

The Duel
by
John Schoneboom

For Jennifer Terpak and Stuart Green

Characters:

Monsieur AGNOGUE, pronounced very much but not quite exactly like "Egg Nog", originally played by Stuart Green
Monsieur MULDOUINE, pronounced very much but not quite exactly like "Mulled Wine", originally played by Jennifer Terpak

Scene and Setting:

Two young musketeers face each other at sword point, obviously about to engage in a duel.

MULDOUINE

Before we go any further...

AGNOGUE

You have something to say? A surprise for me?

MULDOUINE

Perhaps.

AGNOGUE

You wish to tell me that you are really a young woman and not a man at all. There's no need. I've guessed it. Nevertheless I shall give you no quarter. You have offended me, sir madam, and now you must die.

MULDOUINE

I, a woman? You, sir, are a maker of absurd assertions. I am a fresh-faced bright young shiny little button of a lad and while I haven't yet had my first love affair I suffer no shortage of pluck and I daresay I am every inch the man you are. In fact you have now offended me, sir, and it is you who must die. But first, before we go any further...

AGNOGUE

I knew it. You wish to withdraw. You are a coward, young little missy sir.

MULDOUINE

It is not I who am a coward but you who are a fool. I simply wished to learn what offense I committed that now requires me to spill your blood, Monsieur Agnogue.

AGNOGUE

Gah! You've said it again! En garde!

MULDOUINE

Said what?

AGNOGUE

You called me by that name!

MULDOUINE

Which name?

AGNOGUE

I shall not utter it!

MULDOUINE

Agnogue?

AGNOGUE

That's the one!

The duelists cross swords and begin to fight.

MULDOUINE

I still wonder what it is about being called by your name that upsets you so.

AGNOGUE

It is not my name!

They stop fighting.

MULDOUINE

I must protest, Monsieur Agnogue. It is. Everyone knows that it is. You are well known in this town. I was behind you in line at the baker's the other day and when you purchased your croissants the baker said to you, "bonjour Monsieur Agnogue."

AGNOGUE

Yes, and the baker's funeral is this Thursday, for I ran him through impulsively! I am a fierce and adventurous fellow!

Agnogue tries to resume the duel but Muldouine pays no attention, being more interested in pursuing the point of conversation.

MULDOUINE

And your father, Monsieur Agnogue
the elder, owner of Agnogue's
Cobbler Shop, why...

AGNOGUE

Curses! Swear words! Unprintable
expletives! I have changed my name
legally!

MULDOUINE

Have you?

AGNOGUE

Oui.

MULDOUINE

I see. And what is it now?

AGNOGUE

Simply "Ag." I shortened it.

MULDOUINE

Monsieur Ag?

AGNOGUE

Just so.

MULDOUINE

Was it because your name sounded so
much like, erm...

AGNOGUE

Yes, yes, yes, of course! That
putrid undrinkable holiday beverage
which I have never been able to
tolerate!

MULDOUINE

I quite understand.

AGNOGUE (angrily)

I appreciate your kind
condescension of course, but I do
not think you could possibly
understand what it has been like
for me, Monsieur Muldouine.

MULDOUINE

On the contrary. I also hate egg
nog.

(MORE)

MULDOUINE (CONT'D)

In any case, you are an excitable fellow, fighting people to the death over what some people might call minor provocation.

AGNOGUE

I will not be mocked!

MULDOUINE

By god, I like that about you! It is rare to see such fine fighting spirit in a man of our age!

AGNOGUE

Well. Merci. Merci beaucoup. I also admire your, as you say, pluck. You are indeed a clean and well-scrubbed shiny little girly of a lad.

MULDOUINE

My apologies. I don't mean to make this awkward. Naturally we must continue our battle.

They raise their swords reluctantly.

AGNOGUE

Honor must be served.

MULDOUINE

Of course. It is an absolutely undisputed point that when a man is insulted he must leap at once to his sword and kill the other man, insulting him back along the way so that the other's honor, too, is offended and neither can possibly back down ever regardless of how fine each may perceive the other to be deep down inside.

AGNOGUE

Well said.

MULDOUINE

You are too kind.

AGNOGUE

And now...en garde!

They fight a bit, but not terribly enthusiastically.

MULDOUINE

I shall ensure your proper burial,
you may be sure!

AGNOGUE

And I, yours! What adventures we
could have had together!

They stop fighting again and look at each other warmly, then get embarrassed and resume the duel.

MULDOUINE

I can well imagine the sorts of
intrigues and japes you and I would
have gotten involved in had it not
become unfortunately necessary for
me to kill you.

AGNOGUE

Indeed! We'd leap on horses and
dash around, receive sensational
bits of news involving stolen
diamonds and plots against the
Queen!

MULDOUINE

Long may she live!

AGNOGUE

Hurrah! And death to the Cardinal!

They pause to smile at each other, pointing their swords at each other in friendly agreement. Then they start the fight up again.

MULDOUINE

Yes, we'd get in scrapes and rescue
each other and defeat the
Cardinal's best guards in nightly
brawls!

AGNOGUE

And just when everything seemed
lost for the Queen's good name...

MULDOUINE

If not her very life!

AGNOGUE

We'd save her at the last minute!

But just then Muldouine seizes the advantage in the duel, pressing his or her sword against Agnogue's neck.

Agnogue drops his sword in surrender. They look into each other's eyes.

AGNOGUE (CONT'D)

It seems you really are every inch
the man I am after all.

MULDOUINE

I do apologize. Any last requests?

AGNOGUE

Yes. You really are a very
remarkable, very plucky lad, young
missy. May I...have a look inside
your trousers?

Muldouine hesitates, then consents. He or she removes the sword from Agnogue's throat and takes a step back. Muldouine's back is to the audience as s/he pulls his or her trousers out a bit so Agnogue can have a peek inside. They look at each other, then embrace.

AGNOGUE (CONT'D)

Hurrah!

MULDOUINE

Hurrah!

And the two friends skip arm in arm off stage.

THE END