

ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE

An Original Screenplay

by

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Kingdom of Eleanor of Aquitaine & Henry II in 1154

EXT. WOODS OF NORTHERN FRANCE. MIDNIGHT. 1170.

We hear music, chanting in the darkness.

PROLOGUE

In 1152, the marriage between Louis VII and Eleanor of Aquitaine, King and Queen of France, was annulled.

Shortly after, Eleanor married Henry II, King of the English. The marriage allowed Eleanor to hold onto her lands in the south of France and doubled Henry's kingdom.

In 1170, Eleanor returns to Aquitaine without Henry to govern the rebellious territory.

Map appears, showing Henry and Eleanor's kingdom. All fades away, save Aquitaine; then it disappears and we are in darkness again. We hear horses breathing and running hard.

BLACK SCREEN.

DECEMBER 29, 1170.

FOUR KNIGHTS ride through the forest. Their armour gleams through the foliage. They use their swords to cut away branches as they go.

INT. CATHEDRAL OF ST. HILAIRE. POITIERES, S. FRANCE. NOON

Candles are lit; it is Richard's coronation as the Duke of Aquitaine. RICHARD is Eleanor's second eldest son. He is tall, well built and attractive. He has the carriage that we see in Eleanor; he commands attention.

There is an impressive number of knights and barons lining the procession. Richard receives a holy lance and the banner of St. Hilaire from the ARCHBISHOP OF BORDEAUX.

MONTAGE. CANTERBURY. MORNING.

The knights approach Canterbury. They thunder through the market, sending people running and screaming. Upset fruit and milk carts are left in their place.

INT. CATHEDRAL OF ST. HILAIRE. POITIERES, S. FRANCE.

ARCHBISHOP OF BORDEAUX

I present to you...the son of
Eleanor of Aquitaine...the Duke
of Aquitaine!

The crowd roars as Richard steps forward.

INT. ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY'S HOUSE.

We see the Archbishop of Canterbury, THOMAS BECKET, in his study. Becket is tall, thin, and very pale. There is a knock, followed by the entrance of FOUR MONKS. Surprised, Becket rises.

MONK 1

Thomas, you must leave! Henry's
men are here!

Sounds of screams and horses rearing, followed by shouts from the knights.

KNIGHT 1 (O.S.)

Where is Becket?

MONK 2

Thomas, hurry, before they find you!

Sounds of more screams and banging on the front door.

BECKET

Get the cross bearer.

MONK 1

There is no time...

BECKET

I will enter the church with ceremony.

INT. CATHEDRAL OF ST. HILAIRE. POITIERES, S. FRANCE.

Richard walks down the aisle with ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE right behind him. Eleanor is a striking woman in her late 40's with royal carriage and penetrating eyes. We see as many heads bowing to Eleanor as we do to Richard.

EXT. BECKET'S HOUSE

The knights are ramming the door with a large beam.

INT. BECKET'S HOUSE.

The CROSS BEARER, a boy of 12 enters. He is terrified. Becket nods to the boy, and the boy runs forward. Becket puts his hand on his shoulder, calming him.

The monks cluster around Becket, trying to get him to move faster, but Becket waves them off, keeping his hand on the boy's shoulder. They go through a little-used door in the monastery cloister leading into the cathedral.

EXT. CATHEDRAL OF ST. HILAIRE. POITIERES, S. FRANCE.

Eleanor and Richard stand before the crowd.

ELEANOR

You are now the Duke of
Aquitaine...your kingdom rivals
that of your father.

RICHARD

I am still a vassal to Louis.

ELEANOR

A formality...he is more of an
ally than your father is.
(Nodding her head to crowd)
You have an army of knights at
your service such as no one has
seen before.

Eleanor's eyes meet those of MARECHAL, a young knight whose skills in tournament have yet to be defeated.

INT. CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL

Becket crosses to the altar, lights candles; the monks bar the door. Becket wheels around.

BECKET

God forbid that we should make
His house into a fortress!

The monks back away from the door.

BECKET

(Whispered)

May God's will be done.

EXT. CATHEDRAL OF ST. HILAIRE. POITIERES, S. FRANCE.

Eleanor sees a NUN talking to one of her knights, JEAN-PAUL. Eleanor looks away for a moment, and when she looks back the nun and Jean-Paul are gone.

INT. CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL

The knights break through the door. The monks scatter, two remaining with Becket. The knights approach, drawing their swords.

1ST KNIGHT

Where is Thomas Becket, traitor
to the King and realm?

BECKET

I am here, no traitor to the King
but a priest.

1ST KNIGHT

We demand that you absolve and
restore to communion those whom
you have excommunicated.

2ND KNIGHT

And leave England!

BECKET

(Laughing)

I have not come back to flee
again.

4TH KNIGHT

Then you shall die!

One monk raises his arm to defend Thomas, and his arm is cut to the bone. The blow bounces off the monk and takes the crown of the skull off Becket. Becket sinks to his knees.

BECKET

For the name of Jesus and the
safety of the Church, I am ready
to embrace death.

The other 3 knights approach and deliver blows to Thomas' head. The head is severed; the fourth knight digs his sword into the head, scattering brain and blood as he goes.

1ST KNIGHT

Come, he will rise no more...the
King's men!

ALL 4 KNIGHTS

The King's men!

The other knights follow suit. They sack the cathedral of anything of value.

INT. PALACE OF POITIERS

There is music playing with an eastern melody; there is singing, dancing, and happy chaos. We see colors, fabrics, and tapestries adorning the walls. Sumptuously dressed men and women are enjoying themselves at this great banquet. Outside there is jousting.

Richard and Eleanor are well at home in this atmosphere. JEAN-PAUL enters and catches Eleanor's eyes. Eleanor skillfully takes Richard out of the midst of the celebration. They follow Jean-Paul to the wine cellar.

INT. WINE CELLAR

Jean-Paul lights a torch.

JEAN-PAUL

Becket has been murdered.

ELEANOR

Where?

JEAN-PAUL

The Cathedral in Canterbury.
Four of Henry's men cut his head
off at the altar.

ELEANOR

Bold. Henry's men for certain?