

Phase One

Separation— *Stirring Interest and Desire*

Your victims live in their own worlds, their minds occupied with anxieties and daily concerns. Your goal in this initial phase is to slowly separate them from that closed world and fill their minds with thoughts of you. Once you have decided whom to seduce (1: Choose the right victim), your first task is to get your victims' attention, to stir interest in you. For those who might be more resistant or difficult, you should try a slower and more insidious approach, first winning their friendship (2: Create a false sense of security—approach indirectly); for those who are bored and less difficult to reach, a more dramatic approach will work, either fascinating them with a mysterious presence (3: Send mixed signals) or seeming to be someone who is coveted and fought over by others (4: Appear to be an object of desire).

Once the victim is properly intrigued, you need to transform their interest into something stronger—desire. Desire is generally preceded by feelings of emptiness, of something missing inside that needs fulfillment. You must deliberately instill such feelings, make your victims aware of the adventure and romance that are lacking in their lives (5: Create a need—stir anxiety and discontent). If they see you as the one to fill their emptiness, interest will blossom into desire. The desire should be stoked by subtly planting ideas in their minds, hints of the seductive pleasures that await them (6: Master the art of insinuation). Mirroring your victims' values, indulging them in their wants and moods will charm and delight them (7: Enter their spirit). Without realizing how it has happened, more and more of their thoughts now revolve around you. The time has come for something stronger. Lure them with an irresistible pleasure or adventure (8: Create temptation) and they will follow your lead.

1

Choose the Right Victim

Everything depends on the target of your seduction. Study your prey thoroughly, and choose only those who will prove susceptible to your charms. The right victims are those for whom you can fill a void, who see in you something exotic. They are often isolated or at least somewhat unhappy (perhaps because of recent adverse circumstances), or can easily be made so—for the completely contented person is almost impossible to seduce. The perfect victim has some natural quality that attracts you. The strong emotions this quality inspires will help make your seductive maneuvers seem more natural and dynamic. The perfect victim allows for the perfect chase.

Preparing for the Hunt

The young Vicomte de Valmont was a notorious libertine in the Paris of the 1770s, the ruin of many a young girl and the ingenious seducer of the wives of illustrious aristocrats. But after a while the repetitiveness of it all began to bore him; his successes came too easily. So one year, during the sweltering, slow month of August, he decided to take a break from Paris and visit his aunt at her château in the provinces. Life there was not what he was used to—there were country walks, chats with the local vicar, card games. His city friends, particularly his fellow libertine and confidante the Marquise de Merteuil, expected him to hurry back.

There were other guests at the château, however, including the Présidente de Tourvel, a twenty-two-year-old woman whose husband was temporarily absent, having work to do elsewhere. The Présidente had been languishing at the château, waiting for him to join her. Valmont had met her before; she was certainly beautiful, but had a reputation as a prude who was extremely devoted to her husband. She was not a court lady; her taste in clothing was atrocious (she always covered her neck with ghastly frills) and her conversation lacked wit. For some reason, however, far from Paris, Valmont began to see these traits in a new light. He followed her to the chapel where she went every morning to pray. He caught glimpses of her at dinner, or playing cards. Unlike the ladies of Paris, she seemed unaware of her charms; this excited him. Because of the heat, she wore a simple linen dress, which revealed her figure. A piece of muslin covered her breasts, letting him more than imagine them. Her hair, unfashionable in its slight disorder, conjured the bedroom. And her face—he had never noticed how expressive it was. Her features lit up when she gave alms to a beggar; she blushed at the slightest praise. She was so natural and unself-conscious. And when she talked of her husband, or religious matters, he could sense the depth of her feelings. If such a passionate nature were ever detoured into a love affair. . . .

Valmont extended his stay at the château, much to the delight of his aunt, who could not have guessed at the reason. And he wrote to the Marquise de Merteuil, explaining his new ambition: to seduce Madame de Tourvel. The Marquise was incredulous. He wanted to seduce this prude? If he succeeded, how little pleasure she would give him, and if he failed, what a disgrace—the great libertine unable to seduce a wife whose husband was far away! She wrote a sarcastic letter, which only inflamed Valmont fur-

The ninth • Have I become blind? Has the inner eye of the soul lost its power? I have seen her, but it is as if I had seen a heavenly revelation—so completely has her image vanished again for me. In vain do I summon all the powers of my soul in order to conjure up this image. If I ever see her again, I shall be able to recognize her instantly, even though she stands among a hundred others. Now she has fled, and the eye of my soul tries in vain to overtake her with its longing. I was walking along Langelinie, seemingly nonchalantly and without paying attention to my surroundings, although my reconnoitering glance left nothing unobserved—and then my eyes fell upon her. My eyes fixed unswervingly upon her. They no longer obeyed their master's will; it was impossible for me to shift my gaze and thus overlook the object I wanted to see—I did not look, I stared. As a fencer freezes in his lunge, so my eyes were fixed, petrified in the direction initially taken. It was impossible to look

down, impossible to
withdraw my glance,
impossible to see, because I
saw far too much. The
only thing I have retained
is that she had on a green
cloak, that is all—one
could call it capturing the
cloud instead of Juno; she
has escaped me . . . and
left only her cloak
behind. . . . The girl made
an impression on me. •

The sixteenth • . . . I feel
no impatience, for she must
live here in the city, and at
this moment that is enough
for me. This possibility is
the condition for the proper
appearance of her image—
everything
will be enjoyed in slow
drafts. . . . • The
nineteenth • Cordelia,
then, is her name!
Cordelia! It is a beautiful
name, and that, too, is
important, since it can
often be very disturbing to
have to name an ugly
name together with the
most tender adjectives.

—SØREN KIERKEGAARD, *THE
SEDUCER'S DIARY*, TRANSLATED
BY HOWARD V. HONG AND
EDNA H. HONG

Love as understood by
Don Juan is a feeling akin
to a taste for hunting. It is
a craving for an activity
which needs an incessant
diversity of stimuli to
challenge skill.

—STENDHAL, *LOVE*,
TRANSLATED BY GILBERT AND
SUZANNE SALE

It is not the quality of the
desired object that gives us
pleasure, but rather the
energy of our appetites.

—CHARLES BAUDELAIRE, *THE
END OF DON JUAN*

ther. The conquest of this notoriously virtuous woman would prove his greatest seduction. His reputation would only be enhanced.

There was an obstacle, though, that seemed to make success almost impossible: everyone knew Valmont's reputation, including the *Présidente*. She knew how dangerous it was to ever be alone with him, how people would talk about the least association with him. Valmont did everything to belie his reputation, even going so far as to attend church services and seem repentant of his ways. The *Présidente* noticed, but still kept her distance. The challenge she presented to Valmont was irresistible, but could he meet it?

Valmont decided to test the waters. One day he arranged a little walk with the *Présidente* and his aunt. He chose a delightful path that they had never taken before, but at a certain point they reached a little ditch, unsuitable for a lady to cross on her own. And yet, Valmont said, the rest of the walk was too nice for them to turn back, and he gallantly picked up his aunt in his arms and carried her across the ditch, making the *Présidente* laugh uproariously. But then it was her turn, and Valmont purposefully picked her up a little awkwardly, so that she caught at his arms, and while he was holding her against him he could feel her heart beating faster, and saw her blush. His aunt saw this too, and cried out, "The child is afraid!" But Valmont sensed otherwise. Now he knew that the challenge could be met, that the *Présidente* could be won. The seduction could proceed.

Interpretation. Valmont, the *Présidente* de Tourvel, and the Marquise de Merteuil are all characters in the eighteenth-century French novel *Dangerous Liaisons*, by Choderlos de Laclos. (The character of Valmont was inspired by several real-life libertines of the time, most prominent of all the Duke de Richelieu.) In the story, Valmont worries that his seductions have become mechanical; he makes a move, and the woman almost always responds the same way. But no two seductions should be the same—a different target should change the whole dynamic. Valmont's problem is that he is always seducing the same type—the *wrong* type. He realizes this when he meets Madame de Tourvel.

It is not because her husband is a count that he decides to seduce her, or because she is stylishly dressed, or is desired by other men—the usual reasons. He chooses her because, in her unconscious way, she has already seduced him. A bare arm, an unrehearsed laugh, a playful manner—all these have captured his attention, because none of them is contrived. Once he falls under her spell, the strength of his desire will make his subsequent maneuvers seem less calculated; he is apparently unable to help himself. And his strong emotions will slowly infect her.

Beyond the effect the *Présidente* has on Valmont, she has other traits that make her the perfect victim. She is bored, which draws her toward adventure. She is naive, and unable to see through his tricks. Finally, the Achilles' heel: she believes herself immune to seduction. Almost all of us

are vulnerable to the attractions of other people, and we take precautions against unwanted lapses. Madame de Tourvel takes none. Once Valmont has tested her at the ditch, and has seen she is physically vulnerable, he knows that eventually she will fall.

Life is short, and should not be wasted pursuing and seducing the wrong people. The choice of target is critical; it is the set up of the seduction and it will determine everything else that follows. The perfect victim does not have certain facial features, or the same taste in music, or similar goals in life. That is how a banal seducer chooses his or her targets. The perfect victim is the person who stirs you in a way that cannot be explained in words, whose effect on you has nothing to do with superficialities. He or she often has a quality that you yourself lack, and may even secretly envy—the *Présidente*, for example, has an innocence that Valmont long ago lost or never had. There should be a little bit of tension—the victim may fear you a little, even slightly dislike you. Such tension is full of erotic potential and will make the seduction much livelier. Be more creative in choosing your prey and you will be rewarded with a more exciting seduction. Of course, it means nothing if the potential victim is not open to your influence. Test the person first. Once you feel that he or she is also vulnerable to you then the hunting can begin.

It is a stroke of good fortune to find one who is worth seducing. . . . Most people rush ahead, become engaged or do other stupid things, and in a turn of the hand everything is over, and they know neither what they have won nor what they have lost.

—SØREN KIERKEGAARD

Keys to Seduction

Throughout life we find ourselves having to persuade people—to seduce them. Some will be relatively open to our influence, if only in subtle ways, while others seem impervious to our charms. Perhaps we find this a mystery beyond our control, but that is an ineffective way of dealing with life. Seducers, whether sexual or social, prefer to pick the odds. As often as possible they go toward people who betray some vulnerability to them, and avoid the ones who cannot be moved. To leave people who are inaccessible to you alone is a wise path; you cannot seduce everyone. On the other hand, you must actively hunt out the prey that responds the right way. This will make your seductions that much more pleasurable and satisfying.

How do you recognize your victims? By the way they respond to you. You should not pay so much attention to their conscious responses—a person who is obviously trying to please or charm you is probably playing to your vanity, and wants something from you. Instead, pay greater attention to those responses outside conscious control—a blush, an involuntary mir-

The daughter of desire should strive to have the following lovers in their turn, as being mutually restful to her: a boy who has been loosed too soon from the authority and counsel of his father, an author enjoying office with a rather simple-minded prince, a merchant's son whose pride is in rivaling other lovers, an ascetic who is the slave of love in secret, a king's son whose follies are boundless and who has a taste for rascals, the countrified son of some village Brahman, a married woman's lover, a singer who has just pocketed a very large sum of money, the master of a caravan but recently come in. . . . These brief instructions admit of infinitely varied interpretation, dear child, according to the circumstance; and it requires intelligence, insight and reflection to make the best of each particular case.

—EASTERN LOVE, VOLUME II:
THE HARLOTS' BRIEVARY OF
KSHEMENDRA, TRANSLATED BY
E. POWYS MATHERS

The women who can be easily won over to congress: . . . a woman who looks sideways at you; . . . a woman who hates her husband, or who is hated by him; . . . a woman who has not had any children; . . . a woman who is very fond of society; a woman who is apparently very affectionate toward her husband; the wife of an actor; a widow; . . . a woman fond of enjoyments; . . . a vain woman; a woman whose husband is inferior to her

in rank or ability; a woman who is proud of her skill in the arts; . . . a woman who is slighted by her husband without any cause; . . . a woman whose husband is devoted to travelling; the wife of a jeweler; a jealous woman; a covetous woman.

—THE HINDI: ART OF LOVE,
EDITED BY EDWARD WINDSOR

Leisure stimulates love,
leisure watches the lovelorn, \ Leisure's the cause and sustenance of this sweet \ Evil.
Eliminate leisure, and Cupid's bow is broken, \ His torches lie lightless, scorned. \ As a plane-tree rejoices in wine, as a poplar in water, \ As a marsh-reed in swampy ground, so Venus loves \ Leisure. . . .
\ Why do you think Aegisthus \ Became an adulterer? Easy: he was idle—and bored. \ Everyone else was away at Troy on a lengthy \ Campaign: all Greece had shipped \ Its contingent across. Suppose he hankered for warfare? Argos \ Had no wars to offer. Suppose he fancied the courts? \ Argos lacked litigation. Love was better than doing nothing. \ That's how Cupid slips in; that's how he stays.

—OVID, CURES FOR LOVE,
TRANSLATED BY PETER GREEN

The Chinese have a proverb: "When Yang is in the ascendant, Yin is born," which means, translated into our language, that when a man has devoted the better of his life to the ordinary business of living, the Yin,

roring of some gesture of yours, an unusual shyness, even perhaps a flash of anger or resentment. All of these show that you are having an effect on a person who is open to your influence.

Like Valmont, you can also recognize the right targets by the effect they are having on you. Perhaps they make you uneasy—perhaps they correspond to a deep-rooted childhood ideal, or represent some kind of personal taboo that excites you, or suggest the person you imagine you would be if you were the opposite sex. When a person has such a deep effect on you, it transforms all of your subsequent maneuvers. Your face and gestures become more animated. You have more energy; when victims resist you (as a good victim should) you in turn will be more creative, more motivated to overcome their resistance. The seduction will move forward like a good play. Your strong desire will infect the target and give them the dangerous sensation that they have a power over you. Of course, you are the one ultimately in control since you are making your victims emotional at the right moments, leading them back and forth. Good seducers choose targets that inspire them but they know how and when to restrain themselves.

Never rush into the waiting arms of the first person who seems to like you. That is not seduction but insecurity. The need that draws you will make for a low-level attachment, and interest on both sides will sag. Look at the types you have not considered before—that is where you will find challenge and adventure. Experienced hunters do not choose their prey by how easily it is caught; they want the thrill of the chase, a life-and-death struggle—the fiercer the better.

Although the victim who is perfect for you depends on you, certain types lend themselves to a more satisfying seduction. Casanova liked young women who were unhappy, or had suffered a recent misfortune. Such women appealed to his desire to play the savior, but it also responded to necessity: happy people are much harder to seduce. Their contentment makes them inaccessible. It is always easier to fish in troubled waters. Also, an air of sadness is itself quite seductive—Genji, the hero of the Japanese novel *The Tale of Genji*, could not resist a woman with a melancholic air. In Kierkegaard's book *The Seducer's Diary*, the narrator, Johannes, has one main requirement in his victim: she must have imagination. That is why he chooses a woman who lives in a fantasy world, a woman who will envelop his every gesture in poetry, imagining far more than is there. Just as it is hard to seduce a person who is happy, it is hard to seduce a person who has no imagination.

For women, the manly man is often the perfect victim. Mark Antony was of this type—he loved pleasure, was quite emotional, and when it came to women, found it hard to think straight. He was easy for Cleopatra to manipulate. Once she gained a hold on his emotions, she kept him permanently on a string. A woman should never be put off by a man who seems overly aggressive. He is often the perfect victim. It is easy, with a few coquettish tricks, to turn that aggression around and make him your slave. Such men actually enjoy being made to chase after a woman.

Be careful with appearances. The person who seems volcanically passionate is often hiding insecurity and self-involvement. This was what most men failed to perceive in the nineteenth-century courtesan Lola Montez. She seemed so dramatic, so exciting. In fact, she was a troubled, self-obsessed woman, but by the time men discovered this it was too late—they had become involved with her and could not extricate themselves without months of drama and torture. People who are outwardly distant or shy are often better targets than extroverts. They are dying to be drawn out, and still waters run deep.

People with a lot of time on their hands are extremely susceptible to seduction. They have mental space for you to fill. Tullia d'Aragona, the infamous sixteenth-century Italian courtesan, preferred young men as her victims; besides the physical reason for such a preference, they were more idle than working men with careers, and therefore more defenseless against an ingenious seductress. On the other hand, you should generally avoid people who are preoccupied with business or work—seduction demands attention, and busy people have too little space in their minds for you to occupy.

According to Freud, seduction begins early in life, in our relationship with our parents. They seduce us physically, both with bodily contact and by satisfying desires such as hunger, and we in turn try to seduce them into paying us attention. We are creatures by nature vulnerable to seduction throughout our lives. We all want to be seduced; we yearn to be drawn out of ourselves, out of our routines and into the drama of eros. And what draws us more than anything is the feeling that someone has something we don't, a quality we desire. Your perfect victims are often people who think you have something they don't, and who will be enchanted to have it provided for them. Such victims may have a temperament quite the opposite of yours, and this difference will create an exciting tension.

When Jiang Qing, later known as Madame Mao, first met Mao Tse-tung in 1937 in his mountain retreat in western China, she could sense how desperate he was for a bit of color and spice in his life: all the camp's women dressed like the men, and abjured any feminine finery. Jiang had been an actress in Shanghai, and was anything but austere. She supplied what he lacked, and she also gave him the added thrill of being able to educate her in communism, appealing to his Pygmalion complex—the desire to dominate, control, and remake a person. In fact it was Jiang Qing who controlled her future husband.

The greatest lack of all is excitement and adventure, which is precisely what seduction offers. In 1964, the Chinese actor Shi Pei Pu, a man who had gained fame as a female impersonator, met Bernard Bouriscout, a young diplomat assigned to the French embassy in China. Bouriscout had come to China looking for adventure, and was disappointed to have little contact with Chinese people. Pretending to be a woman who, when still a child, had been forced to live as a boy—supposedly the family already had too many daughters—Shi Pei Pu used the young Frenchman's boredom and

or emotional side of his nature, rises to the surface and demands its rights. When such a period occurs, all that which has formerly seemed important loses its significance. The will-of-the-wisp of illusion leads the man hither and thither, taking him on strange and complicated deviations from his former path in life. Ming Huang, the "Bright Emperor" of the T'ang dynasty, was an example of the profound truth of this theory. From the moment he saw Yang Kuei-fei bathing in the lake near his palace in the Li mountains, he was destined to sit at her feet, learning from her the emotional mysteries of what the Chinese call Yin.

—ELOISE TALCOTT HIBBERT,
EMBROIDERED GAUZE:
PORTRAITS OF FAMOUS
CHINESE LADIES

discontent to manipulate him. Inventing a story of the deceptions he had had to go through, he slowly drew Bouriscout into an affair that would last many years. (Bouriscout had had previous homosexual encounters, but considered himself heterosexual.) Eventually the diplomat was led into spying for the Chinese. All the while, he believed Shi Pei Pu was a woman—his yearning for adventure had made him that vulnerable. Repressed types are perfect victims for a deep seduction.

People who repress the appetite for pleasure make ripe victims, particularly later in their lives. The eighth-century Chinese Emperor Ming Huang spent much of his reign trying to rid his court of its costly addiction to luxuries, and was himself a model of austerity and virtue. But the moment he saw the concubine Yang Kuei-fei bathing in a palace lake, everything changed. The most charming woman in the realm, she was the mistress of his son. Exerting his power, the emperor won her away—only to become her abject slave.

The choice of the right victim is equally important in politics. Mass seducers such as Napoleon or John F. Kennedy offer their public just what it lacks. When Napoleon came to power, the French people's sense of pride was beaten down by the bloody aftermath of the French Revolution. He offered them glory and conquest. Kennedy recognized that Americans were bored with the stultifying comfort of the Eisenhower years; he gave them adventure and risk. More important, he tailored his appeal to the group most vulnerable to it: the younger generation. Successful politicians know that not everyone will be susceptible to their charm, but if they can find a group of believers with a need to be filled, they have supporters who will stand by them no matter what.

Symbol:

Big Game. Lions are dangerous—to hunt them is to know the thrill of risk. Leopards are clever and swift, offering the excitement of a difficult chase. Never rush into the hunt. Know your prey and choose it carefully. Do not waste time with small game—the rabbits that back into snares, the mink that walk into a scented trap. Challenge is pleasure.

Reversal

There is no possible reversal. There is nothing to be gained from trying to seduce the person who is closed to you, or who cannot provide the pleasure and chase that you need.

2

Create a False Sense of Security- Approach Indirectly

If you are too direct early on, you risk stirring up a resistance that will never be lowered. At first there must be nothing of the seducer in your manner. The seduction should begin at an angle, indirectly, so that the target only gradually becomes aware of you. Haunt the periphery of your target's life—approach through a third party, or seem to cultivate a relatively neutral relationship, moving gradually from friend to lover. Arrange an occasional "chance" encounter, as if you and your target were destined to become acquainted—nothing is more seductive than a sense of destiny. Lull the target into feeling secure, then strike.

Friend to Lover

Anne Marie Louis d'Orléans, the Duchess de Montpensier, known in seventeenth-century France as *La Grande Mademoiselle*, had never known love in her life. Her mother had died when she was young; her father remarried and ignored her. She came from one of Europe's most illustrious families: her grandfather had been King Henry IV; the future King Louis XIV was her cousin. When she was young, matches had been proposed between her and the widowed king of Spain, the son of the Holy Roman emperor, and even cousin Louis himself, among many others. But all of these matches were designed for political purposes, or because of her family's enormous wealth. No one bothered to woo her; she rarely even met her suitors. To make matters worse, the Grande Mademoiselle was an idealist who believed in the old-fashioned values of chivalry: courage, honesty, virtue. She loathed the schemers whose motives in courting her were dubious at best. Whom could she trust? One by one she found a reason to spurn them. Spinsterhood seemed to be her fate.

In April of 1669, the Grande Mademoiselle, then forty-two, met one of the strangest men in the court: the Marquis Antonin Péguilin, later known as the Duke de Lauzun. A favorite of Louis XIV's, the thirty-six-year-old Marquis was a brave soldier with an acid wit. He was also an incurable Don Juan. Although he was short, and certainly not handsome, his impudent manners and his military exploits made him irresistible to women. The Grande Mademoiselle had noticed him some years before, admiring his elegance and boldness. But it was only this time, in 1669, that she had a real conversation with him, if a short one, and although she knew of his lady-killer reputation, she found him charming. A few days later they ran into each other again; this time the conversation was longer, and Lauzun proved more intelligent than she had imagined—they talked of the playwright Corneille (her favorite), of heroism, and of other elevated topics. Now their encounters became more frequent. They had become friends. Anne Marie noted in her diary that her conversations with Lauzun, when they occurred, were the highlight of her day; when he was not at court, she felt his absence. Surely her encounters with him came frequently enough that they could not be accidental on his part, but he always seemed surprised to see her. At the same time, she recorded feeling uneasy—strange emotions were stealing up on her, she did not know why.

Many women adore the elusive, \ Hate overeagerness. So, play hard to get, \ Stop boredom developing. And don't let your entreaties \ Sound too confident of possession. Insinuate sex \ Camouflaged as friendship. I've seen ultrastubborn creatures \ Fooled by this gambit, the switch from companion to stud.

—OVID, *THE ART OF LOVE*,
TRANSLATED BY PETER GREEN

On the street, I do not stop her, or I exchange a greeting with her but never come close, but always strive for distance. Presumably our repeated encounters are clearly noticeable to her; presumably she does perceive that on her horizon a new planet has loomed, which in its course has encroached disturbingly upon hers in a curiously undisturbing way, but she has no inkling of the law underlying this movement. . . . Before I begin my attack, I must

first become acquainted
with her and her whole
mental state.

—SØREN KIERKEGAARD, *THE
SEDUCER'S DIARY*, TRANSLATED
BY HOWARD V. HONG AND
EDNA H. HONG

No sooner had he spoken
than the bullocks, driven
from their mountain
pastures, were on their way
to the beach, as Jove had
directed; they were making
for the sands where the
daughter [Europa] of the
great king used to play
with the young girls of
Tyre, who were her com-
panions. . . . Aban-
doning the dignity of his
scepter, the father and ruler
of the gods, whose hand
wields the flaming three-
forked bolt, whose nod
shakes the universe,
adopted the guise of a bull;
and, mingling with the
other bullocks, joined in the
lowing and ambled in the
tender grass, a fair sight to
see. His hide was white as
untrodden snow, snow not
yet melted by the rainy
South wind. The muscles
stood out on his neck, and
deep folds of skin hung
along his flanks. His horns
were small, it is true, but
so beautifully made that
you would swear they were
the work of an artist, more
polished and shining than
any jewel. There was no
menace in the set of his
head or in his eyes; he
looked completely placid. •
Agenor's daughter
[Europa] was filled with
admiration for one so
handsome and so friendly.
But, gentle though he
seemed, she was afraid at
first to touch him; then she
went closer, and held out
flowers to his shining lips.
The lover was delighted

Time passed, and the Grande Mademoiselle was to leave Paris for a week or two. Now Lauzun approached her without warning and made an emotional plea to be considered her confidante, the great friend who would execute any commission she needed done while she was away. He was poetic and chivalrous, but what did he really mean? In her diary, Anne Marie finally confronted the emotions that had been stirring in her since their first conversation: "I told myself, these are not vague musings; there must be an object to all of these feelings, and I could not imagine who it was. . . . Finally, after troubling myself with this for several days, I realized that it was M. de Lauzun whom I loved, it was he who had somehow slipped into my heart and captured it."

Made aware of the source of her feelings, the Grande Mademoiselle became more direct. If Lauzun was to be her confidante, she could talk to him of marriage, of the matches that were still being offered to her. The topic might give him a chance to express his feelings; perhaps he might show jealousy. Unfortunately Lauzun did not seem to take the hint. Instead, he asked her why she was thinking of marriage at all—she seemed so happy. Besides, who could possibly be worthy of her? This went on for weeks. She could pry nothing personal out of him. In a way, she understood—there were the differences in rank (she was far above him) and age (she was six years older). Then, a few months later, the wife of the king's brother died, and King Louis suggested to the Grande Mademoiselle that she replace his late sister-in-law—that is, that she marry his brother. Anne Marie was disgusted; clearly the brother was trying to get his hands on her fortune. She asked Lauzun his opinion. As the king's loyal servants, he replied, they must obey the royal wish. His answer did not please her, and to make things worse, he stopped visiting her, as if it were no longer proper for them to be friends. This was the last straw. The Grande Mademoiselle told the king she would not marry his brother, and that was that.

Now Anne Marie met with Lauzun, and told him she would write on a piece of paper the name of the man she had wanted to marry all along. He was to put the paper under his pillow and read it the next morning. When he did, he found the words "*C'est vous*"—It is you. Seeing the Grande Mademoiselle the following evening, Lauzun said she must have been joking; she would make him the laughing stock of the court. She insisted that she was serious. He seemed shocked, surprised—but not as surprised as the rest of the court was a few weeks later, when an engagement was announced between this relatively low-ranking Don Juan and the second-highest-ranking lady in France, a woman known for both her virtue and her skill at defending it.

Interpretation. The Duke de Lauzun was one of the greatest seducers in history, and his slow and steady seduction of the Grande Mademoiselle was his masterpiece. His method was simple: indirection. Sensing her interest in him in that first conversation, he decided to beguile her with friendship.

He would become her most devoted friend. At first this was charming; a man was taking the time to talk to her, of poetry, history, the deeds of war—her favorite subjects. She slowly began to confide in him. Then, almost without her realizing it, her feelings shifted: the consummate ladies' man was only interested in friendship? He was not attracted to her as a woman? Such thoughts made her aware that she had fallen in love with him. This, in part, was what eventually made her turn down the match with the king's brother—a decision cleverly and indirectly provoked by Lauzun himself, when he stopped visiting her. And how could he be after money or position, or sex, when he had never made any kind of move? No, the brilliance of Lauzun's seduction was that the Grande Mademoiselle believed it was she who was making all the moves.

Once you have chosen the right victim, you must get his or her attention and stir desire. To move from friendship to love can win success without calling attention to itself as a maneuver. First, your friendly conversations with your targets will bring you valuable information about their characters, their tastes, their weaknesses, the childhood yearnings that govern their adult behavior. (Lauzun, for example, could adapt cleverly to Anne Marie's tastes once he had studied her close up.) Second, by spending time with your targets you can make them comfortable with you. Believing you are interested only in their thoughts, in their company, they will lower their resistance, dissipating the usual tension between the sexes. Now they are vulnerable, for your friendship with them has opened the golden gate to their body: their mind. At this point any offhand comment, any slight physical contact, will spark a different thought, which will catch them off-guard: perhaps there could be something else between you. Once that feeling has stirred, they will wonder why you haven't made a move, and will take the initiative themselves, enjoying the illusion that they are in control. There is nothing more effective in seduction than making the seduced think that they are the ones doing the seducing.

I do not approach her, I merely skirt the periphery of her existence. . . . This is the first web into which she must be spun.

—SØREN KIERKEGAARD

Key to Seduction

What you are after as a seducer is the ability to move people in the direction you want them to go. But the game is perilous; the moment they suspect they are acting under your influence, they will become resentful. We are creatures who cannot stand feeling that we are obeying someone else's will. Should your targets catch on, sooner or later they will turn against you. But what if you can make them do what you want them to without their realizing it? What if they think *they* are in control? That is

and, until he could achieve his hoped-for pleasure, kissed her hands. He could scarcely wait for the rest, only with great difficulty did he restrain himself. • Now he frolicked and played on the green turf now lay down, all snowy white on the yellow sand. Gradually the princess lost her fear, and with her innocent hands she stroked his breast when he offered it for her caress, and hung fresh garlands on his horns: till finally she even ventured to mount the bull, little knowing on whose back she was resting. Then the god drew away from the shore by easy stages, first planting the hooves that were part of his disguise in the surf at the water's edge, and then proceeding farther out to sea, till he bore his booty away over the wide stretches of mid ocean.

—OVID, *METAMORPHOSES*,
TRANSLATED BY MARY M. INNES

These few reflections lead us to the understanding that, since in attempting a seduction it is up to the man to make the first steps, for the seducer, to seduce is nothing more than reducing the distance, in this case that of the difference between the sexes and that, in order to accomplish this, it is necessary to feminize himself or at least identify himself with the object of his seduction. . . . As Alain Roger writes: "If there is a seduction, it is the seducer who is first lead astray, in the sense that he abdicates his own sex. . . . Seduction undoubtedly aims at sexual consummation, but it only gets there in creating a kind

*of simulacra of Gomorra.
The seducer is nothing
more than a lesbian."*

—FRÉDÉRIC MONNEYRON,
SÉDUIRE: L'IMAGINAIRE DE LA
SÉDUCTION DE DON GIOVANNI
À MICK JAGGER

*As he [Jupiter] was
hurrying busily to and fro,
he stopped short at the
sight of an Arcadian
maiden. The fire of
passion kindled the very
marrow of his bones. This
girl was not one who spent
her time in spinning soft
fibers of wool, or in
arranging her hair in
different styles. She was
one of Diana's warriors,
wearing her tunic pinned
together with a brooch, her
tresses carelessly caught
back by a white ribbon,
and carrying in her hand a
light javelin or her
bow. . . . The sun on
high had passed its zenith,
when she entered a grove
whose trees had never felt
the axe. Here she took her
quiver from her shoulders,
unstrung her pliant bow,
and lay down on the
turf, resting her head on
her painted quiver. When
Jupiter saw her thus, tired
and unprotected, he
said: "Here is a secret of
which my wife will know
nothing; or if she does get
to know of it, it will be
worth her reproaches!" •
Without wasting time he
assumed the appearance
and the dress of Diana,
and spoke to the girl.
'Dearest of all my
companions," he said,
"where have you been
hunting? On what
mountain ridges?" She
raised herself from the
grass: "Greeting, divine
mistress," she cried,
"greater in my sight than*

the power of indirection and no seducer can work his or her magic without it.

The first move to master is simple: once you have chosen the right person, you must make the target come to you. If, in the opening stages, you can make your targets think that they are the ones making the first approach, you have won the game. There will be no resentment, no perverse counterreaction, no paranoia.

To make them come to you requires giving them space. This can be accomplished in several ways. You can haunt the periphery of their existence, letting them notice you in different places but never approaching them. You will get their attention this way, and if they want to bridge the gap, they will have to come to you. You can befriend them, as Lauzun did the Grande Mademoiselle, moving steadily closer while always maintaining the distance appropriate for friends of the opposite sex. You can also play cat and mouse with them, first seeming interested, then stepping back—actively luring them to follow you into your web. Whatever you do, and whatever kind of seduction you are practicing, you must at all cost avoid the natural tendency to crowd your targets. Do not make the mistake of thinking they will lose interest unless you apply pressure, or that they will enjoy a flood of attention. Too much attention early on will actually just suggest insecurity, and raise doubts as to your motives. Worst of all, it gives your targets no room for imagination. Take a step back; let the thoughts you are provoking come to them as if they were their own. This is doubly important if you are dealing with someone who has a deep effect on you.

We can never really understand the opposite sex. They are always mysterious to us, and it is this mystery that provides the tension so delightful in seduction; but it is also a source of unease. Freud famously wondered what women really wanted; even to this most insightful of psychological thinkers, the opposite sex was a foreign land. For both men and women, there are deep-rooted feelings of fear and anxiety in relation to the opposite sex. In the initial stages of a seduction, then, you must find ways to calm any sense of mistrust that the other person may experience. (A sense of danger and fear can heighten the seduction later on, but if you stir such emotions in the first stages, you will more likely scare the target away.) Establish a neutral distance, seem harmless, and you give yourself room to move. Casanova cultivated a slight femininity in his character—an interest in clothes, theater, domestic matters—that young girls found comforting. The Renaissance courtesan Tullia d'Aragona, developing friendships with the great thinkers and poets of her time, talked of literature and philosophy—anything but the boudoir (and anything but the money that was also her goal). Johannes, the narrator of Søren Kierkegaard's *The Seducer's Diary*, follows his target, Cordelia, from a distance; when their paths cross, he is polite and apparently shy. As Cordelia gets to know him, he doesn't frighten her. In fact he is so innocuous she begins to wish he were less so.

Duke Ellington, the great jazz artist and a consummate seducer, would

initially dazzle the ladies with his good looks, stylish clothing, and charisma. But once he was alone with a woman, he would take a slight step back, becoming excessively polite, making only small talk. Banal conversation can be a brilliant tactic; it hypnotizes the target. The dullness of your front gives the subtlest suggestive word, the slightest look, an amplified power. Never mention love and you make its absence speak volumes—your victims will wonder why you never discuss your emotions, and as they have such thoughts, they will go further, imagining what else is going on in your mind. They will be the ones to bring up the topic of love or affection. De-liberate dullness has many applications. In psychotherapy, the doctor makes monosyllabic responses to draw patients in, making them relax and open up. In international negotiations, Henry Kissinger would lull diplomats with boring details, then strike with bold demands. Early in a seduction, less-colorful words are often more effective than vivid ones—the target tunes them out, looks at your face, begins to imagine, fantasize, fall under your spell.

Getting to your targets through other people is extremely effective; infiltrate their circle and you are no longer a stranger. Before the seventeenth-century seducer Count de Grammont made a move, he would befriend his target's chambermaid, her valet, a friend, even a lover. In this way he could gather information, finding a way to approach her in an unthreatening manner. He could also plant ideas, saying things the third party was likely to repeat, things that would intrigue the lady, particularly when they came from someone she knew.

Ninon de l'Enclos, the seventeenth-century courtesan and strategist of seduction, believed that disguising one's intentions was not only a necessity, it added to the pleasure of the game. A man should never declare his feelings, she felt, particularly early on. It is irritating and provokes mistrust. "A woman is much better persuaded that she is loved by what she guesses than by what she is told," Ninon once remarked. Often a person's haste in declaring his or her feelings comes from a false desire to please, thinking this will flatter the other. But the desire to please can annoy and offend. Children, cats, and coquettes draw us to them by apparently not trying, even by seeming uninterested. Learn to disguise your feelings and let people figure out what is happening for themselves.

In all arenas of life, you should never give the impression that you are angling for something—that will raise a resistance that you will never lower. Learn to approach people from the side. Mute your colors, blend in, seem unthreatening, and you will have more room to maneuver later on. The same holds true in politics, where overt ambition often frightens people. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin at first glance looked like an everyday Russian; he dressed like a worker, spoke with a peasant accent, had no air of greatness. This made the public feel comfortable and identify with him. Yet beneath this apparently bland appearance, of course, was a deeply clever man who was always maneuvering. By the time people realized this it was too late.

*Jove himself—I care not
if he hears me!" Jove
laughed to hear her words.
Delighted to be preferred to
himself, he kissed her—not
with the restraint becoming
to a maiden's kisses: and
as she began to tell of her
hunting exploits in the
forest, he prevented her by
his embrace, and betrayed
his real self by a shameful
action. So far from
complying, she resisted
him as far as a woman
could . . . but how could a
girl overcome a man, and
who could defeat Jupiter?
He had his way, and
returned to the upper air.*

—OVID, *METAMORPHOSES*,
TRANSLATED BY MARY M. INNES

*I had rather hear my dog
bark at a crow than a man
swear he loves me.*

—BEATRICE, IN WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE, *MUCH ADO
ABOUT NOTHING*

*I know of a man whose
beloved was completely
friendly and at ease with
him; but if he had
disclosed by the least
gesture that he was in love,
the beloved would have
become as remote from
him as the Pleiades, whose
stars hang so high in
heaven. It is a sort of
statesmanship that is
required in such cases; the
party concerned was
enjoying the pleasure of his
loved one's company
intensely and to the last
degree, but if he had so
much as hinted at his inner
feelings he would have
attained but a miserable
fraction of the beloved's
favor, and endured into the
bargain all the arrogance*

and caprice of which love is capable.

—IBN HAZM; THE RING OF
THE DOVE: A TREATISE ON THE
ART AND PRACTICE OF ARAB
LOVE, TRANSLATED BY A. J.
ARBERRY

Symbol: *The Spider's Web.* The spider finds an innocuous corner in which to spin its web. The longer the web takes, the more fabulous its construction, yet few really notice it—its gossamer threads are nearly invisible. The spider has no need to chase for food, or even to move. It quietly sits in the corner, waiting for its victims to come to it on their own, and ensnare themselves in the web.

Reversal

In warfare, you need space to align your troops, room to maneuver. The more space you have, the more intricate your strategy can be. But sometimes it is better to overwhelm the enemy, giving them no time to think or react. Although Casanova adapted his strategies to the woman in question, he would often try to make an immediate impression, stirring her desire at the first encounter. Perhaps he would perform some gallantry, rescuing a woman in danger; perhaps he would dress so that his target would notice him in a crowd. In either case, once he had the woman's attention he would move with lightning speed. A Siren like Cleopatra tries to have an immediate physical effect on men, giving her victims no time or space to retreat. She uses the element of surprise. The first period of your contact with someone can involve a level of desire that will never be repeated; boldness will carry the day.

But these are short seductions. The Sirens and the Casanovas only get pleasure from the number of their victims, moving quickly from conquest to conquest, and this can be tiring. Casanova burned himself out; Sirens, insatiable, are never satisfied. The indirect, carefully constructed seduction may reduce the number of your conquests, but more than compensate by their quality.

3

Send Mixed Signals

Once people are aware of your presence, and perhaps vaguely intrigued, you need to stir their interest before it settles on someone else. What is obvious and striking may attract their attention at first, but that attention is often short-lived; in the long run, ambiguity is much more potent. Most of us are much too obvious—instead, be hard to figure out. Send mixed signals: both tough and tender, both spiritual and earthy, both innocent and cunning. A mix of qualities suggests depth, which fascinates even as it confuses. An elusive, enigmatic aura will make people want to know more, drawing them into your circle. Create such a power by hinting at something contradictory within you.

Good and Bad

In 1806, when Prussia and France were at war, Auguste, the handsome twenty-four-year-old prince of Prussia and nephew of Frederick the Great, was captured by Napoleon. Instead of locking him up, Napoleon allowed him to wander around French territory, keeping a close watch on him through spies. The prince was devoted to pleasure, and spent his time moving from town to town, seducing young girls. In 1807 he decided to visit the Château de Coppet, in Switzerland, where lived the great French writer Madame de Staël.

Auguste was greeted by his hostess with as much ceremony as she could muster. After she had introduced him to her other guests, they all retired to a drawing room, where they talked of Napoleon's war in Spain, the current Paris fashions, and so on. Suddenly the door opened and another guest entered, a woman who had somehow stayed in her room during the hubbub of the prince's entrance. It was the thirty-year-old Madame Récamier, Madame de Staël's closest friend. She introduced herself to the prince, then quickly retired to her bedroom.

Auguste had known that Madame Récamier was at the château. In fact he had heard many stories about this infamous woman, who, in the years after the French Revolution, was considered the most beautiful in France. Men had gone wild over her, particularly at balls when she would take off her evening wrap, revealing the diaphanous white dresses that she had made famous, and dance with such abandon. The painters Gérard and David had immortalized her face and fashions, and even her feet, considered the most beautiful anyone had ever seen; and she had broken the heart of Lucien Bonaparte, the Emperor Napoleon's brother. Auguste liked his girls younger than Madame Récamier, and he had come to the château to rest. But those few moments in which she had stolen the scene with her sudden entrance caught him off guard: she was as beautiful as people had said, but more striking than her beauty was that look of hers that seemed so sweet, indeed heavenly, with a hint of sadness in the eyes. The other guests continued their conversations, but Auguste could only think of Madame Récamier.

Over dinner that evening, he watched her. She did not talk much, and kept her eyes downward, but once or twice she looked up—directly at the prince. After dinner the guests assembled in the gallery, and a harp was brought in. To the prince's delight, Madame Récamier began to play,

Reichardt had seen Juliette at another ball, protesting coyly that she would not dance, and then, after a while, throwing off her heavy evening gown, to reveal a light dress underneath. On all sides, there were murmurs and whisperings about her coquetry and affectation. As ever, she wore white satin, cut very low in the back, revealing her charming shoulders. The men implored her to dance for them. . . . To soft music she floated into the room in her diaphanous Greek robe. Her head was bound with a muslin fichu. She bowed timidly to the audience, and then, spinning round lightly, she shook a transparent scarf with her fingertips, so that in turns it billowed into the semblance of a drapery, a veil, a cloud. All this with a strange blend of precision and languor. She used her eyes in a subtle fascinating way— "she danced with her eyes." The women thought that all that serpentine undulating of the body, all that nonchalant rhythmic nodding of the head, were sensuous; the men were wafted into a realm of

unearthly bliss. Juliette was an ange fatal, and much more dangerous for looking like an angel! The music grew fainter. Suddenly, by a deft trick, Juliette's chestnut hair was loosened and fell in clouds around her. A little out of breath, she disappeared into her dimly lit boudoir. And there the crowd followed her and beheld her reclining on her daybed in a loose tea-gown, looking fashionably pale, like Gérard's Psyche, while her maids cooled her brow with toilet water.

—MARGARET TROUPER,
MADAME RÉCAMIER

The idea that two distinct elements are combined in Mona Lisa's smile is one that has struck several critics. They accordingly find in the beautiful Florentine's expression the most perfect representation of the contrasts that dominate the erotic life of women; the contrast between reserve and seduction, and between the most devoted tenderness and a sensuality that is ruthlessly demanding—consuming men as if they were alien beings.

—SIGMUND FREUD, LEONARDO
DA VINCI AND A MEMORY OF
HIS CHILDHOOD, TRANSLATED
BY ALAN TYSON

[Oscar Wilde's] hands were fat and flabby; his handshake lacked grip, and at a first encounter one recoiled from its plushy limpness, but this aversion was soon overcome when he began to talk, for his genuine kindness and desire to please made one forget what was unpleasant

singing a love song. And now, suddenly, she changed: there was a roguish look in her eye as she glanced at him. The angelic voice, the glances, the energy animating her face, sent his mind reeling. He was confused. When the same thing happened the next night, the prince decided to extend his stay at the château.

In the days that followed, the prince and Madame Récamier took walks together, rowed out on the lake, and attended dances, where he finally held her in his arms. They would talk late into the night. But nothing grew clear to him: she would seem so spiritual, so noble, and then there would be a touch of the hand, a sudden flirtatious remark. After two weeks at the château, the most eligible bachelor in Europe forgot all his libertine habits and proposed marriage to Madame Récamier. He would convert to Catholicism, her religion, and she would divorce her much older husband. (She had told him her marriage had never been consummated and so the Catholic church could annul it.) She would then come to live with him in Prussia. Madame promised to do as he wished. The prince hurried off to Prussia to seek the approval of his family, and Madame returned to Paris to secure the required annulment. Auguste flooded her with love letters, and waited. Time passed; he felt he was going mad. Then, finally, a letter: she had changed her mind.

Some months later, Madame Récamier sent Auguste a gift: Gérard's famous painting of her reclining on a sofa. The prince spent hours in front of it, trying to pierce the mystery behind her gaze. He had joined the company of her conquests—of men like the writer Benjamin Constant, who said of her, "She was my last love. For the rest of my life I was like a tree struck by lightning."

Interpretation. Madame Récamier's list of conquests became only more impressive as she grew older: there was Prince Metternich, the Duke of Wellington, the writers Constant and Chateaubriand. For all of these men she was an obsession, which only increased in intensity when they were away from her. The source of her power was twofold. First, she had an angelic face, which drew men to her. It appealed to paternal instincts, charming with its innocence. But then there was a second quality peeking through, in the flirtatious looks, the wild dancing, the sudden gaiety—all these caught men off guard. Clearly there was more to her than they had thought, an intriguing complexity. When alone, they would find themselves pondering these contradictions, as if a poison were coursing through their blood. Madame Récamier was an enigma, a problem that had to be solved. Whatever it was that you wanted, whether a coquettish she-devil or an unattainable goddess, she could seem to be. She surely encouraged this illusion by keeping her men at a certain distance, so they could never figure her out. And she was the queen of the calculated effect, like her surprise entrance at the Château de Coppet, which made her the center of attention, if only for a few seconds.

The seductive process involves filling someone's mind with your image. Your innocence, or your beauty, or your flirtatiousness can attract their attention but not their obsession; they will soon move on to the next striking image. To deepen their interest, you must hint at a complexity that cannot be grasped in a week or two. You are an elusive mystery, an irresistible lure, promising great pleasure if only it can be possessed. Once they begin to fantasize about you, they are on the brink of the slippery slope of seduction, and will not be able to stop themselves from sliding down.

Artificial and Natural

The big Broadway hit of 1881 was Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta *Patience*, a satire on the bohemian world of aesthetes and dandies that had become so fashionable in London. To cash in on this vogue, the operetta's promoters decided to invite one of England's most infamous aesthetes to America for a lecture tour: Oscar Wilde. Only twenty-seven at the time, Wilde was more famous for his public persona than for his small body of work. The American promoters were confident that their public would be fascinated by this man, whom they imagined as always walking around with a flower in his hand, but they did not expect it to last; he would do a few lectures, then the novelty would wear off, and they would ship him home. The money was good and Wilde accepted. On his arrival in New York, a customs man asked him whether he had anything to declare: "I have nothing to declare," he replied, "except my genius."

The invitations poured in—New York society was curious to meet this oddity. Women found Wilde enchanting, but the newspapers were less kind; *The New York Times* called him an "aesthetic sham." Then, a week after his arrival, he gave his first lecture. The hall was packed; more than a thousand people came, many of them just to see what he looked like. They were not disappointed. Wilde did not carry a flower, and was taller than they had expected, but he had long flowing hair and wore a green velvet suit and cravat, as well as knee breeches and silk stockings. Many in the audience were put off; as they looked up at him from their seats, the combination of his large size and pretty attire were rather repulsive. Some people openly laughed, others could not hide their unease. They expected to hate the man. Then he began to speak.

The subject was the "English Renaissance," the "art for art's sake" movement in late-nineteenth-century England. Wilde's voice proved hypnotic; he spoke in a kind of meter, mannered and artificial, and few really understood what he was saying, but the speech was so witty, and it flowed. His appearance was certainly strange, but overall, no New Yorker had ever seen or heard such an intriguing man, and the lecture was a huge success. Even the newspapers warmed up to it. In Boston a few weeks later, some sixty Harvard boys had prepared an ambush: they would make fun of this effeminate poet by dressing in knee breeches, carrying flowers, and ap-

in his physical appearance and contact, gave charm to his manners, and grace to his precision of speech. The first sight of him affected people in various ways. Some could hardly restrain their laughter, others felt hostile, a few were afflicted with the "creeps" many were conscious of being uneasy, but except for a small minority who could never recover from the first sensation of distaste and so kept out of his way, both sexes found him irresistible, and to the young men of his time, says W. B. Yeats, he was like a triumphant and audacious figure from another age.

—HESKETH PEARSON, OSCAR WILDE: HIS LIFE AND WIT

Once upon a time there was a magnet, and in its close neighborhood lived some steel filings. One day two or three little filings felt a sudden desire to go and visit the magnet, and they began to talk of what a pleasant thing it would be to do. Other filings nearby overheard their conversation, and they, too, became infected with the same desire. Still others joined them, till at last all the filings began to discuss the matter, and more and more their vague desire grew into an impulse.

"Why not go today?" said one of them; but others were of opinion that it would be better to wait until tomorrow. Meanwhile, without their having noticed it, they had been involuntarily moving nearer to the magnet, which lay there quite still, apparently taking no heed of them. And so they went on discussing, all the time

insensibly drawing nearer to their neighbor; and the more they talked, the more they felt the impulse growing stronger, till the more impatient ones declared that they would go that day, whatever the rest did. Some were heard to say that it was their duty to visit the magnet, and they ought to have gone long ago. And, while they talked, they moved always nearer and nearer, without realizing that they had moved. Then, at last, the impatient ones prevailed, and, with one irresistible impulse, the whole body cried out, "There is no use waiting. We will go today. We will go now. We will go at once." And then in one unanimous mass they swept along, and in another moment were clinging fast to the magnet on every side. Then the magnet smiled—for the steel filings had no doubt at all but that they were paying that visit of their own free will.

—OSCAR WILDE, AS QUOTED BY
RICHARD LE GALLIENNE IN
HESKETH PEARSON, OSCAR
WILDE: HIS LIFE AND WIT

Now that the bohott
[impromptu joust] was over
and the knights were
dispersing and each making
his way to where his
thoughts inclined him, it
chanced that Rivalin was
heading for where lovely
Blanchefflor was sitting.
Seeing this, he galloped up
to her and looking her in
the eyes saluted her most
pleasantly. • "God save
you, lovely woman!" •
"Thank you," said the
girl, and continued very
bashfully, "may God
Almighty, who makes all
hearts glad, gladden your
heart and mind! And my

plauding far too loudly at his entrance. Wilde was not the least bit flustered. The audience laughed hysterically at his improvised comments, and when the boys heckled him he kept his dignity, betraying no anger at all. Once again, the contrast between his manner and his physical appearance made him seem rather extraordinary. Many were deeply impressed, and Wilde was well on his way to becoming a sensation.

The short lecture tour turned into a cross-country affair. In San Francisco, this visiting lecturer on art and aesthetics proved able to drink every one under the table and play poker, which made him the hit of the season. On his way back from the West Coast, Wilde was to make stops in Colorado, and was warned that if the pretty-boy poet dared to show up in the mining town of Leadville, he would be hung from the highest tree. It was an invitation Wilde could not refuse. Arriving in Leadville, he ignored the hecklers and nasty looks; he toured the mines, drank and played cards, then lectured on Botticelli and Cellini in the saloons. Like everyone else, the miners fell under his spell, even naming a mine after him. One cowboy was heard to say, "That fellow is some art guy, but he can drink any of us under the table and afterwards carry us home two at a time."

Interpretation. In a fable he improvised at dinner once, Oscar Wilde talked about some steel filings that had a sudden desire to visit a nearby magnet. As they talked to each other about this, they found themselves moving closer to the magnet without realizing how or why. Finally they were swept in one mass to the magnet's side. "Then the magnet smiled—for the steel filings had no doubt at all but that they were paying that visit of their own free will." Such was the effect that Wilde himself had on everyone around him.

Wilde's attractiveness was more than just a by-product of his character, it was quite calculated. An adorer of paradox, he consciously played up his own weirdness and ambiguity, the contrast between his mannered appearance and his witty, effortless performance. Naturally warm and spontaneous, he constructed an image that ran counter to his nature. People were repelled, confused, intrigued, and finally drawn to this man who seemed impossible to figure out.

Paradox is seductive because it plays with meaning. We are secretly oppressed by the rationality in our lives, where everything is meant to mean something; seduction, by contrast, thrives on ambiguity, on mixed signals, on anything that eludes interpretation. Most people are painfully obvious. If their character is showy, we may be momentarily attracted, but the attraction wears off; there is no depth, no contrary motion, to pull us in. The key to both attracting and holding attention is to radiate mystery. And no one is naturally mysterious, at least not for long; mystery is something you have to work at, a ploy on your part, and something that must be used early on in the seduction. Let one part of your character show, so everyone notices it. (In the example of Wilde, this was the mannered affectation con-

veyed by his clothes and poses.) But also send out a mixed signal—some sign that you are not what you seem, a paradox. Do not worry if this underquality is a negative one, like danger, cruelty, or amorality; people will be drawn to the enigma anyway, and pure goodness is rarely seductive.

Paradox with him was only truth standing on its head to attract attention.

—RICHARD LE GALLIENNE, ON HIS FRIEND OSCAR WILDE

Keys to Seduction

Nothing can proceed in seduction unless you can attract and hold your victim's attention, your physical presence becoming a haunting mental presence. It is actually quite easy to create that first stir—an alluring style of dress, a suggestive glance, something extreme about you. But what happens next? Our minds are barraged with images—not just from media but from the disorder of daily life. And many of these images are quite striking. You become just one more thing screaming for attention; your attractiveness will pass unless you spark the more enduring kind of spell that makes people think of you in your absence. That means engaging their imaginations, making them think there is more to you than what they see. Once they start embellishing your image with their fantasies, they are hooked.

This must, however, be done early on, before your targets know too much and their impressions of you are set. It should occur the moment they lay eyes on you. By sending mixed signals in that first encounter, you create a little surprise, a little tension; you seem to be one thing (innocent, brash, intellectual, witty), but you also throw them a glimpse of something else (devilish, shy, spontaneous, sad). Keep things subtle: if the second quality is too strong, you will seem schizophrenic. But make them wonder why you might be shy or sad underneath your brash intellectual wit, and you will have their attention. Give them an ambiguity that lets them see what they want to see, capture their imagination with little voyeuristic glimpses into your dark soul.

The Greek philosopher Socrates was one of history's greatest seducers; the young men who followed him as students were not just fascinated by his ideas, they fell in love with him. One such youth was Alcibiades, the notorious playboy who became a powerful political figure near the end of the fifth century B.C. In Plato's *Symposium*, Alcibiades describes Socrates's seductive powers by comparing him to the little figures of Silenus that were made back then. In Greek myth, Silenus was quite ugly, but also a wise prophet. Accordingly the statues of Silenus were hollow, and when you took them apart, you would find little figures of gods inside them—the inner truth and beauty under the unappealing exterior. And so, for Alcibiades, it was the same with Socrates, who was so ugly as to be repellent but whose face radiated inner beauty and contentment. The effect was confus-

grateful thanks to you!—yet not forgetting a bone I have to pick with you." • "Ah, sweet woman, what have I done?" was courteous Rivalin's reply. • "You have annoyed me through a friend of mine, the best I ever had." • "Good heavens," thought he, "what does this mean? What have I done to displease her? What does she say I have done?" and he imagined that unwittingly he must have injured a kinsman of hers some time at their knightly sports and that was why she was vexed with him. But no, the friend she referred to was her heart, in which he made her suffer: that was the friend she spoke of. But he knew nothing of that. • "Lovely woman," he said with all his accustomed charm, "I do not want you to be angry with me or bear me any ill will. So, if what you tell me is true, pronounce sentence on me yourself: I will do whatever you command." • "I do not hate you overmuch for what has happened," was the sweet girl's answer, "nor do I love you for it. But to see what amends you will make for the wrong you have done me, I shall test you another time." • And so he bowed as if to go, and she, lovely girl, sighed at him most secretly and said with tender feeling: • "Ah, dear friend, God bless you!" From this time on the thoughts of each ran on the other. • Rivalin turned away, pondering many things. He pondered from many sides why Blancheflor should be vexed, and what lay behind it all. He considered her greeting, her

words; he examined her sigh minutely, her farewell, he whole behavior. . . . But since he was uncertain of her motive—whether she had acted from enmity or love—he wavered in perplexity. He wavered in his thoughts now here, now there. At one moment he was off in one direction, then suddenly in another, till he had so ensnared himself in the toils of his own desire that he was powerless to escape . . . •

His entanglement had placed him in a quandary, for he did not know whether she wished him well or ill; he could not make out whether she loved or hated him. No hope or despair did he consider which did not forbid him either to advance or retreat—hope and despair led him to and fro in unresolved dissension. Hope spoke to him of love, despair of hatred. Because of this discord he could yield his firm belief neither to hatred nor yet to love. Thus his feelings drifted in an unsure haven—hope bore him on, despair away. He found no constancy in either; they agreed neither one way or another. When despair came and told him that his Blanchefflor was his enemy he faltered and sought to escape: but at once came hope, bringing him her love, and a fond aspiration, and so perforce he remained. In the face of such discord he did not know where to turn: nowhere could he go forward. The more he strove to flee, the more firmly love forced him back. The harder he struggled to escape, love drew him back more firmly.

—GOTTFRIED VON STRASSBURG,
TRISTAN, TRANSLATED BY A.T.
HATTO

ing and attractive. Antiquity's other great seducer, Cleopatra, also sent out mixed signals: by all accounts physically alluring, in voice, face, body, and manner, she also had a brilliantly active mind, which for many writers of the time made her seem somewhat masculine in spirit. These contrary qualities gave her complexity, and complexity gave her power.

To capture and hold attention, you need to show attributes that go against your physical appearance, creating depth and mystery. If you have a sweet face and an innocent air, let out hints of something dark, even vaguely cruel in your character. It is not advertised in your words, but in your manner. The actor Errol Flynn had a boyishly angelic face and a slight air of sadness. Beneath this outward appearance, however, women could sense an underlying cruelty, a criminal streak, an exciting kind of dangerousness. This play of contrary qualities attracted obsessive interest. The female equivalent is the type epitomized by Marilyn Monroe; she had the face and voice of a little girl, but something sexual and naughty emanated powerfully from her as well. Madame Récamier did it all with her eyes—the gaze of an angel, suddenly interrupted by something sensual and flirtatious.

Playing with gender roles is a kind of intriguing paradox that has a long history in seduction. The greatest Don Juans have had a touch of prettiness and femininity, and the most attractive courtesans have had a masculine streak. The strategy, though, is only powerful when the underquality is merely hinted at; if the mix is too obvious or striking it will seem bizarre or even threatening. The great seventeenth-century French courtesan Ninon de l'Enclos was decidedly feminine in appearance, yet everyone who met her was struck by a touch of aggressiveness and independence in her—but just a touch. The late nineteenth-century Italian novelist Gabriele d'Annunzio was certainly masculine in his approaches, but there was a gentleness, a consideration, mixed in, and an interest in feminine finery. The combinations can be juggled every which way: Oscar Wilde was quite feminine in appearance and manner, but the underlying suggestion that he was actually quite masculine drew both men and women to him.

A potent variation on this theme is the blending of physical heat and emotional coldness. Dandies like Beau Brummel and Andy Warhol combine striking physical appearances with a kind of coldness of manner, a distance from everything and everyone. They are both enticing and elusive, and people spend lifetimes chasing after such men, trying to shatter their unattainability. (The power of apparently unattainable people is devilishly seductive; we want to be the one to break them down.) They also wrap themselves in ambiguity and mystery, either talking very little or talking only of surface matters, hinting at a depth of character you can never reach. When Marlene Dietrich entered a room, or arrived at a party, all eyes inevitably turned to her. First there were her startling clothes, chosen to make heads turn. Then there was her air of nonchalant indifference. Men, and women too, became obsessed with her, thinking of her long after other memories of the evening had faded. Remember: that first impression, that

entrance, is critical. To show too much desire for attention is to signal insecurity, and will often drive people away; play it too cold and disinterested, on the other hand, and no one will bother coming near. The trick is to combine the two attitudes at the same moment. It is the essence of coquetry.

Perhaps you have a reputation for a particular quality, which immediately comes to mind when people see you. You will better hold their attention by suggesting that behind this reputation some other quality lies lurking. No one had a darker, more sinful reputation than Lord Byron. What drove women wild was that behind his somewhat cold and disdainful exterior, they could sense that he was actually quite romantic, even spiritual. Byron played this up with his melancholic airs and occasional kind deed. Transfixed and confused, many women thought that they could be the one to lead him back to goodness, to make him a faithful lover. Once a woman entertained such a thought, she was completely under his spell. It is not difficult to create such a seductive effect. Should you be known as eminently rational, say, hint at something irrational. Johannes, the narrator in Kierkegaard's *The Seducer's Diary*, first treats the young Cordelia with businesslike politeness, as his reputation would lead her to expect. Yet she very soon overhears him making remarks that hint at a wild, poetic streak in his character; and she is excited and intrigued.

These principles have applications far beyond sexual seduction. To hold the attention of a broad public, to seduce them into thinking about you, you need to mix your signals. Display too much of one quality—even if it is a noble one, like knowledge or efficiency—and people will feel that you lack humanity. We are all complex and ambiguous, full of contradictory impulses; if you show only one side, even if it is your good side, you will wear on people's nerves. They will suspect you are a hypocrite. Mahatma Gandhi, a saintly figure, openly confessed to feelings of anger and vengeance. John F. Kennedy, the most seductive American public figure of modern times, was a walking paradox: an East Coast aristocrat with a love of the common man, an obviously masculine man—a war hero—with a vulnerability you could sense underneath, an intellectual who loved popular culture. People were drawn to Kennedy like the steel filings in Wilde's fable. A bright surface may have a decorative charm, but what draws your eye into a painting is a depth of field, an inexpressible ambiguity, a surreal complexity.

Symbol: *The Theater Curtain. Onstage, the curtain's heavy deep-red folds attract your eye with their hypnotic surface. But what really fascinates and draws you in is what you think might be happening behind the curtain—the light peeking through, the suggestion of a secret, something about to happen.*

You feel the thrill of a voyeur about to watch a performance.

Reversal

The complexity you signal to other people will only affect them properly if they have the capacity to enjoy a mystery. Some people like things simple, and lack the patience to pursue a person who confuses them. They prefer to be dazzled and overwhelmed. The great Belle Epoque courtesan known as La Belle Otero would work a complex magic on artists and political figures who fell for her, but in dealing with the more uncomplicated, sensual male she would astound them with spectacle and beauty. When meeting a woman for the first time, Casanova might dress in the most fantastic outfit, with jewels and brilliant colors to dazzle the eye; he would use the target's reaction to gauge whether or not she would demand a more complicated seduction. Some of his victims, particularly young girls, needed no more than the glittering and spellbinding appearance, which was really what they wanted, and the seduction would stay on that level.

Everything depends on your target: do not bother creating depth for people who are insensitive to it, or who may even be put off or disturbed by it. You can recognize such types by their preference for the simpler pleasures in life, their lack of patience for a more nuanced story. With them, keep it simple.

4

Appear to Be an Object of Desire —Create Triangles

Few are drawn to the person whom others avoid or neglect; people gather around those who have already attracted interest. We want what other people want. To draw your victims closer and make them hungry to possess you, you must create an aura of desirability—of being wanted and courted by many. It will become a point of vanity for them to be the preferred object of your attention, to win you away from a crowd of admirers. Manufacture the illusion of popularity by surrounding yourself with members of the opposite sex—friends, former lovers, present suitors. Create triangles that stimulate rivalry and raise your value.

*Build a reputation that precedes you: if many
have succumbed to your charms,
there must be a reason.*

Creating Triangles

One evening in 1882, the thirty-two-year-old Prussian philosopher Paul Rée, living in Rome at the time, visited the house of an older woman who ran a salon for writers and artists. Rée noticed a newcomer there, a twenty-one-year-old Russian girl named Lou von Salomé, who had come to Rome on holiday with her mother. Rée introduced himself and they began a conversation that lasted well into the night. Her ideas about God and morality were like his own; she talked with such intensity, yet at the same time her eyes seemed to flirt with him. Over the next few days Rée and Salomé took long walks through the city. Intrigued by her mind yet confused by the emotions she aroused, he wanted to spend more time with her. Then, one day, she startled him with a proposition: she knew he was a close friend of the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, then also visiting Italy. The three of them, she said, should travel together—no, actually live together, in a kind of philosophers' ménage à trois. A fierce critic of Christian morals, Rée found this idea delightful. He wrote to his friend about Salomé, describing how desperate she was to meet him. After a few such letters, Nietzsche hurried to Rome.

Rée had made this invitation to please Salomé, and to impress her; he also wanted to see if Nietzsche shared his enthusiasm for the young girl's ideas. But as soon as Nietzsche arrived, something unpleasant happened: the great philosopher, who had always been a loner, was obviously smitten with Salomé. Instead of the three of them sharing intellectual conversations together, Nietzsche seemed to be conspiring to get the girl alone. When Rée caught glimpses of Nietzsche and Salomé talking without including him, he felt shivers of jealousy. Forget about some philosophers' ménage à trois: Salomé was his, he had discovered her, and he would not share her, even with his good friend. Somehow he had to get her alone. Only then could he woo and win her.

Madame Salomé had planned to escort her daughter back to Russia, but Salomé wanted to stay in Europe. Rée intervened, offering to travel with the Salomé's to Germany and introduce them to his own mother, who, he promised, would look after the girl and act as a chaperone. (Rée knew that his mother would be a lax guardian at best.) Madame Salomé agreed to this proposal, but Nietzsche was harder to shake: he decided to join them on their northward journey to Rée's home in Prussia. At one point in the trip, Nietzsche and Salomé took a walk by themselves, and

Let me tell you about a gentleman I once knew who, although he was of pleasing appearance and modest behavior, and also a very capable warrior, was not so outstanding as regards any of these qualities that there were not to be found many who were his equal and even better. However, as luck would have it, a certain lady fell very deeply in love with him. She saw that he felt the same way, and as her love grew day by day, there not being any way for them to speak to each other, she revealed her sentiments to another lady, who she hoped would be of service to her in this affair. Now this lady neither in rank nor beauty was a whit inferior to the first; and it came about that when she heard the young man (whom she had never seen) spoken of so affectionately, and came to realize that the other woman, whom she knew was extremely discreet and intelligent, loved him beyond words, she straight away began to imagine that he must be the most handsome, the wisest, the most discreet of men, and, in short, the

man most worthy of her love in all the world. So, never having set eyes on him, she fell in love with him so passionately that she set out to win him not for her friend but for herself. And in this she succeeded with little effort, for indeed she was a woman more to be wooed than to do the wooing. And now listen to the splendid sequel: not long afterward it happened that a letter which she had written to her lover fell into the hands of another woman of comparable rank, charm, and beauty; and since she, like most women, was curious and eager to learn secrets, she opened the letter and read it. Realizing that it was written from the depths of passion, in the most loving and ardent terms, she was at first moved with compassion, for she knew very well from whom the letter came and to whom it was addressed; then, however, such was the power of the words she read, turning them over in her mind and considering what kind of man it must be who had been able to arouse such great love, she at once began to fall in love with him herself; and the letter was without doubt far more effective than if the young man had himself written it to her. And just as it sometimes happens that the poison prepared for a prince kills the one who tastes his food, so that poor woman, in her greediness, drank the love potion prepared for another. What more is there to say? The affair was no secret, and things so developed that many other women besides, partly to spite the others and partly to follow their

when they came back, Rée had the feeling that something physical had happened between them. His blood boiled; Salomé was slipping from his grasp.

Finally the group split up, the mother returning to Russia, Nietzsche to his summer place in Tautenburg, Rée and Salomé staying behind at Rée's home. But Salomé did not stay long: she accepted an invitation of Nietzsche's to visit him, unchaperoned, in Tautenburg. In her absence Rée was consumed with doubts and anger. He wanted her more than ever, and was prepared to redouble his efforts. When she finally came back, Rée vented his bitterness, railing against Nietzsche, criticizing his philosophy, and questioning his motives toward the girl. But Salomé took Nietzsche's side. Rée was in despair; he felt he had lost her for good. Yet a few days later she surprised him again: she had decided she wanted to live with him, and with him alone.

At last Rée had what he had wanted, or so he thought. The couple settled in Berlin, where they rented an apartment together. But now, to Rée's dismay, the old pattern repeated. They lived together but Salomé was courted on all sides by young men. The darling of Berlin's intellectuals, who admired her independent spirit, her refusal to compromise, she was constantly surrounded by a harem of men, who referred to her as "Her Excellency." Once again Rée found himself competing for her attention. Driven to despair, he left her a few years later, and eventually committed suicide.

In 1911, Sigmund Freud met Salomé (now known as Lou Andreas-Salomé) at a conference in Germany. She wanted to devote herself to the psychoanalytical movement, she said, and Freud found her enchanting, although, like everyone else, he knew the story of her infamous affair with Nietzsche (see page 46, "The Dandy"). Salomé had no background in psychoanalysis or in therapy of any kind, but Freud admitted her into the inner circle of followers who attended his private lectures. Soon after she joined the circle, one of Freud's most promising and brilliant students, Dr. Victor Tausk, sixteen years younger than Salomé, fell in love with her. Salomé's relationship with Freud had been platonic, but he had grown extremely fond of her. He was depressed when she missed a lecture, and would send her notes and flowers. Her involvement in a love affair with Tausk made him intensely jealous, and he began to compete for her attention. Tausk had been like a son to him, but the son was threatening to steal the father's platonic lover. Soon, however, Salomé left Tausk. Now her friendship with Freud was stronger than ever, and so it lasted until her death, in 1937.

Interpretation. Men did not just fall in love with Lou Andreas-Salomé; they were overwhelmed with the desire to possess her, to wrest her away from others, to be the proud owner of her body and spirit. They rarely saw her alone; she always in some way surrounded herself with other men.

When she saw that Rée was interested in her, she mentioned her desire to meet Nietzsche. This inflamed Rée, and made him want to marry her and to keep him for himself, but she insisted on meeting his friend. His letters to Nietzsche betrayed his desire for this woman, and this in turn kindled Nietzsche's own desire for her, even before he had met her. Every time one of the two men was alone with her, the other was in the background. Then, later on, most of the men who met her knew of the infamous Nietzsche affair, and this only increased their desire to possess her, to compete with Nietzsche's memory. Freud's affection for her, similarly, turned into potent desire when he had to vie with Tausk for her attention. Salomé was intelligent and attractive enough on her own account; but her constant strategy of imposing a triangle of relationships on her suitors made her desirability intense. And while they fought over her, she had the power, being desired by all and subject to none.

Our desire for another person almost always involves social considerations: we are attracted to those who are attractive to other people. We want to possess them and steal them away. You can believe all the sentimental nonsense you want to about desire, but in the end, much of it has to do with vanity and greed. Do not whine and moralize about people's selfishness, but simply use it to your advantage. The illusion that you are desired by others will make you more attractive to your victims than your beautiful face or your perfect body. And the most effective way to create that illusion is to create a triangle: impose another person between you and your victim, and subtly make your victim aware of how much this other person wants you. The third point on the triangle does not have to be just one person: surround yourself with admirers, reveal your past conquests—in other words, envelop yourself in an aura of desirability. Make your targets compete with your past and your present. They will long to possess you all to themselves, giving you great power for as long as you elude their grasp. Fail to make yourself an object of desire right from the start, and you will end up the sorry slave to the whims of your lovers—they will abandon you the moment they lose interest.

[A person] will desire any object so long as he is convinced that it is desired by another person whom he admires.

—RENÉ GIRARD

Keys to Seduction

We are social creatures, and are immensely influenced by the tastes and desires of other people. Imagine a large social gathering. You see a man alone, whom nobody talks to for any length of time, and who is wandering around without company; isn't there a kind of self-fulfilling isolation about him? Why is he alone, why is he avoided? There has to be a reason. Until someone takes pity on this man and starts up a conversation

example, put every care and effort into winning this man's love, squabbling over it for a while as boys do for cherries.

—BALDASSARE CASTIGLIONE,
THE BOOK OF THE COURTIER,
TRANSLATED BY GEORGE BULL

Most of the time we prefer one thing to another because that is what our friends already prefer or because that object has marked social significance. Adults, when they are hungry, are just like children in that they seek out the foods that others take. In their love affairs, they seek out the man or woman whom others find attractive and abandon those who are not sought after. When we say of a man or woman that he or she is desirable, what we really mean is that others desire them. It is not that they have some particular quality, but because they conform to some currently modish model.

—SERGE MOSCOVICI, THE AGE OF THE CROWD: A HISTORICAL TREATISE ON MASS PSYCHOLOGY, TRANSLATED BY J. C. WHITEHOUSE

It will be greatly to your advantage to entertain the lady you would win with an account of the number of women who are in love with you, and of the decided advances which they have made to you; for this will not only prove that you are a great favorite with the ladies, and a man of true honor, but it will convince her that she may have the honor of being enrolled in the same list, and of being praised in the

same way, in the presence
of your other female
friends. This will greatly
delight her, and you need
not be surprised if she
testifies her admiration of
your character by throwing
her arms around your neck
on the spot.

—LOLA MONTEZ, *THE ARTS
AND SECRETS OF BEAUTY, WITH
HINTS TO GENTLEMEN ON THE
ART OF FASCINATING*

[René] Girard's mimetic
desire occurs when an
individual subject desires
an object because it is
desired by another subject,
here designated as the
rival: desire is modeled on
the wishes or actions of
another. Philippe Lacoue-
Labarthe says that "the
basic hypothesis upon
which rests Girard's famous
analysis [is that] every
desire is the desire of the
other (and not immediately
desire of an object), every
structure of desire is
triangular (including the
other—mediator or
model—whose desire desire
imitates), every desire is
thus from its inception
tapped by hatred and
rivalry; in short, the origin
of desire is mimesis—
mimeticism—and no
desire is ever forged which
does not desire forthwith
the death or disappearance
of the model or exemplary
character which gave rise
to it.

—JAMES MANDRELL,
*DON JUAN AND THE POINT OF
HONOR*

with him, he will look unwanted and unwanted. But over there, in another corner, is a woman surrounded by people. They laugh at her remarks, and as they laugh, others join the group, attracted by its gaiety. When she moves around, people follow. Her face is glowing with attention. There has to be a reason.

In both cases, of course, there doesn't actually have to be a reason at all. The neglected man may have quite charming qualities, supposing you ever talk to him; but most likely you won't. Desirability is a social illusion. Its source is less what you say or do, or any kind of boasting or self-advertisement, than the sense that other people desire you. To turn your targets' interest into something deeper, into desire, you must make them see you as a person whom others cherish and covet. Desire is both imitative (we like what others like) and competitive (we want to take away from others what they have). As children, we wanted to monopolize the attention of a parent, to draw it away from other siblings. This sense of rivalry pervades human desire, repeating throughout our lives. Make people compete for your attention, make them see you as sought after by everyone else. The aura of desirability will envelop you.

Your admirers can be friends or even suitors. Call it the harem effect. Pauline Bonaparte, sister of Napoleon, raised her value in men's eyes by always having a group of worshipful men around her at balls and parties. If she went for a walk, it was never with one man, always with two or three. Perhaps these men were simply friends, or even just props and hangers-on; the sight of them was enough to suggest that she was prized and desired, a woman worth fighting over. Andy Warhol, too, surrounded himself with the most glamorous, interesting people he could find. To be part of his inner circle meant that you were desirable as well. By placing himself in the middle but keeping himself aloof from it all, he made everyone compete for his attention. He stirred people's desire to possess him by holding back.

Practices like these not only stimulate competitive desires, they take aim at people's prime weakness: their vanity and self-esteem. We can endure feeling that another person has more talent, or more money, but the sense that a rival is more desirable than we are—that is unbearable. In the early eighteenth century, the Duke de Richelieu, a great rake, managed to seduce a young woman who was rather religious but whose husband, a dolt, was often away. He then proceeded to seduce her upstairs neighbor, a young widow. When the two women discovered that he was going from one to the other in the same night, they confronted him. A lesser man would have fled, but not the duke; he understood the dynamic of vanity and desire. Neither woman wanted to feel that he preferred the other. And so he managed to arrange a little ménage à trois, knowing that now they would struggle between themselves to be the favorite. When people's vanity is at risk, you can make them do whatever you want. According to Stendhal, if there is a woman you are interested in, pay attention to her sister. That will stir a triangular desire.

Your reputation—your illustrious past as a seducer—is an effective way

of creating an aura of desirability. Women threw themselves at Errol Flynn's feet, not because of his handsome face, and certainly not because of his acting skills, but because of his reputation. They knew that other women had found him irresistible. Once he had established that reputation, he did not have to chase women anymore; they came to him. Men who believe that a rakish reputation will make women fear or distrust them, and should be played down, are quite wrong. On the contrary, it makes them more attractive. The virtuous Duchess de Montpensier, the *Grande Mademoiselle* of seventeenth-century France, began by enjoying a friendship with the rake Lauzun, but a troubling thought soon occurred to her: if a man with Lauzun's past did not see her as a possible lover, something had to be wrong with her. This anxiety eventually pushed her into his arms. To be part of a great seducer's club of conquests can be a matter of vanity and pride. We are happy to be in such company, to have our name broadcast as this man or woman's lover. Your own reputation may not be so alluring, but you must find a way to suggest to your victim that others, many others, have found you desirable. It is reassuring. There is nothing like a restaurant full of empty tables to persuade you not to go in.

A variation on the triangle strategy is the use of contrasts: careful exploitation of people who are dull or unattractive may enhance your desirability by comparison. At a social affair, for instance, make sure that your target has to chat with the most boring person available. Come to the rescue and your target will be delighted to see you. In *The Seducer's Diary*, by Søren Kierkegaard, Johannes has designs on the innocent young Cordelia. Knowing that his friend Edward is hopelessly shy and dull, he encourages this man to court her; a few weeks of Edward's attentions will make her eyes wander in search of someone else, *anyone* else, and Johannes will make sure that they settle on him. Johannes chose to strategize and maneuver, but almost any social environment will contain contrasts you can make use of almost naturally. The seventeenth-century English actress Nell Gwyn became the main mistress of King Charles II because her humor and unaffectedness made her that much more desirable among the many stiff and pretentious ladies of Charles's court. When the Shanghai actress Jiang Qing met Mao Zedong, in 1937, she did not have to do much to seduce him; the other women in his mountain camp in Yenan dressed like men, and were decidedly unfeminine. The sight alone of Jiang was enough to seduce Mao, who soon left his wife for her. To make use of contrasts, either develop and display those attractive attributes (humor, vivacity, and so on) that are the scarcest in your own social group, or choose a group in which your natural qualities are rare, and will shine.

The use of contrasts has vast political ramifications, for a political figure must also seduce and seem desirable. Learn to play up the qualities that your rivals lack. Peter II, czar in eighteenth-century Russia, was arrogant and irresponsible, so his wife, Catherine the Great, did all she could to seem modest and dependable. When Vladimir Lenin returned to Russia in 1917 after Czar Nicholas II had been deposed, he made a show of decisiveness

It's annoying that our new acquaintance likes the boy. But aren't the best things in life free to all? The sun shines on everyone. The moon, accompanied by countless stars, leads even the beasts to pasture. What can you think of lovelier than water? But it flows for the whole world. Is love alone then something furtive rather than something to be gloried in? Exactly, that's just it—I don't want any of the good things of life unless people are envious of them.

—PETRONIUS, *THE SATYRICON*,
TRANSLATED BY J. P. SULLIVAN

and discipline—precisely what no other leader had at the time. In the American presidential race of 1980, the irresoluteness of Jimmy Carter made the single-mindedness of Ronald Reagan look desirable. Contrasts are eminently seductive because they do not depend on your own words or self-advertisements. The public reads them unconsciously, and sees what it wants to see.

Finally, appearing to be desired by others will raise your value, but often how you carry yourself can influence this as well. Do not let your targets see you so often; keep your distance, seem unattainable, out of their reach. An object that is rare and hard to obtain is generally more prized.

Symbol: *The Trophy.*

What makes you want to win the trophy, and to see it as something worth having, is the sight of the other competitors. Some, out of a spirit of kindness, may want to reward everyone for trying, but the Trophy then loses its value. It must represent not only your victory but everyone else's defeat.

Reversal

There is no reversal. It is essential to appear desirable in the eyes of others.

5

Create a Need— Stir Anxiety and Discontent

A perfectly satisfied person cannot be seduced. Tension and disharmony must be instilled in your targets' minds. Stir within them feelings of discontent, an unhappiness with their circumstances and with themselves: their life lacks adventure, they have strayed from the ideals of their youth, they have become boring. The feelings of inadequacy that you create will give you space to insinuate yourself, to make them see you as the answer to their problems. Pain and anxiety are the proper precursors to pleasure. Learn to manufacture the need that you can fill.

Opening a Wound

In the coal-mining town of Eastwood, in central England, David Herbert Lawrence was considered something of a strange lad. Pale and delicate, he had no time for games or boyish pursuits, but was interested in literature; and he preferred the company of girls, who made up most of his friends. Lawrence often visited the Chambers family, who had been his neighbors until they moved out of Eastwood to a farm not far away. He liked to study with the Chambers sisters, particularly Jessie; she was shy and serious, and getting her to open up and confide in him was a pleasurable challenge. Jessie grew quite attached to Lawrence over the years, and they became good friends.

One day in 1906, Lawrence, twenty-one at the time, did not show up at the usual hour for his study session with Jessie. He finally arrived much later, in a mood she had never seen before—preoccupied and quiet. Now it was her turn to make him open up. Finally he talked: he felt she was getting too close to him. What about her future? Whom would she marry? Certainly not him, he said, for they were just friends. But it was unfair of him to keep her from seeing others. They should of course remain friends and have their talks, but maybe less often. When he finished and left, she felt a strange emptiness. She had yet to think much about love or marriage. Suddenly she had doubts. What would her future be? Why wasn't she thinking about it? She felt anxious and upset, without understanding why.

Lawrence continued to visit, but everything had changed. He criticized her for this and that. She wasn't very physical. What kind of wife would she make anyway? A man needed more from a woman than just talk. He likened her to a nun. They began to see each other less often. When, some time later, Lawrence accepted a teaching position at a school outside London, she felt part relieved to be rid of him for a while. But when he said goodbye to her, and intimated that it might be for the last time, she broke down and cried. Then he started sending her weekly letters. He would write about girls he was seeing; maybe one of them would be his wife. Finally, at his behest, she visited him in London. They got along well, as in the old times, but he continued to badger her about her future, picking at that old wound. At Christmas he was back in Eastwood, and when he visited her he seemed exultant. He had decided that it was Jessie he should marry, that he had in fact been attracted to her all along. They should keep it quiet for a while; although his writing career was taking off (his first

No one can fall in love if he is even partially satisfied with what he has or who he is. The experience of falling in love originates in an extreme depression, an inability to find something that has value in everyday life. The "symptom" of the predisposition to fall in love is not the conscious desire to do so, the intense desire to enrich our lives; it is the profound sense of being worthless and of having nothing that is valuable and the shame of not having it. . . . For this reason, falling in love occurs more frequently among young people, since they are profoundly uncertain, unsure of their worth, and often ashamed of themselves. The same thing applies to people of other ages when they lose something in their lives—when their youth ends or when they start to grow old.

—FRANCESCO ALBERONI,
FALLING IN LOVE, TRANSLATED
BY LAWRENCE VENUTI

"What can Love be then?" I said. "A mortal?" "Far from it." "Well, what?" "As in my previous examples, he is half-way between mortal and immortal." What sort of being is he then, Diotima?" "He is a great spirit, Socrates; everything that is of the nature of a spirit is half-god and half-man." . . . "Who are his parents?" I asked. "That is rather a long story," she answered, "but I will tell you. On the day that Aphrodite was born the gods were feasting, among them Contrivance the son of Invention; and after dinner, seeing that a party was in progress, Poverty came to beg and stood at the door. Now Contrivance was drunk with nectar—wine, I may say, had not yet been discovered—and went out into the garden of Zeus, and was overcome by sleep. So Poverty, thinking to alleviate her wretched condition by bearing a child to Contrivance, lay with him and conceived Love. Since Love was begotten on Aphrodite's birthday, and since he has also an innate passion for the beautiful, and so for the beauty of Aphrodite herself, he became her follower and servant. Again, having Contrivance for his father and Poverty for his mother, he bears the following character. He is always poor, and, far from being sensitive and beautiful, as most people imagine, he is hard and weather-beaten, shoeless and homeless, always sleeping out for want of a bed, on the ground, on doorsteps, and in the street. So far he takes after his mother and lives in want. But, being also his father's

novel was about to be published), he needed to make more money. Caught off guard by this sudden announcement, and overwhelmed with happiness, Jessie agreed to everything, and they became lovers.

Soon, however, the familiar pattern repeated: criticisms, breakups, announcements that he was engaged to another girl. This only deepened his hold on her. It was not until 1912 that she finally decided never to see him again, disturbed by his portrayal of her in the autobiographical novel *Sons and Lovers*. But Lawrence remained a lifelong obsession for her.

In 1913, a young English woman named Ivy Low, who had read Lawrence's novels, began to correspond with him, her letters gushing with admiration. By now Lawrence was married, to a German woman, the Baroness Frieda von Richthofen. To Low's surprise, though, he invited her to visit him and his wife in Italy. She knew he was probably something of a Don Juan, but was eager to meet him, and accepted his invitation. Lawrence was not what she had expected: his voice was high-pitched, his eyes were piercing, and there was something vaguely feminine about him. Soon they were taking walks together, with Lawrence confiding in Low. She felt that they were becoming friends, which delighted her. Then suddenly, just before she was to leave, he launched into a series of criticisms of her—she was so unspontaneous, so predictable, less human being than robot. Devastated by this unexpected attack, she nevertheless had to agree—what he had said was true. What could he have seen in her in the first place? Who was she anyway? Low left Italy feeling empty—but then Lawrence continued to write to her, as if nothing had happened. She soon realized that she had fallen hopelessly in love with him, despite everything he had said to her. Or was it not despite what he had said, but because of it?

In 1914, the writer John Middleton-Murry received a letter from Lawrence, a good friend of his. In the letter, out of nowhere, Lawrence criticized Middleton-Murry for being passionless and not gallant enough with his wife, the novelist Katherine Mansfield. Middleton-Murry later wrote, "I had never felt for a man before what his letter made me feel for him. It was a new thing, a unique thing, in my experience; and it was to remain unique." He felt that beneath Lawrence's criticisms lay some weird kind of affection. Whenever he saw Lawrence from then on, he felt a strange physical attraction that he could not explain.

Interpretation. The number of women, and of men, who fell under Lawrence's spell is astonishing given how unpleasant he could be. In almost every case the relationship began in friendship—with frank talks, exchanges of confidences, a spiritual bond. Then, invariably, he would suddenly turn against them, voicing harsh personal criticisms. He would know them well by that time, and the criticisms were often quite accurate, and hit a nerve. This would inevitably trigger confusion in his victims, and a sense of anxiety, a feeling that something was wrong with them. Jolted out of their usual sense of normality, they would feel divided inside. With half of their minds

they wondered why he was doing this, and felt he was unfair; with the other half, they believed it was all true. Then, in those moments of self-doubt, they would get a letter or a visit from him in which he was his old charming self.

Now they saw him differently. Now they were weak and vulnerable, in need of something; and he would seem so strong. Now he drew them to him, feelings of friendship turning into affection and desire. Once they felt uncertain about themselves, they were susceptible to falling in love.

Most of us protect ourselves from the harshness of life by succumbing to routines and patterns, by closing ourselves off from others. But underlying these habits is a tremendous sense of insecurity and defensiveness. We feel we are not really living. The seducer must pick at this wound and bring these semiconscious thoughts into full awareness. This was what Lawrence did: his sudden, brutally unexpected jabs would hit people at their weak spot.

Although Lawrence had great success with his frontal approach, it is often better to stir thoughts of inadequacy and uncertainty indirectly, by hinting at comparisons to yourself or to others, and by insinuating somehow that your victims' lives are less grand than they had imagined. You want them to feel at war with themselves, torn in two directions, and anxious about it. Anxiety, a feeling of lack and need, is the precursor of all desire. These jolts in the victim's mind create space for you to insinuate your poison, the siren call of adventure or fulfillment that will make them follow you into your web. Without anxiety and a sense of lack there can be no seduction.

Desire and love have for their object things or qualities which a man does not at present possess but which he lacks.

—SOCRATES

Keys to Seduction

Everyone wears a mask in society; we pretend to be more sure of ourselves than we are. We do not want other people to glimpse that doubting self within us. In truth, our egos and personalities are much more fragile than they appear to be; they cover up feelings of confusion and emptiness. As a seducer, you must never mistake a person's appearance for the reality. People are always susceptible to being seduced, because in fact everyone lacks a sense of completeness, feels something missing deep inside. Bring their doubts and anxieties to the surface and they can be led and lured to follow you.

No one can see you as someone to follow or fall in love with unless they first reflect on themselves somehow, and on what they are missing. Before the seduction proceeds, you must place a mirror in front of them in

son, he schemes to get for himself whatever is beautiful and good; he is bold and forward and strenuous, always devising tricks like a cunning huntsman."

—PLATO, SYMPOSIUM,
TRANSLATED BY WALTER
HAMILTON

We are all like pieces of the coins that children break in half for keepsakes—making two out of one, like the flatfish—and each of us is forever seeking the half that will tally with himself . . . And so all this to-do is a relic of that original state of ours when we were whole, and now, when we are longing for and following after that primeval wholeness, we say we are in love.

—ARISTOPHANES'S SPEECH IN
PLATO'S SYMPOSIUM, QUOTED IN
JAMES MANDRELL, DON JUAN
AND THE POINT OF HONOR

Don John: Well met, pretty lass! What! Are there such handsome Creatures as you amongst these Fields, these Trees, and Rocks? • Charlotta: I am as you see, Sir. • Don John: Are you of this Village? • Charlotta: Yes, Sir. • Don John: What's your name? • Charlotta: Charlotta, Sir, at your Service. • Don John: Ah what a fine Person 'tis! What piercing Eyes! • Charlotta: Sir, you make me ashamed. . . . • Don John: Pretty Charlotta, you are not marry'd, are you? • Charlotta: No, Sir, but I am soon to be, with Pierrot, son to Goody Simonetta. • Don John: What! Shou'd such a one as you be Wife to a

Peasant! No, no; that's a
 profanation of so much
 Beauty. You was not born
 to live in a Village. You
 certainly deserve a better
 Fortune, and Heaven,
 which knows it well,
 brought me hither on
 purpose to hinder this
 Marriage and do justice to
 your Charms; for in short,
 fair Charlotta, I love you
 with all my Heart, and if
 you'll consent I'll deliver
 you from this miserable
 Place, and put you in the
 Condition you deserve.
 This Love is doubtless
 sudden, but 'tis an Effect of
 your great Beauty. I love
 you as much in a quarter of
 an Hour as I shou'd
 another in six Months.

—MOLIÈRE, DON JOHN; OR,
 THE LIBERTINE, TRANSLATED BY
 JOHN OZELL, IN OSCAR
 MANDEL, ED., THE THEATRE OF
 DON JUAN

For I stand tonight facing
 west on what was once the
 last frontier. From the
 lands that stretch three
 thousand miles behind me,
 the pioneers of old gave up
 their safety, their comfort,
 and sometimes their lives to
 build a new world here in
 the West. They were not
 the captives of their own
 doubts, the prisoners of
 their own price tags. Their
 motto was not "every man
 for himself—but "all for
 the common cause." They
 were determined to make
 that new world strong and
 free, to overcome its
 hazards and its hardships,
 to conquer the enemies that
 threatened from without
 and within. . . . Today
 some would say that those
 struggles are all over—that
 all the horizons have been
 explored, that all the
 battles have been won, that
 there is no longer an

which they glimpse that inner emptiness. Made aware of a lack, they now can focus on you as the person who can fill that empty space. Remember: most of us are lazy. To relieve our feelings of boredom or inadequacy on our own takes too much effort; letting someone else do the job is both easier and more exciting. The desire to have someone fill up our emptiness is the weakness on which all seducers prey. Make people anxious about the future, make them depressed, make them question their identity, make them sense the boredom that gnaws at their life. The ground is prepared. The seeds of seduction can be sown.

In Plato's dialogue *Symposium*—the West's oldest treatise on love, and a text that has had a determining influence on our ideas of desire—the courtesan Diotima explains to Socrates the parentage of Eros, the god of love. Eros's father was Contrivance, or Cunning, and his mother was Poverty, or Need. Eros takes after his parents: he is constantly in need, which he is constantly contriving to fill. As the god of love, he knows that love cannot be induced in another person unless they too feel need. And that is what his arrows do: piercing people's flesh, they make them feel a lack, an ache, a hunger. This is the essence of your task as a seducer. Like Eros, you must create a wound in your victim, aiming at their soft spot, the chink in their self-esteem. If they are stuck in a rut, make them feel it more deeply, "innocently" bringing it up and talking about it. What you want is a wound, an insecurity you can expand a little, an anxiety that can best be relieved by involvement with another person, namely you. They must feel the wound before they fall in love. Notice how Lawrence stirred anxiety, always hitting at his victims' weak spot: for Jessie Chambers, her physical coldness; for Ivy Low, her lack of spontaneity; for Middleton-Murry, his lack of gallantry.

Cleopatra got Julius Caesar to sleep with her the first night he met her, but the real seduction, the one that made him her slave, began later. In their ensuing conversations she talked repeatedly of Alexander the Great, the hero from whom she was supposedly descended. No one could compare to him. By implication, Caesar was made to feel inferior. Understanding that beneath his bravado Caesar was insecure, Cleopatra awakened in him an anxiety, a hunger to prove his greatness. Once he felt this way he was easily further seduced. Doubts about his masculinity was his tender spot.

When Caesar was assassinated, Cleopatra turned her sights on Mark Antony, one of Caesar's successors in the leadership of Rome. Antony loved pleasure and spectacle, and his tastes were crude. She appeared to him first on her royal barge, then wined and dined and banqueted him. Everything was geared to suggest to him the superiority of the Egyptian way of life over the Roman, at least when it came to pleasure. The Romans were boring and unsophisticated by comparison. And once Antony was made to feel how much he was missing in spending his time with his dull soldiers and his matronly Roman wife, he could be made to see Cleopatra as the incarnation of all that was exciting. He became her slave.

This is the lure of the exotic. In your role of seducer, try to position yourself as coming from outside, as a stranger of sorts. You represent

change, difference, a breakup of routines. Make your victims feel that by comparison their lives are boring and their friends less interesting than they had thought. Lawrence made his targets feel personally inadequate; if you find it hard to be so brutal, concentrate on their friends, their circumstances, the externals of their lives. There are many legends of Don Juan, but they often describe him seducing a village girl by making her feel that her life is horribly provincial. He, meanwhile, wears glittering clothes and has a noble bearing. Strange and exotic, he is always from somewhere else. First she feels the boredom of her life, then she sees him as her salvation. Remember: people prefer to feel that if their life is uninteresting, it not because of themselves but because of their circumstances, the dull people they know, the town into which they were born. Once you make them feel the lure of the exotic, seduction is easy.

Another devilishly seductive area to aim at is the victim's past. To grow old is to renounce or compromise youthful ideals, to become less spontaneous, less alive in a way. This knowledge lies dormant in all of us. As a seducer you must bring it to the surface, make it clear how far people have strayed from their past goals and ideals. You, in turn, present yourself as representing that ideal, as offering a chance to recapture lost youth through adventure—through seduction. In her later years, Queen Elizabeth I of England was known as a rather stern and demanding ruler. She made it a point not to let her courtiers see anything soft or weak in her. But then Robert Devereux, the second Earl of Essex, came to court. Much younger than the queen, the dashing Essex would often chastize her for her sourness. The queen would forgive him—he was so exuberant and spontaneous, he could not control himself. But his comments got under her skin; in the presence of Essex she came to remember all the youthful ideals—spiritedness, feminine charm—that had since vanished from her life. She also felt a little of that girlish spirit return when she was around him. He quickly became her favorite, and soon she was in love with him. Old age is constantly seduced by youth, but first the young people must make it clear what the older ones are missing, how they have lost their ideals. Only then will they feel that the presence of the young will let them recapture that spark, the rebellious spirit that age and society have conspired to repress.

This concept has infinite applications. Corporations and politicians know that they cannot seduce their public into buying what they want them to buy, or doing what they want them to do, unless they first awaken a sense of need and discontent. Make the masses uncertain about their identity and you can help define it for them. It is as true of groups or nations as it is of individuals: they cannot be seduced without being made to feel some lack. Part of John F. Kennedy's election strategy in 1960 was to make Americans unhappy about the 1950s, and how far the country had strayed from its ideals. In talking about the 1950s, he did not mention the nation's economic stability or its emergence as a superpower. Instead, he implied that the period was marked by conformity, a lack of risk and adventure, a loss of our frontier values. To vote for Kennedy was to embark

American frontier. • But I trust that no one in this vast assemblage will agree with those sentiments. . . . I tell you the New Frontier is here, whether we seek it or not. . . . It would be easier to shrink back from that frontier, to look to the safe mediocrity of the past, to be lulled by good intentions and high rhetoric—and those who prefer that course should not cast their votes for me, regardless of party. • But I believe that the times demand invention, innovation, imagination, decision. I am asking each of you to be new pioneers on that New Frontier. My call is to the young in heart, regardless of age.

—JOHN F. KENNEDY, ACCEPTANCE SPEECH AS THE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY, QUOTED IN JOHN HELLMANN, *THE KENNEDY OBSESSION: THE AMERICAN MYTH OF JFK*

The normal rhythm of life oscillates in general between a mild satisfaction with oneself and a slight discomfort, originating in the knowledge of one's personal shortcomings. We should like to be as handsome, young, strong or clever as other people of our acquaintance. We wish we could achieve as much as they do, long for similar advantages, positions, the same or greater success. To be delighted with oneself is the exception and, often enough, a smoke screen which we produce for ourselves and of course for others. Somewhere in it is a lingering feeling of discomfort with ourselves and a slight self-dislike. I assert that an increase of

this spirit of discontent renders a person especially susceptible to "falling in love." . . . In most cases this attitude of disquiet is unconscious, but in some it reaches the threshold of awareness in the form of a slight uneasiness, or a stagnant dissatisfaction, or a realization of being upset without knowing why.

—THEODOR REIK,
OF LOVE AND LUST

on a collective adventure, to go back to ideals we had given up. But before anyone joined his crusade they had to be made aware of how much they had lost, what was missing. A group, like an individual, can get mired in routine, losing track of its original goals. Too much prosperity saps it of strength. You can seduce an entire nation by aiming at its collective insecurity, that latent sense that not everything is what it seems. Stirring dissatisfaction with the present and reminding people about the glorious past can unsettle their sense of identity. Then you can be the one to redefine it—a grand seduction.

Symbol: *Cupid's Arrow. What awakens desire in the seduced is not a soft touch or a pleasant sensation; it is a wound. The arrow creates a pain, an ache, a need for relief. Before desire there must be pain. Aim the arrow at the victim's weakest spot, creating a wound that you can open and reopen.*

Reversal

If you go too far in lowering the targets' self-esteem they may feel too insecure to enter into your seduction. Do not be heavy-handed; like Lawrence, always follow up the wounding attack with a soothing gesture. Otherwise you will simply alienate them.

Charm is often a subtler and more effective route to seduction. The Victorian Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli always made people feel *better* about themselves. He deferred to them, made them the center of attention, made them feel witty and vibrant. He was a boon to their vanity, and they grew addicted to him. This is a kind of diffused seduction, lacking in tension and in the deep emotions that the sexual variety stirs; it bypasses people's hunger, their need for some kind of fulfillment. But if you are subtle and clever, it can be a way of lowering their defenses, creating an unthreatening friendship. Once they are under your spell in this way, you can then open the wound. Indeed, after Disraeli had charmed Queen Victoria and established a friendship with her, he made her feel vaguely inadequate in the establishment of an empire and the realization of her ideals. Everything depends on the target. People who are riddled with insecurities may require the gentler variety. Once they feel comfortable with you, aim your arrows.

6

Master the Art of Insinuation

Making your targets feel dissatisfied and in need of your attention is essential, but if you are too obvious, they will see through you and grow defensive. There is no known defense, however, against insinuation—the art of planting ideas in people's minds by dropping elusive hints that take root days later, even appearing to them as their own idea. Insinuation is the supreme means of influencing people. Create a sublanguage—bold statements followed by retraction and apology, ambiguous comments, banal talk combined with alluring glances—that enters the target's unconscious to convey your real meaning. Make everything suggestive.

Insinuating Desire

One evening in the 1770s, a young man went to the Paris Opera to meet his lover, the Countess de _____. The couple had been fighting, and he was anxious to see her again. The countess had not arrived yet at her box, but from an adjacent one a friend of hers, Madame de T_____, called out to the young man to join her, remarking that it was an excellent stroke of luck that they had met that evening—he must keep her company on a trip she had to take. The young man wanted urgently to see the countess, but Madame was charming and insistent and he agreed to go with her. Before he could ask why or where, she quickly escorted him to her carriage outside, which then sped off.

Now the young man enjoined his hostess to tell him where she was taking him. At first she just laughed, but finally she told him: to her husband's château. The couple had been estranged, but had decided to reconcile; her husband was a bore, however, and she felt a charming young man like himself would liven things up. The young man was intrigued: Madame was an older woman, with a reputation for being rather formal, though he also knew she had a lover, a marquis. Why had she chosen him for this excursion? Her story was not quite credible. Then, as they traveled, she suggested he look out the window at the passing landscape, as she was doing. He had to lean over toward her to do so, and just as he did, the carriage jolted. She grabbed his hand and fell into his arms. She stayed there for a moment, then pulled away from him rather abruptly. After an awkward silence, she said, "Do you intend to convince me of my imprudence in your regard?" He protested that the incident had been an accident and reassured her he would behave himself. In truth, however, having her in his arms had made him think otherwise.

They arrived at the château. The husband came to meet them, and the young man expressed his admiration of the building: "What you see is nothing," Madame interrupted, "I must take you to Monsieur's apartment." Before he could ask what she meant, the subject was quickly changed. The husband was indeed a bore, but he excused himself after supper. Now Madame and the young man were alone. She invited him to walk with her in the gardens; it was a splendid evening, and as they walked, she slipped her arm in his. She was not worried that he would take advantage of her, she said, because she knew how attached he was to her good friend the countess. They talked of other things, and then she returned to the topic of

As we were about to enter the chamber, she stopped me. "Remember," she said gravely, "you are supposed never to have seen, never even suspected, the sanctuary you're about to enter. . . ." . . . All this was like an initiation rite. She led me by the hand across a small, dark corridor. My heart was pounding as though I were a young proselyte being put to the test before the celebration of the great mysteries. . . . "But your Countess . . . " she said, stopping. I was about to reply when the doors opened; my answer was interrupted by admiration. I was astonished, delighted, I no longer know what became of me, and I began in good faith to believe in magic. . . . In truth, I found myself in a vast cage of mirrors on which images were so artistically painted that they produced the illusion of all the objects they represented.

—VIVANT DENON, "NO TOMORROW," IN MICHEL FEHER, ED., *THE LIBERTINE READER*

A few short years ago, in our native city, where fraud and cunning prosper more than love or loyalty, there was a noblewoman of striking beauty and impeccable breeding, who was endowed by Nature with as lofty a temperament and shrewd an intellect as could be found in any other woman of her time. . . . This lady, being of gentle birth and finding herself married off to a master woollen-draper because he happened to be very rich, was unable to stifle her heartfelt contempt, for she was firmly of the opinion that no man of low condition, however wealthy, was deserving of a noble wife. And on discovering that all he was capable of despite his massive wealth, was distinguishing wool from cotton, supervising the setting up of a loom, or debating the virtues of a particular yarn with a spinner-woman, she resolved that as far as it lay within her power she would have nothing whatsoever to do with his beastly caresses. Moreover she was determined to seek her pleasure elsewhere, in the company of one who seemed more worthy of her affection, and so it was that she fell deeply in love with an extremely eligible man in his middle thirties. And whenever a day passed without her having set eyes upon him, she was restless for the whole of the following night. • However, the gentleman suspected nothing of all this, and took no notice of her; and for her part, being very cautious, she would not venture to declare her love by dispatching a maidservant or writing him

his lover: "Is she making you quite happy? Oh, I fear the contrary, and this distresses me. . . . Are you not often the victim of her strange whims?" To the young man's surprise, Madame began to talk of the countess in a way that made it seem that she had been unfaithful to him (which was something he had suspected). Madame sighed—she regretted saying such things about her friend, and asked him to forgive her; then, as if a new thought had occurred to her, she mentioned a nearby pavilion, a delightful place, full of pleasant memories. But the shame of it was, it was locked and she had no key. And yet they found their way to the pavilion, and lo and behold, the door had been left open. It was dark inside, but the young man could sense that it was a place for trysts. They entered and sank onto a sofa, and before he knew what had come over him, he took her in his arms. Madame seemed to push him away, but then gave in. Finally she came to her senses: they must return to the house. Had he gone too far? He must try to control himself.

As they strolled back to the house, Madame remarked, "What a delicious night we've just spent." Was she referring to what had happened in the pavilion? "There is an even more charming room in the château," she went on, "but I can't show you anything," implying he had been too forward. She had mentioned this room ("Monsieur's apartment") several times before; he could not imagine what could be so interesting about it, but by now he was dying to see it and insisted she show it to him. "If you promise to be good," she replied, her eyes widening. Through the darkness of the house she led him into the room, which, to his delight, was a kind of temple of pleasure: there were mirrors on the walls, trompe l'oeil paintings evoking a forest scene, even a dark grotto, and a garlanded statue of Eros. Overwhelmed by the mood of the place, the young man quickly resumed what he had started in the pavilion, and would have lost all track of time if a servant had not rushed in and warned them that it was getting light outside—Monsieur would soon be up.

They quickly separated. Later that day, as the young man prepared to leave, his hostess said, "Goodbye, Monsieur; I owe you so many pleasures; but I have paid you with a beautiful dream. Now your love summons you to return. . . . Don't give the Countess cause to quarrel with me." Reflecting on his experience on the way back, he could not figure out what it meant. He had the vague sensation of having been used, but the pleasures he remembered outweighed his doubts.

Interpretation. Madame de T____ is a character in the eighteenth-century libertine short story "No Tomorrow," by Vivant Denon. The young man is the story's narrator. Although fictional, Madame's techniques were clearly based on those of several well-known libertines of the time, masters of the game of seduction. And the most dangerous of their weapons was insinuation—the means by which Madame cast her spell on the young man, making him seem the aggressor, giving her the night of pleasure she desired,

and safeguarding her guiltless reputation, all in one stroke. After all, he was the one who initiated physical contact, or so it seemed. In truth, she was the one in control, planting precisely the ideas in his mind that she wanted. That first physical encounter in the carriage, for instance, that she had set up by inviting him closer: she later rebuked him for being forward, but what lingered in his mind was the excitement of the moment. Her talk of the countess made him confused and guilty; but then she hinted that his lover was unfaithful, planting a different seed in his mind: anger, and the desire for revenge. Then she asked him to forget what she had said and forgive her for saying it, a key insinuating tactic: "I am asking you to forget what I have said, but I know you cannot; the thought will remain in your mind." Provoked this way, it was inevitable he would grab her in the pavilion. She several times mentioned the room in the château—of course he insisted on going there. She enveloped the evening in an air of ambiguity. Even her words "If you promise to be good" could be read several ways. The young man's head and heart were inflamed with all of the feelings—discontent, confusion, desire—that she had indirectly instilled in him.

Particularly in the early phases of a seduction, learn to make everything you say and do a kind of insinuation. Insinuate doubt with a comment here and there about other people in the victim's life, making the victim feel vulnerable. Slight physical contact insinuates desire, as does a fleeting but memorable look, or an unusually warm tone of voice, both for the briefest of moments. A passing comment suggests that something about the victim interests you; but keep it subtle, your words revealing a possibility, creating a doubt. You are planting seeds that will take root in the weeks to come. When you are not there, your targets will fantasize about the ideas you have stirred up, and brood upon the doubts. They are slowly being led into your web, unaware that you are in control. How can they resist or become defensive if they cannot even see what is happening?

What distinguishes a suggestion from other kinds of psychological influence, such as a command or the giving of a piece of information or instruction, is that in the case of a suggestion an idea is aroused in another person's brain which is not examined in regard to its origin but is accepted just as though it had arisen spontaneously in that brain.

—SIGMUND FREUD

Keys to Seduction

You cannot pass through life without in one way or another trying to persuade people of something. Take the direct route, saying exactly what you want, and your honesty may make you feel good but you are probably not getting anywhere. People have their own sets of ideas, which are hardened into stone by habit; your words, entering their minds, com-

a letter, for fear of the dangers that this might entail. But having perceived that he was on very friendly terms with a certain priest, a rotund, uncouth, individual who was nevertheless regarded as an outstandingly able friar on account of his very saintly way of life, she calculated that this fellow would serve as an ideal go-between for her and the man she loved. And so, after reflecting on the strategy she would adopt, she paid a visit, at an appropriate hour of the day, to the church where he was to be found, and having sought him out, she asked him whether he would agree to confess her.

• *Since he could tell at a glance that she was a lady of quality, the friar gladly heard her confession, and when she had got to the end of it, she continued as follows:*

• *"Father, as I shall explain to you presently, there is a certain matter about which I am compelled to seek your advice and assistance. Having already told you my name, I feel sure you will know my family and my husband. He loves me more dearly than life itself, and since he is enormously rich, he never has the slightest difficulty or hesitation in supplying me with every single object for which I display a yearning. Consequently, my love for him is quite unbounded, and if my mere thoughts, to say nothing of my actual behavior, were to run contrary to his wishes and his honor, I would be more deserving of hellfire than the wickedest woman who ever lived.*

• *"Now, there is a certain person, of respectable outward*

appearance, who unless I am mistaken is a close acquaintance of yours. I really couldn't say what his name is, but he is tall and handsome, his clothes are brown and elegantly cut, and, possibly because he is unaware of my resolute nature, he appears to have laid siege to me. He turns up infallibly whenever I either look out of my window or stand at the front door or leave the house, and I am surprised, in fact, that he is not here now. Needless to say, I am very upset about all this, because his sort of conduct frequently gives an honest woman a bad name, even though she is quite innocent. " . . . For the love of God, therefore, I implore you to speak to him severely and persuade him to refrain from his importunities. There are plenty of other women who doubtless find this sort of thing amusing, and who will enjoy being ogled and spied upon by him, but I personally have no inclination for it whatsoever, and I find his behavior exceedingly disagreeable." • And having reached the end of her speech, the lady bowed her head as though she were going to burst into tears. • The reverend friar realized immediately who it was to whom she was referring, and having warmly commended her purity of mind . . . he promised to take all necessary steps to ensure that the fellow ceased to annoy her. . . . • Shortly afterward, the gentleman in question paid one of his regular visits to the reverend friar, and after they had conversed together for a while on general

pete with the thousands of preconceived notions that are already there, and get nowhere. Besides, people resent your attempt to persuade them, as if they were incapable of deciding by themselves—as if you knew better. Consider instead the power of insinuation and suggestion. It requires some patience and art, but the results are more than worth it.

The way insinuation works is simple: disguised in a banal remark or encounter, a hint is dropped. It is about some emotional issue—a possible pleasure not yet attained, a lack of excitement in a person's life. The hint registers in the back of the target's mind, a subtle stab at his or her insecurities; its source is quickly forgotten. It is too subtle to be memorable at the time, and later, when it takes root and grows, it seems to have emerged naturally from the target's own mind, as if it was there all along. Insinuation lets you bypass people's natural resistance, for they seem to be listening only to what has originated in themselves. It is a language on its own, communicating directly with the unconscious. No seducer, no persuader, can hope to succeed without mastering the language and art of insinuation.

A strange man once arrived at the court of Louis XV. No one knew anything about him, and his accent and age were unplaceable. He called himself Count Saint-Germain. He was obviously wealthy; all kinds of gems and diamonds glittered on his jacket, his sleeves, his shoes, his fingers. He could play the violin to perfection, paint magnificently. But the most intoxicating thing about him was his conversation.

In truth, the count was the greatest charlatan of the eighteenth century—a man who had mastered the art of insinuation. As he spoke, a word here and there would slip out—a vague allusion to the philosopher's stone, which turned base metal into gold, or to the elixir of life. He did not say he possessed these things, but he made you associate him with their powers. Had he simply claimed to have them, no one would have believed him and people would have turned away. The count might refer to a man who had died forty years earlier as if he had known him personally; had this been so, the count would have had to be in his eighties, although he looked to be in his forties. He mentioned the elixir of life. . . . he seems so young. . . .

The key to the count's words was vagueness. He always dropped his hints into a lively conversation, grace notes in an ongoing melody. Only later would people reflect on what he had said. After a while, people started to come to him, inquiring about the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life, not realizing that it was he who had planted these ideas in their minds. Remember: to sow a seductive idea you must engage people's imaginations, their fantasies, their deepest yearnings. What sets the wheels spinning is suggesting things that people already want to hear—the possibility of pleasure, wealth, health, adventure. In the end, these good things turn out to be precisely what you seem to offer them. They will come to you as if on their own, unaware that you insinuated the idea in their heads.

In 1807, Napoleon Bonaparte decided it was critical for him to win the Russian Czar Alexander I to his side. He wanted two things out of the

czar: a peace treaty in which they agreed to carve up Europe and the Middle East; and a marriage alliance, in which he would divorce his wife Josephine and marry into the czar's family. Instead of proposing these things directly, Napoleon decided to seduce the czar. Using polite social encounters and friendly conversations as his battlefields, he went to work. An apparent slip of the tongue revealed that Josephine could not bear children; Napoleon quickly changed the subject. A comment here and there seemed to suggest a linking of the destinies of France and Russia. Just before they were to part one evening, he talked of his desire for children, sighed sadly, then excused himself for bed, leaving the czar to sleep on this. He escorted the czar to a play on the themes of glory, honor, and empire; now, in later conversations, he could disguise his insinuations under the cover of discussing the play. Within a few weeks, the czar was speaking to his ministers of a marriage alliance and a treaty with France as if they were his own ideas.

Slips of the tongue, apparently inadvertent "sleep on it" comments, alluring references, statements for which you quickly apologize—all of these have immense insinuating power. They get under people's skin like a poison, and take on a life of their own. The key to succeeding with your insinuations is to make them when your targets are at their most relaxed or distracted, so that they are not aware of what is happening. Polite banter is often the perfect front for this; people are thinking about what they will say next, or are absorbed in their own thoughts. Your insinuations will barely register, which is how you want it.

In one of his early campaigns, John F. Kennedy addressed a group of veterans. Kennedy's brave exploits during World War II—the PT-109 incident had made him a war hero—were known to all; but in the speech, he talked of the other men on the boat, never mentioning himself. He knew, however, that what he had done was on everyone's mind, because in fact he had put it there. Not only did his silence on the subject make them think of it on their own, it made Kennedy seem humble and modest, qualities that go well with heroism. In seduction, as the French courtesan Ninon de l'Enclos advised, it is better not to talk about your love for a person. Let your target read it in your manner. Your silence on the subject will have more insinuating power than if you had addressed it directly.

Not only words insinuate; pay attention to gestures and looks. Madame Récamier's favorite technique was to keep her words banal and the look in her eyes enticing. The flow of conversation would keep men from thinking too deeply about these occasional looks, but they would be haunted by them. Lord Byron had his famous "underlook": while everyone was discussing some uninteresting subject, he would seem to hang his head, but then a young woman (the target) would see him glancing upward at her, his head still tilted. It was a look that seemed dangerous, challenging, but also ambiguous; many women were hooked by it. The face speaks its own language. We are used to trying to read people's faces, which are often better indicators of their feelings than what they say, which is so easy to control.

topics, the friar drew him to one side and reproached him in a very kindly sort of way for the amorous glances which, as the lady had given him to understand, he believed him to be casting in her direction. • Not unnaturally, the gentleman was amazed, for he had never so much as looked at the lady and it was very seldom that he passed by her house. . . . • The gentleman, being rather more perceptive than the reverend friar, was not exactly slow to appreciate the lady's cleverness, and putting on a somewhat sheepish expression, he promised not to bother her any more. But after leaving the friar, he made his way toward the house of the lady, who was keeping continuous vigil at a tiny little window so that she would see him if he happened to pass by. . . . And from that day forward, proceeding with the maximum prudence and conveying the impression that he was engaged in some other business entirely, he became a regular visitor to the neighborhood.

—GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO, *THE DECAMERON*, TRANSLATED BY G. H. MCWILLIAM

Glances are the heavy artillery of the flirt: everything can be conveyed in a look, yet that look can always be denied, for it cannot be quoted word for word.

—STENDHAL, QUOTED IN RICHARD DAVENPORT-HINES, ED., *VICE: AN ANTHOLOGY*

Since people are always reading your looks, use them to transmit the insinuating signals you choose.

Finally, the reason insinuation works so well is not just that it bypasses people's natural resistance. It is also the language of pleasure. There is too little mystery in the world; too many people say exactly what they feel or want. We yearn for something enigmatic, for something to feed our fantasies. Because of the lack of suggestion and ambiguity in daily life, the person who uses them suddenly seems to have something alluring and full of promise. It is a kind of titillating game—what is this person up to? What does he or she mean? Hints, suggestions, and insinuations create a seductive atmosphere, signaling that their victim is no longer involved in the routines of daily life but has entered another realm.

Symbol: *The Seed.*

The soil is carefully prepared. The seeds are planted months in advance. Once they are in the ground, no one knows what hand threw them there. They are part of the earth. Disguise your manipulations by planting seeds that take root on their own.

Reversal

The danger in insinuation is that when you leave things ambiguous your target may misread them. There are moments, particularly later on in a seduction, when it is best to communicate your idea directly, particularly once you know the target will welcome it, Casanova often played things that way. When he could sense that a woman desired him, and needed little preparation, he would use a direct, sincere, gushing comment to go straight to her head like a drug and make her fall under his spell. When the rake and writer Gabriele D'Annunzio met a woman he desired, he rarely delayed. Flattery flowed from his mouth and pen. He would charm with his "sincerity" (sincerity can be feigned, and is just one stratagem among others). This only works, however, when you sense that the target is easily yours. If not, the defenses and suspicions you raise by direct attack will make your seduction impossible. When in doubt, indirection is the better route.

7

Enter Their Spirit

*Most
people are locked in their
own worlds, making them stubborn
and hard to persuade. The way to lure
them out of their shell and set up your seduction is
to enter their spirit. Play by their rules, enjoy what they
enjoy, adapt yourself to their moods. In doing so you will
stroke their deep-rooted narcissism and lower their defenses.
Hypnotized by the mirror image you present, they will open up,
becoming vulnerable to your subtle influence. Soon you can
shift the dynamic: once you have entered their spirit you
can make them enter yours, at a point when it is
too late to turn back. Indulge your targets'
every mood and whim, giving them
nothing to react against or
resist.*

The Indulgent Strategy

In October of 1961, the American journalist Cindy Adams was granted an exclusive interview with President Sukarno of Indonesia. It was a remarkable coup, for Adams was a little-known journalist at the time, while Sukarno was a world figure in the midst of a crisis. A leader of the fight for Indonesia's independence, he had been the country's president since 1949, when the Dutch finally gave up the colony. By the early 1960s, his daring foreign policy had made him hated in the United States, some calling him the Hitler of Asia.

Adams decided that in the interests of a lively interview, she would not be cowed or overawed by Sukarno, and she began the conversation by joking with him. To her pleasant surprise, her ice-breaking tactic seemed to work: Sukarno warmed up to her. He let the interview run well over an hour, and when it was over he loaded her with gifts. Her success was remarkable enough, but even more so were the friendly letters she began to receive from Sukarno after she and her husband had returned to New York. A few years later, he proposed that she collaborate with him on his autobiography.

Adams, who was used to doing puff pieces on third-rate celebrities, was confused. She knew Sukarno had a reputation as a devilish Don Juan—*le grand séducteur*, the French called him. He had had four wives and hundreds of conquests. He was handsome, and obviously he was attracted to her, but why choose her for this prestigious task? Perhaps his libido was too powerful for him to care about such things. Nevertheless, it was an offer she could not refuse.

In January of 1964, Adams returned to Indonesia. Her strategy, she had decided, would stay the same: she would be the brassy, straight-talking lady who had seemed to charm Sukarno three years earlier. During her first interview with him for the book, she complained in rather strong terms about the rooms she had been given as lodgings. As if he were her secretary, she dictated a letter to him, which he was to sign, detailing the special treatment she was to be given by one and all. To her amazement, he dutifully copied out the letter, and signed it.

Next on Adams's schedule was a tour of Indonesia to interview people who had known Sukarno in his youth. So she complained to him about the plane she had to fly on, which she said was unsafe. "I tell you what, honey," she told him, "I think you should give me my own plane." "Okay," he an-

*You're anxious to keep
your mistress? \ Convince
her she's knocked you all of
a heap \ With her stunning
looks. If it's purple she's
wearing, praise purple; \
When she's in a silk dress,
say silk \ Suits her best of
all. . . Admire \ Her
singing voice, her gestures
as she dances, \ Cry
"Encore!" when she stops.
You can even praise \ Her
performance in bed, her
talent for love-making— \
Spell out what turned you
on. \ Though she may
show fiercer in action than
any Medusa, \ Her lover
will always describe her as
kind \ And gentle. But
take care not to give
yourself away while \
Making such tongue-in-
cheek compliments, don't
allow \ Your expression to
ruin the message. Art's
most effective \ When
concealed. Detection
discredits you for good.*

—OVID, *THE ART OF LOVE*,
TRANSLATED BY PETER GREEN

*The little boy (or girl) seeks
to fascinate his or her
parents. In Oriental
literature, imitation is*

reckoned to be one of the ways of attracting. The Sanskrit texts, for example, give an important part to the trick of the woman copying the dress, expressions, and speech of her beloved. This kind of mimetic drama is urged on the woman who, "being unable to unite with her beloved, imitates him to distract his thoughts." • The child too, using the devices of imitating attitudes, dress, and so on, seeks to fascinate, until a magical intention, the father or mother and thus to "distract its thoughts." Identification means that one is abandoning and not abandoning amorous desires. It is a lure which the child uses to capture his parents and which, it must be admitted, they fall for. The same is true for the masses, who imitate their leader, bear his name and repeat his gestures. They bow to him, but at the same time they are unconsciously baiting a trap to hold him. Great ceremonies and demonstrations are just as much occasions when the multitudes charm the leader as vice versa.

—SERGE MOSCOVICI, *THE AGE OF THE CROWD*, TRANSLATED BY J. C. WHITEHOUSE

My sixth brother, he who had both his lips cut off, Prince of the Faithful, is called Shakashik. • In his youth he was very poor. One day, as he was begging in the streets of Baghdad, he passed by a splendid mansion, at the gates of which stood an impressive array of attendants. Upon inquiry my brother was informed

swered, apparently somewhat abashed. One, however, was not enough, she went on; she required several planes, and a helicopter, and her own personal pilot, a good one. He agreed to everything. The leader of Indonesia seemed to be not just intimidated by Adams but totally under her spell. He praised her intelligence and wit. At one point he confided, "Do you know why I'm doing this biography? . . . Only because of you, that's why." He paid attention to her clothes, complimenting her outfits, noticing any change in them. He was more like a fawning suitor than the "Hitler of Asia."

Inevitably, of course, he made passes at her. She was an attractive woman. First there was the hand on top of her hand, then a stolen kiss. She spurned him every time, making it clear she was happily married, but she was worried: if all he had wanted was an affair, the whole book deal could fall apart. Once again, though, her straightforward strategy seemed the right one. Surprisingly, he backed down without anger or resentment. He promised that his affection for her would remain platonic. She had to admit that he was not at all what she had expected, or what had been described to her. Perhaps he liked being dominated by a woman.

The interviews continued for several months, and she noticed slight changes in him. She still addressed him familiarly, spicing the conversation with brazen comments, but now he returned them, delighting in this kind of saucy banter. He assumed the same lively mood that she strategically forced on herself. At first he had dressed in military uniform, or in his Italian suits. Now he dressed casually, even going barefoot, conforming to the casual style of their relationship. One night he remarked that he liked the color of her hair. It was Clairol, blue-black, she explained. He wanted to have the same color; she had to bring him a bottle. She did as he asked, imagining he was joking, but a few days later he requested her presence at the palace to dye his hair for him. She did so, and now they had the exact same hair color.

The book, *Sukarno: An Autobiography as Told to Cindy Adams*, was published in 1965. To American readers' surprise, Sukarno came across as remarkably charming and lovable, which was indeed how Adams described him to one and all. If anyone argued, she would say that they did not know him the way she did. Sukarno was well pleased, and had the book distributed far and wide. It helped gain sympathy for him in Indonesia, where he was now being threatened with a military coup. And Sukarno was not surprised—he had known all along that Adams would do a far better job with his memoirs than any "serious" journalist.

Interpretation. Who was seducing whom? It was Sukarno who was doing the seducing, and his seduction of Adams followed a classical sequence. First, he chose the right victim. An experienced journalist would have resisted the lure of a personal relationship with the subject, and a man would have been less susceptible to his charm. And so he picked a woman, and

one whose journalistic experience lay elsewhere. At his first meeting with Adams, he sent mixed signals: he was friendly to her, but hinted at another kind of interest as well. Then, having insinuated a doubt in her mind (Perhaps he just wants an affair?), he proceeded to mirror her. He indulged her every mood, retreating every time she complained. Indulging a person is a form of entering their spirit, letting them dominate for the time being.

Perhaps Sukarno's passes at Adams showed his uncontrollable libido at work, or perhaps they were more cunning. He had a reputation as a Don Juan; failing to make a pass at her would have hurt her feelings. (Women are often less offended at being found attractive than one imagines, and Sukarno was clever enough to have given each of his four wives the impression that she was his favorite.) The pass out of the way, he moved further into her spirit, taking on her casual air, even slightly feminizing himself by adopting her hair color. The result was that she decided he was not what she had expected or feared him to be. He was not in the least threatening, and after all, she was the one in control. What Adams failed to realize was that once her defenses were lowered, she was oblivious to how deeply he had engaged her emotions. She had not charmed him, he had charmed her. What he wanted all along was what he got: a personal memoir written by a sympathetic foreigner, who gave the world a rather engaging portrait of a man of whom many were suspicious.

Of all the seductive tactics, entering someone's spirit is perhaps the most devilish of all. It gives your victims the feeling that they are seducing you. The fact that you are indulging them, imitating them, entering their spirit, suggests that you are under their spell. You are not a dangerous seducer to be wary of, but someone compliant and unthreatening. The attention you pay to them is intoxicating—since you are mirroring them, everything they see and hear from you reflects their own ego and tastes. What a boost to their vanity. All this sets up the seduction, the series of maneuvers that will turn the dynamic around. Once their defenses are down, they are open to your subtle influence. Soon you will begin to take over the dance, and without even noticing the shift, they will find themselves entering *your* spirit. This is the endgame.

Women are not at their ease except with those who take chances with them, and enter into their spirit.

—NINON DE L'ENCLOS

Keys to Seduction

One of the great sources of frustration in our lives is other people's stubbornness. How hard it is to reach them, to make them see things our way. We often have the impression that when they seem to be listening to us, and apparently agreeing with us, it is all superficial—the moment we are gone, they revert to their own ideas. We spend our lives butting up

that the house belonged to a member of the wealthy and powerful Barmecide family. Shakashik approached the doorkeepers and solicited alms. • "Go in," they said, "and our master will give you all that you desire." • My brother entered the lofty vestibule and proceeded to a spacious, marble-paved hall, hung with tapestry and overlooking a beautiful garden. He stood bewildered for a moment, not knowing where to turn his steps, and then advanced to the far end of the hall. There, among the cushions, reclined a handsome old man with a long beard, whom my brother recognized at once as the master of the house. • "What can I do for you, my friend?" asked the old man, as he rose to welcome my brother. • When Shakashik replied that he was a hungry beggar, the old man expressed the deepest compassion and rent his fine robes, crying: "Is it possible that there should be a man as hungry as yourself in a city where I am living? It is, indeed, a disgrace that I cannot endure!" Then he comforted my brother, adding: "I insist that you stay with me and partake of my dinner." • With this the master of the house clapped his hands and called out to one of the slaves: "Bring in the basin and ewer." Then he said to my brother: "Come forward, my friend, and wash your hands." • Shakashik rose to do so, but saw neither ewer nor basin. He was bewildered to see his host make gestures as though he were pouring water on his hands

from an invisible vessel and then drying them with an invisible towel. When he finished, the host called out to his attendants: "Bring in the table!" • Numerous servants hurried in and out of the hall, as though they were preparing for a meal.

My brother could still see nothing. Yet his host invited him to sit at the imaginary table, saying, "Honor me by eating of this meat." • The old man moved his hands about as though he were touching invisible dishes, and also moved his jaws and lips as though he were chewing.

Then said he to Shakashik: "Eat your fill, my friend, for you must be famished." • My brother began to move his jaws, to chew and swallow, as though he were eating, while the old man still coaxed him, saying: "Eat, my friend, and note the excellence of this bread and its whiteness." • "This man," thought Shakashik, "must be fond of practical jokes." So he said, "It is, sir, the whitest bread I have ever seen, and I have never tasted the like in all my life." • "This bread," said the host, "was baked by a slave girl whom I bought for five hundred dinars."

Then he called out to one of his slaves: "Bring in the meat pudding, and let there be plenty of fat in it!"

• ... Thereupon the host moved his fingers as though to pick up a morsel from an imaginary dish, and popped the invisible delicacy into my brother's mouth. • The old man continued to enlarge upon the excellences of the various dishes, while my brother became so ravenously hungry that he would have willingly died

against people, as if they were stone walls. But instead of complaining about how misunderstood or ignored you are, why not try something different: instead of seeing other people as spiteful or indifferent, instead of trying to figure out why they act the way they do, look at them through the eyes of the seducer. The way to lure people out of their natural intractability and self-obsession is to enter their spirit.

All of us are narcissists. When we were children our narcissism was physical: we were interested in our own image, our own body, as if it were a separate being. As we grow older, our narcissism grows more psychological: we become absorbed in our own tastes, opinions, experiences. A hard shell forms around us. Paradoxically, the way to entice people out of this shell is to become more like them, in fact a kind of mirror image of them. You do not have to spend days studying their minds; simply conform to their moods, adapt to their tastes, play along with whatever they send your way. In doing so you will lower their natural defensiveness. Their sense of self-esteem does not feel threatened by your strangeness or different habits. People truly love themselves, but what they love most of all is to see their ideas and tastes reflected in another person. This validates them. Their habitual insecurity vanishes. Hypnotized by their mirror image, they relax. Now that their inner wall has crumbled, you can slowly draw them out, and eventually turn the dynamic around. Once they are open to you, it becomes easy to infect them with your own moods and heat. Entering the other person's spirit is a kind of hypnosis; it is the most insidious and effective form of persuasion known to man.

In the eighteenth-century Chinese novel *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, all the young girls in the prosperous house of Chia are in love with the rakish Pao Yu. He is certainly handsome, but what makes him irresistible is his uncanny ability to enter a young girl's spirit. Pao Yu has spent his youth around girls, whose company he has always preferred. As a result, he never comes over as threatening and aggressive. He is granted entry to girls' rooms, they see him everywhere, and the more they see him the more they fall under his spell. It is not that Pao Yu is feminine; he remains a man, but one who can be more or less masculine as the situation requires. His familiarity with young girls allows him the flexibility to enter their spirit.

This is a great advantage. The difference between the sexes is what makes love and seduction possible, but it also involves an element of fear and distrust. A woman may fear male aggression and violence; a man is often unable to enter a woman's spirit, and so he remains strange and threatening. The greatest seducers in history, from Casanova to John F. Kennedy, grew up surrounded by women and had a touch of femininity themselves. The philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, in his novel *The Seducer's Diary*, recommends spending more time with the opposite sex, getting to know the "enemy" and its weaknesses, so that you can turn this knowledge to your advantage.

Ninon de l'Enclos, one of the greatest seductresses who ever lived, had definite masculine qualities. She could impress a man with her intense

philosophical keenness, and charm him by seeming to share his interest in politics and warfare. Many men first formed deep friendships with her, only to later fall madly in love. The masculine in a woman is as soothing to men as the feminine in a man is to women. To a man, a woman's strangeness can create frustration and even hostility. He may be lured into a sexual encounter, but a longer-lasting spell cannot be created without an accompanying mental seduction. The key is to enter his spirit. Men are often seduced by the masculine element in a woman's behavior or character.

In the novel *Clarissa* (1748) by Samuel Richardson, the young and devout Clarissa Harlowe is being courted by the notorious rake Lovelace. Clarissa knows Lovelace's reputation, but for the most part he has not acted as she would expect: he is polite, seems a little sad and confused. At one point she finds out that he has done a most noble and charitable deed to a family in distress, giving the father money, helping the man's daughter get married, giving them wholesome advice. At last Lovelace confesses to Clarissa what she has suspected: he wants to repent, to change his ways. His letters to her are emotional, almost religious in their passion. Perhaps she will be the one to lead him to righteousness? But of course Lovelace has trapped her: he is using the seducer's tactic of mirroring her tastes, in this case her spirituality. Once she lets her guard down, once she believes she can reform him, she is doomed: now he can slowly insinuate his own spirit into his letters and encounters with her. Remember: the operative word is "spirit," and that is often exactly where to take aim. By seeming to mirror someone's spiritual values you can seem to establish a deep-rooted harmony between the two of you, which can then be transferred to the physical plane.

When Josephine Baker moved to Paris, in 1925, as part of an all-black revue, her exoticism made her an overnight sensation. But the French are notoriously fickle, and Baker sensed that their interest in her would quickly pass to someone else. To seduce them for good, she entered their spirit. She learned French and began to sing in it. She started dressing and acting as a stylish French lady, as if to say that she preferred the French way of life to the American. Countries are like people: they have vast insecurities, and they feel threatened by other customs. It is often quite seductive to a people to see an outsider adopting their ways. Benjamin Disraeli was born and lived all his life in England, but he was Jewish by birth, and had exotic features; the provincial English considered him an outsider. Yet he was more English in his manners and tastes than many an Englishman, and this was part of his charm, which he proved by becoming the leader of the Conservative Party. Should you be an outsider (as most of us ultimately are), turn it to advantage: play on your alien nature in such a way as to show the group how deeply you prefer their tastes and customs to your own.

In 1752, the notorious rake Saltykov determined to be the first man in the Russian court to seduce the twenty-three-year-old grand duchess, the future Empress Catherine the Great. He knew that she was lonely; her husband Peter ignored her, as did many of the other courtiers. And yet the ob-

for a crust of barley bread.

• "Have you ever tasted anything more delicious," went on the old man, "than the spices in these dishes?" • "Never, indeed," replied Shakashik. • "Eat heartily, then," said his host, "and do not be ashamed!" • "I thank you, sir," answered Shakashik, "but I have already eaten my fill. " • Presently, however, the old man clapped his hands again and cried: "Bring in the wine!" • . . . "Sir," said Shakashik, "your generosity overwhelms me!" He lifted the invisible cup to his lips, and made as if to drain it at one gulp. • "Health and joy to you!" exclaimed the old man, as he pretended to pour himself some wine and drink it off. He handed another cup to his guest, and they both continued to act in this fashion until Shakashik, feigning himself drunk, began to roll his head from side to side. Then, taking his bounteous host unawares, he suddenly raised his arm so high that the white of his armpit could be seen, and dealt him a blow on the neck which made the hall echo with the sound. And this he followed by a second blow. • The old man rose in anger and cried: "What are you doing, vile creature?" • "Sir" replied my brother, "you have received your humble slave into your house and loaded him with your generosity; you have fed him with the choicest food and quenched his thirst with the most potent wines. Alas, he became drunk, and forgot his manners! But you are so noble, sir, that you will

surely pardon his offence. " • When he heard these words, the old man burst out laughing and said: "For a long time I have joked with all types of men, but no one has ever had the patience or the wit to enter into my humors as you have done. Now, therefore, I pardon you, and ask you in truth to cat and drink with me, and to be my companion as long as I live. " • Then the old man ordered his attendants to serve all the dishes which they had consumed in fancy, and when he and my brother had eaten their fill they repaired to the drinking chamber, where beautiful young women sang and made music. The old Barmecide gave Shakashik a robe of honor and made him his constant companion.

— "THE TALE OF SHAKASHIK,
THE BARBER'S SIXTH BROTHER,"
TALES FROM THE THOUSAND
AND ONE NIGHTS, TRANSLATED
BY N.J. DAWOOD

stacles were immense: she was spied on day and night. Still, Saltykov managed to befriend the young woman, and to enter her all-too-small circle. He finally got her alone, and made it clear to her how well he understood her loneliness, how deeply he disliked her husband, and how much he shared her interest in the new ideas that were sweeping Europe. Soon he found himself able to arrange further meetings, where he gave her the impression that when he was with her, nothing else in the world mattered. Catherine fell deeply in love with him, and he did in fact become her first lover. Saltykov had entered her spirit.

When you mirror people, you focus intense attention on them. They will sense the effort you are making, and will find it flattering. Obviously you have chosen them, separating them out from the rest. There seems to be nothing else in your life but them—their moods, their tastes, their spirit. The more you focus on them, the deeper the spell you produce, and the intoxicating effect you have on their vanity.

Many of us have difficulty reconciling the person we are right now with the person we want to be. We are disappointed that we have compromised our youthful ideals, and we still imagine ourselves as that person who had so much promise, but whom circumstances prevented from realizing it. When you are mirroring someone, do not stop at the person they have become; enter the spirit of that ideal person they wanted to be. This is how the French writer Chateaubriand managed to become a great seducer, despite his physical ugliness. When he was growing up, in the latter eighteenth century, romanticism was coming into fashion, and many young women felt deeply oppressed by the lack of romance in their lives. Chateaubriand would reawaken the fantasy they had had as young girls of being swept off their feet, of fulfilling romantic ideals. This form of entering another's spirit is perhaps the most effective kind, because it makes people feel better about themselves. In your presence, they live the life of the person they had wanted to be—a great lover, a romantic hero, whatever it is. Discover those crushed ideals and mirror them, bringing them back to life by reflecting them back to your target. Few can resist such a lure.

Symbol: *The*

Hunter's Mirror. The lark is a savory bird, but difficult to catch. In the field, the hunter places a mirror on a stand. The lark lands in front of the glass, steps back and forth, entranced by its own moving image and by the imitative mating dance it sees performed before its eyes. Hypnotized, the bird loses all sense of its surroundings, until the hunter's net traps it against the mirror.

Reversal

In 1897 in Berlin, the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, whose reputation would later circle the world, met Lou Andreas-Salomé, the Russian-born writer and beauty who was notorious for having broken Nietzsche's heart. She was the darling of Berlin intellectuals, and although Rilke was twenty-two and she was thirty-six, he fell head over heels in love with her. He flooded her with love letters, which showed that he had read all her books and knew her tastes intimately. The two became friends. Soon she was editing his poetry, and he hung on her every word.

Salomé was flattered by Rilke's mirroring of her spirit, enchanted by the intense attention he paid her and the spiritual communion they began to develop. She became his lover. But she was worried about his future; it was difficult to make a living as a poet, and she encouraged him to learn her native language, Russian, and become a translator. He followed her advice so avidly that within months he could speak Russian. They visited Russia together, and Rilke was overwhelmed by what he saw—the peasants, the folk customs, the art, the architecture. Back in Berlin, he turned his rooms into a kind of shrine to Russia, and started wearing Russian peasant blouses and peppering his conversation with Russian phrases. Now the charm of his mirroring soon wore off. At first Salomé had been flattered that he shared her interests so intensely, but now she saw this as something else: he seemed to have no real identity. He had become dependent on her for his own self-esteem. It was all so slavish. In 1899, much to his horror, she broke off the relationship.

The lesson is simple: your entry into a person's spirit must be a tactic, a way to bring him or her under your spell. You cannot be simply a sponge, soaking up the other person's moods. Mirror them for too long and they will see through you and be repelled by you. Beneath the similarity to them that you make them see, you must have a strong underlying sense of your own identity. When the time comes, you will want to lead them into your spirit; you cannot live on their turf. Never take mirroring too far, then. It is only useful in the first phase of a seduction; at some point the dynamic must be reversed.

This desire for a double of the other sex that resembles us absolutely while still being other, for a magical creature who is oneself while possessing the advantage, over all our imaginings, of an autonomous existence. . . . We find traces of it in even the most banal circumstances of love: in the attraction linked to any change, any disguise, as in the importance of unison and the repetition of self in the other. . . . The great, the implacable amorous passions are all linked to the fact that a being imagines he sees his most secret self spying upon him behind the curtain of another's eyes.

—ROBERT MUSIL, QUOTED IN
DENIS DE ROUGEMONT, *LOVE
DECLARED*, TRANSLATED BY
RICHARD HOWARD

8

Create Temptation

Lure the target deep into your seduction by creating the proper temptation: a glimpse of the pleasures to come. As the serpent tempted Eve with the promise of forbidden knowledge, you must awaken a desire in your targets that they cannot control. Find that weakness of theirs, that fantasy that has yet to be realized, and hint that you can lead them toward it. It could be wealth, it could be adventure, it could be forbidden and guilty pleasures; the key is to keep it vague. Dangle the prize before their eyes, postponing satisfaction, and let their minds do the rest. The future seems ripe with possibility. Stimulate a curiosity stronger than the doubts and anxieties that go with it, and they will follow you.

The Tantalizing Object

Some time in the 1880s, a gentleman named Don Juan de Todellas was swandering through a park in Madrid when he saw a woman in her early twenties getting out of a coach, followed by a two-year-old child and a nursemaid. The young woman was elegantly dressed, but what took Don Juan's breath away was her resemblance to a woman he had known nearly three years before. Surely she could not be the same person. The woman he had known, Cristeta Morerueta, was a showgirl in a second-rate theater. She had been an orphan and was quite poor—her circumstances could not have changed that much. He moved closer: the same beautiful face. And then he heard her voice. He was so shocked that he had to sit down: it was indeed the same woman.

Don Juan was an incorrigible seducer, whose conquests were innumerable and of every variety. But he remembered his affair with Cristeta quite clearly, because she had been so young—the most charming girl he had ever met. He had seen her in the theater, had courted her assiduously, and had managed to persuade her to take a trip with him to a seaside town. Although they had separate rooms, nothing could stop Don Juan: he made up a story about business troubles, gained her sympathy, and in a tender moment took advantage of her weakness. A few days later he left her, on the pretext that he had to attend to business. He believed he would never see her again. Feeling a little guilty—a rare occurrence with him—he sent her 5,000 pesetas, pretending he would eventually rejoin her. Instead he went to Paris. He had only recently returned to Madrid.

As he sat and remembered all this, an idea troubled him: the child. Could the boy possibly be his? If not, she must have married almost immediately after their affair. How could she do such a thing? She was obviously wealthy now. Who could her husband be? Did he know her past? Mixed with his confusion was intense desire. She was so young and beautiful. Why had he given her up so easily? Somehow, even if she was married, he had to get her back.

Don Juan began to frequent the park every day. He saw her a few more times; their eyes met, but she pretended not to notice him. Tracing the nursemaid during one of her errands, he struck up a conversation with her, and asked her about her mistress's husband. She told him the man's name was Señor Martínez, and that he was away on an extended business trip; she also told him where Cristeta now lived. Don Juan gave her a note to give to

*For these two crimes
Tantalus was punished
with the ruin of his
kingdom and, after his
death by Zeus's own hand,
with eternal torment in the
company of Ixion,
Sisyphus, Tityus, the
Danaids, and others. Now
he hangs, perennially
consumed by thirst and
hunger, from the bough of
a fruit tree which leans over
a marshy lake. Its waves
lap against his waist, and
sometimes reach his chin,
yet whenever he bends
down to drink, they slip
away, and nothing remains
but the black mud at his
feet; or, if he ever succeeds
in scooping up a handful of
water, it slips through his
fingers before he can do
more than wet his cracked
lips, leaving him thirstier
than ever. The tree is laden
with pears, shining apples,
sweet figs, ripe olives and
pomegranates, which
dangle against his
shoulders; but whenever he
reaches for the luscious
fruit, a gust of wind whirls
them out of his reach.*

—ROBERT GRAVES, *THE GREEK
MYTHS*, VOLUME 2

Don Juan: Arminta, listen to the truth—for are not women friends of truth? I am a nobleman, heir to the ancient family of the Tenorios, the conquerors of Seville. After the king, my father is the most powerful and considered man at court. . . . By chance I happened on this road and saw you. Love sometimes behaves in a manner that surprises even himself. . . .

• Arminta: I don't know if what you're saying is truth or lying rhetoric. I am married to Batricio, everybody knows it. How can the marriage be annulled, even if he abandons me? • Don Juan:

When the marriage is not consummated, whether by malice or deceit, it can be annulled. . . . • Arminta:

You are right. But, God help me, won't you desert me the moment you have separated me from my husband? . . . • Don

Juan: Arminta, light of my eyes, tomorrow your beautiful feet will slip into polished silver slippers with buttons of the purest gold. And your alabaster throat will be imprisoned in beautiful necklaces; on your fingers, rings set with amethysts will shine like stars, and from your ears will dangle oriental pearls.

• Arminta: I am yours.

—TIRSO DE MOLINA,
THE PLAYBOY OF SEVILLE,
TRANSLATED BY ADRIENNE M.
SCHIZZANO AND OSCAR
MANDEL, IN MANDEL, ED.,
THE THEATRE OF DON JUAN

Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the LORD GOD had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat of

her mistress. Then he strolled by Cristeta's house—a beautiful palace. His worst suspicions were confirmed: she had married for money.

Cristeta refused to see him. He persisted, sending more notes. Finally, to avoid a scene, she agreed to meet him, just once, in the park. He prepared for the meeting carefully: seducing her again would be a delicate operation. But when he saw her coming toward him, in her beautiful clothes, his emotions, and his lust, got the better of him. She could only belong to him, never to another man, he told her. Cristeta took offense at this; obviously her present circumstances prevented even one more meeting. Still, beneath her coolness he could sense strong emotions. He begged to see her again, but she left without promising anything. He sent her more letters, meanwhile wracking his brains trying to piece it all together: Who was this Señor Martínez? Why would he marry a showgirl? How could Cristeta be wrested away from him?

Finally Cristeta agreed to meet Don Juan one more time, in the theater, where he dared not risk a scandal. They took a box, where they could talk. She reassured him the child was not his. She said he only wanted her now because she belonged to another, because he could not have her. No, he said, he had changed; he would do anything to get her back. Disconcertingly, at moments her eyes seemed to be flirting with him. But then she seemed to be about to cry, and rested her head on his shoulder—only to get up immediately, as if realizing this was a mistake. This was their last meeting, she said, and quickly fled. Don Juan was beside himself. She was playing with him; she was a coquette. He had only been claiming to have changed, but perhaps it was true: no woman had ever treated him this way before. He would never have allowed it.

For the next few nights Don Juan slept poorly. All he could think about was Cristeta. He had nightmares about killing her husband, about growing old and being alone. It was all too much. He had to leave town. He sent her a goodbye note, and to his amazement, she replied: she wanted to see him, she had something to tell him. By now he was too weak to resist. As she had requested, he met her on a bridge, at night. This time she made no effort to control herself: yes, she still loved Don Juan, and was ready to run away with him. But he should come to her house tomorrow, in broad daylight, and take her away. There could be no secrecy.

Beside himself with joy, Don Juan agreed to her demands. The next day he showed up at her palace at the appointed hour, and asked for Señora Martínez. There was no one there by that name, said the woman at the door. Don Juan insisted: her name is Cristeta. Ah, Cristeta, the woman said: she lives in the back, with the other tenants. Confused, Don Juan went to the back of the palace. There he thought he saw her son, playing in the street in dirty clothes. But no, he said to himself, it must be some other child. He came to Cristeta's door, and instead of her servant, Cristeta herself opened it. He entered. It was the room of a poor person. Hanging on improvised racks, however, were Cristeta's elegant clothes. As if in a dream, he sat down, dumbfounded, and listened as Cristeta revealed the truth.

She was not married, she had no child. Months after he had left her, she had realized that she had been the victim of a consummate seducer. She still loved Don Juan, but she was determined to turn the tables. Finding out through a mutual friend that he had returned to Madrid, she took the five thousand pesetas he had sent her and bought expensive clothes. She borrowed a neighbor's child, asked the neighbor's cousin to play the child's nursemaid, and rented a coach—all to create an elaborate fantasy that existed only in his mind. Cristeta did not even have to lie: she never actually said she was married or had a child. She knew that being unable to have her would make him want her more than ever. It was the only way to seduce a man like him.

Overwhelmed by the lengths she had gone to, and by the emotions she had so skillfully stirred in him, Don Juan forgave Cristeta and offered to marry her. To his surprise, and perhaps to his relief, she politely declined. The moment they married, she said, his eyes would wander elsewhere. Only if they stayed as they were could she maintain the upper hand. Don Juan had no choice but to agree.

Interpretation. Cristeta and Don Juan are characters in the novel *Dulce y Sabroso* (*Sweet and Savory*, 1891), by the Spanish writer Jacinto Octavio Picón. Most of Picón's work deals with male seducers and their feminine victims, a subject he studied and knew much about. Abandoned by Don Juan, and reflecting on his nature, Cristeta decided to kill two birds with one stone: she would get revenge and get him back. But how could she lure such a man? The fruit once tasted, he no longer wanted it. What came easily to him, or fell into his arms, held no allure for him. What would tempt Don Juan into desiring Cristeta again, into pursuing her, was the sense that she was already taken, that she was forbidden fruit. That was his weakness—that was why he pursued virgins and married women, women he was not supposed to have. To a man, she reasoned, the grass always seems greener somewhere else. She would make herself that distant, alluring object, just out of reach, tantalizing him, stirring up emotions he could not control. He knew how charming and desirable she had once been to him. The idea of possessing her again, and the pleasure he imagined it would bring, were too much for him: he swallowed the bait.

Temptation is a twofold process. First you are coquettish, flirtatious; you stimulate a desire by promising pleasure and distraction from daily life. At the same time, you make it clear to your targets that they cannot have you, at least not right away. You are establishing a barrier, some kind of tension.

In days gone by such barriers were easy to create, by taking advantage of preexisting social obstacles—of class, race, marriage, religion. Today the barriers have to be more psychological: your heart is taken by someone else; you are really not interested in the target; some secret holds you back; the timing is bad; you are not good enough for the other person; the other

any tree of the garden?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' " But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. " So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate.

—GENESIS 3:1, OLD TESTAMENT

*Thou strong seducer,
Opportunity.*

—JOHN DRYDEN

As he listened, Masetto experienced such a longing to go and stay with these nuns that his whole body tingled with excitement, for it was clear from what he had heard that he should be able to achieve what he had in mind. Realizing, however, that he would get nowhere by revealing his intentions to Nuto, he replied: • "How right you were to come away from the [nunnery]! What sort of a life can any man lead when he's surrounded by a lot of women? He might as well be living with a pack of devils. Why, six times out of seven they don't even know their own minds." • But when they

had finished talking, Masetto began to consider what steps he ought to take so that he could go and stay with them. Knowing himself to be perfectly capable of carrying out the duties mentioned by Nuto, he had no worries about losing the job on that particular score, but he was afraid lest he should be turned down because of his youth and his unusually attractive appearance. And so, having rejected a number of other possible expedients, he eventually thought to himself: "The convent is a long way off, and there's nobody there who knows me. If I can pretend to be dumb, they'll take me on for sure." Clinging firmly to this conjecture, he therefore dressed himself in pauper's rags and slung an ax over his shoulder, and without telling anyone where he was going, he set out for the convent. On his arrival, he wandered into the courtyard, where as luck would have it he came across the steward, and with the aid of gestures such as dumb people use, he conveyed the impression that he was begging for something to eat, in return for which he would attend to any wood-chopping that needed to be done. • The steward gladly provided him with something to eat, after which he presented him with a pile of logs that Nuto had been unable to chop. . . . Mow, when the steward had discovered what an excellent gardener he was, he gestured to Masetto, asking him whether he would like to stay there, and the latter made signs to indicate that he was willing to do whatever the steward

person is not good enough for you; and so on. Conversely, you can choose someone who has a built-in barrier: they are taken, they are not meant to want you. These barriers are more subtle than the social or religious variety, but they are barriers nevertheless, and the psychology remains the same. People are perversely excited by what they cannot or should not have. Create this inner conflict—there is excitement and interest, but you are unavailable—and you will have them grasping like Tantalus for water. And as with Don Juan and Cristeta, the more you make your targets pursue you, the more they imagine that it is they who are the aggressors. Your seduction is perfectly disguised.

The only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it.

—OSCAR WILDE.

Keys to Seduction

Most of the time, people struggle to maintain security and a sense of balance in their lives. If they were always uprooting themselves in pursuit of every new person or fantasy that passed them by, they could not survive the daily grind. They usually win the struggle, but it does not come easy. The world is full of temptation. They read about people who have more than they do, about adventures others are having, about people who have found wealth and happiness. The security that they strive for, and that they seem to have in their lives, is actually an illusion. It covers up a constant tension.

As a seducer, you can never mistake people's appearance for reality. You know that their fight to keep order in their lives is exhausting, and that they are gnawed by doubts and regrets. It is hard to be good and virtuous, always having to repress the strongest desires. With that knowledge in mind, seduction is easier. What people want is not temptation; temptation happens every day. What people want is to give into temptation, to yield. That is the only way to get rid of the tension in their lives. It costs much more to resist temptation than to surrender.

Your task, then, is to create a temptation that is stronger than the daily variety. It has to be focused on them, aimed at them as individuals—at their weakness. Understand: everyone has a principal weakness, from which others stem. Find that childhood insecurity, that lack in their life, and you hold the key to tempting them. Their weakness may be greed, vanity, boredom, some deeply repressed desire, a hunger for forbidden fruit. They signal it in little details that elude their conscious control: their style of clothing, an offhand comment. Their past, and particularly their past romances, will be littered with clues. Give them a potent temptation, tailored to their weakness, and you can make the hope of pleasure that you stir in them figure more prominently than the doubts and anxieties that accompany it.

In 1621, King Philip III of Spain desperately wanted to forge an al-

liance with England by marrying his daughter to the son of the English king, James I. James seemed open to the idea, but he stalled for time. Spain's ambassador to the English court, a man called Gondomar, was given the task of advancing Philip's plan. He set his sights on the king's favorite, the Duke (former Earl) of Buckingham.

Gondomar knew the duke's main weakness: vanity. Buckingham hungered for the glory and adventure that would add to his fame; he was bored with his limited tasks, and he pouted and whined about this. The ambassador first flattered him profusely—the duke was the ablest man in the country and it was a shame he was given so little to do. Then, he began to whisper to him of a great adventure. The duke, as Gondomar knew, was in favor of the match with the Spanish princess, but these damned marriage negotiations with King James were taking so long, and getting nowhere. What if the duke were to accompany the king's son, his good friend Prince Charles, to Spain? Of course, this would have to be done in secret, without guards or escorts, for the English government and its ministers would never sanction such a trip. But that would make it all the more dangerous and romantic. Once in Madrid, the prince could throw himself at Princess Maria's feet, declare his undying love, and carry her back to England in triumph. What a chivalrous deed it would be and all for love. The duke would get all the credit and it would make his name famous for centuries.

The duke fell for the idea, and convinced Charles to go along; after much arguing, they also convinced a reluctant King James. The trip was a near disaster (Charles would have had to convert to Catholicism to win Maria), and the marriage never happened, but Gondomar had done his job. He did not bribe the duke with offers of money or power—he aimed at the childlike part of him that never grew up. A child has little power to resist. It wants everything, now, and rarely thinks of the consequences. A child lies lurking in everyone—a pleasure that was denied them, a desire that was repressed. Hit at that point, tempt them with the proper toy (adventure, money, fun), and they will slough off their normal adult reasonableness. Recognize their weakness by whatever childlike behavior they reveal in daily life—it is the tip of the iceberg.

Napoleon Bonaparte was appointed the supreme general of the French army in 1796. His commission was to defeat the Austrian forces that had taken over northern Italy. The obstacles were immense: Napoleon was only twenty-six at the time; the generals below him were envious of his position and doubtful of his abilities. His soldiers were tired, underfed, underpaid, and grumpy. How could he motivate this group to fight the highly experienced Austrian army? As he prepared to cross the Alps into Italy, Napoleon gave a speech to his troops that may have been the turning point in his career, and in his life: "Soldiers, you are half starved and half naked. The government owes you much, but can do nothing for you. Your patience, your courage, do you honor, but give you no glory. . . . I will lead you into the most fertile plains of the world. There you will find flourishing cities, teeming provinces. There you will reap honor, glory, and wealth." The

wanted. . . . Now, one day, when Masetto happened to be taking a rest after a spell of strenuous work, he was approached by two very young nuns who were out walking in the garden. Since he gave them the impression that he was asleep, they began to stare at him, and the bolder of the two said to her companion: • "If I could be sure that you would keep it a secret, I would tell you about an idea that has often crossed my mind, and one that might well work out to our mutual benefit." • "Do tell me," replied the other. "You can be quite certain that I shan't talk about it to anyone." • The bold one began to speak more plainly. • "I wonder," she said, "whether you have ever considered what a strict life we have to lead, and how the only men who ever dare set foot in this place are the steward, who is elderly, and this dumb gardener of ours. Yet I have often heard it said, by several of the ladies who have come to visit us, that all other pleasures in the world are mere trifles by comparison with the one experienced by a woman when she goes with a man. I have thus been thinking, since I have nobody else to hand, that I would like to discover with the aid of this dumb fellow whether they are telling the truth. As it happens, there couldn't be a better man for the purpose, because even if he wanted to let the cat out of the bag, he wouldn't be able to. He wouldn't even know how to explain, for you can see for yourself what a mentally retarded, dim-witted hulk of a youth

the fellow is. I would be glad to know what you think of the idea." •
 "Dear me!" said the other. "Don't you realize that we have promised God to preserve our virginity?" •
 "Pah!" she said. "We are constantly making Him promises that we never keep! What does it matter if we fail to keep this one? He can always find other girls to preserve their virginity for Him." •
 . . . Before the time came for them to leave, they had each made repeated trials of the dumb fellow's riding ability, and later on, when they were busily swapping tales about it all, they agreed that it was every bit as pleasant an experience as they had been led to believe, indeed more so.
 And from then on, whenever the opportunity arose, they whiled away many a pleasant hour in the dumb fellow's arms. •

One day, however, a companion of theirs happened to look out from the window of her cell, saw the goings-on, and drew the attention of two others to what was afoot. Having talked the matter over between themselves, they at first decided to report the pair to the abbess. But then they changed their minds, and by common agreement with the other two, they took up shares in Masetto's holding. And because of various indiscretions, these five were subsequently joined by the remaining three, one after the other. •

Finally, the abbess, who was still unaware of all this, was taking a stroll one very hot day in the garden, all by herself when she came across Masetto stretched out fast asleep in the shade of an almond

speech had a powerful effect. Days later these same soldiers, after a rough climb over the mountains, gazed down on the Piedmont valley. Napoleon's words echoed in their ears, and a ragged, grumbling gang became an inspired army that would sweep across northern Italy in pursuit of the Austrians.

Napoleon's use of temptation had two elements: behind you is a grim past; ahead of you is a future of wealth and glory, *if* you follow me. Integral to the temptation strategy is a clear demonstration that the target has nothing to lose and everything to gain. The present offers little hope, the future can be full of pleasure and excitement. Remember to keep the future gains vague, though, and somewhat out of reach. Be too specific and you will disappoint; make the promise too close at hand, and you will not be able to postpone satisfaction long enough to get what you want.

The barriers and tensions in temptation are there to stop people from giving in too easily and too superficially. You *want* them to struggle, to resist, to be anxious. Queen Victoria surely fell in love with her prime minister, Benjamin Disraeli, but there were barriers of religion (he was a dark-skinned Jew), class (she, of course, was a queen), social taste (she was a paragon of virtue, he a notorious dandy). The relationship was never consummated, but what deliciousness those barriers gave to their daily encounters, which were full of constant flirtation.

Many such social barriers are gone today, so they have to be manufactured—it is the only way to put spice into seduction. Taboos of any kind are a source of tension, and they are psychological now, not religious. You are looking for some repression, some secret desire that will make your victim squirm uncomfortably if you hit upon it, but will tempt them all the more. Search in their past; whatever they seem to fear or flee from might hold the key. It could be a yearning for a mother or father figure, or a latent homosexual desire. Perhaps you can satisfy that desire by presenting yourself as a masculine woman or a feminine man. For others you play the Lolita, or the daddy—someone they are not supposed to have, the dark side of their personality. Keep the connection vague—you want them to reach for something elusive, something that comes out of their own mind.

In London in 1769, Casanova met a young woman named Charpillon. She was much younger than he, as beautiful a woman as he had ever known, and with a reputation for destroying men. In one of their first encounters she told him straight out that he would fall for her and she would ruin him. To everyone's disbelief, Casanova pursued her. In each encounter she hinted she might give in—perhaps the next time, if he was nice to her. She inflamed his curiosity—what pleasure she would yield; he would be the first, he would tame her. "The venom of desire penetrated my whole being so completely," he later wrote, "that had she so wished it, she could have despoiled me of everything I possessed. I would have beggared myself for one little kiss." This "affair" indeed proved his ruin; she humiliated him. Charpillon had rightly gauged that Casanova's primary weakness was his

need for conquest, to overcome challenge, to taste what no other man had tasted. Beneath this was a kind of masochism, a pleasure in the pain a woman could give him. Playing the impossible woman, enticing and then frustrating him, she offered the ultimate temptation. What will often do the trick is to give the target the sense that you are a challenge, a prize to be won. In possessing you they will get what no other has had. They may even get pain; but pain is close to pleasure, and offers its own temptations.

In the Old Testament we read that "David arose from his couch and was walking upon the roof of the king's house . . . [and] he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful." The woman was Bathsheba. David summoned her, seduced her (supposedly), then proceeded to get rid of her husband, Uriah, in battle. In fact, however, it was Bathsheba who had seduced David. She bathed on her roof at an hour when she knew he would be standing on his balcony. After tempting a man she knew had a weakness for women, she played the coquette, forcing him to come after her. This is the opportunity strategy: give someone weak the chance to have what they lust after by merely placing yourself within their reach, as if by accident. Temptation is often a matter of timing, of crossing the path of the weak at the right moment, giving them the opportunity to surrender.

Bathsheba used her entire body as a lure, but it is often more effective to use only a part of the body, creating a fetishlike effect. Madame Récamier would let you glimpse her body beneath the sheer dresses she wore, but only briefly, when she took off her overgarment to dance. Men would leave that evening dreaming of what little they had seen. Empress Josephine made a point of baring her beautiful arms in public. Give the target only a part of you to fantasize about, thereby creating a constant temptation in their mind.

tree. Too much riding by night had left him with very little strength for the day's labors, and so there he lay, with his clothes ruffled up in front by the wind, leaving him all exposed. Finding herself alone, the lady stood with her eyes riveted to this spectacle, and she was seized by the same craving to which her young charges had already succumbed. So, having roused Masetto, she led him away to her room, where she kept him for several days, thus provoking bitter complaints from the nuns over the fact that the handyman had suspended work in the garden. Before sending him back to his own quarters, she repeatedly savored the one pleasure for which she had always reserved her most fierce disapproval, and from then on she demanded regular supplementary allocations, amounting to considerably more than her fair share.

—GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO,
THE DECAMERON, TRANSLATED
BY G. H. MCWILLIAM

Symbol:

*The Apple in the Garden
of Eden. The fruit looks deeply
inviting, and you are not supposed to
eat of it; it is forbidden. But that is precisely
why you think of it day and night.
You see it but cannot have it. And the
only way to get rid of this temptation
is to yield and taste
the fruit.*

Reversal

The reverse of temptation is security or satisfaction, and both are fatal to seduction. If you cannot tempt someone out of their habitual comfort, you cannot seduce them. If you satisfy the desire you have awakened, the seduction is over. There is no reversal to temptation. Although some stages can be passed over, no seduction can proceed without some form of temptation, so it is always better to plan it carefully, tailoring it to the weakness and childishness in your particular target.