

Excerpt terms and conditions



This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

Dramatic Publishing

Colorized covers are for web display only. Most covers are printed in black and white.

Becoming Eleanor

Comedy/Drama by Marsha Lee Sheiness



“One of history’s most intriguing women ... [the] often whimsical, tongue-in-cheek tone is just right for the confident Eleanor.”

—*Orange County Register*

“In her time, Eleanor of Aquitaine was described as sophisticated, charming and clever. The same could be said about *Becoming Eleanor*.”

—*Naples Daily News*

“The clever script is filled with wit, lyrical wordplay and sharp characterizations.”

—*The News-Press, Fort Myers*

Becoming Eleanor

Comedy/Drama. By Marsha Lee Sheiness. Developed in collaboration with Robert Kalfin. Cast: 3m., 3w., with doubling. May be expanded to as many as 32 actors. Becoming Eleanor dramatizes the events that shaped the early life and character of Eleanor of Aquitaine from ages 15 to 29. Considered the most extraordinary woman in 12th-century European history, Eleanor was a key figure in both French and English politics until her death at age 82. She defied the church and tradition, redefining what a woman could be and could do. Her remarkable journey, told in this play, shows how she became the most influential woman of her time, eventually ruling as queen of both France and England. Area staging. Approximate running time: 2 hours. Code: BD9.

Cover design: Jeanette Alig-Sergel

ISBN-10 1-58342-656-6
ISBN-13 978-1-58342-656-2



9 781583 426562

www.dramaticpublishing.com



Dramatic Publishing

311 Washington St.
Woodstock, IL 60098
ph: 800-448-7469



Printed on recycled paper

BECOMING ELEANOR

A comedy-drama in two acts

by

MARSHA LEE SHEINESS

Developed in collaboration with Robert Kalfin



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

© Dramatic Publishing Company, Woodstock, Illinois.

***** NOTICE *****

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website: www.dramaticpublishing.com, or we may be contacted by mail at: DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, 311 Washington St., Woodstock IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play which are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

©MMX by
MARSHA LEE SHEINESS
Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(BECOMING ELEANOR)

For inquiries concerning all other rights, contact:
The Bookman Agency, Trump Tower, 725 Fifth Ave., Floor 17
New York, NY 10022 • Phone: (212) 472-8976

ISBN: 978-1-58342-656-2

for Robert Bendorff

Acknowledgments:

Becoming Eleanor was developed in a series of readings
thanks to:

Fat Chance Productions

The Playwrights' Theatre of East Hampton

Cap21

NYU hotInk Festival

Following its premier production *Becoming Eleanor* had
subsequent productions at

The Long Beach Playhouse, Long Beach, California,

Dayton Theatre Guild, Dayton, Ohio.

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois”

* * * *

Becoming Eleanor was first presented in February 2001 at the Theatre Conspiracy in Fort Myers, Florida. It was directed by Robert Kalfin. The cast was as follows:

ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE Lauren Drexler
LOUIS CAPET Charles Edward Steward
HENRY PLANTAGENET & MULTIPLE ROLES . . . Bill
Taylor

MULTIPLE ROLES John E. Repa
MULTIPLE ROLES Zendyn Duellman
MULTIPLE ROLES Nancy Antonio

Directed by Robert Kalfin
Assistant Director Chere Avery
Costumes Gail Cooper-Hecht
Lighting / Set Design David Utz
Sound Design Margaret Pine
Stage Manager Nancy C. DeFonzo

BECOMING ELEANOR

CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE

SCRIBE

FRIAR

WOMAN

WILLIAM THE TROUBADOUR. . . Eleanor's grandfather

PHILIPPA OF TOULOUSE wife of William the
Troubadour, Eleanor's paternal grandmother

DANGEREUSE lover of William the Troubadour,
Eleanor's maternal grandmother

PETRONILLA Eleanor's sister

WILLIAM OF TOULOUSE. William the Troubadour's
son, Eleanor's father

THIBAULT a vassal to the King of France

ABBOT BERNARD influential church dignitary

LOUIS THE FAT King of France, Louis Capet's father

LOUIS CAPET Eleanor's first husband, Louis VII,
King of France

ABBOT SUGER. mentor to Louis Capet

ADELAIDE . . . wife of Louis the Fat, Louis Capet's mother

POPE INNOCENT II

RAOUL. in love with Petronilla, Louis Capet's cousin

RAOUL'S WIFE

BISHOP

ELAINE. Louis Capet's cousin

RAYMOND Prince of Antioch, Eleanor's uncle,
her father's brother
EMPEROR MANUEL of Constantinople
EMPRESS IRENE Manuel's wife
POPE EUGENIUS successor to Pope Innocent II
HENRY PLANTAGENET Eleanor's second husband

Additional monks, attendants as required by available company members.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

The play may be executed simply. Costumes may be changed on stage as the company assumes different characters, and as the story unfolds the acting ensemble may set the stage for each individual scene. The basic working elements should be simple props, occasional furniture or stage pieces that become whatever is needed; and the creative use of music, sound, light and movement can also support and stimulate the audience's imagination.

The play may be performed by a minimum company of 6 actors. ELEANOR, LOUIS, 2 men and 2 women play all the other roles.

OR

The play can be performed by a maximum company of 32 actors.

DOUBLING BREAKDOWN
(dependent upon final casting)

ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE
LOUIS CAPET

MAN #1

SCRIBE
THIBAUT
ABBOT BERNARD
LOUIS THE FAT
POPE INNOCENT II
BISHOP
EMPEROR MANUEL
SOLDIER
POPE EUGENIUS
ARCHBISHOP

MAN #2

FRIAR
WILLIAM THE TROUBADOUR
WILLIAM OF TOULOUSE
ABBOT SUGER
RAOUL
RAYMOND
ATTENDANT
HENRY PLANTAGENET

WOMAN #1

WOMAN
DANGEREUSE
PETRONILLA
ADELAIDE
MONK
ATTENDANT

WOMAN #2

PHILIPPA OF TOULOUSE
MONK
ATTENDANT
RAOUL'S WIFE
ELAINE
EMPRESS IRENE

ACT ONE

COMPANY. INTRODUCTION!

(MUSIC. ELEANOR crosses downstage, sits.)

ELEANOR *(to AUDIENCE)*. I was born in the year 1122 in the duchy of Aquitaine. Aquitaine. The largest, most affluent and unconventional county in all of France. My father William of Toulouse and my dear, sweet mother, Aenor, christened me Eleanor. So my beginning was simply, Eleanor; then I became Lady Eleanor, Duchess of Aquitaine, Countess of Poitou, Queen of France, Former queen of France, Duchess of Normandy, Countess of Anjou, and lastly, Queen of England; and when God finally relieved me of my earthly guise and all its demands, and I entered the gates of heaven—I became again, simply Eleanor. It was only fitting— Now the exact date of my birth is yet to be discovered, and doubtless never will be.

(LIGHTS UP on SCRIBE.)

SCRIBE *(to AUDIENCE)*. Scribes do not squander time or ink recording insignificant facts and events. And being born a member of the lesser sex, a female, is a combined example of both.

ELEANOR (*to SCRIBE*). An invaluable political commodity certainly, but not a suitable heir to my father's duchy, or any other duchy for that matter.

SCRIBE. Exactly.

ELEANOR. Therefore, my introduction to this good earth is considered relatively insignificant.

SCRIBE (*to AUDIENCE*). The year noted, but nothing more.

(*LIGHTS down on SCRIBE. He freezes.*)

ELEANOR (*to AUDIENCE*). But if I may speculate about myself, and I see no reason why I should not, since so many during and after me have taken the liberty, I shall. I speculate that I slid from between my mother's legs during the early morning hours on the sixth day of the sultry month of August under the zodiac sign of Leo. It just *feels* right— Ah, speculation!

(*LIGHTS UP on FRIAR.*)

FRIAR (*to AUDIENCE*). She's Satan reborn. Very wicked.

(*LIGHTS UP on WOMAN.*)

WOMAN (*to FRIAR*). Oh no, she's saintly.

FRIAR. Ha! She lusted after power.

WOMAN. No, she was a patriot. She did it for France.

FRIAR. No, she did it for England.

WOMAN. She was a devoted mother.

FRIAR. Who deserted her children!

WOMAN. They were taken from her. And you know it!

ELEANOR (*to AUDIENCE*). See what I mean— My death presented itself in the year 1204, interrupting my eighty-second year. For my time, eighty is very, very old.

FRIAR (*to AUDIENCE*). She has been old for so long some fear she will never die.

WOMAN (*to AUDIENCE*). That is because she cannot die!
(*They freeze.*)

ELEANOR (*to AUDIENCE*). Both absurdities prove to be excellent shields that often protect me from my enemies and not infrequently from the half-witted behavior of my own family. In my latter years, I often amuse myself by circulating missives that my health is never better, my mind never keener, and my horse never swifter. In fact, these occasional missives disclose the absolute truth until the last few months of my life, which I gratefully spent submerged in an extraordinary, unruffled calm. They call it a coma. I call it a well-deserved rest from eighty-two years of a very full life. As for the rest of my activities—I let them continue to speculate.

WOMAN (*coming to life*). She was a great French queen.

FRIAR (*coming to life*). She was an English queen.

WOMAN. A devout Catholic.

FRIAR. She was sacrilegious. She defied the church.
Fought with the pope!

WOMAN. Two popes!

FRIAR. And she slept with her uncle!

WOMAN. That is a lie. She was the essence of integrity and refinement.

FRIAR. Cavorting in beds?

WOMAN. Only men behave like that.

FRIAR. Some say she *is* a man.

ELEANOR (*to AUDIENCE*). The exact day and location of my death is not recorded. I can tell you, however, that the season was early spring, my favorite, and that I languished in the bosom of my beloved Aquitaine. I would like to believe that during my passing, crocuses bloomed outside my window, and someone shed a genuine tear. And if I may speculate, they did.

(*PERCUSSION.*)

COMPANY. THE BEGINNING!

ELEANOR. My grandfather, Duke of Aquitaine...

(*LIGHTS UP on WILLIAM THE TROUBADOUR. He is in a freeze.*)

ELEANOR (*cont'd*). also known as William the Troubadour, married my grandmother...

(*LIGHTS UP on PHILIPPA.*)

ELEANOR (*cont'd*). Philippa of Toulouse. They often sparred.

PHILIPPA. Thousands of believers were inspired to free the Holy Land from the infidel, but you—you chose to join the crusade solely to roam about and find new audiences for your obscene filth!

WILLIAM THE TROUBADOUR. My songs express unbounded regard for women and desire, my love.

PHILIPPA. And you mortgaged my homeland, Toulouse, to finance your unholy journey!!

WILLIAM THE TROUBADOUR. Travel is expensive, my dear.

PHILIPPA. If trophies were awarded to hypocrites, William, you would be surrounded by them. Until then you'll have to be content with accolades for your vulgar, uncivilized conduct!

WILLIAM THE TROUBADOUR. Dearest—you must admit—since my return from the crusade, your preoccupation with prayer has provided you with—how can I put this delicately—a barrier between your legs that no cajoling of mine is able to penetrate.

PHILIPPA. Your libertine inclinations were unveiled the first week of our marriage with that—that woman!

WILLIAM THE TROUBADOUR (*to AUDIENCE*). Estelle, I believe her name was.

PHILIPPA (*to AUDIENCE*). Gratefully, prayer nourishes my soul and provides me with a measure of protection from his perpetual humiliations.

WILLIAM THE TROUBADOUR (*to PHILIPPA*). Likewise—(*To AUDIENCE.*) Instead of roaming about with a long face and an irritable nature, I satisfy my sexual appetite from a variety of passion flowers that open their petals for me whenever I call. Naturally, should you desire to share my bed again, my dearest darling, I more than welcome you.

PHILIPPA. I want you to pay off that mortgage!!

WILLIAM THE TROUBADOUR. Dearest, if I could afford it, I would.

PHILIPPA. I will never forgive you for this, William. Never. (*To AUDIENCE.*) And I never did.

WILLIAM THE TROUBADOUR (*to AUDIENCE*). Eventually, to my great surprise, I acquired a more serious and permanent paramour: the Viscountess Dangereuse.

(LIGHTS UP on VISCOUNTESS DANGEREUSE waiting for WILLIAM in bed.)

(DANGEREUSE sensually approaches WILLIAM as LIGHTS FADE on PHILIPPA. In stylized movement to MUSIC, WILLIAM and DANGEREUSE giggle and roll on the bed. They freeze with WILLIAM on top of her.)

WILLIAM THE TROUBADOUR (*to AUDIENCE*). God, what a woman!

DANGEREUSE (*to AUDIENCE*). The fact that we are both married with families strained the patience of the church and agitated the populace into a frenzy of self-righteous gossip. (*COMPANY insinuates, whispers and points at them.*) What fun.

WILLIAM THE TROUBADOUR (*to AUDIENCE*). But neither church nor public opinion can restrain us from expressing our passion for one another. (*To DANGEREUSE.*) Can it, my darling?

(They roll around on bed again. DANGEREUSE stops him.)

DANGEREUSE. But William, we can't legally marry, because we can't legally divorce. And that means we can never bear a legal heir.

WILLIAM THE TROUBADOUR. So we won't. Come here, you vixen.

DANGEREUSE (*pushing him off*). This is a very serious problem, William. A problem that demands a very serious solution.

WILLIAM THE TROUBADOUR. Later. We'll discuss this later.

DANGEREUSE. But I have the perfect solution now. It's entirely foolproof. Your heir, William of Toulouse, will marry my daughter, Aenor. As soon as possible.

WILLIAM THE TROUBADOUR. I don't think that's such a good idea.

DANGEREUSE. I do!!

WILLIAM THE TROUBADOUR. Come here!

DANGEREUSE. William!!

WILLIAM THE TROUBADOUR. Oh, all right! (*He jumps on her again as LIGHTS FADE on them.*)

ELEANOR (*to AUDIENCE*). So Dangereuse's daughter Aenor and William of Toulouse, the next Duke of Aquitaine, marry in the year 1121. One year later, I am born.

(*SOUND of baby crying.*)

PETRONILLA (*to AUDIENCE*). And I follow quickly.

(*SOUND of baby crying.*)

ELEANOR (*to PETRONILLA*). Yes. Petronilla. My younger sister and best friend.

PETRONILLA (*to ELEANOR*). Always.

ELEANOR (*to AUDIENCE*). Then, to the relief of my mother and father and to the whole of Aquitaine, the heir to my father's grand duchy is born, Young William.

(SOUND of baby crying. LIGHTS UP on WILLIAM OF TOULOUSE beaming, holding a BABY high in his arms.)

ELEANOR *(cont'd)*. And that is that.

(LIGHTS FADE on WILLIAM OF TOULOUSE and BABY.)

ELEANOR *(cont'd)*. Our parents educated my sister, Petronilla, and I far beyond the norm for the lesser sex of the 12th century.

(LIGHTS UP on PETRONILLA, WILLIAM OF TOULOUSE and ELEANOR.)

PETRONILLA. Father, I'm tired. How much more do I have to read?

WILLIAM OF TOULOUSE *(to PETRONILLA)*. Every page. Every syllable.

PETRONILLA. But why?

WILLIAM OF TOULOUSE *(with pride)*. Because, my dear daughter, our family takes lavish pride in defying kings, shocking the church, offending society, and having a damn good time.

PETRONILLA. Ohhh.

WILLIAM OF TOULOUSE. We've done it for generations. *(To AUDIENCE.)* Our daughters and granddaughters are tutored in history, politics, languages, religion, poetry, music, the arts, food, wine, and the mysteries of romance.

ELEANOR. I cherish every moment of it.

PETRONILLA. Eleanor, for a girl, you're very odd! But I love you anyway.

(LIGHTS FADE on WILLIAM and PETRONILLA.)

ELEANOR *(to AUDIENCE)*. Since my mother and father travel frequently, my sister and I are presented to nobility and clergy in the entire duchy of Aquitaine. And when my mother is unable to accompany my father, I travel with him as his constant companion, watching and learning as he manages his affairs. Is it no wonder that the chronicles describe me as:

(LIGHTS UP on SCRIBE.)

SCRIBE. Sophisticated, charming, and witty—flirtatious, sensual, and clever—beautiful, intelligent, shrewd and ambitious.

ELEANOR *(interrupts SCRIBE)*. I do not deny any of these reflections of my character but do wish to add:

SCRIBE. Pragmatic, a devoted patron of the arts, and if needs be, artfully devious and a most dangerous enemy.

ELEANOR. Thank you.

SCRIBE. Your ladyship.

(LIGHTS CHANGE.)

ELEANOR *(to AUDIENCE)*. When I am eight years old and Petronilla is nearly seven, my father startles us with devastating news.

(LIGHTS UP on WILLIAM OF TOULOUSE.)

WILLIAM OF TOULOUSE (*grief stricken*). My dear, precious daughters, your mother and young William have died from a ferocious fever that overtook them both. We leave in the morning with the funeral procession.

(*PERCUSSION SOUND. ELEANOR and PETRONILLA are grief stricken.*)

ELEANOR (*to AUDIENCE*). I lie awake, numb with grief, burning with the indisputable significance of this almost unbearable tragedy. I am now heir to my father's duchy. Never until this long, summer night have I ever entertained the desire, or even the probability of ruling Aquitaine. But now, here I am, eight years old with clear, absolute knowledge that not only do I have the desire to rule my beloved Aquitaine, but that I could and would. It is only a matter of time.

(*We hear SOUND of horses' hooves walking in a procession.*)

WILLIAM OF TOULOUSE (*to AUDIENCE*). I am completely determined that this pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint James will resolve my antagonistic relationship with the church.

(*LIGHTS FADE UP on ABBOT BERNARD in a freeze.*)

WILLIAM OF TOULOUSE (*cont'd*). Especially my association with that meddlesome, self-righteous, utterly loathsome Abbot Bernard.

ABBOT BERNARD. And in a perverse way, it did. He died.

(Hooves stop. WILLIAM is dying.)

WILLIAM OF TOULOUSE *(to AUDIENCE)*. The exact cause of my death is unknown.

ABBOT BERNARD *(to WILLIAM)*. Nonsense! You gorged yourself on two dozen fish from a stream known to be polluted. Clearly your mulish nature combined with your insatiable appetite clouded your judgment for the last time. *(LIGHTS OUT on BERNARD.)*

ELEANOR *(to AUDIENCE)*. Whatever the cause, my father, William of Toulouse, Duke of Aquitaine, fell ill and died while pursuing spiritual absolution, and left as his sole heir, his beloved daughter, Eleanor. I am fifteen years old.

(LIGHTS UP on THIBAULT.)

THIBAULT *(to AUDIENCE)*. An extremely dangerous and intriguing situation, because it is common for a rebel nobleman like myself to abduct and marry a single woman of title and property, thereby expanding my assets and my influence. *(Pause.)* I, Thibault of Champagne, however, am happily married, and my wife is very rich.

ELEANOR. Before my father took his last breath, he gave secret instructions to be delivered to Louie the Fat, King of France.

(LIGHTS UP on WILLIAM OF TOULOUSE.)

WILLIAM OF TOULOUSE. Tell the king—I place Aquitaine and my daughters under his direct protection. Tell him to find suitable marriage partners for both as soon as possible. (*He dies.*)

ELEANOR. In a state of ecstasy, Louie the Fat almost levitated at my father's news.

(*LIGHT CHANGE. MUSIC.*)

LOUIE THE FAT. Oh, my God. Oh, God. Aquitaine can be mine. All mine. The largest, richest and most powerful duchy in all of Gaul. God! I'll more than triple my own property. Ahhhhh! Send for Abbot Suger. Wake the queen. Call for my son Louie. And get my doctor.

(*LIGHTS FADE as under the following we hear the SOUND of hammering, horses whinnying and stomping.*)

ELEANOR. So in less than a month, near dawn, Petronilla and I looked down at the French entourage of five hundred or more, lighting torches, setting up tents, watering horses, and collapsing from the unyielding July heat. All sent by King Louie the Fat to introduce, marry, and return his son, Louie Capet, and his new wife to Paris. Two hundred spirited Aquitainians joined the French entourage, and this enormous wedding party sets off to Bordeaux where Louie and I were married. After several more days of secretive travel, we finally arrive in safe territory. It was only then that Louie Capet and I spent our first night together, alone.

(*MUSIC.*)

COMPANY. THE WEDDING NIGHT!

(LOUIE shyly enters, carrying two goblets of wine. Offers her one. There is an awkward silence. They drink.)

ELEANOR. Do you feel the treachery of this summer heat? It nearly strips me of my reason.

LOUIE *(to AUDIENCE)*. They told me she was bold. *(To ELEANOR.)* I feel very little of anything tonight if you are seeking the truth.

ELEANOR. Ah—well then—

LOUIE. The wine is exceptional. Not at all like the wine in chapel.

ELEANOR. From my private vineyards.

LOUIE. To your vineyards, then—and Eleanor.

ELEANOR. How old are you?

LOUIE. I'm in my seventeenth year.

ELEANOR. Is it true that you're in prayer most of the time?

LOUIE. My intention was to be in God's service. If my elder brother Philip had survived his unfortunate accident, I would have been.

ELEANOR. Accident?

LOUIE. He fell off his horse.

ELEANOR. Oh.

LOUIE. Yes, his horse was frightened by a pig.

ELEANOR. A pig.

LOUIE. A runaway pig. He fell off and—well, he died.

ELEANOR. That *was* unfortunate, wasn't it?

LOUIE. Yes.

ELEANOR *(pause, teasing)*. So—you were raised to be pope.

LOUIE. Perhaps an archbishop, hardly pope— Providence had other plans, it seems.

ELEANOR. Do you mourn the loss?

LOUIE. I think Philip was better suited for the throne—but I shall do my best when the time comes. God willing.

ELEANOR (*to AUDIENCE*). Does he ever smile? (*LOUIE smiles.*) There...well, more like a nervous twitch. (*Raises her goblet, to LOUIE.*) Long life, many children. (*LOUIE drinks. He is extremely uncomfortable.*) Sit near me. Sit closer.

LOUIE. You're so very beautiful.

ELEANOR. And you are very handsome. Are you a virgin?

LOUIE. I beg your pardon, madame! Yes, I am!

ELEANOR. You needn't be so peevish about it.

LOUIE. And you? Are you—?

ELEANOR. I am supposed to be—you are not.

LOUIE. Well, I am. Does that disappoint you?

ELEANOR. No. Quite the contrary, I'm pleased.

LOUIE. Why pleased?

ELEANOR. Because that makes us equal.

LOUIE. Equal?

ELEANOR. Yes. Equal.

LOUIE. More wine?

ELEANOR. I've already had too much wine.

LOUIE. I haven't had nearly enough.

ELEANOR. Will you take my hand?

LOUIE. If you wish.

ELEANOR. Such soft skin you have...you're so shy.

LOUIE. I've never held a woman's hand before.

ELEANOR. No! Never?

LOUIE. Well, cousins of course—and the queens.

ELEANOR. Tell me: is your father as fat as rumors say?

LOUIE. Fatter.

ELEANOR. No! How fat? Prepare me! I mustn't be rude when I meet him.

LOUIE. Well, it's quite impossible for him to rise and walk. He hasn't been out of his bed for years.

ELEANOR. No, you're teasing—how many years?

LOUIE. Since before I was twelve.

ELEANOR. But, how does he—

LOUIE. He does everything in his bed.

ELEANOR. Everything?

LOUIE. Everything! And his chambers often need airing.

ELEANOR. I hope our arrival merits that attention.

LOUIE. I suspect it might.

ELEANOR. Would you like to hold me?

LOUIE. Very much—but I don't know how.

ELEANOR. Put your arms around me.

LOUIE. Like this?

ELEANOR. Like that.

LOUIE. This feels good... You feel good...

ELEANOR. Will you lie with me?

LOUIE. I was raised in Notre Dame!

ELEANOR. Really!

LOUIE. My mentor, Abbot Suger, will confirm it. I could call him, if you wish.

(LIGHTS UP on ABBOT SUGER who waits expectantly.)

ELEANOR *(pause)*. I do not wish.

(LIGHTS FADE on ABBOT SUGER.)

ELEANOR (*cont'd. To AUDIENCE*). He's scared... But then, so am I. This could take all night. (*To LOUIE.*)

This feels very cozy, don't you think?

LOUIE. Yes, I do. Very cozy indeed. (*He falls asleep and snores lightly. MUSIC ends.*)

ELEANOR. Later I came to understand that my husband's lack of sexual desire was an explicit comment on his affection for chastity rather than too much wine. Had I known this, I would have petitioned the pope for an immediate annulment. But I did not know. Therefore, during my marriage to Louie, I constantly endured callous insults and malicious gossip for not presenting France with an heir and for seven years no child at all. But I rush the moment. Just before dawn that sweet, first night we spent together, the unexpected occurred.

(*LIGHTS UP on ABBOT SUGER as he wakes ELEANOR and LOUIE.*)

ABBOT SUGER. Louie the Fat is dead.

(*LIGHTS UP on LOUIE THE FAT on his deathbed. He raises his head from his pillow.*)

LOUIE THE FAT (*spreading his arms out to simulate a cross, whispers*). Long live King Louie. (*He falls back dead.*)

ABBOT SUGER (*to LOUIE CAPET*). I presume he means you, sir, which means that we must immediately return to Paris so that you and your wife may be crowned King and Queen of France.