

DE GUICHE

(Who has come down from the seats on the stage, with the MARQUIS)  
He's beginning to be annoying!

VALVERT

(Shrugging)  
He likes to bluster.

DE GUICHE

Isn't anyone going to silence him?

VALVERT

Yes, I will! Just watch his face when he hears what I have to say to him! (Walks up to CYRANO, who observes him, and stands in front of him with a fatuous expression.) You have a nose that . . . Your nose is . . . um . . . very big.

CYRANO

(Gravely)  
Yes, very.

VALVERT

(Laughing)  
Ha!

CYRANO

(With perfect calm)  
Is that all?

VALVERT

Well . . .

CYRANO

I'm afraid your speech was a little short, young man. You could have said . . . oh, all sorts of things, varying your tone to fit your words. Let me give you a few examples.

In an aggressive tone: "If I had a nose like that, I'd have it amputated!"

Friendly: "The end of it must get wet when you drink from a cup. Why don't you use a tankard?"

Descriptive: "It's a rock, a peak, a cape! No, more than a cape: a peninsula!"

Curious: "What do you use that long container for? Do you keep your pens and scissors in it?"

Gracious: "What a kind man you are! You love birds so much that you've given them a perch to roost on."

Truculent: "When you light your pipe and the smoke comes out your nose, the neighbors must think a chimney has caught fire!"

Sollicitous: "Be careful when you walk: with all that weight on your head, you could easily lose your balance and fall."

Thoughtful: "You ought to put an awning over it, to keep its color from fading in the sun."

Pedantic: "Sir, only the animal that Aristophanes calls the hippocampelephantocamelos could have had so much flesh and bone below its forehead."

Flippant: "That tusk must be convenient to hang your hat on."

Grandiloquent: "No wind but the mighty Arctic blast, majestic nose, could ever give you a cold from one end to the other!"

Dramatic: "When it bleeds, it must be like the Red Seal!"

Admiring: "What a sign for a perfume shop!"

Lyrical: "Is that a conch, and are you Triton risen from the sea?"

Naïve: "Is that monument open to the public?"

Respectful: "One look at your face, sir, is enough to tell me that you are indeed a man of substance."

Rustic: "That don't look like no nose to me. It's either a big cucumber or a little watermelon."

Military: "The enemy is charging! Aim your cannon!"

Practical: "A nose like that has one advantage: it keeps your feet dry in the rain."

Or finally, parodying the grief-stricken Pyramus in Théophile de Viau's play: "This nose destroyed the harmony of its good master's features! See how the traitor blushes now for shame!"\*

There, now you have an inkling of what you might have said to me if you were witty and a man of letters. Unfortunately you're totally witless and a man of very few letters: only the four that spell the word "fool." But even if you had the intelligence to invent remarks like those I've given you as examples, you would not have been able to entertain me with them. You would have spoken no more than half the first syllable of the first word, because such jesting is a privilege that I grant only to myself.

DE GUICHE

(Trying to lead away the outraged VALVERT)  
Come, never mind.

\* The reference is to a line from the play *Pyrame et Thisbé* by Théophile de Viau (1590-1626): "Here is the dagger that basely sullied itself with its master's blood. It is red with shame, the traitor!"



VALVERT

*(Choking with anger)*

Such arrogance from an uncouth barbarian who . . . who . . . isn't even wearing gloves! Who appears in public without ribbons, or tassels, or braid!

CYRANO

I have a different idea of elegance. I don't dress like a fop, it's true, but my moral grooming is impeccable. I never appear in public with a soiled conscience, a tarnished honor, threadbare scruples, or an insult that I haven't washed away. I'm always immaculately clean, adorned with independence and frankness. I may not cut a stylish figure, but I hold my soul erect. I wear my deeds as ribbons, my wit is sharper than the finest mustache, and when I walk among men I make truths ring like spurs.

VALVERT

You . . .

CYRANO

I have no gloves? It doesn't trouble me. I had a pair not long ago, but I lost one of them, so I threw the other one away—in someone's face.

VALVERT

Stupid lout, insolent boor, ridiculous ass!

CYRANO

*(Taking off his hat and bowing as though VALVERT had just introduced himself)*

Delighted to meet you. I'm Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac.  
*(Laughter)*

VALVERT

*(Exasperated)*

Buffoon!

CYRANO

*(Crying out as if in pain)*

Oh!

VALVERT

*(Turning back, after having turned away)*

What's he saying now?

CYRANO

*(With a grimace of pain)*

I must move it: it's fallen asleep. It needs exercise. Oh!

VALVERT

What's the matter?

CYRANO

I have a cramp in my sword.

VALVERT

*(Drawing his own)*

So be it!

CYRANO

I'll give you a charming little thrust.

VALVERT

*(Contemptuously)*

Poet!

CYRANO

Yes, sir, I *am* a poet, as I'll demonstrate by composing an impromptu ballade while I fence with you.

VALVERT

A ballade?

CYRANO

You don't know what that is? Allow me to explain.

VALVERT

But . . .

CYRANO

*(As though reciting a lesson)*

The ballade consists of three eight-line stanzas . . .

VALVERT

*(Stamping his foot)*

Oh!

CYRANO

*(Continuing)*

. . . with a four-line refrain at the end.

VALVERT

You . . .

CYRANO

I'm going to compose one as I fight with you, and when I come to the last line, I'll draw blood.

VALVERT

No!

CYRANO

No? Wait and see. *(Declaring)* "Ballade of the Duel between Monsieur de Bergerac and an Imbecile, in the Hôtel de Bourgogne."



VALVERT

What's all that?

CYRANO

It's the title.

THE CROWD

(Greatly excited)  
Make room!—This will be worth seeing!—Step back!—  
Quiet!

(Tableau. A circle of onlookers on the floor, with MARQUIS and officers mingled with BURGHERS and less affluent commoners. The PAGES have climbed up on men's shoulders to see better. All the women are standing in their boxes. To the right, DE GUICHE and his gentlemen; to the left, LE BRET, RAGUENEAU, CUIGY, etc.)

CYRANO

(Closing his eyes for a moment)  
Wait, I'm thinking of how to begin. . . . There, I have it.  
(His actions match his words throughout the ballade.)

I take off my hat and discard it,  
I slowly abandon my cloak,  
I draw my sword out of its scabbard,  
Preparing to put it to use.  
For the moment, I stand here before you,  
Elegant, calm, and serene,  
But I warn you, my impudent scoundrel,  
When I end the refrain, I draw blood.

(They begin fencing.)

You should have avoided this battle.  
Now, where shall I skewer you, goose?  
In the side, 'neath the sleeve of your doublet?  
In the heart, 'neath the ribbon you wear?  
No, I've carefully thought and reflected,  
And finally made up my mind;  
The paunch: that's where I've decided,  
When I end the refrain, to draw blood.

I see you give ground when I press you;  
Your face is as white as a sheet;  
Is "coward" a name that would suit you?  
I dexterously parry the point  
That you hoped to thrust into my entrails;  
Your efforts are doomed to be vain.

Prepare yourself now to be punctured:  
When I end the refrain, I draw blood.

(Announces solemnly.)

Refrain:  
Pray God to forgive your transgressions!  
The close of our combat draws near;  
A coupé, then a feint, then the finish!  
(He lunges. VALVERT staggers. CYRANO bows.)  
When I end the refrain, I draw blood.

(Cheers. Applause from the boxes. Flowers and handkerchiefs are thrown down. Officers surround and congratulate CYRANO. RAGUENEAU dances with delight. LE BRET is both happy and appalled. VALVERT's friends lead him away, holding him up.)

THE CROWD

(In a long cry)  
Ah! . . .

A LIGHT-HORSEMAN

Magnificent!

A WOMAN

Charming!

RAGUENEAU

Phenomenal!

A MARQUIS

Unheard of!

LE BRET

Foolhardy!

THE CROWD

(Swarming around CYRANO)  
Congratulations!—My compliments!—Bravo!

A WOMAN'S VOICE

He's a hero!

A MUSKETEER

(Walking rapidly toward CYRANO with his hand outstretched)  
Allow me to shake your hand, sir! It was a superb exploit,  
and I believe I can claim to be a judge of such things. It  
made me stamp my feet with joy!  
(Walks away.)