



## A YOUNG ERASMUS KNIGHT

In order to reach the condition of a knight and be able to visit the wonderful Alhambra together with my Lord Sir Marc, I must wander a long way. But it is not going to be an easy task since, according to all the feats that my Lord tells me, many adventures await me in my way to Al-Andalus. Nevertheless, if I want to become a knight I must overcome all the trials that destiny keeps for me.

As you already know I am a loyal squire and I have not being through any such important adventure.

Most times, I am in charge of looking after Sir Marc and keeping his armour in perfect conditions. Also I care about his horses, feeding them and keeping them clean.

My Lord has an exceptional black horse which I love. His name is Shadow. My Lord promised me it will be mine once I am made a knight.

Sir Marc is a good man. I love sitting by his side listening to the stories he tells me while I do small works that he requires.

He likes having me near listening to him. He says that he is looking forward for the day when I will become a great knight, even when he knows I need to prepare myself a lot more. I hate when he says I am too thin. He sends me to fulfill this important task so that I learn and I become a real man because it is the only way to become a great knight.

Today, 12th of March, 1420, my Lord and I leave Ratisbon (Germany) very early with destination Al-Andalus (Hispania) and at dawn we left the city.

Days before our departure, and old friend, companion of heroic feats of Sir Marc, asked him to take his young daughter to the great city of Berna (Switzerland).

The day we were ready to leave, my Lord was making sure the belts were adjusted on the horses when a young girl, not older than fifteen, came in. Her hair was straight and shining like gold. She was beautiful. She belonged to the nobility. At first, she was shy and quiet.

When we were leaving Ratisbon, we met a wizard who told Sir Marc to be careful with all the devils we would meet in our journey. I got a fright and I hid behind the girl. She looked at me, smiled and said: "Hello, What is your name?" "I am called Cassandra".

With a little smile who made me shiver, I answered stuttering, "Peter". I felt butterflies in my stomach.

The following days, a feeling of protection towards her started to grow. I do not know why.

When we were leaving Zurich, we walked towards an Inn because it was raining cats and dogs.

Once inside, we listened to the barman saying to another man in a very low voice: "Look, an old man and two children". We were ready to spend the night at the Inn but there was only one room left which was for Cassandra. My Lord and I slept at the stable that night. We had a straw bed and a blanket. I remember it was a very busy night. Many travelers stopped at the Inn and they were very noisy.

I remember I slept very little. My thoughts were flying taking me to a beautiful place where the same woman was always waiting for me: Cassandra.

Before dawn, we were ready to start our journey, having previously filled our stomachs with a delicious walnut and honey bread and some fruit.

It was a cool morning. A few hours passed and we got into a deep forest where we had to stop so that our young lady could rest. We were very unlucky since we were assaulted by two sinister men. It was the first time that I saw my Lord in action to defend us of such bandits. He kept us at his back and he took out his shining sword.

My lord was a very good with his sword and, in spite of his age, he was very fit and moved as a young man.

I threw a stone from behind my Lord and landed on the head of one of the attackers.

Sir Marc looked at me and smiled. He said "Brilliant! You are very brave and that is very important for a knight.

Cassandra stood by my side and smiled. The second bandit, when he saw Sir Marc with his sword, ran away shouting: "Get up and run. These three are more dangerous than a hurricane". They run

and run until we could not see them any longer.

The three of us were laughing all morning every time we remembered the funny situation which we lived that day.

After we left the forest, we arrived in Berna and we entered a huge castle where they were awaiting the young girl to welcome her warmly. After the three of us had a nice bath, we were officially received by the Noble family who introduced Cassandra to her husband to be. Cassandra was as beautiful and shining like a star and I was in pieces having to leave her there.

After Berna and on our way to Geneva, we realized that we had taken the wrong bag and we had left our food at the castle. I had taken a bag full of flour.

Sir Marc was very upset with me and he refused to talk to me the rest of the way.

We stopped at a small monastery to ask the monks for some food. Sir Marc was resting while I was giving the horses some water.

After a while I was wandering around the place when I discovered a place where many monks were making bread. I asked the monks the way bread was made and a very serious but friendly looking monk explained to me that bread came from a dough cooked twice a week –Mondays and Fridays- and the aspect was dry. It was kept in jars and made wet again with water and oil. Those foods which were eaten with bread were called “Companagium”

In case of cereal shortage, some kind of nuts were used (walnuts, dried legumes, ferns, etc.)

We left the monastery, and it was getting dark when we saw in the horizon the city of Geneva. In the city, Sir Marc went to buy some provisions to feed us up to Montpellier in France. I was looking about the horses. A few hours went by and Sir Marc had not come back. I was a bit worried because it was getting dark and we had to carry on with our journey the following day. When he finally arrived, he told me he was talking to a nice lady.

The following day, we left Geneva rapidly. It was strange because we had always maintained a constant pace. I thought “There is something wrong”.

Getting into Montpellier I could tell that it was not a small city either. Sir Marc went straight towards one of the huge houses in the centre of the city and knocked at the door.

A young woman, about 18, opened the door. We went in and she told us –with tearful eyes- that one of Sir Marc’s best friends. Sir Gerbasi, had died. He embraced her and comforted her. I saw him very down for that piece of news and I understood his hurry to reach the city. He wanted to see one of his best comrades and the best man with a sword, but he could not make it.

Sir Marc told me afterwards the way he had met Sir Gerbasi. It was in one of the many battles

which took place in French grounds against their British enemies.

We stayed in this beautiful city a couple of days to rest and recover from the awful news.

When we were ready to leave Montpellier, the young woman who had talked to Sir Marc about his friend, gave him a piece of cloth with a symbol engraved. When I asked him what was it about, he told me that it was what would help us to go through Barcelona. Then I started to get interested in that place and I asked my Lord to tell me about Barcelona.

We spent a day and a half in another monastery in which we learnt their daily life. The monks got up at six in the morning to pray and then they started to cook cakes and bread. Most of them had difficulties with their sight due to their night life when they wrote and read in the candlelight.

In the way, my Lord explained how magnificent Barcelona was and he told me all about the traders.

In a very small village near Barcelona, called Rupit i Pruit, my lord gave me a small bag full of coins to get some food, and a pair of shoes for myself. On the way to the shops, I met a few youngsters attacking an old woman to steal her bread. I got very furious and I bravely faced the rascals who were more in number but not in courage. I managed to get rid of them but I was injured. The old woman, very grateful, gave me a Spanish orange, saying: "Accept this orange, stripling. Many thanks, you are a brave knight"

I replied that I was not a knight yet but my dream was to become one like my Lord. She advised me to travel all the way to Toledo where I could find the best blacksmiths in Europe for my armour and my sword.

When I went back to my Lord I told him about the problem I had and the lady and he asked me if I wanted to go to Toledo after Barcelona and I said "Yes, please"

On the way to Barcelona, Sir Marc was worried and sad for two reasons: one of them because I was wounded because of my fight when I defended the old lady. He explained that he would train me to defend myself and I would not suffer anymore because of that.

The second reason was –as he explained after- that he was feeling older and older and he might not be able to see me become a knight.

Arriving at the gates of the walls of Barcelona, a guard came to us, with his mouth covered with a rag and looking at us with a gesture of seriousness, he told us that he was not allowed to pass

anyone, since there was an epidemic inside the City. Hearing this bad news we were sad, I was even more because I was excited to visit Barcelona.

Sir Marc then decided to go to Toledo. According to what he told me, he had a friend from Toledo and he had a great desire to meet his old friend again.

Barely three days had passed since we left. We found an old gentleman who, on a weak old rocín, who carried a frying pan by shield, declared that his broom was a spear. He was determined to confront giants, but They were actually mills.

If he defeated the giants he recovered the lady who had stolen his heart. We said goodbye to him, my lord and I looked at each other and we began to laugh over the situation.

I have never met a madman like that again. To think that the mills are giants, How stupid! Imagine what other ideas he had in his head.

Five days has passed and we reached Toledo, it is a beautiful city. As I walked through its streets I was shocked by a shop with armors, swords and other knightly utensils, but their prices were also low and I could not afford them.

My illusions began to break. We arrived at the house of my lord's friend, his door had a lion-shaped bronze knocker, it was dark, the ring that gripped the lion's jaw had the shape of a small silver snake, and his eyes of precious stones. A boy opened the door. He had a friendly face. His hair was darker than the dark, his eyes a little torn, a brown color. He seemed to wear adventurous clothes.

I peered into the house and saw many maps written in mozárabe, compasses and books about the Indies and other distant lands. I assumed then that this boy admired to travel.

He invited us to sit with him, closing the door heavily.

He put on his round, silver glasses. He said he was the son of my lord's friend. He told us that his father was working in the smithy and in a few hours he would return, so my lord told him that if he could take A little nap to rest from his long journey. Shortly afterwards he went to the guest room to lie down.

I asked him enthusiastically how good are the swords and armors they made in Toledo. He told me that according to the legends, some Toledo smithy made the Cid's tizona sword .Cid was a knight who fought in one of the most important battles against The Muslims, was so formidable that he won many battles.

A few hours passed while the boy told me the fantastic stories of Mio Cid. Suddenly, loud knocks came from the door. It was a man, quite tall, with a huge beard, strong arms and scary face, so

much so that he even looked like a villain. He was surprised by our visit, I wondered where my master was, I replied that he was Resting in the guest room.

My lord was still in the arms of Morpheus, but we did not want to interrupt his little rest. The son of the blacksmith told him that he wanted to be a gentleman. when he looked at me he showed a smile, he told me that he would give me a sword that he had made by himself. We decided to visit the smithy.

As we walked, the blacksmith told me how his work was.

The internal structure of the sheet and the mystery of its manufacture were a secret very well kept by the manufacturers since to make a weapon so exceptional, they had to forge at the same time a hard steel at very hot temperature with the high carbon content and A soft steel. In this way, they could obtain excellent mechanical characteristics and a greater utility. The kings of all the parts of the world had ordered to manufacture their swords and sabers in Toledo.

I had never thought Toledo was such an important city, I kept my mouth open when I heard about the importance of the Toledo's smithy.

When he arrived at the smithy, the Lord made us wait at the door, I asked the boy if there was a bookstore there, since my lord is anxious to read a novel of chivalry. He recommended me to go to the school of translators Since they translate books of the Hebrew, Latin and Arabic.

Shortly after, the blacksmith came out with a huge and heavy sword, he told me that he called it "Langes Schwert".

Returning to the blacksmith's house, my lord awoke from his long sleep.

He was very happy to see his old friend, and thanked him for the gift he gave me. I Told my lord about the translator school, as he listened to me, he ran to the bookstores, to see if there was any book in Our language. Shortly after he returned, with a depressed face, he learned that they only translate them into Spanish and not in our language.

We decided to spend the night at his house, to rest and to continue our journey the next day.

Two days passed and we arrived to Jaén, near the borders of the kingdom of Granada. We saw a platoon of soldiers very thrown, with much cavalry and artillery.

My lord said, "Boy, we'd better stay here." And I said to myself, "Where will these soldiers go?"

After seeing the failed attempts of the soldiers in the walls of Granada, they returned. It was when my lord said that it would be better if we camped in that place, a beautiful slope full of tall green grass, it was quite windy.

The following day we continued our trip to the Alhambra. We were arriving at the limits of the kingdom of Granada and changing the landscape, walled and with destruction in the ground, rest of battle.

On my way to the walls, my lord was telling me the ways to enter the Alhambra. He told me in a mocking way that if we walked in the door he would be very daring, although he also said that it was the best and simplest way to get into Pomegranate.

I am very impatient and very restless, I could not wait to enter the huge door of the Alhambra that I had imagined, thanks to the daring stories that Sir Marc told me every night before bed.

Arriving at the gates of Granada, I was struck by the huge walls that seemed to reach the sky. I noticed the arches of the entrance, they looked like a horseshoe, I had never seen anything so similar; And so heavy were the doors that it took an eternity to open them by the guardians who were there.

We stayed in a lodge that was near the Alhambra. We were expecting an Emir (a Muslim general). He was the right hand of the sultan who lived in the palace.

As access to enter the palace was only allowed for the Nasrid, you had to have a special permit to enter. My lord knew the Emir, so he gave us permission.

We decided to spend a few days in the kingdom of Granada to rest all the trip we had done and we were able to know the Muslim culture better.

A few days later, we entered the Alhambra by the door of the Reservoir (which gave access to the upper part of the medina). I was impressed by the arches of the monuments, they were very well detailed, I had never seen anything so wonderful.

We passed the Patio de los Arrayanes, it was a show worth seeing. Its central fountain reflected the facade of the palace just inside out, making a really beautiful optic effect.

We entered the palace, where the sultan was waiting for us in the throne room. The little light that was there, created a sinister environment. The shadow covered his face.

The sultan, in a dark voice: "welcome my guests, you have had a long and hard journey, I hope you enjoy the palace." The sultan clapped announcing: Tonight we will make a great party for our visitors.

In the evening, the sultan organized a great party: there were dancers doing belly dancing, jugglers playing with sharp swords, moaxajas were sang, etc ...

The Sultan was whispering to the emir, but with the music it was hard to hear what they said.

The sultan clapped. The party stopped and suddenly some guards came out.

The Sultan jumped from his seat and said in a very dismal way:

"Gentlemen, there is something I want to say. I would like to thank my right hand (the emir), bring me dirty Christians. We have for years and years losing battles with Christians in a humiliating way. So to show my revenge, I thought about killing them, but I will give you good news. You have an hour so that you can escape. Disappear from my sight.

My lord and I, we got up so quickly from the fear. We went to the lodge, to pick up our things in a hurry, but the guards came to the door of the lodge. We only saw 2 guards coming to the gates, my lord had a great idea And we used the flour to throw it out the window, creating a white powder, it was our chance, the lord of the lodge let us out the back door, my lord and I climbed the horse and we could scape.

**THE END**