Act I.
A Representation at the Hotel de Bourgogne.

Scene 1.I.
The public, arriving by degrees.

MEDDLER (to pickpocket): The play will not begin till two. Come, a bout with the foils to pass the time.

(They fence with the foils they have brought.)

PICKPOCKET (receiving a thrust): A hit!

(Ligniere, a distinguished-looking roue, with disordered shirt-front arm-in-arm with Christian de Neuvillette. Christian, who is dressed elegantly, but rather behind the fashion, seems preoccupied, and keeps looking at the boxes.)

Scene 1.II.
The same. Christian, Ligniere, then Ragueneau and Le Bret.

LIGNIERE (drawing Christian aside): Friend, I but came here to give you pleasure. It is clear the lady comes not. I will betake me again to my pet vice.

CHRISTIAN (persuasively): No, no! You, who are a ballad-maker to Court and City alike, can tell me better than any who the lady is for whom I die of love. Stay yet awhile. I, who am so poor of wit, how dare I speak to her—how address her? I am but an honest soldier, and timid withal. She has ever her place, there, on the right—the empty box, see you!

LIGNIERE (making as if to go): I must go.

CHRISTIAN (detaining him): Nay, stay.

LIGNIERE: I cannot. D'Assoucy waits for me at the tavern, and here one dies of thirst.

CHRISTIAN (passing before him with a tray): Orange drink?

LIGNIERE: Ugh!

CHRISTIAN: Milk?
LIGNIERE: Pah!

CHRISTIAN: Rivesalte?

LIGNIERE: Ah! I will remain awhile—Let me taste this rivesalte. *He sits just as Ragueneau enters* Ah! Ragueneau! *to Christian* 'Tis 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 do me too great honor. . .

LIGNIERE: Nay, hold your peace, Maecenas that you are! He is himself a poet of a pretty talent…

RAGUENEAU: So they tell me.

LIGNIERE: --Mad after poetry!

RAGUENEAU: 'Tis true that, for a little ode. . .

LIGNIERE: You give a tart. . .

RAGUENEAU: Oh!—a tartlet!

LIGNIERE: How pay you your tickets, ha?—with cakes. Your place, tonight, come tell me in my ear, what did it cost you?

RAGUENEAU: Four custards, and fifteen cream-puffs. *He looks around on all sides* Monsieur de Cyrano is not here? 'Tis strange.

LIGNIERE: Why so?

RAGUENEAU: Montfleury plays!

LIGNIERE: Ay, 'tis true that that old wine-barrel is to take Phedon's part to-night; but what matter is that to Cyrano?

RAGUENEAU: How? Know you not? He has got a hot hate for Montfleury, and so!—has forbid him strictly to show his face on the stage for one whole month.

LIGNIERE (drinking his fourth glass): Well?

RAGUENEAU: Montfleury will play!
LIGNIERE: Will Cyrano hinder that?

RAGUENEAU: Oh! oh! that I have come to see!

MEDDLER: Who is this Cyrano?

LIGNIERE: A fellow well skilled in all tricks of fence.

PICKPOCKET: Is he of noble birth?

LIGNIERE: Ay, noble enough. He is a cadet in the Guards. (Pointing to a gentleman who is going up and down the hall as if searching for some one) But 'tis his friend Le Bret, yonder, who can best tell you. (He calls him) Le Bret! (Le Bret comes towards them) Seek you for De Bergerac?

LE BRET: Ay, I am uneasy . . .

LIGNIERE: He is…the strangest of men.

LE BRET (tenderly): True, that he is the choicest of earthly beings!

RAGUENEAU: Poet!

LIGNIERE: Soldier! Philosopher!

LE BRET: Musician!

LIGNIERE: And of how fantastic a presence!

RAGUENEAU: Maddest fighter of all his visored crew. Prouder than all the fierce Gascony Cadets that have ever been and will ever be the prolific Alma Mater!

LE BRET (shrugging his shoulders): He will not come!

RAGUENEAU: I say he will! and I wager a fowl—a la Ragueneau.

LIGNIERE (laughing): Good!

(Murmurs of admiration in hall. Roxane has just appeared in her box. She seats herself in front, the duenna at the back. Christian, who is paying the buffet-girl, does not see her entrance.)

LIGNIERE: Ah, gentlemen! she is fearfully—terribly—ravishing!

CHRISTIAN (raising his head, sees Roxane, and catches Ligniere by the arm): 'Tis she!
LIGNIERE: Ah! It is she?

CHRISTIAN: Ay, tell me quick—I am afraid.

LIGNIERE (tasting his rivesalte in sips): Magdaleine Robin—Roxane, so called! A subtle wit—a precieuse.

CHRISTIAN: Woe is me!

LIGNIERE: Free. An orphan. The cousin of Cyrano, of whom we were now speaking.

(At this moment an elegant nobleman, with blue ribbon across his breast, enters the box, and talks with Roxane, standing.)

CHRISTIAN (starting): Who is yonder man?

LIGNIERE (who is becoming tipsy, winking at him): Ha! ha! Count de Guiche. Enamored of her. But wedded to the niece of Armand de Richelieu. Would fain marry Roxane to a certain sorry fellow, one Monsieur de Valvert, a viscount! She will none of that bargain; but De Guiche is powerful.

CHRISTIAN: Good-night.

LIGNIERE: Where go you?

CHRISTIAN: To Monsieur de Valvert!

LIGNIERE: Have a care! It is he who will kill you (showing him Roxane by a look) Stay where you are—she is looking at you.

CHRISTIAN: It is true! (He stands looking at her. A pickpocket seeing him thus, head in air and open-mouthed, draw near to him.)

LIGNIERE: 'Tis I who am going. I am athirst! And they expect me—in the taverns! (He goes out, reeling.)

LE BRET (who has been all round the hall, coming back to Ragueneau reassured): No sign of Cyrano.

RAGUENEAU (incredulously): All the same. . .

LE BRET: A hope is left to me--that he has not seen the playbill!

THE AUDIENCE: Begin, begin!

Scene 1.III.
The same, all but Ligniere. De Guiche, Valvert, then Montfleury.

DE GUICHE: Come you Valvert!

CHRISTIAN (who is watching and listening, starts on hearing this name): The Viscount! Ah! I will throw full in his face my... (He puts his hand in his pocket, and finds there the hand of a pickpocket who is about to rob him. He turns round) What?

THE PICKPOCKET: Oh!

CHRISTIAN (holding him tightly): I was looking for a glove.

THE PICKPOCKET (smiling piteously): And you find a hand. (Changing his tone, quickly and in a whisper): Let me but go, and I will deliver you a secret.

CHRISTIAN (still holding him): What is it?

THE PICKPOCKET: Ligniere...he who has just left you...

CHRISTIAN (same play): Well?

THE PICKPOCKET: His life is in peril. A song writ by him has given offense in high places--and a hundred men--I am of them--are posted to-night... 

CHRISTIAN: A hundred men! Where are they posted?

THE PICKPOCKET: At the Porte de Nesle. On his way homeward. Warn him.

CHRISTIAN (letting go of his wrists): Ah, the scoundrels! A hundred men 'gainst one! (Looking lovingly at Roxane) Ah, to leave her!... (looking with rage at Valvert) But save Ligniere I must! (He hurries out. De Guiche, the viscount, 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.)

THE AUDIENCE: Begin!

(Everyone chanting and hollering in excited anticipation and then... a knock is heard upon the stage. Every one is motionless. A pause.)

BELLEROSE (in the silence): Snuff the candles!

(People begin to murmur again)

BELLEROSE: Silence!
(Three knocks are heard on the stage. The curtain opens in the centre Tableau. The marquises in insolent attitudes seated on each side of the stage. The scene represents a pastoral landscape. Four little lusters light the stage; violins play softly.)

LE BRET (in a low voice to Ragueneau): Montfleury comes on the scene?

RAGUENEAU (also in a low voice): Ay, 'tis he who begins.

LE BRET: Cyrano is not here.

RAGUENEAU: I have lost my wager.

LE BRET: 'Tis all the better!

(An air on the drone-pipes is heard, and Montfleury enters, enormously stout, in an Arcadian shepherd's dress, a hat wreathed with roses drooping over one ear, blowing into a ribboned drone pipe.)

THE PIT (applauding): Bravo, Montfleury! Montfleury!

MONTFLEURY (after bowing low, begins the part of Phedon): 'Heureux qui loin des cours, dans un lieu solitaire,
            Se prescrit a soi-meme un exil volontaire,
            Et qui, lorsque Zephire a souffle sur les bois. . .'

A VOICE (from the middle of the pit): Villain! Did I not forbid you to show your face here for a month?

(General stupor. Every one turns round. Murmurs.)

DIFFERENT VOICES: Hey?--What?--What is't? . . .'Tis he!

(People looking around to see who it is.)

LE BRET (terrified): Cyrano!

THE VOICE: King of clowns! Leave the stage this instant!

ALL THE AUDIENCE (indignantly): Oh!

MONTFLEURY: But . . .

THE VOICE: Do you dare defy me?

DIFFERENT VOICES (from the pit and the boxes): Peace! Enough!--Play on, Montfleury--fear nothing!
MONTFLEURY (in a trembling voice): 'Heureux qui loin des cours, dans un lieu sol--'

THE VOICE (more fiercely): Well! Chief of all the blackguards, 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): 'Heureux qui. . .'

(The cane is shaken.)

THE VOICE: Off the stage!

THE PIT: Oh!

MONTFLEURY (choking): 'Heureux qui loin des cours. . .'

CYRANO (appearing suddenly in the pit, standing on a chair, his arms crossed, his beaver cocked fiercely, his mustache bristling, his nose terrible to see): Ah! I shall be angry in a minute!...

(Sensation.)

Scene 1.IV.
The same. Cyrano, then Bellerose.

MONTFLEURY (to the marquises): Come to my help, my lords!

AUDIENCE (carelessly): Go on! Go on!

CYRANO: Fat man, take warning! If you go on, I shall feel myself constrained to cuff your face!

AUDIENCE: Have done!

CYRANO: And if these lords hold not their tongue, I shall feel constrained to make them taste my cane!


CYRANO: If he goes not quick I will cut off his ears and slit him up!

MONTFLEURY: But. . .

CYRANO: Out he goes!

MONTFLEURY: Yet. . .
CYRANO: Is he not gone yet? (He makes the gesture of turning up his cuffs) Good! I shall mount the stage now, buffet-wise, To carve this fine Italian sausage--thus!

MONTFLEURY (trying to be dignified): You outrage Thalia in insulting me!

THE PIT: Montfleury! Montfleury! Come--Baro's play!

CYRANO (to those who are calling out): I pray you have a care! If you go on my scabbard soon will render up its blade!

MEDDLER: Scandalous!

PICKPOCKET: 'Tis most annoying!

THE PIT: Montfleury. . .Cyrano!

CYRANO: Silence!

THE PIT (wildly excited): Ho-o-o-o-h! Quack! Cock-a-doodle-doo!

CYRANO: I order you all to be silent! *(Turning toward the stage, where Montfleury waits in an agony)* I want to see the theater cured of this boil. Otherwise *(Puts his hand to his sword)* . . . I'll 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 thrice, thus--full moon! At the third clap, eclipse yourself!

THE PIT (amused): Ah!

CYRANO (clapping his hands): One!

MONTFLEURY: I . . .

MEDDLER: Stay!

THE PIT: He stays. . .he goes. . .he stays. . .


CYRANO: Two!

MONTFLEURY: I think 'twere wisest. . .
CYRANO: Three!

(Montfleury disappears as through a trap. Tempest of laughs, whistling cries, etc.)

THE WHOLE HOUSE: Boo!—Boo!—Coward. . .come back!

CYRANO (delighted, sits back in his chair, arms crossed): Let him come back if he dares!

MEDDLER (to Cyrano): But pray, sir, what reason have you to hate Montfleury?

CYRANO (graciously, still seated): I have two reasons--either will suffice. The first: He is a deplorable actor who brays like a donkey and wrestles ponderously with lines that ought to soar lightly from his lips. The second—that is my secret.

BELLORESE: What about the money that will have to be refunded?

CYRANO (turning his chair toward the stage): Bellerose, you make the first intelligent remark! Far be it from me to impose hardship on practitioners of the Thespian art. (He rises and throws a bag on the stage) Here, take this purse and hold your peace.

BELLORESE (catching the purse dexterously and weighing it): At this price, sir, I'll be glad to have you come and stop our performance every day! Clear out the hall!

(The people begin to go out, while Cyrano looks on with satisfaction. But the crowd soon stop on hearing the following scene, and remain where they are. The women, who, with their mantles on, are already standing up in the boxes, stop to listen, and finally reseat themselves.)

THE MEDDLER: (coming up to Cyrano): The actor Montfleury! 'Tis shameful! Why, he's protected by the Duke of Candal! Have you a patron?

CYRANO: No!

THE MEDDLER: What?! No great lord to protect you with his name?

CYRANO: (His hand on his sword) My protector is always near at hand.

THE MEDDLER: But you must leave town! The Duke has a long arm!

CYRANO: But not so long as mine…(Shows his sword) Show your heels! Or tell me why you stare so at my nose!


CYRANO (walking straight up to him): Do you find it strange?

THE MEDDLER (drawing back): Your Grace mistakes!
CYRANO: Is't limp and dangling, like an elephant’s trunk? What do you see?

THE MEDDLER: I’ve been careful not to look at it.

CYRANO: And why not look at it, if you please? It disgusts you?

THE MEDDLER: No, on the contrary!

CYRANO: Do you find it too large?

THE MEDDLER (stammering): Oh, no, it’s quite small…very small…minute

CYRANO: What?! How dare you accuse me of anything so ridiculous? My nose? Small?

THE MEDDLER: Heaven help me!

CYRANO: My nose is enormous, you snub-nosed, flat-faced wretch! I carry it with pride. 'Tis well known, a big nose is indicative of kindness, courtesy, wit, generosity, and courage. Qualities you’ll never hope to have. For that witless face that my hand soon will come to cuff (He cuffs him)

THE MEDDLER: Aie!

CYRANO:…has no more glory, nobility, poetry, aspiration, vivacity, or grandeur—no more nose, in short—than the face (He turns him by the shoulders, suiting the action to the word) my boot will shortly come and kick!

THE MEDDLER (running away): Help! Call the Guard!

CYRANO: Let that be a lesson to anyone else who may feel that the middle of my face is amusing. And if the jester is a nobleman, I’ll let him taste my steel, and not my boot!

DE GUICHE (who, with the marquises, has come down from the stage): He is becoming a nuisance!

VALVERT (shrugging his shoulders): He likes to bluster!

DE GUICHE: Will no one silence him?

VALVERT: I'll treat him to…one of my quips!...See here!... (He goes up to Cyrano, who is watching him, and with a conceited air): Sir, your nose is...hmm...it is...very big!

CYRANO (gravely): Very!
VALVERT (laughing): Ha!

CYRANO (imperturbably): Is that all?

VALVERT: Well...

CYRANO: I’m afraid your speech was a little short, young man. You could have said...oh, all sorts of things, varying your tone to fit your words. A few examples:
Aggressive: “If I had a nose like that, I’d have it amputated!”
Descriptive: “It’s a rock, a peak, a cape! No, more than a cape: a peninsula!”
Curious: “What do you use that long container for? Do you keep your pens and scissors in it?”
Gracious: “What a kind man you are! You love the birds so much that you’ve given them a perch to roost on.”
Solicitous: “Be careful when you walk: with all that weight on your head, you could easily lose your balance and fall.”
Thoughtful: “You ought to put an awning over it, to keep its color from fading in the sun.”
Pedantic: “Sir, only the animal that Aristophanes calls the hippocampelephantocamelos could have had so much flesh and bone below its forehead.”
Flippant: “That tusk must be convenient to hang your hat on.”
Dramatic: “When it bleeds, it must be like the red sea!”
Admiring “What a sign for a perfume shop.”
Naïve: “Is that monument open to the public?”
Rustic: “That don’t look like no nose to me. It’s either a big cucumber or a little watermelon.”
Military: “The enemy is charging! Aim your cannon!”
Practical: “Put it in a lottery! Assuredly ’twould be the biggest prize!”

DE GUICHE (trying to draw away the dismayed viscount): Come away, Viscount!

VALVERT (choking with rage): Such arrogance from an uncouth barbarian who...who...isn’t even wearing gloves! Appearing in public without ribbon, tassels, or braid!

CYRANO: True; all my elegances are within. I do not dress like a fop, it’s true, but my moral grooming is impeccable. I never appear in public with a soiled conscience, a tarnished honor, threadbare scruples, or an insult that I haven’t washed away. I’m always immaculately clean, adorned with independence and frankness. I may not cut a stylish figure, but I hold my soul erect. I wear my deeds as ribbons, my wit is sharper than the finest mustache, and when I walk among men I make truths ring like spurs.

VALVERT: But, Sir...!

CYRANO: I wear no gloves? And what of that? I had a pair not long ago, but lost one of them, so I threw the other in the face of some young fool.

VALVERT: Stupid lout, insolent boor, ridiculous fool!
CYRANO (taking off his hat, and bowing as if the viscount had introduced himself): Delighted to meet you. I’m Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac

(Laughter.)

VALVERT (exasperated): Buffoon!

CYRANO (calling out as if he had been seized with the cramp): Oh!

VALVERT (who was going away, turns back): What’s he saying now?

CYRANO (with grimaces of pain): I must move it: it’s fallen asleep. It needs exercise. Oh!

VALVERT: What’s the matter?

CYRANO: I have a cramp in my sword.

VALVERT (drawing his sword): So be it!

CYRANO: I’ll give you a charming little lunge.

VALVERT (contemptuously): Poet!

CYRANO: Ay, poet, Sir! In proof of which, while we fence, I’ll compose an impromptu ballade.

VALVERT: Ridiculous!

CYRANO: The duel in Hotel of Burgundy—fought by De Bergerac and a good-for-naught!

VALVERT: What is that, if you please?

CYRANO: The title.

THE HOUSE (in great excitement): Give room!—Good sport!—Make place!—Fair play!—No noise!

(Tableau. A circle of curious spectators in the pit; the marquises and officers mingled with the common people; the pages climbing on each other’s shoulders to see better. All the women standing up in the boxes. To the right, De Guiche and his retinue. Left, Le Bret, Ragueneau, Cyrano, etc.)

CYRANO (shutting his eyes for a second): Wait, I’m thinking of how to begin…There, I have it.

(He suits the action to each word.)
I take off my hat and discard it,
I slowly abandon my cloak,
I draw my sword out of its scabbard,
Preparing to put it to use.
For the moment, I stand here before you,
Elegant, calm, and serene,
But I warn you, my impudent scoundrel,
When I end the refrain, I draw blood.

(They begin fencing.)
You should have avoided this battle.
Now, where shall I skewer you, goose?
In the side, ‘neath the sleeve of your doublet?
In the heart, ‘neath the ribbon you wear?
No, I’ve carefully thought and reflected,
And finally made up my mind;
The paunch: that’s where I’ve decided,
When I end the refrain, to draw blood.

I see you give ground when I press you;
Your face is as white as a sheet;
Is “coward” a name that would suit you?
I dexterously parry the point
That you hoped to thrust into my entrails;
Your efforts are doomed to be vain.
Prepare yourself now to be punctured:
When I end the refrain, I draw blood.

(Announces solemnly.)

Refrain:
Pray God to forgive your transgressions!
The close of our combat draws near;
A coupe, then a feint, then a finish!

(He lunges. VALVERT staggers. CYRANO bows.)
When I end the refrain, I draw blood.

(Acclamations. Applause in the boxes. Flowers and handkerchiefs are thrown down. The officers surround Cyrano, congratulating him. Ragueneau dances for joy. Le Bret is happy, but anxious. VALVERT's friends hold him up and bear him away.)

THE CROWD (with one long shout): Ah!

LE BRET (to Cyrano, taking his arm): A word with you!

Scene 1.V.
Cyrano, Le Bret.

LE BRET: These fops, would-be belligerent, will, if you heed them only, turn your head! . . . Ask people of good sense if you would know the effect of your fine insolence—The Cardinal?
CYRANO (radiant): The Cardinal was there?

LE BRET: You make too many enemies by far!

CYRANO: How many think you I have made to-night?

LE BRET: Forty-eight. Without counting the women.

CYRANO: Really? That many? I am o'erjoyed!

LE BRET: I don’t understand the way you live. Where will it lead you? What are you trying to accomplish?

CYRANO: I was once confused and bewildered by all the complicated courses of action that were open to me. Finally I chose…

LE BRET: What did you choose?

CYRANO: The simplest course of all. I decided to be admirable in everything!

LE BRET (shrugging his shoulders): So be it! But the motive of your hate to Montfleury--come, tell me!

CYRANO (rising): I hate him since the evening he presumed to raise his eyes to hers…

LE BRET (stupefied): How now? What? Can it be?

CYRANO (laughing bitterly): That I should love? (Changing his tone, gravely) I love.

LE BRET: And may I know who?

CYRANO: With whom I’m in love? Come now, think a moment: this nose of mine, which precedes me by a quarter of an hour wherever I go, forbids me ever to dream of being loved by even an ugly woman. You ask me whom I love? The answer should be clear to you! Whom else would I love but the most beautiful woman in the world?

LE BRET: The most beautiful…Tell me: who is she?

CYRANO:
She's a danger mortal,
Like a sweet perfumed rose--a snare of nature,
He who has seen her smile has known perfection,
Divinity in every careless gesture;

LE BRET: It is becoming clear!
CYRANO: It’s perfectly transparent.

LE BRET: Your cousin, Madeleine Robin?

CYRANO: Roxane!

LE BRET: Well, but so much the better! Tell her so! She saw your triumph here this very night!

CYRANO: Look well at me--then tell me, with what hope
This vile protuberance can inspire my heart!
I have no illusions.

LE BRET (tenderly): My friend…

CYRANO: My friend, I have bad moments now and then, feeling myself so ugly, all alone…

LE BRET (taking his hand): Do you weep?

CYRANO: No, never! No, it would be grotesque if a tear ran down this nose! There’s nothing more sublime than tears, and I wouldn’t want a single one of them to become an object of ridicule because of me.

LE BRET: Come, don’t be sad! What's love, but a game of chance!

CYRANO (shaking his head): Look I a Caesar to woo Cleopatra?

LE BRET: Your courage and your wit!

CYRANO (impressed): True!

LE BRET: You see? And Roxane herself was pale as she watched you duel.

CYRANO: Pale?

LE BRET: You’ve already made a deep impression on her heart and her mind. Don’t be timid: speak to her, tell her, so that…

CYRANO: So that she’ll laugh in my face? No! That’s the one thing in the world that I fear!

(Roxane’s duenna enters)

CYRANO: (seeing the duenna): Roxane’s duenna!

Scene 1.VI.
Cyrano, Le Bret, the duenna.
THE DUENNA (with a low bow): I was bid ask you where a certain lady could see her valiant cousin--but in secret.

CYRANO (overwhelmed): See me?

THE DUENNA (curtseying): Ay, Sir! She has somewhat to tell.

CYRANO: Somewhat?. . .

THE DUENNA (still curtseying): Ay, private matters!

CYRANO (staggering): Ah.

THE DUENNA: To-morrow, at the early blush of dawn, we go to hear mass at St. Roch. After--what place for a few minutes' speech?

CYRANO (confused): Where? Ah!. . .but. . .Ah…At--the pastry-house of Ragueneau.

THE DUENNA (going): Good. Be you there. At seven.

CYRANO: Without fail.

(The duenna goes out.)

Scene 1.VII.
Cyrano, Le Bret. Then Ligniere.

CYRANO (falling into Le Bret's arms): A rendezvous. . .from her! . .

LE BRET: You're sad no more!

CYRANO: Ah! Let the world go burn! She knows I live!

LE BRET: Now you'll be calm, I hope?

CYRANO (beside himself for joy): Calm? I'll be frenetic, frantic,—raving mad! Oh, for an army to attack—a host! I've ten hearts in my breast; a score of arms. We go!

(He moves away. By the big door enter Ligniere, who is drunk.)

LIGNIERE: Cyrano!

CYRANO: Well, what now? Ligniere! What's happened to you?

LIGNIERE: I dare not go home!
CYRANO: Why not?

LIGNIERE (in a husky voice, showing him a crumpled letter): This note warns me...hundred men against me...because of...of a song...great danger...Porte de Nesle...on my way home...Will you let me...let me sleep under your roof tonight?

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

LIGNIERE (frightened): But--

CYRANO (in a terrible voice, showing him the lighted lantern): Take the lantern...(Ligniere seizes it)...and walk! I'll cover you! (To the officers) And you, follow at a distance: you'll be witnesses!

LIGNIERE: But a hundred men!...

CYRANO: I need at least that many this evening!

LE BRET: But why should you risk your life for that worthless drunkard?

CYRANO: Le Bret is grumbling again. We march! Gentlemen, when you shall see me charge, don’t come to my assistance, no matter how great the danger! One, two three! Open wide the doors! (The doors are opened wide; a view of old Paris in the moonlight is seen) Ah!...Paris wrapped in night! half nebulous: The moonlight streams o'er the blue-shadowed roofs; A lovely frame for this wild battle-scene!

ALL: To the Porte de Nesle!

CYRANO (standing on the threshold): Ay, to the Porte de Nesle!

(He goes out. Ligniere staggers first after him, then the officers'.)

Curtain.

Act II.
The Poet's Eating-House.

Scene 2.I.
Ragueneau, pastry-cooks, then Lise. Ragueneau is writing, with an inspired air, at a small table, and counting on his fingers.

THIRD PASTRY-COOK (bringing in an elaborate fancy dish): Fruits in nougat!

FIFTH PASTRY-COOK (bringing another dish): Custard and cakes!

THIRD PASTRY-COOK (bringing a roast, decorated with feathers): Peacock! Braised beef!
RAGUENEAU (ceasing to write, and raising his head): The silver of dawn is already gleaming on the copper pots! The hour of the lute will come—it is now the hour of the oven! *(stands up and speaks to a cook).* There’s something lacking in this sauce.

THIRD PASTRY-COOK: What shall I do to it?

RAGUENEAU: Make it a little more lyrical.

FIFTH PASTRY-COOK (showing a dish to Ragueneau): Tarts!

THIRD PASTRY-COOK: (also coming up with a tray covered by a napkin) I’ve baked this in your honor, sir. I hope it will please you. *(He uncovers the tray, and shows a large lyre made of pastry.)*

RAGUENEAU (enchanted): A lyre!

THIRD PASTRY-COOK: Made of pastry dough.

RAGUENEAU (touched): With candied fruit! *(giving him a coin)* Go, drink my health! *(Seeing Lise enter)* Hush! My wife. Quickly, go about your business—and hide that money! *(To Lise, showing her the lyre, with a conscious look)* Is it not beautiful?

LISE: 'Tis ridiculous! *(She puts a pile of papers on the counter.)*

RAGUENEAU: Bags! Good. I thank you. *(He looks at them more closely)* Heavens! My cherished books! The poems of my friends! Torn, dismembered, to make bags for holding biscuits and cakes! You’re as heartless as the Bacchantes who tore Orpheus to pieces!

LISE: I have a right to make use of what your wretched scribblers leave her as their payment!

RAGUENEAU: Groveling ant! Insult not the divine grasshoppers, the sweet singers!

LISE: You never called me such names before that rabble began coming here!

RAGUENEAU: How can you treat poetry with such disrespect?

LISE: 'Faith, 'tis all it's good for.

RAGUENEAU: I shudder to think of what you might do with prose!

*(Cyrano enters hurriedly.)*

Scene 2.III.

Ragueneau, Lise, Cyrano, then the musketeer.

CYRANO: What time is it?
RAGUENEAU (bowing low): Six o'clock.

CYRANO (with emotion): In one hour's time! *(He paces up and down the shop.)*

RAGUENEAU (following him): Congratulations!

CYRANO: For what?

RAGUENEAU: I saw your duel!

CYRANO: Which one?

RAGUENEAU: At the Hotel de Bourgogne!

CYRANO (contemptuously): Ah!...the duel!

RAGUENEAU (admiringly): A duel in verse!

LISE: He talks of nothing else!

CYRANO: I'm glad to hear it.

RAGUENEAU (lunging with a spit that he has picked up): “When I end the refrain, I draw blood!...When I end the refrain, I draw blood!” Magnificent! *(with growing enthusiasm)* “When I end 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 draw blood!” *(stands up straight)* Ah, what a ballade!

LISE (to Cyrano, who, as he passes by the counter, has absently shaken hands with her): What's wrong with your hand?

CYRANO: It's nothing, a slight cut.

RAGUENEAU: Have you been in some danger?

CYRANO: None whatsoever.

LISE (shaking her finger at him): Methinks you speak not the truth in saying that!

CYRANO: Did you see my nose quiver when I spoke? 'Faith, it must have been a monstrous lie that should move it! *(Changing his tone)* I’m waiting for someone here. Leave us alone, and disturb us not!
RAGUENEAU: But 'tis impossible; my poets are coming.

LISE (ironically): Oh, ay, for their first meal o' the day!

CYRANO: You will take them away when I give you a signal...What time is it?

RAGUENEAU: Ten minutes after six.

CYRANO (nervously seating himself at Ragueneau's table, and taking a sheet of paper): A pen!

RAGUENEAU (giving him the one from behind his ear): Here.

A MUSKETEER (enters, and in a stentorian voice): Good-day!

(Lise goes up to him quickly.)

CYRANO (turning round): Who's that?

RAGUENEAU: 'Tis a friend of my wife. A mighty warrior—according to what she says.

CYRANO (taking up the pen, and motioning Ragueneau away): Hush! (To himself) I will write, fold it, give it her, and fly! (Throws down the pen) Coward! You don't have the courage to say one word to her! (To Ragueneau) What time is it?

RAGUENEAU: A quarter after six!

CYRANO (to himself): I'm afraid to speak a single one of all the words I have in here. (strikes his chest) But writing is a different matter. (takes his pen again) I'll now put down on paper the love letter that I've already written within myself a hundred times. I have only to look into my soul and copy the words inscribed in it.

(He begins writing. Through the door, he hears voices.)

Scene 2.IV.
Ragueneau, Lise, the musketeer. Cyrano at the little table writing. The poets, dressed in black, their stockings ungartered, and covered with mud.

LISE (entering, to Ragueneau): Here they come, your mud-bespattered friends!

THIRD POET (entering, to Ragueneau): Brother in art!

FIFTH POET (to Ragueneau, shaking his hands): Dear brother!

THIRD POET: (He sniffs) Marry! it smells good in here! O culinary god! Apollo of the kitchen!
RAGUENEAU (whom they surround and embrace): Ah! how quick a man feels at his ease with them!

THIRD POET: We were delayed by a crowd gathered at the Port de Nesle. Eight bandits had been felled by swordplay and lay bleeding on the pavement.

CYRANO (raising his head a minute): Eight? I thought there were only seven. (He goes on writing.)

RAGUENEAU (to Cyrano): Know you who might be the hero of the fray?

CYRANO (carelessly): Not I.

LISE (to the musketeer): And you?

THE MUSKETEER (twirling his mustache): Perhaps!

CYRANO (writing a little way off:--he is heard murmuring a word from time to time): 'I love thee!'

THIRD POET: We were told that one man had routed a whole band of assassins! There were pikes and clubs strewn all over the ground!

CYRANO (writing): ...'Thine eyes'...

THIRD POET: And they were picking up hats all the way to the Quai d'Orfevres!

CYRANO (same play): ...'Thy lips'...

FIFTH POET: Must have been some ferocious giant!

CYRANO (same play): ...'And when I see thee come, I faint for fear.'

FIFTH POET (filching a cake): What have you been writing, Ragueneau?

CYRANO (same play): ...'Who worships thee'... (He stops, just as he is about to sign, and gets up, slipping the letter into his doublet): No need I sign, since I give it her myself.

RAGUENEAU (to fifth poet): I have put a recipe into verse.

THIRD POET (seating himself by a plate of cream-puffs): Go to! Let us hear these verses!

FIFTH POET: We listen.

RAGUENEAU (who has put himself ready for reciting, cleared his throat, settled his cap, struck an attitude): A recipe in verse!
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 their edge, then, drop by drop,
In its little dainty bed
Your cream shed:
In the oven place each mold:
Reappearing, softly browned,
The renowned
Almond tartlets you behold!

THE POETS (with mouths crammed full): Exquisite! Delicious!

THIRD POET (choking): Homph!

(They continue to stuff their faces.)

CYRANO (who has been watching, goes toward Ragueneau): Haven’t you ever noticed how they stuff themselves while they listen to your verse?

RAGUENEAU: Of course, but I never let them know it, because I don’t want to embarrass them. I take double pleasure in reciting my compositions like that: I satisfy my little weakness, and at the same time I feed brother poets who would otherwise go hungry.

CYRANO (clapping him on the shoulder): You’re a fine fellow, Ragueneau!
(Ragueneau goes after his friends. Cyrano follows him with his eyes, then, rather sharply)
Ho there! Lise!
(Lise, who is talking tenderly to the musketeer, starts, and comes down toward Cyrano) So this fine captain is laying siege to you?

LISE (offended): One haughty glance of my eye can conquer any man that should dare venture aught 'gainst my virtue.

CYRANO: Pooh! Conquering eyes, methinks, are oft conquered eyes.
LISE (choking with anger): But--

CYRANO (incisively): I like Ragueneau well, and so--mark me, Dame Lise--I permit not that he be rendered a laughing-stock by any. . .

LISE: But. . .

CYRANO (who has raised his voice so as to be heard by the gallant): 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): How now? Is this your courage? Why turn you not a jest on his nose?

THE MUSKETEER: His nose? Oh, his nose!... (He goes quickly farther away; Lise follows him.)

CYRANO (from the doorway, signing to Ragueneau to draw the poets away): Psst! . . .

RAGUENEAU (showing them the door on the right): We shall be more private there. . .

CYRANO (impatiently): Psst! Psst! . . .

RAGUENEAU (drawing them farther): To read poetry, 'tis better here. . .

THIRD POET (despairingly, with his mouth full): What! leave the cakes?. . .

FIFTH POET: Never! Let's take them with us! (They all follow Ragueneau in procession, after sweeping all the cakes off the trays.)

Scene 2.V.
Cyrano, Roxane, the duenna.

CYRANO:
Ah! I’ll give her my letter if I feel that there’s the slightest hope! (Roxane, masked, followed by the duenna, appears at the glass pane of the door. He opens quickly) Come in! (Walking up to the duenna) Two words with you, Duenna.

THE DUENNA: Have several, if you like.

CYRANO: Are you fond of sweet things?

THE DUENNA: Ay, I could eat myself sick on them!

CYRANO (quickly taking some of the paper bags on the counter): Good. See you these two sonnets of Monsieur Beuserade. . .
THE DUENNA (disappointed): Oh…

CYRANO: . . .Which I fill for you with cream cakes!

THE DUENNA (changing her expression): Ah!

CYRANO: What say you to cream puffs?

THE DUENNA: I hold them in high regard.

CYRANO: Here are six of them for you! And in these verses of Chapelain I’ll place a piece of butter cake. You really like pastry, do you?

THE DUENNA: I adore them!

CYRANO (filling her arms with the bags): Pleasure me then; go eat them all in the street.

THE DUENNA: But. . .

CYRANO (pushing her out): And come not back till the very last crumb be eaten!

(He shuts the door, comes down toward Roxane, and, uncovering, stands at a respectful distance from her.)

Scene 2.VI.
Cyrano, Roxane.

CYRANO: May this day be blessed above all others: the day when you ceased to forget my existence and came here to tell me…to tell me?

ROXANE: First let me thank you for humbling that arrogant fop with your sword yesterday, because he’s the man whom a certain great lord, infatuated with me…

CYRANO: Ha, De Guiche?

ROXANE (casting down her eyes): Sought to impose on me. . . for husband. . .

CYRANO: A husband for the sake of form? (Bows) I’m happy to know that I fought not for my ugly nose, but for your beautiful eyes.

ROXANE: Confession next!…But, before I make my confession, you must be once again that brother-friend with whom I used to play by the lake-side!

CYRANO: Ay, you would come each spring to Bergerac!
ROXANE: Mind you the reeds you cut to make your swords?

CYRANO: While you wove corn-straw plaits for your dolls' hair!

ROXANE: Those were the days of games!

CYRANO: And blackberries!

ROXANE: In those days you did everything I bid!

CYRANO: Ah, yes!

ROXANE: Was I pretty then?

CYRANO: You weren’t ugly.

ROXANE: Sometimes you came to me with hand bleeding from some accident and I acted as if I were your mother, trying to make my voice stern. (Takes his hand.) “What’s this?” I’d say. “Have you hurt yourself again?” (Looks at his hand) Oh! Even now! You’ve done it again! (Cyrano tries to withdraw his hand) No! Let me see! You’re still hurting yourself, at your age! How did you do it this time?

CYRANO: I got it--playing at the Porte de Nesle.

ROXANE (seating herself by the table, and dipping her handkerchief in a glass of water): Give here!

CYRANO (sitting by her): You still mother me.

ROXANE: And tell me, while I wipe away the blood, how many ’gainst you?

CYRANO: Oh, not quite a hundred.

ROXANE: Come, tell me!

CYRANO: No, let be. But you, come tell the thing, just now, you dared not. . .

ROXANE (keeping his hand): Yes, I can say it now that the past has returned to encourage me. Here it is. I’m in love with someone.

CYRANO: Ah! . . .

ROXANE: But with one who knows not.

CYRANO: Ah! . . .
ROXANE: Not yet.

CYRANO: Ah! . . .

ROXANE: But he will know soon.

CYRANO: Ah! . . .

ROXANE: A poor youth who all this time has loved timidly, from afar, and dares not speak. . .

CYRANO: Ah! . . .

ROXANE: Let me keep your hand it feels feverish. . .But I’ve seen a confession of love trembling on his lips.

CYRANO: Ah! . . .

ROXANE (bandaging his hand with her handkerchief): And it so happens, cousin, that he’s a member of your regiment.

CYRANO: Ah! . . .

ROXANE (laughing): —A cadet in your company!

CYRANO: Ah! . . .

ROXANE: His face shines with wit and intelligence. He’s proud, noble, young, fearless and handsome . . .

CYRANO (rising suddenly, very pale): Handsome!

ROXANE: Why, what ails you?

CYRANO: Nothing; ’tis. . . (He shows his hand, smiling) . . .this scratch.

ROXANE: Well, I love him, even though I’ve never seen him anywhere but in the theater.

CYRANO: How? You have never spoken?

ROXANE: Eyes can speak.

CYRANO: How know you then that he. . .?

ROXANE: Oh! people talk.

CYRANO: You say he’s a Cadet?
ROXANE: In the Guards.

CYRANO: His name?

ROXANE: Baron Christian de Neuvillette.

CYRANO: Neuvillette? There is no Cadet by that name?

ROXANE: He began serving only this morning, under Captain Carbon de Castel-Jaloux.

CYRANO: You’ve lost your heart so quickly! But my poor girl…

THE DUENNA (opening the door): The cakes are eaten, Monsieur Bergerac!

CYRANO: Then read the verses printed on the bags! (She goes out) . . . My poor girl, you’re so fond of fine words and gracious wit—what if he should prove to be an uncultured savage?

ROXANE: Impossible. He has the hair of one of d’Urfe’s heroes!

CYRANO: His speech may be as crude as his hair is elegant.

ROXANE: No, there’s delicacy in everything he says. I feel it!

CYRANO: All words are fair that lurk ’neath fair mustache, but what if he’s a fool?

ROXANE (stamping her foot): Then I’ll die! There, are you satisfied?

CYRANO (after a pause): You brought me here to tell me this? I confess I don’t quite understand why.

ROXANE: It is because someone terrified me yesterday by telling me that most of your company are Gascons, and…

CYRANO: And that we always provoke a duel with any newcomer who gains the favor of being admitted among us without being a Gascon? Is that what you were told?

ROXANE: Yes. You can imagine how I trembled for him when I heard it!

CYRANO (aside): And with good reason!

ROXANE: But when, last night I saw you,—brave, invincible,—punish that dandy, fearless hold your own against those brutes, I thought— I thought, if he whom all fear, all— if he would only. . .

CYRANO: Very well. I’ll protect your little baron.
ROXANE: Ah! You'll promise me you will do this for me? I've always held you as a tender friend.

CYRANO: Ay, ay.

ROXANE: Then you will be his friend?

CYRANO: I swear!

ROXANE: And he shall fight no duels, promise!

CYRANO: None.

ROXANE: You are kind, cousin! Now I must be gone. (She puts on her mask and veil quickly; then, absently) You have not told me of your battle last night. It must have been incredible! Bid him write to me! (She sends him a kiss with her fingers) How good you are!

CYRANO: Ay! Ay!

ROXANE: A hundred men against you? Now, farewell. We are great friends!

CYRANO: Ay, ay!

ROXANE: Oh, bid him write! You'll tell me all one day--A hundred men!-- Ah, brave! . . . How brave!

CYRANO (bowing to her): I have fought better since.

(She goes out. Cyrano stands motionless, with eyes on the ground. A silence. The door (right) opens. Ragueneau looks in.)

Scene 2.VII.
Cyrano, Ragueneau, poets, Carbon de Castel-Jaloux, the cadets, a crowd, then De Guiche.

RAGUENEAU: Can we come in?

CYRANO (without stirring): Yes. . .

(Ragueneau signs to his friends, and they come in. At the same time, by door at back, enters Carbon de Castel-Jaloux, in Captain's uniform. He makes gestures of surprise on seeing Cyrano.)

CARBON: Here he is!

CYRANO (raising his head): Captain!
CARBON (delightedly): Our hero! We heard all! 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 drinking in the tavern across the street.

CYRANO: I...

CARBON (going to the door and calling across the street in a voice of thunder): He won't come! Our hero sulks!

A VOICE (outside): Ah! Sandious!

(Tumult outside. Noise of boots and swords is heard approaching.)

CARBON (to Cyrano): They come!

CADETS (entering): Mille dious! Capdedious! Pocapdedious!

RAGUENEAU (drawing back startled): Gentlemen, are you all from Gascony?

THE CADETS: All!

THIRD CADET (to Cyrano): Bravo!

CYRANO: Baron!

FIFTH CADET (shaking his hands): Vivat!

CYRANO: Baron!

THIRD CADET: Come! I must embrace you!

LE BRET (entering, and running up to Cyrano): They're looking for you! There’s a wild crowd led by those who were with you last night…

CYRANO (alarmed): What! Have you told them where to find me?

LE BRET (rubbing his hands): Yes! (in a low voice, smiling, to Cyrano) And Roxane?

CYRANO (quickly): Hush!
CYRANO: Meseems that yesterday I had not all these friends!

LE BRET (delighted): Success!

CYRANO: Enough! Enough!

(A movement in the crowd. De Guiche appears.)

LE BRET (to Cyrano): Here is Monsieur de Guiche. (A murmur—every one makes way) He comes from the Marshal of Gassion!

DE GUICHE (bowing to Cyrano): The Marshal has just learned of your latest exploit and wishes me to express his admiration of you.

CYRANO (bowing): The Marshal is a judge of valor.

DE GUICHE: He could not have believed the thing, unless these gentlemen had sworn they witnessed it.

THIRD CADET: With our own eyes!

LE BRET (aside to Cyrano, who appears to be distracted): Aren’t you going to…

CYRANO: Hush!

LE BRET: But. . . You suffer?

CYRANO (starting): Before this rabble?--I? . . . (He draws himself up, twirls his mustache, and throws back his shoulders) Wait! . . . You shall see!

DE GUICHE: In feats of arms, already your career abounded. You serve with those wild Gascons, don’t you?

CYRANO: Ay, with the Cadets.

FIFTH CADET (in a terrible voice): With us!

DE GUICHE (looking at the cadets, ranged behind Cyrano): Ah! Then all these haughty-looking gentleman are the famous…

CARBON: Cyrano!

CYRANO: Ay, Captain!

CARBON: Since all my company's assembled here, pray favor me,--present them to my lord!
CYRANO (making two steps toward De Guiche): My Lord de Guiche, permit that I present (pointing to the cadets) the bold Cadets of Gascony, of Carbon of Castel-Jaloux!

DE GUICHE: My uncle, Cardinal Richelieu, was amused by your dashing combat yesterday. I’m willing to help you with him, if you like.

LE BRET (overjoyed): Great Heavens!

DE GUICHE: You’ve written a play, I believe...

LE BRET (in Cyrano's ear): Your Agrippine will soon be performed, my friend! You'll see it staged at last!

DE GUICHE: Take them to him.

CYRANO (beginning to be tempted and attracted): In sooth, I would. . .

DE GUICHE: He knows a great deal about the theater. He’ll rewrite a few lines...

CYRANO (whose face stiffens at once): Impossible, sir. My blood curdles at the thought of having a single comma changed.

DE GUICHE: But when a piece of writing pleases him, he pays very well for it.

CYRANO: He couldn’t pay as well as I do. When I write something that I like, I reward the author by reciting it to myself.

DE GUICHE: You are proud.

CYRANO: Really? You have noticed that?

THIRD CADET (entering, with a string of old battered plumed beaver hats, full of holes, slung on his sword): Look, Cyrano, at the strange feathered game we took in the street this morning! The men you routed seem to have run away too fast for their hats to follow them!

CARBON: The spoils of war!

ALL (laughing): Ha ha ha!

CARBON: The man who hired those cowardly brutes must be in a rage today! Who was it?

DE GUICHE: I myself. (The laughter stops) I hired them for a task one doesn’t do oneself: punishing a drunken rhymester.

(Uncomfortable silence)
THIRD CADET (aside, to Cyrano, showing him the hats): What shall we do with these? Make them into a stew?

CYRANO (taking the sword and, with a salute, dropping the hats at De Guiche's feet): Sir, pray be good enough to render them back to your friends.

DE GUICHE (rising, sharply): Bring my sedan chair immediately. I go. (To Cyrano) As to you, sirrah… (controlling himself, smiling) Have you read 'Don Quixote'?

CYRANO: I have! And doff my hat at th' mad knight-errant's name.

DE GUICHE: I counsel you to study... the windmill chapter!

CYRANO (bowing): Chapter thirteen.

DE GUICHE: For when one tilts 'gainst windmills--it may chance...

CYRANO: Tilt I 'gainst those who change with every breeze?

DE GUICHE: When one attacks windmills, their great arms often hurl one down into the mud.

CYRANO: Or upward--to the stars!

(De Guiche goes out, and mounts into his chair. The other lords go away whispering together. Le Bret goes to the door with them. The crowd disperses.)

Scene 2.VIII.
Cyrano, Le Bret, the cadets, who are eating and drinking at the tables right and left.

CYRANO (bowing mockingly to those who go out without daring to salute him): Gentlemen... Gentlemen...

LE BRET (coming back, despairingly): This time you’ve outdone yourself!

CYRANO: Must I listen to your complaining again?

LE BRET: You shatter every opportunity that comes your way! You’ll have to admit that you go too far!

CYRANO: Yes, I go too far.

LE BRET (triumphantly): You admit it!

CYRANO: But for principle--example too.-- I think 'tis well to go too far in that direction.

LE BRET: If you would only soften your haughty spirit a little, fortune and glory would...
CYRANO: But what would I have to do? Cover myself with the protection of some powerful patron? No, thank you. Dedicate poems to financiers, as so many others do? Change myself into a buffoon in the hope of seeing a minister give me a condescending smile? No, thank you. Swallow insults every day? Crawl till the skin of my belly is rubbed raw? Dirty my knees and make my spine as limber as an eel’s? No, thank you. Develop the art of sitting on both sides of the fence at once? Pay for an ounce of favor with a ton of flattery? Use weapon as stepping-stones? No, thank you. Be always scheming and afraid of schemes? Like making visits better than writing poetry? Make humble requests? Seek introductions to useful people? No thank you! No! No! I prefer to lead a different kind of life. I sing, dream, laugh, and go where I please, alone and free. My eyes see clearly and my voice is strong. I’m quarrelsome or benign as it suits my pleasure, always ready to fight a duel or write a poem at the drop of a hat. I dream of flying to the moon but give no thought to fame or fortune. I write only what comes out of myself, and I make it my modest rule to be satisfied with whatever flowers, fruit, or even leaves I gather, as long as they’re from my own garden. Then if I should happen to gain some small success I’m not obliged to render any of it unto Caeser. In short, I scorn to be like parasitic ivy, even though I’m not an oak. I may not rise very high, but I’ll climb alone!

LE BRET: Be alone if you like, but why have everyone against you? How the devil did you acquire that appalling mania for making enemies wherever you go?

CYRANO: Let’s call it my vice. I love to be hated. If you only knew how stimulating it is to be under the murderous fire of hostile eyes, and how amusing it is to watch faces turn venomous with envy or sweaty with fear! The soft friendship that surrounds others is like one of those loose, floating Italian collars that leave your neck free to bend in all directions: you’re more comfortable, but your head is less erect. But the hatred that presses in upon me is like a starched Spanish ruff whose stiffness forces me to hold my head high. Each new enemy is a pleat that constrains me still more, yet adds to my splendor, because hatred is both a yoke and a halo of glory!

LE BRET (after a silence, taking his arm): Proclaim your pride and bitterness loudly to the world, but to me speak softly and tell me simply that she loves you not.

CYRANO (vehemently): Hush!

(Christian has just entered, and mingled with the cadets, who do not speak to him; he has seated himself at a table, where Lise serves him.)

Scene 2.IX.
Cyrano, Le Bret, the cadets, Christian de Neuvillette.

FIFTH CADET (seated at a table, glass in hand): Cyrano! (Cyrano turns round) The story!

CYRANO: Not now. Later.

(He goes up on Le Bret's arm. They talk in low voices.)
THIRD CADET (rising and coming down): The story of Cyrano’s combat will be the best lesson…(he stops before the table where Christian is seated)…for this timid young apprentice!

CHRISTIAN (raising his head): 'Prentice! Who?

THIRD CADET: This sickly Northern greenhorn!

CHRISTIAN: Sickly?

THIRD CADET (mockingly): Hark! Monsieur de Neuvillette, this in your ear: There’s a certain object that we all avoid naming as scrupulously as we would refrain from mentioning rope in the house of a man whose father had been hanged.

CHRISTIAN: What may that be?

FIFTH CADET (in a terrible voice): See here! (He puts his finger three times, mysteriously, on his nose) Do you understand?

CHRISTIAN: Oh! 'tis the. . .

THIRD CADET: Hush! Never speak that word! (Points to Cyrano, who is still talking with Le Bret) If you do, you’ll have him to deal with!

FIFTH CADET (who has meanwhile come up noiselessly to sit on the table--whispering behind him): Hark! He put two snuffling men to death, in rage, for the sole reason they spoke through their nose!

THIRD CADET (in a hollow voice, darting on all-fours from under the table, where he had crept): The slightest allusion to that protuberance brings an untimely death! (clapping him on the shoulder) One word is enough! Even a gesture! If you take out your handkerchief, you’ve taken out your shroud!

(Silence. All, with crossed arms, look at Christian. He rises and goes over to Carbon de Castel-Jaloux, who is talking to an officer, and feigns to see nothing.)

CHRISTIAN: Captain.

CARBON (turning and looking at him from head to foot): Sir!

CHRISTIAN: What should one do when southerners become too boastful?

CARBON: Give them proof that one may be a Northerner, yet brave!

(He turns his back on him.)
CHRISTIAN: I thank you.

FIFTH CADET (to Cyrano): Now the tale!

ALL: The tale!

CYRANO (coming toward them): The tale? . . . (All bring their stools up, and group round him, listening eagerly. Christian is astride a chair) Well, I was walking alone to meet them. The moon was gleaming like a big silver watch in the sky when suddenly some heavenly hand slipped it into a pocket of clouds. The sky was black as pitch and there were no lights in the street. I couldn’t see…

CHRISTIAN: Beyond the end of your nose.

(Silence. All slowly rise, looking in terror at Cyrano, who has stopped—dumbfounded. Pause.)

CYRANO: Who is this man?

THIRD CADET (whispering): He came to us only this morning?

CYRANO (making a step toward Christian): This morning?

CARBON (in a low voice): Yes. His name is Baron de Neuvil—

CYRANO (checking himself): Oh! (His face takes an expression of shock, then anger, and he makes a movement as though to attack Christian) I… (controlling himself) Very well… As I was saying… (with a burst of rage in his voice)… Mordious! (continues in a natural tone) It was so dark that I couldn’t see anything. (The CADETS are amazed. They sit down again, staring at him) I walked on, thinking that for the sake of a poor drunkard I was about to anger some powerful nobleman who would surely…

CHRISTIAN: Resent your nosiness.

(Every one starts up. Christian balances on his chair.)

CYRANO (in a choked voice): … who would surely bear a grudge against me, and that I was rashly putting…

CHRISTIAN: Your nose into…

CYRANO: … myself into a bad situation, because that nobleman might…

CHRISTIAN: Look down his nose at you.
CYRANO (wiping sweat from his forehead): …be able to make things difficult for me. But I said to myself, “Come, Gascon, do what has to be done. Onward, Cyrano!” A moment later, someone…

CHRISTIAN: Nosed you out in the darkness.

CYRANO: …lunged at me with his sword. I parried the thrust and suddenly found myself…

CHRISTIAN: Nose to nose. . .

CYRANO (bounding on to him): No! By all the saints in heaven, I’ll…(The Gascons crowd forward to see better, but as soon as he is in front of Christian he again controls himself and continues his story) I found myself facing a hundred shouting brutes, all smelling…

CHRISTIAN: With their noses, of course.

CYRANO (white, but smiling): …of onions and cheap wine. I plunged into the midst of them…

CHRISTIAN: Nose first!

CYRANO: …and immediately cut down two of them. As I was attacking a third, I saw a sword…

CHRISTIAN: Right under your nose!

CYRANO (bellowing): Out! All of you! Get out!

(The CADETS all hurry towards the doors)

FIFTH CADET: The tiger wakes!

CYRANO: Every man, out! Leave me alone with him!

THIRD CADET: He’ll soon be turned into mincemeat!

RAGUENEAU: Mincemeat?

THIRD CADET: Yes, ready to be baked into one of your pies!

CARBON: Let us be gone.

THIRD CADET: There won’t be anything left of him!

FIFTH CADET: It makes me tremble just to think of what’s going to happen to him!

THIRD CADET (shutting door right): Something too horrible!
(All have gone out by different doors, some by the staircase. Cyrano and Christian are face to face, looking at each other for a moment.)

**Scene 2.X.**
Cyrano, Christian.

CYRANO: Embrace me now!

CHRISTIAN: Sir...

CYRANO: You are brave.

CHRISTIAN: Oh! but...

CYRANO: Nay, I insist.

CHRISTIAN: Pray tell me...

CYRANO: Come, embrace! I am her brother.

CHRISTIAN: Whose brother?

CYRANO: Hers ' faith! Roxane's!

CHRISTIAN (rushing up to him): O heavens! Her brother. . .?

CYRANO: Cousin--brother! . . .the same thing!

CHRISTIAN: And she has told you. . .?

CYRANO: All!

CHRISTIAN: She loves me? Say!

CYRANO: Maybe!

CHRISTIAN (taking his hands): How glad I am to meet you, Sir!

CYRANO: That is rather a sudden change of feeling.

CHRISTIAN: I ask your pardon. . .

CYRANO (looking at him, with his hand on his shoulder): It’s true: you are a handsome devil!

CHRISTIAN: If only you knew, sir, how much I admire you!
CYRANO: But all those noses?

CHRISTIAN: I take them all back!

CYRANO: Roxane expects a letter from you this evening.

CHRISTIAN: Woe the day!

CYRANO: What?

CHRISTIAN: I am lost if I but ope my lips!

CYRANO: Why so?

CHRISTIAN: I am a fool--could die for shame!

CYRANO: None is a fool who knows himself a fool. And you did not attack me like a fool.

CHRISTIAN: Words come easy to anyone when he wants to pick a quarrel. I may have a quick, soldierly wit, but with women I’m always at a loss for anything to say. Their eyes show interest when I pass by, but…

CYRANO: Aren’t their hearts also interested when you stop?

CHRISTIAN: No! for I am one of those men--tongue-tied, I know it—I cannot speak of love.

CYRANO: I have the feeling that if my features had been shaped more harmoniously, I would have been one of those men who do know how to speak of love.

CHRISTIAN: Oh, to express one's thoughts gracefully!

CYRANO: . . .To be a musketeer, with handsome face!

CHRISTIAN: Roxane is so elegant and refined—I'm sure to prove a disappointment to her!

CYRANO (looking at him): Had I but such an interpreter to speak my soul!

CHRISTIAN (with despair): Eloquence! Where to find it?

CYRANO (abruptly): That I lend, if you lend me your handsome victor-charms; blended, we make a hero of romance!

CHRISTIAN: How so?

CYRANO: Think you you can repeat what things I daily teach your tongue?
CHRISTIAN: I…

CYRANO: Roxane shall never have a disillusion! Together, we can win her heart!

CHRISTIAN: But, Cyrano . . .

CYRANO: Will you, I say?

CHRISTIAN: You frighten me!

CYRANO: Your only fear is that you’ll chill her heart when you speak to her, but if she hears my words from your lips, she’ll soon be aflame!

CHRISTIAN: Your eyes are shining…

CYRANO: Will you?

CHRISTIAN: Will it please you so?

CYRANO (madly): It! . . .(Then calmly, business-like) It would amuse me! It is an experiment that would tempt any poet. Shall we complete each other? We’ll walk together: you in the light, I in the shadows. I’ll make you eloquent, you’ll make me handsome.

CHRISTIAN: But I must write her a letter without delay! I’ll never be able to…

CYRANO (taking out the letter he had written): Here’s your letter!

CHRISTIAN: What?

CYRANO: Take it! Look, it wants but the address.

CHRISTIAN: But I. . .

CYRANO: Fear nothing. Send it. It will suit.

CHRISTIAN: Had you already…

CYRANO: I always have a letter in my pocket, written to some imaginary lady, because I’m one of those men whose only sweethearts are dreams breathed into the bubble of a name. You can change my fantasy to reality. Here take it.

CHRISTIAN: Since you wrote it with no specific woman in mind, how can it fit Roxane?

CYRANO: ’Twill fit like a glove!
CHRISTIAN: But. . .

CYRANO: Ah, credulity of love! Roxanne will think each word inspired by herself!

CHRISTIAN: Ah, my friend!

(He throws himself into Cyrano's arms. They remain thus.)

Scene 2.XI.
Cyrano, Christian, the Gascons, the musketeer, Lise.

THIRD CADET (half opening the door): Nothing…A deathly silence…I dare not look. . .
(fHe puts his head in) What?

FIFTH CADET: I can’t believe my eyes!

THE MUSKETEER (mockingly): Well!

CARBON: Our demon has become a saint? Struck on one nostril--lo! he turns the other!

MUSKETEER: Then we may speak about his nose, henceforth! (Calling to Lise, boastfully) Lise, see here! (approaches Cyrano and insolently stares at his nose) What’s that long thing on your face, sir? It reminds me of something, but I can’t recall what it is.

CYRANO: Let me help you by jarring your memory. (Slaps him. The CADETS are delighted to see Cyrano behaving like himself again. They caper joyfully)

Curtain.

Act III.
Roxane's Kiss.

Scene 3.I.
Cyrano, the duenna. Then Roxane.

THE DUENNA (rising, and calling up to the open window): Roxane, are you ready? They wait for us!

ROXANE'S VOICE (from the window): I will but put me on a cloak!

THE DUENNA: Ay, indeed! (Calling up to the window) Roxane, quickly, or we shall miss the discourse on the Tender Passion!

ROXANE'S VOICE: I come! I come!

(A sound of stringed instruments approaching.)
ROXANE (coming out of the house): Ah! How handsome he is, how brilliant a wit! And--how well I love him!

CYRANO (smiling): Christian has so brilliant a wit?

ROXANE: Brighter than even your own, cousin!

CYRANO: Be it so, with all my heart!

ROXANE: Ah! methinks 'twere impossible that there could breathe a man on this earth skilled to say as sweetly as he all the pretty nothings that mean so much—that mean all! At times his mind seems far away, the Muse says naught—and then, presto! he speaks—bewitchingly! enchantingly!

CYRANO (incredulously): Really?

ROXANE: Just like a man! Because he’s handsome, you think he has to be dull witted!

CYRANO: Does he speak well about matters of the heart?

ROXANE: Not well—superbly!

CYRANO: How is he with the pen?

ROXANE: Still better! Listen—here—(Reciting) 'The more of my poor heart you take The larger grows my heart!' (Triumphantly to Cyrano) How like you those lines?

CYRANO: Pooh!

ROXANE: And thus it goes on... 
'And, since some target I must show For Cupid's cruel dart, 
Oh, if mine own you deign to keep, 
Then give me your sweet heart!'

CYRANO: First he has too much heart, then not enough. He can’t seem to make up his mind.

ROXANE: You’re exasperating! You only talk like that because you are jealous…

CYRANO (starting): What mean you?

ROXANE: …of the way he writes! Listen and tell me if you think anything could be more tender? 
'My heart to yours sounds but one cry: 
If kisses fast could flee
By letter, then with your sweet lips
My letters read should be!
If kisses could be writ with ink,
If kisses fast could flee!

CYRANO (smiling approvingly in spite of himself): Well, those lines are... *(catches himself and continues in a disdainful tone)*... rather affected.

ROXANE: And this... 

CYRANO (enchanted): You know his letters by heart?

ROXANE: Every one of them!

CYRANO: That’s quite flattering!

ROXANE: He is a master of eloquence!

CYRANO (modestly): Let’s not exaggerate...

ROXANE: Ay, I say it—a master!

CYRANO: Very well, then... a master!

THE DUENNA (coming down quickly): Monsieur de Guiche is coming! *(To Cyrano, pushing him toward the house)* In with you! 'twere best he see you not; it might perchance put him on the scent. . .

ROXANE (to Cyrano): Ay, of my own dear secret! He loves me, and is powerful, and, if he knew, then all were lost! Marry, he could well deal a deathblow to my love!

CYRANO (entering the house): I’ll do as you wish.

*(De Guiche appears.)*

**Scene 3.II.**
Roxane, De Guiche, the duenna standing a little way off.

ROXANE (courtesying to De Guiche): I was going out.

DE GUICHE: I come to say goodbye.

ROXANE: Whither go you?

DE GUICHE: To the war. Tonight. I am ordered away. We are to besiege Arras.
ROXANE: Ah—to besiege?

DE GUICHE: Ay. My departure seems to leave you cold.

ROXANE: Nay...

DE GUICHE: For my part, I am heartbroken. Will I ever see you again? If so, when?...Do you know that I’ve been made a colonel?

ROXANE (indifferently): Bravo!

DE GUICHE: Of the Guards regiment.

ROXANE (startled): What! the Guards?

DE GUICHE: Ay, where serves your cousin, the swaggering boaster. I will find a way to revenge myself on him at Arras.

ROXANE (choking): What mean you? The Guards go to Arras?

DE GUICHE (laughing): Of course: that’s my regiment.

ROXANE (falling seated on the bench—aside): Christian!

DE GUICHE: What ails you?

ROXANE (moved deeply): I am in despair at...at what you’ve told me...When a woman cares for a man and learns that he’s going to war...

DE GUICHE (surprised and delighted): Why did you wait for the day of my departure to say such a tender thing to me for the first time?

ROXANE (collected, and fanning herself): You say you’re going to take revenge on my cousin?

DE GUICHE: Do you side with him?

ROXANE: Nay—against him!

DE GUICHE: Do you see him often?

ROXANE: Very seldom.

DE GUICHE: He is seen everywhere with one of the cadets...(tries to think of the name)...a young man named Neu...Neuvillen...Neuviller...

ROXANE: Tall?
DE GUICHE: No, quite small. Dark hair.

ROXANE: Ay...

DE GUICHE: Handsome!

ROXANE: Not very.

DE GUICHE: But dull.

ROXANE: One would think so, to look at him! (Changing her tone) How mean you to play your revenge on Cyrano? Perchance you think to put him i' the thick of the shots? Nay, believe me, that were a poor vengeance—he would love such a post better than aught else! I know the way to wound his pride far more keenly!

DE GUICHE: What then? Tell . . .

ROXANE: Leave him behind with the dear Cadets when the regiment goes off to fight. Make him sit idly in Paris through the whole war! That’s the best way to torment a man like him.

DE GUICHE (coming nearer): Only a woman could have thought of a trick like that!

ROXANE: He’ll eat his heart out at not being in action, his friends will angrily chew their fingernails, and you’ll be avenged.

DE GUICHE: You love me, then, a little? (She smiles) I would fain—seeing you thus support my cause, Roxane—believe it a proof of love!

ROXANE: It is.

DE GUICHE (showing some sealed papers): Here are the marching orders; they will be sent instantly to each company—except—(He detaches one)—This one! 'Tis that of the Cadets. (He puts it in his pocket) This I keep. (Laughing) Ha! ha! ha! Cyrano! His love of battle! . . . So you can play tricks on people?. . .you, of all ladies!

ROXANE: Sometimes!

DE GUICHE (coming close to her): Oh! how I love you!--to distraction! Listen! To-night--true, I ought to start--but--how leave you now that I feel your heart is touched! Hard by, in the Rue d'Orleans, is a convent founded by Father Athanasius, the syndic of the Capuchins. True that no layman may enter--but--I can settle that with the good Fathers! Their habit sleeves are wide enough to hide me in. 'Tis they who serve Richelieu's private chapel: and from respect to the uncle, fear the nephew. All will deem me gone. I will come to you, masked. Give me leave to wait till tomorrow, sweet Lady Fanciful!
ROXANE: But if it becomes known, your glory will be…

DE GUICHE: Bah!

ROXANE: But the siege—Arras…

DE GUICHE: Never mind! Let me do it!

ROXANE: No!

DE GUICHE: Give me leave!

ROXANE (tenderly): It were my duty to forbid you!

DE GUICHE: Ah!

ROXANE: You must go! (Aside) Christian stays here. (Aloud) I would have you heroic—Antoine!

DE GUICHE: What heavenly words! Do you love…

ROXANE: Yes, I love the man for whom I fear.

DE GUICHE (in an ecstasy): I go now! (kisses her hand) Are you content?

ROXANE: Yes, my friend!

(He goes out.)

THE DUENNA (making behind his back a mocking courtesy): Yes, my friend!

ROXANE (to the duenna): Not 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 3.III.
Roxane, The duenna, Cyrano.

ROXANE: We are going to Clomire's house. (She points to the door opposite) Alcandre and Lysimon are to discourse! If Christian comes, as I feel sure he will, bid him wait for me!

CYRANO (smiling): Very good!

(Roxane and the Duenna exit)

Christian!
Scene 3.IV.
Cyrano, Christian.

CYRANO: I know what we need to know. Prepare your memory: here’s a chance to cover yourself with glory! Why are you looking so unhappy? Come, there’s no time to lose! We’ll hurry to your house and I’ll tell you…

CHRISTIAN: No!

CYRANO: What?

CHRISTIAN: I will wait for Roxane here.

CYRANO: Have you lost your reason? Come, quickly…

CHRISTIAN: No, I tell you! I’m tired of borrowing my letters and speeches, of always playing my part and trembling lest I forget my lines! It was necessary at the beginning and I’m grateful to you for your help, but now that I feel she really loves me, I’m not longer afraid. I’m going to speak for myself.

CYRANO: Mercy!

CHRISTIAN: What makes you think I can’t do it? After all, I’m not so dull! I’m sure I can speak without your guidance now. And in any case I’ll certainly know how to take her in my arms! (Sees Roxane coming) Here she comes. No, Cyrano, don’t leave me!

CYRANO (bowing): Speak for yourself, sir. *(He disappears behind the garden wall)*

Scene 3.V.
Christian, Roxane, the duenna.


CHRISTIAN (sits by her on the bench. A silence): Oh! I love you!

ROXANE (shutting her eyes): Ay, speak to me of love.

CHRISTIAN: I love thee!

ROXANE: That's the theme—now elaborate on it.

CHRISTIAN: I...I love...

ROXANE: Develop your theme!

CHRISTIAN: I love you so much!
ROXANE: Go on…

CHRISTIAN: I…I’d be so happy if you loved me! Tell me that you do, Roxane!

ROXANE (with a little grimace): You’re giving me water when I expected cream! Tell me how you love me.

CHRISTIAN: I love you…very much!

ROXANE: Come, come! Surely you can express your feelings better than that!

CHRISTIAN: (he has moved closer and is now devouring her neck with his eyes) Your neck! I’d like to kiss it…

ROXANE: Christian!

CHRISTIAN: I love you!

ROXANE (half-rising): Again?!

CHRISTIAN (eagerly, detaining her): No, no! I don’t love you!

ROXANE (reseating herself): At least that’s a change.

CHRISTIAN: I adore you!

ROXANE (rising, and going further off): Oh!

CHRISTIAN: I have grown stupid!

ROXANE (dryly): And it displeases me! As it would displease me if you became ugly.

CHRISTIAN: But…

ROXANE: Try to bring back your vanished eloquence!

CHRISTIAN: I…

ROXANE: I know: you love me. Adieu. *(She goes toward her house.)*

CHRISTIAN: Oh, go not yet! Let me tell you…

ROXANE (opening the door): That you adore me? I already know that. No, no! Go away!

CHRISTIAN: But I…
(She shuts the door in his face)

CYRANO (who has re-entered unseen): Congratulations on your success.

Scene 3.VI.
Christian, Cyrano, two pages.

CHRISTIAN: Come to my aid!

CYRANO: Not I!

CHRISTIAN: But I shall die, unless at once I win back her fair favor. (seizing Cyrano’s arm)
Oh, she is there! (The window of the balcony is now lighted up.)

CYRANO (moved): Her window!

CHRISTIAN: Oh! I shall die!

CYRANO: Speak lower!

CHRISTIAN (in a whisper): I shall die!

CYRANO: The night is dark. . .

CHRISTIAN: Well!

CYRANO: All can be repaired. Stand there, poor wretch, in front of the balcony! I'll go beneath and prompt your words to you. . .

CHRISTIAN: But. . .

CYRANO: Hold your tongue!

THE PAGES (reappearing at back--to Cyrano): Ho!

CYRANO: Hush! (He signs to them to speak softly.)

FIRST PAGE (in a low voice): We've played the serenade you bade to Montfleury!

CYRANO (quickly, in a low voice): Go! Lurk in ambush there, one at this street corner, and one at that. If you see anyone coming, play you a tune!

SECOND PAGE: What tune?
CYRANO: Happy, if a woman comes—for a man, sad! *(The pages disappear, one at each street corner. To Christian)* Call her!

CHRISTIAN: Roxane!

CYRANO (picking up stones and throwing them at the window): Just a moment. First, a few pebbles…

ROXANE (half-opening the casement): Who calls me?

CHRISTIAN: I!

ROXANE: Who?

CHRISTIAN: Christian!

ROXANE (disdainfully): Oh, you.

CHRISTIAN: I would speak with you.

CYRANO (under the balcony—to Christian): Good. Speak soft and low.

ROXANE: No, you speak stupidly!

CHRISTIAN: Oh, pity me!

ROXANE: No! You love me no more!

CHRISTIAN (prompted by Cyrano): Impossible!...I could no more…stop loving you…than I could stop…the rising of the sun!

ROXANE (who was about to shut the window, pausing): That is a trifle better.

CHRISTIAN: My cruel love…has never ceased to grow…in my tormented soul…since the day…when it was born there.

ROXANE (coming out on to the balcony): Better…but since your love is cruel, you were foolish not to smother it at birth.

CHRISTIAN: I tried without success…It had the strength of Hercules…from the first moment of it’s life.

ROXANE: Still better!

CHRISTIAN: And so it strangled…without effort…the two serpents…of Pride and Doubt.
ROXANE (leaning over the balcony): Very good… but why do you speak so haltingly? Has your imagination gone lame?

CYRANO (drawing Christian under the balcony, and slipping into his place): Shh! This is becoming too difficult!

ROXANE: Your words are hesitant tonight. Why?

CYRANO (imitating Christian— in a whisper): Night has come. . . In the dusk they grope their way to find your ear.

ROXANE: But my words find no such difficulty.

CYRANO: They go straight to my heart, a goal too large to miss, whereas your ears are small. And your words travel swiftly because they fall, while mine must climb.

ROXANE: They seem to be climbing better now.

CYRANO: They’ve finally become accustomed to that exercise.

ROXANE: In truth, I seem to speak from distant heights!

CYRANO: True, far above; at such a height 'twere death iff a hard word from you fell on my heart.

ROXANE (moving): I will come down. . .

CYRANO (hastily): No!

ROXANE (showing him the bench under the balcony): Then climb up on that bench!

CYRANO (starting back alarmed): No!

ROXANE: Why will you not?

CYRANO (more and more moved): Stay awhile! 'Tis sweet,. . . The rare occasion, when our hearts can speak, our selves unseen, unseeing!

ROXANE: Why—unseen?

CYRANO: Ay, it is sweet! Half hidden,—half revealed—You see the dark folds of my shrouding cloak, and I, the glimmering whiteness of your dress: I but a shadow— you a radiance fair! Know you what such a moment holds for me? If ever I were eloquent. . .

ROXANE: You were!
CYRANO: But until now my words have never come from my true heart.

ROXANE: Why?

CYRANO: Till now I spoke through…

ROXANE: Through what?

CYRANO: The intoxication that seizes anyone who stands before your gaze…But tonight it seems that I’m speaking to you for the first time.

ROXANE: 'Tis true, your voice rings with a tone that's new.

CYRANO (coming nearer, passionately): Ay, a new tone! In the tender, sheltering dusk I dare to be myself for once—at last! (He stops, falters) What say I? I know not! Oh, pardon me--It thrills me,--'tis so sweet, so new. . .

ROXANE: So new?

CYRANO (off his balance, trying to find the thread of his sentence): Ay,--to be at last sincere; Till now, my chilled heart, fearing to be mocked. . .

ROXANE: Mocked, for what?

CYRANO: For…for an outburst of feeling! My heart always timidly hides itself behind my mind. I set out to bring down stars from the sky, then, for fear of ridicule, I stop and pick the little flowers of eloquence.

ROXANE: You’ve never spoken to me like this before.

CYRANO: Yes, I used but pretty phrases at first, to make you listen to me, but now it would be an insult. It has no place in true love! It’s only a game, and those who love will suffer if they play it too long. There comes a time for most when they feel a noble love inside themselves that’s saddened by every grandiloquent word they say.

ROXANE: Well, if that time has come for us what words will you say to me?

CYRANO: All those that enter my mind of their own accord. I’ll give them to you as they come, without arranging them in bouquets: I love you, I’m overwhelmed, I love you to the point of madness! Your name is in my heart like a bell shaken by my constant trembling, ringing day and night: Roxane, Roxane, Roxane! Loving everything about you, I forget nothing. I remember the day last year, the twelfth of May, when you wore your hair in a different style. Just as a man who has looked at the sun too long sees red circles everywhere, when I’ve gazed on the bright glory of your hair my dazzled eyes see golden spots on everything!

ROXANE: Why, this is love indeed!
CYRANO: The feeling that holds me in its merciless grip could be nothing else but love. Each time I look at you, you strengthen my courage and bring forth some new virtue. Are you beginning to understand?

ROXANE: Ay! I am trembling, weeping!—I am thine! Thou hast conquered all of me!

CYRANO: Then let death come! 'Tis I, 'tis I myself, who conquered thee! One thing, but one, I dare to ask—

CHRISTIAN (under the balcony): A kiss!

ROXANE (drawing back): What?

CYRANO: Oh!

ROXANE: You ask...?

CYRANO: I... (To Christian, whispering) Fool! You go too quick!

CHRISTIAN: Since she is moved thus--I will profit by it!

CYRANO (to Roxane): My words sprang thoughtlessly, but now I see—Shame on me!--I was too presumptuous.

ROXANE (a little chilled): How quickly you withdraw.

CYRANO: Yes, I withdraw without withdrawing! Hurt I modesty? If so--the kiss I asked--oh, grant it not.

CHRISTIAN (to Cyrano, pulling him by his cloak): Why?

CYRANO: Silence, Christian! Hush!

ROXANE (leaning over): What whisper you?

CYRANO: I was scolding myself for having gone too far. I just said to myself, “Quiet, Christian!” (The lutes begin to play) Wait! Someone’s coming! (Roxane closes the window. Cyrano listens to the lutes: one of them is play a happy tune, the other sad) A sad tune and a happy one, both at the same time? What do they mean? Is it a man or a woman?...Ah! It’s a Capuchin!

(Enter a capuchin friar, with a lantern. He goes from house to house, looking at every door.)

Scene 3.VII.
Cyrano, Christian, a capuchin friar.
CYRANO (to the friar): What do you, playing at Diogenes?

THE FRIAR: I seek the house of Madame Roxane.

CYRANO (pointing to a street at the back): This way! Straight on.

THE FRIAR I thank you, and, in your intention will say all the prayers in my rosary for you.

(He goes out.)

CYRANO: Good luck! My blessings go with you! (He goes back to Christian.)

Scene 3.VIII.
Cyrano, Christian.

CHRISTIAN: Oh! win for me that kiss.

CYRANO: No!

CHRISTIAN: Sooner or later…

CYRANO: 'Tis true! The moment of intoxication—of madness—when your lips are sure to meet. Thanks to your fair looks—and her rose lips! (To himself) I'd fainer it should come thanks to.

(A sound of shutters reopening. Christian goes in again under the balcony.)

Scene 3.IX.
Cyrano, Christian, Roxane.

ROXANE (coming out on the balcony): Are you still there? We spoke of…of a…

CYRANO: A kiss! The word is sweet. I see not why your lip should shrink from it; If the word burns it—what would the kiss do?

ROXANE: Hush! hush!

CYRANO: After all, what is a kiss? A vow made at closer range, a more precise promise, a confession that contains its own proof, a seal placed on a pact that has already been signed; it’s a secret told to the mouth rather than to the ear, a fleeting moment filled with the hush of eternity, a communion that has the fragrance of a flower, a way of living by the beat of another heart.

ROXANE: Stop!
CYRANO: A kiss, Madame, is honorable: The Queen of France, to a most favored lord did grant a kiss—the Queen herself!

ROXANE: But I don’t see…

CYRANO: Like the Duke of Buckingham, I’ve suffered in silence, like him, I worship a queen; like him, I’m sad and faithful…

ROXANE: And like him, you are handsome!

CYRANO (aside—abruptly sobered): Ah, yes, I’m handsome; I was forgetting that…

ROXANE: Come to me!

CYRANO (pushing Christian toward the balcony): Climb up to her!

ROXANE: Come give me that communion…

CYRANO: Climb!

ROXANE: …that hush of eternity…

CYRANO: Climb!

CHRISTIAN (hesitating): But now it seems to me that it’s wrong!

CYRANO (still pushing him): Come, blockhead, climb!

(Christian springs forward, and by means of the bench, the branches, and the pillars, climbs to the balcony and strides over it.)

CHRISTIAN: Ah, Roxane! (They kiss.)

CYRANO: What a strange pang in my heart! I’m like Lazarus at the feast—a feast of love! I must content myself with very little, but I still have a few small crumbs. Yes, I feel something of that kiss in my heart, because Roxane is kissing not only Christian’s lips, but also the words I spoke to her. (The lutes begin playing again) A sad tune and a happy one: the Capuchin! (Takes a few rapid steps, pretending to have just arrived, and calls out loudly) Roxane!

ROXANE: Who is it?

CYRANO: ‘Tis I. I was passing by…Is Christian still here?

CHRISTIAN (astonished): Cyrano!

ROXANE: Good evening, cousin.
CYRANO: Cousin, good evening!

ROXANE: I'm coming down!

(She disappears into the house. At the back re-enter the friar.)

CHRISTIAN (seeing him): Back again!

(He follows Roxane.)

Scene 3.X.
Cyrano, Christian, Roxane, the friar, Ragueneau.

THE FRIAR: 'Tis here—I'm sure of it—Madame Roxane.

CYRANO: Why, you said 'Rolin' before.

THE FRIAR: No, I said 'Robin!' R-O-B-I-N!

ROXANE (appearing on the threshold, followed by Ragueneau, who carries a lantern, and Christian) Who's this?

THE FRIAR: I have a letter for you.

CHRISTIAN: A letter?

THE FRIAR (to Roxane): It surely concerns some holy matter. It's from a worthy lord who...

ROXANE (to Christian): De Guiche!

CHRISTIAN: How dare he...

ROXANE: Oh, he will not importune me much longer! (Unsealing the letter) I love you—therefore—(She reads in a low voice by the aid of Ragueneau's lantern)

Lady,
The drums beat;
My regiment buckles its harness on
And starts; but I,--they deem me gone before--
But I stay. I have dared to disobey
Your mandate. I am here in convent walls.
I come to you to-night. By this poor monk--
A simple fool who knows not what he bears--
I send this missive to apprise your ear.
Your lips erewhile have smiled on me, too sweet:
I go not ere I've seen them once again!
I would be private; send each soul away,  
Receive alone him,—whose great boldness you  
Have deigned, I hope, to pardon, ere he asks,—  
He who is ever your--et cetera.'

(To the monk):
Father, this is the matter of the letter—(All come near her, and she reads aloud)
‘You must bow to the Cardinal’s will, however difficult it may be for you. This letter will be delivered into your charming hands by a saintly, intelligent, and discreet Capuchin. You will inform him that we wish him to give you the blessing of holy matrimony…’ (turns page) ‘…in your house, and without delay. Christian must secretly become your husband. I have already sent him to you. I know that you dislike him, but you must accept the Cardinal’s decision, and you may rest assured that heaven will bless you for your resignation. With the respect that I have always borne for you, I remain your humble and devoted…’ And so on.

THE FRIAR (with great delight): O worthy lord! I knew naught was to fear; It could be but holy business!

ROXANE (to Christian, in a low voice): Am I not apt at reading letters?

CHRISTIAN: Hm!

ROXANE (aloud, with despair): This is horrible!

THE FRIAR (who has turned his lantern on Cyrano): 'Tis you?

CHRISTIAN: 'Tis I!

THE FRIAR (turning the light on to him): But…

ROXANE (quickly): I have overlooked the postscript—see—  
'Give twenty pistoles for the Convent.'

THE FRIAR: …Oh! Most worthy lord! (To Roxane) Submit you?

ROXANE (with a martyr's look) I submit! (While Ragueneau opens the door, and Christian invites the friar to enter, she whispers to Cyrano) Keep De Guiche at bay! He will be here! Let him not enter till…

CYRANO: I understand! (To the friar) What time need you to tie the marriage-knot?

THE FRIAR: A quarter of an hour.

CYRANO (pushing them all toward the house): Go! I stay.

ROXANE (to Christian): Come!

(They enter)
CYRANO: Now, how to detain De Guiche so long? *(He jumps on the bench, climbs to the balcony by the wall)* Come! . . . up I go! . . . I have my plan! *(The lutes begin to play a very sad air)* What, ho! *(The tremolo grows more and more weird)* It is a man! ay! ’tis a man this time! *(He is on the balcony, pulls his hat over his eyes, takes off his sword, wraps himself in his cloak, then leans over)* 'Tis not too high! *(He strides across the balcony, and drawing to him a long branch of one of the trees that are by the garden wall, he hangs on to it with both hands, ready to let himself fall)* I'll shake this atmosphere!

**Scene 3.XI.**

Cyrano, De Guiche.

DE GUICHE (who enters, masked, feeling his way in the dark): What’s happened to that cursed Capuchin?

CYRANO: The devil! If he knows my voice! *(Letting go with one hand, he pretends to turn an invisible key. Solemnly)* Cric! Crac! There, I’ve unlocked my Gascon accent.

DE GUICHE (looking at the house): Yes, this is it. I can hardly see where I’m going. This mask hinders me! *(He is about to enter, when Cyrano leaps from the balcony, holding on to the branch, which bends, dropping him between the door and De Guiche; he pretends to fall heavily, as from a great height, and lies flat on the ground, motionless, as if stunned. De Guiche starts back)* 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 Gascon accent) From the moon!

DE GUICHE: From?...

CYRANO (in a dreamy voice): What's time is it?

DE GUICHE: He's lost his mind, for sure!

CYRANO: What hour? What country this? What month? What day?

DE GUICHE: But. . .

CYRANO: I am stupefied!

DE GUICHE: Sir!

CYRANO: Like a bomb, I fell from the moon!

DE GUICHE (impatiently): Come now!

CYRANO (rising, in a terrible voice): I fell from the moon!
DE GUICHE (recoiling): Very well, you fell from the moon! (Aside) He may be a maniac!

CYRANO (walking up to him): I say from the moon! I mean no metaphor!

DE GUICHE: But... 

CYRANO: A hundred years ago, or perhaps a minute ago—I have no idea how long my fall lasted—I was on that yellow sphere!

DE GUICHE: Yes, of course. Let me pass!

CYRANO (intercepting him): Where am I? Tell the truth! Fear not to tell! Oh, spare me not! Where?

DE GUICHE: Morbleu!

CYRANO: As I was falling, I wasn’t able to choose my destination, and I don’t know where I’ve landed. Has the weight of my posterior brought me back to earth, or to another moon?

DE GUICHE: I tell you, Sir, I...

CYRANO (with a screech of terror, which makes De Guiche start back): No? Can it be? I'm on a planet where men have such strange faces.

DE GUICHE (putting a hand to his face): What? Oh, this mask of mine...

CYRANO (feigning great alarm): Am I in Venice or Genoa?

DE GUICHE (trying to pass): A lady is expecting me...

CYRANO (quite reassured): Oh-ho! I am in Paris!

DE GUICHE (smiling in spite of himself): The fool is comical!

CYRANO: You laugh?

DE GUICHE: I laugh, but would get by!

CYRANO (beaming with joy): I have shot back to Paris! (Quite at ease, laughing, dusting himself, bowing) Excuse me; I’ve just come by the latest whirlwind and I have ether all over me. Such a journey! My eyes are full of stardust. I still have a little planet fur on my spurs. (picks something off his sleeve) A comet hair on my doublet. (pretends to blow it away for luck)

DE GUICHE (beside himself with exasperation): Sir...
(Just as De Guiche is about to pass, Cyrano stops him by putting out his leg, as though to show him something on it)

CYRANO: The Great Bear bit me as I passed. Look, you can see the tooth marks on my leg. Then, when I swerved to avoid Orion’s Sword, I fell into the Scales. The pointer still marks my weight. (Quickly prevents De Guiche from passing and takes hold of his doublet) If you were to squeeze my nose, sir, milk would spurt from it.

DE GUICHE: Milk?

CYRANO: From the Milky Way!

DE GUICHE: Oh, stop this nonsense and let me…

CYRANO (crossing his arms): Not yet. I haven’t finished my story. Would you believe…

DE GUICHE: I’ve been very patient with you. Now will you please…

CYRANO: I understand. I’ll be glad to oblige you.

DE GUICHE: At last!

CYRANO: You want to know how I got to the moon. I did it by a method that I invented myself.

DE GUICHE (wearied): He's raving mad!

CYRANO: I invented five ways to violate the virgin sky!

DE GUICHE (turning round): Five?

CYRANO (volubly): I could have clothed my body with crystal bottles full of dew and exposed myself to the morning sun; then, as the sun drew up the dew, I would have been drawn up with it.

DE GUICHE (surprised, making one step toward Cyrano): Yes, that’s one way.

CYRANO (stepping back, and enticing him further away): And I could have rarefied the air in a cedar chest by means of twenty burning mirrors suitably arranged, thus producing a great rush of wind that would have sent me on my way!

DE GUICHE (making another step): Two!

CYRANO: Since smoke tends to rise, I could have blown enough of it into a globe to carry me away!

DE GUICHE (same play, more and more astonished): Three!
CYRANO: Since the new moon likes to suck up the marrow of cattle, I could have coated my body with it!

DE GUICHE (amazed): Four!

CYRANO (who, while speaking, had drawn him to the other side of the square near a bench): Finally, I could have sat on a sheet of iron and thrown a magnet into the air. It’s a very good method: the iron follows the magnet in its flight, then you quickly throw the magnet again, and keep repeating the process until you’ve reached the moon!

DE GUICHE: Five…But which of those five excellent methods did you choose?

CYRANO: A sixth!

DE GUICHE: Astonishing! What was it?

CYRANO: Try to guess.

DE GUICHE: This rascal is becoming interesting!

CYRANO (making a noise like the waves, with weird gestures): Houuh! Houuh!

DE GUICHE: What’s that?

CYRANO: Can’t you guess?

DE GUICHE: No.

CYRANO: The tide! After taking a dip in the sea, I lay on the beach at the hour when the moon was exerting the pull that causes the tides, and I was lifted into the air—head first. Then…

DE GUICHE (overcome by curiosity, sitting down on the bench): Then?

CYRANO: Then…(resumes his natural voice) The quarter of an hour has passed, so I won’t keep you any longer. The wedding is over.

DE GUICHE (springing up): I must be losing my mind! That voice! (The door of the house opens. Cyrano takes off his hat, whose brim has remained turned down throughout the scene) And that nose!...Cyrano!

CYRANO (bowing): At your service. They’ve just been married.

DE GUICHE: Who? (We see Roxane and Christian holding hands. The Capuchin follows them, smiling. Ragueneau is also smiling and following. The Duenna brings up the rear, looking bewildered and wearing a dressing gown) Good heavens!
Scene 3.XII.
The same. Roxane, Christian, the friar, Ragueneau, the duenna.

DE GUICHE (to Roxane): You? (Recognizing Christian, in amazement) And he? (Bowing, with admiration, to Roxane) Cunningly contrived! (To Cyrano) And to you, the great inventor, my compliments. Your story would have stopped a saint at the gates of heaven! Write down the details of it, because you really could use them in a book.

CYRANO (bowing): I shall not fail to follow your advice.

THE FRIAR (showing with satisfaction the two lovers to De Guiche): Here’s the handsome couple you’ve united, my son!

DE GUICHE (with a freezing look): Ay! (To Roxane) Bid your bridegroom, Madame, fond farewell.

ROXANE: Why so?

DE GUICHE (to Christian): Even now the regiment departs. Join it!

ROXANE: It goes to battle?

DE GUICHE: Without doubt.

ROXANE: But the Cadets go not?

DE GUICHE: Oh ay! They go. (Drawing out the paper he had put in his pocket) Here is the order. (To Christian) Deliver it at once, Baron.

ROXANE (throwing herself in Christian's arms): Christian!

DE GUICHE (sneeringly to Cyrano): The wedding night is still a long way off!

CYRANO (aside): He thinks to give me pain of death by this!

CHRISTIAN (to Roxane): Roxane!

CYRANO: Come, come, enough!

CHRISTIAN: 'Tis hard to leave her, you know not…

CYRANO (trying to draw him away): I know.

(Sound of drums beating a march in the distance.)
DE GUICHE: The regiment is leaving!

ROXANE (To Cyrano, holding back Christian, whom Cyrano is drawing away): I trust him to your care! Promise me that nothing will endanger his life!

CYRANO: I will try my best, but promise... that I cannot!

ROXANE: But swear he shall be careful?

CYRANO: Again, I'll do my best, but...

ROXANE: In the siege, let him not suffer!

CYRANO: All that man can do, I...

ROXANE: Promise he'll be faithful!

CYRANO: Of course he will, but...

ROXANE: That he will write oft?

CYRANO (pausing): That, I promise you!

Curtain.

ACT IV.
The Cadets of Gascony.

Post occupied by company of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux at the siege of Arras. In the background an embankment across the whole stage. Beyond, view of plain extending to the horizon. The country covered with intrenchments. The walls of Arras and the outlines of its roofs against the sky in the distance. Tents. Arms strewn about, drums, etc. Day is breaking with a faint glimmer of yellow sunrise in the east. Sentinels at different points. Watch-fires. The cadets of Gascony, wrapped in their mantles, 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. Silence.

Scene 4.I.
Christian, Carbon de Castel-Jaloux, Le Bret, the cadets, then Cyrano.

LE BRET: 'Tis terrible.

CARBON: Not a morsel left.

LE BRET: Mordioux!
CARBON (making a sign that he should speak lower): Curse under your breath. You will awake them. *(To the cadets)* Hush! Sleep on. *(To Le Bret)* He who sleeps, dines!

LE BRET: But that is sorry comfort for the sleepless! . . . What starvation!

*(Firing is heard in the distance.)*

CARBON: Oh, plague take their firing! 'Twill wake my sons. *(To the cadets, who lift up their heads)* Sleep on!

*(Firing is again heard, nearer this time.)*

FIFTH CADET (moving): What, again?

CARBON: 'Tis nothing! 'Tis Cyrano coming back!

*(Those who have lifted up their heads prepare to sleep again.)*

A SENTINEL (from without): Ventrebieu! Who goes there?

THE VOICE OF CYRANO: Bergerac.

The SENTINEL (who is on the redoubt): Ventrebieu! Who goes there?

CYRANO (appearing at the top): Bergerac, idiot! *(He comes down; Le Bret advances anxiously to meet him.)*

LE BRET: Heavens!

CYRANO (making signs that he should not awake the others): Hush!

LE BRET: Wounded?

CYRANO: Oh, you know it has become their custom to shoot at me every morning and to miss me.

LE BRET: This passes all! To take letters at each day's dawn. To risk . . .

CYRANO (stopping before Christian): I promised he should write often. *(He looks at him)* He sleeps. How pale he is! But how handsome still, despite his sufferings. If his poor little lady-love knew that he is dying of hunger . . .

LE BRET: Get you quick to bed.

CYRANO: Nay, never scold, Le Bret. I ran but little risk. I have found me a spot to pass the Spanish lines, where each night they lie drunk.
LE BRET: You should try to bring us back provision.

CYRANO: I have to travel light to get through…But you can expect a change by this evening. If I saw what I think I saw, we will soon either eat or die.

LE BRET: Oh, tell me...

CYRANO: Nay, not yet. I am not certain. . .You will see!

CARBON: It is disgraceful that we should starve while we're besieging!

LE BRET: Unfortunately, nothing could be more complicated than this siege. We’re besieging Arras, we ourselves are caught in a trap, the Cardinal of Spain is besieging us…

CYRANO: Someone ought to come and besiege him.

LE BRET: Excuse me if I don’t laugh.

CYRANO: You’re excused.

LE BRET: To think that every day you risk a life like yours to carry…(Sees Cyrano walking toward a tent) Where are you going?

CYRANO: I am going to write another. (He enters the tent and disappears.)

Scene 4.II.

The same, all but Cyrano. The day is breaking in a rosy light. The town of Arras is golden in the horizon. The report of cannon is heard in the distance, followed immediately by the beating of drums far away to the left. Other drums are heard much nearer. Sounds of stirring in the camp. Voices of officers in the distance.

CARBON (sighing): The reveille! (The cadets move and stretch themselves) Nourishing sleep, thou art at an end. I know well what will be their first words will be.

FIRST CADET (sitting up): I am dying of hunger.

ALL CADETS: Oh!

CARBON: Up with you!

THIRD CADET: I cannot stand!

FIFTH CADET: Nor can I.
FIRST CADET (looking at himself in a bit of armor): My tongue is yellow—living on air has given me indigestion!

FIFTH CADET: I’d give my baron’s coronet for a bite of cheese!

THIRD CADET: If I don’t get something to keep the walls of my stomach from growing together, I’ll withdraw to my tent, like Achilles!

FIRST CADET: Yes! Something! Were it but a crust of bread!

CARBON (going to the tent and calling softly): Cyrano!

ALL THE CADETS: We are dying!

CARBON (continuing to speak under his breath at the opening of the tent): Come to my aid, you, who have the art of quick retort and happy jest. Come, cheer them up.

FIFTH CADET (rushing toward another who is munching something): What are you eating?

FIRST CADET: Ammunition wadding cooked in axle grease, using a steel helmet as a pot. There’s not much game in this country.

ALL TOGETHER: Enough! Let’s mutiny!

CARBON: Cyrano! Help!

(The daylight has now come.)

Scene 4.III.
The SAME. Cyrano.

CYRANO (appearing from the tent, very calm, with a pen stuck behind his ear and a book in his hand): What is wrong? (Silence. To the first cadet) Why do you stand so stiffly?

FIRST CADET: I have to.

CYRANO: Why?

FIRST CADET: My stomach is so empty that if I bend at the waist I’ll break in half!

CYRANO: Be glad you’ve lost the weight: it may save your life.

FIRST CADET: How?

CYRANO: By making you a smaller target to the enemy!
FIRST CADET: I’m so hungry I could eat a whole side of beef!

CYRANO: Now there’s a meaty remark!

THIRD CADET: My stomach’s hollow.

CYRANO: We’ll use it for a drum.

FIRST CADET: You must be as hungry as we are. How do you stand it?

CYRANO: I think of how long it’s been since the last time I ate, and that makes me so sad I lose my appetite.

FIFTH CADET: I don’t think about my last meal, I worry about my next one!

CYRANO (pulling off the cadet's helmet and holding it out to him): That’s good. Maybe you’ll worry yourself into a stew.

FIRST CADET: In Paris, Cardinal Richelieu eats his fill!

CYRANO: Do you think he ought to send you a partridge?

FIRST CADET: And why not? With wine, too!

CYRANO: A little Burgundy, Richelieu, s’il vous plaît!

THIRD CADET: He could send it by one of his friars.

CYRANO: Ay! by His Eminence Joseph himself.

FIFTH CADET: I am as ravenous as an ogre!

CYRANO: Eat your patience, then.

THIRD CADET (shrugging his shoulders): Why is it you never complain about your hunger?

CYRANO: Because there’s one thing I’m not hungry enough to swallow: my pride.

FIRST CADET: You’re never at a loss for a clever remark.

CYRANO: Yes, and I hope that when death comes to me it will find me fighting in a good cause and making a clever remark!

CRIES FROM ALL: I'm hungry!
CYRANO (crossing his arms): Can’t you think of anything but food? Think of our valleys, our moors, our woodlands, of Gascony!

*(the drum beats)*

ALL THE CADETS (stand up and rush to take arms): What? What is it?

CYRANO (smiling): Ah-ha! One roll of the drum is enough and goodbye thoughts of hunger and starvation.

FIRST CADET (looking toward the back of the stage): Ho! Here comes Monsieur de Guiche.


CYRANO (smiling): A flattering welcome!

THIRD CADET: We are sick to death of him!

FIRST CADET: He comes to strut in front of us with his big lace collar over his armor!

THIRD CADET: As if one wore linen over steel! It were good for a bandage had he boils on his neck.

FIRST CADET: He’s not a soldier, he’s a courtier! His uncle's own nephew!

CARBON: He’s still a Gascon.

FIRST CADET: Not a real one!

LE BRET: How pale he is!

FIFTH CADET: He is hungry, just like us poor devils; but under his cuirass, but since his armor has gilded studs, his stomach cramps glitter in the sunlight.

CYRANO (hurriedly): Let us not seem to suffer either! Out with your cards, pipes, and dice. . . *(All begin spreading out the games on the drums, the stools, the ground, and on their cloaks, and light long pipes) And I shall read Descartes.*

*(He walks up and down, reading a little book which he has drawn from his pocket. Tableau. Enter De Guiche. All appear absorbed and happy. He is very pale. He goes up to Carbon.)*

**Scene 4.IV.**
The same. De Guiche.

DE GUICHE (to Carbon): Good morning! *(They examine each other)*
(looking at the cadets) Gentlemen, it’s been reported to me from all sides that you jeer at me and nothing but contempt for your colonel. You call me a schemer and a courtier, and it upsets you to see a lace collar on my armor. (Silence. The Cadets continue their games) Am I going to have you punished by your captain? No.

CARBON: I’m free to do as I see fit, and I choose not to punish my men.

DE GUICHE: Oh?

CARBON: I obey only battle orders.

DE GUICHE: That will do! (To the Cadets) I can afford to despise your mockery, because my conduct under fire is well known. Only yesterday, at Bapaume, I furiously drove back Count de Bucquoi. Bringing my men down upon his like an avalanche, I charged three times!

CYRANO (without lifting his eyes from his book): And your white scarf?

DE GUICHE (surprised and gratified): Ah, you know about that?...Yes, as I was rallying my men for the third charge, I was caught in a rush of fugitives and swept along toward the enemy. I was in danger of being captured or shot when I had the good sense to take off my scarf that showed my rank and drop it on the ground. I was thus able to slip away from the Spaniards without attracting attention, then come back to them, followed by all my men, and beat them!...Well, what do you think of that?

(The Cadets don’t seem to have been listening, but they now stop their games and wait)

CYRANO: I think that Henry the Fourth would never have given up his white plume, even when surrounded by the enemy.

(Silent joy among the Cadets. They resume playing their games.)

DE GUICHE: The ruse succeeded, though!

(The Cadets again become motionless, waiting.)

CYRANO: Perhaps, but I don’t believe declining the honor of being a target. (The Cadets resume their games with growing satisfaction) You and I, sir, have different ideas of courage. If I had been there when you dropped the scarf, I would have picked it up and put it on.

DE GUICHE: Oh, ay! More Gascon boasting!

CYRANO: Boasting? Lend me your scarf and accept my offer to wear it while I lead an assault today.

DE GUICHE: You know very well that my scarf remained on the riverbank, in a place that’s now under heavy enemy fire, so that no one can go and bring it back.
(Silence. The cadets stifle their laughter in their cards and dice-boxes. De Guiche turns and looks at them; they instantly become grave, and set to play.)

DE GUICHE (taking the scarf): I thank you. It will now enable me to make a signal—that I was hesitating to make—till now. (He goes to the rampart, climbs it, and waves the scarf thrice.)

ALL: What's that?

THE SENTINEL (from the top of the rampart): I see a man down there running away!

DE GUICHE (descending): He’s a false Spanish spy. He’s very useful to me. He reports to the enemy whatever I tell him, which makes it possible for us to influence their decisions.

CYRANO: Scoundrel!

DE GUICHE (carelessly tying his scarf around his neck): 'Tis opportune. What were we saying? Ah! I have news for you. Last evening, in a supreme effort to get food for us, the Marshal quietly left for Dourlens, where our supplies are. He’ll arrive there by traveling across the fields, but in order to come back safely he took so many troops with him that we’re now extremely vulnerable to an enemy attack: half the army is absent.

CARBON: If the Spaniards knew that…But they don’t, do they?

DE GUICHE: Yes, they know. And they’re going to attack.

CARBON: Ah!

DE GUICHE: For my false spy came to warn me of their attack. He said, “I can make the attack come at any place you like.” I answered, “Very well, leave the camp and watch our lines. I’ll signal to you from the place I’ve chosen.”

CARBON (to cadets): Make ready!

(All rise; sounds of swords and belts being buckled.)

DE GUICHE: The attack will begin in an hour.

FIRST CADET: Oh, in that case…

(They all sit down again and take up their games.)

DE GUICHE (to Carbon): The most important thing is to gain time. The Marshal will soon be on his way back.
CARBON: How gain it?

DE GUICHE: You will all be good enough to let yourselves to be killed.

CYRANO: Ah. Your revenge?

DE GUICHE: I won’t pretend that if I liked you I would have chosen you and your men, but since you’re known to be incomparably brave, I’m serving my king by serving my rancor.

CYRANO: Permit that I express my gratitude. . .

DE GUICHE: I know you love to fight against five score; You will not now complain of paltry odds. *(He goes up with Carbon.)*

CYRANO (to the cadets): Gentlemen, your Gascon coat of arms bears six chevrons, blue and gold. We’re about to add one more, of a different color: blood-red!

*(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: I wish I could at least pour out my heart to her in one last letter.

CYRANO: I had suspicion it would be to-day…*(He draws a letter out of his doublet)* And had already written your farewell. . .

CHRISTIAN: Show!

CYRANO: Will you. . .?

CHRISTIAN (taking the letter): Ay! *(He opens and reads it)* What’s this?

CYRANO: Where?

CHRISTIAN: This little stain!

CYRANO (taking the letter, with an innocent look): A stain?

CHRISTIAN: A tear!
CYRANO: Yes…A poet is sometimes caught up in his own game; that’s what makes it so fascinating. This letter, you understand…It was so moving that I made myself weep while I was writing it.

CHRISTIAN: Weep?

CYRANO: Yes, because…Dying is no great matter. What’s unbearable is the thought of never seeing her again. And it’s true: I’ll never see her…(Christian looks at him)…we’ll never…(Quickly)…you’ll never…

CHRISTIAN (snatching the letter from him): Give me that letter!

(A distant clamor is heard from the edge of camp)

VOICE Of SENTINEL: Who goes there?

(Shots—voices—carriage-bells.)

CARBON: What is it?

A SENTINEL (on the rampart): A carriage!

(All rush to see.)

CRIES: In the camp? It enters!--It comes from the enemy!--Fire!--No!--The coachman cries!--What does he say?--'On the King's service!'

(Everyone is on the rampart, staring. The bells come nearer.)

DE GUICHE: The King's service? How?

(All descend and draw up in line.)

DE GUICHE: King’s service! Line up, you rabble! Don’t you know how to receive a carriage in the king’s service?

(The carriage enters at full speed covered with dust and mud. The curtains are drawn close. Two lackeys behind. It is pulled up suddenly.)

CARBON: Beat a salute!

(A roll of drums. The cadets uncover.)

DE GUICHE: Lower the carriage-steps!
(Two cadets rush off stage)

ROXANE (entering): Good morning!

(All are bowing to the ground, but at the sound of a woman's voice every head is instantly raised.)

Scene 4.V.
The same. Roxane.

DE GUICHE: On the King's service! You?

ROXANE: I’m in the service of the greatest of all kings: love!

CYRANO: Great heavens!

CHRISTIAN (rushing forward): Why have you come?

ROXANE: This siege has lasted too long!

DE GUICHE: You cannot remain here!

ROXANE (merrily): I can, I thank you. (She laughs) My carriage was fired at by the patrol! Look! Would you not think 'twas made of a pumpkin, like Cinderella's chariot in the tale—and the footmen out of mice? (Sending a kiss with her lips to Christian) Good morning! (Examining them all) You look not merry, any of you! Did you know that Arras is a long way from Paris? (Notices Cyrano) Cousin! Delighted to see you!

CYRANO: But 'tis sheer madness! Where in the fiend's name did you get through?

ROXANE: Through the Spanish lines.

FIRST CADET: Trust a woman to do a thing like that!

DE GUICHE: But how?

LE BRET: Faith! That must have been a hard matter!

ROXANE: Not very. I simply rolled a long in my carriage. Whenever a Spanish officer gave me a suspicious look, I smiled at him sweetly from the window, and since, with all due deference to the French, Spaniards are the most gallant gentlemen in the world, I was always allowed to continue on my way.

CARBON: True, that smile is a passport! But you must have been asked frequently to give an account of where you were going, Madame?
ROXANE: Yes, frequently. Then I would answer, 'I go to see my lover.' At that word the very fiercest Spaniard of them all would gravely shut the carriage-door, and, with a gesture that a king might envy, make signal to his men to lower the muskets leveled at me, bow and say, “Pass, Senorita!

CHRISTIAN: But, Roxane...

ROXANE: Forgive me that I said, 'my lover!' But bethink you, had I said 'my husband,' not one of them had let me pass!

CHRISTIAN: But...

ROXANE: What ails you?

DE GUICHE: You must leave this place!

ROXANE: I?

CYRANO: Yes, and quickly!

LE BRET: Immediately!

CHRISTIAN: Indeed, you must.

ROXANE: But wherefore must I?

CHRISTIAN (embarrassed): Because...

CYRANO (the same): In three-quarters of an hour...

DE GUICHE (the same): Or maybe an hour...

CARBON (the same): It were best...

LE BRET (the same): You might...

ROXANE: There’s going to be a battle, isn’t there? He is my husband! They shall kill us both together!

CHRISTIAN: Why do you look at me thus?

ROXANE: Do I have to tell you why?

DE GUICHE (in despair): This is a terribly dangerous post!

ROXANE (turning round): Dangerous?
 CYRANO: He knows what he’s saying: he gave it to us.

ROXANE (to De Guiche): So, Sir, you would have made a widow of me?

DE GUICHE: Nay, on my oath. . .

ROXANE: No! I don’t care what happens to me now! I’m staying! Besides, it’s amusing.

CYRANO: Oh-ho! So our precieuse is a heroine!

FIRST CADET: We will defend you well!

ROXANE (more and more excited): I believe it, my friends!

FIRST CADET (in ecstasy): The whole camp smells sweet of iris!

ROXANE: And, by good luck, I have chosen a hat that will suit well with the battlefield! (Looking at De Guiche) Don’t you think it’s time for you to leave? The fighting may begin.

DE GUICHE: This is too much! I’m going to inspect my cannons, and then I’ll come back…You still have time: change your mind!

ROXANE: Never!

(De Guiche goes out.)

Scene 4.VI.
The same, all but De Guiche.

CHRISTIAN (entreatingly): Roxane!

ROXANE: No!

FIRST CADET (to the others): She stays!

ALL (hurrying, hustling each other, tidying themselves): A comb!--Soap!--My uniform is torn! A needle!--A ribbon!--Lend your mirror!--My cuffs!--Your curling-iron!--A razor! . . .

ROXANE (to Cyrano, who still pleads with her): No! Nothing shall make me leave this post!

CARBON (To Roxane): Open the hand that holds your handkerchief.

ROXANE (Opens her hand and the handkerchief falls): Why? (The whole company makes a move to pick it up)
CARBON: My company had no flag, but now it has the finest one in the whole army!

THIRD CADET (to the rest): I could die happy, having seen so sweet a face, if I had something in my stomach--were it but a nut!

CARBON (who has overheard, indignantly): Shame on you! What, talk of eating when a lovely woman. . .

ROXANE: But your camp air is keen; I myself am famished. Pasties, cold fricassee, old wines--there is my bill of fare? Pray bring it all here.

FIRST CADET: All that? But where on earth do we find it?

ROXANE (quietly): In my carriage.

ALL: What?!

ROXANE: Look at my coachman a little more closely, gentlemen.

THE CADETS (rushing pellmell to the carriage): 'Tis Ragueneau!

RAGUENEAU (standing on the box like a quack doctor at a fair): Gentlemen! . . .

THE CADETS: Bravo! bravo!

CYRANO (in a whisper to Christian): Hark, Christian! Prythee, one word!

ROXANE (to the cadets, who come down, their arms laden with food): Put it all on the ground! (She lays all out on the grass, aided by the two imperturbable lackeys who were behind the carriage.) Come, make yourself of use! (Christian comes to help her. Cyrano's uneasiness increases.)

RAGUENEAU: Truffled peacock!

FIRST CADET (radiant, coming down, cutting a big slice of ham): It will be easier to face death when we’ve stuffed our guts! (Embarrassed, seeing Roxane) Excuse me, I mean when we’ve a good meal.

RAGUENEAU (throwing down the carriage cushions): The cushions are stuffed with quail! (Hubbub. They tear open and turn out the contents of the cushions. Bursts of laughter--merriment.)

FIFTH CADET: Ah! Viedaze!
ROXANE (throwing a folded tablecloth at Cyrano's head): Unfold me that napkin!—Come, come! be nimble!

CYRANO (in a low voice to Christian, as they arrange the cloth together): I must speak with you ere you speak to her.

ROXANE (pouring out wine, helping): Since we are to die, let the rest of the army fend for itself. All for the Gascons! And mark! If De Guiche comes, let no one invite him! (going up to Christian) What will you?

CHRISTIAN: Nothing.

ROXANE:
Nay, nay, take this biscuit, steeped in muscat; come! . . .but two drops!

CHRISTIAN (trying to detain her): Oh! tell me why you came?

ROXANE: Wait; my first duty is to these poor fellows. Hush! In a few minutes. . .

LE BRET (who had gone up to pass a loaf on the end of a lance to the sentry on the rampart): De Guiche!

CYRANO:
Quick! hide flasks, plates, pie-dishes, game-baskets! Hurry!—Let us all look unconscious! (To Ragueneau) Up on your seat! Is everything covered up?

(In an instant all has been pushed into the tents, or hidden under doublets, cloaks, and beavers. De Guiche enters hurriedly—stops suddenly, sniffing the air. Silence.)

Scene 4.VII.
The same. De Guiche.

DE GUICHE: Something smells good here.

FIRST CADET (humming): Hum, hum, hum.

DE GUICHE (looking at him): What is the matter? Your face is red.

FIRST CADET: Nothing! 'Tis my blood—boiling at the thought of the coming battle!

DE GUICHE: You are merry, my friend!

FIRST CADET: 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) Plague take me! You look merry too!
CARBON (crimson in the face, hiding a bottle behind his back, with an evasive movement): Well, I…

DE GUICHE: I have one cannon left, and have had it carried there—(he points behind the scenes)—in that corner. . .Your men can use it in case of need.

FIRST CADET: How thoughtful of you!

THIRD CADET (with a gracious smile): We’re deeply grateful for your concern!

DE GUICHE: You’ve all gone mad! Since you’re not used to cannons, beware the recoil.

FIRST CADET: Oh, pooh!

DE GUICHE (furious, going up to him): But. . .

FIRST CADET: Gascon cannons never recoil!

DE GUICHE (taking him by the arm and shaking him): Your drunk!—but on what?

FIRST CADET (grandiloquently): The smell of gunpowder!

DE GUICHE (shrugging his shoulders and pushing him away, then going quickly to Roxane): What have you decided?

ROXANE: I stay here.

DE GUICHE: You must leave!

ROXANE: I will stay.

DE GUICHE: Since things are thus, give me a musket, one of you!

CARBON: Why?

DE GUICHE: Because I too am staying.

CYRANO: At last! True valor, Sir!

FIRST CADET: Are you really a Gascon, in spite of your lace?

ROXANE: What is all this?

DE GUICHE: I won’t leave a woman in danger.
THIRD CADET: Hark you! Think you not we might give him something to eat? (All the viands reappear as if by magic.)

DE GUICHE (whose eyes sparkle): Food! (controlling himself, haughtily) Do you think I will eat your leavings?

CYRANO (bowing): You make progress.

DE GUICHE (proudly, with a light touch of accent on the word 'breaking'): I will fight without breaking my fast!

FIRST CADET (with wild delight): Br-r-r-eaking! He has got the accent!

DE GUICHE (laughing): I?

FIRST CADET: 'Tis a Gascon!

(All begin to dance.)

CHRISTIAN (going to Cyrano, eagerly): Tell me quickly! What is this secret?

CYRANO: If Roxane should. . .

CHRISTIAN: Yes?

CYRANO: If she should speak to you about the letters…

CHRISTIAN: Go on!

CYRANO: Don’t make the mistake of being surprised if…

CHRISTIAN: If what? Tell me quickly!

CYRANO: You’ve…you’ve written to her more often than you think.

CHRISTIAN: How so?

CYRANO: I made myself the interpreter of your passion. I sometimes wrote to her without telling you so.

CHRISTIAN: But we’re blockaded! How did you send those letters?

CYRANO: I was able to get through the enemy lines before dawn.

CHRISTIAN (folding his arms): How often have I…been writing? Twice a week? Three times? Four?
CYRANO: More.

CHRISTIAN: Every day?

CYRANO: Yes, every day…twice.

CHRISTIAN (violently): And you were carried away by the letters you wrote! So much that you defied death…

CYRANO (seeing Roxane returning): Hush! Not before her!

(He goes hurriedly into his tent.)

Scene 4.VIII.
Roxane, Christian. In the distance cadets coming and going. Carbon and De Guiche give orders.

ROXANE (running up to Christian): Ah, Christian, at last!

CHRISTIAN (taking her hands): Now tell me why you have traveled such appalling roads in order to join me here.

ROXANE: Your letters!

CHRISTIAN: What?

ROXANE: Yes! You can’t know…I’ve adored you since that evening when, under my window, you began to reveal your soul to me in a voice I’d never heard you use before, and when I read your letters it was like hearing that same voice. I could feel its tenderness enveloping me! Finally I had to come to you, no matter what the danger!

CHRISTIAN: But…

ROXANE: In every word I felt the flame of a powerful, sincere love…

CHRISTIAN: Powerful and sincere? Did you really feel that in my letters, Roxane?

ROXANE: Yes!

CHRISTIAN: And so you came…

ROXANE: I had to. I’m yours, Christian. I’ve come to ask you to forgive me—and now is the time to ask forgiveness, since we may be about to die—for having insulted you, in my frivolity, by first loving you only because you were handsome.

CHRISTIAN (horror-stricken): Oh, Roxane!
ROXANE: And later, love—less frivolous—Like a bird that spreads its wings, but can not fly—Arrested by your beauty, by your soul drawn close—I loved for both at once!

CHRISTIAN: And now?

ROXANE: I now love you for your soul alone.

CHRISTIAN (stepping backward): Roxanne.

ROXANE: Be happy now: your thoughts outshine your face. Your handsomeness was what first attracted me, but now that my eyes are open I no longer see it!

CHRISTIAN (pained): Oh…

ROXANE: I see you cannot yet believe it. Such love…?

CHRISTIAN: I don’t want it! I want to be loved simply for…

ROXANE: For what women have always loved in you till now? Let me love you in a better way!

CHRISTIAN: No! It was better before!

ROXANE: You don’t know what you’re saying! I didn’t really love you before. If you were less handsome…

CHRISTIAN: Hush!

ROXANE: I’d still love you. If you suddenly became ugly…

CHRISTIAN: Say not so!

ROXANE: I will say it!

CHRISTIAN: Even if I were ugly?...

ROXANE: Ugly! I swear I'd love you still!

CHRISTIAN: Ah!

ROXANE: Now are you happy?

CHRISTIAN (in a choked voice): Ay!...

ROXANE: What is wrong?
CHRISTIAN (gently pushing her away): Nothing. I must go and say a few words to someone. It will take only a minute.

ROXANE: But…

CHRISTIAN (pointing to the cadets): My love has taken you away from those poor men. Go and smile at them a little, since they’re about to die.

ROXANE (deeply affected): Dear Christian…

(She goes up to the cadets, who respectfully crowd round her.)

Scene 4.IX.
Christian, Cyrano. At back Roxane talking to Carbon and some cadets.

CHRISTIAN (calling toward Cyrano's tent): Cyrano!

CYRANO (reappearing, fully armed): What? Why so pale?

CHRISTIAN: She does not love me!

CYRANO: What?

CHRISTIAN: 'Tis you she loves!

CYRANO: No!

CHRISTIAN: She loves me only for my soul!

CYRANO: Truly?

CHRISTIAN: Therefore, 'tis you she loves!--And you--love her!

CYRANO: I?

CHRISTIAN: You love to madness!

CYRANO: Ay…and worse.

CHRISTIAN: Then tell her so!

CYRANO: No!

CHRISTIAN: And why not?

CYRANO: Look at my face! Be answered!
CHRISTIAN: She'd love me--were I ugly.

CYRANO: Said she so?

CHRISTIAN: Ay! in those words!

CYRANO: Don’t believe such nonsense. Don’t become ugly—she would never forgive me.

CHRISTIAN: We’ll see.

CYRANO: No! I beg!

CHRISTIAN: Tell her all!

CYRANO: No! Spare my this!

CHRISTIAN: I’m tired of being my own rival!

CYRANO: Christian!

CHRISTIAN: I want to be loved for myself or not at all! We’ll see what she decides. I’m going to walk to the end of the camp, then come back. Talk to her while I’m gone, and tell her she must choose one of us.

CYRANO: It will be you.

CHRISTIAN: I hope so. (He calls) Roxane!

CYRANO: No!

ROXANE (coming up quickly): What?

CHRISTIAN: Cyrano has things, important for your ear. . .

(She hastens to Cyrano. Christian goes out.)

Scene 4.X.
Roxane, Cyrano. Then Le Bret, Carbon de Castel-Jaloux, the cadets, Ragueneau, De Guiche, etc.

ROXANE:
Important, how?

CYRANO (in despair. to Roxane): No, it’s really nothing. He often sees importance where none exists.
ROXANE (warmly): Does he doubt what I told him? Yes, he does. I could see he doubted it.

CYRANO (taking her hand): But are you sure you told him all the truth?

ROXANE: Yes, I would love him even if he were… (She hesitates.)

CYRANO: Does that word embarrass you before my face, Roxane?

ROXANE: I…

CYRANO (smiling sadly): 'Twill not hurt me! Say it! If he were ugly…

ROXANE: Yes, ugly! (Musket report outside) The shooting has begun.

CYRANO (ardently): Even if he were hideous?

ROXANE: Yes.

CYRANO: Disfigured?

ROXANE: Ay.

CYRANO: Grotesque?

ROXANE: He could not be grotesque to me!

CYRANO: You'd love the same?

ROXANE: The same—nay, even more!

CYRANO (losing command over himself--aside): Perhaps it’s true. (To Roxane) I…Roxane…Listen to me…

LE BRET (entering hurriedly--to Cyrano): Cyrano!

CYRANO (turning round): Yes?

LE BRET: Hush! (He whispers something to him.)

CYRANO (letting go Roxane's hand): No…

ROXANE: What’s the matter?

CYRANO (to himself--stunned): It’s all over now.

(More shots are heard.)
ROXANE: What is it? Those shots… *(Takes a few steps and looks offstage)*

CYRANO: It is 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, and close round it to prevent Roxane approaching.)*

ROXANE: Those men? (Cyrano draws her away) What were you about to tell me?

CYRANO: Tell you? Oh, nothing…nothing, I swear. *(Solemnly)* I swear that Christian's soul, his nature, were... *(Hastily correcting himself)* Nay, that they are, the noblest, greatest...

ROXANE: Were? (She rushes up, pushing every one aside.)

CYRANO: It’s all over.

ROXANE (seeing Christian lying on the ground, wrapped in his cloak): Christian!

LE BRET (to Cyrano): Struck by first shot of the enemy.

*(Roxane flings herself down by Christian. Fresh reports of cannon—clash of arms—clamor—beating of drums.)*

CARBON (with sword in the air): Come! Your muskets. *(Followed by the cadets, he passes to the other side of the ramparts.)*

ROXANE: Christian!

THE VOICE OF CARBON (from the other side): Ho! make haste!

CARBON: Prepare your matches!

*(Ragueneau rushes up, bringing water in a helmet.)*

CHRISTIAN (in a dying voice): Roxane!

CYRANO: *(quickly, whispering into Christian's ear, while Roxane distractedly tears a piece of linen from his dress, which she dips into the water, trying to stanch the bleeding)* I told her all. It’s still you she loves. *(Christian closes his eyes.)*

ROXANE:

How, my sweet love?
CARBON: Take out your ramrods!

ROXANE (to Cyrano): He is not dead, is he?

CARBON: Bite open your charges!

ROXANE: His cheek grows cold against my own!

CARBON: READY! AIM!

ROXANE (seeing a letter in Christian's doublet): A letter! 'Tis for me! (She opens it.)

CYRANO (aside): My letter!

CARBON: FIRE!

(Musket reports--shouts--noise of battle.)

CYRANO (trying to disengage his hand, which Roxane on her knees is holding): Roxane! The attack has begun!

ROXANE (detaining him): Stay yet awhile. For he is dead. You knew him, you alone. (Weeping quietly) Ah, was not his a beauteous soul?

CYRANO (standing up--bareheaded): Ay, Roxane.

ROXANE: An inspired poet and a mind sublime?

CYRANO: Ay.

ROXANE: A vast heart whose depths remained hidden from the world!

CYRANO (firmly): Ay, Roxane.

ROXANE (flinging herself on the dead body): Dead, my love.

CYRANO (aside--drawing his sword): And now I too must die, since, without knowing it, she mourns for me in him.

(Sounds of trumpets in the distance.)

DE GUICHE (appearing on the ramparts--bareheaded--with a wound on his forehead--in a voice of thunder): It is the signal! Trumpet flourishes! The French bring the provisions into camp! Hold but the place awhile!
ROXANE: See, there is blood upon the letter—tears!

A VOICE (outside--shouting): Surrender!

VOICES OF CADETS: No!

RAGUENEAU (standing on the top of his carriage, watches the battle over the edge of the ramparts): They’re coming closer!

CYRANO (to De Guiche—pointing to Roxane): I will charge! Take her away!

ROXANE (kissing the letter--in a half-extinguished voice): his tears! his blood!…

RAGUENEAU (jumping down from the carriage and rushing toward her): She's fainted!

DE GUICHE (on the rampart--to the cadets--with fury): Hold fast!

A VOICE (outside): Lay down your arms!

THE CADETS: No!

CYRANO (to De Guiche): Now that you have proved your valor, Sir…(Pointing to Roxane)…fly, and save her!

DE GUICHE (rushing to Roxane, and carrying her away in his arms): So be it! Gain but time, the victory's ours!

CYRANO: We will! (Calling out to Roxane, whom De Guiche, aided by Ragueneau, is bearing away in a fainting condition) Farewell, Roxane!

(Tumult. Shouts. Cadets reappear, wounded, falling on the scene. Cyrano, rushing to the battle, is stopped by Carbon de Castel-Jaloux, who is streaming with blood.)

CARBON: We’re giving ground! I’m wounded!

CYRANO (shouting to the Gascons): GASCONS! HO, GASCONS! NEVER TURN YOUR BACKS! (To Carbon, whom he is supporting) Have no fear! I have two deaths to avenge: My friend who's slain;--and my dead happiness! (They come down, Cyrano brandishing the lance to which is attached Roxane's handkerchief) Float there! laced kerchief brodered with her name! (He sticks it in the ground and shouts to the cadets): FALL ON THEM, GASCONS! CRUSH THEM! Let us salute them! Fire!

(General discharge.)

Curtain.
Act V.
Cyrano's Gazette.

Fifteen years later, in 1655. Park of the Sisters of the Holy Cross in Paris.

Scene 5.I.
Mother Marguerite and Sister Martha.

SISTER MARTHA (to Mother Marguerite): Sister Claire has stopped in front of the mirror twice, to see how her headdress looks.

MOTHER MARGUERITE: 'Tis not well. Did you take a plum out of the tart? *(Sister Martha nods)* That was ill done, sister.

MOTHER MARGUERITE: I shall tell this to Monsieur Cyrano.

SISTER MARTHA: Nay, prithee do not!--he will mock! He'll say we nuns are vain and greedy!

MOTHER MARGUERITE (smiling): Ay, and kind!

SISTER MARTHA: Is it not true, Mother Marguerite, that he has come, each week, on Saturday for ten years, to the convent?

MOTHER MARGUERITE: Longer than that. Ever since his cousin came to us fourteen years ago, in mourning.

SISTER MARTHA: In all the time since she first took a room in the cloister, no one but Monsieur Cyrano has ever been able to distract her from the grief that afflict her night and day. It's so cheerful when he comes! He teases us, but we all like him well! But, he is not a faithful Catholic! We will convert him!

MOTHER MARGUERITE: I forbid you to make any efforts in that direction. Nay, weary him not—me might come less often.

SISTER MARTHA: But... God...

MOTHER MARGUERITE: Nay, never fear! God knows him well!

SISTER MARTHA: But, every Saturday, when he arrives, he tells me, 'Sister, I ate meat on Friday'!

MOTHER MARGUERITE: Ah! says he so? Well, the last time he came, food had not passed his lips for two whole days!
SISTER MARTHA: Oh, Mother!

MOTHER MARGUERITE: He's poor.

SISTER MARTHA: Who told you so?

MOTHER MARGUERITE: Monsieur Le Bret.

SISTER MARTHA: Doesn’t anyone help him?

MOTHER MARGUERITE: No. It would only make him angry if anyone tried. *(In an alley at the back Roxane appears, dressed in black, with a widow's coif and veil. De Guiche, imposing-looking and visibly aged, walks by her side. They saunter slowly. Mother Marguerite rises)* 'Tis time we go in; Madame Roxane walks in the garden with a visitor.

SISTER MARTHA: The Marshal of Grammont? *(looking at him)* 'Tis he, I think. 'Tis many months now since he came to see her.

MOTHER MARGUERITE: He is very busy—the Court—the army... 

SISTER MARTHA: Worldly concerns.

*(They go out. De Guiche and Roxane come forward in silence, and stop close to the embroidery frame.)*

**Scene 5.II.**
Roxane; the Duke de Grammont, formerly Count de Guiche. Then Le Bret and Ragueneau.

THE DUKE: And you stay here still—ever vainly fair, ever in mourning?

ROXANE: Ever.

THE DUKE: Still faithful?

ROXANE: Still.

THE DUKE (after a pause): Have you forgiven me?

ROXANE: Of course, since I am here.

(Another pause.)

THE DUKE: Was he really such a...

ROXANE: He showed his true nature only to those who knew him well.
THE DUKE: His true nature? Yes, perhaps I didn’t know him well enough. Do you still carry his last letter over your heart?

ROXANE: Yes, like a holy relic.

THE DUKE: You love him even in death?

ROXANE: Sometimes it seems to me that he’s not really dead. I feel that our hearts are together, and that his love floats around me, very much alive.

THE DUKE (after another pause): Cyrano comes to see you?

ROXANE: Often, ay. Dear, kind old friend! We call him my 'Gazette.' He never fails to come: beneath this tree they place his chair, if the weather be good. I embroider while I wait for him. When the clock strikes the hour of his arrival, I don’t even turn around to look for him, because I know I’ll hear his cane coming down the steps immediately after the last stroke. He sits down and laughs at my eternal tapestry. Then he begins telling me about the week’s happenings, and…(Le Bret appears on the steps) Why, here's Le Bret! (Le Bret descends) How is our friend doing?

LE BRET: Ill—very ill.

THE DUKE: How?

ROXANE (to the Duke): He exaggerates!

LE BRET: Cyrano lives in isolation and poverty, just as I predicted. His writings constantly make new enemies for him. He attacks false noblemen, false saints, false heroes, plagiarists—everyone.

ROXANE: Ah! But his sword still holds them all in check; None get the better of him.

THE DUKE (shaking his head): Time will tell.

LE BRET: I’m not afraid of his meeting a violent death. Loneliness, hunger, the cold of winter creeping into his dark room—those are the assassins that will end his life. He tightens his belt one more notch every day, his poor nose has turned as pale as ivory, he has only one threadbare black coat…

THE DUKE: It’s certainly true that he hasn’t scaled the heights of worldly success, but don’t feel too sorry for him.

LE BRET (with a bitter smile): Sir, you…

THE DUKE: Pity him not: he lives without compromise, free in both his thoughts and his acts.
LE BRET (in the same tone): My Lord.

THE DUKE (haughtily): Yes, I know: I have everything and he has nothing. But I’d be honored to shake his hand. (Bowing to Roxane) Adieu!

ROXANE: I’ll accompany you to the door. (as they start to exit) You’re in a thoughtful mood today.

THE DUKE: Yes, I’m afraid so. (Abruptly, just as he is about to leave) Monsieur Le Bret! (To Roxane) Will you excuse me? I want to have a word with him. (Goes to Le Bret and speaks in a low voice) It’s true that no one would dare to attack our friend openly, but it’s also true that he’s hated by many people. Only yesterday, during a card game at court, someone said to me, “That Cyrano may have a fatal accident someday.”

LE BRET (raising his arms to heaven): Oh?

THE DUKE: Yes. Tell him not to go out very often, and to be careful.

LE BRET: Careful? He’ll soon be here; I’ll warn him, but…

(Sister Martha enters, and crosses to Roxane)

ROXANE: What is it, Sister Martha?

SISTER MARTHA: Ragueneau would see you, Madame.

ROXANE: Let him come. (To the Duke and Le Bret) He’s come to complain about his poverty. Since the day when he set out to be a writer, he’s been a singer…

LE BRET: A bathhouse attendant…

ROXANE: An actor…

LE BRET: A beadle…

ROXANE: A wig-maker…

LE BRET: A lute teacher…

ROXANE: What will he be to-day?

RAGUENEAU (entering hurriedly): Ah! Madame! (He sees Le Bret) Ah! you here, Sir!

ROXANE (smiling): Tell all your miseries to him; I will return soon.

RAGUENEAU: But, Madame…
Scene 5.III.
Le Bret, Ragueneau.

RAGUENEAU: Since you are here, 'tis best she should not know! I was going to Cyrano’s just now—was but a few steps from the house, when I saw him go out. I hurried to him. I can’t say for certain that it wasn’t an accident, but when he was about to turn the corner a lackey dropped a piece of firewood on him from an upstairs window.

LE BRET: The cowards! Cyrano!

RAGUENEAU: I ran to him…

LE BRET: 'Tis horrible!

RAGUENEAU: Our friend, sir, our poet, was lying on the ground, struck down—a large wound in his head!

LE BRET: He’s dead?

RAGUENEAU: No—but—I bore him to his room. . . Ah! his room! What a thing to see!—what a wretched little closet!

LE BRET: Does he suffer?

RAGUENEAU: No, sir, he’s unconscious.

LE BRET: Did you bring a doctor?

RAGUENEAU: Yes, I found one willing to come out of charity.

LE BRET: Poor Cyrano…We mustn’t tell Roxane all at once…What did the doctor say?

RAGUENEAU: I don’t remember very clearly, something about fever, and the meninges…Come with me quickly! There’s no one with him now, and he may die if he tries to get up!

LE BRET (dragging him toward the right): Come! Through the chapel! 'Tis 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 leave without answering)

Scene 5.V.
Roxane, Cyrano and, for a moment, Sister Martha.
ROXANE (without turning round): For the first time...late!—For the first time, all these fourteen years.

CYRANO (who has succeeded in reaching the chair, and has seated himself--in a lively voice, which is in great contrast with his pale face) Ay! It is villainous! I was delayed by...

ROXANE: By what?

CYRANO: By an untimely visit.

ROXANE (absently, working): Some creditor?

CYRANO: An old acquaintance. We’ve met on the battlefield, among other place. I knew we’d meet again some day, but this wasn’t the time for it.

ROXANE: You sent him away?

CYRANO: Yes. I said to him, “Excuse me, but this Saturday, the day when I always keep a certain appointment. Nothing can make me miss it. Come back in an hour.”

ROXANE (carelessly): He’ll have to wait—I won’t let you leave before nightfall.

CYRANO: (Gently) I may have to leave a little sooner than that. (He closes his eyes and remains silent)

(Sister Martha walks across the park, from the chapel to the steps. Roxane sees her and nods to her)

ROXANE (to Cyrano): Aren’t you going to tease Sister Marthe today?

CYRANO (hastily opening his eyes): Yes, of course! (In a comically gruff voice) Sister! Come here! (The sister glides up to him) When you have such lovely eyes, why do you keep them cast down?

SISTER MARTHA (who makes a movement of astonishment on seeing his face): I...(Sees his face and makes a gesture of astonishment) Oh!

CYRANO (in a whisper, pointing to Roxane): Sh! It’s nothing...(Loudly and truculently) I ate meat yesterday!

SISTER MARTHA: I know. (Aside) He’s pale from hunger! (Rapidly, in a low voice) Come to the dining hall in a little while and I’ll give you a big bowl of soup. Will you come?

CYRANO: Yes, yes!
SISTER MARTHA: Ah, you’re a little more sensible today.

ROXANE (who hears them whispering): She’s trying to convert you!

SISTER MARTHA: I’m doing no such thing!

CYRANO: Now that I think of it, you’re always full of pious platitudes, yet you never preach to me. It’s amazing! (with mock ferocity) I’ll show you that you’re not the only one who can be amazing! Just listen to this! I’m going to…(Seems to be trying to think of a good way to tease her) Ah! I’ve got it! I’m going to allow you to pray for me tonight in the chapel!

ROXANE: Oh! oh!

CYRANO (laughing): Sister Martha is struck dumb!

SISTER MARTHA (gently): I did not wait your leave to pray for you. (She goes out.)

CYRANO: The leaves…

ROXANE (lifting her head, and looking down the distant alley): How well they fall. Such beauty in that short drop from branch to earth! Despite their terror of rotting on the ground, they give their fall the grace of flight.

ROXANE: What, melancholy—you?

CYRANO (collecting himself): Not at all.

ROXANE: Then forget the leaves and tell me the latest news. Aren’t you still my gazette?

CYRANO: I’ll begin this very moment.

ROXANE: Good.

CYRANO (growing whiter and whiter): Last Saturday, the nineteenth, after eating eight helpings of preserved fruit, the King took to his bed with a fever; his illness was convicted of high treason and executed by his physician, and since then the royal pulse has returned to normal. At the Queen’s ball on Sunday, seven hundred and sixty-three white wax candles were burned. Our troops are reported to have beaten John of Austria. Four sorcerers have been hanged. Madame d’Athis’s little dog had to be given an enema to…

ROXANE: That will do, Monsieur de Bergerac!


ROXANE: Oh!
CYRANO (whose face is increasingly twisted by pain): On Tuesday, the whole court went to Fountainebleau. On Wednesday, Madame Montglat said no to Count de Fiesque. On Thursday, Olympe Mancini was the Queen of France—or almost! On Friday, the twenty-fifth, Montglat said yes to Count de Fiesque. And today, Saturday, the twenty-sixth...(He closes his eyes and his head falls. Silence. Surprised at no longer hearing him speak. Roxane turns and looks at him, then stands up in alarm.) Cyrano!

CYRANO (opening his eyes, in an unconcerned voice): What is it?...What...(Seeing her leaning over him, he quickly puts his hand to his hat to make sure it is still pulled down, and draws away from her in his chair) No! It’s nothing. Let me be.

ROXANE: But you . . .

CYRANO: It’s only my old wound from Arras. Sometimes it…You know…

ROXANE: My poor friend.

CYRANO: It’s really nothing. It will soon go away. (Smiles with an effort) There, 'tis gone.

ROXANE: Each of us has his wound. Mine is old but still unhealed, here...(Puts her hand to her bosom)...under the yellowed paper of a letter still stained with tears and blood.

CYRANO: His letter! Ah! You promised me one day that I should read it.

ROXANE: You want to read his letter?

CYRANO: May I open it?

ROXANE (giving the bag hung at her neck): Yes. Please.

(She comes back to her tapestry frame, folds it up, sorts her wools.)

CYRANO (reading):
'Roxane, adieu! I soon must die!
This very night, beloved; and I
Feel my soul heavy with love untold.
I die! No more, as in days of old,
My loving, longing eyes will feast
On your least gesture--ay, the least!
I mind me the way you touch your cheek
With your finger, softly, as you speak!
Ah me! I know that gesture well!
My heart cries out!--I cry "Farewell"!

ROXANE: But how you read that letter! One would think. . .
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--so strange--and yet--
It is not the first time I hear that voice!
(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:
'Here, dying, and there, in the land on high,
I am he who loved, who loves you.--I...

ROXANE (putting her hand on his shoulder):
How can you read? It is 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 says, very slowly, with clasped hands) And, fourteen years long, he has played this part of the kind old friend who comes to laugh and chat.

CYRANO:
Roxane!

ROXANE: 'Twas you!

CYRANO: No, never; Roxane, no!

ROXANE: I should have guessed, each time he said my name!

CYRANO: No, it was not I!

ROXANE: It was you!

CYRANO: I swear!

ROXANE: I see the whole selfless imposture now! The letters...it was you.

CYRANO: No.

ROXANE: The sweet, endearing words! You!

CYRANO: No!

ROXANE: The voice that thrilled the night—you.
CYRANO: I swear it wasn’t.

ROXANE: The soul--it was yours!

CYRANO: I loved you not.

ROXANE: You did love me.

CYRANO: ’Twas Christian!

ROXANE: You loved me!

CYRANO (In a weakening voice): No!

ROXANE: See! How you falter now!

CYRANO: No, my sweet love, I never loved you!

ROXANE: How many things have died, and how many have now been born. Why were you silent for fourteen years, knowing that he hadn’t written that letter, and that the tears on it were yours?

CYRANO (holding out the letter to her): The blood was his.

ROXANE: Why have you let that sublime silence be broken this evening?


(Le Bret and Ragueneau enter running.)

Scene 5.VI.
The same. Le Bret and Ragueneau.

LE BRET: What madness! I knew we’d find him here!

CYRANO (smiling and sitting up): Indeed. Here I am.

LE BRET: He has brought his death by leaving his bed.

ROXANE: No! Your faintness a little while ago…Was it…

CYRANO: That reminds: I didn’t finish my gazette! Today, Saturday the twenty-sixth, an hour before dinner time, Monsieur de Bergerac was murdered. (He takes off his hat; they see his head bandaged.)

ROXANE: What is he saying?…Cyrano!…Those bandages!…What have they done to you? Why?
CYRANO: “To be struck down by the only noble weapon, the sword, wielded by an adversary worthy of me…” Yes, I once said that. Fate is a great jester! I’ve been struck down, but from behind, in an ambush, by a lackey wielding a log! I’ve been consistent to the end. I’ve failed in everything, even in my death.

RAGUENEAU: Ah, Monsieur…

CYRANO (holding out his hand to him): Don’t weep so loudly, Ragueneau. *(Takes his hand)* Tell me, brother poet, what are you doing these days?

RAGUENEAU (amid his tears): I’m the candle-snuffer in a theater…Molière’s company…

CYRANO: Molière!

RAGUENEAU: Yes, but I’m leaving tomorrow. I’m outraged. Yesterday they played his Scapin, and I was that he’d taken a scene from you!

LE BRET: A whole scene?

RAGUENEAU: Yes, sir…

LE BRET (furious): Moliere took it from you!

CYRANO: Be calm. He was right to take it. *(To Ragueneau)* How did the audience react to the scene?

RAGUENEAU (sobbing): Ah! how they laughed!

CYRANO: Yes, my life has been that of a man who provides words and ideas for others, spurs them to action, and is then forgotten. *(To Roxane)* Do you remember the evening when Christian spoke to you below your balcony? Well, that evening was the essence of my life: while I remained below, in the shadows, others climbed up to received the kiss of glory. But now, on the threshold on my grave, I acknowledge the justice of it all—Moliere is a genius, and Christian was handsome! *(The chapel bell has begun ringing: the Nuns are now seen walking along the lane in the background, on their way to Vespers)* Let them go to their prayers, since their bell is ringing.

ROXANE (rising and calling): Sister! Sister!

CYRANO (holding her fast): No, no, don’t bring anyone! You’d find me gone when you returned. *(The nuns have all entered the chapel. The organ sounds)* I needed a little harmony, and there it is.

ROXANE: I love you! You must live!
CYRANO: No, in fairy tales when to the ill-starred Prince the lady says 'I love you!' all his ugliness fades fast—but I remain the same, up to the last!

ROXANE: Your life has been unhappy because of me.

CYRANO: You blessed my life! Never on me had rested woman's love. My mother even could not find me fair: I had no sister; and, when grown a man, I feared the mistress who would mock at me. But I have had your friendship—grace to you a woman's charm has passed across my path.

LE BRET (pointing to the moon, which is seen between the trees): Your other lady-love is come.

CYRANO (smiling): Yes, I see her.

ROXANE: I loved but once, yet twice I lose my love!

CYRANO: Hark you, Le Bret! I soon shall reach the moon.

ROXANE: The moon?

CYRANO: I tell you, it is there, there, that they send me for my Paradise, there I shall find at last the souls I love, in exile—Galileo—Socrates!

LE BRET (rebelliously): You can't die this way! Dear friend. . .

CYRANO: I don't want you to mourn any less for that good, charming, handsome Christian; my only hope is that when the great cold has seeped into my bones, you'll give a double meaning to those black veils, and mourn for me a little when you mourn for him.

ROXANE: I swear it.

CYRANO (shivering violently, then suddenly rising):
Not there! what, seated?—no!
(They spring toward him)
Let no one hold me up--
(He props himself against the tree)
Only the tree!
(Silence)
It comes. E'en now my feet have turned to stone,
My hands are gloved with lead!
(He stands erect)
But since Death comes,
I meet him still afoot,
(He draws his sword)
And sword in hand!
LE BRET: Cyrano!

ROXANNE (half fainting): Cyrano!

(All shrink back in terror.)

CYRANO:
I believe I see...yes, I see him, with his noseless face, daring to look at my nose! (Raises his sword) What’s that you say? It’s useless? Of course, but I’ve never needed hope of victory to make me fight! The noblest battles are always fought in vain!...you there, all of you, who are you? Your numbers seem endless...Ah, I recognize you now: my old enemies! Lies! My greetings to you! (Thrusts his sword into the empty air) And here’s compromise! And Prejudice! And Cowardice! (Thrusts again) What’s that? Come to terms with you? Never! Never!...Ah, there you are, stupidity!...I know I can’t defeat you all, I know that in the end you’ll overwhelm me, but I’ll still fight you as long as there’s a breath in my body! (Swings his sword in great arcs, then stops, panting) Yes, you’ve robbed me of everything: the laurels of glory, the roses of love! But there’s one thing you can’t take away from me. When I go to meet God this evening, and doff my hat before the holy gates, my salute will sweep the blue threshold of heaven, because I’ll still have one thing intact, without a stain, something that I’ll take with me in spite of you! (Springs forward with his sword raised) You ask what it is? I’ll tell you! It’s... (His sword drops from his hand; he staggers and falls into the arms of Le Bret and Ragueneau)

ROXANNE (bending and kissing his forehead): What is it?

CYRANO (opening his eyes, recognizing her, and smiling): My white plume.

Curtain.