

CYRANO: A NOSE BY ANY OTHER NAME

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

By Jeff McKillip

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SYNOPSIS: Based on the play *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Edmund Rostand, this updated romantic comedy stars a small-town sheriff with a big nose who would do anything for the woman he loves...even if it means winning her for another man! This play has something for everyone—fencing, fighting, comedy, romance, poetry and pastries.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(8 MEN, 5 WOMEN, 5 EITHER)

CHRIS (m)	A very handsome young man. (175 lines)
LEO (m)	A talkative playwright and poet friend of Cyrano. (36 lines)
CORI (f)	A female deputy and friend of Leo. (69 lines)
GINA (f)	The restaurateur who loves the arts and supports them with food. (67 lines)
BRETT (m)	A deputy and good friend of Cyrano. (62 lines)
ROXANNE (f)	A beautiful and educated woman. (166 lines)
MONTY (m)	A horrible actor and enemy of Cyrano. (24 lines)
VIC (m)	A conceited actor. (19 lines)
CYRANO DE'BERGE (m)	A small-town sheriff with a long nose. (366 lines)
BELLE (f)	Theatre owner. (9 lines)
STAGEHAND (m/f)	A stagehand in Belle's theatre. (1 line)
CONCESSIONS GIRL (f)	A worker in Belle's theatre. (3 lines)
MICKY (m)	A deputy. A very large, intimidating man. (10 lines)
PAUL (m)	A deputy. (9 lines)
POET 1 (m/f)	(10 lines)
POET 2 (m/f)	(7 lines)

POET 3 (m/f)(7 lines)

POET 4 (m/f)(8 lines)

PLACE: A small tourist town called Edmundton.

TIME: The present, evening. During the “off” season.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Cyrano: A Nose by Any Other Name was first performed by The Royal Lancer Players at McQueen High School in Reno, Nevada on February 23, 2012 with the following cast:

CHRIS.....	Jamieson Oleson
LEO.....	Brandon Keil
CORI.....	Payden Thompson
GINA.....	Cate Disbrow
BRETT.....	James Knapp
ROXANNE.....	Sara Davis
MONTY/POET 1.....	Launie McRoberts
VIC/POET 4.....	Mark Nelson
CYRANO.....	Jacoby Bancroft
BELLE.....	Marcy Abac
STAGE HAND.....	Lauren Kilbourne
CONCESSIONS GIRL.....	Amy Miecznikowski
MICKEY.....	William McIntyre
PAUL/POET 2.....	Roy Dorado
POET 3.....	Randi McCourt

*For all of my kids. May you always look
beyond the surface to find the beauty within.*

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

SETTING:

The Rose Theatre, a local playhouse. The curtains should be drawn.

AT RISE:

House lights up, enter LEO and CHRIS through the house, talking as they look around at the audience members and find their seats.

CHRIS: I don't see her.

LEO: Don't worry, she'll be here.

CHRIS: But I don't see her.

LEO: Calm down, she'll be here.

CORI: Hey, Leo, who's your friend?

LEO: Oh, this is my cousin Chris. Chris, this is Cori. Chris here is new to town.

CORI: I guessed that. What brings you here, Chris?

CHRIS: Well, I—

LEO: Chris just transferred here. He's our new deputy. Cori here is a deputy, too.

CORI: Oh... Have you met the sheriff yet?

LEO: *(As CHRIS is about to answer.)* Not yet. He just got in yesterday and hasn't even found a place to live yet. He's staying at my place until he gets settled.

CORI: *(Still addressing CHRIS as if this is normal.)* Then what are you doing here?

LEO: Looking for a girl.

Enter GINA, also looking for someone, but with a much more worried expression.

CORI: Well, don't you work fast!

LEO: Yeah, not even settled and already he's looking into the local wildlife.

CHRIS: Wildlife? Oh! No, it's not like that...

LEO: *(Lightly mocking.)* Oh yeah, sorry. Chris here is in looove.

CORI: *(Disappointed.)* Oh... So who is she, then?

LEO: He doesn't know! That's why we're here. You know practically everyone in town comes to these shows.

CORI: True. Even the mayor is here tonight.

GINA: Hey, have any of you seen the sheriff?

LEO: Hey, Gina, this is my cousin Chris. Gina here makes the best pastries in town bar none. What did your tickets cost you tonight, Gina?

GINA: Half a dozen muffins for the actors and two dozen extra macaroons for the concessions stand. But have you seen the sheriff?

LEO: Not yet.

CORI: No, why?

GINA: Monty is standing in for Phil tonight.

LEO: What happened to Phil?

GINA: Laryngitis.

CORI: Oh, the sheriff's not going to like that.

LEO: Not at all.

CHRIS: (*Lost.*) Why not?

GINA: Sheriff says Monty's a hack. Three weeks ago, he butchered the role of Stanley in *Streetcar* so bad that Sheriff De'Berge told him he wasn't allowed on stage for a month!

CHRIS: He can't do that! It's not legal!

GINA: Oh, he didn't threaten to put him in jail or anything.

CORI: Nah. He doesn't have to.

LEO: Yeah. He'll just...well... How do I explain it?

GINA: Make Monty wish he had stayed off the stage?

CORI: Nah. That still sounds too physical, and the sheriff doesn't have to be physical to be...intimidating.

LEO: You guys aren't saying it right. You're going to scare poor Chris here out of his job if you keep that up... Though, there is one thing you should know about the sheriff...

CHRIS: He's a bully?

LEO: No, no, no... He...well...he's got... How do I say it?

LEO looks to the other two for help. BRETT enters through the house.

CORI: Hey, Brett! Come on over here!

BRETT walks down to them, also looking around worriedly.

BRETT: How's it going?

LEO: We're okay. Brett, this is my cousin Chris. Chris, this is Brett.
He's a fellow deputy.

BRETT: Ah, so you're the new guy, huh? Nice to meet you.

CORI: Brett, we were just briefing Chris here about the sheriff.

BRETT: Yeah, I'm looking for him. You know Monty's filling in tonight?

LEO: Yeah, we know. We haven't seen him yet, though. We were just trying to tell Chris about the sheriff's...umm...

BRETT: Ah, yes... *(Taps his nose knowingly and takes CHRIS with an arm around his shoulder.)* When you meet the sheriff, you will find that he is many things.

LEO: He's amazing.

CORI: A hero.

GINA: An inspiration.

LEO: He's a better poet than I am.

BRETT: He's a better marksman than anyone.

CORI: He's a born leader.

GINA: Really good at fencing, oddly enough.

LEO: An amazing philanthropist.

BRETT: The most delightful man in the world.

CORI: As long as you don't mention...

All but CHRIS nod knowingly.

CHRIS: As long as you don't mention...?

BRETT: You see, Chris, you will notice all of those things about Cyrano when you meet him, but one thing will—shall we say—stand out more than all the rest.

CHRIS: He's got a weird name?

BRETT: It's French, and that's not it, though I wouldn't say anything about that either if I were you.

LEO: Yeah, but you'll notice first and foremost, if you look at him at length...

GINA: Something you should not do, by the way.

CORI: Yes, for your own sake, don't stare.

BRETT: Though you'll find it hard not to.

Enter ROXANNE, across the house.

CHRIS: Stare at what? *(Suddenly distracted.)* There she is!

They all turn to look.

LEO: Wow. College girl. So go talk to her.

CHRIS: She's in college?

CORI: No. She teaches college. English, I think.

BRETT: She's looking right at you, man.

LEO: And a smile! Man, you're smooth.

GINA: Oh, that's Roxanne. She's sweet. You should go talk to her.

CHRIS: No, I, um...well, not right now. I mean, uh...the show's about to start, right?

BRETT: So go get a seat next to her, and you can talk during intermission.

CHRIS: Yeah...I mean no! Um...I just remembered I have a lot of unpacking to do before tomorrow if I'm going to be joining the elite Edmondton Sheriff's Department, so...I gotta go. *(He runs out.)*

LEO: What just happened?

GINA: Yeah, what was that all about?

CORI: You want me to go after him?

BRETT: *(To LEO.)* He's your cousin.

LEO: Fine, I guess I'll go after him. *(Exit LEO.)*

CORI: Elite... I like the sound of that.

BRETT: Get real, Cori, the biggest crime around here is when the local frat boys have one too many and end up in the drunk tank for the night, and that only happens during the school year. Otherwise all we get around here is retirees, writers and wannabe poets looking for "inspiration" or something.

CORI: Yeah, but it still sounds good.

GINA: And don't knock the writers...or the wannabes...

CORI: *(Motioning to their seats.)* Shall we?

GINA: I still don't see him.

BRETT: *(Taking one last look around.)* I'll bet he didn't hear about Phil getting sick after all.

GINA: I'll take that bet.

BRETT: How much?

GINA: Free doughnuts for a week.

BRETT: I already get my doughnuts for free.

GINA: Then what have you got to lose?

BRETT: Deal. At this point, I bet he doesn't even show tonight.

GINA: I'll bet he shows up before the show starts.

BRETT: *(Looks at his watch and smiles.)* You're on. Let's take our seats.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

SETTING:

The same.

AT RISE:

They sit. House lights out and the curtain opens. The set is a dismal attempt at a balcony scene.

MONTY and VIC enter and begin to emote. MONTY truly is a horrible actor.

GINA: Looks like I lost that bet.

BRETT: It's a good thing you only ever bet pastries.

CORI: Never vacation in Reno, Gina.

MONTY: Come, my friend, and wish me luck, for tonight I go to woo the daughter of mine own dear enemy, the Comte de Guiche. Tonight beneath yon window I shall profess my undying love.

From somewhere in the back of the audience:

CYRANO: I thought I told you that you weren't allowed on stage for a month.

VIC: No! It can't be!

MONTY: What?

VIC: I mean... No! It cannot be, good sir! For surely you will be caught by his guards and die.

MONTY: I would die a hundred deaths—

CYRANO: Just one is all we need.

MONTY: I would die a hundred deaths for the sake of my truest love!
I go now—

CYRANO: Oh, if only you would!

MONTY: —to woo my love, who like the sun doth brighten the world
with her presence.

CYRANO: And you, like the moon, darken the stage with yours! I'll
give you to the count of three to eclipse yourself.

As CYRANO counts, he makes his way down to the stage to arrive there by the end of the count. VIC tries to continue the scene, though both VIC and MONTY are visibly shaken.

VIC: I cannot let you, my lord!

MONTY: How dare you hold me back!

CYRANO: The only thing holding you back is a total lack of talent...
ONE!

MONTY: I must go...er...find my love.

CYRANO: You must go. That's all... TWO!

VIC: You cannot just leave me here!

MONTY: I think it would be wisest if I did.

CYRANO: THREE!

MONTY: I go! (*MONTY flees the stage.*)

VIC: (*Chasing after MONTY.*) Coward!

Enter BELLE, exasperated, with a headset around her neck.

BELLE: Thanks a lot, Cyrano! Why do you hate Monty so much anyway?

CYRANO: I have two reasons—either one will do. First, he is a pompous hack who mouths his lines and heaves up verses that should fly like birds. And second...is my secret.

BELLE: But why ruin the play?

CYRANO: Let's be honest, the play was ruined even before Monty belched out his lines.

BELLE: But now I'll have to refund the ticket money.

CYRANO: Here. (*Tosses a large wad of cash in a money clip to BELLE.*) That should cover your losses.

BELLE: *(Thumbing through the money.)* At this price, you can stop our plays every night! *(Turns to the audience.)* Show's over, folks. Go get your refunds at the ticket counter. Sorry. Hope you can make it to the next one.

BRETT, CORI and GINA rise to go but sit again as soon as MONTY storms back out on stage to confront CYRANO.

MONTY: You! How dare you? Our troupe has played all over the world. We finally agree to grace this podunk little town of yours with our presence, and this is how you repay us? You come and ruin our play and assail me with sharp words, all because you've decided that you don't like me?

CYRANO: Sharp words? Maybe so. You should count yourself lucky. There was a time when an actor as bad as you would get the sharp end of a sword for tainting the stage like you do. Now go away or my sharp words will pierce that ample hide of yours again.

MONTY: But I...

CYRANO: Or... Tell me why you are staring at my nose!

MONTY: *(Shocked.)* I...

CYRANO: *(Walking straight up to him.)* Well, is there something strange?

MONTY: *(Drawing back.)* You're mistaken!

CYRANO: Really? Is it soft and dangling, like a trunk?

MONTY: I never...

CYRANO: Is it crooked, like an owl's beak?

MONTY: I...

CYRANO: Do you see a wart on the tip?

MONTY: N-no...

CYRANO: Or is there a fly there? Tell me, sir, what is there to stare at?

MONTY: Uh...

CYRANO: What do you see?

MONTY: N-nothing. I was careful not to look—knew better.

CYRANO: And why not look at it?

MONTY: I was...

CYRANO: Oh, I see! It disgusts you!

MONTY: Sir!

CYRANO: Does its color seem off to you?

MONTY: Sir!

CYRANO: Or its shape?

MONTY: No, on the contrary!

CYRANO: Then why such a disparaging air, sir? —Maybe you think it's large?

MONTY: (*Stammering.*) N-no, small, qu-uite small—m-m-minute!

CYRANO: Minute! What a ridiculous accusation! Small? My nose?

MONTY: Somebody help me!

CYRANO: It is enormous! You empty-headed fool, you should know that I am proud of possessing such an appendage. It's a well-known fact, after all, that a large nose is indicative of a brilliant mind, a kind, courteous demeanor—of someone liberal and brave, like myself. The kind of person a contemptible bore like you can never dream of being, for your face... (*CYRANO turns MONTY by the shoulders, suiting the action to the word.*) ...is flatter than what my boot is about to kick! (*MONTY exits the stage at a run.*) Anyone else have a comment about my...hood ornament?

VIC: (*From off.*) I DO! (*VIC enters, full of himself and marching toward CYRANO, but stops a notably safe distance away.*) Arrogant flat-footed lout!

CYRANO: (*As though likewise introducing himself.*) And I am Cyrano Hercules De'Berge. The pleasure is all yours, I'm sure.

VIC: Now, see here... (*He goes up to CYRANO, who is watching him, and with a conceited air.*) Sir, your nose is...hmm...it is...very big!

The CROWD gasps.

CYRANO: (*Gravely.*) I see...

VIC: Ha!

CYRANO: (*Blinking disbelief.*) Is that all?

VIC: What do you mean?

CYRANO: That was a tad short, wouldn't you agree?

VIC: Huh?

CYRANO: You are presented with the grand and unequivocal opportunity to hurl an insult like buckshot at the broad side of a barn, and that's the best you can do? My nose is "very big"? Have you no grasp of language, sir? And you dare call yourself an actor...

VIC: I suppose you could come up with something better?

CYRANO: I could come up with twenty "something betters."

VIC: (*Sensing opportunity.*) And if you can't?

CYRANO: A bet? Hmm...all right. If I can't come up with twenty better insults than my nose being "very big," then—then you may present an encore performance with Monty, and though it would pain my soul to do it, I will attend and say nothing throughout the entire play. On my word... But if I can—then you and your rabble leave this town and don't come back until that pompous windbag, Monty, is no longer employed with you.

VIC: You're on. Twenty insults about your nose that are better than mine.

CYRANO: Agreed. Now, let's see... Literary—"Pinocchio, my how you've grown! Hmm... Still telling lies, I see." Aggressive—"If I had a nose like that, I'd cut it off myself." Inquisitive—"When you stop to smell the roses, are they afraid?" Punctual—"Even when you're late, I bet your nose shows up ten minutes early." Curious—"When you drink, do you use a straw or a bucket?" Philosophical—"Well, we all know it's not the size of the nose, but what's in it that really counts." Charitable—"It's starting to rain. Might I stand under your nose for shelter?" Gracious—"My, how you must love the little birds, that you would give them this to perch upon!" Cautionary—"Be careful not to look down when you walk. You might trip over that thing." Utilitarian—"Brilliant! No matter where you go, you have a place to hang your hat." Poetic—"The north wind blows and brings winter snows...oh, never-mind. It's just your nose." Religious—"The good Lord giveth and just kept on giving there, didn't he?" Uh...Biblical—"When it bleeds...The Red Seal!" How many is that?

All respond, excluding VIC, who becomes more and more horrified as it becomes apparent that he is losing the bet.

BRETT: Thirteen, boss!

CYRANO: Thank you. Keep count, please. Where was I? Ah. Admiring—"What a wonderful sign for a perfume shop!"

ALL: Fourteen!

CYRANO: Obscure—"Jeez, what happened to the grindstone?"
(*Some groans from the CROWD.*) Think about it, people...

ALL: Fifteen!

CYRANO: Archeological—"So you're the one who stole it from the Sphinx!"

ALL: Sixteen!

CYRANO pretends to struggle to come up with the last few

CYRANO: Umm... Rustic—"That thang a nose? Shewt, looks like a prize winnin' cucumber ta me!"

ALL: Seventeen!

CYRANO: Hmm... Envious—"It must be wonderful to be able to wake up and smell the coffee...in Brazil."

ALL: Eighteen!

CYRANO: Ah-ha! Military—"Point that at the enemy and blow!"

ALL: Nineteen!

CYRANO: (*Dropping the pretense.*) And one more, to be sure we understand each other perfectly... (*Getting nose to nose with VIC.*) Western—"This town ain't big enough for the three of us."

ALL: Twenty!!

Hoots and hollers of approval from the others as VIC gulps.

CYRANO: That, boy, is what you might have said if you had any wit or were at all a man of letters; however, even if you had been clever enough to think of one, I would not have let you say it. I take them all from myself in good spirit but not from any other man alive! Fortunately for you, you are a man with no wit and only three letters to your name—A-S-S.

VIC bristles at being made a fool of. He takes a swing at CYRANO that is easily side-stepped, and CYRANO lets him sail past, planting an extra kick on his butt to send him careening across the stage, where he draws his sword in rage. Others ad-lib admonishment: 'Give it up, Vic!,' 'You lost! Go home!'

CYRANO: I see. Good people, it looks like you'll have a show after all. It seems that I have issued the wrong challenge. (To VIC.) You are a man of action, not wit. I, on the other hand, am both. Therefore, I issue you a final challenge. The stakes will be the same. Belle? A sword, please.

BELLE brings out a sword for CYRANO

BELLE: (Aside to CYRANO.) Don't hurt him, Cyrano.

CYRANO: Only his pride, my dear. (To VIC.) First to three?

VIC: You want a duel, poet? (The last is said like an insult, and VIC laughs confidently, swinging his sword in a fancy manner to show off his skill.)

CYRANO: Poet? You honor me, sir. So likewise I will honor you. While we fence, I will compose, extemporaneously, a poem and at the end of each verse—I'll strike.

VIC: A poem?

CYRANO: Surely you've heard of those. (Reciting the definition.) A poem: a composition in verse, especially one that is characterized by a highly developed artistic form and by the use of heightened language and rhythm—

VIC: (In frustration.) Aahhh!

CYRANO: —to express an intensely imaginative interpretation of the subject.

VIC: You...

CYRANO: I'll make one up while we fight, and at the end of each verse, I'll strike.

VIC: No!

CYRANO: No?... In *Edmundton, A Duel of Sword and Word Twixt Cyrano and...a Pompous Turd.*

VIC: What was that?

CYRANO: The title. Admittedly a little vulgar, but then, so are you.
Now, let me choose my rhymes... *(He closes his eyes a moment.)*
Okay, I have them. *(Opens them again and steps toward VIC.)*

I raise salute with shining steel
And consider where to hit
On hand, on heart, on head, on heel?
This sad Sir Lack-of-Wit.
Parry, riposte, but all is in vain
As your sword like a hammer you clutch,
For then as I end the refrain...I touch!

Mockingly manages to strike VIC on the backside as they pass each other.

Steel on steel, our swords they sing,
Though yours is out of tune,
Mine will strike, you'll feel the sting,
And I'll send you packing soon.
In rage, you fly at me again!
A hit? On the shoulder? Not much
But then as I end the refrain...I touch.

A final rhyme, a final stroke
I'll shortly win the day,
Your friend, a hack, and you, a joke,
Will both be on your way.
As raging 'neath your breath you curse
Your mind and sword are dull alike!
And then as I end the last verse...I strike.

He knocks the sword out of VIC's hand, taps him lightly, then points his sword at VIC menacingly.

Now, off you go, and if you never return, it'll be too soon.

BELLE: *(To the audience.)* Thanks again for coming out, folks. It looks like you got a bit of a show after all.

GINA: (*Standing.*) Everyone, come to The Poet's Plate! Half price entrees for the next two hours! Tonight only!

ALL exit but CYRANO, BRETT and BELLE.

BELLE: All right, everyone. Let's clean up quickly and lock up, but leave the lights on, we'll go to Gina's and then come back to set up for tomorrow night's concert.

STAGEHAND comes out and begins to sweep while others remove the castle set. CONCESSIONS GIRL enters wheeling a cart of concessions with fresh fruit, macaroons, soda and small bottles of water.

CYRANO: (*To BELLE.*) May I stay?

BELLE: Of course. You're both welcome to stay until we lock up if you want. (*BELLE exits.*)

STAGEHAND: You're not going to dinner?

CYRANO: No.

STAGEHAND shrugs and sweeps his way off stage.

BRETT: Why not?

CYRANO: (*Proudly.*) Because... (*As STAGEHAND sweeps his way out of earshot.*) I'm broke.

BRETT: How? The money you tossed Belle? ...That was your whole paycheck, wasn't it?

CYRANO: Easy come, easy go.

BRETT: But how are you going to live for the next month?

CYRANO: I have nothing left.

BRETT: Well, that was stupid.

CYRANO: But what a show! Think about it! That's a story people will be telling for months!

CONCESSIONS GIRL coughs gently behind them. They turn, and she timidly approaches.

CONCESSIONS GIRL: Sheriff, it breaks my heart to think of you going hungry. *(She motions to the concessions cart.)* Please, take anything you like. I'm sure Belle won't mind.

CYRANO: My pride doesn't allow me to accept, but then I see that my refusal makes you sad. So I'll compromise and take only a little. A single grape, *(She offers him the whole bunch but he takes only one.)* a small bottle of water, *(She offers him a can of soda but he refuses and takes only the small bottle.)* and half a macaroon. *(He breaks a macaroon in half and returns the other half. BRETT shakes his head in silent astonishment.)*

CONCESSIONS GIRL: Please take something else!

CYRANO: Something else? Your hand, to kiss. *(Kisses her hand as if she were a princess.)*

CONCESSIONS GIRL: Thank you, Sheriff. *(She curtsies awkwardly.)* Good night. *(She exits. CYRANO turns to BRETT.)*

CYRANO: Dinner. *(Holds up the grape and eats it.)* Drink. *(Holds up the bottle of water and drinks it.)* Dessert. *(Holds up the macaroon and eats it.)* Well, that hit the spot. I was starving! Now talk, I'll listen.

BRETT: You're an amazing man, my friend, but I have to tell you, what you did tonight...

CYRANO: Was epic!

BRETT: The mayor—

CYRANO: *(Excitedly.)* The mayor was here?

BRETT: He must have thought it—

CYRANO: Was astounding!

BRETT: But...

CYRANO: Didn't you know? The mayor thinks of himself as a playwright, he must have loved me destroying a rival play like that.

BRETT: Maybe so, but you're not making any friends by interrupting shows like that. There's little enough to do in this town as it is.

CYRANO: Bah! I'd rather have enemies I know than fair weather friends who talk behind my back.

BRETT: Fair enough, but you have to tell me... Seriously, what is the second reason you hate Monty so much?

CYRANO: That bombastic, blithering, paunchy old fool still thinks of himself as something of a ladies man. He makes eyes at all the pretty girls in the audience while he's on stage bellowing his lines. I've hated him since the evening he dared let those goggling frog-eyes leer at...her. It was like watching a slug crawl across a flower's petals.

BRETT: Wait. What? Are you telling me—

CYRANO: (*Laughing bitterly.*) That even I have the capacity to fall in love? (*Changing his tone, gravely.*) I am in love.

BRETT: Do I know her? I never thought...

CYRANO: Come on, think about it! What hope do I have of winning even a plain, homely woman with a nose like this? This nose that precedes me to crime scenes by a quarter of a mile? But beast that I am, I am in love—and with who else but the beauty?

BRETT: The beauty?...

CYRANO: Of course, the most beautiful woman in town—in the world. Brilliant and refined...a golden-haired angel.

BRETT: Who is she?

CYRANO: She's like a rose—a share of nature, within whose petals Cupid waits in ambush! Anyone who's seen her smile has witnessed perfection!

BRETT: Mary Whitcroft! It's so clear!

CYRANO: As mud!

BRETT: Madeline Robinson?

CYRANO: Roxanne!

BRETT: Well, so much the better! Tell her! She saw what happened here tonight.

CYRANO: Take a good long look at me, Brett—what hope can this...protuberance inspire in my heart? I'm not an idiot, my friend—but at times, I am weak. During late shifts, when I'm out walking the beat, I smell, with my giant, ugly devil of a nose, some sweet perfume. In the moonlight, I see some young man, his girl on his arm, and I think, "Wouldn't it be nice to walk in the moonlight like that with my lady beside me?" And my heart begins to soar as I imagine it... Then suddenly, it falls—as I catch the shadow of my profile on a wall.

BRETT: (*Gently.*) Come on, man...

CYRANO: There are times when it just really sucks to be me...

BRETT: Aww, buck up! What's love anyway? —a chance of Fortune.

CYRANO: Do I look like Brad Pitt? No. If anything I'm Brad Pitiful.

BRETT: But you've got courage, and wit! —That concessions girl who offered you dinner just now, her eyes didn't show disgust. You saw it yourself!

CYRANO: (*Impressed.*) True!

BRETT: See?... And I saw Roxanne's eyes light up in joy tonight as she watched you win that bet.

CYRANO: Light up?

BRETT: Her heart is already won! Put it to the test!

CYRANO: So she can laugh in my face? That is the one thing on Earth that I truly do fear! (*A text ringtones. CYRANO fishes a cell phone out of his pocket and checks it.*) Excuse me... God! It's from her!

BRETT: She has your number?

CYRANO: I'm the sheriff; the whole town can get my number!

BRETT: Well, what does it say?

CYRANO: She wants to know where "a certain lady can meet with her valiant sheriff in secret"!

BRETT: Well?

CYRANO: (*Texting as he speaks.*) What...for?...

BRETT: What for?? Are you kidding? For someone as smart as you, I can't believe that... (*Text tone interrupts, they look at the phone excitedly.*)

CYRANO: (*Reads.*) "Private matters." (*Text tone.*) "Tomorrow morning?"

BRETT: Well?

CYRANO: I'm thinking!

BRETT: Where?

CYRANO: (*Texting.*) How...about...Gina's?

BRETT: The Poet's Plate?

CYRANO: What's wrong with that?

BRETT: Not exactly secret, boss.

CYRANO: Well, it's too late now! I've already— (*Text tone.*) "See you at seven. Don't be late." (*Texting.*) I'll...be...there. (*Puts his phone away and looks at BRETT.*) My God...

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

SETTING:

Gina's Diner, The Poet's Plate. A simple, small-town diner that serves all daily meals. The place is bustling with customers enjoying their breakfasts, waiters and busboys.

AT RISE:

CYRANO enters looking around anxiously. There is a dessert counter displaying a wide variety of cakes, cookies and other sweets.

GINA: Cyrano, my friend, how are you this morning?

CYRANO: I'm fine. What time is it?

GINA: About twenty to seven. Are you meeting someone?

CYRANO: What do you mean?

GINA: I may not know much, but I do know how to spot a patron who is expecting company.

CYRANO: *(Taking a deep breath.)* As a matter of fact, I am. Could you arrange somewhere private for us to talk when she arrives?

GINA: What? I can't do that! You know I always have my open mic poetry breakfast at seven!

CYRANO: Come on, my friend. For me?

GINA: *(Caving.)* Oh, all right! I guess I can move the readings into the reservation room. There's never that big of a crowd anyway, so we should all fit...

CYRANO: Excellent. What time is it?

GINA: About quarter to seven. *(Exits.)*

CYRANO: Then I have about fifteen minutes to wait. *(He finds a seat near the door and keeps glancing out for her arrival.)* I can't believe she wants to meet me in private. I'm almost afraid to hope. What if I say something stupid? What if it's not what I think? What if she just wants to talk about something else entirely? What if I choke? What if she gets here and I can't get one word out? My God, I think I would die. Why did I agree to meet? I think I'd be much better at this if I had time to think, to write it out...

GINA: *(Stopping back by to check on him.)* Can I get you anything while you wait?

CYRANO: Water only, please. (*A thought occurs as GINA is about to leave.*) Oh, do you have a pen?

GINA: Of course. Here you go. (*As GINA is turning to leave.*)

CYRANO: And some paper?

GINA: You bet. I'll bring it with your water.

CYRANO: Thank you. (*GINA leaves to fetch water and paper.*) I'll write what I want to say in a letter, and then if I choke, I can just give her that. It will be perfect. I've written it in my head so often, all I need to do is set pen to paper and it will write itself. I'll just lay my soul down on the table and copy it in ink.

GINA returns

GINA: Here you are. Water and paper.

SHE looks up and notices LEO and some Beatnik-looking people enter and SHE smiles.

LEO: Gina! How are you, my sister in art?

GINA: Good morning, my friends! Come on in!

POET 1: High soaring eagle among cooks! (*Taking a long sniff at the air.*) Your nest smells wondrous well!

CYRANO: (*Writing a little way off.*) ...Your eyes...

POET 2: She cooks with the very fire of Apollo.

CYRANO: ...Your lips...

POET 3: Hephaestus of the kitchen, a cooking knife her hammer—

POET 4: —a cutting board her anvil, she forges culinary works of art!

POETS all rush in to give her hugs and shake her hand as if they haven't seen her in ages. As each one distracts her, one of the others steals a pastry from the dessert display and quickly eats it or takes a bite and hides the rest.

GINA: I just can't help but feel at ease with such friends around.

CYRANO: (*Still writing.*) ...At your approach I faint from fear...

LEO: Come on, Gina, have you written anything lately?

CYRANO: (*Finishing.*) ...I worship you...

GINA: Oh, nothing like what you guys do.

POET 3: Come on...

POET 2: Yeah, share with us.

CYRANO is about to sign then changes his mind

CYRANO: What am I doing? I don't need to sign it. I'm going to hand it to her. *(He folds the letter neatly and tucks it in his pocket.)*

GINA: Well...if you insist.

POET 1 AND 4: We do!

GINA stands before them, fixes her hat, clears her throat and strikes an almost regal pose. As she recites, the POETS continue to help themselves to the dessert display, stuffing their faces with stolen sweets.

GINA: A recipe in verse.

How Almond Tarts Are Made

Beat your eggs up, light and quick;
Froth them thick;
Mingle with them while you beat
Juice of lemon, essence fine;
Then combine
The crush'd milk of almonds sweet.

Circle with a custard paste
The slim waist
Of your tartlet-molds; the top
With skillful finger print,
Nick and dint,
Round their edge, then, drop by drop,

In its little dainty bed
The cream shed:
In the oven place each mold:
Reappearing, softly browned,
The renowned,
Almond Tarts you will behold!

All POETS, through stuffed mouths, articulate praise "Exquisite!", "Delicious!" LEO makes unintelligible noises of agreement through an overstuffed mouth.

CYRANO: Gina...

GINA steps over to CYRANO while the POETS continue to eat.

GINA: Yes?

CYRANO: Do they pay you for all of that food they eat while you are...occupied?

GINA: Oh, don't worry about that. I know very well what they do, but I pretend not to. For a couple of them, it's the only real food they get, you know, starving artists and all that. And besides, in a way, they pay me double while I recite my poems. First, because I see them enjoy my food, and second, because they indulge me in listening to my admittedly mediocre poetry.

CYRANO laughs.

CYRANO: I knew I liked you for a reason! *(CYRANO glances again out the door, then turns to GINA shooing her away.)*

GINA: We'll be having our reading in the Reservation Room this morning, my friends, please follow me.

POET 1: What? And leave the cakes?

LEO: Never! We'll take them with us!

LEO and the POETS sweep the remaining desserts from the display and carry them off as they exit S.R. with GINA. A moment later, ROXANNE enters. She smiles as she sees CYRANO and moves quickly to him.

CYRANO: *(To himself.)* Here she comes. If I see even a glimmer of hope, I'll give her the letter. *(CYRANO pats the pocket containing the letter. To ROXANNE.)* Blessed is the moment that you descend upon me— remembering that humbly I exist to say...to tell?

ROXANNE: Well, first to thank you. That pompous fool you sparred last night has been bugging me since he got here to go on a date with him.

CYRANO: A date? Hmph! Then I fought not only for my own reasons but for yours as well. (*Slight bow.*)

ROXANNE: And next, a confession. Oh, but first I need you to be that boy I grew up with like a brother again. Remember when we used to play by the lake?

CYRANO: The reeds we would cut to make swords.

ROXANNE: And swinging into the water from that rope!

CYRANO: And fishing!

ROXANNE: And blackberries!

CYRANO: Come on, now tell me what it is you wanted to say.

ROXANNE: I think I will. The memory of those old days gives me the strength to confide in you again. I am in love!

CYRANO: I see!...

ROXANNE: But he doesn't know it.

CYRANO: I see!...

ROXANNE: Not yet, anyway...

CYRANO: I see!...

ROXANNE: But he soon will.

CYRANO: I see!...

ROXANNE: A poor man who has loved, all this time, from afar...

CYRANO: I see!...

ROXANNE: But I have seen the love in his eyes as he looks at me.

CYRANO: I see!...

ROXANNE: And he looks great in uniform.

CYRANO: I see!...

ROXANNE: He has the look of a genius about him. Brave. Courageous. Handsome—

CYRANO: (*Rising suddenly.*) Handsome?

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