

# *Cyrano*

Adapted From Edmond Rostand  
By Doug Zschiegner

# CYRANA

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# CYRANA

## The Characters

*French names, places, and words use French pronunciations*

### The Women

<b>Cyrana De Bergerac</b>	poet and duelist, blessed with a large nose
<b>Christiane De Neuville</b>	cadet from northern France, blessed with a beautiful face
<b>La Bret</b>	officer with the cadets and Cyrana's longtime comrade
<b>Carbon de Castel-Jaloux</b>	Captain of the Gascony Cadets
<b>Raguena</b>	an open-hearted poet and baker
<b>Liginie're</b>	poor composer of satirical songs and lover of liquor
<b>De Guiche</b>	niece of the Cardinal, climbing in rank
<b>Valvert</b>	social climber, serving De Guiche, excellent with a sword

### **The Marquises:**

#### **Bellerose & Brissaille**

#### **Montfleury**

#### **Jodolet (Usher/Stage Hand)**

#### **The Priest**

#### **The Musketeer**

#### **The Cavalry**

#### **The Pickpocket**

#### **The Apprentice**

#### **The Cadets**

#### **The Bakers**

#### **The Poets**

#### **The Musicians**

fashion-focused social climbers

popular theatre actor

theatre producer

dedicated, but of limited eyesight

proud & aggressive

looking for adventure

effective at working the underside

in training as a pickpocket

young nobility from the Gascony region

working for Raguena

ragged and poor and manipulative

young and of limited skill

### The Men

#### **Robin**

Cyrana's 2nd cousin, a handsome Precieuse, aspiring to more

#### **The Chaperone**

long-time protector of Robin

#### **Luis**

Raguena's no-nonsense wife

#### **The Precieuses:**

#### **Gerard, Gustave,**

#### **& Germain**

intent on fashionable excellence/attracting women

#### **The Orange Boy**

young, selling concessions at the theatre, also a Baker

#### **Two Actors**

masked dancers

#### **The Monks:**

from the Benedictine monastery in Paris

#### **Father Abbot**

head of the monastery

#### **Brother Claude**

the former Chaperone after taking his vow

#### **Brother Bertrum**

new to the order

#### **Other Monks**

*Originally cast with 15 women and 6 men*

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## *CyranA*

### A Note from the Adapter

In 1898, Edmond Rostand took a real 17<sup>th</sup> Century poet/duelist and adapted him for a 19<sup>th</sup> century audience. *Cyrano De Bergerac* was one of France's greatest theatrical successes and its plot has been repurposed countless times. For a 21<sup>st</sup> century audience, I collected over twenty English translations and used them as inspiration (but not imitation) in writing new dialogue. I tried to stay close to the original: the mix of humor and heroic sentiment, the passion for romantic poetry presented in a range of verse styles, and the references to historical and – anachronistically - contemporary literature. *Cyrano* onstage is also monumental (up to four hours, over forty characters, and elaborate Cavalier costumes) and this adaptation encourages imaginative staging with a contemporary sensibility over literal period spectacle.

The gender of the characters is switched, without altering their behavior. On a practical level, this addresses the age-old limitation of classic plays: too few great roles for women. Beyond that, fresh questions percolate out of the familiar story. How would women behave in an entirely female power structure where there's no culture of deferring to men? And what would men be like in a world without inherent, systemic privilege? Our title character combines wit, aggression, self-less dedication, literary and military skills, and *panache* – but has one enormous self-esteem problem. How does this imagined past resonate today?

Doug Zschiegner, Adaptor

*Cyrano de Bergerac*. Trans. Renault, Charles. 1899, Project Gutenberg, 2013  
<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/41949>

*Cyrano de Bergerac*. Trans. Gladys Thomas, Mary F. Guilemard. 1910 Project Gutenberg, 1998  
<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks.1254>

*These are the first published English translations and are the most literal translations from the French. The dialogue is overly-formal and would sound inappropriately awkward onstage today, but they served as the most useful connections to the original meaning of the lines. I did not take literal lines from either. Both are in the Public Domain in the U.S.*

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## ACT ONE

Theatre at the Hotel de Bourgogne

*It's 1640 In Paris, France*

*In A World Where Women Wear The Pants*

*An empty theatre. Facing us are benches and a suggestion of a gallery with boxes. Down front is a narrow stage with footlights. A STAGE HAND is sweeping. In one box, an ACTRESS in a robe is putting on make-up before the house opens. An ORANGE BOY is preparing a tray with his concessions: fruit, pastries, wine. A rough looking PICKPOCKET is sneaking around. There's a skirmish between the USHER and a woman wearing a sword.*

**USHER.** Wait, where's your ticket?

**MUSKETEER.** I enter free.

**USHER.** Why?

**MUSKETEER.** Why, I am a Musketeer! (*THE PICKPOCKET distracts the USHER with a peashooter while her APPRENTICE also slips in without paying.*)

**MUSKETEER.** The house is still empty.

**THE PICKPOCKET.** (*aside to THE APPRENTICE*) You see! Distraction. That's our game. Now, success with a theatre crowd will come from choosing our targets well. Fancy dress doesn't necessarily mean money. (*referring to the fencers*)

**THE APPRENTICE.** The pickings look slim. (*They sit and play dice as three masked PRECIEUSES - fashionable young men intent on cultural excellence and on attracting women - pay the USHER and enter.*)

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**GERARD.** You see we're too early. Disserted. Just look! I had plenty of time to finish my book.

**GERMAIN.** Ah, but soak in the history. This theatre. This stage. I saw Corneille here - Racine! - at an age, When I barely knew culture, but mother Insisted - taught me like no other.

**GUSTAVE.** Give me a good seat. Perhaps near an aisle, My charm should be seen. It makes women smile.

**ORANGE BOY.** Oranges! Milk! Strawberries and Tea!

**BELLEROSE.** *(entering)* Why make an entrance with no one to see? *(BELLEROSE and BRISSAILLE, two Marquises – fashion-focused women – are in.)*

**BRISSAILLE.** Pish posh, now you fool. The time we arrive, Depends on the Cardinal. She keeps us alive.

**BELLEROSE.** *(indicating the curtained box)* We're here just before her. She's not in her place.

**BRISSAILLE.** Her patronage paid for that fancy new lace! *(The beautiful CHRISTIANE., in the uniform of the Gascony Cadets, rushes in and stares up at the boxes. A STAGEHAND is passing by with a tray of lit footlight lanterns, which momentarily frame her in light. There's a musical chord and a suspension of the action with the focus on Christiane. This is broken by the entrance of the poorly dressed, singer/poet LIGINIE'RE. carrying a bottle. The MARQUISES approach them both.)*

**LIGINIE'RE.** Someone left the cage open. The peacocks escaped!

**BELLEROSE.** Well, if it isn't that shabby songbird, Liginie're.

**BRISSAILLE.** And still upright, this late in the day.

**BELLEROSE.** *(seeing Christiane.)* You have a new friend. That delicious face could never tolerate Ligonier's libations.

**LIGINIE'RE.** Christiane de Neuville. *(pronounced "kris-TYANNE")* Just arrived from the north.

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**BRISSAILLE.** Really. New blood?

**CHRISTIANE.** Barely a month in Paris. Today, I enlisted to battle Spain with the Royal Guards. The Cadets.

**THE PICKPOCKET.** *(stumbling between the group)* Forgive my clumsiness! *(Brissaille is distracted and the Apprentice steals her money pouch.)*

**BRISSAILLE.** Surely your poison pen calls you to this theatre. Surely you're composing another salacious satire to lampoon your betters.

**LIGINIE'RE.** And surely there are buttocks in need of your lips.

**BELLEROSE.** *(retreating with Brissaille)* Someday that unbridled tongue will cost her dearly... *(The three PRESCIUSES have spotted Christiane. and cruise up to her.)*

**GUSTAVE.** Please pardon good lady, we hope not to upset. But your ravishing face has caused us to bet.

**GERMAINE.** Have we seen you in Shakespeare?

**GERARD.** Or a farce I would say?

**GERMAINE.** No doubt you're an actress.

**GUSTAVE.** We just don't know the play.

**CHRISTIANE.** *(awkwardly)* I thank you. I am not of many words, but I thank you. *(Uncomfortable laughter all around, silence, then the men retreat.)*

**LIGINIE'RE.** Why did I let you drag me to the theatre? Your man has not made his entrance and my bottle has reached its finale.

**CHRISTIANE.** Liginie're, I need your help. Every performance, the handsome Robin *(pronounced "ro-BAN")* sits in that box. We have fallen in love! You're a renowned songwriter and you know the ways of Paris. You must help me

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**LIGINIE'RE.** My friend, yours is not a look that requires romantic assistance.

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**CHRISTIANE.** I'm only an honest soldier, but Robin is a *precieuse*. He studies, attends lectures, strives for the finest things. This language they speak. It confounds me!

**LIGINIE'RE.** This lack of liquor confounds me. I must find a tavern and replenish.

**ORANGE BOY.** Hot Tarts! Macaroons! Or cold Orange-Drinks

**LIGINIE'RE.** Be honest, my boy. Your selection? It stinks.

**ORANGE BOY.** Fresh Milk?

**LIGINIE'RE.** Makes me ill.

**ORANGE BOY.** Cold Water?

**LIGINIE'RE.** Worst still.

**ORANGE BOY.** Lemonade?

**LIGINIE'RE.** I will pass.

**ORANGE BOY.** Red Wine?

**LIGINIE'RE.** One large glass! (*buying one from him*)

**RAGUENA.** (*a baker, spiffed up for the occasion, enters with a hearty:)* Bonsoir!

**THE MARQUISES, THE PRECIEUSES.** Ah! RAGUENA!

**LIGINIE'RE.** Good Christiane, allow me to introduce the most-beloved woman in Paris!

**RAGUENA.** Liginie're! Have you seen de Bergerac?

**LIGINIE'RE.** Every poet, actor, and artist knows RAGUENA's Pastry Shop.

**RAGUENA.** You are too kind.

**LIGINIE'RE.** And that she will feed them on credit.

**RAGUENA.** Poetry itself is my compensation.

**LIGINIE'RE.** Her work is quite delicious. Both her cakes and her verse. Pray tell, what did you pay for your ticket tonight?

**RAGUENA.** Four custards and fifteen cream-puffs. 'Tis a premiere! But Cyrana not here? That's most unexpected.

**LIGINIE'RE.** (*onto her next glass*) Why is that?

**RAGUENA.** But surely you know?

**LIGINIE'RE.** I do not.



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**RAGUENA.** Excuse me! The star of tonight's play? That ham Montfleury! This actor, you see - quite famous, I guess - Is so over the top and such a great mess. That Cyr'na banished her work for four weeks. Her acting tonight could bring violent 'critiques.'

**CHRISTIANE.** But who is this Cyr'na? And why would she fear?

**LIGINIE'RE.** Oh this cha-rac-ter? Just wait till you hear.

**RAGUENA.** There's no one living can attack, Like Cyrana de Bergerac.

**LA BRET.** *(an officer in the Guard, rushes in)* Cyrana here? She's already arrived?

Blood must have been spilt. And who has survived?

**RAGUENA.** That bundle of joy is her friend, La Bret. You want a description? None better to say.

**LA BRET.** *(trying to describe Cyrana)* She's not quite the type you'd see in a painting.

**LIGINIE'RE.** Yet, her unique profile has left weak men fainting.

**LA BRET.** The sight of her nose often prompts a mild scoff: 'Say what is that thing? Can't you just take it off?' She cuts a proud figure with cape - white-plumed hat. But the pride that's within goes quite deeper than that. Her soul's countless worth, no one can dare cheapen.

And as poet and soldier and swordsman? Unbeaten!

**LIGINIE'RE.** Tonight's expectation: she make's good on her threat.

**RAGUENA.** She will, rest assured. I've just placed a bet.  
*(La Bret searches for CYRANA. There's a slap: Gustave has rebuffed the advance of the Musketeer, and Gustave and Germaine storm out to cheers of the crowd. At the same time, the Pickpockets are dangling a stick with a hook, and snag the hat off Brissaile, invoking more cheers. As the Pickpocket scrambles down the gallery and the Apprentice exits, DE GUICHE, VALERT, THE CHAPERONE, and a masked MAN*

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*appear in the boxes. Just as a small orchestra begins to tune, ROBIN removes his mask, and there's a light and an admiring murmur from the crowd.)*

**CHRISTIANE.** That's him! That's Robin! Right there in the box!

**LIGINIE'RE.** My friend, your young chicken is prey of a fox.

**RAGUENA.** Robin's cousin of Cyrana (who's face has that monolith) But she wouldn't approve of the company he's with.

**CHRISTIANE.** Just tell me the worst.

**LIGINIE'RE.** That's Compte De Guiche. She's a sick combination of fop and of leach.

De Guiche thinks she loves him, but she's already married, To the Cardinal's nephew. Her advances she's buried, By wooing Robin through a proxy: Valert!

**RAGUENA.** *(to CHRISTIANE.)* If you value your life, do not focus up there.

**LIGINIE'RE.** Raguena, you're a coward. Don't shrink from their power. Myself? I'll expose them this very same hour. *(pulling out handwritten pages)* I've written a song that features their plot, The dark machinations of that devious lot. It's a most vicious song. I penned the best rhyme. (Well, all aren't the best... perhaps half the time.) Deception and pretense! Their goal is Robin.

**CHRISTIANE.** I swear that I'll save him.

**RAGUENA.** I doubt that you can. With the Cardinal her aunt, that De Guiche gets her way.

**LIGINIE'RE.** The lure of good liquor forbids me to stay. Christiane - he's a beauty, and intelligent, too.

**RAGUENA.** While you're down here babbling, he's looking at you. *(Liginie're makes her way to the exit. Raguena. retreats to La Bret. As Christiane and Robin make eye contact, the action suspends again. Music. Then the freeze breaks.)*

**CHRISTIANE.** *(staring up at the box)* With each part of my being I know this is love. I'll challenge Valvert. Slap her with my glove. We'll duel to the death to save my Robin.

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I reach in my pocket –

**THE PICKPOCKET.** (*caught picking her pocket*) - And you find my hand.

**CHRISTIANE.** (*holding her tight*) What are you doing?

**THE PICKPOCKET.** Wait, wait. Let me go, and I'll tell you a secret.

**CHRISTIANE.** What secret?

**THE PICKPOCKET.** That drunken friend of yours - who just left? Her life's in peril. A song she wrote offended the high and mighty. There's going to be an ambush tonight.

**CHRISTIANE.** An ambush? By whom?

**THE PICKPOCKET.** A hundred armed women have been hired. I am one.

**CHRISTIANE.** Who hired a hundred thugs?

**THE PICKPOCKET.** That I can't tell you. There's honor even among us. If you want Liginie're. to wake up tomorrow, warn her to avoid the Port de Nesle tonight.

**CHRISTIANE.** (*releasing her*) Where can I find her?

**THE PICKPOCKET.** (*scurrying away*) Start with the pubs. She'll be crawling from one to another for hours.

**CHRISTIANE.** A hundred to one! The cowards! I go! - But him! - And them! (*Christiane is torn between love and duty, but finally exits. Bellerose and Brissaille wave their handkerchiefs and "woo hoo" up at De Guiche in her box.*)

**DE GUICHE.** *Bonsoir.*

**BELLEROSE.** Compte De Guiche, you are looking especially splendid this evening.

**BRISSAILLE.** Those ribbons are stunning! What call you that color?

**DE GUICHE.** It's called 'Spanish Blood.'

**BELLEROSE.** Ah, an apt name! For when you join the battle, Spain will bleed indeed.

**DE GUICHE.** *Merci beaucoup.* (*The crowd is getting restless. POET #4 and MUSICIAN #2 enter. A short trumpet fanfare.*

*From one curtained box, a red-gloved hand appears and waves*

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*imperially. The crowd responds with murmurs and polite applause. La Bret returns to Ragunea.)*

**RAGUENA.** The Cardinal's here so the play will begin. Will Montfleury perform?

**LA BRET.** Will Cyrana allow it? *(A robed, masked performer, JODELET, takes the stage – facing the onstage crowd – and bangs a large staff three times.)* That's not Montfleury!

**RAGUENA.** I've lost my bet!

**JODELET.** Mesdames and Messieurs! Welcome to this temple of the arts: the Hotel de Bourgogne! We ask that you silence your conversations and please unwrap any candy. It is with enormous pleasure I present to you, the finest purveyor of the poetic, the last bastion of beauty, that most theatrical of thespians: Madame Montfleury! *(Music. Two masked ACTORS with tambourines dance about and frame an entrance. A flamboyant MONTFLEURY makes a grand appearance. She has thick makeup, a burlesque of a pastoral shepherd's costume, a beribboned pan flute, and a flower. The crowd goes wild. She acknowledges the ovation and ostentatiously throws a kiss up to Robin.)*

**MONTFLEURY.** *(intoning and gesturing dramatically)* 'Oh, happy the shepherds, Who, far from the city, Doth appreciate birds. And blossoms so pretty...'

**A VOICE.** Villain! Were you not forbidden to show your painted face for one month? *(The crowd searches for the VOICE, as MONTFLEURY makes another attempt.)*

**MONTFLEURY.** 'Oh, happy the shepherds, Who far from the city...'

**THE VOICE.** Oh, Queen of Clowns, make your exit this instant!

**MONTFLEURY.** 'Oh, happy the shepherd...'

**THE VOICE.** While you're chewing the scenery, perhaps you've a taste for this! *(A hand brandishing a cane appears. The ACTORS cower. Most of the crowd supports Montfleury.)*

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**CALVARY.** Let her perform! We came for a play!

**CROWD.** Montfleury! Montfleury!

**MUSKETEER.** Play on! Fear nothing!

**MONTFLEURY.** ‘Oh, happy the....’

**CYRANA.** (*appears, cane aloft, white plumed hat cocked, and one helluva nose*) Well, I shall be angry in a moment.

**BRISSAILLE.** See here, good woman. This is hardly the place for dramatic criticism.

**CYRANA.** (*leaping onto the stage*) One more word and I shall carve this ham like Sunday dinner.

**BELLEROSE.** But the play! Why deprive us of this literature?

**CYRANA.** Literature! This sugar-encrusted excrement? Surely someone in Paris has one modicum of taste left. Or have your tongues become so accustomed to a diet of this doggerel, that you can no longer discern the savor of a polished turd?

**GERARD.** Have you no decency?!

**MONTFLEURY.** I beseech you!

**CYRANA.** I will clap my hand three times. On the third, this fool moon will eclipse. (*The crowd cheers and boos.*)

**CYRANA.** (*a clap*) One!

**MONTFLEURY.** While my dedication to my art is without question...

**CYRANA.** Two!

**MONTFLEURY.** ...there comes a time when prudence...

**CYRANA.** Three! (*Montfleury disappears to the roar of the crowd and Jodolet follows.*)

**MUSKETEER.** Coward!

**JODELET.** (*reappearing*) Silence good patrons! It’s with a heavy heart I inform you that your favorite tragedian has fallen ill and won’t be able to continue....

**MUSKETEER.** (*to CYRANA*) But pray tell, Mademoiselle, why do you this hate this Montfleury?

**CYRANA.** Two reasons, good youth. Either would be sufficient. One: ‘It offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters.’ This grease-

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soaked slab of bacon did indeed 'out Herod-Herod.' Two: *(with a glance at ROBIN)* Well...the second is mine own.

**JODELET.** But you must understand, these people paid for a performance. Would you leave them so unsatisfied? We'll have to refund their tickets.

**CYRANA.** That's the first intelligent thing you've spoken all evening. Never let it be said that this sanctuary of Thespis doesn't provide good value. Catch then this purse and hold then your peace. *(tosses her money pouch to Jodelet to cheers from the crowd)*

**JODELET.** *(weighing the pouch)* At this price, you may cancel the performance every night! Twice! *(More cheers as some, including the Actors, gather around Jodelet, others listen to the following. The De Guiche party makes it way to the floor of the pit.)*

**BRISSAILLE.** What a shameful display. Certainly you know this actor is under the generous patronage of one of France's most powerful Duchesses. Have you a patron?

**CYRANA.** None.

**BRISSAILLE.** What, no great patron to shield your name?

**CYRANA.** None!

**BRISSAILLE.** No one to protect you?

**CYRANA.** Would you like to go for three? No, no one! All the protection I need, I wear at my side. *(touching her sword)*

**BRISSAILLE.** The Duchess has a long reach.

**CYRANA.** Should the situation arise, I can lengthen my reach with steel. Please be so kind as to turn on your toes. *(Brissaille is defiant)* Or are you staying to stare at my nose?

**BRISSAILLE.** *Mon dieu!* I do not.

**RAGUENA.** Oh my dear.

**LA BRET.** Oh my God.

**CYRANA.** Is something amiss? Perhaps something is odd? Does my nose have a smudge? I hope nothing is wrong. You don't think it's ugly? Or crooked? Or long?

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**BRISSAILLE.** Your Grace is mistaken!

**CYRANA.** A wart with a hair?

**BRISSAILLE.** No nothing unusual.

**CYRANA.** Then why would you stare?

**BRISSAILLE.** I assure you I didn't. I tried hard not to look.

**CYRANA.** Why wouldn't you gaze then? Does it have a hook?  
You must be disgusted if you cannot glance.

**BRISSAILLE.** Disgusted? Oh no!

**CYRANA.** Then why not take the chance? Go ahead. Take a  
gander. Do you think it large?

**BRISSAILLE.** I really don't think so.

**CYRANA.** Be honest. Take charge.

**BRISSAILLE.** As a matter of fact, I would call it quite small.

**CYRANA.** Well that simply shows you have no brains at all.  
My nose in enormous! Immense! Like a trunk! What you don't  
understand is if ever it shrunk, I'd be just like you and I'd hide  
in disgrace, With that tiny boil in the midst of my face. You  
see, I am proud that I cannot pass For regular folks who get  
kicked in their ass. (*Suiting the word to the action, she boots  
BRISSAILLE away. The crowd cheers.*)

**DE GUICHE.** She's getting to be tiresome.

**VALVERT.** That swashbuckling...buckle...swasher!

**DE GUICHE.** Will no one put her in her place?

**VALVERT.** I'll treat her to my razor sharp *repartee*'. Dear  
Robin, watch this! (*she goes up to Cyrana*) Mademoiselle, your  
nose... it is...very...big!

**CYRANA.** Very.

**VALVERT.** Ha!

**CYRANA.** Is that all?

**VALVERT.** What-what-what do you mean?

**CYRANA.** Certainly you can do better than 'big?' There are a  
thousand insults you could create: Aggressive: If that were  
mine I'd amputate. Friendly: When you drink from a cup how  
does it stay dry? Maybe a wine barrel? Just give it a try.

Geographic: Is that a rock, or a boulder, or what is the story?

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Perhaps a peninsula or large promontory? Gracious: You love the little birds. How sweet! You've grown a perch for their tiny feet. Considerate: Take care when you bow lest you lose your balance. Decorative: Does that curtain rod come with drapes and a valance?

**RAGUENA.** *(as Cyrana looks to her for a suggestion)* Tender:

**CYRANA.** Pray get a small umbrella made, Lest in the sun the color fade. *(Members of the crowd now shout out the prompts and Cryana improvises)* British: I can't find my wet bulldog. I hate to ask this, Would you sniff it out with that great proboscis? Religious: Ev'n Gabriel's Horn couldn't blow quite like this. Military: She's brought her own cannon. She must now enlist. Rustic: That a nose? A dwarf pumpkin? Are you eating a pear? Ah! That prize cu-cum-ber should have won last year's fair! Medicinal: If that starts to run, we'll have a tsunami. Constabulary: Put up your hands and drop the salami! Practical: A coat tree of your very own. Productive: She would certainly need a big grindstone. *(a beat while the audience figures that one out)* Historical: If it blows - we'll know how Pompeii felt. Literary: Oh that this too too solid nose would melt! *(Cyrana poses on stage to enthusiastic applause. She turns back to Valvert.)* You had quite an opportunity here: an audience, a patron to impress, a paramour to dazzle. Your choice for the occasion? 'Very big.'

**DE GUICHE.** Come away, Valvert.

**VALVERT.** *(trying to rally the crowd)* Listen to this arrogance! This *gauche* country bumpkin! This failure of fashion! She has no ruffs or ribbons or lace. She doesn't even have gloves!

**CYRANA.** That's true. My elegance lies within. When I rise in the morning I drape myself in dignity rather than decorations. I value liberty over jewelry. Scruples over baubles. Integrity and independence, over conformity and trends. *Panache* may not be in vogue, but it has served me well.



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**VALVERT.** But, Madame...

**CYRANA.** As for gloves. I had a pair, but left one in some fop's face.

**VALVERT.** Knave! Rascal! Scoundrel! Hack!

**CYRANA.** *(bowing, as if Valvert introduced herself)* Ah! Cyrana de Bergerac! *(The crowd particularly enjoys that one. Cyrana turns to leave)*

**VALVERT.** *(challenging her with a glove swipe to her back)* You buffoon!

**CYRANA.** *(suddenly in pain)* Ay! Ah!

**LA BRET.** *(from the sidelines)* Cyrana! What ails you?

**CYRANA.** It's nothing. This happens when I leave it idle too long.

**VALVERT.** What are you saying?

**CYRANA.** Cramps. Cramps in my sword. *(draws)* There. That's better.

**VALVERT.** *(also drawing)* At last. A chance to put you in your place. You... 'poet!'

**CYRANA.** Oh dear. A battle of wits with the unarmed. One has rules... How about this? To prove that word and sword are equally deadly, while we duel, I'll improvise a ballade.

**VALVERT.** A ballade?

**CYRANA.** Sorry, too big a word? A 'poem.' Of strict classical design: Three stanzas of eight lines each and then a coda - a final quatrain - on the last line of which, I will hit.

**VALVERT.** You?...I?... *En garde!*

**CYRANA.** A moment...

**VALVERT.** To gather your courage?

**CYRANA.** To gather my rhymes. *(thinks a bit, tallying them up)* Very good! 'The Ballade of the Duel at the Hotel de Bourgogne Between Cyrana de Bergerac and an Ostentatious Philistine'

**VALVERT.** What is that, if you please?

**CYRANA.** The title. *(La Bret, Raguena, and the crowd clear a circle with cries of 'Make way,' 'Give room,' 'No noise,')* To

## CYRANA

begin, I take off my old hat. My cape soon follows it. Mine's not a fancy one like that, But I don't mind a bit. The sword I wield for this combat, Polished and shined with spit, Will kill a pseudo-aristocrat, Who on the last line, I hit. (*Valvert attacks and they exchange a few moves.*) Well, wasn't that part quite exciting?! You really can commit. Since we've started up the fighting, What is't should be my tar-get? Shall I aim for a spot inviting, Like head, or hand, or tit?, (This part is only inciting, On the last line, I hit.) (*Another series of moves and counter moves.*) You are a fine adversary. At first, you looked a twit. This rhyming while we thrust n' parry, Is challenging I admit. The word 'coward' in my dictionary? There is no rhyme for it. To the point, that's quite ancillary, For on that last line, I hit. (*At the end of this volley, Cyrana disarms Valvert and has both swords.*) And now the final coda: Start praying to your favorite saint. 'Tis time to end this bit. With that I thrust, I lunge, I feint, And as I said, I HIT! (*Cyrana has crossed both swords like a scissors over Valvert's nose, and snips it off on that final word. With a scream, she runs to De Guiche, who pushes her back to the fight. As Cyrana modestly bows, Valvert rushes up and is impaled on the sword Cyrana flourishes behind her. Valvert falls back on De Guiche, who dumps her on Bellerose, and they are all three off.*)

**GERARD.** You animal!

**RAGEUNA.** Magnificent!

**LA BRET.** You are mad!

**ORANGE BOY.** How heroic!

**POET #4.** *Magnifique!*

**CAVALRY.** That was far better than the play would have been. (*Robin makes eye contact with Cyrana – another momentary freeze with a note of music - but then the Chaperone shuffles her off too. Raguena dances with delight, congratulates Cyrana and exits. The Cavalry tries to comfort [pick-up] Gerard and they exit, followed by the Musketeer. The Poet and the Musician remain.*)

## CYRANA

**CYRANA.** *(to Jodelet)* May we stay a bit?

**JODELET.** Well of course! But wouldn't you rather go dine?

**CYRANA.** Not tonight, my friend. *(Jodelet, the Actors, and the Musician confer upstage with the POET about her script.)*

**LA BRET.** Because?

**CYRANA.** To dine requires coin.

**LA BRET.** But that bag of gold?

**CYRANA.** My nest egg for the month.

**LA BRET.** Spent in one toss. What a ludicrous waste!

**CYRANA.** What a glorious moment.

**ORANGE BOY.** *(having heard)* Mademoiselle de Bergerac? My humble concessions are yours. Please have all you like.

**CYRANA.** Young fellow, my Gascon pride refuses charity. Yet I also refuse to disappoint such a tender sapling.

**ORANGE BOY.** Have some grapes...

**CYRANA.** Just one

**ORANGE BOY.** A glass of wine...

**CYRANA.** Just water.

**ORANGE BOY.** And a macaroon...

**CYRANA.** Just a half.

**ORANGE BOY.** And nothing else?

**CYRANA.** Your hand to kiss. *(she does)*

**ORANGE BOY.** Why thank you. You're too kind. *(The Orange Boy retreats up with the Actors.)*

**CYRANA.** *(ceremoniously laying out her 'banquet')* Ah! *Bon appe'tit!*

**LA BRET.** You'll be the death of me, if not yourself. These public displays! For every admirer you win, I fear you offend two others. And some in high places.

**CYRANA.** Who?

**LA BRET.** The Cardinal for one. She must have thought you...

**CYRANA.** ...original at least.

**LA BRET.** But why such spite? Such venom? That tirade over a foolish actress?

## CYRANA

**CYRANA.** (*suddenly bristling*) Montfleury could not be allowed to continue! Preening to please the public. Making googely eyes at the gallery. To dare to raise her gaze to hers...! A slug crawling across a rose!

**LA BRET.** Methinks I know why the lady protests so much. Could it be a particular rose has caught your eye?

**CYRANA.** Oh, come La Bret. One thing stands between me and romance: And it enters the room a full minute before I do. Yet this... does not kill desire. As fate would have it, my tastes run to the fairest.

**LA BRET.** The fairest...

**CYRANA.** In all the world. The most handsome, most brilliant, most refined...

**LA BRET.** Do tell!

**CYRANA.** Anyone who sees his smile knows perfection. Every word rings true. Every gesture, divine.

**LA BRET.** Your cousin, Robin!

**CYRANA.** Second cousin. As an orphan, my playmate each summer when we were young.

**LA BRET.** Well, so much the better: He saw you triumph here tonight!

**CYRANA.** A chance with him? You've lost your sight! (*after a beat*) Yes, there are moments, in spring, in the dark, When I'm walking alone outside of a park, And I fantasize when I see a pair, Of lovers in moonlight, without a care. And I think, why not me? And I stand tall. I then see my profile shadow the wall.

**LA BRET.** Just now, with that boy who gave you the food, He did not run. And he said nothing rude Robin was cheering you during the duel.

**CYRANA.** If he laughs in my face - dear God how cruel. Courage I have, *panache* with each breath, But mocked by Robin? I'd much prefer death.

## CYRANA

**JODELET.** (*entering with the Chaperone*) Forgive my interruption. Someone is asking for you.

**CYRANA.** Why, that's Robin's chaperone...

**CHAPERONE.** My young man bid me inquire you out. What he bid me say I will keep to myself. Except to say that they are private matters.

**CYRANA.** Private?

**CHAPERONE.** We attend mass at dawn tomorrow. Thereafter, should you be some place where words may be exchanged...

**CYRANA.** (*slumping against LA BRET*) Ah, good lord!

**CHAPERONE.** My master will also there attend.

**CYRANA.** Where? Ah...but...ah...yes...where?

**CHAPERONE.** Where?

**LA BRET.** Where?

**CYRANA.**

Ah, Raguena's. Raguena's Pastry Shop. The *Rue Saint*....ah...  
the *Rue Saint-Honore*'

**CHAPERONE.** (*exiting*) Very good. Be you there at seven.

**CYRANA.** Without fail! (*she falls into La Bret's arms*) A rendezvous...at dawn!

**LA BRET.** You don't hate the world anymore

**CYRANA.** The world can go to hell. He knows I live!

**LA BRET.** I hope his *tete-a-tete* will calm you down.

**CYRANA.** Calm? I am mad! Give me a mountain to climb!  
Dragons to slay!

**JODELET.** Quiet please, we're working

**CYRANA.** We go. I need giants to battle. (*Raguena and the CAVALRY burst in dragging Liginie're., drunk and terrified.*)

**RAGUENA.** Cyrana! We need your help

**CYRANA.** Good, Liginie're. what's the matter?

**LIGINIE'RE.** Rumors in the taverns. They want me dead - because of my song! There's a hundred women, lying in wait - an ambush - at the Port de Nesle. I must pass through to get home. A hundred killers!

## CYRANA

**CYRANA.** One hundred women? They wait in the night?  
(Given my mood, that sounds about right.) My fellow poet,  
don't worry your head. I promise tonight you will sleep in your  
bed.

**LA BRET.** But why take the risk?

**CYRANA.** I'll tell you La Bret, 'Cuz this drunken lout made a  
gesture one day: She saw in a church a quite handsome man,  
And as he was leaving he touched his hand, In-to holy water.  
So to get him to stop, This fool emptied the basin! She drank  
every drop! A woman like that, I want to defend.

**LIGINIE'RE.** But killed for my song?

**CYRANA.** Because you're my friend.

**LA BRET.** This sounds like a slaughter.

**ORANGE BOY.** I fear it's your end.

**CYRANA.** Why don't you come witness? You all can attend!  
Throw open the doors. We'll parade to the fight. Nothing but  
magic can happen this night. *(As the group gathers, some  
taking the footlights as lanterns, we hear great doors open, and  
moonlight shines on their faces. A momentary tableau.  
Music.)*

**ORANGE BOY.** Ah, Paris before us.

**RAGEUNA.** All drenched by the moon.

**CYRANA.** For now, oh so peaceful, but - ah - very soon,  
There'll be an adventure, and then high above, The sun brings  
the dawn and the dawn brings my love. *(Music! Cyrana leads  
the procession into the night.)*

**END OF ACT ONE**

# CYRANA

## ACT TWO

*Raguena's Pastry Shop, The Next Morning at Sunrise*

*The procession morphs into a raucous, musical transition with the cast moving a few set pieces and a team of BAKERS - in aprons and hats - shifting the long platforms that formed the stage into tables for a cooking assembly line. Raguena joins her husband Luis to conduct the morning's choreographed, juggled, preparations: eggs, flour, milk, etc. fly into big bowls, dough is kneaded and spread onto trays, breads and pastries are brought from the ovens.*

**RAGUENA.** Yes, my precious artisans! As the silver rays of dawn awake the citizens of Paris, use your gifted hands to create the treats that will nourish their souls. As this auspicious night draws to a close, it is our *raison-d'etre* to forge the gastronomic delights that will fuel the day's revelations. *(a bell rings and the BAKERS rush to the ovens)* As the sun rises on a day of new possibilities, so our bread rises as sustenance to that achievement. We are not mere bakers, but the generators of culinary dreams. If food be the music of love, bake on!

**BAKER #3.** *(presenting Raguena with trays of fresh goodies)*  
Comedic Croissants!

**BAKER #1.** Tragic Tarts!

**BAKER #2.** Pastoral Petit Fours!

**RAGUENA.** You've put the clefts on the loaves in the wrong places. The baguette scans better thus: Da dum, Da dum, Da dum, Da dum, Da dum.

**BAKER #5** *(with a baked harp)* Good Mistress, this I've baked just to inspire.

**RAGUENA.** *(giving a coin)* Well done! A pastry shaped into a lyre!

**LUIS.** *(with a basket of large paper cones)* Our business would no longer court disaster

## CYRANA

If you allowed the crew to bake much faster.

**RAGUENA.** Oh Muse! Avert thine eyes, from my dear spouse.  
His *bourgeois* slant infects our house

**LUIS.** But wife, without this dough we'd live in rags.

**RAGUENA.** Lu-is, I see you've made us paper bags. But what  
then is this? Oh, break my heart

Pages of poems, here torn apart! The words of good friends,  
now cut into pieces. Disrespected! Trashed! Destroyed with  
these creases! If Verse you treat like this, God knows, What  
violence you'd do to Prose.

**LUIS.** Every day the shop fills with your poetic parasites. You  
accept their attempts at writing as payment. Why shouldn't I  
use these useless scraps for something practical? (*Two*  
*PRECIEUSES enter the shop.*)

**RAGUENA.** May I help you, my lovelies?

**GUSTAVE.** Two of your finest brioches.

**RAGUENA.** An inspired choice.

**GERMAINE.** Could you wrap them for us?

**RAGUENA.** Wrap them? (*she searches the bags*) 'Ulysses  
thus on leaving fair Penelope...' No, not that one. 'As  
Phoebus' hair shines like the sun...' Certainly not. 'Though  
roses be red, good violets, bright blue...' Well, if something  
has to go... (*She wraps the pastries. As the gentlemen leave,*  
*Cyrana rushes in.*)

**CYRANA.** What's the clock?

**RAGUENA.** The clock strikes six and the glittering star  
appears! Your performance last night was magnificent.

**CYRANA.** Which one?

**RAGUENA.** Both! Your stunning duel in verse at the Hotel de  
Bourgogne and then that ambush at the Port de Nesle.

**CYRANA.** Ah. Ancient history. Six, you say? He'll be here at  
seven...

**RAGUENA.** Never have I seen a more masterful display of  
sword and word.



## CYRANA

**LUIS.** She's talked of nothing else all morning.

**CYRANA.** You pop one windbag, another inflates.

**RAGUENA.** '...Will kill a pseudo-aristocrat' Kudos!

*(Raguena flourishes a loaf as a rapier and knocks a tray of pastries out of a Baker's hands)*

**LUIS.** Your histrionics will ruin us!

**CYRANA.** What is the time

**RAGUENA.** Two minutes past six.

**CYRANA.** May I have some privacy?

**RAGUENA.** Anything for you, but soon my poets will arrive for their morning *salon*.

**LUIS.** For their breakfast, more likely. And see if they aren't still here for lunch.

**CYRANA.** The time?

**RAGUENA.** Three minutes past six.

**MUSKETEER.** *(entering)* Good Morning, fair Luis!

**LUIS.** *(rushing to her)* Wonderful to see you again!

**CYRANA.** *(to Raguena)* Who's that?

**RAGUENA.** A friend of Luis. A warrior he said.

**CYRANA.** A warrior indeed. At least of the bed. And tell me again, how much time has past?

**RAGUENA.** Not five minutes more than when you last asked.

**MUSKETEER.** I hear you have here, th' hottest tarts in *Pair-ee!*

**BAKER #2.** *(aside)* The cheapest one too, it looks like to me.

**CYRANA.** *(pressing Raguena)* When my guest arrives, I ask you for the room.

**RAGUENA.** This person upsets you. You're face reflects doom.

**CYRANA.** It's nothing, good friend. *(Raguena is skeptical)* No lies here today.

**RAGUENA.** That nose getting longer may give you away!

**CYRANA.** Let me sit for a moment and give me a pen. *(to herself)* The words in my heart might just flow when I can put them on paper and not see his face. For I fear in his presence,

## CYRANA

I'll be a disgrace. (*Cyrana sits and writes, as a group of bedraggled, cackling, cooing POETS invade the shop.*)

**LUIS.** And in come your vultures, all ready to feed!

**POET #2.** (*to Raguena*) Good morrow, good sister!

**POET #1.** Good sister indeed!

**POET #4.** Once again here we are with a genius so fine.

**POET #3.** A goddess with rhymes and with pastry, divine!

**RAGUENA.** Dear Artists, you're welcome to my humble store. The treats that await you will nourish, but more - The words that we share shall soon fill our soul: A literate banquet to make us all whole.

**LUIS.** (*aside to the Musketeer*) I think I'm gonna be ill. (*The Poets sit to eat. The Bakers pours coffee.*)

**POET #5.** We would have been here sooner, but we were delayed by a mob around the Port de Nesle.

**POET #2.** The docks were littered with the carcasses of bleeding assassins. Each one un-seamed from the nave to the chops.

**POET #5.** I counted eight.

**CYRANA.** (*as she's writing*) Hmph. I thought seven...

**POET #4.** Rumor is that one brilliant buccaneer took on an entire gang.

**POET #3.** We saw discarded weapons and hats all over the neighborhood.

**RAGUENA.** Cyrana, do you know something of this?

**CYRANA.** Not I.

**LUIS.** And you? You know who could have done this?

**MUSKETEER.** (*with faux-false modesty*) Maybe I do. Maybe I don't... One mustn't kill and tell.

**CYRANA.** (*to herself*) A thousand times when I thought of Robin, these vibrant images filled my head. How pale they seem on the page. How cowardly it seems not to give them voice.

**POET #5.** And you, good Raguena. What new poetry have you been baking?

## CYRANA

**RAGUENA.** Oh, nothing – well one. A trifle. A Recipe in Verse! (*After begrudging encouragement from the POETS, she recites*) ALMOND TARTS a la RAGUENA

Beat three fresh eggs, Gently and quick,  
Into a rich froth, Supple and thick.

A lemon then squeeze, But not quite too hard,  
Since the juice that you need, Should be lighter than lard.

Fresh milk then add next, Direct from the cow.

Sweet almonds pour in. Oh, we're moving on now!

Then pop it all in, To the oven with care,

In hopes that deliciousness, Soon will be there.

The secret this is For rich Almond Tarts,

That dee-light the palate, And warm up each heart. (*Over-enthusiastic applause, cries of "Delightful!" "Delicious!" - and more eating*)

**CYRANA.** (*aside to Raguena*) You know they're only feasting on your words so they can feast on your cakes.

**RAGUENA.** Oh, I'm aware they're a bit too generous. But it's a fair bargain: I feed their needy bellies and they feed my need to read. The end is more poetry for all.

**CYRANA.** You, dear heart, are a very special woman.

(*crossing to Luis with the Musketeer*) And is this noble conqueror laying siege to you, Luis?

**LUIS.** I assure you, no one breaches my fortifications without my consent.

**CYRANA.** A word to the wise: Raguena is my friend. You need another example of what happens to those who threaten my friends? (*with a scissor-snipping gesture, she crosses away to the door*)

**LUIS.** Really? You've no response? Couldn't you at least make a joke about her nose?

**MUSKETEER.** It's not her nose I fear... (*they separate*)

**CYRANA.** Here he comes! Hist!

## CYRANA

**RAGUENA.** *(taking the cue, Raguena shuffles them all off, the POETS grabbing the food.)* We'd be more comfortable in here for our next recitations!

**CYRANA.** *(finishing and pocketing the letter)* No need to sign. I'll only draw this if there's a glimmer of hope.

*(Robin, masked, enters the shop, followed closely by the Chaperone.)* Bonjour and welcome! *(the Chaperone interrupts her advance)* Ah, noble sir, grant a word? Even two?

**CHAPERONE.** You can have up to four, should that please you. My role is to chap'rone, the virtuous Robin. Just try to get past me, if you think that you can

**CYRANA.** Do sweet things entice, dear? Do they challenge your norms?

**CHAPERON.** Temptation comes on me in so many forms.

**CYRANA.** *(filling a poem with treats)* Three cream puffs, two tarts...

**CHAPERONE.** And a couple of cakes.

**CYRANA.** And wrap it all up in some drivel that takes, A free hand with rhyme, but nevertheless, Makes a mighty good package for this sweet largess. *(shuffling the Chaperone out)* The warm morning beckons. It's barely hot. And you can come back when you've finished the lot! *(The door slams and Cyrana is alone with Robin.)*

**CYRANA.** Dear Robin. Blessed be this blessed hour when you remembered to remember me.

**ROBIN.** *(unmasking)* I come from Confession for confession. For your ears alone. But first I offer thanksgiving for your gallantry at the theatre last night. That dandy you checkmated with weapon and wit is the pawn of a great lady who thinks she's in love with me.

**CYRANA.** Ha. Compte De Guiche?

**ROBIN.** Indeed. De Guiche was insisting I marry the dolt. No doubt as cover for her own attempts to win me. You foiled her advance.

## CYRANA

**CYRANA.** A happy chance! Then I fought not for my nose but for your hand.

**ROBIN.** And for that I thank you. But before I confess, I need to remember you again as that faithful young playmate in our days beside the lake...

**CYRANA.** When you'd come each spring to visit Bergerac! We'd gather mulberries...

**ROBIN.** You'd cut reeds to serve as your swords...

**CYRANA.** The silk of corn would serve as hair for your dolls...

**ROBIN.** And we'd dream of lives far richer than those we lived then.

**CYRANA.** You were so different from the other children. So eager to explore. Be more.

**ROBIN.** And you would do all that I asked. You'd run to me with a scratch from battling some imagined foe. And I would play father and scold and bandage you. (*seeing the wound on her hand now*) What's this? Perhaps you haven't grown up at all.

**CYRANA.** The foes are real now – a skirmish at the Port de Nesle.

**ROBIN.** (*cleaning her wound with his handkerchief*) Here, let me.

**CYRANA.** Your touch...

**ROBIN.** Tell me. How many did you fight?

**CYRANA.** Oh, no more than a hundred. But you are now out of your text. What did you come to say?

**ROBIN.** Our childhood memories have inspired me. Yes, now I dare: I am in love.

**CYRANA.** In love?

**ROBIN.** With one who doesn't know.

**CYRANA.** Ah.

**ROBIN.** Not yet

**CYRANA.** Ah?

CYRANA

**ROBIN.** But I know she loves from afar and dares not speak.

**CYRANA.** Ah.

**ROBIN.** Your hand... Are you getting a fever?

**CYRANA.** Ah...

**ROBIN.** She's in the Guard. In your company in fact. Can you believe it?

**CYRANA.** Ah!

**ROBIN.** Such pride...such *panache*...so noble...so beautiful!

**CYRANA.** (*pulling away*) Beautiful?

**ROBIN.** What's wrong?

**CYRANA.** Nothing. This wound may prove fatal after all.

**ROBIN.** I love her. Even though we've only seen each other in the theatre.

**CYRANA.** You've never spoken?

**ROBIN.** Only with our eyes.

**CYRANA.** Then how do you know?

**ROBIN.** Why, Cyrana. A man just knows. Besides I have spies – well, confidantes - for confirmation.

**CYRANA.** She's in the Guard? In my company?

**ROBIN.** Christiane de Neuville.

**CYRANA.** There's no 'Christiane.' in the Guard!

**ROBIN.** There is. Since yesterday. Under Captain de Castel-Jaloux.

**CYRANA.** How quickly. How quickly we fling away our hearts.

**CHAPERONE.** (*entering*) I've finished the cakes. 'Tis now time to go.

**CYRANA.** Go read the bags! Oh, here's sourdough! (*he's back out with more food*) Robin, you love words, intelligence and more. For all that you know she could be a bore. You need to explore her soul and her wit.

**ROBIN.** Her face looks so bright and her eyes confirm it.

**CYRANA.** With the right presentation all food can look rich. What if she's stupid?

## CYRANA

**ROBIN.** Then I'll die in a ditch.

**CYRANA.** So why the confession? And why meet me here?

**ROBIN.** Because I heard something that filled me with fear: It's Gascon Cadets that make up your Guard. Christiane - an outsider - could be treated quite hard. They're well reputed for pride and sharp spite. I fear for her safety.

**CYRANA.** *(Well, that you got right.)*

**ROBIN.** When I saw your vigor in deflating that dandy, I knew your protection would come in quite handy.

**CYRANA.** Rest assured, my dear man, I'll take care of your friend

**ROBIN.** You'll keep her from duels? See her safe to the end? I'll sleep so much better knowing you're at her side. You really must love me.

**CYRANA.** Surely that I can't hide

**ROBIN.** *(putting on his mask as he leaves)* Please ask her to write. Forgive me for prying - Your midnight battle must have been trying! A hundred to one? You did not even wince? What a warrior you are.

**CYRANA.** I've had harder fights since. *(A moment of Cyrana alone, then Carbon and La Bret are at the door.)*

**CARBON.** And there is the courageous heroine! At last we've found you!

**CYRANA.** Captain...

**CARBON.** My Cadets are searching everywhere to congratulate you on your victory. They're anxious to hear your tale.

**CYRANA.** Indeed.

**CARBON.** *(calling back outside)* She's in here! Celebrating in a bakery!

**LA BRET.** I delayed them as long as I could. And Robin?

**CYRANA.** Hush!

**RAGUENA.** *(returning)* Captain Carbon de Castel-Jaloux. I am overjoyed!

## CYRANA

**CARBON.** You are overwhelmed! (*Cadets pour in the front, POETS from the back, and a BAKER & Luis offer coffee.*)

**CADETS.** (*overlapping Gascon curses*) Sandious! Mille dious! Capdedious! Pocapedious!

**RAGUENA.** Are you all from Gascony?

**ALL CADETS.** Ay!

**CADET #1.** (*each congratulating Cyrana*) Brava!

**CYRANA.** Baroness.

**CADET #2.** *Vivat!*

**CYRANA.** Baroness.

**CADET #5, #6, & #8.** Come we must embrace you!

**RAGUENA.** And are you all Baronesses?

**CARBON.** You could build a tower with nothing but their titles.

**POET #4.** (*approaching Cyrana*) My plan it is to enshrine you in verse.

**POET #5.** That will not happen if I get done first.

**GUSTAVE.** (*two masked PRESCIUSES have entered and also approach*) You've established yourself as the man of the hour, And those in the know will relish your power. We hold a salon and we'd like to you speak.

**GERMAINE.** Might you be free - say - the start of next week?

**LA BRET.** (*interrupting*) The Gazette will feature three columns on you.

**CYRANA.** Gazette? What is that?

**LA BRET.** An idea quite new. It's a journal of sorts, a daily 'news' paper.

**CYRANA.** Hard to imagine that's worth more than vapor.

**RAGUENA.** (*standing on a table, gleefully*) My shop is invaded and filled end to end!

**CYRANA.** Just yesterday, I had barely one friend.

**LA BRET.** Your exploits are famous! Your story has reach!

**CARBON.** (*at the door*) Here comes a carriage. It looks like De Guiche...



## CYRANA

**LA BRET.** (*aside to Cyrana*) Is there something wrong? You don't seem quite well. Did Robin disappoint?

**CYRANA.** There is nothing to tell.

**DE GUICHE.** (*entering with Bellerose – and killing the rhythm*) My, my, my. Once again the center of attention. Mademoiselle de Bergerac, every breeze in Paris carries your scent this morning.

**CYRANA.** The smell of honor is so out of fashion, I'm surprised it's even recognized.

**DE GUICHE.** I bring accolades from my aunt the Cardinal herself. She observed your duel from her box last night and woke to tales of your 'adventure' on the Port de Nesle.

**CYRANA.** (*bowing*) The Cardinal is a fine judge of valor.

**DE GUICHE.** Your reputation is well established. You serve with this young rabble? In the Guards?

**CARBON.** Since many of my company are here, maybe you'd like to present them. (*Bellerose hastily brings an armchair for De Guiche.*)

**CYRANA.** My Lady De Guiche, it is beyond my pleasure to introduce to you the Gascony Cadets, under Captain Carbon de Castel-Jaloux! (*Cyrana drums out a rhythm and leads, with the Cadets taking their parts*)

**ALL CADETS.** The bold Cadets of Gascony. Of Captain de Castel-Jaloux

**CYRANA.** They brawl and they swagger quite boastfully, But fear should they come after you.

**ALL CADETS.** The bold Cadets of Gascony, Of Captain de Castel-Jaloux.

**LA BRET.** Steeped in battles and honor and heraldry, And brimming with blood that is blue.

**CADET #2.** Young lions protecting from blasphemy, The weakest and neediest few.

**CADET # 1.** Young wolves with razor-sharp scrutiny, Force evil to bid life *adieu*.

**ALL CADETS.** The bold Cadets of Gascony

## CYRANA

**CADET #5.** Love men, oh yes, quite a few.

**CADET #6.** Should they pass by your balcony? Your husbands keep close to you.

**ALL CADETS.** The bold Cadets of Gascony

**CYRANA.** Are proud of their land, that is true. With each breath they honor their family

**ALL CADETS.** And Captain de Castel-Jaloux. *(They end in a grand pose - perhaps with drawn swords - featuring Carbon.)*

**DE GUICHE.** Brava. Really. Brava.

**BELLEROSE.** Compte de Guiche. It so happens that having a poet in your *entourage* is the height of fashion.

**DE GUICHE.** I might be willing to consider...a *protégé*.

**CYRANA.** I follow no one.

**DE GUICHE.** Of course, I have the ear of my aunt.

**LA BRET.** The Cardinal! She's practically God.

**DE GUICHE.** After seeing your performance last night, perhaps I could persuade her to read something of yours.

**LA BRET.** Great heavens!

**DE GUICHE.** No doubt you've written some epic in verse, now languishing in a trunk somewhere?

**CYRANA.** *(tempted)* Well, in fact...

**LA BRET.** *(aside to Cyrana)* Your romantic tragedy. This may be your chance!

**DE GUICHE.** The Cardinal is skilled at the tricks of the trade. After improving a few of your lines, she may be willing to produce it.

**CYRANA.** Impossible. Not a comma would be altered.

**LA BRET.** Cyrana!

**CYRANA.** *(silencing her)* La Bret!

**DE GUICHE.** Do you know how much she would pay?

**CYRANA.** The payment I give myself for crafting a perfect line far exceeds her wealth.

**DE GUICHE.** Ah. So you're proud.

**CYRANA.** Ah. So you're perceptive.

## CYRANA

**ORANGE BOY.** (*bursting in with a dozen plumed hats skewered on a sword*) Cyrana! Look at these! The docks at the Port de Nesle are covered with the molted feathers of the fowl you chased away!

**RAGUENA.** Shall I add chicken to the menu?

**CARBON.** I fear they're too greasy to be palatable.

**BELLEROSE.** Someone lost their investment in those rogues. I wonder who hired them?

**DE GUICHE.** It was I. (*the laughter stops*) That drunken nightingale needed to be silenced. I certainly wasn't going to dirty my own hands.

**CYRANA.** (*saluting with the sword, sliding the hats off at her feet*) Would you return these to your cutthroat friends? And tell them, I might be willing to consider...a *protégé*...

**DE GUICHE.** My carriage! (*Bellerose exits*) I trust Mademoiselle, when you weren't courting glory, You read 'Don Quixote?'

**CYRANA.** It is my life story.

**DE GUICHE.** That truly mad fool, in a truly sad scene, tilts boldly at windmills.

**CYRANA.** Yes, Chapter Thirteen.

A tricky opponent that shifts in each breeze.

**DE GUICHE.** The sails of the windmill are much stronger, please. That impossible fight leaves him covered with scars. He's thrown down in the mud –

**CYRANA.** And then up to the stars. (*As the crowd acknowledges the victory, De Guiche exits.*)

**LA BRET.** When will you learn? Good God, please do say!

**CYRANA.** Batten your hatches: Hurricane *a la* Bret...

**LA BRET.** Everyone needs a patron. That you cannot dismiss. And rarely is there such an offer as this. Every chance you just squander. You ruin your fate. The smallest of hurdles? Exaggerate!

**CYRANA.** Exaggerate? Yes! How else would you have me live? Ignoring the most obvious ills and deferring to another for

## CYRANA

solutions? Allowing those most unworthy of pride, to live on in their proud delusions? No, thank you.

Me, a '*protégé*'? A parasite! A pet! A feeble ivy, clinging to the bark of a greater trunk! To live each day, cringing in hope of an oily smile from my patron's oily lips? Oh, no, my friend. If I'm going to jump through hoops, they'll be of my own construction. To create from the heart, not by commission. To generate art without thought of admissions. To have no critic more critical than myself. To see life as it is. To laugh, to sing, to dream. To shoot for the moon, whatever the cost. And to wear my hat at the angle that pleases me. This plume is not fashion, but *panache*. It may not raise me high, it may not lift me to the moon, but I'll live till I die and the journey will be mine own. (*Respectful admiration from the Cadets.*)

**LA BRET.** (*taking Cyrana aside to confer*) Yes, show that face to the world, but between us: he doesn't love you?

**CADET #8.** But what about the battle last night? Tell us the story of your conquest!

**CADET #1.** (*referencing Christiane., who has entered unnoticed*) Perhaps this whale of a tale may instruct our new minnow here - this tadpole that slithered down from Northern France.

**CHRISTIANE.** Did I miss something?

**CADET #1.** Chances are good. If you're joining the team – learn the rules of the game. Now you must hear what dares not speak its name.

**CADET #6.** A word there exists, which can never be uttered. Not even spoken.

**CADET #5.** Or whispered.

**CADET #2.** Or muttered.

**CADET #1.** In the midst of her face, there lies something forbidden.

**CADET #6.** It cannot be mentioned.

**CADET #5.** It cannot be hidden.

**CADET #2.** A rogue once was slain

## CYRANA

**CADET #6.** - yes, killed with some ease -

**CADET #2.** When all that she did was just sniffle and sneeze.

**CADET #1.** Don't wave your kerchief, it is not allowed.

*A faux pas* like that could serve as your shroud.

**CADET #6.** We know that you're new here and not from the South.

**CADET #2.** You're bound to be stupid and open your mouth

**CHRISTIANE.** (*crossing to Carbon*) Oh, Captain, my Captain, now what's your advice? These Gascony braggarts are all cold as ice. What do I do to establish my place?

**CARBON.** Throw northern brave-ry back in their face!

**CADET #8.** (*to CYRANA*) Enough of the teasing, the waiting all year. Tell us the story we're longing to hear. (*Christiane sits apart, astride a chair, as the Cadets gather round Cyrana.*)

**CYRANA.** There's little to tell of the skirmish last night. The knaves all lay hidden, for the moon was too bright. Their ambush had failed, so we started to walk. Then a cloud passed the moon. All went dark on the dock.

It was suddenly black. That singer? She froze. You could see nothing in front of your -

**CHRISTIANE.** - nose! (*All freeze, then slowly rise in terror.*)

**CYRANA.** Pray who is this person?

**CARBON.** Our newest Cadet.

**CYRANA.** Please tell me her name.

**LA BRET.** Christiane de Neuville.

**CYRANA.** (*after a moment composing herself*) Alright, now where was I? The night it was dark. Assassins approached me, so just for a lark. I let them come near,

**CHRISTIANE.** Nose to nose?

**CYRANA.** Eye to eye! Anxious I was to draw blood. (You know why.) The signal was given. Like one they arose, When the leader, she fingered the side of her -

**CHRISTIANE.** - nose?

**CYRANA.** Face! I was gonna say face... The wretches, they swarmed me. All eager to show, How they'd poke their -

## CYRANA

**CHRISTIANE.** - nose in?

**CYRANA.** I meant their toe. So on I did fight. Landing slashes and blows. These hundred ruffians would pay -

**CHRISTIANE.** - through the nose!

**CYRANA.** OUT! Clear the room! She and I? All alone!

**CADET #1.** (*fleeing*) She'll tear out her tongue!

**CADET #8.** And break every bone! (*The room clears, leaving Cyrana and Christiane. face to face for a tense moment.*)

**CYRANA.** Come to my arms!

**CHRISTIANE.** What?

**CYRANA.** You're quite brave.

**CHRISTIANE.** But...

**CYRANA.** I'm his sister.

**CHRISTIANE.** Whose sister?

**CYRANA.** Robin's!

**CHRISTIANE.** He's your brother?

**CYRANA.** Second cousin - practically the same thing. He's told me all.

**CHRISTIANE.** All...? So he loves me?

**CYRANA.** Believe it or not.

**CHRISTIANE.** (*as they embrace*) Oh, if you knew what that means to me!

**CYRANA.** I have a clue. (*looking at her face*) So I see what he saw!

**CHRISTIANE.** If you knew my admiration...!

**CYRANA.** You've an odd way of showing it. Now: he's expecting a letter from you.

**CHRISTIANE.** A letter? *Mon dieu!* Then all is already lost!

**CYRANA.** Why?

**CHRISTIANE.** If I try to write, I'll lose him. Robin craves an intellect. Me? I'm a fool.

**CYRANA.** Fools don't know they're foolish. And you don't attack with the wit of a fool!

**CHRISTIANE.** Oh, I can compete. In a battle with other women, I'm a genius. But when I look in the eyes of a man...

## CYRANA

my mind it goes blank. I have nothing to say. I cannot ‘compare thee to a summer’s day.’ They like what they see, that is till I speak.

**CYRANA.** They like what I say, till they see this beak.

**CHRISTIANE.** Oh, for the words that attract like my face!

**CYRANA.** Oh, that my words came from some other place!

**CHRISTIANE.** You articulate passion?

**CYRANA.** They’re attracted to you? There’s a lover indeed from the blend of us two. Robin deserves naught but the finest, the best. A woman we’ll make who is up to the quest. What say I provide the art for your letter -The frame that you offer would suit her much better.

**CHRISTIANE.** I don’t know. It’s dishonest. And bound to fail.

**CYRANA.** Have you got a chance on your own with the mail?

**CHRISTIANE.** What’s in it for you? Would it give you pleasure?

**CYRANA.** A game with such stakes any poet would treasure! (*pulling out what she’d written earlier*) A letter like this I composed on a whim. He’s expecting it soon, so take it to him.

**CHRISTIANE.** It was there in your pocket? And written in rhyme?

**CYRANA.** Oh, writers just write things. Quite all of the time.

**CHRISTIANE.** Should we change it to suit him?

**CYRANA.** It fits like a glove. Men are so gullible when they’re in love. (*They embrace, as Raguena and All peak in to see them together.*)

**RAGUENA.** Knock, knock. Oh, pray, pardon. There’s bloodshed in here?

**CADET #1.** (*seeing their embrace*) Well, that’s unexpected. You think that they’re qu----- (*Carbon claps a hand over her mouth just in time*)

**CARBON.** Our demon’s transformed to a gentle-er mother.

**LA BRET.** Strike on one nostril and he turns the other!

## CYRANA

**MUSKETEER.** Hey Luis, look. We've been given the right.  
We can speak of her nose now. And without a fight!  
*(Musketeer goes right up to Cyrana and throws some lame  
insult. Cyrana throws a single punch and lays her out flat. The  
Cadets cheer and lift her on their shoulders,)*  
**ALL.** The bold Cadets of Gascony Of Captain de Castel-  
Jaloux. They brawl and they swagger quite boastfully, But fear  
should they come after you! *(One note suddenly sounds and  
there's a freeze as Cyrana holds high her white-plumed hat  
with a shaft of light illuminating it - then blackout.)*

## INTERMISSION

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS –  
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