

Chapter 2

Which tells of the first sally that the ingenious Don Quixote made from his native land

And so, having completed these preparations, he did not wish to wait any longer to put his thought into effect, impelled by the great need in the world that he believed was caused by his delay, for there were evils to undo, wrongs to right, injustices to correct, abuses to ameliorate, and offenses to rectify. And one morning before dawn on a hot day in July, without informing a single person of his intentions, and without anyone seeing him, he armed himself with all his armor and mounted Rocinante, wearing his poorly constructed helmet, and he grasped his shield and took up his lance and through the side door of a corral he rode out into the countryside with great joy and delight at seeing how easily he had given a beginning to his virtuous desire. But as soon as he found himself in the countryside he was assailed by a thought so terrible it almost made him abandon the enterprise he had barely begun; he recalled that he had not been dubbed a knight, and according to the law of chivalry, he could not and must not take up arms against any knight; since this was the case, he would have to bear blank arms, like a novice knight without a device on his shield, until he had earned one through his own efforts. These thoughts made him waver in his purpose; but, his madness being stronger than any other faculty, he resolved to have himself dubbed a knight by the first person he met, in imitation of many others who had done the same, as he had read in the books that had brought him to this state. As for his arms being blank and white,¹ he planned to clean them so much that when the dubbing took place they would be whiter than ermine; he immediately grew serene and continued on his way, following only the path his horse wished to take, believing that the virtue of his adventures lay in doing this.

And as our new adventurer traveled along, he talked to himself, saying:

“Who can doubt that in times to come, when the true history of my famous deeds comes to light, the wise man who compiles them, when he begins to recount my first sally so early in the day, will write in this manner: ‘No sooner had rubicund Apollo spread over the face of the wide and spacious earth the golden strands of his beauteous hair, no sooner had diminutive and bright-hued birds with dulcet tongues greeted in sweet,

mellifluous harmony the advent of rosy dawn, who, forsaking the soft couch of her zealous consort, revealed herself to mortals through the doors and balconies of the Manchegan horizon, than the famous knight Don Quixote of La Mancha, abandoning the downy bed of idleness, mounted his famous steed, Rocinante, and commenced to ride through the ancient and illustrious countryside of Montiel.’”

And it was true that this was where he was riding. And he continued:

“Fortunate the time and blessed the age when my famous deeds will come to light, worthy of being carved in bronze, sculpted in marble, and painted on tablets as a remembrance in the future. O thou, wise enchanter, whoever thou mayest be, whose task it will be to chronicle this wondrous history! I implore thee not to overlook my good Rocinante, my eternal companion on all my travels and peregrinations.”

Then he resumed speaking as if he truly were in love:

“O Princess Dulcinea, mistress of this captive heart! Thou hast done me grievous harm in bidding me farewell and reproving me with the harsh affliction of commanding that I not appear before thy sublime beauty. May it please thee, Señora, to recall this thy subject heart, which suffers countless trials for the sake of thy love.”

He strung these together with other foolish remarks, all in the manner his books had taught him and imitating their language as much as he could. As a result, his pace was so slow, and the sun rose so quickly and ardently, that it would have melted his brains if he had had any.

He rode almost all that day and nothing worthy of note happened to him, which caused him to despair because he wanted an immediate encounter with someone on whom to test the valor of his mighty arm. Some authors say his first adventure was the one in Puerto Lápice; others claim it was the adventure of the windmills; but according to what I have been able to determine with regard to this matter, and what I have discovered written in the annals of La Mancha, the fact is that he rode all that day, and at dusk he and his horse found themselves exhausted and half-dead with hunger; as he looked all around to see if he could find some castle or a sheepfold with shepherds where he might take shelter and alleviate his great hunger and need, he saw an inn not far from the path he

1. The wordplay is based on the word *blanco*, which can mean both “blank” and “white.”

was traveling, and it was as if he had seen a star guiding him not to the portals, but to the inner towers of his salvation. He quickened his pace and reached the inn just as night was falling.

At the door there happened to be two young women, the kind they call ladies of easy virtue, who were on their way to Sevilla with some muledrivers who had decided to stop at the inn that night, and since everything our adventurer thought, saw, or imagined seemed to happen according to what he had read, as soon as he saw the inn it appeared to him to be a castle complete with four towers and spires of gleaming silver, not to mention a drawbridge and deep moat and all the other details depicted on such castles. He rode toward the inn that he thought was a castle, and when he was a short distance away he reined in Rocinante and waited for a dwarf to appear on the parapets to signal with his trumpet that a knight was approaching the castle. But when he saw that there was some delay, and that Rocinante was in a hurry to get to the stable, he rode toward the door of the inn and saw the two profligate wenches standing there, and he thought they were two fair damsels or two gracious ladies taking their ease at the entrance to the castle. At that moment a swineherd who was driving his pigs—no excuses, that’s what they’re called—out of some mudholes blew his horn, a sound that pigs respond to, and it immediately seemed to Don Quixote to be just what he had desired, which was for a dwarf to signal his arrival; and so with extreme joy he rode up to the inn, and the ladies, seeing a man armed in that fashion, and carrying a lance and shield, became frightened and were about to retreat into the inn, but Don Quixote, inferring their fear from their flight, raised the pasteboard visor, revealing his dry, dusty face, and in a gallant manner and reassuring voice, he said to them:

“Flee not, dear ladies, fear no villainous act from me; for the order of chivalry which I profess does not countenance or permit such deeds to be committed against any person, least of all highborn maidens such as yourselves.”

The women looked at him, directing their eyes to his face, hidden by the imitation visor, but when they heard themselves called maidens, something so alien to their profession, they could not control their laughter, which offended Don Quixote and moved him to say:

“Moderation is becoming in beauteous ladies, and laughter for no reason is foolishness; but I do not say this to cause in you a woeful or dolorous disposition, for mine is none other than to serve you.”

The language, which the ladies did not understand, and the bizarre appearance of our knight intensified their laughter, and his annoyance increased and he would have gone even further if at that moment the innkeeper had not come out, a man who was very fat and therefore very peaceable, and when he saw that grotesque figure armed with arms as incongruous as his bridle, lance, shield, and corselet, he was ready to join the maidens in their displays of hilarity. But fearing the countless difficulties that might ensue, he decided to speak to him politely, and so he said:

“If, Señor, your grace seeks lodging, except for a bed (because there is none in this inn), a great abundance of everything else will be found here.”

Don Quixote, seeing the humility of the steward of the castle-fortress, which is what he thought the innkeeper and the inn were, replied:

“For me, good castellan, anything will do, for

my trappings are my weapons,
and combat is my rest,”²

The host believed he had called him castellan because he thought him an upright Castilian, though he was an Andalusian from the Sanlúcar coast,³ no less a thief than Cacus and as malicious as an apprentice page, and so he responded:

“In that case, your grace’s beds must be bare rocks, and your sleep a constant vigil; and this being true, you can surely dismount, certain of finding in this poor hovel more than enough reason and reasons not to sleep in an entire year, let alone a single night.”

And having said this, he went to hold the stirrup for Don Quixote, who dismounted with extreme difficulty and travail, like a man who had not broken his fast all day long.

Then he told his host to take great care with his horse, because it was the best mount that walked this earth. The innkeeper looked at the horse and did not think it as good as Don Quixote said, or even half as good; after leading it to the stable, he came back to see what his guest might desire, and the maidens, who by this time had made peace with him, were divesting him of his armor, although they removed his breastplate and backpiece, they never knew how or were able to disconnect the gorget or

2. These lines are from a well-known ballad; the first part of the innkeeper’s response quotes the next two lines.

3. In Cervantes’s time, this was known as a gathering place for criminals.

remove the counterfeit helmet, which was tied on with green cords that would have to be cut because the ladies could not undo the knots; but he absolutely refused to consent to this, and so he spent all night wearing the helmet and was the most comical and curious figure anyone could imagine; as they were disarming him, and since he imagined that those well-worn and much-used women were illustrious ladies and damsels from the castle, he said to them with a good deal of grace and verve:

“Never was a knight
so well-served by ladies
as was Don Quixote
when he first sallied forth:
fair damsels tended to him;
princesses cared for his horse,⁴

or Rocinante, for this is the name, noble ladies, of my steed, and Don Quixote of La Mancha is mine; and although I did not wish to disclose my name until the great feats performed in your service and for your benefit would reveal it, perforce the adaptation of this ancient ballad of Lancelot to our present purpose has been the cause of your learning my name before the time was ripe; but the day will come when your highnesses will command, and I shall obey, and the valor of this my arm will betoken the desire I have to serve you.”

The women, unaccustomed to hearing such high-flown rhetoric, did not say a word in response; they only asked if he wanted something to eat.

“I would consume any fare,” replied Don Quixote, “because, as I understand it, that would be most beneficial now.”

It happened to be a Friday, and in all the inn there was nothing but a few pieces of a fish that in Castilla is called cod, and in Andalucía codfish, and in other places salt cod, and elsewhere smoked cod. They asked if his grace would like a little smoked cod, for there was no other fish to serve him.

“Since many little cod,” replied Don Quixote, “all together make one large one, it does not matter to me if you give me eight *reales*⁵ in coins or in a single piece of eight. Moreover, it well might be that these little cod are like veal, which is better than beef, and kid, which is better than goat.

4. Don Quixote paraphrases a ballad about Lancelot.

5. *Real* was the name given to series of silver coins, no longer in use, which were roughly equivalent to thirty-four *maravedis*, or one-quarter of a *peseta*.

But, in any case, bring it soon, for the toil and weight of arms cannot be borne if one does not control the stomach.”

They set the table at the door of the inn to take advantage of the cooler air, and the host brought Don Quixote a portion of cod that was badly prepared and cooked even worse, and bread as black and grimy as his armor; but it was a cause for great laughter to see him eat, because, since he was wearing his helmet and holding up the visor with both hands, he could not put anything in his mouth unless someone placed it there for him, and so one of the ladies performed that task. But when it was time to give him something to drink, it was impossible, and would have remained impossible, if the innkeeper had not hollowed out a reed, placing one end in the gentleman’s mouth and pouring some wine in the other; and all of this Don Quixote accepted with patience in order not to have the cords of his helmet cut. At this moment a gelder of hogs happened to arrive at the inn, and as he arrived he blew on his reed pipe four or five times, which confirmed for Don Quixote that he was in a famous castle where they were entertaining him with music, and that the cod was trout, the bread soft and white, the prostitutes ladies, the innkeeper the castellan of the castle, and that his decision to sally forth had been a good one. But what troubled him most was not being dubbed a knight, for it seemed to him he could not legitimately engage in any adventure if he did not receive the order of knighthood.