

# The OC: Season One

## A Poemization

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## Preface

Brothers bound not by blood  
but fate deals the upper hand. *Well, I don't know what  
to say except that you totally had my back out there.*

It is often repeated:  
your parents choose  
your experiential superiors  
as surrogates.  
They are always wise beyond their years  
on account of their poverty, their raw skill  
their charisma  
is fully developed.

Without biology hindering the case  
teen dramas bury us in the question  
of deciding who we want to be.

It's important, these trivial matters are important:  
who stands behind you, who you believe, what risks you take when...

1: Pilot

Let's start with numbers:  
the drama's odd.

Is it three girls and two guys or  
vice versa? Actually

it's even with a rotating fifth:  
Ryan & Marissa, Seth & Summer

with the extra voice (Luke, Oliver, Anna)  
providing the show with the necessary tension.

The premise sparks with a crime to make worlds collide  
in the absence of a plan. Not Ryan's own scheme: no, a sibling

pulls the threads of his wife beater: Get Smart!  
Besides a pilot is not even really part of the series;

sometimes the actors change; they definitely don't have as much money  
for sets, but the acorn of the show must nevertheless demonstrate

its ability to spread its limbs over households nationwide:  
except, as a result of Nielson

a bias remains against shows with a fervent audience  
but with little universal appeal                      but they will take him

into their home; Sandy, Kirsten, and Seth will take him in.  
The question is: will you?

## 2: The Model Home

If you break the law  
the main question is  
*are you subject to the laws  
of the land  
or not?*

He is trying to convince Kirsten that  
he belongs, first  
in her model home  
and then  
as her son.

*We're from different worlds*  
means *different laws apply*.  
In hers, the cost of a mistake  
is lower than in his  
where any wrong move  
locks the cuffs.

Fortuitously, the way he laughs  
indicates that he's already  
a part: an interruption  
that will show  
everyone (including himself)  
who they are.

### 3: The Gamble

It is burned as bridges

are not just his lawyer: how will it be okay?

Of course, Sandy must witness some of the cruelty  
if only to instigate Ryan's second childhood: "an improved infancy."

Luckily, it was only a model  
and not real life  
left for flames, though it signified the smoldering of  
certain associations. Therefore,  
to become new parents

the birth mother must get so drunk  
she admits to her own failures and splits:

*You hold your family together;  
I tear mine apart.*

And the gravity of the show is finely woven

but, news flash, immunity is not for sale:  
Dawn's trashy booze gives way to Kirsten's own Chardonnay binges  
in a later season:

*way over our head.*

#### 4: The Debut

(Episode Score: 9.4)

Every figure must be debuted to try it on for size:  
debutantes, theft, a new family member, romance.  
You have to let people judge you. You simply have to.

The camera pays attention, objectifies.  
There's a stage for a reason.  
*You know what girls find sexy? Confidence.*

But with that bluster some are decked;  
some are almost expelled.  
Some answers are not worth hearing.

## 5: The Outsider

There is a both ways.

As the foreign enters he brings an entrance into his world.

The moral: it's not a good idea.

In an early novel that seems funny now, rogue planets were expected to enter the solar system, pulverizing the earth before leaving. Or, you could go with the more recent

comment courtesy of George: the theory is that if one's relationship self and one's independent self met it would bring about the cataclysmic end of one's independent self.

On the other hand *The Outsiders* (Coppola, 1983) are always hot: the tension between two groups The Greasers and The Socials "Socs" puts Ponyboy Curtis and his best friend Johnny Cade in a bad spot. Ryan is always in a bad spot:

between his potential and his violent roots there is very little to say and he is not good at saying it in a pool party for two that will inevitably be short lived.



## 6: The Girlfriend

The awkwardness of introductions  
because asking what we are is all that we are  
as far as the eye can see. Gabriella's  
hot body slinks out of the pool, shocking  
that she's with such an older man.

The parents' plane is separate and separating  
but worlds colliding  
is necessary; interference is part of growing up.

*You hooked up with my grandma?  
Actually, that's kinda hot.*

The impossibility of parental satisfaction brings its own clouds.  
But the sun is shining. The sun is always shining in California.

Of course, seeing something means something

always witnessing world-building you don't understand  
but which gives you insight into that world, though not your own

forces you to do something, changes something,

*You're too late* means she's already had sex with Luke.

Starcrossed also means crossing.

## 7: The Escape

Getting out of the city  
was always a realization  
although philosophy happened within

a realization that needs to be hidden  
under guise of a nerdy comic book convention

but he doesn't know what happens in TJ  
because what happens in TJ stays in TJ

except  
whatever occurs out of the city  
remains out of the city

is not true

if the people are the same  
the events are the same:  
impending divorce, cheating boyfriend:

the inside breaks into the outside:  
Marissa's overdose.

## 8: The Rescue

After the excess: consequence.  
Her mother is reasoning back to causes:

First, she assumes Ryan  
is the prime mover:

*You'll never get the chance  
to see her again; you even try*

*and I'll make sure you're thrown  
back in juvie where you belong.*

Then she blames Jimmy:

*You're the one who destroyed this family.  
You lied to us. You stole money from your clients*

*and your friends. Why do you think  
she took all those pills?*

But Julie never sees herself  
as possibly capable

of causing that kind of damage  
in her daughter's life.

But, the more she acts  
the more screwed up the world becomes

which leaves the kids  
to plan their own escape from

Marissa's impending sojourn to a mental institution:  
Summer in a candy-striper uniform and

Luke finally showing his allegiance, directing their getaway:

*Take the stairs.*

## 9: The Heights

On the verge after summer  
trepidation before  
the first day of school:  
are we scared of things being the same or of completely changing?

*I'm not nervous, I'm just not going* is reversed into  
*From Such Great Heights:*

“But everything looks perfect from far away  
come down now, but we’ll stay...”

but we’re not talking about space  
as in the video  
just a ferris wheel

you’ve jumped on  
in a grand expression of love. Hence, the world is composed  
of gestures, not of facts

nor of words, except *we’re always one mistake away  
from losing you*. The perspective from that kiss in the

wobbly  
cheap carnival ride

from those heights  
from the idea of change

is that the first  
in a succession  
of firsts

is the day of continuity: The choices will all contend  
for control of the  
oncoming sequence of stability. That is,  
growth requires multiple seasons.

10: The Perfect Couple

Part of the point is  
that Ryan disrupts  
their lives just enough  
for (at least) the viewer to see  
that despite the glamour  
their lives  
aren't any more put together  
than the kid from Chino's.

Part of the point is  
the glee of watching others fall;  
but the crack in the glee  
is the fact of the glee  
which is why our self-image is repaired  
only when we cheer  
as Summer, like, realizes  
that she, um, likes Seth Cohen

and kisses him, fully  
challenging her self-image  
commencing the arc of the background romance:  
the backbone supporting all the melodrama.



12: The Secret

The obvious answer is that Luke's  
constant bullying  
and homophobia  
is due to his latent knowledge  
that his father  
is gay. Thus, the discovery  
is that much more heartbreaking.

There was a lie (his dad's, that he was straight)  
and to cover it up  
another lie was told  
(a more systematic non-linguistic lie  
concerning the nature of their family

and thus, Luke's actions towards  
dorks such as Seth) by another.  
That is,  
his self-identity was forced into being the negation  
of his father. That's okay,  
fathers are always killed  
or forgotten about which allows  
Ryan and Luke to be friends, an utter necessity for the show.

13: The Best Chrismukkah Ever

Sing a round with me:

*Because before Chrismukkah  
There was festivus  
That holiday  
For the rest of us.*

The message is:

you don't have to choose  
but the possibility of a choice  
is pure indie-rock wish fulfillment  
and it's not really until this episode  
that the viewer realizes that  
Seth is the hero for the writers, their alter-ego.

The choice they  
(actually, a singular woman writer, Stephanie Savage)  
present him with  
firmly indicates their allegiance:  
between the hot and the cool.

Two gifts exemplify this dichotomy  
that can only end in tears and growth:

Anna assertively hands him  
a graphic novel she wrote and illustrated:  
*The Adventures of Seth Cohen and Captain Oats.*  
She's the writer. He often chooses the written.  
Summer, hearing that he likes comic books  
wears a slanderously sexy  
Wonder Woman costume under her dress  
for him to undress.

Thus, both gifts  
make Seth a hero. However,  
he must decide the conditions under which  
he is willing to be the hero of his own life.



14: The Countdown

Funny how a good year  
passes so close to another's worst  
as intimately, spontaneously:  
the *Thank You* after an *I Love You*

is the *changes everything*.  
That is, there are no plateaus  
just a constant climbing, hacking fingers into stone  
and a falling of your girl  
into another man's posh hotel room

as you rush, slow motion style  
towards new year's midnight  
against impossible obstacles:  
e.g. a surrogate aunt's debt-ridden debauchery  
locking you in the poolhouse  
until she needs you to break up the party

and you break free just in time to  
breathless snap penthouse's door open  
to the beat of both the countdown and  
the end of the soundtrack  
(“Dice” by Finley Quaye & William Orbit;  
Featuring Beth Orton).

15: The Third Wheel

The third wheel is sure it can be lost.

The third wheel explains that the joke is that it only requires two wheels to coast.

The third wheel is sure there's nothing to it.

The *third wheel* was the first time a band, Rooney, made a special appearance.

The third wheel needs advice on how to turn, how to tell Summer.

The third wheel is an alternating wheel.

The third wheel is where the show gets its dissatisfaction, known as suspense.

The third wheel is also the wheel that connects.

The third wheel covers up the fact that he wants to be the second wheel.

The third wheel is never just a bagel.

The third wheel is slashed so Ryan offers Luke help changing it.

The third wheel isn't clued into the fact that Seth and Anna are dating.

The third wheel has never been to Paris.

It's a good day for third wheels.

It's a good day for a third wheel to fall off.

16: The Links

Sandy married Jimmy's highschool sweetheart, Kirsten  
thus changing Newport's history forever.  
However, after Jimmy went bankrupt and lost Julie  
to Kirsten's father Caleb, he and Sandy "The Sandman" Cohen  
finally became friends  
even though Jimmy, in a moment of weakness, tried to kiss Kirsten  
while she was helping him paint  
his divorcee's bachelor pad  
after she lent him \$100,000 without telling Sandy.

Before they are rivals

men must recognize each other  
as such;

as men; many lights flash

in many heads

since

Jimmy's favorite job ever was managing The Lighthouse in his 20s  
Sandy concludes that they should partner to reopen  
that venerable Newport restaurant again  
but

Jimmy hasn't really grown up.  
Oliver hasn't really bottomed out;

he is just looking for a ploy into Marissa's heart  
and though he will slip past rivalry

his sleazy lack of self-consciousness,  
his inability to recognize others as self-conscious  
will allow him only to destroy

never to get the girl.

Similarly, the restaurant will only ever end up being a negation: cash.

17: The Rivals

The female me, but an inversion is not hot.  
Seth and Anna never fight. What's hot about that?

But if the quality, humor, they see in her new other  
is the quality you are known for

your jealousy will make you do the crazy.

You can always lie about your psychology.  
*and now I don't trust you.*      You see, the letter

wasn't for Marissa even though it was in Marissa's locker.  
It was (supposedly) for Natalie who ended up being a hotel clerk.

Of course, Oliver planned the whole mixup  
"based on a guy a friend of mine dated

who faked having cancer to [hang on to her]."  
Fortunately, that plot point would be short lived:

Oliver's life extended only

from "The Best Chrismukkah Ever" (Season 1, Episode 13)  
to "The Truth" (Season 1, Episode 18).

Death to the death of characters!  
They live in the mind of screens worldwide!

18: The Truth

*It's not about what I believe, I wish it was. It's about what you did.* Actions are their own proof; your intuitions must find their own. They can't always see the larger game plan, that Oliver's footwork, tight with riches, has been designed to ensnare your earnest instincts. They're all you've had to go on up to this point: *but if you want to stay; if you want to be part of this family* [standing in for community] *you're not going to go anywhere; you're not going to see anyone unless Kirsten and I say it's okay.* This, of course, will give you time to think about the fact that in outward appearance you and Oliver are remarkably similar: rage, loneliness, lack of stable parental figures. Unfortunately, this similarity will be a benefit to him for the first few rounds. You'll have to hold your fists in check; he'll know how to use them. But, importantly, the question of character will eventually reveal Oliver's manipulations as the extravagances of his subjectivity pass into madness. He'll think he's teaching you a lesson, but he will, in fact, be the lesson, a lesson to the others about your character, but unfortunately he will also be a lesson to you, that although you have been taken in you are still alone, can't trust her, shouldn't. Judgments require more than intuition, more than what they can't see. Unfortunately, when the proof is in, the pudding is cooked, hardened against relation.

Locked in his hotel room, fake suicide behind him  
he picks up the gun and is revealed as a fraud;

a defeater, defeated  
as you must decide if Marissa's lack of trust

can be mended. The flipside of beautifully blowing in the wind:  
growth cannot be taken for granted. A show has to earn its moments.

19: The Heartbreak

If she's there to talk about it  
she's there to change the equation.

There are always equations:  
it's a type of math you don't understand.

You're in a new city closer to the ocean.  
You can go under: the dating has begun.

But underneath: the guns the lies the drinking the drugging  
they remain the same. As numbers fall, scrambling emotions

one of the wheels, Oliver, has succumbed to the winds of other shows;  
thus, the physics of drama requires another: an imbalance.

If you think she's just here  
for one episode to serve some cocktails and

I can't see if those are shrimp  
but the point is *Look how easy it was for*

*someone to come into our lives, come between us.*  
Therefore, who knows how far this flirting

with Theresa  
will go?

20: Telenovela

They've been showing reruns of the O.C. on the soap opera network.

And what has been learned from this proximity?

First, you can do anything. I won't even give examples.

But, you can make people appear

from anywhere, from any lousy time in anyone's history: BEWARE!

But, Second, these connections will be overloaded with emotion.

Emotions hide the extravagance of the situation, conceal outlandishness.

If the emotions are real the scene cannot help feeling real. That is,

until Seth breaks the suspension bridge of fiction with his constant mention

of *Victor's sexy handlebar moustache* in ironically watched Telenovelas

whose function is to hide the heroism of his romantic last stand on the coffee cart

whose hands are the moment of rewind that never fail to bring tears.

## 21: The Goodbye Girl

What kind of kiss was it? What level of kiss? Where were your feet? Where was your tongue? What did the kiss mean? How did you even get the part? How did you put enough words together for the audition? What's a possible answer to that question, anyway? *Do you really want to know?* Dating the show, *was it a Christina/Madonna peck? Or was it a full on Al and Tipper Gore liplock?* Does it change your feelings for Marissa? Where will Teresa live? Will she always feel like a second-class citizen if she moves to Newport? Why don't you feel like that? Why do you fit right in? What are you, some sort of chameleon? You know she can't move into the poolhouse, right? And everyone keeps asking, if she moves to Newport, will she rent or buy? Shouldn't she go back to Chino and at least face Eddie? What's the main difference between the real O.C. and the TV O.C.? Do you even know who the first actor cast was? Do you think it was you? Are you going to get her pregnant? Wouldn't a teen pregnancy negate the originality of the show? If you get her pregnant will you want her to keep it? If she keeps it will you do the right thing? If she keeps it will the baby resurface in another season? Have you thought any of these things through? You really need to get thinking! If too many questions must remain unanswered your actions may be what are questionable.



22: The L.A.

Of course,

the teen drama is

all about finding ways of prying

itself open  
making itself real again

about finding the emotion  
stuck on the ferris wheel

but we've been tricked  
too many times before.

Nothing can be straightforward anymore:

we must catch Julie and Luke in the act.

We must witness the absurdity of the TV Seth: Grady Bridges:  
*Thank God I had my camera phone.*  
*They are the autograph of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

Trying too hard for a bon mot

along with the *how does that guy do high school?*  
Earning is self-aware.

It's the one time that Paris Hilton can make it real.

23: The Nana

There is a home away from home:  
there is something you need.

*You will bring it back.*

What has happened since they took him in?  
Ryan developed a sense of humor.

*You will bring it back.*

A reversal: seems like  
I could get in a lot more trouble where I'm from.

*You will bring it back.*

24: The Proposal

In the admission of secrets

*I'm leaving town, but that's what I want to tell Marissa.  
Please, please, five minutes it's not that much to ask*

and then I'm gone

to unpack is to admit  
that this life is real

but this life *is* real

*but I think your best friend's room is really disheveled*

sometimes it just takes a friend

to show you what you already know: a lot's changed in a year.

You are a self and have to go through life

“continuing to affirm the happiness of one's initial leap”

with Jimmy Cooper's name

on the liquor license it'll never go through, but since

selfhood is propaedeutic to learning

it appears that we will have to live with who we are

at least until the consequences of the following seasons take hold.

25: The Shower

A shower is not just what will wash over you;  
it also has to be thrown for you, at you.

You can bite your feelings, swallowing the pit  
of someone else getting in between you and your boyfriend

on the eve of your mother's wedding  
to a sugardaddy who is blackmailing you

to move back in with her  
even though she tried to have you locked up, but you

will still feel abandoned even if you don't act so.  
That history is a fact, a stone

off which our shower sprays. A shower  
is a spray of booze, of bitter relatives

and gifts: as if you needed them  
the second time around.

26: The Strip

Dear O.C.,

I have watched you everywhere:  
in Starbucks, in hotels, at home  
on airplanes, and even on the chinatown bus  
secretly and out in the open  
with wine and with coffee  
with dinner and with breakfast.  
I have watched you  
on sick days and in full summer health.

Dear O.C.,

I began watching you at the behest of a friend.  
He said I should give you a try.  
*What's it about?* I asked.  
*It doesn't matter; it's so cool.*  
At first you were overbearing, ridiculous, pure fantasy.  
*I mean, kids don't really live like that, do they?*  
But then, you were fantastic. To be honest, it was the passions you engendered:  
wish fulfillment glued together with honest emotion:  
the pleasure principle and the reality principle married at long last.  
I just want you to know that I have always taken you seriously.  
I have never, not once, liked you ironically.  
It's all or nothing with me.

Dear O.C.,

I love you                    *every angle and every frame.*

27: The Ties that Bind

which is not to be confused with the later Grey's Anatomy

*These Ties That Bind* (Airdate: Nov. 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008).

*Stay with me*  
is what they always say  
when someone is dying  
as if staying awake  
will prevent the end

of the season

but it won't;  
after you go to sleep tonight  
there will be  
no more

until next season

as innocence is bound to experience; as the place where you are

is bound to the place that is represented: that is, wouldn't it be great if I could actually watch you in Orange County? Or would that break some sort of time-space continuum?

In that case, pleasure would tie itself inside the sail of reality

as the final credits rolled (Airdate: May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2004)

before summer.

Epilogue: Series Finale

*The End's Not Near, It's Here*  
(Episode 92)

The viewer shoots six months into the future, six months after the earthquake shook everything away from its foundations. And what do we want to see after the plot is free from the necessity of another season? That is, what could we want from the end that we could not get from the beginning? Whatever the answer, we deserve an ending. We've stuck with the characters for long enough and we deserve something from them. But what is it that we deserve? They call it closure, but it is something more like the possibility of extension. We want the right choices to be made. We want the characters to fulfill themselves; that is, we want the characters to fulfill their Characters. Don't for a second think that we don't depend on them for our fulfillment.

A TV show, but especially a teen drama, thrives on the tension of the guy not getting the girl (think of Joey and Dawson as you think of Ryan and Marissa), not having fate line up for an easy life, and not making the right choices (then, if it's a great TV show, showing the viewer the consequences of those choices). At the end, though, this tension can be released. Of course, in the case of the O.C., much of this discharge already occurred when Marissa was killed off at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> (and inarguably the worst) season. In an interview, the O.C.'s creator, Josh Schwartz, said about the decision to kill Marissa, "This was always going to be a season of great upheaval and change, and at the end of the year, with graduation and people moving out into different directions, we always knew that the show was never going to be the same." To explain, Marissa was killed in a car chase at the end of their senior year; that is, she was killed right where most shows falter: between high school and college. Her death provided a poignant foil to the troubling shift that most shows face. Thus, killing off Marissa was a formalist's answer to an essentially formal problem of teen dramas. It covered up, and therefore brought to a radical conclusion, certain aspects of the show, and allowed the fourth season some (often humorous) room to breathe. This is just to say that, in some sense, the fourth season of the O.C. was a bonus, for it allowed us to see the importance of the struggles of the characters apart from the central drama of the show (that is, apart from the tragic love between Marissa and Ryan).

In this extra inning, the characters are living in an era where the lessons of the remarriage comedy have been essentially absorbed. As Stanley Cavell defines this genre, the "central idea is that the validity or bond of

marriage is no longer assured or legitimized by church or state or sexual compatibility or children but by something I call the willingness for remarriage, a way of continuing to affirm the happiness of one's initial leap, as if the chance of happiness exists only when it seconds itself." That is, we know that happiness as a couple depends upon the flourishing of the individuals in that couple. There is no question of that. This is why Seth has to push Summer to be an environmentalist on her own (that *has to* is the viewer's ethical demand). He says, "You gotta go, Summer." She answers in a way that serves the purpose of assuring Seth that she loves him, "but what about us?" He replies, chivalrously, "This is for us, it's for both of us." That is, he has grown.

Our problem, different from the problems of the past, is that we don't necessarily know what will make us flourish. We can only guess. But we can help each other guess (with the help of an epilogue). Julie will go to college and not marry either Gordon Bullitt or Frank Atwood; Seth and Summer will get married; Ryan will become a contractor. This ending is a seconding of selves for each of the characters. Happiness exists in the validity of eternal return, which comes in the infinite loop of reruns, and conquers such a return's concomitant terror. Nietzsche writes that his "formula for human greatness is amor fati: that one wants to have nothing different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity...not merely to bear the necessary, but to love it." An epilogue is a love of fate, at least a need to control fate, or the illusion that we do. Since an is presented to us as being in the future it can really only be a guess, a guess that is made between writer and audience, a promise that we make together, a performative of last words.



