

the Natural

Child-

*hood is the golden paradise we
are always consciously or unconsciously try-
ing to re-create. The Natural embodies the longed-
for qualities of childhood—spontaneity, sincerity, unpre-
tentiousness. In the presence of Naturals, we feel at ease,
caught up in their playful spirit, transported back to that
golden age. Naturals also make a virtue out of weakness, elicit-
ing our sympathy for their trials, making us want to protect
them and help them. As with a child, much of this is natu-
ral, but some of it is exaggerated, a conscious seductive
maneuver. Adopt the pose of the Natural to
neutralize people's natural defensiveness
and infect them with helpless
delight.*

Psychological Traits of the Natural

Children are not as guileless as we like to imagine. They suffer from feelings of helplessness, and sense early on the power of their natural charm to remedy their weakness in the adult world. They learn to play a game: if their natural innocence can persuade a parent to yield to their desires in one instance, then it is something they can use strategically in another instance, laying it on thick at the right moment to get their way. If their vulnerability and weakness is so attractive, then it is something they can use for effect.

Why are we seduced by children's naturalness? First, because anything natural has an uncanny effect on us. Since the beginning of time, natural phenomena—such as lightning storms or eclipses—have instilled in human beings an awe tinged with fear. The more civilized we become, the greater the effect such natural events have on us; the modern world surrounds us with so much that is manufactured and artificial that something sudden and inexplicable fascinates us. Children also have this natural power, but because they are unthreatening and human, they are not so much awe inspiring as charming. Most people try to please, but the pleasantness of the child comes effortlessly, defying logical explanation—and what is irrational is often dangerously seductive.

More important, a child represents a world from which we have been forever exiled. Because adult life is full of boredom and compromise, we harbor an illusion of childhood as a kind of golden age, even though it can often be a period of great confusion and pain. It cannot be denied, however, that childhood had certain privileges, and as children we had a pleasurable attitude to life. Confronted with a particularly charming child, we often feel wistful: we remember our own golden past, the qualities we have lost and wish we had again. And in the presence of the child, we get a little of that goldenness back.

Natural seducers are people who somehow avoided getting certain childish traits drummed out of them by adult experience. Such people can be as powerfully seductive as any child, because it seems uncanny and marvelous that they have preserved such qualities. They are not literally like children, of course; that would make them obnoxious or pitiful. Rather it is the spirit that they have retained. Do not imagine that this childishness is something beyond their control. Natural seducers learn early on the value of retaining a particular quality, and the seductive power it contains; they

Long-past ages have a great and often puzzling attraction for men's imagination. Whenever they are dissatisfied with their present surroundings—and this happens often enough—they turn back to the past and hope that they will now be able to prove the truth of the inextinguishable dream of a golden age. They are probably still under the spell of their childhood, which is presented to them by their not impartial memory as a time of uninterrupted bliss.

—SIGMUND FREUD, THE
STANDARD EDITION OF THE
COMPLETE PSYCHOLOGICAL
WORKS OF SIGMUND FREUD,
VOLUME 23

When Hermes was born on Mount Cyllene his mother Maia laid him in swaddling bands on a winnowing fan, but he grew with astonishing quickness into a little boy, and as soon as her back was turned, slipped off and went looking for adventure. Arrived at Pieria, where Apollo was tending a fine herd of cows, he decided to

steal them. But, fearing to be betrayed by their tracks, he quickly made a number of shoes from the bark of a fallen oak and tied them until plaited grass to the feet of the cows, which he then drove off by night along the road. Apollo discovered the loss, but Hermes's trick deceived him, and though he went as far as Pylus in his westward search, and to Onchestus in his eastern, he was forced, in the end, to offer a reward for the apprehension of the thief. Silenus and his satyrs, greedy of reward, spread out in different directions to track him down but, for a long while, without success. At last, as a party of them passed through Arcadia, they heard the muffled sound of music such as they had never heard before, and the nymph Cyllene, from the mouth of a cave, told them that a most gifted child had recently been born there, to whom she was acting as nurse: he had constructed an ingenious musical toy from the shell of a tortoise and some cow-gut, with which he had lulled his mother to sleep. • "And from whom did he get the cow-gut?" asked the alert satyrs, noticing two hides stretched outside the cave. "Do you charge the poor child with theft?" asked Cyllene. Harsh words were exchanged. • At that moment Apollo came up, having discovered the thief's identity by observing the suspicious behaviour of a long-winged bird. Entering the cave, he awakened Maia and told her severely that Hermes must restore the stolen cows. Maia pointed to the child, still wrapped in his

adapt and build upon those childlike traits that they managed to preserve, exactly as the child learns to play with its natural charm. This is the key. It is within your power to do the same, since there is lurking within all of us a devilish child straining to be let loose. To do this successfully, you have to be able to let go to a degree, since there is nothing less natural than seeming hesitant. Remember the spirit you once had; let it return, without self-consciousness. People are much more forgiving of those who go all the way, who seem uncontrollably foolish, than the halfhearted adult with a childish streak. Remember who you were before you became so polite and self-effacing. To assume the role of the Natural, mentally position yourself in any relationship as the child, the younger one.

The following are the main types of the adult Natural. Keep in mind that the greatest natural seducers are often a blend of more than one of these qualities.

The innocent. The primary qualities of innocence are weakness and misunderstanding of the world. Innocence is weak because it is doomed to vanish in a harsh, cruel world; the child cannot protect or hold on to its innocence. The misunderstandings come from the child's not knowing about good and evil, and seeing everything through uncorrupted eyes. The weakness of children elicits sympathy, their misunderstandings make us laugh, and nothing is more seductive than a mixture of laughter and sympathy.

The adult Natural is not truly innocent—it is impossible to grow up in this world and retain total innocence. Yet Naturals yearn so deeply to hold on to their innocent outlook that they manage to preserve the illusion of innocence. They exaggerate their weakness to elicit the proper sympathy. They act like they still see the world through innocent eyes, which in an adult proves doubly humorous. Much of this is conscious, but to be effective, adult Naturals must make it seem subtle and effortless—if they are seen as *trying* to act innocent, it will come across as pathetic. It is better for them to communicate weakness indirectly, through looks and glances, or through the situations they get themselves into, rather than anything obvious. Since this type of innocence is mostly an act, it is easily adaptable for your own purposes. Learn to play up any natural weaknesses or flaws.

The imp. Impish children have a fearlessness that we adults have lost. That is because they do not see the possible consequences of their actions—how some people might be offended, how they might physically hurt themselves in the process. Imps are brazen, blissfully uncaring. They infect you with their lighthearted spirit. Such children have not yet had their natural energy and spirit scolded out of them by the need to be polite and civil. Secretly, we envy them; we want to be naughty too.

Adult imps are seductive because of how different they are from the rest of us. Breaths of fresh air in a cautious world, they go full throttle, as if

their impishness were uncontrollable, and thus natural. If you play the part, do not worry about offending people now and then—you are too lovable and inevitably they will forgive you. Just don't apologize or look contrite, for that would break the spell. Whatever you say or do, keep a glint in your eye to show that you do not take anything seriously.

The wonder. A wonder child has a special, inexplicable talent: a gift for music, for mathematics, for chess, for sport. At work in the field in which they have such prodigal skill, these children seem possessed, and their actions effortless. If they are artists or musicians, Mozart types, their work seems to spring from some inborn impulse, requiring remarkably little thought. If it is a physical talent that they have, they are blessed with unusual energy, dexterity, and spontaneity. In both cases they seem talented beyond their years. This fascinates us.

Adult wonders are often former wonder children who have managed, remarkably, to retain their youthful impulsiveness and improvisational skills. True spontaneity is a delightful rarity, for everything in life conspires to rob us of it—we have to learn to act carefully and deliberately, to think about how we look in other people's eyes. To play the wonder you need some skill that seems easy and natural, along with the ability to improvise. If in fact your skill takes practice, you must hide this and learn to make your work appear effortless. The more you hide the sweat behind what you do, the more natural and seductive it will appear.

The undefensive lover. As people get older, they protect themselves against painful experiences by closing themselves off. The price for this is that they grow rigid, physically and mentally. But children are by nature unprotected and open to experience, and this receptiveness is extremely attractive. In the presence of children we become less rigid, infected with their openness. That is why we want to be around them.

Undefensive lovers have somehow circumvented the self-protective process, retaining the playful, receptive spirit of the child. They often manifest this spirit physically: they are graceful, and seem to age less rapidly than other people. Of all the Natural's character qualities, this one is the most useful. Defensiveness is deadly in seduction; act defensive and you'll bring out defensiveness in other people. The undefensive lover, on the other hand, lowers the inhibitions of his or her target, a critical part of seduction. It is important to learn to not react defensively: bend instead of resist, be open to influence from others, and they will more easily fall under your spell.

swaddling bands and feigning sleep. "What an absurd charge!" she cried. But Apollo had already recognized the hides. He picked up Hermes, carried him to Olympus, and there formally accused him of theft, offering the hides as evidence. Zeus, loth to believe that his own newborn son was a thief encouraged him to plead not guilty, but Apollo would not be put off and Hermes, at last, weakened and confessed. • "Very well, come with me," he said, "and you may have your herd. I slaughtered only two, and those I cut up into twelve equal portions as a sacrifice to the twelve gods" • "Twelve gods?" asked Apollo. "Who is the twelfth?" • "Your servant, sir" replied Hermes modestly. "I ate no more than my share, though I was very hungry, and duly burned the rest. " • The two gods [Hermes and Apollo] returned to Mount Cyllene, where Hermes greeted his mother and retrieved something that he had hidden underneath a sheepskin. • "What have you there?" asked Apollo. • In answer, Hermes showed his newly-invented tortoise-shell lyre, and played such a ravishing tune on it with the plectrum he had also invented, at the same time singing in praise of Apollo's nobility, intelligence, and generosity, that he was forgiven at once. He led the surprised and delighted Apollo to Pylus, playing all the way, and there gave him the remainder of the cattle, which he had hidden in a cave. • "A bargain!" cried Apollo. "You keep the cows, and I take the lyre. "

Examples of Natural Seducers

• "Agreed," said Hermes, and they shook hands on it. . . . Apollo, taking the child back to Olympus, told Zeus all that had happened. Zeus warned Hermes that henceforth he must respect the rights of property and refrain from telling downright lies; but he could not help being amused. "You seem to be a very ingenious, eloquent, and persuasive godling," he said. • "Then make me your herald, Father," Hermes answered, "and I will be responsible for the safety of all divine property, and never tell lies, though I cannot promise always to tell the whole truth." • "That would not be expected of you," said Zeus with a smile. . . . Zeus gave him a herald's staff with white ribbons, which everyone was ordered to respect; a round hat against the rain, and winged golden sandals which carried him about with the swiftness of the wind.

—ROBERT GRAVES,
THE GREEK MYTHS, VOLUME I

A man may meet a woman and be shocked by her ugliness. Soon, if she is natural and unaffected, her expression makes him overlook the fault of her features. He begins to find her charming, it enters his head that she might be loved, and a week later he is living in hope. The following week he has been snubbed into despair, and the week afterwards he has gone mad.

—STENDHAL, LOVE,
TRANSLATED BY GILBERT AND
SUZANNE SALE

1. As a child growing up in England, Charlie Chaplin spent years in dire poverty, particularly after his mother was committed to an asylum. In his early teens, forced to work to live, he landed a job in vaudeville, eventually gaining some success as a comedian. But Chaplin was wildly ambitious, and so, in 1910, when he was only nineteen, he emigrated to the United States, hoping to break into the film business. Making his way to Hollywood, he found occasional bit parts, but success seemed elusive: the competition was fierce, and although Chaplin had a repertoire of gags that he had learned in vaudeville, he did not particularly excel at physical humor, a critical part of silent comedy. He was not a gymnast like Buster Keaton.

In 1914, Chaplin managed to get the lead in a film short called *Making a Living*. His role was that of a con artist. In playing around with the costume for the part, he put on a pair of pants several sizes too large, then added a derby hat, enormous boots that he wore on the wrong feet, a walking cane, and a pasted-on mustache. With the clothes, a whole new character seemed to come to life—first the silly walk, then the twirling of the cane, then all sorts of gags. Mack Sennett, the head of the studio, did not find *Making a Living* very funny, and doubted whether Chaplin had a future in the movies, but a few critics felt otherwise. A review in a trade magazine read, "The clever player who takes the role of a nervy and very nifty sharper in this picture is a comedian of the first water, who acts like one of Nature's own naturals." And audiences also responded—the film made money.

What seemed to touch a nerve in *Making a Living*, setting Chaplin apart from the horde of other comedians working in silent film, was the almost pathetic naiveté of the character he played. Sensing he was onto something, Chaplin shaped the role further in subsequent movies, rendering him more and more naive. The key was to make the character seem to see the world through the eyes of a child. In *The Bank*, he is the bank janitor who daydreams of great deeds while robbers are at work in the building; in *The Pawnbroker*, he is an unprepared shop assistant who wreaks havoc on a grandfather clock; in *Shoulder Arms*, he is a soldier in the bloody trenches of World War I, reacting to the horrors of war like an innocent child. Chaplin made sure to cast actors in his films who were physically larger than he was, subliminally positioning them as adult bullies and himself as the helpless infant. And as he went deeper into his character, something strange happened: the character and the real-life man began to merge. Although he had had a troubled childhood, he was obsessed with it. (For his film *Easy Street* he built a set in Hollywood that duplicated the London streets he had known as a boy.) He mistrusted the adult world, preferring the company of the young, or the young at heart: three of his four wives were teenagers when he married them.

More than any other comedian, Chaplin aroused a mix of laughter and sentiment. He made you empathize with him as the victim, feel sorry for

him the way you would for a lost dog. You both laughed and cried. And audiences sensed that the role Chaplin played came from somewhere deep inside—that he was sincere, that he was actually playing himself. Within a few years after *Making a Living*, Chaplin was the most famous actor in the world. There were Chaplin dolls, comic books, toys; popular songs and short stories were written about him; he became a universal icon. In 1921, when he returned to London for the first time since he had left it, he was greeted by enormous crowds, as if at the triumphant return of a great general.

The greatest seducers, those who seduce mass audiences, nations, the world, have a way of playing on people's unconscious, making them react in a way they can neither understand nor control. Chaplin inadvertently hit on this power when he discovered the effect he could have on audiences by playing up his weakness, by suggesting that he had a child's mind in an adult body. In the early twentieth century, the world was radically and rapidly changing. People were working longer and longer hours at increasingly mechanical jobs; life was becoming steadily more inhuman and heartless, as the ravages of World War I made clear. Caught in the midst of revolutionary change, people yearned for a lost childhood that they imagined as a golden paradise.

An adult child like Chaplin has immense seductive power, for he offers the illusion that life was once simpler and easier, and that for a moment, or for as long as the movie lasts, you can win that life back. In a cruel, amoral world, naivete has enormous appeal. The key is to bring it off with an air of total seriousness, as the straight man does in stand-up comedy. More important, however, is the creation of sympathy. Overt strength and power is rarely seductive—it makes us afraid, or envious. The royal road to seduction is to play up your vulnerability and helplessness. You cannot make this obvious; to seem to be begging for sympathy is to seem needy, which is entirely anti-seductive. Do not proclaim yourself a victim or underdog, but reveal it in your manner, in your confusion. A display of "natural" weakness will make you instantly lovable, both lowering people's defenses and making them feel delightfully superior to you. Put yourself in situations that make you seem weak, in which someone else has the advantage; they are the bully, you are the innocent lamb. Without any effort on your part, people will feel sympathy for you. Once people's eyes cloud over with sentimental mist, they will not see how you are manipulating them.

"Geographical" escapism has been rendered ineffective by the spread of air routes. What remains is "evolutionary" escapism—a downward course in one's development, back to the ideas and emotions of "golden childhood," which may well be defined as "regress towards infantilism," escape to a personal world of childish ideas. • In a strictly-regulated society, where life follows strictly-defined canons, the urge to escape from the chain of things "established once and for all" must be felt particularly strongly. . . . And the most perfect of them [comedians] does this with utmost perfection, for he [Chaplin] serves this principle . . . through the subtlety of his method which, offering the spectator an infantile pattern to be imitated, psychologically infects him with infantilism and draws him into the "golden age" of the infantile paradise of childhood.

—SERGEI EISENSTEIN, "CHARLIE THE KID," FROM NOTES OF A FILM DIRECTOR

2. Emma Crouch, born in 1842 in Plymouth, England, came from a respectable middle-class family. Her father was a composer and music professor who dreamed of success in the world of light opera. Among his many children, Emma was his favorite: she was a delightful child, lively and flirtatious, with red hair and a freckled face. Her father doted on her, and promised her a brilliant future in the theater. Unfortunately Mr. Crouch had a

Prince Gortschakoff used to say that she [Cora Pearl] was the last word in luxury, and that he would have tried to steal the sun to satisfy one of her whims.

—GUSTAVE CLAUDIN, CORA PEARL CONTEMPORARY

Apparently the possession of humor implies the possession of a number of typical habit-systems. The first is an emotional one: the habit of playfulness. Why should one be proud of being playful? For a double reason. First, playfulness connotes childhood and youth. If one can be playful, one still possesses something of the vigor and the joy of young life . . . • But there is a deeper implication. To be playful is, in a sense, to be free. When a person is playful, he momentarily disregards the binding necessities which compel him, in business and morals, in domestic and community life. . . . • What galls us is that the binding necessities do not permit us to shape our world as we please. . . .

What we most deeply desire, however, is to create our world for ourselves.

Whenever we can do that, even in the slightest degree, we are happy. Now in play we create our own world. . . .

—PROFESSOR H.A. OVERSTREET, *INFLUENCING HUMAN BEHAVIOR*

dark side: he was an adventurer, a gambler, and a rake, and in 1849 he abandoned his family and left for America. The Crouches were now in dire straits. Emma was told that her father had died in an accident and she was sent off to a convent. The loss of her father affected her deeply, and as the years went by she seemed lost in the past, acting as if he still doted on her.

One day in 1856, when Emma was walking home from church, a well-dressed gentleman invited her home for some cakes. She followed him to his house, where he proceeded to take advantage of her. The next morning this man, a diamond merchant, promised to set her up in a house of her own, treat her well, and give her plenty of money. She took the money but left him, determined to do what she had always wanted: never see her family again, never depend on anyone, and lead the grand life that her father had promised her.

With the money the diamond merchant had given her, Emma bought nice clothes and rented a cheap flat. Adopting the flamboyant name of Cora Pearl, she began to frequent London's Argyll Rooms, a fancy gin palace where harlots and gentlemen rubbed elbows. The proprietor of the Argyll, a Mr. Bignell, took note of this newcomer to his establishment—she was so brazen for a young girl. At forty-five, he was much older than she was, but he decided to be her lover and protector, lavishing her with money and attention. The following year he took her to Paris, which was at the height of its Second Empire prosperity. Cora was enthralled by Paris, and of all its sights, but what impressed her the most was the parade of rich coaches in the Bois de Boulogne. Here the fashionable came to take the air—the empress, the princesses, and, not least the grand courtesans, who had the most opulent carriages of all. This was the way to lead the kind of life Cora's father had wanted for her. She promptly told Bignell that when he went back to London, she would stay on alone.

Frequenting all the right places, Cora soon came to the attention of wealthy French gentlemen. They would see her walking the streets in a bright pink dress, to complement her flaming red hair, pale face, and freckles. They would glimpse her riding wildly through the Bois de Boulogne, cracking her whip left and right. They would see her in cafes surrounded by men, her witty insults making them laugh. They also heard of her exploits—of her delight in showing her body to one and all. The elite of Paris society began to court her, particularly the older men who had grown tired of the cold and calculating courtesans, and who admired her girlish spirit. As money began to pour in from her various conquests (the Duc de Mornay, heir to the Dutch throne; Prince Napoleon, cousin to the Emperor), Cora spent it on the most outrageous things—a multicolored carriage pulled by a team of cream-colored horses, a rose-marble bathtub with her initials inlaid in gold. Gentlemen vied to be the one who would spoil her the most. An Irish lover wasted his entire fortune on her, in only eight weeks. But money could not buy Cora's loyalty; she would leave a man on the slightest whim.

Cora Pearl's wild behavior and disdain for etiquette had all of Paris on

edge. In 1864, she was to appear as Cupid in the Offenbach operetta *Orpheus in the Underworld*. Society was dying to see what she would do to cause a sensation, and soon found out: she came on stage practically naked, except for expensive diamonds here and there, barely covering her. As she pranced on stage, the diamonds fell off, each one worth a fortune; she did not stoop to pick them up, but let them roll off into the footlights. The gentlemen in the audience, some of whom had given her those diamonds, applauded her wildly. Antics like this made Cora the toast of Paris, and she reigned as the city's supreme courtesan for over a decade, until the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 put an end to the Second Empire.

People often mistakenly believe that what makes a person desirable and seductive is physical beauty, elegance, or overt sexuality. Yet Cora Pearl was not dramatically beautiful; her body was boyish, and her style was garish and tasteless. Even so, the most dashing men of Europe vied for her favors, often ruining themselves in the process. It was Cora's spirit and attitude that enthralled them. Spoiled by her father, she imagined that spoiling her was natural—that all men should do the same. The consequence was that, like a child, she never felt she had to try to please. It was Cora's powerful air of independence that made men want to possess her, tame her. She never pretended to be anything more than a courtesan, so the brazenness that in a lady would have been uncivil in her seemed natural and fun. And as with a spoiled child, a man's relationship with her was on her terms. The moment he tried to change that, she lost interest. This was the secret of her astounding success.

Spoiled children have an undeservedly bad reputation: while those who are spoiled with material things are indeed often insufferable, those who are spoiled with affection know themselves to be deeply seductive. This becomes a distinct advantage when they grow up. According to Freud (who was speaking from experience, since he was his mother's darling), spoiled children have a confidence that stays with them all their lives. This quality radiates outward, drawing others to them, and, in a circular process, making people spoil them still more. Since their spirit and natural energy were never tamed by a disciplining parent, as adults they are adventurous and bold, and often impish or brazen.

The lesson is simple: it may be too late to be spoiled by a parent, but it is never too late to make other people spoil you. It is all in your attitude. People are drawn to those who expect a lot out of life, whereas they tend to disrespect those who are fearful and undemanding. Wild independence has a provocative effect on us: it appeals to us, while also presenting us with a challenge—we want to be the one to tame it, to make the spirited person dependent on us. Half of seduction is stirring such competitive desires.

All was quiet again. (Genji slipped the latch open and tried the doors. They had not been bolted. A curtain had been set up just inside, and in the dim light he could make out Chinese chests and other furniture scattered in some disorder. He made his way through to her side. She lay by herself, a slight little figure. Though vaguely annoyed at being disturbed, she evidently took him for the woman Chujo until he pulled back the covers.

• . . . His manner was so gently persuasive that devils and demons could not have gainsaid him. • . . . She was so small that he lifted her easily. As he passed through the doors to his own room, he came upon Chujo who had been summoned earlier. He called out in surprise. Surprised in turn, Chujo peered into the darkness. The perfume that came from his robes like a cloud of smoke told her who he was. . . . [Chujo] followed after, but Genji was quite unmoved by her pleas. • "Come for her in the morning," he said, sliding the doors closed. • The lady was bathed in perspiration and quite beside herself at the thought of what Chujo, and the others too, would be thinking. Genji had to feel sorry for her. Yet the sweet words poured forth, the whole gamut of pretty devices for making a woman surrender. . . . • One may imagine that he found many kind promises with which to comfort her. . . .

—MURASAKI SHIKIBU,
THE TALE OF GENJI,
TRANSLATED BY EDWARD G.
SEIDENSTICKER

3. In October of 1925, Paris society was all excited about the opening of the *Revue Nègre*. Jazz, or in fact anything that came from black America,

was the latest fashion, and the Broadway dancers and performers who made up the Revue Nègre were African-American. On opening night, artists and high society packed the hall. The show was spectacular, as they expected, but nothing prepared them for the last number, performed by a somewhat gawky long-legged woman with the prettiest face: Josephine Baker, a twenty-year-old chorus girl from East St. Louis. She came onstage bare-breasted, wearing a skirt of feathers over a satin bikini bottom, with feathers around her neck and ankles. Although she performed her number, called "*Danse Sauvage*," with another dancer, also clad in feathers, all eyes were riveted on her: her whole body seemed to come alive in a way the audience had never seen before, her legs moving with the litheness of a cat, her rear end gyrating in patterns that one critic likened to a hummingbird's. As the dance went on, she seemed possessed, feeding off the crowd's ecstatic reaction. And then there was the look on her face: she was having such fun. She radiated a joy that made her erotic dance oddly innocent, even slightly comic.

By the following day, word had spread: a star was born. Josephine became the heart of the Revue Nègre, and Paris was at her feet. Within a year, her face was on posters everywhere; there were Josephine Baker perfumes, dolls, clothes; fashionable Frenchwomen were slicking their hair back à la Baker, using a product called Bakerfix. They were even trying to darken their skin.

Such sudden fame represented quite a change, for just a few years earlier, Josephine had been a young girl growing up in East St. Louis, one of America's worst slums. She had gone to work at the age of eight, cleaning houses for a white woman who beat her. She had sometimes slept in a rat-infested basement; there had never been heat in the winter. (She had taught herself to dance in her wild fashion to help keep herself warm.) In 1919, Josephine had run away and become a part-time vaudeville performer, landing in New York two years later without money or connections. She had had some success as a clowning chorus girl, providing comic relief with her crossed eyes and screwed-up face, but she hadn't stood out. Then she was invited to Paris. Some other black performers had declined, fearing things might be still worse for them in France than in America, but Josephine jumped at the chance.

Despite her success with the Revue Nègre, Josephine did not delude herself: Parisians were notoriously fickle. She decided to turn the relationship around. First, she refused to be aligned with any club, and developed a reputation for breaking contracts at will, making it clear that she was ready to leave in an instant. Since childhood she had been afraid of dependence on anyone; now no one could take her for granted. This only made impresarios chase her and the public appreciate her the more. Second, she was aware that although black culture had become the vogue, what the French had fallen in love with was a kind of caricature. If that was what it took to be successful, so be it, but Josephine made it clear that she did not take the caricature seriously; instead she reversed it, becoming the ultimate

Frenchwoman of fashion, a caricature not of blackness but of whiteness. Everything was a role to play—the comedienne, the primitive dancer, the ultrastylish Parisian. And everything Josephine did, she did with such a light spirit, such a lack of pretension, that she continued to seduce the jaded French for years. Her funeral, in 1975, was nationally televised, a huge cultural event. She was buried with the kind of pomp normally reserved only for heads of state.

From very early on, Josephine Baker could not stand the feeling of having no control over the world. Yet what could she do in the face of her unpromising circumstances? Some young girls put all their hopes on a husband, but Josephine's father had left her mother soon after she was born, and she saw marriage as something that would only make her more miserable. Her solution was something children often do: confronted with a hopeless environment, she closed herself off in a world of her own making, oblivious to the ugliness around her. This world was filled with dancing, clowning, dreams of great things. Let other people wail and moan; Josephine would smile, remain confident and self-reliant. Almost everyone who met her, from her earliest years to her last, commented on how seductive this quality was. Her refusal to compromise, or to be what she was expected to be, made everything she did seem authentic and natural.

A child loves to play, and to create a little self-contained world. When children are absorbed in make believe, they are hopelessly charming. They infuse their imaginings with such seriousness and feeling. Adult Naturals do something similar, particularly if they are artists: they create their own fantasy world, and live in it as if it were the real one. Fantasy is so much more pleasant than reality, and since most people do not have the power or courage to create such a world, they enjoy being around those who do. Remember: the role you were given in life is not the role you have to accept. You can always live out a role of your own creation, a role that fits your fantasy. Learn to play with your image, never taking it too seriously. The key is to infuse your play with the conviction and feeling of a child, making it seem natural. The more absorbed you seem in your own joy-filled world, the more seductive you become. Do not go halfway: make the fantasy you inhabit as radical and exotic as possible, and you will attract attention like a magnet.

4. It was the Festival of the Cherry Blossom at the Heian court, in late-tenth-century Japan. In the emperor's palace, many of the courtiers were drunk, and others were fast asleep, but the young princess Oborozukiyo, the emperor's sister-in-law, was awake and reciting a poem: "What can compare with a misty moon of spring?" Her voice was smooth and delicate. She moved to the door of her apartment to look at the moon. Then, suddenly, she smelled something sweet, and a hand clutched the sleeve of her robe. "Who are you?" she said, frightened. "There is nothing to be

afraid of," came a man's voice, and continued with a poem of his own: "Late in the night we enjoy a misty moon. There is nothing misty about the bond between us." Without another word, the man pulled the princess to him and picked her up, carrying her into a gallery outside her room, sliding the door closed behind him. She was terrified, and tried to call for help. In the darkness she heard him say, a little louder now, "It will do you no good. I am always allowed my way. Just be quiet, if you will, please."

Now the princess recognized the voice, and the scent: it was Genji, the young son of the late emperor's concubine, whose robes bore a distinctive perfume. This calmed her somewhat, since the man was someone she knew, but on the other hand she also knew of his reputation: Genji was the court's most incorrigible seducer, a man who stopped at nothing. He was drunk, it was near dawn, and the watchmen would soon be on their rounds; she did not want to be discovered with him. But then she began to make out the outlines of his face—so pretty, his look so sincere, without a trace of malice. Then came more poems, recited in that charming voice, the words so insinuating. The images he conjured filled her mind, and distracted her from his hands. She could not resist him.

As the light began to rise, Genji got to his feet. He said a few tender words, they exchanged fans, and then he quickly left. The serving women were coming through the emperor's rooms by now, and when they saw Genji scurrying away, the perfume of his robes lingering after him, they smiled, knowing he was up to his usual tricks; but they never imagined he would dare approach the sister of the emperor's wife.

In the days that followed, Oborozukiyo could only think of Genji. She knew he had other mistresses, but when she tried to put him out of her mind, a letter from him would arrive, and she would be back to square one. In truth, she had started the correspondence, haunted by his midnight visit. She had to see him again. Despite the risk of discovery, and the fact that her sister Kokiden, the emperor's wife, hated Genji, she arranged for further trysts in her apartment. But one night an envious courtier found them together. Word reached Kokiden, who naturally was furious. She demanded that Genji be banished from court and the emperor had no choice but to agree.

Genji went far away, and things settled down. Then the emperor died and his son took over. A kind of emptiness had come to the court: the dozens of women whom Genji had seduced could not endure his absence, and flooded him with letters. Even women who had never known him intimately would weep over any relic he had left behind—a robe, for instance, in which his scent still lingered. And the young emperor missed his jocular presence. And the princesses missed the music he had played on the koto. And Oborozukiyo pined for his midnight visits. Finally even Kokiden broke down, realizing that she could not resist him. So Genji was summoned back to the court. And not only was he forgiven, he was given a hero's welcome; the young emperor himself greeted the scoundrel with tears in his eyes.

The story of Genji's life is told in the eleventh-century novel *The Tale of Genji*, written by Murasaki Shikibu, a woman of the Heian court. The character was most likely based on a real-life man, Fujiwara no Korechika. Indeed another book of the period, *The Pillow Book* of Sei Shonagon, describes an encounter between the female author and Korechika, and reveals his incredible charm and his almost hypnotic effect on women. Genji is a Natural, an undefensive lover, a man who has a lifelong obsession with women but whose appreciation of and affection for them makes him irresistible. As he says to Oborozukiyo in the novel, "I am always allowed my way." This self-belief is half of Genji's charm. Resistance does not make him defensive; he retreats gracefully, reciting a little poetry, and as he leaves, the perfume of his robes trailing behind him, his victim wonders why she has been so afraid, and what she is missing by spurning him, and she finds a way to let him know that the next time things will be different. Genji takes nothing seriously or personally, and at the age of forty, an age at which most men of the eleventh century were already looking old and worn, he still seems like a boy. His seductive powers never leave him.

Human beings are immensely suggestible; their moods will easily spread to the people around them. In fact seduction depends on mimesis, on the conscious creation of a mood or feeling that is then reproduced by the other person. But hesitation and awkwardness are also contagious, and are deadly to seduction. If in a key moment you seem indecisive or self-conscious, the other person will sense that you are thinking of yourself, instead of being overwhelmed by his or her charms. The spell will be broken. As an undefensive lover, though, you produce the opposite effect: your victim might be hesitant or worried, but confronted with someone so sure and natural, he or she will be caught up in the mood. Like dancing with someone you lead effortlessly across the dance floor, it is a skill you can learn. It is a matter of rooting out the fear and awkwardness that have built up in you over the years, of becoming more graceful with your approach, less defensive when others seem to resist. Often people's resistance is a way of testing you, and if you show any awkwardness or hesitation, you not only will fail the test, but you will risk infecting them with your doubts.

Symbol: *The*

Lamb. So soft and endearing. At

two days old the lamb can gambol gracefully;

within a week it is playing "Follow the Leader."

Its weakness is part of its charm. The Lamb is pure innocence, so innocent we want to possess it, even devour it.

Dangers

A childish quality can be charming but it can also be irritating; the innocent have no experience of the world, and their sweetness can prove cloying. In Milan Kundera's novel *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, the hero dreams that he is trapped on an island with a group of children. Soon their wonderful qualities become intensely annoying to him; after a few days of exposure to them he cannot relate to them at all. The dream turns into a nightmare, and he longs to be back among adults, with real things to do and talk about. Because total childishness can quickly grate, the most seductive Naturals are those who, like Josephine Baker, combine adult experience and wisdom with a childlike manner. It is this mixture of qualities that is most alluring.

Society cannot tolerate too many Naturals. Given a crowd of Cora Pearls or Charlie Chaplins, their charm would quickly wear off. In any case it is usually only artists, or people with abundant leisure time, who can afford to go all the way. The best way to use the Natural character type is in specific situations when a touch of innocence or impishness will help lower your target's defenses. A con man plays dumb to make the other person trust him and feel superior. This kind of feigned naturalness has countless applications in daily life, where nothing is more dangerous than looking smarter than the next person; the Natural pose is the perfect way to disguise your cleverness. But if you are uncontrollably childish and cannot turn it off, you run the risk of seeming pathetic, earning not sympathy but pity and disgust.

Similarly, the seductive traits of the Natural work best in one who is still young enough for them to *seem* natural. They are much harder for an older person to pull off. Cora Pearl did not seem so charming when she was still wearing her pink flouncy dresses in her fifties. The Duke of Buckingham, who seduced everyone in the English court in the 1620s (including the homosexual King James I himself), was wondrously childish in looks and manner; but this became obnoxious and off-putting as he grew older, and he eventually made enough enemies that he ended up being murdered. As you age, then, your natural qualities should suggest more the child's open spirit, less an innocence that will no longer convince anyone.