

Author's Notes

A slash (/) shows the point of interruption in overlapping dialogue.

A long dash (—) introduces lines to be attributed to audience members, soldiers etc., according to the forces available for a given production.

PRONUNCIATION

Cyrano (Si-ra-no) Stressed on first and sometimes also last syllable.

Christian (Crist-yan) Stressed on final syllable – rhymes with 'man' etc.

Lignière (Lee-nyere) Stressed on final syllable – rhymes with 'where' etc.

Ragueneau (Rag-no) Two equal stresses. Rhymes with 'go' etc.

De Guiche (d' geesh) Rhymes with 'leash' etc.

Madeleine Robin (Ro-ban) Stressed on final syllable – rhymes with 'man' etc.

CYRANO 1/2

~~Cyrano My brains are intact, thank you.~~

~~Le Bret But your mind -~~
~~what were you thinking of?~~

~~Cyrano I'm resigned~~
~~to self-destruction. How could I begin~~
~~to accept 'protection' from a man like him.~~

~~Leila But the Cardinal - I'm sorry but that's suicide.~~

Cyrano

So you too - is this right? - are accusing me of pride?
What is it you want from me? -
some kind of deference? How can I be
myself without my 'political incorrectness' and
'vulgarity'?

Yes yes I'm well aware I don't stand much of a chance
here in the literary world of seventeenth-century France -
money - cronyism - fear of giving offence -
poets on juries awarding cash-prizes to their friends.
As for our seventeenth-century theatre - well - don't
you agree

it's become just fly-paper for mediocrity? -
sure, you can set the bar quite high -
but still the writers stick on it and die -
and even dead they offer thanks
to all their sponsors - to the banks
and banks' best mates
who've managed to manipulate the interest rates -
then add for peanuts to their shopping cart
the priceless prestige that they derive from art.
I mean why would I even have a conversation
with this Cardinal? Publication? -

~~Leila Cyrano stop this~~

~~Cyrano No - let me speak -~~
~~he'd simply crush in my voice~~

~~everything that is unique -~~

~~just like he'd take all of you aspiring writers~~
~~cut up your work and leave just the dead detritus.~~

~~Leila Cyrano~~

~~Cyrano Do not Cyrano me.~~
~~To be myself, I need to be free~~

~~Le Bret Free is one thing - but you actually set out~~
~~to make enemies. What's that about?~~

Cyrano I need them, Le Bret - I need their hate -
let them stare - let them spit with rage - I can't wait
for the next fight -
no way will I kowtow and be polite -
try and make me
conform try and break me
I warn you no one will take me
prisoner of their patronage
VIP sponsorship whatever the fashion is
I will remain outside of it
will not stain any part of my mind with it
I will sing to my own tune
cling to the dark side of my own moon
sooner than bask in the false bright
earth-light
offer no remedies to my many enemies
I need them, Le Bret, I need that hate
need them to isolate
me SO THAT I CAN CREATE.

Everyone looks in shocked silence at Cyrano.

Christian enters unnoticed.

Madame Ragueneau takes Cyrano gently aside.

~~Leila Cyrano - listen - I know you feel strongly but can~~
~~I just ask: did something happen with Roxane?~~

~~Cyrano turns away~~

~~Cyrano! Quite some speech!~~

CHRISTIAN

What is it?

~~Cyrano~~ You had some kind of class?

~~Roxane~~ Oh my God yes! the lecture! there's
so many exams we've got to pass!

~~Roxane hurries out.~~

~~Long pause.~~

~~Then Cyrano calls softly for Christian.~~

~~Cyrano~~ Christian. Christian.

~~Christian appears from another room.~~

~~Well, the bad news is you're not very spontaneous
but the good news is you're friends with a sensitive
genius.~~

~~And who is that genius? Me.~~

~~Christian~~ Why am I not amused?

~~Cyrano~~ Come on. Lighten up. She's just a tiny bit confused –
that's all – and needs you to 'improvise'.

~~Okay. It's a challenge. But if you take my advice –~~

~~Christian~~ I'm not listening.

~~Cyrano~~ – take my advice – I'll get you to learn
something that ~~sounds~~ spontaneous. Make you burn
and burn with truly spontaneous feeling. So
let's begin now and memorise / one or two –

~~Christian~~ Memorise. No!

~~Cyrano~~ What?

~~Christian~~ I said no. I won't do it.

~~Cyrano~~ You're insane –
at least memorise one or two / phrases first.

→ ~~Christian~~ No – this game
of ours is over. I won't play this part

any more. It was fine – yes – okay – at the start –
but if she is really in love with me
why can't I just talk to her simply and naturally?

~~Cyrano~~ Uh-huh.

~~Christian~~ Because I am not completely stupid.
Sure, I can't embroider speech the way you did –
launch verbal arrows like some kind of Cupid –
and no doubt in her eyes a
man like myself is not the most perfect 'improviser' –
but you've taught me, Cyrano, a great deal:
how to write, speak, touch. I'm a man: I can feel.
I can do this alone – believe me – I know.

~~Sees Roxane coming back.~~

~~Shit, she's coming! She's coming – don't go!~~

~~Cyrano goes into the other room. A moment later
Roxane appears.~~

~~Roxane~~ Hey – Christian.

~~They look at each other. Pause.~~

~~I had a lecture but I got there too late.~~

~~The hall was empty.~~

~~Awkwardly, Christian tries to kiss her.~~

~~(Gently.) No no no no – wait.~~
~~Isn't there something you want to say to me?~~
~~I mean about love.~~

~~Christian~~ Sure.

~~Roxane~~ ... some way to be
poetic and ... original ... but also from the heart?
Listen. I'm going to snap my fingers, then you start.
~~She snaps her fingers.~~

~~of the Parisian master race
I don't got no place here
they clear me some empty space here~~

~~Cyrano Lignière?~~

→ Lignière They tell me the end
they tell me this is the end my friend
they tell me what they send
they gonna send one hundred men
they gonna cut my face
they gonna put this harassed Paris poet in his place –
claims that I've named him
claims I've defamed him
keep every writer on a leash
this is the order of de Guiche –

~~Cyrano Lignière?~~

→ Lignière De Guiche is the man who polices speech
who tells the hundred men to teach
the poet not to overreach –
cut me cut me – teach me a lesson –
cut my face – get my confession –

~~Cyrano Lignière?~~

→ Lignière Pull out the knife – turn up the heat –
they gonna beat this man on the Paris street
cut me cut me – come on now try it
show me a rule I will defy it
I wrote the words I won't deny it
cut my face – bring on the riot
BRING ON THE RIOT!

*Lignière suddenly goes blank and sways. The others
hold him up.*

~~Cyrano A hundred men. Where?~~

LIGNIERE

Lignière I'm telling you, man. They are OUT THERE
~~Outside some bar
near the Pont des Arts.~~

Cyrano If there really are a hundred men,
stay here – and I will deal with them.

~~Le Bret Cyrano~~

~~Cyrano What?~~

~~Le Bret He's off his face.~~

~~Cyrano~~

~~Sure – which is why I intend to go there in his place.
If de Guiche thinks he can silence writers
he needs to understand that some of us are fighters.
I'll give those hundred men a lesson
in free speech and the writer's right to self-expression.
You can watch. You can shout all you like and scream.
But please, not a single one of you's to intervene.~~

~~Le Bret Cyrano, don't. They'll kill you.~~

~~Cyrano~~

~~Kill me? Oh?~~

~~Scum sent by de Guiche? – you think so? No.
Down to the Seine! Down to the Pont des Arts!
You think I care how many men there are?
Ten or ten thousand, I shall defend
the life and writing of my poet friend~~

ROXANE

Roxane Seven a.m. - a little early for me, I think.

~~Pause.~~

Cool place - Leila's so into poetry.

Cyrano Look Roxane, this (how can I put this?)
this really is a very special moment for me.

~~Pause.~~

Roxane For me too.

Cyrano May I assume you're here today
because there's something... special or
particularly important that you'd like to say?

→ Roxane That is, first off - thank you. Because
that little shit
you beat in yesterday's duel was the man de Guiche
saw fit

to make me marry. That's right: I marry Valvert,
Valvert leases me back to de Guiche. Job-share
for them - sex-slavery for me - but now they won't dare.
So thank you: Valvert lost his appetite
for that little plan when he lost the fight.

Cyrano nods to acknowledge her thanks.

Second - I've something even more... intimate
to confess -

and I don't know how to begin this - unless
you remember us both being little? We were so close.
Like brother and sister. You'd be wounded -

I'd be nurse;
typical girl-boy stuff. I liked dreaming -

While you ~~while~~ I rushed round waving a stick and screaming? -

~~Roxane~~ That kind of thing - or trying to torture my cat.

Cyrano Shit, was I really as bad as that?

Roxane You were a boy, that's all. And I could be spiteful
back - it doesn't mean I didn't like you.

~~Pause.~~

Has something happened to your hand?

Cyrano No. Just a scratch. But I don't understand / what -

Roxane Just a scratch? Show me. It's deep.

Perhaps she keeps hold of his hand through what
follows.

Cyrano Please.

Roxane Shall I clean it?

Cyrano No - no - listen to me - please -

Roxane Did you really take on a hundred men?

Cyrano Please - what was it you meant when
you said more intimate? - when you said confess?

~~Pause.~~

Roxane You want me to say?

Cyrano Well of course I do. Yes.

~~Pause.~~

Roxane

Well - it's like this - we're not little kids any more -
and there is someone - a man - I have
very strong feelings for.

Cyrano Strong feelings.

Roxane Very. But this... person doesn't know.

~~Pause.~~

Cyrano You love this person.

Roxane Yes. Yes. I love him so.

Leila So ~~precious friends~~ be less abstemious
eat ~~drink~~ be joyful take heart -

~~What's this?~~

Leila That, boy, is a traditional French ~~lemon tart~~ -
Amazing.

Leila Twelve ounces of refined
sugar, juice of four lemons plus their grated rind.
~~Quintessence of French patisserie~~
~~and rich enabler~~

~~(several)~~ OF POETRY.

Leila (softly) of poetry

Everyone starts to concentrate on eating and drinking.

~~Cut it open, man what're you waiting for?~~

~~Don't tell me you've never split a condom before.~~

~~Pass that pastry.~~

Cyrano (softly) Christian Christian, can we talk?

~~That is sweet.~~

~~A culinary work~~
~~of art, Madame Ragueneau~~

Cyrano (softly) Christian

Roxane No you don't, Cyrano. I want this man
of mine all to myself. Your poor lips
~~are all cracked. Does it hurt to kiss?~~

~~(mock disgust)~~ Leave it out.

~~Trying to eat~~

~~Christian pulls back.~~

Roxane Christian, what's wrong?

LEILA

~~Christian Nothing~~

~~He, Leila, do us a poem~~

~~Yeah, poem, come on.~~

LEILA'S POEM

Because I could not stop for death
he kindly stopped for me
I asked to see a photograph
confirming his identity.

The faces matched - the eyes were warm -
the hair was long and grey -
both smiled but as I tried to move
death blocked my way.

No no, my sweetheart, what's the rush?
Come on, let's go to bed,
there's time for love, there's surely time
for happiness - death said.

His voice was soft, his skin was pale,
his fingers brushed my face -
Oh? time for love? I said - but where?
He said: I know a place.

He led me down a flowered track
and on a bank of earth
he loved me till my body screamed
from every living nerve.

I slept then for eternity
drugged as I was with love:
death bent down to my sleeping face
and on earth's pillow made a space
to leave his photograph.

Applause.

During the poem De Guiche has appeared. He is
confused to see everyone eating and drinking.