

ACT III

A little square in the Marais¹ quarter of Paris. A few weeks later.

[ROXANE's house and the wall of its garden are seen, overflowing with foliage. Above the door, a window and a balcony garlanded with quivering, drooping jasmine. As the curtain rises, the DUENNA is seated on the bench. Beside her stands RAGUENEAU, dressed in livery.² He is finishing a story and wiping his eyes.]

RAGUENEAU. . . and then she ran off with a musketeer! Alone and ruined, I felt I had nothing to live for, so I tried to hang myself, but Monsieur de Bergerac came in and cut me down. Then he offered me this position as his cousin's steward.

THE DUENNA. But how did you come to be ruined?

RAGUENEAU. Lise liked warriors and I liked poets. Mars ate everything that Apollo left.³ At that rate, it didn't take long!

THE DUENNA. [Standing up and calling toward the open window.] Roxane, are you ready? We're late!

ROXANE'S VOICE. [From the window.] I'm just putting on my cloak!

THE DUENNA. [To RAGUENEAU, pointing to the door opposite.] That's where we're going, to Clomire's.⁴ She holds regular discussion meetings in her house. A discourse on the Tender Passion⁵ will be read today.

CYRANO'S VOICE. [Singing offstage.] La-la-la.

1. Marais [ma rä']

2. livery: uniform.

3. Mars. . . Apollo left: The soldiers (represented by Mars, the god of war) ate all the pastries left by the poets (represented by Apollo, the god of poetry).

4. Clomire's [klō mērz']

5. Tender Passion: that is, a lecture on love.

THE DUENNA. [Surprised.] Is someone coming to play for us?

CYRANO. [Entering, followed by two PAGES carrying lutes.] Those are thirty-second notes, you fool!

ROXANE. [Appearing on the balcony.] Ah, it's you!

CYRANO. [Singing his words to the melody.] I've come to salute your lilies, and pay my respects to your roses!

ROXANE. I'm coming down! [Leaves the balcony.]

THE DUENNA. [Pointing to the PAGES.] Where did these two virtuosi⁶ come from?

CYRANO. I won them from d'Assoucy⁷ on a bet. We were arguing about a point of grammar when suddenly he pointed to these lute-playing louts, who always accompany him wherever he goes, and said to me, "I'll bet you a day of music!" He lost, and therefore ordered them to follow me and bear harmonious witness to everything I do until tomorrow. It was charming at first, but it has already begun to pall. [To the PAGES.] Go and serenade Montfleury and tell him I sent you! [The PAGES go upstage to leave. CYRANO turns back to the DUENNA.] I've come to ask Roxane, as I do every day. . . [To the PAGES, as they are leaving.] Play a long time—and off-key! [To the DUENNA.] . . . whether her soulmate is still a model of perfection.

ROXANE. [Coming out of the house.] Oh, he's so handsome! And such a brilliant mind! I can't tell you how much I love him!

6. virtuosi [vur'chōō ō'sē]: those with great skill in a fine art, especially music.

7. d'Assoucy [da sōō sē']: probably a reference to Charles d'Assouci (1605–1677), who was a comic poet and contemporary of the real Cyrano de Bergerac.

DE GUICHE. I have my orders. We're besieging Arras.⁸

ROXANE. Ah! A siege?

DE GUICHE. Yes. . . . My departure seems to leave you cold.

ROXANE. [*Politely.*] Not at all.

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

ROXANE. [*With indifference.*] Congratulations.

DE GUICHE. And I'm in command of the Guards.

ROXANE. [*Startled.*] The Guards?

DE GUICHE. Yes, the regiment in which your boastful cousin serves. I'll find a way to take revenge on him when we're at Arras.

ROXANE. [*Choking.*] What! The Guards are being sent there?

DE GUICHE. [*Laughing.*] Of course: that's my regiment!

ROXANE. [*Aside.*] Christian! . . .

DE GUICHE. What's the matter?

ROXANE. [*Overwhelmed with emotion.*] I'm in despair at . . . at what you've told me. . . . When a woman cares for a man and learns that he's going to war. . . .

DE GUICHE. [*Surprised and delighted.*] Why did you wait for the day of my departure to say such a tender thing to me for the first time?

ROXANE. [*Changing her tone and fanning herself.*] So you're going to take revenge on my cousin?

DE GUICHE. Do you see him?

ROXANE. Very seldom.

DE GUICHE. He's seen everywhere with one of the Cadets. . . [*Tries to think of the name.*]. . . a young man named Neu. . . Neuillen. . . Neuville. . .

ROXANE. Tall?

DE GUICHE. Yes, with blond hair.

ROXANE. Reddish blond.

DE GUICHE. And handsome.

ROXANE. Not very.

DE GUICHE. But stupid.

ROXANE. He looks like it. [*Changing her tone.*] Are you planning to take revenge on Cyrano by exposing him to the fire of the enemy? If so, you'll get little satisfaction from it, because he loves danger! I know how you could really make him suffer!

DE GUICHE. How?

ROXANE. Leave him behind with his dear Cadets when the regiment goes off to fight. Make him sit idly in Paris through the whole war! He'll eat his heart out at not being in action, his friends will angrily chew their fingernails, and you'll be avenged.

DE GUICHE. [*Drawing closer.*] Then you do love me a little! [*She smiles.*] I like to think that your sharing my rancor is a sign of love, Roxane!

ROXANE. It is.

DE GUICHE. [*Showing her several sealed envelopes.*] I have orders that will be delivered to each company without delay, except. . . [*Separates one of them from the others.*]. . . for this one, addressed to the Cadets! [*Puts it in his pocket.*] I'll keep it. [*Laughing.*] Ha, ha, Cyrano! We'll see how your warlike temperament takes to this! . . . Tell me, Roxane, do you sometimes play tricks on people yourself?

8. Arras [a ra']: city that was in the Spanish Netherlands and is now in France.

ROXANE. [*Looking at him.*] Yes, sometimes.

DE GUICHE. [*Close to her.*] You drive me mad! I intended to leave tonight, but how can I part from you when you've just revealed such feelings to me? Listen. . . . Near here, on the Rue d'Orleans,⁹ there's a monastery founded by the Capuchins.¹⁰ Laymen aren't allowed to enter it, but I'll see to it that the good monks make an exception in my case. Everyone will believe I've left Paris. I'll then come to you, masked. Let me delay my departure one day!

ROXANE. [*Anxiously.*] But if it becomes known, your glory will be. . . .

9. Rue d'Orléans [rōō' dōr'lā ōn']

10. Capuchins [kap'yə shinz]: monks who belong to a branch of the Franciscan order.

DE GUICHE. Never mind! Let me do it!

ROXANE. No!

DE GUICHE. Let me!

ROXANE. [*Tenderly.*] I must refuse.

DE GUICHE. Ah!

ROXANE. Go! [*Aside.*] And Christian will stay.

[*To DE GUICHE.*] I want you to be heroic. . . . Antoine!

DE GUICHE. What heavenly words! Do you love. . . .

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

DE GUICHE. [*Overjoyed.*] I'm going now! [*Kisses her hand.*] Are you satisfied?



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ROXANE. Yes, Antoine. [*He leaves.*]

THE DUENNA. [*Bowing comically to him behind his back.*] Yes, Antoine!

ROXANE. [*To the DUENNA.*] Don't say a word about what I've done. Cyrano would never forgive me if he knew I'd robbed him of his war! [*Calls toward the house.*] Cousin! If Christian comes, as I presume he will, tell him to wait for me.

CYRANO. [*Quickly, as she is about to disappear.*] One moment! [*She turns back toward him.*] You always have a subject on which you question him; what will it be this time?

ROXANE. This time. . .

CYRANO. [*Eagerly.*] Yes?

ROXANE. You won't tell him?

CYRANO. I'll be as silent as a tomb.

ROXANE. Well, this time I'm not going to question him about anything! I'll say to him, "Give free rein to your mind! Improvise! Speak to me of love in your magnificent way!"

CYRANO. [*Smiling.*] Good.

ROXANE. Sh!

CYRANO. Sh!

ROXANE. Not a word! [*Goes inside and closes the door behind her.*]

CYRANO. [*Bowing to her, after the door is closed.*] I thank you.

[*The door opens again and ROXANE'S head appears.*]

ROXANE. If he knew, he might prepare a speech in advance!

BOTH TOGETHER. Sh! [*The door closes.*]

CYRANO. [*Calling.*] Christian! [*CHRISTIAN appears.*] I know what we need to know. Prepare your mem-

ory: here's a chance to cover yourself with glory! Why are you looking so unhappy? Come, there's no time to lose! We'll hurry to your house and I'll tell you. . .

CHRISTIAN. No!

CYRANO. What?

CHRISTIAN. No! I'm going to wait for Roxane here.

CYRANO. Have you lost your reason? Come with me, you must learn. . .

CHRISTIAN. No, I tell you! I'm tired of borrowing my letters and speeches, of always playing a part and trembling lest I forget my lines! It was necessary at the beginning and I'm grateful to you for your help, but now that I feel she really loves me, I'm no longer afraid. I'm going to speak for myself.

CYRANO. [*Ironically.*] Do you believe that's a good idea?

CHRISTIAN. What makes you think I can't do it? After all, I'm not so stupid! You'll see! Your lessons haven't been wasted on me, my friend: I'm sure I can speak without your guidance now. And in any case I'll certainly know how to take her in my arms! Here she comes! No, Cyrano, don't leave me!

CYRANO. [*Bowing to him.*] Speak for yourself, sir. [*Disappears behind the garden wall.*]

ROXANE. [*She sees CHRISTIAN.*] Ah, it's you! [*Goes to him.*] Dusk is gathering. Wait. . . . The air is pleasant and no one is passing by. Let's sit down. Talk to me. I'm listening.

[*CHRISTIAN sits down beside her on the bench. There is a silence.*]

CHRISTIAN. I love you.

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

CHRISTIAN. I love you.

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

CHRISTIAN. I love . . .

ROXANE. Develop your theme!

CHRISTIAN. I love you so much!

ROXANE. Go on.

CHRISTIAN. I . . . I'd be so happy if you loved me! Tell me that you do, Roxane!

ROXANE. [*Pouting.*] You're giving me water when I expected cream! Tell me how you love me.

CHRISTIAN. I love you . . . very much!

ROXANE. Surely you can express your feelings better than that!

CHRISTIAN. [*Who has moved closer to her and is now devouring her neck with his eyes.*] Your neck! I'd like to kiss it . . .

ROXANE. Christian!

CHRISTIAN. I love you!

ROXANE. [*Starting to stand up.*] Again!

CHRISTIAN. [*Quickly, holding her back.*] No, I don't love you!

ROXANE. [*Sitting down again.*] At least that's a change.

CHRISTIAN. I adore you!

ROXANE. [*Standing up and moving away.*] Oh!

CHRISTIAN. Yes . . . I'm becoming foolish!

ROXANE. [*Curtly.*] And it displeases me! As it would displease me if you became ugly.

CHRISTIAN. But . . .

ROXANE. Try to bring back your vanished eloquence!

CHRISTIAN. I . . .

ROXANE. I know: you love me. Good-by. [*Goes toward the house.*]

CHRISTIAN. Wait! Let me tell you . . .

ROXANE. [*Opening the door.*] That you adore me? I already know that. No, no! Go away!

CHRISTIAN. But I . . . [*She closes the door in his face.*]

CYRANO. [*Who has returned a short time earlier without being seen.*] Congratulations on your success.

CHRISTIAN. Help me!

CYRANO. No.

CHRISTIAN. If I don't win her back immediately, I'll die!

CYRANO. How do you expect me to teach you immediately . . .

CHRISTIAN. [*Gripping his arm.*] Oh! Look! [*A light has appeared in the balcony window.*]

CYRANO. [*With deep emotion.*] Her window!

CHRISTIAN. [*Shouting.*] I'll die!

CYRANO. Lower your voice!

CHRISTIAN. [*Softly.*] I'll die . . .

CYRANO. It's dark now.

CHRISTIAN. What of it?

CYRANO. The damage can be repaired. You don't deserve . . . Stand here, in front of the balcony, you wretched fool! I'll be under it, telling you what to say.

CHRISTIAN. But . . .

CYRANO. Quiet! [*The PAGES appear in the background.*] Sh! [*Signals them to speak softly.*]

FIRST PAGE. [*In an undertone.*] We've been serenading Montfleury!

CYRANO. [*Quickly, also in an undertone.*] I want

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you to stand watch, one at that corner, the other at that one. If you see anyone coming, begin playing your lutes.

SECOND PAGE. What shall we play?

CYRANO. A happy melody for a woman, a sad one for a man. [*The PAGES disappear, one toward each street corner. CYRANO speaks to CHRISTIAN.*] Call her!

CHRISTIAN. Roxane!

CYRANO. [*Picking up pebbles and throwing them against the window.*] Just a moment. First, a few pebbles. . . .

ROXANE. [*Partially opening her window.*] Who's there?

CHRISTIAN. It's I.

ROXANE. Who?

CHRISTIAN. Christian.

ROXANE. [*With disdain.*] Oh, it's you.

CHRISTIAN. I'd like to speak to you.

CYRANO. [*Under the balcony, to CHRISTIAN.*] That's good. Keep your voice down.

ROXANE. No! You speak too awkwardly. Go away.

CHRISTIAN. Please. . . .

ROXANE. No! You've stopped loving me!

CHRISTIAN. [*Repeating what CYRANO tells him.*] Impossible! . . . I could no more. . . stop loving you. . . than I could stop. . . the rising of the sun!

ROXANE. [*Pausing just as she was about to close the window.*] Ah! That's better!

CHRISTIAN. [*Still repeating CYRANO's words.*] My cruel love. . . has never ceased to grow. . . in my tormented soul. . . since the day. . . when it was born there.

ROXANE. [*Leaning forward with her elbows on*

the railing of the balcony.] Very good! . . . But why do you speak so haltingly? Has your imagination gone lame?

CYRANO. [*Pulling CHRISTIAN under the balcony and taking his place.*] Sh! This is becoming too difficult!

ROXANE. Your words are hesitant tonight. Why?

CYRANO. [*Speaking softly, like CHRISTIAN.*] Because of the darkness, they must grope their way to your ears.

ROXANE. My words have no such difficulty.

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

ROXANE. But they seem to be climbing better now.

CYRANO. They've finally become accustomed to that exercise.

ROXANE. It's true that I'm speaking from high above you.

CYRANO. Yes, and it would kill me if you let a harsh word fall on my heart from that height!

ROXANE. [*Making a movement.*] I'll come down to you!

CYRANO. [*Urgently.*] No!

ROXANE. [*Pointing to the bench below the balcony.*] Then climb up on that bench.

CYRANO. [*Stepping back into the shadows.*] No!

ROXANE. Why not?

CYRANO. [*Increasingly overcome by emotion.*] I want to go on taking advantage of this opportunity. . . this chance for us to talk quietly. . . without seeing each other.

ROXANE. Why should we talk without seeing each other?

CYRANO. I find it delightful. We're almost invisible to each other. You see the blackness of a long cloak, I see the whiteness of a summer dress. I'm only a shadow, you're only a spot of brightness. You can't know what these moments mean to me! I may sometimes have been eloquent in the past . . .

ROXANE. You have!

CYRANO. . . . but until now my words have never come from my true heart.

ROXANE. Why?

CYRANO. Because . . . till now I always spoke through . . .

ROXANE. Through what?

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

ROXANE. Perhaps it's true—even your voice is different.

CYRANO. [*Impetuously moving closer.*] Yes, quite different, because in the protecting darkness I dare at last to be myself, I dare . . . [*Pauses, then continues distractedly.*] What was I saying? I don't know . . . All this . . . Excuse my agitation! All this is so enchanting . . . so new to me!

ROXANE. So new?

CYRANO. [*Deeply stirred, trying to cover up what he has admitted.*] Yes, it's new to me to be sincere . . . without fear of being laughed at . . .

ROXANE. Laughed at for what?

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

ROXANE. Those little flowers have their charm.

CYRANO. Yes, but let's scorn them tonight!

ROXANE. You've never talked to me like this before.

CYRANO. One look at the starry sky above us is enough to make me want to throw off all artificiality. If the expression of feeling is refined too much, the feeling itself is lost.

ROXANE. But it seems to me that elegant language . . .

CYRANO. It has no place in true love! It's only a game, and those who love will suffer if they play it too long. For most of them there comes a time—and I pity those for whom it doesn't come!—when they feel a noble love inside themselves that's saddened by every grandiloquent word they say.

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

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

ROXANE. [*In a tremulous voice.*] Yes, that's really love . . .

CYRANO. The feeling that holds me in its merciless grip could be nothing else but love! It has all the terrible jealousy and somber violence of love, and all the unselfishness, too. How gladly I would give my happiness for the sake of yours, even without your knowledge, asking only to





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hear from a distance, now and then, the laughter born of my sacrifice! Are you beginning to understand now? Do you feel my soul rising to you in the darkness? Ah, it's all too beautiful, too sweet, this evening! I say all these things and you listen to me—you listen to me! It's more than my poor heart can bear! Even in my most daring dreams I never hoped for so much! I could die happily at this moment! It's because of my words that you're trembling—for you are trembling, like one of the leaves in the dark foliage above me: I've felt the beloved tremor of your hand descending along the jasmine branches! [*Fervently kisses the end of a drooping branch.*]

ROXANE. Yes, I'm trembling, and I'm weeping, and I love you, and I'm yours!

CYRANO. Then let death come, now that I've aroused such feelings in you! I ask only one thing. . .

CHRISTIAN. [*From under the balcony.*] A kiss!

ROXANE. [*Quickly drawing back.*] What?

CYRANO. Oh!

ROXANE. You ask. . .

CYRANO. Yes, I. . . [*To CHRISTIAN, in an undertone.*] You're going too fast!

CHRISTIAN. She's in a willing mood—I must take advantage of it!

CYRANO. [*To ROXANE.*] Yes, I. . . I asked for a kiss, but I now realize that I was much too bold.

ROXANE. [*A little disappointed.*] You don't insist?

CYRANO. Yes, I insist. . . but not insistently! I've offended your modesty. . . Don't give me that kiss!

CHRISTIAN. [*To CYRANO, tugging at his cloak.*] Why do you say that?

CYRANO. Quiet, Christian!

ROXANE. [*Leaning forward.*] What are you saying?

CYRANO. I was scolding myself for having gone too far. I just said to myself, "Quiet, Christian!" [*The lutes begin playing.*] Wait! Someone's coming! [*ROXANE closes the window.*] A sad tune and a happy one, both at the same time? What do they mean? Is it a man or a woman? . . . Ah! [*A CAPUCHIN enters; holding a lantern in his hand, he goes from house to house, looking at the doors.*]

CYRANO. [*To the CAPUCHIN.*] What are you doing?

THE CAPUCHIN. I'm looking for the house of Madame. . . Magdeleine Robin.

CYRANO. [*To the CAPUCHIN, showing him an uphill street.*] It's that way. Straight ahead.

THE CAPUCHIN. Thank you. [*He leaves.*]

CHRISTIAN. You must get that kiss for me!

CYRANO. No!

CHRISTIAN. Sooner or later. . .

CYRANO. Yes, it's true. Sooner or later there will be an ecstatic moment when your mouths are drawn together. [*To himself.*] I prefer it to be because of. . .

[*Sound of the window being opened again.*
CHRISTIAN *hides under the balcony.*]

ROXANE. [*Coming out onto the balcony.*] Are you still there? We were talking about. . . about a. . .

CYRANO. A kiss. The word is so sweet! Why should you be afraid to say it? Don't be alarmed; you've already given up your bantering tone and gradually drifted from smiles to sighs, and then from sighs to tears! Let yourself drift a little further.

ROXANE. Stop!

CYRANO. After all, what is a kiss? A vow made at

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closer range, a more precise promise, a confession that contains its own proof, a seal placed on a pact that has already been signed; a fleeting moment filled with the hush of eternity, a communion that has the fragrance of a flower, a way of living by the beat of another heart.

ROXANE. Come to me! Come and give me that matchless flower. . .

CYRANO. [*Pushing CHRISTIAN toward the balcony.*] Climb up to her!

ROXANE. . . that communion. . .

CYRANO. Climb!

ROXANE. . . that hush of eternity. . .

CYRANO. Climb!

CHRISTIAN. [*Hesitating.*] But now it seems to me that it's wrong!

CYRANO. [*Pushing him.*] Climb, you fool!

[CHRISTIAN stands on the bench, then climbs up onto the balcony.]

CHRISTIAN. Ah, Roxane! [*Takes her in his arms and kisses her.*]

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

ROXANE. Who is it!

CYRANO. It's I. I was passing by. . . . Is Christian still here?

CHRISTIAN. [*Surprised.*] Cyrano!

ROXANE. Good evening, cousin.

CYRANO. Good evening, cousin.

ROXANE. I'm coming down! [*She disappears into the house. The CAPUCHIN enters in the background.*]

CHRISTIAN. [*Seeing him.*] No! Not again! [*Follows ROXANE.*]

THE CAPUCHIN. This is Magdeleine Robin's house!

CYRANO. You said "Rolin" before.

THE CAPUCHIN. No, I said "Robin!" R-O-B-I-N!

ROXANE. [*Appearing in the doorway of the house, followed by RAGUENEAU, who carries a lantern, and CHRISTIAN.*] Who's this?

THE CAPUCHIN. I have a letter for you.

CHRISTIAN. A letter?

THE CAPUCHIN. [*To ROXANE.*] It surely concerns some holy matter. It's from a worthy lord who. . .

ROXANE. [*To CHRISTIAN.*] It's from De Guiche!

CHRISTIAN. How dare he. . .

ROXANE. He won't bother me much longer! [*Opening the letter.*] I love you, and if. . . [*By the light of RAGUENEAU's lantern, she reads the letter to herself in a low voice.*] "The drums are beating and my regiment is preparing to leave. Everyone believes that I have already gone, but I am staying, in disobedience to your orders. I am in a monastery. This letter is to inform you that I will soon come to visit you. The monk who will deliver it to you is as simpleminded as a goat, so there is no danger of his guessing my plan. Your lips have smiled at me too much today; I must see them again. I hope that you have already forgiven my boldness, and I remain your. . ." And so on. [*To the CAPUCHIN.*] Father, you must hear what's in this letter. Listen. [*The others gather around her and she pretends to read aloud.*] "You must bow to the Cardinal's will, however difficult it may be for you. This letter will be delivered into your charming hands by a saintly,

intelligent, and discreet Capuchin. You will inform him that we wish him to give you the blessing of holy matrimony. . . ." [Turns the page.] ". . . in your house, and without delay. Christian must secretly become your husband. I have already sent him to you. I know that you dislike him, but you must accept the Cardinal's decision, and you may rest assured that heaven will bless you for your resignation. With the respect that I have always borne for you, I remain your humble and devoted. . . ." And so on. [Loudly, with despair.] Oh! This is horrible!

THE CAPUCHIN. [Turning the light of his lantern on CYRANO.] Are you the. . .

CHRISTIAN. No, I am!

THE CAPUCHIN. [Turns the light on CHRISTIAN, then, seeing how handsome he is, appears to become suspicious.] But. . .

ROXANE. [Quickly, pretending to read again.] "P.S. You will make a gift of a thousand francs¹¹ to the monastery."

THE CAPUCHIN. A worthy, worthy lord! [To ROXANE.] Resign yourself!

ROXANE. [In a tone of martyrdom.] I am resigned. [While RAGUENEAU opens the door for the CAPUCHIN, whom CHRISTIAN has invited to enter, she speaks softly to CYRANO.] De Guiche will soon be here. Delay him, don't let him come in until. . .

CYRANO. I understand. [To the CAPUCHIN.] How long will you need for the wedding ceremony?

THE CAPUCHIN. About a quarter of an hour.

CYRANO. [Pushing them all toward the house.] Hurry! I'll stay here.

ROXANE. [To CHRISTIAN.] Come! [They go inside.]

11. francs: The franc is the French monetary unit; it is worth about twenty cents.

CYRANO. How can I make De Guiche waste a quarter of an hour? [Leaps onto the bench and climbs up the wall, toward the balcony.] Up we go! . . . I have my plan! [The lutes begin playing a mournful melody.] Aha! A man is coming! [The tremolo becomes sinister.] No doubt of it this time! [He is now on the balcony. He pushes his hat down over his eyes, takes off his sword, wraps his cloak around himself, leans forward, and looks down.] No, it's not too high. . . . [He sits on the railing, takes one of the long tree branches that overhang the garden wall, pulls it toward him, and holds it with both hands, ready to swing down.] I am going to trouble this peaceful atmosphere a little!

DE GUICHE. [Entering masked, groping in the darkness.] What's happened to that Capuchin?

CYRANO. My voice! What if he recognizes it? [Lets go of the branch with one hand and makes the motion of turning an invisible key.] There! I've unlocked my Gascon accent!

DE GUICHE. [Looking at the house.] Yes, this is it. I can hardly see where I'm going. This mask is so annoying! [He walks toward the door. CYRANO leaps from the balcony, holding the branch, which bends and sets him down between DE GUICHE and the door. He pretends to fall heavily, as if from a great height, and lies motionless on the ground, as though dazed. DE GUICHE jumps back.] What! . . . What's this? . . . [He looks up, but the branch has already sprung back into place. Seeing nothing but the sky, he is mystified.] Where did this man fall from?

CYRANO. [Sitting up, and speaking with a Gascon accent.] From the moon!

DE GUICHE. Did you say. . .

CYRANO. [Dreamily.] What time is it?

DE GUICHE. He's lost his reason!

CYRANO. What time is it? What country is this? What day? What season?

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DE GUICHE. But . . .

CYRANO. I'm still dazed.

DE GUICHE. Sir . . .

CYRANO. I fell from the moon like a cannonball!

DE GUICHE. [*Impatiently.*] Look, sir . . .

CYRANO. [*Loudly and emphatically, standing up.*] I fell from the moon!

DE GUICHE. [*Stepping back.*] Very well, then, you fell from the moon! [*Aside.*] He may be a maniac!

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

DE GUICHE. [*Shrugging.*] Yes, of course. Let me pass.

CYRANO. [*Stepping in front of him.*] Where am I? Be frank, don't hide anything from me! What is this place where I've just fallen like a meteorite?

DE GUICHE. Enough of this!

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

DE GUICHE. [*Trying to get past him.*] A lady is expecting me. . . .

CYRANO. Ah, then I'm in Paris!

DE GUICHE. [*Smiling in spite of himself.*] This lunatic is rather amusing!

CYRANO. You're smiling?

DE GUICHE. Yes, but I still want you to let me pass!

CYRANO. [*Beaming.*] I've fallen back into Paris! [*Thoroughly at ease, smiling, brushing himself off, bowing.*] Excuse me; I've just come by the latest whirlwind and I have ether all over me. Such a journey! My eyes are full of stardust. I still

have a little planet fur on my spurs. [*Picks something off his sleeve.*] A comet hair on my doublet! [*Pretends to blow it away.*]

DE GUICHE. [*Beside himself with exasperation.*] Sir! . . . [*Just as DE GUICHE is about to pass, CYRANO stops him by putting out his leg, as though to show him something on it.*]

CYRANO. The Great Bear bit me as I passed. Look, you can see the tooth marks on my leg. Then, when I swerved to avoid Orion's Sword, I fell into the Scales.¹² The pointer still marks my weight. [*Prevents DE GUICHE from passing and takes hold of his doublet.*] If you were to squeeze my nose, sir, milk would spurt from it.

DE GUICHE. Milk?

CYRANO. From the Milky Way!

DE GUICHE. Sir, I've been very patient with you. Now will you please. . .

CYRANO. I understand. I'll be glad to oblige you.

DE GUICHE. At last!

CYRANO. You want me to tell you what the moon is like and whether anyone lives there, isn't that right?

DE GUICHE. No! No! I want to. . .

CYRANO. Yes, of course—you want to know how I got to the moon. I did it by a method that I invented myself.

DE GUICHE. [*Discouraged.*] He's raving mad!

CYRANO. I didn't imitate anything that had been done before! [*DE GUICHE succeeds in getting past him. He walks toward ROXANE'S door while CYRANO follows him, ready to take hold of him.*] I invented six ways.

DE GUICHE. [*Stopping and turning around.*] Six?

12. Great Bear, Orion's Sword, Scales: constellations in the zodiac.

CYRANO. [*Volubly.*] I could have clothed my naked body with crystal bottles full of dew and exposed myself to the morning sun; then, as the sun drew up the dew, I would have been drawn up with it!

DE GUICHE. [*Surprised, and taking a step toward CYRANO.*] Yes, that's one way!

CYRANO. [*Stepping back to lead him away from the door.*] And I could have rarefied¹³ the air in a cedar chest by means of twenty burning-mirrors¹⁴ suitably arranged, thus producing a great rush of wind that would have sent me on my way!

DE GUICHE. [*Taking another step toward him.*] Two!

CYRANO. [*Still moving back.*] Or, with my mechanical skill and my knowledge of pyrotechnics,¹⁵ I could have constructed a large steel grasshopper propelled by successive explosions of gunpowder.

DE GUICHE. [*Following him without realizing it, and counting on his fingers.*] Three!

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

DE GUICHE. [*Increasingly surprised, and still following him.*] Four!

CYRANO. Since the new moon likes to suck up the marrow of cattle, I could have coated my body with it!

DE GUICHE. [*Fascinated.*] Five!

CYRANO. [*Who, while speaking, has led him to the other side of the square, near a bench.*]

13. **rarefied**: made thinner, like the hot air in a balloon. The real Cyrano de Bergerac wrote a work of science fiction proposing these various methods of space travel.

14. **burning-mirrors**: curved mirrors used for producing great heat by focusing the sun's rays.

15. **pyrotechnics** [pɪˈrɒ tekˈnɪks]: art of making and using fireworks.

Finally, I could have sat on a sheet of iron and thrown a magnet into the air. It's a very good method: the iron follows the magnet in its flight, then you quickly throw the magnet again, and keep repeating the process until you've reached the moon!

DE GUICHE. Six! . . . But which of those six excellent methods did you choose?

CYRANO. A seventh!

DE GUICHE. Amazing! Tell me about it.

CYRANO. Try to guess.

DE GUICHE. This rascal is becoming interesting!

CYRANO. [*Making a sound of waves, with broad, mysterious gestures.*] Hoo! . . . Hoo! . . .

DE GUICHE. What's that?

CYRANO. Can't you guess?

DE GUICHE. No!

CYRANO. The tide! . . . After taking a dip in the sea, I lay on the beach at the hour when the moon was exerting the pull that causes the tides, and I was lifted into the air—head first, of course, since it was my hair that held the most moisture. I was rising straight up, slowly and effortlessly, like an angel, when suddenly I felt a shock! Then . . .

DE GUICHE. [*Sitting down on the bench, seized with curiosity.*] Yes? Then what?

CYRANO. Then . . . [*Resumes his natural voice.*] The quarter of an hour has passed, so I won't keep you any longer. The wedding is over.

DE GUICHE. [*Leaping to his feet.*] I must be losing my mind! That voice! . . . And that nose! . . . Cyrano!

CYRANO. [*Bowing.*] At your service. They've just been married.

DE GUICHE. Who? [*He turns around. Tableau. ROXANE and CHRISTIAN are holding hands. The*

CAPUCHIN follows them, smiling. RAGUENEAU is also holding a candelabrum. The DUENNA brings up the rear. To ROXANE.] You! [With amazement, recognizing CHRISTIAN.] And he? . . . [Bowing to ROXANE with admiration.] I congratulate you on your cleverness! [To CYRANO.] And to you, the great inventor, my compliments! Your story would have stopped a saint at the gates of heaven! Write down the details of it, because you really could use them in a book!

CYRANO. [Bowing.] I promise to follow your advice.

THE CAPUCHIN. [Showing the couple to DE GUICHE.] Here's the handsome couple you've united, my son!

DE GUICHE. [Giving him an icy look.] Yes. [To ROXANE.] And now you must tell your husband good-by, madame.

ROXANE. Why?

DE GUICHE. [To CHRISTIAN.] The regiment is about to leave. Join it!

ROXANE. To go to war?

DE GUICHE. Of course!

ROXANE. But the Cadets aren't going!

DE GUICHE. Yes, they are. [Takes the envelope from his pocket.] Here's the order. [To CHRISTIAN.] Deliver it at once, Baron.

ROXANE. [Throwing herself in CHRISTIAN'S arms.] Christian!

CHRISTIAN. It's hard to leave her. . . . You can't know. . . .

CYRANO. [Trying to lead him away.] I do know. . . .

[Drums are heard beating in the distance.]

DE GUICHE. [Who has gone upstage.] The regiment! It's leaving!

ROXANE. [To CYRANO, clutching CHRISTIAN, whom he is still trying to lead away.] I trust you to look after him! Promise me that nothing will endanger his life!

CYRANO. I'll do my best, but I can't promise anything.

ROXANE. [Still holding CHRISTIAN back.] Promise me that you'll make him be very careful!

CYRANO. I'll try, but. . .

ROXANE. [Still holding CHRISTIAN.] Promise me that he'll never be cold during that terrible siege!

CYRANO. I'll do whatever I can, but. . .

ROXANE. [Still holding CHRISTIAN.] Promise me that he'll write often!

CYRANO. [Stopping.] Ah! That's one thing I can promise you!

STUDY QUESTIONS

Recalling

1. In the beginning of Act III, what does Roxane tell Cyrano about Christian and his letters?
2. Explain the circumstances that lead to Cyrano's speech under the balcony to Roxane.
3. During the balcony speech what does Cyrano tell

Roxane about his feelings for her? Describe Roxane's response to him.

4. Explain how Roxane arranges for her marriage to Christian.
5. What does Cyrano do to delay De Guiche, and what does De Guiche do to retaliate?