

# Richard Coeur de Lion

or: *Franks Incensed.*

*A play for Christmas 1998 by Simon Lavington.*

*To Elli and Panos, with fond memories of Vasa.*

*Simon Lavington*

Characters, in order of appearance.

Richard I	1157 - 1199. King of England; known as Coeur de Lion, Lionheart.
Philip	King of France (born 1165).
Eleanor	of Aquitaine, Queen Mum, Richard's mother (died 1204).
Saladin	1137 - 1193. Sultan of Syria and Egypt; leader of the Saracen army.
Guy de Lusignan,	titular King of Jerusalem, later of Cyprus. Died 1194.
Blondel	faithful minstrel to King Richard.
Berengaria,	princess of Navarre; married Richard in Cyprus in 1191.

14/1/99.

## **Background notes.**

The play describes the part played by Richard Coeur de Lion in the Third Crusade. Richard became King of England in 1189, at the age of 32. He died ten years later, having spent no more than a few months in England. As ruler of the Frankish Angevin Empire, Richard's main pre-occupation throughout his reign was to hold on to the three main 'baronies' in the Angevin Empire, namely Normandy, Anjou and Aquitaine. His rivals included Philip, King of France, and Richard's younger brother, John. Richard was supported by his mother, Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine (wife of Henry II).

Other Angevin baronial titles included Poitou, which encompassed Lusignan. The Lusignan family held positions of power in the Near East between 1129 and 1474. In particular, Guy de Lusignan was King of Jerusalem until thrown out by the Saracens in 1187 - an event that sparked the call for the Third Crusade. The Frankish Lusignan family came from the heart of the Angevin Empire and therefore in some senses were neighbours to Richard I. King Philip of France and Richard met at Vézelay in 1190 and agreed to take part in the Third Crusade.

Joan, sister to King Richard, married King William of Sicily in 1177. William died childless in 1189. In 1190 Richard went to Sicily on his way to the Crusade, to search for his sister, her dowry, and a legacy which William was believed to have left to Henry II. After leaving Sicily, Richard's ships were caught in a storm near Rhodes. Blown off course, they sought shelter in Cyprus.

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