

ACT IV

The post occupied by CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX'S company in the siege of Arras. About a month later.

[In the background, an embankment crosses the entire stage. Beyond is a plain covered with siegeworks. Far off in the distance, the walls and rooftops of Arras are silhouetted against the sky. Tents, scattered weapons, drums, etc. Daybreak is near. Yellowish glow in the east. Sentries at intervals. Campfires. Wrapped in their cloaks, the GASCON CADETS are asleep. CARBON and LE BRET are awake. They are both pale and gaunt. CHRISTIAN, sleeping like the others, is in the foreground, with the light of a campfire on his face. Silence.]

LE BRET. It's horrible!

CARBON. Yes. Not one scrap of food left.

[A few shots are heard in the distance.]

CARBON. Those shots! They'll wake my children! *[To the CADETS, who have begun to raise their heads.]* Go back to sleep! *[The CADETS settle down again, then there are more shots, from closer range.]*

A CADET. *[Stirring.]* What, again?

CARBON. It's nothing, only Cyrano coming back. *[The heads that have been raised are lowered again.]*

THE SENTRY ON THE PARAPET. Halt! Who goes there?

CYRANO. *[Appearing on the parapet.]* Bergerac, you idiot! *[Comes down from the parapet. LE BRET anxiously goes forward to meet him.]*

LE BRET. Thank God you're back!

CYRANO. *[Motioning him not to awaken anyone.]* Sh!

LE BRET. Are you wounded?

CYRANO. You know very well that they make it a habit to miss me every morning!

LE BRET. Don't you think it's going a little too far to risk your life every day to send a letter?

CYRANO. *[Stopping in front of CHRISTIAN.]* I promised he would write often! *[Looks at him.]* He's asleep. His face is pale. If poor Roxane knew he was dying of hunger. . . . But he's still handsome!

LE BRET. You ought to bring us some food.

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

LE BRET. Tell me about it!

CYRANO. No, I'm not sure. . . . You'll see!

CARBON. We're the besiegers, and yet we're starving! It's shameful!

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

LE BRET. Excuse me if I don't laugh.

CYRANO. You're excused.

LE BRET. To think that every day you risk a life like yours to carry. . . . *[Sees CYRANO walking toward a tent.]* Where are you going?

CYRANO. I'm going to write another one. *[Lifts the flap of the tent and disappears. Reveille¹ is heard.]*

CARBON. *[With a sigh.]* Reveille, alas! *[The CADETS stir in their cloaks and stretch.]* Their de-

1. reveille [rev'ə lē]: signal on bugle or drum to waken soldiers.

licious sleep has ended, and I know only too well what their first words will be!

A CADET. [*Sitting up.*] I'm hungry!

ANOTHER. I'm starving!

ALL. Oh! . . .

CARBON. On your feet, all of you!

FIRST CADET. [*Looking at himself in a piece of polished armor.*] My tongue is yellow—living on air has given me indigestion!

SECOND CADET. We must have food!

CARBON. [*Calling softly into the tent where CYRANO has gone.*] Cyrano!

OTHER CADETS. We're dying!

CARBON. [*Still softly, standing at the doorway of the tent.*] I need your help! You always know how to answer them—come and cheer them up!

SECOND CADET. [*Hurrying to the FIRST CADET, who is chewing something.*] What are you eating?

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

CYRANO. [*Calmly coming out of the tent with a quill pen behind his ear and a book in his hand.*] What's the trouble? [*Silence. He speaks to the FIRST CADET.*] Why are you standing so stiffly?

FIRST CADET. I have to.

CYRANO. Why?

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

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

FIRST CADET. How?

CYRANO. By making you a smaller target for the enemy!

THIRD CADET. Why is it that *you* never complain about your hunger?

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

FIRST CADET. [*Sbrugging.*] You're never at a loss for a clever remark.

CYRANO. Yes, and I hope that when death comes to me it will find me fighting in a good cause and making a clever remark! I want to be struck down by the only noble weapon, the sword, wielded by an adversary worthy of me, and to die not in a sickbed but on the field of glory, with sharp steel in my heart and a flash of wit on my lips!

ALL THE CADETS. [*Shouting.*] I'm hungry!

CYRANO. [*Folding his arms.*] Can't you think of anything but food? . . . Come here, Bertrandou.² You're a fifer³ now, but you were once a shepherd; take out your fife and play some of the old Gascon music for these gluttons! Let them hear those soft, haunting melodies in which each note is like a little sister, melodies that hold the sound of loved voices and have the slowness of smoke rising from the chimneys of our home villages, melodies that speak to us in our mother tongue! [*BERTRANDOU begins playing melodies from the south of France.*] Listen, Gascons. . . . He's no longer playing the martial fife: it's now the flute of our forests! It's not a call to battle, but the slow piping of our goatherds! Listen. . . . It's our valleys, our moors, our woodlands; it's a dark-haired little cowherd wearing a red beret; it's the sweetness of evenings on the banks of the Dordogne⁴. . . . Listen, Gascons: it's all of Gascony!

[*The CADETS have all sat down and dreamily*

2. Bertrandou [bār'tron dōō']

3. fifer: one who plays a fife, an instrument like a flute, that often accompanies a military drum.

4. Dordogne [dōr dō'nyə]: region of southwestern France.

bowed their heads. Now and then one of them furtively wipes away a tear with his sleeve or his cloak.]

CARBON. [*Softly, to CYRANO.*] You're making them weep!

CYRANO. Yes, from homesickness! It's a nobler pain than hunger. I'm glad that their suffering has shifted from their bellies to their hearts.

CARBON. You'll weaken them by stirring up such feelings!

CYRANO. [*Motioning the drummer to approach.*] Not at all! The courage in their blood is easily awakened. It takes only . . . [*He makes a gesture and the drummer beats a roll.*]

ALL THE CADETS. [*Leaping to their feet and rushing for their weapons.*] What?—Where?—What is it?

CYRANO. [*Smiling.*] You see? It takes only a drumbeat! Farewell dreams, regrets . . .

A CADET. Oh! Here comes Monsieur de Guiche! [*The CADETS all murmur irritably.*]

CYRANO. [*Smiling.*] That's a flattering greeting!

THE CADET. He annoys us!

— SECOND CADET. He's coming to strut in front of us with his big lace collar over his armor!

— SECOND CADET. He's not a soldier, he's a courtier!

CARBON. He's still a Gascon.

LE BRET. He looks pale.

THIRD CADET. He's hungry, like the rest of us poor devils, but since his armor has gilded studs, his stomach cramps glitter in the sunlight!

CYRANO. [*Urgently.*] We mustn't let him see us looking miserable! Take out your cards, your pipes, your dice. . . . [*They all quickly begin*

playing cards and dice on drums, stools, and their cloaks spread out on the ground, and they light their long pipes.] As for me, I'm going to read Descartes.⁵

[*He walks slowly back and forth, reading from a small book that he has taken from his pocket. Tableau. DE GUICHE enters. The CADETS all seem happily absorbed in what they are doing. DE GUICHE is very pale. He walks toward CARBON.*]

DE GUICHE. [*To CARBON.*] Ah! Good morning! [*Aside, with satisfaction, after they have observed each other a moment.*] He looks green around the gills!

CARBON. [*Aside, also with satisfaction.*] His eyes are sunken, and big as saucers!

DE GUICHE. [*Looking at the CADETS.*] So here are the grumblers! . . . Yes, gentlemen, it's been reported to me from all sides that you jeer at me, that you rustic barons have nothing but contempt for your colonel. [*Silence. The CADETS continue their games and smoking.*] Am I going to have you punished by your captain? No.

CARBON. Let me point out to you that I'm free to do as I see fit, and I don't choose to punish my men. I've paid for my company; it's my own. I obey only battle orders.

DE GUICHE. That will do! [*To the CADETS.*] I can afford to despise your mockery, because my conduct under fire is well known. Only yesterday, at Bapaume, I furiously drove back Count de Bucquoi.⁶ Bringing my men down upon his like an avalanche, I charged three times!

CYRANO. [*Without looking up from his book.*] And don't forget your white scarf.

5. Descartes [dā kārt']: René Descartes (1596–1650), French philosopher and mathematician.

6. Bapaume [ba pōm'], de Bucquoi [dō bū kwa']

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

[*The CADETS do not seem to have been listening, but they now stop puffing on their pipes and suspend the movements of their card and dice games; they are waiting.*]

CYRANO. I think that Henry the Fourth⁷ would never have given up his white plume, even when surrounded by the enemy.

[*Silent joy among the CADETS. They resume laying down their cards, rolling their dice, and smoking their pipes.*]

DE GUICHE. But my trick succeeded! [*The CADETS again become motionless, waiting.*]

CYRANO. Perhaps, but I don't believe in declining the honor of being a target. [*The CADETS resume their activities with growing satisfaction.*] You and I, sir, have different ideas of courage. If I had been there when you dropped the scarf, I would have picked it up and put it on.

DE GUICHE. That's nothing but Gascon bragging!

CYRANO. Bragging? Lend me the scarf and accept my offer to wear it while I lead an assault today.

DE GUICHE. And that's a Gascon offer! You know very well that my scarf remained on the river bank, in a place that's now under heavy enemy

7. Henry the Fourth (1553–1610): king of France from 1589 to 1610, who often led his army in battle. Before a battle he told his soldiers, "If you lose your banners, rally around my white plume; you will always find it on the path of honor and glory."

fire, so that no one can go and bring it back.

CYRANO. [*Taking the white scarf from his pocket and holding it out to DE GUICHE.*] Here it is.

[*Silence. The CADETS stifle their laughter behind their cards and dice cups. DE GUICHE turns around and looks at them. They immediately take on serious expressions and resume their games. One of them casually whistles a melody played earlier by the fifer.*]

DE GUICHE. [*Taking the scarf.*] Thank you. Now that I have this piece of white cloth, I can use it for a signal that I was hesitating to make. [*Climbs to the top of the embankment and waves the scarf several times.*]

ALL THE CADETS. What! . . .

THE SENTINEL ON THE PARAPET. I see a man down there, running away!

DE GUICHE. [*Returning.*] He's a false Spanish spy. He's very useful to me. He reports to the enemy whatever I tell him, which makes it possible for us to influence their decisions. Now, what was I saying? . . . Ah, yes, I was about to tell you some news. Last night, in a supreme effort to get food for us, the Marshal quietly left for Dourlens,⁸ where our supplies are. He'll arrive there by traveling across the fields, but in order to come back safely he took so many troops with him that we're now extremely vulnerable to an enemy attack: half the army is absent!

CARBON. If the Spaniards knew that . . . But they don't, do they?

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

CARBON. Ah!

DE GUICHE. My false spy came to warn me. He said, "I can make the attack come at any place you like, by reporting that it's your most weakly

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defended point. Just tell me where." I answered, "Very well, leave the camp and watch our lines. I'll signal to you from the place I've chosen."

CARBON. [*To the CADETS.*] Gentlemen, prepare yourselves. [*They all stand up. Sounds of swords and sword belts being buckled on.*]

DE GUICHE. The attack will begin in an hour.

FIRST CADET. Oh. . . . In that case. . . . [*They all sit down again and resume their games.*]

DE GUICHE. [*To CARBON.*] The most important thing is to gain time. The Marshal will soon be on his way back.

CARBON. And how shall we gain time?

DE GUICHE. You will be so kind as to fight till the last of you is killed.

CYRANO. Ah, so that's your revenge?

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

CYRANO. [*Bowing.*] Allow me to be grateful to you, sir.

DE GUICHE. [*Returning his bow.*] I know that you like to fight against odds of a hundred to one. I'm sure this is an opportunity you wouldn't have wanted to miss. [*Goes upstage with CARBON. Preparations to meet the attack are being made. CYRANO goes to CHRISTIAN, who is standing motionless, with his arms folded.*]

CYRANO. [*Putting his hand on CHRISTIAN'S shoulder.*] Christian?

CHRISTIAN. [*Shaking his head.*] Roxane. . . .

CYRANO. Yes, I know. . . .

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

CYRANO. I thought something might happen to-

day, so. . . . [*Takes a letter from his doublet.*] . . . I wrote your farewell.

CHRISTIAN. Let me see!

CYRANO. Do you want. . . .

CHRISTIAN. [*Taking the letter.*] Of course! [*Opens it and begins reading it, then stops.*] What's this?

CYRANO. Where?

CHRISTIAN. Here—this little stain.

CYRANO. [*Quickly takes the letter back and looks at it with an innocent expression.*] A stain?

CHRISTIAN. It was made by a tear!

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

CHRISTIAN. Weep?

CYRANO. Yes, because. . . . Dying is no great matter. What's unbearable is the thought of never seeing her again. And it's true: I'll never see her. . . . [*CHRISTIAN looks at him.*] . . . we'll never. . . . [*Quickly.*] . . . you'll never. . . .

CHRISTIAN. [*Snatching the letter from him.*] Give me that letter!

[*A distant clamor is heard from the edge of the camp.*]

CARBON. What is it?

THE SENTRY. [*Now on the parapet.*] A carriage! [*Everyone rushes to look.*]

VOICES. What!—It seems to have come from the direction of the enemy!—Shoot!—No! Didn't you hear what the driver shouted?—He said, "King's service!" [*Everyone is now on the parapet, looking down. The sound of jingling bells is coming closer.*]

DE GUICHE. [Shouting into the wings.] King's service! . . . Line up, you rabble! Don't you know how to receive a carriage in the king's service?

[The carriage enters at a rapid trot. It is covered with mud and dust. The curtains are drawn. Two FOOTMEN behind. It stops abruptly.]

CARBON. [Shouting.] Beat the general salute! [Ruffle of drums. All the CADETS take off their hats.]

DE GUICHE. Lower the step! [Two men rush forward. The carriage door opens.]

ROXANE. [Alighting from the carriage.] Good morning! [The men have bowed low; hearing the sound of a woman's voice, they all straighten up at once. Stupefaction.]

DE GUICHE. King's service? You?

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

CYRANO. Oh!

CHRISTIAN. [Hurrying to her.] You! Why?

ROXANE. This siege had lasted too long!

CHRISTIAN. Why . . .

ROXANE. I'll tell you!

CYRANO. [Who, at the sound of her voice, has remained rooted to the spot, not daring to turn his eyes toward her.] I can't look at her. . . .

DE GUICHE. You can't stay here!

ROXANE. [Gaily.] Yes I can! [Laughs.] They shot at my carriage! [Proudly.] We met a patrol! . . . It looks as if it had been made from a pumpkin, like the carriage in the fairy tale, doesn't it? And my footmen look as if they had once been rats. [Throws a kiss to CHRISTIAN.] Good morning! [Looks at everyone.] You don't seem very cheerful! . . . [Notices CYRANO.] Cousin! Delighted to see you!

CYRANO. [Approaching.] And I'm amazed! How . . .

ROXANE. How did I find the army? It was quite simple: I went where I saw that the countryside had been laid waste. Oh, such horrors! I would never have believed them if I hadn't seen them! Gentlemen, if that's how you serve your king, I much prefer to serve mine!

CYRANO. This is insane! How did you get here?

ROXANE. I went through the Spanish lines.

DE GUICHE. How were you able to pass?

ROXANE. I simply rolled along in my carriage. Whenever a Spanish officer gave me a suspicious look, I smiled at him sweetly from the window, and since, with all due deference to the French, Spaniards are the most gallant gentlemen in the world, I was always allowed to continue on my way.

CHRISTIAN. But . . .

ROXANE. What's the matter?

DE GUICHE. You must leave here!

ROXANE. Leave?

CYRANO. Yes, and quickly!

LE BRET. Immediately!

CHRISTIAN. Yes!

ROXANE. But why?

CHRISTIAN. [Embarrassed.] Because . . .

CYRANO. [Embarrassed.] In three-quarters of an hour . . .

DE GUICHE. [Embarrassed.] Or maybe an hour . . .

CARBON. [Embarrassed.] You'd better . . .

LE BRET. [Embarrassed.] You might . . .

ROXANE. I'm staying. There's going to be a battle, isn't there?

ALL. Oh, no!

ROXANE. He's my husband! [*Throws herself into CHRISTIAN's arms.*] Let them kill me with you!

CHRISTIAN. Such a look in your eyes!

ROXANE. Do I have to tell you why?

DE GUICHE. [*Desperately.*] This is a terribly dangerous post!

ROXANE. [*Turning around.*] Dangerous?

CYRANO. He knows what he's saying: he gave it to us!

ROXANE. [*To DE GUICHE.*] Ah, so you wanted to make me a widow!

DE GUICHE. Oh! I swear to you that . . .

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

CYRANO. What? You're both an intellectual and a heroine? — *female hero*

ROXANE. I'm your cousin, Monsieur de Bergerac. [*Looks at DE GUICHE.*] Don't you think it's time for you to leave? The fighting may begin. . . .

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

ROXANE. Never! [*DE GUICHE leaves.*]

CHRISTIAN. [*Beseechingly.*] Roxane! . . .

ROXANE. No!

FIRST CADET. [*To the others.*] She's staying!

ALL. [*Jostling one another as they hurry to make themselves more presentable.*] A comb!—Soap!—Give me a needle, I have to sew up a hole!—A ribbon!—Your mirror!—My cuffs!—Your mustache curler!—A razor!

A CADET. [*To the others.*] Now that I've seen her face, I could die without regret if I only had a little food in my stomach!

CARBON. [*Indignantly, having overheard.*] Shame! Speaking of food when an exquisite lady . . .

ROXANE. But I'm hungry too! It must be the cool air. I'd like some pâté, cold chicken, and wine. Would you please bring it to me?

[*Consternation.*]

A CADET. Bring it to you?

ANOTHER. Where can we get it?

ROXANE. [*Calmly.*] In my carriage.

ALL. What!

ROXANE. But the food will have to be carved and served. Look at my coachman a little more closely, gentlemen, and you'll recognize a valuable man. If you like, each sauce will be reheated.

THE CADETS. [*Rushing toward the carriage.*] It's Ragueneau! [*Loud cheers.*]

ROXANE. [*Watching them.*] Poor men! . . .

THE CADETS. Bravo! Bravo!

RAGUENEAU. The Spaniards were so busy feasting their eyes that they didn't eye the feast! [*Applause.*]

CYRANO. [*Softly, to CHRISTIAN.*] Christian!

RAGUENEAU. Distracted by Beauty, they overlooked. . . [*Picks up a roast suckling pig on a tray and holds it aloft.*] the Beast! [*Applause. The tray is passed from hand to hand.*]

CYRANO. [*Softly, to CHRISTIAN.*] Please let me have a word with you.

RAGUENEAU. The sight they saw was so pleasant that they failed to notice. . . [*Picks up another tray.*] . . . this pheasant! [*More enthusiasm. The tray is seized by a dozen eager hands.*]

CYRANO. [*Softly, to CHRISTIAN.*] I want to talk to you! I must talk to you before you talk to her!

RAGUENEAU. [*More and more exuberant.*] The handle of my whip is a sausage!



440 *Drama*

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ROXANE. [*Pouring wine and handing out food.*] Since we're the ones who are going to be killed, we don't care about the rest of the army! Everything for the Gascons! And if De Guiche comes, he's not invited! [*Going from one to another.*] There's plenty of time. . . . Don't eat so fast! . . . Why are you weeping?

FIRST CADET. It's too good!

LE BRET. [*Who has gone upstage to pass a loaf of bread, at the end of a lance, to the SENTRY on the parapet.*] Here comes De Guiche!

CYRANO. Quickly! Hide the food, the bottles, the baskets, everything! And act as if nothing had happened! [*To RAGUENEAU.*] Hurry back to your driver's seat! . . . Is everything out of sight?

[*In the twinkling of an eye, everything is hidden in the tents or under cloaks and hats. DE GUICHE enters rapidly, then suddenly stops, sniffing. Silence.*]

DE GUICHE. Something smells good here.

A CADET. [*Casually singing.*] Tra-la-la. . .

DE GUICHE. [*Looking at him.*] What's the matter with you? Your face is red.

THE CADET. It's nothing. We'll soon be fighting, and the thought of it has made the blood rush to my head.

SECOND CADET. Poom-poom-poom. . .

DE GUICHE. [*Turning around.*] What's that?

SECOND CADET. Nothing. Just a song, a little song. . . .

DE GUICHE. You're in a gay mood!

SECOND CADET. It's because danger is approaching!

DE GUICHE. [*To ROXANE.*] Well, what have you decided?

ROXANE. I'm staying!

DE GUICHE. You must leave!

ROXANE. No!

DE GUICHE. In that case, I'll need a musket.

CARBON. What do you mean?

DE GUICHE. I'm staying too.

CYRANO. Sir, you've finally shown pure courage!

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

ROXANE. What! . . .

DE GUICHE. I won't leave a woman in danger.

SECOND CADET. [*To the first.*] I think we can give him something to eat! [*The food reappears as though by magic.*]

DE GUICHE. [*His face lighting up.*] Food!

THIRD CADET. It's coming out from under every cloak!

DE GUICHE. [*Haughtily, controlling himself.*] Do you think I'm going to eat your leavings?

CYRANO. [*Bowing.*] You're making progress!

DE GUICHE. [*Proudly.*] An empty belly won't stop me from fighting!

FIRST CADET. [*Enthusiastically.*] Spoken like a Gascon!

DE GUICHE. [*Laughing.*] I am a Gascon!

FIRST CADET. It's true! He's really one of us!

CARBON. [*Reappearing on the parapet, after having disappeared behind the embankment a few moments earlier.*] I've stationed my pikemen.⁹ They're ready to fight to the end! [*Points to a row of pikes showing above the parapet.*]

9. **pikemen:** soldiers armed with pikes, or long wooden shafts with pointed tips of iron or steel. Pikes were used in repelling attacks on forts and other walled structures.

DE GUICHE. [To ROXANE, bowing.] Will you accept my hand and go with me to inspect them?

[She takes his hand and they go upstage toward the embankment. The others follow them, taking off their hats.]

CHRISTIAN. [Hurrying to CYRANO.] Tell me what you have to say, quickly! What's your secret?

CYRANO. If Roxane should. . .

CHRISTIAN. Yes?

CYRANO. If she should speak to you about the letters. . .

CHRISTIAN. Go on!

CYRANO. Don't make the mistake of being surprised if. . .

CHRISTIAN. If what?

CYRANO. You've. . . you've written to her more often than you think.

CHRISTIAN. I have?

CYRANO. Yes. I made myself the interpreter of your passion. I sometimes wrote to her without telling you so.

CHRISTIAN. Oh?

CYRANO. It's quite simple!

CHRISTIAN. But we're blockaded! How did you send those letters?

CYRANO. I was able to get through the enemy lines before dawn.

CHRISTIAN. [Folding his arms.] And I suppose that was quite simple too? . . . How often have I been writing? Twice a week? Three times? Four?

CYRANO. More than that.

CHRISTIAN. Every day?

CYRANO. Yes, every day. . . twice.

CHRISTIAN. [Violently.] And you were carried

away by the letters you wrote! So much so that you defied death. . .

CYRANO. [Seeing ROXANE returning.] Quiet! Not in front of her! [He quickly goes into his tent.]

ROXANE. [Hurrying to CHRISTIAN.] And now, Christian! . . .

CHRISTIAN. [Taking her hands.] And now, Roxane, tell me why you traveled such appalling roads, infested with lawless soldiers, in order to join me here.

ROXANE. Because of your letters!

CHRISTIAN. What?

ROXANE. It's your fault if I'm in danger: your letters made me lose my reason! You've written so many of them in the last month, each more beautiful than the one before!

CHRISTIAN. Do you mean to say that because of a few love letters. . .

ROXANE. Yes! You can't know. . . I've adored you since the evening when, under my window, you began to reveal your soul to me in a voice I'd never heard you use before, and when I read your letters it was like hearing that same voice.

CHRISTIAN. But. . .

ROXANE. I read your letters over and over, until I began to feel faint! I knew I belonged to you totally! Each page was like a petal fallen from your soul. In every word I felt the flame of a powerful, sincere love. . .

CHRISTIAN. Powerful and sincere? Did you really feel that in my letters, Roxane?

ROXANE. Oh, yes!

CHRISTIAN. And so you came. . . .

ROXANE. I've come to ask you to forgive me—and now is the time to ask forgiveness, since we may be about to die!—for having insulted you, in my frivolity, by first loving you

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only because you were handsome.

CHRISTIAN. [*In consternation.*] Oh, Roxane!

ROXANE. Later, when I became a little less frivolous, I was like a bird hopping before taking flight, held back by your handsome face and drawn forward by your soul. I then loved you for both of them together.

CHRISTIAN. And now?

ROXANE. Your true self has prevailed over your outer appearance. I now love you for your soul alone.

CHRISTIAN. [*Stepping back.*] Oh, Roxane!

ROXANE. I know how painful it is for a noble heart to be loved because of an accident of nature that will soon pass away. But you can be happy now: your thoughts outshine your face. Your handsomeness was what first attracted me, but now that my eyes are open I no longer see it!

CHRISTIAN. Oh! . . .

ROXANE. Do you still doubt your victory?

CHRISTIAN. I don't want it! I want to be loved simply for . . .

ROXANE. For what women have always loved in you till now? Let me love you in a better way!

CHRISTIAN. No! It was better before!

ROXANE. You don't know what you're saying! It's better now! I didn't really love you before. It's what makes you yourself that I now love. If you were less handsome . . .

CHRISTIAN. Enough!

ROXANE. I'd still love you. If you suddenly became ugly . . .

CHRISTIAN. Oh, don't say that!

ROXANE. I *will* say it!

CHRISTIAN. Even if I were ugly? . . .

ROXANE. Yes, even if you were ugly! I swear I'd still love you! Now are you happy?

CHRISTIAN. [*Choking.*] Yes . . .

ROXANE. What's the matter?

CHRISTIAN. [*Gently pushing her away.*] Nothing. I must go and say a few words to someone. It will take only a minute.

ROXANE. But . . .

CHRISTIAN. [*Pointing to a group of CADETS in the background.*] My love has taken you away from those poor men. Go and smile at them a little, since they're about to die.

ROXANE. [*Deeply moved.*] Dear Christian! . . . [*She goes to the CADETS, who eagerly but respectfully crowd around her.*]

CHRISTIAN. [*Calling outside CYRANO'S tent.*] Cyrano?

CYRANO. [*Coming out of the tent, armed for battle.*] Yes? Oh! How pale you are!

CHRISTIAN. She doesn't love me any more!

CYRANO. What!

CHRISTIAN. It's you she loves!

CYRANO. No!

CHRISTIAN. She loves only my soul now!

CYRANO. No!

CHRISTIAN. Yes! That means it's you she loves—and you love her too!

CYRANO. I?

CHRISTIAN. I know it's true.

CYRANO. Yes, it's true.

CHRISTIAN. You love her with all your heart.

CYRANO. More than that.

CHRISTIAN. Tell her so!

CYRANO. No!

CHRISTIAN. Why not?

CYRANO. Look at my face!

CHRISTIAN. She would still love me if I were ugly!

CYRANO. She told you that?

CHRISTIAN. Yes!

CYRANO. I'm glad she said it, but don't believe such nonsense! Yes, I'm very glad she had that thought. . . . But don't take her at her word! Don't become ugly—she would never forgive me!

CHRISTIAN. We'll see!

CYRANO. No, no!

CHRISTIAN. Let her choose! I want you to tell her everything!

CYRANO. No! I couldn't bear that torture!

CHRISTIAN. Do you expect me to kill your happiness because I'm handsome? That would be too unjust!

CYRANO. And do you expect me to kill yours because I happen to have been born with a gift for expressing. . . . what you may feel?

CHRISTIAN. Tell her everything!

CYRANO. It's cruel of you to persist in tempting me!

CHRISTIAN. I'm tired of being my own rival!

CYRANO. Christian!

CHRISTIAN. Our wedding took place in secret, without witnesses. The marriage can be broken—if we survive!

CYRANO. You still persist! . . .

CHRISTIAN. I want to be loved for myself or not at all! We'll see what she decides. I'm going to walk to the end of the camp, then come back.

Talk to her while I'm gone, and tell her she must choose one of us.

CYRANO. It will be you!

CHRISTIAN. I hope so! [*Calls.*] Roxane!

CYRANO. No! No!

ROXANE. [*Hurrying toward them.*] Yes?

CHRISTIAN. Cyrano has something important to tell you.

[CHRISTIAN *leaves.*]

ROXANE. Something important?

CYRANO. [*Frantically.*] He's leaving! . . . [*To ROXANE.*] No, it's really nothing. . . . You must know how he is: he often sees importance where none exists!

ROXANE. [*Anxiously.*] Does he doubt what I told him? Yes, he does! I could see he doubted it!

CYRANO. [*Taking her hand.*] But was it really the truth?

ROXANE. Yes. I'd love him even if he were. . . . [*Hesitates.*]

CYRANO. [*Smiling sadly.*] The word embarrasses you in front of me?

ROXANE. No, I. . .

CYRANO. It won't hurt me! You'd love him even if he were ugly?

ROXANE. Yes! [*Several musket shots are heard offstage.*] The shooting seems to have begun.

CYRANO. [*Ardently.*] Even if he were hideous?

ROXANE. Yes!

CYRANO. Disfigured?

ROXANE. Yes!

CYRANO. Grotesque?

ROXANE. Nothing could make him seem grotesque to me!

CYRANO. You'd still love him?

ROXANE. Yes! Maybe even more!

CYRANO. [*Aside, losing his head.*] Perhaps it's true! Can it be that happiness is here, within my grasp? [*To ROXANE.*] I . . . Roxane . . . Listen to me . . .

LE BRET. [*Entering rapidly and calling softly.*] Cyrano!

CYRANO. [*Turning around.*] Yes?

LE BRET. Sh! [*Whispers something to CYRANO, who lets go of ROXANE'S hand with a cry.*]

CYRANO. Oh!

ROXANE. What's the matter?

CYRANO. [*To himself, dazed.*] It's all over now. [*More shots are heard.*]

ROXANE. What is it? Those shots . . . [*Takes a few steps and looks offstage.*]

CYRANO. It's all over. Now I can never tell her!

ROXANE. What's happened?

CYRANO. [*Stopping her as she is about to rush forward.*] Nothing!

[*Some CADETS have entered, hiding the burden they are carrying. They group themselves to prevent ROXANE from approaching.*]

ROXANE. Those men . . .

CYRANO. [*Leading her away.*] Come away from them!

ROXANE. But what were you about to tell me?

CYRANO. Tell you? Oh, nothing . . . Nothing, I swear! [*Solemnly.*] I swear that Christian's mind and soul were . . . [*Catches himself in alarm.*] . . . are the greatest . . .

ROXANE. Were? [*She screams, runs to the group of CADETS, and pushes them aside.*]

CYRANO. It's all over.

ROXANE. [*Seeing CHRISTIAN lying wrapped in his cloak.*] Christian!

LE BRET. [*To CYRANO.*] The first shot fired by the enemy!

[*ROXANE throws herself onto CHRISTIAN. More shots. Clatter of weapons. Voices. Drums.*]

CARBON. [*Holding his drawn sword.*] Here comes the attack! Get ready! [*Followed by the CADETS, he climbs over the parapet.*]

ROXANE. Christian!

CARBON'S VOICE. [*From the other side of the embankment.*] Hurry!

ROXANE. Christian!

CARBON. Fall in!

ROXANE. Christian!

CHRISTIAN. [*In a dying voice.*] Roxane . . .

CYRANO. [*Speaking rapidly and softly in CHRISTIAN'S ear while ROXANE, distraught, tears a strip of cloth from her dress and dips it in the water to wash his wound.*] I told her everything. It's still you she loves! [*CHRISTIAN closes his eyes.*]

ROXANE. Yes, my love? [*To CYRANO.*] He's not dead, is he?

CARBON. Bite open your charges!

ROXANE. I feel his cheek turning cold against mine!

CARBON. Ready! Aim!

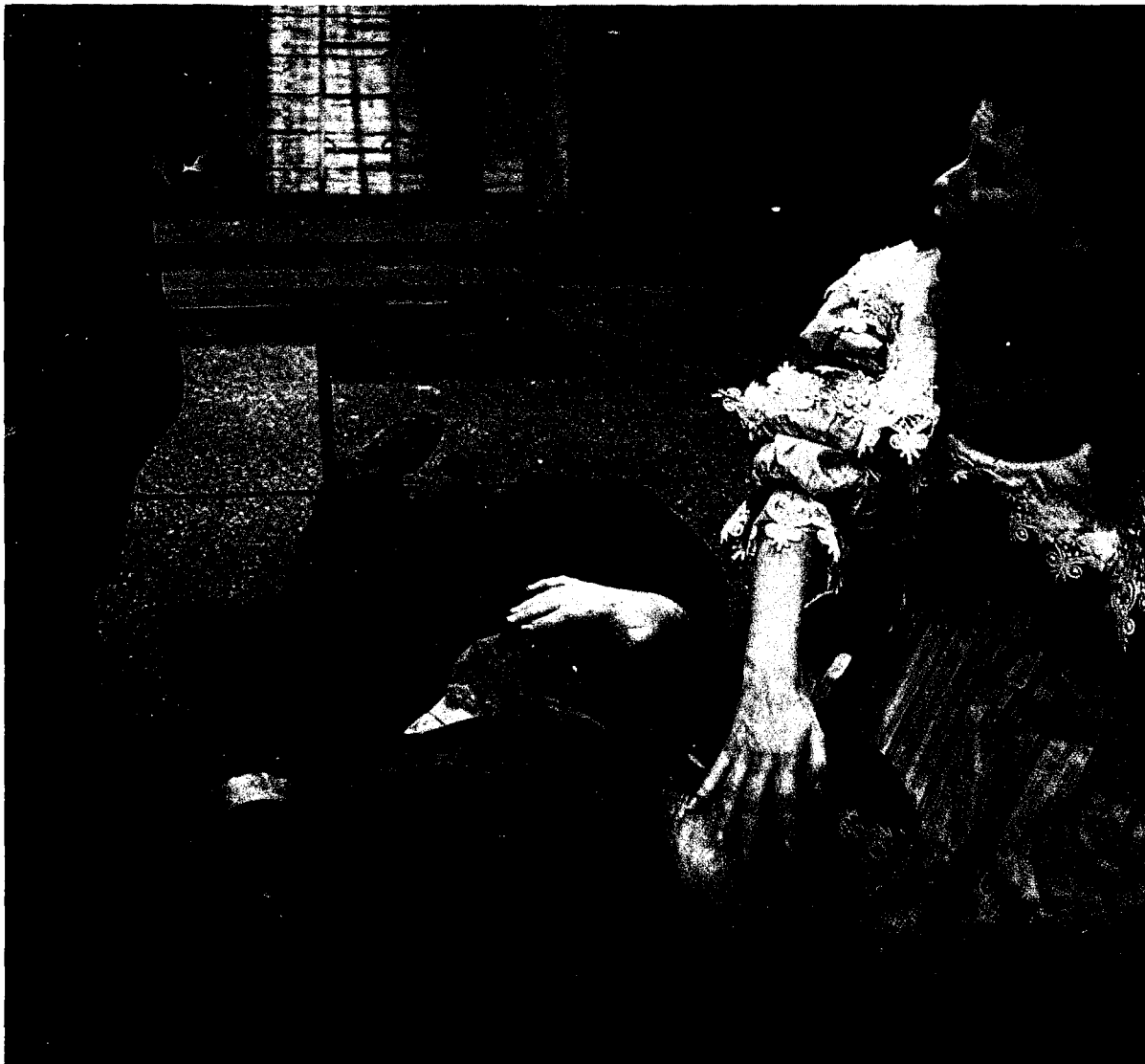
ROXANE. Here's a letter he was carrying! [*Opens it.*] For me!

CYRANO. [*Aside.*] My letter!

CARBON. Fire! [*Shots. Cries. Sounds of battle.*]

CYRANO. [*Trying to draw his hand away from ROXANE, who clutches it, kneeling.*] Roxane! The attack has begun!

ROXANE. [*Holding him back.*] Stay a little longer.



He's dead. You were the only one who knew him. [*She weeps gently.*] He was a great and wonderful man, wasn't he?

CYRANO. [*Standing, bareheaded.*] Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE. A brilliant, captivating poet!

CYRANO. Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE. A magnificent mind!

CYRANO. Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE. A vast heart whose depths remained hidden from the world! A noble and charming soul!

CYRANO. [*Firmly.*] Yes, Roxane!

ROXANE. [*Throwing herself onto CHRISTIAN's body.*] He's dead!

CYRANO. [*Aside, drawing his sword.*] And now I too must die, since, without knowing it, she's mourning for me in him!

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[Trumpets in the distance. DE GUICHE reappears on the parapet, bareheaded, with a wound on his forehead.]

DE GUICHE. [In a thunderous voice.] That's the signal! A fanfare! The French are on their way back to camp with provisions! Hold fast a little longer!

ROXANE. There's blood on his letter, and tears!

A VOICE. [Shouting from the other side of the embankment.] Surrender!

CADETS' VOICES. No!

RAGUENEAU. [Who has climbed up on his carriage to watch the battle beyond the embankment.] They're coming closer!

CYRANO. [To DE GUICHE, pointing to ROXANE.] Take her away! I'm going to charge!

ROXANE. [Feebly, kissing the letter.] His blood! His tears!

RAGUENEAU. [Leaping down from the carriage and running toward her.] She's fainted!

DE GUICHE. [On the parapet, shouting fiercely to the CADETS.] Hold fast!

A VOICE. [From beyond the embankment.] Lay down your arms!

CADETS' VOICES. No!

CYRANO. [To DE GUICHE.] You've proved your valor, sir. [Points to ROXANE.] Flee now, and save her!

DE GUICHE. [Hurrying to ROXANE and picking her up in his arms.] I'll do it, for her sake. But we can win if you gain time!

CYRANO. We will! [Watches ROXANE, unconscious, being carried away by DE GUICHE and RAGUENEAU.] Good-by, Roxane!

[Tumult. Shouts. CADETS reappear, wounded, and fall onstage. CYRANO, rushing toward the

battle, is stopped on the parapet by CARBON, covered with blood.]

CARBON. We're giving ground! I've been wounded twice!

CYRANO. [Shouting to the CADETS in their native Gascon tongue. To CARBON, holding him up.] Don't give up hope! I have two deaths to avenge: Christian's and that of my happiness! [They go downstage. CYRANO brandishes the lance and fastens ROXANE's handkerchief to it.] Float proudly, little lace banner bearing her monogram! [Plants it on the parapet and again shouts. The fifer plays. Some of the wounded men stand up. Other CADETS come down the embankment and group themselves around CYRANO and the little flag. The carriage is filled and covered with men. Bristling with muskets, it is transformed. A CADET appears on the parapet, moving backward, still fighting.]

THE CADET. [Shouting.] They're coming up the embankment! [He falls dead.]

CYRANO. We'll give them a salute! [In an instant the parapet is crowned by a formidable line of enemy soldiers. Large Imperial banners are raised.]

CYRANO. Fire! [General volley.]

A VOICE. [Shouting from the enemy ranks.] Fire! [Murderous counterfire. CADETS fall on all sides.]

A SPANISH OFFICER. Who are these men who have such scorn for death?

CYRANO. [Reciting, facing the enemy fire.]

These are the stouthearted Gascon Cadets
Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux;
They fight over trifles and shamelessly lie. . . .

[He rushes forward, followed by the few survivors.]

These are the stouthearted Gascon. . . .

[The rest is lost in the tumult of battle.]