

# DON QUIXOTE DE LA CENTER

by David Bareford

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# DON QUIXOTE DE LA CENTER

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*Inspired by the novel “Don Quixote” by Miguel de Cervantes*

**SYNOPSIS:** It is the night before Halloween at a group home for senior citizens in the small town of La Center, Washington. Donald Quintero, an aging resident with dementia, is costumed as a knight by the staff and decides that he really is a cavalier of old, viewing the world around him as a land of castles, giants, fair ladies, and evil sorcerers. At first, his antics are harmless—even therapeutic for the other residents—and the staff indulges Don’s fantasy, much to the consternation of his practical-minded son, Sam.

Then, Don’s delusions of knightly valor begin causing inadvertent harm to himself and others: he uses his wheelchair to joust against a vending machine (he sees a giant), he destroys cardboard cutouts of Thanksgiving pilgrims (he thinks they are holding the house director prisoner), and he nearly strikes another resident with a yardstick sword (he sees her as an infidel). Worse, he convinces another resident that she is his paramour, Dulcinea. She forsakes her real identity and no longer recognizes her husband of forty-nine years. The house staff realizes Don has gone too far.

But because logical explanation is ineffective with those who suffer from advanced dementia, the staff choose to employ validation therapy to get through to Don: address him from inside the fantasy. They pose increasingly difficult knightly challenges to try to prove Don isn’t a real knight, but to no avail. Finally, Don’s son Sam, posing as the Knight of Mirrors, brings his father back to crushing reality, though we are left wondering if the remaining fragments of the identity of Donald Quintero are truly better than the fantasy of Don Quixote.

**DURATION:** 90 minutes.

**TIME:** 2015.

**SETTING:** Interior of the La Center Adult Family Home.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS***(4-5 females, 4-6 males)*

DONALD QUINTERO (m).....he/him, late 70s, with advancing dementia. *(213 lines)*

SAM QUINTERO (m).....he/him, late 40s, Don's son. *(113 lines)*

MARTA KOVALENKO (f) .....she/her, who runs the La Center Adult Family Home. Speaks with a Ukrainian accent. *(141 lines)*

ALICE SIMMS (f).....she/her, 70s, a La Center guest. *(79 lines)*

DORIS (f).....she/her, 80s, a La Center guest. *(49 lines)*

EDDIE (m).....he/him, 70s, a La Center guest. *(35 lines)*

JIMMY (m).....he/him, 20s, a caregiver. *(113 lines)*

SANDY CHO (f) .....she/her, a caregiver. *(122 lines)*

CLARK (m) .....he/him, 70s, Alice's husband. *(42 lines)*

DR. CARRASCO (f).....she/her, a geriatric psychologist. *(38 lines)*

ANNOYED DAD (m) .....he/him, a Halloween bully. *(8 lines)*

**CAST NOTE:** Act One contains a few lines from unseen children. These lines can be performed by offstage cast or prerecorded, as the production prefers.

**OPTIONAL DOUBLING**

- SAM can double as ANNOYED DAD
- EDDIE can double as CLARK
- DORIS can double as DR. CARRASCO

### SETTING

The interior of the La Center Adult Family Home, circa 2015. A representation of part of Don's bedroom is seen, along with a common area that includes a couch, a dining table, and a vending machine. Also visible is a front door and an exit to a hallway to a kitchen and other guest rooms.

### PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

While the scenes of the play are somewhat episodic in nature, the transitions are meant to show that life in La Center continues on. The residents and the staff deal with their circumstances day in and day out, and the focused action in the scenes merely highlights snippets of their lived experience.

“Do not go gentle into that good night, Old age should burn and rave at close of day...Rage, rage, against the dying of the light.” —Dylan Thomas

**PREMIERE PRODUCTION**

*Don Quixote de La Center* was first staged in August, 2022 at Magenta Theater of Vancouver, Washington, with the following cast and crew:

DONALD QUINTERO..... Christopher Cleveland  
 SAM QUINTERO ..... Jason Litts  
 MARTA KOVALENKO.....Laura Henderson  
 ALICE SIMMS ..... Rebecca L Hoffman  
 DORIS/DR. CARRASCO ..... Carol Radkins  
 EDDIE/CLARK ..... David Roberts  
 SANDY CHO..... Jessica Moran  
 JIMMY ..... Zane Jager

Director..... Alice Tanzillo  
 Asst. Dir/Stage Manager ..... Maddi Dorry  
 Set Designer ..... Mark Wood  
 Lighting Designer..... Rebecca Hoffman  
 Sound Designer ..... Autumn Bochart  
 Original Sound ..... Steve Goodwin  
 Costume Design ..... Christine Kuzar  
 Hair and Makeup..... Maddi Dorry  
 Set Dressing..... Melody Lester  
 Properties Design ..... Sara Coombs  
 Violence Design ..... David Bareford

**ACT ONE, SCENE 1**

**AT START:** *In darkness, we hear the war cries, hoof-beats, and the din of hundreds of clashing swords produced by a medieval battle. The sound establishes, then dissolves into the roar of thousands of fans cheering after a goal at a soccer match, overlaid with an announcer speaking excited and rapid Spanish.*

**AT RISE:** *DON sits in a wheelchair in his room, staring blankly at the flicker of a small television but registering no interest or awareness as the sounds of the game continue softly. In the common room, ALICE sits at the table with DORIS while MARTA is busy getting the table set for dinner.*

**DORIS:** Where's Doug?

**MARTA:** You mean Don.

**DORIS:** Don. What did I say? Where's Don?

**ALICE:** Probably on the crapper.

**MARTA:** Alice, language!

**ALICE:** What? Thomas Crapper invented the toilet. True story!

**MARTA:** You forget the names of your grandkids, but you remember that.

**ALICE:** Well, I see the crapper a lot more often!

**DORIS:** Is this dinner?

**MARTA:** *(Calling down the hall.)* Jimmy! Can you check on Donald?

**DORIS:** Is this dinner we're having, or lunch?

**MARTA:** It's dinner, Doris.

**DORIS:** I thought it was lunch.

**ALICE:** You already had lunch, you silly goose. The soup.

**DORIS:** Oh, right, the soup. That was good.

*EDDIE enters with a walker. His robe is untied and hanging open, revealing a bare chest and some less-than-glamorous undergarments.*

**EDDIE:** Where's it at? I... I... I don't know where—

**MARTA:** Oh! Eddie! Let's get you tied up here.

*MARTA ties EDDIE'S robe closed. JIMMY enters.*

**JIMMY:** Check on Don?

**MARTA:** Yeah, see if he'll eat with us or if I have to bring it to his room again.

*JIMMY crosses to Don's room.*

**EDDIE:** My... my... my... clicker. For the... the...

**MARTA:** TV?

**EDDIE:** Right, the TV. To change the channel. I can't find the clicker.

**MARTA:** In a minute. Will find it. Right now, time to sit and eat. Would you like some food?

**EDDIE:** Okay.

*EDDIE sits at the table.*

**DORIS:** We're having lunch.

**ALICE:** Dinner.

**DORIS:** Dinner. What did I say?

**JIMMY:** *(In DON'S room.)* Hey, Don, ready to eat? *(No response.)*  
Hello, Mister Quintero! Do you want to come eat with us? How 'bout I just wheel you out into—

*JIMMY starts to move Don's chair toward the door, but DON suddenly becomes very agitated and digs his heels into the floor to stop it.*

**DON:** No no no no no....

**JIMMY:** *(Stopping.)* All right, all right, relax... have it your way.

*In the common area, the phone rings. MARTA answers.*

**MARTA:** La Center Adult Family Home, this is Marta. *(Pause.)* Yes, thank you. Let me grab her file.

**DORIS:** *(To EDDIE.)* You forgot where you put your remote again.

**EDDIE:** My... my... my clicker.

**DORIS:** Clicker. What did I say?

**EDDIE:** I forgot where I put it.

**ALICE:** Last week he forgot which room was his and climbed into bed with me.

**DORIS:** That must have been exciting.

**ALICE:** Not really. What good is a man in your bed if he can't remember what to do?

*JIMMY comes back out to the common room and catches MARTA'S eye. He jerks a thumb back toward DON'S room and shakes his head: he's not coming. MARTA nods.*

**MARTA:** April 6, 1941. Okay, she needs refills on Gabapentin, Atorvastatin, and Metformin.

*There is a knock at the door. MARTA rolls her eyes and nods at JIMMY, who heads to answer it.*

**MARTA:** Yeah. Friday will be fine.

*JIMMY answers the door to find SAM, who carries a book.*

**SAM:** Hello! I'm here about my father.

**JIMMY:** Uh...

**SAM:** Donald Quintero?

**JIMMY:** Oh, yeah. Come on in.

**MARTA:** *(On the phone.)* Have a good day. Thanks. *(Crossing to SAM.)* Mister Quintero!

**SAM:** Please. Sam. So... Dad's having problems?

**MARTA:** It's only been a few days. There's always a transition.

**SAM:** You said he's not eating?

**MARTA:** Not with the group. He eats all right when I bring it to him.

**JIMMY:** Yeah, he doesn't like it when we try to bring him out. Just wants to stay in his room.

**SAM:** Has he been reading? I... brought a book he's always liked.

**MARTA:** He watches TV mostly.

**JIMMY:** He likes coming out to the vending machine though!

**SAM:** *(Glancing at the machine.)* I noticed that. I'm surprised you have one here.

**MARTA:** Oh, we provide all their food, even snacks. It really just helps our guests feel a little... independent. Something they can pick on their own.

**JIMMY:** And we fill it with sugar-free.

**MARTA:** It's true. Hey... help Christina dish up in the kitchen, would you?

**JIMMY:** You got it.

*JIMMY exits into the kitchen.*

**MARTA:** Want to come on back and talk to Donald?

**SAM:** Yeah, great.

*As they pass near the table, ALICE calls out to SAM.*

**ALICE:** Hello, handsome!

**DORIS:** Alice!

**MARTA:** Yes, that would be Alice. And Doris, and Eddie. This is Don's son Sam.

**SAM:** Hi. Nice to meet you.

**MARTA:** Eddie was glad to get another man in the house, right, Eddie?

**EDDIE:** We're getting someone else?

**MARTA:** Don hasn't been out of his room much.

**SAM:** I'll get him. One sec.

*SAM crosses to DON'S door.*

**EDDIE:** Someone else is coming?

**MARTA:** Don.

**EDDIE:** But this is dinner. Dawn is in the morning.

*SAM comes back to the common area.*

**SAM:** Why is he in a wheelchair?

**MARTA:** Oh, he's fine! We were just hoping it would make it easier to bring him out, but...

**SAM:** I'll talk to him.

*SAM goes back into DON'S room. JIMMY returns with dishes of food for the table.*

**DORIS:** I wish my granddaughter would visit me.

**ALICE:** How old is she?

**DORIS:** I can't remember.

**ALICE:** What's her name?

**DORIS:** Um... Gloria? Ginnie? Something with a G...

**EDDIE:** Shouldn't someone say grace?

**DORIS:** No, not Grace... Gwen?

**ALICE:** I'll do it. God, grant me the senility to forget the people I never liked anyway, the luck to run into the ones I do, and the eyesight to tell the difference. Let's eat!

*DON, walking, emerges from the bedroom. SAM guides him by the elbow toward the dinner table, but DON is heading for the front door.*

**SAM:** No, Dad, over here.

**DON:** (*Pointing at the door.*) But...

**MARTA:** Hey, Don! We got a place right here for you.

**DON:** I'm leaving.

**SAM:** But it's dinner time. (*With feigned enthusiasm.*) I'm sure hungry!

**DON:** I'll buy you a Happy Meal on the way home.

**SAM:** A Happy... Dad, I'm forty-five. And this is home!

**DON:** Really? Where is your room?

**SAM:** Not mine. Yours. You live here.

**DON:** I don't live here. I'm going back to my house.

**SAM:** You can't.

**DON:** Oh, yes I can!

**SAM:** We sold your house.

*No one speaks for a moment.*

**ALICE:** Awkward...

**DORIS:** Alice!

**SAM:** Dad, can we have a word in private?

*SAM pulls DON aside.*

**EDDIE:** Uh-oh... is he in trouble?

**JIMMY:** He's fine, Eddie. Alice, you want some potatoes?

**ALICE:** (*Intrigued by DON and SAM.*) What I need is some popcorn!

**DORIS:** Mind your own business (*Under her breath.*) Busybody!

**ALICE:** Doris, don't you start with—

**MARTA:** Come on, Alice, be nice.

**DON:** I want to go home, son. I don't know these people.

**SAM:** I know it's hard to understand, but you really can't take care of yourself any more.

**DON:** I feel fine.

**SAM:** I know, Dad. I know you do. But your... your mind isn't...

**DON:** Isa will take care of me.

**SAM:** Mom's gone, Dad. Two years ago now.

*DON'S memory of his late wife's passing slowly resurfaces, and his knees nearly buckle.*

**SAM:** I got you. Here. Sit down over here.

**DON:** I miss her so much.

**SAM:** I know, I know. Me too.

*ALICE holds up her fork and spoon in front of her. She is visibly worried.*

**MARTA:** Something wrong with your silverware, Alice?

**ALICE:** (*Snapping.*) Of course not! (*Pause. Then, almost timidly.*) Spoon? Or fork?

**DORIS:** That's your fork.

**ALICE:** I know what it is!

**MARTA:** What's the problem, sweetie?

**ALICE:** I don't... which one am I supposed to... for potatoes? Spoon, or fork?

**MARTA:** (*Tenderly.*) Either one, dear. Some people eat them with a fork. Some with a spoon.

**ALICE:** Oh, okay. I just didn't want to look like a dumb-ass.

**JIMMY:** You're not supposed to swear, Alice!

**ALICE:** Damn right I'm not!

*SAM helps DON return to the table.*

**DON:** I'd like to have some dinner if there's any left, please.

**MARTA:** Of course! Plenty!

**DORIS:** He's so polite!

**ALICE:** And handsome.

*DON sits down.*

**SAM:** I'm gonna go ahead and go, Dad.

*DON doesn't really respond.*

**MARTA:** We'll take care of him.

**SAM:** Thanks. Oh, I left him a book on his bed. Ivanhoe. One of his favorites. He used to love all that adventure stuff, knights and everything. Maybe you could get him to read a bit?

**MARTA:** I'll get Sandy to try. She's our evening person and really good at that sort of thing.

**SAM:** Appreciate it.

**MARTA:** Are you back tomorrow? We're having a little party for Halloween.

**SAM:** Probably not. Kathy and I... we have to figure out what we're doing with the kids.

**MARTA:** Sure. *(To DON.)* Don, Sam is leaving.

**DON:** *(As if just realizing SAM is there.)* Oh, Sammy! Good to see you. Stay and eat with us.

**SAM:** I'll be back in a couple days.

**DON:** You're leaving? Oh... okay. I'm gonna eat my dinner. I love you.

**SAM:** Love you too, Dad.

*SAM exits out the front door as the lights dim. TRANSITION: AFTERNOON TO EARLY MORNING THE NEXT DAY. In dimmed light with musical underscoring, MARTA and JIMMY begin to clear the dinner dishes. DON goes back to his room, puts on his robe. EDDIE, DORIS, and ALICE move back to their room one by one, moving in character but not dawdling. SANDY enters, helps the staff. MARTA, JIMMY, and SANDY eventually move off.*

**ACT ONE, SCENE 2**

**AT START:** *DON leaves his room and enters the common area. The lights change to show a darkened home. The vending machine brightens as DON crosses to it. He begins pushing buttons in a vain effort to get a snack. It is now three a.m. and the rest of the house is asleep. SANDY enters and sees DON.*

**SANDY:** Don! Hey, what're you doing up?

**DON:** It won't let me have it. I think it's broken.

**SANDY:** Okay, but it's three a.m., buddy! It's bedtime. Come on back to your room.

**DON:** I want a Reese's.

**SANDY:** Did you put your money in? (*DON looks at her blankly.*) You have to feed the giant before he gives up his treasure. Here. I'll spot you.

*SANDY pulls out some change and buys a Reese's Peanut Butter Cup, which she gives to DON.*

**DON:** You got it! Thanks... (*He seems to see SANDY for the first time.*)  
Do I know you?

**SANDY:** Well, I've seen you, but you're mostly asleep 'cause I work nights. I'm Sandy.

**DON:** Sammy?

**SANDY:** Sandy. Short for Saundra. Saundra Cho.

**DON:** Oh, Sancho.

**SANDY:** Sure. Sancho is great. Why don't I take you back to your room?

**DON:** Okay.

*SANDY guides DON back to his room and maneuvers him to the bed.*

**SANDY:** There you go. Whoops! Don't sit on this. (*She picks up the book SAM left on the bed as DON sits.*) Ivanhoe, huh? What's that about?

**DON:** Ivanhoe is a knight.

**SANDY:** Oh, like in medieval times.

**DON:** His father is a Saxon lord and he dis... dis...

*DON sighs, frustrated.*

**SANDY:** Dislikes Ivanhoe?

**DON:** *(In a flood of clarity.)* ...disinherits him for going on crusade with Richard the Lionheart and then Ivanhoe comes back to England to find that Prince John has wrongfully claimed the throne.

**SANDY:** *(Musing to herself.)* Whoa, buddy! Where did that come from?

**DON:** And he rescues Rebecca, the daughter of a Jewish moneylender, from being burned as a heretic.

**SANDY:** Look at that! *(She gently pats DON'S temple.)* There's still some stuff up there! Keep talking, Donnie. How does it end? Who's the bad guy?

**DON:** Brian de Bois-Guilbert. He's a Templar Knight. Ivanhoe kills him at the end.

**SANDY:** Were you an English teacher before? Or just like Ivanhoe a lot?

**DON:** I like all knights.

**SANDY:** So, like King Arthur, Lancelot, that kind of thing? Hey, what are you going as, for Halloween tomorrow? Want to be a knight?

**DON:** I'm not a knight.

**SANDY:** No, but you could be!

**DON:** Knights have armor.

**SANDY:** Yeah, huh... *(An idea.)* Hey, I wonder if Marta still keeps... wait here a sec!

*SANDY quickly exits. DON placidly munches on his candy. SANDY soon returns, carrying a catcher's mask, chest protector, and a box of aluminum foil.*

**SANDY:** It was still there. Marta's son played catcher in high school. His old gear's been in the garage forever. This'll be great. We always have a little costume contest here on Halloween. It's like a La Center tradition. You'll totally win this year. *(While SANDY talks*

*she wraps the mask in foil.)* See? We just mush this around like that and... voila! Your helmet!

*She continues to do the same with the chest protector, trying to give it the look of a knight's plate armor.*

**SANDY:** Keep telling me about the story. Does the knight get with... what's her name... Rebecca? Does he marry her?

**DON:** No, of course not. She's Jewish.

**SANDY:** That's a problem?

**DON:** You couldn't do that back then. Ivanhoe marries Rowena.

**SANDY:** Sure, okay. *(DON stops talking. SANDY tries to keep the conversation going.)* Are you married?

**DON:** Oh, yes! To... to... *(He has forgotten her name.)* ...to the prettiest girl in the world!

**SANDY:** Well, you're lucky! No one's asked me yet!

**DON:** Are you Jewish?

**SANDY:** *(She's clearly not.)* Uh... no. So who's this Rowena chick?

**DON:** She's a Saxon lady that Ivanhoe loves but her father wants to marry her to someone else. She has long, golden hair.

**SANDY:** Yeah, blondes are always trouble. Is your wife a blonde?

*DON stops and thinks. He becomes distressed and upset, nearly shaking, like a panic attack. SANDY abandons the costume preparation.*

**SANDY:** Hey, hey, it's okay. It's okay. What's wrong? What's going on?

**DON:** She's not real...

**SANDY:** Who's not?

**DON:** Rowena. She's from a book but I know she has golden hair... why do I know that?

**SANDY:** Because you read—

**DON:** Isabelle! ...I... I can't see her face, her hair, what she looks like. Where did she go?

**SANDY:** Isabelle... your wife?

*SANDY looks around quickly and spies a framed photo on the nightstand. She grabs it up and shows DON.*

**SANDY:** Here, here! Is this her?

**DON:** Isabelle! My Isa.

**SANDY:** You got you a brunette. And look at those big brown eyes.

**DON:** *(Calming down.)* Prettiest girl in the world. *(Pause.)* Fifty-two years, we had.

**SANDY:** That's a long run. My folks are only on—

**DON:** I love her so much, Sancho. I'm so scared.

**SANDY:** What? Why?

**DON:** She's... fading. What if Isa... if she gets lost again?

**SANDY:** No, no. She'll always be with you. *(She puts a hand on his chest.)* Right here.

**DON:** *(Putting a hand on his chest.)* She'll stay in here?

**SANDY:** Of course! She would never... *(She sees the foil-covered chest protector and gets an idea.)* Here! If you put this on, you'll keep her safe.

*SANDY puts the chest protector on DON. He straightens up just a bit.*

**DON:** My armor.

**SANDY:** That's right! You're a knight, and knights aren't scared.

**DON:** *(As if realizing a long-forgotten truth.)* I'm a knight.

**SANDY:** That's right. You're a brave knight, ready to take on the world, and I'm your faithful... what do they call the guys that help a knight?

**DON:** Squires.

**SANDY:** Your faithful squire.

**DON:** Sancho.

**SANDY:** Sancho. *(She kneels and presents the foil-covered mask to DON.)* Your helmet, good sir!

**DON:** But... a knight's not supposed to wear armor until he does a vigil, where he prays all night for God to protect him and give him strength to fight his cause.

**SANDY:** All night, huh? Tell you what. You can do a vigil lying down instead of standing up.

**DON:** I can?

**SANDY:** Oh, sure. Lotsa knights did. Go ahead and lie back, and we'll get your legs swung up here. There you go.

**DON:** *(In a weary voice.)* I'm praying, not sleeping.

**SANDY:** *(Exiting quietly leaving DON to rest.)* I know, m'lord. Have a good vigil. We'll see you tomorrow.

**DON:** Till the morrow.

*TRANSITION: EARLY MORNING TO THE FOLLOWING EVENING. The lights fade briefly to darkness before coming up in a transition light on JIMMY, wearing a half-hearted pirate costume. He wipes down the table and pushes in the chairs. He crosses to retrieve a broom as the lights come up on the scene.*

### ACT ONE, SCENE 3

**AT START:** *It is the next day. DON rises, adjusts his breastplate, and ceremonially dons his catcher's mask like a helmet. Out in the common area, JIMMY sweeps the floor a bit, then stops and checks his smartphone, seeing something that makes him sigh. He takes a selfie holding the broom with a pained look on his face.*

**JIMMY:** *(Captioning the post.)* Hey Jason, living the dream, just like you. NOT.

*MARTA enters in a queen's costume (not much more than a flowy dress and a crown) and sees JIMMY on his phone.*

**MARTA:** Always with the phones.

**JIMMY:** I was just replying... My friend Jason just got a job working with the Bulls! So lucky!

**MARTA:** Oh! I have a cousin who does that.

**JIMMY:** No way! With the Bulls?

**MARTA:** Yeah, Bulls, calves, all kind of cows, really. He got a big ranch in Yakima.

**JIMMY:** No, that's not what I—

**MARTA:** Can you grab the punch from the kitchen?

**JIMMY:** Yeah, okay.

*JIMMY exits. MARTA puts up a "Happy Halloween" banner as SANDY enters from the front door for her shift. She wears an oversized Seattle Seahawks football jersey and eye black on her cheeks.*

**SANDY:** It's already getting crazy out there! I don't know if they bus these kids in, or what!

**MARTA:** I hope they don't make a mess again. Last year they threw toilet paper all over our trees and the porch.

**SANDY:** You got T.P'd? I saw coming in they hit a house down the street.

**MARTA:** In Ukraine, it is very different holiday. Children come round, maybe sing a carol... they are hooligans here.

**SANDY:** Kids last year not like your candy?

**MARTA:** Candy? You mean in the machine?

**SANDY:** No, for the—

*JIMMY enters from the kitchen with a punch bowl as EDDIE enters from the hall, costumed in a black leather jacket over a white T-shirt, with dark sunglasses and slicked back hair. Of course, the Fonz never wore a gait belt or used a walker...*

**MARTA:** Eddie! You look great!

*EDDIE gives two thumbs up.*

**EDDIE:** Ayyyy!

**JIMMY:** I don't get it. Who's he supposed to be?

**MARTA:** He's the Fonz.

*JIMMY is clueless.*

**SANDY:** From Happy Days? (*No recognition.*) You are so young.

*DORIS enters with her walker. She wears a black jacket, black bowler hat, and a stuck-on narrow black mustache like Charlie Chaplin. The effect is somewhat reduced by the house dress under her costume.*

**DORIS:** Alice needs help. Her hat.

**SANDY:** Doris! You look amazing!

**MARTA:** *(To EDDIE and DORIS.)* Come on over to the couch, both of you.

**EDDIE:** Ayyyy!

**DORIS:** Alice wanted something.

**SANDY:** I'll help her. Jimmy, could you grab Mister Quintero?

*SANDY exits down the hall. JIMMY goes to DON'S room.*

**DORIS:** Are there cupcakes?

**MARTA:** Not yet, Doris.

**JIMMY:** Hey, Mister Donald! Come out for the party! *(DON turns to face JIMMY.)* Holy crap! Where did you get that?

**DON:** *(In a bold, confident voice we have not yet heard.)* My vigil is ended and I seek the rightwise lord of this manor!

**JIMMY:** Marta...

*JIMMY backs out. DON steps out into the common area. Though he looks ridiculous, he moves strongly and confidently, with a kind of elegance he has not shown before.*

**DORIS:** Aaahhh! Who is that?

**DON:** Fear not, good sir!

**DORIS:** I'm a ma'am!

**DON:** Thou need not fear one such as I, for a true knight would never act the churl toward a respected gentleman as your appearance proclaims you to be.

**JIMMY:** Why is he talking all old-timey?

**EDDIE:** *(To MARTA.)* Is he a knight?

**MARTA:** Well, I should say so! *(She crosses to DON.)* Hey, Don, I love this! Sandy did a great job!

**DON:** Ah! Art thou the lady here?

**MARTA:** Um... yes, I am... Princess Marta, Lady of La Center.

**DON:** And I am Don Quixote, and if by my life I can serve thee, thou hast but to make thy quest known.

**JIMMY:** *(Bringing over a cup of punch.)* Want some punch?

*DON accepts the cup and tries to drink, but the bars of the catcher's mask prevent his best efforts to get the cup to his lips. MARTA, thinking quickly, finds a straw to help DON drink.*

**DON:** Gramercies, good lady.

*SANDY enters from the hall.*

**SANDY:** Alice will be right out. *(Seeing DON.)* Don! You look great!

**DON:** Peace, Sancho. *(With a bow to MARTA.)* Your Highness, I have come to tell thee that I have completed my vigil of arms in the chapel of thy castle, and I am ready to begin my questing.

**SANDY:** He's really leaning into this...

**MARTA:** *(To SANDY.)* What did you do?

**SANDY:** *(Shrugging.)* Just the costume...

**DON:** Yet I fear I lack the one thing that Your Highness can give, and I beg that you grant me.

**MARTA:** You... need something?

**DON:** 'Ere I can venture forth to right the wrongs of the world, I must be dubbed a knight by the lord or lady of a castle.

**MARTA:** Very well, good sir. You must first... remove your helmet and... come over here.

*She leads DON to the carpet in the common area.*

**DON:** Also, I have no sword.

**MARTA:** Sure... Jimmy, run get me the yardstick from the utility closet.

*JIMMY exits.*

**DORIS:** Oh, I love to see people get baptized.

**SANDY:** Knighted.

**DORIS:** I meant knighted. What did I say?

*JIMMY returns with the yardstick.*

**MARTA:** What was your knight name again, Don?

**DON:** I am called Don Quixote, my liege.

**MARTA:** Oh, Quixote. Sure, okay. Um... bow your head. Do you, Don Quixote, pledge allegiance to the... to La Center Adult Family Home, and to the people for which it stands? One... community... under God, with... compassion and justice for all?

**DON:** Upon my honor, I do so pledge.

**MARTA:** Then I dub thee Don Quixote de La Center, knight of the realm. Go forth and do... knightly things.

*DON raises his head and looks around proudly. EDDIE and DORIS clap. MARTA offers DON the yardstick.*

**MARTA:** Sorry, this is all I have for a sword.

**DON:** *(Taking the yardstick and admiring it.)* It is a treasured gift, for a good blade will show the measure of a man.

*DON "sheathes" the sword in his belt. ALICE enters, wearing a glittery tabard draped over her robe and high conical hat with a veil like a fairy princess. DON looks at her, smitten.*

**ALICE:** *(Seeing DON.)* The hell is this? Is it baseball already?

**DON:** Sancho! My resourceful squire! Thou has found her!

**SANDY:** What?

**DON:** *(Bowing deeply to ALICE.)* Thou art my paramour Dulcinea, fairest on earth.

**ALICE:** I am?

**DON:** No lady is more noble nor gentle nor pleasing. Thou art my sun and stars, and all my deeds shall be done in thy name.

**ALICE:** I... I don't know what I'm supposed to say.

**JIMMY:** Well, there's a first.

**SANDY:** Jimmy!

*The DOORBELL rings.*

**EDDIE:** I got it! I got it!

*EDDIE jumps up and runs to the door. At least, that's what happens in his mind. In reality, it's a painstakingly slow process that everyone watches in awkward silence. The doorbell rings again, EDDIE is still going.*

**EDDIE:** I got it. I got it.

*The awkward silence continues, but no one has the heart to stop EDDIE. The doorbell rings a final time. At last, EDDIE opens the door and strikes a pose.*

**EDDIE:** Ayyyy! *(Silence. He stares out into the night.)* There's no one there.

**ALICE:** What a shock.

**DORIS:** Maybe it was a ghost.

*EDDIE suddenly recoils in horror.*

**EDDIE:** It's a ghost!

**DORIS:** Aaaaah! I don't like ghosts!

*EDDIE staggers back away from the door, abandoning his walker. SANDY runs to the door and looks out.*

**SANDY:** Eddie! Look! There's no ghosts here!

*SANDY slams the door. EDDIE whirls to face the other side of the room.*

**EDDIE:** It's over there! Can't you see it?!

**MARTA:** *(Moving slowly to EDDIE.)* Eddie! Eddie. That's a scary feeling. Let's take a deep breath. I don't see anything now, so I think...

*EDDIE shoves MARTA back.*

**EDDIE:** Get away! It'll get you!

*JIMMY runs to EDDIE.*

**JIMMY:** It's okay, Eddie, just whoa!

*EDDIE has thrown a haymaker punch at JIMMY who leaps back just in time to avoid getting hit.*

**EDDIE:** Stay away!

*ALICE has retreated to the couch with DORIS, who is still exclaiming in fright. MARTA, SANDY, and JIMMY stand in a loose ring around EDDIE, trying to decide how to get him under control without hurting him or getting hurt in the process.*

**EDDIE:** *(To the ghost.)* No! You can't have him! He's my son!

**SANDY:** Your son is safe, Eddie—

**EDDIE:** *(Viciously, to SANDY.)* He wants to take him! Can't you see that?

*DON suddenly steps forward and takes command.*

**DON:** *(Pointing to an empty space in the room.)* I see the apparition! There!

**EDDIE:** Yes! Right there!

**DON:** Stand back! *(He draws his yardstick sword.)* Only a sacred blade given by a princess can hope to wound this being from beyond!

*DON moves confidently past EDDIE, who makes no move to stop him. DON squares off against his invisible opponent.*

**JIMMY:** *(To MARTA.)* Should we...?

**MARTA:** Shh... let him...

*DON moves through a series of fighting moves as if he is engaged in an epic duel with a foe only he can see.*

**DON:** Back, fiend from hell! Thou art not welcome here! *(A powerful "attack" from the ghost drives DON back near EDDIE. DON cries out in pain.)* Aaah! *(He sees the ghost coming again.)* Duck! *(DON pulls EDDIE down, as if saving him from an attack passing overhead.)* No! Thou canst not escape! *(DON lunges toward the space in front of the door.)* Take that!

*DON roars as if with great effort. EDDIE yells as well, and DORIS too. Then DON'S sword point drops, and he stands panting. It is over.*

**EDDIE:** You saved my son.

*EDDIE drops to his knees, overcome by emotions. DON lays a paternal hand on EDDIE'S head. There is a moment of silence for this tableau.*

**JIMMY:** Are they in the dream, or are we?

**SANDY:** *(Quietly.)* Right? *(Pause. Then, to everyone.)* So... cupcakes?

**MARTA:** Great! Yes! Come and sit down, Eddie. Everyone, come on over to the couch. Jimmy, run and grab the cupcakes.

**DORIS:** I like cupcakes.

*JIMMY exits to the kitchen. EDDIE returns to his seat. ALICE takes DON'S arm and he guides her to the couch. MARTA moves to SANDY.*

**MARTA:** That was an interesting episode...

**SANDY:** Has Eddie triggered off ghosts before?

**MARTA:** Not that I know of. I can't believe Don got him out of it, and from inside the fantasy.

**SANDY:** Validation therapy, basically. Who knew Don was a geriatric psychologist?

*JIMMY enters with a small tray of orange and black cupcakes.*

**JIMMY:** Happy Halloween!

*He sets the cupcakes on the coffee table in front of the couch. DORIS immediately takes one and is about to eat it.*

**MARTA:** Not yet, Doris!

**DORIS:** I'm just holding it.

*There is a knock on the front door.*

**MARTA:** I'll get it this time, Eddie.

*She opens the door.*

**CHILDREN'S VOICES:** (*Offstage.*) Trick or treat!

**MARTA:** Oh, hi. What nice costumes. Can I help you?

**CHILDREN'S VOICES:** (*Offstage.*) Trick or treat!

**MARTA:** Do you want to sing a carol or something?

**ANNOYED DAD:** (*Offstage.*) Candy, lady. C'mon!

**MARTA:** Oh, I'm sorry. I don't have any candy.

**CHILDREN'S VOICES:** (*Offstage.*) Awww!

**MARTA:** Good night! Happy Halloween!

*MARTA starts to close the door. From outside, a man's hand stops it. An ANNOYED DAD steps into the room.*

**ANNOYED DAD:** What's wrong with you? They're kids!

**MARTA:** (*Steps back, disconcerted.*) We're a senior citizens' home.

**ANNOYED DAD:** Your porch light is on!

**MARTA:** It comes on at sunset. Automatic.

**ANNOYED DAD:** Unbelievable.

**MARTA:** Did... did you want... I mean, I could offer you a cupcake?

**ANNOYED DAD:** No, I don't want a damn cupcake, you clueless—

*DON is on his feet, helmet on, yardstick in hand.*

**DON:** (*Firmly.*) You shall not speak to Princess Marta in this manner!

**ANNOYED DAD:** Who are you supposed to be, Lancelot? Or DiMaggio?

**DON:** I will not warn thee again, sir. Depart this castle.

**ANNOYED DAD:** My point is, if you don't have candy, you turn the light off and you—

*The ANNOYED DAD takes one step further in and stops dead in his tracks as the end of DON'S yardstick appears at his throat. DON is confident, unwavering, and deadly serious.*

**DON:** Begone from this place.

*The ANNOYED DAD keeps up a brave face but is clearly rattled by the strange old man. He bats the yardstick away.*

**ANNOYED DAD:** Whatever. You people are crazy. *(He backs out the door.)* Come on, Dakota, there's other houses. *(He exits.)*

*MARTA closes the door. EVERYONE cheers for DON.*

**JIMMY:** That was amazing!

**ALICE:** *(To DON.)* You really are my hero!

**DON:** *(Ingenuously.)* Yes, I told you that before.

**MARTA:** Well, alright, shall we have cupcakes? Doris, cupcakes?

**DORIS:** Now? Yay!

**EDDIE:** Ayyy!

**SANDY:** A cupcake toast!

**JIMMY:** A toast!

**SANDY:** To Don Quixote de La Center, our hero!

*There are general cheers amid bites. ALICE breaks off a piece of her cupcake and feeds it to DON through the catcher's mask. Everyone is smiling, happy. The DOORBELL rings.*

**MARTA:** I forgot the light!

**DON:** Fear not. I shall open the portal.

*DON strides to the front door and pulls it open quickly. A barrage of Silly String, launched by cans in unseen hands, pelts DON in the face and chest. A roll of toilet paper sails past him into the room.*

*DON staggers back under the unexpected onslaught and falls backward to the floor with a cry. MARTA and SANDY leap to DON'S side as JIMMY slams the door shut.*

**MARTA:** Shit! Did he hit his head?

**SANDY:** Don? Don? Are you all right?

**DON:** *(Confused.)* Sancho?

**SANDY:** I'm here, Don.

*SANDY removes his mask and breastplate and pulls a penlight from her pocket, shining it alternately into each of his eyes. DON struggles a bit.*

**SANDY:** He seems okay, but we'll want to call his PCP.

**MARTA:** Yeah. Let's get him to his room. *(To JIMMY.)* And turn out that porch light!

*TRANSITION: HALLOWEEN TO A FEW DAYS LATER. Transition light. SANDY takes off DON'S armor and walks DON back to his room and DON lies on his bed. SANDY places the armor near him and goes back to the common area. JIMMY and MARTA clear the Halloween decorations as DORIS and EDDIE and ALICE remove bits of their costumes and hand them to SANDY, who takes them offstage. EVERYONE exits to their rooms or other parts of the house as SAM enters DON'S room and places a call on his cell phone.*

## ACT TWO, SCENE 4

**AT START:** *A few days have passed. DON sleeps. SAM talks on his phone.*

**SAM:** No, they said just some bruises, nothing serious. He's sleeping now. I'll head out in a few minutes... Who did? Gerald is my— ...Yes, Kathy, he's my lawyer. If you're going to be unreasonable about, about everything, I'm hiring a lawyer! ...Look, can we talk about this later? I'm with Dad... Oh. Yeah. Real mature, Kath. I'm hanging up. Talk to Gerald.

**DON:** Don't let others fight your battles for you.

**SAM:** Oh, now you wake up, with the pithy proverb.

**DON:** Have the courage to enter the fray yourself.

**SAM:** Kathy and I have been "fraying" for a year now. And speaking of, you need to stop getting into fights! I can't believe you.

**DON:** A true knight never backs down from a challenge.

**SAM:** Yeah... that was a Halloween costume. You didn't have to act the part. Thank God they didn't make you Dracula, we'd have been sued for assault. But Marta did say you managed to stop that guy, so good for you.

**DON:** He was no fit opponent for a knight, but a coward and a churl.

**SAM:** A... churl? Why are you talking like that?

*JIMMY enters with a bottle of water and a small medicine cup with several pills.*

**JIMMY:** *(With a horrible British accent.)* Good evening, Don Quixote! The apothecary hath sent healing herbs to thou!

*JIMMY moves to DON and helps him take his evening pills.*

**SAM:** *(To himself.)* What the hell is happening? *(To JIMMY.)* What did you call him just now?

**JIMMY:** Don Quixote. It's his knight name.

**SAM:** He's not a knight. He did landscaping.

**DON:** A knight is renowned not for the gilding of his birth, but for the valor of his deeds.

**SAM:** And apparently he swallowed an inspirational quote generator.

**JIMMY:** Yeah, Marta says we should just go with it. Play along, you know?

**DON:** Where is my squire?

**JIMMY:** Sandy... uh, Sancho is off today. I'm your night guy tonight, big man. You and me.

**DON:** It is well. Thou and I shall walk the battlements and keep a close guard on our charges in the castle.

**SAM:** The castle. All right, this is nuts. *(SAM goes back to the common area as MARTA enters from the kitchen.)* Marta, what's going on?

**MARTA:** What do you mean?

**SAM:** Dad's delusional and your response is, "Go with it?"

**MARTA:** There's a little more to it than that.

*MARTA gestures for SAM to sit. JIMMY makes DON comfortable and exits down the hall.*

**SAM:** He thinks he's a knight. You guys are enabling him.

**MARTA:** Sam, I know it looks a little strange, but dementia and Alzheimer's are... well, they're complicated.

**SAM:** Explaining reality is hard?

**MARTA:** Which reality do you mean?

**SAM:** There's only one.

**MARTA:** Your father's imaginings... the things his brain is telling him... are as real to him as reality is to you and me. You want to make his life miserable by telling him he's wrong all the time?

**SAM:** I want him to get better. To know what's real and what isn't.

**MARTA:** It isn't quite so... (*A different tack.*) You have kids, yes?

**SAM:** Um... yeah. Christian's eight and Brianna's ten.

**MARTA:** What does your daughter want to be when she grows up?

**SAM:** Well, right now? An astronaut, but—

**MARTA:** Is that realistic?

**SAM:** What, statistically? No. I mean, I guess not.

**MARTA:** And you tell her that, yes? Bring her back to reality?

**SAM:** She's a kid.

**MARTA:** Of course. So, instead, you give her book on rockets, right? Talk about space, encourage her interest in science?

**SAM:** Look, I get your point. Obviously, I'm not going to crush my kid's dreams...

**MARTA:** Right, because even though it's not real, what does it hurt for now? And later she will change.

**SAM:** Yeah, but Dad—

**MARTA:** —is more engaged and alert and talking more than he's ever been since he came here. You should see how happy he was on Halloween.

**SAM:** Picking fights with strangers!

**MARTA:** He was actually pretty good with that dad...

**SAM:** Not to mention the fall! That could have been—

**MARTA:** —and I'm sorry about that, we—

**SAM:** —I know, you can't always be right there when—

**MARTA:** —it happened so fast.

**SAM:** It's just... his fantasy got him hurt.

**MARTA:** And reality... this never hurt you?

*Pause.*

**SAM:** So... what? You're saying just agree with all the crazy stuff he says?

**MARTA:** I'm saying pick your battles, yes? This dream is helping him cope, to understand his world, feel useful.

**SAM:** That part I get...

**MARTA:** And that world is what he has left. Just... share it with him for a little while. (*SAM ponders this.*) I need to get Doris her medicine. You okay?

**SAM:** Yeah, I'll just be a few minutes more.

**MARTA:** As long as you like.

*MARTA exits. SAM stands with his feelings in turmoil. He sees himself in a mirror on the wall, straightens up, puts on a cheerful face that he doesn't really feel. He returns to DON.*

**SAM:** So... you're a knight now, huh?

**DON:** I am Don Quixote, knight-errant.

**SAM:** Oh, you're certainly errant... but here's the thing, Dad, being a knight... it's... it's dangerous. It already got you hurt.

**DON:** Wounds of battle bestow honor, not lessen it.

**SAM:** Yeah, until the honor kills you.

**DON:** I have never died in all my life.

**SAM:** Where is this coming from? You've been forgetting more and more, for years, but this, this is like a whole other person. It's crazy.

**DON:** Help me up. (*SAM helps DON sit up on the edge of the bed.*) Young man, in this life, the greatest madness a man can be guilty of is to let himself die, slain not by any foe or weapon but the hands of melancholy.

*SAM has no answer. DON points into the distance.*

**DON:** Now, look out across yon fields and woods and tell me what thou seest.

**SAM:** We're indoors. I can't see outside from here.

*DON visibly contracts with disappointment.*

**DON:** The Knight of Mirrors blinds thine eyes.

**SAM:** The who?

**DON:** The Knight of Mirrors. He is a powerful sorcerer who has laid a mighty curse upon the land, covering all with an illusion most foul.

*SAM is beginning to actually listen to his father.*

**SAM:** What kind of illusion?

**DON:** A mask of metal. Of smoke, and concrete. Machines and papers. Of... *(He looks angrily at the back of his hand and pinches and pulls his skin.)* ...of age and decay. Sometimes even I cannot pierce the veil of his spell. Blind men laugh at me. I hear them. They call me mad, because they cannot see.

*DON falls silent, retreating into himself.*

**SAM:** *(Gently.)* What can't they see, Dad?

**DON:** The madness that lives in themselves. They see the world only as it is, and not as it should be!

*Pause.*

**SAM:** The veil... it's thinning a little, I think. I can see... fields.

*DON brightens a bit.*

**DON:** Yes?

**SAM:** Green fields. And rolling hills, stretching to the horizon. I see a shining river. And beside it, a castle.

**DON:** Tell me: the castle... it is ruined?

**SAM:** Yes, long ago.

**DON:** The Lost Ruins of the Castle Matamora!

**SAM:** A lone tower still stands, alone in the midst of crumbled walls that seem to have been knocked down by a mighty hand.

**DON:** (*Visibly excited now.*) And traveler, in thy wanderings, didst thou see giants in that land?

**SAM:** I... I was fortunate enough to avoid them. But I have seen their footprints, pressed deep into the earth, and heard the thunder of their passing...

*The lights fade as they continue talking. TRANSITION: ANOTHER NIGHT TWO WEEKS LATER. In the transition light, DON lies back on his bed and SAM exits out the front door. JIMMY enters with a broom and dustpan and sweeps up a pile of dust on the floor. He puts away the broom and crosses to DON'S room.*

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