

## A Garage Wedding

*Man sollte nie über einen Menschen spotten,  
[...] man weiss nicht, ob man ihn nicht eines  
Tages heiratet.*

(Never mock anyone you might marry one day.)

Max Frisch, *Die Schwierigen* (Difficult People)

During their courtship Yvonne frequently amazed Ted with radical or unusual plans and ideas. Four months in she startled him with one particular bombshell. “I’m taking instructions,” she announced casually. Impatient to know what she meant, Ted’s nerves tingled. Just a few days earlier they had had a debate about science and religion. By now such dialogues had become a recurring feature of their conversations. Invariably the discussions were prompted by a desire to explore the differences between them as they were both anxious to get closer. They still knew too little about each other.

Ted had previously told Yvonne that he occasionally went to Sunday Mass on his own to remember his parents, but his main reason for attending services was to reflect on where his life was going. He was not “a religious person”, saying he was irritated by what he considered a smug clergy. But when he had previously asked her whether she would like to join him the suggestion had prompted an outraged response from her: “I’m not getting involved in something I don’t know and don’t understand.” She had added, “Frankly, Ted, I wonder how an intellectual like you, a judge in the making, can actually believe in all this wishful thinking.” Now he feared another misunderstanding.

“A Father McEnroe will get in touch with you,” Yvonne informed him matter-of-factly. “He’s the university chaplain.” Ted was floored. He had no ambition to proselytise, but he could not resist commenting: “I thought you didn’t want to understand what was involved.” Yvonne replied with one of her stern looks, signalling she was unwilling to debate the matter.

Once, when he had quoted biblical lines like *feed my lambs, tend my sheep* to her, she’d got really upset. “Don’t give me that holy stuff about sheep! I don’t consider myself part of a herd! And anyway, you know what they do with sacrificial lambs. It’s a crazy, murderous analogy. How dare you draw such comparison! Are you trying to kill me?” In helpless exhaustion Ted had fallen silent, unable to respond to her wayward overreaction. Admittedly he’d asked for it. He knew his friend and confidante Yvonne, the non-believing scientist, would be offended. He had decided to drop the subject, but it was too late. She’d pushed him aside and stormed out of the room. When she’d reached the kitchen she turned around and shouted, “I’m making lambs fry!” With that she’d disappeared, slamming the door behind her to let him know she would not speak to him for a while.

Shortly afterwards, however, she returned teary-eyed. “*Je n’existe pas*,” she’d whispered. Her French reminded him that, like most Swiss, Yvonne was a speaker of three native languages – French, German and Italian. As a typical Australian, listening to Yvonne made Ted conscious of his own monolingual restriction. She also spoke English, and so it seemed incongruous when she appeared to have difficulty expressing herself with all those languages at hand. But when she talked about science and life her language was articulate, fluent and passionate. More and more Ted came to love these discussions with Yvonne. What a difference it was! He was more excited by them than by the promise of intimate encounters with other women. The memory of Jana’s lovemaking, the seductive scent of her perfume and the elation of their orgasms had lost their power. When he was with Yvonne, sex belonged to another world. Ted had tried to explain to others about the caring commitment two people could make to

each other without sex being part of the equation. He wanted them to understand it was a relationship based on looking after someone in need, not a “religious” act. Was that concept really so challenging? But no one wanted to know or even try to understand. Not even Yvonne – did she not know he was talking about them? Those he spoke to about this just shook their heads in embarrassed disbelief.

Now, despite her wilful earlier outbursts against Christian theology, Yvonne had coolly informed him she was “receiving instructions”. Was she teasing him or seriously planning to convert? Faith seemed totally at odds with Yvonne’s independent sensibility. Did she suddenly believe in miracles, confessions and original sin? The question unsettled him deeply. Confused and disturbed, he wondered what was going on.

In one of their discussions, Yvonne had flippantly referred to herself as “a miracle”, before withdrawing the term and replacing it with “a curse”. Initially Ted did not take much notice of the excessive descriptions, assuming them to be part of her peculiar ways. It took him a while to decipher what she might have meant. By then Yvonne had told him about her studies in molecular biology, her fascination with the unfolding of the complete genetic material encoded in the DNA of an organism and the RNA of some viruses, but most of all the mechanisms leading to autoimmune diseases – a new field in science. As yet, not much was known about this area, so it was groundbreaking. In this context she had been describing not only herself but constituent genes of the human body generally, as “a miracle”. To her, life seemed to be a marvel of many imperfections. In light of her collapse at Newman College and the evasive descriptions of the medical staff at St Vincent’s, Yvonne’s captivation with autoimmune diseases unsettled Ted. She described the human immune system in unusual terms, as if it were a reflection of complex social behaviour. One of its features was that it habitually differentiated between components of the “self” and the “non-self”. However, there were critical developments when it lost the ability to identify or distinguish between the two. Yvonne’s main obsession was what

she called the body's "self-attack", a central autoimmune disease manifested most prominently in cancer.

Why did he not simply ask Yvonne whether she was suffering from that disease? Was it too intrusive? He had already encountered her staunch reluctance to discuss the physical condition of her body. Perhaps the time would come when Yvonne would be ready to talk, not just about scientific and philosophical aspects of life in general. Even after St Vincent's her accounts of autoimmune diseases had remained abstract. She had spoken about them almost as if it were an introductory lecture on the subject. Ted had listened intently, albeit without knowing whether to apply what Yvonne was saying to her own state of health. He realised she was offering him a glimpse into a field of knowledge she had made her own. Ted could tell the functions of the immune system fascinated her, above all because of its capacity for memory. He had never heard Yvonne so sharp and articulate. She was able to express very complex processes almost effortlessly. It was as if another person was speaking.

Yet for all her erudite scholarship and precision, Yvonne continued to exclude herself specifically from what she was saying. She talked about the clinical diagnosis of a hypothetical patient, anyone but herself. It became part of their early, almost conspiratorial understanding not to challenge each other with clarifications. They had more intimate ways of understanding. While Ted appreciated Yvonne's passionate dedication and respected her privacy, he wondered how much her devotion to human pathology had been motivated by her need for self-protection. It seemed bizarre to recognise in Yvonne's volatile temperament a conflict between the self and the non-self. Ted had less trouble believing her explanation that she continued to be troubled by unhappy memories. Had it been the doctor who told him, "Your friend suffers from a chronic autoimmune illness"? All Ted could be certain of was that Yvonne had referred to an enemy from within. Was her social behaviour the psychological equivalent of a pathological condition?

Clearly, Ted had not fully understood the nature of her illness,

but he knew how much he loved listening to what Yvonne had to say about life and the human body. Her professional expertise proved stimulating. The field of science she had chosen seemed to be a language of its own. She had introduced him to new and original thoughts, argued a variety of unfamiliar ideas. Ted felt she was undating his mind with precious gifts. Many things she explained as part of autoimmunity and other clinical conditions seemed to have much wider implications. As a postgraduate student Yvonne had reached only the first stage of qualifying for a professional biochemist, yet Ted was impressed. He felt privileged she trusted him enough to talk to him, even though it was from a medical point of view. He could never have imagined her speaking with such authority on other topics.

Not least, their frequently lengthy and passionate discussions offered insights into Yvonne's psyche. They helped him gain an understanding of her intelligence and imagination. In that, Ted made an important discovery: disclosure of Yvonne's personality was the most precious intimacy he could acquire. Amazed and delighted, he found her thoughts and feelings were beginning to have a profoundly unsettling effect on him. He would not have been able to describe it other than that he was aroused by her willingness to reveal to him at least part of her most complex private ideas and emotions. Their blissful agreements led to a powerful oneness he would have been tempted to call erotic. Was there a closeness as intense as introspection, a penetration as deep as carnal knowledge? Ted saw how Yvonne's self-revelation possessed a vulnerable beauty all its own. Desirous to know Yvonne in an ever-deeper and longer-lasting way, he lusted after her mind.

In such a context, Yvonne, committed to scientific knowledge with allegedly no need for spiritual faith, had now suddenly informed Ted of her intention to convert to Catholicism. Had she forgotten their earlier exchanges and assumed he had too? Weeks later, while discussing what Yvonne presumptuously called their future as though it were the most natural thing in the world, she performed for him a

canticle she had sung as a child in church. She told him her mother had encouraged her to believe in the song's plea for guidance, protection and shelter:

*So nimm denn meine Hände  
Und führe mich  
Bis an mein selig Ende  
Und ewiglich.  
Ich mag allein nicht gehen,  
nicht einen Schritt;  
Wo Du wirst geh'n und stehen,  
da nimm mich mit.*

(O take my hand, dear Father, and lead  
Thou me,  
till at my journey's ending I dwell  
with Thee.  
Alone I cannot wander one single day,  
So do Thou guide my footsteps on  
life's rough way.)

Hearing Yvonne sing proved a profound experience for Ted. He was reminded of her spectacular piano playing at Newman. She may have been a brilliant pianist, but she had no voice. Seemingly neither male nor female, she sounded like a mixture of a grumpy bear and a broken clockwork toy, rendering the song in a childlike off-key delivery. But the sounds she made expressed a mournful need that made him shiver. Her discordant rendition moved him deeply. At first he did not know whether to laugh or cry, but realised in time she was appealing to her childhood God, who she claimed no longer to believe in. Perhaps she sang it in memory of her mother's death. Deeply touched, he quietly asked, "Is that how you see your future?"

Yvonne swiftly shook her head and corrected him: "You mean our future." The passion of her statement startled him. He was unsure

how to respond. It would have been cruel to point out he was not her “dear father”. To pacify her, Ted quietly remarked, “Let’s hope you really won’t have to wander alone.” His sympathetic comment was enough to reassure her.

Other more specific questions emerged during the course of the following days. Did they want to rent a terrace at the top of Swanston Street or move to a cheaper flat around Flemington? As the campus was located virtually across the road, Ted thought it would be easy to convince Yvonne to move to Carlton with him. It would be so much more convenient. They could meet briefly during the day, occasionally even share lunch at home. Yet for some reason Yvonne preferred not to move so close to the university. Did she have any idea of the traffic they would encounter if they moved beyond Parkville? It made him speculate whether she may have had a reason for living as far away as Richmond.

“I like to have a home where I’m not constantly reminded of my work,” she pleaded. Although by now Ted knew that seeming contradictions did not trouble Yvonne, he remained puzzled. Hadn’t she told him her biochemical research was the centre of her life? Ted sensed more was to come.

The following weekend, over a bottle of wine, Yvonne gently confided she was wrestling with a problem she wanted to share with him. Conscious of her emotional fragility, especially her volatile fluctuations from assertiveness to vulnerability, Ted had a feeling she was preparing him for a further need to be reassured. Before Yvonne could say anything, he tried to put her mind at ease.

“It’s all right, darling,” he encouraged her. “I agree we should stay together. Don’t worry.” On the spur of the moment he tried to pique her curiosity with: “By the way, I’ve got good news for you ...” However, she all but ignored his entreaty. She was getting increasingly tense. It was as though what she needed to tell him right now seemed to trouble her deeply. It had to be something more urgent and important than how, where and why they would be living together.

Although Ted was sure Yvonne would be excited by what he had to say, he fell silent. His good news could wait. Then he was stunned by her sudden dramatic proclamation.

“I think I should tell you, Ted, we’re not going to have children.” She said it in the same forceful, succinct tone as most of her other unexpected statements or observations, sounding either unwittingly dictatorial or comical. The presumption took his breath away, yet he had learned to respond to Yvonne’s categorical declarations with caution. He had misinterpreted them too often.

“What makes you say that?” he asked. They had not slept with each other like a man and a woman, so he had not anticipated the subject. Yvonne looked tense.

“I won’t have it,” she stammered, overcome with panic. “Children are –” She could not complete the sentence. “My body is not going to get pregnant!” she burst out in despair. Or was it disgust? If Ted had said that the nature of their present relationship left no need for her to worry about such eventuality, she would no doubt have walked out on him without saying another word. Instead, he endeavoured to calm her by remaining composed.

“Well, okay; you’ve told me. You know I’m not going to force anything on you.” He added, “You’re all right, Ivy.” He did not know why he suddenly called her Ivy. It was the first time he used it as a term of affection. Was he quoting from *The Greatest Show on Earth*? Or did he apply the pet name instinctively because it evoked in him associations of climbing or trailing plants? Although it had come to him spontaneously, he felt uneasy now, having invented such an impulsive and flippant nickname for the woman he was determined to look after.

Ted looked at her apprehensively and was relieved to find she didn’t flinch at being addressed this way.

To say more at this moment would have amounted, in adopting Yvonne’s peculiar aphorism, to “going overboard while drowning on deck”. He tried again to lighten the conversation with the news he felt sure would delight her.

“By the way, darling,” he began, “the faculty has just informed me I’ve been awarded a temporary position at the University of Zürich as part of an academic exchange program with Melbourne. It means I’ll be able to accompany you home.” He stopped to gauge her response. Yvonne’s figure seemed frozen. All signs of anger or other emotions had disappeared. She just stared at him in disbelief. Ted continued as if quoting from the official invitation: “Even though Switzerland is not part of the EC, it would allow me to research legal cooperation in Europe as well as lecture on the differences of Australian and Commonwealth courts.”

Yvonne’s eyes grew wider and wider. Her upper body began to shake. Then Ted asked innocently, “What do you think? I need your advice. Should I take it?” Her response continued to be non-verbal. Sobbing and laughing, she fell into his arms, her hands clinging to him like a lifebelt. For a very long time she could not speak. Overcome with emotion she at last let him go.

“You and I, Ted,” she spluttered, “going home together!” He had never seen Yvonne so unreservedly happy. Confronted with her utter joy and relief, he wondered why at the very moment, when chance had given him direction and purpose, he began feeling apprehensive about their future. Had Yvonne talked him into the idea of a life together, or was this really a case of fortuitous coincidence? What had made him apply for the fellowship without letting Yvonne know? Thoughts of Jana entered his mind as he recalled asking her for application forms in his attempts to seduce her. He didn’t even know whether he was interested in such an offer at the time. Had he tempted fate? Ted recalled a televised interview with an actress who, when asked why she had taken a decision that could make or break her career, cheerfully replied, “I made a proposition to my imagination.” Was that what he had done? Had it been a dare, the only way to find out where Yvonne and he were going?

Ted had studied the publications of a few Swiss academics at the University of Zürich who shared his interest in historical, political and cultural changes of justice and law. For that reason alone he

cherished the opportunity to meet and discuss his own ideas with them. That at least was his official alibi. In reality he had wanted to be with Yvonne. Since spending more time with her, Ted was no longer as certain of his motivations as before, but he remained determined to prove their life together could be meaningful, satisfying and enjoyable. Yvonne would never turn into a cheerful person. True *joie de vivre* seemed beyond her. Nonetheless, he had a good feeling about their shared life together in Switzerland. Perhaps relating to Yvonne in her native country would make life easier for her.

After what he told her, the subject of children had lost all urgency. Yvonne was impatient to plan their future. In her over-enthusiasm she projected possible travel dates. Ecstatically she called out, “I know why I came to Melbourne! It was to meet you! And now I’m taking you home.” Having studied in Zürich, she enthusiastically suggested possible locations for their lodging. Her favourite was Niederdorf, the inner-city artists’ quarter near the Limmat river in the old part of town, where there were excellent bookstores, elegant boutiques, restaurants and cafés, and it was close to the university.

“You’ll love Zürich!” she kept exclaiming. “Oh Ted, it will all be so wonderful!”

As they would not leave for Europe until the following year, right now they spent their time studying in the library or working in the laboratory, attending concerts, watching continental films at Carlton’s bughouse or staying at home eating, drinking and talking. On days when they did not see much of each other Yvonne and Ted seemed to live in different worlds.



Please allow me to cut in here. I had given up on the idea I might be able to tell the story of Ted Harris – or is it the story of Yvonne? – but now I’m impatient to interrupt the narrative because I have something to say about them, which I only discovered after having read Ted’s disturbing confession. Over the top it may have been, but it prompted me to think about my friends in a more serious way. They

were more than a strange couple. Already in the early stages of their relationship their curious attraction to each other began to acquire an almost tragic dimension. Having shared with them at least some of their time together, I'm only now beginning to understand some of the difficulties they encountered. Without acknowledging it, they realised something special had happened to them. I have no idea whether they knew they had fallen in love, if it was love that had called on them, but both were quite aware of the unusual nature of their fascination with each other. Theirs was not a physical appeal, rather a meeting of minds. I don't know whether the general nature of Yvonne's illness explains their need for chastity, and I must admit I had no idea how little was known about autoimmune diseases in the early sixties. Whatever knowledge Yvonne may have acquired about her ailment, she obviously tried very hard to avoid warning Ted of all its possible manifestations and consequences.

In hindsight, I would say they were involuntarily drawn to each other in a passion they tried to control by disciplined role-playing. (How many times have I advised my students of such acting requirements!) Ted and Yvonne were living in a hurry, side by side, though not always in the same place. As a producer, I would have radically slowed down the early part of their drama. They were not overacting in a tear-jerking opera but, with instinctive collusion, the actions of these two protagonists were designed to safeguard their feelings for each other. However, neither Yvonne nor Ted gave any thought to how the unusual nature of their relationship was likely to end. I guess they just wanted to claim their part of life together. Alas, life does not follow dramaturgical rules.

As lovers, they were playing their roles against predestined inevitability, an ill-fated outcome they could only acknowledge in denial. The story I am trying to put together from my friend's emotional outburst of guilt is following its own sequence and logic, partly true, partly untrue. Looking back, I believe there was more life in their unusual behaviour than in many so-called normal relations. Both were exceptional, misunderstood or misjudged by many, even their

friends. For all their differences, they shared a search they consciously decided not to reveal. Part of the awkward strangeness Yvonne managed to express was a life simultaneously at one and at odds with itself. In her phraseology, they were “overboard while drowning on deck”. Perhaps, in the end, life is the ultimate language of consistent contradiction. The more it becomes what it is, the harder it is to recognise.

This expression was destined to become part of their wilfully confusing variations of normal language, a steadily growing idiolect only they understood. Like many couples, Ted and Yvonne developed a set of words and images designed to convey intimate personal messages. The term might describe either something impossible, nonsensical, or simply trying too hard. In response, Ted invented the tautological “protective overkill” as a synonym for Yvonne’s precarious life, but he applied it freely to a range of situations where he felt either one of them was too guarded or restrained.

Ted probably thought Yvonne’s announcement of converting to Catholicism must have been part of her over-the-top defence mechanism. But her plans were usually linked to safeguarding an ultimate goal. How could she feel safe in something she did not believe? She had given him no explanation and kept him uninformed of her real motives. She had once explained to him the principle of her clinical research: not to concentrate on problems in isolation but to integrate partial insights and theoretical suppositions into long-term prospects of broader dimensions. She was convinced speculative estimates, a high degree of probability, would more often than not lead to a verifiable practical discovery. Accordingly, she summed up her formula of working in molecular biology in one sentence: “I begin with chance knowledge, speculate, build on it, discover a breakthrough and create certainty.” That was also her philosophy of life. Ted wasn’t working in the natural sciences and found it hard to challenge the logic of her belief. But who knows, perhaps at least some of these ideas might apply to his legal profession. Yvonne and Ted often considered the nature of discovery in different areas of human endeavour and ended

up agreeing on a common definition, that it consisted of “seeing what everybody could see, but thinking what nobody had thought”. Was that the relationship Yvonne had in mind for them?

For Ted, the primary discovery of Yvonne’s life remained her overpowering need for protection. Security was the basis for all her living and planning. Her ultimate aim was to obtain an immunity of self-reliance. Ted did not fail to recognise the priorities of her protective overkill. Even after she revealed to him the circumstances of how she lost her parents (she completely severed ties with her father and his new wife), he underestimated the extent of her desperate need for shelter. It seemed Yvonne had tried to be responsible for her life at an early age. Unlike him, Yvonne mistrusted coincidences and left little to chance. Did that mean she knew what she was doing?

I think it’s important to understand, though, how it came about that the two ended up getting married. And to let you know that at the time his friends were shocked to learn they had become husband and wife.



When Yvonne suggested they should get married, Ted was at a loss for words. Not knowing whether she was serious, he held back with a guarded response. She took it as a sign of him being overpowered by emotion. Cheerfully she assured him, “It’s okay for a woman to propose, Ted, if she’s quite certain she’s found the right man.” He managed to smile. “Think about it, darling. I know you’ve got lots of friends, but basically you and I are on our own. Who’s going to stop us? The priest at St Carthage’s is quite happy to marry us. In fact, he wants you to come along next time I see him.”

Perhaps if Ted had simply laughed off the whole outrageous suggestion, their lives would have turned out differently. Looking back on it later, he was astounded by Yvonne’s wild proposition and puzzled about why he had not put an immediate stop to it. After all, he was no more than a final-year law student. It would take him years to earn a decent income. As far as he was concerned, there simply

was little room in his life for Yvonne in the long term.

From that moment she began to check his every move on and off campus. Ted had never been pursued by someone so single-mindedly. By comparison, Jana's attempt to prolong their affair had been no more than a check to see whether it was really over. Yvonne proved tenacious; so much so that at times Ted came close to regarding her as a real stalker. Ironically, around that time she attached the word "sticker" to certain female friends of his. Anyone who knew Ted was an invader threatening the special future she had planned for them. Gradually it dawned on him he was in danger of becoming her creature. In this seemingly awkward, hapless and bizarre outsider he began to recognise a formidable person of strong will with the power to manipulate situations according to her needs. It was as if, in an urge to design the fulfilment of her most intimate aspiration, she had taken her biochemical research out of the laboratory. The only difference was that she did not consider her bond with Ted an experiment.

If Yvonne had been a victim in her younger years, she was by now capable of setting up scenarios merely by being unobtrusive, guileless or innocent. At least that's how it appeared to Ted whenever she overwhelmed him with unexpected resolutions. He learned Yvonne was anything but unworldly. It did not take long before he realised her sudden interest in religion had only one purpose: it was part of her plan to become his wife.

Throughout the early part of her scholarship year, Ted had considered Yvonne little more than a companion. He had come to like her company – so much so that at times he thought he depended on it – yet she was hardly the love of his life. Therefore it was all the more impossible to explain how it was he had nonetheless gradually fallen under her spell. Yvonne took care not to allow the change in communication between them to become obvious. Any critical remarks and comments he heard from others Ted began to put down to irritation, jealousy or envy. It was undeniable they were a most unusual pair on campus, at odds with conventional ideas of courting,

love, affection or companionship. It was enough to set them apart from Ted's friends and acquaintances. Suddenly it was no longer just Yvonne but both of them who came to be considered peculiar, challenging or eccentric.

A week after Ted announced he would move with Yvonne back to Switzerland at the end of the academic year, she surprised him with news of her own. Melbourne University had offered her a paid part-time position as a lab assistant. She proclaimed it with her usual over-the-top enthusiasm. That was when she let Ted know that from now on they would be financially independent and could afford to find a flat together. Sharing everything, including expenses, would mark another new sense of belonging together for them. Yvonne's face was glowing with triumph. Clearly, earning her own money meant a great deal to her.

When Ted left college to move with her into a rented terrace in Flemington, everything did appear to come together. In the midst of the upheaval Ted continued to be puzzled, irritated and occasionally amused by what he considered Yvonne's affected fervour of religious instructions. No longer ignorant of her ultimate plan, he was nonetheless reluctant to intervene. In his written confession he foolishly remonstrates with himself about his "incomprehensible indecision". I wonder how Ted would have responded in court to someone claiming innocence on the grounds of ignorance?

Although they continued to live like brother and sister in their few spare hours together, he began to love coming home to Yvonne's stimulating companionship. After a couple of months Yvonne asked him to come with her to see Father Michael McEnroe. Apparently she had been instructed enough for the Jesuit to request a "serious conversation" with both of them. Despite an uneasy feeling Ted went along, but he couldn't help wondering what the priest would make of their living arrangement. Would the Church still not call it living in sin? Theirs was hardly a conventional home with all the warmth and comfort of regular meals, neatly-made beds, friendly neighbours and backyard barbecues. Yet Ted would not have it any other way. After

years of college he was not ready to settle into a suburban existence. Ted didn't look for a home; he just wanted a place where he could be with Yvonne. He thought they were two students about to graduate. What would happen after that was up in the air.

Father Michael of St Carthage's in Parkville was in his late fifties and wore a professional kind-hearted, spiritually sensitised expression. He began by congratulating them on the "brave, godly decision" to enter the state of holy matrimony at a time when so many young people had given in to temptation and abandoned faith-oriented lifetime commitments. Fully aware of the motives for Yvonne's conversion, the priest's words left Ted dumbfounded. Father Michael spoke as if her design were already an accomplished fact. Silently Yvonne signalled Ted to hear out the priest.

Together they listened to the man in black as he lectured them on the nature of love. A man and a woman contributed to its holiness, he asserted. Their marriage would be a sharing in the sanctity of God's endless passion for his own creation. It sounded profound, even if they knew their relationship had hardly reached such a state of divine love. Ted had to suppress a heretical thought: was passion for one's own creation really divine, or selfish? The interview lasted barely half an hour. At its end the priest informed them of dates available for a booking of St Carthage's. Anxiously Yvonne kept nodding her approval to everything that was being said. Upon leaving, Ted promised the holy man he would be in touch. The priest then scrutinised him in an attempt to discover what his true thoughts might be.

"It's just the date you have to decide," he remarked, slightly irritated. Yvonne nodded her agreement one more time. Ted responded, "We'll see, Father."

On their way back, Yvonne turned all meek and mild. Sheepishly, she thanked Ted for coming to the interview. Along Royal Parade and while crossing the campus, Ted kept quiet. It was clear from Yvonne's behaviour she knew that this time she had gone too far with her presumptions. Ted tried not to look angry or disappointed,

but found it impossible to say the words he knew she wanted him to say. Once again she had done something so preposterous that it left him speechless, even if he had allowed it to happen. At the very least Yvonne had shown an appalling lack of propriety. Ted wondered whether it was too late to be outraged or laugh the whole thing off. In the chaos of his bewilderment he decided it was not the time for either response.

Walking separately – Yvonne did not take Ted’s hand as she usually did – he reflected on the madness of her plan. Yvonne had spoken about marriage, but not explicitly. She too was fully aware they’d only just met and were still in the process of getting to know each other. Moving in together was something purely practical. So far they had agreed to live together, no more. Lots of students shared digs during the academic year; only a few got married, usually because they had fallen into the trap of pregnancy. That was one thing Yvonne had made clear they would not have to worry about.

Reflecting on Yvonne’s excitement over his going to Zürich with her, Ted wondered whether he had not encouraged her forwardness, at least indirectly. As yet, he did not know the precise dates of the research fellowship. All he knew was that the law faculty at the University of Zürich had accepted him for the following year’s summer and winter semesters. Going somewhere together had inspired him but, true to form, Yvonne must have simply anticipated he would fit in with her plans and expectations in the process. They had not discussed for how long Ted would be able to stay in Switzerland after the fellowship if they weren’t a married couple.

At a loss at how to respond to Yvonne getting what she wanted yet again, he turned angry with himself. Why had he not put a stop to it? Her drive to claim him seemed almost demonic. It was grotesque how without feminine seduction Yvonne had presumptuously chosen him as her partner in life. The claim was so ridiculous Ted was tempted to make fun of it. Annoyed and unnerved, he tried to remember who it was that said, “If I love you, what business is it of yours?”

What had fascinated him more and more was the hidden depth of Yvonne's exceptional personality. Under the spell of her enticing brilliance and unconventional mind, nothing was more seductive than the insights of her solicitous deliberations. The longer he was with her the more he responded to her odd wit and unusual intuition. Ted knew he had almost become addicted to her intelligence. But was that a reason for getting married? He brushed aside the question of conjugal love in cavalier fashion. Perhaps in time her libido would change but Ted had to admit the thought of having sex with Yvonne did not arouse him even if the times he spent with her were exciting in a very different way. Somewhat extravagantly, he thought being with her meant entering a different kind of reality. The idiosyncratic vision of life she projected had a powerful logic of its own. Ted wondered whether some of her imaginative thoughts were leftovers from her difficult childhood. Did Yvonne own an inventive intelligence inspired by pain? In the originality of her mind and the headstrong wilfulness of her emotions he believed he could recognise remnants of infantile reasoning.

From conversations with Ted I am only too familiar with his reflections. In vain I tried my best to demythologise his enthusiasm by advising him, "Perhaps you just read too much Freud, mate." I remember at the time he merely responded with a wry smile.

Despite the horrific accounts of Yvonne's girlhood, Ted sensed there was something else she still had not told him. As she used a variety of unusual defence mechanisms, Yvonne was quite aware of her own distinctive personality. With her tense intelligence, Ted had no doubt she made conscious use of being perceived as peculiar. When Yvonne was introduced to the Vice-Chancellor shortly after her arrival, she apparently asked him what it was like to "manage the bureaucracy of the mind," and the great man was unsure how to respond. She applied her uncommon temperament in matters of personal intimacy as well. Once she had made it clear she was not interested in "sexual consummation" – there were "other, more worthy forms of fulfilment," she had primly informed Ted – she became all

the more anxious to demonstrate her affection. For a while he found beautiful ripe apples on pillows in the bedroom or hidden among books, in a shoe and other unlikely places. Yvonne explained to a nonplussed Ted that she was “demystifying” the biblical symbol of seduction as a “natural sign of love and devotion”. In light of his own lack of sexual attraction to her, he replied with tactful restraint. Part of his response was wondering what she would come up with next.

Yvonne reminded Ted that for truly caring people, being married would be the perfect way to look after each other.

“We are truly caring, darling, aren’t we?” she appealed. It was the first time she addressed him as “darling”. It sounded wrong to Ted; it was not a natural part of Yvonne’s vocabulary. Life would be so much easier if they were married, she continued. There were practical matters to consider. It would be an advantage when looking for accommodation in Zürich – in the past she had found it so difficult to find suitable housing as a single person. There also would be tax advantages, she advised. But most of all they would continue to discover each other in their passionate exchanges of ideas and the shared commitment to the morals and convictions of their respective professions. Whoever said marriage was only for people who wanted a family? Weren’t they already the most intimate partners imaginable? Had it not been a fateful chance of life that had brought them together? Did they not have so much in common? Having lost their families, they had survived and were about to embark on successful careers. It would make sense to live together, even without sex. Together they would see the world and explore life in their professions. How could celebrating their shared existence, the joy they had found each other, not be the highest form of love?

“When you think about it, Ted,” Yvonne concluded, “being married would make us just about the perfect couple.”



Father Michael McEnroe, SJ, officiated over their nuptial Mass on a Wednesday morning to echoes of an empty church. He had managed