

# ACA, Cancillería, Reg. 2037, f. 17v

## Royal Health Bulletin: Queen Violant de Bar on the Illness of Joan I

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### Document Summary

| Field              | Details  |
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| Archive            | Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó (ACA)   |
| Series             | Cancillería, Registre 2037   |
| Folio              | 17v  |
| Document type      | <i>Lletra closa</i> (sealed letter) — royal health bulletin and political directive  |
| Sender             | Queen Violant de Bar   |
| Recipients         | Unnamed; almost certainly royal commissioners or representatives attending to <i>Capítols</i> in another city (possibly Corts business)  |
| Language           | Catalan  |
| Date               | Tuesday, 30 April 1387 (Julian calendar)   |
| Place of issue     | Barcelona  |
| Seal               | <i>Segell secret</i> (secret/privy seal)   |
| Principal subjects | (1) Reassurance regarding the integrity of negotiated <i>Capítols</i> ; (2) detailed report on Joan I's life-threatening illness (syncope, loss of speech, cold extremities, last rites) and subsequent recovery; (3) order to recipients not to abandon their business regardless of alarming reports about the king's health |
| Note               | The text begins mid-sentence, continuing from the recto (f. 17r). The opening passage refers to a general inhibition and commission contained in earlier letters.  |

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## Reconciled Transcription

*Note: The text begins mid-sentence, continuing from f. 17r. Uncertain readings are marked [?]. Standard abbreviations are expanded silently; genuinely ambiguous expansions are flagged in the translation footnotes.*

...de les inhibicio general e comissio contengudes en les dites letres no ses als trobat sino que ço qui fa saber per sa letra lo dit senyor / qui daço e de les altres coses tocades en vostres letres que·u al present poguesse [?] vosaltres hauets fet saber · Quant es daço que desus dehets que a·n nos fassa res qui pogues tornar en lesio alguna / o torb dels Capitols que en hauets portats / hajats per ferm [?] que nos fara [?] / Com en aquells lo senyor Rey e nos stam e entenam esser constants sens tota variacio ¶ Ja [?] sapiats que diumenge prop passat apres vespres vench al senyor Rey fort gran accident de sincopi / per lo qual perdet la paraula / e li refredaren fortment les extremitats / e vench en article de mort e tro a lhora de miga nuyt estech fortment abatut / mas ladonchs o aço algun poch per gracia de nostre senyor Deu pres millorament / en lo qual prosseda [?] tot lendema ço es [?] que fo diluns apres mig jorn · ¶ Et en aquella hora vench li altre fort accident per lo qual se agreuja entant que tot hom romas quasi desesperat de sa vida / e cert doppingio que ja o en la nuyt prop passada ell degues finir sos dies / de que tots los de la Cort e de la Ciutat foren greument torbats / mostrants be lur naturalesa e granda [?] affeccio / e singularment ne haguem nos en turbacio e tribulacio transcendent / com ne haguessem e hajam singulars raons · ¶ Et ladonchs lo dit senyor molt solemnement e devota combrega / e reebe lo cors de Jhesuchrist · Mas apres obrant la gracia divinal / a la qual era e es tot merit / recorregue lo dit senyor [a] tan [?] gran millorament / lo qual de hora en hora per ara e encara continuat / que ell esta ara molt be / beneyt ne sia nostre senyor / en lo qual esperam que dins breu lo restituira [?] en plena sanitat / e veurem lo y conservar [?] longament ¶ Et notificam vos aquest fet per tal que sapiats la veritat / e que del bon millorament del senyor Rey hajats plaer e consolacio / en retents laors e gracies a la sancta trinitat [?] / ffahents hi oracions especials per la salut del dit senyor · Et si tro aci hauets entes diligentment als afers per e mes [?] per que sots aqui / daciavant hi entenets [?] ab diligencia superlativa [?] · Donants vos hi tots ab tot esforç de guisa que breu hagen la conclusio que desijam · Et abans nos moguessets daqui per res que oissets del estament de la persona del senyor Rey ne per altres coses / tro que los dits afers hajen deguda fi / com sien tals en que va molt al senyor Rey e a nos / e a tota la terra / e que ell e nos ques prosequex [?] com al nostre cor fort impreses [?] · Dada en Barchelona sots nostre segell secret dimarts a XXX dabril · del any M CCC LXXX set · [Get [?]]

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## Annotated English Translation

[...continuing from f. 17r...] ...regarding the general inhibition and commission contained in the said letters, nothing else has been found except that which the said lord makes known by his letter — who, regarding this and the other matters touched upon in your letters [that which] at present he could [address],<sup>1</sup> you have made known.

As for what you say above — that nothing should be done to us that could result in any injury, or disturb the Chapters that you have brought — hold as firm<sup>2</sup> that it will not be done, as regarding those [Chapters] the lord King and we stand and intend to be constant, without any variation.

Know ye<sup>3</sup> that on the past Sunday, after vespers,<sup>4</sup> a very great attack of syncope<sup>5</sup> came upon the lord King, on account of which he lost the power of speech, and his extremities grew very cold, and he came to the point of death,<sup>6</sup> and until the hour of midnight he was greatly prostrated. But then, or a little [later], by the grace of our Lord God, he took improvement, in which he continued<sup>7</sup> all the next day — that is,<sup>8</sup> which was Monday — after midday.

And at that hour another strong attack came upon him, on account of which he was so worsened that everyone remained nearly despairing of his life, and [were] certain of the opinion that imminently, or in the night just past, he should end his days — on account of which all those of the Court and of the City<sup>9</sup> were grievously distressed, showing well their natural loyalty<sup>10</sup> and great<sup>11</sup> affection. And singularly we ourselves were [thrown] into turmoil and tribulation beyond measure,<sup>12</sup> as we had and have singular reasons [for such emotion].

And then the said lord very solemnly and devoutly received communion, and received the body of Jesus Christ.<sup>13</sup> But afterwards, the divine grace working — to which [grace] was and is all merit<sup>14</sup> — the said lord recovered with such great improvement, which from hour to hour has for now and still continued, [so] that he is now very well — blessed be our Lord for it — in whom we hope that soon he will be restored<sup>15</sup> to full health, and we shall see him preserved long.

And we notify you of this event so that you may know the truth, and that from the good improvement of the lord King you may have pleasure and consolation, rendering praises and thanks to the Holy Trinity,<sup>16</sup> making special prayers for the health of the said lord.

And if until now you have attended diligently to the affairs<sup>17</sup> for which you are there, henceforth attend to them with [superlative]<sup>18</sup> diligence, applying yourselves all with full effort, so that soon they may reach the conclusion that we desire.

And [lest] you should depart from there for anything you might hear about the condition<sup>19</sup> of the lord King's person, or for other reasons — [do not move] until the said affairs have their due conclusion, as they are such that much depends on them for the lord King and for us, and for the whole land,<sup>20</sup> and [as] he and we<sup>21</sup> [feel them to be] strongly impressed upon our heart.

Given in Barcelona, under our secret seal, Tuesday the 30th of April, of the year 1387.<sup>22</sup>

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## Footnotes

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## Unresolved Ambiguities

The following items require archival verification against the original manuscript:

1. **The crux passage on f. 17v, ll. 2-3** (*vostres letres [?] al [?] vosaltres havets fet saber*): Neither Claude's reading (*escriu al papa segons*) nor the HTR's (*que u al present poguésse*) parses cleanly. The political implications differ: Claude's reading places the document in the context of papal diplomacy; the HTR's reading suggests the king could not yet respond to all matters raised. Verification of the recto (f. 17r) would also illuminate the syntactic structure of this incomplete opening.
2. **"Per ferm" vs. "per fi" and "no-s farà" vs. "nós farem"**: Both the noun and the verb in the queen's reassurance about the Chapters are paleographically ambiguous. The meaning is consistent either way, but the precise wording matters for understanding the legal register of the assurance.
3. **"Stam e entenam ésser" vs. "siam e estiam certs"**: Claude's reading (*we stand and intend to be constant*) and the HTR's (*we are and stand certain, constant*) are both plausible. The key divergence — *entenam ésser* (intend to be) vs. *estiam certs* (stand certain) — affects the rhetorical register of the queen's commitment.
4. **"Granda" vs. "puresa" affecció**: The adjective modifying the affection shown by the Court and City is uncertain. Both *granda affecció* (great affection) and *puresa d'affecció* (pure affection) are contextually appropriate.
5. **"Prossedà" [?]** (l. 12 of the transcription): The verb describing the continuation of the king's improvement is uncertain and may be a form of *prosseguir*, *procedir*, or another verb.
6. **"Ço és [ahir?]"**: The presence or absence of *ahir* (yesterday) before *que fo diluns* — if present, it provides an explicit chronological self-reference within the letter.
7. **"Restituirà" vs. "veurem"**: Whether the queen says God *will restore* the king or *we will see* him restored affects the theological and rhetorical register, though the meaning converges.
8. **"Sancta trinitat" vs. "sua majestat"**: The object of thanksgiving is uncertain.
9. **The modifier(s) on "afers"** (*per e més [?] / seys e nucs [?]*): Both readings are garbled. The underlying text needs direct verification.
10. **"Diligència superlativa" [?]**: The qualifying adjective for *diligència* is unresolved. All three readings (Claude, HTR, reconciled) are tentative.
11. **The final clause** (*ques proseguex... al nostre cor fort impreses*): The verb form, its subject, and the grammatical relationship between *proseguir* and *impreses* all need verification.
12. **"Get" [?]**: The notation following the date — present in Claude's reading, absent from the HTR — may be a scribal validation mark, a secretary's abbreviation, or an artifact of damage. If genuine, identifying the secretary could illuminate the administrative context of the letter.
13. **Calendar verification**: The document states *dimarts a XXX d'abril del any M CCC LXXX set* (Tuesday, 30 April 1387). The correspondence between "Tuesday" and "April 30" in the

Julian calendar for 1387 should be verified.

1. **Crux passage.** This clause, continuing from the recto, is syntactically incomplete on this folio and the middle portion is garbled in both readings. The *inhibició general* (general inhibition) and *comissió* (commission) are standard paired legal instruments: the inhibition prohibits interference with a mandate; the commission authorizes its execution. Claude's initial reading gave *escriu al papa segons* (writes to the pope according to), which would place the letter in the context of Joan I's Avignon diplomacy; the HTR reads *que·u al present poguésse* (that which at present he could [address]). The HTR reading, though syntactically strained, is tentatively preferred on a second reading of the manuscript, but neither is fully satisfactory. The sense is that the king has responded, via his own letter, to matters the recipients had raised, and nothing beyond his response has been found in the records. ↵
2. The manuscript may read *per ferm* (as firm/certain) or *per fi* (as settled/final). On re-reading, the letter forms are ambiguous — there may be a double *ff* followed by a short word (*ffi = fi*), or *ferm* with a final minim. The subsequent verb is likewise uncertain: *no·s farà* (it will not be done, i.e., no harm will come to the Chapters) or *nós farem* (we will do [as agreed]). Both convey the same political reassurance. I tentatively read *per ferm que no·s farà*, the more standard formula. ↵
3. *Sapiats* — imperative/subjunctive of *saber* (to know), a standard epistolary formula for introducing news. The paragraph-opening word before *sapiats* is uncertain; I tentatively read *Ja* (already, i.e., "you will already know that..."), though the HTR brackets [*Item*]. ↵
4. Vespers: the canonical hour of evening prayer, typically around 6:00 PM in late medieval practice. The illness thus began on Sunday evening, April 28, 1387. ↵
5. *Accident de síncope* — a sudden medical episode of syncope (loss of consciousness). In medieval Galenic nosology, *accident* denotes a sudden onset of symptoms or a crisis in the course of a disease. The clinical sequence that follows — loss of speech (*perdet la paraula*), cold extremities (*li refredaren fortment les extremitats*), and approach to the point of death (*vench en article de mort*) — is a standard medieval description of a patient in extremis and is consistent with a severe cardiovascular or neurological event. ↵
6. *Article de mort* — the "point" or "moment" of death; a fixed legal and medical phrase denoting that the patient was believed to be on the threshold of dying. This phrasing triggers specific canonical and legal consequences, notably the administration of last rites (see n. 13). ↵
7. *Prossedà* [?] — uncertain verb, likely a form of *prosseguir* or *procedir* (to proceed, continue). The HTR output contains a duplication (*fo fo*) in this clause, which I have silently corrected to a single *fo*. ↵

8. The words between *l'endemà* and *que fo diluns* are uncertain. Claude's initial reading suggested *ço és ahir* (that is, yesterday), which would explicitly confirm that the letter was written the day after Monday — i.e., Tuesday, matching the date. On the second reading, I can identify *ço és* but the following word remains uncertain. Whether or not *ahir* is present, the internal chronology is clear: illness began Sunday evening (April 28), improvement around midnight, relapse Monday (April 29), letter written Tuesday (April 30). ↵
9. "The Court and the City" — *la Cort* here refers to the royal household and its officials present in Barcelona; *la Ciutat* refers to the civic body of Barcelona and its inhabitants. The pairing reflects the two institutional poles of authority present in the capital. ↵
10. *Naturalesa* — the feudal-political concept of natural loyalty binding subjects to their lord (*senyor natural*). In the Crown of Aragon, *naturalesa* denotes the reciprocal bond between a ruler and the natural-born subjects of the realm — an active political and emotional obligation, not merely "nature" in the modern sense. The word carries particular weight in a context where the king's death might trigger a succession crisis. ↵
11. The word modifying *affecció* is uncertain: Claude reads *granda* (great); the HTR reads *pureza* (purity, i.e., pure affection). On the second manuscript reading, I tentatively favor *granda*, but the initial letter could be read either way. ↵
12. *Tribulació transcendent* — tribulation "transcending" or "exceeding" [all measure]. The queen's language here is unusually personal and emotionally intense for chancery correspondence, underscoring the gravity of the crisis. ↵
13. The king received viaticum — the Eucharist administered to a person believed to be in danger of death. This is a politically charged act: receiving last rites signals to the court and the realm that the succession might be imminent. That Violant reports this detail openly, then immediately pivots to the recovery, suggests she is managing a narrative — acknowledging the gravity of the crisis while reassuring the recipients that it has passed. Joan I's chronic ill health was a persistent feature of his reign and a source of political instability. ↵
14. *A la qual [gràcia] era e és tot mèrit* — "to which [grace] was and is all merit." A theological formula attributing the king's recovery entirely to divine grace. *Recorregué* (recovered, or had recourse to) is the tentative reading for the verb that follows; *retornà* (returned) and other forms are paleographically possible. ↵
15. The verb is uncertain: Claude's initial reading gives *restituirà* (will restore [him]); the HTR reads *veurem* (we will see [him]), yielding a paired construction: *lo veurem en plena sanitat, e veurem-lo y conservar longament* (we will see him in full health, and we will see him preserved long). Both are defensible. I tentatively retain *restituirà* for the first verb, as on the second reading the word appears to begin with *r-e-s-*, but acknowledge the uncertainty. The closing phrase — whether *conservarà* (will preserve him) or *conservar* (infinitive, governed by *veurem*) — is likewise uncertain. ↵

16. The recipient of thanks is uncertain: Claude reads *sancta trinitat* (Holy Trinity); the HTR reads *sua majestat* (His Majesty, i.e., God's). On re-reading, the abbreviated forms are difficult to distinguish. Both are theologically conventional in pious exclamations accompanying recovery narratives. ↵
17. This clause contains several words that are garbled in both readings. The modifier(s) on *afers* are illegible — Claude read *per e més* (especially); the HTR read *seys e nucs*, which does not parse. The sense is clear: the recipients have been attending to affairs (almost certainly the negotiation of *Capítols* or related Corts business) and must continue to do so. ↵
18. *Superlativa* [?] — tentative reading for a word that both Claude and the HTR struggled to resolve (variants: *perlativa*, *puixlatina*, *prelativa*). The intended meaning is clearly an intensifying adjective for *diligència*: attend with the greatest possible diligence. The exact form needs archival verification. ↵
19. *Estament* — the state, condition, or standing (of the king's person). This is the most politically significant instruction in the letter: the queen explicitly orders the recipients not to leave their post for anything they might *hear* (*oíssets*, from *oïr*) about the king's condition. The implication is that alarming rumors will circulate — as indeed they already have, given that the king received last rites — but the business at hand is too important to interrupt. This reveals Violant acting as a political manager, maintaining the continuity of governance during a royal health crisis. ↵
20. *A tota la terra* — to the whole land/realm. The queen frames the affairs as vital not only to the royal couple but to the entire Crown of Aragon. ↵
21. The final clause before the date is syntactically difficult. The verb appears to be a form of *proseguir/prosseguir* (to pursue, prosecute), and *impreses* (impressed) is a past participle modifying the affairs. The sense is that the king and queen feel the urgency of these affairs deeply — they are "strongly impressed upon our heart" (*al nostre cor fort impreses*). The exact verb form and grammatical construction need archival verification. ↵
22. Tuesday, 30 April 1387 (Julian calendar). Joan I acceded to the throne on 5 January 1387, upon the death of his father Pere III (IV of Aragon); this letter thus dates from just under four months into the new reign. The *segell secret* (secret/privy seal) marks this as private royal correspondence rather than a public instrument sealed with the great seal. A scribal or secretarial notation — possibly *Get* [?] — may follow the date; this could be a registering clerk's abbreviation or validation mark. The day of the week should be verified against a Julian calendar perpetual table. ↵