

Cyrano de Bergerac

by Edmond Rostand



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Notes

What is a literary classic and why are these classic works important to the world?

A literary classic is a work of the highest excellence that has something important to say about life and/or the human condition and says it with great artistry. A classic, through its enduring presence, has withstood the test of time and is not bound by time, place, or customs. It speaks to us today as forcefully as it spoke to people one hundred or more years ago, and as forcefully as it will speak to people of future generations. For this reason, a classic is said to have universality.

Edmond Rostand was born on April 1, 1868, into a wealthy, refined French family. The young boy was encouraged to explore his imagination, and he had a book of his poems published in a literary magazine by the time he turned sixteen. Rostand went to college to become a lawyer, but a literary career interested him much more, and he never practiced law.

In 1890, Rostand married the poet Rosemonde Gerard, and they had two children.

After two unsuccessful attempts at writing dramas, his play, *Les Romanesques (The Romancers)*, written in 1894, became popular with the French public, and Rostand was finally a well-known author.

A famous French actor, Constant-Benoit Coquelin, persuaded Rostand to write a play that would showcase his wide range of acting abilities. Out of this association came the masterpiece for which Rostand is remembered, *Cyrano de Bergerac*. The story is loosely based on the life of Hercule Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac, who was not a great swordsman, but who did have a large nose—although not as large as Rostand's Cyrano—and was quite vain about it. *Cyrano de Bergerac*, however, marks the end of French dramatic Romanticism, which was soon overtaken by more naturalistic styles.

In 1901, strictly on the popularity of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Rostand was elected to the Académie Française, the prestigious French language institution. Rostand wrote only a few additional plays, none of which were well-received. Despondent and ill, he retired to his estate in the country.

Rostand died on Dec. 2, 1918, a victim of the worldwide influenza pandemic.

Reading Pointers for Sharper Insights

1. To better appreciate *Cyrano de Bergerac*, consider some of the following themes that the play deals with:

- ◆ Intelligence and inner worth are more valuable than physical beauty.
- ◆ People tend to magnify their own faults or flaws, which can lead to low self-esteem and/or self-destructive behavior.
- ◆ Deception often causes unfavorable consequences for both the deceiver and the deceived.
- ◆ Honor, virtue, and moral purity are heroic qualities that are often intertwined with suffering and self-sacrifice.

2. It is important to consider some historical context with regard to two particular time periods: the time and place in which the action of the play occurs and the time and place in which Edmond Rostand wrote the play.

- ◆ The play is set in France between the years of 1640 and 1655.
 - ◇ France is involved in the Thirty Years' War, a war fought against the Holy Roman Empire mainly over trade routes.
 - ◇ France reaches its height in the areas of art, literature, and philosophy, which sets the standard for the rest of Europe.
 - ◇ Cardinal Richelieu has recently founded the French Academy, a society of intellectuals and writers.
 - ◇ Literature and poetry are discussed at intellectual gatherings called salons, which were popular among educated, aristocratic women and usually took place in the homes of such women.
- ◆ Edmond Rostand wrote *Cyrano de Bergerac* in Paris, France, in 1897.
 - ◇ France experiences rapid industrial growth and further growth of its many colonies.
 - ◇ English physicist Joseph John Thomson discovers the electron.

◇ *The Invisible Man* by H.G. Wells and *Dracula* by Bram Stoker are published.

◇ Realism and naturalism dominate the arts, but a neo-romanticist movement also begins, of which Rostand is a part.

3. As stated above, the late nineteenth century was dominated by realism in the arts. The realist tradition involved frank depictions of everyday life and its mundane activities, important social or political themes, and depictions of the daily struggles people faced, especially those in the lower classes. Rostand, however, along with other artists of his time, broke out of this realist mode and looked back to the genre of romanticism, a literary movement popular in Europe during the late 18th century. Romanticism involves the following characteristics:

- ◆ the depiction of intense emotion and expression
- ◆ the importance of action, movement, and drama
- ◆ a focus on the individual and his or her rebellion against social conventions

4. Be aware of numerous references by Rostand to other famous literary works and plays. For example, the balcony scene in *Cyrano de Bergerac* is a parody of the balcony scene in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Pay special attention, however, to the many references to Alexandre Dumas' 1844 novel *The Three Musketeers*. Rostand was a fan of Dumas' novel, and he both parodies and pays tribute to it in *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Here are just a few of the allusions Rostand makes to *The Three Musketeers*.

5. Understand some of the symbols that occur in *Cyrano de Bergerac*:

- ◆ Cyrano's nose symbolizes several things. On the one hand, it symbolizes his best qualities: loyalty, virtue, bravery, and independence. It also symbolizes his character's biggest weakness: his insecurities when it comes to love.
- ◆ Cyrano's tears and Christian's blood on the last letter to Roxane symbolize the fact that the two men together made up one romantic hero.
- ◆ The white plume is a symbol of honor, bravery, purity, and moral integrity.

6. Understand some of the motifs that occur in the play:

- ◆ fighting and war

- ◆ poetry and letters

- ◆ the Moon and the night sky

- ◆ society and its hierarchies

- ◆ Greek mythology and ancient heroes

Dedication

I wished to dedicate this play to Cyrano's soul, But since his soul has now passed into you, Coquelin, it is to you that I dedicate it.

E.R.

Dramatis Personae

- CYRANO DE BERGERAC A SPANISH OFFICER
- CHRISTIAN DE NEUVILLETTE A PORTER
- COUNT DE GUICHE A BURGHER
- RAGUENEAU HIS SON
- LE BRET A PICKPOCKET
- CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX A SPECTATOR
- THE CADETS A GUARDSMAN
- LINGNIERE BERTRANDOU THE FIFER
- DE VALVERT A MONK
- A MARQUIS TWO MUSICIANS
- SECOND MARQUIS THE POETS
- THIRD MARQUIS THE PASTRY COOKS
- MONTFLEURY ROXANE
- BELLEROSE SISTER MARTHA
- JODELET LISE
- CUIGY THE BUFFET-GIRL
- BRISSAILLE MOTHER MARGUERITE
- THE DOORKEEPER THE DUENNA
- A LACKEY SISTER CLAIRE
- SECOND LACKEY AN ACTRESS
- A BORE THE PAGES
- A MUSKETEER THE SHOP-GIRL
- SECOND MUSKETEER
- The CROWD, TROOPERS, BURGHERS, MARQUIES, MUSKETEERS, PICKPOCKETS, PASTRY COOKS, POETS, CADETS, COMEDIANS, ACTORS, VIOLINISTS, PAGES, CHILDREN, SPANISH SOLDIERS, SPECTATORS, INTELLECTUALS, NUNS, etc.
- *The first four acts take place in 1640; the fifth act takes place in 1655.*

Act I

A Performance at the Hotel de Bourgogne

The hall of the Hotel de Bourgogne, in 1640. It is a sort of tennis court arranged and decorated for a theatrical performance.

The hall is oblong and seen from an angle, so that one of its sides forms the back of the right foreground, and meeting the left background, makes an angle with the stage, which is partly visible.

On both sides of the stage are benches. The curtain is made up of two tapestries which can be drawn aside. Above the proscenium are the royal arms. There are broad steps from the stage to the hall. On either side of these steps are the places for the violinists. The footlights consist of a row of candles.

There are two rows, one over the other, of side galleries. The highest row is divided into boxes. There are no seats in the pit of the hall, which is the real stage of the theater. At the back of the pit, some benches form steps, and underneath the steps is a staircase which leads to the upper seats. There is an improvised buffet containing candles, vases, glasses, plates of tarts, cakes, bottles, etc.

The entrance to the theater is in the center of the background, under the gallery of the boxes. A large door is half-open to let in the spectators. On the panels of this door, in different corners, and over the buffet, are red placards bearing the words, "La Clorise."

At the rising of the curtain, the hall is in semi-darkness, and still empty. The candle-holders are lowered in the middle of the pit, ready to be lighted.

Scene I

The public, arriving by degrees. TROOPERS, BURGHERS, LACKEYS, PAGES, a PICKPOCKET, the DOORKEEPER, etc., followed by the MARQUISES. CUIGY, BRISSAILLE, the BUFFET-GIRL, the VIOLINISTS, etc.

[A confusion of loud voices is heard outside the door. A TROOPER enters hastily.]

DOORKEEPER:

[going after him] Wait! You must pay your fifteen sols!

TROOPER:

I get in free!

DOORKEEPER:

How so?

TROOPER:

I'm a soldier in the King's Cavalry!

DOORKEEPER:

[to SECOND TROOPER who also enters] And you?

SECOND TROOPER:

I get in free as well. I'm a musketeer!

FIRST TROOPER:

[to the second] The play doesn't begin until two. Let's have a bout with the foils to pass the time.

[They begin fencing.]

A LACKEY:

[entering] Psst—Flanquin!

SECOND LACKEY:

Is that you, Champagne?

FIRST LACKEY:

[taking cards and some dice out of his jacket pocket] Look what I've brought. Let's play!

SECOND LACKEY:

Good idea, my rogue friend!

[They both sit down on the floor.]

FIRST LACKEY:

[taking a candle-end from his pocket and lighting it] I've stolen for us a little light from my master.

A GUARDSMAN:

[to a SHOP-GIRL who comes toward him] How nice of you to come before the lights are lit!

[He grabs her at the waist.]

ONE OF THE FENCERS:

[receiving a thrust] A hit!

ONE OF THE CARD-PLAYERS:

A club!

GUARDSMAN:

[following the girl] A kiss!

SHOP-GIRL:

[trying to free herself from his grasp] Stop! They'll see us!

GUARDSMAN:

[drawing her to a dark corner] Now they can't!

A MAN:

[sitting on the floor with some others who are all eating food] By coming early, one can eat in comfort.

A BURGHER:

[leading his SON] Let's sit here, my son.

A CARD-PLAYER:

Triple ace!

A MAN:

[taking a bottle out from his jacket and seating himself on the floor] A drunkard should drink his Burgundy...*[he drinks]* in the Hotel Burgundy!

BURGHER:

[to his SON] My God! One would think we've stumbled into some place of ill-repute! What with drunkards! *[He points with his cane to the drunk.]* Brawlers! *[One of the FENCERS jostles him.]* And gamblers! *[He stumbles into the midst of the CARD-PLAYERS.]*

GUARDSMAN:

[behind the BURGHER, still teasing the SHOP-GIRL] Come on, just one kiss!

BURGHER:

[hurriedly pulling HIS SON away] Good heavens! And to think that Rotrou was played here!

HIS SON:

Yes, and Corneille too!

A TROOP OF PAGES:

[entering hand-in-hand, dancing and singing] Tra-la-lala-la-la-la-la-la...

DOORKEEPER:

[sternly, to the PAGES] You pages better behave yourselves. No pranks tonight!

FIRST PAGE:

[with an air of wounded dignity] Oh, sir! How can you even suspect that we would do such things? *[quickly, to the SECOND PAGE, the moment the DOORKEEPER'S back is turned]* Did you bring the string?

SECOND PAGE:

Oh, yes—and a fish-hook with it!

FIRST PAGE:

Great! We'll fish for wigs from up in the gallery!

A PICKPOCKET:

[gathering about him some evil-looking youths] Listen here, you young thieves. I'm about to give you your first lesson in stealing.

SECOND PAGE:

[calling up to other PAGES in the top galleries] Have you all brought your peashooters?

THIRD PAGE:

[from above] Oh yes, and peas too!

[He blows peas down at the crowd.]

BURGHER'S SON:

[to his father] What's the name of the play tonight?

BURGHHER:

La Clorise.

SON:

Who wrote it?

BURGHHER:

Balthazar Baro. It's a play about...

[He takes his SON by the arm and leads him away.]

PICKPOCKET:

[to his students] Look for lace knee-ruffles and cut them off!

A SPECTATOR:

[to another, pointing to a corner of the gallery] I was sitting up there, the first night of the 'Cid.'

PICKPOCKET:

[making a gesture as of picking a pocket] And with watches...

BURGHHER:

[coming down again with his SON] Soon you will see some great actors.

PICKPOCKET:

[making the type of gesture one would use when pulling something in a sneaky way, with little jerks of the hand] And for handkerchiefs...

BURGHHER:

Montfleury...

A VOICE FROM THE GALLERY:

Light the lights!

BURGHHER:

Bellerose, L'Epy, La Beaupre, Jodelet!

A PAGE:

Here comes the buffet-girl!

BUFFET-GIRL:

[taking her place behind the buffet] Oranges, milk, raspberry-water, cider...

[A hubbub outside the door is heard.]

A FALSETTO VOICE:

Make way, you brutes!

A LACKEY:

[astonished] The Marquises! Down here on the floor with us?

ANOTHER LACKEY:

Oh, only for a moment, I'm sure.

[Enter a band of young MARQUISES.]

A MARQUIS:

[seeing that the hall is half empty] What's this? We've arrived like common tradesmen—without disturbing anyone or stepping on their toes? For shame! *[recognizing some other gentlemen who have entered a little before him]* Cuigy! Brissaille!

[They greet and embrace one another.]

CUIGY:

True to our word! We're here before the candles are lit.

MARQUIS:

Enough! I'm so annoyed!

ANOTHER MARQUIS:

Don't worry, Marquis, they're coming to light the candles now!

ENTIRE AUDIENCE:

[welcoming the entrance of the candle lighter] Ah!

[They form in groups around the candle-holders as they are lit. Some people have taken their seats in the galleries. LIGNIERE, disheveled but distinguished-looking, with disordered shirt-front is arm-in-arm with CHRISTIAN DE NEUVILLETTE. CHRISTIAN, who is dressed elegantly but a little out of fashion, seems preoccupied, and keeps looking at the boxes.]

Scene II

The same, with CHRISTIAN, LIGNIERE, then RAGUENEAU and LE BRET.

CUIGY:

Ligniere!

BRISSAILLE:

[laughing] Not drunk yet?

LIGNIERE:

[aside to CHRISTIAN] Shall I introduce you? *[CHRISTIAN nods in assent.]* Baron de Neuville.

[They exchange bows.]

AUDIENCE:

[applauding as the first candelabra is lighted and drawn up] Ah!

CUIGY:

[to BRISSAILLE, looking at CHRISTIAN] Handsome fellow!

FIRST MARQUIS:

[who has overheard] Pooh!

LIGNIERE:

[introducing them to CHRISTIAN] Messieurs de Cuigy, de Brissaille.

CHRISTIAN:

[bowing] Delighted to meet you.

FIRST MARQUIS:

[to the SECOND] He's good-looking, but his fashion is a little out of date.

LIGNIERE:

[to CUIGY] Monsieur de Neuville comes from Touraine.

CHRISTIAN:

Yes, I've only been in Paris for three weeks. Tomorrow I join the Guards, in the Cadets.

FIRST MARQUIS:

[watching the people who are coming into the boxes] There's Madame Aubry, the Chief-Justice's wife.

BUFFET-GIRL:

Oranges, milk...

VIOLINISTS:

[tuning up] La...La...

CUIGY:

[to CHRISTIAN, pointing to the hall, which is filling fast] It's really getting crowded.

CHRISTIAN:

Yes, indeed.

FIRST MARQUIS:

The whole great world is arriving!

[They recognize and name the different elegantly dressed ladies who enter the boxes, bowing low to them. The ladies send smiles in answer.]

SECOND MARQUIS:

Madame de Guemenee.

CUIGY:

Madame de Bois-Dauphin.

FIRST MARQUIS:

Adored by us all!

BRISSAILLE:

Madame de Chavigny.

SECOND MARQUIS:

Who plays with our poor hearts!

LIGNIERE:

Ah, there's Corneille. He must be back from Rouen!

BURGHHER'S SON:

[to his father] Is the Academy here?

BURGHHER:

Oh yes, I see several members. There's Boudu, Boissat, and Cureau de la Chambre, Porcheres, Colomby, Bourzeys, Bourdon, Arbaud. Names that will live forever! How wonderful!

FIRST MARQUIS:

Attention! Our lady intellectuals have arrived! There is Barthenoide, Urimedonte, Cassandace, Felixerie ...

SECOND MARQUIS:

Ah, their names are exquisite! Do you know them all, Marquis?

FIRST MARQUIS:

I do indeed, every one!

LIGNIERE:

[drawing CHRISTIAN aside] My friend, I came here tonight to help you, but the lady you seek is not here. I shall go now and return to my vice.

CHRISTIAN:

[persuasively] No, please stay! You are songwriter to the court and the city alike. You know everyone! You are the one who can tell me who she is—the lady for whom I'm dying of love!

FIRST VIOLIN:

[striking his bow on the desk] Gentlemen violinists!

[He raises his bow.]

BUFFET-GIRL:

Macaroons, lemon-drink ...

[The violins begin to play.]

CHRISTIAN:

Oh! I'm afraid that she is coquettish and refined! I fear I'm not intelligent enough for her! How can I dare speak with her? I'm only a shy and honest soldier—not very good with words at all. She always sits right there, on the right. Her box is still empty!

LIGNIERE:

[making as if to leave] I must go.

CHRISTIAN:

[detaining him] No, please stay.

LIGNIERE:

I cannot stay. D'Assoucy is waiting for me at the tavern. I'll die of thirst here.

BUFFET-GIRL:

[passing before him with a tray] Orange drink?

LIGNIERE:

Ugh!

BUFFET-GIRL:

Milk?

LIGNIERE:

Pooh!

BUFFET-GIRL:

Wine?

LIGNIERE:

[to CHRISTIAN] Oh, if you insist—I shall stay awhile longer. Now let me try a little of that wine.

[He sits by the buffet; the girl pours some out for him.]

AUDIENCE:

[crying out joyously and excitedly as a plump little man enters] Ah! Ragueneau!

LIGNIERE:

[to CHRISTIAN] It's the famous tavern-keeper Ragueneau.

RAGUENEAU:

[dressed in the Sunday clothes of a pastry-cook, going up quickly to LIGNIERE] Sir, have you seen Monsieur de Cyrano?

LIGNIERE:

[introducing him to CHRISTIAN] The pastry-cook of the actors and the poets!

RAGUENEAU:

[overcome] You praise me too highly!

LIGNIERE:

Oh, stop! You are a great patron of the arts!

RAGUENEAU:

Well, it is true that poets do come to my bakery ...

LIGNIERE:

To buy on credit! You yourself are a talented poet too.

RAGUENEAU:

So they tell me.

LIGNIERE:

You're mad about poetry!

RAGUENEAU:

It is true that, for an ode ...

LIGNIERE:

You give a tart!

RAGUENEAU:

Well, just a little tart.

LIGNIERE:

Oh, you're being modest! Now, what do you give for a triolet?

RAGUENEAU:

Oh, maybe a small roll or two.

LIGNIERE:

[severely] Oh, come on! You give milk-rolls, the best kind! And as for the theater, which you love just as much as poetry ...

RAGUENEAU:

Oh, I adore the theater!

LIGNIERE:

You pay with pastries! Now, tell me, how much did your ticket tonight cost you?

RAGUENEAU:

Four custards and fifteen cream-puffs. *[He looks around on all sides.]* Monsieur Cyrano is not here? How strange.

LIGNIERE:

Why?

RAGUENEAU:

Montfleury is playing tonight!

LIGNIERE:

Oh, yes, the fat fool is playing the role of Phedon tonight. But why should Cyrano care about it?

RAGUENEAU:

Haven't you heard? He hates Montfleury and has forbidden him to show his face on stage for a whole month!

LIGNIERE:

[drinking his fourth glass of wine] So?

RAGUENEAU:

Montfleury will play! Unless ...

CUIGY:

[who has joined them] Cyrano can't stop him.

RAGUENEAU:

That is what I've come to see!

FIRST MARQUIS:

Who is this Cyrano?

CUIGY:

A fellow who certainly knows how to handle a sword.

SECOND MARQUIS:

Is he of noble birth?

CUIGY:

Noble enough. He's a cadet in the Guards. *[He points to a gentleman who is going up and down the hall as if searching for someone.]* But his friend, Le Bret, over there, can tell you more about him. *[He calls him.]* Le Bret! *[LE BRET comes over to them.]* Are you looking for Cyrano?

LE BRET:

Yes, and I'm beginning to worry.

CUIGY:

He's an extraordinary man, isn't he?

LE BRET:

[tenderly] He is the rarest, most delightful man on earth!

RAGUENEAU:

A poet!

CUIGY:

A soldier!

BRISSAILLE:

A philosopher!

LE BRET:

A musician!

LIGNIERE:

And such a striking appearance!

RAGUENEAU:

No painter today can do him justice! Only the wild and whimsical Jacques Callot, if he were still alive, could have painted Cyrano's portrait. He'd have placed him in some fantastic setting and made Cyrano the maddest fighter there—with his triple-plumed hat and six-tailed jacket and his sword sticking up beneath his cloak like the proud tail of a rooster. He is a true swashbuckler—as bold as the fiercest soldier in Gascony! Above his collar he carries a nose—and my good lords, what a nose it is! When people see it, they immediately think it's a false nose. They think it's a joke and that soon

Cyrano will take it off. But, alas, Cyrano never takes it off.

LE BRET:

[throwing back his head] True, he keeps it on—and will maim any man who dares to remark on it!

RAGUENEAU:

[proudly] His sword is one half the shears of Fate!

FIRST MARQUIS:

[shrugging his shoulders] He won't come.

RAGUENEAU:

I say he will come! And I'll wager you a chicken à la Ragueneau!

THE MARQUIS:

[laughing] Agreed!

[Murmurs of admiration are heard in the hall. ROXANE has just appeared in her box. She seats herself in front, her DUENNA sits at the back. CHRISTIAN, who is paying the BUFFET-GIRL, does not see her entrance.]

SECOND MARQUIS:

[with little cries of joy] Ah, gentlemen, she is exquisite—adorable—ravishing!

FIRST MARQUIS:

She's as sweet as a peach smiling at a strawberry!

SECOND MARQUIS:

And so fresh and cool! Any man approaching her might catch a chill at the heart!

CHRISTIAN:

[Raising his head, he sees ROXANE and catches LIGNIERE by the arm.] It is she!

LIGNIERE:

Ah! Is it she?

CHRISTIAN:

Yes. Quickly, tell me her name! Oh, I am afraid.

LIGNIERE:

[sipping his wine] Madeleine Robin—called Roxane. She's witty, charming, quite an intellectual.

CHRISTIAN:

Woe is me!

LIGNIERE:

Unmarried, an orphan, the cousin of Cyrano, whom we were just speaking about.

[At this moment, an elegant nobleman, with blue ribbon across his breast, enters the box, and talks with ROXANE, standing.]

CHRISTIAN:

[alarmed] Who is that man?

LIGNIERE:

[who has become tipsy, winking at him] That's Count de Guiche. He's in love with her, but he happens to be married to the niece of Armand de Richelieu. Wants to set Roxane up with a certain sorry fellow by the name of Valvert—a viscount. Why Valvert? Because he's very accommodating, if you get my meaning! She won't agree to it, of course, but de Guiche is powerful, and can persecute a girl like her. I myself have actually composed a song in which I expose his nasty little plan. Oh, he must hate me! The end really hits home! Listen!

[He gets up, staggering, and raises his glass, ready to sing.]

CHRISTIAN:

No. I'm leaving.

LIGNIERE:

Where are you going?

CHRISTIAN:

To find this Monsieur de Valvert!

LIGNIERE:

Don't be so rash! He will kill you before you harm him. *[calling his attention to ROXANE with a look]* Stay right there—she's looking at you.

CHRISTIAN:

It's true!

[He stands looking at her. The group of PICKPOCKETS see him standing there in an open-mouthed daze. They draw near to him.]

LIGNIERE:

'Tis I who am going. I am thirsty! And they are expecting me in the taverns!

[He goes out, reeling.]

LE BRET:

[who has been all around the hall, coming back to RAGUENEAU with a look of reassurance] No sign of Cyrano.

RAGUENEAU:

[incredulously] But still ...

LE BRET:

I'm hoping he hasn't seen the playbill.

AUDIENCE:

Begin, begin!

Scene III

The same, with all but LIGNIERE DE GUICHE, VALVERT, then MONTFLEURY.

A MARQUIS:

[watching DE GUICHE, who comes down from ROXANE'S box and crosses the pit surrounded by obsequious noblemen, among them the VISCOUNT DE VALVERT] He pays a fine court, your de Guiche!

SECOND MARQUIS:

[with distaste] Another Gascon!

FIRST MARQUIS:

Yes, but a cold and clever Gascon—that's the stuff success is made of! Believe me, we had best make our bow to him.

[They go toward DE GUICHE.]

SECOND MARQUIS:

What fine ribbons, Count de Guiche! What would you call the color? 'Kiss me, my darling,' or 'Timid Fawn?'

DE GUICHE:

I call it 'Sick Spaniard.'

FIRST MARQUIS:

Very appropriate! Thanks to your valor, things will soon go ill for Spain in Flanders.

DE GUICHE:

I'm going up to sit on the stage. Won't you come along? *[He goes toward the stage, followed by the MARQUISES and gentlemen. Turning, he calls to de VALVERT.]* Come, Valvert!

CHRISTIAN:

[who is watching and listening, starts when he hears this name] The Viscount! I'll throw my glove in his face! *[He puts his hand in his pocket and finds there the hand of a PICKPOCKET who is about to rob him. He turns around.]* What...

PICKPOCKET:

Oh!

CHRISTIAN:

[holding him tightly] I was looking for my glove.

PICKPOCKET:

[smiling piteously] And you found a hand instead. *[changing his tone and whispering quickly]* Let me go and I'll tell you a secret!

CHRISTIAN:

[still holding him] What is it?

PICKPOCKET:

Ligniere—your friend who just left ...

CHRISTIAN:

What about him?

PICKPOCKET:

His life is in danger. He wrote a song which has offended some very powerful people. A hundred men—I am one of them—will be after him tonight.

CHRISTIAN:

A hundred men! Who hired them?

PICKPOCKET:

I cannot say. It's a secret—

CHRISTIAN:

Oh!

PICKPOCKET:

[with great dignity] Of the profession.

CHRISTIAN:

Where are the men posted?

PICKPOCKET:

At the Porte de Nesle. On his way home. Warn him.

CHRISTIAN:

[letting go of his wrists] But where can I find him?

PICKPOCKET:

Go around to all the taverns—The Golden Wine Press, The Pine Cone, The Bursting Belt, The Two Torches, The Three Funnels, and leave a word at each one that should put him on his guard.

CHRISTIAN:

I'm on my way! Oh, the scoundrels! A hundred men against one!*[looking lovingly at ROXANE]* Ah, to leave her! *[looking with rage at DE VALVERT]* And him! But save Ligniere I must!

[He hurries out. DE GUICHE, DE VALVERT, and the MARQUISES have all disappeared behind the curtain to take their places on the benches placed on the stage. The pit is quite full; the galleries and boxes are also crowded.]

AUDIENCE:

Begin the play!

A BURGHER:

[whose wig is drawn up on the end of a string by a page in the upper gallery] My wig!

CRIES OF DELIGHT:

He's bald! Bravo, pages! Ha ha ha!

BURGER:

[furious, shaking his fist] Little villains!

LAUGHTER AND CRIES:

[beginning very loud, and dying gradually away] Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

[There is total silence.]

LE BRET:

[astonished] Why the sudden silence? *[A SPECTATOR says something to him in a low voice]* Is it true?

THE SPECTATOR:

I have just heard it on good authority.

MURMURS:

[spreading through the hall] Shhh!—Is it him?—No!—Yes, I say!—In the box with the bars in front!—The Cardinal!—The Cardinal!—The Cardinal!

A PAGE:

The devil! We'll have to behave ourselves now!

[A knock is heard upon the stage. Everyone is motionless. There is a pause.]

VOICE OF A MARQUIS:

[in the silence, behind the curtain] Snuff that candle out!

ANOTHER MARQUIS:

[putting his head through the opening in the curtain] A chair!

[A chair is passed from hand to hand, over the heads of the spectators. The MARQUIS takes it and disappears, after blowing some kisses to the boxes.]

A SPECTATOR:

Silence!

[Three knocks are heard on the stage. The curtains part. The MARQUISES in arrogant attitudes are seated on each side of the stage. The scene represents a pastoral landscape. Four little candelabra light the stage; the violins play softly.]

LE BRET:

[in a low voice to RAGUENEAU] Montfleury is about to come on stage?

RAGUENEAU

Yes, it is he who begins.

LE BRET:

Cyrano isn't here.

RAGUENEAU:

I suppose I've lost my wager then.

LE BRET:

All for the better!

[A note on the bagpipes is heard, and MONTFLEURY enters, enormously fat, in shepherd's dress, a hat wreathed with roses drooping over one ear, blowing into a ribboned bagpipe.]

AUDIENCE:

[applauding] Bravo, Montfleury! Montfleury!

MONTFLEURY:

[after bowing low, begins his part] Happy is the man who dwells alone
Far from the pomp of court and crowd
In a solitary wood, where gentle breezes—

A VOICE:

[from the middle of the pit] Scoundrel! Didn't I forbid you to show your face here for a month?

[A general stupor ensues. Everyone turns around. The CROWD murmurs.]

DIFFERENT VOICES:

Hey?—What?—What's going on?

[The people stand up in the boxes to look.]

CUIGY:

It's him!

LE BRET:

[terrified] Cyrano!

THE VOICE:

King of clowns! Leave the stage this instant!

AUDIENCE:

[indignantly] Oh!

MONTFLEURY:

But—

THE VOICE:

Do you dare defy me?

DIFFERENT VOICES:

[from the pit and the boxes] Shhh! Enough! Keep going, Monfleury—don't be afraid!

MONTFLEURY:

[in a trembling voice] Happy is the man who dwells—

THE VOICE:

[more fiercely] Prince of buffoons! Must I come and give you a taste of my cane?

[A hand holding a cane starts up over the heads of the spectators.]

MONTFLEURY:

[in a voice that trembles more and more] Happy is the man—

[The cane is shaken.]

THE VOICE:

Off the stage!

AUDIENCE:

Oh!

MONTFLEURY:

[choking] Happy is the man who—

CYRANO:

[appearing suddenly in the pit, standing on a chair, his arms crossed, his hat cocked fiercely, his mustache bristling, his nose terrible to see] I shall be angry in a minute!

[A sensation ripples throughout the theater.]

Scene IV

The same, with CYRANO, then BELLEROSE and JODELET.

MONTFLEURY:

[to the MARQUISES] Come to my help, my lords!

A MARQUIS:

[carelessly] Oh, go on, Montfleury, keep acting.

CYRANO:

If you do, I'll cuff your face, fat man!

MARQUIS:

That's enough!

CYRANO:

And you marquises! I advise all of you to hold your tongues, or else each one of you will get a taste of my cane!

ALL THE MARQUISES:

[rising] That's enough! Montfleury—

CYRANO:

If he doesn't get off the stage this minute, I'll cut off his ears and slit him up like a roasted pig!

A VOICE:

But—

CYRANO:

Out he goes!

ANOTHER VOICE:

Yet—

CYRANO:

Is he not gone yet? *[He makes the gesture of turning up his cuffs.]* Good! I shall mount the stage now and carve up this fine, fat Italian sausage!

MONTFLEURY:

[trying to be dignified] You outrage Thalia when you insult me!

CYRANO:

[very politely] You, Sir, are not acquainted in the least with that muse! But if she ever had the questionable pleasure of meeting you, you fat dullard, she would be inspired to kick you in the backside!

AUDIENCE:

Montfleury! Montfleury! Come, go on and play!

CYRANO:

[to those who are calling out] Have a care, all of you! If you keep on, you're liable to rouse my sword right out of its scabbard!

[The circle around him widens.]

THE CROWD:

[drawing back] Stay back from him! Beware!

CYRANO:

[to MONTFLEURY] Leave the stage! *[The CROWD begins to murmur and to come nearer to CYRANO.]* Did someone speak?

[The CROWD draws back again.]

A VOICE:

[singing at the back] Monsieur de Cyrano
Such a tyrant today
Oh, why won't he just go?
So that we can see the play!

AUDIENCE:

[singing] La Clorise! La Clorise!

CYRANO:

Let me hear you sing that foolish little song once more and I'll slaughter every man in this theater!

A BURGHER:

Oh, do you think yourself Samson?

CYRANO:

Yes, Samson! Will you lend me your jawbone, Sir?

A LADY:

[in the boxes] This is outrageous!

A LORD:

Scandalous!

A BURGHER:

Most annoying!

A PAGE:

Hilarious!

AUDIENCE:

[hissing] Montfleury! Cyrano!

CYRANO:

Silence!

AUDIENCE:

[wildly excited] Woof! Woof!—Quack! Quack!—Cock-a-doodle-doo!

CYRANO:

I order you all to—

A PAGE:

Meow!

CYRANO:

I order silence! And I challenge every man here! Come, all you young heroes! I'll write down your names and give each of you a number—everyone will get their turn! Come now, who wants to be first? You, Sir? No? You? No? Come on, the first opponent will be done away with honorably and sent straight to glory! Come now, who wants to die? Hold up your hands! *[a silence]* What is it? Too modest to face my naked sword? No one? Not one name? Good, then I shall proceed. *[turning toward the stage, where MONTFLEURY waits in agony]* This theater must be cured of this boil! *[He puts his hand on his sword.]* And if it won't leave of its own accord, then I shall have to lance it!

MONTFLEURY:

I—

CYRANO:

[leaves his chair, and settles himself in the middle of the circle which has formed] I will clap my hands three times, you full moon! On the third clap, I want to see you eclipse yourself!

AUDIENCE:

[amused] Ah!

CYRANO:

[clapping his hands] One!

MONTFLEURY:

I—

A VOICE:

[in the boxes] Stay!

AUDIENCE:

[divided] Stay!—Go!—No, stay!

MONTFLEURY:

I think, gentlemen—

CYRANO:

Two!

MONTFLEURY:

I think it would be wise if I—

CYRANO:

Three!

[MONTFLEURY suddenly disappears. There is a tempest of laughs, whistles and catcalls.]

AUDIENCE:

Coward! Come back!

CYRANO:

[delighted, sits back in his chair, arms crossed] Come back if you dare!

A BURGHER:

Call for the speaker of the theater!

[BELLEROSE comes forward and bows.]

THE BOXES:

Ah! Here's Bellerose!

BELLEROSE:

[elegantly] My noble lords—

AUDIENCE:

No! Give us Jodelet instead!

JODELET:

[advancing, speaking in an exaggerated nasal voice] Miserable calves!

AUDIENCE:

[laughing] Bravo, go on!

JODELET:

No bravos, Sirs! The fat tragedian, whom you all love, has had to—

AUDIENCE:

That coward!

JODELET:

—was obliged to go.

AUDIENCE:

Call him back!

SOME:

No!

OTHERS:

Yes!

A YOUNG MAN:

[to CYRANO] But, Sir, why do you hate Montfleury so much?

CYRANO:

[graciously, still seated] Young man, I have two reasons—either will suffice. First, he is a terrible actor. He heaves up his lines as though they were buckets of water drawn clumsily from a well, when instead, they should soar from his lips like the lightest of birds. The second reason ...well, that's my secret.

A BURGHER:

[behind him] Shame on you! You deprive us of *La Clorise*! I must insist—

CYRANO:

[turning his chair toward the BURGHER, respectfully] You old mule! The verses of Baro are worthless trash! You should thank me for stopping the play!

LADY INTELLECTUALS:

[in the boxes] Our Baro! Oh dear! How dare he!

CYRANO:

[turning his chair toward the boxes gallantly] Fair ladies! Bloom and radiate, fill us with longing, intoxicate us with your beauty, charm death with your sweet smiles, inspire poetry—but don't attempt to judge it!

BELLEROSE:

We must give back the entrance fees!

CYRANO:

[turning his chair toward the stage] Bellerose, that's the smartest thing anyone has said all afternoon! You know how I love the theater and its actors. Therefore, I would never intentionally rend a tear in Thespis' sacred cloak! *[He rises and throws a bag onto the stage.]* Catch then the purse I throw and hold your peace!

AUDIENCE

[dazzled] Ah!—Oh!

JODELET:

[catching the bag skillfully and weighing it] At this price, Sir, you are welcome to come and stop the play anytime!

AUDIENCE:

Boo! Boo!

JODELET:

Even if we all get booed!

BELLEROSE:

Clear out the hall!

JODELET:

Everybody out this minute!

[The people begin to go out, while CYRANO looks on with satisfaction. But the CROWD soon stops on hearing the following scene, and everyone remains where they are. The women, who, with their cloaks on, are already standing up in the boxes, stop to listen, and finally reseal themselves.]

LE BRET:

[to CYRANO] You are mad!

A BORE:

[coming up to CYRANO] The great actor Montfleury! How could you? Shame on you! Don't you know he's protected by the Duke of Candal! Do you have a patron?

CYRANO:

No!

BORE:

No patron?

CYRANO:

None!

BORE:

What! No great lord to shield you with his name?

CYRANO:

[irritated] No, I've told you twice! Must I tell you again? I have no protector...*[He puts his hand on his sword.]* but I do have a protectress —right here!

BORE:

But now you must leave town, then.

CYRANO:

Well, that depends!

BORE:

The Duke has a long arm, you know!

CYRANO:

But not so long as mine, when it is lengthened out [*He shows his sword.*] ...with this!

BORE:

But do you really dare...?

CYRANO:

Oh, I certainly do!

BORE:

But—

CYRANO:

Get out now! Go!

BORE:

But I—

CYRANO:

Go! Or tell me why you stare at my nose!

THE BORE:

[*petrified*] I—

CYRANO:

[*walking straight up to him*] Well, what's so strange about it?

BORE:

[*drawing back*] My lord, you're mistaken!

CYRANO:

Is it soft and dangling, like an elephant's trunk?

BORE:

[*still drawing back*] I never—

CYRANO:

Is it crooked, like an owl's beak?

BORE:

I—

CYRANO:

Do you see a wart upon the tip?

BORE:

No—

CYRANO:

Is there a fly upon it? What is there to stare at?

BORE:

Oh!

CYRANO:

What do you see?

BORE:

But I've been so careful not to look!

CYRANO:

Oh? Why is that?

BORE:

I was—

CYRANO:

Oh! It disgusts you!

BORE:

Sir!

CYRANO:

Are you sickened by its color?

BORE:

Please, Sir!

CYRANO:

Or it's shape?

BORE:

No, on the contrary!

CYRANO:

Why then that look of distaste? Do you think it's too large, perhaps?

BORE:

[stammering] No, it's small! Quite small! It's minute!

CYRANO:

Minute! How dare you accuse me of having a small nose!

BORE:

Heaven help me!

CYRANO:

My nose is enormous, you snub-nosed, meddling idiot! And let it be said that I am proud to possess such an appendage! 'Tis well known that a large nose indicates an affable soul, one kind and courteous, liberal and brave, just like myself! Such qualities you could never hope to have, you hateful wretch! For that dull face which my hand will soon slap is as empty...*[He slaps him.]*

BORE:

Ouch!

CYRANO:

...of pride, of glory, of feeling, of poetry and godlike spark—in fact, as empty as all that is embodied by my big nose, [*He turns him by the shoulders.*] as what my boot will soon meet! [*He kicks him in the backside.*]

BORE:

[*running away*] Help! Call the Guard!

CYRANO:

Here's a word of advice for any other fool who might find something amusing about the middle of my face. Let it be known that if the jester is a nobleman, he will not just taste my boot but will taste my steel instead!

DE GUICHE:

[*who, with the MARQUISES, has come down from the stage*] He's becoming a nuisance!

DE VALVERT:

[*shrugging his shoulders*] He's quite arrogant!

DE GUICHE:

Won't anyone silence him?

DE VALVERT:

I'll take the challenge. I'll treat him to one of my quips! See here! [*With a conceited air, he goes up to CYRANO, who is watching him.*] Sir, your nose is...hmm...it is...very big!

CYRANO:

[*gravely*] Very!

DE VALVERT:

[*laughing*] Ha!

CYRANO:

[*calmly*] Is that all?

DE VALVERT:

What do you mean?

CYRANO:

Ah no, young man! That was a trifle short! You might have said at least a hundred things by varying the tone. Shall I give you a few examples?

Aggressive:

“Sir, if I had such a nose, I'd amputate it!”

Friendly:

“It must annoy you when it dips into your drink. You really should have a specially shaped goblet, I think!”

Descriptive:

“’Tis a rock, a peak, a cape, a peninsula!”

Curious:

“What is the purpose of that large container? Do you keep your pens and ink in it?”

Gracious:

“Oh, how you must love the birds! I see you've made them a nice perch for their tiny feet!”

Hostile:

“When you enjoy your pipe and the smoke spouts from your nose, the neighbors must think the chimney's on fire!”

Considerate:

“When you stroll, keep your head bowed low, else head over heels you just might go!”

Tender:

“Oh, someone please get a small umbrella made, else in the sun its bright color might fade!”

Pedantic:

“Only such a beast as Aristophanes' hippocampelephantocamelos could have possessed such a large lump of flesh and bone beneath its forehead!”

Flippant:

“What a fashionable hook to hang your hat on!”

Emphatic:

“No wind but the Arctic blast would be strong enough to give you a cold, oh majestic nose!”

Dramatic:

“When it bleeds, it's like the Red Sea!”

Admiring:

“Oh, what a perfect sign for a perfume shop!”

Lyrical:

“Is that a conch? And you, a Triton?”

Simple:

“Is that monument open for public viewing?”

Rustic:

“Is that thing a nose? No, it must be a dwarf pumpkin, or a prize watermelon!”

Military:

“Aim that cannon at the enemy and blast away!”

Practical:

“Put it in the lottery! I'm sure it would be the biggest prize!”

Or, in a parody of Pyramus, “Behold the nose that mars the beauty of its owner's face. How red with shame it is, the traitor!”

All of these things you might have said, if you were a man of wit and letters in the slightest. But, sadly, of wit you never had an atom, and of letters you have only three—and they spell Ass! And even if you were intelligent enough to think of witty remarks like the ones I just listed, you would not have been able to utter a single one of them. Because I allow such jokes only when spoken by myself, and never by any other man that breathes!

DE GUICHE:

[trying to draw away the dismayed DE VALVERT] Come away, Viscount!

DE VALVERT:

[choking with rage] Listen to this arrogant lout! A barbarian who wears no gloves ...who comes out in public without any ribbons and lace!

CYRANO:

True, all my elegances are within. I do not dress up like a pretentious dandy when I go out. But I'll tell you this: I groom myself more thoroughly than you. I would never venture out in public with a soiled conscience, a tarnished honor, or scruples grimy and dull. I do not adorn myself with gems and ribbons, like you. Instead, I decorate myself with truth, independence and a clean soul. I am not ornamented with tassels and lace but with proud and brave exploits instead. My spirit is sharper than your stiff mustache. When I walk among the crowds and chattering groups, I make Truth ring bravely out like a clash of spurs!

DE VALVERT:

But, Sir—

CYRANO:

I wear no gloves? And what of that? I had one, the remaining one of an old pair. And, not having any other use for it, I threw it in the face of some young fool.

DE VALVERT:

Base scoundrel! Stupid lout!

CYRANO:

[taking off his hat, and bowing as if the VISCOUNT had introduced himself] Oh, delighted to meet you! And I am Cyrano Savinien Hercule de Bergerac.

[Laughter erupts throughout the CROWD.]

DE VALVERT:

[angrily] Buffoon!

CYRANO:

[crying out as if in pain] Aie! Aie!

DE VALVERT:

[who was going away, turns back] What on earth is the fellow saying now?

CYRANO:

[with grimaces of pain] It must be moved—it's getting stiff! This is what happens when it's been unused for too long! Aie!

DE VALVERT:

What is the matter with you?

CYRANO:

The cramp! I have a cramp in my sword!

DE VALVERT:

[drawing his own sword] So be it!

CYRANO:

You shall feel a charming little stroke!

DE VALVERT:

[contemptuously] Poet!

CYRANO:

Yes, a poet, Sir! And to demonstrate my skills as such, I will compose a ballade as we fight.

DE VALVERT:

A ballade?

CYRANO:

Do you not know what a ballade is?

DE VALVERT:

But—

CYRANO:

[reciting, as if repeating a lesson] Know then that the ballade should contain three eight-versed couplets ...

DE VALVERT:

[stamping his foot] Oh!

CYRANO:

[still reciting] And an envoi of four lines ...

DE VALVERT:

You—

CYRANO:

I'll make one as we fight, and on the last line, I shall thrust my sword home.

DE VALVERT:

No!

CYRANO:

No? *[declaiming loudly]* Ballade of the duel between de Bergerac and a fool—here in the Hotel Burgundy!

DE VALVERT:

What's all that?

CYRANO:

That is the title.

AUDIENCE:

[greatly excited] Quiet!—Make room!—Fair play!—What sport!

[A circle of curious spectators forms in the pit. The MARQUISES and OFFICERS mingle with the common people. The PAGES climb on each other's shoulders to see better. All the WOMEN stand up in the boxes. To the right stand DE GUICHE and his retinue. To the left are LE BRET, RAGUENEAU CYRANO, etc.]

CYRANO:

[shutting his eyes for a second] Wait while I choose my lines. Ah, now I have them!

[He matches each action to each word.]

I lightly doff my hat down low,
And, freeing hand and heel,
My heavy cloak away I throw,
And I draw my polished steel.
Graceful as Phoebus, round I wheel,
With swiftness and skill alike,
“Careful now,” I say with zeal,
For at the end of the refrain I shall strike!

[They begin fencing.]

Better for you had you lain low.
Where shall I hit you? In the heel?
Or how about the heart, my worthless foe?
Or in the hip, and make you kneel?
Oh, for the music of clashing steel!
Where shall I land my spike?
'Twill be in the belly the stroke I steal,
When, at the end of the refrain I shall strike!
Oh, for a word that rhymes with “o”!
You wriggle, so white, my eel!
Your face is as pale as fresh snow, As I parry the point of your steel.
Oh there, a thrust you hoped I'd feel!
But alas, you missed, little tyke!
Now we're nearing the close of this deal. Watch out! At the end of the refrain I strike!

[He declaims solemnly.]

Refrain:

And now I shall make you kneel.
Pray for your soul if you like!
I thrust *[He thrusts.]* and your fate I seal,
As at the end of the refrain—*[DE VALVERT staggers; CYRANO salutes.]*
I strike!

[Acclamations and applause rise from the boxes. Flowers and handkerchiefs are thrown down. The OFFICERS surround CYRANO, congratulating him. RAGUENEAU dances for joy. LE BRET is happy, but anxious. DE VALVERT'S friends hold him up and bear him away.]

AUDIENCE:

[with one long shout] Ah!

A TROOPER:

'Tis superb!

A WOMAN:

A pretty stroke!

RAGUENEAU:

A marvel!

LE BRET:

Oh, madman!

AUDIENCE:

[presses around CYRANO, shouting] Compliments!—Bravo!— Quite unsurpassed!

A WOMAN'S VOICE:

There's a hero for you!

A MUSKETEER:

[advancing to CYRANO with outstretched hand] Sir, permit me to say that you are a fine swordsman—and I am a good judge of such things. I stamped my feet to show my admiration!

[He goes away.]

CYRANO:

[to CUIGY] Who is that gentleman?

CUIGY:

Why, that's D'Artagnan!

LE BRET:

[to CYRANO, taking his arm] I need a word with you!

CYRANO:

Wait—let the crowd go. *[to BELLEROSE]* May I stay?

BELLEROSE

[respectfully] Of course!

[Cries are heard outside]

JODELET:

[who has looked out] They're hooting Montfleury!

BELLEROSE:

[solemnly] Sic transit! [to the porters] Sweep up and close everything down, but leave the lights on. We'll take dinner, but later we must return to rehearse tomorrow's farce.

[JODELET and BELLEROSE go out, bowing low to CYRANO]

PORTER:

[to CYRANO] You do not dine, Sir?

CYRANO:

No.

[The PORTER goes out.]

LE BRET:

Because?

CYRANO:

[proudly] Because...[changing his tone as the PORTER goes away] I have no money!

LE BRET:

[with the action of throwing a bag] But how's that? What about that bag of money?

CYRANO:

My inheritance—all spent in one day!

LE BRET:

How are you going to live for the next month?

CYRANO:

I have nothing left.

LE BRET:

How foolish of you to throw it all away like that!

CYRANO:

But what a graceful action! Just think of it!

BUFFET-GIRL:

[coughing, behind her counter] Ahem! [CYRANO and LE BRET turn. She comes timidly forward.] Sir, my heart cannot stand to hear that you are not eating. [showing the buffet] Please take what you like!

CYRANO:

[taking off his hat] Gentle child, although my Gascon pride forbids me to take the least bit of food from you, my fear of offending you outweighs that pride. I will accept [He goes over to the buffet.]...one of these grapes. [She offers him the whole bunch. He takes one.] No, just one! [She tries to give him wine, but he stops her.] No, a glass of water will be just fine, and half a macaroon!

[He puts back the other half.]

LE BRET:

What foolery!

BUFFET-GIRL:

Please take something else!

CYRANO:

I take your hand to kiss.

[He kisses her hand as though she were a princess.]

BUFFET-GIRL:

Thank you, kind Sir! *[curtsying]* Good-night.

[She goes out.]

Scene V

CYRANO and LE BRET.

CYRANO:

[to LE BRET] Now go ahead and talk. I'll listen now. *[He stands at the buffet and places before him first the macaroon.]* Dinner! *[then the grapes]* Dessert! *[then the glass of water]* Wine! *[He seats himself.]* So! And now to dine! Oh, I was so hungry, my friend—ravenous! *[He eats.]* You were saying—?

LE BRET:

You must stop paying heed to these fools! They'll have you ruined! Ask a real friend and he'll tell you the truth about the effects of your arrogant behavior!

CYRANO:

[finishing his macaroon] Enormous!

LE BRET:

The Cardinal—

CYRANO:

[radiant] The Cardinal was there?

LE BRET:

He must have thought it—

CYRANO:

Original, I'm sure!

LE BRET:

But—

CYRANO:

He's an author. It could not have failed to please him that I disrupted another author's play.

LE BRET:

You make too many enemies!

CYRANO:

[eating his grapes] How many do you think I've made tonight?

LE BRET:

Forty, no less, not counting ladies.

CYRANO:

Count them for me!

LE BRET:

Well, Montfleury first, then the burgher, then de Guiche, de Valvert, Baro, the Academy—

CYRANO:

Enough! I am overjoyed!

LE BRET:

But I don't understand your behavior. Why do you live this way? Where will it lead you, in the end?

CYRANO:

I wandered in a maze for many years. I was lost, and there were so many paths to choose. So I took...

LE BRET:

Which?

CYRANO:

I took the simplest path, by far! I decided to be admirable in everything!

LE BRET:

[shrugging his shoulders] So you say. But what is the reason for your hate of Montfleury? Please tell me.

CYRANO:

[rising] That lout! Rude and fat, but still thinks he's a danger to the ladies! While he's up there on stage sputtering out his part, he makes sheep's eyes at their boxes! I've hated him ever since the evening he presumed to raise his eyes to hers. When he did so, it was like seeing a slug crawl across a flower's petals!

LE BRET:

[stupefied] How now? What? Can it be?

CYRANO:

[laughing bitterly] That I should love? *[changing his tone, gravely]* I love.

LE BRET:

But whom? You've never said!

CYRANO:

Think for a minute! This nose of mine, which pokes out a quarter-mile ahead of me wherever I go, prevents me from being loved by even the poorest and most graceless of ladies. So who would I be in love with, then? The fairest of all ladies, of course. How could it be otherwise?

LE BRET:

The fairest?

CYRANO:

Oh yes, the fairest in the world. The most brilliant, the most refined, the most beautiful, the most golden-haired!

LE BRET:

Who is this lady?

CYRANO:

She is a mortal danger to all men. She is beautiful without knowing it, and possesses charms that she's not even aware of. She is like a trap set by nature—a sweet perfumed rose in whose petals Cupid lurks in ambush! Anyone who has seen her smile has known perfection. She instills grace in every common thing and divinity in every careless gesture. Venus in her shell was never so lovely, and Diana in the forest never so graceful as my Lady when she strides through Paris!

LE BRET:

Yes! Now I know! It's becoming quite clear!

CYRANO:

Yes, quite transparent.

LE BRET:

Your cousin, Madeleine Robin?

CYRANO:

Roxane!

LE BRET:

You love her! Then tell her so! She saw you triumph here this very night!

CYRANO:

Look at me! Look at me and tell me what hope I can have with this vile protuberance! I am under no illusions about it, yet sometimes I am weak. Sometimes in the dim hours of the evening, I enter some fair sweet-smelling garden. With my poor ugly devil of a nose I smell spring's essence. In the silver rays of the moonlight I see some knight with a lady on his arm. And then I think "Oh, how lovely it would be to saunter through such a garden with my lady." My thoughts soar to ecstasy, but then they suddenly fall—when I see the shadow of my profile on the wall!

LE BRET:

[tenderly] My friend!

CYRANO:

Oh, my friend, at times it is very hard for me, and I cannot help but feel bitter. Sometimes, I feel so ugly and so all alone. Sometimes...

LE BRET:

[taking his hand] You weep?

CYRANO:

No, never! Think how unsuitable this nose is for a tear's path! I will never let the divine beauty of tears be connected to such common ugly grossness. There is nothing more solemn and sublime than a tear. If I were to weep, the grave emotion that a tear represents would turn to laughter and ridicule. And I will never let that happen!

LE BRET:

Don't be sad! What is love but a game of chance?

CYRANO:

[shaking his head] Do I look like a Caesar fit to woo Cleopatra? Or a Tito to win Berenice?

LE BRET:

But you have great courage and wit! Think of the little maid who offered you food and drink just now. She was not repulsed by you at all! You must admit this!

CYRANO:

[impressed] True!

LE BRET:

See, then? And Roxane herself was death-pale as she watched the duel.

CYRANO:

Pale?

LE BRET:

You've already caught her heart and her fancy! Speak to her!

CYRANO:

So that she can mock my face? That's the only thing on earth I fear!

PORTER:

[introducing someone to CYRANO] Sir, someone is asking for you.

CYRANO:

[seeing the DUENNA] My God! It's her duenna!

Scene VI

CYRANO, LE BRET *and the* DUENNA.

DUENNA:

[with a low bow] I was asked to find out where a certain lady could see her heroic cousin in private.

CYRANO:

[overwhelmed] See me?

DUENNA:

[curtsying] Yes, Sir. She has some things to tell you.

CYRANO:

Some things to...

DUENNA:

[still curtsying] Yes, Sir, private matters.

CYRANO:

[staggering] Ah, my God!

DUENNA:

Early tomorrow morning, we will go to hear mass at Saint-Roch.

CYRANO:

[leaning against LE BRET] My God!

DUENNA:

And after mass, where can we meet you for a talk?

CYRANO:

[confused] Where? Ah! My God!

DUENNA:

Please name a place, Sir.

CYRANO:

I'm thinking...

Duenna:

Where?

CYRANO:

Ragueneau's bakery!

DUENNA:

Where is his shop?

CYRANO:

It's on the—on the—My God!—the Rue St. Honore.

DUENNA:

[going] Good. We'll see you there at seven.

CYRANO:

I will be there.

[The DUENNA goes out.]

Scene VII

CYRANO, LE BRET. Then ACTORS, ACTRESSES, CUIGY, BRISSAILLE, LIGNIERE, the PORTER, the VIOLINISTS.

CYRANO:

[falling into LE BRET'S arms] A Rendezvous! From her!

LE BRET:

You're sad no more!

CYRANO:

Ah! Whatever happens, at least she knows that I exist!

LE BRET:

Now you'll be calm, I hope?

CYRANO:

[beside himself with joy] Calm? You think I can be calm now? I'll be frenetic, frantic, raving mad! Oh, for an army to attack! I've got ten hearts in my breast and twenty arms at my sides. No more fighting with dwarfs! *[gesturing wildly]* No, I must fight giants now!

[For a few moments the shadows of the actors have been moving on the stage, whispers are heard, the rehearsal is beginning. The VIOLINISTS are in their places.]

A VOICE:

Hello there! Silence, please! We're rehearsing now!

CYRANO:

[laughing] We shall go!

[He moves away. By the big door enter CUIGY BRISSAILLE, and some OFFICERS, holding up LIGNIERE, who is drunk.]

CUIGY:

Cyrano!

CYRANO:

What is it?

CUIGY:

We've brought your friend, the drunken songbird.

CYRANO:

[recognizing him] Ligniere! What has happened?

CUIGY:

He's been looking for you.

BRISSAILLE:

He doesn't dare to go home!

CYRANO:

Why not?

LIGNIERE:

[in a husky voice, showing him a crumpled letter] This letter warns me—a hundred men out for me—revenge for that song I wrote—waiting for me at the Porte de Nesle—I must pass there in order to get home—I dare not!—Please, let me sleep under your roof tonight!

CYRANO:

A hundred men? You'll sleep in your own bed tonight!

LIGNIERE:

[frightened] But—

CYRANO:

in a fierce voice, showing him the lighted lantern held by the PORTER, who is listening curiously] Take the lantern. *[LIGNIERE grabs it.]* Let us start! I swear that I will make your bed tonight myself! *[to the OFFICERS]* Follow us! But stay behind—I only need you as witnesses!

CUIGY:

A hundred men!

CYRANO:

Any less would be too few!

[The ACTORS and ACTRESSES, in their costumes, have come down from the stage, and are listening.]

LE BRET:

But why get yourself involved in this mess?

CYRANO:

Le Bret scolds again!

LE BRET:

Why risk your life for that worthless drunkard?

CYRANO:

[slapping LIGNIERE on the shoulder] I'll tell you why. This wine-barrel of a man, this walking cask of Burgundy, did an action one day that was full of grace. As he was leaving church, he saw his love taking holy water. He, who can't even stand the sight of water, ran quickly to the basin, and drank it all, to the last drop!

AN ACTRESS:

Oh, what a graceful thing to do!

CYRANO:

Indeed, was it not?

ACTRESS:

[to the others] But why a hundred men against one poor poet?

CYRANO:

Let's go! *[to the OFFICERS]* Gentlemen, when you see me charge, give me no help, no matter what the odds!

ANOTHER ACTRESS:

[jumping from the stage] Oh! I shall come and see!

ANOTHER:

[to an older ACTOR, while jumping down from the stage] And you?

CYRANO:

Come all—the Doctor, Isabel, Leander—everyone must come! You'll form a madcap and motley group to add a little Italian farce to this Spanish drama!

ALL THE WOMEN:

[dancing for joy] Bravo!—Let's go!—My cloak!—Quick, my hood!

JODELET:

Come on!

CYRANO:

Play us a march, gentlemen of the band! *[The VIOLINISTS join the procession, which is forming. They take the footlights, and divide them for torches.]* Brave officers first! Next, women in costume! And twenty paces in front *[He takes his place.]* I alone! I, beneath my hat which glory itself has decorated, proud as Scipio! Remember now, I forbid you to give me any aid! One, two, three! Open wide the doors! *[The PORTER opens the doors; a view of old Paris in the moonlight is seen.]* Ah! Paris wrapped in night, half nebulous, the moonlight streaming over the rooftops! What a lovely frame for this wild battle scene! Beneath the haze, the Seine trembles, mysterious, like a magic mirror. Soon you shall see what you shall see!

ALL:

To the Porte de Nesle!

CYRANO:

[standing on the threshold] Yes, to the Porte de Nesle! *[turning to the ACTRESS]* Did you not ask, young lady, why one hundred men are after this one poet? *[He draws his sword and then speaks calmly.]* It's because they know he's a friend of mine.

[He goes out. LIGNIERE staggers first after him. The ACTRESSES then go out on the OFFICERS' arms, and then the actors go out. The procession starts to the sound of the violins and in the faint light of the candles.]

CURTAIN.

Act II

The Poet's Eating-House

RAGUENEAU's pastry shop. It is a large kitchen at the corner of the Rue St. Honore and the Rue de l'Arbre Sec, which are seen in the background through the glass door, in the gray dawn.

On the left, in the foreground, is a counter. Above this counter hang geese, ducks and water peacocks. In great china vases are tall bouquets of simple flowers, mainly yellow sunflowers.

On the same side, farther back, is a large open fireplace. From each andiron hangs a little saucepan. Drippings from various roasts fall into the pans.

There is a door in the right foreground. Farther back, a staircase leads to a little room under the roof, the entrance of which is visible through the open shutter. In this room a table is laid. A small candelabra is lit. It is a place for eating and drinking. A wooden gallery, continuing the staircase, apparently leads to other similar little rooms.

In the middle of the shop an iron hoop is suspended from the ceiling by a string with which it can be drawn up and down. Big game is hung around this hoop.

The ovens in the darkness under the stairs give forth a red glow. The copper pans shine. The spits are turning. Heaps of food are formed into pyramids. Hams are suspended from hooks. Scullions, fat cooks, and diminutive apprentices bustle and hurry around, their caps decorated with chicken feathers and hens' wings. On metal and wicker plates they bring in piles of cakes and tarts.

Tables are covered with rolls and dishes of food. Other tables surrounded with chairs are ready for the customers. RAGUENEAU is seated at a small table

THE CURTAIN RISES.

Scene I

RAGUENEAU, PASTRY-COOKS, then LISE, RAGUENEAU is writing, with an inspired air, at a small table, and counting on his fingers.

FIRST PASTRY-COOK:

[bringing in an elaborate fancy dish] Fruits in nougat!

SECOND PASTRY-COOK:

[bringing another dish] Custard!

THIRD PASTRY-COOK:

[bringing a roast, decorated with feathers] Peacock!

FOURTH PASTRY-COOK:

[bringing a batch of cakes on a slab] Cakes!

FIFTH PASTRY-COOK:

[bringing a sort of pie-dish] Beef casserole!

RAGUENEAU:

[stopping his writing and raising his head] The silver rays of the dawn begin to glint even now on the copper pans! Stifle the God of Song in your breast, Ragueneau! Soon the hour of the lute will come. But now, 'tis the hour of the oven! *[He rises, and speaks to one of the cooks.]* Improve that sauce—it's short of something!

COOK:

How much too short?

RAGUENEAU:

About three feet.

[He passes on farther.]

COOK:

What on earth is he talking about?

FIRST COOK:

[showing a dish to RAGUENEAU] The tart!

SECOND COOK:

The pie!

RAGUENEAU:

[before the fire] Retire, my muse, lest thy bright eyes be burned by the fire's blaze! *to a COOK, showing him some loaves of bread* You have split these loaves in the wrong place. Don't you know that the pause always occurs at the center of the line? *[to ANOTHER, showing him an unfinished pastry]* Build a roof for this palace of crust! *to a young APPRENTICE, who is seated on the ground placing poultry on a spit* On your spit, my son, you must alternate the modest chicken and the superb turkey, just as old Malherbe alternated his long lines of verse with short ones. Just as a couplet should be well-turned, so should a roast!

ANOTHER APPRENTICE:

[coming up with a tray covered by a napkin] Master, I thought of your tastes and made this. I hope it pleases you.

[He uncovers the tray, and shows a large lyre made of pastry.]

RAGUENEAU:

[enchanted] A lyre!

APPRENTICE:

'Tis of pastry dough.

RAGUENEAU:

[touched] With candied fruits!

APPRENTICE:

And I made the strings out of sugar.

RAGUENEAU:

[giving him a coin] Go, and drink to my health! *seeing LISE enter* Shhh! My wife! Go now, and hide that money! *[to LISE, showing her the lyre, with a self-conscious look]* Isn't it beautiful?

LISE:

It's ridiculous!

[She puts a pile of papers on the counter.]

RAGUENEAU:

Bags? Good! We need them! *[He looks at them.]* Heavens! My cherished pages! The poems of my friends! Torn apart to make bags for holding biscuits and cakes! You've desecrated great poetry, just as the Bacchantes tore apart Orpheus!

LISE:

[dryly] And am I not free to put to some use the only things that your wretched scribblers leave behind them by way of payment?

RAGUENEAU:

Groveling ant! Don't insult the divine grasshoppers!

LISE:

You never called your wife an ant—much less Bacchantes—until you started keeping company with that bunch!

RAGUENEAU:

Oh, to turn my poetic words to such use!

LISE:

That's all your poetry is good for!

RAGUENEAU:

I hate to think of what you would do to prose, then!

Scene II

The same, plus two CHILDREN, who have just trotted into the shop

RAGUENEAU:

What would you like, little ones?

FIRST CHILD:

Three pies.

RAGUENEAU:

[serving them] See, hot and well-browned.

SECOND CHILD:

If you don't mind, Sir, will you wrap them up for us?

RAGUENEAU:

[aside] Alas! One of my bags! *to the CHILDREN* Must I really wrap them up for you? *[He takes a bag, and just as he is about to put in the pies, he reads.]* “Ulysses thus, on leaving fair Penelope ...” No! Not that one! *[He puts it aside, and takes another, and as he is about to put in the pies, he reads.]* “The gold-locked Phoebus ...” No! Not that one either!

LISE:

[impatiently] What are you dallying for?

RAGUENEAU:

Here! Here! *[He chooses a third, resignedly.]* The sonnet to Phillis! Oh, but it's also hard to part with!

LISE:

Thank goodness he's made up his mind at last! *[shrugging her shoulders]* Fool!

[She stands on a chair and begins to put plates on a shelf.]

RAGUENEAU:

[taking advantage of the moment she turns her back, calls back the CHILDREN, who are already at the door] Psst! Children! Give me back that sonnet and I'll give you six pies instead of three!

[The CHILDREN give him back the bag, grab the pies, and go out.]

RAGUENEAU:

[smoothing out the paper, begins to declaim] “Phillis! ...” Oh, a smear of butter on that sweet name! “Phillis! ...”

[Cyrano enters hurriedly.]

Scene III

RAGUENEAU, LISE, CYRANO, then the MUSKETEER.

CYRANO:

What time is it?

RAGUENEAU:

[bowing low] Six o'clock.

CYRANO:

[with emotion] In just one hour's time!

[He paces up and down the shop.]

RAGUENEAU:

[following him] Bravo! I saw the—

CYRANO:

You saw what?

RAGUENEAU:

Your duel!

CYRANO:

Which one?

RAGUENEAU:

Last night, or course, in the Hotel Burgundy!

CYRANO:

[contemptuously] Oh, that duel ...

RAGUENEAU:

[admiringly] Indeed, the duel in verse!

LISE:

He can't talk of anything else!

CYRANO:

Well, fine! Let it be!

RAGUENEAU:

[lunging with a spit as if it is a sword] "At the end of the refrain, I strike! ... At the end of the refrain, I strike!" ... Oh, it was wonderful! *[with increasing enthusiasm]* "At the end of the refrain—"

CYRANO:

What time is it now, Ragueneau?

RAGUENEAU:

[stopping short in the act of thrusting to look at the clock] Five minutes after six! ... "I strike!" *[He straightens himself.]* Oh, to write a ballade!

LISE:

[to CYRANO, who has absently shaken hands with her as he passes the counter] What's wrong with your hand?

CYRANO:

Nothing, just a little cut.

RAGUENEAU:

Have you been in some danger?

CYRANO:

None at all.

LISE:

[shaking her finger at him] I think you're lying when you say that!

CYRANO:

Why? Did you see my nose quiver when I spoke? My goodness, it must have been a monstrous lie to be able to move it! *[changing his tone]* I'm waiting for someone. Please, when it comes time, leave us

alone.

RAGUENEAU:

But that's impossible! My poets are coming!

LISE:

[sarcastically] Oh, indeed, for their first meal of the day!

CYRANO:

I beg you, please take them aside when I make a signal for you to do so. What time is it now?

RAGUENEAU:

Ten minutes after six.

CYRANO:

[nervously seating himself at RAGUENEAU'S table, and drawing some paper toward him] A pen!

RAGUENEAU:

[giving him the one from behind his ear] Here's a swan's quill.

A MUSKETEER:

[with fierce mustache, enters, and speaks in a very loud voice] Good day!

[LISE goes up to him quickly.]

CYRANO:

[turning around] Who's that?

RAGUENEAU:

'Tis a friend of my wife. A great warrior—or so he says himself.

CYRANO:

[taking up the pen, and motioning RAGUENEAU away] Hush! *[to himself]* I'll write her a note, fold it, give it to her, and run out! *[throws down the pen]* Coward! But I just don't dare speak to her—not even one word! *[to RAGUENEAU]* What time is it?

RAGUENEAU:

A quarter after six!

CYRANO:

[striking his chest] I dare not speak a single word of all those I have in here! Writing it all down is much easier. *[He takes up the pen.]* I'll do it! I'll write her that love letter that is always in my thoughts! I've written it and rewritten it so many times that it lies there in my mind ready to be put down in pen and ink. All I must do is lay my soul beside this sheet of paper and copy what's written on it!

[He writes. Through the glass of the door, the silhouettes of their figures move uncertainly and hesitatingly.]

Scene IV

RAGUENEAU, LISE, the MUSKETEER, CYRANO at the little table writing. The POETS, dressed in black, their stockings sagging and covered with mud.

LISE:

[entering, to RAGUENEAU] Here they come, your mud-spattered friends!

FIRST POET:

[entering, to RAGUENEAU] Brother in art!

SECOND POET:

[to RAGUENEAU, shaking his hand] Dear brother!

THIRD POET:

High soaring eagle among pastry-cooks! *[He sniffs.]* My, it smells good here in your nest!

FOURTH POET:

Phoebus of the kitchen!

FIFTH POET:

Apollo of cooks!

RAGUENEAU:

[whom they surround and embrace] Ah! How quickly at ease I find myself among these friends!

FIRST POET:

We were delayed by the mob; they're all crowded around the Porte de Nesle!

SECOND POET:

Eight bandits lay dead in the street there—all slit open with sword-gashes!

CYRANO:

[raising his head a minute] Eight? I thought it was seven.

[He goes on writing.]

RAGUENEAU:

[to CYRANO] Do you know who the hero of that fight might be?

CYRANO:

[carelessly] Not I.

LISE:

[to the MUSKETEER] And you? Do you know?

MUSKETEER:

[twirling his mustache] Maybe!

CYRANO:

[still writing, he is heard murmuring a word from time to time.] “I love you!”

FIRST POET:

’Twas one man, they say. They all swear to it—just one man, who single-handedly beat the entire band of assassins!

SECOND POET:

’Twas a strange sight! Pikes and cudgels were strewn all over the ground!

CYRANO:

[writing] “Your eyes ...”

THIRD POET:

They were picking up hats seven blocks away!

FIRST POET:

My God! The man must have been ferocious!

CYRANO:

[still writing] “Your lips ...”

FIRST POET:

He must have been a fearsome giant!

CYRANO:

“... and when I see you come, I faint from fear.”

SECOND POET:

[filching a cake] What have you written lately, Ragueneau?

CYRANO:

[still writing] “I worship you ...” *[He stops, just as he is about to sign, and gets up, slipping the letter into his jacket.]* No need to sign, since I’ll give it to her myself.

RAGUENEAU:

[to SECOND POET] I have put a recipe into verse.

THIRD POET:

[seating himself by a plate of cream-puffs] Go to it! Let’s hear those verses!

FOURTH POET:

[looking at a cake which he has taken] Oh my, this cake is lopsided! I’ll fix it! *[He takes a bite off the top.]*

FIRST POET:

[taking a cake] Ah, how this gingerbread woos the starving poet with its almond eyes!

SECOND POET:

[to RAGUENEAU] Go ahead, we’re listening.

THIRD POET:

[gently squeezing a cream-puff] How it laughs! Until its very cream runs over!

SECOND POET:

[biting a bit off the lyre-shaped pastry] This is the first time in my life I've gotten any true nourishment from the lyre!

RAGUENEAU:

[who has cleared his throat, settled his cap, and struck a pose, in preparation to recite his poem] A recipe in verse!

SECOND POET:

[to first, nudging him] Is this your breakfast?

FIRST POET:

[to second] Yes, and you are taking your dinner, it seems.

RAGUENEAU:

How almond tartlets are made.
Beat your eggs up, light and quick;
Froth them thick;
Mingle with them while you beat
Juice of lemon, essence fine;
Then combine
The burst milk of almonds sweet.
Circle with a custard paste
The slim waist
Of your tartlet-molds; the top
With a skillful finger print,
Nick and dint,
Round the edge, then, drop by drop,
Pour some cream upon each one—
Almost done!
In the oven place each mold.
Reappearing, softly browned,
The renowned
Almond tartlets you behold!

THE POETS:

[with mouths crammed full] Exquisite! Delicious!

A POET:

[choking] Humph!

[They go upstage, still eating.]

CYRANO:

[who has been watching, goes toward RAGUENEAU] Don't you see how they stuff themselves while you recite your poetry?

RAGUENEAU:

[in a low voice, smiling] Oh, yes! I see it well enough, but I won't let them know that I see it. I wouldn't want to embarrass them, you know. Plus, I gain a double pleasure when I recite my poems to them, for I give those poor starving fellows the freedom to eat, even while I gratify my own dearest weakness!

CYRANO:

[clapping him on the shoulder] Friend, I like you! *[RAGUENEAU goes after his friends. CyranO follows him with his eyes, and then speaks rather sharply.]* Lise! Is that musketeer making passes at you?

LISE:

[offended] One proud glance of my eye can conquer any man that should dare venture to attack my virtue!

CYRANO:

Pooh! Conquering eyes, I think, are often conquered eyes.

LISE:

[choking with anger] But—

CYRANO:

[bluntly] I like Ragueneau. So mark my words, Lise—I will not permit you to make a laughing-stock of him by any—

LISE:

But—

CYRANO:

[who has raised his voice so as to be heard by the MUSKETEER] A word to the wise ...

[He bows to the MUSKETEER and goes to the doorway to watch, after looking at the clock.]

LISE:

[to the MUSKETEER, who has merely bowed in answer to CYRANO'S bow] What's with you? Have you no courage? You didn't even make fun of his nose!

MUSKETEER:

His nose? Oh yes, his nose.

[He goes quickly farther away, and LISE follows him.]

CYRANO:

[from the doorway, signing to RAGUENEAU to take the poets away] Psst!

RAGUENEAU:

[showing them the door on the right] We shall have more privacy in here.

CYRANO:

[impatiently] Psst! Psst!

RAGUENEAU:

[drawing them farther away] We can better read our poetry over here.

FIRST POET:

[despairingly, with his mouth full] What! Must we leave the cakes?

SECOND POET:

Never! Let's take them with us!

They all go out behind RAGUENEAU, after sweeping all the cakes off the trays.]

Scene V

CYRANO, ROXANE, the DUENNA.

CYRANO:

Ah! If I see even the faintest glimmer of hope, I'll give her my letter! *[ROXANE, masked, followed by the DUENNA, appears at the glass pane of the door. He opens it quickly.]* Come in! *[aside to the DUENNA]* May I have two words with you?

DUENNA:

You may have as many as you like, Sir!

CYRANO:

Are you fond of sweet things?

DUENNA:

Oh, yes, I could eat myself sick with them!

CYRANO:

[grabbing some of the paper bags from the counter] Good. Take these two sonnets written by Monsieur Benserade—

DUENNA:

[slightly disappointed] Oh ...

CYRANO:

Which I will fill for you with cream cakes!

DUENNA:

[changing her expression] Oh!

CYRANO:

I'll wrap up six of them for you in the bosom of a poem by Saint Amant! And here in these verses of Chapelain I'll drop a piece of sponge cake. Oh, and do you like warm pies?

DUENNA:

Oh, yes, to the core of my heart!

CYRANO:

[filling her arms with the bags] Now, please go and enjoy them all out in the street.

DUENNA:

But—

[He shuts the door, comes down toward ROXANE, and stands at a respectful distance from her with his hat in his hand.]

Scene VI

CYRANO, ROXANE

CYRANO:

Blessed be this day that you recognize my existence and come to meet me, and to say ...

ROXANE:

[who has taken off her mask] I came to say thank you, first of all, for your victory last night. That arrogant man whom you beat in swordplay was the man whom a certain great lord, infatuated with me—

CYRANO:

de Guiche?

ROXANE:

[casting her eyes downward] —tried to force on me as a husband.

CYRANO:

Indeed, a husband! A duped husband! A husband only in form! *[bowing]* Then I am glad to know that I fought last night not for my ugly nose but for your beautiful virtue!

ROXANE:

I also have a confession to make. But before I do so, I must see you again as that brother-friend with whom I used to play by the lakeside!

CYRANO:

Yes, you would come each spring to Bergerac!

ROXANE:

Remember the reeds you used to cut to make your swords?

CYRANO:

And you wove corn silk to make braids for your dolls' hair!

ROXANE:

Those were the days of games!

CYRANO:

And eating blackberries!

ROXANE:

In those days, you did everything I asked of you!

CYRANO:

You were called Madeleine then, in your little girl dress!

ROXANE:

Was I pretty then?

CYRANO:

You certainly were not plain!

ROXANE:

I remember many times you would come running to me, hands all cut up from a fall, and I would act as if I were your mother. I would try to sound severe. *[She takes his hand.]* I'd say sternly, "What happened here? Did you hurt yourself again?" *[She looks at his hand, surprised.]* Oh! It's too much! What happened to your hand? *[CYRANO tries to draw away his hand.]* No, let me see! Still injuring yourself, at your age! Where did you get that scratch?

CYRANO:

I got it while playing at the Porte de Nesle.

ROXANE:

[seating herself by the table, and dipping her handkerchief in a glass of water] Give me your hand!

CYRANO:

[sitting by her] So soft! So motherly and sweet!

ROXANE:

Tell me, while I wipe away the blood, how many men were against you?

CYRANO:

Oh, about a hundred.

ROXANE:

Tell me more!

CYRANO:

No, let it be. But I'd like you to tell me what it was you were about to confess.

ROXANE:

[keeping his hand] Yes, now I can tell you! The memory of those old days makes me bolder! Here it is. I am in love with someone.

CYRANO:

Ah!

ROXANE:

But he does not know it.

CYRANO:

Ah!

ROXANE:

Not yet.

CYRANO:

Ah!

ROXANE:

But he shall soon learn.

CYRANO:

Ah!

ROXANE:

A poor young man, who all this time has loved me, timidly, from afar, and dares not speak.

CYRANO:

Ah!

ROXANE:

My, your hand feels feverish! He dares not speak, but I have seen love trembling on his lips.

CYRANO:

Ah!

ROXANE:

[bandaging his hand with her handkerchief] And it just so happens, dear cousin, that he's a member of your regiment!

CYRANO:

Ah!

ROXANE:

[laughing] A cadet in your own company!

CYRANO:

Ah!

ROXANE:

His brow bears the stamp of genius. He is proud, noble, young, intrepid, handsome—

CYRANO:

[rising suddenly, very pale] Handsome!

ROXANE:

What's the matter?

CYRANO:

Nothing. It's ... *[showing his hand, smiling]* It's only a little pain from this scratch!

ROXANE:

I love him. Now I've said it. But I must tell you I've only seen him at the theater.

CYRANO:

You mean you've never spoken to him?

ROXANE:

Eyes can speak.

CYRANO:

But then, how do you know that he ...?

ROXANE:

Oh, people talk. Gossip spreads quickly under the linden trees at Place Royale.

CYRANO:

He is a cadet?

ROXANE:

Yes, in the Guards

CYRANO:

What's his name?

ROXANE:

Baron Christian de Neuville.

CYRANO:

What? He's not in the Guards.

ROXANE:

He just joined this morning, under Captain Carbon de Castel-Jaloux.

CYRANO:

Oh, how quickly we lose our hearts! But, my poor child—

DUENNA:

[opening the door] I've eaten all the cakes, Monsieur Bergerac!

CYRANO:

Then read the poems printed on the bags! *[She goes out.]* My poor child, you who love flowing words and sharp wit—what if he turns out to be dull?

ROXANE:

No, his hair is just like the hair of one of d'Urfe's heroes!

CYRANO:

Ah! Nice hair but witless speech, perhaps?

ROXANE:

Oh, no! His words are fair and elegant—I can just feel it!

CYRANO:

All words seem elegant when they lurk beneath an elegant mustache! Suppose he's really a fool!

ROXANE:

[stamping her foot] Then I'll just die!

CYRANO:

[after a pause] Did you bring me here in order to tell me this? I must say I don't understand why.

ROXANE:

It's because I learned just yesterday that all of your company are Gascons and—

CYRANO:

And we always provoke any newcomer who somehow gains favor without being a pure Gascon?

ROXANE:

Yes! Think how I fear for him!

CYRANO:

[aside] And with good reason!

ROXANE:

But when I saw you last night, fighting so bravely and fearlessly, holding your own against all of those brutes, I thought, "If only he, whom everyone fears, if only he would ..."

CYRANO:

All right. I will befriend your little Baron.

ROXANE:

Oh! Do you promise you'll do this for me? I've always held you as a tender friend.

CYRANO:

Yes, yes.

ROXANE:

Then you will be his friend?

CYRANO:

I swear!

ROXANE:

And he shall fight no duels?

CYRANO:

None. I promise.

ROXANE:

You are so kind, cousin! Now I must go. *[She puts on her mask and veil, and then speaks distractedly.]* Oh, but you haven't told me about your battle last night—what a hero you must have been! Please tell him to write to me! *[She sends him a kiss with her fingers.]* Oh, how good you are!

CYRANO:

Yes, yes.

ROXANE:

A hundred men against you! What a hero! But I must go. You're such a great friend!

CYRANO:

Yes, yes.

ROXANE:

Tell him to write to me. You'll tell me all about the fight one day. A hundred men! Oh, how brave!

CYRANO:

[bowing to her] I have fought better since.

[She goes out. CYRANO stands motionless, with his eyes to the ground. There is a silence. The door opens and RAGUENEAU looks in.]

Scene VII

CYRANO, RAGUENEAU, the POETS, CARRBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, the CADETS, a CROWD, then DE GUICHE.

RAGUENEAU:

Can we come in?

CYRANO:

[motionless] Yes.

[RAGUENEAU signals to his friends and they all come in. At the same time, by a door at the back, CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX enters, in Captain's uniform. He makes gestures of surprise upon seeing CYRANO.]

CARBON:

Here he is!

CYRANO:

[raising his head] Captain!

CARBON:

[delightedly] Our hero! We heard all about it! Thirty or more of my cadets are here!

CYRANO:

[shrinking back] But...

CARBON:

[trying to draw him away] Come with me! They will not rest until they see you!

CYRANO:

No!

CARBON:

They're just across the street, drinking at The Bear's Head.

CYRANO:

I—

CARBON:

[going to the door and calling across the street in a loud, booming voice] He won't come! The hero's in a bad mood!

A VOICE:

[outside] Sandious!

[There is a tumult outside. The noise of boots and swords is heard.]

CARBON:

[rubbing his hands] They're running across the street!

[The cadets enter, shouting exclamations in the Gascon dialect.]

RAGUENEAU:

[drawing back, startled] Gentlemen, are you all from Gascony?

THE CADETS:

Yes, all of us!

A CADET:

[to CYRANO] Bravo!

CYRANO:

[nodding] Baron!

ANOTHER:

[shaking his hands] Hurrah!

CYRANO:

Baron!

THIRD CADET:

Come! I must embrace you!

CYRANO:

Baron!

SEVERAL CADETS:

We'll all embrace him! All in turn!

CYRANO:

[not knowing whom to reply to] Baron—Baron—I beg you—

RAGUENEAU:

Are you all Barons, Sirs?

CADETS:

Scene VII

All of us!

RAGUENEAU:

Is it true?

FIRST CADET:

You could build a tower with nothing but our coronets!

LE BRET:

[entering, and running up to CYRANO] Everyone wants to see you! There's a wild mob led by the men who followed you last night!

CYRANO:

[alarmed] You haven't told them where to find me, have you?

LE BRET:

[rubbing his hands] Yes!

A BURGHER:

[entering, followed by a group of men] Sir, everyone in the Marais is coming here!

[Outside the street has filled with people. Carriages are stopping.]

LE BRET:

[in a low voice, smiling, to CYRANO] What happened with Roxane?

CYRANO:

[quickly] Hush!

CROWD:

[calling from outside] Cyrano!

[A CROWD rushes into the shop, pushing one another and cheering.]

RAGUENEAU:

[standing on a table] My shop is being invaded! They're breaking everything! How magnificent!

CROWD:

[gathering around CYRANO] My friend! My friend!

CYRANO:

It seems that just yesterday I didn't have this many friends!

LE BRET:

[delighted] Success!

A YOUNG MARQUIS:

[hurrying up with his hands held out] My friend, if you only knew—

CYRANO:

Friend? How can you be my friend if I've never even seen you before?

ANOTHER:

Sir, please let me present to you some fair ladies who are waiting in my carriage.

CYRANO:

[coldly] Oh? And who will introduce me to you?

LE BRET:

[astonished] What's wrong with you?

CYRANO:

Hush!

A MAN OF LETTERS:

[with a writing-board] Sir, may I have a few details?

CYRANO:

No.

LE BRET:

[nudging his elbow] That's Théophraste Renaudot, editor of the "Gazette!"

CYRANO:

Who cares?

LE BRET:

But his paper is of great importance! They say it will be an immense success!

A POET:

[advancing] Sir—

CYRANO:

Another one!

POET:

Please permit me to make a pentacrostic out of your name.

A MAN:

[also advancing] Please, Sir—

CYRANO:

Enough! Enough!

[There is a movement in the CROWD. DE GUICHE appears, escorted by OFFICERS, including CUIGY, BRISSAILLE, and the officers who went with CYRANO the night before. CUIGY comes rapidly up to CYRANO.]

CUIGY:

[to CYRANO] I present Monsieur de Guiche. *[The CROWD murmurs and everyone gets out of the way.]* He comes with a message from the Marshal of Gassion!

DE GUICHE:

[bowing to CYRANO] The Marshal expresses his admiration, Sir, for your exploit that everyone is talking about.

CROWD:

Bravo!

CYRANO:

[bowing] The Marshal is a judge of valor.

DE GUICHE:

He could not have believed it, unless these gentlemen had sworn they witnessed it.

CUIGY:

With our own eyes!

LE BRET:

[aside to CYRANO, who appears distracted] Aren't you going to say something?

CYRANO:

Hush!

LE BRET:

What is it? You seem to be suffering.

CYRANO:

[starting] Suffering? In front of this mob? *[He draws himself up, twirls his mustache, and throws back his shoulders.]* Wait! You shall see!

DE GUICHE:

[to whom CUIGY has spoken in a low voice] Your career is already filled with great exploits. And you also serve with those crazy Gascons?

CYRANO:

Yes, I'm with the Cadets.

A CADET:

[in a fierce tone] He's one of us!

DE GUICHE:

[looking at the CADETS, who all stand behind CYRANO] Ah! These proud and haughty gentlemen must be the famous warriors!

CARBON:

Cyrano!

CYRANO:

Yes, captain!

CARBON:

Since all my company is assembled here, please favor me and present them to the Count.

CYRANO:

[making two steps toward DE GUICHE and pointing to the CADETS] My Lord de Guiche, permit me to present my fellow cadets:

The bold Cadets of Gascony,
Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux!
Brawling and swaggering boastfully,
The bold Cadets of Gascony!
Bragging of arms and heraldry,
Their veins brimming with blood so blue,
The bold Cadets of Gascony,
Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux.
Eagle-eyed, and graceful as cats,
Fierce mustache and wolf-like grin,
They slash those before them as though they were gnats.
Eagle-eyed, and graceful as cats,
Haphazardly sporting their torn and worn hats,
With feathers to cover the holes there within,
Eagle-eyed and graceful as cats,
Fierce mustache and wolf-like grin.
Stab-Your-Belly and Slit-Your-Trunk
Are the gentlest nicknames they bear.
With fame and glory their soul is drunk!
Stab-Your-Belly and Slit-Your-Trunk,
In brawl and battle they show their spunk,
Doing things others would never dare,
Stab-Your-Belly and Slit-Your-Trunk
Are the gentlest nicknames they bear!
Behold the Cadets of Gascony!
All jealous lovers are sport for you!
Fair ladies will lose their purity!
Behold the Cadets of Gascony!
The ones all husbands fear to see,
For their wives the Cadets will woo!
Behold the Cadets of Gascony!
Husbands and lovers are game for you!

DE GUICHE:

[looking snobby and seated casually in an armchair brought quickly by RAGUENEAU] A poet! It's the latest fashion! Would you like to be my personal poet?

CYRANO:

No, Sir! I'm no man's poet!

DE GUICHE:

Your exploits last night pleased my uncle, Cardinal Richelieu. I'll gladly say a word to him for you.

LE BRET:

[overjoyed] My God!

DE GUICHE:

I believe you have written a play?

LE BRET:

[in CYRANO'S ear] Your play! *Agrippine* shall be performed at last!

DE GUICHE:

Take it to him.

CYRANO:

[beginning to be tempted and attracted] Well, I...

DE GUICHE:

He is a skilled critic. He may correct a line or two, at most.

CYRANO:

[whose face stiffens at once] Impossible! My blood freezes just to imagine that even one comma should be changed!

DE GUICHE:

But when he likes a piece of writing, he pays extremely well for it, good friend.

CYRANO:

He cannot pay as well as I do. For when a verse I've written pleases me, I pay the writer the highest reward by singing it to myself!

DE GUICHE:

You are proud.

CYRANO:

Really? Have you noticed that?

A CADET:

[entering, with a string of old battered plumed beaver hats, full of holes, slung on his word] Look, Cyrano! See the brightly-feathered game we found this morning out in the street!

CARBON:

The spoils of war!

ALL:

[laughing] Ha, ha, ha!

CUIGY:

Whoever hired those cowards must be cursing and swearing today!

BRISSAILLE:

Who was it?

DE GUICHE:

It was me. *[The laughter stops.]* The job was too dirty for my sword, so I hired them to punish that drunken sot of a poet.

[A tense silence ensues.]

CADET:

in a low voice, to CYRANO, showing him the hats] What should we do with them? They're all greasy. Maybe we should make a stew!

CYRANO:

[taking the sword and, with a salute, dropping the hats at DE GUICHE'S feet] Please, Sir, be good enough to return them to your friends.

DE GUICHE:

[rising, and speaking sharply] Bring me my chair at once! I'm leaving! *[to CYRANO, angrily]* As to you, Sir!

VOICE:

[in the street] Porters! Bring Count de Guiche's chair!

DE GUICHE:

[who has regained control of himself, smiling] Have you read *Don Quixote*?

CYRANO:

I have! And I take off my hat to that mad knight!

DE GUICHE:

I advise you study—

PORTER:

[appearing at the back] My lord's chair!

DE GUICHE:

—the windmill chapter!

CYRANO:

[bowing] Chapter thirteen.

DE GUICHE:

For when one attacks windmills, it may happen that—

CYRANO:

Are you saying that I attack those who change with every change of the breeze?

DE GUICHE:

—that the arms of windmills may catch you and sweep you down into the mud!

CYRANO:

Or upward to the stars!

[DE GUICHE goes out and gets into his chair. The other LORDS go away whispering together. LE BRET goes to the door with them. The CROWD leaves.]

Scene VIII

CYRANO, LE BRET, and the CADETS, who are eating and drinking at the tables on the right and left.

CYRANO:

[bowing mockingly to those who go out without daring to salute him] Gentlemen... Gentlemen...

LE BRET:

[coming back, with an expression of despair] Oh, what a fine mess!

CYRANO:

Oh, go ahead! Scold away!

LE BRET:

You must admit that destroying every opportunity that comes your way is a little extreme!

CYRANO:

Yes, I admit it. I am sometimes extreme.

LE BRET:

[triumphantly] Ah!

CYRANO:

But to take a stand, or to defend a principle, sometimes requires one to act in extreme ways.

LE BRET:

Oh, lay aside your pride for a moment. Fortune and glory await you!

CYRANO:

Oh, yes? But what would I have to do for it? Seek a patron to support me and protect me? Be like the wretched ivy that clings around a big tree and creeps upward not by its own strength but by trickery? No, thank you! Dedicate poems to bankers, like other poets have done? Act like a cringing fool just for the hope of seeing a condescending smile on a patron's lips? Thank you, but no! Learn to swallow insults every day? Scrape my knees raw from kneeling and bend my back till it breaks from bowing? No, thank you! Or be two-faced and sly, running with the hare while at the same time hunting with the hounds? Learn the cheap art of flattering people so that they may praise me? Step on people to make my way ahead? Navigate the sea of life with madrigals for sails, blown gently windward by old ladies' sighs? Thank you, but no! Bribe kindly editors to print my poetry? Aspire to be elected pope of tavern councils held by drunken idiots? Work my whole life to bank my reputation on one famous sonnet instead of writing hundreds? Be terrorized by all the papers, thinking such things as, "Oh, if only the *Mercury* would give me a kind review!" Grow pale and fearful and scheming? Prefer to make visits instead of poems? Seek introductions to the right people, sign the right petitions? No! No! And no again! But sing? And dream and laugh? Yes! Go freely, wherever I please, with eyes that look straight forward and with a fearless voice! To wear my hat just the way I choose! To decide for myself in any situation whether to fight a duel or to recite a poem! To work without one thought of fortune or fame, and to realize that journey to the moon! Never to write a line that has not sprung straight from my heart. To be modest. To be content with every flower, fruit or even leaf—but pluck them from my own garden and no one else's! And then, if glory ever does by chance come my way, I'll pay no tribute to Caesar, because the merit will be my own. In short, I will never be like that wretched ivy. Whether I rise very high or not, I am content because I climb alone!

LE BRET:

Be alone if you will, but where did you ever get the idea that you should be making enemies at every turn?

CYRANO:

I got it from watching you make friends at every turn by fawning over people and flattering them. As you smile at people you despise, I pass by joyfully, thinking, "Oh, good—I've made another enemy today!"

LE BRET:

Sheer lunacy!

CYRANO:

Think of it as my vice. It gives me pleasure to displease people. I love to be hated! I march better beneath the crossfire of hostile glances! How amusing it is to see my jacket stained with so many spatters of envy and fear! The dull friendships which you and others keep enfold your neck like an open-laced collar. Such a collar makes it easy to move your head every which way, but makes it impossible to hold your head up straight. My hatred is like a stiff and starched collar which presses in upon me and keeps my head held high! And every new enemy adds a stiff new pleat to it, for hatred grips like a vice, but frames one like a halo!

LE BRET:

[after a silence, taking his arm] Speak loud and proud to the world. But whisper the truth into my ear—she does not love you, does she?

CYRANO:

[sharply] Hush!

[CHRISTIAN has just entered, and has tried to mingle with the cadets, who do not speak to him. He has seated himself at a table, where LISE serves him.]

Scene IX

CYRANO, LE BRET, the CADETS, CHRISTIAN DE NEUVILLETTE.

A CADET:

[seated at a table, glass in hand] Cyrano! *[CYRANO turns around]* Tell the story!

CYRANO:

Give me a moment!

[He goes upstage, arm and arm with LE BRET, the two of them talking in low voices.]

THE CADET:

[rising and coming downstage] The story of the fight! *[He stops at the table where CHRISTIAN is seated.]* It will be a good lesson for this timid young apprentice!

CHRISTIAN:

[raising his head] Apprentice?

ANOTHER CADET:

Yes, you weak northerner!

CHRISTIAN:

Weak?

FIRST CADET:

[mockingly] Listen, Monsieur de Neuville, there is something you must know. There is an object that no one dares to name. Calling attention to this object would be like mentioning rope in a home where a man hung himself!

CHRISTIAN:

What might this object be?

ANOTHER CADET:

[in a fierce voice] See here! *[He taps his finger three times, mysteriously, on his nose.]* Do you understand?

CHRISTIAN:

Oh! You must mean—

ANOTHER CADET:

Hush! Never breathe that word, unless you want to deal with him!

[He points to CYRANO, who is talking with LE BRET.]

ANOTHER CADET:

[who has meanwhile come up quietly to sit on the table, whispering behind him] Listen here! He put two men to death, just because they spoke with nasally voices!

ANOTHER:

[in a hollow voice, darting on all fours from under the table, where he had crept] If you'd rather not die young, do not ever mention the fatal cartilage!

ANOTHER:

[clapping him on the shoulder] Not a word! Not a gesture! Even pulling out a handkerchief could land you dead!

[There is a silence. All the CADETS stand with crossed arms and look at CHRISTIAN. He rises and goes over to CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, who is talking to an officer, and pretends to see nothing.]

CHRISTIAN:

Captain!

CARBON:

[turning and looking at him from head to foot] Sir!

CHRISTIAN:

Please tell me, what should one do to southerners who swagger and boast?

CARBON:

Prove to them that one can be a northerner and also be brave!

[He turns his back on him.]

CHRISTIAN:

Thank you.

FIRST CADET:

[to CYRANO] Now tell the tale!

ALL:

The tale!

CYRANO:

[coming toward them] The tale? *[They all bring their stools up and group around him, listening eagerly. CHRISTIAN sits astride a chair.]* Well! I went all alone to meet the scoundrels. The full moon was shining like a big clock in the sky. Suddenly, an unseen hand slipped a cloud in front of the clock face, and the night went black! All the docks were hidden in the murky dark. I could see nothing further—

CHRISTIAN:

Than the end of your nose!

[There is complete silence. Everyone slowly rises, looking in terror at CYRANO, who has stopped speaking, dumbfounded. There is a pause.]

CYRANO:

Who in God's name is that?

A CADET:

[whispering] He just joined today.

CYRANO:

[making a step toward CHRISTIAN] Today?

CARBON:

[in a low voice] Yes, his name is Baron de Neuvil—

CYRANO:

[stopping himself] Very well. *[He turns pale, then turns red, and looks as if he will attack CHRISTIAN.]* I— *[He gains control of himself.]* What was I saying? *[with a burst of rage]* MORDIOUS! *[then continuing calmly]* It was dark. *[The CADETS are astonished. They reseal themselves, staring at him.]* On I went, thinking to myself, “For a brave cause, I might provoke some great man, some great prince, who might certainly break—”

CHRISTIAN:

Your nose!

[Everyone starts up. CHRISTIAN balances on his chair.]

CYRANO:

[in a choked voice] My teeth! Who might break my teeth, and that I, unwisely, might be putting my—

CHRISTIAN:

Your nose!

CYRANO:

Myself into a bad situation. He might prove strong and rap me—

CHRISTIAN:

In the nose!

CYRANO:

[wiping his forehead]

On the knuckles! But I said to myself, “Forward, Gascon! Duty calls! On, Cyrano!” And so I ventured on. And then, from out of the shadows, came—

CHRISTIAN:

A crack on the nose!

CYRANO:

A thrust from someone's sword! I parried it, and found myself—

CHRISTIAN:

Nose to nose—

CYRANO:

[rushing at him] Good God in heaven! *[All the Gascons leap up to see, but when he is close to CHRISTIAN, he controls himself and continues.]* With a hundred brutes, who all stank—

CHRISTIAN:

So much you had to hold your nose!

CYRANO:

[ghostly pale, but smiling] Of onions and cheap brandy! I leapt out and charged right into the midst of them—

CHRISTIAN:

Nose first!

CYRANO:

I charge! I immediately gore two and impale one! Then another aims at me—Paf!—and I parry—

CHRISTIAN:

Pif!

CYRANO:

[bursting out loud] Great God! Get out! All of you!

[The CADETS rush to the doors.]

FIRST CADET:

The tiger awakens!

CYRANO:

Everyone out! Leave me alone with him!

SECOND CADET:

He'll be mince meat! Chopped up finely and ready to be baked into a pastry!

RAGUENEAU:

I am turning pale! I curl up like a napkin, limp and white!

CARBON:

Let's be gone.

A CADET:

There won't be a crumb left of him!

ANOTHER:

I die of fright just to think of what will happen to him!

ANOTHER:

[shutting the door as they all leave] Something too horrible!

[All have gone out by different doors; some have left by the staircase. CYRANO and CHRISTIAN are face to face, looking at each other for a moment.]

Scene X

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN.

CYRANO:

Embrace me!

CHRISTIAN:

But, Sir—

CYRANO:

You're a brave man.

CHRISTIAN:

Oh! But—

CYRANO:

I insist!

CHRISTIAN:

Please tell me—

CYRANO:

Come, embrace me! I'm her brother.

CHRISTIAN:

Whose brother?

CYRANO:

Roxane's!

CHRISTIAN:

[rushing up to him] Oh, heavens! Her brother?

CYRANO:

Cousin, brother—same thing!

CHRISTIAN:

And has she told you...?

CYRANO:

She's told me everything!

CHRISTIAN:

Does she love me? Please tell me!

CYRANO:

Maybe!

CHRISTIAN:

[taking his hands] How glad I am to meet you, Sir!

CYRANO:

Well, that's a rather sudden change in feeling!

CHRISTIAN:

Please forgive me.

CYRANO:

[puts his hands on CHRISTIAN'S shoulders and looks at him] It's true, you *are* a handsome rogue.

CHRISTIAN:

Oh, Sir! If you only knew how much I admire you!

CYRANO:

But what about all those 'noses'?

CHRISTIAN:

Oh! I take them back!

CYRANO:

Roxane expects a letter from you.

CHRISTIAN:

Oh, woe is me!

CYRANO:

What's wrong?

CHRISTIAN:

If I open my mouth, I'm lost!

CYRANO:

Why so?

CHRISTIAN:

Because I'm a fool! Oh, I could die for shame!

CYRANO:

If one calls himself a fool, he cannot really be a fool. Besides, you did not attack me like a fool.

CHRISTIAN:

It's easy to find words to pick a fight. I'll admit I have a certain military wit. But before women, I'm at a loss! True, when I pass by them, their eyes are kind, but—

CYRANO:

Aren't they even kinder when you stop?

CHRISTIAN:

No! For I am one of those men who are tongue-tied. I don't know how to speak my love to a woman.

CYRANO:

And, I, it seems, would be able to speak *my* love if only Nature had been kinder to me.

CHRISTIAN:

Oh, to be able to express my thoughts with grace!

CYRANO:

Oh, to be a musketeer, with a handsome face!

CHRISTIAN:

Roxane is so intelligent. I'm sure to prove a disappointment to her!

CYRANO:

[looking at him] If only I had a face like yours to speak what's in my soul!

CHRISTIAN:

[with despair] If only I had some eloquence!

CYRANO:

[abruptly] I'll lend you mine! If you'll lend me your handsome face! Blended together, we'll make one romantic hero!

CHRISTIAN:

But how?

CYRANO:

Do you think you can repeat whatever I may tell you?

CHRISTIAN:

What do you mean?

CYRANO:

Roxane will not be disillusioned if the two of us woo her as one!

Let my words speak through your lips. Let my soul pass from this leather jacket to your embroidered coat. We will win her together!

CHRISTIAN:

But, Cyrano—

CYRANO:

Will you do it?

CHRISTIAN:

I'm afraid!

CYRANO:

You're afraid you will chill her heart if you speak to her yourself.
But if you let me speak through your lips, her heart will flame!

CHRISTIAN:

Your eyes are flashing!

CYRANO:

Will you do it?

CHRISTIAN:

Would it please you so?

CYRANO:

[passionately] It would! *[then calmly, business-like]* It would... amuse me! It's the type of challenge every poet would hope for. Let us complete each other. You will march victorious, in the light, while I go in your shadow. Let me make you witty and intelligent, and you shall make me handsome!

CHRISTIAN:

The letter! I could never—

CYRANO:

[taking out the letter he had written] Here it is! Here's your letter!

CHRISTIAN:

What?

CYRANO:

Take it! All it needs is your signature.

CHRISTIAN:

But I—

CYRANO:

Do not fear. Go ahead and send it. It's entirely suitable.

CHRISTIAN:

But how did you already—?

CYRANO:

Oh! We poets always have our pockets full of love letters, written to so many imaginary beauties. Now, you can take this one and make the words ring true. Take this fictional letter, meant for no particular lady, and put it to real use. Take all my insincere romantic lines and give them a direction. Make it so these haphazard verses will come together and surround her like love birds coming home to nest!

CHRISTIAN:

Should I change anything at all? If it wasn't written with Roxane in mind, then how will it fit her?

CYRANO:

It will fit her like a glove!

CHRISTIAN:

But—

CYRANO:

Love believes anything! Roxane will think each word was inspired by herself!

CHRISTIAN:

My friend!

[He throws himself into CYRANO'S arms and they remain this way.]

Scene XI

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN, the GASCONS, the MUSKETEER, LISE.

A CADET:

[opening the door halfway] Not a word! Such a deadly silence! I dare not look! *[He puts his head in.]* What's this!

ALL THE CADETS:

[entering, and seeing CYRANO and CHRISTIAN embracing] Oh!

A CADET:

This is unbelievable!

MUSKETEER:

[in a jeering tone] Ho! Ho!

CARBON:

Can it be that our demon has become a saint? When struck on one nostril, he turns the other?

MUSKETEER:

Well then, I suppose it's safe to speak about his nose from now on! *[calling to LISE, boastfully]* Lise, look here! *[sniffing in the air exaggeratedly]* Oh, heavens! What a stench! *[going up to CYRANO]* You, Sir, must certainly have noticed how it smells in here! What is it?

CYRANO:

[slapping his face and sending him tumbling down] A stinking bag of hot air!

[The CADETS are all delighted to have found the old CYRANO again. They shout and leap around and turn somersaults.]

Act III

Roxane's Kiss

A small square in the old Marais. The houses are old and the streets are narrow. On the right is ROXANE'S house and the wall of her garden, which is overhung with thick foliage. There is a window and balcony over the door and a bench in front of the house. By the use of the bench and some stones jutting out of the wall, it is easy to climb to the balcony.

Opposite ROXANE'S house is an old house in the same style of brick and stone. The knocker on the door is bandaged with linen like a sore thumb.

At the rising of the curtain, the duenna is seated on the bench. The window on ROXANE'S balcony is wide open. RAGUENEAU is standing near the door dressed in a sort of livery. He has just finished relating something to the DUENNA, and is wiping his eyes.

Scene I

RAGUENEAU, the DUENNA, Then ROXANE, CYRANO, and two PAGES.

RAGUENEAU:

—and then off she went, with a musketeer! Deserted and financially ruined, I decided to put an end to it all, so I hanged myself. Just as my last breath was drawn, in comes Monsieur de Bergerac! He cuts me down, and gets me a job as his cousin's steward.

DUENNA:

But how did you come to be ruined?

RAGUENEAU:

Oh, Lise loved the warriors and I loved the poets! We gave away too much. Any cakes that were left by Apollo were quickly snapped up by Mars. You can see why financial ruin didn't take very long.

DUENNA:

[rising and calling up to the open window] Roxane, are you ready?
They're waiting for us!

ROXANE'S VOICE:

[from the window] I'm just putting on my cloak!

DUENNA:

[to RAGUENEAU, showing him the door opposite] We're going over there to Clomire's house. She's receiving all the lady intellectuals and the poets today. They'll be reading a paper on "The Tender Passion."

RAGUENEAU:

"The Tender Passion"?

DUENNA:

[in a mincing voice] Oh, yes! *[calling up to the window]* Roxane, if you don't come down quickly, we shall miss the talk on "The Tender Passion!"

ROXANE'S VOICE:

I'm coming! I'm coming!

[There is the sound of stringed instruments approaching.]

CYRANO'S VOICE:

[behind the scenes, singing] La la la la!

DUENNA:

[surprised] Are they serenading us?

CYRANO:

[followed by two pages with lutes] I tell you that's a demi-semi-quaver, you demi-semi-fool!

FIRST PAGE:

[ironically] You know, then, Sir, how to distinguish between semi-quavers and demi-semi-quavers?

CYRANO:

Isn't every pupil of Gassendi a musician?

PAGE:

[playing and singing] La la!

CYRANO:

[snatching the lute from him, and going on with the melody] In proof of which, I shall continue! La la la la!

ROXANE:

[appearing on the balcony] Oh! It's you!

CYRANO:

[singing his own words to the melody] I have come to serenade your lilies and pay my devotion to your roses!

ROXANE:

I am coming down!

[She leaves the balcony.]

DUENNA:

[pointing to the pages] How did you find these master musicians?

CYRANO:

I won them in a bet with D'Assoucy. We were arguing forever over a question of grammar. Suddenly he points to these two louts whom he takes around with him as his escorts, and whom he thinks are great musicians. He says, "I will wager you a day's music!" And he lost! So, until the sun rises tomorrow, I'll have these lute-twanglers at my heels, seeing all I do, hearing all I say, and accompanying it all with melody. It was pleasant at first, but I'm growing tired of it already. *[to the*

MUSICIANS] Ho there! Go serenade Montfleury for me! Play a dance for him! [*The pages go toward the door. CYRANO speaks to the DUENNA.*] I have come, as I do every evening, to ask Roxane whether— [*to the PAGES, who are going out*] Play a long time, and play out of tune! [*to the DUENNA*]—whether her heart's desire is still as faultless as he is handsome!

ROXANE:

[*coming out of the house*] Ah! How handsome he is, and how brilliant in wit! Oh, how I love him!

CYRANO:

[*smiling*] Christian has a brilliant wit?

ROXANE:

Brighter than even your own, cousin!

CYRANO:

I'm happy to hear it!

ROXANE:

I would have thought it impossible that here could be a man on this earth skilled enough to say so sweetly all the pretty nothings that mean so much! At times it seems his mind is far away and his inspiration is fading. But then, all of a sudden, he says such bewitching and enchanting things to me!

CYRANO:

[*incredulously*] No! It can't be true!

ROXANE:

Why must you think that? Just like a man! Because he's handsome, you assume he must be dull.

CYRANO:

Does he speak well about love?

ROXANE:

Not only does he *speak* superbly about it, but he *teaches* it!

CYRANO:

And how does he write?

ROXANE:

Even better! Listen to this! [*reciting*] “The more of my poor heart you take, the larger my heart grows!” [*triumphantly to CYRANO*] How do you like those lines?

CYRANO:

Pooh!

ROXANE:

It goes on: “And, since I must show some target for Cupid's cruel dart, if you must keep mine, then give me your heart!”

CYRANO:

Lord! First he has too much of a heart, then not enough! How much heart does the fellow want?

ROXANE:

Oh, you're being terrible! You're just jealous!

CYRANO:

[starting] What do you mean?

ROXANE:

It's your poet's jealousy! You envy that he writes so well! Listen to this, and tell me if it's not the sweetest thing you've ever heard: "My heart to yours gives but one cry: if kisses by letter could fly, then kisses would soar, my love, straight from my fingertips and on to your lovely lips, if kisses by letter could fly!"

CYRANO:

[smiling approvingly in spite of himself] Well! Those last lines are— *[correcting himself, and speaking disdainfully]* They are trite enough!

ROXANE:

And listen to this—

CYRANO:

[enchanted] Do you know all his letters by heart?

ROXANE:

Every one of them!

CYRANO:

How flattering that is!

ROXANE:

They are the words of a master!

CYRANO:

[modestly] Come, now—a master?

ROXANE:

Yes, a master!

CYRANO:

All right then. He's a master.

DUENNA:

[coming down quickly] Here comes Monsieur de Guiche! *[to CYRANO, pushing him toward the house]* In with you! It's best he doesn't see you. It might put him on the scent—

ROXANE:

[to CYRANO] The scent of my secret! He loves me, and he's powerful. If he finds out I'm in love with someone else, all is lost! He could ruin everything!

CYRANO:

[entering the house] As you wish.

[DE GUICHE appears.]

Scene II

ROXANE, DE GUICHE, the DUENNA standing a little way off.

ROXANE:

[curtsying to DE GUICHE] I was just going out.

DE GUICHE:

I've come to say goodbye.

ROXANE:

Where are you going?

DE GUICHE:

To the war.

ROXANE:

Ah!

DE GUICHE:

Yes, I leave tonight.

ROXANE:

Oh!

DE GUICHE:

We've gotten our orders. We're to lay siege to Arras.

ROXANE:

Ah, a siege?

DE GUICHE:

It seems that my going away doesn't move you at all.

ROXANE:

[politely] No, no...

DE GUICHE:

I am heartbroken. Will I ever see you again? And if so, when?
Have you heard that I've been named commander?

ROXANE:

[indifferently] Bravo!

DE GUICHE:

In the Guards regiment.

ROXANE:

[startled] What! The Guards?

DE GUICHE:

Yes, where your cousin serves, that swaggering boaster. I'll find a way to revenge myself on him at Arras.

ROXANE:

[choking] The Guards are going to Arras?

DE GUICHE:

[laughing] Yes, it's my regiment.

ROXANE:

[aside, while falling down onto the bench] Christian!

DE GUICHE:

What's the matter?

ROXANE:

[deeply moved] Oh, I am in despair! To think that the man I love will be at war!

DE GUICHE:

[surprised and delighted] You say such sweet words to me! It's the first time! And just when I must leave you!

ROXANE:

[changing her tone and fanning herself] You say you're going to take revenge on my cousin?

DE GUICHE:

Are you on his side?

ROXANE:

Oh, no! I'm against him!

DE GUICHE:

Do you see him often?

ROXANE:

Very rarely.

DE GUICHE:

He is seen all the time with one of the cadets...a young fellow named Newvillen...Neuviller...

ROXANE:

Is he a tall gentleman?

DE GUICHE:

Yes, and fair-haired.

ROXANE:

Yes, reddish-blond hair!

DE GUICHE:

Handsome.

ROXANE:

Not very much.

DE GUICHE:

But rather stupid.

ROXANE:

One would think so, to look at him! [*changing her tone*] How are you planning to take your revenge on Cyrano? If you're thinking of putting him in the midst of all the shooting, then that plan won't work very well. You see, he loves danger. In the middle of all the terrible action is the place he would *want* to be. I know a far better way for you to wound his pride.

DE GUICHE:

What is it? Tell me!

ROXANE:

Leave him and his fellow cadets behind when the regiment marches to Arras! Let them spend the whole war powerless and idle! This is the thing that will enrage him! If you cheat Cyrano of his chance to engage in mortal danger, you will be punishing him severely!

DE GUICHE:

[*coming nearer*] Oh, woman! Only a woman could devise such a subtle trick!

ROXANE:

He'll eat his heart out! And his friends will gnaw angrily at their fingernails from being deprived of battle. See, this is the way you can avenge yourself.

DE GUICHE:

Do you love me a little, then? [*ROXANE smiles.*] I would almost believe it proves your love, the way you're helping me with my cause.

ROXANE:

It certainly is proof of love!

DE GUICHE:

[*showing some sealed papers*] Here are the marching orders.

They'll be sent instantly to each company, except... [*He takes one paper out.*] this one! It's the one for the Cadets. [*He puts it in his pocket.*] This one I will keep. [*laughing*] Ha! ha! ha! Cyrano! His love of battle! You really can play tricks on people! You, of all ladies!

ROXANE:

Sometimes!

DE GUICHE:

[*coming close to her*] Oh, how I love you! You drive me mad!

Listen! I know that I'm supposed to leave tonight, but how can I leave now that I've learned your heart has been touched? Nearby, in the Rue d'Orleans, is a monastery founded by Father Athanasius, the syndic of the Capuchins. While it's true that no laymen may enter, I think I can work it out with the

good Fathers. Their sleeves are wide enough to hide me in. 'Tis they who serve Richelieu's private chapel, and out of respect for my uncle, they will do as I tell them. Everyone will think I have left Paris. And then I will come to you, masked. Let me have your permission to delay my departure just one day, sweet lady!

ROXANE:

But if people find out, then your glory—

DE GUICHE:

Bah!

ROXANE:

But the siege at Arras—

DE GUICHE:

It can begin without me. Please, grant me your permission.

ROXANE:

No!

DE GUICHE:

Please say yes!

ROXANE:

[tenderly] It is my duty to forbid you.

DE GUICHE:

Ah!

ROXANE:

You must go! *[aside]* Christian stays here. *[aloud]* I want you to be heroic—Antoine!

DE GUICHE:

Oh, heavenly word! You do love, then—

ROXANE:

Yes, the one I tremble for.

DE GUICHE:

[ecstatic] Ah! I shall go then! *[He kisses her hand.]* Are you content?

ROXANE:

Yes, Antoine!

[He goes out.]

DUENNA:

[making a mocking curtsy behind his back] Yes, Antoine!

ROXANE:

[to the DUENNA] Do not speak a word of what I have done! Cyrano would never pardon me for stealing his fighting from him! *[She calls toward the house.]* Cousin!

Scene III

ROXANE, the DUENNA, CYRANO

ROXANE:

We're going to Clomire's house. *[She points to the door opposite.]* Alcandre and Lysimon are to discourse!

DUENNA:

[putting her little finger in her ear] Yes, but my little finger tells me we shall miss hearing them.

CYRANO:

It would be a pity to miss those monkeys!

[They have come to Clomire's door.]

DUENNA:

Oh, look! The knocker is wrapped with cloth! *[speaking to the knocker]* So they have gagged you, noisy one, lest you disturb the fine speakers!

[She lifts it carefully and knocks with precaution.]

ROXANE:

[seeing that the door is opening] Let's go in! *[on the threshold, to CYRANO]* If Christian comes, as I feel sure he will, please tell him to wait for me!

CYRANO:

[quickly, as she is going in] Listen! *[She turns.]* You always choose a subject to speak about with Christian. Tell me, which subject will you ask him to speak on tonight?

ROXANE:

Oh—

CYRANO:

[eagerly] Yes?

ROXANE:

Do you promise you won't tell him?

CYRANO:

I promise.

ROXANE:

I shall not choose a subject at all. Instead, I will tell him to speak on whatever he wishes. I don't want him to prepare a speech. This time, I want him to speak his thoughts as they come. I'll tell him to speak to me of love, and to speak of it splendidly!

CYRANO:

[smiling] Very good!

ROXANE:

But secret!

CYRANO:

Secret.

ROXANE:

Not a word.

[She enters and shuts the door.]

CYRANO:

[when the door is shut, bowing to her] A thousand thanks!

[The door opens again, and ROXANE puts her head out.]

ROXANE:

If he knew what I just told you, he would prepare a speech in advance!

CYRANO:

We wouldn't want that to happen!

BOTH TOGETHER:

Shhhhh!

[The door shuts.]

CYRANO:

[calling] Christian!

Scene IV

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN

CYRANO:

I know what's needed for tonight. Here's your chance to truly impress her. Come, we cannot waste any time. Put away that sulky expression. Come to your house with me, and I'll teach you—

CHRISTIAN:

No!

CYRANO:

Why?

CHRISTIAN:

I will wait for Roxane here.

CYRANO:

What? Are you crazy? Come quickly with me and learn—

CHRISTIAN:

No! No, I say! I'm tired of these borrowed letters and borrowed speeches! I'm tired of acting a part and fearing all the time. It helped me in the beginning, but now I know she loves me! I'm afraid no longer! From now on, I will speak for myself!

CYRANO:

Good heavens!

CHRISTIAN:

What makes you think I cannot speak at all? I'm not such a fool anymore. I've learned a lot from your lessons. I'll be able to speak without your help. You'll see! At least I know enough to take her in my arms! [*seeing ROXANE come out from Clomire's house*] It is she! Oh, Cyrano! Don't leave me!

CYRANO:

[*bowing*] Speak for yourself, my friend, and take your chances.

[*He disappears behind the garden wall.*]

Scene V

CHRISTIAN, ROXANE, the DUENNA

ROXANE:

[*coming out of Clomire's house with a group of friends, bowing and saying goodbye to them*]
Goodbye, Barthenoide! Alcandre! Gremione!

DUENNA:

[*bitterly disappointed*] We missed the speech on "The Tender Passion."

[*She goes into ROXANE'S house.*]

ROXANE:

[*still bowing to her friends*] Goodbye, Urimedonte! [*They all bow to ROXANE and to each other, and then separate, going up different streets. ROXANE suddenly sees CHRISTIAN*] It's you! [*She goes to him.*] Night is falling and no one is around. Let's sit. Please speak, and I will listen.

CHRISTIAN:

[*sits by her on the bench; there is a silence.*] Oh! I love you!

ROXANE:

[*shutting her eyes*] Yes, speak to me of love.

CHRISTIAN:

I love you!

ROXANE:

Yes, that's the theme, but elaborate on it.

CHRISTIAN:

I...

ROXANE:

Go on, elaborate!

CHRISTIAN:

I love you so!

ROXANE:

Oh, without a doubt! But what else?

CHRISTIAN:

And I would be—Oh!—I would be so glad—so glad—if you would love me! Oh, Roxane, tell me so!

ROXANE:

[with a little grimace] I hoped for cream, but you're giving me water! Explain to me how you love me!

CHRISTIAN:

Oh, utterly!

ROXANE:

Come, come! Untangle those knotted thoughts!

CHRISTIAN:

I'd love to kiss your throat!

ROXANE:

Christian!

CHRISTIAN:

I love you!

ROXANE:

[half-rising] You've already said that!

CHRISTIAN:

[eagerly, trying to detain her] No, no! I don't love you!

ROXANE:

[reseating herself] Well, at least that's a change.

CHRISTIAN:

I adore you!

ROXANE:

[rising and going further away] Oh!

CHRISTIAN:

Oh, I'm growing foolish!

ROXANE:

[dryly] And that displeases me—almost as much as it would displease me if you grew ugly.

CHRISTIAN:

But—

ROXANE:

Find your eloquence that seems to have flown away!

CHRISTIAN:

I...

ROXANE:

Yes, you love me. I already know that. Good night!

[She goes toward her house.]

CHRISTIAN:

Oh, don't go yet! I shall tell you—

ROXANE:

[opening the door] That you adore me? I've heard that enough. Go away!

CHRISTIAN:

But I—

[She shuts the door in his face.]

CYRANO:

[who has re-entered unseen] Well, what a success that was!

Scene VI

CHRISTIAN, CYRANO, two PAGES

CHRISTIAN:

Help me!

CYRANO:

Not I!

CHRISTIAN:

But I shall die unless I win her respect back at once!

CYRANO:

And how, in the devil's name, do you expect me to teach you right this moment—

CHRISTIAN:

[seizing his arm] Oh, there she is!

[The window of the balcony is now lighted up.]

CYRANO:

[with great emotion] Her window!

CHRISTIAN:

Oh! I shall die!

CYRANO:

Shhh! Speak softly!

CHRISTIAN:

[in a whisper] I shall die!

CYRANO:

It's dark now...

CHRISTIAN:

So?

CYRANO:

We can repair the damage—although I'm not sure you deserve it! Stand there, in front of the balcony! I'll hide beneath it and tell you what to say.

CHRISTIAN:

But—

CYRANO:

Hold your tongue!

PAGES:

[reappearing at the back, and shouting to CYRANO] Ho there!

CYRANO:

Hush!

[He signs to them to speak softly.]

FIRST PAGE:

[in a low voice] We've played the serenade to Montfleury as you asked!

CYRANO:

[quickly, in a low voice] Go! Hide over there! One at this street corner and one at that one! And if a passer-by should intrude, play a tune for him!

SECOND PAGE:

What tune shall we play, oh great student of Gassendi?

CYRANO:

If a woman comes, play something happy. If a man, something sad! *[The PAGES disappear, one at each street corner. CYRANO speaks to CHRISTIAN]* Call her!

CHRISTIAN:
Roxane!

CYRANO:
[picking up stones and throwing them at the window] Some pebbles! Wait a while!

ROXANE
[half-opening the window] Who calls me?

CHRISTIAN:
It is I!

ROXANE:
Who's that?

CHRISTIAN:
Christian!

ROXANE:
[disdainfully] Oh, you?

CHRISTIAN:
I want to speak with you.

CYRANO:
[under the balcony, to CHRISTIAN] Good. Speak soft and low.

ROXANE:
No, you speak like a fool!

CHRISTIAN:
Oh, have pity on me!

ROXANE:
No! I don't think you love me anymore!

CHRISTIAN:
[prompted by CYRANO] You think I no longer love you? Oh, great heaven, but I love you more and more!

ROXANE:
[who was about to shut the window, pausing] That's a little better.

CHRISTIAN:
[prompted by CYRANO] My love for you grows and grows. It batters me like a cruel and restless child using my heart for a cradle.

ROXANE:
[coming out onto the balcony] That's better! But if you think that Cupid is so cruel, then you should have stifled this newborn love while it was still in its cradle!

CHRISTIAN:

[prompted again] Oh, Madame, I tried. But this love was as strong as Hercules from the moment it was born.

ROXANE:

Still better!

CHRISTIAN:

[prompted again] And this Hercules in my heart strangled the twin serpents of Pride and Doubt!

ROXANE:

[leaning over the balcony] Well said! But why do you halt so much? Has your ability for imagination weakened?

CYRANO:

[drawing CHRISTIAN under the balcony, and slipping into his place] Let me do it! This has become too critical!

ROXANE:

Why do you speak so hesitantly tonight?

CYRANO:

[imitating CHRISTIAN, in a whisper] It is so dark that my words must grope their way in the blackness to find your ear.

ROXANE:

But *my* words don't have the same difficulty.

CYRANO:

They find their way down to me at once? That's no surprise, then! It's because their home is in my heart, and my heart is so large that they cannot help but fall into the right place. Your ear, however, is small! And of course, your words come fast because they fall from such a height, while mine must climb up to you, and that takes time!

ROXANE:

It seems that your last words have learned to climb.

CYRANO:

They've become better at such exercise!

ROXANE:

It is true that I seem to speak from high above you.

CYRANO:

Yes, and so far above that a hard word from you would kill me if it were to fall on my heart.

ROXANE:

[moving] I'm coming down.

CYRANO:

[hastily] No!

ROXANE:

[showing him the bench under the balcony] Then won't you stand on the bench so I can see you?

CYRANO:

[starting back, alarmed] No!

ROXANE:

Why not?

CYRANO:

[overcome with emotion] Let us stay like this for a while. It's so sweet to have this rare occasion when our hearts can speak without our bodies seeing one another.

ROXANE:

But why should we want to speak without seeing one another?

CYRANO:

Oh, because it's so sweet! We are half-hidden and half-revealed. You see the dark folds of my cloak and I see the glimmering whiteness of your dress. I am but a shadow, and you are a bright shining light! Do you know what such a moment does to me? I may have been eloquent in the past but—

ROXANE:

Oh, you *have* been!

CYRANO:

Yet not until tonight has my speech sprung so directly from my heart!

ROXANE:

Why not?

CYRANO:

Up until now, I spoke uncertainly. I've been so intoxicated by your beauty. Your eyes radiate and make me dizzy. But tonight, I think I am able to find speech for the first time!

ROXANE:

'Tis true, your voice even sounds a little different.

CYRANO:

[coming nearer, passionately] Yes, I speak with a new tone! In the sheltering dusk, I dare to be myself for once—at last! *[He stops, falters.]* What have I said? Please pardon me. It's all so enchanting, and so sweet and new!

ROXANE:

New? How so?

CYRANO:

[deeply moved and trying to compose himself again] It's a new feeling for me to at last speak sincerely. Up until now, my heart feared that it would be mocked—

ROXANE:

But why?

CYRANO:

Because of its mad passion! My heart has masked itself with witty words to hide itself from curious eyes. I've aimed to bring stars down from the sky, but, fearing ridicule, I've stooped to pick wild flowers instead!

ROXANE:

Wild flowers are sweet!

CYRANO:

Yes, but not tonight. Tonight I aim for the star!

ROXANE:

Oh! You've never spoken quite like this before!

CYRANO:

Tonight I want to leave behind all of Cupid's arrows and quivers. I don't want to speak about the trite little symbols of love—the sentimental kinds of things that all lovers already speak about. Instead, I want to speak in a fresh, pure language—one that comes directly from my heart. For why should we sip little thimblefuls of dull fashionable waters, when, instead, we can quench our souls' thirst by drinking from the great flooding river!

ROXANE:

But what about your wit? Your elegant speeches?

CYRANO:

If I have used my witty speech to gain your attention at the first, then it would be an outrage and an insult to this night, and to Nature herself, to speak such sugary, flowery words again. Just look up at the stars! The quiet sky will ease our hearts of all things artificial. If love is expressed in terms too refined, then the real feeling is lost. The truth of love itself becomes buried among all the flowery embellishments of poetic language.

ROXANE:

But wit, and elegant language—

CYRANO:

They are a crime when it comes to love! It is hateful to turn honest loving into a game! When the moment comes—and I pity those who never know that moment—and the real feeling of love exists in us, premeditated words are futile and only make the soul sad!

ROXANE:

Well, if that moment has come for us, what words will you use now?

CYRANO:

All words! Whatever words come to me, and even as they come, I'll fling them in a wild cluster and not wrap them in a careful bouquet. I love you! I am mad! I am suffocating with love for you! Your name rings in my heart like a bell. When I think of you, I tremble, and the bell shakes and rings out your name! Everything you do I love! I remember every action of yours that I ever witnessed! I know that last year on the twelfth of May, you changed the way you wore your hair. I am so used to taking your hair for daylight itself that, just as one stares at the sun and sees a red blot on all things, when I turn away after looking at you, I see a radiant image imprinted on everything!

ROXANE:

[in a trembling voice] Yes, this is love.

CYRANO:

Yes, the feeling which fills me is true love! Fierce and jealous and sad, yet never selfish. I would gladly lay down my own happiness for yours, even if you were never to know it. And even if I end up far away from you and lonely, I will be content just to hear a happy echo of the joy I once brought you! Each glance from you makes me virtuous and brave in new and unknown ways. Do you begin to understand me? Now, after all this time, have you begun to understand? Do you feel my soul climbing up to you through the darkness of this night? Oh, it is too sweet, too incredible, that I should speak this way and that you should listen! Even in moments when my hopes rose so high, I never could have hoped for this much! I could die peacefully right now. My words have had the power to make you tremble! You *are* trembling, I can feel it! I can feel the quivering of your hand echoing down through the jasmine branches!

[He passionately kisses one of the hanging branches.]

ROXANE:

Oh, I am trembling and weeping! I am yours! You have conquered all of me!

CYRANO:

Then let death come! It is I who have conquered you! There is just one thing I dare ask you—

CHRISTIAN:

[under the balcony] A kiss!

ROXANE:

[drawing back] What?

CYRANO:

Oh!

ROXANE:

Did you ask—

CYRANO:

I— *[to CHRISTIAN, whispering]* Fool! You're moving too fast!

CHRISTIAN:

She is in such a loving mood that I must take advantage of the moment!

CYRANO:

[to ROXANE] Yes, I asked for a kiss, but I spoke thoughtlessly. Shame on me!

ROXANE:

[disappointed] You withdraw your request so quickly!

CYRANO:

Yes, I withdraw, but without really withdrawing! I'm afraid I have offended your modesty. If so, please do not grant me that kiss!

CHRISTIAN:

[to CYRANO, pulling him by his cloak] Why?

CYRANO:

Silence, Christian! Hush!

ROXANE:

[leaning over] What are you whispering?

CYRANO:

I'm chiding myself for my overly bold advances. I say to myself, "Silence, Christian!" *[The lutes begin to play.]* Hark! Wait a minute! I hear footsteps! *[ROXANE shuts the window. CYRANO listens to the lutes, one of which plays a merry tune and the other a melancholy tune.]* How strange. They play both a sad tune and a happy one. What does it mean? Neither man nor woman? Aha! It's a monk!

Enter a capuchin FRIAR, with a lantern. He goes from house to house, looking at every door.]

Scene VII

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN a capuchin FRIAR

CYRANO:

[to the FRIAR] Hello there, new Diogenes. What are you searching for this time?

FRIAR:

I'm looking for the house of Madame—

CHRISTIAN:

Oh, make him go away!

FRIAR:

Madeleine Robin—

CHRISTIAN:

What could he want?

CYRANO:

[pointing to a street at the back] It's that way! Straight ahead!

FRIAR:

I thank you, and will pray my rosary for you.

[He goes out.]

CYRANO:

Good luck and blessings to you!

[He goes back to CHRISTIAN.]

Scene VIII

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN

CHRISTIAN:

Win for me that kiss!

CYRANO:

No!

CHRISTIAN:

Sooner or later...

CYRANO:

'Tis true! Sooner or later the moment will come when your mouths are sure to meet. Thanks to your fair mustache and her rose petal lips! *[to himself]* I'd rather it should come thanks to—

[There is a sound of shutters reopening. CHRISTIAN goes in again under the balcony.]

Scene IX

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN, ROXANE

ROXANE:

[coming out onto the balcony] Are you still there? We were speaking of a—

CYRANO:

A kiss! The word is sweet! Do not let your lips shrink from it! If the word burns your sweet mouth, what would the kiss itself do? Oh, don't let it frighten you or make you shy. You've already left playful banter behind and glided easily from smile to sigh, and then from sigh to weeping. Glide gently further still. It is only a heartbeat from tear to kiss!

ROXANE:

Hush, hush!

CYRANO:

When all is said and done, what is a kiss? It's simply an oath made more certain, a sealed promise, the heart's confirmation of a pact. It's a secret whispered to the mouth instead of the ear, a stolen moment that makes time eternal, a communion perfumed like the spring's wild flowers. A kiss allows for one to live through the beating of another's heart, and to taste the very soul of another on one's lips!

ROXANE:

Hush, hush!

CYRANO:

A kiss, Madame, is honorable. Even the Queen of France granted a kiss to her favorite lord!

ROXANE:

But what has that got to do with us?

CYRANO:

[speaking more warmly] I have suffered in silence just as Buckingham did. He adored a queen, just as I do. He was sad but faithful, and so am I.

ROXANE:

And you are as handsome as Buckingham!

CYRANO:

[aside, suddenly cool] Oh, yes. I forgot!

ROXANE:

Please climb up here and pick me as your flower.

CYRANO:

[pushing CHRISTIAN toward the balcony] Climb!

ROXANE:

Communion perfumed like spring's wild flowers...!

CYRANO:

Climb!

CHRISTIAN:

[hesitating] But somehow it doesn't feel quite right anymore.

ROXANE:

A stolen moment...!

CYRANO:

[still pushing CHRISTIAN] Go, blockhead, climb!

[CHRISTIAN springs forward, and by way of the bench, the branches, and the pillars, climbs up to the balcony.]

CHRISTIAN:

Ah, Roxane!

[He takes her in his arms, and bends over her lips.]

CYRANO:

Oh, what a strange pain in my heart! The kiss is so near! I am like Lazarus at the feast. But still a crumb or two falls down to me from the rich man's plate. Because it is *my* heart that receives you, Roxane. For, as you press your lips against his, it is *my* words that you kiss! *[The lute play.]* What now? Both a sad song and a happy song again? It must be the monk! *[He begins to run as if he came from a long way off, and then cries out towards ROXANE'S house.]* Hello!

ROXANE:

What is it?

CYRANO:

I—I was just passing by. Is Christian here?

CHRISTIAN:

[astonished] Cyrano!

ROXANE:

Hello, cousin!

CYRANO:

Good evening, cousin!

ROXANE:

I'm coming down!

[She disappears into the house. The FRIAR reenters at the back.]

Scene X

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN, ROXANE, the FRIAR, RAGUENEAU.

FRIAR:

'Tis here, I'm sure of it—Madame Madeleine Robin.

CYRANO:

But you asked for Rolin before!

FRIAR:

No, I didn't! I asked you for the house of Madame Robin—R-O-BI-N!

ROXANE:

[appearing on the threshold, followed by RAGUENEAU, who carries a lantern, and CHRISTIAN]
What is it?

FRIAR:

A letter.

CHRISTIAN:

A letter?

FRIAR:

[to ROXANE] It must be about some holy business! It's from a wealthy lord!

ROXANE:

[to CHRISTIAN] De Guiche!

CHRISTIAN:

How dare he!

ROXANE:

Oh, he won't be able to bother me forever! It is you whom I love! *[unsealing the letter and reading in a low voice with the aid of RAGUENEAU'S lantern]* "Lady, the drums beat and my regiment prepares to leave, but I secretly stay behind. I have dared to disobey your order. I am here in a monastery. I

will come to you tonight. This letter comes to you by way of a poor fool of a monk who knows not what he carries. Your lips have smiled on me too sweetly. I cannot go until I've seen them once again! Please send all your servants away tonight so we may meet in private. I hope you will pardon my boldness. I remain, always, your—" Etcetera, etcetera. *[to the MONK]* Father, you must hear what this letter says. *[Everyone gathers around her and she reads out loud.]* "Lady, the Cardinal has spoken, and his wish is law, no matter how much you may disagree with it. I have sent you this letter by way of a discreet and intelligent holy man. It is the will of the Cardinal that, in your own house, this very night *[She turns the page.]* this monk shall perform the holy rite of matrimony. Unknown to all the world, Christian shall become your husband. I know that he is not your first choice, and that you rather dislike him, but you must obey the Cardinal in this matter. Rest assured that you will be rewarded in heaven for your sacrifice in this matter. I remain your humble and faithful—" Etcetera.

FRIAR:

[with great delight] Oh, I knew it could only be holy business, coming from such a noble lord!

ROXANE:

[to CHRISTIAN, in a low voice] I'm very good at reading letters, aren't I?

CHRISTIAN:

Hmm!

ROXANE:

[aloud, with despair] But this is horrible!

FRIAR:

[who has turned his lantern on CYRANO] Are you the one she is to marry?

CHRISTIAN:

No, I am!

FRIAR:

[turning the light on CHRISTIAN, and startled by his handsome face] But...

ROXANE:

[quickly] Oh, I must have overlooked the postscript. It says, "Give twenty pistoles to the monastery."

FRIAR:

Oh! Most worthy lord! *[to ROXANE]* Do you resign yourself to this marriage?

ROXANE:

[with the look of a MARTYR] I resign myself! *[While RAGUENEAU opens the door, and CHRISTIAN invites the FRIAR to enter, she whispers to CYRANO.]* Oh, keep de Guiche occupied! He will be here soon! Don't let him enter until—

CYRANO:

I understand! *[to the FRIAR]* How much time will you need to perform the marriage ceremony?

FRIAR:

About a quarter of an hour.

CYRANO:

[pushing them all toward the house] Go! I'll stay out here.

ROXANE:

[to CHRISTIAN] Come!

[They enter.]

CYRANO:

How can I stall de Guiche for so long? *[He jumps onto the bench and climbs up to the balcony.]* Up I go! I've got a plan! *[The lutes begin to play a sad tune.]* What's that? *[The tune grows more intense.]* It must be a man approaching this time! *[He stands on the balcony, pulls his hat over his eyes, takes off his sword, wraps himself in his cloak, and then leans over.]* It's not too high. *[He strides across the balcony, and pulls toward him a long branch of one of the trees that are by the garden wall. He then hangs onto the branch with both hands, ready to let himself fall.]* I shall disturb this peaceful atmosphere!

Scene XI

CYRANO, DE GUICHE

DE GUICHE:

[entering, with mask on, feeling his way in the dark] What can that cursed friar be doing?

CYRANO:

Damn! What if he recognizes my voice! *[Letting go with one hand, he pretends to turn an invisible key.]* There! I've unlocked my native Bergerac accent!

DE GUICHE:

[looking at the house] I cannot see well at all through this mask! *[He is about to enter, when CYRANO leaps from the balcony, holding onto the branch, which bends, dropping him between the door and DE GUICHE. He then pretends to fall heavily, as if from a great height, and lies flat on the ground, motionless, as if stunned. DE GUICHE jumps back, startled.]* What's this? *[When he looks up, the branch has sprung back into its place. He sees only the sky, and is lost in amazement.]* Where did this man fall from?

CYRANO:

[sitting up and speaking with a thick Gascon accent] From the moon!

DE GUICHE:

From the moon?

CYRANO:

[in a dreamy voice] What time is it?

DE GUICHE:

He's lost his mind, for sure!

CYRANO:

What time is it? What country is this? What month? What day?

DE GUICHE:

But—

CYRANO:

I'm still dazed and confused from the fall!

DE GUICHE:

Sir!

CYRANO:

I just fell like a bomb, straight from the moon!

DE GUICHE:

[impatiently] Oh, come on!

CYRANO:

[rising, in a fierce voice] I fell from the moon, I tell you!

DE GUICHE:

[stepping back] Yes, fine, so be it. *[aside]* He's raving mad!

CYRANO:

[walking up to him] I say from the moon! And I don't mean it metaphorically!

DE GUICHE:

But—

CYRANO:

Was it a hundred years ago or just a minute ago? I cannot guess how much time has passed since I was on that yellow sphere up there!

DE GUICHE:

[shrugging his shoulders] Fine, then. Just let me pass.

CYRANO:

[stepping in his way] Where am I? Tell me the truth! Don't spare me! Where have I just fallen like a shooting star?

DE GUICHE:

Oh, good Lord!

CYRANO:

The fall was lightning quick! I had no time to choose where I might land! Oh, tell me where the weight of my posterior has landed me! Am I on earth or another moon?

DE GUICHE:

I tell you, Sir—

CYRANO:

[with a screech of terror, which makes DE GUICHE jump back] No! Can it be? I've landed on a planet where men have black faces!

DE GUICHE:

[putting a hand to his face] What?

CYRANO:

[pretending to be greatly alarmed] Am I in Africa? Are you a native?

DE GUICHE:

[who has remembered his mask] Oh, my mask—

CYRANO:

[pretending to be somewhat reassured] Ah, then I must be in Venice! Or Rome?

DE GUICHE:

[trying to pass] A lady waits for me.

CYRANO:

Ah! Then I must be in Paris!

DE GUICHE:

[smiling in spite of himself] This fool is quite comical!

CYRANO:

You're smiling?

DE GUICHE:

Yes, I'm smiling, but I would still like to get by!

CYRANO:

[beaming with joy] I've landed back in Paris! *[acting completely at ease now; laughing, dusting himself off, bowing]* Oh, please pardon me! I'm all soaked with cloud-water! My eyes are still full of stardust and I have planet fur on my shoes! *[picking something off his sleeve]* And a comet's hair stuck on my jacket! *[He puffs as if to blow it away.]*

DE GUICHE:

[completely exasperated] Sir!

CYRANO:

[Just as DE GUICHE is about to pass, he holds out his leg as if to show him something and stops him.] Look! See the tooth mark in my leg from where the Great Bear bit me! And when I veered to avoid Neptune's trident, I fell right into the Scales! My weight is still registered on those scales, up there in heaven! *[hurriedly preventing de Guiche from passing, and detaining him by the button of his jacket]* I swear to you that if you squeezed my nose, it would spout milk!

DE GUICHE:

Milk?

CYRANO:

From the Milky Way!

DE GUICHE:

Oh, go to hell!

CYRANO:

[crossing his arms] Sir, I just fell from heaven! Would you believe me if I told you that Sirius wears a nightcap? It's true! *[confidentially]* The other Bear is still too small to bite! *[laughing]* I went straight through the Lyre and snapped a cord! *[proudly]* Some day I shall write the whole thing in a book! The small gold stars that have stuck to my cloak will serve as asterisks on the printed page!

DE GUICHE:

Enough of this! Let me—

CYRANO:

Oh, you're a sly one!

DE GUICHE:

Sir!

CYRANO:

You're trying to worm it all out of me! You want me to tell you what the moon is made of, and whether or not anyone lives there! I know what you're up to!

DE GUICHE:

[angrily] No, no! I just want—

CYRANO:

To know how I got up there? It was by a method all my own!

DE GUICHE:

[growing tired] He's mad!

CYRANO:

[contemptuously] I didn't copy Regiomontanus' eagle! Nor did I make a version of Archytas' pigeon! Neither of those! I tell you I got there by my own invention!

DE GUICHE:

Indeed, he's a fool, but an educated fool!

CYRANO:

No, I'm not an imitator of other men! *[DE GUICHE has succeeded in getting by, and goes toward ROXANE'S door. Cyrano follows him, ready to stop him by force.]* Six new methods, all invented by my own brain!

DE GUICHE:

[turning around] Six?

CYRANO:

[quickly and fluently] First, I lay my naked body on the ground and dab myself all over with drops of water. Then I let the sun's fierce rays suck me up just as they suck up the morning dew!

DE GUICHE:

[surprised, making one step toward CYRANO] Ah! That makes one!

CYRANO:

[stepping back, and enticing him further away] Second, I surround a chest with twenty mirrors. The mirrors focus the sun's rays directly upon the chest, heating up the air inside it. The air becomes rarefied and the chest rises up like a balloon, with myself inside it!

DE GUICHE:

[making another step] That makes two!

CYRANO:

[still stepping backward] Or, with my mechanical skills, I build a giant grasshopper out of steel. I use gunpowder to propel it, and with each leap, it launches me upward to the skies!

DE GUICHE:

[unconsciously following him and counting on his fingers] Three!

CYRANO:

Or, since smoke rises, I fill a giant globe with smoke. The globe rises, and carries me away!

DE GUICHE:

[still following Cyrano, and becoming more and more astonished] Well, that makes four!

CYRANO:

Or, since the goddess of the moon likes to hunt cattle, I coat my body with cattle marrow and get drawn up by her bow and arrow!

DE GUICHE:

[amazed] Five!

CYRANO:

[who, while speaking, has drawn DE GUICHE to the other side of the square near a bench] Or, I sit upon an iron platform and throw a magnet into the air. It's a very smart method! The magnet will pull up the iron platform with me on it. Then, I simply throw the magnet up again and it pulls the platform up further! And on and on, until I reach the moon!

DE GUICHE:

Those are six excellent methods! Which one of them did you choose?

CYRANO:

Why, none of them! I chose a seventh!

DE GUICHE:

Astonishing! What was it?

CYRANO:

Try to guess.

DE GUICHE:

This madman has becoming quite interesting!

CYRANO:

[making a noise like that of ocean waves, and gesturing strangely] Hoo! Hoo!

DE GUICHE:

What does that mean?

CYRANO:

Can't you guess?

DE GUICHE:

Certainly not!

CYRANO:

The tide! When the moon was full, I soaked myself in the sea and laid myself down by the shore. In the same way that it pulls the ocean up and causes the tides, the moon pulled *me* up! I was pulled straight up by my head, since that part of me held the most moisture, due to my wet and matted hair! I was gently rising, just like an angel in flight, when all of a sudden I felt a shock! And then—

DE GUICHE:

[overcome by curiosity, sitting down on the bench] And then what?

CYRANO:

Oh! And then—*[suddenly returning to his natural voice]* The quarter hour is up. I'll detain you no more. The marriage vows have been exchanged.

DE GUICHE:

[springing up] What? Am I mad? That voice! *[The door of the house opens. LACKEYS appear carrying lighted candelabra. The stage lighting becomes brighter. CYRANO gracefully takes off his hat, which he had kept pulled down in order to hide his face.]* That nose! Cyrano?

CYRANO:

[bowing] At your service. They've just been married.

DE GUICHE:

Who? *[He turns around. Behind the lackeys appear ROXANE and CHRISTIAN, holding hands. The FRIAR follows them, smiling. RAGUENEAU also holds a candlestick. The DUENNA follows at the rear, bewildered and wearing a dressing gown.]* Good Lord!

Scene XII

The same, with ROXANE, CHRISTIAN, the FRIAR, RAGUENEAU, the LACKEYS, the DUENNA.

DE GUICHE:

[to ROXANE] You? *[recognizing CHRISTIAN, in amazement]* And he? *[bowing, with admiration, to ROXANE]* How clever and cunning your little trick! *[to CYRANO]* My compliments to you as well, master inventor! Your story would stop even the angels on their way into heaven! Be sure to write all the details down. It certainly would make a great book!

CYRANO:

[bowing] I will take your advice.

FRIAR:

[showing with satisfaction the two lovers to DE GUICHE] A handsome couple, brought together by you, Sir!

DE GUICHE:

[with an icy look] Yes. *[to ROXANE]* Say goodbye to your husband, Madame.

ROXANE:

Why?

DE GUICHE:

[to CHRISTIAN] The regiment is departing. Join it!

ROXANE:

The regiment is going off to battle?

DE GUICHE:

Without doubt.

ROXANE:

But the cadets aren't going, are they?

DE GUICHE:

Oh, yes, they're going! *[drawing out the paper he had put in his pocket]* Here's the order. *[to CHRISTIAN]* Baron, take it and deliver it at once!

ROXANE:

[throwing herself into CHRISTIAN'S arms] Christian!

DE GUICHE:

[sneeringly to CYRANO] The wedding night is a long way off, I think!

CYRANO:

[aside] He thinks that bothers me!

CHRISTIAN:

[to ROXANE] Oh, let me kiss you once more!

CYRANO:

Come, come, that's enough!

CHRISTIAN:

[still kissing ROXANE] You don't know how hard it is to leave her!

CYRANO:

[trying to draw him away] I do know.

[There is the sound of drums beating a march in the distance.]

DE GUICHE:

The regiment starts!

ROXANE:

[to CYRANO, holding back CHRISTIAN, whom CYRANO is drawing away] I trust you to protect him!
Promise me that nothing shall put his life in danger!

CYRANO:

I will do my best, but— I cannot promise anything.

ROXANE:

But swear to me that you'll make sure he is careful!

CYRANO:

Again, I'll do my best, but—

ROXANE:

Promise me he won't suffer from the cold during the siege!

CYRANO:

I'll do everything I can—

ROXANE:

Promise me that he'll be faithful!

CYRANO:

I'm sure he will be, but—

ROXANE:

Promise to make him write to me often!

CYRANO:

[pausing] That is something I can promise!

Curtain.

Act IV

The Cadets of Gascony

A post occupied by the company of CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX at the siege of Arras. In the background is an embankment across the whole stage. Beyond is a view of plains extending to the horizon. The countryside is covered with entrenchments. The walls of Arras and the outlines of its roofs can be seen in the distance. Tents, weapons, armor, and drums are strewn about. Day is breaking with a faint glimmer of yellow sunrise in the east. Sentinels keep watch at various points. Campfires are burning. The cadets of Gascony, wrapped in their cloaks, are sleeping. CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX and LE BRET are keeping watch. They are very pale and thin. CHRISTIAN sleeps among the others in his cloak in the foreground, his face illuminated by the fire. There is silence.

Scene I

CHRISTIAN, CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, LE BRET, the CADETS, then CYRANO.

LE BRET:

It's terrible!

CARBON:

Not a morsel of food left.

LE BRET:

Mordious!

CARBON:

[making a sign that he should speak lower] Curse under your breath. You will awaken them. *[to the CADETS]* Hush! Go back to sleep. *[to LE BRET]* He who sleeps can dine by dreaming of food.

LE BRET:

That's not much comfort to those who cannot sleep! What starvation!

[Firing is heard in the distance.]

CARBON:

Oh, damn their firing! It will wake my boys. *[to the CADETS, who lift up their heads]* Go back to sleep!

[Firing is heard again, nearer this time.]

A CADET:

[moving] Damn! Again!

CARBON:

'Tis nothing! It's just Cyrano coming back!

[Those who have lifted up their heads prepare to sleep again.]

A SENTINEL:

[from offstage] Halt! Who goes there?

VOICE OF CYRANO:

Bergerac.

SENTINEL:

[on the embankment] Stop! Who goes there?

CYRANO:

[appearing at the top of the embankment] It's Bergerac, you idiot!

[He comes down. LE BRET advances anxiously to meet him.]

LE BRET:

Heavens!

CYRANO:

[making signs that he should not awaken the others] Hush!

LE BRET:

Are you wounded?

CYRANO:

No. You should know by now they make a habit of missing me every morning.

LE BRET:

This is too much! To risk your life every morning in order to deliver letters!

CYRANO:

[stopping before CHRISTIAN] I promised that he would write often. *[He looks at CHRISTIAN.]* He sleeps. How pale he is! But still handsome, despite his sufferings. If his poor lady-love knew that he is dying of hunger...

LE BRET:

Get yourself to bed, quickly.

CYRANO:

Don't scold me, Le Bret! The risk I take is smaller than you think. I've found an easy spot to pass through the Spanish lines, where the men go to sleep drunk every night.

LE BRET:

You should try to bring us back some food next time.

CYRANO:

A man must carry no weight if he is to get by there! But there will be a surprise for us tonight. If I'm not mistaken, the French will either eat or die tonight.

LE BRET:

Oh! What's going on? Tell me!

CYRANO:

No, not yet. I'm not certain of it yet. You'll see.

CARBON:

We're the besiegers, and yet we're starving! How disgraceful!

LE BRET:

Alas, this siege is full of complications! While we're besieging, we ourselves are caught in a trap and are besieged by the Cardinal Infante of Spain.

CYRANO:

It would come full circle if he were besieged as well!

LE BRET:

This isn't funny. I'm serious.

CYRANO:

Oh! Of course!

LE BRET:

To think that you should risk your precious life everyday, for the sake of a letter. [*seeing him turning to enter the tent*] Where are you going?

CYRANO:

To write another one!

[He enters the tent and disappears.]

Scene II

The same, with all but CYRANO. The day is breaking in a rosy light. The town of Arras is golden on the horizon. The report of cannon fire is heard in the distance, followed immediately by the beating of drums far away to the left. Other drums are heard much nearer. There are sounds of stirring in the camp and voices of officers in the distance.

CARBON:

[sighing] The reveille! *[The CADETS move and stretch themselves.]* Nourishing sleep is at an end! I know what their first cry will be!

A CADET:

[sitting up] I'm so hungry!

ANOTHER:

Oh, I'm dying of hunger!

TOGETHER:

Oh!

CARBON:

Up with you!

THIRD CADET:

I cannot move a limb!

FOURTH CADET:

Nor can I!

FIRST:

[looking at himself in a piece of armor] My tongue is yellow. The air we've been living on is not quite in season—it's hard on the digestion.

ANOTHER:

I'd give my coronet for a bit of cheese!

ANOTHER:

If I don't get something for the juices in my stomach to work on, I'll give up and retire to my tent like old Achilles!

ANOTHER:

Oh, something, anything! Even just a crust!

CARBON:

[going to the tent and calling softly] Cyrano!

ALL THE CADETS:

We're dying!

CARBON:

[continuing to speak under his breath at the opening of the tent] Help me, Cyrano. You always know what to say to make them feel better. Come, cheer them up.

SECOND CADET:

[rushing toward another who is munching on something] What are you eating there?

FIRST CADET:

Cannon wadding fried in axle-grease! It's poor game-hunting around here!

A CADET:

[entering] I've been hunting game!

ANOTHER:

[following him] And I've been after fish!

ALL:

[rushing to the two newcomers] Well!—What have you brought?—A pheasant?—A carp?—Come, show us quick!

FISHER:

A minnow.

HUNTER:

One tiny sparrow.

ALL TOGETHER:

[exasperated] It's more than we can bear! We'll mutiny!

CARBON:

Cyrano! Come to my aid!

[The daylight has now come.]

Scene III

The same, with CYRANO.

CYRANO:

[appearing from the tent, very calm, with a pen stuck behind his ear and a book in his hand] What's wrong? *[There is silence. He speaks to the FIRST CADET.]* Why do you drag yourself around so sadly?

CADET:

I have something in my feet which weighs them down.

CYRANO:

And what might that be?

CADET:

My stomach!

CYRANO:

I have the same problem!

CADET:

But aren't you bothered by it?

CYRANO:

No, being so thin only makes us look taller!

A THIRD:

My stomach's hollow.

CYRANO:

Then it shall make a fine drum to bang during the assault!

ANOTHER:

I have a ringing in my ears.

CYRANO:

No, no! That can't be! A hungry stomach has no ears!

ANOTHER:

Oh, for a morsel of anything, with just a dab of oil!

CYRANO:

[pulling off the CADET's helmet and holding it out to him] Here's your salad!

ANOTHER:

What, in God's name, can we eat?

CYRANO:

[throwing him the book which he is carrying] *The Iliad!* A little food for thought!

ANOTHER:

The prime minister in Paris gets *his* four meals a day!

CYRANO:

It would be courteous of him to send you a few partridges!

SAME CADET:

Yes, it would! And wine too!

CYRANO:

A little Burgundy, please, Cardinal!

ANOTHER:

I'm as ravenous as a giant!

CYRANO:

Then feast on some of your giant's fat!

FIRST CADET:

[shrugging] You're always so quick with your pointed words!

CYRANO:

Yes, pointed words! And I hope that when I die, I shall die making a pointed word for a good cause. I'll die a soldier's death by a soldier's sword, wielded by some brave adversary. I'll die on blood-stained ground, not in a sickbed, with a pointed word on my lips, and a *real* point within my heart.

ALL THE CADETS:

I'm hungry!

CYRANO:

All you think about is food! Bertrandou the fifer, you were a shepherd once. Draw your fife from its leather case and play for these greedy, gluttonous soldiers. Play some sweet country songs to remind us of our Gascon homes. Play those songs that softly echo the dear voices of family, in which each note calls to us like a little sister. Play those tunes that rise slowly, like the smoke-wreaths rise from the hearthstones of our native villages. Their music strikes the air like Gascon patois!
[BERTRANDOU seats himself, and gets his flute ready.] Your flute is sadly at war now, but it was not always a warrior. As your fingers dance upon its stem in a bird-like minuet, remember that flutes were not always made of wood, but were made first out of simple reeds. Use your flute to recall those pastoral days, the soul-time of your youth, in country pastures! *[The old man begins to play a Gascon tune.]* Listen to the music, Gascons! It's no longer the piercing fife of battle, but beneath his fingers, the flute of the woods! No more the call to combat, it's now the love-song of the wandering

goat-herds! Listen! It's the valley, the wetlands, the forest, the sunburnt shepherd boy with scarlet beret, the dusk of evening on the Dordogne River! 'Tis Gascony! Listen, Gascons, to the music!

[The CADETS sit with bowed heads. Their eyes have a far-off look as if they are dreaming. Once in a while, they furtively wipe away their tears with their cuffs and the corner of their cloaks.]

CARBON:

[to CYRANO in a whisper] But you're making them weep!

CYRANO:

Yes, but for homesickness. It's a nobler pain than hunger. It's a pain of the soul, not the body. I'm pleased to see their pain changed. Heart-ache is better than stomach-ache.

CARBON:

But aren't you weakening their courage by playing with their hearts?

CYRANO:

[making a sign to a drummer to approach] Not at all! The hero that sleeps inside of every Gascon is easily awakened. All it takes is—

[He makes a signal and the drum begins to beat.]

ALL THE CADETS:

[standing up and rushing to take up their weapons] What? What is it?

CYRANO:

[smiling] See! One roll of the drum is enough! Goodbye dreams, regrets, native land, love! All that the pipe brought forth, the drum has chased away!

A CADET:

[looking toward the back of the stage] Ugh! Here comes Monsieur de Guiche.

[All the CADETS mutter irritably.]

CYRANO:

[smiling] That's a flattering welcome!

A CADET:

We are sick to death of him!

ANOTHER:

With his lace collar over his armor, acting like he's a fine gentleman!

ANOTHER:

A soldier should not wear linen over steel!

THE FIRST:

Unless he's using it to bandage a boil on his neck!

THE SECOND:

He's not a true soldier! He's a scheming courtier!

ANOTHER:

He's his uncle's nephew!

CARBON:

But he's still a Gascon.

THE FIRST:

Oh, but a false Gascon! I don't trust him at all. True Gascons are madmen, but he is too sane. There's nothing more dangerous than a rational Gascon!

LE BRET:

He's so pale!

ANOTHER:

Oh, he's hungry, just as we are. But since he wears gilded studs on his armor, *his* stomach-ache glitters in the sunlight!

CYRANO:

[hurriedly] Let's not look like we're suffering! Take out your cards and pipes and dice! *[They all begin lighting pipes and spreading out games on the drums, the stools, the ground, and on their cloaks.]* And I shall read Descartes.

[He walks up and down, reading a little book which he has drawn from his pocket. DE GUICHE enters. Everyone appears absorbed and happy. DE GUICHE is very pale. He goes up to CARBON.]

Scene IV

The same, with DE GUICHE.

DE GUICHE:

[to CARBON] Good day! *[They examine each other. De Guiche speaks in an aside, with satisfaction.]* He's quite green!

CARBON:

[looking at DE GUICHE with the same sort of satisfaction and also speaking in an aside] His cheeks are sunken and his eyes are as big as saucers!

DE GUICHE:

[looking at the CADETS] So! Here are the rebels! I've been hearing from all sides that you country louts scoff at me—your colonel! It seems that you mountain-bred aristocrats harbor a disdain for me, calling me a plotter and a scheming courtier! I hear that it doesn't please your mightiness to see a lace collar on my armor! You're all simply enraged by the fact that a man can be still be a Gascon without looking like a ragged beggar! *[There is silence. Everyone continues to smoke and to play.]* Shall I command your captain to punish you? No.

CARBON:

Let me remind you that these are my men, and I would refuse to punish them.

DE GUICHE:

Ah!

CARBON:

These men are of *my* company. I take orders only from headquarters.

DE GUICHE:

Is that so? Fine, then. *[addressing himself to the cadets]* I am above your taunts, because it's well known how I've shown myself in this war. Just yesterday, at Bapaume, I beat back the Count of Bucquoi. I assembled my men and we charged on him three separate times!

CYRANO:

[without lifting his eyes from his book] Yes, and don't forget the part about your white scarf.

DE GUICHE:

[surprised and gratified] Oh, you've heard that detail? It's true! I'll tell you how it happened. While turning about to recall the troops for the third charge, I was swept up with a band of fugitives. They bore me with them, and we came dangerously close to the enemy. I was in peril of capture or sudden death! I quickly had the idea to loosen the scarf which told my military rank and I let it fall. This way, I was unnoticed and was able to leave the swarm. I went back, rallied my men, and we charged and scattered them! What do you say to that, Sir?

[The CADETS pretend not to be listening, but the cards and the dice-boxes remain suspended in their hands, the smoke of their pipes in their cheeks. They wait.]

CYRANO:

I say that Henry the Fourth would never have stripped himself of his scarf, no matter the danger.

[There is silent delight among the cadets. The cards fall, the dice rattle, the smoke is puffed.]

DE GUICHE:

But it was a good trick! And it worked!

[The CADETS again suspend their movements and wait.]

CYRANO:

Oh, that may be true! But I don't believe in lightly abdicating the honor of being the enemy's target. *[Cards and dice fall again, and the cadets smoke with delight.]* We have very different ideas of what courage is, Sir. If I had been there when your scarf fell, I would have picked it up and put it on myself.

DE GUICHE:

Oh, that's just Gascon bragging!

CYRANO:

Bragging? Give the scarf to me. I promise that tonight I will lead the assault while wearing it across my chest.

DE GUICHE:

Another Gascon boast! You know very well that my scarf now lies on the river bank in enemy territory. The place is riddled with gunfire! No one can bring it back!

CYRANO:

[drawing the scarf from his pocket, and holding it out to him] Here it is.

[There is silence. The cadets stifle their laughter in their cards and dice-boxes. DE GUICHE turns and looks at them. They instantly become serious and return to their games. One of them whistles indifferently the tune that was just played by the fifer.]

DE GUICHE:

[taking the scarf] I thank you. And now I shall make a signal that I was unable to make until now.

[He goes to the embankment and waves the scarf three times.]

ALL:

What's he doing?

SENTINEL:

[from the top of the embankment] I see a man running away down there!

DE GUICHE:

[descending] He's a false Spanish spy. He's extremely useful to me. I give him false news to carry to the enemy, and such news influences their decisions!

CYRANO:

He's a traitor and a scoundrel!

DE GUICHE:

[carelessly knotting his scarf] But he's extremely helpful to us. Now, what were we talking about? Ah! I have news for you. Last night, the Marshal secretly left for Dourlens in order to bring back food and drink for us. But to ensure that he would be able to return to camp more easily, he took most of the troops with him. If we get attacked now, we'll be in serious trouble. Half of the army is absent from the camp!

CARBON:

Yes, if the Spaniards knew this, it would be terrible for us. But they know nothing?

DE GUICHE:

Oh, they know. And they will attack us.

CARBON:

Ah!

DE GUICHE:

My false spy came to warn me of their attack. He told me, "I can have them attack at whichever point you'd like them to, by telling them that it's the point which is least defended. Where do you want it to happen?" I answered, "Leave the camp and watch for my signal. I will sign to you from the point I have chosen."

CARBON:

[to the CADETS] Make ready!

[All the CADETS rise. There are sounds of swords being picked up and belts being buckled.]

DE GUICHE:

It will happen in one hour.

FIRST CADET:

Oh, in that case...

[They all sit down again and take up their games.]

DE GUICHE:

[to CARBON] The Marshal will be on his way back, so we must keep the enemy occupied here for as long as we can.

CARBON:

How do you propose we do that?

DE GUICHE:

By letting them continue their attack until every last one of your cadets are killed.

CYRANO:

Ah! So this is your revenge!

DE GUICHE:

I am not saying that if I loved you all, I would have chosen differently. As boastful and courageous as you are, you are my best choice. In this way, I serve both my King and my grudge at the same time.

CYRANO:

Permit me to express my gratitude.

DE GUICHE:

I know you love to fight against the odds. I hope you're not complaining now.

[He goes up with CARBON.]

CYRANO:

[to the CADETS] We shall add to the Gascon coat of arms a new mark! Among its six bars of blue and gold, we'll add one more—a blood-red bar that was missing before!

[DE GUICHE speaks in a low voice with CARBON at the back. Orders are given. Preparations go forward. CYRANO goes up to CHRISTIAN, who stands with crossed arms.]

CYRANO:

[putting his hand on CHRISTIAN'S shoulder] Christian?

CHRISTIAN:

[shaking his head] Roxane!

CYRANO:

Yes, I know.

CHRISTIAN:

If I could only, at the very least, say goodbye to her in a letter!

CYRANO:

I had a suspicion that today might be the day, so I already wrote— *[He draws a letter out of his jacket.]*

CHRISTIAN:
Show it to me!

CYRANO:
Shall I—

CHRISTIAN:
[taking the letter] Yes! *[He opens it and reads.]* Wait a minute!

CYRANO:
What?

CHRISTIAN:
This little spot!

CYRANO:
[taking the letter, with an innocent look] A spot?

CHRISTIAN:
It's a tear!

CYRANO:
Alas, poets are so good at inventing emotion that they sometimes get caught up in it themselves! This letter was so sad and moving that I wept myself while writing it!

CHRISTIAN:
You wept? But why?

CYRANO:
Oh, death itself is nothing. But to never see her again! That is something worse than death! To think that I shall never—*[CHRISTIAN looks at him.]* I mean, to think that we shall—*[quickly]* I mean, that you—

CHRISTIAN:
[snatching the letter from him] Give me that letter!

[A distant rumbling is heard far off in the camp.]

VOICE OF SENTINEL:
Who goes there?

[Shots and voices and carriage bell are heard.]

CARBON:
What is it?

SENTINEL:
[on the embankment] 'Tis a carriage!

[Everyone rushes to see.]

CRIES:

A carriage? In the camp? It's coming! The enemy! Fire on it! No! The coachman! What did he say?
"On the King's service!"

[Everyone is on the embankment, staring. The bells come nearer.]

DE GUICHE:

The King's service? How?

[Everyone comes down and falls into line.]

CARBON:

Hats off, everyone!

DE GUICHE:

The King's service! Get in line, all of you! Don't you know how to welcome a king?

[The carriage enters at full speed covered with dust and mud. The curtains are drawn closed. Two LACKEYS follow behind. The carriage stops suddenly.]

CARBON:

Beat the salute!

[A roll of drums sounds. The CADETS take off their hats.]

ROXANE:

[jumping down from the carriage] Good day!

[All are bowing to the ground, but at the sound of a woman's voice every head is instantly raised.]

Scene V

The same, with ROXANE.

DE GUICHE:

On the King's service! You?

ROXANE:

Yes, I come in the service of the king called love! What other king is there?

CYRANO:

Great God!

CHRISTIAN:

[rushing forward] Why have you come?

ROXANE:

This siege is going on too long!

CHRISTIAN:

But—

ROXANE:

I will tell you all!

CYRANO:

[who, at the sound of her voice, has stood still, rooted to the ground, afraid to raise his eyes] My God! I don't dare to look at her!

DE GUICHE:

You cannot stay here!

ROXANE:

[merrily] Yes, I can! Who will give me a drum to sit on? *[She seats herself on the drum that is rolled forward.]* Thank you! *[She laughs.]* My carriage was fired at! *[proudly]* It looks just like a pumpkin, doesn't it? And my footmen like rats turned into handsome men, just like in the fairy tale! *[blowing a kiss to CHRISTIAN]* Good morning! *[examining them all]* You don't look very cheerful! Don't you know it's a long way from Paris to Arras? *[seeing CYRANO]* Cousin! I'm delighted to see you!

CYRANO:

[coming up to her] But how, in Heaven's name—?

ROXANE:

How did I find my way here? It was simple enough. I just had to keep going until I saw the countryside laid to waste. Ah, what horrors were there! If I had not seen it, I would never have believed it! Well, gentlemen, if this is the way you serve your king, I would certainly rather serve mine!

CYRANO:

But this is sheer madness! Where in the devil's name did you get through?

ROXANE:

Where? Through the Spanish lines, of course!

FIRST CADET:

Only a woman could get away with something like that!

DE GUICHE:

But how did you pass through their lines?

LE BRET:

Yes, that must have been extremely difficult!

ROXANE:

Not really. I simply drove calmly forward in my carriage, and whenever some proud Spaniard stopped me, I gave him my sweetest smile. And since Spaniards are the most gallant gentlemen in the world—after Frenchmen, of course—they allowed me to pass on!

CARBON:

True, that smile of yours makes a pretty passport! But were you not asked to give an account of where you were going, Madame?

ROXANE:

Yes, frequently. And in answer, I would say, "I'm going to see my lover." At that word, the fiercest Spaniard of them all would gravely shut the carriage door, and, with a gesture that a king might envy, would signal to his men to lower the guns leveled at me. Then, with sad and graceful dignity, he would doff his hat and bow low to me, saying, "Pass on, Señorita!"

CHRISTIAN:

But, Roxane—

ROXANE:

Forgive me for saying "my lover." But think of it! If I had said "my husband" not one of them would have let me pass!

CHRISTIAN:

But...

ROXANE:

What's the matter?

DE GUICHE:

You must leave here!

ROXANE:

Must I?

CYRANO:

Yes, and right now!

LE BRET:

At once!

CHRISTIAN:

Indeed, you must.

ROXANE:

But why must I?

CHRISTIAN:

[embarrassed] Because—

CYRANO:

[also embarrassed] In three quarters of an hour—

DE GUICHE:

[with the same look] Or less—

CARBON:

[the same] It would be best if—

LE BRET:

[the same] You might want to—

ROXANE:

You're going to fight, aren't you? I'm staying here!

ALL:

No, no!

ROXANE:

He is my husband! *[She throws herself into CHRISTIAN'S arms.]* They shall kill us both together!

CHRISTIAN:

What a fiery look in your eyes!

ROXANE:

You know what it signifies!

DE GUICHE:

[in despair] This is a post of mortal danger!

ROXANE:

[turning around] Mortal danger?

CYRANO:

He should know. He stationed us here.

ROXANE:

[to DE GUICHE] So! You wanted to make a widow out of me!

DE GUICHE:

No! I swear to you—

ROXANE:

I will not go! I'm reckless now, and I shall not move from here! Besides, it's quite amusing!

CYRANO:

Oh! So the lady intellectual is now a heroine as well!

ROXANE:

I am your cousin, Monsieur de Bergerac.

A CADET:

We'll defend you well!

ROXANE:

[more and more excited] I do not doubt that at all, my friends!

ANOTHER:

[ecstatically] Ah! The whole camp smells like irises!

ROXANE:

And what luck! I'm wearing a hat that will look so nice on the battlefield! *[looking at DE GUICHE]* Shouldn't you be going? Surely they'll begin the attack any moment!

DE GUICHE:

I won't stand for this! I'm going to inspect the cannons. When I return, I hope to see that you've changed your mind!

ROXANE:

Never!

[DE GUICHE goes out.]

Scene VI

The same, with all except DE GUICHE.

CHRISTIAN:

[begging] Roxane!

ROXANE:

No!

FIRST CADET:

[to the others] She stays!

ALL:

[hurrying, hustling each other, tidying themselves for her] A comb! Some soap! My uniform is torn! A needle! A ribbon! Lend me your mirror! Your mustache curler! A razor!

ROXANE:

[to CYRANO, who still pleads with her] No! Nothing shall make me move from this spot!

CARBON:

[who, like the others, has been buckling, dusting, brushing his hat, settling his plume, and drawing on his cuffs, advances to ROXANE, and speaks ceremoniously.] Since that is the case, let me present to you some of these gentlemen who are about to have the honor of dying before your eyes. *[ROXANE bows, and stands leaning on CHRISTIAN'S arm, while CARBON introduces the cadets to her.]* Baron de Peyrescous de Colignac!

THE CADET:

[bowing] Madame.

CARBON:

[continuing] Baron de Casterac de Cahuzac... Vidame de Malgouyre Estressac Lesbas d'Escarabiot... Chevalier d'Antignac-Juzet... Baron Hillot de Blagnac-Salechan de Castel Crabioules...

ROXANE:

But how many names do you each have?

BARON HILLOT:

Oh, too many to count!

CARBON:

[to ROXANE] Please, open the hand which holds your handkerchief.

ROXANE:

[opens her hand, the handkerchief falls] Why?

[The whole company starts forward to pick it up.]

CARBON:

[quickly raising it] My company had no flag! But now they will have the most beautiful flag in all the camp!

ROXANE:

[smiling] 'Tis a little small.

CARBON:

[tying the handkerchief on the staff of his lance] But it's made of lace!

A CADET:

[to the rest] I could die happy, having seen such a sweet face, if only I had something in my stomach!

CARBON:

[indignantly] Shame on you! How can you speak of eating when such a lovely woman—

ROXANE:

I'm starving too! It must be the brisk air. I'd like some pâté, some cold chicken and some good wine. Would you please bring it to me?

[Everyone is confused and dismayed.]

A CADET:

You want all of that?

ANOTHER:

But where on the earth shall we find it?

ROXANE:

[quietly] In my carriage.

ALL:

What!

ROXANE:

All we must do is unpack it and serve it! Look a little closer at my coachman, gentlemen, and you'll recognize a most valuable man! All the sauces can be served hot, if you like!

THE CADETS:

[rushing to the carriage] It's Ragueneau! *[loud cheers]* Oh! Bravo!

ROXANE:

[looking after them] Poor fellows!

CYRANO:

[kissing her hand] Kind fairy!

RAGUENEAU:

[standing on the seat of the carriage and proclaiming] Gentlemen!

[The CADETS cheer enthusiastically.]

RAGUENEAU:

The Spaniards, feasting their eyes on such a beautiful lady, failed to notice the beautiful feast that she was hiding!

[The CADETS applaud.]

CYRANO:

[in a whisper to CHRISTIAN] Listen, Christian!

RAGUENEAU:

They were so occupied with gallantry that they overlooked... *[He draws a plate from under the seat, and holds it up.]* the galantine!

[The CADETS applaud more. The dish passes from hand to hand.]

CYRANO:

[still whispering to CHRISTIAN] Please, let me have one word with you!

RAGUENEAU:

They were so hypnotized by Beauty that they failed to notice... *[He holds up a roasted pig on a platter.]* the Beast!

[Enthusiastic cries ensue. All the CADETS reach out to the platter.]

CYRANO:

[in a low whisper to CHRISTIAN] I must speak to you!

ROXANE:

[to the CADETS, who come down with their arms laden with food] Put it all on the ground!

[She lays it all out on the grass, aided by the two lackeys who followed behind the carriage.]

ROXANE:

[to CHRISTIAN, just as CYRANO is drawing him away] Come and make yourself useful!

[CHRISTIAN comes to help her. CYRANO'S uneasiness increases.]

RAGUENEAU:

Peacock with truffles!

FIRST CADET:

[radiant, coming down with a big slice of ham] Thank God! We don't have to die without having had a gullet-full—*[quickly correcting himself on seeing ROXANE]* Pardon me! A civilized banquet, I mean!

RAGUENEAU:

[throwing down the carriage cushions] The cushions are stuffed with quail!

[The CADETS tear open the cushions, laughing and shouting.]

THIRD CADET:

Thank the Lord!

RAGUENEAU:

[throwing bottles of red and white wine down to the CADETS] Flasks of rubies and flasks of topaz!

ROXANE:

[throwing a folded tablecloth at CYRANO'S head] Unfold that napkin! Come, make it quick now!

RAGUENEAU:

[waving a lantern] Each of the carriage-lamps is a little pantry of its own!

CYRANO:

[in a low voice to CHRISTIAN, as they arrange the cloth together] I must speak with you before you speak to her.

RAGUENEAU:

The handle of my whip is a sausage!

ROXANE:

[pouring out wine and helping with the food] Since we're about to die, let's eat all this food ourselves. All for the Gascons! And, listen! If de Guiche comes back, we shall not invite him to our feast! *[going from one to the other]* There, there! You have time enough! Don't eat too fast. Here, have some wine. Why are you weeping?

FIRST CADET:

It's all so good!

ROXANE:

[playing the part of the hostess, speaking quickly to all of them in turn] Hush! Red or white? Some bread for Monsieur de Carbon! A knife, please! Pass your plate! A little of the crust? Some more? Let me help you! Some champagne? A wing?

CYRANO:

[who follows her, his arms laden with dishes, helping her to wait on everybody] How I worship her!

ROXANE:

[going up to CHRISTIAN] What would you like?

CHRISTIAN:

Nothing.

ROXANE:

Oh, you must! At least take this biscuit, soaked in wine!

CHRISTIAN:

[trying to detain her] Oh! Tell me why you came here!

ROXANE:

Wait! My first duty is to these poor men. Hush! In a few minutes—

LE BRET:

[who had gone up to pass a loaf of bread on the end of a lance to the sentry on the embankment] De Guiche is coming!

CYRANO:

Quick! Hide the bottles, plates, pie-dishes and meats! Everything! Hurry! Look as if nothing has been going on! *[to RAGUENEAU]* Get up on your seat! Is everything covered up?

[In an instant everything has been pushed into the tents or hidden in jackets, cloaks and hats. DE GUICHE enters hurriedly and suddenly stops, sniffing the air. There is silence.]

Scene VII

DE GUICHE:

Something smells good here.

A CADET:

[singing casually] La, la, la...

DE GUICHE:

[looking at him] What's the matter with you? Your cheeks are flushed.

CADET:

Nothing's the matter! It's just my blood boiling at the thought of the coming battle!

ANOTHER:

Poom, poom-poom...

DE GUICHE:

[turning around] What's that?

CADET:

[slightly drunk] Oh, nothing! Just a little song!

DE GUICHE:

Well, aren't you in a merry mood!

CADET:

It's just that the approach of danger is intoxicating!

DE GUICHE:

[calling CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, to give him an order] Captain! I— *[He stops short on seeing him.]* By God! You too! How strangely happy you look!

CARBON:

[red in the face, hiding a bottle behind his back with an evasive movement] Oh! I...

DE GUICHE:

Listen. I have one cannon left, and I've carried it over there. *[He points.]* Your men can use it in case they need it.

A CADET:

[reeling slightly] What a thoughtful action!

ANOTHER:

[with a gracious smile] How sweet of you to think of us!

DE GUICHE:

Good Lord! Have they all gone crazy? *[curtly]* Since you're not used to cannons, beware of the recoil on this one.

FIRST CADET:

Pooh!

DE GUICHE:

[furious, going up to him] Look here, you—!

CADET:

Gascon cannons never recoil!

DE GUICHE:

[taking him by the arm and shaking him] You're drunk! But with what?

CADET:

[loftily] The smell of gunpowder!

DE GUICHE:

[shrugging his shoulders and pushing him away, then going quickly to ROXANE] Quickly, Madame, have you made your decision?

ROXANE:

Yes, I'm staying here.

DE GUICHE:

No, you must go!

ROXANE:

No! I'm staying.

DE GUICHE:

If this is the way it's going to be, someone give me a musket.

CARBON:

Why?

DE GUICHE:

Because I, too, am staying.

CYRANO:

At last! This is true bravery, Sir!

FIRST CADET:

Then you *are* a Gascon after all, despite your lace collar!

ROXANE:

What's all this about?

DE GUICHE:

I will never leave any woman in danger.

SECOND CADET:

[to the first] Listen! Don't you think we ought to give him something to eat?

[All the food and drink reappears as if by magic.]

DE GUICHE:

[eyes sparkling] Food!

THIRD CADET:

Yes, you'll see it appear from under every hat and coat!

DE GUICHE:

[controlling himself, proudly] Do you think I'll eat your leftovers?

CYRANO:

[saluting him] You're making progress.

DE GUICHE:

[proudly, with a light touch of Gascon accent] I will fight without breaking my fast!

FIRST CADET:

[with wild delight] Spoken like a true Gascon!

DE GUICHE:

[laughing] I *am* a Gascon!

CADET:

He's one of us!

[The CADETS shout and dance in delight.]

CARBON:

[who had disappeared behind the embankment, reappearing on the ridge] I've lined up my pikemen. They're prepared to fight until the end.

[He points to a row of pikes, the tops of which are seen over the ridge.]

DE GUICHE:

[bowing to ROXANE] Will you accept my hand, and accompany me while I inspect them?

[She takes it and they go up toward the embankment. All the CADETS take off their hats and follow them.]

CHRISTIAN:

[going over to CYRANO] Tell me quickly!

[As ROXANE appears on the ridge, the tops of the lances disappear, lowered for the salute, and a shout is raised. She bows.]

PIKEMEN:

[from outside] Hurrah!

CHRISTIAN:

What is this secret?

CYRANO:

If Roxane should—

CHRISTIAN:

Should what?

CYRANO:

If she should speak of the letters—

CHRISTIAN:

Yes, go on!

CYRANO:

Don't spoil it all by seeming surprised—

CHRISTIAN:

Surprised at what?

CYRANO:

I must explain to you! It's quite a simple matter. I was reminded of it just today upon seeing her. You've written—

CHRISTIAN:

Tell me quickly!

CYRANO:

You've written to her more often than you think.

CHRISTIAN:

How so?

CYRANO:

I took it upon myself to express your passion for you! At times I wrote to her without telling you!

CHRISTIAN:

Ah, I see.

CYRANO:

It's quite simple! No great matter!

CHRISTIAN:

But we've been blockaded. How did you get the letters across?

CYRANO:

Oh! I was able to get through before dawn.

CHRISTIAN:

[folding his arms] And was *that* a simple matter too? Tell me, how often have "I" written? Twice a week? Three times? Four?

CYRANO:

More often still.

CHRISTIAN:

What! Every day?

CYRANO:

Yes. Every day, twice a day.

CHRISTIAN:

[violently] And you became so caught up in the mad joy of it that you risked your life—

CYRANO:

[seeing ROXANE returning] Hush! Not in front of her!

[He goes hurriedly into his tent.]

Scene VIII

ROXANE, CHRISTIAN. In the distance cadets are coming and going. CARBON and DE GUICHE give orders.

ROXANE:

[running up to CHRISTIAN] Ah, Christian! At last!

CHRISTIAN:

[taking her hands] Now, Roxane, tell me why you traveled such perilous roads and dealt with such vulgar soldiers in order to come here.

ROXANE:

Your letters brought me here, my love!

CHRISTIAN:

What do you mean?

ROXANE:

It's your fault that I ran such risks! Your letters intoxicated me so much I lost my reason! So many letters! And each one better than the one before!

CHRISTIAN:

Do you mean to say you came all this way just because of a few simple love letters?

ROXANE:

Yes! You have no idea of the power those letters hold! Ever since that night under my window, when, in a voice all new to me, you bared your soul—ever since then I've adored you! And now, with all the letters of the past month, I hear your tender and true voice so close to me! So it *is* your fault, I say! It was your voice that drew me here. Penelope never would have stayed home and contented herself with her embroidering if her Ulysses could have written such letters! Instead, she would have cast everything aside and fled to join him, as mad for love as was Helen!

CHRISTIAN:

But—

ROXANE:

I read them over and over. I grew weak with love. I was entirely yours. Each separate page was like a flower petal, plucked from your soul, and sent wafting into mine. Imprinted in each burning word was a love so sincere, so powerful—

CHRISTIAN:

A love sincere! And you really could feel that, Roxane?

ROXANE:

Yes, I felt it!

CHRISTIAN:

And so you have come...

ROXANE:

Oh, Christian, my true love! Yes, I have come to you! If I were to throw myself down on my knees, I know you would lift me up. Therefore, I lay my soul down at your feet, and it cannot be raised. I've come to beg your forgiveness. And it seems a good time to ask for forgiveness, now that death is so near. I ask you to forgive me for the insult I did to you when I first loved you only for your handsome face!

CHRISTIAN:

[horror-stricken] Roxane!

ROXANE:

And later, when I grew less frivolous, I began to love you not just for your beauty, but for also for your soul. I loved you for both of these things at once!

CHRISTIAN:

And now?

ROXANE:

Ah! And now, your true self has triumphed over your appearance! I now love you only for your soul!

CHRISTIAN:

[stepping backward] Oh, Roxane!

ROXANE:

But be happy. It must be torture for any noble soul to be loved only for beauty. For beauty is a poor disguise that is soon worn threadbare by time. Your dear thoughts have outshined the handsome face that won me in the beginning. And now I see clearer. Now I no longer see your beauty at all!

CHRISTIAN:

Oh!

ROXANE:

Do you still doubt your victory?

CHRISTIAN:

[pained] Oh, Roxane!

ROXANE:

I know. You cannot believe in such a love yet.

CHRISTIAN:

I don't ask for such a love as that! All I want is for you to love me more simply!

ROXANE:

Like so many other women have loved you? For shame! Let me show you a better kind of love!

CHRISTIAN:

No! The first one was better!

ROXANE:

Oh, how wrong you are! The way I love you now is the best kind of love! I love you for your true self. If you were less handsome—

CHRISTIAN:

Hush!

ROXANE:

I would love you still! Yes, even if you became ugly—

CHRISTIAN:

No! Don't say it!

ROXANE:

Yes, I *will* say it!

CHRISTIAN:

Even if I were ugly?

ROXANE:

Yes, even so, I swear I'd love you still!

CHRISTIAN:

My God!

ROXANE:

Are you content at last?

CHRISTIAN:

[in a choked voice] Yes.

ROXANE:

What's wrong?

CHRISTIAN:

[gently pushing her away] Nothing. I just need to have a word with someone. Just one moment.

ROXANE:

But...

CHRISTIAN:

[pointing to the CADETS] Those poor fellows are being deprived of you while you're here with me. Go on and speak to them and smile at them before they die.

ROXANE:

[deeply moved] Dear Christian!

[She goes up to the CADETS, who respectfully crowd around her.]

Scene IX

CHRISTIAN, CYRANO. At the back of the stage, ROXANE is speaking to CARBON and some CADETS.

CHRISTIAN:

[calling toward CYRANO'S tent] Cyrano!

CYRANO:

[reappearing, fully armed] What's the matter? Why are you so pale?

CHRISTIAN:

She does not love me!

CYRANO:

What?

CHRISTIAN:

It is you she loves!

CYRANO:

No!

CHRISTIAN:

She loves me only for my soul!

CYRANO:

Truly?

CHRISTIAN:

Yes! And that soul is you! Therefore it's you she loves—and you love her!

CYRANO:

I?

CHRISTIAN:

It's true! I know it!

CYRANO:

Yes, it's true.

CHRISTIAN:

You love her madly!

CYRANO:

Yes, and even more than that!

CHRISTIAN:

Then tell her so!

CYRANO:

No!

CHRISTIAN:

Why not?

CYRANO:

Look at my face! You'll find your answer there!

CHRISTIAN:

She told me she would love me even if I were ugly.

CYRANO:

She said that?

CHRISTIAN:

Yes! In those words!

CYRANO:

Scene IX

I'm glad she told you that, but those are only words. Believe them if you want to, but I wouldn't. Take my word for it: never grow ugly. She'd be upset with me then!

CHRISTIAN:

We'll see about that.

CYRANO:

No! I'm begging you!

CHRISTIAN:

Yes! Let her choose between us! Tell her everything!

CYRANO:

No, no! I will not have it! Spare me this torment!

CHRISTIAN:

Do you really believe that just because my face is handsome by chance, that *your* chance of happiness should be destroyed? That would be too unjust!

CYRANO:

But do *you* think that just because I happen to have the gift of eloquence, I should let it kill *your* chance of happiness?

CHRISTIAN:

Tell her everything!

CYRANO:

You must not tempt me this way!

CHRISTIAN:

I'm tired of being my own rival! I'll put an end to it!

CYRANO:

Christian! Enough!

CHRISTIAN:

Our marriage was made in secret. It can be easily dissolved if we survive.

CYRANO:

My God! You still persist!

CHRISTIAN:

I want to be loved for myself or not at all! I'm going over to the other side of the camp. While I'm gone, you must speak to her. Let her choose between the two of us!

CYRANO:

It will be you.

CHRISTIAN:

I pray that it will! [*He calls out.*] Roxane!

CYRANO:

No! No!

ROXANE:

[coming up quickly] Yes?

CHRISTIAN:

Cyrano has something important to tell you.

[She rushes over to CYRANO. CHRISTIAN goes out.]

Scene X

ROXANE, CYRANO. Then LE BRET, CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, the CADETS, RAGUENEAU, DE GUICHE, etc.

ROXANE:

What is this urgent news?

CYRANO:

[in despair] He's gone! *[to ROXANE]* Oh, it's nothing! You know how he sees such importance in the most trivial things!

ROXANE:

[warmly] Did he doubt what I said? Ah, yes, I can tell—he doubted.

CYRANO:

[taking her hand] But did you really speak the truth to him?

ROXANE:

Yes, I would love him even if he were...

[She hesitates.]

CYRANO:

Does it embarrass you to say that word in front of me?

ROXANE:

I...

CYRANO:

[smiling sadly] It won't hurt me! Say it! You'd love him if he were ugly!

ROXANE:

Yes!

[A shot is heard outside, but CYRANO keeps talking.]

CYRANO:

[passionately] Even if he were hideous?

ROXANE:

Hideous! Yes!

CYRANO:

Disfigured?

ROXANE:

Yes!

CYRANO:

Grotesque?

ROXANE:

He could never be grotesque to me!

CYRANO:

You'd love him the same way?

ROXANE:

Yes! No—even more!

CYRANO:

[losing command over himself, speaking in an aside] My God! It's true! Maybe love really is within my reach! *[to ROXANE]* I...Roxane... listen—

LE BRET:

[entering hurriedly] Cyrano!

CYRANO:

[turning around] What?

LE BRET:

Hush!

[He whispers something to him.]

CYRANO:

[letting go of ROXANE'S hand and exclaiming] Oh, God!

ROXANE:

What is it?

CYRANO:

[to himself, stunned] It's all over now.

[More shots are heard.]

ROXANE:

What's the matter? Listen! Another shot!

[She goes up to look outside.]

CYRANO:

It's too late! Now I can never tell!

ROXANE:

[trying to rush out] What's happened?

CYRANO:

[rushing to stop her] Nothing!

[Some CADETS enter, trying to hide something they are carrying. They huddle close around it, preventing ROXANE from seeing what it is.]

ROXANE:

Those men... *[CYRANO tries to draw her away.]* You were about to tell me something...

CYRANO:

Tell you something? Oh, it was nothing, I swear! *[solemnly]* I swear that Christian's soul, his nature, was...*[quickly correcting himself]* is the noblest and the greatest—

ROXANE:

Was? *[with a loud scream]* Oh!

[She rushes up, pushing everyone aside.]

CYRANO:

It's all over now!

ROXANE:

[seeing CHRISTIAN lying on the ground, wrapped in his cloak.] Oh, Christian!

LE BRET:

[to CYRANO] Struck by the first shot of the enemy!

[ROXANE flings herself down by CHRISTIAN. Sounds of gunfire, clashing of arms, and beating of drums are heard outside.]

CARBON:

[with sword in the air] We're being attacked! Get your muskets!

[He rushes over the embankment, followed by the CADETS.]

ROXANE:

Christian!

VOICE OF CARBON:

[from the other side] Quick! Prepare yourselves!

ROXANE:

Christian!

CARBON:

Fall in line!

ROXANE:

Christian!

CARBON:

Ready your matches!

[RAGUENEAU rushes up, bringing water in a helmet.]

CHRISTIAN:

[in a dying voice] Roxane!

[ROXANE tears a piece of her dress and dips it into the water. She then presses it against CHRISTIAN'S wound, trying to stop the bleeding. CYRANO whispers quickly into CHRISTIAN'S ear while she is distracted.]

CYRANO:

I told her everything. She still loves you.

[CHRISTIAN closes his eyes.]

ROXANE:

Yes, my love?

CARBON:

Draw your ramrods!

ROXANE:

[to CYRANO] He's not dead, is he?

CARBON:

Open your charges with your teeth!

ROXANE:

His cheek is growing cold against my own!

CARBON:

Ready! Aim!

ROXANE:

[seeing a letter in CHRISTIAN'S jacket] A letter! It's for me!

[She opens it.]

CYRANO:

[aside] My letter!

CARBON:

Fire!

[Musket shots ring out, along with shouts and noises of battle.]

Scene X

CYRANO:

[trying to disengage his hand, which ROXANE is holding on her knees] But Roxane, the battle is raging!

ROXANE:

[detaining him] Please stay with me for a while. He's dead. You were the only one who really knew him. *[weeping quietly]* He was a wondrous and beautiful man, wasn't he?

CYRANO:

[standing up, with his hat off] Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE:

An inspired poet.

CYRANO:

Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE:

With a pure and brilliant mind.

CYRANO:

Yes.

ROXANE:

A heart too deep for shallow minds to comprehend; a spirit both subtle and charming.

CYRANO:

[firmly] Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE:

[flinging herself on the dead body] He is dead!

CYRANO:

[aside, while drawing his sword] Yes, and let me die today as well. For, unknowing, it is I that she mourns, over his body.

[Trumpets sound in the distance.]

DE GUICHE:

[appearing on the embankment, bareheaded, with a wound on his forehead, in a thunderous voice]
That's the signal! The French are bringing provisions into camp! Hold out a little longer!

ROXANE:

There is blood on the letter, and tears!

A VOICE:

[from outside, shouting] Surrender!

VOICE OF CADETS:

No!

RAGUENEAU:

[standing on the top of his carriage, watching the battle over the edge of the embankment] The danger is at its greatest!

CYRANO:

[to DE GUICHE, pointing to ROXANE] I will join the charge! You take her away!

ROXANE:

[kissing the letter, in a faint and choked voice] Oh, God! His tears! His blood!

RAGUENEAU:

[jumping down from the carriage and rushing toward her] She's fainted!

DE GUICHE:

[on the embankment, to the cadets, with fury] Stand fast!

A VOICE:

[outside] Lay down your arms!

CADETS:

No!

CYRANO:

[to DE GUICHE] You've proved your valor, Sir. *[pointing to ROXANE]* Now, hurry out of here and save her!

DE GUICHE:

[rushing to ROXANE, and carrying her away in his arms] I will do so! If you can hold out, victory will be ours!

CYRANO:

Good. *[calling out to ROXANE, whom DE GUICHE and RAGUENEAU are carrying away in a fainting condition]* Farewell, Roxane!

[There is a great tumult, with shouts and screams from all sides. CADETS reappear, wounded and falling. CYRANO, rushing to the battle, is stopped by CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, who is streaming with blood.]

CARBON:

We're losing ground! I've been wounded twice!

CYRANO:

[shouting to the CADETS] Gascons! Never turn your backs! *[to CARBON, whom he is holding up]* Have no fear! I have two deaths to avenge: my friend Christian's and my own happiness! *[They come downstage, CYRANO brandishing the lance with ROXANE'S handkerchief attached to it.]* Fly proudly, little lace flag embroidered with her name! *[He sticks it in the ground and shouts to the CADETS.]* Fall on them, Gascons! Crush them! *[to the FIFER]* Play, fifer!

[The FIFER plays. The wounded try to rise. Some CADETS, falling one over the other down the slope, group themselves around CYRANO and the little flag. The carriage is crowded with men inside and outside. Surrounded by muskets, the carriage is protected like a fortress.]

A CADET:

[appearing on the crest, beaten backward, but still fighting] They're climbing up the embankment!

CYRANO:

Let us salute them! *[The embankment is instantly covered by a formidable row of enemies. Imperialist flags are raised.]* Fire!

[The CADETS fire.]

A CRY FROM THE ENEMY'S RANKS:

Fire!

[There is a deadly volley of fire from the enemy. The CADETS fall on all sides.]

A SPANISH OFFICER:

[taking off his hat] Who are these men who are not afraid of death?

CYRANO:

[reciting, erect, amid a storm of bullets] The bold cadets of Gascony, of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux! Brawling and swaggering boastfully— *[he rushes forward, followed by a few survivors]* The bold cadets...

[His voice is drowned in the battle.]

Curtain.

Act V

Cyrano's Gazette

It is fifteen years later, in 1655, at the park of the Sisters of the Holy Cross in Paris. The park is filled with magnificent trees. On the left is the house, containing broad steps onto which open several doors. An enormous plane tree is in the middle of the stage, standing alone. On the right, among big boxwood trees, is a semicircular stone bench.

The whole background of the stage is crossed by an alley of chestnut trees leading on the right-hand side to the door of a chapel seen through the branches. Through the double row of trees of this alley are seen lawns, other alleys, clusters of trees, the winding of the park, and the sky.

The chapel opens by a little side door onto a colonnade which is wreathed with autumn leaves, and is lost to view a little farther on in the right-hand foreground behind the boxwood.

It is autumn. All the foliage is red against the fresh green of the lawns. The green boxwood and yews stand out darkly. Under each tree is a patch of yellow leaves. The stage is strewn with dead leaves, which rustle under foot in the alleys, and partially cover the steps and benches.

Between the bench on the right-hand side and the tree, a large embroidery frame is set up, in front of which is a little chair. There are baskets full of skeins and balls of wool. A tapestry has been started in the frame.

At the rising of the curtain, NUNS are walking to and fro in the park. Some are seated on the bench around an older nun. The leaves are falling.

Scene I

MOTHER MARGUERITE, SISTER MARTHA, SISTER CLAIRE, and other SISTERS.

SISTER MARTHA:

[to MOTHER MARGUERITE] Sister Claire has looked in the mirror not just once but *twice* today to see how her head-dress looks on her!

MOTHER MARGUERITE:

[to SISTER CLAIRE] That's not good.

SISTER CLAIRE:

But I saw Sister Martha steal a plum out of the tart!

MOTHER MARGUERITE:

[to SISTER MARTHA] That was a bad deed, my sister.

SISTER CLAIRE:

Just a little glance!

SISTER MARTHA:

And just a little plum!

MOTHER MARGUERITE:

I'll tell this to Monsieur Cyrano.

SISTER CLAIRE:

Oh, please don't! He'll make fun of us!

SISTER MARTHA:

He'll say that we nuns are vain!

SISTER CLAIRE:

And greedy!

MOTHER MARGUERITE:

[smiling] Yes, and kind!

SISTER CLAIRE:

Is it not true, Mother Marguerite, that he has come to the convent every Saturday for ten years?

MOTHER MARGUERITE: Yes, and even longer than that. Ever since the day his cousin was brought here, wearing her widow's veil among our white habits and looking like a blackbird among a flock of white doves. That was fourteen years ago now.

SISTER MARTHA:

He's the only one who can distract her from the terrible grief she still feels every day.

ALL THE SISTERS:

He's so funny!—It's cheerful when he comes!—He teases us!—We like him so much!—He enjoys our pastries!

SISTER MARTHA:

But he is not a faithful Catholic!

SISTER CLAIRE:

We will convert him!

THE SISTERS:

Yes! Yes!

MOTHER MARGUERITE:

I forbid you to attempt that, my daughters. He might grow tired of it and come here less often.

SISTER MARTHA:

But God—

MOTHER MARGUERITE:

Do not fear! God knows him well!

SISTER MARTHA:

But, every Saturday, when he arrives, he tells me, "Sister, I ate meat on Friday!"

MOTHER MARGUERITE:

Oh, is that what he says? Well, the last time he came, he hadn't eaten for two whole days!

SISTER MARTHA:

Mother!

MOTHER MARGUERITE:

He's poor.

SISTER MARTHA:

Who told you that, dear Mother?

MOTHER MARGUERITE:

Monsieur Le Bret.

SISTER MARTHA:

No one helps him?

MOTHER MARGUERITE:

He won't permit anyone to help him. *[In an alley at the back ROXANE appears, dressed in black, with a widow's coif and veil. DE GUICHE, imposing-looking and visible aged, walks by her side. They saunter slowly. MOTHER MARGUERITE rises.]* It's time we go in. Madame Madeleine walks in the garden with a visitor.

SISTER MARTHA:

[to SISTER CLAIRE, in a low voice] It's the Marshal of Grammont, isn't it?

SISTER CLAIRE:

[looking at him] Yes, I think so.

SISTER MARTHA:

It's been many months since he came to see her.

THE SISTERS:

He's so busy! What with the Court, the Army—

SISTER CLAIRE:

His worldly concerns!

[They go out. DE GUICHE and ROXANE come forward in silence, and stop close to the embroidery frame.]

Scene II

ROXANE and the DUKE OF GRAMMONT, formerly COUNT DE GUICHE. Then LE BRET and RAGUENEAU.

DUKE:

And you remain here, still beautiful, still in mourning?

ROXANE:

Still in mourning.

DUKE:

Still faithful?

ROXANE:

Still faithful.

DUKE:

[after a pause] Do you forgive me?

ROXANE:

Yes, since I've come here.

[There is another pause.]

DUKE:

Was he really all that you say he was?

ROXANE:

Yes. But he showed his true self only to those who knew him well.

DUKE:

I see. Perhaps I did not know him well at all. And his last letter is always next to your heart?

ROXANE:

It hangs right here on this ribbon around my neck, like a holy relic.

DUKE:

And, even though he is dead, you love him still?

ROXANE:

At times, it feels like he's not really dead. Our hearts still speak, as if his love is still alive, and wraps itself around me!

DUKE:

[after another pause] Does Cyrano come to see you?

ROXANE:

Oh, yes! My dear old friend never fails to come! We call him my "Gazette" because he brings me the news every week. His chair waits beneath this tree, when the weather is nice. I sit and embroider while I wait for him. When the clock strikes the hour of his arrival, I don't even turn to look, because I know that before the last stroke is heard, I'll hear his cane tapping down the steps. He seats himself and gently mocks my tapestry that's forever unfinished. He tells me all the gossip of the week...*[LE BRET appears on the steps.]* Why, here's Le Bret! *[LE BRET descends.]* How goes it with our friend?

LE BRET:

Very badly!

DUKE:

How?

ROXANE:

[to the DUKE] He's exaggerating!

LE BRET:

Everything I predicted is happening! Cyrano is living in poverty and isolating himself from the world! Everything he writes makes him another new enemy! He attacks false saints, false soldiers, false noble-men, thieving authors—everyone!

ROXANE:

Ah! But his sword still holds them all in check. No one gets the better of him.

DUKE:

[shaking his head] Time will tell!

LE BRET:

Oh, I fear for him! But it's not the attack of men that I fear. Solitude, hunger, cold December days, the lonely wolf-like way he steals into his dreary room—these are the assassins that will come for him! Each day he tightens his belt one more hole. His poor nose is tinted like old ivory. He has only one shabby serge suit left!

DUKE:

Yes, it's true, fortune hasn't smiled upon him. But he is not to be pitied!

LE BRET:

[with a bitter smile] My Lord—

DUKE:

Don't pity him! He has lived honestly, according to his own vows. He is free in his thoughts and free in his actions!

LE BRET:

[in the same tone] My Lord, you—

DUKE:

[haughtily] True! I have everything and he has nothing! Yet I'd be proud to shake his hand! *[bowing to ROXANE]* Now I must say my good-bye.

ROXANE:

I'll walk you out.

[The DUKE bows to LE BRET and goes with ROXANE toward the steps.]

DUKE:

[pausing, while she goes up] It's true. I do envy him sometimes. When a man's life is full of success, even though he hasn't acted wrongly, he still feels a thousand self-disgusts. It's not necessarily remorse he feels, but a dim, vague uneasiness. And, as he mounts the steps of worldly fame, he sometimes hears the sounds of dead illusions and vain regrets whispering and rustling among the folds of his fur-lined cloak, just as your mourning robe sweeps the dying autumn leaves in its train as you mount the terrace steps.

ROXANE:

[ironically] My, you're in a thoughtful mood!

DUKE:

I am. *[suddenly, as he is going out]* Monsieur Le Bret! *[to ROXANE]* Will you excuse me for a moment while I have a word with him? *[He goes to LE BRET and speaks in a low voice.]* It's true that no one dares to attack your friend, but many do hate him. Yesterday, during a card game at court, I heard someone say, "That Cyrano may die by accident someday soon!" Tell him to be prudent and stay indoors!

LE BRET:

[raising his arms to heaven] Prudent! Him? He's coming here today. I'll warn him, but—

ROXANE:

[who has stayed on the steps, to a SISTER who comes toward her] What is it?

SISTER:

Ragueneau would like to see you, Madame.

ROXANE:

Let him in. *[to the DUKE and LE BRET]* He comes to tell me his troubles. Ever since he became an author, he's had to take jobs as a singer...

LE BRET:

A bathhouse attendant...

ROXANE:

An actor...

LE BRET:

A beadle...

ROXANE:

Wig-maker...

LE BRET:

Lute-teacher...

ROXANE:

I wonder what he'll be today.

RAGUENEAU:

[entering hurriedly] Ah! Madame! *[He sees LE BRET.]* Ah! And you, Sir!

ROXANE:

[smiling] Tell Le Bret all your troubles. I shall return shortly.

RAGUENEAU:

But, Madame...

[ROXANE goes out with the DUKE. RAGUENEAU goes toward LE BRET.]

Scene III

LE BRET, RAGUENEAU.

RAGUENEAU:

I'm glad you're here! It's best that she not know! I was going to Cyrano's house just now. I was but a few steps from the house, when I saw him go out. I hurried after him. I saw him turn the corner, and suddenly, from out of a window just above him—I cannot say whether it was by accident or not—a lackey dropped a large piece of wood!

LE BRET:

Cowards! Oh, Cyrano!

RAGUENEAU:

I ran to him, and I saw—

LE BRET:

Oh, how horrible!

RAGUENEAU:

I saw our dear poet, our friend, lying on the ground with a large wound in his head!

LE BRET:

Is he dead?

RAGUENEAU:

No. I carried him to his room. Oh, what a terrible thing to see! That dreary little garret!

LE BRET:

Is he suffering?

RAGUENEAU:

No, he's unconscious.

LE BRET:

Have you called a doctor?

RAGUENEAU:

I found a kind doctor, and he came.

LE BRET:

My poor Cyrano! We must not tell this to Roxane all at once. What did the doctor say?

RAGUENEAU:

I don't really know! He spoke of fever, and something about the brain! Oh, if you could see him—his head all bound up! But let's hurry! There's no one by his bed, and if he tries to get up, he might very well die!

LE BRET:

[dragging him toward the right] Come! Through the chapel! It's the quickest way!

ROXANE:

[appearing on the steps, and seeing LE BRET go away by the colonnade leading to the chapel door]
Monsieur Le Bret! *[LE BRET and RAGUENEAU disappear without answering]* I call him, and he doesn't stop! Ragueneau's troubles must be really bad this time!

[She descends the steps.]

Scene IV

ROXANE alone. Two SISTERS, for a moment.

ROXANE:

Ah! What beauty the autumn brings! My sorrow has eased. April's joy sharpened it, but now September's calm comforts it. *[She seats herself at the embroidery frame. Two SISTERS come out of the house and set a large armchair under the tree.]* Here is the famous armchair for my dear faithful friend!

SISTER MARTHA:

It's the best one in the parlor!

ROXANE:

Thank you, sister. *[The SISTERS go.]* He'll be here any moment now. *[She seats herself. A clock strikes.]* The hour strikes. I'll begin my embroi- dery. *[after a moment]* The last stroke of the hour! How strange for him to be late! Perhaps the sister at the door is—Where's my thimble?—is preaching to him. Yes, that must be it! Surely he'll come soon! Ah, a dead leaf. *[She brushes off the leaf from her work.]* Nothing could—My scissors? Oh yes, here in my bag—could prevent him from coming.

A SISTER:

[coming to the steps] Monsieur de Bergerac.

Scene V

ROXANE, CYRANO and, for a moment, SISTER MARTHA.

ROXANE:

[without turning around] What was I saying? *[She embroiders. CYRANO, very pale, his hat pulled down over his eyes, appears. The SISTER who had announced him retires. He descends the steps slowly, with a visible difficulty in holding himself upright, bearing heavily on his cane. ROXANE still works at her tapestry.]* The colors have faded. How can I make them match now? *[to CYRANO, with playful reproach]* Late—for the first time in fourteen years!

CYRANO:

[He has succeeded in reaching the chair, and has seated himself, and speaks in a lively voice which is in great contrast to his pale face.] Yes! It's scandalous! I was so angry! I was detained...

ROXANE:

By?

CYRANO:

By a bold, unwelcome visitor.

ROXANE:

[absently, working] Some creditor?

CYRANO:

Yes, cousin. The last creditor who has a debt to claim from me.

ROXANE:

And have you paid it?

CYRANO:

No, not yet! I put it off. I said, "Have mercy! This is Saturday, the day I have a standing meeting that nothing should prevent. Come back in an hour!"

ROXANE:

[carelessly] Oh, well, a creditor can always wait! I shall not let you go before twilight falls!

CYRANO:

I may have to leave you before it falls.

[He shuts his eyes, and all is silent for a moment. SISTER MARTHA crosses the park from the chapel to the flight of steps. ROXANE, seeing her, signs for her to approach.]

ROXANE:

[to CYRANO] Aren't you going to tease Sister Martha today?

CYRANO:

[quickly opening his eyes] Of course! *[in a comically loud voice]* Sister! Come here! *[The SISTER glides up to him.]* Such lovely eyes! Why do you always keep them cast down to the ground?

SISTER MARTHA:

[who makes a movement of astonishment upon seeing his face] Oh!

CYRANO:

[in a whisper, pointing to ROXANE] Hush! It's nothing! *[loudly, in a blustering voice]* I ate meat yesterday!

SISTER MARTHA:

[aside] He must be pale from hunger! *[to CYRANO, in a whisper]* Come into the refectory soon and I'll make you a bowl of soup! Will you come?

CYRANO:

Yes, yes!

SISTER MARTHA:

Ah! You're more reasonable today than usual!

ROXANE:

[who hears them whispering] Is the sister trying to convert you?

SISTER MARTHA:

No, not I!

CYRANO:

It's true! You with your holy words! You used to preach to me all the time, but not anymore! I'm astonished! *[with mock fury]* Well, I can astonish you too! Listen here! I permit you... *[He pretends to be seeking for something to tease her with, and to have found it.]* I've got it! I permit you to pray for me tonight at chapel!

ROXANE:

Oh!

CYRANO:

[laughing] Good Sister Martha is struck speechless!

SISTER MARTHA:

[gently] I've never waited for your permission.

[She goes out.]

CYRANO:

[turning to ROXANE, who is still bending over her work] That tapes- try! Will I ever see the end of that eternal thing?

ROXANE:

I've been waiting for you to make fun of it!

[A light breeze causes the leaves to fall.]

CYRANO:

The autumn leaves!

ROXANE:

[lifting her head, and looking down the distant alley] Golden brown and red, like a painting by Titian. See how they fall!

CYRANO:

Ah, see how bravely they fall. Still lovely, even on their last short journey to the ground, where they'll rot within the clay. They hide the horror of that end by floating down so carelessly and gracefully!

ROXANE:

You sound melancholy!

CYRANO:

[collecting himself] No, no, Roxane!

ROXANE:

Then let the dead leaves fall as they will. Chat with me. Haven't you any news to tell, my Court Gazette?

CYRANO:

I'll begin right now.

ROXANE:

Good!

CYRANO:

[growing whiter and whiter, struggling against pain] On Saturday, the nineteenth, after having eaten several helpings of pear jelly, the King felt feverish. The court physician convicted the illness of high treason and executed it, and now the royal pulse beats at a normal pace once again. At the Queen's ball on Sunday, seven hundred wax candles were burned. Our troops, they say, have chased away John of Austria. Four witches were hanged. The little dog of Madame d'Athis had an enema—

ROXANE:

That's enough, Monsieur de Bergerac!

CYRANO:

On Monday, not much happened. Lygdamire took a new lover.

ROXANE:

Oh!

CYRANO:

[whose face changes more and more] On Tuesday, the Court went off to Fontainebleau. On Wednesday, Madame Montglat said “No” to Count de Fiesque. On Thursday, Olympe Mancini became the Queen of France—well, almost! On Friday, Madame Montglat said “Yes” to Count de Fiesque. And today, Saturday the twenty-sixth...

[He closes his eyes. His head falls forward. There is silence.]

ROXANE:

[surprised at his voice ceasing, turns around, looks at him, and rises, terrified] He's fainted! *[She runs toward him, crying.]* Cyrano!

CYRANO:

[opening his eyes, in a vague voice] What's this? *[He sees ROXANE bending over him and hastily presses his hat on his head and shrinks back in his chair.]* It's nothing! I swear! Let me be!

ROXANE:

But—

CYRANO:

It's just that old wound from Arras acting up. It hurts sometimes.

ROXANE:

Dear friend!

CYRANO:

'Tis nothing. It will pass soon. *[He smiles with an effort.]* See! It has passed already!

ROXANE:

Each of us has his own wound. I have mine, too. It still hasn't healed up, my old wound! *[She puts her hand on her breast.]* 'Tis here, beneath this letter brown with age, all stained with tears and blood.

[Twilight begins to fall.]

CYRANO:

His letter! You promised that one day you would let me read it.

ROXANE:

Do you really want to read it?

CYRANO:

Yes, I do. In fact, I'd like to read it right now.

ROXANE:

[removing the little bag which hangs from her neck] Here it is!

CYRANO:

[taking it] Do I have your permission to open it?

ROXANE:

Yes, open it and read!

[She goes back to her tapestry frame, folds it up, and sorts her wools.]

CYRANO:

[reading] Goodbye, Roxane! I soon must die! My soul is heavy with love untold. No more shall my eyes feast on your smallest gestures. I think of the way you touch your cheek, softly, with your finger, as you speak! I know that gesture so well! My heart cries out, and I cry, "Farewell!"

ROXANE:

How well you read that letter! It's as if...

CYRANO:

[continuing to read] My life, my love, my jewel, my sweet! My heart has been yours in every beat!

[The shades of evening fall imperceptibly.]

ROXANE:

You read in such a voice! A voice I've heard somewhere before!

[She comes nearer very softly, without his perceiving it, passes behind his chair, and, noiselessly leaning over him, looks at the letter. The darkness deepens.]

CYRANO:

My heart has never left you. In this world and in the next, I am the one who loves you—

ROXANE:

[putting her hand on his shoulder] How can you read? It's too dark to see! *[He starts, turns, sees her close to him. Suddenly alarmed, he holds his head down. Then in the dusk, which has now completely enfolded them, she speaks, very slowly, with clasped hands.]* And, for fourteen years now, he has played the part of the kind old friend who comes to laugh and chat.

CYRANO:

Roxane!

ROXANE:

It was you!

CYRANO:

No, Roxane, no!

ROXANE:

I should have guessed it each time you said my name!

CYRANO:

No, it was not I!

ROXANE:

It was you!

CYRANO:

I swear!

ROXANE:

I see through the whole generous lie! The letters—you!

CYRANO:

No!

ROXANE:

The sweet, mad love-words! All yours!

CYRANO:

No!

ROXANE:

That voice that thrilled me in the night! You!

CYRANO:

I swear you're mistaken.

ROXANE:

The soul—it was your soul!

CYRANO:

I loved you not!

ROXANE:

You *did* love me!

CYRANO:

No! It was he!

ROXANE:

You loved me!

CYRANO:

[in a weakening voice] No!

ROXANE:

You're faltering now. You're denying it less strongly.

CYRANO:

No, my sweet love, I never loved you!

ROXANE:

Ah! So many long-dead things are being reborn now! Why did you keep your silence all these fourteen years when the tears on this letter, which he never wrote, are your tears?

CYRANO:

[holding out the letter to her] The blood is his.

ROXANE:

Why, then, have you broken your noble silence today?

CYRANO:

Why?...

[LE BRET and RAGUENEAU enter running.]

Scene VI

The same, with LE BRET and RAGUENEAU.

LE BRET:

What madness! He's here! I knew it!

CYRANO:

[smiling and sitting up] Of course I am! What is it?

LE BRET:

Madame, he has brought his death by coming here.

ROXANE:

Oh, God! That moment just now, when you fainted—!

CYRANO:

Ah, yes! The moment that so rudely interrupted the "Gazette." As I was saying, on Saturday, the twenty-sixth, at dinner-time, Monsieur de Bergerac was murdered.

[He takes off his hat. They all see that his head is bandaged.]

ROXANE:

What is he talking about? Cyrano! Those bandages! What's happened? How? Who?

CYRANO:

To be struck down by a sword in the heart, from a worthy opponent's hand! That's what I had dreamed of! Oh, how Fate mocks me! I, of all men, killed in an ambush! Struck from behind, and by a lackey's hand! 'Tis very fitting. I've failed in everything, even in death.

RAGUENEAU:

Oh, Sir!

CYRANO:

[holding out his hand to him] Ragueneau, don't weep so bitterly! What are you doing for money now, old comrade?

RAGUENEAU:

[amid his tears] I snuff out the lights in the theater. I work for Molière.

CYRANO:

Molière!

RAGUENEAU:

Yes, but I'm quitting tomorrow. I cannot bear it! Yesterday, they played *Scapin*, and they used a scene stolen from you!

LE BRET:

The whole scene!

RAGUENEAU:

Yes, the famous one: "What the devil is he doing?"

LE BRET:

Molière stole that from you!

CYRANO:

Hush! I'm glad he took it. Tell me, how was the scene?

RAGUENEAU:

[sobbing] Oh! It was wonderful! The audience laughed and laughed!

CYRANO:

It's been my life's role to prompt others to greatness and to be forgotten myself. *[to ROXANE]* Do you remember that night, when Christian spoke to you from under your balcony? Well, there was the allegory of my whole life: I stand in the shadows, at the foot of the ladder, while others lightly climb their way up to Love and Fame! Here, on the threshold of death, I see the justice of it—Molière has genius and Christian had beauty! *[The chapel-bell chimes. The nuns are seen passing down the alley at the back, to say their prayers.]* Let them go pray. Their bell is ringing!

ROXANE:

[rising and calling] Sister! Sister!

CYRANO:

[holding her fast] Don't go after them! If you leave me, I'll be gone for good when you come back. *[The nuns have all entered the chapel. The organ sounds.]* Ah! I was in need of some music, and here it is!

ROXANE:

Please live! I love you!

CYRANO:

In fairy tales, when the lady says “I love you” to the beast, his ugliness disappears. But this is no fairy tale. I remain the same, even after you speak the magic words.

ROXANE:

I am the source of your life's unhappiness! I!

CYRANO:

No. You have blessed my life! Never in my life had I been loved by a woman. Even my mother could not see past my ugliness. I had no sister and, when grown a man, I feared all women would mock me. But I have had your gracious friendship. Because of you, a woman's charm has finally passed across my path.

LE BRET:

[pointing to the moon, which is seen between the trees] Your other lady-love has come.

CYRANO:

[smiling] I see.

ROXANE:

I loved one man, and now I've lost him twice!

CYRANO:

Tonight, Le Bret, I shall reach the moon, without the aid of any projectile!

LE BRET:

What are you saying?

CYRANO:

I tell you, it's there that I'll have my Paradise. There I shall find at last the exiled souls that I love—Galileo, Socrates...

LE BRET:

[rebelliously] No, no! This is too unjust! So great a poet! So great a heart! To die like this?

CYRANO:

Listen to Le Bret, always scolding!

LE BRET:

[weeping] Dear friend...

CYRANO:

[starting up, his eyes wild] The bold cadets of Gascony!...The elemental mass!...Ah, yes!...There's the thing...

LE BRET:

Still speaking science, even in his delirium.

CYRANO:

Copernicus said...

ROXANE:

Oh!

CYRANO:

“But what the devil was he doing there? What the devil was he doing there, on that galley?” *[He declaims.]* Philosopher, physician, poet, brawler, musician; famed for his lunar expedition and for duels and battles no less; and lover too, to his own distress! Here lies Hercule Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac, who was everything yet was nothing. I beg your pardon, but I cannot stay. See, the moon's rays come to call me up! *[He has fallen back in his chair. The sobs of ROXANE call him back to reality. He looks for a long moment at her and touches her veil.]* I would not ask you to mourn that good, brave Christian less faithfully. I would only ask that when my body is cold and in the ground, that you wear your mourning clothes for two, and mourn me for a while, as you mourn him.

ROXANE:

I swear I will!

CYRANO:

[shivering violently, then suddenly rising] No! Not seated! *[They all spring toward him.]* Let no one hold me up! *[He props himself up against the tree.]* Only this tree! *[There is silence.]* It comes. Even now my feet have turned to stone. My hands are heavy like lead. *[He stands erect.]* But since Death comes, I'll meet him standing. *[He draws his sword.]* And with sword in hand!

LE BRET:

Cyrano!

ROXANE:

[half fainting] Cyrano!

[Everyone shrinks back in terror.]

CYRANO:

I see him! He, the noseless one, dares to mock my nose! How insolent! *[He raises his sword.]* You say it's useless. That I know. But who fights believing that every battle will be a success? I fought for lost causes and fruitless quests! You there! I see you! Thousands of you! All enemies of mine, I know you now! Ah! There's Falsehood! *[He strikes the air with his sword.]* And Compromise! Prejudice! Treachery! *[He strikes.]* Will I surrender? Strike an agreement? Never! And there you are, Folly! I know you'll be the one to take me down, at last. Yet I'll fall fighting, fighting still! *[He makes passes in the air, and stops, breathless.]* You've stripped me of the laurel and the rose! Of glory and love! Take it all! But there is still one thing I hold against you, and when I enter God's house tonight, I shall wave one thing in salutation, across heaven's blue threshold. For there is one thing I have left, void of smear or stain, and I take it with me despite you. *[He springs forward, his sword raised. It falls from his hand. He staggers and falls back into the arms of LE BRET and RAGUENEAU.]*

ROXANE:

[bending and kissing his forehead] And that is—?

CYRANO:

[opening his eyes, recognizing her, and smiling] My white plume.

Curtain.

Cyrano de Bergerac is a play written in 1897 by Edmond Rostand. There was a real Cyrano de Bergerac, and the play is a fictionalisation following the broad outlines of his life. The entire play is written in verse, in rhyming couplets of twelve syllables per line, very close to the classical alexandrine form, but the verses sometimes lack a caesura.Â Hercule Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac, a cadet (nobleman serving as a soldier) in the French Army, is a brash, strong-willed man of many talents.