

Chapter 10

Concerning what further befell Don Quixote with the Basque and the danger in which he found himself with a band of Galicians from Yanguas¹

By this time Sancho Panza, rather badly treated by the servants of the friars, had gotten to his feet and was paying close attention to the battle waged by his master and imploring God, in his heart, that it would be His will to grant Don Quixote a victory in which he would win an *ínsula* and make Sancho the governor, as he had promised. Seeing, then, that the combat had ended and his master was about to remount Rocinante, he came to hold the stirrups for him, and before Don Quixote mounted, Sancho fell to his knees before him, and grasping his hand, he kissed it and said:

“May it please your grace, Señor Don Quixote, to give me the governorship of the *ínsula* that you have won in this fierce combat; for no matter how big it may be, I feel I have the ability to govern it just as well as anyone else who has ever governed *ínsulas* in this world.”

To which Don Quixote responded:

“Let me point out, brother Sancho, that this adventure and those like it are adventures not of *ínsulas* but of crossroads, in which nothing is won but a broken head or a missing ear. Have patience, for adventures will present themselves in which you can become not only a governor, but perhaps even more.”

Sancho thanked him profusely, and after kissing his hand again, and the skirt of his cuirass, he helped him to mount Rocinante, and then he mounted his donkey and began to follow his master, who, at a rapid pace, without saying goodbye or speaking any further with the ladies in the carriage, rode into a nearby wood. Sancho followed as fast as his jackass would go, but Rocinante moved so quickly that the squire, seeing himself left behind, was obliged to call to his master to wait for him. Don Quixote did so, pulling on Rocinante’s reins until his weary squire caught up to him, and when he did, Sancho said:

“It seems to me, Señor, that it would be a good idea for us to take refuge in some church; for that man you fought was so badly injured that

it won’t be long before he tells the Holy Brotherhood² what happened, and they’ll arrest us, and by my faith, if they do, before we get out of prison they’ll put us through a terrible time.”

“Be quiet,” said Don Quixote. “Where have you ever seen or read that a knight errant has been brought before the law no matter how many homicides he may have committed?”

“I don’t know anything about *omecils*,”³ replied Sancho, “and I never did beat one in my life; all I know is that the Holy Brotherhood takes care of people who fight in the countryside, and I don’t want anything to do with that.”

“Well, do not trouble yourself, my friend,” Don Quixote responded, “for I shall save you from the hands of the Chaldeans, not to mention those of the Brotherhood. But tell me as you value your life: have you ever seen a more valiant knight than I anywhere on the face of the earth? Have you read in histories of another who has, or ever had, more spirit in attacking, more courage in persevering, more dexterity in wounding, or more ingenuity in unhorsing?”

“The truth is,” replied Sancho, “that I never read any history because I don’t know how to read or write, but I’ll wager that in all my days I’ve never served a bolder master than your grace, and may it please God that all this boldness isn’t paid for in the place I said. What I beg of your grace is that we treat your wounds; a lot of blood is coming out of that ear; and I have some lint⁴ and a little white salve here in the saddlebags.”

“None of that would be needed,” replied Don Quixote, “if I had remembered to prepare a flask of the balm of Fierabrás,⁵ for just one drop saves both time and medicines.”

“What flask and what balm is that?” asked Sancho Panza.

“It is a balm,” replied Don Quixote, “the recipe for which I have memorized, and with it one need not fear death, nor think that one will

1. The first two are epic poems by Jerónimo Senipere (s60) and Pedro de La Vecilla Castetlanos (1586); the third work is not known, although Luis de Avila did write a prose commentary on Spain’s wars with the German Protestants. Martín de Riquer believes that Cervantes intended to cite the poem *Carlo famoso* (166) by Luis Zapara.

2. The *Santa Hermandad*, or Holy Brotherhood, was an armed force that policed the countryside and the roads.

3. Sancho confuses *homicidios* (“homicides”) and *omecillas* (“grudges”).

4. Lint was used in much the same way that absorbent cotton is used in modern medicine.

5. Mentioned in a twelfth-century *chanson de geste* that was translated into Spanish prose in 1525 and became very popular, the balm could heal the wounds of anyone who drank it.

die of any wound. When I prepare it and give it to you, all you need do, when you see in some battle that they have cut my body in two (as is wont to happen), is to pick up the part of my body that has fallen to the ground, and very artfully, and with great cunning, before the blood congeals, place it on top of the other half still in the saddle, being careful to fit them together precisely and exactly. Then you will give me only two mouthfuls to drink of the balm I have mentioned, and you will see me sounder than an apple.”

“If that is true,” said Panza, “I renounce here and now the governorship of the *ínsula* you have promised and want nothing else in payment for my many good services but that your grace give me the recipe for this marvelous potion, for I think an ounce of it will bring more than two *reales* anywhere, and I don’t need more than that to live an easy and honorable life. But what I’d like to know now is if it costs a lot to make.”

“With less than three *reales* you can make more than six *azumbres*,”⁶ replied Don Quixote.

“Poor sinner that I am!” said Sancho. “What is your grace waiting for, why don’t you make it and show me how it’s done?”

“Be quiet, my friend,” Don Quixote responded, “for I intend to show you greater secrets and do you greater good turns; for now, let us treat these wounds, for my ear hurts more than I should like.”

Sancho took lint and salve out of the saddlebags. But when Don Quixote saw that his helmet had been broken, he thought he would go mad, and placing his hand on his sword and lifting his eyes to heaven, he said:

“I make a vow to the Creator of all things, and to the four Holy Gospels in the fullness of all their writing, that I shall lead the life led by the great Marquis of Mantua when he swore to avenge the death of his nephew Valdovinos, which was to eat no bread at the table, nor to lie with his wife, and other things which I do not remember but I consider them stated here, until I take my entire revenge on the one who has done me so great a wrong.”

On hearing this, Sancho said:

“Look, your grace, Señor Don Quixote, if the gentleman did what you ordered him to and went to present himself to my lady Dulcinea of Toboso, then he has already done what he had to do and doesn’t deserve another punishment if he doesn’t commit another crime.”

6. An *azumbre* was the equivalent of a little more than two liters.

“You have spoken very well and to the point,” Don Quixote responded, “and so I revoke the part of the vow that deals with wreaking new vengeance on him, but I make it and confirm it again with regard to leading the life I mentioned until such time that I take by force another helmet just as good as this one from some other knight. And do not think, Sancho, that I do this without reflection, for I have a good model to emulate; the same thing happened in exactly the same way with regard to the helmet of Mambrino, which cost Sacripante⁷ so dearly.”

“Your grace should send such vows to the devil, Señor,” replied Sancho, “for they are very dangerous to your health and very damaging to your conscience. If not, then tell me: if for many days we don’t happen to run into a man armed with a helmet, what will we do? Must we keep the vow in spite of so many inconveniences and discomforts, like sleeping in our clothes, and sleeping in the open, and a thousand other acts of penance contained in the vow of that crazy old man the Marquis of Mantua, which your grace wants to renew now? Look, your grace, no armed men travel along these roads, only muledrivers and wagondrivers, and they not only don’t have helmets, but maybe they haven’t even heard of them in all their days.”

“In this you are deceived,” said Don Quixote, “because in less than two hours’ time at these crossroads we shall see more armed men than those who besieged Albracca,⁸ when Angelica the Fair was defeated.”

“All right, then; so be it,” said Sancho, “and may it please God that all goes well with us and the time comes soon when we win this *ínsula* that is costing me so dear, and then I can die.”

“I have already told you, Sancho, that you should have no care in that regard; if an *ínsula* is lacking, there is always the kingdom of Denmark, or that of Soliadisa,⁹ which will fit you like the ring on your finger, and because they are on terra firma you ought to rejoice even more. But all of this in due course; look and see if you have anything to eat in those saddlebags, and then we shall go in search of a castle where we can stay the night and prepare the balm I told you of, because I swear before God that my ear is hurting a good deal.”

7. Loosely based on an episode in Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso*, in which Reinaldos de Monralbán takes the enchanted helmet of the Moorish king Mambrino from Dardinel (not Sacripante) and kills him in the process.

8. A reference to an episode in Boiardo’s *Orlando innamorato*, in which Agricane’s army, consisting of twenty-two hundred thousand knights, laid siege to Albracca.

9. This name appears in a novel of chivalry, *Clamades y Clarmonda* (1562); in later editions of *Don Quixote* it was changed to “Sobradisa,” a kingdom mentioned in *Amadis of Gaul*.

“I have here an onion, and a little cheese, and I don’t know how many crusts of bread,” said Sancho, “but these are not victuals suitable for a knight as valiant as your grace.”

“How little you understand!” Don Quixote responded. “I shall tell you, Sancho, that it is a question of honor for knights errant not to eat for a month, and when they do eat, it is whatever they find near at hand, and you would know the truth of this if you had read as many histories as I; although there are many of them, in none have I found it written that knights errant ever ate, unless perhaps at some sumptuous banquet offered in their honor; the rest of the time they all but fasted. Although it is understood that they could not live without eating or doing all the other necessities of nature because, in fact, they were men like ourselves, it must also be understood that because they spent most of their lives in the open, unpopulated countryside, without a cook, their most common food would be rustic viands, like those which you offer me now. And so, Sancho my friend, do not concern yourself with what may or may not be to my taste. You should not try to make the world over again or change the nature of errant chivalry.”

“Forgive me, your grace,” said Sancho. “Since I don’t know how to read or write, as I told you before, I don’t know and am not aware of the rules of the chivalric profession; from now on I’ll stock the saddlebags with all kinds of dried fruit for your grace, since you are a knight, and for me, since I’m not, I’ll fill them with other things that have wings and are more substantial.”

“I am not saying, Sancho,” replied Don Quixote, “that it is necessary for knights errant not to eat anything other than those fruits you mention, but simply that their most ordinary sustenance consisted of them and of certain plants found in the fields, which were known to them, and to me as well.”

“It’s a great virtue,” Sancho responded, “to know those plants, for I’m thinking that one day we’ll need to use that knowledge.”

He took out the things he said he was carrying, and they ate in peace and good companionship. But they wanted to find a place to sleep that night, and they quickly finished their dry and meager meal. Then they climbed back on their mounts and hurried to reach a village before dark, but the sun set, along with the hope of achieving their desire, when they were near the huts of some goatherds, and so they decided to spend the night there; as much as it grieved Sancho not to be in a town, it pleased

his master to sleep outdoors, for it seemed to him that each time this occurred it was another act of certification that helped to prove his claim to knighthood.