

Ramon Vidal de Besalú
The Chastising of the Jealous Man
(Castía Gilos)

translated by

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I wish to tell you a tale
that I heard told by a minstrel
at the court of the wisest king
of any faith who ever lived,
the King of Castile, Lord Alfonso, 5
a man of hospitality, generosity,
wit, valor, courtesy
and great chivalric ability.
He was neither anointed nor consecrated:
but was crowned with worth, 10
and wisdom, and loyalty,
valor and prowess.
The king had assembled
many knights and many minstrels
at his court, and many powerful barons. 15
When the court was all gathered,
Queen Eleanor arrived.
One couldn't really see her at all,
for she came all enveloped in a mantle
of fine and beautiful silk cloth, 20
the kind that is called "cisclaton."
It was red with a band of silver,
and there was a golden lion embroidered on it.
She bowed to the king, and then she sat down
some distance away from him. 25
Right then a jongleur came quietly
toward the generous, noble king,
and said, "O king of worth, emperor,
I have come here to you

and I ask you, please, that my tale 30
 may be heard and heeded."
 The king called out, "My love is lost
 to anyone who speaks before
 this man has finished all that he wants to say."
 Then the prudent minstrel began: 35
 "Noble king, adorned with worth,
 I have come to you from my lodgings
 in order to tell and recount to you
 an adventure which happened
 in the land where I've come from 40
 to an Aragonese vassal.
 You know well who this vassal is;
 he is named Alfonso de Barbastre.
 Hear now, my lord, what a disaster
 came to him through his jealousy. 45
 He had a beautiful and charming wife,
 and she never played him false
 with any man. She wouldn't even listen
 to the entreaties of any man in the country,
 except one, and therefore she was suspected. 50
 This man was one of her own household,
 who held a fief from her husband.
 Love overpowered him so much
 that from time to time he would entreat
 Lady Elvira, the wife of his lord. 55
 This made her very angry in heart,
 but she decided to endure his entreaties
 rather than denounce him to her husband
 for something that might lead to his destruction.
 He was esteemed as a knight, 60
 and her husband honored him greatly,
 for in good chivalry
 he had no equal in all Aragon..."
 "Then," said the king, "this must have been
 the courteous Bascol de Cotanda!" 65

"Yes, my lord. Now hear the rest,
 and how he fared with the fair Lady Elvira.
 Nothing of what a man desires
 could he win or obtain from her,
 until finally the husband found out. 70
 For his knights told him,
 all together, in full council:
 'By God, what foolishness
 Sir Bascol is committing! Every day
 he entreats and beseeches Milady, 75
 and I tell you that she accepts it so well
 that you'll be a cuckold for certain.'
 'God help me,' he answered,
 'if I wouldn't be blamed for it,
 you'd all be burned or hanged! 80
 This is something quite unbelievable!
 You are all saying it from envy,
 because of his surpassing worth and intelligence.
 May God never save my head,
 if anyone ever tells me tales 85
 about what Lady Elvira does
 and I don't hang him by the neck,
 for he won't find any protection.'
 Then a knight spoke up,
 a vile, wicked, and frivolous man: 90
 'My lord, when you've finished your talking
 and mocking and threatening,
 I'll be glad to tell you how you can
 find out for sure about all this,
 whether Milady loves or not. 95
 Pretend that you want to go help
 the king of Leon in a war.
 If you can drag Sir Bascol away
 from this land and take him with you,
 you can exact the penalty on my body: 100
 I deliver it here to you publicly.'"

("And I accept it," said the king.)
 "With that, the council dispersed.
 One of those who heard this
 ran, by the orders of his lord, 105
 to the lodgings of Sir Bascol.
 'Sir Bascol de Cotanda,' he said,
 'my lord greets you and asks you
 if he can have you with him in the morning,
 for he wants to go to give help in war 110
 to the king of Leon, without fail.'
 'So help me God,' he replied,
 'I'll go with him most willingly.'
 Then he whispered softly and quietly,
 'I won't do it at all; I can't.' 115
 The messenger, full of wickedness,
 returned to report to his lord:
 'My lord, I've been to see that traitor of yours,
 and he says that he'll go with you.
 He says he will, but he certainly won't: 120
 I'm quite sure that it would be painful to him.'
 Nevertheless, the lord wasn't upset,
 when he heard that his knight
 made no objection to going with him.
 'The one who should be afraid 125
 is the man who put himself in my power
 and delivered himself to me to be put to death.
 Nothing can save him from death
 if Sir Bascol goes on the expedition;
 he won't change my decision 130
 by promises or prayers.'
 Then he took to the road,
 saying that he was going to see Sir Bascol,
 whom Love was making suffer and lament;
 and as he lamented, he often said 135
 with deep sighing, night and day,
 'Love, you make me act most foolishly,

for I'm treating my lord in such a way
 that if he could only find it out,
 nothing could save my life. 140
 And he surely will be able to find it out,
 for I won't go, not for anything,
 where my lord wants me to go.
 Still, it hasn't been his way
 to gather an army that I don't go with, 145
 or engage in a battle without taking me.
 If I say no this time,
 he'll surely know the reason,
 I think, why I have stayed behind.
 But I know what I can do: 150
 I'll tell him that I've been sick,
 and that I'm not better yet,
 and so the doctor advised me
 to have some blood let.'
 So he had his arms bound, 155
 and his head wrapped tightly with a bandage,
 and said that God should give him no joy
 if he ever went there, unless he was forced.
 For Love, which made him sail close to the wind,
 had seized his will and driven him mad. 160
 Just then, Lord Alfonso
 called out loudly at the gate,
 and it was quickly opened for him.
 He came inside and Sir Bascol greeted him:
 'My lord, may God Who mounted 165
 the cross for us give you aid!
 'Yes, and to you, Bascol,' said the lord,
 'may God give you joy and health.
 But tell me, what has happened to you?'
 'By Christ my lord, a great sickness.' 170
 'So what will happen? I want to go
 on an expedition. Will you not come along?'
 'My lord, may God and my faith assist me,

you can see well that I can't go there,
 and it troubles me greatly, God save me.' 175
 `And me also' said the lord,
 `Sir Bascol, twice as much, by my faith,
 since I can't change my plans and not go.
 I must be off; I commend you to God.'
 `And I, my lord, commend you to His mother.' 180
 With that, the good lord
 went away, and the knight stayed behind.
 Early in the morning on the next day,
 the lord had his horses saddled,
 took his leave without delay, 185
 and went out of the castle at once,
 furious and full of ill will
 because Sir Bascol stayed behind.
 He came to a castle
 about two leagues away, 190
 and as soon as the day was done,
 he saddled his horse,
 and mounted up, taking
 a young valet along behind him.
 He took to the road 195
 and returned straight to Barbastre,
 saying that he would give his wife
 bad medicine that night, if he could.
 He spurred his horse
 and rode at full speed until he came 200
 quietly up to a small door in the castle,
 under his wife's chamber.
 He left his horse with his valet,
 saying 'Wait here for me, my friend.'
 Then he stepped forth 205
 and knocked quietly with his hand.
 When the good lady, with a clear conscience,
 heard the knock at the door
 she said, 'Girl, get up,

get up at once and go see who it is, 210
 girl, for I'm not expecting any
 knight or anyone else...
 Ah!' she said, 'may God forsake me, if
 I don't think it is my lord,
 who has come back to test my relationship 215
 with Sir Bascol, since he didn't follow him today.'
 He knocked a second time:
 'Get up at once, girl!'
 She said, 'I won't wait any longer,
 'but I'll go see who is there right now.' 220
 She opened the door at once,
 and as soon as he came in, he said
 'Girl, you've made me wait here too long;
 why didn't you come to open the door for me?
 Didn't you know I was coming?' 225
 'No, my lord, may God give me good fortune.'
 Then the lord of Barbastre
 approached, pretending to be a lover,
 and went straight up to the bed.
 He knelt at once, 230
 saying, 'Beautiful, courteous lady,
 here is your heart's friend,
 and, by God, don't take it amiss
 that, because of you, I failed to accompany
 my lord, for which he is angry. 235
 The love which oppresses me
 did not let me go elsewhere,
 and leave you, be separated from you,
 and I have sighed many times for it.'
 'But tell me, my lord, who are you?' 240
 'Madame, do you not know me?
 It's me, your love,
 Bascol, who has loved you so long.'
 The lady rose at once
 to her feet, and recognized him: 245

it was her husband, but that did him no good,
 for she called out as loud as she could,
 `By Christ! You traitor! No attack
 have you ever made that will bring you more trouble,
 for you'll be hanged at once, 250
 and nothing can save you from death.'
 She grabbed his hair and began to pull
 as hard as she could, with both hands.
 But 'woman's strength is vain,'
 and soon tires after great effort, 255
 and 'with a heavy club gives tiny blows.'
 When she had drubbed him enough
 and beaten him and humiliated him,
 without him ever striking a blow in return,
 she went out of the room and closed the door, 260
 leaving her husband behind, joyful
 as if he felt no pain at all,
 for it seemed to him that she was faithful.
 She didn't stop until she reached
 the room of the knight 265
 who was so tormented by Love,
 and he found what he most desired:
 she took him, and drew him to herself,
 and told him all that had happened to her.
 `Handsome, courteous friend,' she said, 270
 `now I will give you willingly
 what you have always desired.
 Love wants it, and permits it to me.
 Let's leave the buck on his rope,
 at least until day, 275
 and we'll take our pleasure!
 And so they stayed, with great delight,
 both in one bed, until the morning bells rang
 and the lady arose. She went out,
 and summoned everyone 280
 from their lodgings, and told them her story:

'Hear now' she said, 'how that scoundrel
 Sir Bascol tried to deceive me.
 Last night he came knocking at the door,
 pretending to be my lord. 285
 He came in like a traitor,
 approached my bed, and wanted to dishonor me.
 But I knew how to defend myself,
 and I've locked him in my bedroom.'
 Everyone gave thanks to God. 290
 'Lady,' they said, 'it has turned out very well
 for you, provided that he dies at once.
 A traitor must not be allowed to live.'
 They went at once to arm themselves,
 and ran at once to their lodgings. 295
 Then would you have seen some putting on hauberks,
 others grabbing doublets and shields,
 headgear, caps, and pointed helmets,
 others taking up lances and darts.
 At once they came from all directions, 300
 candles and torches burning.
 When Lord Alfonso heard these people
 coming toward him, all armed,
 he bolted the doors from inside,
 and cried out, 'My lords, stop! 305
 By God, the Son of Holy Mary,
 I am your master, Lord Alfonso!
 But they battered
 the doors so violently
 that the wood and iron couldn't resist. 310
 When he heard them breaking in
 he jumped quickly on a ladder
 and climbed up to a loft,
 throwing the ladder away.
 When they had completely smashed the door, 315
 they came toward the bed with their weapons
 and struck it as hard as they could,

for they all thought that he was there.
 When they didn't find him in it,
 they were all angry and furious, 320
 and the lady was saddened in heart.
 While they were searching around for him,
 she glanced up at the loft,
 and saw, off to one side, the ladder
 which her husband had thrown aside. 325
 She came back and called to the household,
 'Gentlemen, I've spotted the traitor.
 See, he's up in that loft!
 Get the ladder and climb up!
 Cut him into little pieces 330
 before he has a chance to say a word!
 Lord Alfonso cried out at once,
 'Gentlemen, what kind of people are you?
 Doesn't anyone recognize Lord Alfonso,
 your lawful master? 335
 It's me, so help me God!
 Don't kill me, in the name of God!
 The lady sighed,
 and as he was coming down, she cried out,
 when everyone recognized her husband, 340
 she cried, wept, groaned and called out
 'Sweet my lord, how could you dare
 to make such a foolish attempt?
 No man born of woman was
 ever in such danger of death. 345
 Sweet, noble, generous lord,
 for the love of God, pardon me.
 Please, let me find mercy from you,
 my lord, for I didn't recognize you,
 so help me the Son of Holy Mary! 350
 On the contrary, I thought
 you were Sir Bascol de Cotanda.'
 'God save me,' he replied,

`you have done me no shame or harm
 for which you need to ask forgiveness. 355
 Rather I, the falsest man,
 the greatest traitor who ever was born,
 dear lady--pardon me!
 For I have deceived myself
 and brought shame upon your person! 360
 Wrongly and foolishly
 I have hated my own good knight.
 It is through the fault of slanderers
 that all this torment came to me
 and this misadventure! 365
 Dear lady, noble and pure,
 pardon me, for the love of God,
 and please, let me find mercy from you,
 let our two hearts be one!
 I promise you that never for any reason 370
 will I believe what slanderers say about you,
 and there will be no adversary
 able to cause trouble between us.'
 `Now,' she said, 'send word of that to Sir Bascol,
 my lord, by your messenger.' 375
 `I will do it willingly and joyfully,
 since I see that it would please you, my lady.'
 `Yes, my lord, and do still more:
 you will go to see Sir Bascol
 and tell him that you stayed here 380
 on his account, waiting until he was cured.'
 He left the room then,
 and did what she commanded.
 He went to see Sir Bascol de Cotanda,
 and sent him his knights 385
 for never had such great joy
 come to a man from his own harm.
 And shall I tell you something more?
 He arrived at the lodgings of his vassal

Sir Bascol and ran straight to his bed. 390
 He was lying, quiet and peaceful,
 with the windows closed.
 `Bascol,' he said, 'how are you feeling?'
 `By Christ, my lord, I am not well,
 and I'm surely in need of health. 395
 But how is it that you have come back so soon?'
 said Sir Bascol to his lord.
 `Bascol, it is for love of you
 that I stayed, and will stay:
 I will not go on any expedition 400
 unless you come with me.'
 `My lord, I'll get better, God willing,
 and then I will do for you willingly
 all that you wish.'
 Lord Alfonso returned to his lodgings, 405
 and was very pleased for his misfortune.
 That was a good thing, God help me,
 for he had suspected a lady
 who had done nothing wrong.
 But when it came to deception, she 410
 was much smarter than he, in my opinion.
 And so, noble king, I pray you,
 both you and my lady the queen,
 before whom worth and beauty bow,
 that you forbid jealousy 415
 in all the married men
 who are in your land.
 For women have such power,
 yes they surely have such power,
 that they can make a lie seem true 420
 and the truth seem false,
 when they want, since they have such subtle minds.
 Let men avoid the role of the jealous husband,
 so that they will not always be in doubt,
 and sorrowful and angry. 425

He often sighs and laments
who is ruled by jealousy.
He won't do anything that is good,
for in all the world there is no more harmful
disease, my lord, than jealousy, 430
nor more foolish or more shameful.
It makes a man less hospitable,
and he entertains less often, inviting fewer guests,
for he's always afraid it will bring trouble."
"Minstrel, I consider this story good 435
and charming and fine,
and so are you who told it to me.
I wish to give you sure proof,
so that you may know truly
that the story pleased me. 440
I declare that, among us, the story will always
be known as *The Chastising of the Jealous Man*."
When the king had finished speaking,
there was in the court no baron
or knight, no damsel or young gentleman, 445
not a single man or woman,
who hadn't enjoyed hearing it,
who didn't praise and approve it,
and each one was eager
to learn *The Chastising of the Jealous Man*. 450