**Roxane’s Kiss.**

*A small square in the old Marais. Old houses. A perspective of little streets. On the right Roxane’s house and her garden wall overhung with thick foliage. A window and balcony above the door. A bench in front.*

*From the bench and the stones jutting out of the wall it is easy to climb to the balcony.*

*Facing, an old house in the same style of brick and stone. The knocker of this door is bandaged with linen like a sore thumb.*

*At the rising of the curtain the duenna is seated on the bench.*

*The window onto Roxane’s balcony is wide open.*

*Ragueneau is standing near the door in a sort of livery. He has just finished relating something to the duenna, and is wiping his eyes.*

**Scene One**

*Ragueneau, the duenna. Then Roxane, Cyrano, and two pages.*

RAGUENEAU:

……And then, she takes herself off with a musketeer!

Alone, ruined, I hang myself. I depart the earth. Here

comes Monsieur de Bergerac! He draws me earthward,

then comes an offer from his cousin, to be her steward.

THE DUENNA:

But what was the reason for all your debts?

RAGUENEAU:

Lise loved soldiers, and I loved the poets!

Mars ate the cakes remaining from Apollo:

-  So it didn’t take too long, if you follow!

THE DUENNA (*rising, and calling up to the open window*):

Roxane, you’re ready?…They’re waiting!

ROXANE’S VOICE (*from the window*):

  Let me just get

a cloak!

THE DUENNA (*to Ragueneau, showing him the door opposite*):

It’s there they’re waiting for us, opposite,

at Clomire’s. In her little room, she holds her salon:

they’re reading a discourse on the Tender Passion.

RAGUENEAU:

The Tender Passion?

THE DUENNA (*in a mincing voice*):

Yes, indeed!

(*Calling up to the window*)

 Roxane, come down:

we’ll miss the discourse on the Tender Passion!

ROXANE’S VOICE:

I’m coming!

(*A sound of stringed instruments approaching.*)

CYRANO’S VOICE (*behind the scenes, singing*):

La, la, la, la!

THE DUENNA (*surprised*):

       Someone’s playing for you?

CYRANO (*followed by two pages with large lutes*):

They’re demi-semi-quavers, demi-semi-fool!

FIRST PAGE (*ironically*):

Can you tell, Sir, if they *are* demisemiquavers?

CYRANO:

I’m a musician too, like all the others,

we disciples of Gassendi!

THE PAGE (*playing and singing*):

La, la!

CYRANO (*snatching the lute from him, and going on with the phrase*):

I’ll continue!

La, la, la, la!

ROXANE (*appearing on the balcony*):

It’s you?

CYRANO (*going on with the air, and singing to it*):

‘Tis I, who come to salute

 your lilies, and present my greetings to your ro...ses!

ROXANE:

I’ll come down!

(*She leaves the balcony*.)

THE DUENNA (*pointing to the pages*):

             How about these two virtuosos?

CYRANO:

It’s a wager I had with D’Assoucy, and I won.

We disputed a point in grammar. Oui! – Non!

Suddenly he shows me these two gangly jaws,

used to scratching lute-strings with their claws,

whom he always has for escorts: then he said:

‘You’ll pay me a whole day’s music!’ Lost instead!

Till Phoebus starts on his daily round once more

I’ve got these two lute players in my paw,

harmonious accompaniment to all I’m doing!…

Charming at first, but it’s already palling.

(*To the musicians*)

Ho there! Go, instead of me, and play a pavane!

for Montfleury!…

(*The pages go toward the door. To the duenna*)

       I’ve come here to ask Roxane

as every evening…

 (*To the pages, who are going out*)

     Play a long time -  be tuneless!

(*To the duenna*)

...if the friend of her soul is still quite faultless!

ROXANE (*coming out of the house*):

How handsome he is, how witty, how I love him!

CYRANO (*smiling*):

Christian’s very witty?

ROXANE:

         My dear, more than you even!

CYRANO:

I’ll agree!

ROXANE:

            To my mind, no finer poets sing

those pretty nothings that are everything.

At times he’s distracted: his Muse is sleeping:

then, suddenly, he says something ravishing!

CYRANO (*incredulously*):

No?

ROXANE:

      That’s too much! You men are always cruel:

He can’t have wit, because he’s beautiful!

CYRANO:

He knows how to speak his heart in expert fashion?

ROXANE:

He doesn’t speak, Sir, he gives a dissertation!

CYRANO:

He writes?

ROXANE:

            Better still! Listen a moment or two:

(*Reciting*)

‘*The more you steal my heart, the more I have*!’

(*Triumphantly to Cyrano*)

                                                                    Well?

CYRANO:

                 Pooh!

ROXANE:

And then: ‘*Since I need another one, to weep,*

*if you’ll have my heart, give me yours to keep*!’

CYRANO:

One moment he has too much, then not enough: I see!

How much heart does he want?…

ROXANE:

                                                    You’re annoying me!

It’s jealousy…

CYRANO (*starting*):

What?

ROXANE:

                 …of his poetry, ah yes!

- And this, isn’t this the last thing in tenderness?

‘*Hear my heart utter a single cry towards you,*

*and if kisses in these words might travel too,*

*Madame, you’d read my letter with your lips!*…’

CYRANO (*smiling approvingly in spite of himself*):

Ha! Those last lines are…Hm! Hm! ...

(*Correcting himself - contemptuously*)

                                        But, too Romantic!

ROXANE:

And this ...

CYRANO (*enchanted*):

Then you have his letters off by heart?

ROXANE:

All of them!

CYRANO:

                            What can I say: you flatter his art!

ROXANE:

He’s a master!

CYRANO (*modestly*):

Oh? ...

ROXANE: (*forcefully*)

A master!…

CYRANO:

Well!.. A master!

THE DUENNA (*coming downstage quickly*):

Monsieur de Guiche!

(*To Cyrano, pushing him toward the house*)

In with you! It might be better

if he doesn’t find you here: that would maybe set

him on the track..

ROXANE (*to Cyrano*):

            Yes, of my own dear secret!

He loves me, he’s powerful, he mustn’t know!

He could well deal my love a true deathblow!

CYRANO (*entering the house*):

Good!…

(*De Guiche appears.*)

**Scene Three**

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

ROXANE (*curtsying to De Guiche*):

                    I was going out.

DE GUICHE:

                                   I came to say goodbye.

ROXANE:

You’re leaving?

DE GUICHE:

For the war.

ROXANE:

Ah!

DE GUICHE:

       To-night.

ROXANE:

Ah!

DE GUICHE:

         I

have my orders. We besiege Arras.

ROXANE:

           Ah – you besiege?...

DE GUICHE:

Yes. My departure seems to leave you cold indeed.

ROXANE:

Oh!...

DE GUICHE:

              I’m desolate. Shall I see you again?... When?

- You know I’m named commander of all those men? ...

ROXANE (*indifferently*):

Bravo!

DE GUICHE:

Of the Guards regiment.

ROXANE (*startled*):

Ah! the Guards?

DE GUICHE:

In which your cousin serves, a man of boastful words.

I’ll revenge myself on him, there

ROXANE (*choking*):

You meant?

The Guards go there?

DE GUICHE (*laughing*):

Well, that’s my regiment!

ROXANE (*falling seated on the bench—aside*):

Christian!

DE GUICHE:

What’s wrong?

ROXANE (*deeply moved*):

             This…departure…makes me despair!

When one’s attached to someone – knowing they’re at war!

DE GUICHE (*surprised and delighted*):

For the first time, you speak to me words so sweet,

on the day I go away!

ROXANE (*collected, and fanning herself*):

                                      So – you would like to be

 revenged on my cousin?

DE GUICHE:

You’re on his side?

ROXANE:

       Not at all!

DE GUICHE:

Do you see him?

ROXANE:

Seldom.

DE GUICHE:

You’d find him if he called

with one of the cadets, ...

(*searching for the name*)

that New…villen…viler…

ROXANE:

Tall?

DE GUICHE:

        Fair!

ROXANE:

Red!

DE GUICHE:

         Handsome!

ROXANE:

                                                 Pooh!

DE GUICHE:

But dull.

ROXANE:

He has that air!

(*Changing her tone*)

Your revenge on Cyrano? That would be, I’d guess,

to expose him to what he loves, gunfire?…Hopeless!

I know the way, myself, to hurt him more!

DE GUICHE:

                     What then?

ROXANE:

Why, if when the regiment leaves, he must remain

here with his beloved Cadets, for the whole war:

sits here with folded arms!…That’s the true manner

of means to inspire a man of his kind to anger.

You want to punish him? Deprive him of danger.

DE GUICHE (*coming nearer*):

Woman! O, Woman! Who else but a woman

would invent that trick!

ROXANE:

        He’ll consume

his soul away, his friends their fists, without a battle:

And you’ll be avenged!

DE GUICHE:

You love me, then, a little?

(*She smiles*.)

You adopt my cause: I’d like to feel that your action

is a proof of love, Roxane!…

ROXANE:

        It is one.

DE GUICHE (*showing her some sealed papers*):

I’ve the orders here with me: they’ll all be sent,

at the same hour, to each of the companies - except -

(*He detaches one.*)

This! The one for the Cadets.

(*He puts it in his pocket*.)

                This I’m keeping.

(*Laughing*)

Ha! ha! ha! Cyrano! His love of fighting! ...

So you play tricks on people then, ... you too!

ROXANE:

Sometimes!

DE GUICHE (*coming close to her*):

You madden me! This evening – listen – yes I’m

due to leave. But to depart while I feel that you….

Listen! There’s a place, not far from here, in the Rue

d’Orléans, a convent founded by the Capuchins,

by Father Athanasius. No layman’s allowed in

 - but - I can settle that with the good Fathers!..

They can hide me in their sleeves. They’re

role’s to serve Richelieu’s private chapel too:

in respecting the uncle, they fear the nephew -

They’ll think I’ve gone. I’ll come to you, in a mask.

Let me delay a day, dear caprice, is all I ask!

ROXANE:

But, if it becomes known, your glory ...

DE GUICHE:

Bah!

ROXANE:

But

the siege, Arras ...

DE GUICHE:

So what! Permit me!

ROXANE:

No!

DE GUICHE:

Permit!

ROXANE (*tenderly*):

I must protect you!

DE GUICHE:

           Ah!

ROXANE:

Go now!

(*Aside*)

Christian stays.

(*Aloud*)

I would have you be a hero - Antoine!

DE GUICHE:

                 O celestial phrase!

You love him, this man? ...

ROXANE:

... For whom I trembled, then.

DE GUICHE (*in an ecstasy*):

I go, now!

(*He kisses her hand*.)

Are you satisfied?

ROXANE:

Yes, my friend!

(*He goes out*.)

THE DUENNA (*making a mocking curtsy behind his back*):

Yes, my friend!

ROXANE (*to the duenna*):

         Silence about what I’ve been doing.

Cyrano’d be annoyed with me for stealing his fighting!

(*She calls toward the house.*)

Cousin!

**Scene Three**

*Roxane, The duenna, Cyrano.*

ROXANE:

We’re off to Clomire’s.

(*She points to the door opposite*.)

Alcandre and Lysimon

are to speak!

THE DUENNA (*putting her little finger in her ear*):

Yes! But one’s little finger tells one…

we shall miss them.

CYRANO (*to Roxane*):

  Ah, don’t miss the monkeys!

(*They have come to Clomire’s door*.)

THE DUENNA:

Oh, look! They’ve muffled the knocker with draperies!

(*Speaking to the knocker*)

They’ve gagged you, then, so that your tongue of metal

won’t trouble their fine discourse – a little brutal!

(*She lifts it carefully and knocks with precaution*.)

ROXANE (*seeing that the door will open*):

Let’s go in!

(*On the threshold, to Cyrano*)

          If Christian comes, as he will I assume,

make him wait for me!

CYRANO (*quickly, as she is going in*):

Ah!

(*She turns*.)

What, according to your custom,

do you mean to question him on, to-night?

ROXANE:

On…

CYRANO (*eagerly*):

           On?

ROXANE:

But you’ll be silent?

CYRANO:

Like a wall, I’ll be dumb.

ROXANE:

On nothing!…I’ll tell him: Off! Ride with no bridle!

Improvise. Speak of love. Be remarkable!

CYRANO (*smiling*):

Good!

ROXANE:

           Ssh!...

CYRANO:

Ssh!...

ROXANE:

           Not a word!

(*She enters and shuts the door*.)

CYRANO (*when the door is shut, bowing to her*):

A thousand thanks!

(*The door opens again, and Roxane puts her head out*.)

ROXANE:

He’ll be prepared!

CYRANO:

The devil, no!..

BOTH TOGETHER:

Ssh!...

(*The door shuts*.)

CYRANO (*calling*):

Christian!

**Scene Three**

*Cyrano, Christian.*

CYRANO:

I know all that’s needed. Ready your memory.

Here’s the chance to cover yourself with glory.

No time to lose. Don’t let your surliness show.

Quick, to your place, I’m going to train you…

CHRISTIAN:

        No!

CYRANO:

What?

CHRISTIAN:

No! I’ll wait for Roxane here.

CYRANO:

What madness

has struck you? Come and learn quickly..

CHRISTIAN:

No, I confess!

I’m tired of borrowing my letters, my lines

and playing a role, and trembling all the time!…

It was fine at the start! But I feel she loves me!

Thank you. I’m not afraid! I’ll speak openly.

CYRANO:

And how!

CHRISTIAN:

              And who told you I can’t speak?

I’m not such a fool as all that! You’ll see!

Dear friend, I’ve profited by your lessons, so

I know how to speak myself! And, by God, I know

perfectly well how to hold her in my embrace!

(*Seeing Roxane come out from Clomire’s house*)

- It’s her! Cyrano, no, no, don’t leave this place!

CYRANO (*bowing*):

Speak for yourself, Monsieur.

(*He disappears behind the garden wall*.)

**Scene Five**

*Christian, Roxane, the duenna.*

ROXANE (*coming out of Clomire’s house, with a group of friends, whom she leaves. Bows and good-byes*):

      Barthénoïde! - Alcandre! -

Grémione!…

THE DUENNA (*bitterly disappointed*):

We missed their discourse on the Tender!

(*Goes into Roxane’s house*.)

ROXANE (*still bowing*):

Urimédonte…Farewell!

(*All bow to Roxane and to each other, and then separate, going up different streets. Roxane suddenly seeing Christian*)

It’s you!…

(*She goes to him*.)

Evening falls.

Look. They’re far off. The air’s sweet. No one at all

goes by. Let’s sit. Speak on. I listen.

CHRISTIAN (*sits by her on the bench. A silence*):

  I love you!

ROXANE (*shutting her eyes*):

Yes, speak of love.

CHRISTIAN:

        I love you!

ROXANE:

     That’s the theme, true.

Wider, deeper.

CHRISTIAN:

I…

ROXANE:

   Deeper!

CHRISTIAN:

    I love you so!

ROXANE:

Doubtless. And then?...

CHRISTIAN:

And then…I’d be happy, oh,

if you loved me! - Tell me, Roxane, that you love me!

ROXANE (*with a little grimace*):

You offer me water when I hoped for cream!

Speak a little of how you love me?

CHRISTIAN:

     Oh a lot!

ROXANE:

Oh!…Un-wind your sentiments!

CHRISTIAN (*coming nearer and devouring her with his eyes*):

Your throat!

I wish to touch!…

ROXANE:

 Christian!

CHRISTIAN:

I love you!

ROXANE (*half-rising*):

Once more!

CHRISTIAN (*eagerly, detaining her*):

No, I love you not!

ROXANE (*reseating herself*):

That’s better!

CHRISTIAN:

You, I adore!

ROXANE (*rising, and going further off*):

Oh!

CHRISTIAN:

       Yes…I’m grown stupid!

ROXANE (*dryly*):

                And that displeases me

as it would displease me if you’d become ugly.

CHRISTIAN:

But...

ROXANE:

Go and recall your eloquence that’s flown!

CHRISTIAN:

I...

ROXANE:

You love me, I know. Farewell.

(*She goes toward her house*.)

CHRISTIAN:

                        Oh, don’t go!

I wish to say…

ROXANE (*opening the door*):

That you adore me…yes, I know.

No! No! Away with you!

CHRISTIAN:

But I...

(*She shuts the door in his face.*)

CYRANO (*who has re-entered unseen*):

     A splendid show!

**Scene Six**

*Christian, Cyrano, two pages.*

CHRISTIAN:

Help me!

CYRANO:

No, Sir!

CHRISTIAN:

But I’ll die if I can’t return

to her good graces, instantly…

CYRANO:

     And how will you learn

to do that *instantly*?

CHRISTIAN (*seizing his arm*):

Oh, up there, see!

(*The window of the balcony is now lighted up.*)

CYRANO (*moved*):

Her window!

CHRISTIAN:

    I’m going to die!

CYRANO:

     Speak quietly!

CHRISTIAN (*in a whisper*):

To die!

CYRANO:

The night’s dark ...

CHRISTIAN:

        So?

CYRANO:

                      It’s recoverable.

You don’t deserve it.... Stand there, you heap of trouble!

There, in front of the balcony! I’ll stand below

And whisper the words to you ...

CHRISTIAN:

      But ...

CYRANO:

           Silence, now!

THE PAGES (*reappearing at back—to Cyrano*):

Ho!

CYRANO:

Ssh!

(*He signs to them to speak softly*.)

FIRST PAGE (*in a low voice*):

       We’ve played the serenade you said,

To Montfleury!…

CYRANO (*quickly, in a low voice*):

        Go and set an ambush there instead,

one at this street corner, one just over there:

and if anyone annoying comes by here,

play a tune!

SECOND PAGE:

              What tune, then, Monsieur Gassendi?

CYRANO:

Lively, for a woman: and for a man, unhappy!

(*The pages disappear, one at each street corner. To Christian*)

Call her!

CHRISTIAN:

       Roxane!

CYRANO (*picking up stones and throwing them at the window*):

            Wait ! Some pebbles too!

**Scene Seven**

*Roxane, Christian, Cyrano still hidden below the window.*

ROXANE (*half-opening the window*):

Who calls me?

CHRISTIAN:

      I!

ROXANE:

Who’s I?

CHRISTIAN:

Christian!

ROXANE (*disdainfully*):

It’s you?

CHRISTIAN:

I want to speak to you.

CYRANO (*under the balcony, to Christian*):

 Good. Good. Speak soft and low.

ROXANE:

No! You speak badly! Go away!

CHRISTIAN:

           Let pity flow!

ROXANE:

No! You don’t love me!

CHRISTIAN (*prompted by Cyrano*):

 To accuse me! – Heavenly Father!

Of no longer loving…when….I love you more!

ROXANE (*who was about to shut the window, pausing*):

                                           Better!

CHRISTIAN (*as before*):

Love grew within rocked in my anxious soul…

which that…cruel boy took for…… a cradle!

ROXANE (*coming out on to the balcony*):

That’s better! – But, since he’s cruel, you were mad

not to stifle that new-born Love in his bed!

CHRISTIAN (*as before*):

I tried that also, but…unsuccessfully.

This ... new-born babe Madame’s a young ... Hercules!

ROXANE:

That’s better!

CHRISTIAN (*as before*):

So that he…strangled easily

the twin snakes, of ... Pride and…Doubt!

ROXANE (*leaning over the balcony*):

                                                         Well said, indeed!

— But why speak then in such a faltering fashion

Have you started limping with imagination?

CYRANO (*drawing Christian under the balcony, and slipping into his place*):

Ssh! This is getting too difficult!...

ROXANE:

To-night...

Your words are hesitant. Why?

CYRANO (*imitating Christian—in a whisper*):

                                               As there’s no light,

they weave around in the shadows to find your ear.

ROXANE:

For my words no such difficulties appear.

CYRANO:

They find their way at once? That goes without saying!

Since, deep inside my heart, I receive their straying:

Now I, I have a great heart, you, a tiny ear.

Besides the words you speak fall swiftly here,

mine climb, Madame: that takes them quite a time!

ROXANE:

Yet, for a while now, they’ve had an easier climb.

CYRANO:

From these gymnastics they’ve acquired the skill!

ROXANE:

In truth, I speak to you as if from some high hill!

CYRANO:

True, and you kill me if, from that high part,

you let one harsh word fall upon my heart.

ROXANE (*moving*):

I’ll come down ...

CYRANO (*hastily*):

        No!

ROXANE (*showing him the bench under the balcony*):

              Climb on the bench, then, quickly!

CYRANO (*starting back alarmed*):

No!

ROXANE:

What..No?

CYRANO (*more and more emotionally*):

                                        Wait a moment so that we

can profit from this chance we’re offered…for speaking

sweetly together, without seeing.

ROXANE:

    Without seeing?

CYRANO:

Yes, it’s delightful! The eye scarce distinguishes.

You see the folds of a long cloak of darkness,

I view the whiteness of a summer dress:

I, I’m but a shadow, and you a brightness!

You don’t know what these moments are to me!

If I was ever eloquent...

ROXANE:

      You are, indeed!

CYRANO:

Language has never launched itself till now

from my heart, so truly…

ROXANE:

            Why?

CYRANO:

  Because till now...

I spoke with…

ROXANE:

                                What?

CYRANO:

                                  ….the dizziness where trembles

whatever haunts your eyes!…But the night resembles…

a darkened stage where, this first time, I address you.

ROXANE:

You’ve a quite different voice, indeed, that’s true.

CYRANO (*coming nearer, passionately*):

Yes different, for protected by the night

I dare to be myself at last, I dare…

(*He stops, falters*.)

           Where was I?

I don’t know! – all this – forgive my emotion –

it’s so delicious….it’s so new this magic potion!

ROXANE:

So new?

CYRANO (*off his balance, trying to find the thread of his sentence*):

  So new...why yes…to be so sincere:

fear of being mocked, always grips my heart, here…

ROXANE:

Mocked, for what?

CYRANO:

         Why for…daring!…Yes, that same

heart of mine is always veiled by wit, through shame:

I reach out for a star, and I stop, instead,

for fear of ridicule, to gather a flower-let!

ROXANE:

A flower-let is fine.

CYRANO:

Tonight, I disdain it!

ROXANE:

Never before have you spoken to me like this!

CYRANO:

Ah! Like this, far from the quivers, arrows, torches,

you turn yourself towards things…new and fresh!

Instead of drinking fashionable waters, taken cold,

drop by drop, from a pretty thimble, of fine gold,

you find, like this, how the soul might be refreshed

drinking full, from the wide river’s endless depth!

ROXANE:

But the wit?…

CYRANO:

I employed it to make you stay,

at first, but to do that now would be to pay

an insult to Night, Nature, these scents, the hour:

to speak like a love-letter, written by Voiture!

With a single glance at the stars, the celestial

heavens strip us of all that’s artificial:

yet I fear, lest in our exquisite alchemy,

true feeling itself might simply cease to be,

and the soul exhaust itself in empty musings,

and the ultimate be merely…the end of things!

ROXANE:

But your wit?…

CYRANO:

                         I hate it, in love! It’s a crime

to prolong such fencing, endlessly, in time!

Besides the moment comes, an inevitable one,

and I grieve for those to whom it never comes,

when we feel that a noble love’s within us, so

that each fine word we speak saddens the soul!

ROXANE:

Well, if that moment’s come for us two, then,

what words will you give me?

CYRANO:

      All, all, all again,

that come to me, I’d throw towards you, wild

without making garlands: I love, I’m stifled,

I love you! I’m maddened! No more: I tell

you, your name in my heart’s a little bell,

and as I tremble, Roxane, all the time, so

all the time the bell rings your name’s its echo!

I remember all about you, love all of it, I say:

I know last year, one day, on the twelfth of May,

going out that morning, you altered your hair!

I’m so used to taking it for daylight, like the glare

you find when you stare too long at the sun,

seeing a red disc everywhere when it’s gone,

that I, when I quit the flames that flood me, see,

a stain of dazzling gold, clothe all around me.

ROXANE (*agitated*):

Yes, that’s love it’s true…

CYRANO:

This feeling, surely,

that fills me, that’s terrible and jealous, is truly

that of Love: he always has a melancholy fury!

Of Love - and yet, he’s still not selfish, purely!

Ah! How I’d give my happiness for yours, though,

even though you yourself might never know:

if sometime perhaps, far off, I might delight

in the happy laughter born of my sacrifice!

- Each look of yours excites a new virtue,

a new courage in me! Now at last do you,

begin to see? For you yourself, do you allow?

Can you feel my soul, at all, rise through the shadow…

Oh! But truly this night’s too beautiful, too sweet!

I saying all this to you, you listening, you, to me!

Too sweet! In my dreams, even the least humble

I never hoped for such! There’s nothing else

to do but die now! It’s through words alone, I know,

that I say you tremble in the blue branches, though.

For you do tremble, like a leaf among the leaves!

For you do tremble! Whether you wish it so, I feel

your hand’s adorable trembling as it plays,

down the whole net of the jasmine sprays!

(*He kisses one of the hanging tendrils, passionately.*)

ROXANE:

Yes I tremble, and I weep, and I love, and I am

yours! You’ve intoxicated me!

CYRANO:

   Then let death come!

This intoxication, I, it’s I, who’ve created it!

I ask but one thing more

CHRISTIAN (*under the balcony*):

A kiss!

ROXANE (*drawing back*):

What?

CYRANO:

Oh!

ROXANE:

      You ask?

CYRANO:

Yes…I...

(*To Christian, whispering*)

You go too quick!

CHRISTIAN:

Since she’s so moved, I must profit from it!

CYRANO (*to Roxane*):

Yes, I…I asked, it’s true…but sweet heavens!

I understand that I was too audacious.

ROXANE (*a little chilled*):

You insist no more strongly than that?

CYRANO:

                                                         Yes! I insisted…

without insisting!…Yes! Your modesty’s affronted!

Well! Then this kiss…does not agree with my idea!

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

Why?

CYRANO:

Hush, Christian!!

ROXANE (*leaning over*):

              What are you whispering for?

CYRANO:

Having gone too far I scolded myself, saying

‘Hush, Christian!’

(*The lutes begin to play*.)

   Wait a moment, that playing!..

Someone comes!

(*Roxane shuts the window. Cyrano listens to the lutes, one of which plays a lively, the other an unhappy, tune*.)

          Lively *and* unhappy! What’s their game?

A man or a woman? - Ah! It’s a Capuchin!

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

**Scene Eight**

*Cyrano, Christian, a Capuchin friar.*

CYRANO (*to the friar*):

What’s this new version of Diogenes?

THE FRIAR:

I seek her house, Madame...

CHRISTIAN:

                             He’s annoying me!

THE FRIAR:

Madeleine Robin ...

CHRISTIAN:

What does he want? ...

CYRANO (*pointing to a street at the back*):

This way!

Straight on, keep straight on...

THE FRIAR:

            For you I’ll tell,

my rosary as far as the very last bead.

(*He goes out*.)

CYRANO:

Good luck! My blessings on your cowled head!

(*He returns to Christian.*)

**Scene Nine**

*Cyrano, Christian.*

CHRISTIAN:

Win that kiss for me!...

CYRANO:

             No!

CHRISTIAN:

                   Sooner or later! ...

CYRANO:

        True!

That moment of dizziness will come, when you

will find your mouths are sure to meet, and sip,

thanks to your blonde moustache, and her rosy lip!

(*To himself*)

I’d prefer it were thanks to...

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

**Scene Ten**

*Cyrano, Christian, Roxane.*

ROXANE (*coming out on the balcony*):

Is it you I see?

We spoke of...of…of a…

CYRANO:

Kiss! The word is sweet!

I don’t see why your lips shouldn’t dare to:

if they burn already, what might the thing not do?

Don’t let yourself be frightened by me:

haven’t you, now, almost insensibly,

left off our repartee, gliding without a fear

from a smile to a sigh, a sigh to a tear?

Glide onwards, still, a while, in this manner:

from a tear to a kiss, is only a tremor!

ROXANE:

Hush!

CYRANO:

What is it, when all’s said and done, a kiss?

A deeper pledge, a more exacting promise,

an avowal that wishes to confirm its rights,

a rose-coloured dot on the ‘i’ of the verb ‘to like’:

a secret for lips not ears, the infinity

of a moment that makes a noise like a bee,

a communion with the sweet taste of a flower

a way to let the heart breathe a little more,

and taste the soul at the borders of the lips!

ROXANE:

Hush!

CYRANO:

          It’s so noble a thing, Madame, a kiss,

that the Queen of France allowed a favoured lord

to steal one of them, the Queen herself!

ROXANE:

                    For sure!

CYRANO (*speaking more warmly*):

I, like Buckingham, have suffered silently,

I adore, like him, the queen you are to me,

like him I am sad and faithful…

ROXANE:

          Yes, and you

are handsome like him!

CYRANO (*aside—suddenly cooled*):

                       Handsome: I forgot: that’s true!

ROXANE:

Then, climb, to gather the peerless flower you see…

CYRANO (*pushing Christian toward the balcony*):

Climb!

ROXANE:

That sip from the heart! ...

CYRANO:

Climb!

ROXANE:

         That buzz of a bee!...

CYRANO:

Climb!

CHRISTIAN (*hesitating*):

But it doesn’t seem right to me, now, at all!

ROXANE:

That infinite moment!...

CYRANO (*still pushing him*):

         Climb, then, you animal!

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

CHRISTIAN:

Roxane!

(*He takes her in his arms, and bends his mouth to hers.*)

CYRANO:

Oh! My heart, such a strange ache of sadness!

A kiss, is love’s feast where I am, Lazarus!

Yet a trace of you comes to me from that shadow -

why yes, I feel it’s *my* heart that receives you:

on the lips where Roxane deludes herself, at last,

she kisses the words I spoke but a moment past!

(*The lutes play*.)

An unhappy air, a lively air: the monk!

(*He begins to run as if he came from a long way off, and cries out*.)

        Hola!

ROXANE:

Who’s that?

CYRANO:

Me. I was passing…Is Christian there?

CHRISTIAN (*astonished*):

Cyrano!

ROXANE:

Cousin, good evening!

CYRANO:

Good evening, cousin!

ROXANE:

I’ll come down!

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

CHRISTIAN (*seeing him*):

Oh! Back again!

(*He follows Roxane*.)

**Scene Eleven**

C*yrano, Christian, Roxane, the friar, Ragueneau.*

THE FRIAR:

This is it - I’m certain

Madeleine Robin!

CYRANO:

                    But, you said Ro-*lin*.

THE FRIAR:

No: *B, i, n, bin*!

ROXANE (*appearing on the threshold, followed by Ragueneau, who carries a lantern, and Christian*):

What is it?

THE FRIAR:

A letter.

CHRISTIAN:

And?

THE FRIAR (*to Roxane*):

Oh, it can only be on some sacred affair!

It’s a noble lord who…

ROXANE (*to Christian*):

    It’s De Guiche!

CHRISTIAN:

 Does he dare?

ROXANE:

Oh! But he won’t be troubling me for long!

(*Unsealing the letter*)

I love you, and so…

(*She reads in a low voice by the aid of Ragueneau’s lantern.*)

         ‘Mademoiselle,

           The drum

beats: my regiment buckles on its harness:

they leave: and think I’m already departed:

I stayed. I’ve disobeyed you. I’m at the convent.

I’m coming to you, and send word of my intent,

by a monk who’s quite as stupid as a sheep

and won’t understand a word of it. Your lips

smiled on me, too sweetly: and I wished to see

them again. Be alone, and wait there for me,

an audacious man, pardoned I hope, my dear,

he who is ever yours  - *et cetera*.’

(*To the monk*)

Father,

here’s what this letter says. Listen to it all.

(*All come near her, and she reads aloud.*)

‘Mademoiselle,

It’s essential to obey the will

of the Cardinal. Hard for you though it may be.

That’s the reason why I’ve chosen to remit these

lines to your charming hand, by this true saint

of a monk, discreet and most intelligent:

we wish him to confer on you, and in your

house, the blessing…

(*She turns the page*.)

  …of marriage this very hour.

Christian becomes your husband, secretly.

I send him to you. He displeases you. Let be.

Consider that Heaven will truly bless your zeal,

and be fully assured, dear Mademoiselle,

of his respect who was, and will be ever,

your very humblest, and most - *et cetera*.’

THE FRIAR (*with great delight*):

Noble lord!…I said so. I had no fear

It could only have been a sacred affair!

ROXANE (*to Christian, in a low voice*):

Am I not clever at reading letters?

CHRISTIAN:

Ha. Yes!

ROXANE (*aloud, with despair*):

Oh!…This is terrible!

THE FRIAR (*who has turned his lantern on Cyrano*):

You?

CHRISTIAN:

          I!

THE FRIAR (*turning the light on to him, and as if a doubt struck him on seeing his beauty*):

But ...

ROXANE (*quickly*):

                                                                      ‘P.S.

‘Give a hundred and twenty to the Convent.’

THE FRIAR:

                                                                       ..Oh!

Noble, noble lord!

(*To Roxane*)

           Do you resign yourself?

ROXANE (*with a martyr’s look*):

           I do!

(*While Ragueneau opens the door, and Christian invites the friar to enter, she whispers to Cyrano*.)

You keep De Guiche at bay! He’ll be arriving soon!

Don’t let him enter till ...

CYRANO:

Understood!

(*To the friar*)

     How long

do you need?

THE FRIAR:

  A quarter of an hour.

CYRANO (*pushing them all toward the house*):

        Go! I stay here.

ROXANE (*to Christian*):

Come! ...

(*They go inside*.)

CYRANO:

How to delay De Guiche a quarter of an hour?

(*He jumps on the bench, climbs to the balcony by the wall*.)

There! ... Up I go! ... I’ve a plan! ...

(*The lutes begin to play a lugubrious air*.)

Ah, it’s a man! Ay!

(*The music ends on a sinister tremolo.*)

This time it really is one!…

(*He is on the balcony, pulls his hat over his eyes, takes off his sword, wraps himself in his cloak, then leans over.*)

                  No, it’s not too high!

(*He strides across the balcony, and pulling a long branch of one of the trees by the garden wall, towards himself, he hangs on with both hands, ready to*

*let himself fall*.)

I intend to lightly trouble the atmosphere!…

**Scene Twelve**

*Cyrano, De Guiche.*

DE GUICHE (*who enters, masked, feeling his way in the dark*):

What can that blessed Capuchin be doing, and where?

CYRANO:

The devil! ... My voice? If he should know it!

(*Letting go with one hand, he pretends to turn an invisible key. Solemnly*)

                  Cric! Crac!

Cyrano, adopt the accent of Bergerac! ...

DE GUICHE (*looking at the house*):

Yes, it’s here. Hard to see with this mask I’ve assumed!

(*He is about to enter, when Cyrano leaps from the balcony, holding on to the branch, which bends, depositing him between De Guiche and the door: he pretends to fall heavily, as from a great height, and lies flat on the ground, motionless, as if stunned. De Guiche starts back*.)

What?

(*When he looks up, the branch has sprung back into its place. He sees only the sky, and is lost in amazement.*)

Where has this man dropped from?

CYRANO (*sitting up, and speaking broadly, with a Gascon accent*):

From the moon!

DE GUICHE:

From *where*?...

CYRANO (*in a dreamy voice*):

What time is it?

DE GUICHE:

               Has he lost his reason?

CYRANO:

What hour? What country’s this? What day? What season?

DE GUICHE:

But ...

CYRANO:

I’m completely dazed!

DE GUICHE:

My dear sir…

CYRANO:

      Like a bomb,

I fell from the moon!

DE GUICHE (*impatiently*):

Come now! Sir!

CYRANO (*rising, in a terrible voice*):

                                                            From the moon!

DE GUICHE (*recoiling*):

Fine, fine! You fell from there! ...Perhaps he’s crazy!

CYRANO (*walking up to him*):

And yet I didn’t fall metaphorically!...

DE GUICHE:

But ...

CYRANO:

              It was a hundred years, or a moment,

- I don’t know how long it lasted, that descent! -

I was inside a ball the colour of saffron!

DE GUICHE (*shrugging his shoulders*):

Yes! Let me pass!

CYRANO (*intercepting him*):

Where am I? Be quite open!

Hide nothing from me! On what place, to what site,

dear sir, have I fallen, like a meteorite?

DE GUICHE:

My God!

CYRANO:

I could not choose, falling so swiftly,

my point of arrival – know not where I might be!

Is it on a moon or on a planet, may be,

that the weight of my backside has landed me?

DE GUICHE:

But, I tell you, Sir ...

CYRANO (*with a screech of terror, which makes De Guiche start back*):

            Ah! Good God!…I see

men in this land have a black physiognomy!

DE GUICHE (*putting a hand to his face*):

What?

CYRANO (*feigning great alarm*):

Are you a native? Is this Algeria?

DE GUICHE (*who has remembered his mask*):

This mask!…

CYRANO (*pretending to be reassure*d):

                    So I’m in Venice or in Genoa?

DE GUICHE (*trying to pass*):

A lady’s waiting for me!…

CYRANO (*quite reassured*):

                                        So I’m in Paris.

DE GUICHE (*smiling in spite of himself*):

The fool’s absurd enough!

CYRANO:

You laugh?

DE GUICHE:

             I laugh,

But wish to pass!

CYRANO (*beaming with joy*):

            I’m back in Paris again!

(*Quite at ease, laughing, dusting himself, bowing*)

I arrived - excuse me! - by the last hurricane.

A little dusty with ether! I’ve come so far!

My eyes are filled with ashes from a star.

I’ve traces of a planet on my shoulder!

(*Picking something off his sleeve*)

See, on my doublet, here’s a comet hair!...

(*He puffs as if to blow it away*.)

DE GUICHE (*beside himself*):

Sir!...

CYRANO (*just as he is about to pass, holds out his leg as if to show him something and stops him*):

                 In the calf of my leg I bring a tooth

of the Great Bear, and, brushing Scorpio close,

while wishing to steer clear of his three flails,

I fell straight downwards, then, into the Scales -

whose needle, up there, shows where my weight lingered!

(*Hurriedly preventing De Guiche from passing, and detaining him by the button of his doublet*)

If you squeezed my nose, Sir, in your fingers,

it would shed milk, in fact!

DE GUICHE:

What, Milk?

CYRANO:

        From the Milky

Way!…

DE GUICHE:

Oh! Hell take you!

CYRANO (*crossing his arms*):

      Ah! It’s Heaven that sent me!

Now, would you believe it, as I was falling,

I saw the turban Night has Sirius wearing?

(*Confidentially*)

The Little Bear’s not big enough for biting!

(*Laughing*)

I travelled through the Lyre, and snapped a string!

(*Grandiloquent*)

I’ll need to write a book, at least, to reveal it all,

and the gold stars, held in my scorched mantle,

I managed to bring away, despite the risks,

when it’s printed, will serve as the asterisks!

DE GUICHE:

Enough of this! I want ...

CYRANO:

                                           You: I see what you’re about!

DE GUICHE:

Sir!

CYRANO:

You want to know, from the horse’s mouth,

what the moon is made of, and if anyone may be

alive in that rotund pumpkin-icity?

DE GUICHE (*angrily*):

No, no! I want ...

CYRANO:

   To know how I ascended?

It was by a means that I myself invented.

DE GUICHE (*wearied*):

He’s mad!

CYRANO (*contemptuously*):

         I’ve not made Regiomontanus’s

stupid eagle again, nor yet Archytas’s

timid pigeon!…

DE GUICHE:

                Mad – but he’s a learned madman.

CYRANO:

No, I imitate nothing men before have done!

(*De Guiche has succeeded in getting by, and goes toward Roxane’s door. Cyrano follows him, ready to stop him by force*.)

I found six ways to pierce the sky’s pure mantle!

DE GUICHE (*turning round*):

Six?

CYRANO (*volubly*):

       I might, stripping my body bare as a candle,

have caparisoned myself with crystal phials,

filled with the tears of the dawn skies, while

in exposing my person to the sunlight, too,

the star would suck me up as it does the dew!

DE GUICHE (*surprised, making one step toward Cyrano*):

Ah! Yes, that’s one way!

CYRANO (*stepping back, and enticing him further away*):

And then, again I could,

have rarefied air, in a chest of cedar wood,

with bright mirrors forming an icosahedron,

and enclosed the wind, ready for my expansion!

DE GUICHE (*taking another step*):

Two!

CYRANO (*still stepping backward*):

Or then, as much engineer as inventor,

mounted upon my steel-sprung grasshopper,

make myself, by successive blasts of saltpetre,

pierce the blue meadows where the stars pasture!

DE GUICHE (*unconsciously following him and counting on his fingers*):

Three!

CYRANO:

Since smoke has a tendency to rise,

fill a globe with enough to carry me to the skies!

DE GUICHE (*as before, more and more astonished*):

Four!

CYRANO:

              Since the Moon, when she’s at her darkest phase,

loves to suck bulls’ marrow…smear myself with the paste!

DE GUICHE (*amazed*):

Five!

CYRANO (*who, while speaking, has drawn him to the other side of the square near a bench*):

           Lastly, placing myself in an iron chair,

take a piece of magnet and throw it in the air!

That’s a good method: the iron follows suit,

when the magnet flies upwards it flies in pursuit:

throw the magnet again, and bravo! If you’re quick,

you can climb like that indefinitely.

DE GUICHE:

         Six!

- Well here are six excellent ways!…Which system,

of the six, did you choose, Sir?

CYRANO:

               Number seven!

DE GUICHE:

Peerless! What was it?

CYRANO:

I’ll tell you the whole thing.

DE GUICHE:

This fool’s starting to become interesting!

CYRANO (*making the sound of waves, with mystifying gestures*):

Hoooh! Hoooh!

DE GUICHE:

Well.

CYRANO:

     Have you guessed it, yet?

DE GUICHE:

No!

CYRANO:

      The tide!…

At the hour when the moon draws the waves aside

I lie on the sand – after bathing in the sea –

head-forward, dear sir, since hair, especially,

you’ll accept, holds the moisture in its tangle -

I rise in the air, up, straight up, like an angel.

I climb, I climb, gently, without effort, when

I feel a sudden shock!…And then ...

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

       And then?

CYRANO:

                  And then...

(*Suddenly returning to his natural voice*)

the quarter hour is past and, Sir, I free you:

the wedding ceremony’s done.

DE GUICHE (*springing up*):

    Am I mad, too?

That voice?

(*The house-door opens. Servants appear carrying lighted candelabra. Lights. Cyrano gracefully takes off his hat*.)

And that nose!…Cyrano?

CYRANO (*bowing*):

        Cyrano.

- They come from exchanging rings, a moment ago.

DE GUICHE:

Who?

(*He turns round. Tableau. Behind the servants Roxane and Christian appear, holding each other’s hand. The friar follows, smiling. Ragueneau too, holding a candlestick. The duenna brings up the rear, bewildered, having dressed hastily*.)

        My God!

**Scene Fourteen**

*The same. Roxane, Christian, the friar, Ragueneau, servants, the duenna.*

DE GUICHE (*to Roxane*):

 You?

(*Recognizing Christian, in amazement*)

         Him?

(*Bowing, with admiration, to Roxane*)

You’re very cunning, it seems!

(*To Cyrano*)

My compliments, Sir Inventor-of-Machines:

it would even have made a saint stop short, your tale,

before the Gates of Heaven! Remember the detail,

since it will certainly serve to fill a book!

CYRANO (*bowing*):

Sir, that’s advice I’ll follow: wish me luck.

THE FRIAR (*showing with satisfaction the two lovers to De Guiche*):

A handsome pair, my son, whom you’ve joined together!

DE GUICHE (*with a freezing look*):

Yes!

(*To Roxane*)

              Madame, please say your farewells to your lover.

ROXANE:

Why so?

DE GUICHE (*to Christian*):

The regiment is leaving already.

Join it!

ROXANE:

To go to the war?

DE GUICHE:

                                 Assuredly!

ROXANE:

But, Sir, the Cadets are not going?

DE GUICHE:

                      They’re gone.

(*Drawing out the paper he had put in his pocket*)

Here’s the order.

(*To Christian*)

Take it quickly, you, Baron!

ROXANE (*throwing herself in Christian’s arms*):

Christian!

DE GUICHE (*sneeringly to Cyrano*):

         The wedding-night’s still some way off, I guess!

CYRANO (*aside*):

In saying that he thinks he causes *me* distress!

CHRISTIAN (*to Roxane*):

Oh! Your lips, once more!

CYRANO:

Come on, enough, let’s go!

CHRISTIAN (*still kissing Roxane*):

It’s hard to leave her…You can’t know…

CYRANO (*trying to draw him away*):

          I know.

(*Sound of drums beating a march in the distance*.)

DE GUICHE:

The regiment’s off!

ROXANE (*To Cyrano, holding back Christian, whom Cyrano is drawing away*):

                        Oh!…I place him in your care!

Promise me nothing will put his life in danger

CYRANO:

I’ll try, but however much I do I can’t…

promise…

ROXANE:

        Promise me he’ll be very prudent!

CYRANO:

Yes I swear, but ...

ROXANE:

             That in this terrible siege

he won’t catch cold!

CYRANO:

         I’ll do whatever you please,

but...

ROXANE:

That he’ll be faithful!

CYRANO:

Why yes! He’ll be true,

But…

ROXANE:

He’ll write to me, often!

CYRANO (*pausing*):

That - I promise you!

**Curtain.**