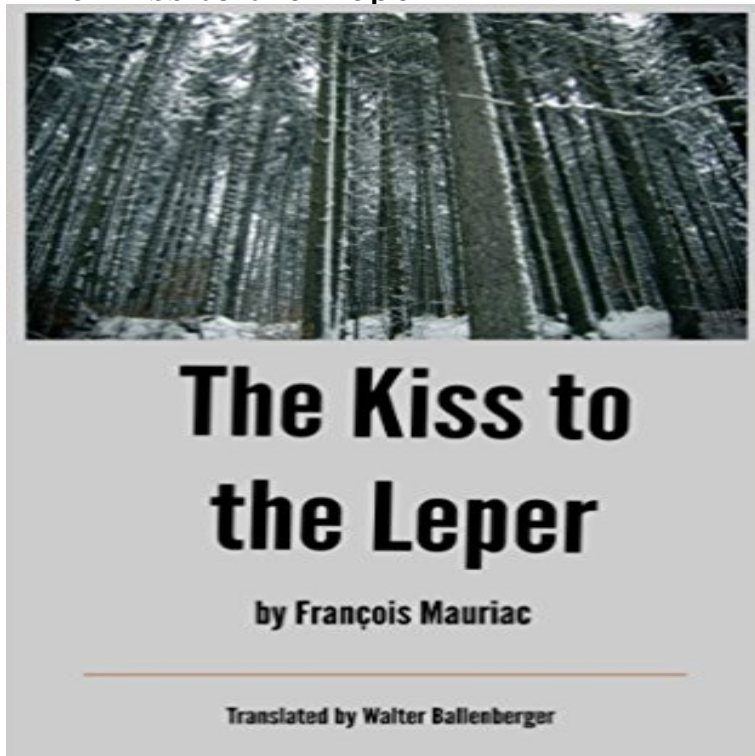


The Kiss to the Leper



Francois Mauriac is a very famous French author. He was the recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature, as well as the Grand Cross of the French Legion dHonneur, and he was a Member of the Academie Francaise, a highly prestigious appointment. Mauriac published this book in 1922 when he was 37 years old. The title in French is: Le Baiser au lepreux. This was not Mauriac's first novel, but it brought him his first serious critical success. Mauriac himself grew up in the Bordeaux area, which is also the setting for this novel, and he certainly knew a great deal about the local people and their customs. Written almost a century ago, this book is certainly a time period piece. The culture then and there was naturally far different from what we know today. Local transportation was almost exclusively done by horse-drawn carriages or by train. Arranged marriages were not uncommon, especially in families with large landholdings, with the goal of either enlarging those holdings or of keeping the properties within the family in the future. The local church played a much more central role in the lives of people than is the case today. Although many arranged marriages at that time probably were successful, they obviously have the potential to be seriously flawed. Mauriac took advantage of that fact to explore through his characters the emotions he wished to portray in both this novel and another of his famous works published about five years later, *Therese Desqueyroux*. A new film based on the latter work was released in France at the end of 2012, and it should start playing in U.S. theaters shortly after these words are being written. That being said, the author explores very basic human emotions that anyone today can recognize. In fact the book was considered a bit scandalous by some when it was published for so openly dealing with sexual feelings and desires.

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