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## CHAPTER I

THE PLEASANT NEW ADVENTURE THE CURATE AND  
BARBER MET WITH IN SIERRA MORENA, OR BLACK  
MOUNTAIN

Most fortunate and happy was the age that ushered into the world that most daring knight Don Quixote de la Mancha! for from his generous resolution to revive and restore the ancient order of knight-errantry, that was not wholly neglected, but almost lost and abolished, our age, barren in itself of pleasant recreations, derives the pleasure it reaps from his true history, and the various tales and episodes thereof, in some respects no less pleasing, artful, and authentic, than the history itself. We told you that as the curate was preparing to give Cardenio some seasonable consolation, he was prevented by a voice, whose doleful complaints reached his ears. "O heavens," cried the unseen mourner, "is it possible I have at last found out a place that will afford a private grave to this miserable body, whose



load I so repine to bear? Yes, if the silence and solitude of these deserts do not deceive me, here I may die concealed from human eyes. Ah me! ah wretched creature! to what extremity has affliction driven me, reduced to think these hideous woods and rocks a kind retreat! it is true, indeed, I may here freely complain to heaven, and beg for that relief which I might ask in vain of false mankind: for it is vain, I find, to seek below either counsel, ease, or remedy." The curate and his company, who heard all this distinctly, justly conjectured they were very near the person who thus expressed his grief, and therefore rose to find him out. They had not gone about twenty paces, before they spied a youth in a country habit, sitting at the foot of a rock behind an ash-tree; but they could not well see his face, being bowed almost upon his knees, as he sat washing his feet in a rivulet that glided by. They approached him so softly that he did not perceive them: and, as he was gently paddling in the clear water, they had time to discern that his legs were as white as alabaster, and so taper, so curiously proportioned, and so fine, that nothing of the kind could appear more beautiful. Our observers were amazed at this discovery, rightly imagining that such

tender feet were not used to trudge in rugged ways, or measure the steps of oxen at the plough, the common employments of people in such apparel; and therefore the curate, who went before the rest, whose curiosity was heightened by this sight, beckoned to them to step aside, and hide themselves behind some of the little rocks that were by; which they did, and from thence making a stricter observation, they found he had on a grey double-skirted jerkin, girt tight about his body with a linen towel. He wore also a pair of breeches, and gamashes of grey cloth, and a grey huntsman's cap on his head. His gamashes were now pulled up to the middle of his leg, which really seemed to be of snowy alabaster. Having made an end of washing his beauteous feet, he immediately wiped them with a handkerchief, which he pulled out from under his cap; and with that, looking up, he discovered so charming a face, so accomplished a beauty, that Cardenio could not forbear saying to the curate, that since this was not Lucinda, it was certainly no human form, but an angel. And then the youth taking off his cap, and shaking his head, an incredible quantity of lovely hair flowed down upon his shoulders, and not only covered them, but



almost all his body; by which they were now convinced, that what they at first took to be a country lad, was a young woman, and one of the most beautiful creatures in the world. Cardenio was not less surprised than the other two, and once more declared, that no face could vie with hers but Lucinda's. To part her dishevelled tresses, she only used her slender fingers, and at the same time discovered so fine a pair of arms, and hands so white and lovely, that our three admiring gazers grew more impatient to know who she was, and moved forward to accost her. At the noise they made, the pretty creature started; and peeping through her hair, which she hastily removed from before her eyes with both her hands, she no sooner saw three men coming towards her, but in a mighty fright she snatched up a little bundle that lay by her, and fled as fast as she could, without so much as staying to put on her shoes, or do up her hair. But alas! scarce had she gone six steps, when her tender feet not being able to endure the rough encounter of the stones, the poor affrighted fair fell on the hard ground; so that those from whom she fled, hastening to help her, "Stay, madam," cried the curate, "whoever you be you have no reason to fly;

we have no other design but to do you service." With that, approaching her, he took her by the hand, and perceiving she was so disordered with fear and confusion, that she could not answer a word, he strove to compose her mind with kind expressions. "Be not afraid, madam," continued he; "though your hair has betrayed what your disguise concealed from us, we are but the more disposed to assist you, and do you all manner of service. Then pray tell us how we may best do it. I imagine it was no slight occasion that made you obscure your singular beauty under so unworthy a disguise, and venture into this desert, where it was the greatest chance in the world that ever you met with us. However, we hope it is not impossible to find a remedy for your misfortunes; since there are none which reason and time will not at last surmount: and therefore, madam, if you have not absolutely renounced all human comfort, I beseech you tell us the cause of your affliction, and assure yourself we do not ask this out of mere curiosity, but a real desire to serve you, and either to condole or assuage your grief."

While the curate endeavoured thus to remove the trembling fair-one's apprehension, she stood amazed, staring, without speaking a



word, sometimes upon one, sometimes upon another, like one scarce well awake, or like an ignorant clown who happens to see some strange sight. But at last the curate, having given her time to recollect herself, and persisting in his earnest and civil entreaties, she fetched a deep sigh, and then unclosing her lips, broke silence in this manner. "Since this desert has not been able to conceal me, and my hair has betrayed me, it would be needless now for me to dissemble with you; and since you desire to hear the story of my misfortunes, I cannot in civility deny you, after all the obliging offers you have been pleased to make me: but yet, gentlemen, I am much afraid, what I have to say will but make you sad, and afford you little satisfaction; for you will find my disasters are not to be remedied. There is one thing that troubles me yet more; it shocks my nature to think I must be forced to reveal to you some secrets which I had a design to have buried in my grave: but yet considering the garb and the place you have found me in, I fancy it will be better for me to tell you all, than to give occasion to doubt of my past conduct and my present designs, by an affected reservedness." The disguised lady having made this answer,

with a modest blush and extraordinary discretion, the curate and his company, who now admired her the more for her sense, renewed their kind offers and pressing solicitations; and then they modestly let her retire a moment to some distance to put herself in decent order. Which done, she returned, and being all seated on the grass, after she had used no small violence to smother her tears, she thus began her story.

"I was born in a certain town of Andalusia,<sup>1</sup> from which a duke takes his title, that makes him a grandee of Spain. This duke has two sons, the eldest, heir to his estate, and, as it may be presumed, of his virtues; the youngest, heir to nothing I know of, but the treachery of Vellido,\* and the deceitfulness of Galalon.† My father, who is one of his vassals, is but of low degree; but so very rich, that had fortune equalled his birth to his estate, he could have wanted nothing more, and I, perhaps, had never been so miserable; for I verily believe, my not being of noble blood is the chief occasion of my ruin. True it is my parents are not so meanly born, as to have any cause to be ashamed of their original, nor so high as

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 1 to Chap. 4, Book IV.

\* Who murdered Sancho, King of Castile.

† Who betrayed the French army at Roncesvalles.



to alter the opinion I have that my misfortune proceeds from their lowness. It is true, they have been farmers from father to son, yet without any mixture or stain of infamous or scandalous blood. They are old rusty\* Christians (as we call our true primitive Spaniards), and the antiquity of their family, together with their large possessions, and the port they live in, raises them much above their profession, and has by little and little almost universally gained them the name of gentlemen, setting them, in a manner, equal to many such in the world's esteem. As I am their only child they ever loved me with all the tenderness of indulgent parents; and their great affection made them esteem themselves happier in their daughter, than in the peaceable enjoyment of their large estate. Now as it was my good fortune to be possessed of their love, they were pleased to trust me with their substance. The whole house and estate was left to my management, and I took such care not to abuse the trust reposed in me, that I never forfeited their good opinion of my discretion. The time I had to spare from the care of the family, I commonly employed in the usual

\* *Ranciosos* in the original: a metaphor taken from rusty bacon, yellow and mouldy, as it were, with age. It is a farmer's daughter speaks this.

exercises of young women, sometimes making bone-lace, or at my needle, and now and then reading some good book, or playing on the harp; having experienced that music was very proper to recreate the wearied mind: and this was the innocent life I led. I have not descended to these particulars out of vain ostentation, but merely that when I come to relate my misfortunes, you may observe I do not owe them to my ill conduct. While I thus lived the life of a nun, unseen, as I thought, by any body but our own family, and never leaving the house but to go to church, which was commonly betimes in the morning, and always with my mother, and so close hid in a veil that I could scarce find my way; notwithstanding all the care that was taken to keep me from being seen, it was unhappily rumoured abroad that I was handsome, and to my eternal disquiet, love intruded into my peaceful retirement. Don Ferdinand, second son to the duke I have mentioned, had a sight of me"—Scarce had Cardenio heard Don Ferdinand named, but he changed colour, and betrayed such a disorder of body and mind, that the curate and the barber were afraid he would have fallen into one of those frantic fits that often used to



take him; but by good fortune it did not come to that, and he only set himself to look steadfastly on the country maid, presently guessing who she was; while she continued her story, without taking any notice of the alteration of his countenance.

“No sooner had he seen me,” said she, “but, as he since told me, he felt in his breast that violent passion of which he afterwards gave me so many proofs. But not to tire you with a needless relation of every particular, I will pass over all the means he used to inform me of his love: he purchased the good-will of all our servants with private gifts: he made my father a thousand kind offers of service: every day seemed a day of rejoicing in our neighbourhood, every evening ushered in some serenade, and the continual music was even a disturbance in the night. He got a number of infinite love-letters transmitted to me, I do not know by what means, every one full of the tenderest expressions, promises, vows, and protestations. But all this assiduous courtship was so far from inclining my heart to a kind return, that it rather moved my indignation; insomuch, that I looked upon Don Ferdinand as my greatest enemy, and one wholly bent on my ruin: not but that I was well enough

pleased with his gallantry, and took a secret delight in seeing myself thus courted by a person of his quality. Such demonstrations of love are never altogether displeasing to women, and the most disdainful, in spite of all their coyness, reserve a little complaisance in their hearts for their admirers. But the disproportion between our qualities was too great to suffer me to entertain any reasonable hopes, and his gallantry too singular not to offend me. Besides, my father, who soon made a right construction of Don Ferdinand's pretensions, with his prudent admonitions concurred with the sense I ever had of my honour, and banished from my mind all favourable thoughts of his addresses. However, like a kind parent, perceiving I was somewhat uneasy, and imagining the flattering prospect of so advantageous a match might still amuse me, he told me one day he reposed the utmost trust in my virtue, esteeming it the strongest obstacle he could oppose to Don Ferdinand's dishonourable designs; yet if I would marry, to rid me at once of his unjust pursuit, and prevent the ruin of my reputation, I should have liberty to make my own choice of a suitable match, either in our own town or the neighbourhood; and that he would do for me whatever could be expected



from a loving father. I humbly thanked him for his kindness, and told him, that as I had never yet had any thoughts of marriage, I would try to rid myself of Don Ferdinand some other way. Accordingly I resolved to shun him with so much precaution, that he should never have the opportunity to speak to me; but all my reservedness, far from tiring out his passion, strengthened it the more. In short, Don Ferdinand, either hearing or suspecting I was to be married, thought of a contrivance to cross a design that was likely to cut off all his hopes. One night, therefore, when I was in my chamber, nobody with me but my maid, and the door double-locked and bolted, that I might be secured against the attempts of Don Ferdinand, whom I took to be a man who would stick at nothing to compass his designs, unexpectedly I saw him just before me; which amazing sight so surprised me, that I was struck dumb, and fainted away with fear. So I had not power to call for help, nor do I believe he would have given me time to have done it, had I attempted it; for he presently ran to me, and taking me in his arms, while I was sinking with the fright, he spoke to me in such endearing terms, and with so much address, and pretended tenderness and sin-

cerity, that I did not dare to cry out when I came to myself. His sighs, and yet more his tears, seemed to me undeniable proofs of his vowed integrity; and I being but young, bred up in perpetual retirement, from all society but my virtuous parents, and unexperienced in those affairs, in which even the most knowing are apt to be mistaken, my reluctancy abated by degrees, and I began to have some sense of compassion, yet none but what was consistent with my honour. However, when I was pretty well recovered from my first fright, my former resolution returned; and then, with more courage than I thought I should have had, 'My lord,' said I, 'if at the same time that you offer me your love, and give me such strange demonstrations of it, you would also offer me poison, and leave to take my choice, I would soon resolve which to accept, and convince you by my death, that my honour is dearer to me than my life. To be plain, I can have no good opinion of a presumption that endangers my reputation; and unless you leave me this moment, I will so effectually make you know how much you are mistaken in me, that if you have but the least sense of honour left, you will prevent the driving me to that extremity as long as you live. I was born your