



I, Don Quixote

A play

by

DALE WASSERMAN

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& Renewed as revised—1988.

THE PEOPLE

(Note: Each character plays two or more roles. These are their permanent identities, in the prison.)

- MIGUEL DE CERVANTES In age about fifty. Tall, thin, with a short graying beard. Manner courtly, voice courteous and leavened with humor. Face life-worn. Eyes remarkable—a child's eyes, grave and curious, endlessly interested.
- ESCALANTE (Aldonza) A splendid alley cat, survivor if not always victor of many back-fence tussles. She is vital, half-savage, with an aura of natural sexuality. Black hair in tangled profusion. A ripe body threatening to burst its ragged clothes.
- SANCHO (Manservant) Short, rotund, cheery, mixing peasant naiveté and pragmatism in odd proportions.
- THE DUKE (Dr. Carrasco) A handsome young man of elegance and fearful ennui. English. His mordant cynicism marks the frustrated idealist.
- JUDAS MACABEO (Padre) An old man with little square spectacles. Unctuous and pedantic. Kindly and faintly ironic of manner.
- MONIPODIO (Governor) A born boss, jovial, clever, amoral. Knows every iniquity and is practiced in all. He limps.
- GRACIOSA (Antonia) A girl of eighteen, vacuously pretty, with a streak of malice. Not terribly bright but sometimes cunning.
- THE SCORPION (Pedro) A surly cutthroat with a hook in place of one hand. Bull-like and dangerous.
- LOBILLO (Anselmo) A swarthy, affable pimp. He plays guitar and sings well.
- EL MÉDICO (Barber) A grinning little man; evil and sprightly.
- MOTHER BANE (Housekeeper) A hoarse-voiced hag of many years and misdeeds.
- THE GYPSY A dark, lithe, and ragged boy of thirteen.
- CAPTAIN OF THE INQUISITION
- FOUR MASKED MEN OF THE INQUISITION (non-speaking)

THE SETTING

A vast stone prison vault whose furthest reaches are lost in shadow. There are skeletal platforms at various heights, used by the prisoners for sleeping, and by us for playing certain scenes. There are two qualities of light used: the scant cold rays which sift into the prison from a grille overhead; and the warm suffusion which lights the Don Quixote scenes.

Although the walls of the prison are seemingly solid stone they will, in the “playing” scenes, become transparent and give way to the hot sun and landscape of La Mancha; or on occasion to night sky with stars.

THE PLACE

A prison in Seville in 1594.

ACT I

(There is music. It sweeps and rolls with the bombast and blind arrogance of Spain at the end of the sixteenth century. A confident march to nowhere.)

The curtain rises on a one-way traveler which moves wall-like across stage, an art-work panorama of Spain. It is a profile of the wide, empty region called La Mancha framed in the distance by the burned hard lines of the sierra. A highway winds across the plains. These are some of the things we may see:

— A country home set bleakly in the fields.

- A shepherd escorting his flock in rolling clouds of dust.
- A crossroads gibbet with a hanged man dangling from its beam.
- A march of soldiers led by men playing bugles and kettledrums. They haul cannon and carry guns of the period.
- A turreted castle, disintegrating, springing from crags.
- A procession of hooded monks carrying tall crosiers, escort for a prelate in a sedan chair.
- The decorated wagon of a troupe of strolling players. The actors themselves riding, or walking behind in costume.
- A cluster of wind mills.
- Muleteers with long coiling whips freighting goods over the road.
- A roadside inn. And finally,
- The massive and ornate gates of Seville and, seen through and above them, the city itself.

On this last image the music has given way to the muffled drums and chanting of the MEN OF THE INQUISITION. The sound is inimical, chilling. Then the lights come up in the vast prison vault which occupies the entire stage.

The GYPSY is dancing a *seguriya gitana* with epicene sensuality. LOBILLO sings and beats the rhythm on a *sanbomba*. GRACIOSA wields a palm-broom in dry, shuffling accompaniment. JUDAS MACABEO tinkles with a spoon on an iron bar, nodding his head in dignified, approving manner. The DUKE is to one side, leaning against the wall, stiff in his armor of indifference. SOME of the other PRISONERS may be seen, dimly, sleeping or huddled in the shadows.

There is little vitality in the dance or accompaniment. Jaded, born of boredom.

The JAILER enters down right, followed by a MAN-SERVANT

burdened with a sizable, shabby straw trunk. HE pauses to look back.)

JAILER (brusquely, to someone following): Well? (MIGUEL DE CERVANTES enters carrying a bulky package under one arm. HE is hesitant; his eyes canvass the surroundings.) Anything wrong? The accommodations?

CERVANTES: No, no, they appear...interesting.

JAILER (slyly, rubbing finger and thumb): I could arrange something more private?

CERVANTES: I *like* company.

JAILER: If you change your mind, just shout...if you are able. (HE exits.)

MANSERVANT (nervously): What did he mean by that?

CERVANTES: Calm yourself. There is a remedy for everything but death.

MANSERVANT: That could be the one we need!

CERVANTES: Good morning, gentlemen...ladies. I regret being thrust upon you in this manner and I hope you will not find my company objectionable. (Silence. The PRISONERS' eyes glitter like snakes into whose den a rabbit has been thrust.) I'm not really a stranger to these surroundings, my friends. I have been in prison before—oh, yes, more than once! And on occasion I've thought the whole world a prison, a very large one where all have desires and practically none are satisfied. (HE laughs courteously—alone. Movement begins, a slow surround by the PRISONERS, approaching, circling. The SCORPION slithers to the floor from his sleeping place, his iron hook ready. MOTHER BANE comes creeping from upstage.) But how thoughtless of me to complain in the face of *your* misfortunes. Does one speak of the rope in the house of the hanged? Let me say, rather—take heart! Remember that the light of hope is most clearly seen in the dark. I have always believed —
(With a yell the PRISONERS pounce. The SCORPION leaps on

CERVANTES' back, bending him into an arc with the iron hook about his throat. The GYPSY and LOBILLO rifle his pockets, ripping them inside out. The WOMEN, shrieking like harpies, tear open the trunk and sack and plunder the contents. The MANSERVANT too is smothered in the attack.

The DUKE, unmoving, smiles remotely at the entertainment.

MONIPODIO, who has been sleeping, rolls over, blinks at the doings, sits up.)

MONIPODIO (a roar): *Basta!* Enough! (Action freezes. HE slides to the floor, grumbling and scratching.) Noise, trouble, fights. Kill each other if you must, but for God's sake do it quietly. (HE becomes aware of CERVANTES still held by the iron hook.) Who are you? (CERVANTES makes a strangling sound.) Eh?

(CERVANTES gurgles desperately. MONIPODIO snaps his fingers at the SCORPION, who sullenly releases CERVANTES.)

CERVANTES: Cervantes. Don Miguel de Cervantes.

MONIPODIO (with mock respect): A gentleman!

CERVANTES: It has never saved me from going to bed hungry.

MONIPODIO (of the MANSERVANT): And that?

CERVANTES: My servant. May I have the honor ...?

MONIPODIO: They call me "The Governor."

CERVANTES (bows): Your Excellency.

MONIPODIO: Are you mocking me?

CERVANTES (sincerely): No, *señor*. I have known several governors, and all deserved this place more than you.

MONIPODIO: I doubt that. What's your stuff?

CERVANTES: My ...?

MONIPODIO (impatiently): Your specialty, man. Cutpurse?

Highwayman?

CERVANTES: Oh, nothing so interesting! I am a poet.

THE DUKE (with his first sign of interest): They're putting men in prison for that?

CERVANTES: Oh, not for that!

THE DUKE (losing interest): Too bad.

MONIPODIO: Well, what *are* you here for?

CERVANTES: I am to appear before the Inquisition.

(A reaction among the PRISONERS—this is bad.)

MONIPODIO: Heresy?

CERVANTES: Not exactly. You see, I had been employed by the government as a tax-collector—

MONIPODIO: Tax-collector! You must be rich!

CERVANTES (a doleful denial): I have the misfortune to be honest.

(A whistle of incredulity from the PRISONERS.)

MONIPODIO (trying hard to stay with it): How does a tax-collector get in trouble with the Inquisition?

CERVANTES: By making assessments against the church.

MONIPODIO (in disbelief): You did...*what*?

CERVANTES (defensively): The law says tax all property equally.

MONIPODIO (helplessly): The *law*.

THE DUKE: This gentleman has empty rooms in his head.

MONIPODIO: They'll burn him at high noon and if I were there I'd light the fire. (Pulls himself together. Briskly.) Well. Let's get on with the trial.

(This is the signal for a burst of activity from the PRISONERS.)

THEY scurry about pulling benches in to position, setting up a table and stool for MONIPODIO. CERVANTES views this in growing bewilderment.)

CERVANTES: Excuse me. What trial?

MONIPODIO: Yours, of course.

CERVANTES: What have I done?

MONIPODIO (cheerfully): We'll find something.

CERVANTES: That's not fair!

MONIPODIO: Fair is for the innocent. You're guilty.

CERVANTES: You don't seem to understand. I'll only be here a few hours. The Inquisition—

MONIPODIO (patient but firm): My dear sir, no one enters or leaves this prison without being tried by his fellow-prisoners.

CERVANTES: And if I'm found guilty?

MONIPODIO: Oh, you will be.

CERVANTES: What kind of a sentence...?

MONIPODIO: We generally fine a prisoner all his possessions.

CERVANTES: All of them...

MONIPODIO: Well, it's not practical to take more.

CERVANTES: One moment! These things are my livelihood.

MONIPODIO (puzzled): I thought you said you were a poet.

CERVANTES: Of the theater.

(MONIPODIO crosses to the trunk, digs out a sword, pulls it from its scabbard.)

MONIPODIO: False!

CERVANTES: Costumes and properties. You see, actually I am a

playwright...and an actor. These are the trappings of my profession, so of course they could not possibly be of any use to...to... (Halts as HE looks at the inimical faces. The PRISONERS fling the trappings about, making a game of it. Helplessly clutching the package:) Very well, take them. Only leave me this. (The package is snatched from him and tossed to MONIPODIO.)

MONIPODIO: Heavy! Valuable?

CERVANTES: To me.

MONIPODIO: We might let you ransom it?

CERVANTES: I have no money.

MONIPODIO: How unfortunate. (Raps with his "gavel.") Hear ye, hear ye—

CERVANTES (desperately): Your Excellency!

MONIPODIO: Now what?

CERVANTES: I demand a jury.

MONIPODIO (a wave at the PRISONERS): You have one.

CERVANTES (looks them over): A man should know those who will judge him.

MONIPODIO (cheerfully): Certainly. Why not? (Making the rounds.) The Scorpion. Cutthroat and murderer.

THE SCORPION (presenting his iron hook): Here is my sting.

CERVANTES (a hand at his throat): Ah, yes...

MONIPODIO: Mother Bane.

CERVANTES: Your specialty, Mother?

MOTHER BANE: The Evil Eye!

CERVANTES (a compliment): It is superbly evil.

MONIPODIO: El Médico.

CERVANTES: I have always envied doctors. The only ones who can take our lives without fear of punishment.

MONIPODIO (chuckling, to EL MÉDICO): Show him how you operate. (EL MÉDICO, grinning, raises his clenched right fist. A wicked little blade springs out of a ring and EL MÉDICO jerks it across an imaginary throat. CERVANTES recoils.) Anyone you want scarred? The Doctor charges by the inch. (Moving on.) The Gypsy. Pickpocket.

THE GYPSY: I can steal your watch while you're looking at it!

CERVANTES: How fortunate that I do not own one.

MONIPODIO: Judas Macabeo. Jew and professional slanderer.

CERVANTES: The first crime is self-evident. But professional slanderer...?

JUDAS MACABEO: Engage my services and I will spread stories about your enemy that will ruin his business, his reputation, and the good name of his wife.

CERVANTES: A difficult way to make a living. So much competition!

MONIPODIO: Lobillo, the Little Wolf. He is a...businessman.

LOBILLO (wounded): A broker.

CERVANTES (to LOBILLO): May one ask the nature of your merchandise?

(LOBILLO snaps his fingers, smiling. The TWO GIRLS come to him.)

LOBILLO (introducing them): Graciosa. Escalante.

CERVANTES (gazing at ESCALANTE with interest): Escalante. The Ladder...?

LOBILLO: She is so frequently climbed.

MONIPODIO (cheerfully): A jury to hang the whole human race!

CERVANTES: And the judge?

MONIPODIO: Highly qualified. I have spent more time in court than most lawyers.

CERVANTES (curiously, of THE DUKE): And this gentleman?

MONIPODIO: The Duke. (A dismissal with a tinge of distaste.) Not really one of us.

THE DUKE (as CERVANTES crosses toward him; not looking): Name, James William Fox. Nationality: English. Profession: traitor.

CERVANTES: You deal in treason?

THE DUKE: I sell false information about one country to others too stupid to believe it.

CERVANTES (considers): It seems a sound proposition. What brought you here?

THE DUKE: A lapse of judgment. I told the truth. Whereupon your King Phillip had me arrested on the painfully obvious charge of heresy.

CERVANTES: You are for the Inquisition?

THE DUKE (remotely): How annoying to be charged with false gods when one has none at all.

CERVANTES (sympathetically): I am sorry.

THE DUKE: I shan't be called. A traitor has friends.

CERVANTES: Do you enjoy your profession?

THE DUKE: Oh, quite.

CERVANTES: Then why do you despise yourself?

THE DUKE (turns his eyes upon CERVANTES for the first time): I despise *all* men.

CERVANTES: I have noticed that men often jeer what they love best. Their country. The world.

THE DUKE (carefully): The world is a dungheap and we are maggots that crawl upon it.

CERVANTES (with ingenuous interest): And yet you told the truth when you should have lied.

THE DUKE: A moment of weakness!

CERVANTES: Or was it morality? Yes... I think that within you there is so stern a moralist he forced you to betray yourself.

THE DUKE (coming upright): I believe I could learn to dislike you. (With venom.) Poets. Spinning nonsense out of nothing! Are you a good poet or bad?

CERVANTES (with humor): Well, a poem of mine once took first prize in a competition.

THE DUKE: What was the prize?

CERVANTES: Three silver spoons.

THE DUKE: And that was the pinnacle of your success?

CERVANTES: I have written ballads for blind beggars to sing on the streets.

THE DUKE: How utterly loathsome. (To MONIPODIO:) Governor—if you don't mind, *I* should like to prosecute this case.

MONIPODIO (rapping on the package): Very well, I declare this court in session!

THE DUKE (strolls into the arena): Miguel de Cervantes. I charge you with being an idealist, a bad poet, and an honest man. How plead you?

CERVANTES (a pause as HE looks over the expectant faces): Guilty.

MONIPODIO: Excellent! It is the sentence of this court —

CERVANTES: Your Excellency! What about my defense?

MONIPODIO: But you just pleaded —

CERVANTES: Had I said “innocent” you would surely have found me guilty. Since I have admitted guilt the court is required to hear me out.

MONIPODIO (puzzled): For what purpose?

CERVANTES: The jury may choose to be lenient.

(MONIPODIO considers this odd argument. Then HE begins to chuckle.)

MONIPODIO: Clever!

THE DUKE: He is trying to gain time!

CERVANTES: Do you have a scarcity of *that*?

MONIPODIO (to the PRISONERS): Any urgent appointments? (A hollow groan is the answer. HE waves CERVANTES permission to proceed.)

CERVANTES: It is true I am guilty of these charges. An idealist? Well...I do not have the courage to believe in nothing. (The DUKE snorts disdainfully.) A bad poet? This comes more painfully...

THE DUKE: Don't forget those odes for blind beggars.

CERVANTES (smiling): Hunger drives talent to do things which are not on the map.

THE DUKE: You were also charged with being an honest man.

CERVANTES: Not my fault! I lack the training for professions like yours. But more than anything, I am guilty of bad luck.

MONIPODIO (dryly): Worse than ours?

CERVANTES: You chose your misfortunes. Mine were assigned

me by fate. My family...decayed nobility, too poor to indulge their pretensions, too proud to give them up. Only two careers were possible—the pen or the sword. I doubted my ability with words and so I became a soldier. I fought for the first time at Lepanto, against the Turks.

MONIPODIO: I was there! This crippled foot...

CERVANTES: This crippled hand. (HE raises his gloved left hand, smiling.) I gave my left hand for the greater glory of the right. They tell me I fought well. I do not know. I remember only that nothing was left undamaged that day but human hatred. They gave me letters of praise and sent me home. My ship was in sight of the Spanish coast, when out of the south came the galleys of Barbary pirates. And for the next five years I was a slave in Algiers. (EL MÉDICO giggles as though this were an uncommonly fine joke.) Yes. Ironic. The letters I carried led the Moors to believe I was someone of importance—and so they set an impossibly high price on my freedom. Five years, while my family begged, borrowed, sold all they owned in order to raise the ransom.

MONIPODIO: You never tried to escape?

CERVANTES: Seven times. And seven times caught. But I was too valuable to kill, so each time others paid the penalty for my attempt.

THE DUKE: Ah, then you *were* lucky.

CERVANTES: I wept for those who were killed or tortured in place of myself. Then suddenly I was ransomed. I came home with joy in my heart—and found there was no employment for a disabled soldier, no reward for hardship. My mother died, poor and alone. My brother, also a soldier, fell in Flanders. My two sisters, penniless and without hope of marriage, were forced to adopt—a bow to the TROLL OPS)—your profession. I was broken...sick at heart, sick of life. All that sustained me was the knowledge that there is no memory to which time does not put an end, no pain which death does not abolish.

MONIPODIO (skeptically): There's a saying, Cervantes, "A stout

heart breaks bad fortune.”

CERVANTES: I can no more avoid bad luck than I can strike the sky with my fist!

THE DUKE (laughs): How very touching.

CERVANTES: And so I turned to the pen. I joined a troupe of strolling players, writing, acting in my own plays. I grew to know every road, every village in Spain...every audience that pelted us with rotten eggs. And then—I fell in love.

THE DUKE: The final disaster.

CERVANTES: She was an actress in the company. Lovely...laughing...and fickle. I learned that love is a happy torment. A sweet poison. I learned that beauty looked at too closely vanishes like a dream. She left me with a keepsake of our affair—an infant daughter. The girl is grown up now but no comfort to me nor I to her.

THE DUKE: You looked for the wrong things in life, Cervantes.

CERVANTES: What should I have sought?

THE DUKE: There’s only one thing worth the struggle. Gold! It never betrays. It doesn’t sicken. Bullets cannot do it harm. And how it propagates!

CERVANTES: I know a better currency than that.

THE DUKE: Name it.

CERVANTES: Imagination.

THE DUKE: You won’t spend much of it in this place.

CERVANTES: What prison can hold a man’s imagination? (Taps his head.) I create in here. I invent other lives. I live them all. And in that moment—I am God.

THE DUKE (sincerely): I believe you must be mad.

CERVANTES: Possibly. But I *have* invented a man who was. A man

who...come—enter into my imagination and see him! His name is Alonso Quijana. A country squire...no longer young...bony and hollow-faced...eyes burning with the fire of inner vision. Being retired he has much time for books. He studies them from morn to night—and through the night as well. And all he reads oppresses him...fills him with indignation at man's murderous ways toward man. He broods...and broods...and finally, from so much brooding his brains dry up. He lays down the melancholy burden of sanity and conceives the strangest project a man ever imagined. He will become a knight-errant and sally forth into the world to right all wrongs! (The PRISONERS chortle appreciatively. CERVANTES moves quickly now, selecting props and costume elements from his trappings, falling into character as HE dons them; and his SERVANT assists.) He hunts out an old rusted suit of armor...or as many pieces as he can find. He scrubs and oils them. He fits them on his aging bones. Breastplate...cuise...shoulder plates...gauntlets...casque! But there is something missing. Of course! A proper knight must have a squire. (Looks about, crooks a finger at the MANSERVANT, who scurries to his side.) He finds one—a peasant from a neighboring farm. They conspire secretly to take their leave. And one morning...before their families are awake...they steal out of their homes... (The action is played. The MANSERVANT—now SANCHE PANZA—brings two stick-horses, one with a mournful nag's head, the other with an ass's.) They mount their trusty steeds. Softly, they make their way to the highway... (MUSIC COMING UP—and the lighting is altering, prison walls giving way to the hot sweep of Manchegan sky.) Now he is no longer Alonso Quijana—but a dauntless knight, known as—*Don Quixote de La Mancha!*

(MUSIC UP, and THEY ride.)

DON QUIXOTE (singing):

Never was knight so served

By any noble dame

As Don Quixote was

When down the road he came

With queens to wait on his every need

While princesses cared for his steed.

(Pulls up suddenly.) Sancho!

SANCHO: Your Grace?

DON QUIXOTE (looking ahead): How long since we sallied forth?

SANCHO (looks at the sun): About two minutes?

DON QUIXOTE: So soon!

SANCHO: Eh?

DON QUIXOTE: So soon shall I display the valor of my good right arm! Sancho, on this, the first day of our venture, I shall perform deeds that will be written down in the book of fame for centuries to come!

SANCHO: I don't quite follow Your Grace.

DON QUIXOTE (pointing into the distance): Do you see where yon dust cloud rises? Mark it well, Sancho—for beneath it marches a vast army!

SANCHO: No! (He cranes in his saddle.) What kind of army?

DON QUIXOTE: Men of all nations! I see Moors, Arabians, Medes, Parthians, Persians, Franks, Greeks, and Ethiopians. And look—look who commands!

SANCHO (frightened): Who?

DON QUIXOTE: Alifanfarón, the evil Emperor, Lord of the Isle of Trapobana!

SANCHO: God help us all!

DON QUIXOTE: He is that same wizard that stole the Princess Pentapolín and sealed her in a tower guarded by forty ogres!

SANCHO: Is Your Grace sure?

DON QUIXOTE: You see his coat of arms? A cat, crouching on a field tawny, and beneath it the inscription: "Miau"!

SANCHO: We'd better run!

DON QUIXOTE: Don Quixote run from a mere army? Take up thy bugle, Sancho. Blow me a blast that will strike fear into yon craven hearts!

(SANCHO takes the battered bugle which hangs by a cord around his neck and blows a frightened bleat.)

DON QUIXOTE (bellowing): Ho, false knight! Blackhearted betrayer of maidens! Prepare to meet thy doom! (HE levels his lance.)

SANCHO (excitedly, grabbing his arm): Your Grace! Wait! I see them now!

DON QUIXOTE: So do I.

SANCHO: It is only a flock of sheep!

DON QUIXOTE (annoyed): What nonsense is this?

SANCHO: I vow to God! No Moors, no Ethiopians, no cats—nothing but sheep. Listen!

DON QUIXOTE (cocking an ear): I hear the sound of trumpets and the rolling of drums!

SANCHO: Maybe Your Grace is hard of hearing. (HE lifts the flap of DON QUIXOTE'S casque. The baaing of many sheep is heard.) And see? There is the shepherd, the one Your Grace thought was Ali-what's-his-name.

DON QUIXOTE (bitterly, lowering his lance): Ah, Sancho, this is the work of my enemy.

SANCHO: What enemy?

DON QUIXOTE: The Enchanter. Envious of the glory I was to achieve in this battle, he changed the army into sheep and Alifanfarón into a shepherd.

SANCHO: He sounds dangerous!

DON QUIXOTE: He *is* dangerous. But one day we shall meet face to face, and then—!

SANCHO (sensibly): I wouldn't be upset, Your Grace. As I always say, have patience and shuffle the cards. I don't know who this enemy is, but if we keep traveling we're bound to meet him somewhere along the way. Furthermore—

DON QUIXOTE: Silence.

SANCHO: What?

DON QUIXOTE: I am trying to think!

SANCHO: Very well, Your Grace, but as Your Grace knows I am naturally talkative and it will be Your Grace's own fault if all the things I have to say begin to rot on the end of my tongue.

DON QUIXOTE: *Silence!* (SANCHO claps a hand over his mouth.) It comes to me, Sancho. How my enemy was able so easily to deceive me. (A groan of self-recrimination.) Oh, knave that I am. To violate the first rule of chivalry and then complain. Sancho—I beg you keep it secret from the world—but Don Quixote has committed a grievous error. (Silence.) Sancho? I spoke to you. (SANCHO dumbly indicates the hand over his mouth.) Sancho!

SANCHO: Your Grace said to be silent.

DON QUIXOTE: Do not anger me, Sancho, I warn you I am terrible in anger!

SANCHO: Very well. What was Your Grace saying?

DON QUIXOTE: I have been punished for committing a sin against the order of knighthood.

SANCHO: Which sin was that?

DON QUIXOTE: I had no right to offer nor accept a challenge since I have never properly been dubbed a knight.

SANCHO: That's no problem. Just tell me how it's done, Your Grace, and I'll be glad to take care of this drubbing.

DON QUIXOTE: Dubbing. Thank you, friend Sancho, but it is a ceremony which may only be performed by another knight.

SANCHO (whistles in dismay): *There's* a problem—I've never *seen* another knight.

DON QUIXOTE: The lord of some castle would do. Or a king, or a duke.

SANCHO: Very well, Your Grace. I'll keep an eye out for any kings or dukes as we ride.

DON QUIXOTE (gratefully): Thank you, my friend. (THEY ride on. DON QUIXOTE pulls up sharply.) Aha! See who approaches!

SANCHO: Doesn't look like royalty to me.

DON QUIXOTE: But notice what he wears on his head!

SANCHO (squinting into the sun): That *is* a peculiar hat...

DON QUIXOTE: Oh joyous moment! Oh, glorious undertaking!

SANCHO (apprehensively): Oh, dear. What now?

(The BARBER—played by EL MÉDICO—comes capering along, singing a lively *seguidilla*. Now and then HE cracks his heels in the air just for the devil of it. HE carries over one shoulder a bundle of his equipment. HE holds his brass shaving-bowl on his head to shield his eyes from the sun, and it gleams brightly.)

DON QUIXOTE (handing over his lance): Remain well apart, Sancho. This encounter may be perilous. (HE draws his sword as the little BARBER approaches unaware, singing and capering, SANCHO blows a cracked blast on the bugle as DON QUIXOTE presents his sword point-first. In tones of thunder:) Hold, thou varlet! Stand and deliver! (The BARBER'S song dies on a questioning note. HE comes to a stop, goggling in disbelief.)

BARBER: By the beard of St. Anthony... (Points a shaking finger.) I could swear I see before me a knight in full armor! (Laughing at the notion.) Ridiculous. There *aren't* any knights. (DON QUIXOTE

roars in anger, raises his sword. The BARBER falls to his knees.) I was wrong!

DON QUIXOTE: Address me properly ere I bloody my sword on thy unworthy carcass!

BARBER: Forgive me, Your Highness. I thought I'd been touched by the sun!

DON QUIXOTE: Thou wilt be touched by worse if thou do not speedily hand over that golden helmet!

BARBER: Golden helmet? What...where...? (Beginning to comprehend, HE takes the basin from his head. Wonderingly:) This? Why, this is nothing but a shaving-basin! And you thought—ha! Ha ha!

DON QUIXOTE (thundering): Thou darest laugh at Don Quixote de La Mancha?

BARBER: No, no I wasn't laughing! If Your Bigness will let me explain—I am nothing but a poor barber who plies his trade from village to village. And this—I was wearing it on my head to ward off the rays of the sun.

DON QUIXOTE (with fine contempt, to SANCHE): Observe how glibly the rascal lies.

SANCHE (critically): I must say, it *does* look like a shaving basin.

BARBER (timidly): Perhaps Your Highness would like his beard trimmed?

DON QUIXOTE (a roar): Hold thy tongue! (The BARBER flinches, is silent. To SANCHE:) Here is an example of how to the untrained eye one thing may appear to be another. Know thou what that really is? (Impressively:) The Golden Helmet of Mambrino. When worn by one of pure heart and noble birth it renders him invulnerable to all wounds!

(The BARBER examines the basin, impressed.)

SANCHE (equally impressed): Say...that sounds like a very handy

thing. I wonder how *he* got hold of it?

DON QUIXOTE: How indeed! Misbegotten thief! Where didst thou steal it?

BARBER: Your Worship, I swear...

DON QUIXOTE: Enough! Defend thyself, wretch, or else render unto me that which is justly mine!

BARBER (blankly): What?

SANCHO: He means, hand it over.

BARBER: But, Your Worship, it cost me half a crown! (DON QUIXOTE takes an enormous swipe at him with his sword. The BARBER leaps over it.) Help!

DON QUIXOTE (striking great blows that whistle through empty air): Churl! Rascal! Thief!

BARBER: Help! (HE dodges nimbly, abandons the basin, takes to his heels. HE goes running down the road, squealing in terror.) Help! Help! Hel-l-lp (and his voice dies away). (Sancho retrieves the basin.)

SANCHO (with satisfaction): It *is* worth half a crown.

DON QUIXOTE: Fool! (HE snatches it from SANCHO, removes his own shabby casque, flings it aside. Reverently sets the basin on his head.) The Golden Helmet...

SANCHO (critically): You know, that Mandrino must have had a very big head.

DON QUIXOTE: Thus do I counter one enchantment with another. (Sword raised, exultantly) Forward to glory-y-y! (HE rides, supported by a fanfare in music. Then the music and the Manchegan sky fade and we are back in the prison and the PRISONERS spill down from their perches, laughing.

The DUKE is in the center of the arena, protesting angrily.)

THE DUKE: Governor! Governor, if you don't mind... this man

proposed to offer a defense!

CERVANTES: This *is* my defense.

THE DUKE: The most curious I've ever heard!

MONIPODIO: But entertaining!

THE DUKE: The word is "diverting." In fact, I think *his* purpose is to divert us from *ours*.

CERVANTES: Precisely. May I get on with it?

MONIPODIO (genially, to CERVANTES): You may continue your defense.

CERVANTES (to the DUKE): Perhaps...if you would participate...?

THE DUKE: In this mummery?

CERVANTES: You might find a suitable role. (To ALL.) Let us leave our ingenious knight as he pursues destiny down the roads of La Mancha. Imagine now the home he left behind...not the castle of Don Quixote de La Mancha, but the residence of a country squire known as Alonso Quijana... (HE and the OTHERS are shifting the essential props into position. HE will cue the PEOPLE who play the roles.) Imagine the shock to his niece—Antonia—(HE selects GRACIOSA)—to his housekeeper—(HE casts MOTHER BANE)—and to the neighborhood padre, who has known him all his life—(played by JUDAS MACABEO)—as the dreadful...the unbelievable news reaches them!

(The scene is set, the lighting changing. ANTONIA begins sobbing brokenheartedly. The HOUSEKEEPER stands grimly by, taking righteous pleasure in catastrophe. The PADRE paces back and forth.)

PADRE (marveling): Extraordinary. An *extraordinary* occurrence. From whom did you hear about it?

HOUSEKEEPER (answering for ANTONIA): The farmer, García, met them on the road.

PADRE: Them?

HOUSEKEEPER: The Master and Sancho Panza.

PADRE: Ah, yes, Sancho Panza. (Shakes his head.) He wouldn't be much help.

HOUSEKEEPER: García was astonished to see the Master dressed as he was, and spoke to him. Señor Quijana said: "I beg you to address me in the proper way. I am Don Quixote, knight-errant in the service of all that is good on earth."

PADRE (musing): "In the service of all this is good on earth." It doesn't seem such a terrible madness.

ANTONIA (angrily): It's still madness!

PADRE: I suppose you are right. Have you notified your fiancé?

HOUSEKEEPER: I sent for Doctor Carrasco as soon as I heard the news.

PADRE: Then let us wait before deciding upon a course of action. (Marveling:) Alonso Quijana...the good Alonso... the studious...

ANTONIA (bursting out bitterly): Studious! That's what did it! Look at those books! They ought to be marked "Poison!"

PADRE (demurring): Oh, now—

ANTONIA: Reading day and night, that's all he did. How many times have I heard him, pacing the floor, talking out loud. Arguing with himself! I'd say, "Uncle, please go to bed." He wouldn't even hear me!

PADRE (has taken a book from a pile, opened it): "Tales of Chivalry." I know this one. (Smiles, reading.) Not a bad story!

HOUSEKEEPER: *All* books are bad.

PADRE (mildly): Let us at least exclude the Scriptures.

ANTONIA: She's right! (Wildly, flinging a stack of books to the

floor.) They should be burned like heretics!

PADRE (sighs, closing the one HE holds): Very well, my child. Tomorrow we shall have a public *auto-da-fe*. In the meantime—

ANTONIA (catches sight of DR. CARRASCO—played by the DUKE—who has just entered): My darling! (SHE flies to his arms. CARRASCO carries his own self-importance as though afraid of breaking it. HE takes ANTONIA in his arms but with a certain remoteness.)

PADRE: Have you heard?

DR. CARRASCO: On my way here I was informed by at least ten people. (To ANTONIA:) My dear, your uncle is the laughing-stock of the entire neighborhood.

ANTONIA: Oh-h... (and begins sobbing afresh).

DR. CARRASCO: Padre? What do you know of this?

PADRE: Only that the good Señor Quijana has been carried away by his imagination.

DR. CARRASCO (stiffly): Señor Quijana has lost his mind and is suffering from delusions.

PADRE (quizzically): Is there a difference?

DR. CARRASCO: Exactitude of meaning. I beg to remind you, Padre, that I am a graduate of the University of Salamanca.

PADRE: Very well, Doctor. What shall we do?

DR. CARRASCO (detaching himself from ANTONIA): I am afraid the damage has already been done.

ANTONIA: Damage?

DR. CARRASCO: My dear, we must recognize a certain danger.

ANTONIA: But Uncle Alonso isn't *dangerous*.

DR. CARRASCO: The danger is to us. To our future. It has been

scientifically established that the taint of madness may recur in future generations.

ANTONIA: You mean our marriage? You want to...? (Stricken:) Oh. Oh-h!

PADRE (alarmed at this drift): Oh, come, come, Doctor!

DR. CARRASCO: Padre, we are modern men. We face facts.

HOUSEKEEPER (a sibyl): The innocent must pay for the sins of the guilty.

PADRE (roused): Guilty of what? A gentle delusion!

DR. CARRASCO: How do you know it is gentle? By this time who knows what violence he has committed! He was armed?

ANTONIA (hopelessly): With sword and lance.

DR. CARRASCO (throws up his hands, resigning): Why should this fall upon *me*?

ANTONIA (recognizes a crisis, and an ancient female cunning stirs in her. Her voice becomes forlorn and wistful:) Sansón, I had hoped for so much for us. For you, really.

DR. CARRASCO (lost in self-pity): I know...

ANTONIA: Everything was to be for you. My dowry...you would have been free to continue your studies.

DR. CARRASCO (suffering): Yes...

ANTONIA: This house. These lands...

DR. CARRASCO: House? Lands?

ANTONIA (simply): I am uncle's only heir.

PADRE: True. They would all come to you.

ANTONIA: To us.

PADRE (the devil's advocate): Consider, Doctor. After all, if one is

to serve science, one must have the means.

DR. CARRASCO (musing): I suppose that is a consideration.

PADRE: Definitely. But not as great as the other.

DR. CARRASCO: The other?

PADRE: Think what cleverness it would take to wean this man from madness! To argue him from his course and persuade him to return home. Difficult, Doctor. Perhaps impossible.

DR. CARRASCO: Hmm... that *is* a challenge...

PADRE: Extraordinary.

DR. CARRASCO (to the PADRE): He can't have gotten far?

PADRE: No more than a day's journey!

DR. CARRASCO: We shall go after him.

PADRE (cheerfully, to ANTONIA): You see, child? Stop worrying!

ANTONIA: I can't help it. I keep thinking of him...out there in the wilderness...helpless...hungry—maybe even in pain. (Sobbing.) Oh, my poor uncle. My poor, suffering uncle...

(A cross-fade in the light as this scene disappears and we see DON QUIXOTE and SANCHEO lolling in a shady glen off the road. All is lovely, idyllic with the sound of songbirds and the splashing of a little cascade nearby. QUIXOTE lies in the cool grass, waving a fan-leaf as HE hums a tranquil tune. SANCHEO is eating.)

DON QUIXOTE (with a happy sigh): Ah, Sancho, is it not lovely? See how Nature conspires to delight the soul. What more could a man possibly need?

SANCHEO (proffering): An onion?

DON QUIXOTE: No, thank you, my friend. (A pause of pure euphoria. DON QUIXOTE smiles dreamily, his eyes on the horizon.) How this place puts me in mind of the Golden Age. Was there ever such a time? In those days there were not yet such

words as “mine” and “thine,” and no labor was required of man but to reach forth and take the nourishment which God so generously gave. There were clear-running rivers and springs, trees that bore fruit the year round, and men lived in harmony for no one had taught them to quarrel. There was love then, simple as the simple hearts from which it sprang. Deceit, hatred, and envy had not yet mingled with truth, and in all mankind there was delight in creation, a joyous embracing of life. (A shadow crosses his face.) Then did it change. The pleasures of that life passed like the shadow of a dream, and out of the darkness crawled another kind. These were the enchanters, they of cold thought and shriveled spirit. They are among us now, Sancho, and their disguise is clever, for they look like other men. Yet you may know them, for their eyes are blind to beauty, their ears deaf to music, and where they walk the earth is blighted. These are the ones I fight. The men against life—the shepherds who are wolves—the spoilers of the dream! (HE rises to his feet, eyes burning with a vision of combat.) Come forth, ye magicians! Come forth, ye wizards and make ready for battle! Ye are many and strong and this is but one man who defies thee, but beware! For the sword of Don Quixote points to the stars! (HE holds, exalted. Then, unmistakably, the sound of a snore. HE discovers SANCHO curled up and sleeping. HE prods him disgustedly with a toe.) Sancho. Sancho!

SANCHO (wakes with an assortment of subhuman noises): Huh? What...? Oh, excuse me, Your Grace, I was dreaming.

DON QUIXOTE (with irony): Of high adventure?

SANCHO: Of home, and my wife Teresa. (Smiling fondly:) I can see those little black mustaches of hers now.

DON QUIXOTE: Come. We’d best be riding.

SANCHO (rising): Does Your Grace know where we’re going?

DON QUIXOTE: Wherever the road may lead.

SANCHO (philosophically): Well, they say no journey is a bad one unless it be that which leads to the gallows.

DON QUIXOTE: Do you never run out of proverbs?

SANCHO: No, Your Grace, I was born with a bellyful of them. I always say—

DON QUIXOTE (suddenly, as HE hears a noise): Sh-h! (The sound again, cries faintly heard.) Someone is in distress!

SANCHO: It may be something private.

DON QUIXOTE: What anguish is private from Don Quixote?

(Unsheathes his sword. LIGHTS UP on a shadowy place in the woods where a FARMER—played by LOBILLO—is lashing a ragged BOY.)

ANDRÉS (played by the GYPSY): Oh! Ow! Please! Don't!

FARMER: Bungler! Whelp! Loafer!

ANDRÉS: I won't do it again, sir! Ow!

FARMER: Hold your tongue!

ANDRÉS: Oh! I swear it!

FARMER: There! There! And there!

ANDRÉS: Ow! Help! Help!

DON QUIXOTE (in ringing tones): Stay thy hand! (The FARMER uncertainly raises the switch.) Stop, base lout! I say—desist!

(The FARMER looks around. His hand is paralyzed in mid-stroke by the sight of DON QUIXOTE. The BOY, too, gapes at the apparition. DON QUIXOTE advances upon them.)

FARMER: Who...who are you?

DON QUIXOTE: The terror of rascals like thyself! (Leans on his sword as SANCHO comes puffing on scene. Coldly:) I will hear thy explanation—and thou have one.

FARMER: Explanation? Why should I—? (Stops, intimidated by

DON QUIXOTE'S cold, level look.) I am a farmer, sir. This boy works for me, in charge of my flock. Twice now he has allowed sheep to get lost. Therefore I am bound to punish him.

DON QUIXOTE (coldly): So say you. (Turns to the BOY.)

ANDRÉS (apprehensively): Sir, I...I...

DON QUIXOTE: Be not afraid, boy. Speak up.

ANDRÉS: My name is Andrés, sir. It is true that I let the sheep stray, but only because he refuses to pay me.

FARMER: I hold him responsible for the sheep that are missing!

ANDRÉS: He is a miser and will not give me my pay!

FARMER (cholericly): You insolent little rascal, I'll—

DON QUIXOTE: Stop! (With contempt:) Coward and bully. To strike one powerless to defend himself! Release the lad. Instantly! (The FARMER sullenly looses the BOY'S hands. To ANDRÉS:) Now, then. How much does he owe you?

ANDRÉS: For nine months' work, sir, at seven *reales* a month.

DON QUIXOTE (not aw fully strong on arithmetic): Nine months at seven reales...that would be...

SANCHO (also figuring): Eighty...

FARMER (anguished): Sixty-three!

DON QUIXOTE: Very well. Pay him.

FARMER: But, sir—

DON QUIXOTE: Pay him or by the God who rules us I'll make an end to thee here and now!

FARMER (digs in his pocket, starts counting money into ANDRÉS' hand): Twenty—forty—sixty—

ANDRÉS (boldly): And three.

DON QUIXOTE: Are you satisfied, Andrés?

ANDRÉS: Oh, yes, sir. Thank you!

DON QUIXOTE (to the FARMER): Take warning, miser. Lay not a hand on that boy again.

FARMER: Yes, sir.

DON QUIXOTE: You swear it?

FARMER (piously): I swear.

DON QUIXOTE: And you, boy. Should any ask who it was that came to your aid, tell them it was Don Quixote de La Mancha!

ANDRÉS: Don Quixote de La Mancha!

DON QUIXOTE: Righter of wrongs and defender of the weak!

ANDRÉS: Righter of wrong and defender of the weak!

(DON QUIXOTE presents his sword in a salute, turns and goes.)

ANDRÉS: Good-bye, sir! Good-bye! (Turns to the FARMER. Boldly:) From now on you'd better watch yourself.

FARMER (his attention on the departure): Oh, I will.

ANDRÉS: Because if you don't that knight will come back and slice you up like a lemon!

FARMER (not really listening): True.

ANDRÉS: And another thing. I don't get paid enough.

FARMER: Hmm m? (Turns to him, satisfied THEY are gone.) What did you have in mind?

ANDRÉS: Well, some kind of a bonus.

FARMER: A bonus? Certainly! (Hand in pocket. Hungrily:) Come here, my boy.

ANDRÉS (approaching, becomes a little nervous): You haven't got

anything funny in mind, have you? Because if you have I'm warning you—

FARMER (pounces, claps a hand over ANDRÉS' mouth): Give me back that money!

(ANDRÉS struggles, makes strangled noises. The FARMER wrests it from him.)

FARMER (with satisfaction): Now, you whelp. You ungrateful cur. I believe you mentioned a bonus?

DON QUIXOTE (as HE and SANCHEO mount): Tell me, Sancho, have you ever seen a knight more cool, more firm, more valiant than I?

SANCHEO: I must say, Your Grace handled that situation very nicely.

DON QUIXOTE: Thank you. Still, the credit is not all mine. Remember, Sancho: evil always surrenders to virtue, and in the end justice always prevails.

(THEY ride on.)

FARMER (beating ANDRÉS twice as vigorously as before): There! There! And there!

ANDRÉS (howling in vain): Ow! Oh! Mercy! Help! Help!

(The laughter of the PRISONERS rises...and then is stilled as another sound is heard. It is the slow-march roll of drums, and a chanting which echoes from distant corridors. ALL fall silent. The lighting chills and dims to the prison setup. CERVANTES moves center, uncertainly.)

CERVANTES: That sound...?

MONIPODIO: The Men of the Inquisition.

CERVANTES (with the beginning of apprehension): What does it mean?

MONIPODIO: They're coming to fetch someone. They'll haul him

off, put the question to him. Next thing he knows—he's burning.

CERVANTES (voice unsure): Are they coming for me?

MONIPODIO (cheerfully): Who knows?

CERVANTES (to the DUKE): But perhaps...for you.

THE DUKE (smiling coolly): Never for me.

(The drums approach, growing louder. Echoes bounce and clash from the stone walls. CERVANTES is beginning to sweat, body rigid, face drawn. The sound grows to almost unbearable volume, then cuts off, seemingly just outside the vault. There is the sound of the adjoining cell being opened, then there is a scream, rising to a pitch of terror, as abruptly choked off.)

MONIPODIO (cheerfully, to CERVANTES): Well! Not this time.

THE DUKE (smiling): Were you afraid, Cervantes?

(CERVANTES sinks to a bench, shaking and undone.)

THE DUKE: What, Cervantes? No courage? Or is that in your imagination, too?

(The drums crash into their death-march again, now receding. CERVANTES flinches, covers his face with his hands. The DUKE'S laughter rings out in malicious triumph.)

END OF ACT I

ACT II

(There has been no time lapse. The drums are receding, the DUKE'S laughter dying. CERVANTES is crouched as we last saw him, head in hands. MONIPODIO goes upstage, fetches a goatskin of wine, pokes CERVANTES and hands it to him. CERVANTES takes it in trembling hands, drinks deeply.)

MONIPODIO (with amused good nature): Better?

CERVANTES (still shaky as HE hands it back): Thank you.

MONIPODIO: Let's get on with your defense!

CERVANTES (apologetically): If I could rest for a moment...

THE DUKE: This place he calls La Mancha—is it real?

MONIPODIO: Oh, yes! I've been there myself.

LOBILLO: So have I!

THE SCORPION (proudly, pointing to himself): Three months in jail at Argamasilla!

MONIPODIO: An empty place. Great wide plains.

LOBILLO: The songs of the people wail and cry.

MOTHER BANE: And the weather—nine months of winter and three months of hell!

JUDAS MACABEO: A desert.

MONIPODIO: A wasteland.

THE DUKE: Which apparently grows lunatics.

CERVANTES (looking up): I would say, rather...men of illusion.

THE DUKE: Much the same.

CERVANTES: La Mancha is a wasteland, true. The sky is too high

for comfort, the horizons too wide. Most men are frightened by them. They drop their eyes to the ground...and presently the ground reaches up and enfolds them. But if they have courage they turn their eyes upward—and see there a world not yet made. (HE rises.) These are the men of La Mancha. They have discovered reality for what it is: a strangler-vine that crushes the human spirit. Each man makes his own world in La Mancha. Illusion grows on that land. Imagination soars to unimaginable heights! (The lighting alters to the Manchegan sky. The PRISONERS fall back, isolating CERVANTES as HE becomes QUIXOTE.) To the men of La Mancha reality is illusion and only illusion real. They look away from life and they choose a dream. Then they ride forth over the boundless plain of the human spirit, searching, each in his own way...

DON QUIXOTE (halting): Sancho!

SANCHO (startled out of a doze): Your Grace?

DON QUIXOTE (pointing triumphantly): There!

SANCHO: It may be that the sun has melted my brains, but all I see is more of this road.

DON QUIXOTE: *What?*

SANCHO: If Your Grace would give me a hint...?

DON QUIXOTE: In the distance. A castle!

SANCHO (looking vainly): Castle.

DON QUIXOTE: Rockbound amidst the crags.

SANCHO: Crags.

DON QUIXOTE: And see the turrets!

SANCHO: How many?

DON QUIXOTE (counts): Nine.

SANCHO: That's a lot!

DON QUIXOTE: And the banners—ah, the brave banners flaunting in the wind!

SANCHO: Anything on ‘em?

DON QUIXOTE (shielding his eyes): I cannot quite make out the device, but it must be the insignia of some great lord.

SANCHO: Oh, that’s fine, Your Grace. Maybe this is where you can get yourself drubbed.

DON QUIXOTE: Dubbed. Yes, Sancho, I have no doubt there will be earls, dukes, brave knights and gentle maidens without number. Perchance even some princess lying under an evil spell. Here may I plunge my arms up to the very elbows in adventure! (To SANCHO:) Blow thy bugle that a dwarf may mount the battlements and announce our coming!

SANCHO (under his spell, lifts the bugle to his lips, hesitates): But I don’t *see* a castle.

DON QUIXOTE: Thou and thy peasant eyes!

SANCHO (doubtfully): I do see something...maybe it’s an inn.

DON QUIXOTE (sadly): An inn. (Resigned:) Come. We shall ride straight to the drawbridge and there, perchance, thy vision will improve.

(THEY ride out of view as lights come up on the courtyard of the “inn.” An improvised table at which sit THREE MULETEERS of loud voices, crude humor, lusty appetites.)

MULETEERS (boisterously, banging on the table): Food! We starve! Soup! Meat! Cheese! Wine! *Olla podri-i-i-da!* (This last in a falsetto wail followed by appreciative guffawing. PEDRO, the leader—played by the SCORPION—who sits at the head of the table, strikes up a song of Rabelaisian flavor. The OTHERS join in, a cheerful bedlam. MARÍA, the Innkeeper’s wife—played by MOTHER BANE—comes hurrying from the kitchen with baskets of bread.)

MARÍA: It comes! It comes! Everything—be patient!

MULETEERS: We're dying! Bring the stew!

MARÍA (shrieking toward the kitchen): Aldonza! Hurry! Bring the stew!

MULETEERS: The stew! The stew!

MARÍA (frantic): Where is that slut! Aldonza!

MULETEERS (picking it up): Aldonza! Aldonza! *Aldonza!*

ALDONZA (emerging from the kitchen with a huge, smoking tureen. SHE is played by ESCALANTE): You want it on the table or over your lousy heads! (A cheer of approval from the MULETEERS as ALDONZA marches to the table with the tureen. SHE sets it down with a crash.) There, swine, feed.

PEDRO (reaching for a convenient portion of her anatomy): Aldonza...

ALDONZA (eluding him lithely): I'll be back!

(SHE exits, muttering imprecations to herself.

The INNKEEPER enters—played by MONIPODIO.)

INNKEEPER (rubbing his hands): There we are, gentlemen! Everything in order.

JOSÉ (played by EL MÉDICO): Did you feed the mules?

INNKEEPER: They're eating as well as you!

TENORIO (played by LOBILLO): God forbid.

INNKEEPER (chuckling): He jokes!

JOSÉ (mouth full, growling): Wine.

INNKEEPER: No wine! María—to the kitchen!

PEDRO (shouting after her as SHE goes): Send it out with Aldonza!

INNKEEPER (slyly): You like that one, eh?

PEDRO: A man has to do something about these cold nights.

JOSÉ (a shout): Bring the wine!

ALDONZA (off): Stop yelling, for God's sake, I'm bringing it! (PEDRO waves the INNKEEPER away as ALDONZA comes to the table with a decanter of wine. Grumbling:) Bellies that walk like men! (SHE starts filling cups as the MEN eye her with frank appetite.)

TENORIO (lasciviously): I've been thinking of you, Aldonza.

ALDONZA (pauses): You promised to bring me a comb from Toledo.

TENORIO (grinning): That was last time.

ALDONZA: It was, eh? Then last time was *your* last time. (SHE moves on, pouring wine for JOSÉ. HE continues eating, but one hand is reaching slyly under her skirt. Without change of expression ALDONZA shifts the stream of wine from the cup to JOSÉ'S head. HE yells, tumbles over backward from the bench.) And you, little dog—never!

PEDRO (laughing, as are the OTHERS): Aldonza! Sweetheart. Come here.

ALDONZA (approaching sullenly): Keep your hands where I can see 'em.

PEDRO: Come here, come here. (Pulls her close. Confidentially:) I've got a nice thick bed of hay in the stable.

ALDONZA (as confidentially): Good. Eat it.

PEDRO: I had something else in mind.

ALDONZA: I know what you had in mind.

PEDRO: You wouldn't refuse Pedro?

ALDONZA: Try me.

PEDRO: My *mules* are not as stubborn as you!

ALDONZA: Then go lie with your mules! (Scathingly, of TENORIO:) *He* was going to bring me a comb from Toledo.

PEDRO (changing tones): Aldonza. (HE reaches in his pocket, deliberately drops one, two, three coins on the table. ALDONZA hesitates, then reaches for them. PEDRO imprisons her hand beneath his.) Tonight?

ALDONZA (sullenly): When I'm through in the kitchen.

(PEDRO smiles, releases her hand. SHE snatches up the coins, exits, followed by the guffaws of the MEN.)

JOSÉ: Payment before delivery? She won't show up!

PEDRO: She'll be there.

TENORIO: All *I* had to pay was a promise!

(THEY laugh. DON QUIXOTE and SANCHO have appeared at the far side of the stage. QUIXOTE gestures to SANCHO who raises his bugle and blows a horrible, off-key blast. The MEN drop their implements and gape.)

JOSÉ: What in the name of...?

(INNKEEPER hurries in as SANCHO blows another blast. HE is nonplused a moment, then lights up.)

INNKEEPER: The pig-butcher! I didn't expect him until tomorrow. (Hurrying to the "gates.") Coming, Señor Butcher, coming!

DON QUIXOTE (haughtily, as the INNKEEPER swings open the "gates"): Is the governor of the castle at hand? (No reply from the flabbergasted INNKEEPER.) I say, is the *castellano* here?

INNKEEPER (with an effort): I am in charge of this place.

DON QUIXOTE: We waited, sire, for a dwarf to mount the

battlements and announce us but none appeared.

INNKEEPER: The...the dwarfs are all busy.

DON QUIXOTE: Then know ye that Don Quixote, knight-errant, defender of the right and pursuer of lofty undertakings, implores the boon of hospitality! (The INNKEEPER looks open-mouthed at the MULETEERS, who look back in kind.) Well, sir? Is it granted?

INNKEEPER (pulling himself together): Absolutely! This inn—I mean, this castle—is open to everybody.

DON QUIXOTE: Thank you, my lord. (HE clucks Rocinante forward and rides through the gates. The arch is too low, it knocks him off his horse.)

INNKEEPER (hurries to him, horrified): Oh dear, are you hurt?

DON QUIXOTE (with total dignity): These little mishaps are all part of my profession. (With the INNKEEPER'S aid HE gets to his feet and limps to the MULETEERS.) How my heart is gladdened by the sight of such fair company! Good morrow, brave knights, gentle warriors. (Sees MARÍA.) Hail, oh Empress of La Mancha! Thou hast but to command, and my good right arm is at thy service!

(MARÍA turns a frightened look on the INNKEEPER.)

INNKEEPER (aside): Don't cross him.

MARÍA: He's a madman!

INNKEEPER: Madmen are the children of God! (To DON QUIXOTE:) You must be hungry, sir knight.

DON QUIXOTE: Aye, that I am.

INNKEEPER: There's food aplenty, and for your squire, too. (Crossing to SANCHO.) I'll just help him stable your animals.

DON QUIXOTE: I thank thee, Sir Castellano. (Approaching the OTHERS.) Fair knights, gentle lady, I have ridden far and encountered many and fearful adventures, and there are great tales to

relate. Only this morning while crossing the burning plains of La Mancha— (ALDONZA has emerged laden with things for the table. Stops, puzzled, at the silence. DON QUIXOTE is gazing at her, stricken.) Dear God, it is she. (ALDONZA stares incredulously. HE lays hand to sword, flings a challenge to the sky.) Let the whole world tremble if the whole world does not confess that in the whole world there is not a damsel more beautiful than this! (ALDONZA turns astounded eyes to MARÍA, who gestures urgently: *Humor him!* When there is no answer to his challenge, DON QUIXOTE sweeps the barber's basin from his head, kneels to ALDONZA, eyes lowered worshipfully.) Sweet lady... fair virgin... (A strangled snort from the MULETEERS.) I dare not gaze full upon thy countenance lest I be blinded by beauty. But I implore thee: speak once thy name.

ALDONZA (Prompted by a gesture from MARÍA. A growl:) Aldonza.

DON QUIXOTE: My lady jests.

ALDONZA: Aldonza!

DON QUIXOTE (smiling, eyes on the ground): The name of a kitchen-scullion or mayhap my lady's serving-maid.

ALDONZA: I told you my name! Now get out of the way or by Christ I'll— (A shriek from MARÍA restrains her from bashing him over the head.)

DON QUIXOTE (humbly): Forgive me, lady, for offending thy modesty. Be charitable, for I assure thee that from this moment on thou art sovereign of my captive heart.

INNKEEPER (returning): Come along, Señor Knight! I'll show you to your quarters.

(DON QUIXOTE rises, keeping eyes averted from ALDONZA, follows the INNKEEPER off. ALDONZA is angry and confused.)

PEDRO (swooning across the table): Dear God, what vision is this?

JOSÉ (languishing): What princess? What queen?

TENORIO (in falsetto): Sweet lady...

PEDRO: Divine maiden...

JOSÉ: Fair...virgin?!

(THEY explode, hee-hawing like their mules.)

ALDONZA (furious): Apes! Asses!

PEDRO (Using a table knife for sword. Declaiming:) Let the whole world tremble if the whole world does not confess—

ALDONZA (clawing at him): Son of a castrated goat!

JOSÉ: —that in the whole world there is not—

ALDONZA: Filthy swine!

TENORIO: —a damsel more beautiful—

(ALDONZA, nearly out of her mind, seizes a loaf of bread from the table and belabors them, cursing, as THEY dodge about, laughing and jeering.)

Lights out; up on one of the raised levels which is now DON QUIXOTE'S room in the inn. HE is seated, writing, as SANCHO comes up the stairs, whistling.)

DON QUIXOTE: Is it thou, Sancho?

SANCHO: Yes, Your Grace. (Entering, depositing saddlebags.) Everything's fine. Rocinante's in the stable eating like a whole herd. Now if Your Grace doesn't mind I'll go do the same.

DON QUIXOTE (dreamily): Ah, Sancho, Sancho...did you see her?

SANCHO: Her?

DON QUIXOTE: She with the eyes of a dove...hair like the raven's wing...

SANCHO: Oh, *that* one. (Nudges DON QUIXOTE, man to man.) Nice piece of goods. (DON QUIXOTE turns shocked eyes upon

him, rises tall and terrible. SANCHO backs off in dismay.) What did I say?

DON QUIXOTE: Vile-tongued wretch!

SANCHO: I'm sorry!

DON QUIXOTE: I warn thee, Sancho!

SANCHO: Your Grace *knows* my tongue throws out the first thing it gets hold of.

DON QUIXOTE: Never let it sully the fair name of woman!

SANCHO: What I meant, I wonder if it's a good idea to get mixed up with them.

DON QUIXOTE: Know you not that a knight without a lady is like a body without a soul? To whom shall he dedicate his conquests? What name give strength to his right arm? What vision sustain him when he sallies forth to do battle with ogres and with giants?

SANCHO (tentatively): A woman?

DON QUIXOTE: A *lady*.

SANCHO: Well, if Your Grace puts it that way...

DON QUIXOTE: Is there any other?

SANCHO (considers): No.

DON QUIXOTE (turning back to the desk, folding a paper): My friend, I would entrust thee with a most delicate errand.

(Lights fade out on QUIXOTE and up on ALDONZA, who is scrubbing pots and pans, her skirts hiked up on her thighs. SHE is bawling out a ditty as SHE works.)

ALDONZA (singing):

For a red-headed lad of old Seville, my heart is all aflame,
For a little brown lad I know, any girl would part with her
good name...

(SHE becomes aware of SANCHO approaching, falls silent and watches him with hostile eyes.) What do *you* want?

SANCHO: My master sent me with a missive.

ALDONZA (suspiciously): Missive? What's a missive?

SANCHO: A kind of a letter. He warned me to give it only into your hand.

ALDONZA (darkly): Let's see it. (SHE takes the folded sheet from SANCHO, inspects both sides. Sullenly:) I can't read.

SANCHO: Neither can I. But my master, foreseeing such a possibility, recited it to me so I could commit it to heart.

ALDONZA (angrily): What made him think I couldn't read?

SANCHO: Well, as he explained it, highborn ladies are so busy with their needlework—

ALDONZA: *Needlework?*

SANCHO: Embroidering devices on banners for their knights. He said they had no time for study.

ALDONZA (contemptuously): What's it say?

SANCHO (takes the letter from her, holds it before him, closes his eyes and recites): "Most lovely Sovereign and Highborn Lady—"

ALDONZA: Ho.

SANCHO: "The heart of this, thy vassal knight, faints for thy favor."

ALDONZA: Ha.

SANCHO: "Oh, fairest of the fair, purest of the pure, incomparable Dulcinea—"

ALDONZA: Who?

SANCHO: "Incomparable Dulcinea—"

ALDONZA: Why, that letter isn't even for me!

SANCHO: I assure you—

ALDONZA: My name is Aldonza!

SANCHO (patiently): My master calls you Dulcinea.

ALDONZA (glowering): Why?

SANCHO: I don't know, but I can tell you from experience that knights have their own language for everything, and it's better not to ask questions because it only gets you into trouble. (ALDONZA gestures: "Go on.") "I beg thee grant that I may kiss the nethermost hem of thy garment—"

ALDONZA: Kiss my which?

SANCHO: If you keep interrupting the whole thing will be gone out of my head! "—and swear to be thy knight forever. Lady, do not deprive me of the beauty that renders life joyful, the grace which charms it, the modesty which gives it measure. Know that thou, dearest enemy, holds me submissive to thy every wish. Thine until death, Don Quixote de La Mancha."

ALDONZA (a pause): That's all?

SANCHO: He said to tell you he would be trembling and languishing upon your reply.

ALDONZA: What was that name again...?

SANCHO: Don Quixote de La Mancha.

ALDONZA: The other one.

SANCHO: Dulcinea.

ALDONZA (with sudden violence): Your master's a crackbrain!

SANCHO: Oh, no!

ALDONZA: Oh, yes!

SANCHO: He's the best and bravest man in the whole world.

ALDONZA: He's crazy!

SANCHO (stubbornly): Well, if he is I'll just have some of the same.

ALDONZA: You're crazy, too!

SANCHO (patiently): My master said there would be a reply.

ALDONZA: I'll give him a reply. Tell him I may be a stupid kitchen-wench, but nobody makes fun of me!

SANCHO: My lady—

ALDONZA: Don't you "my lady" me, or I'll crack you like an egg. Now get out of here. (As HE hesitates, SHE picks up pots and pans, flinging them at him.) Out! Out! (SANCHO, dodging in panic, disappears. Sneering:) Dearest enemy! Kiss the hem of thy garment! Incomparable—(a hesitation)—Dulcinea... (Uncertainly, SHE picks up the letter and studies it, forehead knitted, as though it might yield some further secret.)

(The lights fade out. They come up on DON QUIXOTE pacing his room as HE waits.)

INNKEEPER (as HE ascends the stairs): Señor knight. Señor knight!

DON QUIXOTE (excited): Sancho? (Disappointed.) Ah... what is it, my lord?

INNKEEPER (puffing): Two gentlemen.

DON QUIXOTE (puzzled): They inquire for me?

INNKEEPER: They say: one who calls himself Don Quixote de La Mancha.

DON QUIXOTE (pleasure lighting his face): So soon has my fame spread abroad!

INNKEEPER: They probably need your help.

DON QUIXOTE: Some high enterprise. A perilous adventure or a challenge to be met. An exploit which can only be accomplished by me! (Briskly.) Thank you, my lord. I shall attend upon them.

(Lights go up on the PADRE and DR. CARRASCO in the central courtyard. The PADRE is nervous, DR. CARRASCO calm as HE removes his travel cloak and beats dust from it.)

PADRE: I confess I shall not know what to say to him.

DR. CARRASCO: In that case leave it to me.

PADRE: But how does one deal with an old friend who is...who...

DR. CARRASCO (calmly): To one of my training there is no problem. The procedure must go according to the phenomena.

PADRE: We are not in the laboratory!

DR. CARRASCO: All the world is a laboratory.

PADRE: And men merely specimens? (DR. CARRASCO shrugs.) He may not even know us!

DR. CARRASCO: I am prepared for that contingency. Should he fail to recognize us—

(DON QUIXOTE entering, strikes a pose.)

DON QUIXOTE (in ringing tones): Who is it crieth help of Don Quixote de La Mancha? Is there a castle beleaguered by giants? A king who lies under enchantment? An army besieged and awaiting rescue?

PADRE (quavering): Alonso...

DON QUIXOTE (surprised): What is this? (With cordial welcome:) My friends!

DR. CARRASCO (taken aback): You know us?

DON QUIXOTE (equally puzzled): Should a man not know his

friends? You are the Bachelor, Sansón Carrasco. And you (with great warmth, taking his hand) Padre Pérez!

PADRE: Then you are not...?

DON QUIXOTE: Not what?

DR. CARRASCO: Out of your head!

DON QUIXOTE: What foul rumor is this?

PADRE (in deep relief): Ah, Señor Quijana—

DON QUIXOTE (in cool reproof): I should prefer that you address me properly. I am Don Quixote, knight-errant of La Mancha. (The PADRE quails.) Now, then. What dire circumstance has led you to seek my aid?

DR. CARRASCO: The dire circumstance is your family.

DON QUIXOTE: My family is all mankind.

DR. CARRASCO: We ask you to return home.

DON QUIXOTE: My home is the whole wide world.

DR. CARRASCO (grimly): He knows us, Padre, but not himself!

DON QUIXOTE: Wrong, Doctor. I know who I am... and who I may be if I choose.

DR. CARRASCO: Señor Quijana—

DON QUIXOTE: Don Quixote.

DR. CARRASCO: There are no giants. No kings under enchantment. No castles. No chivalry. No knights. There have been no knights for three hundred years.

DON QUIXOTE (indifferently): So say you.

DR. CARRASCO: These are *facts*.

DON QUIXOTE: Facts are the enemy of truth!

DR. CARRASCO: Would you deny reality?

DON QUIXOTE (coolly): Which... mine or yours?

DR. CARRASCO: There is only one!

DON QUIXOTE (smiles calmly): I think reality is in the eye of the beholder. (As DR. CARRASCO would answer:) No, my friend, it is useless to argue. Give me my way and let the devil take those who have no more use for imagination than a rooster for his wings.

(DR. CARRASCO turns away, angry.)

PADRE (fascinated): Why do you do this?

DON QUIXOTE: In the service of God...and my lady.

PADRE: I have some knowledge of God... but this other?

DON QUIXOTE: My lady Dulcinea.

DR. CARRASCO (pouncing): So there's a woman!

DON QUIXOTE: *A lady!* (Softening.) Her beauty is more than human. Her quality? Perfection. She is the very meaning of woman...and all meaning woman has to man.

(A pause.)

PADRE (with a sad smile): To each his Dulcinea.

DR. CARRASCO: And when will this...enterprise...be finished?

DON QUIXOTE: When I have conquered my enemy.

DR. CARRASCO: What enemy?

DON QUIXOTE: The Great Enchanter.

DR. CARRASCO: A man?

DON QUIXOTE: He may appear as a man.

DR. CARRASCO (intently): How will you know him?

DON QUIXOTE: I will know him. And I will fight him. And I will win!

DR. CARRASCO (studies him a moment, then in a businesslike tone): Come, Padre. It's a long way home.

PADRE (hesitates a moment): Go with God. (Follows DR. CARRASCO, pauses to look back.) There is either the wisest madman or the maddest wise man in the world.

DR. CARRASCO: He is mad.

PADRE: Or is the word...possessed?

DR. CARRASCO: You know a distinction?

PADRE: One could say Jesus was possessed. Buddha...Saint Francis.

DR. CARRASCO: Jesuit!

PADRE (curiously): Strange. You are angry. (DR. CARRASCO makes a brusque gesture, thinking. The PADRE sighs, giving up.) Well...in any case, we have failed.

DR. CARRASCO: Not necessarily. We know the sickness. Now to find the cure.

(THEY go. The INNKEEPER enters, bringing wine.)

INNKEEPER (seeing DON QUIXOTE alone): Your friends have departed? (DON QUIXOTE, deep in thought, does not notice him.) Señor knight?

DON QUIXOTE: Forgive me. I am troubled.

INNKEEPER (heartily): Have a glass of wine!

DON QUIXOTE (drops to one knee suddenly): Sir Castellano—

INNKEEPER (alarmed): Here, what's this?

DON QUIXOTE: I would make a confession.

INNKEEPER: To me?

DON QUIXOTE: I would confess that I have never been dubbed

a knight.

INNKEEPER: Oh! That's bad.

DON QUIXOTE: And yet I am well qualified, my lord. I am brave, courteous, bold, generous, affable, and patient.

INNKEEPER (judiciously): Yes...that's the list.

DON QUIXOTE: Therefore I would beg of thee a boon.

INNKEEPER: Anything! Within reason.

DON QUIXOTE: Tonight I would hold vigil in the chapel of thy castle, and at dawn receive from thy hand the ennobling stroke of knighthood.

INNKEEPER: Hmm m. There's one small difficulty. No chapel.

DON QUIXOTE: No...chapel?

INNKEEPER: That is—it's being repaired. But if you wouldn't mind holding your vigil some place else...?

DON QUIXOTE (a happy thought): Here in the courtyard. Under the sky...!

INNKEEPER: Fine. At sunrise you'll be dubbed a knight.

DON QUIXOTE: I thank thee, I thank thee!

INNKEEPER: Now—how would you like some supper?

DON QUIXOTE: Before a vigil? No, my lord. On this night I must fast and compose my spirit.

(Lights out in the courtyard and up dimly on a level—the stable loft—where PEDRO and JOSÉ play cards while TENORIO touches his guitar and sings. The song is lonely and sentimental.

Lights up on another level, where ALDONZA is combing her hair by the reflection of a fragment of mirror. Her movements are slow and automatic. SHE puts the comb down, picks up DON QUIXOTE'S letter, studies it, brows knitted. Flings it aside, irritably,

picks up a rebozo, puts it on her head. Is caught by her image in the mirror. Leans forward curiously, gazing at herself. With the *rebozo* her face is softened, almost Madonna-like.)

ALDONZA (almost soundlessly): Dulcinea...

(Lights come up in the courtyard... moonlight from a full moon on an attendance of stars. DON QUIXOTE is there, lance on shoulder as HE paces slowly back and forth. HE is keeping vigil over his armor, which lies on a watering trough. An atmosphere of serenity. Of mystery. The guitar and singing are heard softly.)

DON QUIXOTE (musing): Now must I consider how sages of the future will describe this historic night. (HE strikes a pose.) "Long after the sun had retired to his couch, darkening the gates and balconies of La Mancha, Don Quixote with measured tread and lofty expression held vigil in the courtyard of a mighty castle!" (Hears the pompous echo of his voice, bows his head, ashamed.) Oh, maker of empty boasts. On this of all nights to give way to vanity! Nay, Don Quixote. Now is the time to take a deep breath of life and consider how it should be lived. (Eyes closed.)

Call nothing thy own except thy soul.

Love not what thou art, but only what thou may become.

Avoid self-contempt for this is the nearest thing to hell on earth.

Be a father to virtue and a stepfather to vice.

Do not pursue pleasure for you may have the misfortune to overtake it.

Be brave in spirit rather than body, and remember that most courage is but fear of censure by others.

Remain always at odds with the majority, for men singly may be right but in unison are always wrong.

Respect all gods except them that are cruel or jealous.

Look always forward; in last year's nest there are no birds this year.

(ALDONZA has entered the courtyard en route to herrendezvous with PEDRO. SHE stops, watching DON QUIXOTE, and listening.)

Be just to all men, yet remember that charity is even better than justice.

Be courteous to all women.

Keep ever before thee a vision of that one for whom great deeds are performed...she that is called Dulcinea.

ALDONZA (harshly): Why do you call me that?

DON QUIXOTE (opens his eyes, quickly kneels): My lady!

ALDONZA: Oh, get up from there. Get up! (DON QUIXOTE rises worshipfully.) Why do you call me by that name?

DON QUIXOTE: Because it is thine.

ALDONZA: My name is Aldonza!

DON QUIXOTE (shakes his head respectfully): I know thee, lady.

ALDONZA: My name is Aldonza and I think you know me not.

DON QUIXOTE: All my years have I known thee. Thy virtue. Thy nobility of spirit.

ALDONZA (Laughs scornfully, whips the *rebozo* from her head in a defiant gesture:) Take another look!

DON QUIXOTE (gently): Shall I trust my eyes when my heart is wiser?

ALDONZA: Your heart doesn't know much about women!

DON QUIXOTE: It knows all, my lady. They are the soul of man, and the radiance that lights his way.

ALDONZA: Oh, God, you *are* mad.

DON QUIXOTE: A woman is...glory!

ALDONZA (anger covering uncertainty): What do you want of me?

DON QUIXOTE: Nothing.

ALDONZA: Liar!

DON QUIXOTE (bows his head): I deserved the rebuke. I ask of my lady—

ALDONZA (scornfully): *Now* we get to it.

DON QUIXOTE: —that I may be allowed to serve her. That I may hold her in my heart. That I may dedicate each victory to her and call upon her in defeat. And if I give my life I give it in the sacred name of Dulcinea.

ALDONZA (draws her *rebozo* about her shoulders, backs away uncertainly): I must go... Pedro is waiting... (Vehemently:) Why do you do these things?

DON QUIXOTE: What things, my lady?

ALDONZA: These ridiculous—the things you do!

DON QUIXOTE: I hope to add some measure of grace to life.

ALDONZA: Life stinks like a rotten fish—and you won't change *that!*

DON QUIXOTE (gently): My lady knows better in her heart.

ALDONZA: What's in my heart will get me straight to hell. And you, Señor Don Quixote...you're going to take such a beating!

DON QUIXOTE: Whether one wins or loses does not matter.

ALDONZA (jeering): What does?

DON QUIXOTE: Only that he fights...and follows the quest.

ALDONZA (spits in vulgar contempt): *That* for your quest! (SHE turns from him, marches away. Stops. Comes back. Sullenly:) What does it mean...quest?

DON QUIXOTE: The mission we follow.

ALDONZA: We?

DON QUIXOTE: Surely it is yours as well as mine. (HE lifts his eyes to the stars.)

To dream the impossible dream.

To fight the unbeatable foe.

And never to stop dreaming or fighting.

This is man's privilege and the only life worth living.

ALDONZA (Silent a moment. Then pleading suddenly:) Once—just once—would you look at me as I really am?

(DON QUIXOTE lowers his eyes from the sky, gazes into hers.)

DON QUIXOTE: I see beauty. Purity. I see the woman each man holds secret within him. Dulcinea.

(ALDONZA moans in inexpressible despair. SHE backs away from the steady eyes, shaking her head. SHE turns to run—and gasps as SHE collides with PEDRO who has appeared unseen. HE grips her in fury.)

PEDRO: Keep me waiting, will you?

ALDONZA: I wasn't—I didn't—

PEDRO (shaking her): Next time I'll know better than to pay in advance!

ALDONZA: I swear I was—

PEDRO (mocking ferociously): My lady. My princess. My little flower. (And HE slaps her so that SHE goes spinning to the ground.)

DON QUIXOTE (a roar of outrage): Monster!

PEDRO: Stay clear!

DON QUIXOTE (advancing): Thou wouldst strike a woman?

PEDRO: Get back or I'll break your empty head!

DON QUIXOTE: Oh, thou heart of flint and bowels of cork! Now shall I punish thee!

PEDRO: I warn you—ai-e-ee!

(DON QUIXOTE, clubbing his lance, catches PEDRO alongside the head, sending him sprawling.)

DON QUIXOTE: Impudent beast! Get to thy feet that I may strike again!

PEDRO (groaning): Oh-h-h, I am killed. (In a yell, staying on the ground.) José! Tenorio! Muleteers!

DON QUIXOTE: Rise! Up, that I may teach thee courtesy! Oh, thou unmannerly, ignorant, impudent, backbiting, insolent monster of Nature!

PEDRO (scrambling away but staying prudently on the ground): José! Tenorio! Muleteers—to the rescue!

MULETEERS (approaching at the run): Hold, Pedro! We come! We come!

(ALDONZA, back on her feet, has sheltered herself behind the watering-trough.)

DON QUIXOTE (facing the reinforcements): Come one, come all! Don Quixote will vanquish armies!

PEDRO: Beware the lance!

TENORIO (pulling up): Stone him! Stone him! (The MULETEERS pick up stones and, keeping distance from DON QUIXOTE'S lance, fling stones at him. HE is struck, staggers back with a cry of dismay.)

ALDONZA (stepping out): Leave him be!

PEDRO: Back, whore!

ALDONZA: I said leave him be! He's worth a thousand of you!

PEDRO (diverted from DON QUIXOTE): You want the same, eh? (HE lurches toward her. ALDONZA snatches DON QUIXOTE'S sword from the watering trough, swings it in a mighty arc, and the flat of the blade sends PEDRO bowling butt over elbow.)

ALDONZA (exultant): There's a kiss for *you!* (To the OTHERS, eyes blazing.) Come on, brave men...who's next?

DON QUIXOTE (bawling it to the sky): For God—and for Dulcinea! (HE charges back into the fray. HE wields the lance, ALDONZA swinging hugely with the sword. The battle rages for a while, then the tide turns and the MULETEERS, with cries, groans, and howls of pain, fall *hors de combat.*)

DON QUIXOTE (gasping but triumphant): Victory!

ALDONZA (brandishing the sword): Victory!

INNKEEPER (roused from sleep, comes rushing up wearing nightgown and bedcap. Aghast:) What is this? All the noise! (HE sees the MULETEERS where THEY lie groaning or crawling away.) Oh! Oh! What dreadful thing...?

ALDONZA: What *glorious* thing!

DON QUIXOTE (gasping): Sir Castellano—I would inform you... that the right has triumphed.

SANCHO (coming on the run): Your Grace! Are you hurt?

DON QUIXOTE: Nay, Sancho. A little weakness, perhaps... temporary and of no— (HE collapses suddenly, SANCHO catching him.)

ALDONZA: Oh, he *is* hurt! (SHE drops the sword and hurries to help.)

INNKEEPER: Oh, what a terrible thing...

ALDONZA (tenderly, as SHE and SANCHO help DON QUIXOTE): Gently, my lord. Gently...gently...so...

(MARÍA, frightened and in nightclothes, comes running out.)

MARÍA: What is it?

INNKEEPER: Fetch me hot water. Bandages. More light!

MARÍA: The madman! I knew it.

INNKEEPER: Hurry, María! (HE helps set DON QUIXOTE against the trough.)

ALDONZA (tenderly): There. Poor man! (SHE snatches the cloths from MARÍA, dips one and begins cleansing the wounds.) There... oh, what they did to you! Poor warrior...

MARÍA (bitterly): Poor lunatic.

INNKEEPER (wearily): Go back to bed, María.

MARÍA: I warned you what would happen if—

INNKEEPER: *Go to bed.*

(MARÍA sniffs, exits haughtily. DON QUIXOTE stirs, moans.)

SANCHO: He's coming around!

DON QUIXOTE (Opens his eyes and is looking at ALDONZA. Weakly but with pleasure:) Ah...might I always wake to such a vision!

ALDONZA: Don't move.

SANCHO: I must say, Your Grace, you certainly did a job out here.

DON QUIXOTE (coming to fully): We routed them?

ALDONZA: Ho! There's not a man in that bunch'll walk straight for a week!

DON QUIXOTE (distressed, tries to rise): My lady—

ALDONZA: Sit still!

DON QUIXOTE: It is not seemly to gloat over the fallen.

ALDONZA: Let 'em rot in hell!

INNKEEPER (agitated, to DON QUIXOTE): Sir, I am a tame and peaceful man. I have a wife and responsibilities. Please, Sir Knight—I don't like to be inhospitable—but I must ask you to leave as soon as you are able.

DON QUIXOTE (with dignity): I am sorry to have offended the dignity of thy castle and I shall depart with daylight. But now, my lord, I must remind thee of thy promise.

INNKEEPER: Promise?

DON QUIXOTE: True, it is not yet dawn, but I have kept vigil and proven myself in combat. Therefore I beg that thou dub me knight.

INNKEEPER (remembering): Oh-h. Certainly. Let's get it over with.

DON QUIXOTE: Sancho, wilt be good enough to fetch my sword? (SANCHO looks for it. DON QUIXOTE rises weakly, ALDONZA assisting. Warmly:) Lady, I cannot tell thee how joyful I am that this ceremony should take place in thy presence.

ALDONZA (as HE sways a little): Be careful, now!

DON QUIXOTE: It is a solemn moment which seals my vocation...

ALDONZA (worriedly): You shouldn't be on your feet!

(SANCHO has found the sword, hands it to the INNKEEPER.)

INNKEEPER (handling the sword gingerly): Are you ready?

DON QUIXOTE (firmly): I am.

INNKEEPER: Very well, then. Kneel. (DON QUIXOTE, with ALDONZA and SANCHO assisting on either side, gets down to his knees.) Don Quixote de La Mancha—according to the rules of chivalry and my authority as lord of this castle, I hereby dub thee knight. (HE touches him with the sword on each shoulder.)

DON QUIXOTE: Your Lordship.

INNKEEPER: Didn't I do it right?

DON QUIXOTE (humbly): Your Lordship, it is customary at this time to grant the new knight an added name.

INNKEEPER: Oh... of course.

DON QUIXOTE: Would Your Lordship devise such a name for me?

INNKEEPER (reflects, looks down at the battered face): Don Quixote, I devise and proclaim that you shall henceforth be known as the Knight of the Woeful Countenance.

DON QUIXOTE (simply, bowing his head): I thank thee.

INNKEEPER (handing the sword to SANCHO): Now, Sir Knight, I am going to bed. And I advise you do the same! (Exits.)

DON QUIXOTE (still on his knees; raptly): Knight of the Woeful Countenance...

ALDONZA (near tears): It's a beautiful name.

SANCHO (practically): Come, Your Grace. Let's get you up to bed. (DON QUIXOTE holds out his hands and SANCHO and ALDONZA help him to his feet.) This way.

DON QUIXOTE (holding back): Not yet. I owe something to my enemies.

ALDONZA: *That* account's been paid.

DON QUIXOTE: No, my lady. I must raise them up and minister to their wounds.

ALDONZA (aghast): What?

DON QUIXOTE: Nobility demands.

ALDONZA: It does?

DON QUIXOTE: Yes, my lady. Therefore I shall take these—

ALDONZA (firmly, reaching the bandages before him): No, you won't. *I'll* take them. *I'll* minister.

DON QUIXOTE: But, my lady...!

ALDONZA (simply): They were my enemies, too.

DON QUIXOTE (with emotion): Oh, blessed one...!

SANCHO: Come, Your Grace. (HE helps DON QUIXOTE toward his room.

ALDONZA climbs to the stable loft, where the MULETEERS lie about, moaning and muttering curses over their wounds. SHE calmly sets down the pot of water, begins tearing bandages from her underskirt. The MEN stare at her blankly. PEDRO gapes in disbelief.)

PEDRO: What are you doing here?

ALDONZA (matter-of-factly): I'm going to minister to your wounds.

PEDRO: You're...what?

ALDONZA: Nobility demands. (To TENORIO:) Turn over, you poxy goat. (SHE goes to work on him. PEDRO'S eyes light up with cat-and-mouse savagery and HE comes to his feet. ALDONZA is unaware as HE approaches from behind. HE grips her by her hair, yanks her upright. ALDONZA cries out, the cry cut off as HE strikes. SHE falls back, moaning.

PEDRO seizes the cloth, whips it around her head, ties it tight, gagging her. JOSÉ leaps upon her, ties her hands. PEDRO stands up.)

PEDRO: Nobility, eh? (HE kicks her savagely. To the MEN:) We're leaving.

TENORIO (of ALDONZA): What do we do with that?

PEDRO (grimly): We take it along—and have a little sport as we go.

(JOSÉ slings ALDONZA over his shoulder like a sack of meal. The MEN descend quietly from the loft.

In DON QUIXOTE'S room SANCHO is helping him to a reclining position. QUIXOTE leans back with a sigh.)

DON QUIXOTE: Ah, Sancho, how I do envy my enemies.

SANCHO: Well, I wouldn't unless they're feeling better than you.

DON QUIXOTE: But they are, my friend. Oh, lucky enemies! To know the healing touch of my lady Dulcinea.

(HE smiles rapturously.

The MULETEERS are crossing the stage, carrying ALDONZA, whose moans are anguished, though muffled.)

END OF ACT II

ACT III

(It is eating time in the prison. The JAILER officiates, ladling soup from a tub, tossing about chunks of bread. The PRISONERS sprawl or sit about cross-legged.)

LOBILLO (inspecting the contents of his bowl): You call this soup? Scum!

THE SCORPION: What's this?

JAILER (cheerfully): Bread, Señor Scorpion.

THE SCORPION: Fungus!

MOTHER BANE (indignantly): Look! A worm!

JAILER: Very nourishing, madam. More, Señor Judas?

JUDAS MACABEO (mournfully, as HE holds out his bowl): An insult to the belly.

JAILER: *Buen apetito!*

(MONIPODIO rises, flings aside his bowl and crosses to CERVANTES.)

MONIPODIO (affably): Eat up, fellow. Let's get back to your crazy cavalier.

THE DUKE (pensively, as HE plucks pieces from his chunk of bread and tosses them aside): Curious.

JAILER: The bread?

THE DUKE: No, that's merely revolting. (To CERVANTES:) Why are you poets so fascinated with madmen?

CERVANTES: Are we?

THE DUKE: There's a writer-chap in my country—Will Shakespeare by name...

CERVANTES: I do not know of him.

THE DUKE: Never a play of his without its lunatic.

CERVANTES (with humor): I suppose artists and madmen have much in common.

THE DUKE: They both turn their backs on life.

CERVANTES: They both select from life what pleases them.

THE DUKE (with irony): You find that preferable to sanity?

CERVANTES: To me it *is* sanity.

THE DUKE: A man must come to terms with life as it is!

CERVANTES (sets down his bowl): I am more than fifty years of age and I have seen life as it is. Misery, pain, sorrow, hunger... cruelty beyond belief. I have heard the singing from taverns and the moans from bundles of filth on the streets. I have been a soldier and seen my comrades fall in battle—or die more slowly under the lash in Africa. I have held some of them in my arms at the final moment. These were men who saw life as it is—yet they died despairing. No glory, no gallant last words. Only their eyes filled with confusion, whimpering the question: “Why?” I do not think they asked why they were dying, but why they had lived. (HE rises, and will move into the character of DON QUIXOTE.) No, madness lies down other roads. To be practical is madness. To surrender dreams. To seek treasure where there is only trash. Too much sanity is madness. And maddest of all, to see life as it is and not as it might be...

(DON QUIXOTE and SANCHO are back on the road. It is bright morning but DON QUIXOTE is moody.)

SANCHO (singing merrily but not beautifully):

I have danced at all the dances,

Many serenades I’ve sung,

But I always was unwelcome,

Spurned by maidens old and young.

One I loved was named Teresa,
She lived up there on the hill;
Said I kissed her like an angel
But I was a monkey still!

DON QUIXOTE: Sancho.

SANCHO (about to launch another verse): Your Grace?

DON QUIXOTE: Have the goodness to be silent.

SANCHO: I was trying to cheer you up!

DON QUIXOTE (sighs gustily): I cannot bear it, Sancho. To find and then lose her!

SANCHO: Well, you know what they say: "never put to the test what's sure to fail."

DON QUIXOTE: Do not condemn before thou knowest!

SANCHO: She ran off with those mule-drivers, didn't she?

DON QUIXOTE (loyally): But undoubtedly with some high purpose.

SANCHO (stubbornly): High or low she could have said good-bye. And there's another thing. Suppose you conquer some kings or giants. Naturally you'll send them to the Lady Dulcinea?

DON QUIXOTE: Aye.

SANCHO: Well, how are they going to find her? I can see them now, wandering around like a bunch of nitwits!

DON QUIXOTE (gloomily): Verily, that *is* a problem.

SANCHO: You see? And I'll tell you something else, Your Grace—

DON QUIXOTE (halting suddenly): Sancho!

SANCHO (startled): What ails you?

DON QUIXOTE: There! (HE points to the road ahead. Emerging

from darkness are FIVE MASKED FIGURES standing atop a Players' wagon, their costumes blowing eerily in a wind. At the center is DEATH, robed in black, skull-faced. To his right a figure dressed as LOVE, and a CLOWN. To his left an ANGEL and a DEMON.)

SANCHO (peering vainly): Where?

DON QUIXOTE: Dost not see them?

DEATH (raises his arm, finger leveled straight at DON QUIXOTE): Stand, Sir Knight. Prepare to deliver that for which thou wilt have no further use—thy body.

DON QUIXOTE (quaveringly): Who...who art thou?

DEATH: I am the incurable wound. The sickness without remedy. The final victor of each battle! (He laughs, and the others echo his laughter, a sound like wind among trees.)

SANCHO: Master...who are you talking to?

DON QUIXOTE (bravely, raising his voice): I flee neither phantom nor man. Whoever or whatever ye are—prepare to do battle with Don Quixote de La Mancha! (HE levels his lance.)

DEATH (quickly): Halt! Hold, sir. We did not know!

DON QUIXOTE: Did not know my name?

DEATH: Nay, sir. We thought you were one of us.

DON QUIXOTE (perplexed): How should I be one of you?

DEATH: An actor! You see, sir, because of your costume—

DON QUIXOTE (outraged): *Costume?*

DEATH (amending quickly): We *thought* it was a costume. We deemed you one of our profession and thought to have a little fun.

DON QUIXOTE (darkly, but unsure): Methinks I do not trust this tale. Why should actors wear their trappings on the highway?

DEATH (easily): Oh, I can explain that, sir. Today is Corpus Christi and we play the same piece in three different villages. Therefore we do not change costumes between.

DON QUIXOTE: What is the name of thy play?

DEATH: "The Parliament of Death."

SANCHO (bemused, HE plucks at DON QUIXOTE'S sleeve): Master—what...?

DON QUIXOTE: Silence! (To the FIGURES:) Tell me what ye represent, and I shall then decide whether to slay thee or not.

(DEATH gestures to his TROUPE to comply.)

DEMON (steps forward, flicking his whip): I am a Demon, sir. There is at least one of me in every man, and with this whip I flog him toward his heart's desire. In some I am lust for fame. In others, lust for power or possessions. In many, simply lust.

DON QUIXOTE: Do men know thou art within them?

DEMON: Oh, yes, but they always call me by some virtuous name!

DON QUIXOTE: I think I would do well to kill thee first.

DEMON: But why?

DON QUIXOTE: Thou art a foul enslaver!

DEMON: Oh, no, sir, it's the other way around. Men seek me out if I do not find them first. They beg that I shall enter into them. They suffer when I do not scourge them with this whip! (HE cracks it smartly.)

DON QUIXOTE (to the ANGEL): And thou?

ANGEL: I am what men hope to be after they have dealt with him. (SHE indicates DEATH.)

DON QUIXOTE: And are they not?

ANGEL: Oh, yes, sir, most of them are. They enter my land where

there is neither pain nor ecstasy. No striving, no passion, no darkness, and no light. Just one eternity after another.

DON QUIXOTE: This land of yours sounds more like Hell!

ANGEL: Yes, sir. That's what it is.

(DON QUIXOTE looks to the NEXT who steps forward without bidding.)

LOVE (timidly): I am Love, sir. But I have no lines to speak.

DON QUIXOTE: Love—silent?

LOVE: Yes, sir, everyone's so busy talking about *me* I can't get in a word.

DON QUIXOTE: Thou art clearly the victim of malicious gossip. (To the CLOWN:) But what place has laughter in a "Parliament of Death"?

CLOWN (exuberantly): Everything! Why, without me, sir, the performance would be *ghastly*. Wise men call me the highest attribute of intelligence. Others say I am the only certain way to tell animal from man. And regardless, sir, if it weren't for me, how could you ever bear with *them*? (HE points to the OTHERS and his manic laughter rings out.)

DEATH (steps forward): I am the Director and General Understudy.

DON QUIXOTE (puzzled): General Understudy?

DEATH: A theatrical term. It means that I may change costume and play the roles of any of these others.

DON QUIXOTE: Is the audience not aware?

DEATH: No, sir, they don't know there's been a substitution—at least not until the performance is over. Then it's too late, sir, because I've taken their money and gone.

DON QUIXOTE: I wonder would it be a kindness were I to slay thee now?

DEATH (with humor): Well, sir, it would be a terrible disappointment to the next village.

DON QUIXOTE: Only if thou art truly actors as thou claim. Remove thy mask.

DEATH: I warn you, sir—

DON QUIXOTE (leveling his lance): Remove it, or by all the gods— (DEATH'S hand goes to his mask. HE removes it. Beneath it is an identical skull-face. The CLOWN'S laughter burbles.) Now shall Don Quixote slay Death himself!

SANCHO (bewildered): Master...!

(DON QUIXOTE charges. But the FIGURES are already fading and his charge meets thin air. HE goes sprawling. SANCHO hurries to him.)

SANCHO (horrified): Master, who are you fighting?

DON QUIXOTE: Saw thou not?

SANCHO: I didn't see anybody.

DON QUIXOTE: It was Death himself!

SANCHO: Oh—he's a bad enemy.

DON QUIXOTE (getting up): Nay, but he fled from me. Sancho—dost know what that encounter was? A test!

SANCHO: Of what?

DON QUIXOTE: My faith. Had I flinched or turned craven it should have been the end of Don Quixote. Instead I was the very soul of courage. (Modestly:) Didst note my poise? How gallantly I defied him?

SANCHO: I didn't note a thing!

DON QUIXOTE: Know thou what sustained me? The image of my lady.

SANCHO (surprised): Dulcinea?

DON QUIXOTE: Wretch that I was to doubt her even for a moment! (To the sky:) Dulcinea—queen of my heart—forgive me! If it be possible for my prayers to reach thine ears, forgive the weakness that makes me unworthy of thy favor!

SANCHO: You think she hears you?

DON QUIXOTE: She hears! She hears! Ah, Sancho, my heart is again restored to joy.

SANCHO: That's fine, Your Grace. Now if you want to do something for *my* heart, you'll just get down to business and conquer a few kingdoms.

DON QUIXOTE: Have no fear!

SANCHO (stubbornly): Well, we've been riding a long time and I'm getting anxious.

DON QUIXOTE: I assure you there will be conquests and kingdoms aplenty. The fortunes of war— (Stops suddenly.) Aha! Spoke I not truly?

SANCHO: What? Where?

DON QUIXOTE (as the shadows of great vanes revolve across the scene): There before you, Sancho! Twenty or more lawless giants with whom I mean to do battle!

(SANCHO lifts himself in the saddle to peer ahead.)

SANCHO: *What* giants?

DON QUIXOTE: Be happy, for I shall deprive them of their lives, and with the spoils from this encounter you shall have your kingdom!

SANCHO: But look, Your Grace, those are not giants.

DON QUIXOTE (scornfully): Not giants? See their long arms whirling in rage!

SANCHO: Why, they're nothing but windmills. And what you call arms are just their sails turning in the wind.

DON QUIXOTE: If thou art afraid, Sancho, go off to one side and say thy prayers. For I am about to engage these giants in fierce unequal combat!

SANCHO: Your Grace...

DON QUIXOTE (shouting): Accursed breed, I shall remove thee from the face of the earth! Nay, do not seek to flee, cowards and vile creatures! This is but one single knight who challenges thee! Rocinante—charge!

(HE goes charging out of sight, lance leveled. There is a fearful crash and HE comes spinning back minus lance.)

SANCHO: Master...!

DON QUIXOTE (gaining his feet, unsheathing his sword): Yea, cry, shout, flourish thy arms! It will avail thee naught! For God—and for Dulcinea! (HE charges again.)

SANCHO (clutching his cheeks): Oh! Oh! (DON QUIXOTE comes sailing back to land with a crash. His sword is a corkscrew.) Oh!

DON QUIXOTE (staggering erect): Surrender, thou monsters! Thou art beaten, I tell thee! (Back to the attack.) Yield or I shall show thee neither pity nor— (HE comes spinning back, goes head over heels, and this time HE does not rise.)

SANCHO: I *told* him they were windmills! (Hurries to his aid.) Didn't I tell you? Didn't I say, "Your Grace, those are windmills"?

DON QUIXOTE (hollow-voiced): The fortunes of war.

SANCHO: Can Your Grace get up? (HE helps him and DON QUIXOTE gains his feet with considerable pain and difficulty.)

DON QUIXOTE: You have seen a perfect example of the work of my enemy.

SANCHO: The Enchanter?

DON QUIXOTE: Jealous of my success, he changed those giants into windmills at the last moment. He will stop at nothing in order to deprive me of glory.

SANCHO (doubtfully): I don't know, Your Grace. He seems a lot tougher than you are. One of these days he might get you killed.

DON QUIXOTE (roused): How can he prevail against *me*?

SANCHO: He's doing a pretty good job.

DON QUIXOTE: Because he hides! He skulks and slinks behind his magic. But there will come a time when we meet face to face. And then— (HE groans, the result of too violent a gesture.)

SANCHO: Is Your Grace in pain?

DON QUIXOTE (nobly): Nothing...nothing.

SANCHO: We'd better go back where we can get some help.

(Lights fade on them.)

Lights up on the courtyard of the inn. The INNKEEPER is crossing toward the stable, singing. HE hears the bleat of SANCHO'S bugle.

HE turns a haunted face toward the gates. MARÍA comes crashing from the inn. The bugle again; and SANCHO and DON QUIXOTE are seen.)

MARÍA (a shriek): Don't open the gates! Don't let him in!

INNKEEPER (his face clearing): It's the pig-butcher!

MARÍA: No, no! Don't open!

INNKEEPER: The pig-butcher. Don't you remember? We expected him yesterday. (HE swings open the "gates." MARÍA screams and runs off. A wail.) Not again? (Trying to bar the way:) This place is closed.

SANCHO: But—

INNKEEPER: This castle has gone out of business!

DON QUIXOTE (feeble, but stern): What, sir? Deny the right of sanctuary?

INNKEEPER: I *hate* to, but—

DON QUIXOTE: *And* to a knight dubbed by thy own hand?

INNKEEPER (wavering): It *doesn't* seem right, does it?

DON QUIXOTE: Not by any rule of chivalry!

INNKEEPER (HE sighs, yielding): Bring him in. (SANCHO helps DON QUIXOTE to a bench at the table.) Knight of the Woeful Countenance, it appears I named you well. (Bringing DON QUIXOTE wine.) More muleteers?

SANCHO (as DON QUIXOTE drinks): No, sir. My master fought a dreadful encounter with twenty giants.

INNKEEPER: Giants?

SANCHO: But at the last moment, just as he was about to overcome them, they changed into windmills.

INNKEEPER: Oh. And you lost.

DON QUIXOTE: To a mere handful of giants? Nay, sir, I was upset by enchantment.

(In the background, unseen, ALDONZA enters.)

INNKEEPER: No one doubts your bravery—only your discretion. Why not declare a truce?

DON QUIXOTE: And allow wickedness to flourish?

INNKEEPER: I'm afraid wickedness wears thick armor.

DON QUIXOTE: It cannot withstand courage!

INNKEEPER: You won't overthrow it by tilting at windmills.

DON QUIXOTE (roused): Wouldst thou have me stop trying? Nay, for a time virtue may be thwarted but in the end evil must

give way. Let a man be overthrown ten thousand times, still he must rise and again do battle. The Enchanter may twist the outcome but the effort remains sublime!

ALDONZA: Lies. Madness and lies.

DON QUIXOTE (as ALL turn to her, startled): My lady!

ALDONZA: Enough of that! (SHE advances toward them, eyes burning with fury and disillusionment. SHE has been badly beaten and worse. Her face is bruised, hair matted, clothing in tatters.)

INNKEEPER (horrified): Aldonza! What happened?

ALDONZA: Ask *him*. (Crying in rage.) Oh, how they beat me. How they used me!

DON QUIXOTE (rising, pale): I shall punish them that did this crime.

ALDONZA: Crime. You know the worst crime of all? Being born. For that you get punished your whole life!

DON QUIXOTE: Dulcinea—

ALDONZA: Get yo urself to a madhouse! Rave about nobility and inner calls where no one can hear.

DON QUIXOTE (pleading): My lady—

ALDONZA: I am not your lady. I am not any kind of a lady. I was spawned in a ditch by a mother who left me there. My father? An unknown regiment. I grew up on the garbage heaps of La Mancha. I have been starved, kicked, beaten, violated, more times than memory can count. I slave in kitchens, and when my luck is good I earn a few coins from casual bridegrooms. You want to know me better? Cross my palm with silver and I'll teach you all of me there is!

DON QUIXOTE: Thou art my lady Dulcinea.

ALDONZA: Still he torments me! (Shrieking:) I am Aldonza. Aldonza the kitchen-wench. Aldonza the slut. Aldonza the whore!

DON QUIXOTE (steadily): Now and forever, thou art my lady.

ALDONZA (collapses, weeping): Oh, God, leave me be. Leave me be...

(DON QUIXOTE limps toward her, extends a compassionate hand—but suddenly, off, there is a fanfare of trumpets. Brazen, warlike.)

A VOICE (harsh and clangorous): Is there one here calls himself Don Quixote de La Mancha? If there is—and he be not afraid to look upon me—let him come forth!

(SANCHO is the first to move. HE crosses and looks outside the gates.)

SANCHO (backing away from what HE sees): Master. Oh, master...!

(Fear chokes him. There is another fanfare.)

THE VOICE: Come out from thy hiding-place, Don Quixote. Come face me and thou dare!

(DON QUIXOTE, as in a dream and with premonition behind his eyes, crosses slowly. Entering to meet him is a KNIGHT. Behind him are LIVERIED RETAINERS. The KNIGHT is tall and terrifying in jet-black armor. HE wears a chain-mail tunic on which are mounted tiny mirrors that glitter and dazzle the eyes. On his head a closed casque, only his eyes visible through the slit. From the crest of the casque spring great plumes accentuating what seems already incredible stature. On his arm a shield turned away from view. And in his hand a naked sword. We will know him as the KNIGHT OF THE MIRRORS.)

DON QUIXOTE (at length, voice shaking): I am Don Quixote, Knight of the Woeful Countenance.

KNIGHT OF THE MIRRORS: Come forth, Don Quixote. Stand before me! (DON QUIXOTE advances to face the strange KNIGHT. The OTHERS move closer, awed and silent. The

KNIGHT'S voice is magnified and metallic within the casque.) Now hear me, thou charlatan, thou sickly poltroon! Thou art no knight but a foolish pretender. Thy pretense is a child's mockery, and thy principles dirt beneath my feet!

DON QUIXOTE (trembling with anger): Oh, false knight! Discourteous and with heart black as thy armor! Before I chastise thee, speak thy name.

KNIGHT OF THE MIRRORS: Thou shalt hear it in due course.

DON QUIXOTE: Then say why thou seekest me out!

KNIGHT OF THE MIRRORS (mockingly): Thou called upon me, Don Quixote. Thou reviled me and threatened.

DON QUIXOTE: The Enchanter! (A moan from SANCHO. The KNIGHT OF THE MIRRORS chuckles evilly.) I know thee now. My enemy. He that cripples each effort and bewitches victory from my grasp. Thou art The Enchanter! (The KNIGHT chuckles louder. DON QUIXOTE, enraged, tears off his left gauntlet and flings it at the feet of the OTHER.) Behold at thy feet the gage of battle!

SANCHO (anguished): Master...no!

(HE runs, scrabbles for the gauntlet, but the KNIGHT pins it with his sword.)

KNIGHT OF THE MIRRORS (suddenly very cold): On what terms do we fight?

DON QUIXOTE: Choose thine own!

KNIGHT OF THE MIRRORS: If thou art beaten thy freedom shall be forfeit and thou must obey my every command. (DON QUIXOTE bows coldly.) And thy conditions?

DON QUIXOTE: If thou art still alive thou shalt kneel and beg mercy of my lady Dulcinea.

KNIGHT OF THE MIRRORS (mockingly): Where shall I seek this lady?

DON QUIXOTE: There she stands. (The KNIGHT OF THE MIRRORS turns his eyes to ALDONZA—her rags, her bruises, her ruined face. HE begins to laugh in cruel derision. Enraged.) What means this?

KNIGHT OF THE MIRRORS (gasping): Thy...lady...!

DON QUIXOTE: The fairest upon earth!

KNIGHT OF THE MIRRORS: Thy lady is an alley-cat!

DON QUIXOTE (drawing his sword in fury): Foul caitiff! Defend thyself!

KNIGHT OF THE MIRRORS (steps back. Commandingly:) Hold! (As DON QUIXOTE pauses:) Thou asked my name, Don Quixote. Now I will tell it. I am called—The Knight of the Mirrors! (With the words HE swings his shield forward. Its surface is burnished steel, a brilliant mirror. DON QUIXOTE flings up an arm before his eyes and falls back, blinded by reflected sun. The KNIGHT moves upon him, slowly, inexorably.) Nay, do not flinch, Don Quixote. Look upon my device. Gaze deeply—for this is the mirror of reality and it tells things as they truly are. (DON QUIXOTE, trying to avoid the blaze of light, raises his sword.) Look! (Again the shield blinds him, and that of the ATTENDANTS, too.) What seest thou, Don Quixote? A gallant knight? Naught but an aging fool. (Again DON QUIXOTE raises his sword.) *Look!* (And again falls back before the shield.) Thou wilt see there *is* no Don Quixote. Naught but an old man—weak of brain. Seest thou? The face of a madman! (DON QUIXOTE raises his sword in one final trembling effort.) *Look!* (And HE strikes at DON QUIXOTE'S sword, which goes flying from his hand.) The masquerade is ended! (HE crashes his shield against the OTHER'S chest. DON QUIXOTE reels back into the dust. ALDONZA cries out, stifles the cry. The KNIGHT OF THE MIRRORS stands over DON QUIXOTE, sword-point at the FALLEN MAN'S throat.) Confess! Thy lady is a trollop and thy dream the nightmare of a disordered mind!

DON QUIXOTE (dazedly, uncertain): My lady is the lady Dulcinea...and the dream...the dream...? (His eyes wander and

for the first time HE seems to realize what has happened.) Oh, God—I am vanquished...

(The KNIGHT OF THE MIRRORS steps back and waves his ATTENDANTS to bring forward a wooden cage which has been concealed behind them.)

SANCHO (hurrying forward, lifts DON QUIXOTE'S head. Anguished:) Master—are you hurt?

DON QUIXOTE: Vanquished...

SANCHO: You couldn't help it!

DON QUIXOTE: Vanquished... (TWO of the ATTENDANTS lift him roughly to his feet. THEY shove him toward the cage. DON QUIXOTE holds back when HE sees it.)

KNIGHT OF THE MIRRORS: Remember the terms! (DON QUIXOTE dazedly enters the cage. The door closes behind him.) It is done! (And HE sweeps the casque from his head.)

SANCHO (thunderstruck): Your Grace! See! It is Doctor Carrasco! It is only Sansón Carrasco!

DR. CARRASCO: Forgive me, Señor Quijana. It was the only way.

DON QUIXOTE (after a long, slow look): I would rather you had killed my body...for when the spirit dies... (HE starts to cry, nakedly, broken. His head bends down between the bars and HE sinks, weeping to the floor.

ALDONZA starts forward, her face devastated by loss and pity.

The CAPTAIN OF THE INQUISITION enters, crossing the forestage. HE comes to the door, rattles it jarringly.)

CAPTAIN (shouting): Cervantes? Cervantes! (The PRISONERS look at him blankly, from another mood. The JAILER recalls himself, hurries to open the door.) Prepare to be summoned.

CERVANTES (confusedly, crawling out of the cage): By whom?

CAPTAIN: The judges of the Inquisition! (HE slings a bundle of

cloth across to CERVANTES.) You are to wear this. (CERVANTES takes the bundle, lets it fall open. It is a black robe with an imprint of yellow flames rising from the bottom.)

CERVANTES: What is it?

THE DUKE (with relish): Oh, very fashionable these days. To be worn at burnings.

CAPTAIN (maliciously): Don't laugh, Señor Englishman. I think there is an order for you, too.

THE DUKE: An order for freedom!

MONIPODIO: Captain? How soon?

CAPTAIN: Soon! (HE exits.)

MONIPODIO: But not yet. (To CERVANTES, with satisfaction:) You'll have time to finish the story.

CERVANTES: But the story is finished.

MONIPODIO: What?

THE DUKE (cheerfully): Of course. *Quite* the proper ending.

MONIPODIO (coldly): I don't think I like this ending. I don't think the jury likes it, either.

(CERVANTES turns to look at them. Their faces are hostile.)

THE DUKE: Cervantes...you've failed!

MONIPODIO (with a rap of his gavel): How says the jury?

CERVANTES (in panic): Wait! Could I have a little more time?

MONIPODIO: Oh, *I'll* grant it...but the Inquisition?

CERVANTES (harassed): A moment, please. Let me think...

(A pause. Music establishes a somber mood, a ticking of time. CERVANTES slowly removes the remnants of his armor, moves to an area where the PRISONERS establish an improvised bed. HE

puts on a dressing gown which MONIPODIO holds for him. His armor, sword atop the heap, is laid atop a table. The lighting alters to shafts of dying sun as CERVANTES lies down on the bed...and as ANTONIA, the PADRE, the HOUSEKEEPER and DR. CARRASCO move into positions of attendance. We are in DON QUIXOTE'S bedroom. QUIXOTE'S eyes are open but deep-hollowed and remote, windows on a mind that has retreated to some secret place. There is silence a while but for the music.)

ANTONIA (voice low, to CARRASCO): Can you do nothing?

PADRE (with soft compassion): I'm afraid there'll be more need of my services than his. (Waves a hand slowly across QUIXOTE'S unseeing eyes.) Where is he, I wonder? In what dark cavern of the mind?

DR. CARRASCO: According to recent theory—

PADRE: Doctor. Please.

DR. CARRASCO (offended): I was only going to—

PADRE: I know what you were going to.

DR. CARRASCO (resentfully): Don't you think I did right?

(The PADRE throws up his hands. SANCHO enters timidly, hat in hand.)

ANTONIA: You again!

DR. CARRASCO: Tell him to go away.

PADRE (wearily): What harm can he do?

ANTONIA: Yes—it's all been done! (SHE lets him pass, grudgingly.)

PADRE: Good evening.

SANCHO (bobbing his head): Your Reverence. (Diffidently:) Could I talk to him?

PADRE: I'm afraid he won't hear you.

SANCHO: Well, then I won't say much.

(The PADRE rises, leaving his chair for SANCHO.)

DR. CARRASCO: Not too long, please.

SANCHO: Oh, he likes to hear me talk! Why, when we were out adventuring— (Stops, as HE gets a hard look from the OTHERS. To DON QUIXOTE:) Good evening, Your Grace.

ANTONIA (bitterly): Your Grace!

SANCHO (gaining confidence, to DON QUIXOTE): Oh, what a time I've been having since I got back! You know my wife Teresa, how strong she is? Muscles like a Miura bull! Well, she beat me, Your Grace. She hit me with everything but the house itself. And she yells: "Where's all them gold and jewels you were going to bring me? Where's that kingdom you were supposed to get?" Well, Your Grace, I just kept a dignified silence because there are some questions you can't answer. Like when a man says, "What are you doing with my wife?" that's one of those questions you just can't answer. Of course I hit her back, Your Grace, but as I say, she's a lot stronger than I am, and whether the stone hits the pitcher or the pitcher hits the stone it's going to be bad for the pitcher. (The PADRE is listening with a smile. His eyes turn to DON QUIXOTE, and there is sudden interest at what they see.) But things might be worse, Your Grace, because even if I didn't get that kingdom I didn't come home with completely nothing. What I means is, on the way back I saw two baskets of wheat sitting all alone in a field with nobody near them, and I said to myself: "Sancho Panza, when they offer you a heifer, come running with a halter." So I just took those two baskets along. I know it wasn't exactly honest, Your Grace, but I made up for it by giving one basket to the church. "Steal the pig," I say, "but give the feet to God," and the Padre himself can tell you that the fat of Christianity is four fingers deep on my soul. Well, Your Grace—

DON QUIXOTE (smiling a little, barely audible): Sancho.

SANCHO (politely, as the PADRE warns the OTHERS to silence):

Did Your Grace say something?

DON QUIXOTE: You're a fat little bag stuffed with proverbs.

SANCHO: Yes, Your Grace. Well, as I was telling you—

ANTONIA (a cry as SHE runs to him): Uncle!

DON QUIXOTE (feebly): My dear... (His eyes go to the OTHERS.)
Good morning, Padre...or is it evening?

PADRE: Alonso...

DR. CARRASCO: How do you feel, sir?

DON QUIXOTE: Not well, my friend.

DR. CARRASCO: Can you speak your name?

DON QUIXOTE: Should a man not know his own name?

DR. CARRASCO: If you would say it...?

DON QUIXOTE (in surprise): Alonso Quijana.

DR. CARRASCO (with a look of triumph at the PADRE): Thank you!

ANTONIA (as DON QUIXOTE closes his eyes and is silent.
Anxiously:) Uncle?

DON QUIXOTE (faintly): Forgive me, dear. When I close my eyes I see a pale horse...and he beckons me—mount.

PADRE: No, Alonso. You will get well!

DON QUIXOTE (smiling): Why should a man get well when he is dying? 'Twould be such a waste of good health. (Gestures feebly.) Come closer, my friends. (THEY come to the bedside.) In my illness I dreamed most strangely. Oh, such dreams. It seemed that I was a...no...I dare not tell lest you think me mad.

ANTONIA: Put them from your mind!

DON QUIXOTE (deeply weary): They are gone, my dear—nor do

I know what they meant. Padre...

PADRE: Here, beside you.

DON QUIXOTE: If you please... I should like to make a will...

PADRE: Speak, my friend, and I shall write.

DR. CARRASCO (as DON QUIXOTE remains silent): Señor Quijana?

DON QUIXOTE (opens his eyes): Yes...yes... (HE summons strength.) I, Alonso Quijana, aware of the approaching end to my earthly existence—

(The PADRE'S pen scratches busily. From the front of the house is heard the thudding of the door knocker.)

ANTONIA (to the HOUSEKEEPER, as SHE goes to see): Don't admit anyone.

DON QUIXOTE: —do hereby make the following disposition of my estate. The bulk I bequeath to my beloved niece, Antonia Quijana (from off comes a racket of VOICES in vehement argument) with the exception of certain personal bequests which are as follows—

(The HOUSEKEEPER backs in, pushed roughly by ALDONZA.)

HOUSEKEEPER: You cannot! I say you cannot!

ALDONZA: Out of my way, you hag—

ANTONIA (angrily): What is this?

HOUSEKEEPER: I tried to stop her! She threatened to—

ALDONZA: Tear your eyes out! And if you touch me again, by God—

ANTONIA: Sansón!

DR. CARRASCO: It's that slut from the inn. (Advancing on ALDONZA grimly:) Get out of here.

ALDONZA: Not before I see him!

DR. CARRASCO: I'm warning you... go quietly or I shall...

DON QUIXOTE (voice weak but commanding): Let be.

DR. CARRASCO: Señor Quijana—

DON QUIXOTE: Let be, I say! In my house there will be courtesy. (CARRASCO is balked, but stands between ALDONZA and the bed.) Let me see her. (CARRASCO reluctantly steps aside, and ALDONZA and DON QUIXOTE are looking at each other.) Come closer, girl. (ALDONZA approaches, losing her bravado.) What did you wish?

ALDONZA (incredulously): Don't you know me?

DON QUIXOTE (puzzled): Should I?

ALDONZA: I am Aldonza!

DON QUIXOTE (blankly): I am sorry. I do not recall anyone of that name.

ALDONZA (Looks about wildly. Sees SANCHO. Points to him:) He knows!

(DON QUIXOTE'S eyes go to SANCHO, who steps forward as though to speak. DR. CARRASCO warns him fiercely with a gesture. SANCHO closes his mouth, shrugs feebly.)

ALDONZA (panicky, to DON QUIXOTE): Please, my lord!

DON QUIXOTE (curiously): Why do you say "my lord"? I am not a lord.

ALDONZA: You are my lord Don Quixote!

(A gasp from ANTONIA. The PADRE stills her with a warning gesture.)

DON QUIXOTE: Don Quixote. (Rubs his forehead, troubled.) You must forgive me, my dear. I have been ill... I am confused by

shadows. It is possible that I knew you once—I do not remember.

(ALDONZA is stunned. DR. CARRASCO smoothly steps forward, takes her by the arm.)

DR. CARRASCO (moving her along): This way.

(ALDONZA allows herself to be led. But SHE stops, pulls loose suddenly, and in a rush comes back and flings herself to her knees beside the bed.)

ALDONZA: Please! Try to remember!

DON QUIXOTE (with helpless compassion): Is it so important?

ALDONZA (anguished): Everything. My whole life. You spoke to me and it was different.

DON QUIXOTE: I...spoke to you?

ALDONZA: And you looked at me! And you didn't see me as I was! (Incoherently:) You said I was...sacred, and lovely. You said I was a...a vision of purity, and a radiance that would light your path. You said a woman is glory!

DON QUIXOTE: Glory...

ALDONZA: And you called me by another name!

DR. CARRASCO: I'm afraid I must insist—

DON QUIXOTE: Leave her be! (Deeply disturbed, his mind stirring.) Then perhaps...it was not a dream...

ALDONZA: You *spoke* of a dream. And about the inner call. How you must fight and it doesn't matter whether you win or lose if you follow the inner call. And our mission!

DON QUIXOTE (with growing alertness): Mission?

ALDONZA: You said it was mine as well as yours!

DON QUIXOTE: The words. Tell me the words!

ALDONZA (her eyes shining): "To dream the impossible dream.

To fight the unbeatable foe. And never to stop dreaming or fighting...!"

DON QUIXOTE: "This is man's privilege—and the only life worth living." (HE turns to her, his eyes catching fire.) Dulcinea!

ALDONZA (seizes his hand, kisses it): Thank you, my lord!

DON QUIXOTE: But this is not seemly, my lady. On thy knees? To me? (HE gets up, raising her.)

ALDONZA (in protest): My lord, you are not well!

DON QUIXOTE (growing in power): Not well? What is sickness to the body of a knight-errant? What matter wounds? For each time he falls he shall rise again—and woe to the wicked! (A lusty bellow:) Sancho!

SANCHO: Here, Your Grace!

DON QUIXOTE: My armor! My sword!

SANCHO (delighted, claps his hands): More misadventures!

DON QUIXOTE: *Adventures*, old friend! (Takes the sword from SANCHO and stands firm, eyes glowing and visionary with the old purpose.) Now does Don Quixote sally forth again. Now let the good take heart and the evil beware, for he shall perform the most astounding deeds of chivalry this world has known. (In growing exaltation.) Avaunt, ye Enchanters! Tremble, ye men against life! Cry terror and flee, for this is Don Quixote, Knight of the Woeful Countenance, and he is invincible! Cry, quake, gnash thy teeth—it will avail thee not. He shall win! For the sword of Don Quixote points— (HE wavers suddenly.)

ALDONZA (a cry of apprehension): My lord...!

DON QUIXOTE (in a whisper): To the stars! (The sword falls from his hand and HE crumples to the floor.)

ANTONIA: Uncle! (CARRASCO brushes her aside, swiftly moves to DON QUIXOTE, places a hand on his heart. In a moment HE looks up at ANTONIA in confirmation.) He is dead. My poor

uncle... (HER eyes turn to ALDONZA in gathering fury.) You killed him. You with your stories. Your lies. He was sane. He was himself again. And you ...! (SHE flies at ALDONZA, frenziedly striking and scratching.) Slut! Kitchen trull! Harlot!

(ALDONZA reels under the attack, but does not defend herself.)

DR. CARRASCO (catching ANTONIA, holding her back): It's too late now.

ANTONIA (struggling, spits at ALDONZA): Filthy animal! Out! Out!

(ALDONZA silently leaves the area of the room. ANTONIA starts to cry in CARRASCO'S arms. The PADRE, kneeling by DON QUIXOTE'S side, makes the sign of the cross. The lights begin to fade but remain up on ALDONZA where SHE stands alone. SANCHEO leaves the room. HE is blubbering, his fat face wet and foolish. HE sees ALDONZA where SHE leans against a post, eyes closed. HE goes to her.)

SANCHEO: He is dead. My master is dead.

ALDONZA (without emotion): A man died. He seemed a good man but I did not know him.

SANCHEO: But you saw...

ALDONZA: Don Quixote is not dead. Believe, Sancho. Believe.

SANCHEO (in confused hope): Aldonza...?

ALDONZA (gently): My name is Dulcinea.

(SHE leaves him, serene, transfigured.)

Off, we hear the snarling roll of the drums of the Inquisition. The lighting becomes that of the prison once more and in a moment the CAPTAIN enters, crossing the stage at the head of FOUR HOODED, CHANTING MEN. THEY fall silent, remaining outside as the JAILER opens the door.)

CAPTAIN (unrolling a scroll): Under authority of the Holy Office

of the Inquisition! (Reading:) By reason of certain offenses committed against His Majesty's Most Catholic Church the following are summoned to give answer and submit their persons for purification if it be so ordered. Don Miguel de Cervantes. (CERVANTES nods, almost with relief) James William Fox. (HE slings a bundled black robe straight at the DUKE, who catches it automatically, comes upright in a paralysis of shock.)

CERVANTES (with wry bravado): How popular a defendant I am. Summoned by one court before I've quite finished with another. Well? How says the jury?

MONIPODIO (of the package): I think I know what this contains. The history of your mad knight? (CERVANTES nods, smiling.) Plead as well there as you did here and you may not bum.

CERVANTES (accepting the package): I've no intention of burning. (To THE DUKE, cheerfully.) Your Lordship? Shall we go? (THE DUKE'S face is white, eyes glazed. The MAN is in the grip of total, abject terror. CERVANTES understands, comes to him. Voice low:) Courage.

(No response. HE takes the DUKE by the arm, leads him toward the door. THE DUKE moves like a man made of wood.)

MONIPODIO: Cervantes. (CERVANTES pauses in the doorway.) I think Don Quixote is brother to Don Miguel.

CERVANTES (smiling): God help us—we are both men of La Mancha.

(The DRUMMERS and CAPTAIN about-face. The drums strike into their slow-march roll and the chanting resumes. The little PROCESSION moves across the forestage as the PRISONERS come forward to watch. The girl ESCALANTE (ALDONZA) stands apart from the others, in her own dream. THE DUKE walks stiff-legged. CERVANTES keeps an arm about him, guiding, lending him strength as THEY go. The arrogant Spanish march-music swells as LIGHTS DIM OUT.)

THE END