Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616)

Miguel de Cervantes, son of a wandering apothecary, or druggist, was born near Madrid, Spain, in 1547. In 1569, Cervantes, seeing no prospects at home, enlisted in the army, fought valiantly, and was wounded at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571. His left hand was crippled, earning him the nickname, "el manco de Lepanto"—"the one-handed man of Lepanto."

Cervantes hoped to be promoted to an army captain after the war, but his plans were later thwarted when he was captured by Barbary pirates and held as a slave for five years in Algeria. He returned to Spain in 1580, jobless, in debt, and without any hope of regaining his army career. Over the years he worked as a playwright, bureaucrat, and tax collector before finally landing in jail for failure to pay his debts, many of which had accrued as a result of his family scraping together the ransom money to buy his freedom from the pirates.

According to legend, it was while he was in jail that the idea for Don Quixote came to Cervantes. His hero, Don Quixote, is a poor, aging landowner who reads nothing but romantic tales of chivalry. As he teeters on the edge of insanity, the old man becomes convinced that he is a knight-errant, even though the age of knights is long past.

The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha was published in January of 1605, and immediately caused a sensation. Once the first edition sold out, pirated—illegally printed—copies began to appear. Six editions were issued in the first year, and translations into French and English appeared within ten years. It seemed that everyone in Spain, and soon everyone in Europe, was laughing at the droll adventures of ridiculous knight, Don Quixote.

Cervantes, at the age of fifty-eight, was now a famous author, but he was still poor. As was common until the nineteenth century, authors were at the mercy of publishers and were seldom able to retain the copyrights on their books. Thus, Don Quixote's publisher, not Cervantes, reaped the lion's share of the books' profits. Spain's greatest writer died in poverty on April 22, 1616. To his family, Cervantes left only a little money and many debts. To the world, he left a comic masterpiece that earned him the title of "father of the modern novel."

Background:

Initially, Cervantes intended Don Quixote to lampoon tales of chivalry and courtly romances, stories from the medieval period about romantic love and knightly adventures, which were still eagerly devoured by the audience of Cervantes' time. In these stories, idealized knights fought villains, dragons, and monsters, and embarked on quests in honor of ladies to whom they had sworn their love. Such heroes stood for military values such as honor, courage, and loyalty, combined with Christian virtues such as piety, courtesy, and chastity.

Over the centuries, scholars and casual readers alike have debated the extent of Cervantes' intentions and achievements in Don Quixote. Early readers accepted at face value Cervantes' claim that the work was simply a parody of courtly romances. By the nineteenth century, however, critics of the Romantic era began to see Don Quixote as a tragic hero, "the immortal

1 Cervantes' life after his return to Spain was one of better disillusionment. Though Don Quixote was a very popular
representative of all men of exalted imagination who carry the noblest enthusiasms to the point of folly." It is this interpretation that has inspired contemporary works such as the musical *Man of La Mancha*, for which the popular song "The Impossible Dream" was written.

Cervantes used the conventions of chivalric romances and satirized them at the same time. Don Quixote wears a cardboard visor on his helmet and mistakes windmills for giants. These actions, and others like them, suggest the discrepancy between the real world and the idealism portrayed in chivalric romances. Yet Don Quixote is much more than a parody of the romances of Cervantes' day. It touchingly develops two of literature's most enduring themes: the struggle of the idealist in a materialistic world and the interplay of fantasy and reality.

A literary parody is an imitation of another work of literature for amusement or instruction. A parody uses exaggeration or inappropriate subject matter to make something serious seem laughable. For example, in a serious chivalric romance his lord, usually a king, would dub a hero a knight and he would prepare for the ceremony during an all-night vigil in which he watched over his armor in a chapel. In *Don Quixote*, Don Quixote arranges to be dubbed a knight by the fat innkeeper of a rural inn that he mistakes for a castle, and he places his rusty armor in a horse-trough rather than on an altar. In the novel, many other uproarious scenes parody chivalric romances.

Parody was a popular literary form in Cervantes' time, but most parodies were inspired by an intense dislike of an author or a genre and were rather nasty in tone. Cervantes' parody, on the other hand, is an affectionate send-up of a genre for which he had a certain fondness. Evidence suggests that Cervantes was an enthusiastic reader of courtly romances.

In all parodies, readers are invited to laugh at the characters' expense and to feel superior to them. However, the genius of Cervantes' work lies in the fact that while we may laugh at Don Quixote, we are not always sure that our way of seeing the world is superior to his, and we come to share the author's affection for him.

Cervantes' novel resulted in a new word used to describe a person who is well intentioned, impractical, foolishly idealistic dreamer: *quixotic*. 
Chapter 1

Which treats of the station in life and the pursuits of the famous gentleman, Don Quixote de la Mancha.

In a village of La Mancha, the name of which I have no desire to recall, there lived not so long ago one of those gentlemen who always have a lance in the rack, an ancient buckler, a skinny nag, and a greyhound for the chase. A stew with more beef than mutton in it, chopped meat for his evening meal, scraps for a Saturday, lentils on Friday, and a young pigeon as a special delicacy for Sunday went to account for three quarters of his income. The rest of it he laid out on a broadcloth greatcoat and velvet stockings for feast days, with slippers to match, while the other days of the week he cut a figure in a suit of the finest homespun. Living with him were a housekeeper in her forties, a niece who was not yet twenty, and a lad of the field and marketplace who saddled his horse for him and wielded the pruning knife.

This gentleman of ours was close on to fifty, of a robust constitution but with little flesh on his bones and a face that was lean and gaunt. He was noted for his early rising, being very fond of the hunt. They will try to tell you that his surname was Quijada or Quesada—there is some difference of opinion among those who have written on the subject—but according to the most likely conjectures we are to understand that it was really Quejana. But all this means very little so far as our story is concerned, providing that in the telling of it we do not depart one iota from the truth.

You may know, then, that the aforesaid gentleman, on those occasions when he was at leisure, which was most of the year around, was in the habit of reading books of chivalry with such pleasure and devotion as to lead him almost wholly to forget the life of a hunter and even the administration of his estate. So great was his curiosity and infatuation in this regard that he even sold many acres of tillable land in order to be able to buy and read the books that he loved, and he would carry home with him as many of them as he could obtain.

Of all those that he thus devoured, none pleased him so well as the ones that had been composed by the famous Feliciano de Sliva, whose lucid prose style and involved conceits were as precious to him as pearls; especially when he came to read those tales of love and amorous challenges that are to be met with in many places, such a passage as the following, for example: "The reason of the unreason that afflicts my reason, in such a manner weakness my reason that

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2 La Mancha: a province of south-central Spain, a poor plateau land lying alongside the mountains called Sierra Morena; to Cervantes, La Mancha represented a poor, backward area in the middle of nowhere.
3 Quijada or Quesada: distinguished Spanish family names.
4 The authors of chivalric romances often claimed that they were retelling the stories of actual historical figures about whom legends had sprung up. To parody this convention, Cervantes teases readers throughout his novel with conjectures about Don Quixote’s "actual" identity.
5 Feliciano de Silva: a sixteenth-century writer of romances, including Don Florisel de Niquea, from which the following quotation is taken.
with reason lament me of your comeliness." And he was similarly affected when his eyes fell
upon such lines as these: "... the high heaven of your divinity divinely fortifies you with the
stars and renders you deserving of that desert your greatness doth deserve." 6

The poor fellow used to lie awake nights in an effort to disentangle the meaning and make sense
out of passages such as these, although Aristotle himself would not have been able to understand
them, even if he had been resurrected for that sole purpose. He was not at ease in his mind over
those wounds that Don Belianís gave and received; for no matter how great the surgeons who
 treated him, the poor fellow must have been left with his face and his entire body covered with
marks and scars. Nevertheless, he was grateful to the author for closing the book with the
promise of an interminable adventure to come; many a time he was tempted to take up his pen
and literally finish the tale as had been promised, and he undoubtedly would have done so, and
would have succeeded at it very well, if this thoughts had not been constantly occupied with
other things of greater moment.

He often talked it over with the village curate who was a learned man, a graduate of Sigüenza, 7
and they would hold long discussions as to who had been the better knight, Palmerin of England
 or Amadis of Gaul; 8 but Master Nicholas, the barber of the same village, was in the habit of
saying that no one could come up to the Knight of Phoebus, 9 and that if anyone could compare
with him it was Don Galaor, brother of Amadis of Gaul, for Galaor was ready for anything—he
was none of your finical knights who went around whimpering as his brother did, and in point of
valor he did not lag behind him.

In short, our gentleman became so immersed in his reading that he spent whole nights from
sundown to sunup and his days from dawn to dusk in poring over his books, until, finally, from
so little sleeping and so much reading, his brain dried up and he went completely out of his mind.
He had filled his imagination with everything that he had read, with enchantments, knightly
encounters, battles, challenges, wounds, with tales of love and its torments, and all sorts of
impossible things, and as a result had come to believe that all these fictitious happenings were
true; they were more real to him than anything else in the world. He would remark that Cid 10
Ruy Díaz had been a very good knight, but there was no comparison between him and the Knight
of the Flaming Sword, who with a single backward stroke and cut in half two fierce and
monstrous giants. He preferred Bernado del Carpio, who at Roncesvalles had slain Roland
despite the charm 11 the latter bore, availing himself of the stratagem that Hercules employed
when he strangled Antaeus, 12 the son of Earth, in his arms.

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6 Before quoting from de Silva romance, the narrator says it will demonstrate a "lucid" prose style. This is not a
lucid prose style and so the narrator is using verbal irony for comic effect.
7 Sigüenza: a minor Spanish university with a poor reputation, hence an ironic reference.
8 Palmerin of England or Amadis of Gaul: famous heroes of chivalric romances.
9 Phoebus: Apollo, the sun god in Greek mythology; here used as a symbolic name.
10 Cid (thêd): the subject of Spain's national epic.
11 Charm: magic that made him invulnerable.
12 Antaeus: In Greek mythology, Antaeus could not be killed as long as he remained in contact with the earth.
Hercules lifted him and then strangled him.
He had much good to say for Morgante\textsuperscript{13} who, though he belonged to the haughty, overbearing race of giants was of an affable disposition and well brought up. But, above all, he cherished an admiration for Rinaldo of Montalbán,\textsuperscript{14} especially as he beheld him sallying forth from his castle to rob all those that crossed his path, or when he thought of him overseas stealing the image of Mohammed, which, so the story has it, was all of gold. And he would have liked very well to have had his fill of kicking the traitor Galalón,\textsuperscript{15} a privilege for which he would have given his housekeeper with his niece thrown into the bargain.

At last, when his wits were gone beyond repair, he come to conceive the strangest idea that ever occurred to any madman in this world. It now appeared to him fitting and necessary, in order to win a greater amount of honor for himself and serve his country at the same time, to become a knight-errant and roam the world on horseback, in a suit of armor; he would go in quest of adventures, by way of putting into practice all that he had read in his books; he would right every manner of wrong, placing himself in situations of the greatest peril such as would redound to the eternal glory of his name. As a reward for his valor and the might of arm, the poor fellow could already see himself crowned Emperor of Trebizond\textsuperscript{16} at the very least; and so, carried away by the strange pleasure that he found in such thoughts as these, he at once set about putting his plan into effect.

The first thing he did was to burnish up some old pieces of armor, left him by his great-grandfather, which for ages had lain in a corner, molding and forgotten. He polished and adjusted them as best the could, and then he noticed that on very important thing was lacking; there was no closed helmet, but only a morion,\textsuperscript{17} or visorless headpiece, with turned-up brim of the kind foot soldiers wore. His ingenuity, however, enabled him to remedy this, and he proceeded to fashion out of cardboard a kind of half-helmet, which when attached to the morion, gave the appearance of a whole one. True, when he went to see if it was strong enough to withstand a good slashing blow, he was somewhat disappointed; for when he drew his sword and gave it a couple of thrusts, he succeeded only in undoing a whole week's labor. The ease at which he had hewed it to bits disturbed him no little, and he decided to make it over. This time he placed a few strips of iron on the inside and then, convinced that it was strong enough, refrained from putting it to any further test; instead, he adopted it then and there as the finest helmet ever made.

After this, he went out to have a look at his nag; and although the animal had more cuartos, or cracks, in its hoof than there are quarters in a real,\textsuperscript{18} and more blemishes than Gonela's steed\textsuperscript{19} which \textit{tantum pellis et ossa fuit},\textsuperscript{20} it nonetheless looked to its master like a far better horse than

\textsuperscript{13}Morgante: a character in an Italian epic.
\textsuperscript{14}Rinaldo of Montalbán: one of Charlemagne's knights.
\textsuperscript{15}Galalón: Ganelon, who in the \textit{Song of Roland}, betrayed the French at the pass of Roncesvalles.
\textsuperscript{16}Trebizond: Greek empire that was an offshoot of the Byzantine Empire.
\textsuperscript{17}morion: a helmet with a curved peak, used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
\textsuperscript{18}real (rā-āl'): an old Spanish coin, something like a nickel; there were eight cuartos (meaning both "quarter" and "crack") in a real
\textsuperscript{19}Gonela's steed: Gonela, the jester of the Duke of Ferrara, had a horse that was the butt of many jokes.
\textsuperscript{20}tantum…fuit: "was noting but skin and bones" (Latin).
Alexander’s Bucephalus or the Babieca\(^{21}\) of the Cid. He spent all of four days in trying to think up a name for his mount; for—so he told himself—seeing that it belonged to so famous and worthy a knight, there was no reason why it should not have a name of equal renown. The kind of name he wanted was one that would at once indicate what the nag had been before it came to belong to a knight-errant and what its present status was; for it stood to reason that, when the master's worldly condition changed, his horse also aught to have a famous high-sounding appellation, one suited to the new order of things and the new profession that it was to follow.

After he in his memory and imagination had made up, struck out, and discarded many names, now adding to and now subtracting from the list, he finally hit up "Rocinante,"\(^{22}\) a name that impressed him as being sonorous and the same time indicative of what the steed had been when it was but a hack, whereas now it was nothing other than the first and foremost of all the hacks in the world.\(^ {23}\)

Having found a name for his horse that pleased his fancy, he then desired to do as much for himself, and this required another week, and by the end of that period he had made up his mind that he was henceforth to be known as Don Quixote,\(^ {24}\) which, as has been stated, has led the authors of this veracious history to assume that his real name must undoubtedly have been Quijada, and not Quesada as others would have it. But remembering that the valiant Amadis was not content to call himself that and nothing more, but added the name of his kingdom and fatherland that he might make it famous also, and thus came to take the name Amadis of Gaul, so our good knight chose to add his place of origin and become "Don Quixote de la Mancha"; for by this means, as he saw it, he was making very plain his lineage and was conferring honor upon his country by taking its name as his own.\(^ {25}\)

And so, having polished up his armor and made the morion over into a closed helmet, and having given himself and his horse a name, he naturally found but one thing lacking still: he must seek out a lady of whom he could become enamored; for a knight-errant without a ladylove was like a tree without leaves or fruit, a body without a soul.

"If," he said to himself, "as a punishment for my sins or by a stroke of fortune I should come upon some giant hereabouts, a thing that very commonly happens to knights-errant, and if I should slay him in a hand-to-hand encounter or perhaps cut him in tow, or, finally, if I should vanquish and subdue him, would it not be well to have someone to whom I may send him as a present, in order that he, if he is living, may come in, fall upon his knees in front of my sweet lady, and say in a mumble and submissive tone of voice, 'I, lady, am the giant Caraculiambro, lord of the island Malindrania, who has been overcome in single combat by that knight who never can be praised enough, Don Quixote de la Mancha, the same who sent me to present myself before your Grace that your Highness may dispose of me as you see fit?"

\(^{\text{21}}\) Bucephalus: war horse of Alexander the Great. \(\text{.Babieca: Cid's champion horse.}\)

\(^{\text{22}}\) Rocinate: coined from the word rocin, meaning "a nag" or "hack" and the word ante, meaning "before"; Rocinate therefore means "formerly a nag" and implies a grand new status.

\(^{\text{23}}\) A hack is an old, worn-out horse.

\(^{\text{24}}\) Quixote: the name for a piece of armor that covers the thigh.

\(^{\text{25}}\) name as his own: If a man named Smith from Wichita called himself Lord Smythe of Kansas, the effect might be something like this.
Oh, how our good knight reveled in this speech, and more than ever when he came to think of the name that he should give his lady! As the story goes, there was a very good-looking farm girl who lived nearby, with whom he had once been smitten, although it is generally believed that she never knew or suspected it. Her name was Aldonza Lorenzo, and it seemed to him that she was the one upon whom he should bestow the title of mistress of his thoughts. For here he washed a name that should not be incongruous with his own and that would convey the suggestion of a princess or a great lady; accordingly, he resolved to call her “Dulcinea” del Toboso, she being a native of that place. A musical name to his ears, out of the ordinary and significant, like the others he had chosen for himself and his appurtenances.

From Chapter 2
Which treats of the first sally that the ingenious Don Quixote made from his native health.

Having, then made all these preparations, he did not wish to lose any time in putting his plan into effect, for he could not but blame himself for what the world was losing by his delay, so many were the wrongs that were to be righted, the grievances to be redressed, the abuses to be done away with, and the duties to be performed. Accordingly, without informing anyone of his intention and without letting anyone see him, he set out one morning before daybreak on one of those very hot days in July. Donning all his armor, mounting Rocinante, adjusting his ill-contrived helmet, bracing his shield on his arm, and taking up his lance, he sallied forth by the back gate of his stable yard into the open countryside. It was with great contentment and joy that he saw how easily he had made a beginning towards the fulfillment of his desire.

No sooner was he out on the plain, however, than a terrible thought assailed him, one that all but caused him to abandon the enterprise he had undertaken. This occurred when he suddenly remembered that he had never formally been dubbed a knight, and so, in accordance with the law of knighthood, was not permitted to bear arms against one who had a right to that title. And even if he had been, as a novice knight he would have had to wear white armor, without any device on his shield, until he should have earned one by his exploits. These thoughts led him to waver in his purpose, but, madness prevailing over reason, he resolved to have himself knighted by the first person he met, as many others had done if what he had read in those books that he had at home was true. And so far as white armor was concerned, he would scour his own the first chance that offered until it shone whiter than any ermine. With this he became more tranquil and continued on his way, letting his horse take whatever path it chose, for he believed that therein lay the very essence of adventures.

Don Quixote gets himself "knighted" by a bewildered innkeeper, who marvels at such an extraordinary variety of madness, but he is finally tricked by his friends and brought home, where he is treated as a lunatic. His family deprives him of the dangerous books, and they hope that the madness will pass.

26 Dulcinea: derived from the Spanish word dulce, meaning "sweet."
27 Satire: Don Quixote spends a great deal of time and energy renaming himself, his ladylove, and his horse.
28 white armor: that is, armor without any insignia or signs of use. Here Don Quixote is taking the term literally.
From Chapter 7

Of the second sally of our good knight, Don Quixote de la Mancha.

… He remained at home very tranquilly for a couple of weeks, without giving sign of any desire to repeat his former madness. During that time he had the most pleasant conversation with his two old friends, the curate and the barber, on the point he had raised to the effect that what the world needed most was knights-errant and a revival of chivalry. The curate would occasionally contradict him and again would give in, for it was only by means of this artifice that he could carry on a conversation with him at all.

In the meanwhile Don Quixote was bringing his powers of persuasion to bear upon a farmer who lived nearby, a good man—if this title may be applied to one who is poor—but with very few wits in his head. The short of it is, by pleas and promises, he got the hapless rustic to agree to ride forth with him and serve him as his squire. Among other things, Don Quixote told him that he ought to be more than willing to go, because no telling what adventure might occur which would win them an island, and then he (the farmer) would be left to be the governor of it. As a result of these and other similar assurances, Sancho Panza forsook his wife and children and consented to take upon himself the duties of squire to his neighbor.

Next, Don Quixote set out to raise some money, and by selling this thing and pawning that and getting the worst of the bargain always, and he finally scraped together a reasonable amount. He also added a friend of his for the loan of a buckler and patched up his broken helmet as well as he could. He advised his squire, Sancho, of the day and hour whey they were to take the road and told him to see to laying in a supply of those things that were most necessary, and, above all, not to forget the saddlebags. Sancho replied that he would see to all this and added that he was also thinking of taking along with him a very good ass that he had, as he was not much used to going on foot.

With regard to the ass, Don Quixote had to do a little thinking, trying to recall if any knight-errant had ever had a squire thus asininely mounted. He could not think of any, but nevertheless he decided to take Sancho with the intention of providing him with a nobler steed as soon as occasion offered; he had but to appropriate the horse of the first discourteous knight he met. Having furnished himself with shirts and all the other things that the innkeeper had recommended, he and Panza rode forth one night unseen by anyone and without taking leave of wife and children, housekeeper or niece. They went so far that by the time morning came they were safe from discovery had a hunt been started for them.

Mounted on his ass, Sancho Panza rode along like a patriarch, with saddlebags and flask, his mind set upon becoming governor of that island that his master had promised him. Don Quixote determined to take the same route and road over the Campo de Montiel that he had followed on his first journey; but he was not so uncomfortable this time, for it was early morning and the sun’s rays fell upon them slantingly and accordingly did not tire them too much.

29 buckler: a small shield
30 Campo de Montiel: the site of the famous battle in 1369.
“Look, Sir Knight-errant,” said Sancho, “your Grace should not forget that island you promised me; for no matter how big it is, I’ll be able to govern it right enough.”

“I would have you know, friend Sancho Panza,” replied Don Quixote, “that among the knights-errant of old it was a very common custom to make their squires governors of the islands or the kingdoms that they won, and I am resolved that in my case so pleasing a usage shall not fall into desuetude. I even mean to go them one better; for they very often, perhaps most of the time, waited until their squires were old men who had had their fill of serving their masters during bad days and worse nights, whereupon they would give them the title of count, or marquis at most, of some valley or province more or less. But if you live and I live, it well may be that within a week I shall win some kingdom with others dependent upon it, and it will be the easiest thing in the world to crown you king of one of them. You need not marvel at this, for all sorts of unforeseen things happen to knights like me, and I may readily be able to give you even more than I have promised.”

“In that case,” said Sancho Panza, “if by one of those miracles of which your Grace was speaking I should become king, I would certainly send for Juana Gutierrez, my old lady, to come and be my queen, and the young ones could be infantes.”

“There is no doubt about it,” Don Quixote assured him.

“Well, I doubt it,” said Sancho, “for I think that even if God were to rain kingdoms upon the earth, no crown would sit well on the head of Mari Gutierrez, for I am telling you, sir, as a queen she is not worth two maravedis. She would do better as a countess, God help her.”

“Leave everything to God, Sancho,” said Don Quixote, “and he will give you whatever is most fitting; but I trust you will not be so pusillanimous as to be content with anything less than the title of viceroy.”

“That I will not,” said Sancho Panza, “especially seeing that I have in your Grace so illustrious a master who can give me all that is suitable to me and all that I can arrange.”

From Chapter 8

Of the good fortune which the valorous Don Quixote had in the terrifying and never-before-imagined adventure of the windmills, along with other events that deserve to be suitably recorded.

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31 *desuetude*: disuse
32 The titles of *count* and *marquis* originated during the feudal age. Feudal society was based on a chain of mutual obligations between peasants, landed nobility, and kings. *Count* is the lowest title of European nobility. *A marquis* is the next highest title, followed by a duke. Such titles were usually hereditary.
33 *infantes*: a term used to designate the children of a Spanish king.
34 *Mari Gutierrez*: Sancho’s wife, who appears under several names during the course of the story.
35 *maravedis*: old Spanish coins of trifling value.
36 *pusillanimous*: timid
At this point they caught sight of thirty or forty windmills which were standing on the plain there, and no sooner had Don Quixote lad eyes upon them than he turned to his squire and said, “Fortune is guiding our affairs better than we could have wished; for you see there before you, friend Sancho Panza, some thirty or more lawless giants with whom I mean to do battle. I shall deprive them of their lives, and with the spoils from this encounter we shall begin to enrich ourselves; for this is righteous warfare, and it is a great service to Go to remove do accursed a breed from the face of the earth.”

“What giants?” said Sancho Panza

“Those that you see there,” replied his master, “those with the two long arms, some of which are as much as two leagues in length.”

“But look, your Grace, those are not giants but windmills, and what appear to be arms are their wings which, when whirled in the breeze, cause the millstone to go.”

“It is plain to be seen,” said Don Quixote, “that you have had little experience in this matter of adventures. If you are afraid, go off to one side and say your prayers while I am engaging them in fierce, unequal combat.”

Saying this, he gave spurs to his steed Rocinante, without paying any heed to Sancho’s warning that these were truly windmills and not giants that he was riding forth to attack. Nor even when he was close upon them did he perceive what they really were, but shouted at the top of his lungs, “Do not seek to flee, cowards and vile creatures that you are, for it is but a single knight with whom you have to deal!”

At that moment a little wind came up and the big wings began turning.

“Though you flourish as many arms as did the giant Birareus, said Don Quixote when he perceived this, “you still shall have to answer to me.”

He thereupon commended himself with all his heart to his lady Dulcinea, beseeching her to succor him in this peril; and, being well covered with his shield and with his lance at rest, he bore down upon them at a full gallop and fell upon the first mill that stood in his way, giving a thrust at the wing, which was whirling at such a speed that his lance was broken into bits and both horse and horseman went rolling over the plain, very much battered indeed. Sancho upon his donkey came hurrying to his master’s assistance as fast as he could, but when he reached the spot, the knight was unable to move, so great was the shock with which he and Rocinante had hit the ground.

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37 According to the ideals of chivalry, knights fought to protect the weak and to serve God and society. In fact, they lived on what they could plunder from their enemy in “spoils,” and their constant battles often harmed innocent bystanders.

38 Birareus: in Greek mythology, a giant with a hundred arms, who helped Zeus overthrow the Titans.
“God help us!” exclaimed Sancho, “did I not tell your Grace to look well, that those were
nothing but windmills, a fact which no one could fail to see unless he had other mills of the same
sort in his head?”

“Be quiet, friend Sancho,” said Don Quixote. “Such are the fortunes of war, which more than
any other are subject to constant change. What is more, when I come to think of it, I am sure that
this must be the work of that magician Frestón, the one who robbed me of my study and books,
and who has thus changed the giants into windmills in order to deprive me of the glory of
overcoming them, so great is the enmity that he bears me; but in the end his evil arts shall not
prevail against this trusty sword of mine.”

“May God’s will be done,” was Sancho Panza’s response. And with the aid of his squire the
knight was once more mounted on Rocinante, who stood there with one shoulder half out of
joint. And so, speaking of the adventure that had just befallen them, they continued along the
Puerto Lápice highway; for there, Don Quixote said, they could not fail to find many and varied
adventures, this being a much-traveled thoroughfare. The only thing was, the knight was
exceedingly downcast over the loss of his lance.

“I remember,” he said to his squire,” having read of a Spanish knight by the name of Diego Pérez
de Vargas, who, having broken his sword in battle, tore from an oak a heavy bough or branch
and with it did such feats of valor that day, and pounded so many Moors, that he came to be
known as Machuca, and he and his descendants from that day forth have been called Vargas y
Machuca. I tell you this because I, too, intend to provide myself with just such a bough as the
one he wielded, and with it I propose to do such exploits that you shall deem yourself fortunate
to have been found worthy to come with me and behold and witness things that are almost
beyond belief.”

“God’s will be done,” said Sancho. “I believe everything that your Grace says; but straighten
yourself up in the saddle a little, for you seem to be slipping down on one side, owing, no doubt,
to the shaking up that you received in your fall.”

“Ah, that is the truth,” replied Don Quixote, “and if I do not speak of my sufferings, it is for the
reason that it is not permitted knights-errant to complain of any would whatsoever, even though
their bowels may be dropping out.”

“If that is the way it is,” said Sancho, “I have nothing more to say; but, God knows, it would suit
me better if your Grace did complain when something hurts him. I can assure you that I mean to
do so, over the least little thing that ails me—that is, unless the same rule applies to squires as
well.”

Don Quixote laughed long and heartily over Sancho’s simplicity, telling him that he might
complain as much as he like and where and when he liked, whether he had good cause or not; for
he had read nothing to the contrary in the ordinances of chivalry. Sancho then called his
master’s attention to the fact that it was time to eat. The knight replied that he himself had no

39 Machuca: literally, “the pounder,” the hero of an old ballad.
40 ordinances: authoritative commands
need of food at the moment, but his squire might eat whenever he chose. Having been granted this permission, Sancho seated himself as best he could upon his beast, and, taking out from his saddlebags the provisions that he had stored there, he rode along leisurely behind his master, munching his victuals and taking a good, hearty swig now and then at the leather flask in a manner that might well have caused the biggest-bellied tavernkeeper of Málaga to envy him. Between drafts he gave not so much as a thought to any promise that his master might have made him, nor did he look upon it as any hardship, but rather as good sport, to go in quest of adventures however hazardous they might be.

The short of the matter is, they spent the night under some trees, from one of which Don Quixote tore off a withered bough to serve him as a lance, placing it in the lance head from which he had removed the broken one. He did not sleep all night long for thinking of his lady, Dulcinea; for this was in accordance with what he had read in his books, of men of arms in the forest or desert places who kept a wakeful vigil, sustained by the memory of their ladies fair. Not so with Sancho, whose stomach was full, and not with chicory water. He fell into a dreamless slumber, and had not his master called him. He would not have been awakened either by the rays of the sun in his face or by the many birds who greeted the coming of the new day with their merry song.

Upon arising, he had another go at the flask, finding it somewhat more flaccid than it had been the night before, a circumstance which grieved his heart, for he could not see that they were on the way to remedying the deficiency within any very short space of time. Don Quixote did not wish any breakfast; for, as has been said, he was in the habit of nourishing himself on savorous memories. They then set out once more along the road to Puerto Lápice, and around three in the afternoon they came in sight of the pass that bears that name.

“‘There,’ said Don Quixote as his eyes fell upon it, ‘we may plunge our arms up to the elbow in what are known as adventures. But I must warn you that even though you see me in the greatest peril in the world, you are not to lay hand upon your sword to defend me, unless it be that those who attack me are rabble and men of low degree, in which case you may very well come to my aid; but if they be gentlemen, it is in no wise permitted by the laws of chivalry that you should assist me until you yourself shall have been dubbed a knight.’”

“‘Most certainly, sir,’ replied Sancho, ‘your Grace shall be very well obeyed in this; all the more so for the reason that I myself am of a peaceful disposition and not fond of meddling in the quarrels and feuds of others. However, when it comes to protecting my own person, I shall not take account of those laws of which you speak, seeing that all laws, human and divine, permit each one to defend himself whenever he is attacked.’”

“I am willing to grant you that,” assented Don Quixote, “but in this matter of defending me against gentlemen you must restrain your natural impulses.”

“I promise you I shall do so,” said Sancho. “I will observe this precept as I would the Sabbath day.” . . .

41 chicory water: an inexpensive coffee substitute
--taken exactly from: World Literature: Revised Edition (Holt, Rinehart, and Winston) pgs. 821-836