

## MARGAUX OGDEN: CHEKHOV'S GUN

Essay by David C. Hunt

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*Seducer's have a warrior's outlook on life. They see each person as a kind of walled castle to which they are laying siege. Seduction is a process of penetration: initially penetrating the target's mind, their first point of defense. Once seducers have penetrated the mind, making the target fantasize about them, it is easy to lower resistance and cause physical surrender.*

- Robert Greene, SEDUCTION

### **“LISTEN TO ME, YOU GREAT BIG BUMBLE-HEADED BABOON.”**

She had to-do lists and to-don't lists, and checklists scribbled on pastel post-its, listing in the wind. She wrapped rubber bands around her delicate wrists, to remind her of all the loans and the liens and the rivers of crumpled receipts, the racy texts where, come to think of it, she hadn't been all that discreet. There were bullet-points and power-points and points that she felt were worth making, pie charts and bar graphs – shattered panes of glass, stained in a purple acid bath. Funny what you could do with a bank account and a box of crayons. Her best trait, hands down, was that she had a tendency to speak too quickly, while gesturing too wildly with her hands.

Paintings didn't show up on your porch, corsage in hand, car idling curbside with the keys in the ignition, gorgeous and burning. Paintings didn't tart themselves up like Cleopatra at high noon on a hot day, click their gold power bracelets three times and whisper “Oh mighty ISIS” to unleash the plague of doves on a willing, though unsuspecting populace. “Cocks on Whiteboards: Dry-Erase or Sharpie?” Was it robot-rape, or robot *date-rape*? Those questions hardly mattered now. There was always so much at stake, or you had long been burned at the stake, the important thing to remember was the original trauma and its persistence beyond the singularity of the event. Deal with those ripples, the trauma seemed to say, and we'll hook you up big time. Knowledge was continuously under siege by a wealth of facts, an insurgency of over-disclosure, but you were always the first responder to your own ruin – one less lonely girl in the world. Friendship was magic and depending upon who your friends were, your casual catastrophes in oil & acrylic were either miracles of misdirection, or the last autonomous objects moonlighting as totems of inviolate freedom in a murky, post-lapsarian world. You couldn't know; *you never knew*. Drops plummeted to their deaths on spring sidewalks everywhere and yet your ancient intimations and shotgun chemical weddings – all that “spooky action-at-a-distance” stuff – might be the closest thing to a brass ring this busted carousel was ever going to produce.

## ARACHNOPHOBIA

The World Wide Web, though, that turned out to be like any other web, like Charlotte's web, like reading *Charlotte's Web* for the rest of your life, marveling at how those plucky little spiders managed to pull off one wacky caper after another. Friendship was magic, though. Friendship was your network. And your network was your salvation. Because of your interest in various things, connection requests were always pending, friends were always waiting. The network was immortal like that; it scripted its own destiny. You literally couldn't kill it. You know how Alexander wept because there were no more worlds for him to conquer? That was the network in a nutshell. But *networking*? It was as if your "physical location" – once grounded, fixed, actual – had opted for a more "discursive vector" – ungrounded, fluid, virtual. A whole lot more. You'd be working on your origin story, an immaculate conception of cheek & chic full of uplift and long odds overcome, told with enough gusto and grit to match your hostile wit, when it slowly dawns on you that no one would ever dare risk falling, for fear of having heard what the descent had to say.

## ASTRONOMY / PUBLIC RELATIONS / FORCE DRIFT

It was a Radial World and so, naturally, it radiated. The stars in the sky were in inverse proportion to the stars on the earth: shooting stars and rising stars and Stars of David dangling on thin, gossamer chains were all starlings in a summer sky – sequined grace notes flying by at a complicated, orchestral clip. They couldn't be caught, or captured, or wished upon, let alone domesticated in any meaningful way. How quickly they became feral and insensate, these neutral eagles out on a windowsill, flushed from the shadows, waiting, offering protection and threat. Light had driven back night – it was *all* an anti-nocturne from here on out. So sleep was so over. Sleep was so last week. Sleep was wet rags and water, the sound a bucket made when it was kicked. Machine-mourning and grief choked the air, an inconsolable yearning for another upgrade. They kept on talking about a sense of renewed purpose and personal agency in an accelerated and uncertain world but you had already swept up my malware, cleaned out my cache. You may have worn the false pathology of your sadness around your neck like a busted Egyptian Ankh – comical and primordial in equal measure – but you, my Candy Crush lush, you were my killer app. At times you had to bring it all *Fast and the Furious: Scarsdale Drift*-style, just steering directly into the skid, effortlessly gliding from situation to symbol, agitating & extrapolating, turning structures into ambiances and accidents into auguries. And sometimes you were that soccer mom shellacked on wine coolers, gabbing on your cell-phone while your Escalade straddled three lanes of the Taconic. The important thing was to be flexible. Fluid and chameleon-like. *Chameleonic*. Erasure reassured people; the palimpsest was evidence of a struggle.

- David C. Hunt  
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