

CYRI

By JD Atkins

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ISBN: 978-1-61588-527-5

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SYNOPSIS: Edmond Rostand's classic *Cyrano de Bergerac* is born anew as *Cyri*, a tragicomic adaptation featuring a gender-swapped cast. Cyrano De Bergerac, poet and hero of the sword, has a big nose and an even bigger heart—especially when it comes to her oldest friend, Monsieur Robin. But when Robin falls in love with her new friend Christian, Cyrano must swallow her feelings in order to turn her fellow soldier into the poet that Robin has always imagined. These labors of love may prove too much even for Cyrano, especially with the jealous and malicious Countess who has Cyrano and Christian's company redeployed to the frontlines of an ongoing war. What follows is a bittersweet exploration of what the heart wants—in both friendship and in love.

DURATION: 90 minutes.

SETTING: Paris.

TIME: 1640.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 females, 3 males, 10-15 either; extras)

CYRANO DE BERGERAC (f)	The greatest swordswoman and wordsmith in all of Paris. She is self-conscious of her enormous nose. Clever, spirited, enthusiastic, and proud. (245 lines)
CHRISTIAN (f)	Talented and beautiful swordswoman. Often tongue-tied, but always earnest and deeply loyal. (204 lines)
ROBIN (m)	The most coveted eligible bachelor in all of Paris. Noble and kind. (150 lines)
LE BRET (m/f)	A soldier in the wars and Cyrano's friend. (89 lines)

CUIGY (m)	Gascon Company's field medic. (61 lines)
RAGUENEAU (m/f).....	Soldier in the Gascon Company. (45 lines)
BRISSAILLE (f)	Soldier in the Gascon Company. (40 lines)
LIGNIÈRE (m/f)	A likable bum. His irresponsible drinking gets him into trouble. (59 lines)
THE CAPTAIN (m/f)	No-nonsense leader of The Gascon Company. Distinguished and calm. (65 lines)
COUNTESS (f)	Scheming, cunning member of the French Elite. (55 lines)
VISCOUNT (m).....	A High Society type. Husband to the Countess. (12 lines)
ROY (m/f).....	Bumbling sellsword with a loose moral code. (27 lines)
REY (m/f)	Scheming sellsword with a loose moral code. (40 lines)
BELLEROSE (m/f).....	Owner of a well-respected theater in Paris. (14 lines)
MONTFLEURY (m/f).....	An over-the-hill blowhard in Bellerose's theater. (16 lines)
BAKER (m/f).....	(13 lines)
FIRST GUARD (m/f)	(3 lines)
FIRST SPANISH SOLDIER (m/f)	(7 lines)
SECOND GUARD (m/f)	(3 lines)
SECOND SPANISH SOLDIER (m/f).....	(6 lines)
THIRD GUARD (m/f).....	(3 lines)
SPANISH CAPTAIN (m/f).....	(31 lines)

EXTRAS: Theater patrons, cafe customers, French/Spanish Soldiers

DOUBLING

- FIRST GUARD can double as FIRST SPANISH SOLDIER
- SECOND GUARD can double as SECOND SPANISH SOLDIER
- THIRD GUARD can double as SPANISH CAPTAIN
- VISCOUNT can double as FIRST GUARD and FIRST SPANISH SOLDIER
- BAKER can double as SECOND GUARD and SECOND SPANISH SOLDIER
- MONTFLEURY or BELLEROSE can double as SECOND SPANISH SOLDIER
- CUIGY can double as FIRST SPANISH SOLDIER

SET LOCATIONS

A theater, a town square, a courtyard, a battlefield, French camp, Spanish camp. The set must include a courtyard and a lofted area US, preferably a balcony. Other pieces can be movable and there is flexibility in how to portray the various locations.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

SCENE 1: A theater.

SCENE 2: A Parisian town square.

SCENE 3: The Countess's Courtyard.

ACT TWO

SCENE 1: The field of battle.

SCENE 2: The French Camp.

SCENE 3: The Spanish Camp.

SCENE 4: A Parisian town square / the theater.

COSTUMES

The only necessity is to distinguish the French and Spanish side, perhaps shirt color. All other costumes can suggest period Parisian wear or could be a blend of period and contemporary; overlarge long sleeve shirts (belted) and patterned tights can be a fun and effective aesthetic.

PROPS

- ☐ Swords
- ☐ Knives
- ☐ A satchel (medical supplies)
- ☐ A letter (new and distressed)
- ☐ 10 pages of paper
- ☐ Black eye masks
- ☐ Wine bottles
- ☐ A baguette
- ☐ A knapsack
- ☐ Tomatoes

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT START: *Paris. 1640. A theater. DSL, a hooded stagehand works at the curtain. US there is an elevated seating area for the wealthier patrons. At the door, BELLEROSE, the wealthy theater owner, greets the patrons as they enter. CHRISTIAN, in uniform, enters USC. She is followed by ROY and REY, two dingy sellswords, and finally by LE BRET and CUIGY, who are also in uniform.*

BELLEROSE: Welcome! Welcome one and all to my humble theater! The Burgundy's doors are always open—make sure you have your tickets ready! Wait over there, Christian. I'll be with you in a moment. *(As LE BRET and CUIGY approach.)* Good evening. May I see your tickets, please?

CUIGY: Good evening, Bellerose. I think you'll find that we don't need tickets.

BELLEROSE: Excuse me?

CUIGY: My friend may appear to be a humble soldier, but he is actually royalty in disguise.

LE BRET: I'm a Prince.

CUIGY: How dare you question us, peasant!

BELLEROSE: Oh, very droll. What does that make you? The King?

LE BRET: The King? Don't be ridiculous... I'm the Pope.

Enter BRISSAILLE and RAGUENEAU, in uniform.

BRISSAILLE: I'm the King. Is this guy bothering you, your holiness?

LE BRET: Indeed he is, your majesty.

BELLEROSE: *(Sternly.)* Wait a minute... I recognize you! You're the rascallions who threw rotten tomatoes at my actors last week!

RAGUENEAU: The past is the past, Bellerose. Wouldn't dream of doing it again.

BRISSAILLE: We're totally reformed.

Enter VISCOUNT, a wealthy socialite, and the BAKER, with a basket of refreshments.

VISCOUNT: Good evening, Bellerose.

BELLEROSE: Viscount Valvert! I'm sorry, I didn't see you come in. There's someone I want to introduce to you. *(To BAKER.)* Ah! The refreshments have arrived. You can start handing them out at once, monsieur. *(To the soldiers, tersely.)* Just take your seats and behave yourselves!

BELLEROSE heads SR with VISCOUNT. US, BAKER begins handing out refreshments.

CUIGY: On my honor, Bellerose. We are the very model of decorum! *(As soon as BELLEROSE is out of earshot, CUIGY opens a hidden knapsack.)* Alright, so here are your tomatoes everyone.

LE BRET: One point for every actor you hit—two points if you hit them while they're singing.

BRISSAILLE: Naturally.

The Gascons fade into the background as BELLEROSE, CHRISTIAN, LIGNIÈRE and VISCOUNT take focus.

BELLEROSE: Viscount Valvert, may I introduce you to Mademoiselle Christian. An old family friend. She asked me to proffer an introduction.

CHRISTIAN: *(Bowing, eager.)* Delighted to meet you.

VISCOUNT: Charmed. You are a soldier, I see?

BELLEROSE: A damn good one at that. She's been reassigned to the Gascon Company and promoted to Lieutenant.

CHRISTIAN: We ship out for the wars in two days time.

VISCOUNT: I see. But who is this with you?

CHRISTIAN: Oh. This is my friend Lignière. He's my guest here tonight.

LIGNIÈRE: I'm here for moral support.

CHRISTIAN: *(Shushing LIGNIÈRE, then, apologetically.)* I was nervous to meet you.

VISCOUNT: Lignière... Lignière... Why do I know that name? Are you a soldier as well?

CHRISTIAN: No, Monsieur. Lignière isn't much of a fighter.

VISCOUNT: Oh, now I remember! Lignière. You're the—how should I say this—wine enthusiast?

LIGNIÈRE: (*Salute.*) I regret that I have but one liver to give for my country.

VISCOUNT: Charming.

BRISSAILLE: Hey! Christian! Ragueneau stole my orange!

CHRISTIAN: (*Tersely, over a shoulder.*) Ragueneau, give Brissaille her orange.

BELLEROSE: Don't tell me those four are with you?

CHRISTIAN: I'm afraid so.

VISCOUNT: Not exactly model soldiers, are they?

CHRISTIAN: I suppose not. Anyway, Viscount. About why I wanted to meet you. You see—

RAGUENEAU: Christian, Brissaille hit me!

CUIGY: Christian, I have to go to the bathroom.

CHRISTIAN: (*Angrily.*) Stop including me in things! (*Turns back with a nervous chuckle.*)

VISCOUNT: Well, my friends, as entertaining as this all is, I'm afraid I must find my wife.

CHRISTIAN: Viscount Valvert, if I could just—

VISCOUNT: Come along, Bellerose. Our private box awaits. Good evening, all.

Exit VISCOUNT. BELLEROSE follows with an apologetic shrug.

LIGNIÈRE: Well, that went about as well as I expected. Can we go now?

CHRISTIAN: Please Lignière, stay awhile longer. Bellerose said he would be here.

LIGNIÈRE: Look—even if you did succeed in arranging an introduction—would it matter?

CHRISTIAN: What do you mean?

LIGNIÈRE: Come on, Christian. How long have we been friends? You may be the most beautiful woman in Paris, but when it comes to conversation, you're not exactly Cyrano.

CHRISTIAN: I know, Lignière. I know I am not good with... with...

LIGNIÈRE: Words?

CHRISTIAN: Words! I know what I want to say, but whenever I try, the words get caught in my mouth!

LIGNIÈRE: You've been tongue-tied since the day we met, my friend. It's why I like you so much! Now, can we go? It doesn't look like I'm going to be able to get a good drink around this place.

BAKER: You need a drink? I've got orange juice.

LIGNIÈRE: See?

CHRISTIAN: Wait! Theoretically, if I were to tell you that we were guests of Bellerose, then would you happen to have something a little stronger?

BAKER: (*Pulls out two fancy bottles.*) That depends... theoretically, do you prefer white or red?

LIGNIÈRE: (*Beat.*) Alright. We can stay.

ROY and REY make their way to LIGNIÈRE and CHRISTIAN.

REY: Lignière!

LIGNIÈRE: (*Good natured.*) If it isn't Roy and Rey! Christian, meet the two ugliest sellswords in all of Paris. We're old friends.

REY: (*Equally good natured.*) Don't ask me why!

ROY: Hey—is Cyrano here? We thought she might be with you.

REY: She's got to be here somewhere!

LIGNIÈRE: Why's that?

REY: Monsieur Montfleury is onstage tonight.

LIGNIÈRE: That old sack of wine? What does that have to do with Cyrano?

REY: Haven't you heard? Cyrano hates Montfleury.

ROY: (*Laughing.*) Last month, his performance was so bad, she forbade him from showing his face on stage ever again.

LIGNIÈRE: Sounds like Cyrano. But hang on—I don't understand why you two are here. Just the other day you said theater wasn't worth the money.

ROY: Weren't you listening? Montfleury is going to be onstage!

REY: We want to be here when Cyrano makes a fool out of him!

ROY: Now that is entertainment worth paying for.

ROY and REY move away DS, laughing.

CHRISTIAN: Who is this Cyrano? Everyone seems to know her but me.

LIGNIÈRE: (*Drinking.*) She's a soldier, too, actually. But much more than that. Le Bret could tell you better. HEY LE BRET! COME HERE!

GASCON COMPANY approach.

LE BRET: Hello, Lignière. Gracious as ever.

LIGNIÈRE: Yeah, I'm a real peach. Listen, have you seen Cyrano this evening?

LE BRET: I spoke with her earlier. My head still hasn't recovered.

CHRISTIAN: What do you mean by that?

CUIGY: Cyrano is different from your average soldier.

LE BRET: Different is a good word for it.

RAGUENEAU: Poet among poets!

BRISSAILLE: Duelist among duelists!

CUIGY: A philosopher!

LE BRET: A musician!

CHRISTIAN: She sounds like an upstanding character.

LIGNIÈRE: Oh, she's a character all right.

LIGNIÈRE: You'll see when she comes in.

CUIGY: (*Suddenly hushed.*) Just don't mention her nose!

LE BRET: (*Scolding CUIGY.*) Be careful, you idiot. If Cyrano were here, she would take your head off for speaking of it!

CHRISTIAN: Would she do such a thing?

RAGUENEAU: Put it this way—she could if she wanted. I've never seen a better swordswoman.

BRISSAILLE: Wait! Everyone! Look who's here!

Enter ROBIN. In unison, all but CHRISTIAN crane around to spot him, then whip back around to face the audience.

BRISSAILLE: My god! He is gorgeous.

CHRISTIAN: Who? (*Looks around and spots ROBIN. She gasps and looks away, catching LIGNIÈRE by the arm.*) Lignière!

LIGNIÈRE: Ow! Watch it!

CHRISTIAN: Lignière, that's him! That's the guy!

LIGNIÈRE: (*Moderately interested.*) The one with the Viscount?

CHRISTIAN: Yes, that's him. Oh no... I feel so... so... (*She makes a nervous gesture.*)

LIGNIÈRE: Nervous?

CHRISTIAN: Nervous!

LIGNIÈRE: So... the man of your dreams is none other than Monsieur Robin. You know, Christian, they say he's got a pretty sharp tongue. Are you sure you want to deal with that?

CHRISTIAN: Oh, god! Who is that?

Enter COUNTESS, who seats herself beside ROBIN. For a second time, the whole company whips around to see her, then whips back when she spots them.

LE BRET: That's the Countess. Cyrano says Robin went to live with her after his family died. But it was far from charity.

CHRISTIAN: What do you mean?

RAGUENEAU: People say she's in love with Robin.

BRISSAILLE: She keeps Robin on a short leash.

CUIGY: No one gets within ten feet of Monsieur Robin without dealing with the Countess first.

LIGNIÈRE: Correct me if I'm wrong, but unless I'm very much mistaken, it looks like Monsieur Robin is looking at our good friend Christian.

CHRISTIAN: He is?

For a third time, the whole group whips around to look at ROBIN. ROBIN gives a tiny wave, which CHRISTIAN shyly returns. Then the whole group whip back around to face the audience.

CHRISTIAN: Oh my God! He waved! I don't believe it.

BRISSAILLE: Why don't handsome men ever wave at me?

CUIGY: (*Pityingly.*) Aww, it's okay, Brissailles, I'll wave at you!

RAGUENEAU: She said handsome men.

LIGNIÈRE: (*Standing.*) Well, as fun as this all is, I'm going to have to take my leave. Goodbye.

CHRISTIAN: I thought you said you'd stay until you'd finished the bottle!

LIGNIÈRE: (*Handing over the empty bottle.*) I did.

CHRISTIAN: You drank the whole bottle? Lignière, how could you?

LIGNIÈRE: Years of practice. Now if you'll excuse me, there's a town full of bottles with my name on them. Have fun with Robin.

CHRISTIAN: Lignière! Oh, brother.

BRISSAILLE: Might as well take our seats.

RAGUENEAU: I hope Cyrano shows. I'd love to see a good sword fight...

ROY: (*Moving US.*) Lignière! Hey—Lignière?

CHRISTIAN: Lignière is gone.

REY: (*Incredulous.*) Gone? Where did he go?

CHRISTIAN: A tavern, I expect.

REY: I told you we ought to keep a better eye on him!

ROY: Sorry, Rey.

CHRISTIAN: What's the matter?

REY: Your friend has drunk himself into some serious debt. He has a bounty on his head.

ROY: In fact, a hundred men are posted at his favorite pub to collect that debt with a sword.

CHRISTIAN: A hundred men! But that's a small army!

REY: Well, the money he owes could feed a small country.

CHRISTIAN: But you spoke with him earlier! You're his friends, why didn't you warn him?

ROY: Warn him? I want to be the one to kill him!

REY: Not before I get back what he owes me! Come on, Roy.

Exit ROY and REY.

CHRISTIAN: Those scoundrels! I have to save him!

With a longing look at ROBIN, CHRISTIAN exits.

LE BRET: Montfleury. There he is.

RAGUENEAU: The old windbag.

LE BRET: So Cyrano didn't make it after all.

BRISSAILLE: Ah, well. Better ready your tomatoes, everyone.

MONTFLEURY takes the stage and bows to light applause.

MONTFLEURY: *(In an over-the-top, grandiose style.)* Friends, countrymen... Tonight I present a humble reading of Le Ricard Rouler. Ahem. "We are no strangers to love... Thou knowest the rules, and so dost I..."

CYRANO: *(Remains concealed speaking with authority from beneath the cover of her hood.)* You dull, daft, cud-chewing cow! I warned you not to show your face here again!

Murmurs.

CUIGY: Cyrano?

LE BRET: She's here!

CYRANO: Get off the stage, Montfleury!

MONTFLEURY: I... well...

CYRANO: Did you hear me?

MONTFLEURY: Ahem... "Never going to giveth you up, never going to..."

CYRANO: If I cannot stop your acting with my words, I will stop it with my sword!

CYRANO suddenly whips off the dark cloak and steps out of the shadows. Lights reveal the striking figure of CYRANO DE BERGERAC. Audience applauds.

MONTFLEURY: Cyrano!

CYRANO: I warned you never to set foot on stage again. You disgrace the theater with your unworthy tongue.

MONTFLEURY: I am the muse's instrument! I am the very font of inspiration!

CYRANO: There is but one way that you inspire me. *(Draws sword.)*

BELLEROSE: Cyrano, stop this at once! You're making a mockery of my stage!

CYRANO: Bellerose, I am here to guard your stage. My sword will prevent yet another good play from being murdered here tonight.

BELLEROSE: *(Joining CYRANO on stage.)* If you do this I have to give back their ticket fees!

CYRANO: Old friend, I say once more that I come to defend you.
(*Throws a drawstring sack of coin.*) Consider this compensation for the night's tickets, and allow me to finish what I started.

BELLEROSE: This is enough to pay for the entire week of shows!
(*When CYRANO raises her sword, a wave of realization.*) I see.
Everyone... Please settle down. It appears tonight we will enjoy a different sort of entertainment.

The crowd laughs appreciatively. MONTFLEURY looks mortified.

CYRANO: Thank you, my friend. Now... Montfleury. Tell me. Why are you staring at my nose!

MONTFLEURY: I wasn't! (*Motions for a sword.*) Sword! Please, someone!

CYRANO: Yes you were. Well, what's so strange about it?

MONTFLEURY: You are mistaken, Mademoiselle, I wasn't staring at your nose.

MONTFLEURY retrieves a sword and nervously points it at CYRANO. A swordfight commences, wherein CYRANO simultaneously talks and duels circles around MONTFLEURY with ease.

CYRANO: Isn't it a sight to behold? Sort of like an elephant's trunk, is it not?

MONTFLEURY: I never said that! It's not like a trunk at all!

CYRANO: How right you are! It's closer to a vulture's beak!

MONTFLEURY: I... Listen, I am warning you! I have been trained with a sword!

CYRANO: Are you saying you want a closer look?

MONTFLEURY: No!

CYRANO: Why not? Does it disgust you that much?

MONTFLEURY: Mademoiselle!

CYRANO: Its color—

MONTFLEURY: Please, Mademoiselle!

CYRANO: Or its shape?

MONTFLEURY: No, on the contrary!

CYRANO: Perhaps you think it is too large!

CYRANO disarms MONTFLEURY.

MONTFLEURY: (*Stammering.*) No, Cyrano! If anything it's too small!

CYRANO: Small—my nose?

MONTFLEURY: Oh, God help me!

CYRANO: Now you've gone too far.

COUNTESS: That's enough!

COUNTESS and VISCOUNT step onto stage.

CYRANO: Good evening, Countess.

COUNTESS: Cyrano, you have spoiled the evening and done harm to my dear friend, Montfleury. We have all had quite enough of your disreputable behavior.

CYRANO: On the contrary, Countess. My behavior would only be disreputable if I had a reputation to disrupt. I discarded mine years ago for that very reason.

COUNTESS: Oh, very clever. What would you call your actions, then?

CYRANO: Necessary.

COUNTESS: Enough. Viscount! Get out there and defend our honor.

VISCOUNT: Oh! Uh—of course, darling. I am the king of insults and the sultan of swordplay. (*Draws a sword.*) Mademoiselle Cyrano, your nose is... um... very large!

CYRANO: (*Gravely.*) GASP!

VISCOUNT: Ha! Take that.

CYRANO: That one hurt, I admit.

CYRANO begins to duel the VISCOUNT.

CYRANO: Although, it might have hurt more if you had said... 'Cyrano, I would ask you to bow before combat, but I was afraid that your nose might have caused you to tip over!' Or... 'Tell me, Cyrano, where did you ever find such a fashionable hook to hang your hat on?' Or even... 'My dear Cyrano, did you love the birds so much that you would grow a perch for them on your face?' (*Disarms VISCOUNT.*) I am grateful you did not think to say such things, sir. It would have been a grave injury to my pride.

COUNTESS: Get up, Viscount! Get up!

VISCOUNT: You jerk! You're a big mean jerk! And you have tacky clothes!

CYRANO: Well said; all my elegance is within. Now leave. My weak heart cannot bear another of your insults.

VISCOUNT retreats in disgrace, and the audience cheers. COUNTESS finds comfort with ROBIN, a fact that CYRANO immediately notices.

CYRANO: *(Suddenly morose.)* Bellerose. My friend. I think everyone has had enough entertainment tonight. Send them home.

BELLEROSE: Oh. Yes, of course... Everyone, thank you for coming. Goodnight!

Exit ALL except LE BRET and CYRANO.

CYRANO: Go ahead, Le Bret. Tell me of my sins.

LE BRET: Do I really have to say it at this point? This is the fifth nobleman you've humiliated since we've returned from the front. Why are you wasting your time on these pompous fools?

CYRANO: The war taught me very little, but it did remind me to protect my friends.

LE BRET: And what friends would those be?

CYRANO: Words, Le Bret. Words. The nobility in Paris abuse them daily.

LE BRET: Words cannot protect you back, Cyrano. You keep on like this and you'll be arrested!

CYRANO: *(Suddenly pensive.)* The world of social grace has always confused me, Le Bret. It's a maze of rules and expectations and manners. At a certain point it becomes easier to walk a more straightforward path.

LE BRET: You could fit in if you tried.

CYRANO: Never. It is a world for which I am *(tapping her nose.)*—ill equipped.

LE BRET: Your nose? Cyrano... Don't tell me that's what you're upset about!

CYRANO: Maybe I'm tired of the nobles turning up their nose at me.

LE BRET: Those rich snobs have been pointing at you since we were children. You've never cared about "High Society."

CYRANO: I never wanted anything from it.

LE BRET: But you do now? *(CYRANO doesn't answer, but LE BRET understands.)* Monsieur Robin looked very handsome tonight, didn't he?

CYRANO: I didn't notice.

LE BRET: Have you ever thought to just tell him how you feel? *(CYRANO doesn't answer.)* I think I may have seen him grow pale during your duel. He was nervous for you.

CYRANO: Ha! Or he was sick at the sight of my deformity.

LE BRET: *(Amused.)* Well, regardless, Cyrano. Just remember you have friends besides words, and that they are worried about you.

Enter CUIGY.

CUIGY: Hey, Cyrano! Letter for you!

CYRANO: What?

CUIGY: Yeah! That handsome fellow gave it to me outside. Says he wants you to meet with him.

CYRANO: *(Shocked.)* It's... It's from Robin!

LE BRET: What did I tell you? He wants to talk to the hero of the hour!

CYRANO: I can't believe it!

Enter BRISSAILLE and RAGUENEAU, carrying an injured LIGNIÈRE between them. A rabble grows offstage.

BRISSAILLE: Cyrano! Help!

LE BRET: My god! What happened?

CYRANO: Lignière! My friend! Are you hurt?

LIGNIÈRE: A bit, Cyrano, a bit. *(Laughing, but in pain.)* One of them got me right under the arm.

CYRANO: Who? Who did this to you?

LIGNIÈRE: Just some old friends. I seem to have let my ledgers get away from me this time...

LE BRET: *(Scoffing.)* I can believe that.

Enter CHRISTIAN, sword drawn. CYRANO draws to meet her.

RAGUENEAU: Hold on, Cyrano! She's a friend.

BRISSAILLE: She held off those thugs while we brought Lignière inside.

CHRISTIAN: They're coming. All of them. I couldn't stop them alone.

LE BRET: How many men are after Lignière?

CHRISTIAN: At least a hundred. Armed—and angry.

A somber pause. Everyone exchanges doomed glances.

CYRANO: *(Laughing... Slowly at first, then more emboldened.)* Only a hundred? Lignière, you have nothing to fear. Give me ten minutes with these lowlifes.

LE BRET: Don't be a fool, Cyrano. One hundred swords!

CYRANO: Better than a thousand.

CUIGY: I don't want to die over this!

RAGUENEAU: Neither do I! I say we run for it.

CYRANO: With Lignière in such a state? No. Fate has deemed this stage our battleground.

CHRISTIAN: *(Lifting her sword.)* She's right.

CYRANO: Of course I'm right. Make a guard around our friend. *(CYRANO takes the stage in front of them, away from the group.)* Now... None of you are to break this circle, understand? *(Lights begin to fade slowly until only the circle is visible.)* If any of our enemies make it to your swords, I owe you a drink. Throw wide the doors, comrades, and see all of Paris wrapped in night! Look at the moonlight over the rooftops! Look at the darkened haze of dusk! A fitting backdrop for a struggle for our lives! What, cowards? Raise your swords! Raise them high! Take heart, friends! Soon you shall see what I see!

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT START: *The Town Square. A courtyard with an entrance to a cafe on one side, and a fountain in the middle. RAGUENEAU enters and is immediately accosted by BAKER. ROY and REY covertly mingle among the bakery patrons.*

BAKER: No, no, no.... Out! Get out! There's no table for you here!

RAGUENEAU: I beg your pardon? I have a very important meeting here this evening!

BAKER: Meet somewhere else.

RAGUENEAU: What?

BAKER: You're here with your little poetry club, right?

RAGUENEAU: As a matter of fact—

BAKER: —Because I'm tired of you starving artists coming in here every day and ordering the cheapest thing on the menu.

RAGUENEAU: Hey! I resent the implication that—

BAKER: And while I'm at it, Monsieur Bard, stop leaving me your sappy poems as tips! I can't pay the rent with sonnets!

RAGUENEAU: For your information, I am meeting here today with a regiment of the Royal Army. Tomorrow, we ship out to fight in this great war!

BAKER: An army regiment? Is that so?

RAGUENEAU: Yes. We are called: "The Gascon Company."

BAKER: (*Impressed.*) I see! Well then, I apologize! In that case, we happen to have a wonderful private table around back.

RAGUENEAU: That will do nicely, thank you.

BAKER: You all must be great heroes... Perhaps the sort of heroes that tip well?

RAGUENEAU: Mmm, doubtful. Gascon Company is mostly new recruits. Actually, you've met us before: we were in here last week writing our poetry.

BAKER: What?

RAGUENEAU: Come on in, everyone! He said we could have a table!

BAKER: Wait a minute!

LE BRET, BRISSAILLE, and CUIGY come in one by one and shake the distraught BAKER'S hand. Behind them, CAPTAIN enters.

CAPTAIN: Thank you for the hospitality. Line them up, Le Bret!

CAPTAIN hands over some gold to the BAKER, who enthusiastically retreats. LE BRET stands between CAPTAIN and the Gascons, who salute when introduced.

LE BRET: *(Saluting.)* Mon Capitaine! Presenting Cadet Cuigy, Cadet Ragueneau, and Cadet Brissaille. Soldiers, this is Captain Castel.

BRISSAILLE, RAGUENEAU and CUIGY: Mon Capitaine!

CAPTAIN: Welcome to the Gascon Company, Cadets. I look forward to serving with you—especially after hearing about your heroic exploits at the theater last night. One hundred strong—dead at the tips of your swords. That's the sort of bravery that will win us the war!

BRISSAILLE: Actually, Monsieur...

RAGUENEAU: *(Cutting him off.)* Thank you, Captain!

CAPTAIN: Why don't we have a seat? We can discuss our marching orders over our meal.

Exit BRISSAILLE, RAGUENEAU, CUIGY, and LE BRET. CHRISTIAN walks in with CYRANO. They are laughing jovially.

CHRISTIAN: You'll have to show me that parry you used on the bandit in the red scarf.

CYRANO: You have a good eye! I learned that move from a Musketeer.

CAPTAIN: Well, well! Isn't this a sight! My new Lieutenant reports, and with whom do I find her chatting? None other than the greatest cadet I ever had.

CHRISTIAN: Cyrano! You served with Captain Castel?

CYRANO: I seem to recall the cadets doing most of the serving.

CAPTAIN: *(Chuckling.)* Always with a quick wit. But of course: the one thing I could never teach you was a measure of modest reserve.

CYRANO: Take an arm, take a leg, but take my wit? I'd rather be dead.

CAPTAIN: *(To CHRISTIAN, amused.)* See what I mean?

CHRISTIAN: She has a way with words, Monsieur.

CAPTAIN: The understatement of the century. Thank you for meeting us here today, Christian. Your letter said something about a new recruit?

CHRISTIAN: Oui, Monsieur. An old friend of mine. Lignière! Front and center!

LIGNIÈRE stumbles in, arm in a sling, disheveled from the previous night's events.

LIGNIÈRE: (*Mumbling.*) I'm coming! I'm coming for God's sake...

CHRISTIAN: Last night Cyrano and I assisted Lignière in a certain matter, and in return he has agreed to—volunteer—for the King's service.

CAPTAIN: How noble.

LIGNIÈRE: (*Wryly.*) Oh, yeah. I'm a model citizen.

CHRISTIAN: Go sit down, Lignière.

LIGNIÈRE: Yup.

CHRISTIAN: Apologies, Captain. Rest assured, I will straighten him out.

CYRANO: First, I think you had better dry him out.

CAPTAIN: Nothing we can't handle. But wait, Cyrano—I just realized—does your presence here today mean that you've reconsidered my offer?

CYRANO: Well...

CHRISTIAN: What offer?

CYRANO: To rejoin the regiment.

CAPTAIN: My other Lieutenant has recently taken ill. I sent a letter to Cyrano to see if she would consider replacing him.

CHRISTIAN: (*Excited.*) That's perfect! Captain, she's the greatest swordswoman I've ever seen! Last night she took down a hundred vagabonds with—(*Looking from left to right, seeing their amusement.*)—but you already know that, don't you?

CAPTAIN: Who do you think taught her to use a sword in the first place?

CYRANO: Ha! Next you'll claim that you taught your chickens to lay eggs.

CHRISTIAN: Well how about it, Cyrano? Will you join us?

CYRANO: (*Fondly.*) I'm sorry, my friends, but I'm afraid I came to the cafe on other business. I have no plans to reenlist.

CHRISTIAN: Cyrano, your country needs you!

CAPTAIN: It's alright, Christian, I completely understand... (*Seeing CHRISTIAN'S confused face.*) The battles that Cyrano has seen... The number of enemies she has laid to rest with her sword... Trust me: she has done her duty for our country a hundred times over.

CYRANO: (*A genteel nod.*) Thank you, Captain.

CAPTAIN: Not at all. (*Turning to CHRISTIAN.*) Well—Come on then, Lieutenant. Let's go scare the pants off of some new recruits.

Exit CAPTAIN.

CHRISTIAN: (*Shaking hands with CYRANO.*) Good luck with your other business, Cyrano.

CYRANO: Thank you, Christian. And once more, thank you for your assistance last night.

CHRISTIAN: I'm not sure I did much assisting. Most of the vagabonds were defeated by the time they got to me.

CYRANO: On the contrary: you watched my back. There are few people in this world I trust to do that. (*Bowing cordially.*) Therefore: thank you. I consider myself fortunate to call you a friend.

CHRISTIAN: (*Moved by this.*) You're welcome, Cyrano. I'm... (*Trying and failing to find a word to match CYRANO'S eloquence.*) ...happy... to be your friend as well.

Exit CHRISTIAN, abruptly. Enter ROBIN from SL.

ROBIN: Cyri!

CYRANO: (*Suddenly straightening up.*) Monsieur Robin! Bonjour.

CYRANO dips into a cordial bow. ROBIN, amused, pulls her up into a friendly hug. As they part, CYRI is clearly a little shell-shocked.

ROBIN: How are you? We haven't seen each other since you came back from the war!

CYRANO: (*Heart flutter.*) Yes, I'm sorry about that. I've been busy.

ROBIN: (*Laughing.*) Oh, I know! You have been making a mockery of the entire bourgeoisie. I'm impressed with your courage. Although... (*Lowering his voice.*) As your friend, I would advise a little more caution. There are those who do not take so kindly to your antics—those with more power than I.

CYRANO: Was your chaperone not amused?

ROBIN: (*Bristling slightly.*) You mean the Countess?

CYRANO: I have to say, I'm surprised she let you off your leash long enough to manage a visit.

ROBIN: She... can be difficult, it's true. But you know better than anyone how generous she has been since my family's death. I would have been destitute without her help.

CYRANO: She's practically a saint.

ROBIN: You joke, but let's be honest, what would I be without her?

CYRANO: Happy?

ROBIN: (*Beat.*) That's funny.

CYRANO: (*Recognizing her error, backtracking.*) Sorry. Sometimes my wit gets away from me.

ROBIN: It's alright.

CYRANO: I know that things haven't been easy for you. I don't mean to tease.

ROBIN: (*Pensively.*) Do you ever think about when we were kids? Before the war, before all this high society nonsense? We used to sneak out at night. You would climb into the alley behind my parent's house and hit my window with rocks. Remember?

CYRANO: I remember. We used to go sit by the fountain and eat the candy I had filched.

ROBIN: Yes! Those were the days. No responsibilities... No pressure...

CYRANO: No Countess.

ROBIN: (*Smiling.*) A lot has changed.

CYRANO: You haven't.

ROBIN: Nor you.

A moment passes between them—the warmth of a long friendship.

ROBIN: I'm still waiting to see when you will turn that sharp wit of yours on me, as you have with the other nobles. As long as you've known me, you have no shortage of ammunition! I can only imagine the insults you could come up with.

CYRANO: I would never dream of it.

ROBIN: Oh, come on! I can take it! God knows I deserve it, the way I used to tease you about that nose.

CYRANO: *(A sad smile.)* Somehow, your barbs always hurt a little less. *(Stands.)*

ROBIN: Where are you going? Hey! Cyri, what's wrong?

CYRANO: I'm afraid I misunderstood the intention of this meeting. In your letter you said... *(Catches herself.)* No matter. Good day, Robin.

CYRANO begins to walk away. ROBIN stands and grabs her by the arm.

ROBIN: Don't go. Please. I need your help.

CYRANO: Then why—

ROBIN: *(Shushes her.)* Shh! I cannot speak freely here. *(Looking around.)* The Countess watches me closely. Even when she is not nearby.

CYRANO: And what, pray tell, would you be so worried the Countess would overhear?

ROBIN: Love!

CYRANO: *(Taken aback.)* Oh.

ROBIN: *(Grabbing CYRANO about the shoulders and turning her around.)* You were right, Cyrano. The Countess does have eyes for me. Since I have lived with her, she has barred my every attempt at romance. See the shifty characters at the fountain? I think they might work for the Countess. If we are to speak, we must evade them first.

CYRANO: I understand.

ROBIN: On three, take my hand and run. Ready?

CYRANO: *(With a blush.)* Robin—

ROBIN: One... Two... Three!

ROBIN grabs the flabbergasted CYRANO, and together they exit. Enter CHRISTIAN, flower in hand, looking around. She catches BAKER.

CHRISTIAN: Excuse me. Someone said that Monsieur Robin was here. But I don't see him.

BAKER: Kid, I don't know who you're talking about. (*Shouting offstage.*) Marie! The baguettes! Hurry up! (Beat.) What do you mean we don't sell baguettes! We live in France!

REY and ROY jump up from the table in the corner. They begin talking, and CHRISTIAN overhears their exchange.

REY: Damn it, Roy! I told you to keep an eye on him!

ROY: Sorry, Rey.

REY: If he runs off and elopes, we won't get paid.

ROY: (*Nervous laughter.*) Monsieur Robin? Elope? With Cyrano?

REY: (*Chuckles.*) Good point. But we better find him anyway.

CHRISTIAN: Monsieur Robin? ...Cyrano?

As they pass, CHRISTIAN tries and fails to articulate a question. Exit ROY and REY. Enter CAPTAIN.

CAPTAIN: Lieutenant!

CHRISTIAN: Oui, Monsieur!

CAPTAIN: What are you doing out here? I'm about to relay our orders.

CHRISTIAN: Oui.

ALL exit. The lights change. CYRANO and ROBIN enter together and sit on the lip of the fountain. They're exhausted but exhilarated.

ROBIN: We haven't done that in a while.

CYRANO: Not since school. Ditching old Maester Devereux! He always smelled of mold.

ROBIN: And wine. (*They laugh.*) Listen, Cyri... We've known each other for such a long time... You've been there for me through my lowest lows and my highest highs. I think you know me better than anyone.

CYRANO: I feel the same way, Robin. You are, to me, irreplaceable.

ROBIN: Yes! We can tell each other anything. Our deepest secrets...

Our most precious hopes. And now, with this terrible war, it seems that none of us have any time to waste. I don't want any more regrets, Cyri. Last night... When I saw you fighting, you inspired me.

Inspired me to say what I've wanted to say for a long time.

CYRANO: What are you getting at, Robin?

ROBIN: Cyrano... I am in love.

CYRANO: In love.

ROBIN: In love. With the bravest, kindest, most beautiful soldier in the entire Royal Army.

CYRANO: (*Floored.*) I don't know what to say.

ROBIN: I know, I know... This must seem totally out of the blue. But the simple fact is, after what I saw in the theater last night, I simply cannot wait any longer!

CYRANO: (*Exuberant.*) I will admit I'm a little shocked... but I am also happy. Robin, you have no idea how happy I am to hear this.

ROBIN: Good! Because these are feelings I've had for a long time.

And now that you're back from the war, the timing couldn't be better.

CYRANO: Oh, Robin, I agree!

ROBIN: Then I only have one question.

ROBIN takes CYRANO'S hand and kneels.

CYRANO: Oh my god.

CHRISTIAN: Cyrano De Bergerac, will you.... Introduce me to your friend?

CYRANO: Yes! Yes! A thousand times... Sorry, what?

ROBIN: I said: will you arrange the introduction?

CYRANO: (*Pulling hands away.*) You want me to arrange an introduction?

ROBIN: (*Impatient.*) Yes, an introduction! I can hardly arrange it myself, with the Countess watching my every move. I admit I had lost hope until yesterday. But seeing you sneak around on stage gave me an idea! You can help me set up an introduction... in secret!

CYRANO: Oh! Of course... I can introduce... (*Stands and walks away for a pace or two, struggling to keep it together.*) Sorry, whom am I introducing you to again?

ROBIN: (*Laughing.*) What do you mean? Christian, of course!

CYRANO: (*Infinitely deflated.*) Oh... Of course.

ROBIN: I said that I am in love with the most beautiful soldier in all of France! Who else could I have meant?

CYRANO: Who else indeed. (*Struggling to understand.*) But—Robin—you've always said that your soulmate would be... charismatic.

ROBIN: That's right.

CYRANO: (*Bolder.*) You always say—we both have always said—what is most important is a poetic heart.

ROBIN: It is! Don't you see? That's why it has to be you... (*CYRANO scoffs and turns away, amused.*) I have imagined meeting my true love since I was a boy, but now that she's right in front of me... I'm afraid it won't be the poetry that I have always dreamt of.

CYRANO: (*Scathing.*) Love is always poetry, Christian; it's the poets that fail to impress.

ROBIN: Oh, ha-ha. Come on, Cyri, be serious! You talked with her last night. No one on earth is more eloquent than you. You can spot eloquence in a mud puddle. Tell me honestly... Is she everything I hoped for?

CYRANO: (*Regaining composure.*) Robin... I feel like I should tell you...

Enter REY and ROY, swords drawn.

ROY: There he is!

REY: Alright, rich boy, don't try to run. You're coming back with us.

CYRANO: And you are?

REY: Tired and angry.

ROY: And Roy!

REY: Pack it in, Robin. You're going to come back to the manor with us, willing or no.

CYRANO: (*Drawing her sword.*) I respect words too much to bandy them for your sake. Why not let our swords do the talking.

ROY and REY move forward with their swords and attack. CYRANO prepares to meet them, but before she can, ROBIN draws. In a short series of counters, he repels them.

ROBIN: No need for you to sully your honor with these two, Cyri.

ROY: You rich brat!

REY: (*In agony.*) My arm! You cut my arm! You miserable slug!

ROBIN: (*Taking aim.*) Run along. I can find my way back to the manor unescorted.

ROY and REY exit, defeated. ROBIN turns back to the astonished CYRANO.

CYRANO: You drew your sword.

ROBIN: I did.

CYRANO: But you never fight. Not once in your whole life!

ROBIN: I never had anything to fight for. I'm afraid I did more harm than good today; I better get back to the Manor before the Countess throws a fit. Forget my request. You are my friend, and I would never wish to put you in a compromising position. Please forgive me.

At last, CYRANO understands.

CYRANO: Robin... wait. You know, Christian ships out tomorrow for the wars.

ROBIN: I know.

CYRANO: She may not survive.

ROBIN: She will.

CYRANO: How can you be so sure?

ROBIN: Because I have faith in my destiny. And when she returns, then nothing will stop me from making my feelings known.

Exit ROBIN. CYRANO is left alone with her humiliation and heartbreak. Enter CAPTAIN and GASCON COMPANY.

CAPTAIN: Cyrano! Is everything okay!

LE BRET: Someone told us that you were being attacked. We came as fast as we could.

CUIGY: Did you see which way they went?

CYRANO points off stage.

BRISSAILLE: After them!

GASCON COMPANY pursues, but CYRANO grabs CHRISTIAN before she leaves.

CYRANO: Christian, wait.

CHRISTIAN: What is it?

CYRANO: Listen—Monsieur Robin and I were just talking.

CHRISTIAN: Yes, I know. What did he want?

CYRANO: To speak to the woman he loves.

CHRISTIAN: (*Crestfallen.*) I see. I suppose that makes sense... A man as smart as Robin could only ever love a poet.

CYRANO: It's funny you say that... I spent most of my life assuming a man as handsome as Robin could only love someone beautiful. I assumed I could never give him what he desires.

CHRISTIAN: I am happy to hear that you were wrong.

CYRANO: We both were, Christian. But also correct, in a sense.

CHRISTIAN: I don't understand.

CYRANO: Neither do I. At any rate, I need you to follow me.

CHRISTIAN: Follow you where?

CYRANO: To the Manor of the Countess.

CHRISTIAN: What for?

CYRANO: (*Exhales resignedly.*) To speak with your true love. I think I have finally found a way to give my friend what he desires.

They exit.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

AT START: *The Countess Manor Courtyard. Night. The entire courtyard is deserted. ROBIN enters, watching his back. When he realizes that he is alone, he breathes a sigh of relief. In the moment before he exits, the COUNTESS, GUARDS ONE, TWO and THREE reveal themselves.*

COUNTESS: Welcome home, Robin.

ROBIN: *(Surprised.)* Countess! What are you doing out here in the courtyard so late?

COUNTESS: Waiting on you, of course.

ROBIN: That's... kind of you Countess.

COUNTESS: *(Sharply.)* I am a kind person. You know that, Robin. *(ROBIN does not respond.)* Guards, won't you bring me my little songbird? I want to see that he's unharmed.

ROBIN: Hey!

GUARDS roughly bring ROBIN to center stage. THE COUNTESS begins examining her prize.

COUNTESS: *(Abruptly saccharine.)* My sweet boy, where in the world did you go tonight? I was told that you left the bakery rather abruptly.

ROBIN: I was taking a walk with an old friend.

COUNTESS: *(Laughs.)* Silly, Robin. You know as well as I that you have no friends left in Paris. At least, none worthy of a man of your station.

ROBIN: Mademoiselle, Cyrano is hardly—

COUNTESS: *(Abruptly.)* Cyrano? I thought I told you not to speak with her. *(COUNTESS grabs ROBIN'S collar.)* Cyrano is a disfigured wretch of a woman! Cyrano is a disgrace to France!

ROBIN: So you say, Countess.

COUNTESS: You disagree?

ROBIN: I do. Cyrano may be brash, but she is noble of spirit.

COUNTESS: Ha! There is nothing noble about that woman. Nothing!

ROBIN: Her deeds in the war say otherwise. On her first day of battle, Cyrano is said to have rescued a dozen captive soldiers using only her wits and a small can of tuna—

COUNTESS: Enough! Simply taking part in a war does not make you a hero.

ROBIN: (*Measured.*) But bravery does.

COUNTESS: Is this about my refusal to let you join the fighting, Robin?

ROBIN: Every day that I am forced to stay behind is another day of shame. I have strength and cunning, I should be fighting alongside my friends!

COUNTESS: Nonsense! This family's obligation to the crown is fulfilled. My husband ships out tomorrow to assist in the wars—with him in the ranks, your honor remains intact. Besides, darling, you are not fit for the horrors of battle. You are a gentle soul. (*COUNTESS moves uncomfortably close.*) You have remembered your duty to your country, but have you forgotten your duty to me?

ROBIN: No, Countess.

COUNTESS: You have not forgotten what I did for you when your family died?

ROBIN: No, Countess.

COUNTESS: (*With mounting intensity.*) That I kept you out of the poor houses? That I lifted you out of misery? That I gave you every conceivable luxury that my fortune could provide?

ROBIN: (*Resigned.*) No, Countess.

COUNTESS: (*Sweet, again.*) Good. You realize with my husband gone, I will need you more than ever. From here on, I should think your loyalty would keep you at my side at all times.

ROBIN: (*Absolutely resigned.*) Yes, Countess.

COUNTESS: Poor, sweet, naive Robin. Someday, perhaps you'll thank me for all I've done for you. (*To GUARDS.*) Lock down the courtyard. Monsieur Robin is tired now. He will not be accepting any more visitors from friends tonight.

Exit COUNTESS. After a moment, ROBIN dejectedly follows. The GUARDS snap to action.

FIRST GUARD: Alright, listen up! Le Mieux, cover the back entrance. Le Feu, start making the rounds. I'll cover the front entrance here.

GUARD TWO and GUARD THREE: Oui, Monsieur!

Exit SECOND GUARD and THIRD GUARD.

FIRST GUARD: Remember, no one gets past the Countess's guards!

No one! This manor is the impenetrable fortress of Paris! We have the eyes of an eagle and the instincts of a trained hound. Hear that world? In twenty years of service, I have never let a single intruder get past! I can see danger coming a mile away!

CYRANO, CUIGY, BRISSAILLE, LE BRET, RAGUENEAU, LIGNIÈRE, and CHRISTIAN enter. At the zenith of the GUARD'S declaration, CYRANO whacks him on the head and he collapses unconscious.

CYRANO: *(Rapid fire.)* Alright everyone, I've been getting past this guy for twenty years. He'll have sent someone to cover the back entrance, so RaguenEAU, Brissaille, you take care of him.

RAGUENEAU: *(Snapping to attention.)* Oui, Madame.

CYRANO: Cuigy, get this guard out of here. Le Bret, find the guard that's making the rounds. We can tie them up in the guardhouse.

LE BRET: *(Snapping to attention.)* Oui, Madame.

CUIGY: *(Snapping to attention.)* Oui.

CYRANO: Lignière!

LIGNIÈRE: *(Snapping to attention.)* Oui!

CYRANO: You're drunk again, aren't you?

LIGNIÈRE: Oui!

CYRANO: Go take a nap.

LIGNIÈRE: *(With relief.)* Oui.

The GASCON COMPANY exit promptly upon receiving their various assignments. CHRISTIAN stands back and admires CYRANO'S efficiency.

CHRISTIAN: You've got them working like clockwork... It's a shame that the Captain could not convince you to join our company.

CYRANO: Nothing could ever make me go back to that idiotic war. Now focus: do you remember the plan?

CHRISTIAN: Oh! Yes... I think so. Robin appears at that window.

CYRANO: That's right. Most nights he comes out onto his balcony before he goes to bed.

CHRISTIAN: At that point I stand beneath him here...

CYRANO: (*Repositions her.*) Here.

CHRISTIAN: Here... And then I declare my love.

CYRANO: To wit: you will read this poem that I composed.

CYRANO draws a poem from her pocket. CHRISTIAN examines it with interest.

CHRISTIAN: You wrote a poem?

CYRANO: Yes. This is a love poem declaring your undying love for Monsieur Robin.

CHRISTIAN: You just happened to have a love poem written to Robin on hand?

CYRANO: (*Feigning a casual air.*) Uh... No... Of course not! Obviously I wrote it on the way over.

CHRISTIAN: It's ten pages long.

CYRANO: (*Cough.*) It's double spaced. Anyway get ready, he's going to be out any second.

CHRISTIAN positions herself, and CYRANO tries to leave.

CHRISTIAN: Wait! Where are you going?

CYRANO: What do you mean? I can't be here while you're talking.

CHRISTIAN: No! I'm too nervous! I don't think I can do this alone!

CYRANO: Don't be ridiculous! Just stick to the poem and you'll be fine!

CHRISTIAN: Please don't go!

CYRANO: I have to, you dolt!

ROBIN: Hello? Who's there?

Enter ROBIN, US on the balcony. CHRISTIAN, frightened, yells and drops the poem pages, which scatter. CYRANO, equally upended, runs DS and conceals herself from the view of the balcony. CHRISTIAN immediately begins trying to recover the pages.

CHRISTIAN: No... No, no, no, no, no...

ROBIN: Christian! Christian, is that you?

CHRISTIAN: (*Standing up with mismatched papers in hand.*) Uh...
Yes!

ROBIN: I can't believe it! What are you doing here? I thought you were leaving for the wars!

CHRISTIAN: I had to see you.

ROBIN: Why?

CHRISTIAN: (*Gaining momentum.*) Isn't it obvious? Because I love you!

ROBIN: Christian...

CHRISTIAN: I love you, Robin. And... And I wish I had told you that a long time ago!

ROBIN: Christian... I love you too. All the time you were away, I never stopped thinking about you. Every day, I prayed for your safe return.

CHRISTIAN: (*Whispers.*) Cyrano! It worked! He says he loves me too!

CYRANO: (*Glum.*) Yeah, I heard.

ROBIN: What was that?

CHRISTIAN: Uhhh—Nothing! I, um, weep for happiness! I have waited a long time to hear you say those words.

ROBIN: (*Smiles.*) Then let's not waste any more. Before tomorrow separates us again—Please, tell me how you love me.

CHRISTIAN: How... I love you?

ROBIN: Yes! Tell me. I want to hear poetry.

CHRISTIAN: Poetry. Right. I'll just... do that. (*Fumbles with the hopelessly mixed up papers. Clears throat.*) Robin, since we were children... I have longed to look you in the eye and kiss your handsome... (*Flips page.*) ... throat.

CYRANO: Oh, lord.

ROBIN: You want to kiss my throat?

CHRISTIAN: No! Hold on—Okay. (*Recomposes.*) Your eyes. Your eyes remind me of a summer's day. And your lips! Your lips remind me of (*Flips page.*) your dead dog Le Floof.

ROBIN: (*Aghast.*) Christian!

CHRISTIAN: Oh! I'm so sorry... No. What I meant to say was... (*Finds a new place in the poetry.*) Your smile. Your smile is my daily bread. It sustains me. And your laughter. Robin, your laughter rings in my ear as an angel's song. Whenever I hear it, my lips long to kiss... (*Flips page.*) ... your dead dog Le Floof. (*Harsh whisper.*) Why do you keep writing about his dead dog?

CYRANO: (*Defensively.*) Le Floof meant a lot to him!

ROBIN: Christian, you aren't making any sense!

CHRISTIAN: I'm sorry... My words seem to have gotten mixed up.

ROBIN: Can you not speak to me from the heart?

CHRISTIAN: (*Nervous.*) Well, you see... I've never been great at... at...

CYRANO: Speaking.

CHRISTIAN: Speaking!

ROBIN: (*Disappointed.*) I see.

CHRISTIAN: Is that... okay?

ROBIN: Christian... I admire your valor, and I have always been entranced by your beauty. But my heart longs for eloquence; far more eloquence than you have shown here tonight. If you have nothing more to say, then I must bid you adieu.

CHRISTIAN: (*Hangs her head in shame.*) I understand.

CYRANO: (*Supremely frustrated.*) Heaven help me! (*Shouting.*) Wait!

CYRANO quickly grabs CHRISTIAN and repositions her in shadow. She then hides nearby.

CHRISTIAN: What are you doing?

CYRANO: Just follow my lead. Stand there and do not speak. Do you understand?

CHRISTIAN: Yes.

ROBIN: Christian? Where are you?

CYRANO: (*Composes herself.*) I'm here, Robin. I couldn't leave yet. Not when I still have so much to say.

ROBIN: Your voice sounds... different, somehow. Come back into the light!

CHRISTIAN: (*Softly.*) This will never work!

CYRANO: Trust me! (*To ROBIN.*) I would be ashamed to show myself after my careless words. I beg you, let me plead my case from the shadows, where my blush may go unnoticed.

ROBIN: Alright. What more would you say to me?

CYRANO: Only what my love would prompt me.

ROBIN: Love does not speak, Christian; love acts.

CYRANO: True enough! Soldiers know that more than most. Our love acts with every swing of the sword. (*Begins to gain confidence, liberated from her from her insecurities.*) But soldiers know about words, too. When we are away, our words must act on our behalf.

ROBIN: (*Intrigued.*) You mean love letters.

CYRANO: I do.

ROBIN: Are you saying that you intend to write me letters while you are away at the war?

CYRANO: I do.

CHRISTIAN: Cyrano, what are you doing?

CYRANO grabs CHRISTIAN and takes her place in the semi-darkness.

CYRANO: Just trust me!

ROBIN: It's not just your voice that's different now... You've found your eloquence!

CYRANO: I have found more than that. Through my love for you, I have found everything.

ROBIN: What do you mean?

CYRANO: For someone like me—all opportunity, all advantage was out of reach. My life was a prison, but you, Christian, became my door. Your kindness, your compassion... Your acceptance was my gateway to everything else in this life. When I met you, for the first time, I knew the truth.

ROBIN: What is the truth?

CYRANO: (*Powerfully.*) That words are nothing but the armor we use to hide our hearts. But for you, I would strip my heart of all pretense, and lay my love unguarded at your feet.

Both ROBIN and CHRISTIAN are moved by CYRANO'S declaration.

ROBIN: Christian... Thank you. I don't know what I could say in return, except that I wish you were not leaving tomorrow. We have so much more to say to one another.

CYRANO: In that, my love, fortune is on our side—words and wit are things that never spoil. (*Glances away.*) I fear our time together is drawing to a close. My friends can only keep the guards away for so long.

ROBIN: I understand. Before you go—will you allow me to give you a token?

CYRANO: A token?

ROBIN: Something to carry with you in the wars. To remind you of me.
A coin, or a pendant, or a ring.

CYRANO: Believe me—I do not need a trinket to remember you.

ROBIN: Then what can I give you?

CHRISTIAN jumps out from behind cover.

CHRISTIAN: How about a kiss?

CYRANO: Wait, what?

ROBIN: (*Exuberant.*) Christian, that is a token I would be happy to give.

CYRANO: What?

CHRISTIAN: Then come down, and meet me here in the courtyard!

ROBIN: Wait there my love!

CYRANO: What?!

Exit ROBIN.

CYRANO: What are you doing? I told you to stick to the plan!

CHRISTIAN: I thought this was the plan!

CYRANO: The plan was to let me do the talking!

CHRISTIAN: I did! And you did a great job!

CYRANO: I did a fantastic job! I'm a genius!

CHRISTIAN: Well then what's the problem? Your plan worked!
Robin's coming down!

CYRANO: (*Furious.*) I don't have a problem! It couldn't have gone better!

CHRISTIAN: Then why are you so angry?

CYRANO: (*Still furious; spoken at a clip.*) I'm not angry, I'm thrilled!
Robin is about to kiss you! I hope it's magical!

CHRISTIAN: (*Equally terse.*) Thank you, I'm sure it will be!

ROBIN: (*From offstage.*) Christian!

CYRANO dunks behind cover.

CHRISTIAN: Robin!

Enter ROBIN. ROBIN and CHRISTIAN join hands.

ROBIN: I've waited too long for this moment. I should have told you years ago how I felt. From this point forward, I swear I will never conceal my true feelings ever again.

CHRISTIAN: Neither will I.

COUNTESS: Neither will I.

Enter COUNTESS US. ROBIN and CHRISTIAN break apart. CYRANO, meanwhile, repositions herself and draws her weapon.

ROBIN: Countess!

COUNTESS: Well, well... She certainly is beautiful. I thought better of you, Robin. A word of advice: next time you intend to meet in secret, don't use new recruits as your hired muscle.

Enter GUARDS, holding the GASCON COMPANY.

RAGUENEAU: Let us go, you big oafs!

BRISSAILLE: Yeah! Don't forget, we know where you live!

COUNTESS: Perhaps I was not clear before, Robin. You are mine, understand? Mine. Mine to do with as I please. And now that my doddering husband is leaving, I intend to take advantage of that fact.

ROBIN: You may have wealth, Countess, but my heart is not something that you can purchase. I am in love with Christian and there's nothing you can do about it.

COUNTESS: My dear Robin, you are absolutely incorrect. Good evening, Captain.

Enter CAPTAIN.

CAPTAIN: Lieutenant? Cadets? What is the meaning of this?

COUNTESS: Captain, thank you for coming so quickly. I am afraid your company is guilty of trespassing on my private grounds. What's more: they assaulted my guards. These are grave charges, as you know.

CAPTAIN: They certainly are. (*Angry.*) What in God's name were you thinking?

CHRISTIAN: I can explain!

CAPTAIN: I am not interested in your explanation! Don't you realize what you have done? (*Turing to CUIGY and BRISSAILLE.*) And don't even get me started on you lot! When we get to the barracks, you'll be doing pushups until your arms fall off!

GASCON COMPANY: Oui, Monsieur!

CAPTAIN: Mademoiselle, I humbly beg for your forgiveness, and I assure you that I will personally pay for any damages that my men have caused. By your grace, please allow me to discipline them myself.

CHRISTIAN: But Captain!

CAPTAIN: Not another word, Lieutenant!

COUNTESS: (*Referring to the soldiers.*) I couldn't care less about these clowns.

BRISSAILLE: (*Hurt.*) Aww.

COUNTESS: Do with your cadets what you will. But the Lieutenant here... (*Smiling.*) I'm afraid it will not be that easy. As she is the ringleader, military discipline will not be enough. I insist that you release her into my custody.

ROBIN: No!

COUNTESS: Silence, Robin. This is none of your concern.

CHRISTIAN: Please, Captain!

LE BRET: It's alright, Christian. She has no authority to claim you. Not while you are a member of the Royal Army. It's up to the Captain, not the Countess.

COUNTESS: Captain, I would remind you that the war only lasts so long... If you value your position in High Society, you will do as I ask.

CHRISTIAN: Please, Captain, I can still make amends. I am loyal to the Company.

CAPTAIN: (*Disappointed.*) If that were true, then you would never have planned this deception.

CYRANO finally must reveal herself.

CYRANO: Christian did not plan this deception, Captain. I did.

ALL turn to face CYRANO.

CUIGY: Hey, Cyrano.

CYRANO: Hi, Cuigy.

CUIGY: We got caught, Cyrano.

CYRANO: I can see that, Cuigy.

ROBIN: Cyri? What are you doing here?

COUNTESS: I'd rather like to know that as well.

CYRANO: Monsieur Robin is my oldest and dearest friend. He is in love... And I would do anything to see him happy. Christian is innocent. If anyone is to pay the price for these crimes, it should be me.

GASCON COMPANY and guards mumble in agreement.

CAPTAIN: Well there you are, Christian, front and center. I will discipline you according to the regulations laid down by the military.

COUNTESS: Nonsense! Christian is still the main offender! Turn her over to me at once!

CAPTAIN: I am afraid you do not have the authority to demand that, Countess. Guards, you are dismissed.

SECOND GUARD: *(Exchanging a confused look with FIRST GUARD.)* We don't work for you.

CAPTAIN: *(With authority.)* I said dismissed!

GUARDS scurry away.

COUNTESS: You think you've won.

CYRANO: We did win.

COUNTESS: This isn't over, Cyrano.

CYRANO: Yeah, it kind of is.

COUNTESS: No. It's not. You have made a grave mistake tonight by protecting Christian. (*Laughingly.*) Did you all forget? My husband is the Viscount. The Viscount is a General. He outranks you all! You think you have saved your paramour, Robin? Ha! With one letter, I can make sure that this little Gascon Company is sent to fight on the front lines!

ROBIN: Countess!

COUNTESS: (*Venomous, working herself into a rage.*) You will be assigned every dangerous mission; you will be sent into every quagmire! There will be no rest for your Company, Christian. No moment of grace! And in the end... (*Recomposing herself.*) And in the end, there will be nothing left of the Gascon Company to ship home. As for you, Cyrano, expect a visit from the office of the magistrate tomorrow. It's high time my friends in the justice system deal with you once and for all.

Exit COUNTESS. The GASCON COMPANY look at one another gravely.

RAGUENEAU: She's bluffing, right?

ROBIN: Her husband is a powerful man. He could easily reassign your regiment... and arrange for Cyrano's arrest.

CUIGY: Oh.

BRISSAILLE: So, fine: she reassigns us.

RAGUENEAU: I agree! So we go to the front lines. How bad could it be?

CAPTAIN: Le Bret, would you mind reading out the title of our latest intelligence briefing?

LE BRET: (*Pulling out a letter.*) Oui, Monsieur. Quote: "The Front Lines are About as Bad as They Could Be." End Quote.

CHRISTIAN: Oh.

CAPTAIN: At this point, the cannon fire from the Spanish side has all but wiped out our defenses, and our main supply routes are attacked daily. Being sent to the front lines is as good as a death sentence.

CHRISTIAN abruptly releases ROBIN and strides boldly away.

ROBIN: Where are you going?

CHRISTIAN: To war.

ROBIN: Wait! You haven't said goodbye. And you forgot to take your token!

CHRISTIAN: (*Turns back to ROBIN and bows cordially.*) I thank you, Monsieur, but I would rather that you keep it. I will take it from you upon my return. (*Walks away, turns back wistfully at the last moment before exiting.*) I will write.

ROBIN: Christian! (*Desperate, turning back to CYRANO.*) Why would she leave like that?

CAPTAIN: In her own way, I believe she was trying to be noble.

ROBIN: There is nothing noble about such a parting!

CAPTAIN: With all due respect, Monsieur, Christian is steeling herself to the realities of war... Perhaps you should do the same. (*Shouting at the Cadets.*) Company! Move out. I will take my leave, Monsieur. I apologize for the trouble that my company has caused.

Exit GASCON COMPANY. CYRANO watches the ground mournfully.

CYRANO: Captain. (*CAPTAIN pauses.*) Do you intend to leave without your lieutenant?

CAPTAIN: (*Confused.*) Lieutenant Christian has—

CYRANO: Christian's insubordination is worthy of a demerit at the very least. You will need a new lieutenant to take her place. I volunteer my services.

ROBIN: Cyrano!

CYRANO: Do you accept?

CAPTAIN: (*Moved.*) I would be honored. Report to the docks at sunrise, Lieutenant.

CAPTAIN exits.

ROBIN: Cyri! Why would you do that? What were you thinking?

CYRANO: (*Proudly.*) They are being sent to the most dangerous parts of the war! Think of the glorious battles to be had!

ROBIN: (*Admonishing.*) You're going to get yourself killed!

CYRANO: Nonsense! Remember who you are talking to. With this sword, I would outduel God himself. I give you my word, Monsieur, by this hand, I swear that not a single member of Gascon Company will fall. Not Cuigy, not Le Bret... and not Christian.

ROBIN understands the gravity of this promise.

ROBIN: I don't know what to say.

CYRANO: *(Smiling.)* That is to your benefit. I've never cared for people who talk too much.

The two friends hug.

ROBIN: Be safe.

ROBIN exits.

CYRANO: *(Amused, to herself.)* Be safe... *(Sighs, and looks up at the night sky. She swings her sword at the shadows. This revitalizes her.)* Now! Throw wide the doors, comrades, and see all of Paris wrapped in night! Look at the moonlight over the rooftops! Look at the darkened haze of dusk! A fitting backdrop for a struggle for our lives! What, cowards? Raise your swords! Raise them high! Take heart, friends! *(To the audience.)* ...SOON YOU SHALL SEE WHAT I SEE!

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