

Tirant lo Blanc

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"Hearing that cry, the Easygoing Widow guessed what had occurred and knew that if Tirant had his way, she would never have hers. Everything was silent as Carmesina defended herself in whispers, urging our knight not to bring the pleasant battle to its conclusion, but then the widow sat up in bed and shouted: "What ails you, my daughter?"

The widow's shout roused the empress and her maidens, who sprang out of bed, some naked and some in their nightgowns, and hastened to the princess's door. They found it locked and called for light, but as they were knocking, Pleasure-of-my-life grabbed Tirant's hair and pulled him away from where he wished to die. She made him jump onto the roof and threw him a rope, that he might climb down into the garden and escape through the gate. She had planned to let him out before daybreak, but the uproar and the damsels's screams made such a plan impossible. She quickly shut the window and returned to her lady.

Tirant fastened the rope to the roof, yet he was so fearful of being seen that he forgot to consider whether it was long enough to reach the ground. After sliding down it, he found a twelve-yard drop at the bottom, and unable to keep his grip, he fell so hard that he broke his leg.

Let us now leave our knight on the ground and return to the ladies.

Once Tirant had escaped, Pleasure-of-my-life admitted the empress and her maidens, who were holding torches and asking the princess why she had screamed.

"My lady", replied the princess, "a big rat leapt on the bed and crawled onto my face, frightening me half out of my wits. It scratched me, but fortunately it did not hurt my eye."

Pleasure-of-my-life had made that scratch when she shut the princess's mouth.

The emperor, who had also risen, entered his daughter's chamber sword in hand. When he heard about the rat, he searched all the nearby rooms, but Pleasure-of-my-life was on her toes and, as the empress was talking with her daughter, the damsel jumped onto the roof and pulled in the rope. Hearing Tirant's groans, she quickly guessed that he had fallen, while the whole palace was in such turmoil that it was terrifying to behold. Had the Turks attacked at that moment, they could not have chosen a better time, yet the wise emperor thought it was nothing but a rat. He even looked inside the chests and had the windows opened, and if the damsel had waited to hide that rope, he surely would have found it.

Diaphebus, who knew what was afoot, heard the commotion, and fearing for his cousin's safety, he donned his armor and told Stephanie "Today I shall lose my title if Tirant is in peril."

"What shall I do," she asked, "for my hands are too weak even to put on a skirt?"

As soon as the duke was armed, he set out to find Tirant, and on his way he met the emperor, who was returning to his chamber. The duke asked him: "What is it, sire? Why all this commotion?"

The emperor replied: "Those foolish damsels are upset by trifles and claim a rat jumped onto my daughter's face and scratched her. Go back to sleep; there is no cause for alarm."

Diaphebus returned to his chamber and, after reassuring the duchess said: "By Our Lady, had they arrested our captain, I was ready to kill Her Majesty and those in his service, whereupon I or Tirant would have been crowned emperor."

"It is better this way," replied the duchess.

She got out of bed and hastened to the princess's chamber, where Pleasure-of-my-life saw her and whispered: "My lady, please stay here and see that no one speaks ill of Tirant, while I go and find out how he fares."

When she got to the roof, she was afraid to call out lest someone notice her, but then she heard Tirant moaning and lamenting thus:"

Translated by David H. Rosenthal