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1 Somewhere in La Mancha, in a place whose name I do not care to re-
2 member, a gentleman lived not long ago, one of those who has a lance
3 and ancient shield on a shelf and perhaps a skinny nag and a greyhound for
4 racing. An occasional stew, beef more often than lamb, hash most
5 nights, eggs and abstinence on Saturdays, lentils on Fridays, sometimes
6 squab as a treat on Sundays—these consumed three-fourths of his in-
7 come. The rest went for a light woolen tunic and velvet breeches and
8 hose of the same material for feast days, while weekdays were honored
9 with dun-colored coarse cloth. He had a housekeeper past forty, a niece
10 not yet twenty, and a man-of-all-work who did everything from saddling
11 the horse to pruning the trees. Our gentleman was approximately fifty
12 years old; his complexion was weathered, his flesh scrawny, his face
13 gaunt, and he was a very early riser and a great lover of the hunt. Some
14 claim that his family name was Quixada, or Quexada, for there is a cer-
15 tain amount of disagreement among the authors who write of this mat-
16 ter, although reliable conjecture seems to indicate that his name was
17 Quexana. But this does not matter very much to our story; in its telling
18 there is absolutely no deviation from the truth.

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20 And so, let it be said that this aforementioned gentleman spent his
21 times of leisure--which meant most of the year--reading books of
22 chivalry with so much devotion and enthusiasm that he forgot almost
23 completely about the hunt and even about the administration of his es-
24 tate; and in his rash curiosity and folly he went so far as to sell acres of
25 arable land in order to buy books of chivalry to read, and he brought as
26 many of them as he could into his house; and he thought none was as
27 fine as those composed by the worthy Feliciano de Silva, because the
28 clarity of his prose and complexity of his language seemed to him more

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29 valuable than pearls, in particular when he read the declarations and
30 missives of love, where he would often find written: The reason for the un-
31 reason to which my reason turns so weakens my reason that with reason I
32 complain of thy beauty. And also when he read: . . . the heavens on high
33 divinely heighten thy di i the stars and make thee deserving of
34 the deserts thy greatness deserves.

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36 With these words and phrases the poor gentleman lost his mind, and
37 he spent sleepless nights trying to understand them and extract their
38 meaning, which Aristotle himself, if he came back to life for only that
39 purpose, would not have been able to decipher or understand. Our gen-
40 tleman was not very happy with the wounds that Don Belianís gave and
41 received, because he imagined that no matter how great the physicians
42 and surgeons who cured him, he would still have his face and entire body
43 covered with scars and marks. But, even so, he praised the author for
44 having concluded his book with the promise of unending adventure, and
45 he often felt the desire to take up his pen and give it the conclusion
46 promised there; and no doubt he would have done so, and even pub-
47 lished it, if other greater and more persistent thoughts had not prevented
48 him from doing so. He often had discussions with the village priest-
49 who was a learned man, a graduate of Sigüenza--regarding who had
50 been the greater knight, Palmerín of England or Amadís of Gaul; but
51 Master Nicolás, the village barber, said that none was the equal of the
52 Knight of Phoebus, and if any could be compared to him, it was Don
53 Galaor, the brother of Amadís of Gaul, because he was moderate in
54 everything: a knight who was not affected, not as weepy as his brother,
55 and incomparable in questions of courage.

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57 In short, our gentleman became so caught up in reading that he spent
58 his nights reading from dusk till dawn and his days reading from sunrise
59 to sunset, and so with too little sleep and too much reading his brains
60 dried up, causing him to lose his mind. His fantasy filled with everything
61 he had read in his books, enchantments as well as combats, battles, chal-
62 lenges, wounds, courtings, loves, torments, and other impossible foolish-
63 ness, and he became so convinced in his imagination of the truth of all
64 the countless grandiloquent and false inventions he read that for him no
65 history in the world was truer. He would say that El Cid Ruy Díaz had
66 been a very good knight but could not compare to Amadís, the Knight of
67 the Blazing Sword, who with a single backstroke cut two ferocious and
68 colossal giants in half. He was fonder of Bernardo del Carpio because at
69 Roncesvalles he had killed the enchanted Roland by availing himself of
70 the tactic of Hercules when he crushed Antaeus, the son of Earth, in his
71 arms. He spoke highly of the giant Morgante because, although he be-
72 longed to the race of giants, all of them haughty and lacking in courtesy,
73 he alone was amiable and well-behaved. But, more than any of the oth-
74 ers, he admired Reinaldos de Montalbán, above all when he saw him
75 emerge from his castle and rob anyone he met, and when he crossed the
76 sea and stole the idol of Mohammed made all of gold, as recounted in his
77 history. He would have traded his housekeeper, and even his niece, for
78 the chance to strike a blow at the traitor Guenelon.

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80 The truth is that when his mind was completely gone, he had the
81 strangest thought any lunatic in the world ever had, which was that it
82 seemed reasonable and necessary to him, both for the sake of his honor
83 and as a service to the nation, to become a knight errant and travel the
84 world with his armor and his horse to seek adventures and engage in

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85 everything he had read that knights errant engaged in, righting all man-
86 ner of wrongs and, by seizing the opportunity and placing himself in dan-
87 ger and ending those wrongs, winning eternal renown and everlasting
88 fame. The poor man imagined himself already wearing the crown, won by
89 the valor of his arm, of the empire of Trebizond at the very least; and so it
90 was that with these exceedingly agreeable thoughts, and carried away by
91 the extraordinary pleasure he took in them, he hastened to put into effect
92 what he so fervently desired. And the first thing he did was to attempt to
93 clean some armor that had belonged to his great-grandfathers and
94 stained with rust and covered with mildew, had spent many long years
95 stored and forgotten in a corner. He did the best he could to clean and re-
96 pair it, but he saw that it had a great defect, which was that instead of a
97 full sallet helmet with an attached neckguard, there was only a simple
98 headpiece; but he compensated for this with his industry, and out of
99 pasteboard he fashioned a kind of half-helmet that, when attached to the
100 headpiece, took on the appearance of a full sallet. It is true that in order
101 to test if it was strong and could withstand a blow, he took out his sword
102 and struck it twice, and with the first blow he undid in a moment what it
103 had taken him a week to create; he could not help being disappointed at
104 the ease with which he had hacked it to pieces, and to protect against
105 that danger, he made another one, placing strips of iron on the inside so
106 that he was satisfied with its strength; and not wanting to put it to the test
107 again, he designated and accepted it as an extremely fine sallet.

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109 Then he went to look at his horse though its hooves had more
110 cracks than his master's pate and it owed more flaws than Gonnella's
111 horse, that *tantum pellis et osso fuit*, it seemed to him that Alexander's
112 Bucephalus and El Cid's Babieca were not its equal. He spent four days

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113 thinking about the name he would give it; for—as he told himself—it
114 was not seemly that the horse of so famous a knight, and a steed so in-
115 trinsically excellent, should nor have a worthy name; he was looking for
116 the precise name that would declare what the horse had been before its
117 master became a knight errant and what it was now; for he was deter-
118 mined that if the master was changing his condition, the horse too
119 would change its name to one that would win the fame and recognition
120 its new position and profession deserved; and so, after many names that
121 he shaped and discarded, subtracted from and added to, unmade and re-
122 made in his memory and imagination, he finally decided to call the horse
123 Rocinante, a name, in his opinion, that was noble, sonorous, and reflec-
124 tive of what it had been when it was a nag, before it was what it was now,
125 which was the foremost nag in all the world.

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127 Having given a name, and one so much to his liking, to his horse, he
128 wanted to give one to himself, and he spent another eight days ponder-
129 ing this, and at last he called himself Don Quixote, which is why, as has
130 been noted, the authors of this absolutely true history determined that
131 he undoubtedly must have been named Quixada and not Quexada, as
132 others have claimed. In any event, recalling that the valiant Amadís had
133 not been content with simply calling himself Amadís but had added the
134 name of his kingdom and realm in order to bring it fame, and was known
135 as Amadís of Gaul, he too, like a good knight, wanted to add the name of
136 his birthplace to his own, and he called himself Don Quixote of La Man-
137 cha, thereby, to his mind, clearly stating his lineage and country and
138 honoring it by making it part of his title.

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140 Having cleaned his armor and made a full helmet out of a simple
141 headpiece, and having given a name to his horse and decided on

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142 one for himself, he realized that the only thing left for him to do was
143 to find a lady to love; for the knight errant without a lady-love was
144 a tree without leaves or fruit, a without a soul. He said to him-
145 self:

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147 "If I, because of my evil sins, of my good fortune, meet with a giant
148 somewhere, as ordinarily befalls knights errant, and I unseat him with a
149 single blow, or cut his body in half, or, in short, conquer and defeat him,
150 would it not be good to have someone to whom I could send him so that
151 he might enter and fall to his knees before my sweet lady, and say in the
152 humble voice of surrender: 'I, lady, am the giant Caraculiambro, lord of
153 the island Malindrania, defeated in single combat by the never suffi-
154 ciently praised knight Don Quixote of La Mancha, who commanded me
155 to appear before your ladyship, so that your highness might dispose of me
156 as you chose'?"

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158 Oh, how pleased our good knight was when he had made this speech,
159 and even more pleased when he discovered the one he could call his
160 lady! It is believed that in a nearby village there was a very attractive
161 peasant girl with whom he had once been in love, although she, appar-
162 ently, never knew or noticed. Her name was Aldonza Lorenzo, and he
163 thought it a good idea to call her the lady of his thoughts, and, searching
164 for a name that would not differ significantly from his and would suggest
165 and imply that of a princess and great lady, he decided to call her
166 Dulcinea of Toboso, because she came from Toboso, a name, to his
167 mind, that was musical and beautiful and filled with significance, as
168 were all the others he had given to himself and everything pertaining
169 to him.