

ROZ. Howard, stay! Nothing's going to happen in two minutes.

(ROZ exits. Pause. HOWARD looks around the room. He spies a CYRANO hat on the table. He picks it up and puts it on. He preens. When he takes off the hat, a CYRANO nose drops out onto the floor. He picks it up and looks at it with curiosity—then suspicion. He moves it down towards his crotch... Is that what it is?! At this moment, GEORGE HAY bursts through the center door, still wearing his CYRANO costume, nose and makeup, brandishing a sword.)

GEORGE. CHYAA!

(Just as suddenly, CHARLOTTE HAY bursts through the door at the top of the stairs. She's still dressed as ROXANE, and she also has a sword.)

CHARLOTTE. CHYAA!

(GEORGE and CHARLOTTE face off—then start fencing in the best Errol Flynn tradition. This is their daily exercise, as well as their fun.)***

GOERGE. Aroint thee, villain!

CHARLOTTE. Stay back, thou knave and cutpurse!

GEORGE. Stand thy ground, I say, or thou shalt bleed from ear to ear like the vomiting stream at flood tide!

(More swordplay. HOWARD watches with his mouth hanging open.)

CHARLOTTE. Dungheap!

GEORGE. Witch!

CHARLOTTE. Bull's pizzle!

(The next exchange brings the combatants nose to nose, their swords crossed—then suddenly CHARLOTTE stamps on GEORGE's foot to get the advantage.)

GEORGE. Ow!

CHARLOTTE. Ha!

GEORGE. Villain!

(GEORGE and CHARLOTTE are at it again. Then they both notice HOWARD for the first time and stop fighting.)

CHARLOTTE. What is this?

GEORGE. I know not, but 'tis passing strange.

HOWARD. (*Waves.*) ...Hi.

(CHARLOTTE lunges at GEORGE, GEORGE counters, then grabs HOWARD around the neck in a hammerlock, with his sword at HOWARD's throat.)

CHARLOTTE. Ha!

GEORGE. Ha!

HOWARD. Argh!

GEORGE. Stay back, I say, or the lad shall die!

CHARLOTTE. Coward!

GEORGE. If thou dost move *one inch*, the lad shall spout blood like a fountain.

(HOWARD is terrified. He tries to chuckle, to be a good sport.)

HOWARD. (*To CHARLOTTE.*) ...Don't move.

(CHARLOTTE lunges—.)

CHARLOTTE. Ha!

GEORGE. Ha!

(—And GEORGE discards HOWARD like a sack of potatoes. HOWARD careens off a chair. Then GEORGE and CHARLOTTE go at it again, and exit fighting.)

CHARLOTTE. Hold up thy head, vile Scot!

GEORGE. I'll make a ghost of him that lets me! And away!

(*And they're gone. HOWARD gets to his feet, panting. After a beat, ROZ enters at the top of the stairs.*)

ROZ. They're not in their dressing rooms.

HOWARD. I-I-I-I-

ROZ. Howard?

HOWARD. I have to go now.

(*HOWARD heads for the street door.*)

ROZ. Where are you going?

HOWARD. I need a few minutes. I'll be back.

ROZ. Howard, what's wrong?

HOWARD. I have to think about this! You don't just-just-just rush into a relationship! It takes some thinking!!

(*HOWARD exits.*)

ROZ. Howard! Are you crazy?! (*Exiting.*) Get back here!!

(*ROZ runs out. A moment later, GEORGE and CHARLOTTE reenter in high spirits.*)

GEORGE. Do you know what I like most about the author of *Cyrano*? He's dead, so he can't argue with me.

(*CHARLOTTE laughs.*)

Now listen, I have a new idea for tomorrow. When the carriage arrives, during the battle, and you step out, I want you to pause, curtsy to the soldiers—and I'm going to put a spotlight on your face to suggest that you have descended like an angel from heaven.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, George, let's try it! Now!

GEORGE. All right.

CHARLOTTE. Clip clop clip clop clip clop. Na-a-a-y. (*A whinny.*)

GEORGE. "Halt, who goes there?!"

CHARLOTTE. "It's a coach!"

GEORGE. "What? In the camp?!"

CHARLOTTE. "Look! 'Tis Roxane!"

GEORGE. "Thank God."

CHARLOTTE. (*Weakly.*) "Yay." (*Stepping elegantly down the last two steps of the stairway.*) And I float down, out of the carriage, like an angel from heaven..."

GEORGE. Spotlight!

CHARLOTTE. (*As ROXANE.*) "Good morning, gentlemen."

GEORGE. "Roxane, on the King's service?!"

CHARLOTTE. "Yes. In the service of my own king: Love."

GEORGE. That's it! It'll make the scene!

CHARLOTTE. "Cyrano. My best friend. I need your help."

GEORGE. (*As CYRANO, kneeling, taking her hand.*) "I am at your disposal, madam, now and forever."

(GEORGE kisses her hand and lays his cheek upon it.)

CHARLOTTE. (*Moved.*) When you do that, George, center stage, in front of a thousand people holding their breath, I wet myself, I can't help it.

GEORGE. Thank you, my darling.

CHARLOTTE. Kiss me. Now. Before the moment passes.

(CHARLOTTE lifts his nose and kisses him on the lips. They start necking on the chaise—when ETHEL enters from backstage.)

ETHEL. Don't mind me, I'm just the hired help.

GEORGE. Well, well, if it isn't the Hound of the Baskervilles.

(*During the following, GEORGE and CHARLOTTE remove their CYRANO clothes and put on their relaxing clothes. CHARLOTTE, of course, looks stunning. ETHEL gathers up their costumes to take them away.*)

CHARLOTTE. (*To GEORGE.*) Don't start.

GEORGE. Oh, she can't hear a thing I'm saying. She hasn't heard a word in twenty years. (*To ETHEL.*) Have you, Quasimodo?

CHARLOTTE. George, stop it.