

Phase Two

Lead Astray— Creating Pleasure and Confusion

Your victims are sufficiently intrigued and their desire for you is growing, but their attachment is weak and at any moment they could decide to turn back. The goal in this phase is to lead your victims so far astray—keeping them emotional and confused, giving them pleasure but making them want more—that retreat is no longer possible. Springing on them a pleasant surprise will make them see you as delightfully unpredictable, but will also keep them off balance (9: Keep them in suspense—what comes next?). The artful use of soft and pleasant words will intoxicate them and stimulate fantasies (10: Use the demonic power of words to sow confusion). Aesthetic touches and pleasant little rituals will titillate their senses, distract their minds (11: Pay attention to detail).

Your greatest danger in this phase is the mere hint of routine or familiarity. You need to maintain some mystery, to keep a little distance so that in your absence your victims become obsessed with you (12: Poeticize your presence). They may realize they are falling for you, but they must never suspect how much of this has come from your manipulations. A well-timed display of your weakness, of how emotional you have become under their influence will help cover your tracks (13: Disarm through strategic weakness and vulnerability). To excite your victims and make them highly emotional, you must give them the feeling that they are actually living some of the fantasies you have stirred in their imagination (14: Confuse desire and reality). By giving them only a part of the fantasy, you will keep them coming back for more. Focusing your attention on them so that the rest of the world fades away, even taking them on a trip, will lead them far astray (15: Isolate your victim). There is no turning back.

9

Keep Them in Suspense— What Comes Next?

The moment people feel they know what to expect from you, your spell on them is broken. More: you have ceded them power. The only way to lead the seduced along and keep the upper hand is to create suspense, a calculated surprise. People love a mystery, and this is the key to luring them further into your web. Behave in a way that leaves them wondering, What are you up to? Doing something they do not expect from you will give them a delightful sense of spontaneity—they will not be able to foresee what comes next. You are always one step ahead and in control. Give the victim a thrill with a sudden change of direction.

The Calculated Surprise

In 1753, the twenty-eight-old Giovanni Casanova met a young girl named Caterina with whom he fell in love. Her father knew what kind of man Casanova was, and to prevent some mishap before he could marry her off, he sent her away to a convent on the Venetian island of Murano, where she was to remain for four years.

Casanova, however, was not one to be daunted. He smuggled letters to Caterina. He began to attend Mass at the convent several times a week, catching glimpses of her. The nuns began to talk among themselves: who was this handsome young man who appeared so often? One morning, as Casanova, leaving Mass, was about to board a gondola, a servant girl from the convent passed by and dropped a letter at his feet. Thinking it might be from Caterina, he picked it up. It was indeed intended for him, but it was not from Caterina; its author was a nun at the convent, who had noticed him on his many visits and wanted to make his acquaintance. Was he interested? If so, he should come to the convent's parlor at a particular time, when the nun would be receiving a visitor from the outside world, a friend of hers who was a countess. He could stand at a distance, observe her, and decide whether she was to his liking.

Casanova was most intrigued by the letter: its style was dignified, but there was something naughty about it as well—particularly from a nun. He had to find out more. At the appointed day and time, he stood to the side in the convent parlor and saw an elegantly dressed woman talking with a nun seated behind a grating. He heard the nun's name mentioned, and was astonished: it was Mathilde M., a well-known Venetian in her early twenties, whose decision to enter a convent had surprised the whole city. But what astonished him most was that beneath her nun's habit, he could see that she was a beautiful young woman, particularly in her eyes, which were a brilliant blue. Perhaps she needed a favor done, and intended that he would serve as her cat's-paw.

His curiosity got the better of him. A few days later he returned to the convent and asked to see her. As he waited for her, his heart was beating a mile a minute—he did not know what to expect. She finally appeared and sat down behind the grating. They were alone in the room, and she said that she could arrange for them to have supper together at a little villa nearby. Casanova was delighted, but wondered what kind of nun he was dealing with. "And—have you no lover but me?" he asked. "I have a

I count upon taking [the French people] by surprise. A bold deed upsets people's equanimity, and they are dumbfounded by a great novelty.

—NAPOLEON BONAPARTE,
QUOTED IN EMIL LUDWIG,
NAPOLEON, TRANSLATED BY
EDEN AND CEDAR PAUL

The first care of any dandy is to never do what one expects them to do, to always go beyond. . . . The unexpected can be nothing more than a gesture, but a gesture that is totally uncommon. Alcibiades cut off the tail of his dog in order to surprise people. When he saw the looks on his friends as they gazed upon the mutilated animal, he said: "Ah, that is precisely what I wanted to happen: as long as the Athenians gossip about this, they will not say anything worse about me."

• Attracting attention is not the only goal of a dandy, he wants to hold it by unexpected, even ridiculous means. After Alcibiades, how many apprentice dandies cut off the tails of their dogs! The

baron of Saint-Cricq, for example, with his ice cream boots: one very hot day, he ordered at Tortoni's two ice creams, the vanilla served in his right boot, the strawberry in his left boot. . . . The Count Saint-Germain loved to bring his friends to the theater, in his voluptuous carriage lined in pink satin and drawn by two black horses with enormous tails; he asked his friends in that inimitable tone of his:

"Which piece of entertainment did you wish to see? Vaudeville, the Variety show, the Palais-Royal theater? I took the liberty of purchasing a box for all three of them." Once the choice was made, with a look of great disdain, he would take the unused tickets, roll them up, and use them to light his cigar.

—MAUD DE BELLEROCHE,
DU DANDY AU PLAY-BOY

While Shahzaman sat at one of the windows overlooking the king's garden, he saw a door open in the palace, through which came twenty slave girls and twenty negroes. In their midst was his brother's [King Shahriyar's] queen, a woman of surpassing beauty. They made their way to the fountain, where they all undressed and sat on the grass. The king's wife then called out: "Come Mass'ood!" and there promptly came to her a black slave, who mounted her after smothering her with embraces and kisses. So also did the negroes with the slave girls, reveling together till the approach of night. . . . And so

friend, who is also absolutely my master," she replied. "It is to him I owe my wealth." She asked if he had a lover. Yes, he replied. She then said, in a mysterious tone, "I warn you that if you once allow me to take her place in your heart, no power on earth can tear me from it." She then gave him the key to the villa and told him to meet her there in two nights. He kissed her through the grating and left in a daze. "I passed the next two days in a state of feverish impatience," he wrote, "which prevented me from sleeping or eating. Over and above birth, beauty, and wit, my new conquest possessed an additional charm: she was forbidden fruit. I was about to become a rival of the Church." He imagined her in her habit, and with her shaven head.

He arrived at the villa at the appointed hour. Mathilde was waiting for him. To his surprise, she wore an elegant dress, and somehow she had avoided having her head shaved, for her hair was in a magnificent chignon. Casanova began to kiss her. She resisted, but only slightly, and then pulled back, saying a meal was ready for them. Over dinner she filled in a few more of the gaps: her money allowed her to bribe certain people, so that she could escape from the convent every so often. She had mentioned Casanova to her friend and master, and he had approved their liaison. He must be old? Casanova asked. No, she replied, a glint in her eye, he is in his forties, and quite handsome. After supper, a bell rang—her signal to hurry back to the convent, or she would be caught. She changed back into her habit and left.

A beautiful vista now seemed to stretch before Casanova, of months spent in the villa with this delightful creature, all of it courtesy of the mysterious master who paid for it all. He soon returned to the convent to arrange the next meeting. They would rendezvous in a square in Venice, then retire to the villa. At the appointed time and place, Casanova saw a man approach him. Fearing it was her mysterious friend, or some other man sent to kill him, he recoiled. The man circled behind him, then came up close: it was Mathilde, wearing a mask and men's clothes. She laughed at the fright she had given him. What a devilish nun. He had to admit that dressed as a man she excited him even more.

Casanova began to suspect that all was not as it seemed. For one, he found a collection of libertine novels and pamphlets in Mathilde's house. Then she made blasphemous comments, for example about the joy they would have together during Lent, "mortifying their flesh." Now she referred to her mysterious friend as her lover. A plan evolved in his mind to take her away from this man and from the convent, eloping with her and possessing her himself.

A few days later he received a letter from her, in which she made a confession: during one of their more passionate trysts at the villa, her lover had hidden in a closet, watching the whole thing. The lover, she told him, was the French ambassador to Venice, and Casanova had impressed him. Casanova was not one to be fooled with like this, yet the next day he was back at the convent, submissively arranging for another tryst. This time she showed up at the hour they had named, and he embraced her—only to

find that he was embracing Caterina, dressed up in Mathilde's clothes. Mathilde had befriended Caterina and learned her story. Apparently taking pity on her, she had arranged it so that Caterina could leave the convent for the evening, and meet up with Casanova. Only a few months before Casanova had been in love with this girl, but he had forgotten about her. Compared to the ingenious Mathilde, Caterina was a simpering bore. He could not conceal his disappointment. He burned to see Mathilde.

Casanova was angry at the trick Mathilde had played. But a few days later, when he saw her again, all was forgiven. As she had predicted during their first interview, her power over him was complete. He had become her slave, addicted to her whims, and to the dangerous pleasures she offered. Who knows what rash act he might have committed on her behalf had their affair not been cut short by circumstance.

Interpretation. Casanova was almost always in control in his seductions. He was the one who led, taking his victim on a trip to an unknown destination, luring her into his web. In all of his memoirs the story of Mathilde is the only seduction in which the tables are happily turned: he is the seduced, the bewildered victim.

What made Casanova Mathilde's slave was the same tactic he had used on countless girls: the irresistible lure of being led by another person, the thrill of being surprised, the power of mystery. Each time he left Mathilde his head was spinning with questions. Her ability to go on surprising him kept her always in his mind, deepening her spell and blotting Caterina out. Each surprise was carefully calculated for the effect it would produce. The first unexpected letter piqued his curiosity, as did that first sight of her in the waiting room; suddenly seeing her dressed as an elegant woman stirred intense desire; then seeing her dressed as a man intensified the excitingly transgressive nature of their liaison. The surprises put him off balance, yet left him quivering with anticipation of the next one. Even an unpleasant surprise, such as the encounter with Caterina that Mathilde had set up, kept him emotional and weak. Meeting the somewhat bland Caterina at that moment only made him long that much more for Mathilde.

In seduction, you need to create constant tension and suspense, a feeling that with you nothing is predictable. Do not think of this as a painful challenge. You are creating drama in real life, so pour your creative energies into it, have some fun. There are all kinds of calculated surprises you can spring on your victims—sending a letter from out of the blue, showing up unexpectedly, taking them to a place they have never been. But best of all are surprises that reveal something new about your character. This needs to be set up. In those first few weeks, your targets will tend to make certain snap judgments about you, based on appearances. Perhaps they see you as a bit shy, practical, puritanical. You know that this is not the real you, but it is how you act in social situations. Let them, however, have these impressions, and in fact accentuate them a little, without overacting: for instance,

Shahzaman related to [his brother King Shahriyar] all that he had seen in the king's garden that day. . . .
• Upon this Shahriyar announced his intention to set forth on another expedition. The troops went out of the city with the tents, and King Shahriyar followed them. And after he had stayed a while in the camp, he gave orders to his slaves that no one was to be admitted to the king's tent. He then disguised himself and returned unnoticed to the palace, where his brother was waiting for him. They both sat at one of the windows overlooking the garden; and when they had been there a short time, the queen and her women appeared with the black slaves, and behaved as Shahzaman had described. . . .
• As soon as they entered the palace, King Shahriyar put his wife to death, together with her women and the black slaves. Thenceforth he made it his custom to take a virgin in marriage to his bed each night, and kill her the next morning. This he continued to do for three years, until a clamor rose among the people, some of whom fled the country with their daughters. • Now the vizier had two daughters. The elder was called Shahrazad, and the younger Dunyazad. Shahrazad possessed many accomplishments and was versed in the wisdom of the poets and the legends of ancient kings. • That day Shahrazad noticed her father's anxiety and asked him what it was that troubled him. When the vizier told her of his predicament, she said: "Give me in marriage to

this king; either I shall die and be a ransom for the daughters of Moslems, or live and be the cause of their deliverance." He earnestly pleaded with her against such a hazard; but Shahrazad was resolved, and would not yield to her father's entreaties. . . .

So the vizier arrayed his daughter in bridal garments and decked her with jewels and made ready to announce Shahrazad's wedding to the king. • Before saying farewell to her sister, Shahrazad gave her these instructions:

"When I am received by the king, I shall send for you. Then when the king has finished his act with me, you must say: 'Tell me, my sister, some tale of marvel to beguile the night.' Then I will tell you a tale which, if Allah wills, shall be the means of our deliverance." • The vizier went with his daughter to the king. And when the king had taken the maiden Shahrazad to his chamber and had lain with her, she wept and said: "I have a young sister to whom I wish to bid farewell." •

The king sent for Dunyazad. When she arrived, she threw her arms around her sister's neck, and seated herself by her side. • Then Dunyazad said to Shahrazad: "Tell us, my sister, a tale of marvel, so that the night may pass pleasantly." • "Gladly," she answered, "if the king permits." • And the king, who was troubled with sleeplessness, eagerly listened to the tale of Shahrazad: Once upon the time, in the city of Basrah, there lived a prosperous tailor who was fond of sport and merriment. . . . [Nearly

seem a little more reserved than usual. Now you have room to suddenly surprise them with some bold or poetic or naughty action. Once they have changed their minds about you, surprise them again, as Mathilde did with Casanova—first a nun who wants an affair, then a libertine, then a seductress with a sadistic streak. As they strain to figure you out, they will be thinking about you all of the time, and will want to know more about you. Their curiosity will lead them further into your web, until it is too late for them to turn back.

This is always the law for the interesting. . . . If one just knows how to surprise, one always wins the game. The energy of the person involved is temporarily suspended; one makes it impossible for her to act.

—SØREN KIERKEGAARD

Keys to Seduction

A child is usually a willful, stubborn creature who will deliberately do the opposite of what we ask. But there is one scenario in which children will happily give up their usual willfulness: when they are promised a surprise. Perhaps it is a present hidden in a box, a game with an unforeseeable ending, a journey with an unknown destination, a suspenseful story with a surprise finish. In those moments when children are waiting for a surprise, their willpower is suspended. They are in your thrall for as long as you dangle possibility before them. This childish habit is buried deep within us, and is the source of an elemental human pleasure: being led by a person who knows where they are going, and who takes us on a journey. (Maybe our joy in being carried along involves a buried memory of being literally carried, by a parent, when we are small.)

We get a similar thrill when we watch a movie or read a thriller: we are in the hands of a director or author who is leading us along, taking us through twists and turns. We stay in our seats, we turn the pages, happily enslaved by the suspense. It is the pleasure a woman has in being led by a confident dancer, letting go of any defensiveness she may feel and letting another person do the work. Falling in love involves anticipation; we are about to head off in a new direction, enter a new life, where everything will be strange. The seduced wants to be led, to be carried along like a child. If you are predictable, the charm wears off; everyday life is predictable. In the *Arabian Tales from the Thousand and One Nights*, each night King Shahriyar takes a virgin as his wife, then kills her the following morning. One such virgin, Shahrazad, manages to escape this fate by telling the king a story that can only be completed the following day. She does this night after night, keeping the king in constant suspense. When one story finishes, she quickly starts up another. She does this for nearly three years, until the king finally decides to spare her life. You are like Shahrazad: with-

out new stories, without a feeling of anticipation, your seduction will die. Keep stoking the fires night after night. Your targets must never know what's coming next—what surprises you have in store for them. As with King Shahriyar, they will be under your control for as long as you can keep them guessing.

In 1765, Casanova met a young Italian countess named Clementina who lived with her two sisters in a château. Clementina loved to read, and had little interest in the men who swarmed around her. Casanova added himself to their number, buying her books, engaging her in literary discussions, but she was no less indifferent to him than she had been to them. Then one day he invited the entire family on a little trip. He would not tell them where they were going. They piled into the carriage, all the way trying to guess their destination. A few hours later they entered Milan—what joy, the sisters had never been there. Casanova led them to his apartment, where three dresses had been laid out—the most magnificent dresses the girls had ever seen. There was one for each of the sisters, he told them, and the green one was for Clementina. Stunned, she put it on, and her face lit up. The surprises did not stop—there was a delicious meal, champagne, games. By the time they returned to the château, late in the evening, Clementina had fallen hopelessly in love with Casanova.

The reason was simple: surprise creates a moment when people's defenses come down and new emotions can rush in. If the surprise is pleasurable, the seductive poison enters their veins without their realizing it. Any sudden event has a similar effect, striking directly at our emotions before we get defensive. Rakes know this power well.

A young married woman in the court of Louis XV, in eighteenth-century France, noticed a handsome young courtier watching her, first at the opera, then in church. Making inquiries, she found it was the Duc de Richelieu, the most notorious rake in France. No woman was safe from this man, she was warned; he was impossible to resist, and she should avoid him at all costs. Nonsense, she replied, she was happily married. He could not possibly seduce her. Seeing him again, she laughed at his persistence. He would disguise himself as a beggar and approach her in the park, or his coach would suddenly come alongside hers. He was never aggressive, and seemed harmless enough. She let him talk to her at court; he was charming and witty, and even asked to meet her husband.

The weeks passed, and the woman realized she had made a mistake: she looked forward to seeing the marquis. She had let down her guard. This had to stop. Now she started avoiding him, and he seemed to respect her feelings: he stopped bothering her. Then one day, weeks later, she was at the country manor of a friend when the marquis suddenly appeared. She blushed, trembled, walked away, but his unexpected appearance had caught her unawares—it had pushed her over the edge. A few days later she became another of Richelieu's victims. Of course he had set the whole thing up, including the supposed surprise encounter.

Not only does suddenness create a seductive jolt, it conceals manipula-

three years pass.] Now during this time Shahrazad had borne King Shahriyar three sous. On the thousand and first night, when she had ended the tale of Ma'aruf she rose and kissed the ground before him, saying: "Great King, for a thousand and one nights I have been recounting to you the fables of past ages and the legends of ancient kings. May I be so bold as to crave a favor of your majesty?" • The king replied: "Ask, and it shall be granted." • Shahrazad called out to the nurses, saying: "Bring me my children." • . . . "Behold these three [little boys] whom Allah has granted to us. For their sake I implore you to spare my life. For if you destroy the mother of these infants, they will find none among women to love them as I would." • The king embraced his three sous, and his eyes filled with tears as he answered: "I swear by Allah, Shahrazad, that you were already pardoned before the coming of these children. I loved you because I found you chaste and tender, wise and eloquent. May Allah bless you, and bless your father and mother, your ancestors, and all your descendants. O, Shahrazad, this thousand and first night is brighter for us than the day!"

—TALES FROM THE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS, TRANSLATED BY N.J. DAWOOD

tions. Appear somewhere unexpectedly, say or do something sudden, and people will not have time to figure out that your move was calculated. Take them to some new place as if it only just occurred to you, suddenly reveal some secret. Made emotionally vulnerable, they will be too bewildered to see through you. Anything that happens suddenly seems natural, and anything that seems natural has a seductive charm.

Only months after arriving in Paris in 1926, Josephine Baker had completely charmed and seduced the French public with her wild dancing. But less than a year later she could feel their interest wane. Since childhood she had hated feeling out of control of her life. Why be at the mercy of the fickle public? She left Paris and returned a year later, her manner completely altered—now she played the part of an elegant Frenchwoman, who happened to be an ingenious dancer and performer. The French fell in love again; the power was back on her side. If you are in the public eye, you must learn from this trick of surprise. People are bored, not only with their own lives but with people who are meant to keep them from being bored. The minute they feel they can predict your next step, they will eat you alive. The artist Andy Warhol kept moving from incarnation to incarnation, and no one could predict the next one—artist, filmmaker, society man. Always keep a surprise up your sleeve. To keep the public's attention, keep them guessing. Let the moralists accuse you of insincerity, of having no core or center. They are actually jealous of the freedom and playfulness you reveal in your public persona.

Finally, you might think it wiser to present yourself as someone reliable, not given to caprice. If so, you are in fact merely timid. It takes courage and effort to mount a seduction. Reliability is fine for drawing people in, but stay reliable and you stay a bore. Dogs are reliable, a seducer is not. If, on the other hand, you prefer to improvise, imagining that any kind of planning or calculation is antithetical to the spirit of surprise, you are making a grave mistake. Constant improvisation simply means you are lazy, and thinking only about yourself. What often seduces a person is the feeling that you have expended effort on their behalf. You do not need to trumpet this too loudly, but make it clear in the gifts you make, the little journeys you plan, the little teases you lure people with. Little efforts like these will be more than amply rewarded by the conquest of the heart and willpower of the seduced.

Symbol: *The Roller Coaster.*

The car rises slowly to the top, then suddenly hurtles you into space, whips you to the side, throws you upside down, in every possible direction.

The riders laugh and scream. What thrills them is to let go, to grant control to someone else, who propels them in unexpected directions. What new thrill awaits them around the next corner?

Reversal

Surprise can be unsurprising if you keep doing the same thing again and again. Jiang Qing would try to surprise her husband Mao Zedong with sudden changes of mood, from harshness to kindness and back. At first he was captivated; he loved the feeling of never knowing what was coming. But it went on for years, and was always the same. Soon, Madame Mao's supposedly unpredictable mood swings just annoyed him. You need to vary the method of your surprises. When Madame de Pompadour was the lover of the inveterately bored King Louis XV, she made each surprise different—a new amusement, a new game, a new fashion, a new mood. He could never predict what would come next, and while he waited for the next surprise, his willpower was temporarily suspended. No man was ever more of a slave to a woman than was Louis to Madame de Pompadour. When you change direction, make the new direction truly new.

10

Use the Demonic Power of Words to Sow Confusion

*It
is hard to make
people listen; they are consumed
with their own thoughts and desires, and
have little time for yours. The trick to making them
listen is to say what they want to hear, to fill their ears
with whatever is pleasant to them. This is the essence of seduc-
tive language. Inflame people's emotions with loaded phrases,
flatter them, comfort their insecurities, envelop them in fantasies,
sweet words, and promises, and not only will they listen to
you, they will lose their will to resist you. Keep your lan-
guage vague, letting them read into it what
they want. Use writing to stir up fantasies
and to create an idealized
portrait of your-
self.*

Seductive Oratory

On May 13, 1958, right-wing Frenchmen and their sympathizers in the army seized control of Algeria, which was then a French colony. They had been afraid that France's socialist government would grant Algeria its independence. Now, with Algeria under their control, they threatened to take over all of France. Civil war seemed imminent.

At this dire moment all eyes turned to General Charles de Gaulle, the World War II hero who had played a crucial role in liberating France from the Nazis. For the last ten years de Gaulle had stayed away from politics, disgusted with the infighting among the various parties. He remained very popular, and was generally seen as the one man who could unite the country, but he was also a conservative, and the right-wingers felt certain that if he came to power he would support their cause. Days after the May 13 coup, the French government—the Fourth Republic—collapsed, and the parliament called on de Gaulle to help form a new government, the Fifth Republic. He asked for and was granted full powers for four months. On June 4, days after becoming the head of government, de Gaulle flew to Algeria.

The French colonials were ecstatic. It was their coup that had indirectly brought de Gaulle to power; surely, they imagined, he was coming to thank them, and to reassure them that Algeria would remain French. When he arrived in Algiers, thousands of people filled the city's main plaza. The mood was extremely festive—there were banners, music, and endless chants of "*Algérie française*," the French-colonial slogan. Suddenly de Gaulle appeared on a balcony overlooking the plaza. The crowd went wild. The general, an extremely tall man, raised his arms above his head, and the chanting doubled in volume. The crowd was begging him to join in. Instead he lowered his arms until silence fell, then opened them wide, and slowly intoned, in his deep voice, "*Je vous ai compris*"—I have understood you. There was a moment of quiet, and then, as his words sank in, a deafening roar: he understood them. That was all they needed to hear.

De Gaulle proceeded to talk of the greatness of France. More cheers. He promised there would be new elections, and "with those elected representatives we will see how to do the rest." Yes, a new government, just what the crowd wanted—more cheers. He would "find the place for Algeria" in the French "ensemble." There must be "total discipline, without qualification and without conditions"—who could argue with that? He closed with a loud call: "*Vive la République! Vive la France!*" the emotional slogan that

*After Operation Seditio,
we are being treated to
Operation Seduction.*

—MAURICE KRIEGL-
VALRIMONT ON CHARLES DE
GAULLE, SHORTLY AFTER THE
GENERAL ASSUMED POWER

*My mistress staged a lock-
out. . . . \ I went back to
verses and compliments, *
*My natural weapons. Soft
words \ Remove harsh
door-chains. There's magic
in poetry, its power \ Can
pull down the bloody
moon, \ Turn back the
sun, make serpents burst
asunder \ Or rivers flow
upstream. \ Doors are no
match for such
spellbinding, the toughest *
*Locks can be open-sesamed
by its charms. \ But epic's a
dead loss for me. I'll get
nowhere with swift-footed *
*Achilles, or with either of
Atreus' sons. \ Old what's-
his-name wasting twenty
years on war and travel, *
*Poor Hector dragged in the
dust— \ No good. But
lavish fine words on some
young girl's profile \ And
sooner or later shell tender
herself as the fee, \ An
ample reward for your*

labors. So farewell, heroic \
 Figures of legend—the
 quid \ Pro quo you offer
 won't tempt me. A bevy of
 beauties \ All swooning
 over my love-songs—that's
 what I want.

—OVID, THE AMORES,
 TRANSLATED BY PETER GREEN

When she has received a
 letter, when its sweet
 poison has entered her
 blood, then a word is
 sufficient to wake her love
 burst forth. . . . My
 personal presence will
 prevent ecstasy. If I am
 present only in a letter,
 then she can easily cope
 with me; to some extent,
 she mistakes me for a more
 universal creature who
 dwells in her love. Then,
 too, in a letter one can
 more readily have free rein;
 in a letter I can throw
 myself at her feet in superb
 fashion, etc.—something
 that would easily seem like
 nonsense if I did it in
 person, and the illusion
 would be lost. . . . • On
 the whole, letters are and
 will continue to be a
 priceless means of making
 an impression on a young
 girl; the dead letter of
 writing often has much
 more influence than the
 living word. A letter is a
 secretive communication;
 one is master of the
 situation, feels no pressure
 from anyone's actual
 presence, and I do believe a
 young girl would prefer to
 be alone with her ideal.

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

had been the rallying cry in the fight against the Nazis. Everyone shouted it back. In the next few days de Gaulle made similar speeches around Algeria, to equally delirious crowds.

Only after de Gaulle had returned to France did the words of his speeches sink in: not once had he promised to keep Algeria French. In fact he had hinted that he might give the Arabs the vote, and might grant an amnesty to the Algerian rebels who had been fighting to force the French from the country. Somehow, in the excitement his words had created, the colonists had failed to focus on what they had actually meant. De Gaulle had duped them. And indeed, in the months to come, he worked to grant Algeria its independence—a task he finally accomplished in 1962.

Interpretation. De Gaulle cared little about an old French colony, and about what it symbolized to some French people. Nor did he have any sympathy for anyone who fomented civil war. His one concern was to make France a modern power. And so, when he went to Algiers, he had a long-term plan: weaken the right-wingers by getting them to fight among themselves, and work toward Algerian independence. His short-term goal had to be to defuse the tension and buy himself some time. He would not lie to the colonials by saying he supported their cause—that would cause trouble back home. Instead he would beguile them with seductive oratory, intoxicate them with words. His famous "I have understood you" could easily have meant, "I understand what a danger you represent." But a jubilant crowd expecting his support read it the way they wanted. To keep them at a fever pitch, de Gaulle made emotional references—to the French Resistance during World War II, for example, and to the need for "discipline," a word with great appeal to right-wingers. He filled their ears with promises—a new government, a glorious future. He got them to chant, creating an emotional bond. He spoke with dramatic pitch and quivering emotion. His words created a kind of delirium.

De Gaulle was not trying to express his feelings or speak the truth; he was trying to produce an effect. This is the key to seductive oratory. Whether you are talking to a single individual or to a crowd, try a little experiment: rein in your desire to speak your mind. Before you open your mouth, ask yourself a question: what can I say that will have the most pleasant effect on my listeners? Often this entails flattering their egos, assuaging their insecurities, giving them vague hopes for the future, sympathizing with their travails ("I have understood you"). Start off with something pleasant and everything to come will be easy: people's defenses will go down. They will grow amenable, open to suggestion. Think of your words as an intoxicating drug that will make people emotional and confused. Keep your language vague and ambiguous, letting your listeners fill in the gaps with their fantasies and imaginings. Instead of tuning you out, getting irritated or defensive, being impatient for you to shut up, they will be pliant, happy with your sweet-sounding words.

Seductive Writing

One spring afternoon in the late 1830s, in a street in Copenhagen, a man named Johannes caught a glimpse of a beautiful young girl. Self-absorbed yet delightfully innocent, she fascinated him, and he followed her, from a distance, and found out where she lived. Over the next few weeks he made inquiries and found out more about her. Her name was Cordelia Wahl, and she lived with her aunt. The two led a quiet existence; Cordelia liked to read, and to be alone. Seducing young girls was Johannes's specialty, but Cordelia would be a catch: she had already turned down several eligible suitors.

Johannes imagined that Cordelia might hunger for something more out of life, something grand, something resembling the books she had read and the daydreams that presumably filled her solitude. He arranged an introduction and began to frequent her house, accompanied by a friend of his named Edward. This young man had his own thoughts of courting Cordelia, but he was awkward, and strained to please her. Johannes, on the other hand, virtually ignored her, instead befriending her aunt. They would talk about the most banal things—farm life, whatever was in the news. Occasionally Johannes would veer off into a more philosophical discussion, for he had noticed, out of the corner of his eye, that on these occasions Cordelia would listen to him closely, while still pretending to listen to Edward.

This went on for several weeks. Johannes and Cordelia barely spoke, but he could tell that he intrigued her, and that Edward irritated her to no end. One morning, knowing her aunt was out, he visited their house. It was the first time he and Cordelia had been alone together. As dryly and politely as possible, he proceeded to propose to her. Needless to say she was shocked and flustered. A man who had shown not the slightest interest in her suddenly wanted to marry her? She was so surprised that she referred the matter to her aunt, who, as Johannes had expected, gave her approval. Had Cordelia resisted, her aunt would have respected her wishes; but she did not.

On the outside, everything had changed. The couple were engaged. Johannes now came to the house alone, sat with Cordelia, held her hand, talked with her. But inwardly he made sure things were the same. He remained distant and polite. He would sometimes warm up, particularly when talking about literature (Cordelia's favorite subject), but at a certain point he always went back to more mundane matters. He knew this frustrated Cordelia, who had expected that now he would be different. Yet even when they went out together, he took her to formal socials arranged for engaged couples. How conventional! Was this what love and marriage were supposed to be about, these prematurely aged people talking about houses and their own drab futures? Cordelia, who was shy at the best of times, asked Johannes to stop dragging her to these affairs.

The battlefield was prepared. Cordelia was confused and anxious.

*Let wax pave the way for
you, spread out on smooth
tablets, \ Let wax go before
as witness to your mind—
\ Bring her your flattering
words, words that ape the
lover: \ And remember,
whoever you are, to throw
in some good \ Entreaties.
Entreaties are what made
Achilles give back \
Hector's Body to Priam;
even an angry god \ Is
moved by the voice of
prayer. Make promises,
what's the harm in \
Promising? Here's where
anyone can play rich....
\ A persuasive letter's \ The
thing to lead off with,
explore her mind, \
Reconnoiter the landscape.
A message scratched on an
apple \ Betrayed Cydippe:
she was snared by her own
words. \ My advice, then,
young men of Rome, is to
learn the noble \ Advocate's
arts—not only to let you
defend \ Some trembling
client: a woman, no less
than the populace, \ Elite
senator, or grave judge, \
Will surrender to
eloquence. Nevertheless,
dissemble \ Your powers,
avoid long words, \ Don't
look too highbrow. Who
but a mindless ninny \
Declaims to his mistress?
An overlettered style \
Repels girls as often as not.
Use ordinary language, \
Familiar yet coaxing
words—as though \ You
were there, in her presence.
If she refuses your letter, \
Sends it back unread,
persist.*

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

Therefore, the person who
is unable to write letters
and notes never becomes a
dangerous seducer.

—SØREN KIERKEGAARD,
EITHER/OR, TRANSLATED BY
HOWARD V. HONG
AND EDNA H. HONG

Standing on a crag of
Olympus \ Gold-throned
Hera saw her brother, \
Who was her husband's
brother too, \ Busy on the
fields of human glory, \
And her heart sang. Then
she saw Zeus \ Sitting on
the topmost peak of Ida \
And was filled with
resentment. Cow-eyed
Hera \ Mused for a while
on how to trick \ The mind
of Zeus Aegis-holder, \
And the plan that seemed
best to her \ Was to make
herself up and go to Ida, \
Seduce him, and then shed
on his eyelids \ And
cunning mind a sleep
gentle and warm. . . . \
When everything was
perfect, she stepped \ Out
of her room and called
Aphrodite \ And had a
word with her in private: \
"My dear child, will you
do something for me, \ I
wonder, or will you refuse,
angry because \ I favor the
Greeks and you the
Trojans?" \ And Zeus'
daughter Aphrodite
replied: \ "Goddess revered
as Cronus's daughter, \
Speak your mind. Tell me
what you want \ And I'll
oblige you if I possibly
can." \ And Hera, with
every intention to deceive: \
"Give me now the Sex
and Desire \ You use to
subdue immortals and
humans. . . ." \ And
Aphrodite, who loved to
smile: \ "How could I, or
would I, refuse someone \
Who sleeps in the anus of

Then, a few weeks after their engagement, Johannes sent her a letter. Here he described the state of his soul, and his certainty that he loved her. He spoke in metaphor, suggesting that he had been waiting for years, lantern in hand, for Cordelia's appearance; metaphor melted into reality, back and forth. The style was poetic, the words glowed with desire, but the whole was delightfully ambiguous—Cordelia could reread the letter ten times without being sure what it said. The next day Johannes received a response. The writing was simple and straightforward, but full of sentiment: his letter had made her so happy, Cordelia wrote, and she had not imagined this side to his character. He replied by writing that *he had changed*. He did not say how or why, but the implication was that it was because of her.

Now his letters came almost daily. They were mostly of the same length, in a poetic style that had a touch of madness to it, as if he were intoxicated with love. He talked of Greek myth, comparing Cordelia to a nymph and himself to a river that fell in love with a maiden. His soul, he said, merely reflected back her image; she was all he could see or think of. Meanwhile he detected changes in Cordelia: her letters became more poetic, less restrained. Without realizing it she repeated his ideas, imitating his style and his imagery as if they were her own. Also, when they saw each other in person, she was nervous. He made a point of remaining the same, aloof and regal, but he could tell that she saw him differently, sensing depths in him that she could not fathom. In public she hung on his every word. She must have memorized his letters, for she referred to them constantly in their talks. It was a secret life they shared. When she held his hand, she did so more tightly than before. Her eyes expressed an impatience, as if she were hoping that at any moment he would do something bold.

Johannes made his letters shorter but more numerous, sometimes sending several in one day. The imagery became more physical and more suggestive, the style more disjointed, as if he could barely organize his thoughts. Sometimes he sent a note of just a sentence or two. Once, at a party at Cordelia's house, he dropped such a note into her knitting basket and watched as she ran away to read it, her face flushed. In her letters he saw signs of emotion and turmoil. Echoing a sentiment he had hinted at in an earlier letter, she wrote that she hated the whole engagement business—it was so beneath their love.

Everything was ready. Soon she would be his, the way he wanted it. She would break off the engagement. A rendezvous in the country would be simple to arrange—in fact she would be the one to propose it. This would be his most skillful seduction.

Interpretation. Johannes and Cordelia are characters in the loosely autobiographical novel *The Seducer's Diary* (1843), by the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard. Johannes is a most experienced seducer, who specializes in working on his victim's mind. This is precisely where Cordelia's previous

suitors have failed: they have begun by imposing themselves, a common mistake. We think that by being persistent, by overwhelming our targets with romantic attention, we are convincing them of our affection. Instead we are convincing them of our impatience and insecurity. Aggressive attention is not flattering because it is not personalized. It is unbridled libido at work; the target sees through it. Johannes is too clever to begin so obviously. Instead, he takes a step back, intriguing Cordelia by acting a little cold, and carefully creating the impression of a formal, somewhat secretive man. Only then does he surprise her with his first letter. Obviously there is more to him than she has thought, and once she has come to believe this, her imagination runs rampant. Now he can intoxicate her with his letters, creating a presence that haunts her like a ghost. His words, with their images and poetic references, are constantly in her mind. And this is the ultimate seduction: to possess her mind before moving to conquer her body.

The story of Johannes shows what a weapon in a seducer's armory a letter can be. But it is important to learn how to incorporate letters in seduction. It is best not to begin your correspondence until at least several weeks after your initial contact. Let your victims get an impression of you: you seem intriguing, yet you show no particular interest in them. When you sense that they are thinking about you, that is the time to hit them with your first letter. Any desire you express for them will come as a surprise; their vanity will be tickled and they will want more. Now make your letters frequent, in fact more frequent than your personal appearances. This will give them the time and space to idealize you, which would be more difficult if you were always in their face. After they have fallen under your spell, you can always take a step back, making the letters fewer—let them think you are losing interest and they will be hungry for more.

Design your letters as homages to your targets. Make everything you write come back to them, as if they were all you could think about—a delirious effect. If you tell an anecdote, make it somehow relate to them. Your correspondence is a kind of mirror you are holding up to them—they get to see themselves reflected through your desire. If for some reason they do not like you, write to them as if they did. Remember: the tone of your letters is what will get under their skin. If your language is elevated, poetic, creative in its praise, it will infect them despite themselves. Never argue, never defend yourself, never accuse them of being heartless. That would ruin the spell.

A letter can suggest emotion by seeming disordered, rambling from one subject to another. Clearly it is hard for you to think; your love has unhinged you. Disordered thoughts are exciting thoughts. Do not waste time on real information; focus on feelings and sensations, using expressions that are ripe with connotation. Plant ideas by dropping hints, writing suggestively without explaining yourself. Never lecture, never seem intellectual or superior—you will only make yourself pompous, which is deadly. Far better to speak colloquially, though with a poetic edge to lift the language above the commonplace. Do not become sentimental—it is tiring, and too

almighty Zeus?" \ And with that she unbound from her breast \ An ornate sash inlaid with magical charms. \ Sex is in it, and Desire, and seductive \ Sweet Talk, that fools even the wise. . . . \ Hera was fast approaching Gargarus, \ Ida's highest peak, when Zeus saw her. \ And when he saw her, lust enveloped him, \ Just as it had the first time they made love, \ Slipping off to bed behind their parents' backs. \ He stood close to her and said: \ "Hera, why have you left Olympus? \ And where are your horses and chariot?" \ And Hera, with every intention to deceive: \ "I'm off to visit the ends of the earth \ And Father Ocean and Mother Tethys \ Who nursed and doted on me in their house. . . . " \ And Zeus, clouds scudding about him: \ "You can go there later just as well. \ Let's get in bed now ami make love. \ No goddess or woman has ever \ Made me feel so overwhelmed with lust. . . . \ I've never loved anyone as I love you now, \ Never been in the grip of desire so sweet. " \ And Hera, with every intention to deceive: \ "What a thing to say, my awesome lord. \ The thought of us lying down here on Ida \ Ami making love outdoors in broad daylight! \ What if one of the Immortals saw us \ Asleep, and went to all the other gods \ Aud told them? I could never get up \ And go back home. It would be shameful. \ But if you really do want to do this, \ There is the bedroom your dear son Hephaestus \ Built for you, with good solid doors. Let's go \ There and lie down, since you're in the mood. " \

And Zeus, who masses the clouds, replied: \ "Hera, don't worry about any god or man \ Seeing us. I'll enfold you in a cloud so dense \ And golden not even Helios could spy on us, \ And his light is the sharpest vision there is."

—HOMER, *THE ILIAD*,
TRANSLATED BY STANLEY
LOMBARDO

ANTONY: Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears; \ I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. \ The evil that men do lives after them; \ The good is oft interred with their bones. \ So let it be with Caesar. . . . \ I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke, \ But here I am to speak what I do know. \ You all did love him once, not without cause. \ What cause withholds you then to mourn for him? \ O judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts, \ And men have lost their reason! Bear with me. \ My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar, \ And I must pause till it come back to me. . . . \

PLEBEIAN: Poor soul! his eyes are red as fire with weeping. \ PLEBEIAN: There's not a nobler man in Rome than Antony. \

PLEBEIAN: Now mark him. He begins again to speak. \

ANTONY: But yesterday the word of Caesar might \ Have stood against the world. Now lies he there, \ And none so poor to do him reverence. \

O masters! If I were disposed to stir \ Your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage, \ I should do Brutus wrong, and Cassius wrong, \ Who, you all know, are

direct. Better to suggest the effect your target has on you than to gush about how you feel. Stay vague and ambiguous, allowing the reader the space to imagine and fantasize. The goal of your writing is not to express yourself but to create emotion in the reader, spreading confusion and desire.

You will know that your letters are having the proper effect when your targets come to mirror your thoughts, repeating words you wrote, whether in their own letters or in person. This is the time to move to the more physical and erotic. Use language that quivers with sexual connotation, or, better still, suggest sexuality by making your letters shorter, more frequent, and even more disordered than before. There is nothing more erotic than the short abrupt note. Your thoughts are unfinished; they can only be completed by the other person.

Sganarelle to Don Juan: Well, what I have to say is . . . I don't know what to say; for you turn things in such a manner with your words, that it seems that you are right; and yet, the truth of it is, you are not. I had the finest thoughts in the world, and your words have totally scrambled them up.

—MOLIÈRE

Keys to Seduction

We rarely think before we talk. It is human nature to say the first thing that comes into our head—and usually what comes first is something about ourselves. We primarily use words to express our own feelings, ideas, and opinions. (Also to complain and to argue.) This is because we are generally self-absorbed—the person who interests us most is our own self. To a certain extent this is inevitable, and through much of our lives there is nothing much wrong with it; we can function quite well this way. In seduction, however, it limits our potential.

You cannot seduce without an ability to get outside your own skin and inside another person's, piercing their psychology. The key to seductive language is not the words you utter, or your seductive tone of voice; it is a radical shift in perspective and habit. You have to stop saying the first thing that comes to your mind—you have to control the urge to prattle and vent your opinions. The key is to see words as a tool not for communicating true thoughts and feelings but for confusing, delighting, and intoxicating.

The difference between normal language and seductive language is like the difference between noise and music. Noise is a constant in modern life, something irritating we tune out if we can. Our normal language is like noise—people may half-listen to us as we go on about ourselves, but just as often their thoughts are a million miles away. Every now and then their ears prick up when something we say touches on them, but this lasts only until

we return to yet another story about ourselves. As early as childhood we learn to tune out this kind of noise (particularly when it comes from our parents).

Music, on the other hand, is seductive, and gets under our skin. It is intended for pleasure. A melody or rhythm stays in our blood for days after we have heard it, altering our moods and emotions, relaxing or exciting us. To make music instead of noise, you must say things that please—things that relate to people's lives, that touch their vanity. If they have many problems, you can produce the same effect by distracting them, focusing their attention away from themselves by saying things that are witty and entertaining, or that make the future seem bright and hopeful. Promises and flattery are music to anyone's ears. This is language designed to move people and lower their resistance. It is language designed for them, not directed at them.

The Italian writer Gabriele D'Annunzio was physically unattractive, yet women could not resist him. Even those who knew of his Don Juan reputation and disliked him for it (the actress Eleanora Duse and the dancer Isadora Duncan, for instance) fell under his spell. The secret was the flow of words in which he enveloped a woman. His voice was musical, his language poetic, and most devastating of all, he knew how to flatter. His flattery was aimed precisely at a woman's weaknesses, the areas where she needed validation. A woman was beautiful, yet lacked confidence in her own wit and intelligence? He made sure to say that he was bewitched not by her beauty but by her mind. He might compare her to a heroine of literature, or to a carefully chosen mythological figure. Talking to him, her ego would double in size.

Flattery is seductive language in its purest form. Its purpose is not to express a truth or a real feeling, but only to create an effect on the recipient. Like D'Annunzio, learn to aim your flattery directly at a person's insecurities. For instance, if a man is a fine actor and feels confident about his professional skills, to flatter him about his acting will have little effect, and may even accomplish the opposite—he could feel that he is above the need to have his ego stroked, and your flattery will seem to say otherwise. But let us say that this actor is an amateur musician or painter. He does this work on his own, without professional support or publicity, and he is well aware that others make their living at it. Flattery of his artistic pretensions will go straight to his head and earn you double points. Learn to sniff out the parts of a person's ego that need validation. Make it a surprise, something no one else has thought to flatter before—something you can describe as a talent or positive quality that others have not noticed. Speak with a little tremor, as if your target's charms had overwhelmed you and made you emotional.

Flattery can be a kind of verbal foreplay. Aphrodite's powers of seduction, which were said to come from the magnificent girdle she wore, involved a sweetness of language—a skill with the soft, flattering words that prepare the way for erotic thoughts. Insecurities and nagging self-doubts have a dampening effect on the libido. Make your targets feel secure and alluring through your flattering words and their resistance will melt away.

honorable men. \ I will not do them wrong. . . . \ But here's a parchment with the seal of Caesar. \ I found it in his closet; 'tis his will. \ Let but the commons hear this testament, \ Which (pardon me) I do not mean to read, \ And they would go and kiss dead Caesar's wounds \ And dip their napkins in his sacred blood. . . . \ PLEBEIAN: We'll hear the will! Read it, Mark Antony. \ ALL: The will, the will! We will hear Caesar's will! \ ANTONY: Have patience, gentle friends; I must not read it. \ It is not meet you know how Caesar loved you. \ You are not wood, you are not stones, but men; \ And being men, hearing the will of Caesar, \ It will inflame you, it will make you mad. \ 'Tis good you know not that you are his heirs; \ For if you should, O, what would come of it? . . . \ If you have tears, prepare to shed them now. \ You all do know this mantle. I remember \ The first time ever Caesar put it on. . . . \ Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through. \ See what a rent the envious Casca made. \ Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabbed; \ And as he plucked his cursed steel away, \ Mark how the blood of Caesar followed it. . . . \ For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel. \ Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved him! \ This was the most unkindest cut of all; \ For when the noble Caesar saw him stab, \ Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms, \ Quite vanquished him. . . . \ O, now you weep, and I perceive you feel \ The dint of pity. These are gracious

*drops. \ Kind souls, what
weep you when you but
behold \ Our Caesar's
vesture wounded? Look
you here! \ Here is himself,
marred as you see until
traitors.*

—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE,
JULIUS CAESAR

Sometimes the most pleasant thing to hear is the promise of something wonderful, a vague but rosy future that is just around the corner. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in his public speeches, talked little about specific programs for dealing with the Depression; instead he used rousing rhetoric to paint a picture of America's glorious future. In the various legions of Don Juan, the great seducer would immediately focus women's attention on the future, a fantastic world to which he promised to whisk them off. Tailor your sweet words to your targets' particular problems and fantasies. Promise something realizable, something possible, but do not make it too specific; you are inviting them to dream. If they are mired in dull routine, talk of adventure, preferably with you. Do not discuss how it will be accomplished; speak as if it magically already existed, somewhere in the future. Lift people's thoughts into the clouds and they will relax, their defenses will come down, and it will be that much easier to maneuver and lead them astray. Your words become a kind of elevating drug.

The most anti-seductive form of language is argument. How many silent enemies do we create by arguing? There is a superior way to get people to listen and be persuaded: humor and a light touch. The nineteenth-century English politician Benjamin Disraeli was a master at this game. In Parliament, to fail to reply to an accusation or slanderous comment was a deadly mistake: silence meant the accuser was right. Yet to respond angrily, to get into an argument, was to look ugly and defensive. Disraeli used a different tactic: he stayed calm. When the time came to reply to an attack, he would slowly make his way to the speaker's table, pause, then utter a humorous or sarcastic retort. Everyone would laugh. Now that he had warmed people up, he would proceed to refute his enemy, still mixing in amusing comments; or perhaps he would simply move on to another subject, as if he were above it all. His humor took out the sting of any attack on him. Laughter and applause have a domino effect: once your listeners have laughed, they are more likely to laugh again. In this lighthearted mood they are also more apt to listen. A subtle touch and a bit of irony give you room to persuade them, move them to your side, mock your enemies. That is the seductive form of argument.

Shortly after the murder of Julius Caesar, the head of the band of conspirators who had killed him, Brutus, addressed an angry mob. He tried to reason with the crowd, explaining that he had wanted to save the Roman Republic from dictatorship. The people were momentarily convinced—yes, Brutus seemed a decent man. Then Mark Antony took the stage, and he in turn delivered a eulogy for Caesar. He seemed overwhelmed with emotion. He talked of his love for Caesar, and of Caesar's love for the Roman people. He mentioned Caesar's will; the crowd clamored to hear it, but Antony said no, for if he read it they would know how deeply Caesar had loved them, and how dastardly this murder was. The crowd again insisted he read the will; instead he held up Caesar's bloodstained cloak, noting its rents and tears. This was where Brutus had stabbed the great general, he said; Cassius had stabbed him here. Then finally he read the will, which

told how much wealth Caesar had left to the Roman people. This was the coup de grâce—the crowd turned against the conspirators and went off to lynch them.

Antony was a clever man, who knew how to stir a crowd. According to the Greek historian Plutarch, "When he saw that his oratory had cast a spell over the people and that they were deeply stirred by his words, he began to introduce into his praises [of Caesar] a note of pity and of indignation at Caesar's fate." Seductive language aims at people's emotions, for emotional people are easier to deceive. Antony used various devices to stir the crowd: a tremor in his voice, a distraught and then an angry tone. An emotional voice has an immediate, contagious effect on the listener. Antony also teased the crowd with the will, holding off the reading of it to the end, knowing it would push people over the edge. Holding up the cloak, he made his imagery visceral.

Perhaps you are not trying to whip a crowd into a frenzy; you just want to bring people over to your side. Choose your strategy and words carefully. You might think it is better to reason with people, explain your ideas. But it is hard for an audience to decide whether an argument is reasonable as they listen to you talk. They have to concentrate and listen closely, which requires great effort. People are easily distracted by other stimuli, and if they miss a part of your argument, they will feel confused, intellectually inferior, and vaguely insecure. It is more persuasive to appeal to people's hearts than their heads. Everyone shares emotions, and no one feels inferior to a speaker who stirs up their feelings. The crowd bonds together, everyone contagiously experiencing the same emotions. Antony talked of Caesar as if he and the listeners were experiencing the murder from Caesar's point of view. What could be more provocative? Use such changes of perspective to make your listeners feel what you are saying. Orchestrate your effects. It is more effective to move from one emotion to another than to just hit one note. The contrast between Antony's affection for Caesar and his indignation at the murderers was much more powerful than if he had stayed with one feeling or the other.

The emotions you are trying to arouse should be strong ones. Do not speak of friendship and disagreement; speak of love and hate. And it is crucial to try to feel something of the emotions you are trying to elicit. You will be more believable that way. This should not be difficult: imagine the reasons for loving or hating before you speak. If necessary, think of something from your past that fills you with rage. Emotions are contagious; it is easier to make someone cry if you are crying yourself. Make your voice an instrument, and train it to communicate emotion. Learn to seem sincere. Napoleon studied the greatest actors of his time, and when he was alone he would practice putting emotion into his voice.

The goal of seductive speech is often to create a kind of hypnosis: you are distracting people, lowering their defenses, making them more vulnerable to suggestion. Learn the hypnotist's lessons of repetition and affirmation, key elements in putting a subject to sleep. Repetition involves using

the same words over and over, preferably a word with emotional content: "taxes," "liberals," "bigots." The effect is mesmerizing—ideas can be permanently implanted in people's unconscious simply by being repeated often enough. Affirmation is simply the making of strong positive statements, like the hypnotist's commands. Seductive language should have a kind of boldness, which will cover up a multitude of sins. Your audience will be so caught up in your bold language that they won't have time to reflect on whether or not it is true. Never say "I don't think the other side made a wise decision"; say "We deserve better," or "They have made a mess of things." Affirmative language is active language, full of verbs, imperatives, and short sentences. Cut out "I believe," "Perhaps," "In my opinion." Head straight for the heart.

You are learning to speak a different kind of language. Most people employ symbolic language—their words stand for something real, the feelings, ideas, and beliefs they really have. Or they stand for concrete things in the real world. (The origin of the word "symbolic" lies in a Greek word meaning "to bring things together"—in this case, a word and something real.) As a seducer you are using the opposite: *diabolic* language. Your words do not stand for anything real; their sound, and the feelings they evoke, are more important than what they are supposed to stand for. (The word "diabolic" ultimately means to separate, to throw things apart—here, words and reality.) The more you make people focus on your sweet-sounding language, and on the illusions and fantasies it conjures, the more you diminish their contact with reality. You lead them into the clouds, where it is hard to distinguish truth from untruth, real from unreal. Keep your words vague and ambiguous, so people are never quite sure what you mean. Envelop them in demonic, diabolical language and they will not be able to focus on your maneuvers, on the possible consequences of your seduction. And the more they lose themselves in illusion, the easier it will be to lead them astray and seduce them.

***Symbol:** The Clouds. In the clouds it is hard to see
the exact forms of things. Everything seems vague;
the imagination runs wild, seeing things that are
not there. Your words must lift people into
the clouds, where it is easy for them
to lose their way.*

Reversal

Do not confuse flowery language with seduction: in using flowery language you run the risk of wearing on people's nerves, of seeming pretentious. Excess verbiage is a sign of selfishness, of your inability to rein in your natural tendencies. Often with language, less is more; the elusive, vague, ambiguous phrase leaves the listener more room for imagination than does a sentence full of bombast and self-indulgence.

You must always think first of your targets, and of what will be pleasant to their ears. There will be many times when silence is best. What you do not say can be suggestive and eloquent, making you seem mysterious. In the eleventh-century Japanese court diary *The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon*, the counselor Yoshichika is intrigued by a lady he sees in a carriage, silent and beautiful. He sends her a note, and she sends one back; he is the only one to read it, but by his reaction everyone can tell it is in bad taste, or badly written. It spoils the effect of her beauty. Shonagon writes, "I have heard people suggest that no reply at all is better than a bad one." If you are not eloquent, if you cannot master seductive language, at least learn to curb your tongue—use silence to cultivate an enigmatic presence.

Finally, seduction has a pace and rhythm. In phase one, you are cautious and indirect. It is often best to disguise your intentions, to put your target at ease with deliberately neutral words. Your conversation should be harmless, even a bit bland. In this second phase, you turn more to the attack; this is the time for seductive language. Now when you envelop them in your seductive words and letters, it comes as a pleasant surprise. It gives them the immensely pleasing feeling that they are the ones to suddenly inspire you with such poetry and intoxicating words.

Pay Attention to Detail

*Lofty
words and grand
gestures can be suspicious: why are you trying
so hard to please? The details
of a seduction—the subtle gestures, the offhand things you do—
are often more charming and
revealing. You must learn to distract
your victims with a myriad of pleasant
little rituals—thoughtful gifts tailored
just for them, clothes and adornments
designed to please them, gestures that
show the time and attention you are
paying them. All of their senses are
engaged in the details you orchestrate.
Create spectacles to dazzle their
eyes; mesmerized by what they
see, they will not notice what
you are really up to. Learn to
suggest the proper feelings
and moods through
details.*

The Mesmerizing Effect

In December 1898, the wives of the seven major Western ambassadors to China received a strange invitation: the sixty-three-year-old Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi was hosting a banquet in their honor in the Forbidden City in Beijing. The ambassadors themselves had been quite displeased with the empress dowager, for several reasons. She was a Manchu, a race of northerners who had conquered China in the early seventeenth century, establishing the Ching Dynasty and ruling the country for nearly three hundred years. By the 1890s, the Western powers had begun to carve up parts of China, a country they considered backward. They wanted China to modernize, but the Manchus were conservative, and resisted all reform. Earlier in 1898, the Chinese Emperor Kuang Hsu, the empress dowager's twenty-seven-year-old nephew, had actually begun a series of reforms, with the blessings of the West. Then, one hundred days into this period of reform, word reached the Western diplomats from the Forbidden City that the emperor was quite ill, and that the empress dowager had taken power. They suspected foul play; the empress had probably acted to stop the reforms. The emperor was being mistreated, probably poisoned—perhaps he was already dead. When the seven ambassadors' wives were preparing for their unusual visit, their husbands warned them: Do not trust the empress dowager. A wily woman with a cruel streak, she had risen from obscurity to become the concubine of a previous emperor and had managed over the years to accumulate great power. Far more than the emperor, she was the most feared person in China.

On the appointed day, the women were borne into the Forbidden City in a procession of sedan chairs carried by court eunuchs in dazzling uniforms. The women themselves, not to be outdone, wore the latest Western fashions—tight corsets, long velvet dresses with leg-of-mutton sleeves, billowing petticoats, tall plumed hats. The residents of the Forbidden City looked at their clothes in amazement, and particularly at the way their dresses displayed their prominent bosoms. The wives felt sure they had impressed their hosts. At the Audience Hall they were greeted by princes and princesses, as well as lower royalty. The Chinese women were wearing magnificent Manchu costumes with the traditional high, jewel-encrusted black headdresses; they were arranged in a hierarchical order reflected in the color of their dresses, an astounding rainbow of color.

The wives were served tea in the most delicate porcelain cups, then

*The barge she sat in, like a
burnish'd throne, \ Burn'd
on the water: the poop was
beaten gold; \ Purple the
sails, and so perfumed that
\ The winds were love-sick
with them; the oars were
silver, \ Which to the tune
of flutes kept stroke, and
made \ The water which
they beat to follow faster, \
As amorous of their
strokes. For her own
person, \ It beggar'd all
description: she did lie \ In
her pavilion—cloth-of-gold
of tissue— \ O'er picturing
that Venus where we see \
The fancy outwork nature:
on each side her \ Stood
pretty dimpled boys, like
smiling Cupids, \ With
divers-colour'd fans, whose
wind did seem \ To glow
the delicate cheeks which
they did cool, \ And
what they undid did. . . . \
Her gentlewomen, like the
Nereids, \ So many
mermaids, tended her i' the
eyes, \ And made their
bends adornings: at the
helm \ A seeming mermaid
steers: the silken tackle \
Swell with the touches of
those flower-soft hands \
That yarely frame the
office. From the barge \ A
strange invisible perfume
hits the sense \ Of the*

adjacent wharfs. The city
cast \ Her people out upon
her; and Antony, \
Enthron'd i' the market-
place, did sit alone, \
Whistling to the air;
which, but for vacancy, \
Had gone to gaze on
Cleopatra too \ And made
a gap in nature.

—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE,
ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

*In the palmy days of the
gay quarters at Edo there
was a connoisseur of
fashion named Sakakura
who grew intimate with the
great courtesan Chitosé.
This woman was much
given to drinking sake; as
a side dish she relished the
so-called flower crabs, to be
found in the Mogami
River in the East, and
these she had pickled in
salt for her enjoyment.
Knowing this, Sakakura
commissioned a painter of
the Kano School to execute
her bamboo crest in
powdered gold on the tiny
shells of these crabs; he
fixed the price of each
painted shell at one
rectangular piece of gold,
and presented them to
Chitosé throughout the
year, so that she never
lacked for them.*

—IHARA SAIKAKU, *THE LIFE OF
AN AMOROUS WOMAN, AND
OTHER WRITINGS*, TRANSLATED
BY IVAN MORRIS

*For such men as have
practised love, have ever
held this a sound maxim
that there is naught to be
compared with a woman in
her clothes. Again when
you reflect how a man doth
brave, rumple, squeeze and
make light of his lady's
finery, and how he doth*

were escorted into the presence of the empress dowager. The sight took their breath away. The empress was seated on the Dragon Throne, which was studded with jewels. She wore heavily brocaded robes, a magnificent headdress bearing diamonds, pearls, and jade, and an enormous necklace of perfectly matched pearls. She was a tiny woman, but on the throne, in that dress, she seemed a giant. She smiled at the ladies with much warmth and sincerity. To their relief, seated below her on a smaller throne was her nephew the emperor. He looked pale, but he greeted them enthusiastically and seemed in good spirits. Maybe he was indeed simply ill.

The empress shook the hand of each of the women. As she did so, an attendant eunuch handed her a large gold ring set with a large pearl, which she slipped onto each woman's hand. After this introduction, the wives were escorted into another room, where they again took tea, and then were led into a banqueting hall, where the empress now sat on a chair of yellow satin—yellow being the imperial color. She spoke to them for a while; she had a beautiful voice. (It was said that her voice could literally charm birds out of trees.) At the end of the conversation, she took the hand of each woman again, and with much emotion, told them, "One family—all one family." The women then saw a performance in the imperial theater. Finally the empress received them one last time. She apologized for the performance they had just seen, which was certainly inferior to what they were used to in the West. There was one more round of tea, and this time, as the wife of the American ambassador reported it, the empress "stepped forward and tipped each cup of tea to her own lips and took a sip, then lifted the cup on the other side, to our lips, and said again, 'One family—all one family' " The women were given more gifts, then were escorted back to their sedan chairs and borne out of the Forbidden City.

The women relayed to their husbands their earnest belief that they had all been wrong about the empress. The American ambassador's wife reported, "She was bright and happy and her face glowed with good will. There was no trace of cruelty to be seen. . . . Her actions were full of freedom and warmth. . . . [We left] full of admiration for her majesty and hopes for China." The husbands reported back to their governments: the emperor was fine, and the empress could be trusted.

Interpretation. The foreign contingent in China had no idea what was really happening in the Forbidden City. In truth, the emperor had conspired to arrest and possibly murder his aunt. Discovering the plot, a terrible crime in Confucian terms, she forced him to sign his own abdication, had him confined, and told the outside world that he was ill. As part of his punishment, he was to appear at state functions and act as if nothing had happened.

The empress dowager loathed Westerners, whom she considered barbarians. She disliked the ambassadors' wives, with their ugly fashions and simpering ways. The banquet was a show, a seduction, to appease the West-

ern powers, which had been threatening invasion if the emperor had been killed. The goal of the seduction was simple: dazzle the wives with color, spectacle, theater. The empress applied all her expertise to the task, and she was a genius for detail. She had designed the spectacles in a rising order—the uniformed eunuchs first, then the Manchu ladies in their headdresses, and finally the empress herself. It was pure theater, and it was overwhelming. Then the empress brought the spectacle down a notch, humanizing it with gifts, warm greetings, the reassuring presence of the emperor, teas, and entertainments, which were in no way inferior to anything in the West. She ended the banquet on another high note—the little drama with the sharing of the teacups, followed by even more magnificent gifts. The women's heads were spinning when they left. In truth they had never seen such exotic splendor—and they never understood how carefully its details had been orchestrated by the empress. Charmed by the spectacle, they transferred their happy feelings to the empress and gave her their approval—all that she required.

The key to distracting people (seduction is distraction) is to fill their eyes and ears with details, little rituals, colorful objects. Detail is what makes things seem real and substantial. A thoughtful gift won't seem to have an ulterior motive. A ritual full of charming little actions is so enjoyable to watch. Jewelry, handsome furnishings, touches of color in clothing, dazzle the eye. It is a childish weakness of ours: we prefer to focus on the pleasant little details rather than on the larger picture. The more senses you appeal to, the more mesmerizing the effect. The objects you use in your seduction (gifts, clothes, etc.) speak their own language, and it is a powerful one. Never ignore a detail or leave one to chance. Orchestrate them into a spectacle and no one will notice how manipulative you are being.

The Sensuous Effect

One day a messenger told Prince Genji—the aging but still consummate seducer in the Heian court of late-tenth-century Japan—that one of his youthful conquests had suddenly died, leaving behind an orphan, a young woman named Tamakazura. Genji was not Tamakazura's father, but he decided to bring her to court and be her protector anyway. Soon after her arrival, men of the highest rank began to woo her. Genji had told everyone she was a lost daughter of his; as a result, they assumed that she was beautiful, for Genji was the handsomest man in the court. (At the time, men rarely saw a young girl's face before marriage; in theory, they were allowed to talk to her only if she was on the other side of a screen.) Genji showered her with attention, helping her sort through all the love letters she was receiving and advising her on the right match.

As Tamakazura's protector, Genji was able to see her face, and she was indeed beautiful. He fell in love with her. What a shame, he thought, to give this lovely creature away to another man. One night, overwhelmed by

work ruin and loss to the grand cloth of gold and web of silver, to tinsel and silken stuffs, pearls and precious stones, 'tis plain how his ardour and satisfaction be increased manifold—far more than with some simple shepherdess or other woman of like quality, be she as fair as she may. • And why of yore was Venus found so fair and so desirable, if not that with all her beauty she was always gracefully attired likewise, and generally scented, that she did ever smell sweet an hundred paces away? For it hath ever been held of all how that perfumes be a great incitement to love. •

This is the reason why the Emperresses and great dames of Rome did make much usage of these perfumes, as do likewise our great ladies of France—and above all those of Spain and Italy, which from the oldest times have been more curious and more exquisite in luxury than Frenchwomen, as well in perfumes as in costumes and magnificent attire, whereof the fair ones of France have since borrowed the patterns and copied the dainty workmanship. Moreover the others, Italian and Spanish, had learned the same from old models and ancient statues of Roman ladies, the which are to be seen among sundry other antiquities yet extant in Spain and Italy; the which, if any man will regard them carefully, will be found very perfect in mode of hair-dressing and fashion of robes, and very meet to incite love.

—SEIGNEUR DE BRANTÔME,
LIVES OF FAIR & GALLANT
LADIES, TRANSLATED BY A. R.
ALLINSON

For years after her entry into the palace, a large number of court-maidens were especially set aside for preparing Kuei-fei's dresses, which were chosen and fashioned according to the flowers of the season. For instance, for New Year (spring) she had blossoms of apricot, plum and narcissus; for summer, she adopted the lotus; for autumn, she patterned them after the peony; for winter, she employed the chrysanthemum. Of jewelry she was fondest of pearls, and the finest products of the world found their way into her boudoir and were frequently embroidered on her numerous dresses. • Kuei-fei was the embodiment of all that was lovely and extravagant. No wonder that no king, prince, courtier or humble attendant who ever met her could resist the allurements of her charms. Besides, she was the most artful of women and knew how to use her natural gifts to the best purpose. . . . The Emperor Ming Huang, supreme in the land and with thousands of the most handsome maidens to choose from, became a complete slave to her magnetic powers . . . spending day and night in her company and giving up his whole kingdom for her sake.

—SHU-CHIUNG, YANG KUEI-
FEI: THE MOST FAMOUS
BEAUTY OF CHINA

Then [Pao-yu] called Bright Design to him and said to her, "Go and see what [Black Jade] is doing. If she asks about me, just say that I am quite all

her charms, he held her hand and told her how much she resembled her mother, whom he once had loved. She trembled—not with excitement, however, but with fear, for although he was not her father, he was supposed to be her protector, not a suitor. Her attendants were away and it was a beautiful night. Genji silently threw off his perfumed robe and pulled her down beside him. She began to cry, and to resist. Always a gentleman, Genji told her that he would respect her wishes, he would always care for her, and she had nothing to fear. He then politely excused himself.

Several days later Genji was helping Tamakazura with her correspondence when he read a love letter from his younger brother, Prince Hotaru, who numbered among her suitors. In the letter, Hotaru berated Tamakazura for not letting him get physically close enough to talk to her and tell her his feelings. Tamakazura had not replied; unused to the manners of the court, she had felt shy and intimidated. As if to help her, Genji got one of his servants to write to Hotaru in her name. The letter, written on beautiful perfumed paper, warmly invited the prince to visit her.

Hotaru appeared at the appointed hour. He smelled a beguiling incense, mysterious and seductive. (Mixed into this scent was Genji's own perfume.) The prince felt a wave of excitement. Approaching the screen behind which Tamakazura sat, he confessed his love for her. Without making a sound, she retreated to another screen, farther away. Suddenly there was a flash of light, as if a torch had flared up, and Hotaru saw her profile behind the screen: she was more beautiful than he had imagined. Two things delighted the prince: the sudden, mysterious flash of light, and the brief glimpse of his beloved. Now he was truly in love.

Hotaru began to court her assiduously. Meanwhile, feeling reassured that Genji was no longer chasing her, Tamakazura saw her protector more often. And now she could not help noticing little details: Genji's robes seemed to glow, in pleasing and vibrant colors, as if dyed by unworldly hands. Hotaru's robes seemed drab by comparison. And the perfumes burned into Genji's garments, how intoxicating they were. No one else bore such a scent. Hotaru's letters were polite and well written, but the letters Genji sent her were on magnificent paper, perfumed and dyed, and they quoted lines of poetry, always surprising yet always appropriate for the occasion. Genji also grew and gathered flowers—wild carnations, for instance—that he gave as gifts and that seemed to symbolize his unique charm.

One evening Genji proposed to teach Tamakazura how to play the koto. She was delighted. She loved to read romance novels, and whenever Genji played the koto, she felt as if she were transported into one of her books. No one played the instrument better than Genji; she would be honored to learn from him. Now he saw her often, and the method of his lessons was simple: she would choose a song for him to play, and then would try to imitate him. After they played, they would lie down side by side, their heads resting on the koto, staring up at the moon. Genji would have torches set up in the garden, giving the view the softest glow.

The more Tamakazura saw of the court—of Prince Hotaru, the other

suitors, the emperor himself—the more she realized that none could compare to Genji. He was supposed to be her protector, yes, that was still true, but was it such a sin to fall in love with him? Confused, she found herself giving in to the caresses and kisses that he began to surprise her with, now that she was too weak to resist.

Interpretation. Genji is the protagonist in the eleventh-century novel *The Tale of Genji*, written by Murasaki Shikibu, a woman of the Heian court. The character was most likely inspired by the real-life seducer Fujiwara no Korechika.

In his seduction of Tamakazura, Genji's strategy was simple: he would make her realize indirectly how charming and irresistible he was by surrounding her with unspoken details. He also brought her in contact with his brother; comparison with this drab, stiff figure would make Genji's superiority clear. The night Hotaru first visited her, Genji set everything up, as if to support Hotaru's seducing—the mysterious scent, then the flash of light by the screen. (The light came from a novel effect: earlier in the evening, Genji had collected hundreds of fireflies in a cloth bag. At the proper moment he let them all go at once.) But when Tamakazura saw Genji encouraging Hotaru's pursuit of her, her defenses against her protector relaxed, allowing her senses to be filled by this master of seductive effects. Genji orchestrated every possible detail—the scented paper, the colored robes, the lights in the garden, the wild carnations, the apt poetry, the koto lessons which induced an irresistible feeling of harmony. Tamakazura found herself dragged into a sensual whirlpool. Bypassing the shyness and mistrust that words or actions would only have worsened, Genji surrounded his ward with objects, sights, sounds, and scents that symbolized the pleasure of his company far more than his actual physical presence would have—in fact his presence could only have been threatening. He knew that a young girl's senses are her most vulnerable point.

The key to Genji's masterful orchestration of detail was his attention to the target of his seduction. Like Genji, you must attune your own senses to your targets, watching them carefully, adapting to their moods. You sense when they are defensive and retreat. You also sense when they are giving in, and move forward. In between, the details you set up—gifts, entertainments, the clothes you wear, the flowers you choose—are aimed precisely at their tastes and predilections. Genji knew he was dealing with a young girl who loved romantic novels; his wild flowers, koto playing, and poetry brought their world to life for her. Attend to your targets' every move and desire, and reveal your attentiveness in the details and objects you surround them with, filling their senses with the mood you need to inspire. They can argue with your words, but not with the effect you have on their senses.

right now." • "You'll have to think of a better excuse than that," *Bright Design* said. "Isn't there anything that you can send or want to borrow? I don't want to go there and feel like a fool without anything to say." • Pao-yu thought for a moment and then took two handkerchiefs from under his pillow and gave them to the maid, saying, "Well then, tell her that I sent you with these," • "What a strange present to send" the maid smiled. "What does she want two old handkerchiefs for? She will be angry again and say that you are trying to make fun of her." • "Don't worry" Pao-yu assured her. "She will understand." • Black Jade had already retired when *Bright Design* arrived at the Bamboo Retreat. "What brought you at this hour?" Black Jade asked. • "[Pao-yu] asked me to bring these handkerchiefs for [Black Jade]." • For a moment Black Jade was at a loss to see why Pao-yu should send her such a present at that particular moment. She said, "I suppose they must be something unusual that somebody gave him. Tell him to keep them himself or give them to someone who will appreciate them. I have no need of them." • "They are nothing unusual," *Bright Design* said. "Just two ordinary handkerchiefs that he happened to have around." Black Jade was even more puzzled, and then it suddenly dawned upon her: Pao-yu knew that she would weep for him and so sent two handkerchiefs of his own. • "You can leave them, then," she said to *Bright Design*, who in turn was

surprised that Black Jade did not take offense at what seemed to her a crude joke. • As Black Jade thought over the significance of the handkerchiefs she was happy and sad by turns: happy because Pao-yu read her innermost thoughts and sad because she wondered if what was uppermost in her thoughts would ever be fulfilled.

Thinking thus to herself of the future and of the past, she could not fall asleep. Despite Purple Cuckoo's remonstrances, she had her lamp relit and began to compose a series of quatrains, writing them directly on the handkerchiefs which Pao-yu had sent.

—TSAO HSUEH CHIN,
DREAM OF THE RED CHAMBER,
TRANSLATED BY CHI-CHEN
WANG

Therefore in my view when the courtier wishes to declare his love he should do so by his actions rather than by speech, for a man's feelings are sometimes more clearly revealed by . . . a gesture of respect or a certain shyness than by volumes of words.

—BALDASSARE CASTIGLIONE

Keys to Seduction

When we were children, our senses were much more active. The colors of a new toy, or a spectacle such as a circus, held us in thrall; a smell or a sound could fascinate us. In the games we created, many of them reproducing something in the adult world on a smaller scale, what pleasure we took in orchestrating every detail. We noticed everything.

As we grow older our senses get dulled. We no longer notice as much, for we are constantly hurrying to get things done, to move on to the next task. In seduction, you are always trying to bring the target back to the golden moments of childhood. A child is less rational, more easily deceived. A child is also more attuned to the pleasures of the senses. So when your targets are with you, you must never give them the feeling they normally get in the real world, where we are all rushed, ruthless, out for ourselves. You need to deliberately slow things down, and return them to the simpler times of their youth. The details that you orchestrate—colors, gifts, little ceremonies—are aimed at their senses, at the childish delight we take in the immediate charms of the natural world. Their senses filled with delightful things, they grow less capable of reason and rationality. Pay attention to detail and you will find yourself assuming a slower pace; your targets will not focus on what you might be after (sexual favors, power, etc.) because you seem so considerate, so attentive. In the childish realm of the senses in which you envelop them, they get a clear sense that you are involving them in something distinct from the real world—an essential ingredient of seduction. Remember: the more you get people to focus on the little things, the less they will notice your larger direction. The seduction will assume the slow, hypnotic pace of a ritual, in which the details have a heightened importance and the moments are full of ceremony.

In eighth-century China, Emperor Ming Huang caught a glimpse of a beautiful young woman, combing her hair beside an imperial pool. Her name was Yang Kuei-fei, and even though she was the concubine of the emperor's son, he had to have her for himself. Since he was emperor, nobody could stop him. The emperor was a practical man—he had many concubines, and they all had their charms, but he had never lost his head over a woman. Yang Kuei-fei, though, was different. Her body exuded the most wonderful fragrance. She wore gowns made of the sheerest silk gauze, each embroidered with different flowers, depending on the season. In walking she seemed to float, her tiny steps invisible beneath her gown. She

danced to perfection, wrote songs in his honor that she sang magnificently, had a way of looking at him that made his blood boil with desire. She quickly became his favorite.

Yang Kuei-fei drove the emperor to distraction. He built palaces for her, spent all his time with her, satisfied her every whim. Before long his kingdom was bankrupt and ruined. Yang Kuei-fei was an artful seductress who had a devastating effect on all of the men who crossed her path. There were so many ways her presence charmed—the scents, the voice, the movements, the witty conversation, the artful glances, the embroidered gowns. These pleasurable details turned a mighty king into a distracted baby.

Since time immemorial, women have known that within the most apparently self-possessed man is an animal whom they can lead by filling his senses with the proper physical lures. The key is to attack on as many fronts as possible. Do not ignore your voice, your gestures, your walk, your clothes, your glances. Some of the most alluring women in history have so distracted their victims with sensual detail that the men fail to notice it is all an illusion.

From the 1940s on into the early 1960s, Pamela Churchill Harriman had a series of affairs with some of the most prominent and wealthy men in the world—Averill Harriman (whom years later she married), Gianni Agnelli (heir to the Fiat fortune), Baron Elie de Rothschild. What attracted these men, and kept them in thrall, was not her beauty or her lineage or her vivacious personality, but her extraordinary attention to detail. It began with her attentive look as she listened to your every word, soaking up your tastes. Once she found her way into your home, she would fill it with your favorite flowers, get your chef to cook that dish you had tasted only in the finest restaurants. You mentioned an artist you liked? A few days later that artist would be attending one of your parties. She found the perfect antiques for you, dressed in the way that most pleased or excited you, and she did this without your saying a word—she spied, gathered information from third parties, overheard you talking to someone else. Harriman's attention to detail had an intoxicating effect on all the men in her life. It had something in common with the pampering of a mother, there to bring order and comfort into their lives, attending to their needs. Life is harsh and competitive. Attending to detail in a way that is soothing to the other person makes them dependent upon you. The key is probing their needs in a way that is not too obvious, so that when you make precisely the right gesture, it seems uncanny, as if you had read their mind. This is another way of returning your targets to childhood, when all of their needs were met.

In the eyes of women all over the world, Rudolph Valentino reigned as the Great Lover through much of the 1920s. The qualities behind his appeal certainly included his handsome, almost pretty face, his dancing skills, the strangely exciting streak of cruelty in his manner. But his perhaps most endearing trait was his time-consuming approach to courtship. His films would show him seducing a woman *slowly*, with careful details—sending her flowers (choosing the variety to match the mood he wanted to

induce), taking her hand, lighting her cigarette, escorting her to romantic places, leading her on the dance floor. These were silent movies, and his audiences never got to hear him speak—it was all in his gestures. Men came to hate him, for their wives and girlfriends now expected the slow, careful Valentino treatment.

Valentino had a feminine streak; it was said that he wooed a woman the way another woman would. But femininity need not figure in this approach to seduction. In the early 1770s, Prince Gregory Potemkin began an affair with Empress Catherine the Great of Russia that was to last many years. Potemkin was a manly man, and not at all handsome. But he managed to win the empress's heart by the many little things he did, and continued to do long after the affair had begun. He spoiled her with wonderful gifts, never tired of writing her long letters, arranged for all kinds of entertainments for her, composed songs to her beauty. Yet he would appear before her barefoot, hair uncombed, clothes wrinkled. There was no kind of fussiness in his attention, which, however, did make it clear he would go to the ends of the earth for her. A woman's senses are more refined than a man's; to a woman, Yang Kuei-fei's overt sensual appeal would seem too hurried and direct. What that means, though, is that all the man really has to do is take it slowly, making seduction a ritual full of all kinds of little things he has to do for his target. If he takes his time, he will have her eating out of his hand.

Everything in seduction is a sign, and nothing more so than clothes. It is not that you have to dress interestingly, elegantly, or provocatively, but that you have to dress for your target—have to appeal to your target's tastes. When Cleopatra was seducing Mark Antony, her dress was not brazenly sexual; she dressed as a Greek goddess, knowing his weakness for such fantasy figures. Madame de Pompadour, the mistress of King Louis XV, knew the king's weakness, his chronic boredom; she constantly wore different clothes, changing not only their color but their style, supplying the king with a constant feast for his eyes. Pamela Harriman was subdued in the fashions she wore, befitting her role as a high-society geisha and reflecting the sober tastes of the men she seduced. Contrast works well here: at work or at home, you might dress nonchalantly—Marilyn Monroe, for example, wore jeans and a T-shirt at home—but when you are with the target you wear something elaborate, as if you were putting on a costume. Your Cinderella transformation will stir excitement, and the feeling that you have done something just for the person you are with. Whenever your attention is individualized (you would not dress like that for anyone else), it is infinitely more seductive.

In the 1870s, Queen Victoria found herself wooed by Benjamin Disraeli, her own prime minister. Disraeli's words were flattering and his manner insinuating; he also sent her flowers, valentines, gifts—but not just any flowers or gifts, the kind that most men would send. The flowers were primroses, symbols of their simple yet beautiful friendship. From then on, whenever Victoria saw a primrose she thought of Disraeli. Or he would

write on a valentine that he, "no longer in the sunset, but the twilight of his existence, must encounter a life of anxiety and toil; but this, too, has its romance, when he remembers that he labors for the most gracious of beings!" Or he might send her a little box, with no inscription, but with a heart transfixed by an arrow on one side and the word "Fideliter," or "Faithfully," on the other. Victoria fell in love with Disraeli.

A gift has immense seductive power, but the object itself is less important than the gesture, and the subtle thought or emotion that it communicates. Perhaps the choice relates to something from the target's past, or symbolizes something between you, or merely represents the lengths you will go to to please. It was not the money Disraeli spent that impressed Victoria, but the time he took to find the appropriate thing or make the appropriate gesture. Expensive gifts have no sentiment attached; they may temporarily excite their recipient but they are quickly forgotten, as a child forgets a new toy. The object that reflects its giver's attentiveness has a lingering sentimental power, which resurfaces every time its owner sees it.

In 1919, the Italian writer and war hero Gabriele D'Annunzio managed to put together a band of followers and take over the town of Fiume, on the Adriatic coast (now part of Slovenia). They established their own government there, which lasted for over a year. D'Annunzio initiated a series of public spectacles that were to be immensely influential on politicians elsewhere. He would address the public from a balcony overlooking the town's main square, which would be full of colorful banners, flags, pagan religious symbols, and, at night, torches. The speeches would be followed by processions. Although D'Annunzio was not at all a Fascist, what he did in Fiume crucially affected Benito Mussolini, who borrowed his Roman salutes, his use of symbols, his mode of public address. Spectacles like these have been used since then by governments everywhere, even democratic ones. Their overall impression may be grand, but it is the orchestrated details that make them work—the number of senses they appeal to, the variety of emotions they stir. You are aiming to distract people, and nothing is more distracting than a wealth of detail—fireworks, flags, music, uniforms, marching soldiers, the feel of the crowd packed together. It becomes difficult to think straight, particularly if the symbols and details stir up patriotic emotions.

Finally, words are important in seduction, and have a great deal of power to confuse, distract, and boost the vanity of the target. But what is most seductive in the long run is what you do not say, what you communicate indirectly. Words come easily, and people distrust them. Anyone can say the right words; and once they are said, nothing is binding, and they may even be forgotten altogether. The gesture, the thoughtful gift, the little details seem much more real and substantial. They are also much more charming than lofty words about love, precisely because they speak for themselves and let the seduced read into them more than is there. Never tell someone what you are feeling; let them guess it in your looks and gestures. That is the more convincing language.

Symbol: *The Banquet.* A

feast has been prepared in your honor. Everything has been elaborately coordinated—the flowers, the decorations, the selection of guests, the dancers, the music, the five-course meal, the endlessly flowing wine. The Banquet loosens your tongue, and also your inhibitions.

Reversal

There is no reversal. Details are essential to any successful seduction, and cannot be ignored.

Poeticize Your Presence

Important things happen when your targets are alone: the slightest feeling of relief that you are not there, and it is all over. Familiarity and overexposure will cause this reaction. Remain elusive, then, so that when you are away, they will yearn to see you again, and will associate you only with pleasant thoughts. Occupy their minds by alternating an exciting presence with a cool distance, exuberant moments followed by calculated absences. Associate yourself with poetic images and objects, so that when they think of you, they begin to see you through an idealized halo. The more you figure in their minds, the more they will envelop you in seductive fantasies. Feed these fantasies by subtle inconsistencies and changes in your behavior.

Poetic Presence/Absence

In 1943, the Argentine military overthrew the government. A popular forty-eight-year old colonel, Juan Perón, was named secretary of labor and social affairs. Perón was a widow who had a fondness for young girls; at the time of his appointment he was involved with a teenager whom he introduced to one and all as his daughter.

One evening in January of 1944, Perón was seated among the other military leaders in a Buenos Aires stadium, attending an artists' festival. It was late and there were some empty seats around him; out of nowhere two beautiful young actresses asked his permission to sit down. Were they joking? He would be delighted. He recognized one of the actresses—it was Eva Duarte, a star of radio soap operas whose photograph was often on the covers of the tabloids. The other actress was younger and prettier, but Perón could not take his eyes off Eva, who was talking to another colonel. She was really not his type at all. She was twenty-four, far too old for his taste; she was dressed rather garishly; and there was something a little icy in her manner. But she looked at him occasionally, and her glance excited him. He looked away for a moment, and the next thing he knew she had changed seats and was sitting next to him. They started to talk. She hung on his every word. Yes, everything he said was precisely how she felt—the poor, the workers, they were the future of Argentina. She had known poverty herself. There were almost tears in her eyes when she said, at the end of the conversation, "Thank you for existing."

In the next few days, Eva managed to get rid of Perón's "daughter" and establish herself in his apartment. Everywhere he turned, there she was, fixing him meals, caring for him when he was ill, advising him on politics. Why did he let her stay? Usually he would have a fling with a superficial young girl, then get rid of her when she seemed to be sticking around too much. But there was nothing superficial about Eva. As time went by he found himself getting addicted to the feeling she gave him. She was intensely loyal, mirroring his every idea, puffing him up endlessly. He felt more masculine in her presence, that was it, and more powerful—she believed he would make the country's ideal leader, and her belief affected him. She was like the women in the tango ballads he loved so much—the suffering women of the streets who became saintly mother figures and looked after their men. Perón saw her every day, but he never felt he fully knew her; one day her comments were a little obscene, the next she was

*He who does not know
how to encircle a girl so
that she loses sight of
everything he does not
want her to see, he who
does not know how to
poetize himself into a girl
so that it is from her that
everything proceeds as he
wants it—he is and
remains a bungler. . . .
To poetize oneself into a
girl is an art.*

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

*What else? If she's out,
reclining in her litter, *
Make your approach
discreet, \ And—just to fox
the sharp ears of those
around you— \ Cleverly
riddle each phrase \ With
ambiguous subtleties. If
*she's taking a leisurely *
Stroll down the colonnade,
then you stroll there too—
\ Vary your pace to hers,
march ahead, drop behind
her, \ Dawdling and brisk
by turns. Be bold, \ Dodge
in round the columns
between you, brush your
person \ Lingeringly past
*hers. You must never fail *

To attend the theater when
 she does, gaze at her
 beauty— \ From the
 shoulders up she's time \
 Most delectably spent, a
 feast for adoring glances, \
 For the eloquence of
 eyebrows, the speaking
 sign. \ Applaud when some
 male dancer struts on as
 the heroine, \ Cheer for
 each lover's role. \ When
 she leaves, leave too—but
 sit there as long as she
 does: \ Waste time at your
 mistress's whim. . . . \ Get
 her accustomed to you; \
 Habit's the key, spare no
 pains till that's achieved. \
 Let her always see you
 around, always hear you
 talking, \ Show her your
 face night and day. \ When
 you're confident you'll be
 missed, when your absence
 \ Seems sure to cause her
 regret, \ Then give her
 some respite: a field
 improves when fallow, \
 Parched soil soaks up the
 rain. \ Demophoön's
 presence gave Phyllis no
 more than mild excitement;
 \ It was his sailing caused
 arson in her heart. \
 Penelope was racked by
 crafty Ulysses's absence, \
 Protesilaus, abroad, made
 Laodameia burn. \ Short
 partings do best, though:
 time wears out affections, \
 The absent love fades, a
 new one takes its place. \
 With Menelaus away,
 Helen's disinclination for
 sleeping \ Alone led her
 into her guest's \ Warm bed
 at night. Were you crazy,
 Menelaus?

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

*Concerning the Birth of
 Love • Here is what
 happens in the soul: •*
 1. Admiration. • 2. You
 think, "How delightful it

the perfect lady. He had one worry: she was angling to get married, and he could never marry her—she was an actress with a dubious past. The other colonels were already scandalized by his involvement with her. Nevertheless, the affair went on.

In 1945, Perón was dismissed from his post and jailed. The colonels feared his growing popularity and distrusted the power of his mistress, who seemed to have total influence over him. It was the first time in almost two years that he was truly alone, and truly separated from Eva. Suddenly he felt new emotions sweeping over him: he pinned her photographs all over the wall. Outside, massive strikes were being organized to protest his imprisonment, but all he could think about was Eva. She was a saint, a woman of destiny, a heroine. He wrote to her, "It is only being apart from loved ones that we can measure our affection. From the day I left you . . . I have not been able to calm my sad heart. . . . My immense solitude is full of your memory." Now he promised to marry her.

The strikes grew in intensity. After eight days, Perón was released from prison; he promptly married Eva. A few months later he was elected president. As first lady, Eva attended state functions in her somewhat gaudy dresses and jewelry; she was seen as a former actress with a large wardrobe. Then, in 1947, she left for a tour of Europe, and Argentines followed her every move—the ecstatic crowds that greeted her in Spain, her audience with the pope—and in her absence their opinion of her changed. How well she represented the Argentine spirit, its noble simplicity, its flair for drama. When she returned a few weeks later, they overwhelmed her with attention.

Eva too had changed during her trip to Europe: now her dyed blond hair was pulled into a severe chignon, and she wore tailored suits. It was a serious look, befitting a woman who was to become the savior of the poor. Soon her image could be seen everywhere—her initials on the walls, the sheets, the towels of the hospitals for the poor; her profile on the jerseys of a soccer team from the poorest part of Argentina, whose club she sponsored; her giant smiling face covering the sides of buildings. Since finding out anything personal about her had become impossible, all kinds of elaborate fantasies began to spring up about her. And when cancer cut her life short, in 1952, at the age of thirty-three (the age of Christ when he died), the country went into mourning. Millions filed past her embalmed body. She was no longer a radio actress, a wife, a first lady, but Evita, a saint.

Interpretation. Eva Duarte was an illegitimate child who had grown up in poverty, escaped to Buenos Aires to become an actress, and been forced to do many tawdry things to survive and get ahead in the theater world. Her dream was to escape all of the constraints on her future, for she was intensely ambitious. Perón was the perfect victim. He imagined himself a great leader, but the reality was that he was fast becoming a lecherous old man who was too weak to raise himself up. Eva injected poetry into his

life. Her language was florid and theatrical; she surrounded him with attention, indeed to the point of suffocation, but a woman's dutiful service to a great man was a classic image, and was celebrated in innumerable tango ballads. Yet she managed to remain elusive, mysterious, like a movie star you see all the time on the screen but never really know. And when Perón was finally alone, in prison, these poetic images and associations burst forth in his mind. He idealized her madly; as far as he was concerned, she was *no* longer an actress with a tawdry past. She seduced an entire nation the same way. The secret was her dramatic poetic presence, combined with a touch of elusive distance; over time, you would see whatever you wanted to in her. To this day people fantasize about what Eva was really like.

Familiarity destroys seduction. This rarely happens early on; there is so much to learn about a new person. But a midpoint may arrive when the target has begun to idealize and fantasize about you, only to discover that you are not what he or she thought. It is not a question of being seen too often, of being too available, as some imagine. In fact, if your targets see you too rarely, you give them nothing to feed on, and their attention may be caught by someone else; you have to occupy their mind. It is more a matter of being too consistent, too obvious, too human and real. Your targets cannot idealize you if they know too much about you, if they start to see you as all too human. Not only must you maintain a degree of distance, but there must be something fantastical and bewitching about you, sparking all kinds of delightful possibilities in their mind. The possibility Eva held out was the possibility that she was what in Argentine culture was considered the ideal woman—devoted, motherly, saintly—but there are any number of poetic ideals you can try to embody. Chivalry, adventure, romance, and so on, are just as potent, and if you have a whiff of them about you, you can breathe enough poetry into the air to fill people's minds with fantasies and dreams. At all costs, you must embody something, even if it is roguery and evil. Anything to avoid the taint of familiarity and commonness.

What I need is a woman who is something, anything; either very beautiful or very kind or in the last resort very wicked; very witty or very stupid, but something.

—ALFRED DE MUSSET

Keys to Seduction

We all have a self-image that is more flattering than the truth: we think of ourselves as more generous, selfless, honest, kindly, intelligent, or good-looking than in fact we are. It is extremely difficult for us to be honest with ourselves about our own limitations; we have a desperate need to idealize ourselves. As the writer Angela Carter remarks, we would rather align ourselves with angels than with the higher primates from which we are actually descended.

would be to kiss her, to be kissed by her," and so on. . . . • 3. Hope. You observe her perfections, and it is at this moment that a woman really ought to surrender, for the utmost physical pleasure. Even the most reserved women blush to the whites of their eyes at this moment of hope. The passion is so strong, and the pleasure so sharp, that they betray themselves unmistakably. • 4. Love is born. To love is to enjoy seeing, touching, and sensing with all the senses, as closely as possible, a lovable object which loves in return. • 5. The first crystallization begins. If you are sure that a woman loves you, it is a pleasure to endow her with a thousand perfections and to count your blessings with infinite satisfaction. In the end you overrate wildly, and regard her as something fallen from Heaven, unknown as yet, but certain to be yours. • Leave a lover with his thoughts for twenty-four hours, and this is what will happen: • At the salt mines of Salzburg, they throw a leafless wintry bough into one of the abandoned workings. Two or three months later they haul it out covered with a shining deposit of crystals. The smallest twig, no bigger than a torn-tit's claw, is studded with a galaxy of scintillating diamonds. The original branch is no longer recognizable. • What I have called crystallization is a mental process which draws from everything that happens new proofs of the perfection of the loved one. . . . • A man in love sees every perfection in the object of his love, but his attention is liable to

wander after a time because one gets tired of anything uniform, even perfect happiness. • This is what happens next to fix the attention: • 6. Doubt creeps in. . . . He is met with indifference, coldness, or even anger if he appears too confident. . . . The lover begins to be less sure of the good fortune he was anticipating and subjects his grounds for hope to a critical examination. • He tries to recoup by indulging in other pleasures but finds them inane. He is seized by the dread of a frightful calamity and now concentrates fully. Thus begins: • 7. The second crystallization, which deposits diamond layers of proof that "she loves me."
• Every few minutes throughout the night which follows the birth of doubt, the lover has a moment of dreadful misgiving, and then reassures himself "she loves me"; and crystallization begins to reveal new charms. Then once again the haggard eye of doubt pierces him and he stops transfixed. He forgets to draw breath and mutters, "But does she love me?" Torn between doubt and delight, the poor lover convinces himself that she could give him such pleasure as he could find nowhere else on earth.

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

Falling in love automatically tends toward madness. Left to itself, it goes to utter extremes. This is well known by the "conquistadors" of both sexes. Once a woman's

This need to idealize extends to our romantic entanglements, because when we fall in love, or under the spell of another person, we see a reflection of ourselves. The choice we make in deciding to become involved with another person reveals something important and intimate about us: we resist seeing ourselves as having fallen for someone who is cheap or tacky or tasteless, because it reflects badly on who we are. Furthermore, we are often likely to fall for someone who resembles us in some way. Should that person be deficient, or worst of all ordinary, then there is something deficient and ordinary about us. No, at all costs the loved one must be overvalued and idealized, at least for the sake of our own self-esteem. Besides, in a world that is harsh and full of disappointment, it is a great pleasure to be able to fantasize about a person you are involved with.

This makes the seducer's task easy: people are dying to be given the chance to fantasize about *you*. Do not spoil this golden opportunity by overexposing yourself, or becoming so familiar and banal that the target sees you exactly as you are. You do not have to be an angel, or a paragon of virtue—that would be quite boring. You can be dangerous, naughty, even somewhat vulgar, depending on the tastes of your victim. But never be ordinary or limited. In poetry (as opposed to reality), anything is possible.

Soon after we fall under a person's spell, we form an image in our minds of who they are and what pleasures they might offer. Thinking of them when we are alone, we tend to make this image more and more idealized. The novelist Stendhal, in his book *On Love*, calls this phenomenon "crystallization," telling the story of how, in Salzburg, Austria, they used to throw a leafless branch into the abandoned depths of a salt mine in the middle of winter. When the branch was pulled out months later, it would be covered with spectacular crystals. That is what happens to a loved one in our minds.

According to Stendhal, though, there are two crystallizations. The first happens when we first meet the person. The second and more important one happens later, when a bit of doubt creeps in—you desire the other person, but they elude you, you are not sure they are yours. This bit of doubt is critical—it makes your imagination work double, deepens the poeticizing process. In the seventeenth century, the great rake the Duc de Lauzun pulled off one of the most spectacular seductions in history—that of the Grande Mademoiselle, the cousin of King Louis XIV, and the wealthiest and most powerful woman in France. He tickled her imagination with a few brief encounters at the court, letting her catch glimpses of his wit, his audacity, his cool manner. She would begin to think of him when she was alone. Next she started to bump into him more often at court, and they would have little conversations or walks. When these meetings were over, she would be left with a doubt: is he or is he not interested in me? This made her want to see him more, in order to allay her doubts. She began to idealize him all out of proportion to the reality, for the duke was an incorrigible scoundrel.

Remember: if you are easily had, you cannot be worth that much. It is

hard to wax poetic about a person who comes so cheaply. If, after the initial interest, you make it clear that you cannot be taken for granted, if you stir a bit of doubt, the target will imagine there is something special, lofty, and unattainable about you. Your image will *crystallize* in the other person's mind.

Cleopatra knew that she was really no different from any other woman, and in fact her face was not particularly beautiful. But she knew that men have a tendency to overvalue a woman. All that is required is to hint that there is something different about you, to make them associate you with something grand or poetic. She made Caesar aware of her connection to the great kings and queens of Egypt's past; with Antony, she created the fantasy that she was descended from Aphrodite herself. These men were cavorting not just with a strong-willed woman but a kind of goddess. Such associations might be difficult to pull off today, but people still get deep pleasure from associating others with some kind of childhood fantasy figure. John F. Kennedy presented himself as a figure of chivalry—noble, brave, charming. Pablo Picasso was not just a great painter with a thirst for young girls, he was the Minotaur of Greek legend, or the devilish trickster figure that is so seductive to women. These associations should not be made too early; they are only powerful once the target has begun to fall under your spell, and is vulnerable to suggestion. A man who had just met Cleopatra would have found the Aphrodite association ludicrous. But a person who is falling in love will believe almost anything. The trick is to associate your image with something mythic, through the clothes you wear, the things you say, the places you go.

In Marcel Proust's novel *Remembrance of Things Past*, the character Swann finds himself gradually seduced by a woman who is not really his type. He is an aesthete, and loves the finer things in life. She is of a lower class, less refined, even a little tasteless. What poeticizes her in his mind is a series of exuberant moments they share together, moments that from then on he associates with her. One of these is a concert in a salon that they attend, in which he is intoxicated by a little melody in a sonata. Whenever he thinks of her, he remembers this little phrase. Little gifts she has given him, objects she has touched or handled, begin to assume a life of their own. Any kind of heightened experience, artistic or spiritual, lingers in the mind much longer than normal experience. You must find a way to share such moments with your targets—a concert, a play, a spiritual encounter, whatever it takes—so that they associate something elevated with you. Shared moments of exuberance have immense seductive pull. Also, any kind of object can be imbued with poetic resonance and sentimental associations, as discussed in the last chapter. The gifts you give and other objects can become imbued with your presence; if they are associated with pleasant memories, the sight of them keeps you in mind and accelerates the poeticization process.

Although it is said that absence makes the heart grow fonder, an absence too early will prove deadly to the crystallization process. Like Eva

attention is fixed upon a man, it is very easy for him to dominate her thoughts completely. A simple game of blowing hot and cold, of solicitousness and disdain, of presence and absence is all that is required. The rhythm of that technique acts upon a woman's attention like a pneumatic machine and ends by emptying her of all the rest of the world. How well our people put it: "to suck one's senses"! In fact: one is absorbed—absorbed by an object! Most "love affairs" are reduced to this mechanical play of the beloved upon the lover's attention. • The only thing that can save a lover is a violent shock from the outside, a treatment which is forced upon him. Many think that absence and long trips are a good cure for lovers. Observe that these are cures for one's attention. Distance from the beloved starves our attention toward him; it prevents anything further from rekindling the attention. Journeys, by physically obliging us to come out of ourselves and resolve hundreds of little problems, by uprooting us from our habitual setting and forcing hundreds of unexpected objects upon us, succeed in breaking down the maniac's haven and opening channels in his sealed consciousness, through which fresh air and normal perspective enter.

—JOSÉ ORTEGA Y GASSET,
ON LOVE: ASPECTS OF A
SINGLE THEME, TRANSLATED BY
TOBY TALBOT

Excessive familiarity can destroy crystallization. A charming girl of sixteen was becoming too fond of a handsome young man of the same age, who used to make a practice of passing beneath her window every evening at nightfall. Her mother invited him to spend a week with them in the country. It was a bold remedy, I admit, but the girl was of a romantic disposition, and the young man a trifle dull; within three days she despised him.

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

Perón, you must surround your targets with focused attention, so that in those critical moments when they are alone, their mind is spinning with a kind of afterglow. Do everything you can to keep the target thinking about you. Letters, mementos, gifts, unexpected meetings—all these give you an omnipresence. Everything must remind them of you.

Finally, if your targets should see you as elevated and poetic, there is much to be gained by making them feel elevated and poeticized in their turn. The French writer Chateaubriand would make a woman feel like a goddess, she had such a powerful effect on him. He would send her poems that she supposedly had inspired. To make Queen Victoria feel as if she were both a seductive woman and a great leader, Benjamin Disraeli would compare her to mythological figures and great predecessors, such as Queen Elizabeth I. By idealizing your targets this way, you will make them idealize you in return, since you must be equally great to be able to appreciate and see all of their fine qualities. They will also grow addicted to the elevated feeling you give them.

Symbol: *The Halo.*

Slowly, when the target is alone, he or she begins to imagine a kind of faint glow around your head, formed by all of the possible pleasures you might offer, the radiance of your charged presence, your noble qualities. The Halo separates you from other people. Do not make it disappear by becoming familiar and ordinary.

Reversal

It might seem that the reverse tactic would be to reveal everything about yourself, to be completely honest about your faults and virtues. This kind of sincerity was a quality Lord Byron had—he almost got a thrill out of disclosing all of his nasty, ugly qualities, even going so far, later on in his life, as to tell people about his incestuous involvements with his half sister. This kind of dangerous intimacy can be immensely seductive. The target will poeticize your vices, and your honesty about them; they will start to see more than is there. In other words, the idealization process is unavoidable. The only thing that cannot be idealized is mediocrity, but there is nothing seductive about mediocrity. There is no possible way to seduce without creating some kind of fantasy and poeticization.

13

Disarm Through Strategic Weakness and Vulnerability

Too much maneuvering on your part may raise suspicion. The best way to cover your tracks is to make the other person feel superior and stronger. If you seem to be weak, vulnerable, enthralled by the other person, and unable to control yourself, you will make your actions look more natural, less calculated. Physical weakness—tears, bashfulness, paleness—will help create the effect. To further win trust, exchange honesty for virtue: establish your "sincerity" by confessing some sin on your part—it doesn't have to be real. Sincerity is more important than goodness. Play the victim, then transform your target's sympathy into love.

The Victim Strategy

That sweltering August in the 1770s when the Présidente de Tourvel was visiting the château of her old friend Madame de Rosemonde, leaving her husband at home, she was expecting to be enjoying the peace and quiet of country life more or less on her own. But she loved the simple pleasures, and soon her daily life at the château assumed a comfortable pattern—daily Mass, walks in the country, charitable work in the neighboring villages, card games in the evening. When Madame de Rosemonde's nephew arrived for a visit, then, the Présidente felt uncomfortable—but also curious.

The nephew, the Vicomte de Valmont, was the most notorious libertine in Paris. He was certainly handsome, but he was not what she had expected: he seemed sad, somewhat downtrodden, and strangest of all, he paid hardly any attention to her. The Présidente was no coquette; she dressed simply, ignored fashions, and loved her husband. Still, she was young and beautiful, and was used to fending off men's attentions. In the back of her mind, she was slightly perturbed that he took so little notice of her. Then, at Mass one day, she caught a glimpse of Valmont apparently lost in prayer. The idea dawned on her that he was in the midst of a period of soul-searching.

As soon as word had leaked out that Valmont was at the château, the Présidente had received a letter from a friend warning her against this dangerous man. But she thought of herself as the last woman in the world to be vulnerable to him. Besides, he seemed on the verge of repenting his evil past; perhaps she could help move him in that direction. What a wonderful victory that would be for God. And so the Présidente took note of Valmont's comings and goings, trying to understand what was happening in his head. It was strange, for instance, that he would often leave in the morning to go hunting, yet would never return with any game. One day, she decided to have her servant do a little harmless spying, and she was amazed and delighted to learn that Valmont had not gone hunting at all; he had visited a local village, where he had doled out money to a poor family about to be evicted from their home. Yes, she was right, his passionate soul was moving from sensuality to virtue. How happy that made her feel.

That evening, Valmont and the Présidente found themselves alone for the first time, and Valmont suddenly burst out with a startling confession. He was head-over-heels in love with the Présidente, and with a love he had

The weak ones do have a power over us. The clear, forceful ones I can do without. I am weak and indecisive by nature myself, and a woman who is quiet and withdrawn and follows the wishes of a man even to the point of letting herself be used has much the greater appeal. A man can shape and mold her as he wishes, and becomes fonder of her all the while.

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

Hera, daughter of Cronus and Rhea, having been born on the island of Samos or, some say, at Argos, was brought up in Arcadia by Temenus, son of Pelasgus. The Seasons were her nurses. After banishing their father Cronus, Hera's twin brother Zeus sought her out at Cnossus in Crete or, some say, on Mount Thornax (now called Cuckoo Mountain) in Argolis, where he courted her, at first unsuccessfully. She took pity on him only when he adopted the

disguise of a bedraggled
cuckoo and tenderly
warmed him in her bosom.
There he at once resumed
his true shape and ravished
her, so that she was
shamed into marrying him.

—ROBERT GRAVES,
THE GREEK MYTHS

*In a strategy (?) of
seduction one draws the
other into one's area of
weakness, which is also his
or her area of weakness. A
calculated weakness, an
incalculable weakness: one
challenges the other to be
taken in . . . • To seduce
is to appear weak. To
seduce is to render weak.*

*We seduce with our
weakness, never with
strong signs or powers. In
seduction we enact this
weakness, and this is what
gives seduction its strength.*
• *We seduce with our
death, our vulnerability,
and with the void that
haunts us. The secret is to
know how to play with
death in the absence of a
gaze or gesture, in the
absence of knowledge or
meaning. • Psychoanalysis
tells us to assume our
fragility and passivity, but
in almost religious terms,
turns them into a form of
resignation and acceptance
in order to promote a well-
tempered psychic
equilibrium. Seduction, by
contrast, plays triumph-
antly with weakness,
making a game of it, with
its own rules.*

—JEAN BAUDRILLARD,
SEDUCTION, TRANSLATED BY
BRIAN SINGER

never experienced before: her virtue, her goodness, her beauty, her kind ways had completely overwhelmed him. His generosity to the poor that afternoon had been for her sake—perhaps inspired by her, perhaps something more sinister: it had been to impress her. He would never have confessed to this, but finding himself alone with her, he could not control his emotions. Then he got down on his knees and begged for her to help him, to guide him in his misery.

The Présidente was caught off guard, and began to cry. Intensely embarrassed, she ran from the room, and for the next few days pretended to be ill. She did not know how to react to the letters Valmont now began to send her, begging her to forgive him. He praised her beautiful face and her beautiful soul, and claimed she had made him rethink his whole life. These emotional letters produced disturbing emotions, and Tourvel prided herself on her calmness and prudence. She knew she should insist that he leave the château, and wrote him to that effect; he reluctantly agreed, but on one condition—that she allow him to write to her from Paris. She consented, as long as the letters were not offensive. When he told Madame de Rosemonde that he was leaving, the Présidente felt a pang of guilt: his hostess and aunt would miss him, and he looked so pale. He was obviously suffering.

Now the letters from Valmont began to arrive, and Tourvel soon regretted allowing him this liberty. He ignored her request that he avoid the subject of love—indeed he vowed to love her forever. He rebuked her for her coldness and insensitivity. He explained his bad path in life—it was not his fault, he had had no direction, had been led astray by others. Without her help he would fall back into that world. Do not be cruel, he said, *you are the one who seduced me*. I am your slave, the victim of your charms and goodness; since you are strong, and do not feel as I do, you have nothing to fear. Indeed the Présidente de Tourvel came to pity Valmont—he seemed so weak, so out of control. How could she help him? And why was she even thinking of him, which she now did more and more? She was a happily married woman. No, she must at least put an end to this tiresome correspondence. No more talk of love, she wrote, or she would not reply. His letters stopped coming. She felt relief. Finally some peace and quiet.

One evening, however, as she was seated at the dinner table, she suddenly heard Valmont's voice from behind her, addressing Madame de Rosemonde. On the spur of the moment, he said, he had decided to return for a short visit. She felt a shiver up and down her spine, her face flushed; he approached and sat down beside her. He looked at her, she looked away, and soon made an excuse to leave the table and go up to her room. But she could not completely avoid him over the next few days, and she saw that he seemed paler than ever. He was polite, and a whole day might pass without her seeing him, but these brief absences had a paradoxical effect: now Tourvel realized what had happened. She missed him, she wanted to see him. This paragon of virtue and goodness had somehow fallen in love with an incorrigible rake. Disgusted with herself and what she had allowed to

happen, she left the château in the middle of the night, without telling anyone, and headed for Paris, where she planned somehow to repent this awful sin.

Interpretation. The character of Valmont in Choderlos de Laclos's epistolary novel *Dangerous Liaisons* is based on several of the great real-life libertines of eighteenth-century France. Everything Valmont does is calculated for effect—the ambiguous actions that make Tourvel curious about him, the act of charity in the village (he knows he is being followed), the return visit to the château, the paleness of his face (he is having an affair with a girl at the château, and their all-night carousals give him a wasted look). Most devastating of all is his positioning of himself as the weak one, the seduced, the victim. How can the Présidente imagine he is manipulating her when everything suggests he is simply overwhelmed by her beauty, whether physical or spiritual? He cannot be a deceiver when he repeatedly makes a point of confessing the "truth" about himself: he admits that his charity was questionably motivated, he explains why he has gone astray, he lets her in on his emotions. (All of this "honesty," of course, is calculated.) In essence he is like a woman, or at least like a woman of those times—emotional, unable to control himself, moody, insecure. She is the one who is cold and cruel, like a man. In positioning himself as Tourvel's victim, Valmont can not only disguise his manipulations but elicit pity and concern. Playing the victim, he can stir up the tender emotions produced by a sick child or a wounded animal. And these emotions are easily channeled into love—as the Présidente discovers to her dismay.

Seduction is a game of reducing suspicion and resistance. The cleverest way to do this is to make the other person feel stronger, more in control of things. Suspicion usually comes out of insecurity; if your targets feel superior and secure in your presence, they are unlikely to doubt your motives. You are too weak, too emotional, to be up to something. Take this game as far as it will go. Flaunt your emotions and how deeply they have affected you. Making people feel the power they have over you is immensely flattering to them. Confess to something bad, or even to something bad that you did, or contemplated doing, to them. Honesty is more important than virtue, and one honest gesture will blind them to many deceitful acts. Create an impression of weakness—physical, mental, emotional. Strength and confidence can be frightening. Make your weakness a comfort, and play the victim—of their power over you, of circumstances, of life in general. This is the best way to cover your tracks.

You know, a man ain't worth a damn if he can't cry at the right time.

—LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON

The old American proverb says if you want to con someone, you must first get him to trust you, or at least feel superior to you (these two ideas are related), and get him to let down his guard. The proverb explains a great deal about television commercials. If we assume that people are not stupid, they must react to TV commercials with a feeling of superiority that permits them to believe they are in control. As long as this illusion of volition persists, they would consciously have nothing to fear from the commercials. People are prone to trust anything over which they believe they have control. . . . • TV commercials appear foolish, clumsy, and ineffectual on purpose. They are made to appear this way at the conscious level in order to be consciously ridiculed and rejected. . . . Most ad men will confirm that over the years the seemingly worst commercials have sold the best. An effective TV commercial is purposefully designed to insult the viewer's conscious intelligence, thereby penetrating his defenses.

—WILSON BRYAN KEY,
SUBLIMINAL SEDUCTION

It takes great art to use bashfulness, but one does achieve a great deal with it. How often I have used bashfulness to trick a little miss! Ordinarily, young girls speak very harshly about bashful men, but secretly they like them. A little bashfulness flatters a teenage girl's vanity, makes her feel superior; it is her

earnest money. When they are lulled to sleep, then at the very time they believe you are about to perish from bashfulness, you show them that you are so far from it that you are quite self-reliant. Bashfulness makes a man lose his masculine significance, and therefore it is a relatively good means for neutralizing the sex relation.

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

Yet another form of Charity is there, which is oft times practised towards poor prisoners who are shut up in dungeons and robbed of all enjoyments with women. On such do the gaolers' wives and women that have charge over them, or chatelaines who have prisoners of war in their Castle, take pity and give them share of their love out of very charity and mercifulness. . . . Thus do these gaolers' wives, noble chatelaines and others, treat their prisoners, the which, captive and unhappy though they be, yet cease not for that to feel the prickings of the flesh, as much as ever they did in their best days. . . . To confirm what I say, I will instance a tale that Captain Beaulieu, Captain of the King's Gallies, of whom I have before spoke once and again, did tell me. He was in the service of the late Grand Prior of France, a member of the house of Lorraine, who was much attached to him. Going one time to take his patron on board at Malta in a

Keys to Seduction

We all have weaknesses, vulnerabilities, frailnesses in our mental makeup. Perhaps we are shy or oversensitive, or need attention—whatever the weakness is, it is something we cannot control. We may try to compensate for it, or to hide it, but this is often a mistake: people sense something inauthentic or unnatural. Remember: what is natural to your character is inherently seductive. A person's vulnerability, what they seem to be unable to control, is often what is most seductive about them. People who display no weaknesses, on the other hand, often elicit envy, fear, and anger—we want to sabotage them just to bring them down.

Do not struggle against your vulnerabilities, or try to repress them, but put them into play. Learn to transform them into power. The game is subtle: if you wallow in your weakness, overplay your hand, you will be seen as angling for sympathy, or, worse, as pathetic. No, what works best is to allow people an occasional glimpse into the soft, frail side of your character, and usually only after they have known you for a while. That glimpse will humanize you, lowering their suspicions, and preparing the ground for a deeper attachment. Normally strong and in control, at moments you let go, give in to your weakness, let them see it.

Valmont used his weakness this way. He had lost his innocence long ago, and yet, somewhere inside, he regretted it. He was vulnerable to someone truly innocent. His seduction of the Présidente was successful because it was not totally an act; there was a genuine weakness on his part, which even allowed him to cry at times. He let the Présidente see this side to him at key moments, in order to disarm her. Like Valmont, you can be acting and sincere at the same time. Suppose you are genuinely shy—at certain moments, give your shyness a little weight, lay it on a little thick. It should be easy for you to embellish a quality you already have.

After Lord Byron published his first major poem, in 1812, he became an instant celebrity. Beyond being a talented writer, he was so handsome, even pretty, and he was as brooding and enigmatic as the characters he wrote about. Women went wild over Lord Byron. He had an infamous "underlook," slightly lowering his head and glancing upward at a woman, making her tremble. But Byron had other qualities: when you first met him, you could not help noticing his fidgety movements, his ill-fitting clothes, his strange shyness, and his noticeable limp. This infamous man, who scorned all conventions and seemed so dangerous, was personally insecure and vulnerable.

In Byron's poem *Don Juan*, the hero is less a seducer of women than a man constantly pursued by them. The poem was autobiographical; women wanted to take care of this somewhat fragile man, who seemed to have little control over his emotions. More than a century later, John F. Kennedy, as a boy, became obsessed with Byron, the man he most wanted to emulate. He even tried to borrow Byron's "underlook." Kennedy himself was a frail youth, with constant health problems. He was also a little pretty, and friends

saw something slightly feminine in him. Kennedy's weaknesses—physical and mental, for he too was insecure, shy, and oversensitive—were exactly what drew women to him. If Byron and Kennedy had tried to cover up their vulnerabilities with a masculine swagger they would have had no seductive charm. Instead, they learned how to subtly display their weaknesses, letting women sense this soft side to them.

There are fears and insecurities peculiar to each sex; your use of strategic weakness must always take these differences into account. A woman, for instance, may be attracted by a man's strength and self-confidence, but too much of it can create fear, seeming unnatural, even ugly. Particularly intimidating is the sense that the man is cold and unfeeling. She may feel insecure that he is only after sex, and nothing else. Male seducers long ago learned to become more feminine—to show their emotions, and to seem interested in their targets' lives. The medieval troubadours were the first to master this strategy; they wrote poetry in honor of women, emoted endlessly about their feelings, and spent hours in their ladies' boudoirs, listening to the women's complaints and soaking up their spirit. In return for their willingness to play weak, the troubadours earned the right to love.

Little has changed since then. Some of the greatest seducers in recent history—Gabriele D'Annunzio, Duke Ellington, Errol Flynn—understood the value of acting slavishly to a woman, like a troubadour on bended knee. The key is to indulge your softer side while still remaining as masculine as possible. This may include an occasional show of bashfulness, which the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard thought an extremely seductive tactic for a man—it gives the woman a sense of comfort, and even of superiority. Remember, though, to keep everything in moderation. A glimpse of shyness is sufficient; too much of it and the target will despair, afraid that she will end up having to do all the work.

A man's fears and insecurities often concern his sense of masculinity; he usually will feel threatened by a woman who is too overtly manipulative, who is too much in control. The greatest seductresses in history knew how to cover up their manipulations by playing the little girl in need of masculine protection. A famous courtesan of ancient China, Su Shou, used to make up her face to look particularly pale and weak. She would also walk in a way that made her seem frail. The great nineteenth-century courtesan Cora Pearl would literally dress and act like a little girl. Marilyn Monroe knew how to give the impression that she depended on a man's strength to survive. In all of these instances, the women were the ones in control of the dynamic, boosting a man's sense of masculinity in order to ultimately enslave him. To make this most effective, a woman should seem both in need of protection and sexually excitable, giving the man his ultimate fantasy.

The Empress Josephine, wife of Napoleon Bonaparte, won dominance over her husband early on through a calculated coquetry. Later on, though, she held on to that power through her constant—and not so innocent—use of tears. Seeing someone cry usually has an immediate effect on our emo-

frigate, he was taken by the Sicilian galleys, and carried prisoner to the Castel-à-mare at Palermo, where he was shut up in an exceeding narrow, dark and wretched dungeon, and very ill entreated by the space of three months. By good hap the Governor of the Castle, who was a Spaniard, had two very fair daughters, who hearing him complaining and making moan, did one day ask leave of their father to visit him, for the honor of the good God; and this he did freely give them permission to do. And seeing the Captain was of a surety a right gallant gentleman, and as ready-tongued as most, he was able so to win them over at this, the very first visit, that they did gain their father's leave for him to quit his wretched dungeon and to be put in a seemly enough chamber and receive better treatment. Nor was this all, for they did crave and get permission to come and see him freely every day and converse with him. • And this did fall out so well that presently both the twain of them were in love with him, albeit he was not handsome to look upon, and they very fair ladies. And so, without a thought of the chance of more rigorous imprisonment or even death, but rather tempted by such opportunities, he did set himself to the enjoyment of the two girls with good will and hearty appetite. And these pleasures did continue without any scandal, for so fortunate was he in this conquest of his for the space of eight whole months, that no scandal did ever hap all that time, and no ill,

inconvenience, nor any surprise or discovery at all. For indeed the two sisters had so good an understanding between them and did so generously lend a hand to each other and so obligingly play sentinel to one another, that no ill happened ever occur. And he swore to me, being my very intimate friend as he was, that never in his days of greatest liberty had he enjoyed so excellent entertainment or felt keener ardor or better appetite for it than in the said prison—which truly was a right good prison for him, albeit folk say no prison can be good. And this happy time did continue for the space of eight months, till the truce was made betwixt the Emperor and Henri II., King of France, whereby all prisoners did leave their dungeons and were released. He swore that never was he more grieved than at quitting this good prison of his, but was exceeding sorry to leave these fair maids, with whom he was in such high favor, and who did express all possible regrets at his departing.

—SEIGNEUR DE BRANTÔME,
LIVES OF FAIR & GALLANT
LADIES, TRANSLATED BY A. R.
ALLINSON

tions: we cannot remain neutral. We feel sympathy, and most often will do anything to stop the tears—including things that we normally would not do. Weeping is an incredibly potent tactic, but the weeper is not always so innocent. There is usually something real behind the tears, but there may also be an element of acting, of playing for effect. (And if the target senses this the tactic is doomed.) Beyond the emotional impact of tears, there is something seductive about sadness. We want to comfort the other person, and as Tourvel discovered, that desire quickly turns into love. Affecting sadness, even crying sometimes, has great strategic value, even for a man. It is a skill you can learn. The central character of the eighteenth-century French novel *Marianne*, by Marivaux, would think of something sad in her past to make herself cry or look sad in the present.

Use tears sparingly, and save them for the right moment. Perhaps this might be a time when the target seems suspicious of your motives, or when you are worrying about having no effect on him or her. Tears are a sure barometer of how deeply the other person is falling for you. If they seem annoyed, or resist the bait, your case is probably hopeless.

In social and political situations, seeming too ambitious, or too controlled, will make people fear you; it is crucial to show your soft side. The display of a single weakness will hide a multitude of manipulations. Emotion or even tears will work here too. Most seductive of all is playing the victim. For his first speech in Parliament, Benjamin Disraeli prepared an elaborate oration, but when he delivered it the opposition yelled and laughed so loudly that hardly any of it could be heard. He plowed ahead and gave the whole speech, but by the time he sat down he felt he had failed miserably. Much to his amazement, his colleagues told him the speech was a marvelous success. It would have been a failure if he had complained or given up; but by going ahead as he did, he positioned himself as the victim of a cruel and unreasonable faction. Almost everyone sympathized with him now, which would serve him well in the future. Attacking your mean-spirited opponents can make you seem ugly as well; instead, soak up their blows, and play the victim. The public will rally to your side, in an emotional response that will lay the groundwork for a grand political seduction.

Symbol: The Blemish. A beautiful face is a delight to look at, but if it is too perfect it leaves us cold, and even slightly intimidated.

It is the little mole, the beauty mark, that makes the face human and lovable. So do not conceal all of your blemishes. You need them to soften your features and elicit tender feelings.

Reversal

Timing is everything in seduction; you should always look for signs that the target is falling under your spell. A person falling in love tends to ignore the other person's weaknesses, or to see them as endearing. An unseduced, rational person, on the other hand, may find bashfulness or emotional outbursts pathetic. There are also certain weaknesses that have no seductive value, no matter how in love the target may be.

The great seventeenth-century courtesan Ninon de l'Enclos liked men with a soft side. But sometimes a man would go too far, complaining that she did not love him enough, that she was too fickle and independent, that he was being mistreated and wronged. For Ninon, such behavior would break the spell, and she would quickly end the relationship. Complaining, whining, neediness, and actively appealing for sympathy will appear to your targets not as charming weaknesses but as manipulative attempts at a kind of negative power. So when you play the victim, do it subtly, without overadvertising it. The only weaknesses worth playing up are the ones that will make you seem lovable. All others should be repressed and eradicated at all costs.

14

Confuse Desire and Reality— The Perfect Illusion

To
compensate for the difficulties in their
lives, people spend a lot of their time daydreaming, imagining a future full of adventure, success, and romance. If you can create the illusion that through you they can live out their dreams, you will have them at your mercy. It is important to start slowly, gaining their trust, and gradually constructing the fantasy that matches their desires. Aim at secret wishes that have been thwarted or repressed, stirring up uncontrollable emotions, clouding their powers of reason. The perfect illusion is one that does not depart too much from reality, but has a touch of the unreal to it, like a waking dream, lead the seduced to a point of confusion in which they can no longer tell the difference between illusion and reality.

Fantasy in the Flesh

In 1964, a twenty-year-old Frenchman named Bernard Bouriscout arrived in Beijing, China, to work as an accountant in the French embassy. His first weeks there were not what he had expected. Bouriscout had grown up in the French provinces, dreaming of travel and adventure. When he had been assigned to come to China, images of the Forbidden City, and of the gambling dens of Macao, had danced in his mind. But this was Communist China, and contact between Westerners and Chinese was almost impossible at the time. Bouriscout had to socialize with the other Europeans stationed in the city, and what a boring and cliquish lot they were. He grew lonely, regretted taking the assignment, and began making plans to leave.

Then, at a Christmas party that year, Bouriscout's eyes were drawn to a young Chinese man in a corner of the room. He had never seen anyone Chinese at any of these affairs. The man was intriguing: he was slender and short, a bit reserved, but he had an attractive presence. Bouriscout went up and introduced himself. The man, Shi Pei Pu, proved to be a writer of Chinese-opera librettos who also taught Chinese to members of the French embassy. Aged twenty-six, he spoke perfect French. Everything about him fascinated Bouriscout; his voice was like music, soft and whispery, and he left you wanting to know more about him. Bouriscout, although usually shy, insisted on exchanging telephone numbers. Perhaps Pei Pu could be his Chinese tutor.

They met a few days later in a restaurant. Bouriscout was the only Westerner there—at last a taste of something real and exotic. Pei Pu, it turned out, had been a well-known actor in Chinese operas and came from a family with connections to the former ruling dynasty. Now he wrote operas about the workers, but he said this with a look of irony. They began to meet regularly, Pei Pu showing Bouriscout the sights of Beijing. Bouriscout loved his stories—Pei Pu talked slowly, and every historical detail seemed to come alive as he spoke, his hands moving to embellish his words. This, he might say, is where the last Ming emperor hung himself, pointing to the spot and telling the story at the same time. Or, the cook in the restaurant we just ate in once served in the palace of the last emperor, and then another magnificent tale would follow. Pei Pu also talked of life in the Beijing Opera, where men often played women's parts, and sometimes became famous for it.

*Lovers and madmen have
such seething brains, \ Such
shaping fantasies, that
apprehend \ More than cool
reason ever comprehends.*

—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE,
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S
DREAM

*He was not a sex person.
He was like . . . somebody
who had come down from
the clouds. He was not
human. You could not say
he was a man/friend or a
woman friend; he was
somebody different
anyway. . . . You feel he
was only a friend who was
coming from another planet
and so nice also, so
overwhelming and
separated from the life of
the ground.*

—BERNARD BOURISCOUT, IN
JOYCE WADLER, LIAISON

*Romance had again come
her way personified by a
handsome young German
officer, Lieutenant Konrad
Friedrich, who called upon
her at Neuilly to ask her
help. He wanted Pauline
[Bonaparte] to use her*

influence with Napoleon in connection with providing for the needs of the French troops in the Papal States. He made an instantaneous impression on the princess, who escorted him around her garden until they arrived at the rockery. There she stopped and, looking into the young man's eyes mysteriously, commanded him to return to this same spot at the same hour next day when she might have some good news for him. The young officer bowed and took his leave. . . . In his memoirs he revealed in detail what took place after the first meeting with Pauline: •

"At the hour agreed on I again proceeded to Neuilly, made my way to the appointed spot in the garden and stood waiting at the rockery. I had not been there very long when a lady made her appearance, greeted me pleasantly and led me through a side door into the interior of the rockery where there were several rooms and galleries and in one splendid salon a luxurious-looking bath.

The adventure was beginning to strike me as very romantic, almost like a fairy tale, and just as I was wondering what the outcome might be a woman in a robe of the sheerest cambric entered by a side door, came up to me, and smilingly asked how I liked being there. I at once recognized Napoleon's beautiful sister, whose perfect figure was clearly outlined by every movement of her robe. She held out her hand for me to kiss and told me to sit down on the couch beside her. On this occasion I certainly was not the

The two men became friends. Chinese contact with foreigners was restricted, but they managed to find ways to meet. One evening Bouriscout tagged along when Pei Pu visited the home of a French official to tutor the children. He listened as Pei Pu told them "The Story of the Butterfly," a tale from the Chinese opera: a young girl yearns to attend an imperial school, but girls are not accepted there. She disguises herself as a boy, passes the exams, and enters the school. A fellow student falls in love with her, and she is attracted to him, so she tells him that she is actually a girl. Like most of these tales, the story ends tragically. Pei Pu told it with unusual emotion; in fact he had played the role of the girl in the opera.

A few nights later, as they were walking before the gates of the Forbidden City, Pei Pu returned to "The Story of the Butterfly" "Look at my hands," he said, "Look at my face. That story of the butterfly, it is my story too." In his slow, dramatic delivery he explained that his mother's first two children had been girls. Sons were far more important in China; if the third child was a girl, the father would have to take a second wife. The third child came: another girl. But the mother was too frightened to reveal the truth, and made an agreement with the midwife: they would say that the child was a boy, and it would be raised as such. This third child was Pei Pu.

Over the years, Pei Pu had had to go to extreme lengths to disguise her sex. She never used public bathrooms, plucked her hairline to look as if she were balding, on and on. Bouriscout was enthralled by the story, and also relieved, for like the boy in the butterfly tale, deep down he felt attracted to Pei Pu. Now everything made sense—the small hands, the high-pitched voice, the delicate neck. He had fallen in love with her, and, it seemed, the feelings were reciprocated.

Pei Pu started visiting Bouriscout's apartment, and soon they were sleeping together. She continued to dress as a man, even in his apartment, but women in China wore men's clothes anyway, and Pei Pu acted more like a woman than any of the Chinese women he had seen. In bed, she had a shyness and a way of directing his hands that was both exciting and feminine. She made everything romantic and heightened. When he was away from her, her every word and gesture resonated in his mind. What made the affair all the more exciting was the fact that they had to keep it secret.

In December of 1965, Bouriscout left Beijing and returned to Paris. He traveled, had other affairs, but his thoughts kept returning to Pei Pu. The Cultural Revolution broke out in China, and he lost contact with her. Before he had left, she had told him she was pregnant with their child. He had no idea whether the baby had been born. His obsession with her grew too strong, and in 1969 he finagled another government job in Beijing.

Contact with foreigners was now even more discouraged than on his first visit, but he managed to track Pei Pu down. She told him she had borne a son, in 1966, but he had looked like Bouriscout, and given the growing hatred of foreigners in China, and the need to keep the secret of her sex, she had him sent him away to an isolated region near Russia. It was so cold there—perhaps he was dead. She showed Bouriscout photographs

of the boy, and he did see some resemblance. Over the next few weeks they managed to meet here and there, and then Bouriscout had an idea: he sympathized with the Cultural Revolution, and he wanted to get around the prohibitions that were preventing him from seeing Pei Pu, so he offered to do some spying. The offer was passed along to the right people, and soon Bouriscout was stealing documents for the Communists. The son, named Bertrand, was recalled to Beijing, and Bouriscout finally met him. Now a threefold adventure filled Bouriscout's life: the alluring Pei Pu, the thrill of being a spy, and the illicit child, whom he wanted to bring back to France.

In 1972, Bouriscout left Beijing. Over the next few years he tried repeatedly to get Pei Pu and his son to France, and a decade later he finally succeeded; the three became a family. In 1983, though, the French authorities grew suspicious of this relationship between a Foreign Office official and a Chinese man, and with a little investigating they uncovered Bouriscout's spying. He was arrested, and soon made a startling confession: the man he was living with was really a woman. Confused, the French ordered an examination of Pei Pu; as they had thought, he was very much a man. Bouriscout went to prison.

Even after Bouriscout had heard his former lover's own confession, he was still convinced that Pei Pu was a woman. Her soft body, their intimate relationship—how could he be wrong? Only when Pei Pu, imprisoned in the same jail, showed him the incontrovertible proof of his sex did Bouriscout finally accept it.

Interpretation. The moment Pei Pu met Bouriscout, he realized he had found the perfect victim. Bouriscout was lonely, bored, desperate. The way he responded to Pei Pu suggested that he was probably also homosexual, or perhaps bisexual—at least confused. (Bouriscout in fact had had homosexual encounters as a boy; guilty about them, he had tried to repress this side of himself.) Pei Pu had played women's parts before, and was quite good at it; he was slight and effeminate; physically it was not a stretch. But who would believe such a story, or at least not be skeptical of it?

The critical component of Pei Pu's seduction, in which he brought the Frenchman's fantasy of adventure to life, was to start slowly and set up an idea in his victim's mind. In his perfect French (which, however, was full of interesting Chinese expressions), he got Bouriscout used to hearing stories and tales, some true, some not, but all delivered in that dramatic yet believable tone. Then he planted the idea of gender impersonation with his "Story of the Butterfly." By the time he confessed the "truth" of his gender, Bouriscout was already completely enchanted with him.

Bouriscout warded off all suspicious thoughts because he *wanted* to believe Pei Pu's story. From there it was easy Pei Pu faked his periods; it didn't take much money to get hold of a child he could reasonably pass off as their son. More important, he played the fantasy role to the hilt, remaining elusive and mysterious (which was what a Westerner would expect from an

seducer. . . . After an interval Pauline pulled a hell rope and ordered the woman who answered to prepare a bath which she asked me to share.

Wearing bathgowns of the finest linen we remained for nearly an hour in the crystal-clear bluish water. Then we had a grand dinner served in another room and lingered on together until dusk. When I left I had to promise to return again soon and I spent many afternoons with the princess in the same way."

—HARRISON BRENT,

PAULINE BONAPARTE: A WOMAN OF AFFAIRS

The courtesan is meant to be a half-defined, floating figure never fixing herself surely in the imagination. She is the memory of an experience, the point at which a dream is transformed into reality or reality into a dream. The bright colors fade, her name becomes a mere echo—echo of an echo, since she has probably adopted it from some ancient predecessor. The idea of the courtesan is a garden of delights in which the lover walks, smelling first this flower and then that but never understanding whence comes the fragrance that intoxicates him. Why should the courtesan not elude analysis? She does not want to be recognized for what she is, but rather to be allowed to be potent and effective. She offers the truth of herself—or, rather, of the passions that become directed toward her. And what she gives back is one's self and an hour of grace in her presence. Love revives

when you look at her: is that not enough? She is the generative force of an illusion, the birth point of desire, the threshold of contemplation of bodily beauty.

—LYNNE LAWNER, *LIVES OF THE COURTESANS: PORTRAITS OF THE RENAISSANCE*

It was on March 16, the same day the Duke of Gloucester wrote to Sir William, that Goethe recorded the first known performance of what were destined to be called *Emma's Attitudes*. Just what these were, we shall learn shortly. First, it must be emphasized that the *Attitudes* were a show for favored eyes only. • . . . Goethe, disciple of Winckelmann, was at this date thrilled by the human form, as a contemporary writes. Here was the ideal spectator for the classical drama *Emma* and Sir William had wrought in the long winter evenings. Let us take our seats beside Goethe and settle to watch the show as he describes it. • "Sit William Hamilton . . . has now, after many years of devotion to the arts and the study of nature, found the acme of these delights in the person of an English girl of twenty with a beautiful face and a perfect figure. He has had a Greek costume made for her which becomes her extremely. Dressed in this, he lets down her hair and, with a few shawls, gives so much variety to her poses, gestures, expressions, etc. that the spectator can hardly believe his eyes. He sees what thousands of artists would have liked to

Asian woman) while enveloping his past and indeed their whole experience in titillating bits of history. As Bouriscout later explained, "Pei Pu screwed me in the head. . . . I was having relations and in my thoughts, my dreams, I was light-years away from what was true."

Bouriscout thought he was having an exotic adventure, an enduring fantasy of his. Less consciously, he had an outlet for his repressed homo-erotic sexuality. Pei Pu embodied his fantasy, giving it flesh, by working first on his mind. The mind has two currents: it wants to believe in things that are pleasant to believe in, yet it has a self-protective need to be suspicious of people. If you start off too theatrical, trying too hard to create a fantasy, you will feed that suspicious side of the mind, and once fed, the doubts will not go away. Instead, you must start slowly, building trust, while perhaps letting people see a little touch of something strange or exciting about you to tease their interest. Then you build up your story, like any piece of fiction. You have established a foundation of trust—now the fantasies and dreams you envelop them in are suddenly believable.

Remember: people want to believe in the extraordinary; with a little groundwork, a little mental foreplay, they will fall for your illusion. If anything, err on the side of reality: use real props (like the child Pei Pu showed Bouriscout) and add the fantastical touches in your words, or an occasional gesture that gives you a slight unreality. Once you sense that they are hooked, you can deepen the spell, go further and further into the fantasy. At that point they will have gone so far into their own minds that you will no longer have to bother with verisimilitude.

Wish Fulfillment

In 1762, Catherine, wife of Czar Peter III, staged a coup against her ineffectual husband and proclaimed herself empress of Russia. Over the next few years Catherine ruled alone, but kept a series of lovers. The Russians called these men the *vremienchiki*, "the men of the moment," and in 1774 the man of the moment was Gregory Potemkin, a thirty-five-year-old lieutenant, ten years younger than Catherine, and a most unlikely candidate for the role. Potemkin was coarse and not at all handsome (he had lost an eye in an accident). But he knew how to make Catherine laugh, and he worshipped her so intensely that she eventually succumbed. He quickly became the love of her life.

Catherine promoted Potemkin higher and higher in the hierarchy, eventually making him the governor of White Russia, a large southwestern area including the Ukraine. As governor, Potemkin had to leave St. Petersburg and go to live in the south. He knew that Catherine could not do without male companionship, so he took it upon himself to name Catherine's subsequent *vremienchiki*. She not only approved of this arrangement, she made it clear that Potemkin would always remain her favorite.

Catherine's dream was to start a war with Turkey, recapture Constan-

tinople for the Orthodox Church, and drive the Turks out of Europe. She offered to share this crusade with the young Hapsburg emperor, Joseph II, but Joseph never quite brought himself to sign the treaty that would unite them in war. Growing impatient, in 1783 Catherine annexed the Crimea, a southern peninsula that was mostly populated by Muslim Tartars. She asked Potemkin to do there what he had already managed to do in the Ukraine—rid the area of bandits, build roads, modernize the ports, bring prosperity to the poor. Once he had cleaned it up, the Crimea would make the perfect launching post for the war against Turkey

The Crimea was a backward wasteland, but Potemkin loved the challenge. Getting to work on a hundred different projects, he grew intoxicated with visions of the miracles he would perform there. He would establish a capital on the Dnieper River, Ekaterinoslav ("To the glory of Catherine"), that would rival St. Petersburg and would house a university outshining anything in Europe. The countryside would hold endless fields of corn, orchards with rare fruits from the Orient, silkworm farms, new towns with bustling marketplaces. On a visit to the empress in 1785, Potemkin talked of these things as if they already existed, so vivid were his descriptions. The empress was delighted, but her ministers were skeptical—Potemkin loved to talk. Ignoring their warnings, in 1787 Catherine arranged for a tour of the area. She asked Joseph II to join her—he would be so impressed with the modernization of the Crimea that he would immediately sign on for the war against Turkey. Potemkin, naturally, was to organize the whole affair.

And so, in May of that year, after the Dnieper had thawed, Catherine prepared for a journey from Kiev, in the Ukraine, to Sebastopol, in the Crimea. Potemkin arranged for seven floating palaces to carry Catherine and her retinue down the river. The journey began, and as Catherine, Joseph, and the courtiers looked at the shores to either side, they saw triumphal arches in front of clean-looking towns, their walls freshly painted; healthy-looking cattle grazing in the pastures; streams of marching troops on the roads; buildings going up everywhere. At dusk they were entertained by bright-costumed peasants, and smiling girls with flowers in their hair, dancing on the shore. Catherine had traveled through this area many years before, and the poverty of the peasantry there had saddened her—she had determined then that she would somehow change their lot. To see before her eyes the signs of such a transformation overwhelmed her, and she berated Potemkin's critics: Look at what my favorite has accomplished, look at these miracles!

They anchored at three towns along the way, staying in each place in a magnificent, newly built palace with artificial waterfalls in the English-style gardens. On land they moved through villages with vibrant marketplaces; the peasants were happily at work, building and repairing. Everywhere they spent the night, some spectacle filled their eyes—dances, parades, mythological tableaux vivants, artificial volcanoes illuminating Moorish gardens. Finally, at the end of the trip, in the palace at Sebastopol, Catherine and

express realized before him in movements and surprising transformations—standing, kneeling, sitting, reclining, serious, sad, playful, ecstatic, contrite, alluring, threatening, anxious, one pose follows another without a break. She knows how to arrange the folds of her veil to match each mood, and has a hundred ways of turning it into a headdress. The old knight idolizes her and is quite enthusiastic about everything she does. In her he has found all the antiquities, all the profiles of Sicilian coins, even the Apollo Belvedere. This much is certain: as a performance it's like nothing you ever saw before in your life. We have already enjoyed it on two evenings."

—FLORA FRASER,
EMMA, LADY HAMILTON

For this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression. This reference to the factor of repression enables us, furthermore, to understand Schelling's definition of the uncanny as something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light. . . . There is one more point of general application which I should like to add. . . . This is that an uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary

appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes, and so on. It is this factor which contributes not a little to the uncanny effect attaching to magical practices. The infantile element in this, which also dominates the minds of neurotics, is the overaccentuation of psychical reality in comparison with material reality—a feature closely allied to the belief in the omnipotence of thoughts.

—SIGMUND FREUD,
"THE UNCANNY," IN
PSYCHOLOGICAL WRITINGS
AND LETTERS

Joseph discussed the war with Turkey. Joseph reiterated his concerns. Suddenly Potemkin interrupted: "I have 100,000 troops waiting for me to say 'Go!' " At that moment the windows of the palace were flung open, and to the sounds of booming cannons they saw lines of troops as far as the eye could see, and a fleet of ships filling the harbor. Awed by the sight, images of Eastern European cities retaken from the Turks dancing in his mind, Joseph II finally signed the treaty. Catherine was ecstatic, and her love for Potemkin reached new heights. He had made her dreams come true.

Catherine never suspected that almost everything she had seen was pure fakery, perhaps the most elaborate illusion ever conjured up by one man.

Interpretation. In the four years that he had been governor of the Crimea, Potemkin had accomplished little, for this backwater would take decades to improve. But in the few months before Catherine's visit he had done the following: every building that faced the road or the shore was given a fresh coat of paint; artificial trees were set up to hide unseemly spots in the view; broken roofs were repaired with flimsy boards painted to look like tile; everyone the party would see was instructed to wear their best clothes and look happy; everyone old and infirm was to stay indoors. Floating in their palaces down the Dnieper, the imperial entourage saw brand-new villages, but most of the buildings were only facades. The herds of cattle were shipped from great distances, and were moved at night to fresh fields along the route. The dancing peasants were trained for the entertainments; after each one they were loaded into carts and hurriedly transported to a new downriver location, as were the marching soldiers who seemed to be everywhere. The gardens of the new palaces were filled with transplanted trees that died a few days later. The palaces themselves were quickly and badly built, but were so magnificently furnished that no one noticed. One fortress along the way had been built of sand, and was destroyed a little later by a thunderstorm.

The cost of this vast illusion had been enormous, and the war with Turkey would fail, but Potemkin had accomplished his goal. To the observer, of course, there were signs along the way that all was not as it seemed, but when the empress herself insisted that everything was real and glorious, the courtiers could only agree. This was the essence of the seduction: Catherine had wanted so desperately to be seen as a loving and progressive ruler, one who would defeat the Turks and liberate Europe, that when she saw signs of change in the Crimea, her mind filled in the picture.

When our emotions are engaged, we often have trouble seeing things as they are. Feelings of love cloud our vision, making us color events to coincide with our desires. To make people believe in the illusions you create, you need to feed the emotions over which they have least control. Often the best way to do this is to ascertain their unsatisfied desires, their wishes crying out for fulfillment. Perhaps they want to see themselves as noble or romantic, but life has thwarted them. Perhaps they want an adventure. If

something seems to validate this wish, they become emotional and irrational, almost to the point of hallucination.

Remember to envelop them in your illusion *slowly*. Potemkin did not start with grand spectacles, but with simple sights along the way, such as grazing cattle. Then he brought them on land, heightening the drama, until the calculated climax when the windows were flung open to reveal a mighty war machine—actually a few thousand men and boats lined up in such a way as to suggest many more. Like Potemkin, involve the target in some kind of journey, physical or otherwise. The feeling of a shared adventure is rife with fantasy associations. Make people feel that they are getting to see and live out something that relates to their deepest yearnings and they will see happy, prosperous villages where there are only facades.

Here the real journey through Potemkin's fairyland began. It was like a dream—the waking dream of some magician who had discovered the secret of materializing his visions. . . . [Catherine] and her companions had left the world of reality behind. . . . Their talk was of Iphigenia and the ancient gods, and Catherine felt that she was both Alexander and Cleopatra.

—GINA KAUS

Keys to Seduction

The real world can be unforgiving: events occur over which we have little control, other people ignore our feelings in their quests to get what they need, time runs out before we accomplish what we had wanted. If we ever stopped to look at the present and future in a completely objective way, we would despair. Fortunately we develop the habit of dreaming early on. In this other, mental world that we inhabit, the future is full of rosy possibilities. Perhaps tomorrow we will sell that brilliant idea, or meet the person who will change our lives. Our culture stimulates these fantasies with constant images and stories of marvelous occurrences and happy romances.

The problem is, these images and fantasies exist only in our minds, or on-screen. They really aren't enough—we crave the real thing, not this endless daydreaming and titillation. Your task as a seducer is to bring some flesh and blood into someone's fantasy life by embodying a fantasy figure, or creating a scenario resembling that person's dreams. No one can resist the pull of a secret desire that has come to life before their eyes. You must first choose targets who have some repression or dream unrealized—always the most likely victims of a seduction. Slowly and gradually, you will build up the illusion that they are getting to see and feel and live those dreams of theirs. Once they have this sensation they will lose contact with reality, and begin to see your fantasy as more real than anything else. And once they

lose touch with reality, they are (to quote Stendhal on Lord Byron's female victims) like roasted larks that fall into your mouth.

Most people have a misconception about illusion. As any magician knows, it need not be built out of anything grand or theatrical; the grand and theatrical can in fact be destructive, calling too much attention to you and your schemes. Instead create the appearance of normality. Once your targets feel secure—nothing is out of the ordinary—you have room to deceive them. Pei Pu did not spin the lie about his gender immediately; he took his time, made Bouriscout come to him. Once Bouriscout had fallen for it, Pei Pu continued to wear men's clothes. In animating a fantasy, the great mistake is imagining it must be larger than life. That would border on camp, which is entertaining but rarely seductive. Instead, what you aim for is what Freud called the "uncanny," something strange and familiar at the same time, like a *déjà vu*, or a childhood memory—anything slightly irrational and dreamlike. The uncanny, the mix of the real and the unreal, has immense power over our imaginations. The fantasies you bring to life for your targets should not be bizarre or exceptional; they should be rooted in reality, with a hint of the strange, the theatrical, the occult (in talk of destiny, for example). You vaguely remind people of something in their childhood, or a character in a film or book. Even before Bouriscout heard Pei Pu's story, he had the uncanny feeling of something remarkable and fantastical in this normal-looking man. The secret to creating an uncanny effect is to keep it subtle and suggestive.

Emma Hart came from a prosaic background, her father a country blacksmith in eighteenth-century England. Emma was beautiful, but had no other talents to her credit. Yet she rose to become one of the greatest seductresses in history, seducing first Sir William Hamilton, the English ambassador to the court of Naples, and then (as Lady Hamilton, Sir William's wife) Vice-Admiral Lord Nelson. What was strangest when you met her was an uncanny sense that she was a figure from the past, a woman out of Greek myth or ancient history. Sir William was a collector of Greek and Roman antiquities; to seduce him, Emma cleverly made herself resemble a Greek statue, and mythical figures in paintings of the time. It was not just the way she wore her hair, or dressed, but her poses, the way she carried herself. It was as if one of the paintings he collected had come to life. Soon Sir William began to host parties in his home in Naples at which Emma would wear costumes and pose, re-creating images from mythology and history. Dozens of men fell in love with her, for she embodied an image from their childhood, an image of beauty and perfection. The key to this fantasy creation was some shared cultural association—mythology, historical seductresses like Cleopatra. Every culture has a pool of such figures from the distant and not-so-distant past. You hint at a similarity, in spirit and in appearance—but you are flesh and blood. What could be more thrilling than the sense of being in the presence of some fantasy figure going back to your earliest memories?

One night Pauline Bonaparte, the sister of Napoleon, held a gala affair

in her house. Afterward, a handsome German officer approached her in the garden and asked for her help in passing along a request to the emperor. Pauline said she would do her best, and then, with a rather mysterious look in her eye, asked him to come back to the same spot the next night. The officer returned, and was greeted by a young woman who led him to some rooms near the garden and then to a magnificent salon, complete with an extravagant bath. Moments later, another young woman entered through a side door, dressed in the sheerest garments. It was Pauline. Bells were rung, ropes were pulled, and maids appeared, preparing the bath, giving the officer a dressing gown, then disappearing. The officer later described the evening as something out of a fairy tale, and he had the feeling that Pauline was deliberately acting the part of some mythical seductress. Pauline was beautiful and powerful enough to get almost any man she wanted, and she wasn't interested simply in luring a man into bed; she wanted to envelop him in romantic adventure, seduce his mind. Part of the adventure was the feeling that she was playing a role, and was inviting her target along into this shared fantasy.

Role playing is immensely pleasurable. Its appeal goes back to childhood, where we first learn the thrill of trying on different parts, imitating adults or figures out of fiction. As we get older and society fixes a role on us, a part of us yearns for the playful approach we once had, the masks we were able to wear. We still want to play that game, to act a different role in life. Indulge your targets in this wish by first making it clear that you are playing a role, then inviting them to join you in a shared fantasy. The more you set things up like a play or a piece of fiction, the better. Notice how Pauline began the seduction with a mysterious request that the officer reappear the next night; then a second woman led him into a magical series of rooms. Pauline herself delayed her entrance, and when she appeared, she did not mention his business with Napoleon, or anything remotely banal. She had an ethereal air about her; he was being invited to enter a fairy tale. The evening was real, but had an uncanny resemblance to an erotic dream.

Casanova took role playing still further. He traveled with an enormous wardrobe and a trunk full of props, many of them gifts for his targets—fans, jewels, other accouterments. And some of the things he said and did were borrowed from novels he had read and stories he had heard. He enveloped women in a romantic atmosphere that was heightened yet quite real to their senses. Like Casanova, you must see the world as a kind of theater. Inject a certain lightness into the roles you are playing; try to create a sense of drama and illusion; confuse people with the slight unreality of words and gestures inspired by fiction; in daily life, be the consummate actor. Our culture reveres actors because of their freedom to play roles. It is something that all of us envy.

For years, the Cardinal de Rohan had been afraid that he had somehow offended his queen, Marie Antoinette. She would not so much as look at him. Then, in 1784, the Comtesse de Lamotte-Valois suggested to him that

the queen was prepared not only to change this situation but actually to befriend him. The queen, said Lamotte-Valois, would indicate this in her next formal reception—she would nod to him in a particular way.

During the reception, Rohan indeed noticed a slight change in the queen's behavior toward him, and a barely perceptible glance at him. He was overjoyed. Now the countess suggested they exchange letters, and Rohan spent days writing and rewriting his first letter to the queen. To his delight he received one back. Next the queen requested a private interview with him in the gardens of Versailles. Rohan was beside himself with happiness and anxiety. At nightfall he met the queen in the gardens, fell to the ground, and kissed the hem of her dress. "You may hope that the past will be forgotten," she said. At this moment they heard voices approaching, and the queen, frightened that someone would see them together, quickly fled with her servants. But Rohan soon received a request from her, again through the countess: she desperately wanted to acquire the most beautiful diamond necklace ever created. She needed a go-between to purchase it for her, since the king thought it too expensive. She had chosen Rohan for the task. The cardinal was only too willing; in performing this task he would prove his loyalty, and the queen would be indebted to him forever. Rohan acquired the necklace. The countess was to deliver it to the queen. Now Rohan waited for the queen both to thank him and slowly to pay him back.

Yet this never happened. The countess was in fact a grand swindler; the queen had never nodded to him, he had only imagined it. The letters he had received from her were forgeries, and not even very good ones. The woman he had met in the park had been a prostitute paid to dress and act the part. The necklace was of course real, but once Rohan had paid for it, and handed it over to the countess, it disappeared. It was broken into parts, which were hawked all over Europe for enormous amounts. And when Rohan finally complained to the queen, news of the extravagant purchase spread rapidly. The public believed Rohan's story—that the queen had indeed bought the necklace, and was pretending otherwise. This fiction was the first step in the ruin of her reputation.

Everyone has lost something in life, has felt the pangs of disappointment. The idea that we can get something back, that a mistake can be righted, is immensely seductive. Under the impression that the queen was prepared to forgive some mistake he had made, Rohan hallucinated all kinds of things—nods that did not exist, letters that were the flimsiest of forgeries, a prostitute who became Marie Antoinette. The mind is infinitely vulnerable to suggestion, and even more so when strong desires are involved. And nothing is stronger than the desire to change the past, right a wrong, satisfy a disappointment. Find these desires in your victims and creating a believable fantasy will be simple for you: few have the power to see through an illusion they desperately want to believe in.

Symbol: *Shangri-La. Everyone has a vision in their mind of a perfect place where people are kind and noble, where their dreams can be realized and their wishes fulfilled, where life is full of adventure and romance. Lead the target on a journey there, give them a glimpse of Shangri-La through the mists on the mountain, and they will fall in love.*

Reversal

There is no reversal to this chapter. No seduction can proceed without creating illusion, the sense of a world that is real but separate from reality.

15

Isolate the Victim

An iso-

lated person is weak.

By slowly isolating your vic-

tims, you make them more vul-

nerable to your influence. Their

isolation may be psychological: by filling

their field of vision through the pleasurable

attention you pay them, you crowd out every-

thing else in their mind. They see and think

only of you. The isolation may also be physi-

cal: you take them away from their normal mi-

lieu, friends, family, home. Give them the

sense of being marginalized, in limbo—they

are leaving one world behind and entering

another. Once isolated like this, they have

no outside support, and in their confu-

sion they are easily led astray.

Lure the seduced into your

lair, where nothing is

familiar.

Isolation—the Exotic Effect

In the early fifth century B.C., Fu Chai, the Chinese king of Wu, defeated his great enemy, Kou Chien, the king of Yueh, in a series of battles. Kou Chien was captured and forced to serve as a groom in Fu Chai's stables. He was finally allowed to return home, but every year he had to pay a large tribute of money and gifts to Fu Chai. Over the years, this tribute added up, so that the kingdom of Wu prospered and Fu Chai grew wealthy.

One year Kou Chien sent a delegation to Fu Chai: they wanted to know if he would accept a gift of two beautiful maidens as part of the tribute. Fu Chai was curious, and accepted the offer. The women arrived a few days later, amid much anticipation, and the king received them in his palace. The two approached the throne—their hair was magnificently coiffured, in what was called "the cloud-cluster" style, ornamented with pearl ornaments and kingfisher feathers. As they walked, jade pendants hanging from their girdles made the most delicate sound. The air was full of some delightful perfume. The king was extremely pleased. The beauty of one of the girls far surpassed that of the other; her name was Hsi Shih. She looked him in the eye without a hint of shyness; in fact she was confident and coquettish, something he was not used to seeing in such a young girl.

Fu Chai called for festivities to commemorate the occasion. The halls of the palace filled with revelers; inflamed with wine, Hsi Shih danced before the king. She sang, and her voice was beautiful. Reclining on a couch of white jade, she looked like a goddess. The king could not leave her side. The next day he followed her everywhere. To his astonishment, she was witty, sharp, and knowledgeable, and could quote the classics better than he could. When he had to leave her to deal with royal affairs, his mind was full of her image. Soon he brought her with him to his councils, asking her advice on important matters. She told him to listen less to his ministers; he was wiser than they were, his judgment superior.

Hsi Shih's power grew daily. Yet she was not easy to please; if the king failed to grant some wish of hers, tears would fill her eyes, his heart would melt, and he would yield. One day she begged him to build her a palace outside the capital. Of course, he obliged her. And when he visited the palace, he was astounded at its magnificence, even though he had paid the bills: Hsi Shih had filled it with the most extravagant furnishings. The grounds contained an artificial lake with marble bridges crossing over it. Fu Chai spent more and more time here, sitting by a pool and watching Hsi

In the state of Wu great preparations had been made for the reception of the two beauties. The king received them in audience surrounded by his ministers and all his court. As they approached him the jade pendants attached to their girdles made a musical sound and the air was fragrant with the scent of their gowns. Pearl ornaments and kingfisher feathers adorned their hair.

• Fu Chai, the king of Wu, looked into the lovely eyes of Hsi Shih (495-472 B.C.) and forgot his people and his state. Now she did not turn away and blush as she had done three years previously beside the little brook. She was complete mistress of the art of seduction and she knew how to encourage the king to look again. Fu Chai hardly noticed the second girl, whose quiet charms did not attract him. He had eyes only for Hsi Shih, and before the audience was over those at court realized that the girl would be a force to be reckoned with and that she would be able to influence

the king either for good
or ill. . . . Amidst the
 revelers in the halls of Wu,
Hsi Shih wove her net
of fascination about the
heart of the susceptible
monarch. . . . "Inflamed
by wine, she now begins to
sing / The songs of Wu to
please the fatuous king; /
And in the dance of Tsu
she subtly blends /All
rhythmic movements to her
sensuous ends." . . . But
she could do more than
sing and dance to amuse
the king. She had wit, and
her grasp of politics
astonished him. When
there was anything she
wanted she could shed tears
which so moved her lover's
heart that he could refuse
her nothing. For she was,
as Fan Li had said, the
one and only, the
incomparable Hsi Shih,
whose magnetic personality
attracted everyone, many
even against their own
will. . . . Embroidered
silk curtains encrusted with
coral and gems, scented
furniture and screens inlaid
with jade and mother-of-
pearl were among the
luxuries which surrounded
the favorite. . . . On one
of the hills near the palace
there was a celebrated pool
of clear water which has
been known ever since as
the pool of the king of
Wu. Here, to amuse her
lover, Hsi Shih would
make her toilet, using the
pool as a mirror while
the infatuated king combed
her hair. . . .

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

Shih comb her hair, using the pool as a mirror. He would watch her playing with her birds, in their jeweled cages, or simply walking through the palace, for she moved like a willow in the breeze. The months went by; he stayed in the palace. He missed councils, ignored his family and friends, neglected his public functions. He lost track of time. When a delegation came to talk to him of urgent matters, he was too distracted to listen. If anything but Hsi Shih took up his time, he worried unbearably that she would be angry.

Finally word reached him of a growing crisis: the fortune he had spent on the palace had bankrupted the treasury, and the people were discontented. He returned to the capital, but it was too late: an army from the kingdom of Yueh had invaded Wu, and had reached the capital. All was lost. Fu Chai had no time to rejoin his beloved Hsi Shih. Instead of letting himself be captured by the king of Yueh, the man who had once served in his stables, he committed suicide.

Little did he know that Kou Chien had plotted this invasion for years, and that Hsi Shih's elaborate seduction was the main part of his plan.

Interpretation. Kou Chien wanted to make sure that his invasion of Wu would not fail. His enemy was not Fu Chai's armies, or his wealth and his resources, but his mind. If he could be deeply distracted, his mind filled with something other than affairs of state, he would fall like ripe fruit.

Kou Chien found the most beautiful maiden in his realm. For three years he had her trained in all of the arts—not just singing, dancing, and calligraphy, but how to dress, how to talk, how to play the coquette. And it worked: Hsi Shih did not allow Fu Chai a moment's rest. Everything about her was exotic and unfamiliar. The more attention he paid to her hair, her moods, her glances, the way she moved, the less he thought about diplomacy and war. He was driven to distraction.

All of us today are kings protecting the tiny realm of our own lives, weighed down by all kinds of responsibilities, surrounded by ministers and advisers. A wall forms around us—we are immune to the influence of other people, because we are so preoccupied. Like Hsi Shih, then, you must lure your targets away, gently, slowly, from the affairs that fill their mind. And what will best lure them from their castles is the whiff of the exotic. Offer something unfamiliar that will fascinate them and hold their attention. Be different in your manners and appearance, and slowly envelop them in this different world of yours. Keep your targets off balance with coquettish changes of mood. Do not worry that the disruption you represent is making them emotional—that is a sign of their growing weakness. Most people are ambivalent: on the one hand they feel comforted by their habits and duties, on the other they are bored, and ripe for anything that seems exotic, that seems to come from somewhere else. They may struggle or have doubts, but exotic pleasures are irresistible. The more you can get them

into your world, the weaker they become. As with the king of Wu, by the time they realize what has happened, it is too late.

Isolation—The "Only You" Effect

In 1948, the twenty-nine-year-old actress Rita Hayworth, known as Hollywood's Love Goddess, was at a low point in her life. Her marriage to Orson Welles was breaking up, her mother had died, and her career seemed stalled. That summer she headed for Europe. Welles was in Italy at the time, and in the back of her mind she was dreaming of a reconciliation.

Rita stopped first at the French Riviera. Invitations poured in, particularly from wealthy men, for at the time she was considered the most beautiful woman in the world. Aristotle Onassis and the Shah of Iran telephoned her almost daily, begging for a date. She turned them all down. A few days after her arrival, though, she received an invitation from Elsa Maxwell, the society hostess, who was giving a little party in Cannes. Rita balked but Maxwell insisted, telling her to buy a new dress, show up a little late, and make a grand entrance.

Rita played along, and arrived at the party wearing a white Grecian gown, her red hair falling over her bare shoulders. She was greeted by a reaction she had grown used to: all conversation stopped as both men and women turned in their chairs, the men gazing in amazement, the women jealous. A man hurried to her side and escorted her to her table. It was thirty-seven-year-old Prince Aly Khan, the son of the Aga Khan III, who was the worldwide leader of the Islamic Ismaili sect and one of the richest men in the world. Rita had been warned about Aly Khan, a notorious rake. To her dismay, they were seated next to each other, and he never left her side. He asked her a million questions—about Hollywood, her interests, on and on. She began to relax a little and open up. There were other beautiful women there, princesses, actresses, but Aly Khan ignored them all, acting as if Rita were the only woman there. He led her onto the dance floor, and though he was an expert dancer, she felt uncomfortable—he held her a little too close. Still, when he offered to drive her back to her hotel, she agreed. They sped along the Grande Corniche; it was a beautiful night. For one evening she had managed to forget her many problems, and she was grateful, but she was still in love with Welles, and an affair with a rake like Aly Khan was not what she needed.

Aly Khan had to fly off on business for a few days; he begged her to stay at the Riviera until he got back. While he was away, he telephoned constantly. Every morning a giant bouquet of flowers arrived. On the telephone he seemed particularly annoyed that the Shah of Iran was trying hard to see her, and he made her promise to break the date to which she had finally agreed. During this time, a gypsy fortune-teller visited the hotel, and Rita agreed to have her fortune read. "You are about to embark on the

In Cairo Aly bumped into [the singer] Juliette Greco again. He asked her to dance. • "You have too bad a reputation," she replied. "We're going to sit very much apart." • "What are you doing tomorrow?" he insisted. • "Tomorrow I take a plane to Beirut." • When she boarded the plane, Aly was already on it, grinning at her surprise. . . . • Dressed in tight black leather slacks and a black sweater [Greco] stretched languorously in an armchair of her Paris house and observed: • "They say I am a dangerous woman. Well, Aly was a dangerous man. He was charming in a very special way. There is a kind of man who is very clever with women. He takes you out to a restaurant and if the most beautiful woman comes in, he doesn't look at her. He makes you feel you are a queen. Of course, I understood it. I didn't believe it. I would laugh and point out the beautiful woman. But that is me. . . . Most women are made very happy by that kind of attention. It's pure vanity. She thinks, 'I'll be the one and the others will leave.' • " . . . With Aly, how the woman felt was most important. . . . He was a great charmer, a great seducer. He made you feel fine and that everything was easy. No problems. Nothing to worry about. Or regret. It was always, 'What can I do for you? What do you need?' Airplane tickets, cars, boats; you felt you were on a pink cloud."

—LEONARD SLATER,
ALY: A BIOGRAPHY

ANNE: Didst thou not kill
this king [Henry VI]? \

RICHARD: I grant ye. . . \

ANNE: And thou unfit for
any place, but hell. \

RICHARD: Yes, one place
else, if you will hear me
name it. \ ANNE: Some
dungeon. \ RICHARD:

Your bedchamber, \ ANNE:
Ill rest betide the chamber
where thou liest! \

RICHARD: So will it,
madam, till I lie with you.

. . . But gentle Lady
Anne . . . \ Is not the

causer of the timeless
deaths \ Of these

Plantagenets, \ Henry and
Edward, \ As blameful as
the executioner? \ ANNE:

Thou wast the cause and
most accursed effect. \

RICHARD: Your beauty
was the cause of that
effect— \ Your beauty, that
did haunt me in my sleep \

To undertake the death of
all the world, \ So I might
live one hour in your sweet
bosom.

—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE,
THE TRAGEDY OF KING
RICHARD III

My child, my sister, dream
\ How sweet all things
would seem \ Were we in
that kind land to live
together, \ And there love
slow and long, \ There love
and die among \ Those
scenes that image you, that
sumptuous weather. \

Drowned suns that
glimmer there \ Through
cloud-dishevelled air \
Move me with such a
mystery as appears \
Within those other skies \
Of your treacherous eyes \

When I behold them
shining through their tears.
\ There, there is nothing
else but grace and measure,
\ Richness, quietness, and
pleasure. . . . \ See,

greatest romance of your life," the gypsy told her. "He is somebody you already know. . . . You must relent and give in to him totally. Only if you do that will you find happiness at long last." Not knowing who this man could be, Rita, who had a weakness for the occult, decided to extend her stay. Aly Khan came back; he told her that his château overlooking the Mediterranean was the perfect place to escape from the press and forget her troubles, and that he would behave himself. She relented. Life in the château was like a fairy tale; wherever she turned, his Indian helpers were there to attend to her every wish. At night he would take her into his enormous ballroom, where they would dance all by themselves. Could this be the man the fortune-teller meant?

Aly Khan invited his friends over to meet her. Among this strange company she felt alone again, and depressed; she decided to leave the château. Just then, as if he had read her thoughts, Aly Khan whisked her off to Spain, the country that fascinated her most. The press caught on to the affair, and began to hound them in Spain: Rita had had a daughter with Welles—was this any way for a mother to act? Aly Khan's reputation did not help, but he stood by her, shielding her from the press as best he could. Now she was more alone than ever, and more dependent on him.

Near the end of the trip, Aly Khan proposed to Rita. She turned him down; she did not think he was the kind of man you married. He followed her to Hollywood, where her former friends were less friendly than before. Thank God she had Aly Khan to help her. A year later she finally succumbed, abandoning her career, moving to Aly Khan's château, and marrying him.

Interpretation. Aly Khan, like a lot of men, fell in love with Rita Hayworth the moment he saw the film *Gilda*, in 1948. He made up his mind that he would seduce her somehow. The moment he heard she was coming to the Riviera, he got his friend Elsa Maxwell to lure her to the party and seat her next to him. He knew about the breakup of her marriage, and how vulnerable she was. His strategy was to block out everything else in her world—problems, other men, suspicion of him and his motives, etc. His campaign began with the display of an intense interest in her life—constant phone calls, flowers, gifts, all to keep him in her mind. He set up the fortune-teller to plant the seed. When she began to fall for him, he introduced her to his friends, knowing she would feel alienated among them, and therefore dependent on him. Her dependence was heightened by the trip to Spain, where she was on unfamiliar territory, besieged by reporters, and forced to cling to him for help. He slowly came to dominate her thoughts. Everywhere she turned, there he was. Finally she succumbed, out of weakness and the boost to her vanity that his attention represented. Under his spell, she forgot about his horrid reputation, relinquishing the suspicions that were the only thing protecting her from him.

It was not Aly Khan's wealth or looks that made him a great seducer.

He was not in fact very handsome, and his wealth was more than offset by his bad reputation. His success was strategic: he isolated his victims, working so slowly and subtly that they did not notice it. The intensity of his attention made a woman feel that in his eyes, at that moment, she was the only woman in the world. This isolation was experienced as pleasure; the woman did not notice her growing dependence, how the way he filled up her mind with his attention slowly isolated her from her friends and her milieu. Her natural suspicions of the man were drowned out by his intoxicating effect on her ego. Aly Khan almost always capped off his seductions by taking the woman to some enchanted place on the globe—a place that he knew well, but where the woman felt lost.

Do not give your targets the time or space to worry about, suspect, or resist you. Flood them with the kind of attention that crowds out all other thoughts, concerns, and problems. Remember—people secretly yearn to be led astray by someone who knows where they are going. It can be a pleasure to let go, and even to feel isolated and weak, if the seduction is done slowly and gracefully.

*Put them in a spot where they have no place to go, and
they will die before fleeing.*

—SUN-TZU

*sheltered from the swells \
There in the still canals \
Those drowsy ships that
dream of sailing forth; \ It
is to satisfy \ Your least
desire, they ply \ Hither
through all the waters of
the earth. \ The sun at
close of day \ Clothes the
fields of hay, \ Then the
canals, at last the town
entire \ In hyacinth and
gold: \ Slowly the land is
rolled \ Sleepward under a
sea of gentle fire. \ There,
there is nothing else but
grace and measure, \
Richness, quietness, and
pleasure.*

—CHARLES BAUDELAIRE,
"INVITATION TO THE VOYAGE,"
THE FLOWERS OF EVIL,
TRANSLATED BY RICHARD
WILBUR

Keys to Seduction

The people around you may seem strong, and more or less in control of their lives, but that is merely a facade. Underneath, people are more brittle than they let on. What lets them seem strong is the series of nests and safety nets they envelop themselves in—their friends, their families, their daily routines, which give them a feeling of continuity, safety, and control. Suddenly pull the rug out from under them, drop them alone into some foreign place where the familiar signposts are gone or scrambled, and you will see a very different person.

A target who is strong and settled is hard to seduce. But even the strongest people can be made vulnerable if you can isolate them from their nests and safety nets. Block out their friends and family with your constant presence, alienate them from the world they are used to, and take them to places they do not know. Get them to spend time in *your* environment. Deliberately disturb their habits, get them to do things they have never done. They will grow emotional, making it easier to lead them astray. Disguise all this in the form of a pleasurable experience, and your targets will wake up one day distanced from everything that normally comforts them. Then they will turn to you for help, like a child crying out for its mother when the lights are turned out. In seduction, as in warfare, the isolated target is weak and vulnerable.

In Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*, written in 1748, the rake Lovelace is

attempting to seduce the novel's beautiful heroine. Clarissa is young, virtuous, and very much protected by her family. But Lovelace is a conniving seducer. First he courts Clarissa's sister, Arabella. A match between them seems likely. Then he suddenly switches attention to Clarissa, playing on sibling rivalry to make Arabella furious. Their brother, James, is angered by Lovelace's change in sentiments; he fights with Lovelace and is wounded. The whole family is in an uproar, united against Lovelace, who, however, manages to smuggle letters to Clarissa, and to visit her when she is at the house of a friend. The family finds out, and accuses her of disloyalty. Clarissa is innocent; she has not encouraged Lovelace's letters or visits. But now her parents are determined to marry her off, to a rich older man. Alone in the world, about to be married to a man she finds repulsive, she turns to Lovelace as the only one who can save her from this mess. Eventually he rescues her by getting her to London, where she can escape this dreaded marriage, but where she is also hopelessly isolated. In these circumstances her feelings toward him soften. All of this has been masterfully orchestrated by Lovelace himself—the turmoil within the family, Clarissa's eventual alienation from them, the whole scenario.

Your worst enemies in a seduction are often your targets' family and friends. They are outside your circle and immune to your charms; they may provide a voice of reason to the seduced. You must work silently and subtly to alienate the target from them. Insinuate that they are jealous of your target's good fortune in finding you, or that they are parental figures who have lost a taste for adventure. The latter argument is extremely effective with young people, whose identities are in flux and who are more than ready to rebel against any authority figure, particularly their parents. You represent excitement and life; the friends and parents represent habit and boredom.

In Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of King Richard III*, Richard, when still the Duke of Gloucester, has murdered King Henry VI and his son, Prince Edward. Shortly thereafter he accosts Lady Anne, Prince Edward's widow, who knows what he has done to the two men closest to her, and who hates him as much as a woman can hate. Yet Richard attempts to seduce her. His method is simple: he tells her that what he did, he did because of his love for her. He wanted there to be no one in her life but him. His feelings were so strong he was driven to murder. Of course Lady Anne not only resists this line of reasoning, she abhors him. But he persists. Anne is at a moment of extreme vulnerability—alone in the world, with no one to support her, at the height of grief. Incredibly, his words begin to have an effect.

Murder is not a seductive tactic, but the seducer does enact a kind of killing—a psychological one. Our past attachments are a barrier to the present. Even people we have left behind can continue to have a hold on us. As a seducer you will be held up to the past, compared to previous suitors, perhaps found inferior. *Do not let it get to that point.* Crowd out the past with your attentions in the present. If necessary, find ways to disparage their previous lovers—subtly or not so subtly, depending on the situation. Even go so far as to open old wounds, making them feel old pain and seeing by con-

trast how much better the present is. The more you can isolate them from their past, the deeper they will sink with you into the present.

The principle of isolation can be taken literally by whisking the target off to an exotic locale. This was Aly Khan's method; a secluded island worked best, and indeed islands, cut off from the rest of the world, have always been associated with the pursuit of sensual pleasures. The Roman Emperor Tiberius descended into debauchery once he made his home on the island of Capri. The danger of travel is that your targets are intimately exposed to you—it is hard to maintain an air of mystery. But if you take them to a place alluring enough to distract them, you will prevent them from focusing on anything banal in your character. Cleopatra lured Julius Caesar into taking a voyage down the Nile. Moving deeper into Egypt, he was further isolated from Rome, and Cleopatra was all the more seductive. The early-twentieth-century lesbian seductress Natalie Barney had an on-again-off-again affair with the poet Renée Vivien; to regain her affections, she took Renée on a trip to the island of Lesbos, a place Natalie had visited many times. In doing so she not only isolated Renée but disarmed and distracted her with the associations of the place, the home of the legendary lesbian poet Sappho. Vivien even began to imagine that Natalie was Sappho herself. Do not take the target just anywhere; pick the place that will have the most effective associations.

The seductive power of isolation goes beyond the sexual realm. When new adherents joined Mahatma Gandhi's circle of devoted followers, they were encouraged to cut off their ties with the past—with their family and friends. This kind of renunciation has been a requirement of many religious sects over the centuries. People who isolate themselves in this way are much more vulnerable to influence and persuasion. A charismatic politician feeds off and even encourages people's feelings of alienation. John F. Kennedy did this to great effect when he subtly disparaged the Eisenhower years; the comfort of the 1950s, he implied, compromised American ideals. He invited Americans to join him in a new life, on a "New Frontier," full of danger and excitement. It was an extremely seductive lure, particularly for the young, who were Kennedy's most enthusiastic supporters.

Finally, at some point in the seduction there must be a hint of danger in the mix. Your targets should feel that they are gaining a great adventure in following you, but are also losing something—a part of their past, their cherished comfort. Actively encourage these ambivalent feelings. An element of fear is the proper spice; although too much fear is debilitating, in small doses it makes us feel alive. Like diving out of an airplane, it is exciting, a thrill, at the same time that it is a little frightening. And the only person there to break the fall, or catch them, is you.

Symbol: *The Pied Piper.* A jolly fellow in his red and yellow cloak, he lures the children from their homes with the delightful sounds of his flute. Enchanted, they do not notice how far they are walking, how they are leaving their families behind. They do not even notice the cave he eventually leads them into, and which closes upon them forever.

Reversal

The risks of this strategy are simple: isolate someone too quickly and you will induce a sense of panic that may end up in the target's taking flight. The isolation you bring must be gradual, and disguised as pleasure—the pleasure of knowing you, leaving the world behind. In any case, some people are too fragile to be cut off from their base of support. The great modern courtesan Pamela Harriman had a solution to this problem: she isolated her victims from their families, their former or present wives, and in place of those old connections she quickly set up new comforts for her lovers. She overwhelmed them with attention, attending to their every need. In the case of Averill Harriman, the billionaire who eventually married her, she literally established a new home for him, one that had no associations with the past and was full of the pleasures of the present. It is unwise to keep the seduced dangling in midair for too long, with nothing familiar or comforting in sight. Instead, replace the familiar things you have cut them off from with a new home, a new series of comforts.