

per. Now then! As everyone knows, it is imperative that each knight shall have a lady—for a knight without a lady is like a body without a soul. To whom would he dedicate his conquests? What vision sustain him when he sallies forth to do battle with ogres and with giants? (He points to the stage area where lights come up on ALDONZA, seated in what is now the kitchen, gobbling her supper. SANCHO is seen approaching. CERVANTES hands him a sheet of paper) Don Quixote, having discovered his lady, sends his faithful squire to her with a missive.

(The transition is complete; CERVANTES exits)

ALDONZA (To SANCHO, suspiciously) Missive? What's a missive?

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

ALDONZA (Darkly) Let's see it. (She takes the rolled 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, noblewomen are so busy with their needlework—

ALDONZA Needlework?

SANCHO Embroidering 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, and closes his eyes. Music: the quotations from the letter are sung. All other lines are spoken)

SANCHO

"Most lovely sovereign and highborn lady—"

ALDONZA (Continuing to gobble her supper) 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 That again. 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 makes a contemptuous gesture for him to continue)

"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!

ALDONZA Well, what's he want?

SANCHO I'm getting to it!

"—And send to me a token of thy fair esteem that I may carry as my standard into battle."

MAN OF LA MANCHA

ALDONZA What kind of a token?

SANCHO He says generally it's a silken scarf.

ALDONZA Your master's a crackbrain!

SANCHO Oh, no!

ALDONZA (*Mimicking*) Oh, yes!

SANCHO Well, they say one madman makes a hundred
and love makes a thousand.

ALDONZA What's that mean?

SANCHO I'm not sure.

ALDONZA You're crazy, too! (*A pause*) Well, what are you
waiting for?

SANCHO (*Patiently*) The token.

ALDONZA I'll give him a token. Here!

(*She flings him the filthy, tattered dishcloth she
has been using*)

SANCHO (*Examining it in dismay*) But my lady—

ALDONZA Don't you "my lady" me too or I'll crack you
like an egg! (*SANCHO retreats*) Wait a minute. Come
here. Sit. Sit! (*She pats the stool and SANCHO sits, she
beside him on the floor*) Tell me—why do you follow
him?

SANCHO Well, that's easy to explain, I . . . I . . .
(*The reason seems to elude him*)

ALDONZA Why?

SANCHO I'm *telling* you. It's because . . . because . . .

ALDONZA *Why?*

End