



The Wonder of Love

drama in three acts by Christian Lanciai
after the only novel of Henri Alain-Fournier

The characters :

Augustin Meaulnes
François Seurel
Professor Seurel
Yvonne de Galais
Frantz de Galais
Monsieur de Galais
Pierrot (alias Ganache)
uncle Florentin
Valentine
school mates
two aunts
a great number of children

The action is in France around 1900.

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The Wonder of Love

Act I scene 1. Pupils in a class.

1 Come on and tell us about it!
2 Don't be so bloody secretive!
3 Can't you see that he will never tell you anything? He is not the sharing type.
Augustin How could I share what I cannot understand myself?
1 He has a secret! He has a secret!
2 Just tell us then at least where you have been!
Augustin Fools! That's what I don't know myself!
3 Was she good in bed, Meaulnes? Was she a yummy paramour?
François Leave him alone. If he doesn't want to tell, he doesn't want to tell.
2 Then tell us at least that you had a girl! Everyone can tell anyway that's what you've had!
Augustin No, I hadn't.
3 He is lying! He is lying!
Augustin I never lie about sacred matters, while you only trample them down.
2 Isn't he cocky! He doesn't deign to have anything to do with us!
3 Meaulnes, we respect you, but we can't stand your haughtiness.
Augustin I am not haughty. I just tell you how it is.
2 Get him, everyone! He shall pay for his pride! (*attacks him. All the other boys follow his example except François. General fight. Enter the teacher.*)
Seurel What's going on here? A fight in my own class!
(*The fighting immediately ceases. All are ashamed and bruised, and Meaulnes has a fresh black eye.*)
Augustin Nothing, Sir.
Seurel Says the only one who is wounded defending the violence. Never before have I seen fighting in my own class! Get out, all of you! No more class today! Augustin, you stay with François. Get out! (*All the others scatter away in fright.*) Well, François, what happened?
Augustin Nothing happened, Sir.
Seurel You insist on defending the delinquents although you were their victim. Why then was it all about nothing?
Augustin They attacked me for wanting to know what I didn't know myself and therefore could not tell them.
Seurel Is this the truth, François?
François Yes, father.
Seurel (*reflects for a moment*) You are in a dangerous age. It's probably all about puberty secrets. Well, I will leave it at that. I have sent the whole class home to calm down. I never had a fight in my school before, and I never want to have it. You were gone for four days, Augustin, for which everyone is envying you. You are a constant source of worries and upsets. I would like to have you stop being like that. I don't know if I should be angry or relieved that you came back, for your return and secrecy only adds to our earlier worries. Well, I have lectured enough. Try to talk him into his senses, François. I am leaving. (*leaves*)

François (when he has left) You haven't said a word of what you have been up to, Meaulnes.

Meaulnes I wish I knew anything about it myself.

François But you must know something. Why did you disappear?

Meaulnes I was lost when I went to meet those people from the train.

François We found the empty cart you had borrowed.

Meaulnes That's good. It went out of my hands.

François But where have you been?

Meaulnes That's what I know least of all. I have tried to study the maps for several days but haven't become any wiser. But I think I could find the way back.

François But what really happened?

Meaulnes Well, I will tell you about it. Try to understand anything of it, if you can, but to me it appears as nothing else than an unsurmountable mystery until I have come to terms with it myself.

François Just tell me first what everyone believes, that you found a woman.

Meaulnes It was all like a dream. I went the wrong way and discovered it too late, suddenly it was dusk, and I must have fallen asleep also at some moment, for when I woke up the horse had brought me to places totally unfamiliar to me, but I reached a village, where a kind farmer couple took care of me. Then the horse and the cart left me in the night, so I had to continue on foot and suddenly met with that company.

François That you were supposed to meet at the train?

Meaulnes No, children, dressed up people of all kinds, mostly elderly people and children, who were all going the same way to that castle...

François Have you been to a castle?

Meaulnes François, pinch me if I am awake, but I had landed in a dream which was all reality but not at all of this world...

François What castle was it?

Meaulnes I wish I knew. It was exactly like having ended up in one of those old enchanted paintings of the rococo before the revolution, Antoine Watteau, you know, only beautiful people in a dream world of only beauty...

Change of scene to scene 2: *The castle.*

Pastoral idyll in a garden. Two old ladies on a bench in the arbour.

An old lady Do you really think he will turn up with his wonder bride?

Second old lady But my dear Agnes, you know that Frantz always presents astonishing spectacles which fail just as often as they become legendary!

1 But this feast really caps it all. He has invited all the children of the neighbourhood.

2 And all of us of an advanced age. And do you know why? Yes, because he only wants kind people for his wedding.

1 Isn't it delightful!

2 His father will do anything for him, and his sister was always helpful. But here she is now.

Yvonne (a sparkling blonde young beautiful woman in white and a parasol) But here you are, dear aunts! While all the party is inside!

1 We take it easy, dear Yvonne. Let the children have their cakes first. We don't need much of that.

2 And we don't want to miss the advent of Frantz with his lovely bride.

Yvonne They haven't arrived yet.

1 No, we know. We haven't seen them.

Yvonne But who is this? (*observes Augustin who enters like lost in a dream*) You are not dressed for the wedding, my friend.

Augustin Is this a wedding I have landed in?

Yvonne Yes, and since you have arrived you haven't landed wrong. The bridegroom's heart is today open to the entire world.

Augustin So you don't shut me out for having come wrong?

Yvonne There are proper clothes for everyone. Here we must all be dressed up for timelessness for the sake of the bridal couple, whose only demand on the company is timelessness.

aunt 1 He is a poet, that Frantz de Galais. He knows what he wants.

aunt 2 But alas, he is sensitive and gladly wages the world for his dreams.

Yvonne But come with me inside, my friend, and you will have the proper clothes. You must be hungry.

Augustin I have neither eaten nor slept much the last days. That's how I woke up into this dream.

Yvonne I hope to your fortune, for this dream is actually real.

Augustin Are you acting some part in it then, since you seem to know what it is all about?

aunt 1 Young man, you are speaking with Yvonne de Galais, the bridegroom's sister, daughter of the lord of the castle.

Yvonne And who are you yourself?

Augustin Augustin Meaulnes.

Yvonne A name as good as any other. Welcome, Augustin Meaulnes, to my brother's wedding. There must have been some meaning with your arrival here, since you arrived on time.

Augustin There must have been some meaning of it for certain, but so far it is unfathomable for me.

aunt 1 Bring him in, Yvonne, and dress him up. He is just like a prince discovered in the gutter.

Yvonne (*offers him her hand*) Come! (*walks inside with him*)

aunt 2 A courteous young man. Where do you think he comes from?

1 He is at least not from these parts. He has gone astray indeed.

2 But landed right justy because of that, it seems.

1 Yes, he couldn't have arrived more opportunely.

(*Now the children start swarming out, lovely little bridesmaids and princes, as cute as can be, of all ages but the smaller the better.*)

The children (*calling*) Pierrot! Pierrot!

(*Pierrot comes to meet them from the other side, a tall fellow dressed as Pierrot with too long sleeves and his face painted white*)

Pierrot Children! Children! Haven't you had enough yet of all your parties! Haven't you had enough of cakes and games! Do you still want more!

The children Pierrot! Pierrot!

some Tell us a fairy tale!
Pierrot But you have all the fairy tale books in the world in there!
The children More! More!
Pierrot More pastries! More cakes! More tales! More plays! More theatre! More spectacles! And Pierrot is here to give you everything! Back into the castle, all of you! The bridal couple hasn't arrived yet!
A girl When will they come?
Pierrot As soon as they can.
another Are they very pretty?
Pierrot Prettiest in the world.
A third Does the bride wear a crown?
Pierrot And the loveliest purest white dress in the world!
A boy When can we see them?
Pierrot As soon as they arrive. Get into the castle now!
(gets the children with him into the castle, who make jubilant noise all around him)
aunt 1 Something has happened.
2 I don't think Pierrot himself knows what has happened.
1 But he knows something has happened.
2 There is still hope. Or else he would not entertain the children.
1 We'll have to wait and see. I hope the bridal couple will come.
2 You know what Frantz is like, my dear. It never turns out the way he had intended.
1 Alas, our wonderful unhappy family!
2 Yes, just tears and joy, hysterical felicity and disasters all the way.
1 It will all work out all right, you will see.
2 I think I will go to help the children enjoy themselves. The bridal couple seems to take their time.
1 You couldn't be more right, my dear. *(Augustin comes out again.)*
2 But you were also right, my dear. The foundling from the gutter was indeed a prince.
1 But obviously still at a loss. Well, young man, do you feel better now, when you are well dressed up?
Augustin (handsomely dressed in a white fin de siècle costume) Everything here is like in a dream. The entire castle is crowded with happy little playful children, like small angels. And the princess herself took care of me...
2 He has fallen down from the clouds.
Augustin Yes, I am like fallen from the clouds, for destiny brought me here without me doing anything for it, and I don't know where I am. Could anyone explain the situation to me?
1 There is not much to explain, young man. Everything is quite simple. et är inte så mycket att förklara, unge man. Allt är mycket enkelt.
2 Frantz de Galais found a fallen girl in Bourges, who was so beautiful that he decided to marry her.
hittade en fallen flicka i Bourges, som var så vacker att han ville gifta sig med henne. Hon var bortjagad hemifrån, vilket bara bidrog till hans passion.
2 From the gutter directly to the castle. från rännstenen direkt till slottet.
Augustin I see.

Formaterat: Engelska (Storbritannien)

Jag förstår.

arrived at their wedding party.

Det är bara ett problem. Brudgummen och hans brud har inte kommit till sin bröllopsfest.

Några gäster där inne har redan beslutat sig för att fara hem. De tror inte att de kommer. Har Frantz de Galais gjort så förr?

1 We'll go inside now and see what we can do. Vi går in nu och ser vad vi kan göra.

Augustin Thanks, my ladies. I will join you directly, if only I may pull myself a bit together first.

ack, mina damer. Jag kommer strax också, bara jag får hämta mig litet först.

(the old ladies go insideanterna går in)

Augustin A dream that really is true, a world of beauty that isn't a dream, and a princess like from another better world, who raises me, a farmer's boy, to be a prince and her equal in her own castle - could life be more enchanting?

En dröm som verkligen är verklig, en skönhetsvärld som inte är en dröm, och en prinsessa som från en annan bättre värld, som upphöjer mig, en boddräng, till prins och jämlike i sitt eget slott - kan livet bli mera förtrollande?

Frantz My friend, you stand here alone and outside. You don't join the party? in vän, ni står här ensam och utanför? Ni deltar ej i festen?

Jag försöker bara hämta mig från alla överväldigande intryck.

Jag förstår. Så festen var lyckad? Alla kom?

Hela världen kom, alla världens vackraste och älskligaste människor, mest gamla och barn.

Det var så jag ville ha det. Jag ville föra min älskade till en bättre värld och få henne

Frantz Frantz de Galais.

Augustin *(cautiouslyförsiktigt)* And your bride?

Och er brud?

Hon kom inte. Hon blev aldrig min brud. Hon ville inte bli min prinsessa. Hon kände sig inte värdig. Bröllopet är avblåst. Och ingen vet ännu om det utom jag.

Jag beklagar.

Jag kan inte gå in dit. Jag vill inte se min syster i ögonen. Jag kan inte komma med förklaringar. Jag kan bara fly, som jag alltid har gjort, från min egen olycka och alla mina katastrofer. Ack, vad skall jag ta mig till!

Frantz And I have reasons to be. I don't know how to solve this.

Och jag har skäl att vara det. Jag vet inte hur jag skall lösa detta.

Er syster är där inne med Pierrot och alla barnen.

Ni får hälsa dem. Jag kan inget göra.

Frantz No one can help me. Take care of my sister. Ingen kan hjälpa mig. Tag hand om min syster. *(rushes outär ut)*

Augustin *(at a loss, after himhandfallen, efter honom)* Such a noble young man, and so lost.

En så ädel ung man, och så förlorad.

ni är ensam här ute.

Ja, jag är verkligen mycket ensam.

Augustin Your brother. Er

bror.

Formaterat: Engelska (Storbritannien)

Var han här?

Yvonne Where is he now?

Var är han nu?

Yvonne And his bride?

Och hans brud?

Yvonne (afraidförskrämt) Frantz! Frantz! (grasps Augustin's arm, then hurries back insideriper Augustin i armen, skyndar sedan in igen) Pierrot! Pierrot!
(A shot is heard outside to the rightEtt skott hörs ute till höger.)

Augustin This party has run off the rails. I had better be on my way home... Den
här festen har kommit av sig. Det är bäst jag ger mig av hem... (hurries in towards the
castle alsoskyndar in mot slottet även han)

Pierrot (comes rushing outkommer rusande ut) Frantz! Frantz! Noe! Noe!
(rushes outstörtar ut. Blackout.)

Formaterat: Engelska (Storbritannien)

Formaterat: Teckensnitt:Kursiv

Formaterat: Engelska (Storbritannien)

Formaterat: Engelska (Storbritannien)

Formaterat: Engelska (Storbritannien)

Scene 3. In the forest skogen.

(Pierrot rushes forth to take care of Frantz, who has shot himself in his head)

Pierrot Frantz! Frantz! How could you!

Frantz Ganache! Forgive me that I am alive!

Ganache I would never have forgiven you if you had died.

Frantz Still my greatest crime is to be alive, that I shamefully survived my own suicide! How could she do it, Ganache? What did I do wrong? All I wanted was to exonerate her!

Ganache Even the deepest fallen women have their pride, Frantz. Sometimes their self-love is greater than anyone else's love.

Frantz What was wrong then about my love?

Ganache There was nothing wrong with it. That's what was wrong with it. It was too pure and unselfish to be taken seriously.

Frantz Was that wrong then?

Ganache No. Your only wrong was to shoot yourself, to ruin your own party and leave your own family in utter worry, despair and uncertainty.

Frantz I left a messenger behind.

Ganache That's not enough.

Frantz I can never face my family any more, Ganache, not after this.

Ganache That's what you have to do.

Frantz But my sister! All the troubles she had for the party! All the invitations, all the guests, the whole party, the whole theatre, and then there was no performance!

Ganache They had everything for free. They were invited for the finest feast in the world. They can't complain.

Frantz But my sister!

Ganache Some disappointment. That's all.

Frantz Take me away from here, Ganache. I have to go into exile and live incognito for some time. I have to learn how my messenger conveyed my message, if he did.

Ganache I know who it was. We can find him.

Frantz And forgive me yet again, Ganache.

Ganache Forgive you for what?
Frantz For having missed.
Ganache Why are all suicides always so endlessly pathetic, especially when they again and again succeed in surviving?
Frantz You are right, *Ganache*. That's why suicides always are so popular: they are always so extremely pitiable in their self-destructive self-love.
Ganache *Frantz*, that is maybe the point.
Frantz It is enough. Carry me away from here before I bleed to death.
Ganache It's only your love that has bled to death. Unfortunately you are managing.
Frantz Which I regret with all my heart.
Ganache You are deplorable, *Monsieur*, for having at all tried to take your life and failed at that.
Frantz That's what I mean.
Ganache Just don't do it again.
Frantz I will try not to.
(Ganache carries him out copiously bleeding.)

Act II scene 1. A shabby joint.
Augustin with François, Frantz with Ganache.

Augustin I recognized you from the beginning, but I didn't want to say anything since I didn't wish to give you away.
Frantz What did you think I was after?
Augustin That's what I didn't dare to guess.
Frantz We stole your map.
Augustin But you returned it. With improvements.
Frantz We could only act incognito. We stole your map to learn how much you had engaged in our affair.
Augustin I understood you acted incognito for that very reason, and therefore I respected your incognito. But why are you now putting your cards on the table, if you wish to remain incognito?
Frantz I can never show myself to my family any more, not after a suicide attempt and an aborted wedding. It wouldn't do. I am not even sure if it hadn't been best for me and for everyone if I had been allowed to die."
Augustin Why then did you do it so awkwardly? The bullet couldn't have more than scratched you.
Frantz Shall I unwind my bloody bandages and show you? *(removes his cap and reveals his bloodied head bandage)* The wounds open again now and then. But how my head bleeds is nothing to how my heart is constantly bleeding.
Augustin Why did she refuse you?
Ganache Don't torture him, *Augustine*. They were just not suited for each other. *Frantz* acted out of generous idealism while she suffered from incurable heart wounds, which his compassion only made worse.
Augustin I see.

Frantz But I can understand that you and my sister found each other. Have you kept in touch?

Augustin (*sighs*) I have lost it. I can't even find my way back to your castle.

Frantz I am afraid it is abandoned now, and then not even my completed map would help. But we used to reside together in Paris, she and I. Here is the address. (*offers him a note on the table*)

Augustin At least you give me some hope.

Frantz That's all I can give you. For me there is no hope.

Augustin What will you do?

Frantz That's the big question. I already failed in my suicide, and that was all I was good for. I might go to sea.

Ganache Your family must have a sign of life from you, Frantz. They are weeping blood for your sake.

Frantz (*hits the table*) Have I then not wept more than just blood? (*checks himself*) I am sorry. I will never get over it. That is why I am confiding in you, Augustin. I think you could comfort my sister. Be a brother to her instead of the one she has lost. And if you can, become even more.

Augustin I would gladly try.

Frantz That gives me pleasure. Then I can trust you.

Augustin Will we hear from you again?

Frantz No one knows and I least of all. But you will certainly hear *about* me.

Ganache I will try to keep him from doing anything foolish again.

Augustin Do that, Ganache. Never desert him.

Ganache Never.

Augustin Come, François. We are finished here.

Frantz Thanks for coming.

Augustin Thanks for bungling your suicide. Or else I would never have got a second chance.

Ganache There is always a second chance whatever happens.

Augustin Thus speaks an incurable optimist.

François Come, Augustin. (*they leave*)

Frantz I hope he will find her.

Ganache That's more than I could do.

Frantz Why?

Ganache Your entire family has vanished, and they say your sister is married.

Frantz With whom?

Ganache They don't say.

Frantz Typical. Those rumours are the worst that can neither be proved nor disproved.

Ganache I think Augustin will find her.

Frantz I hope you are right.

Scene 2. At uncle Florentin's.

Florentin How kind of you to visit me, my dear nephew. What brings me the honour?

François I heard a rumour from one of my old classmates, uncle, that you knew a certain old Monsieur de Galais.

Florentin Indeed I do. He comes here regularly.

François Is it true that he owns a castle?

Florentin He did. It has been pulled down now, and the buyers levelled it with the ground to expand their hunting grounds. But he still lives on in one of the smaller houses with his daughter.

François Isn't she married?

Florentin No, why should she be? Are you claiming her? She naturally has no dowry.

François How come that such a noble and rich family was ruined?

Florentin It was the son. He was capricious and had all kinds of odd ideas, and both the father and the mother considered it their obligation to gratify his every wish and therefore spoiled him from the start. She is gone now, but the father is in good shape, and his daughter looks after him. Part of the son's whims was a certain lust for splendour which constantly demanded sumptuous parties. Again and again ostentatious feasts were organised with a vast number of guests and engaged actors from Paris just to please the son Frantz, who could never have enough. But one of those feasts became one too much. It was his engagement party, the young boy had set his mind on getting married although he was far too young and immature, which ended up in a disaster. When it came to the point the bride was unwilling, there was no engagement, and then the whole party had already been organised. Young Frantz de Galais appears to have attempted to shoot himself and then disappeared and has never been heard of since. That broke his mother's heart, who went to bed never to rise again. Then creditors started to turn up from years back. *(The doorbell.)* We have visitors.

François Who would visit you at this late hour?

Florentin It could only be old Monsieur de Galais and his daughter.

(These enter.)

Come in, come in! It's been too long since you were here last time, Monsieur de Galais.

Galais I have been somewhat sickly. But I see that you have a visitor.

Florentin It's just my nephew François. He is to succeed his father as school master of Sainte-Agathe.

Yvonne I always wished to be a teacher myself.

François Everyone would have had the greatest respect for you, mademoiselle.

Yvonne Therefore I might not have been suitable.

François Why not?

Yvonne Students must always question. If they dare not question what they are being taught, the teacher is redundant.

Galais Yvonne means that our teachers are far too authoritarian.

François My father was always all tolerance. He allowed anything in his class, and therefore there never was any trouble.

Yvonne And you will surely be as good a teacher as he.

Florentin Mademoiselle, my nephew did for some reason believe you were married.

Yvonne Where did he get that idea? Whom would I have married?

François I was not the one who overheard it. It was a good friend.
Yvonne Who listens to false rumours?
François He heard it from a man who was badly wounded in his head but whose life was saved by a certain Pierrot.
Yvonne (shaken but in control) And who then was your good friend?
François A certain Augustin Meaulnes.
Yvonne (finds it hard to control herself) And where is he now?
François Last time I heard from him he was in Paris trying to find you.
Yvonne I haven't been in Paris since my brother disappeared and my mother passed away.
François Did you never have any notice from your brother?
Yvonne You seem to have had news of him later than I.
Galais What do you know, François Seurel?
François Alas, I know nothing. I don't even have any contact with Meaulnes any more. I had three melancholy letters from Paris about his fruitless searchings for you. He gave up and has since remained silent.
Yvonne I remember him well, a tall, well-shaped and sympathetic young man of sensitive politeness.
François He has never forgotten you.
Yvonne Do you have any possibility to get in touch with him?
François I could try.
Yvonne Perhaps he knows more than I about my brother.
François The one who knows most is our friend Pierrot, of whom I don't even know his name.
Yvonne My brother's adjutant in all his games. He has also been gone since then.
François Out of loyalty with your brother no doubt.
Yvonne (to Galais) There is still hope, father.
Galais Do you really think so, my heart? I have given up long ago. We spoiled him too much, which only turned him miserable.
Yvonne But he is still alive.
Galais In what capacity? As a phantom or a shadow in the underground? In exile or in the gutter? And what is he living on, if he lives? He could never have or do anything for money.
Yvonne He could still be back.
Galais I don't believe it until I myself see him alive again. Now I am upset again. We had better leave. *(rises)*
Florentin That was not our intention, my friend.
Galais Of course not. It just turned out, and now it's finished. Yvonne, we are leaving immediately.
Yvonne Yes, father. *(helps him out)* Pardon us. Now he will have another difficult night.
François (rising) I had absolutely no intention...
Yvonne Thanks for your news, François. To us it was good in spite of all. *(leaves with her father)*
Florentin We made him upset, and he comes here seldom. Now he will be seen even more seldom.

François It was my fault.
Florentin Not at all, François. You made a contribution, and your news *was* good. I could see that from Mademoiselle de Galais' face.
François I have never seen a more beautiful girl. Now I understand Augustin.
Florentin You had better get in touch with him before she vanishes like her brother.

Scene 3.

Meaulnes alone in his study by his desk. A knock.

Augustin Come in. (*François comes in.*)
François Seurel! I don't know if your appearance takes me by positive or negative surprise. And why do you come here to haunt me in my desert life as a phantom from the past?
François Augustin, I have found her. She isn't married at all.
Augustin Of whom are you speaking?
François Of *her* of course, whom you searched for in vain in Paris, although she all the time was here in the vicinity!
Augustin I gave her up long ago. Don't try to recall my lost dreams. They mocked me from the start.
François Meaulnes, wake up, she lives, and she is yours if you want her, and you are right: she is the most beautiful young lady in the world.
Augustin And where did you find this apparition?
François The place is called *Les Sablonnières*. It was really a castle once, but it has been pulled down and sold to an enterpiser, who had it demolished to exploit the ground. She is living there in a smaller house with her father.
Augustin And the brother? The unhappy bridegroom? Do you know anything about him?
François Nothing. He remains lost without a trace. I learned something about his bride though.
Augustin Tell me!
François She ran away and was found in the forest dressed up as a boy. She ran off, for she imagined things, that Frantz preferred her sister when he gave her some attention, so she said she would go home to fetch a shawl but dressed up in men's clothes instead and ran off to Paris, where she is now working as a seamstress close to Notre Dame.
Augustin This news is crushing what you are telling me, François. And Yvonne has never been married?
François No.
Augustin Why was I then told that she was? Why was I deceived?
François Since she is so beautiful she must have had a number of suitors. Maybe her brother said so to protect her.
Augustin That's typical of brothers of beautiful sisters. And Frantz was something of a born mythomaniac.
François You must come along and meet her, Augustin.
Augustin Under so different circumstances? The wondrous castle sold and demolished? How could such a family come into such poor circumstances?

François They were ruined by the son's extravagant parties. Especially the last one appears to have cost them everything, and when the wedding came to nothing and the son shot himself and disappeared, they lost all their friends and the mother died.

Augustin And in this tragedy the fairest of all flowers has survived and not abandoned her father.

François You must meet her, Meaulnes.

Augustin Yes, I suppose I must. I can't get away from my destiny. My love has only increased with the years the more hopeless it has appeared. Lead me back to the light, François, and let me find out if my dream was real in spite of all or not.

François It will be my pleasure, Augustin.

Scene 4. The same garden as in act I scene 2 but with no castle.

Yvonne somewhat more mature in simpler dress. Augustin modest but proper.

Yvonne I recognize you, Augustin Meaulnes.

Augustin Still it was eternities ago.

Yvonne The timeless feast had an abrupt end but continues anyway.

Augustin Everything has changed, but you are still the same.

Yvonne Am I? Life has been hard on us. We should be unrecognizable.

Augustin Your father is bent but tough. You seem somewhat frailer but unchanged.

Yvonne My brother attempted suicide. That suicide struck his family harder than himself.

Augustin We must find him.

Yvonne Do you think it is possible?

Augustin It must be possible, since he is alive.

Yvonne You make me believe the impossible.

Augustin The incredible has proved true.

Yvonne What do you mean?

Augustin I am back here with you.

Yvonne But under what altered circumstances? We were forced to sell our castle, our home, which proved to be so dilapidated, that the new owners had to pull it down immediately.

Augustin The castle was a moment of unreality that passed, but the dream still remains, and we can never lose it.

Yvonne Our paradise was transformed into a hell when my brother's wedding feast ended in tragedy with an eloped bride and suicide. We have nothing left, Meaulnes. We are completely ruined.

Augustin Your heart and your beauty still remain. In the wildest gardens you find the most beautiful flowers.

Yvonne What do you mean by that?

Augustin (on his knees) Yvonne, you can't guess how much I have tortured myself for your sake, how I waited for days and nights outside your house in Paris for any sign of life, how the rumour of your marriage lashed my soul and only accelerated its gushing flow of blood, how the uncertainty of your destiny, your situation and your

existence only made me live for you the more intensively all since the only time we met. Yes, Yvonne, I have only loved you since our single fleeting encounter, and I could not love anyone else. Would you want to marry me?

Yvonne (takes him tenderly by the cheek) My friend, I knew you were my best friend from the beginning. You could never be anything else. Yes, Augustin Meaulnes, I knew I belonged to you from the beginning, and your proposal does not come as any surprise. On the contrary, it appears as the most natural thing in the world.

Augustin So you could accept me, a rustic farmer with no position and without having anything to offer you?

Yvonne You offered yourself and your love. That is more than the whole world.

Augustin (embraces her) Yvonne, I never thought this could become real.

Yvonne The reality is always unreal, Augustin. You should get used to it.

Augustin You should teach me how to do it.

Yvonne You are on the right course. It's just to carry on.

Augustin Thanks, Yvonne, for returning.

Yvonne I am the one to thank you for never having left me.

Augustin Let's never leave each other again.

(They go out together.)

Act III scene 1.

(A hooting is heard, like the call of an owl. Frantz becomes visible, long-haired, worn and torn. He is giving the signal.)

François (enters) Frantz! What are you doing here? Why didn't you come to the wedding?

Frantz So the great Meaulnes has really married my sister. Then the rumour was true.

François But why are you coming now? You can't disturb them now in their fresh happiness.

Frantz I had to. Augustin must help me find my love. I know that she is living, alive, and you and Augustin swore to help me long ago. He has won his love. Let me then win mine in the name of justice!

François They were engaged for five months, and then you appear now on their wedding day after their wedding already has been celebrated. Why didn't you come earlier?

Frantz I was in Germany, and I intend to return there at once. But Augustin has promised to stand by me.

François The way you look. You are a prince fallen into the gutter. Isn't it impractical to have your hair so long?

Frantz It keeps growing by itself. There is nothing I can do about it.

François Yes, you can cut it.

Frantz Yes, I suppose I should do that sometime.

Ganache (appears) Frantz! The carriage is waiting! It can't wait any longer!

Frantz I have to be off. Tell your friend Augustin that he sacredly promised to help me.

François Not on his wedding day!

Frantz There will be other days. Farewell, François. *(leaves with Ganache)*

François (beside himself) That hopeless idiot!
Augustin (comes rushing in) Where is he? I heard his signal.
François You shouldn't have come out.
Augustin I know, but here I am. Where is he?
François He has gone to Germany.
Augustin Why then did he call for us?
François He still thinks he could find his lost love in Paris with your help.
Augustin So that's why he has returned.
Yvonne (comes rushing in, torn and bloody) Meaulnes! I thought you had left me!
Augustin I will never leave you. But you have been torn by the bushes. Wipe your blood off your front, for God's sake!
Yvonne I didn't watch my step.
Augustin You must have rushed off in a panic.
Yvonne Yes, I did.
Augustin Don't do it again, my love, for your own sake.
Yvonne I did it for your sake.
Augustin Come, Yvonne, let's go back inside. *(takes care of her)*
Yvonne Yes, my love.
Augustin Thanks for keeping watch, François. Don't let him get away again if he comes back.
Yvonne Who was here?
Augustin Your brother was here, Yvonne, but he went off again before I had had time to see him.
Yvonne Alas! Why didn't he come in to us?
Augustin We will have to ask him next time he turns up.
François You had better go inside with her and take care of her, Augustin.
Augustin Yes. *(takes care of Yvonne and goes inside with her)*
François Their matrimonial happiness cannot be disturbed, for it is too young, tender and vulnerable, but Frantz just ignores that, since he is in an opposite position. I just hope he will not come importuning again!

Scene 2. Inside.

Augustin My love, you shouldn't have rushed out into the cold so desperately.
Yvonne I didn't know where you had gone. Fortunately you were still there. Yes, it was foolish of me to become so upset.
Augustin No, it was my fault, but we are faced by a more difficult trial.
Yvonne You are not going to leave me?
Augustin Only temporarily. I have to go for a longer journey. There is something I must do before I can start living in peace with my conscience.
Yvonne Won't you tell me what it is?
Augustin I can't, until I have solved the problem.
Yvonne Then it's a difficult problem to solve, if you don't know what it is.
Augustin Yes, my love, it is very difficult, and I am the only one who can solve it.
Yvonne When are you leaving?
Augustin Tomorrow.

Yvonne Then we have the night. Were you happy with your wedding?
Augustin It couldn't have been more ideal.
Yvonne You only say so to be polite. It was a poor folks' wedding with few invited and no proper feast, for the bride was without a dowry, and her father was without means.
Augustin Don't say so. You are only hurting yourself.
Yvonne But we had a long and wonderful engagement.
Augustin Yes, we did.
Yvonne Will you be back?
Augustin Of course, but not until my task is completed, so that I can tell you about it.
Yvonne I will long for that day, when my hero comes home after having solved all the problems in the world.
Augustin Only one of them and that a most personal and private one.
Yvonne Your mystifications only make you more attractive.
Augustin My long way to you was difficult, but now when at last I have reached you there is one last obstacle in the way, which I must remove for our happiness.
Yvonne Will you then be at home?
Augustin Yes, then I will be at home.
Yvonne Then I give you allowance, but I will wait for you.
Augustin And I will long for you.
Yvonne Come. We have the night.
Augustin Yes, my love.

Scene 3. Outside.

François (arrives at the door and knocks. Monsieur de Galais opens.)
Galais François Seurel! Shouldn't you be at school?
François I took the day off. My pupils will have to manage on their own for a while. I don't know why, but I suddenly became concerned about Mademoiselle.
Galais She is ill.
François What is the matter with her?
Galais Fever.
Yvonne (from inside) Let him in, father.
Galais Still it is against my better common sense. *(lets him in. The walls slide apart, and he is inside with Yvonne, who is lying in bed)*
François It grieves me to find you ailing, Madame.
Yvonne It will pass. It's just fever.
Galais It started when Augustin left her.
Yvonne He is just on leave, father.
François Has Augustin gone away?
Yvonne He will be back.
François When?
Galais No one knows.
Yvonne Leave us, father. I wish to speak alone with François.
Galais Just don't tire her out. *(leaves)*

François That's the last thing I wish to do. But why did he go away?
Yvonne He was very mysterious and would not tell me the reason. Therefore I think his happiness became too much for him. He finally found his princess, but that was too much for him.
François You were the only thing he ever lived for.
Yvonne I also imagined that until he left. But he also has something else, a secret which he has no right to reveal, an enigma which he perhaps can't even figure out himself and which he must resolve before he can take responsibility for his family.
François You suggest, Madame...
Yvonne Yes, François, I am pregnant. That's why I am pending between health and weakness, but it will pass.
François He must come home at once.
Yvonne He will come as soon as he can.
François You really are the ideal wife who is prepared to endure anything just for your husband's sake.
Yvonne We women are like that. That's why we exist.
François You exist for being loved and for being taken care of, for the sake of life.
Yvonne Believe me, François, that is what Augustin is doing, whatever he is doing and no matter how little we know about what he is doing.
François I believe you.
Yvonne Thanks for the chat. I think you can go now. I already feel much better.
François Call on me any time.
Yvonne You have your own children to mind. I have my father here, and I couldn't have any better support.
François I will do all I can for you. I will inquire for him.
Yvonne No, don't do that. Give him all the freedom he needs, so that he will be certain to succeed.
François As you wish, Madame.
Yvonne Now let me sleep a while.
François (*leaves discreetly, passes Monsieur de Galais, indicates to him with a finger on his lips that she is asleep.*)
Galais Thank you, my son.
(François leaves. Monsieur de Galais goes in to his daughter and sits down to wake by her side.)

Scene 4.

François (*rummages around on the attic and finds an old notebook*) That must be from our school days. (*turns over some leaves*) But what have you written here, Augustin? This is not from your school days. This is from your days in Paris!
Augustin (*appears on the opposite side of the stage, like in a scene of its own*) I met her outside the house of my love. She was the one who made me lose all hope by being certain that Yvonne was married. She also knew *Les Sablonnières* and the great feast there and was in some way connected with the family, why she raised my interest. We did have a common interest. But she never wanted to tell me everything, and it turned more and more like to a relationship...

Valentine, why won't you tell me what really was between you and that family? Were you employed by them? And how do you know for certain that Yvonne is married?

Valentine They used to come here together, she and her brother. I learned from others that she had a fiancé and would be married.

Augustin When did you last see the family?

Valentine Oh, it was a long time ago.

Augustin And they haven't been here at all while you were in Paris?

Valentine No, the house was always quite empty and only lived by the breath of the melancholy of their absence.

Augustin And still you come here almost daily.

Valentine You too.

Augustin I don't know what it is that attracts me to you, but in some way that family is connected to our destiny and turning it to one, perhaps just because it now seems so certain that I never will have my love.

Valentine So you loved her?

Augustin Infinitely.

Valentine But you were not engaged?

Augustin No, we only met once.

Valentine And still you claim her?

Augustin No, I only love her.

Valentine We have both lost our love. Why then don't we seek comfort in each other?

Augustin Destiny seems to bring us to it, and we don't seem to have any choice, do we?

Valentine You are welcome to join me. I was fallen anyway from the beginning.

Augustin You are a very unhappy woman.

Valentine I was happy in my dreams that were smothered.

Augustin But why did he fail you? You are young and beautiful and could bring anyone to court you.

Valentine He was not the one who failed me. I was the one who let him down.

Augustin But why did you do that if you loved him?

Valentine He was too good for me. I wasn't worthy of him. I was just a fallen woman who had been expelled from home while he was a prince of noble blood who offered me an entire castle with gold and green forests...

Augustin You are not saying...

Valentine What?

Augustin That you were the intended wife of Frantz de Galais.

Valentine I couldn't go through with it. He was too good for me. He wanted to give me everything, but I had nothing at all to offer him. I backed out in the last moment.

Augustin But why did you not tell me this before?

Valentine You did not ask me.

Augustin But there is nothing else that I have been asking you about all the time! Every day I have been questioning you about what you knew of that family, and not until now you reveal that you yourself was his fiancée!

Valentine It was so sensitive.

Augustin Yes, it was so sensitive that Frantz de Galais tried to shoot himself when you failed him, and since then he has been travelling everywhere around just in a desperate search for you!

Valentine What are you saying!

Augustin The truth! It's all over, Valentine. I could never take you away from him. On the contrary I should now concentrate entirely on finding him again to tell him that I have found you.

Valentine Couldn't we remain friends?

Augustin Of course, since we are almost related by the fact that I should have been your husband's sister's husband. (*hurries out*)

Valentine So that's why he was here. He has never let her go, and Frantz has never let me go. But who could ever get anyone? The prospects of love seem ever hopeless, since it appears to be constantly doomed for practical problems...

Scene 5. The following year.

Galais She has had a difficult childbirth and is very weak.

François How is the child?

Galais The little girl will manage. But the doctor has expressly maintained the importance of Yvonne not getting worried by learning the seriousness of her condition.

François So it is very serious?

Galais We don't know how serious it is.

François If only Meaulnes would come back home!

Galais They still don't know where he is? He has still given no notice?

François I fear that he has taken it upon himself to reunite Frantz with his vanished bride, whom he once happened to meet in Paris.

Galais Frantz. Always Frantz. He always caused all our disasters. But we loved him. He was such an adorable child with such a boundless creative imagination that always got the better of him...

Yvonne (moving in bed, terribly emaciated) Is François here?

Galais Yes, he is here, my child. (*They gather around her*)

Yvonne No news of Augustin, dearest François?

François Alas, I just told your father about my suspicion that he has taken it upon himself to find Frantz' fiancée for him. He seems to have run into her in Paris.

Yvonne He searched for me but found her?

François Yes, Yvonne, but he let her go immediately as soon as he realized who she was. She appears to have convinced him that you were already married.

Yvonne Alas, my poor over-protecting, wild mythomaniac brother!

Galais Do you think he could succeed at all?

François Last time we met Frantz, he was on his way to Germany. Yes, I actually think that he if anyone could succeed.

Yvonne He has only been gone for a year.

Galais (to François) And during that year my daughter has constantly been pining away more and more. Her delivery became too hard for her, and it was a miracle that

she survived, but she has never been well again since Augustin departed. He had better hurry home if he wants to see her again at all.

Yvonne What are you saying about Augustin?

François That I believe he is on his way home.

Yvonne Yes, he is always on his way home, but he never arrives in time. I am afraid I don't have time to wait for him any longer.

François Yvonne!

Galais My child! It will pass! You will soon be well again!

Yvonne Yes, on the other side of the grave, where I may rejoice at the living, which I can't do any more among the living.

Galais We must not tire her out.

Yvonne Father, you always said that all since we were children. We were always to be treated with silk gloves and be wrapped in cocoons of cotton for imagined safety. It would have been better, father, if we from the start had been brought up with the horrors of reality. Then perhaps we could have lived a little longer, and then perhaps Frantz had not bolted with our lives and resources to by any means have his imagined safety and happy fantasy world manifested in reality, which always mocks us by never turning into how we would desire it to be.

Galais My child, you must not tire yourself out. Go to sleep instead. You need rest.

Yvonne If only I could sleep. But I love too much, and I was too much loved by my husband. Therefore we are punished by destiny to have our love so cruelly cut short...

Galais Try to sleep, my child. Close your eyes.

Yvonne How could I sleep when I know that I am dying?

Galais You must not say so, my child. If you die I could never survive you. I already lost your mother, and Frantz is lost for us. Whatever will be left if even you leave us? Only the remnants of my own ego torn asunder, which I would only find unbearable.

Yvonne Father, it will pass. Then we will rejoin in heaven.

Galais No, my child, don't give up so easily! Don't let go of life! It still has everything to offer you!

Yvonne I die satisfied, for I had the experience of being loved by a faithful husband.

Galais (to François) Who failed her as soon as he had made her pregnant.

Yvonne No, now you do him wrong. He only minded his other obligations.

Galais You know nothing about that.

Yvonne On the contrary, I know everything about it, for I can feel it.

François Don't force her, Monsieur.

Galais On the contrary, I always tried to make her take it easy, for she always worked herself up for love.

François Love works that way.

Yvonne Thank you, François. You know what is all about. But I will obey you, father. Now let me sleep. I think I could succeed with that now, for I know the only thing remaining for me of life and of eternity is golden dreams.

Galais Come, my son. We must let her sleep.

François (lets himself reluctantly be led out of the room)

Galais She hasn't slept for I don't know how many nights. She has always kept asking about Meaulnes and her child and kept herself informed about everyone's good health while she herself has just kept on fading out in her fits of coughing...

(In the next moment there is a hard knock on the door. Galais and François are like paralysed. When no one opens, the door is brusquely opened from the outside, and enter – Augustin with Frantz and Valentine.)

Augustin (simply) We are at home. *(observes the silence of François and Galais)* Where is she?

François She is asleep.

Galais She must not be disturbed now, Augustin, no matter how very welcome you are.

(goes to greet Frantz overwhelmed by his feelings)

Frantz Everything is now in order, father, after years of wayward wanderings. Augustin has found us and brought us home.

Galais (overwhelmed) Yes, I can see that. *(then embraces his son with infinite tenderness)*

Augustin (looks from François to Galais) You are keeping something from me. Where is she?

François (can't be but honest) In there.

Augustin (rushes in to Yvonne, throws himself down by her side, but she does does not move.) Yvonne! *(takes her face in his hands, kisses her, caresses her, but she does not wake up.)* Yvonne! I never left you except to return! How could we now be reunited? *(embraces her and cries helplessly)*

Galais This is too much.

Valentine You have another daughter, Monsieur de Galais, instead of the one you lost, and this time I will not run away.

Frantz (hurries up to Meaulnes) He put everything in order but lost his love himself in the effort. Everything is my own fault.

Augustin (through his tears) No, Frantz, it is actually no one's fault this time. We all did as best as we could, and still everything has gone so totally wrong without anyone's intention and with no one to blame for it. We are all innocent, for none of us engaged in anything but love. Were we wrong then, thou eternity, that took her away from me?

François (goes up to Augustin and lays a hand on his shoulder) Augustin, you have a daughter.

Augustin She gave life? I have a child?

(Galais indicates to Valentine where the child is. She immediately goes for it and carries it up to Augustine.)

A daughter. My little Yvonne. *(receives her with deep piety, rises and is immediately quite busy with it, starting to lull her.)*

Valentine (to Galais) I think Yvonne is happy for his return.

Galais Which one of them? The child or my daughter?

Valentine Both.

(While Augustin completely absorbed walks around lulling the child, François goes to cover Yvonne's face. He and Frantz find each other.)

François Welcome home, Frantz.

(They take each other's hands. You can understand that their friendship will persist and that Frantz now at last has reached maturity.)

Curtain.

*(Finland 10.6.2006,
translated in October 2021)*

Post Script.

There are few books that have come to mean so much for me as Henri Alain-Fournier's "*Le grand Meaulnes*" which, when I first read it at the age of fifteen, I just couldn't help going on re-reading again and again. Here is now a small dramatization with a few extra scenes that are not found in the book, which I hope rather will underline the importance of how much in the book is written between the lines than be regarded as anything else. Henri Alain-Fournier's one and single novel will remain unique of its kind and unsurpassable as it is.

The playwright.