tale of Balaam the pagan.

RICHARD

The tale of who?

ELEANOR

Balaam the pagan. The Book of Numbers, *mon petite fils*. Do not obstinately refuse to accept the plain truth, simply because you do not like the look of it.

RICHARD

I'm king. Not you. And I will not stand for this defiance in your face, in your eyes, in your words, in your stinking...bloody... You have meddled in my life long enough. I will not greet that Spanish tart politely, I will not betray my beloved brother in arms, I will not, I will not, I will not!

(RICHARD exits.

ELEANOR sits, alone.

Blackout.)

9

THE CHAPEL OF SAINT AGATHA

9

(Lights up in the Chapel of Saint Agatha late at night.)

RICHARD waits.

PHILIP enters.)

PHILIP
What is it?

RICHARD
Hm?

PHILIP
It is the middle of the night.

RICHARD
Yeah.

PHILIP
What is wrong?

RICHARD
You haven't heard.

PHILIP
Heard what?

RICHARD
Me mum's here.

PHILIP
What?

RICHARD
The queen of England has arrived.

PHILIP
No--here?

RICHARD
That's right.

PHILIP
How--your mother?

RICHARD
I don't know how, black magic, necromancy, incantation, it don' matter, she's here--rode horseback across the wilds of Christendom to be with me.

PHILIP
Oh, mon Dieu. [Oh, my God.]

RICHARD
Yeah.

PHILIP
Why?

RICHARD
Yeah, well, that's difficult...she's...uh... She wants me to marry the princess of Navarre.

PHILIP
Navarre?

RICHARD
Yeah. She's brought the princess Berengaria along with her.

PHILIP
No.

RICHARD
I'm afraid so.

PHILIP
You cannot do that.

RICHARD
She's been to see the pope.

PHILIP
And?

RICHARD
He thinks it's a fine idea. She told him all about you know what. Seems even the pope don't think it's right the son should marry the father's mistress what had a bastard child by him. Hard to ignore the logic of that, eh?

PHILIP
Serpent.

RICHARD
Careful. That's my mum you're disparaging.

PHILIP
You swore.

RICHARD
I know what I swore.

(beat)
I want to ask you something.
(MORE)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

We agreed to meet up at La Bagnara, before going into Messina. You went into Messina without me. Why?

PHILIP

Why would you ask me this?

RICHARD

Just answer it.

PHILIP

This is me. You question me?

RICHARD

Why didn't you wait for me, like we said?

PHILIP

You were late. Where were you?

RICHARD

We agreed to meet at La Bagnara--

PHILIP

Where were you?

RICHARD

I had a bit of a mix-up in Calabria.

PHILIP

You were late. I was here. He invited me into Messina. I accepted.

RICHARD

We agreed we would go in together.

PHILIP

Where were you?

RICHARD

I was delayed.

PHILIP

You should have sent word.

RICHARD

Couldn't.

PHILIP

You were off on your own. Roaming about the countryside.

RICHARD

I wanted to see a bit of It'ly.

PHILIP

Oh, sight-seeing were you?

No. RICHARD

What happened in Mileto? PHILIP

Hm? RICHARD

You went off on your own. On horseback. PHILIP

D'Avern was with me. RICHARD

You and William D'Avern. Two men, alone? PHILIP

We were *in cognito*. RICHARD

The king of England, and one man, *in cognito*, in a foreign land. Have you no sense at all? PHILIP

I was curious. RICHARD

You court disaster, Richard. Why? PHILIP

No harm done. In the end. RICHARD

You were nearly killed, I am told. PHILIP

Naaa. A little mix-up, nothing more. I run into a tavern in this little lost town in them great glorious hills they've got in Calabria, and the skivy geezers wouldn't give us a drink. So I told 'em, in so many words, what I thought of their silly mugs, and they came at us, came at us in numbers, they must've been twenty in all. What a tussle that was. Bip, bap, calou, and, oh, Chirst, me sword's broke, which was most unfortunate, and with that they was all over us, Bill and me, and I admit I thought we might be done for, till we...well, let's just say we beat a hasty retreat, cuppin' our arseholes in our hands as they pelted us with stones from head to toe. Bill got the worst of it.
(chuckles)

Though I lost a tooth, and a right fine sword, in the exchange.

PHILIP
You could have been killed.

RICHARD
Naaa.

PHILIP
No word. Nothing. You were late. What was I to do?
(beat)
Now your mother.

RICHARD
Yeah.

PHILIP
You know what they will say?

RICHARD
Yeah, I know.

PHILIP
When they learn she is here, they will think we are cursed.

RICHARD
Yes, I realize that, your holiness.

PHILIP
You cannot let her do this.

RICHARD
I will decide what I can and cannot do.

PHILIP
You swore to marry Alais.

RICHARD
And the pope says no!
(long beat)
The chapel of Saint Agatha. That's what this is. Which one was she?

PHILIP
She is the martyr of Sicily.
(pointing to her depiction)
That is her there.

RICHARD
(looking at the painting)
Hm.

PHILIP
An early Christian. Dedicated herself to God. But a Roman fell in love with her. And she spurned him.
(another depiction)
(MORE)

PHILIP (CONT'D)

There. In spite, he demanded she make sacrifice to the Roman gods, but, of course, she refused.

(a third depiction)

So he had her breasts cut off, and made her roll on a bed of hot coals.

RICHARD

(looking at the third depiction)

Give us our daily bread.

PHILIP

They say the earth quaked when she died.

RICHARD

(he kneels and prays)

Beloved Saint, what they done to you was wrong, and cruel, and I am most sorrowful for all the sufferin' what you done. I kneel before you, in prayer, and ask that you bless our crusade, on behalf of the Holy One, to restore his tomb to the faithful. Amen.

(to Philip)

Do you feel that?

PHILIP

What?

RICHARD

A presence like.

(JOANNA enters.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Oh, it's you.

JOANNA

Lucius said you wanted to see me.

RICHARD

Yeah. Come in. Join us.

JOANNA

What are you two up to then?

RICHARD

Squabblin'. Makin' amends. Praying to old Saint Aggy.
(extends his hand to PHILIP)

Brother?

(PHILIP takes his hand and they embrace.)

JOANNA

Don't know if I like the looks o' this.

RICHARD

I have come to a decision.

JOANNA

Yeah, what's that?

RICHARD

I have decided to offer your hand to the king of France. Should His Majesty decide to accept my offer, then I shall marry his sister, and you will marry him. And our two kingdoms, the kingdoms of England and France, shall be united, as one great family. And we will have peace. In Christendom.

JOANNA

Peace?

RICHARD

Peace. Your Majesty?

(RICHARD lifts Joanna's hand, extending it to Philip.)

PHILIP takes Joanna's hand, and kisses it.

PHILIP and JOANNA kiss on the lips.

RICHARD turns away.

PHILIP reaches out, and puts his hand on Richard's shoulder as he kisses Joanna.

Lights change.

RICHARD presents PHILIP and JOANNA to his court.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

(to the audience)

Upon my return from the shores of Palestine, I will marry Alice. Philip will marry Joanna. And we shall have peace between our two kingdoms, joined as one family.

(RICHARD formally joins Philip's and Joanna's hands with his own.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Let it be known.

(Blackout.)

10

TANCREDI'S LETTER

10

(Lights up in the chapel, the next morning.

ELEANOR enters, followed by JOANNA.)

JOANNA

What is it? Mum, what is it? Look, I know you're angry with me, but Rick says we've got to--

ELEANOR

Here.

(She extends a letter to her.)

JOANNA

What's that?

ELEANOR

It's a letter. Read it.

JOANNA

(taking the letter)

Who's it from?

ELEANOR

From the king of France.

JOANNA

(reading)

"To Lord Tancredi?"

ELEANOR

Usurper of Messina.

JOANNA

Where did you get this?

ELEANOR

Read it.

(JOANNA reads the letter to herself.)

JOANNA

(to herself)

What?...No...Richard--a traitor?... The bloody snake... No... No... Christ, what's he done?... Oh, God...

(RICHARD enters.

Beat.)

RICHARD

What?

(to Eleanor)

Where've you been all morning? I was looking for you.

ELEANOR

I have been busy.

RICHARD

All right, I know you're displeased. But I've made up my mind. I've thought all this over very carefully. It's not like it was when you were...well, back when...when we was little. When Dad and... Even before that... Look, there's trouble among the rank and file. You bein' here... There's concern about you...and the way things went...back when...on your crusade with Louis. There are some very ill feelings about all that. About you and uncle Raymond. Now, I don't want to know. Whatever went on between you and him. It's all ancient history to me, but...well, to the men...well, there's talk. Very ugly talk. I cannot allow anything to risk the success of this endeavor. I've given the word. We set sail with the tide tomorrow morning--Saint Alban's Day. The whole bleedin' fleet. The scale of the thing is...staggering. It's... it's... well, it's--

JOANNA

Shut up, Rick!

RICHARD

What did you say to me?

(JOANNA hands the letter to RICHARD.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

What's this?

JOANNA

Just read it.

(RICHARD reads the letter to himself.)

Long beat.)

RICHARD

(to Joanna)

Where did you get this?

(JOANNA looks at ELEANOR.)

ELEANOR

My man, Roderick, obtained it from the prisoner himself. You'll notice Philip's seal below the signature.

(RICHARD looks at the seal on the letter--stunned.)

PHILIP enters.

Beat.)

PHILIP
(to Eleanor)

Well, what is it?

JOANNA

You.

PHILIP

What?

(beat)

Richard?

(RICHARD crosses to PHILIP and strikes him with a powerful punch in the face.)

JOANNA
(holding him back)

Rick!

RICHARD
(to Philip)

You deceived me.

(throws the letter at Philip)

PHILIP

How dare you.

RICHARD

There it is. A traitor am I?

PHILIP
(looking at the letter)

What is this?

RICHARD

Your offer of friendship to Tancredi, if he'll only take the opportunity to put a dagger in me heart! You bleedin' Judas you.

PHILIP

This is a lie. A forgery. Obviously, a forgery.

RICHARD

It's got your flippin' seal on it, Philip. That tawdry stinkin' signet ring of yours. Your mark, you Judas.

(MORE)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

You dog. You think you can kill me?
(starts toward him)

JOANNA

(holding him back)

No, Rick!

RICHARD

I should snap your bleedin' little neck, you slaggy French git.

PHILIP

This is a forgery, I tell you. It is a plot.
(pointing at Eleanor)
It is her. Don't you see?

RICHARD

It's got your seal on it, Donny. You're a snake. And I'm a bloody fool.

(he starts out)

JOANNA

Easy does it, Rick.

RICHARD

Stay away from me. All of ya. To the devil with ya. All lies.

JOANNA

Rick--wait!

(RICHARD exits.)

Beat.)

JOANNA (CONT'D)

(to Philip)

Since we was kids...

PHILIP

I do not know where this letter has come from. But it did not come from me.

(referring to Eleanor)

This is her doing. I have always loved Richard as my own brother. I would never... And you, Joanna. It is me, Philip.

ELEANOR

Stay away from her.

PHILIP

My father always spoke of the years he was married to you as his time in hell.

ELEANOR
And then he spawned you.

PHILIP
You are a curse.
(to Joanna)
She has the devil in her heart.

(PHILIP exits.)

ELEANOR
(to Joanna)
Go to the princess. See that she's well guarded.

JOANNA
The princess--why?

ELEANOR
Just do as I say.

JOANNA
What about Rick?

ELEANOR
I will speak to Richard.
(she picks up the letter off
the floor)
Go. What are you waiting for?

JOANNA
Mum. That letter. Is it genuine?

ELEANOR
Of course, it is. It has his seal on it. What more do you
need? Now go, do as I say. The princess must be protected.

JOANNA
Yes, Mum.

(ELEANOR exits.)

JOANNA (CONT'D)
(alone)
What about me?

(Blackout.)

11

THE NIGHT ON THE MOUNTAIN (PART 1)

11

(Night, on the slopes of Mt. Etna. RICHARD enters, wineskin in hand. He drinks. He sings, drunkenly.)

RICHARD

Yar, she said, wi' an open bunghole,
Open 'tas wide she'd go-oh.
Yar, she said, wi' an open bunghole,
I'd rather be broke, than old.

(drinks, collapses)

I am struck down. By mine enemies. They hurtle boulders upon me. Stab me with sharp blades. Still I fight on.

(He drifts off to sleep.)

RACHEL enters, on her way to Messina. She stops when she sees Richard, passed out in the dirt.

She nudges him, with a foot.

He stirs, groggy.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Hm?

RACHEL

You're a crusader.

RICHARD

Hello.

RACHEL

You're English.

RICHARD

Am I?

RACHEL

Are you ill?

RICHARD

Where's me...

(finds his wineskin)

RACHEL

Have you a pestilence?

RICHARD

No. No pestilence. What's your name then?

RACHEL

I'm looking for the English. How far's Messina?

RICHARD

Messina? Oh...not sure, really. Can't be too far. When I left it was still light.

RACHEL

This way is it?

RICHARD

To tell you the truth, I haven't got a clue.

RACHEL

What you doing sleeping in the dirt there?

RICHARD

Not sleeping. Just resting me eyes a bit. I'm on my way to climb Mount Etna, I am. Though I seem to have lost me bearings somewhat. Where is that bloody mountain?

RACHEL

You're drunk.

RICHARD

No.

(offering the wineskin)

You like wine?

(beat)

Go on. Have a drink with me.

(She starts to go.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Oh, don't go. Stay and have a chat with us--

(He grabs her cape to stop her,
and she draws a dagger on him.)

RACHEL

Keep your bleedin' hands off me.

RICHARD

All right, all right. No need to draw arms upon me. I mean you no harm.

(beat)

What you doing out here all on your tod? A pretty girl like you.

RACHEL

I told you, I'm looking for the English crusader camp.

RICHARD

At night?

(beat)

You're lost, ain't ya?

(beat)

Same as me.

(beat)

Fear not. I will protect you from brigands and ne'er-do-wells--

(He stands, draws his sword,
stumbles, and falls in a heap.)

RACHEL

I'll look after meself, thank you very much.

RICHARD

Suit yourself. I'll rest me eyes a bit more.

(She watches him.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Takin' up the cross, have ya?

RACHEL

That's right.

RICHARD

As what? No washer woman you. No cook neither, by the look of ya. That leaves only...not one o' them, are you?

RACHEL

I'm on pilgrimage.

RICHARD

Oh. Right. A pilgrim. Mean to pray in the Tomb of the Holy Sepulcher, do ya?

RACHEL

Is King Richard with the English?

RICHARD

King Richard? No.

RACHEL

No?

RICHARD

No. Not anymore.

RACHEL

Where is he?

RICHARD
Where? Oh...no one knows.

RACHEL
What?

RICHARD
Aye.

RACHEL
I heard he stormed Messina, and made a captive of the
usurper.

RICHARD
So he did, and a right fine job of it to boot.

RACHEL
What happened?

RICHARD
He were betrayed by the King of France.

RACHEL
Betrayed. How?

RICHARD
Philip put a dagger through his heart.

RACHEL
What--killed him?

RICHARD
Oh, no. Not dead. Not yet.

RACHEL
Wounded then--near death?

RICHARD
So they say.

RACHEL
But where?

(He looks at her, and smiles.)

RICHARD
Where he will be a king in his own right. Lord of all he
surveys.

(He laughs.)
Mount Etna calls. Come with me. We will scale the heights
of this colossus together, side by side, hand in hand. We
will sing songs together, and share our heart's secret
longings, eh? They say Vulcan's fiery furnace dwells beneath
that ancient peak.

(MORE)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I will have the armorer of the gods forge me a new blade, the finest in all the world.

(beat)

RACHEL

Are you crying?

RICHARD

No. I am iron. King Richard's a bloody fool.

RACHEL

Why is that?

RICHARD

Oh, you don't know him like I do.

RACHEL

You know the king, personally?

RICHARD

As well as any man.

(he drinks)

RACHEL

I don't believe you. You're a drunk. Asleep in the dirt. Talking rubbish.

RICHARD

The king of France is a snake. Don't believe a word he says.

(RICHARD passes out.)

RACHEL looks around.)

RACHEL

Crusader. Here's what I have for you...

(She kneels, and puts her knife to his throat.)

But she can't bring herself to do it.

She stands, and puts the knife away.)

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Bashanah haba'ah biyrushalayim.

(She heads off into the night.)

Blackout.)

(Lights up, later in the night.
RICHARD awakens from his drunken
slumber. JOACHIM, a mystic, sits
cross-legged, nearby, reading an
ancient book.)

RICHARD

Where am I?

JOACHIM

This is the night. On the mountain.

RICHARD

Who in Jimmy's blue bollocks are you?

(a pain in his head)

Oh, Christ, me nut.

(reaches for his wineskin--
it's empty)

Bugger all.

(beat)

How long have I been here?

(beat)

What--are you reading?

(beat)

Anything good?

JOACHIM

(in Greek)

"En arche epoiesen ho Theos ton ouranon kai ten gen."

RICHARD

What?

JOACHIM

"In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth."

RICHARD

Oh. Right. The Good Book.

JOACHIM

"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

RICHARD

What are you doing out here?

JOACHIM

Seeking to praise God, and to know Him.

RICHARD

You live out here?

JOACHIM

Here and there.

RICHARD

What are you--a hermit then?

JOACHIM

Would you betray Him?

RICHARD

Him who?

(JOACHIM looks to the heavens.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

We are divided. At war with ourselves. What cause could succeed where there is such disloyalty, such faithlessness? When mere, naked ambition rules?

JOACHIM

The time is at hand. The day of judgement approaches. When all the righteous will be gathered up together in His arms. And the wicked, and the unbelievers will be cast into the lake of fire.

RICHARD

Philip.

JOACHIM

Be thou mindful of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

RICHARD

Sodom and Gomorrah.

(beat)

Me mum said something to me. Something from the Bible. Something about...Balaam the pagan. What can you tell me about Balaam the pagan?

JOACHIM

The son of Beor?

(RICHARD shrugs, not knowing.)

JOACHIM (CONT'D)

Balaam was a wicked pagan diviner, a false prophet from the land of Baal. The king of Moab summoned him to place a curse upon the Israelites, that the Children of God should commit sins of licentiousness and lust, that they should eat of forbidden foods. But while he traveled to Moab, an angel appeared before Balaam, and stood astride the road, with a great sword raised high as if to strike. Now, Balaam rode along upon an ass, a lowly animal, but one of God's creatures, nonetheless. And when the animal saw the angel of the Lord, it turned away.

(MORE)

JOACHIM (CONT'D)

But Balaam, blind to the sight of the angel, struck the beast, turning it back to the road. Again the animal turned away, fearful of the angel. And a second time, Balaam struck the poor beast in fury. The animal fell to the ground, refusing to go forward, and the anger rose in Balaam, and he struck the animal yet again, driving it on, even more fiercely. Till, finally, the Lord opened the mouth of the beast that it might speak, and it spoke in words unto Balaam, saying "What have I done to thee that you should strike me these three times?" And with that, the Lord opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel standing in his way, with his sword held high. And Balaam bowed down his head, and fell to the ground, with his face in the dirt. And the angel said, "Thy way is perverse before me."

RICHARD

Thy way is perverse before me.

JOACHIM

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

(The sound of two dogs fighting
in the distance.)

RICHARD

What's 'at? What's out there?

JOACHIM

Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne.

RICHARD AND JOACHIM

(together)

So saithe Him that was the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of kings upon the earth, Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood!

JOACHIM

This is the Revelation of Saint John the Divine.

(silence)

RICHARD

I know what I must do.

(RICHARD steps into a spotlight,
and begins to strip off his outer
garments.)

JOACHIM remains in another
spotlight.

Philip enters.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

What are you doing here?

PHILIP

You cannot go through with this.

RICHARD

Get out of my sight. You're lucky I don't... Leave me.
I've business to attend to.

PHILIP

Look at me.

RICHARD

I'm taking a vow.

PHILIP

You took a vow to me.

RICHARD

You tried to kill me.

PHILIP

No. Not so. That letter is false. I never put my hand to
it.

RICHARD

What about your signet on it? How'd that happen?

PHILIP

I do not know.

RICHARD

I don't believe you.

PHILIP

You believe your mother.

RICHARD

Well, that's what it comes down to, don' it. She's me mum.
And you're...just another king.

PHILIP

I am your brother.

RICHARD

No.

PHILIP

In here.

(his heart)

Lies. RICHARD

I will always be. PHILIP

I had no idea what you was capable of. You're a flippin' genius of a deceiver, you are. RICHARD

Not so. PHILIP

All lies. Get out. RICHARD

Remember Gisors, Richard. Remember all those times together. In the woods. Remember your father. PHILIP

Get out. RICHARD

Remember our Truce of God. PHILIP

I don't need you. RICHARD

You will marry Alais. PHILIP

In a pig's arse. I'm leaving. You can sod off. RICHARD

This is me, Richard. We are brothers. PHILIP

(They kiss.)

No more. RICHARD

(RICHARD steps into a different spotlight.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Men of the Church, I stand before you, here in the chapel of Saint Agatha. Your excellencies, the archbishops of Monreale and Besançon, bishops of Toul, and Chartres, Ely, Durham, and Beauvais.

(he kneels)

I have sinned.

JOACHIM
(sound of a whip)

RICHARD
(reacts to the whip)

I have sinned.

JOACHIM
(sound of a whip)

RICHARD
(reacts to the whip)

I am as dirt.

JOACHIM
(sound of a whip)

RICHARD
(reacts to the whip)

I am as dirt.

JOACHIM
(sound of a whip)

RICHARD
(reacts to the whip)

As is my life.

JOACHIM
(sound of a whip)

RICHARD
(reacts to the whip)

As is my life.

JOACHIM
In the name of the Holy One...

RICHARD
Him that suffered the agony on the cross...

JOACHIM
Savior of mankind...

RICHARD
Abjectly, I beg your forgiveness. Grant me the strength to resist unnatural desires. I do here take within me heart a vow of shear abstinence from any impure acts with them of me own sex. Repentance will be me path. For all me days hereafter. To kingdom come. This I swear.

(sound of a whip--
RICHARD reacts)

PHILIP
Richard.

JOACHIM
Thy way is perverse before me.

RICHARD
(to Philip)
Thy way is perverse before me.

PHILIP

No.

(ELEANOR enters.)

JOACHIM

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

ELEANOR

Your bride awaits you.

RICHARD

(to Eleanor, as he re-dresses)

You're going home. Immediately.

ELEANOR

You must have an heir, Richard.

RICHARD

I said go!

ELEANOR

As you wish...my lord.

(JOANNA enters.)

JOANNA

Rick, take me with you. To Jerusalem.

RICHARD

You will go on ahead, with Berengaria. I have outfitted a marvelous frigate especially for the two of you, that you may travel in comfort and luxury. We shall rendez-vous on the isle of Cypress, birthplace of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. There I will wed the princess of Navarre. There I will make an heir.

ELEANOR

God go with you, my son.

(ELEANOR exits.)

JOACHIM

And I heard, as it were, the noise of thunder, and the four horses of the Apocalypse.

(PHILIP exits.)

JOANNA
I want your word, Rick. Your word you'll make me the queen
of Jerusalem.

RICHARD
Where is Philip?

JOANNA
He's already left.

RICHARD
Gone home has he? Ha!

JOANNA
No, Rick. He's set sail for Palestine.

RICHARD
Palestine? He means to get there before me. I have to be
first.

JOANNA
Queen of Jerusalem.

RICHARD
Pack your things, love. We sail tonight.

(JOANNA exits.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Philip?

(Sound of the sea.)

RICHARD (CONT'D)
So it's a contest, is it? Between you and me, Donny. A
race.

JOACHIM
And a power was given him that he should make war on earth...

RICHARD
To the Holy Land.

JOACHIM
That men would kill one another...

RICHARD
I will overtake you.

JOACHIM
And there was given unto him a mighty sword...

RICHARD

Are you out there? Philip? What's this? Winds from the north. A great storm crashes down upon the fleet of Christ. The waves make sport of us. For days on end. We are scattered all about the Greek isles. At last, the waters calm. Donny--are you out there? A fog descends upon us. Wraps us all about. We drift. Donny? We are lost.

JOACHIM

For the day of wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

RICHARD

What now?

JOACHIM

Behold who comes, lo, a black horse; and he that sits upon him holds a balance in his hand.

RICHARD

The fog begins to lift. The mist parts. What's there?

JOACHIM

Behold a pale horse--

RICHARD

I see it: upon the rocky coast. A tower rises in the distance. They call it the Tower of Flies. Beneath that lofty turret stands a great walled city. The rock of Acre. We are here.

JOACHIM

--and he that sits there upon is called Death--

RICHARD

Palestine, brothers, the Land Beyond the Sea.

JOACHIM

--and Hell follows with him.

RICHARD

To arms, soldiers of Christ, we will make war upon these infidels.

JOACHIM

And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

RICHARD

Are you with me? Come on, then!

(The sounds of war and apocalypse begin to build.)

JOACHIM

And the sun becomes black as sackcloth of hair--

RICHARD

I leap from the deck, into the salty brine, up to me chest--

JOACHIM

--and the moon becomes red as blood.

RICHARD

On, lads, to the beach!

JOACHIM

And the stars of heaven fall unto the earth--

RICHARD

Up through the rocks, these dogs have no defense against
courage the like of ours!

JOACHIM

Every mountain falls, every island sinks, heaven itself
departs--

RICHARD

We will hack down the walls of this castle with our blades,
if we must!

JOACHIM

The kings of earth, all great men, poor and rich alike, the
mighty and the slave, all hide themselves away--

RICHARD

Up the ladders, onto the walls, they cower before us, let
loose the sword of Christ!

JOACHIM

They cry out, mountains and rocks fall upon us, hide us from
the face of him that sits upon the throne, hide us from the
wrath of the Lamb.

RICHARD

Come, my brothers, wash over these battlements like the great
flood of old.

JOACHIM

For the day of wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

RICHARD

(in a frenzy)

Let them know the taste of salvation, deliver them to hell,
slay them, without mercy, redeem us for the Lord in heaven,
hammer them upon God's anvil, dismember with the sword of
Christ. Crush them. Cut them. Teach them the word. On!
On!! On!!!

(The frenzy passes.

Calm returns.)

JOACHIM

The thorns of lustfulness have risen from your head.

RICHARD

The city burns. The dead heap up in mounds. Blood flows through the gutters, and rises like the tide.

JOACHIM

Happy is the man who falls so low, and then rises with still greater strength.

RICHARD

We are victorious. We are redeemed. I have pried Acre from the clenched fist of the infidel, and lopped off his arm.

JOACHIM

Happy is he that after repentance, does not relapse in the course of ruin.

RICHARD

Philip? Philip? Are you there? Dad would be proud. Philip?

JOACHIM

And there was war in heaven.

RICHARD

(to Joachim)

Are you an angel?

(JOACHIM smiles.

Blackout.)

THE END

*

RICHARD THE FIRST

PART 2: LIONHEART

written by

Gary Graves

in collaboration with Rica Anderson, Armen DiLanchian, Jodi Feder,
Gregory Scharpen, Robert Weinapple and Jan Zvaifler.

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© CENTRAL WORKS
P.O. Box 9771
Berkeley CA 94706
510-558-1381
gary@centralworks.org

ACT ONE

1 REVELATION

1

(Reveal RACHEL, a girl. She wraps her chest in cloth to conceal her breasts.)

RACHEL

Blessed art thou oh Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has preserved me and allowed me to reach this day.

(Reveal RICHARD. He kneels, and bares his back.

RACHEL uncoils a bull whip.)

RICHARD

God, forgive me.

(RACHEL whips him as he recites a passage from the *Revelation of St. John the Divine*.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. And there was war in heaven.

(RICHARD dresses, and looks out a window, into the distance.

He straps on a dagger that he always wears at his side.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

I recall the day you came to me. Just after we took Acre, it was. God, what a victory. I wonder, a thousand years from today, will they know of what we done at Acre? Not since Alexander scrapped with Persia has their been such a contest of military might. At Acre did Christendom storm the bloody battlements of Antichrist. What will they say of me then, I wonder--a thousand years hereafter? Richard the First, what led so many stout-hearted geezers over them walls, them walls running red with Saracen blood. Acre.

(Lights change.

RACHEL exits.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

A fine place this. Worth as much as Constantinople, in terms of all the trade what passes through the harbor out there. Choke point at the crossroads of the world. Ya see it's here the roads to Damascus, Baghdad, and Cairo all converge. And have ever since...God knows when, eh? Since the Lord hisself walked along these shores. We are here. Here in the bloody Holy Land. God, what a sight. Me, Richard One, I took back Acre from the devil incarnate and reclaimed the gateway to the center of the world: Jerusalem. Jerusalem. The Holy City. But sixty miles to the southeast now. Half way across the world, and but sixty miles to go, my friends. In the land beyond the sea, our pilgrimage is near an end. We'll be home in time for Lent.

(Lights change.)

2 "THERE ARE PROBLEMS"

2

(RICHARD thinks, alone.

JOANNA enters.)

RICHARD

What do you want?

JOANNA

Why won't you talk to me?

RICHARD

I'm busy. Go away.

JOANNA

When am I to be married?

RICHARD

When I say so. Now leave us alone; I'm trying to think.

JOANNA

You promised me, Richard. What's the delay?

RICHARD

Are you deaf?

JOANNA

I've been sitting up in that bloody tower for three days straight. I want to know what's going on?

RICHARD

How's my lovely little Berengaria?

JOANNA

She thinks you hate her.

RICHARD

Not comfortable up there? I told Lucius to see that you two were kept comfortable up there.

JOANNA

Aren't you ever going to sleep with her?

RICHARD

I slept with her--what you talking about?

JOANNA

What--on your wedding night? That was three months ago, Rick, you'll have to do better than that.

RICHARD

I don't need your advice on that subject, Joanna.

JOANNA

Well, it sounds like you need someone's advice. She says you weren't up to the task.

RICHARD

Stuff it, ya poxy git!

JOANNA

You've got to have an heir, Richard.

RICHARD

I will have an heir. In my own bleedin' time, thank you my loving sister. At the moment, I haven't been... I haven't got the... Get out.

JOANNA

(looks out the window)

What's going on out there?

RICHARD

What's going on? I'm having the walls rebuilt. Resupplying the army. Packing for the march. Tearing down these bloody mosques. Cleaning out the stench. What do you think's going on?

JOANNA

What about the ransom?

RICHARD

What about it?

JOANNA

Has it been paid yet?

RICHARD

No.

JOANNA

No?

RICHARD

Not your concern, is it?

JOANNA

What cha gonna do then?

RICHARD

"What cha gonna do then?"--that's what I'm bloody trying to think about, if you'd give me a moment's peace and quiet!

JOANNA

He's testing you, idn't he?

RICHARD

You are testing me!

JOANNA

Kill 'em.

RICHARD

There's twenty-seven hundred of them.

JOANNA

You can't let this keep us from Jerusalem, Richard. Why are you waiting here? The longer you wait the stronger he gets. You've got the advantage now, you've got the momentum!

RICHARD

It's a bit more complicated than that, Joan!

JOANNA

Why? What is complicated? Tell me. Why won't you tell me anything? Remember when we was kids? You used to tell me everything. I've been good to you, Richard. Everything you asked me for, I've given you. I gave you money, Richard. / Twenty thousand in gold! I got you a hundred tons of grain. They'd all be starving out there if it weren't for that grain. I got you ships, I gave you my gold plate, I lied to Berengaria for you, I done everything you asked!

RICHARD

Don't. If it weren't for me, you'd nevera got one ounce of that gold. Grain--I'll thank your dead husband for that, and the ships he promised me. That was all part of the plan. Till Tancredi went and mucked it up, the bloody monkey with a crown on his head. You should be grateful! If it weren't for me you'd still be locked up in bloody Sicily!

JOANNA

I have given everything I have to this cause, Richard. I've taken up the cross as much as any bloke here, I have. I may not swing a sword out there, but I'm here to play my part. I trusted you, Richard. You've got to trust me. Who else can you really trust here, eh? I'm your bloody sister. Me. Joanna. I know your secrets, Richard. Now tell me what the bloody hell is going on!

(beat)

RICHARD

There are problems.

JOANNA

What cha mean problems?

RICHARD
Problems! Philip for one.

JOANNA
What about him?

RICHARD
He's leaving.

JOANNA
Leaving? Leaving what?

RICHARD
He's going home. Sailing with the morning tide.

JOANNA
He can't do that.

RICHARD
Well then why don't you go tell him so.

JOANNA
Why don't you?

RICHARD
Because I'm through talking to that bleedin' git.

JOANNA
What--again?

RICHARD
This is it. I'm through with him.

(beat)

JOANNA
Night before last. Where did you sleep?

RICHARD
In me bed, Mum. What are you--checking up on me?

JOANNA
I come to your room late the night before last--you weren't there.

RICHARD
Well, I was up and about a bit. You must have missed me, I guess, eh?

JOANNA
I hope you and Philip ain't been at it again.

RICHARD
Stuff it.

JOANNA

Remember your vow, Rick.

RICHARD

Stuff it, I said!

JOANNA

A promise to God, Rick.

RICHARD

It always comes down to that with you, done'it?

JOANNA

What about the Truce?

RICHARD

I tore it up and threw it in his face.

JOANNA

Oh, that's fine. He could have you excommunicated for that.

RICHARD

Let him try. He's the one what broke the Truce--he's the one what's leaving. If anyone warrants excommunication, it's him --the stroppy wankin' old woman!

JOANNA

But why--why is he leaving?

RICHARD

Oh, he's cheesed off about his sister. He's cheesed off about Cyprus. He's cheesed off he's always in my shadow here, because he don't belong here in the first place. He hasn't got the stomach for it. He hasn't got the bowels. He's been in the bloody privy ever since he got here.

JOANNA

He's not the only one.

RICHARD

I've never felt better in my life. I love this place. This climate. God. The food. That new cook is a blessing from God. It's the Arab food. Fruit. These spices. The clothing. This is splendid. They all wear these things. And the music. These Arabs make the most astonishing music. You should see the instruments they play. Carries you away, it does. I can see why so many stay once they've been here.

JOANNA

All right. So Philip is leaving. Do we really need him?

RICHARD

Well, he is the king of France.

JOANNA

But do we really need him?

RICHARD

He's cut me strength in half. Told his bloody girls not to fight for me. French pissies... That's not the end of it.

JOANNA

You mean what?

RICHARD

Well, I'm afraid Conrad is a much bigger problem than I realized.

JOANNA

Conrad?

RICHARD

Philip is behind him--fully behind him. He's got the king of France, the Pisans, and the Templars.

JOANNA

Yeah, but Guy is the king!

RICHARD

It's not that simple.

JOANNA

Oh, yeah--why idn't?

RICHARD

Cousin Sybil is dead, Joanna. Guy's claim to the throne is very weak.

JOANNA

Weak--why? They was married in the eyes of God, wasn't they?

RICHARD

Without the blessing of the pope.

JOANNA

What's hers is rightly his. He married her; he's the bloody king.

RICHARD

Mm-hm. Unfortunately, Conrad's just married Sybil's little sister.

JOANNA

Conrad married Isabella? That's impossible; she's already married.

RICHARD

The archbishop of Pisa annulled her marriage to Humphrey.

JOANNA

What!

RICHARD

And no doubt Conrad paid the archbishop well for it.

JOANNA

The bloody pope will never allow this.

RICHARD

The bloody pope already said no, but they went ahead and did it anyway. As I said, Guy's in a very weak position. With Sybil dead the line passes through the little sister.

JOANNA

But Guy's got the bloody crown on his head. That's what counts, eh? And you. He's got you.

RICHARD

Yeah, he's got me, all right. But Conrad's married Isabella and the king of France is backing him--it's a bloody civil war in the making, don't you see? And these are the bloody gits I'm to lead on to the reconquest of Jerusalem! Christ!

JOANNA

You can trust Guy. He's a good man. He is. No one could have stopped the sultan from taking Jerusalem. We was outnumbered an 'undred to one. You can't blame Guy for that.

RICHARD

He was in command.

JOANNA

He fought bravely. I've seen the scars. I know. He's our man, Dickie. All he lives for is the day he's back in Jerusalem. That's the only way he figures he can redeem himself, in God's eyes. In everyone's eyes. He just needs a chance. You're his Lord and Protector, Rick. You can't desert him now.

RICHARD

You love him.

JOANNA

I trust him. I do.

RICHARD

They say his family is descended from a serpent.

JOANNA

They say worse than that about us.

RICHARD

I suppose they do. I'll have to think on it.

JOANNA

Marry us. Now.

RICHARD

I'll have to think on it!

JOANNA

You promised me, Richard.

RICHARD

Shut up! Shut up!! Shut your bloody gob!!!

JOANNA

You mean to turn your back on Guy, don't you?

RICHARD

I'm thinking.

JOANNA

Why did I ever trust you? You were born a liar. You've never kept a single promise you ever made. Have you?

RICHARD

Get out.

JOANNA

That's why Dad hated you, idn't? That's why he never trusted you. Only Mum trusts you. Cause you can't lie to her, can you?--she's too bloody good a liar! And you are hers, ain't you? Just how close are you to Mum, eh? I remember, she would cuddle you, all kissy and loving. I can just see you two goin' at it--

RICHARD

Shut your filthy gob, you slaggy whore!

JOANNA

I wonder--is that what came between you and Dad, eh? Is that what drove you to it?

(RICHARD grabs her by the throat.)

RICHARD

I could snap your neck like a twig.

JOANNA

But you won't, will you?

RICHARD

Don't be so bloody sure.

(releases her)

JOANNA

Marry me to Guy. Tomorrow. Or I'll tell your new queen all about you. And I mean, all about you.

RICHARD

Tell her what you will. Just get out.

JOANNA

Time, Rick. Time is running out. We can't stay here forever.

(JOANNA exits.)

3 "I NEED A CHRONICLER"

3

(RICHARD opens a letter and peruses it.)

RACHEL enters, disguised as "Balian," a boy--unarmed.

Beat.)

RICHARD

What--am I so frightening as all that?

RACHEL

No. Sire.

RICHARD

(reading from the letter)

"Balian le Brune." Hm. Have we met before?

RACHEL

No. Sire.

RICHARD

I've seen you somewheres.

RACHEL

I joined the Crusade in Marseille. Perhaps...

RICHARD

No.

(referring to the letter)

The count of Champagne speaks very highly of you, lad. Very highly indeed.

RACHEL

The count's kindness and generosity has been my great good fortune.

RICHARD

Henry's a good man. He saved my life the day we landed here. He says you're a very talented young man.

(reading from the letter)

"For a knowledge of history, languages, and the works of antiquity, he is without equal in our ranks." High praise from one who knows of what he speaks.

(beat)

You like music? I'm rather fond of it meself. Listen to this.

(sings a phrase of a Latin hymn)

RACHEL

Very excellent, Sire.

RICHARD

Tried my hand at a bit of poetry, too. What you think of this: "The longing heart is appeased through sweetness and succor, and I am dying of true love's kisses. If another kiss is not soon mine, I will surely die."

RACHEL

Most impressive.

RICHARD

There's more: "I am on fire with a love which compels me to sing. I act like a man taken by surprise who cannot resist. And yet I have gained something to boast of: that long ago I learned to love loyally."

RACHEL

Your own composition?

RICHARD

Mine...and a friend.

RACHEL

It touches me.

RICHARD

Does it?

RACHEL

Deeply.

RICHARD

You think its any good?

RACHEL

I think it betrays a hidden talent.

RICHARD

Ha! You're flattering me.

RACHEL

I am quite sincere.

RICHARD

Are you? We'll see about that. I need a chronicler. Someone to record these events. Someone to put it all down in writing. With a proper...interpretation to it. I want the world back home to appreciate what we're doing here. We stand on the precipice of the ages here. The decisions we make...these events...this is the stuff of bloody legend. We've got to write this down. Do you understand me?

RACHEL

I do indeed.

RICHARD

How would you tell me story?

RACHEL

How? You mean...

RICHARD

Yeah. Go on. Impress me.

RACHEL

Well, let me think... I wasn't actually prepared to...

RICHARD

Mm-hm. I'm waitin'.

RACHEL

Well, I suppose I'd put it something like this... In the year of the Incarnation of the Word, Eleven Eighty-Seven, the Sixth Great Persecutor of the Church, in the Age of the Son, rose out of the Valley of the Nile, and swept into the Land Beyond the Sea. He took the name Saladin, sultan of all Egypt and Syria. Then did our Lord turn his back on the Latins of Palestine, for they had grown wicked and corrupt in their hearts, adopting the ways of the east, the ways of the unbelievers. So far from God had the Oriental Christians strayed that He deserted them to the punishment of this devil, at the Horns of Hattin. There the sultan's army surrounded the Christian defenders of the Holy Land and annihilated them. Thus was the army of the Latins obliterated, and the True Cross, the very cross upon which our Savior gave up the Holy Ghost in unsurpassed agony, thus was the Holy Rood lost to the infidels. And thus did the Holy City itself fall into the hands of the Sixth Great Persecutor called Saladin. But, lo, then did his Holiness Pope Gregory send out a call to all the faithful: Hasten ye to Palestine, there to aid the brethren of Christ with all your strength! And first among all the great Lords of the Latin kingdoms to answer the call and take up the cross was his Majesty, Richard Plantagenet, King of England, Normandy and Aquitaine. Brave King Richard set about raising an army the likes of which the world had never seen. And in the summer of Eleven Ninety One, at last he arrived on the shores of Palestine, at the port of Acre. And there did this new Hector breathe fresh life into the exhausted Christian cause. With the awesome might of his deadly war machines, and with the fury of the lion in his heart, Richard toppled the fabled towers of defiant Saracen Acre. And with unmatched valor and unrivaled virtue of arms this king of England, this Lionheart, did lead his Christian brothers on to glorious victory. And thus, with the grace of God, did Richard Plantagenet smite the forces of Saladin, the Sixth Great Persecutor in the Age of the Son.

(beat)

RICHARD

Well. You've got a way with words, you have. What was that you called me--Lionheart? Where'd you get that?

RACHEL

It just seems...right to me. Is it not to your liking?

RICHARD

No, I rather like it. Richard Lionheart. I approve. A chronicle of my campaign on Jerusalem. How long you think it would take you to write such a thing?

RACHEL

How long? Such a work could take months.

RICHARD

Months?

RACHEL

Well, I should have to assemble a great deal of information, and testimony. And...

RICHARD

And what?

RACHEL

And, well, events are still unfolding.

RICHARD

What's that got to do with anything?

RACHEL

Well, it depends.

RICHARD

On what?

RACHEL

On what manner of chronicle you wish me to write.

RICHARD

Just tell the truth, eh? I expect to be in Jerusalem for Christmas. Have it done by then. We'll quarter you in the palace here. How's that? Anything you need, see my secretary, Lucius.

RACHEL

I don't know what to say.

RICHARD

Then don't say nothing. Just get started. I like you. You've got a way with words. Lionheart...

(looks out the window)

You know, they was eating grass when I got here.

(MORE)

RICHARD (cont'd)

A whole army, starving to death. I saw it with me own eyes. Grown men--soldiers and servants alike--down on their hands and knees, like cattle gnawing at cud. That was the state of things when I got here. Now look at it. On to Jerusalem--my chronicler!

(RICHARD exits.)

RACHEL

Blessed art thou oh Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has preserved me and allowed me to reach this day.

(Lights change.)

4 THE MASSACRE OF THE PRISONERS

4

(Enter KALIL.)

KALIL

The hostages were led out of the city on the road to Nazareth, to an open field by the hill of Keisan. Bound together in chains, over two thousand seven hundred of them, all ordained by God for martyrdom that day--our brothers, who so faithfully and valiantly defended Acre against the infidels these two years now.

(RICHARD enters, and pours himself a cup of wine from a wine cask always at his side.

Alone, he sips the wine, and broods, as KALIL continues.)

KALIL (cont'd)

Their king, Richard of England, commanded the act. At a signal from this king, his men at arms fell upon the prisoners, with sword and lance, and began cutting them down, hacking them to pieces where they stood.

RACHEL

Please, God, grant me the strength.

KALIL

Their blades glistened in the sun, slicing through the air, cleaving head from neck, arm from shoulder, quartering our people like animals at slaughter--bloody, ruthless, frenzied, slaughter. All through the night it lasted.

RACHEL

Please, God, let me not turn away in fear.

KALIL

In the morning, we went out to the site. It was then I found my cousins, Ali and Beha, among the dead.

RACHEL

Let my will not waver.

KALIL

Their bodies lay in the heap, a great mound of blood and severed limbs, beneath a cloud of insects, stinking in the sun, and the dust, amid a riot of jackals.

RACHEL

For my Father, and my mother, and my brother...

KALIL

Leaving this monument to their cause behind, the infidels departed Acre, and began their march south, along the coast, for Jerusalem.

RACHEL

Let me not falter...

KALIL

This is the character of these invaders. And their king, Richard of England.

RACHEL

Till the task is done.

(RACHEL exits.)

5 "WE MUST MAKE PEACE"

5

(RICHARD and KALIL regard one another as the two meet for the first time.)

JOANNA enters, unexpectedly--all eyes on her.

Shocked to discover KALIL in the room, she quickly exits.)

RICHARD

My sister. Former queen of Sicily. Welcome to the Church of the Virgin. Ever been to Jaffa before?

KALIL

Many times.

RICHARD

Is that right? Not much left of the place, is there? You barely left us a pot to piss in.

(a laugh)

Nice of you to leave this church, though.

KALIL

We are not in the habit of destroying holy sites.

RICHARD

'Course, I'd rather you'd left the city walls standing.

(another laugh)

No matter. We'll have 'em up again quick enough. We're making very good progress. Did you notice on your way in?

(beat)

They tell me Jerusalem is but thirty miles from here, down the old Roman road. Thirty miles. Lovely here though, idn't? The fragrance--what is that? Fig trees and pomegranates? Oh, my, these gardens of yours. With the sea gently rolling in. Not much of an harbor out there, I must say. But it'll do. It'll do very nice.

KALIL

Your letter said you wanted to talk of peace.

RICHARD

Indeed I do. But first, I want to thank your sultan for sending you here. You're his brother--is that right?

(Kalil nods)

And you speak our language.

(no response)

Yeah, I want to talk about making peace. Your army is exhausted. They run from us in the field. Your losses at Arsuf were ten times ours. Admit it. A complete and utter rout.

KALIL

And your advance has been stopped here at Yafa.

RICHARD

We ain't been stopped.

KALIL

Then what are you waiting for? Why do you not march on Jerusalem?

RICHARD

All in good time, my prince. All in good time. Perhaps I've a good mind to go further south first, hm?

KALIL

You will find Ascalon's walls have been leveled, as well.

RICHARD

That's impossible.

KALIL

Nothing defensible remains of the fortress there.

RICHARD

I don't believe you.

KALIL

Then I expect you will see for yourself.

RICHARD

You people tear things down much better than you fight, don't you? You think you can tear down the whole country then?

KALIL

If we must.

RICHARD

The walls you tear down I will rebuild. And I will rebuild 'em stronger, and finer than they were in the first place.

KALIL

Do you have the time for such an undertaking? And the money? We are under the impression you wish to conclude your invasion of our country quickly in order that you may return to your own as soon as possible. Is your country not in need of its king?

RICHARD

I will remain here as long as it takes. My country is in good hands.

KALIL

Even with the departure of the king of France?

RICHARD

The king of France is a friend to England.

KALIL

Then why will his men at arms not fight for you?

RICHARD

I am not in need of his men at arms. I have plenty of me own.

KALIL

Here, in Yafa, perhaps. With your fleet at hand to resupply you. But how will you take Jerusalem? How will you protect your lines of supply if you leave your fleet behind and march inland, into the hills, to undertake a lengthy siege? We will cut you off. And you will die out there. You cannot take Jerusalem, and you know this. That is why you have asked me here, to talk.

RICHARD

You don't know me very well, my friend. I will take Jerusalem by force if I must. But I would prefer to make peace. Because my heart...is changed. That's right. All right, I'll admit, the fact is, both our armies are bloody well exhausted. We're all bleedin' to death here. The land itself is bleedin'. It's been stricken, devastated. Too much has been destroyed already, too many have been sacrificed.

KALIL

I wonder, is it the murder in cold blood of two thousand seven hundred innocent prisoners at Acre that has so changed your heart?

RICHARD

War is war.

KALIL

Murder is murder.

RICHARD

The time limit your sultan agreed to expired.

KALIL

Never agreed. Your time limit was never agreed.

RICHARD

It was agreed!

KALIL

How did you imagine we would collect such a sum in so short a time?

RICHARD

He's the bleedin' sultan of Cairo and Damascus, he could get ten times what I asked, if he'd a mind to.

KALIL

You promised to make slaves of them if payment was not made.

RICHARD

Bollocks I did. We don't hold slaves. That's your business. I warned your sultan not to play games with me. But that's exactly what he did. Delay, delay, delay. I will not be pissed at! This is me you're dealing with now--Richard Lionheart!

KALIL

Is Richard Lionheart not a man?

RICHARD

Piss off.

KALIL

What would your Lord and Savior say about such an act?

RICHARD

"A Christian glories in the death of a pagan, because thereby Christ himself is glorified."

KALIL

These are the words of your popes. What would Jesus of Nazareth say?

RICHARD

I won't presume to put words in the mouth of Jesus Christ, our Lord God in heaven. What would your god say about the monks of the Temple / what your brother had beheaded at Hattin?

KALIL

These monks as you call them worship nothing but the sword. / They murder our people indiscriminately.

RICHARD

The Templars are devoted only to the protection of our pilgrims in the Holy Land.

KALIL

Your pilgrims are men at arms intent upon the conquest of our lands and the destruction of our people.

RICHARD

All right, all right, all right! Bloody hell. The time has come to put a stop to this. We must make peace.

KALIL

"If your enemy incline toward peace," Allah tells us, "do thou also incline toward peace. For God loves not the aggressors." I am here to listen.

RICHARD

All right, then let me explain something to you, if I may. You see, Jerusalem, for us, is a thing...at the center of all we believe. It all goes back to Jerusalem for us. Everything we are. It's the place where our God was crucified and resurrected. And His tomb, the Holy Sepulcher, is the center of the center. To kneel and pray at the very spot where our Savior rose from the dead...this is the most precious thing in life for us. In this act we are washed clean of all sin. All sin. Do you see what I mean? Can you understand that?

KALIL

Yes, I understand.

RICHARD

Then why do you defile it?

KALIL

We do not.

RICHARD

You stable horses there!

KALIL

This is not true.

RICHARD

You people are shitting in the bloody Tomb of Christ!

KALIL

These are lies your churchmen have told to recruit for your crusade against us.

RICHARD

You tell me. I've seen your blokes stand atop these walls and piss on the crucifix.

KALIL

In the heat of a siege perhaps. When men will do anything. When hatred is like the air we breathe. Then only contempt has meaning, even to the last breath. Yes, there have been acts of desecration on both sides. When we took Jerusalem, I myself argued that we should tear down this sepulcher of yours, that the earth beneath it should be plowed under, and salted over. Then perhaps you Christians would abandon your desire for pilgrimage to the site and we will be rid of you forever!

RICHARD

Not bloody likely.

KALIL

But my brother, in his wisdom, would not allow this. My brother is a very devout man.

RICHARD

So I've heard.

KALIL

Allah would have us venerate the holy sites of all religions. Your Church of the Holy Sepulcher has been unharmed. But what did we find in our holy sites? Our Dome of the Rock you converted into a church, defiled with graven images of animals and women. Did the Christians not deface and mutilate the very Rock itself?

RICHARD

The what?

KALIL

Do you know nothing of us? Allow me to explain something to you now. Jerusalem is for us even more sacred than for you.

RICHARD

Is it now.

KALIL

The Dome houses a rock. From that Rock, from that very spot, our prophet ascended to heaven on the night of his journey, thereby gaining his knowledge of God. And it is there, also at that very spot, that our people will gather together on the Day of Judgement. Do not imagine we can surrender Jerusalem.

RICHARD

All right. Let's say we set aside Jerusalem for the moment, eh? Let's look at the larger piece of it. Let's look at the whole Christian kingdom in Palestine--an hereditary kingdom, I might add--

KALIL

Hereditary as far back as your incursion into our lands ninety years ago. Our lands. Your kingdom here is illegitimate.

RICHARD

Our God was born here. What right more do we need?

KALIL

Then reclaim your God, but leave our lands alone.

RICHARD

Your lands.

(beat)

All right, what about the Cross?

(no answer)

The Cross is just a piece of wood to you people. To us it's the most sacred relic of all. What value can it possibly hold for you?

KALIL

The value of what you will trade in exchange to have it back. Something of equal importance to Islam.

RICHARD

Like what?

KALIL

Do you really believe this is the very cross upon which your Lord was crucified?

RICHARD

Why shouldn't I?

KALIL

You believe it holds a miraculous power?

RICHARD

It's the bloody True Cross.

KALIL

Then how do you explain our capture of it?

RICHARD

All right, I'll tell you how I explain it. The Christians of these kingdoms out here--them what's been here for a while, "poolies" we call 'em--kids--they're a special breed, see? Over the years, living out here, they drifted away from the true path God has set for us. Living here corrupted the descendants of the great heroes what first took back these lands from you lot. But over the years, they got more and more like ya. On twenty-some-odd different occasions, our kings of Jerusalem carried that cross into battle against you blokes. And every time we prevailed. Till the Horns of Hattin. You see, God has punished us for our neglect of Him. But now we've come to correct that. Now, what ya want for the Cross?

KALIL

Allah will provide an answer to that question when the time comes.

RICHARD

You can stick Allah in your ear. Here's what I've got for you and your sultan. I've had enough of this.

(MORE)

RICHARD (cont'd)

You people are done. Here's my terms: one: you will surrender Jerusalem immediately. Two: you will abandon Palestine from the coast to the River Jordan. And three: you will return the True Cross. That's my terms. There. Accept 'em, and we'll have peace. Otherwise, every place I take, you can expect the same treatment I gave the garrison of Acre.

(beat)

KALIL

I see. Very well. I shall convey your terms to the sultan.

(KALIL starts to go.)

RICHARD

Hold on now.

(KALIL stops.)

RICHARD erupts in laughter.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

You should see your bloody mug. What's the matter, eh? Don't you people appreciate a good joke?

KALIL

A joke?

RICHARD

Yeah. There's always room for a good laugh. Between friends, eh?

KALIL

Friends.

RICHARD

Yeah. Friends.

(He pours a cup of wine.)

Wine. From Sicily. It's quite good.

(offers it to him)

KALIL

My faith forbids the drinking of wine.

RICHARD

Oh, piss on that. No wine? I'd sooner hang myself. This ain't no Spanish plonk, this is my special reserve. It's bloody excellent. You should try it. Go on, give it a taste. I won't tell.

(KALIL does not drink.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

Suit yourself. I tell you though, you don't know what you're missing.

(sips the wine)

Ahhhhh. Mmmmm. Splendid.

(sets the cup on the floor,
between them)

All right, look, I'll tell you what I really think, and then maybe you'll do the same for me, eh?

(beat)

You see, this crusade is very personal for me. I've dreamed of this pilgrimage, this whole campaign, for years. When my dad died, I came to him on his deathbed. There he was, all sickly. A broken man he was. He built an empire out of Aquitaine and England. Fought his whole bloody life. He did a lot of terrible things in his day. Locked up me mum nearly twenty years, for one thing. There was a matter with an archbishop weighed very heavily on him. And a great many other treacherous maneuvers he done. So I come to him at the end there, and he says to me, Rick--he always called me Rick-- This is the end, Rick. I die with me obligation unfulfilled. You see, he promised to make his own crusade here, but... well, he just never got around to it. That was a black stain on my dad's life. An open wound between him and God Almighty. And he put his feeble old hand on my shoulder, and he said, Rick, promise me you'll go in my place. Promise me you'll wipe away the stain, that God will forgive me my failings. That's when I promised me dear old dad that one day I'd kneel and pray for his soul in the Tomb of the Holy Sepulcher. Funny, eh? Funny how big things can have such small beginnings. From that brief little moment there, when that feeble old hand came down on my shoulder, and I looked into old dad's dying milky-white eyes, all this came about. A great lumbering storm upon the world.

(beat)

I had a vision two days ago.

KALIL

A vision?

RICHARD

Mm-hm.

KALIL

Does Richard of England fancy himself a prophet here in Palestine?

RICHARD

You be the judge. I was riding on patrol just south of Beit Jabar. We came upon a squadron of your blokes, fine looking gents. And on we come. Decent swordsmen. My man Geoffery took a blow to his head sent him into the dirt.

(MORE)

RICHARD (cont'd)

I took off the forearm of one of these devils, and then caught him in the throat, but me horse reared and threw me, so the others got away after. William d'Avern and the count of Champagne each did as well as I. All together we did in three of 'em, against Jeffery's bloody fine headache. Not bad for a day's work, eh? We decided to water at the well of St. George, and let Jeff rest his head a bit. There's a grove of orange trees there, and I went off on me own and lay meself down among 'em. I don't know how long I lay there, breathing in the perfume of them orangey trees, but sometime later, I sat straight up, all of a sudden like, and everything was quiet. Not just quiet--silent. Except for a faint ringing in my ears. Bells. Quiet, stillness, in the heat of the noonday sun. That's when I sawr Him, coming at me, through the trees. It was Him. I could tell. The Crucified One. Coming through the trees, toward me. I got to my knees, and I began to weep. Tears streamin' down me cheeks. Have you come to chastise me? I said. No, he shook his head, and he smiled. And then he spoke to me.

KALIL

What were His words?

RICHARD

"Blessed are them what maketh peace," he said, "for they shall inherit the earth." And then he walked on through the orchard. Till finally, in a flash of light, he transformed into a dove, and off he went, through the canyon, up into the sky. Now I know. Why I'm here. What I'm to do. We must make peace here in Palestine. God wills it.

KALIL

I am still listening.

RICHARD

I am told that you are the sultan's right hand. His most trusted general, his most able emissary. They call you the "Sword of Saladin," do they not?

KALIL

What is in your mind, Malik Ric?

RICHARD

Union. Sacred union. One of yours. And one of ours. That together both might enjoy the fruits of this garden beyond the sea.

KALIL

Speak plainly.

RICHARD

You will persuade your brother to grant all of Saracen Palestine to you. I will grant all the coastal cities we now hold to my sister, Joanna.

(MORE)

RICHARD (cont'd)

And then you and she shall be joined in marriage. From this union will be born a whole new kingdom, a kingdom jointly ruled in the interests of both our peoples. Together, as king and queen, you will reside in Jerusalem, where all Christians and all Moslems shall live side by side. And where all shall be free to worship in their holy places. You will return the True Cross. Prisoners on both our sides shall be released. And we shall have peace in the Holy Land. From now till doomsday.

KALIL

Is this another one of your jokes?

RICHARD

I've had some food and entertainment prepared. Some of your musicians. This music of yours fascinates me. Perhaps we could discuss this a bit further. Are you willing to at least consider it?

(KALIL picks up the cup, and tastes the wine.)

KALIL

Yes, very good. For a Sicilian red. I am all ears.

RICHARD

(opening the door)

After you, my friend.

(KALIL exits to the refectory, and RICHARD follows him out.)

Blackout.)

6 "I WILL NOT BE MARRIED TO A TURK"

6

(Middle eastern music plays in the refectory. Lights up, later that night. JOANNA enters angrily from elsewhere in the church. She crosses to the door leading to the refectory, but stops. Decides not to go in. Listens at the door.)

RACHEL enters from the garden, startling JOANNA.)

RACHEL

Forgive me.

JOANNA

What are you doing there?

RACHEL

My apologies. I was hoping to speak with the king.

JOANNA

Well, he's busy.

RACHEL

Is he dining?

JOANNA

That's right.

RACHEL

With the Turk?

JOANNA

So I'm told.

RACHEL

Have you seen him--what does he look like?

JOANNA

What you ask so many questions for?

RACHEL

I'm sorry. It's just that...

JOANNA

Just what?

RACHEL

I need to see the king.

JOANNA

Why?

RACHEL

Because he's set me a task that I cannot complete.

JOANNA

What task?

RACHEL

He's commissioned me to write a chronicle of the crusade, but I haven't been able to speak to him for weeks.

JOANNA

But what do you need to speak to him about?

RACHEL

I have hundreds of factual details to verify; I need to know what he was thinking at various points along the way.

JOANNA

What he was thinking?

RACHEL

I need to speak to the king. I need a better understanding of who exactly he is. That's the manner of chronicle I'm trying to record.

JOANNA

Hm.

RACHEL

Are they in good spirits?

JOANNA

How would I know? I'm out here with you, ain' I? They been in there for hours. With that bloody music. He loves that bloody music.

RACHEL

Is it true the king means to make peace with the sultan?

JOANNA

Who are you, anyway?

RACHEL

You mean my name?

JOANNA

What exactly goes on between you and him?

RACHEL

Hm?

JOANNA

You're a very strange little fellow, aren't you?

RACHEL

Strange, your Highness?

JOANNA

Nothing funny going on, I hope.

RACHEL

Funny?

JOANNA

Between you and him.

RACHEL

No. Nothing funny.

JOANNA

You sure about that?

RACHEL

Quite sure.

JOANNA

He took a vow, you know. Before God. In Messina, it was. Laid out naked on the floor of the church, in front of all the priests. They whipped the hell out of him. And he swore, on the crucifix, to refrain from any fornicating, with them of his own sex, while on crusade. Now, you wouldn't want to jeopardize the king's eternal soul, would you? Think of the crusade. Muck with that, and you'll have to answer to me. Am I being understood?

(RICHARD enters from the refectory.)

RICHARD

(seeing Joan)

There you are.

(seeing Rachel)

Oh. Hello.

RACHEL

Sire.

JOANNA

(to Richard)

I'd like a word with you.

RICHARD

(to Joanna)

You're angry.

RACHEL

Sire, forgive me for intruding, but I implore you--

RICHARD

The chronicle. Yes, I've been meaning to set aside some time for you, but--

JOANNA

Richard--now!

RICHARD

I'm afraid history will have to wait. But soon, Balian. Soon, I promise. Have I got a chronicle for you.

JOANNA

Richard!

RICHARD

(to Rachel)

Go on now, leave us.

RACHEL

As you wish, sire.

(RACHEL exits.)

RICHARD

(turning to Joanna)

I was just looking for you.

JOANNA

Tell me it's not true.

RICHARD

What have you heard?

JOANNA

The most ridiculous rumor ever concocted.

RICHARD

Can I explain?

JOANNA

Oh, God, it's true.

RICHARD

It's not what you think.

JOANNA

I will not be married to a Turk!

RICHARD

You'll marry whoever I say you'll marry.

JOANNA

You can't do this to me.

RICHARD

What are you pissing about?--you wanted to be the bloody queen of Jerusalem.

(He laughs.)

JOANNA

You think this is funny?

RICHARD

Mollify yourself, girl. I just want you to meet him and be pleasant. That's all.

JOANNA

You're out of your bleeding mind. What about Guy?

RICHARD

Oh. Right. I wouldn't worry about Guy, if I was you.

JOANNA

Why not? He'll bloody shit!

RICHARD

I don't think so.

JOANNA

What are you up to?

RICHARD

Didn't he say goodbye?

JOANNA

Goodbye? What have you done?

RICHARD

He's decided to step down, he has. He's given up Jerusalem.

JOANNA

No.

RICHARD

I've given him Cyprus instead.

JOANNA

Cyprus? That's impossible.

RICHARD

It's done.

JOANNA

But he... He...

RICHARD
He what?

JOANNA
How could you do this to me?

RICHARD
He wasn't suitable.

JOANNA
But...
(she turns away)

RICHARD
But what? You loved him? Don't make me vomit. If it's lovey-dove romance you're after, I suggest you catch the next boat back home. If you're after a prize the likes of this one, you'll need a bit more determination. Fortitude, Joan. Cunning. You're behaving like a silly git, old girl. What would Mum say?

JOANNA
What about Conrad?

RICHARD
What about him?

JOANNA
Half the bloody world is behind him. With Guy out of the way, road's open to Conrad. How ya gonna stop him?

RICHARD
I've got a plan in motion there. In the meantime, what I need you to do is meet the sultan's brother. Smile. Be pleasant. Flirt with him, if you like. That's all.

JOANNA
Why?

RICHARD
Just do it.

JOANNA
I hate you.

RICHARD
That's my girl.

(RICHARD exits, back into the refectory.)

JOANNA rages, then begins to cry.

RICHARD re-enters. KALIL follows him in.

JOANNA wipes her eyes.)

RICHARD (cont'd)
It's a great fine honor to introduce my sister, Joanna, to you, my friend, General Kalil.

KALIL
The honor is mine.

(JOANNA says nothing.)

RICHARD
I trust the food was to your liking, General?

KALIL
Yes, wonderful. I have not dined so well since I was in Damascus.

RICHARD
And the musicians?

KALIL
Excellent. Your appreciation for our music is a pleasant surprise to me.
(to Joanna)
Do you share your brother's interest in music?

JOANNA
No.

KALIL
Hm.

RICHARD
Of course, she does. She sings beautifully. Perhaps you'll give us a song--eh, Joan?

(JOANNA shoots RICHARD a look of contempt.)

RICHARD (cont'd)
Well, maybe later. Once she gets to know you a little bit.

KALIL
I shall have that to look forward to.

(awkward silence)

RICHARD
Well, I'll leave you two alone, how's that? Get to know one another a bit, eh? But no snogging!

(RICHARD laughs and exits, back into the refectory.)

7 "THE POETRY OF LOVE"

7

(Another awkward silence.)

KALIL

You are very beautiful.

(JOANNA glares at him, contemptuously.)

KALIL (cont'd)

Your husband was the king of Sicily.

(no response)

A most interesting land, Sicily. Norman, Greek, and Moslem all live side by side there. Each with their own language, their own religion.

JOANNA

Norman French is the language of the court in Messina.

KALIL

Yes, for the moment.

(a smile)

My uncle visited Sicily just a year ago. He says the Christian women in Palermo wear veils out of doors, in the Arab fashion. And they never stop talking.

(he laughs, silence)

But what does he know.

(beat)

My condolences on the death of your husband.

(no reply)

There was some dispute about the succession?

JOANNA

His bastard son stole the throne.

KALIL

Ah, it is ever thus with bastard sons, is it not?

(another chuckle)

You had no children of your own--no son?

(no answer)

No children?

JOANNA

William was very old.

KALIL

Ah.

JOANNA

Ain't you married?

(KALIL shakes his head, no.)

JOANNA (cont'd)

Why not?

KALIL

God has deemed it so.

JOANNA

I don't know what you and my brother got in your heads, but I can tell you one thing right now, I would never renounce my faith.

KALIL

The Koran forbids marriage to an unbeliever. We believe there must be spiritual harmony between husband and wife.

JOANNA

Well, there you have it.

KALIL

Your brother has been very gracious. We have been eating for hours. Forgive me, my head is... The music and dancing... These women, these dancers...

JOANNA

They're from Acre.

KALIL

Ah, I might have guessed that.

JOANNA

Very popular with the officers.

KALIL

No doubt.

JOANNA

Nothing but a troop of traveling whores with bells and jingles dangling all about, if you ask me.

KALIL

You Christians are a curious people.

JOANNA

Is that right?

KALIL

You speak of godliness and devotion, yet everywhere you settle you bring wickedness and immorality.

JOANNA

I don't see you running from the banquet hall tearing your hair out.

KALIL

True. True. Yes, we hate this about you for we despise temptation.

JOANNA

"Deliver us from evil, and lead us not into temptation."

KALIL

I wonder, just for the sake of curiosity, how does one convert to your religion, if one wishes to?

JOANNA

Well, you have to be baptized.

KALIL

Baptized. And what is that?

JOANNA

It's what a priest does. You stand in the water--Christ done it in the River Jordan--you confess your faith in Jesus Christ our Lord in Heaven, and then they dip you in. You're a pagan when you go under, and when you come up, there you are--converted.

KALIL

Is this all?

JOANNA

More or less.

KALIL

Hm. A curious custom... Your mother is Eleanor of the Acquitaine.

JOANNA

That's right.

KALIL

The great patroness of love poets.

JOANNA

That was quite some time ago.

KALIL

We, too, hold a special place in our hearts for the poetry of love.

JOANNA

Love. What is love, eh?

KALIL

Love is inborn suffering.

JOANNA

I suppose it is. Funny word "love." I wonder where it comes from?

KALIL

From the Greek word for "hook."

JOANNA

That makes sense. Tell me this, what makes a man worthy of love, in your opinion?

KALIL

Character.

JOANNA

Hm. And what about jealousy?

KALIL

Jealousy is the stern nursemaid of love. He who is not jealous cannot love. Jealousy emboldens love.

JOANNA

What about lust?

KALIL

The wise man will not fall into the toils of a lustful woman.

JOANNA

Why's that?

KALIL

Because you cannot win the heart of a lustful woman, no matter how you try--unless one is so skilled in the art of love that you may satisfy her. But it is easier, so says the wise man, to dry up all the oceans of the world.

JOANNA

I think your wise man is a bit unsure of hisself in between the sheets.

KALIL

You don't know him very well.

JOANNA

I'm leaving.

KALIL

So soon?

JOANNA

I've business with the queen, I'm afraid.

KALIL

In that case, let me say it was a great pleasure to meet you.
I look forward to our meeting again.

(beat)

Among my people, it is customary to lightly kiss both cheeks
upon departing. May I show you how?

(He approaches her, lightly kisses her
on each cheek, and then lingers a
moment near her lips.)

RACHEL enters, and discovers the two
almost kissing.

Beat.)

JOANNA

(to Rachel)

What are you bloody looking at?

(JOANNA exits.)

RACHEL

(to Kalil)

I'm...sorry.

(KALIL starts out.)

RACHEL (cont'd)

General.

(KALIL stops and turns back.)

RACHEL (cont'd)

May we talk?

KALIL

Talk? Who are you?

RACHEL

I'm...the king's chronicler. Is it true? This marriage.
Would the sultan permit such a thing?

KALIL

Good evening.

(starts to go again)

RACHEL

General.

KALIL

(stopping again)

Yes?

(beat)

RACHEL

Blessings on you. And blessings on the sultan.

(KALIL exits.)

8 MORTAR AND PESTLE

8

(Lights change. RACHEL addresses the audience, as a royal chronicler.)

RACHEL

And, lo, all the world did stand in amazement at the boldness of King Richard's unprecedented peace proposal. Could such a union ever succeed? Would the royals and religious of the states back home ever accept such a peace? Would the barons of the Crusader states accept it? It seemed an unthinkable proposition to most. Many suspected it was merely a joke on the part of the king, or a tactic of some other sort. Few believed it could ever come to pass. For Christian and Moslem are opposed as God and the Devil. Still, General Kalil dutifully returned to convey this audacious proposal to his brother, the sultan, and meanwhile all Palestine, nay, all the world waited...for newfound peace...or continuing war in the Holy Land.

(Lights change again.)

RACHEL kneels and huddles in the shadows, with a mortar and pestle, grinding a white powdery substance in the bowl.

Secretively, she looks over her shoulder as she grinds away at the powder.)

Blackout.)

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

9 "WHAT ABOUT THE JEWS?"

9

(Late at night, RICHARD sits alone with his wine. Drunkenly, he sings.)

RICHARD

*No woman can make herself the mistress of my spirit
If I choose to bestow my favor on others.
I should rather live all alone, hated and shunned,
Than to divide my life's virtue and affection...*

(RACHEL enters, eagerly, dishevelled.)

RACHEL

You sent for me, sire?

RICHARD

Good evening, Balian. My esteemed chronicler. Or should I say good morning? Come in. Come in. Were you sleeping?

RACHEL

What time is it?

RICHARD

The second hour rang a bit ago. I love this time of the night. It's the stillness. The quiet. And the dark. Can you hear the sea?

RACHEL

Yes, I can.

RICHARD

Makes me think of home. And happier times. And love. Seen my trouble and strife about?

RACHEL

Sire?

RICHARD

My wife--the queen. She walks about this time of night on occasion. Like a bloody ghost, she is.

RACHEL

No, I haven't seen her.

RICHARD

Well, if you do, don't tell her where I am. I don't want to see her bloody mug.

RACHEL

Very well.

RICHARD

You're looking...young tonight.

RACHEL

Thank you, Sire. About your chronicle--

RICHARD

Oh, I don't want to talk about that now.

RACHEL

Oh. I just assumed--

RICHARD

I want to talk about other things. You interest me.

RACHEL

Me?

RICHARD

You're a bit of a mystery, you are.

RACHEL

Am I?

RICHARD

What you're thinking. I can never quite tell.

RACHEL

I see General Kalil arrived today.

RICHARD

There, see? I don't know what you're thinking.

RACHEL

What does the sultan think of your proposal?

RICHARD

He wants to know more.

(beat)

Surprised?

RACHEL

A bit. Yes.

RICHARD

Why--what do you think of it?

RACHEL

I think no one believes such a marriage will ever really take place.

Why not? RICHARD

Many reasons. RACHEL

Such as what? RICHARD

Well, Conrad for one. RACHEL

What about him? RICHARD

The marquis will never consent to a peace agreement that denies him the throne of Jerusalem. RACHEL

Conrad's dead. RICHARD

What? RACHEL

I just heard--not two hours ago. RICHARD

Dead--how? RACHEL

He was murdered. RICHARD

Murdered by whom? RACHEL

It seems the Old Man of the Mountain was the author of the crime. Two of his assassins waited for the marquis as he rode through an alleyway near the marketplace of Tyre. Very unfortunate. RICHARD

When did this happen? RACHEL

Just today, it was. RICHARD

How did you hear? RACHEL

Count Henry brought the news. Very unfortunate. RICHARD

RACHEL

How do you know it was the Old Man of the Mountain?

RICHARD

They caught the two buggers. And they confessed. Before they lopped 'em off. Don't surprise me one bit. They say he's got magical powers over his faithful, the Old Man does. They do anything he tells 'em to. Henry once told me he sawr one of 'em leap to his death off the castle walls of Masyef just because the Old Man told him to. Blind obedience, it is. They worship him like a god.

RACHEL

Yes, very unfortunate.

RICHARD

These bloody Hottentots. What devils they are, eh?

RACHEL

And yet you would marry your sister to one of them?

RICHARD

Yeah, well, that's different, in'it? But enough of that. Give us a rub, eh? My neck is bloody well crippled. Go on. Don't be fearful. I won't bite.

(RACHEL cautiously approaches Richard, and massages his neck and shoulders.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

Oh, that's nice. Yeah, that's the spot. Right there. Harder.

RACHEL

What about Deuteronomy?

RICHARD

What about what?

RACHEL

The Book of Deuteronomy: "Thou shalt not make marriages with them. For the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you."

RICHARD

You sound like all the rest of these creamers. Don't nobody round here appreciate the benefits what peace could bring to this bloody place? Cor blimey! Nothing but small minds about me. Deuteronomy? Bloody hell, it's done all the time here. Plenty of these infidels have converted. Besides, he's not such a bad bloke. Rather refined in certain ways. He might be just the thing for old Joan.

RACHEL

Do you really imagine the brother of Islam's supreme leader would renounce their god?

RICHARD

Why not? It's a few words. Once the marriage is sanctified let him believe what he will. Who's to say? Who's to know? Would you not be willing to say a few simple words if it would gain you the kingdom of Jerusalem?

(beat)

I like the way you look. Come here.

RACHEL

What about the Jews?

RICHARD

What?

RACHEL

If Jerusalem is ruled jointly by a Moslem king and a Christian queen, what will be the policy toward Jews?

RICHARD

Don't you ever stop?

RACHEL

I'm curious.

RICHARD

Why?

RACHEL

Just my nature, I guess.

RICHARD

Your nature, eh?

RACHEL

I like to talk.

(she looks him in the eye)

More wine, Sire?

(she fills his cup)

So what about the Jews?

RICHARD

The Jews have to go.

RACHEL

Go?

RICHARD

None of 'em in Jerusalem. That's the way it's been ever since we first took the place. That's the law.

RACHEL

It's not the law in Jerusalem now.

RICHARD

The Jews go.

RACHEL

Saladin will never agree to that.

RICHARD

Oh, no--why not?

RACHEL

Because he is devoted to the Jews.

RICHARD

Devoted? You mean he tolerates 'em.

RACHEL

Saladin upholds the principle of Jewish sovereignty over the Holy City.

RICHARD

What?

RACHEL

He means to see Jerusalem returned to the Jews.

RICHARD

You're daft. Where'd you hear that?

RACHEL

The Jews believe it.

RICHARD

Well, that don't make it so. They killed our God. They don't belong in the Holy City. On that I will not bend.

(beat)

RACHEL

I see.

RICHARD

Enough talk. Come here. I been thinking a lot about you. Closer... Closer... Do as I say. I'm your king.

(He touches her face.)

RACHEL

Did you not take a vow, sire?

RICHARD

Who told you that? Did my sister tell you that? The bloody cow! That's the thanks I get. She's just like me mum. Two bloody cows. And you. Have you been toying with me? Get out of my sight. I've a good mind to knock you about. Or worse. What's the bloody use. I don't like this! I'd like to tear down this bloody church stone by stone! I hate him. I hate him. And he hates me. I know he does. No matter what I do. He'll always hate me. I could turn the whole bleedin' world upside down, and he'd still hate me. Where's the end, eh? Where's the end? Where's the end?! I have to be alone.

(RICHARD staggers out, leaving his wine cask behind.

Alone, RACHEL eyes the wine cask for a moment.

She snatches up the cup and wine cask, and leaves another way.

Blackout.)

(JOANNA enters a spotlight. She opens a letter and reads it.

KALIL enters another spotlight, and speaks the words he has written to Joanna.)

KALIL

Dear lady, I hope you will accept this letter as a token of my good faith and honor toward you. I must confess, ever since the evening we first met and talked of love's unfathomable mysteries, my head has been filled with thoughts of you. Last night I had a dream, the source of which is surely divine. I am walking through a heavenly garden on a warm summer night. The sweet intoxicating perfume of myrrh hangs in the air. The moon's silvery eye reflects in a still pool of cool water, smooth as a polished mirror. Further on stands a glorious Lotus tree, its ivory white flowers cast silver blue in the light of the watchful moon above. And beneath these resplendent, flower-laden boughs, I discover...you...in sweet repose, draped in a gossamer gown woven through with delicate strands of glistening silver thread. Your eyes fixed on mine, looking deep into my soul. As I draw near, you smile, ever so slightly, and extend your hand to me. We walk together through the garden, luxuriating in all the delicious fragrances of the night. And then I realize my feet no longer touch the ground. I am flying. The garden canopy descends into the distance below. Together, hand in hand, we soar into the heavens, through the spheres of all the stars, on through the night, till at last, we approach the earth far below, and in the distance, the Holy City appears, glowing like the moon itself in the dark of night. And together, hand in hand, we descend into the burning light of Jerusalem. I long to see you again. And I have wondrous news to share. If you will meet me, join me in the nave of the church when the morning bell strikes three.

(A church bell tolls three. JOANNA tucks the letter away.)

KALIL (cont'd)

Until then, may God bestow innumerable blessings upon you.
Your devoted servant...

JOANNA

Kalil.

(Lights change and the two regard one another across the nave of the church.)

KALIL

Is it possible you have grown more beautiful since I saw you last?

JOANNA

We can't afford to be seen together here.

KALIL

Is there somewhere else we can go?

JOANNA

I've got to get back. Before I'm missed.

KALIL

My brother has accepted Richard's offer. I'm here in Yafa to discuss the details of how such an agreement might be made.

JOANNA

He's willing?

KALIL

There are many things still to be settled, but yes, he is willing.

JOANNA

And you? You are willing?

KALIL

I am. But we cannot afford to wait. There are many on both sides who will oppose this union. Peace between our peoples is an outcome to be feared by some. For it will mean sacrifice from all. Some will lose their lands, others their right to avenge past grievances. To the son who has lost a father, or the mother who has lost a son, this is a high price indeed to pay for peace. And then there are those who will lose power. They are the most dangerous.

JOANNA

I told you before, I will not renounce my faith.

KALIL

I am willing to be baptized.

JOANNA

You'd do that?

KALIL

If we can be married tonight.

JOANNA

Tonight? That's impossible.

KALIL

Why?

JOANNA

Why so soon?

KALIL

If we wait, they will undo us. There are too many opposed. But if your brother puts the full force of his crown behind us, and your archbishop sanctifies the union, we have a chance. Peace in hand is a most appetizing dish. Once your brother and mine sit at the table together and partake of this dish, others will find it hard to resist.

JOANNA

And you will be baptized?

KALIL

I am sure Allah the Compassionate will understand that peace in the Holy Land...is well worth a dip in the sea.

(They kiss.)

JOANNA

Wait here.

(JOANNA exits.)

KALIL waits.

He thinks.

He looks out the window.

He exits, following after Joanna.

Blackout.)

11 THE CRYPT

11

(Lights up in a crypt beneath the church.)

RICHARD enters, collapses on the floor, and sobs.

RACHEL enters with Richard's wine and cup, and stands at a distance.)

RICHARD
What the bloody hell do you want?

RACHEL
This is the crypt, sire.

RICHARD
I can see that. Leave me alone.
(she stays)
What are you waiting for? Get out!
(still she stays)
Is that my wine?

RACHEL
I thought you might like a cup.

RICHARD
I rather like it down here. It's quiet. You can just imagine all the others about, packed away behind them walls. Fathers of the church. Perhaps a saint or two. Fine ladies and noble lords. All dead. Dusty bones.

(RACHEL sits with RICHARD on the floor.)

RICHARD (cont'd)
What are you doing here?

RACHEL
I still have a chronicle to write.

(RICHARD laughs.)

RICHARD
And what a chronicle it will be, eh?

(RACHEL pours RICHARD a cup of wine.)

RACHEL
Tell me what happened on Cyprus.

RICHARD

Cyprus? Oh, Cyprus was a stroke of genius on my part.

(RICHARD takes a drink of the wine. As the scene continues he drinks deep and freely; RACHEL refills his cup several times.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

The fleet assembled in Sicily. Over two hundred vessels in all--the finest warships in the world. Like a great flight of birds, they was. We set out for the Holy Land by way of the Greek Isles. But just two days out, a devil of a wind blew up, and soon a fierce storm swept over us. All hung on for dear life as we were thrown about this way and that. I've never seen the likes of such a storm. It seemed God was set against us, till the wind finally died, and the skies cleared. But by then the whole fleet was scattered all about the Aegean. I'd sent my sister and my bride to be on ahead. But their frigate was nowhere in sight. It took weeks to reassemble the fleet, first at Crete, then at Rhodes, and all the while, no sign of Joan and the princess Berengaria. Till finally word arrived that the storm had driven them all the way to the island of Cyprus, and there, Isaac the Angel, the bloody Greek, had taken 'em both hostage. Now, mind you, this was the same Isaac what was all friendly like with Saladin himself, and had even partaken of a demonic ritual with the sultan wherein they each drank of the other's blood. I decided we would pay a call on this Angel, and I gave orders to direct all sails to Cyprus. Into his harbor we swept, and I boldly demanded Isaac give back what he was unlawfully holding, but he just scoffed at me. So I strapped on me armor and gave the sign for all in my charge to do likewise. "Follow me," I says, "follow me that we may avenge the injuries what this perfidious tyrant has done to God and all of us!" Over the side we went, into the salty wet. Me archers let loose a rain of arrows on the beach, and on we stormed. We chased 'em up the beach, we chased 'em into the city, we chased 'em onto the plain beyond. Till finally we cornered 'em in the castle of Kolossi. A multitude he had with him in there, but on we came, and scaled the walls, putting all his minions to flight once more. And naked Isaac himself ran desperate from the citadel, upon his fine Arabian yellow he lept and off he fled into the Troodos Mountains--I decided I would have that yellow. The Cypriots detested Isaac. They welcomed me like a God sent for their salvation. Finally, I chased this fallen angel to the heights of Dieudamour, the Fortress of a Hundred and One Chambers. Just him and me it was then. High upon the cliffs, wrapped in clouds and whipped by the wind, there did I finally catch up with the villain. And with this hand I struck him a blow across the face, directly unhorsing him. The yellow was mine, and is to this day, my horse, Fauvel. And there in the dirt, he began to beg. "

(MORE)

RICHARD (cont'd)

Please," said the tyrant, "do not place me in irons. I cannot abide irons!" As a youth, he had been captured in a war with Armenia and imprisoned in chains for many years. As a consequence, he had a maniacal fear of irons. So I had him clapped in chains of pure silver!

(laughs)

And I packed him off to the dungeons of Margat on the coast of Syria. And with that I made Cyprus our final staging site for the assault on Palestine. That was the key to our victory at Acre--Cyprus. Where I married my new bride, the lovely Berengaria.

There on Aphrodite's isle was crowned
The fairest bride that could be found
At any time and any place,
A virtuous queen with lovely face.
Now was the king most glorious
Because he was victorious
And because he had wed the wife
To whom he pledged his word and life.

I don't feel well.

RACHEL

What's wrong?

RICHARD

A bit of the fever. It'll pass. I come down with a tertian fever when we first landed here. It plagues me from time to time. I'm thirsty.

(RACHEL refills his cup. He gulps it down.)

JOANNA enters.

RACHEL jumps up apprehensively.

All stop.)

JOANNA

What the bloody hell are you doing down here?

(to Rachel)

And you?

RICHARD

My dear sister.

JOANNA

I've an urgent matter to discuss with you, my brother.

RICHARD

Shove it!

JOANNA

It requires your immediate attention.

RICHARD

Piss off!

JOANNA

What's wrong with you? You don't look well.

RACHEL

He's fine.

JOANNA

Who asked you?

RACHEL

Leave us.

JOANNA

You think you can speak to me like that?

RICHARD

Shut up, Joan!

JOANNA

I have to talk to you. Now!

(to Rachel)

You. Get out.

RICHARD

He stays.

JOANNA

It's a matter of state!

RICHARD

You want to talk to me, you go right ahead, but he stays.

JOANNA

Why?

RICHARD

Cause he's my friend.

RACHEL

Would it not be best to wait until morning?

JOANNA

No, it would not be best.

(to Richard)

I want you to marry me to the sultan's brother.

RICHARD

Don't tell me you're in love again.

JOANNA

Tonight.

RICHARD

What?

JOANNA

Do it. Send for the bleedin' archbishop.

RICHARD

Hurrying things a bit, aren't you, Joan?

JOANNA

The sultan's willing. Why wait?

RICHARD

We're still negotiating. There's a world of details to be worked out yet.

JOANNA

Marry us now. The details will follow.

(KALIL enters.)

RICHARD

Well, General Kalil. What a pleasant surprise.

JOANNA

I told you to wait.

RICHARD

Do come in. Do come in. I'm holding court in the crypt this evening. My sister tells me you two would like to hurry things along a bit. I do hope it's not because she's expecting a new addition to our cozy little royal family. Not that, I trust.

KALIL

No, Malik Ric. Not that.

RICHARD

Well, what's all the hurry about then?

RACHEL

Sire, I implore you, postpone this discussion till the morning, when your head is clear. We have other matters to attend to.

KALIL

This cannot wait. I believe our only hope is to move swiftly and decisively. Give me your sister's hand, tonight, and I will deliver my brother's commitment to make peace with you. You will retain all the cities you now possess along the coast; we will keep those we now possess inland.

(MORE)

KALIL (cont'd)

Your sister and I will rule Jerusalem as king and queen, and both our peoples shall be welcome in the city. Peace, Malik Ric, just say the word.

JOANNA

He's willing to convert, Rick.

RICHARD

Is that true?

KALIL

It is.

(RICHARD nearly faints.)

JOANNA

What's wrong with you?

RICHARD

I'm fine. I'm fine. A bit feverish, that's all.
(takes a drink of wine)

JOANNA

This is our chance, Rick. Tell him we'll do it. Go on. He's willing to convert!

(beat)

RICHARD

I need the pope's blessing.

JOANNA

What!

KALIL

The pope?

RICHARD

I cannot condone a union of this nature without the pope's consent. My gents 'll never accept it otherwise.

JOANNA

You never said anything about the pope's consent!

RICHARD

I know. I was over-hasty in that.
(to Kalil)
I hope you'll understand.

JOANNA

And how long will that bloody take?

RICHARD

I should think...at least...three months.

JOANNA

Three months!

KALIL

So this is how you repay my good faith. The gifts we exchanged. The promises of friendship. All lies. You have no intention of making peace with us.

RICHARD

No...I do.

(RICHARD collapses and wretches horribly.)

RACHEL

You're ill. Let me help you. This way, to bed.

JOANNA

Get away from him, you!

RICHARD

I am poisoned.

JOANNA

Poisoned?

RICHARD

The wine.

(to Rachel)

You.

JOANNA

You?

(RACHEL lunges at Richard's dagger, draws it, and tries to stab him, but KALIL stops her, and wrenches the blade away from her.)

RICHARD

What have you done to me?

(RACHEL runs off.

RICHARD cries out in agony as the poison burns into his guts. He staggers out of the room.

JOANNA takes a last look at KALIL, and follows after Richard.

Alone, KALIL thinks for a moment, and then exits another way.

Blackout.)

12 RACHEL'S CELL

12

(Lights up on RACHEL in a dungeon cell.
As she chants a prayer in Hebrew,
JOANNA enters and watches her.)

RACHEL

*Baruch atah adonai, elohaynu melech ha-olam, shehechyanu
v'higiyanu v'kiyamanu lazman hazeh...*

JOANNA

You're a Jew. And a girl. Who are you?

(no answer)

You know what they'll do to you?

(no reply)

Why? Why'd you do it?

(still no answer)

You Jews. Nothing to say?

RACHEL

Is he dead?

JOANNA

No, he's not. I expect he'll fully recover. No one thought
he'd make it. But Rick, he's not so easily killed as most
men. He'll be fit as new in no time. Fit as new... Who sent
you?

(no answer)

Tell me who sent you, and I'll ask them to go easier on you.

RACHEL

Do what you will.

JOANNA

You will die in obscurity. No one will ever know about this.
I can't believe it myself. You're to disappear. Who sent
you?

(no answer)

They will torture it out of you eventually. Is that what you
prefer?

RACHEL

No one sent me.

JOANNA

No one? How's that possible? You just got it in your head
to work your way into the midst of the king of England so's
you could poison him? What the bloody hell did you hope to
accomplish?

RACHEL

Jerusalem belongs to the Jews.

JOANNA

What?

RACHEL

In Jerusalem is the hill where our Temple of the Holy of Holies once stood. The Temple Mount. Zion. Where we die, and are restored. You Crusaders are as ravens of the apocalypse to us. You slaughter us. In the Rhineland, and the Danube Valley, tens of thousands of us you massacred. In the Holy City itself. And the Tower of York.

JOANNA

The Tower of York?

RACHEL

In the heart of London. You laughed and danced and sang mocking hymns as I huddled together with my family. In the fire. My father. Mother. Brother. All ashes now. But Jerusalem will be ours once again. Saladin has proclaimed it.

JOANNA

What?

RACHEL

"Whosoever is of the seed of Abraham, whether in Assyria or in Egypt, or at all the ends of the earth, those who are willing shall gather and dwell in the boundaries of Jerusalem."

JOANNA

The sultan said that?

(she nods)

I don't believe it.

RACHEL

These acts foretell the return.

JOANNA

Do they now. So you thought you'd just poison the king of England.

RACHEL

I will stop him yet.

JOANNA

Will you. How? You some sort of witch, are you?

(KALIL appears, and looks at JOANNA.)

RACHEL

Tell me, what's become of the marriage between you and the sultan's brother?

(JOANNA sees KALIL.)

JOANNA

General Kalil...was beheaded. By order of his own brother. Seems the sultan never intended to go through with the marriage. The general's orders were to engage in negotiations only in order to delay us.

RACHEL

He was ambitious.

(KALIL crosses to JOANNA.)

JOANNA

He was...

(KALIL kisses her on both cheeks, and exits into the garden.)

JOANNA (cont'd)

It was all...just a dream. They killed him. That's your sultan. Your Saladin.

(JOANNA exits.)

RACHEL

So God stirred the spirit of the sultan of Islam in the year four thousand nine hundred and fifty of Creation, and blessed him with the spirit of wisdom and bravery. And he and all the hosts of Egypt went up and put siege to Jerusalem and God delivered her into his hands." Behold the Day of Salvation is at hand!

(RACHEL look up into the light.)

13 "WHERE'S MY SWORD?"

13

(Elsewhere in the palace, RICHARD enters, weak and delirious, completely unkempt.)

RICHARD

Where's my sword? Who took my sword?

(JOANNA enters.)

JOANNA

What are you doing up? Back to bed, Rick. Rest. Got to get your strength back, eh?

RICHARD

My strength. I have my strength. It's Excaliber I'm in need of. Now where is it? Did you give it away?

JOANNA

No. Come on, Rick.

RICHARD

Get your bloody hands off me, you cow. Where am I? What was I doing? I was looking for something.

JOANNA

You were looking for your sword.

RICHARD

That's it.

JOANNA

But it's not in here, Rick. You've got to go back to bed.

RICHARD

No time for that.

JOANNA

We'll find your bleedin' sword later.

RICHARD

No. I've given the order.

JOANNA

What order?

RICHARD

Assemble the ranks.

JOANNA

Do what?

RICHARD

We march at dawn.

JOANNA

March where?

RICHARD

To Jerusalem.

JOANNA

To Jeru--Gave the order to who?

RICHARD

Henry. I told him to pass the word.

JOANNA

You told the count of Champagne to assemble the ranks for a march on Jerusalem?

RICHARD

I need Excaliber. I left it in here somewhere, I know I did.

JOANNA

You're not well, Rick.

RICHARD

Got a letter from Mum today. Not good news. Brother John again.

JOANNA

John--what's he done now?

RICHARD

He's pissed away half the Aquitaine. Bankrupted my treasury. Threatened my chancellor with civil war. It's a bloody awful mess, I can tell you. It's all falling to bits. All of it. Time to go home.

JOANNA

Home?

RICHARD

First to Jerusalem, then back home, quick as spit. That's the nut of it.

JOANNA

You're not well, Rick.

RICHARD

I am iron. Where's my bloody sword?

JOANNA

Have we got the strength to take Jerusalem? Have we got the men?

RICHARD

We have courage. And courage will see us through. I know now, the only reason Saladin was willing to talk peace is because he hasn't got piss in Jerusalem. I knew it. I knew it. I knew it.

JOANNA

If you take it, can you keep it? As soon as it ours, these geezers will pray in the tomb and then they'll all go home--pilgrimage done, thank you very much, I must be off. What's to keep the sultan at bay once the army's gone?

RICHARD

I've been thinking about that.

JOANNA

What about me?

You? RICHARD

Who's to be king? JOANNA

I've decided on Henry. RICHARD

Henry? Why Henry? JOANNA

He deserves it. RICHARD

You think he's up to it? JOANNA

We'll see, won't we? RICHARD

I rather like Henry. JOANNA

Do you? RICHARD

When are we to be married? JOANNA

I've decided against that. RICHARD

You what? JOANNA

Conrad's dead. Which means Isabella's available again, ain't she? RICHARD

Isabella? JOANNA

The line runs through the little sister. RICHARD

No. JOANNA

Henry will marry Isabella. Sorry, Joan. RICHARD

You bloody monster. JOANNA

RICHARD
Necessities of state.

JOANNA
You can't do this to me.

RICHARD
(shivers)
I'm cold.

JOANNA
You can't.

RICHARD
Draughty in here, idn't?

JOANNA
Look at me.

RICHARD
What was I looking for?

JOANNA
Look at me!

RICHARD
Mum?

JOANNA
What was it like, Rick? What was it like when you came to see dear old dad on his deathbed?

RICHARD
Don't talk to me about that.

JOANNA
Did he forgive you for all the trouble you caused him, eh? The lies, deceit, the open rebellion?

RICHARD
You don't know what you're talking about.

JOANNA
I know what you done.

RICHARD
You don't know nothing.

JOANNA
I know you knelt down beside him--

RICHARD
Stop it.

JOANNA

I know you put your bloody mits about the old geezer's throat--

RICHARD

Stop it!

JOANNA

And you squeezed the bleedin' life out of him, you did!

(RICHARD cries out.)

JOANNA (cont'd)

Strangled our dear old dad while he lay on his deathbed. That's what our boy Dickie done!

RICHARD

(rising)

Sanctum sepulcrum adjuva, my brothers! Help for the Holy sepulcher! Onward, to Jerusalem!

JOANNA

I hope you die out there. And when you do, I will piss on your bloody corpse!

(JOANNA exits.)

14 JERUSALEM

14

(RICHARD stands, alone.)

RACHEL, in her cell.)

RACHEL

And then did King Richard lead his army out of Jaffa and on against the Holy City. But one remained behind. The girl that tried to slay him. So ashamed was the king at the deception perpetrated against him, that he ordered the girl be put to death in secret, but that she should suffer the utmost. They kept her in a dungeon cell in the ruins of the old palace at Jaffa. And there she waited till the night before Saint Christopher's Day.

RICHARD

Faith, brothers. We'll be home in time for Easter.

RACHEL

How long the night seemed. How quiet in the dark. All the world seemed dead to me. A long, long road took me to this place. But all is well.

RICHARD

Bring me my Cypriot stallion.

(A thin ray of sunlight falls across RACHEL.)

RACHEL

They came one morning at dawn. I saw a ray of sunlight break through the walls above. A little shaft of gold. A hopeful sign. Like a pack of hungry jackals they came. Bound me with ropes and took me to another place beneath the palace. Down a long dark passageway.

RICHARD

Keep in tight order. Do not break ranks, no matter how the Turks provoke. We cannot be stopped, if we hold ranks.

RACHEL

They took me to a place where fire burned. With instruments of torture all about. They lashed me to a table. Though I kicked, and clawed, and screamed.

RICHARD

Do not let them tempt you from the line, brothers. God will protect us. Hold your ranks.

RACHEL

Finally, I could struggle no more. A blade was heated till it glowed red. What would they do? I asked. "The butcher's work," said he with the blade. "But worry not," he whispered with a smile, "for I am an artist in my heart."

RICHARD

Into the land of Samson. Yea, for with no more than the jawbone of an ass I will slaughter mine enemies by the thousands, I will slay the lion with my bare hands. Behind us see the banners of all our houses, the cloud of dust rising in our wake, let the hours cry out, beat the drums of war, raise your polished swords, and keep time, brothers, keep time!

RACHEL

They began to remove my skin.

RICHARD

We'll camp at White Custody, in the Valley of Elah, where David slew Goliath. There we may water at the Wadi al Sant. Beware the bite of snakes in this land. The devil lies in wait behind every rock here.

RACHEL

They cut out my tongue.

RICHARD

Bravely, fight on, strike with sword, wheel and turn, and strike again. What news, lieutenant? Turks lying in ambush at the holy fount of Emmaus.

RACHEL

They cut out my eyes.

RICHARD

Emmaus, where our Lord walked after his resurrection, with two of his disciples, though they recognized him not, where all ailments are cured with one taste from this fountain.. Let not these Turks corrupt the sacred waters. We'll rout 'em and perchance halt to take the waters ourselves.

RACHEL

My ears and nose.

RICHARD

'Tis dawn, and they are there. Attack. Sing Excaliber, divide the air and behead the devil. First one, then another, in pieces leave these dogs. Now off, that way, there. I see their banners, come. They scatter with the wind, like crows before Tigers!

RACHEL

And all that was left was a bloody heap of flesh, carried out and tossed in a dead pit when all was done.

RICHARD

Come, where are you? Can you not keep pace with the Lionheart? Spur your chargers if they lag behind. I will not wait. There. Who goes there? Upon the ridge above. I see you, mine enemy. You have a noble look. Perhaps you are the sultan himself. Come, let us fight. On, Fauvel! Ha! This one knows his trade. Take this from me. Death to you, Saracen devil. There. Another kisses the dirt. All are fallen. I stand alone!

RACHEL

There I lay, in the stinking pit, till the sun went down. And a breeze blew in off the sea. Lightly the wind rolled over Jaffa, and swept inland, brushing through the hills and valleys, through the desert night, under the canopy of stars, till at last, we crested the hills outside Jerusalem in sight of the Temple Mount.

RICHARD

Where is this place? Where is my horse? My men? No matter, the stars will light my path. There, 'tis that way. Beyond that hill. Just... beyond... this... hill. At last, the rising sun. What glistens in the distance? It is the golden dome. It cannot be. It is. Jerusalem. There. Not a mile distant. Oh, God. We are here. We are here!

RACHEL

(rising)

Richard.

(Slowly RICHARD turns and sees the ghost of RACHEL.)

RICHARD

Oh, God. What bloody sight is this? A walking corpse. With bloody gashes for eyes. A thing of evil.

RACHEL

Patricide.

RICHARD

What does it say?

RACHEL

For the murder of your father, know ye that the way to Jerusalem is forever barred to you.

RICHARD

The murder of my father? What is this thing? This hag. This presentiment.

RACHEL

I am Rachel baht Moshe. Family of Moses. She that you had murdered. Know me.

RICHARD

No.

RACHEL

And the Lord speaketh through me, you shall not walk in Jerusalem. My lands are closed to you.

(RICHARD cries out.)

RACHEL (cont'd)

Wander on your way. To the wilderness with you. To the sea. You are lost forever more.

RICHARD

What have I done to you?

RACHEL

Wander on your way.

(Lights change.)

15 END TIMES

15

(RACHEL and RICHARD in spotlights.)

RACHEL

On the ninth day of October, in the year of the Incarnation, eleven ninety-two, Richard Plantagenet departed Palestine. No one knows why the Lionheart turned back when he did, so close to the final destination of his great crusade. Some say he was no more than a stone's throw from the walls of Jerusalem when he abandoned his quest. Only God knows the reason why, in His infinite and unknowable wisdom.

(KALIL in a spotlight.)

KALIL

Last night I had a dream, the source of which is surely divine.

RACHEL

The king set sail for his homeland, across the sea. But after several days out, a wind from the south began to blow, a hot sirocco wind off the deserts of Libya. For weeks this wind drove Richard's galley, first north, across the Etruscan Sea, then south to the coast of Africa, then north again, till at last, a fog descended on the vessel.

RICHARD

Oh, God, I'm lost. I'm lost.

(JOANNA in a spotlight.)

KALIL

I am walking through a heavenly garden on a warm summer night.

RICHARD

Jerusalem.

KALIL

Jerusalem.

JOANNA

Jerusalem.

RACHEL

Jerusalem.

KALIL

Reflect how every human being does hang suspended on a slender thread.

(KALIL and JOANNA exit.)

RICHARD

And when a thousand years have expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison. And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they will go out upon the breadth of the earth, and compass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire will come down from God out of heaven, and devour them. And the devil that deceived them will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophets are, and shall be tormented day and night, for ever and ever and ever.

(RICHARD kneels and bares his back.

RACHEL takes up the whip again.)

RACHEL

Blessed art thou oh Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has preserved me and allowed me to reach this day.

(She whips him across the back.

RICHARD cries out in agony, then braces himself for the next strike of the whip.

Blackout.)

THE END

RICHARD THE FIRST

PART 3: A KING'S RANSOM

written by

Gary Graves

in collaboration with Milissa Carey, Armando McClain,
John Patrick Moore, Greg Scharpen, Josh Schell,
Megan Trout, Kat Zdan, and Jan Zvaifler.

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© CENTRAL WORKS
P.O. Box 9771
Berkeley CA 94706
510-558-1381
gary@centralworks.org

PART THREE: A KING'S RANSOM

1

ODYSSEUS

1

(Lights up on RICHARD. He wears the white surcoat of a crusader, emblazoned with a red cross. But the garment is ragged and filthy. A stain of dried blood from a bad wound in his shoulder runs down the back.

He walks in circle, round and round.

He stops, and looks out.)

RICHARD

We are leaving. I have sent my queen on ahead, along with my sister. Good riddance. England needs us. We go, but we are not defeated. We will come back. This sultan is a wily one. A clever devil, he is. But we will be back for him. Soon. Soon. For now, we sail.

(Again, he returns to the circle, walking round and round.

Again, he stops.

Sounds of a ship at sea.

He looks out at the distant shore.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

Farewell, Palestine. Take me home, ship. I want to go home. But which way? How? Enemies everywhere. They've all turned against me. They blame me for everything. I can trust no one. No route is safe. Cannot risk traveling through Italy. Germany is impossible. France would mean certain capture. Sail all the way? Foolhardy in the winter. Which way? How to go? Who to trust? I am all alone. The girl. There. I see the girl. Still she haunts me. God.

(Thunder cracks, a storm at sea.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

No ordinary storm this. God harrows me. Whips me with these winds. Tears away my sails, one by one, till only tatters of canvass and tangles of rigging remain. He snaps a mast in two. She's comin' apart, cracking open across the foredeck, waves crashing down upon our heads, men, animals, all the weapons of war, all flooding into the cold, dark, raging sea in one great mass of wood, and rope, and confusion, and despair. All goes under. Men and all.

(MORE)

RICHARD (cont'd)

All lost in the stormy cataclysm. Into the watery black. Gasping for air. Drawn downward to certain death. But my hand grabs hold...of a chicken coop. Floating somehow, in the riotous waves. I climb atop my raft of empty cages, and there I cling, and there I ride out this storm in hell. A cruel eternity. I drift in the freezing wind. For days.

(A cold wind blows.

The sound of waves breaking on a beach.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

I am alive. Washed up. But where? Where is this rocky coastline? I begin to walk. I find a road. I follow it. Someone comes. A wagoner. A tinker by trade. Lucky for me, he is not some knight loyal to some enemy of mine. Where does this road lead, I ask the tinker. Ragusa, he tells me. Ragusa? Where the bloody hell is that? Dalmatia. I am on the coast of Dalmatia, across the Adriatic from Italy. I am utterly lost. The tinker heads off on the road to Ragusa. I will head north. God protect me.

(He walks in a circle. Stops.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

This is west. Or is it east? I will go on.

(He walks in a circle. Stops.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

Mountains. Very high mountains. The Alps? I must cross over 'em.

(walks on)

Home. Home. Home. Bleedin' Nora. Snow. Bloody snow deep as a lake to swallow me whole. Winter's coming on.

(walks on)

I am trudging through snow. And I am hungry. Ferociously hungry. I am starving. I eat roots. I eat twigs. I eat the frozen carcass of a large animal I find in the snow. I vomit. Constantly. Now the runs. Constantly.

(stops)

A cave. Thank you, God.

(curls up)

I sleep. Sleep. Sleep. So cold. Food. Home. I was a king once. I will die here. The girl.

(He lies still.

Blackout.)

2

LEOPOLD

2

(Lights up on RICHARD, still lying on the floor. Sometime later.)

A cold wind blows outside.

He shivers, feverishly.

A shadowy figure, LEOPOLD, sits in a dark corner of the room. He wears a hooded robe, like that of a monk. The hood somewhat conceals his face, at first.

RICHARD groans as he wakes from a feverish sleep.)

RICHARD

Christ, it's freezing in here.

(He looks about, weakly, disoriented.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

Where the bloody hell... Cold. Think.
(pain in his shoulder)

Ah.

(when the pain eases, he calls out)

Oy!

(no answer)

Oy! Can anyone hear me?

(still no answer)

Is there anything to drink?

(nothing)

Bollocks.

(sees the shadowy figure in the corner)

What--who's there?

(beat)

What are you?

(beat)

Have you a tongue?

(LEOPOLD adjusts his robe, revealing a long dagger sheathed at his side.)

RICHARD feels for his own dagger, but he is unarmed.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

(to himself)

Where's me bloody...

(MORE)

RICHARD (cont'd)
(to Leopold)
Where is this place?

LEOPOLD
Castle Durnstein.

RICHARD
So you do have a tongue. Castle what?

LEOPOLD
Durnstein.

RICHARD
Where in Jimmy-Jack Codswallop is...Dur...Dur-what?

LEOPOLD
Vasha.

RICHARD
Hm?

LEOPOLD
Kremsland.

(RICHARD shakes his head, no.)

LEOPOLD (cont'd)
Lower Austria. Valley of the Danube.

RICHARD
Austria? Christ.

(RICHARD rises to his feet, aching and weak. He moves to the window.)

RICHARD (cont'd)
(looking out the window, below)
Crikey come Doomsday.

LEOPOLD
A sheer drop below.

RICHARD
The edge of the world.

LEOPOLD
Many have been forced to their death out that window. Some have gone willingly. Down, down, down. Till--like the sun exploding in an instant--you meet the rocks below.

RICHARD
(looking into the distance)
So that's the Danube, is it? Austria. Huh.
(MORE)

RICHARD (cont'd)
(pointing out the window)
Which way's that?

LEOPOLD
East.

RICHARD
(looks east)
East.

LEOPOLD
Hungary.

RICHARD
Hm?

LEOPOLD
The land of Hungary.

RICHARD
Oh.

LEOPOLD
The Magyars. Savage people.

RICHARD
How far would you say it is to London from here?
(beat)

A thousand miles?
(beat)

Two thousand?
(beat)

Why do you hide your face from me? Declare yourself.

(LEOPOLD pulls back his hood, revealing his face.)

Beat.)

RICHARD (cont'd)
No. It cannot be. Leopold?

LEOPOLD
Hello, Richard.

RICHARD
What great good fortune. Leopold!

LEOPOLD
Yes, good fortune, indeed.

RICHARD
How long have I been here?

LEOPOLD

Oh, quite some time.

RICHARD

My head's a bit foggy. I don't remember a thing. Wait.
Them stairs. I remember climbing them stairs.
(the circle)

LEOPOLD

Yes, it's a long climb up here.

RICHARD

Round and round them stairs went. On forever. I didn't
think I'd make it.

LEOPOLD

A long, long climb.

RICHARD

I don't feel well.

LEOPOLD

Yes, you've been ill. Fever.

RICHARD

Fever?

(pain in his shoulder)

Ah!

LEOPOLD

You are wounded.

RICHARD

How?

(LEOPOLD shakes his head, no.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

How bad is it?

LEOPOLD

Do you know what day it is?

RICHARD

What day? No. I've no idea.

LEOPOLD

It is Palm Sunday.

RICHARD

Palm Sunday? Easter's in a week. It's been...months.
Months? Does anyone else know I'm here?

Oh, yes.

LEOPOLD

RICHARD
Does me mum know I'm here?

LEOPOLD
Your mother? Oh, yes, she knows.

RICHARD
You sent word to her?

LEOPOLD
Not exactly.

RICHARD
Then how's she know?

LEOPOLD
Your mother seems to know everything.

RICHARD
Not everything.
(beat)
Who else knows?

LEOPOLD
The emperor knows.

RICHARD
The emperor? He knows I'm here?
(beat)
Well. Good.

LEOPOLD
Yes. In fact, he's here to see you.

RICHARD
What?

LEOPOLD
Mm-hm.

RICHARD
The emperor--here? To see me?

LEOPOLD
That's correct.

RICHARD
Where?

LEOPOLD
In the great hall of the castle.

RICHARD

When?

LEOPOLD

When he summons you.

RICHARD

Hm. Will we dine together? A banquet perhaps? Show me how you Austrians entertain a king of England, eh? What music do you like? Give us a lively ballad. And dancing--do you dance the rondel, eh?

(sings)

Come you ladies, make light of your skivies...diddle-oh, diddle-hey, diddle-hi...

(he dances a step, but is overcome by the pain from his wound)

Oh...Oh...Ut-oh...

(he staggers, then sinks to his knees)

Oh, me nut is crackin'...

LEOPOLD

Perhaps you should rest.

RICHARD

Leopold. Brother.

LEOPOLD

You dare address me as your brother?

RICHARD

Are we not comrades in arms?

LEOPOLD

No longer.

RICHARD

Can such a bond be broken?

LEOPOLD

You betrayed us.

RICHARD

No.

LEOPOLD

You abandoned the Holy City.

RICHARD

Not abandoned.

LEOPOLD

Why?

RICHARD

I was compelled to withdraw.

LEOPOLD

Compelled? By whom? The sultan?

RICHARD

By circumstances. It was the only prudent course of action.

LEOPOLD

You were within sight of the walls. You had it within your grasp. But you turned back.

RICHARD

It was all I could do.

LEOPOLD

Why?

RICHARD

Not enough men. Not enough time.

LEOPOLD

We were victorious. We were behind you. Siege engines at the ready, Jerusalem itself in sight, the sultan in retreat. But you fled.

RICHARD

Withdrawal, not flight!

LEOPOLD

Why?

RICHARD

Because it was hopeless. Wherever I went, he knew. He knew what I was thinking. He knew my plans, my every move, my strength, my numbers, my intentions, my bloody thoughts-- there he was, every move! We were too far from the coast. If he out-flanked us, cut off our line of supply, how could we besiege Jerusalem? We'd have starved, beneath that heartless, blazing sun. He poisoned every well, every bleedin' water-hole for miles in every direction, all about the city. We'd have had to carry in every drop for drinking, every drop for man and beast. And what if he cut that off-- cut off our water? The walls of Jerusalem are vast, and high. We did not have the men. Not enough to conduct a proper siege and protect our line of supply. Not enough men!

LEOPOLD

This from Richard the Lionheart. How many dead? How many sacrificed--for what? With the ultimate prize there before us--you turned back.

RICHARD

Silence! Had I attacked, as you maintain I should have, and we were defeated, then what? For the rest of my days, they would lay it at my feet. They would pronounce my name in shame; they would spit upon me, in revulsion. Oh, there are those out there, and many they are, who would have loved to see me make such a foolish mistake. The king of France would have been delighted. Philip. Philip! They all would have danced with joy at my failure. My disgrace. No. Against such odds, against those circumstances, I would have been a fool to press on. To move forward. To attack. Perhaps if I'd known the land better. The sultan has the advantage there. If I'd known more about...his strengths...his reserves...his plans... But, no, the risk was too great. I had to turn back.

LEOPOLD

It was your vanity then.

RICHARD

No.

LEOPOLD

Fear for your reputation, your exalted place in history, your pride!

RICHARD

Not so, we were tactically disadvantaged--

LEOPOLD

Richard the Lionheart--a coward!

RICHARD

How dare you--

(RICHARD rises to strike, but LEOPOLD looks him in the eye, and an agonizing pain from the wound in his shoulder grips hold of RICHARD.

Slowly, he sinks to the floor, till finally the pain eases.

Weakly, he recovers.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

I will make you pay for that.

LEOPOLD

We shall see who will pay.

RICHARD

The way was barred. Even if I could have taken Jerusalem, I knew we could never hold on to it. His numbers were growing every day. It was hopeless!

LEOPOLD

You betrayed us. You betrayed Him.

RICHARD

No!

(beat)

It was the girl.

LEOPOLD

The girl? What girl?

RICHARD

No girl. Nothing.

(a long silence)

How did I get here?

LEOPOLD

I brought you here...from the tavern.

RICHARD

The tavern. What tavern--in Calabria?

LEOPOLD

Thirty miles from Vienna.

RICHARD

Vienna?

LEOPOLD

You were begging for food.

RICHARD

Begging? No. Not me.

LEOPOLD

Begging. The tavern keeper sent word to the castle here.

RICHARD

How'd he know it was me?

LEOPOLD

The cross on your surcoat.

RICHARD

I'm not the only crusader returning from Palestine, surely.

LEOPOLD

We were waiting for you.

RICHARD

Who was?

LEOPOLD

All of us. All of us that served with you. That followed you. All of us that took up the cross, and vowed not to surrender till Jerusalem was ours. Till we knelt and prayed in the tomb of the Holy Sepulcher. We knew you were coming. But we didn't know which way you'd come. I promised a handsome reward for anyone that caught sight of you. The tavern keeper was well paid for his intelligence.

RICHARD

I am no criminal.

LEOPOLD

You have made many enemies, Richard. Many enemies.

RICHARD

We was comrades, you and me. We fought together. Side by side. Remember Acre? Remember Arsuf? What victories, eh? Remember when we took the caravan in the hills of Hebron? At the Great Cistern. Oh, we fell upon 'em then, didn't we? Bloodied 'em up good. Three thousand camels we took, that many horses, mules, all loaded with spices, and gold, silver, and silk, robes of scarlet and purple, all the riches of Araby. All ours then. What a victory, eh?

LEOPOLD

I found you hiding in the tavern kitchen. Cloaked in a filthy oilskin.

RICHARD

No.

LEOPOLD

Turning a pig on a spit. "I am no one," you said. "Just a poor kitchen scullion. Have mercy on me."

RICHARD

No. Not me.

LEOPOLD

Richard the Lionheart.

RICHARD

Not me. Never. I remember none of that. These are lies. You are deceiving me. I am wounded, and you are...you are...

(shivers with fever)

I'm cold. So cold. Ah, burning. Where am I? Stairs. Them stairs. I was climbing them stairs.

(beat)

Are you my jailor then?

(MORE)

RICHARD (cont'd)

(beat)

What's your reward, I wonder?

LEOPOLD

You do not know me very well.

RICHARD

I know you, all right. But I do not think you are very well acquainted with the emperor.

LEOPOLD

No?

RICHARD

I am the king of England. An insult against me comes with a heavy price. A price he would not so foolishly incur. One word from me. From my lips. To his ears. And Austria will suffer. And suffer mightily. Of course, if you were to make amends to me. Show me the proper courtesy which I deserve as a royal head of state. I might be inclined to speak well of you. In your favor even. Perhaps there is some need you have. Some matter you would like me to speak of on your behalf when I meet with the emperor. Are you still unmarried? I have a cousin. Constance. She's only twelve, but... Is there any word of my sister, Joan? She's available.

LEOPOLD

Speak truthfully to him.

RICHARD

To who?

LEOPOLD

The emperor. When he summons you, speak the truth.

RICHARD

Naturally. Why would I do otherwise?

LEOPOLD

He may condemn you to torture.

RICHARD

Torture--me? Why would he do that?

LEOPOLD

To learn the truth.

RICHARD

About what?

LEOPOLD

About your crimes. Confess. Do not prevaricate.

RICHARD

What crimes? What have I done?

(beat)

All right, I know I've made a few mistakes here and there. Made a few dodgy picks along the way. But not where he's concerned. The emperor and me is like Bob n' Bip, ever since...since...well, since--

LEOPOLD

You legitimized the usurper of Messina.

RICHARD

What--Tancredi? Well, that was my right, wa't'n'it?

LEOPOLD

In so doing you severed the emperor's claim to the kingdom of Sicily.

RICHARD

Oh. Well, yeah, but--

LEOPOLD

You took Cyprus by force, and clapped Isaac the Angel in irons. Or should I say "chains of silver?"

RICHARD

He was a beastly little tyrant what locked up me wife and me sister when by rights he should have lavished luxuries upon 'em both.

LEOPOLD

Isaac was wedded to the emperor's niece.

RICHARD

True, but--

LEOPOLD

You had Conrad of Tyre murdered.

RICHARD

That's a lie.

LEOPOLD

The emperor's heir apparent.

RICHARD

Not so. I did not. No matter how many people says it, no matter how many times they say it, it's not true. I had no hand in that foul deed. That's a malicious lie told about me without a bleedin' shred of truth to it, so help me God.

(beat)

All right. I can do nothing about Sicily and Cyprus now. What's done is done.

(MORE)

RICHARD (cont'd)

But the truth is, I only did what anyone in command of an holy crusade would have done under such circumstances: I used both them islands as launch points in the greater scheme for good. Where I encountered opposition, I overcame it. I subdued my foes. I deny the accusation that I engineered Conrad's murder. I did not. That was the infidel. Or some other enemy of the marquis--not me. Not that. I'm innocent of that.

(hand on his crotch)

So help me God, as sure as these goolies are mine.

LEOPOLD

The emperor knows otherwise.

RICHARD

Well, I will set him straight then. And we shall see who he sides with. The king of England...or you.

LEOPOLD

The king of England, eh?

RICHARD

Standing before you.

LEOPOLD

Did you honor your parents before entering this room?

RICHARD

Why would I do that?

LEOPOLD

It's customary here. They say it's likely the last thing you'll ever do, once you've entered the tower of Castle Durnstein.

RICHARD

Execution?

(beat)

You wouldn't.

LEOPOLD

The emperor will decide.

RICHARD

You think I fear death? Torture? Do what you like.

(beat)

LEOPOLD

There was an incident a few days ago.

RICHARD

What incident?

LEOPOLD

A game of Pluck-buffet.

RICHARD

Pluck-buffet? Oh. Yeah. That.

(chuckles)

Where was that? Was that here?

LEOPOLD

A man was killed.

RICHARD

Mm-hm.

LEOPOLD

You killed him.

RICHARD

That's right. I did. But that was a fair fight, ready and right. I was challenged. What else could I do?

LEOPOLD

He was just a boy.

RICHARD

No, he was a stout lad, he was. A brawny strapping mug. Taller than me this much. A giant of a lad. A young Samson, I'd venture to say--if somewhat wanting in his wits, in the end.

LEOPOLD

You struck, and killed him, as he stood before you, blindfolded. You murdered him.

RICHARD

Not so. The boy struck first. I can see you don't know much about Pluck-buffet, do you? How the game is played. He was one of me guards. In here. But it was different. There was a table in here. Where's it gone? There was chairs, furniture, and food. Fine foods, and plenty to drink. Where's it all gone?

(beat)

Are you punishing me then? Have I lost my privileges, Sir?

LEOPOLD

You were drunk.

RICHARD

We shared a drink or two, I'll admit. They was right fine fellows, them guards o' yours, lusty gents, what appreciate a good laugh, and a good song.

(MORE)

RICHARD (cont'd)

I was treatin' em all to the tale of how we routed the sultan at the River of Crocodiles--when all of a sudden--this big, young bloke stands up and says, "I challenge you to a game of Pluck-buffet." "Pluck-buffet?" says I. What in the name of bleedin' Saint Aggy is Pluck-buffet? Well, it seems it's an old, old game, dating all the way back to the Greeks of ancient times. Here's how it's played: one fellow stands still, blindfolded, while the other bloke strikes him in the head, with all his might, putting his "pluck" on display. If the first geezer remains standing after this "buffeting," then it's the other bloke's turn. Well, when this fair, lumberin' Gallihad steps up and challenges me, what else could I do? I accepted. So, they wrap me up, I'm blind as a stone, standin'--right here, I guess it was--and suddenly--koush!--I'm seeing twinklies, birdies are tweeting, I'm staggering--bleedin' Nora, I think I've lost another tooth. I'm staggering, staggering, staggering--but I'm still on my feet. What a wallop. Ow. I can still feel it. But then it was my turn. According to the rules of the game.

LEOPOLD

He was only a boy.

RICHARD

He was man enough to challenge me. In my weakened state. Starving from lack of food. Wounded. Me nut collicked. Seeing double. Fever.

LEOPOLD

Drunken.

RICHARD

More than a bit bladdered, that's for certain, as I've been known to be on occasion. Ha! Even still, there he stood, blindfolded and waiting. Fearful of what was to come. And I let fly with all my might, fist clenched like a morning star in battle, and--

(he throes a punch, as if in
slow motion, a sound echoes
and fades)

Down he went. His jaw, shattered in oozy pieces. And he died. That's how the game's played. Pluck-buffet.

LEOPOLD

He was my son.

RICHARD

Your son? Him? Oh. Hm.

(long beat)

LEOPOLD

Why do they call you "the Lionheart?"

(RICHARD shakes his head, no.)

LEOPOLD (cont'd)

I heard it was because you once killed a lion with your bare hands. Someone, somewhere, set a lion loose upon you. When the beast leapt at you, jaws gaping wide, you seized it by the snout, pried open its mouth, thrust your arm down its throat, grabbed hold of its heart, and ripped the bloody thing strait out. Then, as I recall, you gave thanks to God, squeezed all the blood from the still beating organ, dipped it in a bowl of table salt, and ate the whole thing down, every bit of it. Is that true? Is that why they call you Richard the Lionheart?

RICHARD

I'm sorry. That was your boy. I didn't know.

LEOPOLD

It's a song, isn't it?--the tale of Richard and the heart of the lion. How does it go?

(hums a bit)

You're quite a singer, aren't you? Sing a tune for me, Richard. Won't you?

(beat)

Sing!

RICHARD

I didn't know.

LEOPOLD

What difference does that make? You killed the boy. How many more just like him? How many corpses left in the wake of your pathway through the world? How many slaughtered? How many dead? Ten thousand? An hundred thousand? Millions? How many? You didn't know?

(beat)

"Today a king, tomorrow a captive; today in power, tomorrow in prison; today a free man; tomorrow a slave. Be wise, therefore, ye judges of the world, come and see the words of the Lord--see a king made wretched, a proud man humbled--

RICHARD

--a rich man beggared."

(Blackout.)

3

ELEANOR AND JOANNA

3

(Lights up on RICHARD, asleep on the floor again. Sometime later.

LEOPOLD remains in the shadows, at one end of the room.

At the other end of the room, stands ELEANOR.)

LEOPOLD

You have a visitor.

(RICHARD wakes.)

RICHARD

Hm? What? Was I sleeping?

ELEANOR

Richard.

RICHARD

Huh!

(sees Eleanor)

Bloody hell. Mum.

ELEANOR

My boy.

(They embrace.)

RICHARD

How's it possible? How'd you get here? How'd you find me?

(ELEANOR looks at LEOPOLD.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

(looks at Leopold)

Him? I see.

ELEANOR

There is trouble. Back home--

RICHARD

(shushing her)

Sh!

(referring to Leopold)

Not in front of him. Our gracious host is somewhat less than trustworthy.

(to Leopold)

A little privacy, if you don't mind. So's I can commiserate with me dear old mum.

(LEOPOLD remains.)

RICHARD (cont'd)
I said, give us some privacy, would ya?

LEOPOLD
Say what you have to say. You will not leave my sight.

RICHARD
I'm the bloody king of England. And I've instructed you to leave us alone.

(LEOPOLD remains.)

ELEANOR
Leave him stay, Richard.

RICHARD
(to Eleanor)
Don't you start.
(back to Leopold)
You move your poxy Austrian bollocks out of this rat-infested hole before I--
(he is overcome with pain from the wound in his shoulder)

Ah!

ELEANOR
You are wounded.

RICHARD
No.

ELEANOR
Be still. Let me see.

RICHARD
I'm fine. Fit as a fish.

ELEANOR
Let me see the wound.

RICHARD
It's nothing, I tell ya. A scratch is all.
(he shivers)

ELEANOR
You shiver.
(feels his forehead)

RICHARD
It's freezing bloody cold in here.

ELEANOR
You are burning up.

RICHARD
A little fever is all. Who hasn't got a little fever now and again?

ELEANOR
Let me see.

(She inspects the wound in his shoulder.)

RICHARD
How's it look?

(Beat.)
ELEANOR looks at LEOPOLD.)

RICHARD (cont'd)
Well?

ELEANOR
(lying)
Nothing serious.

RICHARD
Right. Good. Stings like the devil, all the same.

ELEANOR
Be still.

RICHARD
How in the flippin' name of all the saints in heaven did you get here? Riding on an angel's wings? How's it possible?

ELEANOR
We do what we must do.

RICHARD
Rode all the way from home?

ELEANOR
It isn't the first time.

RICHARD
One o' these days you'll have to slow down, Mum.

ELEANOR
Why?

RICHARD
How old are you--actually?

ELEANOR

We have more important things to discuss, Richard.

RICHARD

Right. I've got to get out of here. Got to get back home. The emperor's here. Did you know that?

ELEANOR

Yes. I am to see him, presently.

RICHARD

You're meeting with the emperor?

ELEANOR

As soon as I leave here.

RICHARD

Well. Good. Then we shall meet him together. We've got to straighten this whole thing out. Talk some reason to him.

LEOPOLD

Not before he summons you.

RICHARD

What did you say?

LEOPOLD

He has summoned your mother. You must wait.

RICHARD

Who do you think you are?--little Fanny Adams.

ELEANOR

Richard. We must do as he says.

RICHARD

Does he know who he's talking to?

ELEANOR

He is the emperor. We are here.

RICHARD

Sod the old bugger.

ELEANOR

They mean to ransom you.

RICHARD

What? Ransom me? I'm the bloody king of England! Ransom me?

(beat)

For how much?

ELEANOR

We do not know yet.

RICHARD

Ransom the bloody king of England, would ya. What is this flippin' world coming to? God's sacred bollocks.

(to Leopold)

This your revenge then? You will regret this treachery, old friend. God will not look kindly upon trading me like a sodding piece of meat in the marketplace. No matter what injury I may have done to you. Unwittingly. Were I not less than myself, due to this pernicious wound in the back of my neck, I would have at you, and teach you a lesson in kingly diplomacy that you would not soon forget. But my time will come. My time will come, Leo. Remember I told you so.

ELEANOR

Do not agitate yourself, Richard. Do not speak this way. You will only make things worse.

RICHARD

Ransom me, will he. I'll show these greasy kites what ransoming the king of England will bring 'em. It's war with these crummers--war!

ELEANOR

Richard. There is trouble back home.

RICHARD

Trouble--what sort of trouble?

ELEANOR

Your brother.

RICHARD

Bloody John--what's he done now?

ELEANOR

He and Philip.

RICHARD

Oh, Christ--Philip?

ELEANOR

They have made a pact together.

RICHARD

A pact? He's my bloody brother! A pact with the sodding king of France? This is treason. Me own flippin' brother.

(beat)

Are they--? They're not. Are they, you know--?

ELEANOR

That I cannot say.

RICHARD

John and Philip. The bloody thought of it turns me gullet.
I thought you was gonna keep an eye on brother John.

ELEANOR

You vanished. There was no word. Nothing. John declared
himself your heir. Since there was no one else. You have no
heir, Richard. No son.

RICHARD

Where's the queen?

ELEANOR

Home.

RICHARD

Where?

ELEANOR

Safe and sound in the royal keep of Oxfordshire. Waiting for
you.

RICHARD

She made it. Good. Good.

ELEANOR

She says...

RICHARD

She says what?

ELEANOR

You never...

RICHARD

What? I never what?

ELEANOR

Did you try?

RICHARD

You mean--? Of course, I tried. Many a night. Many a
night. What about her?

ELEANOR

Enough.

RICHARD

I will do my part. You should've brung her along with you.
I'll show you who's ready to do his part, I will. All in due
time. All in due time. First off, we've got to gain my
freedom.

ELEANOR

Your freedom. Yes.

RICHARD

(to Leopold)

All right, mate. How much is this gonna cost us?

(beat)

Eh?

(beat)

What's in it for you?

(beat)

How much is the emperor giving you to turn me over, eh?

(beat)

What if I was to go him one better? What then?

(beat)

How does three hundred million strike your fancy?

ELEANOR

Richard.

RICHARD

I'll give you three hundred and fifty million in silver to let me walk out that door. Be on my way, eh? Three hundred and fifty million in silver.

ELEANOR

Richard.

RICHARD

(to Eleanor)

What? We can get that. We'll raise a tax for it. A special tax, for the king's ransom. Or we'll sell...something. Something very large. Ireland. We'll sell Ireland, what about that? I know--Messina. We'll give 'em Messina.

(to Leopold)

Have you ever been to Messina? It's the jewel of Sicily. And Sicily--well, Sicily is a veritable Garden of Eden down at the tip of Italy, the toe o' the boot, eh? You haven't lived till you've sniffed the air on a summer night in Sicily. Finest port in the region, strategic choke point, and a bloody beautiful palace in the middle of everything--that's Messina. It's yours, Leo, yours with a by your leave and it's out that door I walk with me sainted mum here. What you say, hm? Have we got an understanding?

(beat)

ELEANOR

Richard.

RICHARD

What is it?

ELEANOR

Philip and John have offered the emperor one and a half billion for you.

RICHARD

Billion? With a B? Christ. Where are they getting one and a half billion? I had no idea I was worth as much as that. Did you? Well. We can beat that, eh?

(beat)

Mum?

(beat)

What?

LEOPOLD

The emperor is waiting.

RICHARD

Oh, sod off, you poxy git.

(ELEANOR produces a document.)

ELEANOR

Here.

RICHARD

What? What's this?

ELEANOR

It is a declaration. A writ.

RICHARD

What--

(reading)

"By royal decree...I, Richard Plantagenet..."

(looks at her)

ELEANOR

You must invest me with all authority in matters of the crown.

RICHARD

You?

ELEANOR

Absolute authority. In your absence. There must be no doubt. No uncertainty. Where the power lies. We are in peril, my son. Our house. They have rested away much of Normandy--Gisors, Verneuil--

RICHARD

Christ.

ELEANOR

Tours--

RICHARD

No.

ELEANOR

Now they are after the Aquitaine--Lusignan is under siege, Angouleme, Limoges, all are threatened. All could fall. Unless we act. Immediately. Now. There must be no doubt about where the authority lies. Not with John. Not with Philip.

RICHARD

With you.

ELEANOR

Sign it.

RICHARD

You've got to ransom me. You've got to get me out of here.

ELEANOR

I shall do all I can. But first, sign.

RICHARD

I've got to get out of this hole. Get back to me wife. Beget a son. A son for England. For Plantagenet. I've got to put our house back in order again. Reclaim what's mine. Set about re-building. My whole bloody kingdom is falling away. I've got a get it back!

ELEANOR

Sign.

(RICHARD looks at Leopold.

LEOPOLD looks away.)

RICHARD

(back to Eleanor)

I haven't got a pen.

(The door opens slowly.

JOANNA enters.

She has a quill and ink in hand.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

Joan. Bloody Joan. Old girl. Look at you.

JOANNA

Hello, Rick.

RICHARD

(to Eleanor)

You didn't tell us you brought Sis along with ya. Come.
Joan. Give us a kiss.

(JOAN hesitates.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

Joan? What's that you've got there?

JOANNA

(to Eleanor)

You wanted quill and ink.

RICHARD

Come all this way just to give us that, did ya?

JOANNA

I've come to say goodbye.

RICHARD

Goodbye? You mean, you're leaving? But you've only just
arrived. Come visit with us. Welcome to my luxurious royal
apartments atop the fabled--what is it again?

LEOPOLD

Castle Durnstein.

RICHARD

'At's right, the fabled castle Durnstein, how could I forget.
Joanna, my sister, former queen of Sicily, I'd like you to
meet Leopold, duke of Austria, me old comrade in arms, eh?
Leopold, Joanna.

JOANNA

How'd you do.

(beat)

ELEANOR

She is engaged.

RICHARD

What's'at?

ELEANOR

She is engaged to be married.

RICHARD

Married--to who?

ELEANOR

The count of Toulouse.

RICHARD
What--Toulouse? Says who?

JOANNA
It's a good match, Rick.

RICHARD
Not yours to say, is it?

ELEANOR
Richard, please. It is settled.

RICHARD
Oh, no, it ain't. Not unless I say it's settled. Toulouse?
Whose brilliant idea was that? He's nothin' but a smarmy
little git without a piss pot to his family name.

ELEANOR
I arranged it.

RICHARD
Oh, you did, did you.
(to Leopold)
Excuse me, mate.
(to Eleanor)
Since when exactly do you go about making arrangements for
royal alliances without my express approval?

ELEANOR
You were here. The count's wife died. The marriage will
strengthen our eastern borders, and disadvantage Philip in
Auvergne. It's a good match.

JOANNA
I like him.

RICHARD
You like him?

JOANNA
He's kind. And thoughtful. He dances well. And he's funny.
(she giggles)

ELEANOR
They spent some time together at Chinon.

RICHARD
He's funny? What--he can tell a good joke? Oh, well, that
recommends him well enough right there--why not make him the
bloody king of England then, eh? This is a bloody outrage,
that's what this is. I am beset by strumpets that would
unseat me. Sod off Toulouse! You will marry who I say you
will marry!

JOANNA

It's already decided.

RICHARD

You.

(beat)

LEOPOLD

Well, it sounds like congratulations are in order.

RICHARD

You keep out of this.

ELEANOR

Sign the document, Richard. I dare not keep the emperor waiting any longer.

JOANNA

It's best, Rick. Mum's right.

(beat)

RICHARD

All right. Toulouse. I'll admit, there's a wisdom to that. I didn't know his wife was dead. If it helps us against Philip, I'm all for it.

(to Joanna)

And if you...well, if you think it's a good match...well, then...Toulouse it is. I only thought, perhaps...

(looks at Leopold)

But leave that.

(back to Joanna)

Stay with me. Will ya? Till I'm out of here, eh? I'm not well. It's cold here. And it's... With only him--bloody him--to keep me company. Stay, won't you? You're the only one I can really talk to. We'll reminisce, eh? Talk about when we was little. When it was all ahead of us. Fields of flowers behind the old house in Saintonge. You remember?

JOANNA

I've got to go with Mum, Rick. Here.

(JOANNA extends the ink and quill.)

ELEANOR unfolds the document.)

RICHARD

All right, then. That's the way it is.

(RICHARD signs.)

ELEANOR

Tres bien.

(she folds up the document)

Goodbye, Richard.

RICHARD

You'll raise the money, eh? You can't let him turn me over to Philip. Philip and John. Christ.

ELEANOR

I shall do all I can.

RICHARD

Mum.

ELEANOR

Yes?

RICHARD

Don't let me die here.

ELEANOR

I shall do all I can.

(ELEANOR kisses RICHARD goodbye.)

RICHARD

Mum. Who do you love more--me or the crown?

ELEANOR

Such a silly question. Goodbye, son.

(ELEANOR exits.)

RICHARD

Sis.

(JOANNA hesitates.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

Stay with me. Please. I'm all alone without you. Please.

(JOANNA exits.)

Beat.

All alone, RICHARD turns and looks at LEOPOLD.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

Is there nothin' to drink in this bloody hell hole? I'm in desperate need of a drink.

LEOPOLD

Say your prayers. It won't be long now.

RICHARD

Prayers. Prayers to who? Him? To the Son of Man? What man? A beast is all. The brotherhood of man. Ha! What a joke it all is. The love of brothers is Cain and Abel. Nothing more. A fight to the death. Like me and me Dad. Dogs. Beasts. Every one of 'em. No man, not a one, is worthy of the love of Christ. If such a thing exists.

(beat)

Give us a drink, for the love of Christ!

(beat)

Bugger all.

(Blackout.)

4

KALIL

4

(Lights up, some time later.)

RICHARD sees KALIL standing on the other side of the room. Is he a ghost or a figment in a dream? He holds a gold goblet in one hand.

LEOPOLD remains in the room, but he doesn't seem to see KALIL.)

RICHARD

(without taking his eyes off
Kalil)

Do you see that?

LEOPOLD

Do I see what?

RICHARD

The sultan's brother. Kalil'a'din. There. Standing before me. Looking at me.

LEOPOLD

The sultan's brother is dead. Saladin had him beheaded after...after you...after the incident in Jaffa.

RICHARD

He's there. Staring at me. A golden goblet in his hand.

LEOPOLD

How could such a thing be?

RICHARD

His ghost. Come to torment me.

LEOPOLD

His ghost?

RICHARD

Go. Leave me. You demon from hell. Stay away.

(KALIL calmly approaches RICHARD.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

No. He comes at me. He means to visit horrors upon me, to rip me open, yank out me bowels, severing limb from limb. He comes to take his revenge upon me--the wretched, heathen dog. Help me. God in heaven, angels above, have pity upon me. Help!

(to Leopold)

Can you not see it?

LEOPOLD

Speak to him.

RICHARD

Speak to him?

(to Kalil)

What do you want from me? Why have you come?

(KALIL extends the goblet to Richard.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

He wants me to drink. He's come to poison me. Some dreadful infidel potion of death. A beguiling drink that would set fire to me entrails, and burn me inside out, turning flesh and bone to ash and ember, whilst I heave, and gasp, and gag. No, no, no I will not. I will not do it.

(Calmly, KALIL sits before Richard, and places the goblet on the floor.)

KALIL

My brother is dead.

RICHARD

What? He speaks.

KALIL

Saladin...is dead. He died two days ago.

RICHARD

The sultan--dead? No, this cannot be.

KALIL

Lo, at his death, the king of all the east, could take nothing with him, but his battle standard, a worn and tattered rag of green cloth, nothing more. Nothing more.

RICHARD

Dead.

KALIL

Had only you held out these few months longer, you would have prevailed over him.

RICHARD

No. What took him?

KALIL

A sickness of some kind. Some say a broken heart.

RICHARD

A broken heart--for who?

KALIL

For all of us, perhaps. Ah, the misery and futility of war. All for what? Still we hold the relic you call the True Cross. Nearly all Palestine remains in our dominion. Jerusalem is ours. The Garden of Gethsemane, wherein your Christ was betrayed and arrested, your via Dolorosa, where he carried the cross to the site of his crucifixion, the hill of Golgotha, where he gave up the ghost. And your tomb of the Holy Sepulcher, where his body was laid to rest, and, so you believe, from whence he rose again, and walked the earth, resurrected, your son of God. All still ours.

RICHARD

I will come back. I am not finished with you infidels. All will be ours again one day. One day still, I will pray in his tomb. And all will be forgiven.

KALIL

Shed your illusions, old friend. Abandon false promises.

RICHARD

You call me friend? When it was I that hesitated, when you accepted my offer... Would you really have married Joanna?

(beat)

Did you love her?

KALIL

(recalling his letter to
Joanna)

"Together, hand in hand, we soared into the heavens, through the spheres of all the stars, on through the night, till at last, we approached the earth far below...and together, hand in hand, we descended into the burning light of Jerusalem."

(beat)

Remember the dream of peace.

RICHARD

Too late.

KALIL

No. Not too late. Drink. From the cup of forgiveness.

RICHARD

This is poison. You mean to poison me. With your words of peace. And forgiveness.

KALIL

Drink. Do not be afraid. Brother.

RICHARD

Brother?

(beat)

I fear nothing. No man. Nor you. If it be poison, I drink it eagerly.

(He drinks from the goblet.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

It's sweet. I remember the first cup of wine we shared together. That night in Jaffa. Perhaps a year ago. Only a year? Do you remember? Enemies.

KALIL

No more.

RICHARD

I am so thirsty.

(Another drink from the goblet.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

If this is poison, it goes down easily.

(beat)

I so deeply regret betraying your trust. If only I'd shown the same courage as you. We might have had peace.

KALIL

Amend the wrong.

RICHARD

How?

KALIL

Drink up.

(RICHARD empties the goblet, and returns it to Kalil.)

KALIL kisses him, rises, and exits.

When he is gone, RICHARD turns to Leopold.)

RICHARD

Did you not see that?

LEOPOLD

See what?

RICHARD

The ghost. The sultan's brother. He brought me a goblet of wine.

LEOPOLD

Well, you said you were thirsty.

RICHARD

The cup of forgiveness.

(beat)

You mean to ransom me then? To Philip and John, eh?

LEOPOLD

The emperor will decide.

RICHARD

(looks out the window)

It's a long fall, that is. A long fall indeed.

LEOPOLD

It passes swiftly.

RICHARD

I'll bet it does.

(beat)

Amend the wrong. How does one do that?

(beat)

I'm still thirsty.

(Blackout.)

5

PETER

5

(Lights up on RICHARD, writhing on the floor, in agony from the wound in his shoulder.)

Across the room, PETER, a boy, stands, watching Richard agonize. He is filthy, and barefoot, his clothes ragged.

LEOPOLD's words seem to torture Richard.)

RICHARD

I am on fire. Help me, God. Stop the pain. Stop the pain.

LEOPOLD

A hundred thousand Christian crusaders dead.

RICHARD

Stop.

LEOPOLD

Over a quarter million dead in all.

RICHARD

No more.

LEOPOLD

Of those who left their homes behind and followed you to the Holy Land, only one in twelve returned.

RICHARD

Physician. More bleeding. Take more. Bleed me, before I die of this burning fire in my veins!

LEOPOLD

Was it worth it?

(RICHARD cries out.)

Slowly, the pain fades, and his head clears.)

RICHARD

It's worse. I'm dying. This wound. How?

LEOPOLD

A bolt shot from a crossbow. The doctors removed the shaft, but the tip broke off, and remained in the flesh. Eventually, they dug it out. But the wound is deep. And it has putrefied.

RICHARD
Who shot me?

PETER
I did.

RICHARD
(sees Peter)
You? You. You're the girl.

LEOPOLD
His name is Peter Basil. He's the boy that shot you.

RICHARD
The boy? But you...you...

LEOPOLD
He fired on you from the castle wall of Chalus.

RICHARD
Where?

LEOPOLD
He is your prisoner now.

RICHARD
My prisoner?

LEOPOLD
What would you have me do to him?

RICHARD
Me?

PETER
I don't care what you do to me. I'm glad I done what I done.

RICHARD
You shot me. With a crossbow. I'm the king of England.

PETER
Serves you right.

RICHARD
What punishment befits a king's assassin? A simple hanging?
No. Beheading? No. Too quick. Too dignified. Drawn by
horses at your arms and legs, torn into quarters? Some
justice in that, eh? I am reminded of Saint Agatha. How she
were butchered. All them saints. All butchered. For what?

(looks at Leopold)
I am reminded of an angel, that stood in the roadway, with
his sword raised high. Saint Michael, was it?

(back to Peter)
And a girl. What tried to kill me. She was a Jew.

(MORE)

RICHARD (cont'd)

Worked her way into my trust. So that she might murder me. For her people. I sentenced her to death. Had her skin stripped away. And as I approached the Holy City, there in the desert, she appeared, and stood before me, bloody and horrible, barring my way. Then she cursed me. Forever. God himself, barred my way to Jerusalem. There will be no forgiveness for my sins. They are too many, and too great. My own father. Not even Christ himself could forgive me what I have done. You remind me of her.

PETER

Do what you will. You killed my whole family. All of 'em. Dead. Because of you. So I shot you. From the castle wall.

RICHARD

Lucky shot.

PETER

Guided by the hand o' God.

RICHARD

You've killed me.

PETER

Good.

RICHARD

Before your bolt, nothing in the world could stop me. No raging sea, no deep abyss, no mountain's height, nor winding road, not the fury of the winds, nor thunder, nor dreadful visitation, not nothing. The lion has been slain by a mere boy.

LEOPOLD

What would you have us do with him?

RICHARD

Let him go.

(withdraws a silver coin)

Here. Take this. It's me last coin. Pure silver. From Damascus. It'll bring you good luck. I give it to you. As a gift. To say...I'm sorry what I done...to you...and your family.

(PETER takes the coin.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

You're free to go.

(PETER looks to LEOPOLD.)

LEOPOLD nods to the door.

PETER exits.

RICHARD sits, alone.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

Her name was Rachel.

LEOPOLD

It's time.

RICHARD

No.

LEOPOLD

Come.

RICHARD

No. God. I'm dying. I can't, I tell you. I will die in this hole, and my wretched brother John will be king. John. Pity the poor kingdom. Philip. I miss you, Donny. I always called him Donny. Short for *Dieudonné*. French for God-given. Donny.

(to Leopold)

Remember when we was kids? I miss you. I loved him. But it was wrong. I was wrong. All wrong. I will die here. Will you pass along my last wishes?

(beat)

I want them to take my heart and bury it in Rouen. The town I loved best in all the world. I was happy there. When I was little. Growing up. With me mum. I want them to hollow out my body, all the innards taken out, till there's just the shell of me left. Me body. I want that buried at the foot of Father's tomb. That part of me will lie side by side with him through all eternity. I'm sorry Dad. I didn't know how empty it all was. I loved you. I did. I'm sorry.

(beat)

My entrails, I will leave here, to stink up the place what caused me so much grief and misery. To the pope, I leave my avarice. To the church, my love of luxury. And to the royals of the world, I bequeath my pride. Let me be an example to all.

(He lies back on the floor.)

RICHARD (cont'd)

I die.

(He closes his eyes, and lies still, hands folded on his chest, like a stone effigy on a royal crypt.)

A long, long beat.)

LEOPOLD

Come along, Richard. The emperor waits.

(RICHARD opens his eyes.)

RICHARD

Bollocks.

LEOPOLD

Rise.

RICHARD

Ahhh...me bones ache. This wound has poisoned me through and through.

LEOPOLD

Rise.

RICHARD

I met a man on the slopes of Mount Etna, on the island of Sicily. He was a hermit. A holy man. I met him in the night. He spoke of Revelation. The Revelations of Saint John the Divine. As this holy man understood them verses, he claimed they prophesied the dawn of a new age, a day when the Church would no longer be needed. Imagine that, eh? A day when Christian, Moslem, and Jew would all be as one. I welcome that day.

LEOPOLD

Rise.

(Slowly, RICHARD stands, weakly at first, wincing in pain, he struggles to his feet, till finally, he stands tall, defiant once again.)

RICHARD

I am iron.

LEOPOLD

This way.

(starts for the door)

RICHARD

Wait.

LEOPOLD

What is it?

RICHARD

How do I look?

LEOPOLD

Well enough.

RICHARD

All right then.

(LEOPOLD starts out.)

RICHARD (cont'd)
Wait. I've never met the emperor. Is he a cheery bloke?

LEOPOLD
Cheery?

RICHARD
Is he a drinking man?
(beat)
What about music? Does he like music--singing? Dancing, eh?
(beat)
Has he got a sense of humor?

LEOPOLD
Some would say so.

RICHARD
Good. Good to know. All right then. Shall we?

(They start out.)

RICHARD (cont'd)
Wait.

LEOPOLD
What is it now?

RICHARD
I'll make you a wager.

LEOPOLD
A wager?

RICHARD
Will you take a bet?
(beat)
I've got a good feeling. I'll wager you that once we've met,
and had a good chat, me and the emperor will be thick as
thieves. What ya say? Will you take my bet?

LEOPOLD
What money have you got to bet with?

RICHARD
Not a bloody cent.

(RICHARD extends his hand.)

LEOPOLD takes Richard's hand, and they
shake.)

RICHARD (cont'd)
Come on then. Mustn't keep the old emperor waiting, eh?

(LEOPOLD opens the door, and RICHARD exits.)

LEOPOLD takes a last look around the room, at the audience, and he exits.

Blackout.)

THE END