LAW 1

NEVER OUTSHINE THE MASTER

JUDGMENT

Always make those above you feel comfortably *superior.* In your desire to please and impress them, do not go too *far in displaying your talents or you might accomplish the opposite—inspire fear and insecurity. Make your masters appear more brilliant than they are and you will attain the heights of power.*

TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW

Nicolas Fouquet, Louis XIV's finance minister in the first years of his reign, was a generous man who loved lavish parties, pretty women, and poetry. He also loved money, for he led an extravagant lifestyle. Fouquet was clever and very much indispensable to the king, so when the prime minister, Jules Mazarin, died, in 1661, the finance minister expected to be named the successor. Instead, the king decided to abolish the position. This and other signs made Fouquet suspect that he was falling out of favor, and so he decided to ingratiate himself with the king by staging the most spectacular party the world had ever seen. The party's ostensible purpose would be to commemorate the completion of Fouquet's château, Vaux-le-Vicomte, but its real function was to pay tribute to the king, the guest of honor.

The most brilliant nobility of Europe and some of the greatest minds of the time—La Fontaine, La Rochefoucauld, Madame de Sévigné attended the party. Molière wrote a play for the occasion, in which he himself was to perform at the evening's conclusion. The party began with a lavish seven course dinner, featuring foods from the Orient never before tasted in France, as well as new dishes created especially for the night. The meal was accompanied with music commissioned by Fouquet to

honor the king.
After dinner there was a promenade through the château's gardens. The grounds and fountains of
Vaux-le-Vicomte were to be the inspiration for Versailles. Fouquet personally accompanied the young king through the geometrically aligned arrangements of
shrubbery and flower beds. Arriving at the gardens' canals, they witnessed a fireworks display,
which was followed by the performance of Molière's play. The party ran well into the night and
everyone agreed it was the most amazing affair they had ever attended.
The next day, Fouquet was arrested by the king's head musketeer, D'Artagnan. Three months later
he went on trial for stealing from the country's treasury. (Actually, most of the stealing he was
accused of he had done on the king's behalf and with the king's permission.) Fouquet was found guilty
and sent to the most isolated prison in France, high in the Pyrenees Mountains, where he spent the last
twenty years of his life in solitary confinement.**Interpretation**
Louis XIV, the Sun King, was a proud and arrogant man who wanted to be the center of attention at all
times; he could not countenance being outdone in lavishness by anyone, and certainly not his finance
minister. To succeed Fouquet, Louis chose Jean-Baptiste Colbert, a man famous for his parsimony
and for giving the dullest parties in Paris. Colbert made sure that any money liberated from the
treasury went straight into Louis's hands. With the money, Louis built a palace even more magnificent
than Fouquet's—the glorious palace of Versailles. He used the same architects, decorators, and
garden designer. And at Versailles, Louis hosted parties even more extravagant than the one that cost
Fouquet his freedom.
Let us examine the situation. The evening of the party, as Fouquet presented spectacle on spectacle
to Louis, each more magnificent than the one before, he imagined the affair as demonstrating his

loyalty and devotion to the king. Not only did he think the party would put him back in the king's favor, he thought it would show his good taste, his connections, and his popularity, making him indispensable to the king and demonstrating that he would make an excellent prime minister. Instead, however, each new spectacle, each appreciative smile bestowed by the guests on Fouquet, made it seem to Louis that his own friends and subjects were more charmed by the finance minister than by the king himself, and that Fouquet was actually flaunting his wealth and power. Rather than flattering Louis XIV, Fouquet's elaborate party offended the king's vanity. Louis would not admit this to anyone, of course—instead, he found a convenient excuse to rid himself of a man who had inadvertently made him feel insecure.

Such is the fate, in some form or other, of all those who unbalance the master's sense of self, poke holes in his vanity, or make him doubt his pre-eminence.

When the evening began, Fouquet was at the top of the world.
By the time it had ended, he was at the bottom.
Voltaire, 1694-1778

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

In the early 1600s, the Italian astronomer and mathematician Galileo found himself in a precarious position. He depended on the generosity of great rulers to support his research, and so, like all Renaissance scientists, he would sometimes make gifts of his inventions and discoveries to the leading patrons of the time. Once, for instance, he presented a military compass he had invented to the Duke of Gonzaga. Then he dedicated a book explaining the use of the compass to the Medicis. Both rulers were grateful, and through them Galileo was able to find more students to teach. No matter how great the discovery, however, his patrons usually paid him with gifts, not cash. This made for a life of

constant insecurity and dependence. There must be an easier way, he thought.

Galileo hit on a new strategy in 1610, when he discovered the moons of Jupiter. Instead of dividing the discovery among his patrons—giving one the telescope he had used, dedicating a book to another, and so on—as he had done in the past, he decided to focus exclusively on the Medicis. He chose the Medicis for one reason: Shortly after Cosimo I had established the Medici dynasty, in 1540, he had made Jupiter, the mightiest of the gods, the Medici symbol—a symbol of a power that went beyondpolitics and banking, one linked to ancient Rome and its divinities.

Galileo turned his discovery of Jupiter's moons into a cosmic event honoring the Medicis' greatness. Shortly after the discovery, he announced that "the bright stars [the moons of Jupiter] offered themselves in the heavens" to his telescope at the same time as Cosimo II's enthronement. He said that the number of the moons—four—harmonized with the number of the Medicis (Cosimo II had three brothers) and that the moons orbited Jupiter as these four sons revolved around Cosimo I, the dynasty's founder. More than coincidence, this showed that the heavens themselves reflected the ascendancy of the Medici family. After he dedicated the discovery to the Medicis, Galileo commissioned an emblem representing Jupiter sitting on a cloud with the four stars circling about him, and presented this to Cosimo II as a symbol of his link to the stars.

In 1610 Cosimo II made Galileo his official court philosopher and mathematician, with a full salary. For a scientist this was the coup of a lifetime. The days of begging for patronage were over.

Interpretation

In one stroke, Galileo gained more with his new strategy than he had in years of begging. The reason is simple: All masters want to appear more brilliant than other people.

They do not care about science or empirical truth or the latest invention ; they care about their name and their glory. Galileo gave the Medicis infinitely more glory by linking their name with cosmic forces than he had by making them the patrons of some new scientific gadget or discovery.

Scientists are not spared the vagaries of court life and patronage. They too must serve masters who hold the purse strings. And their great intellectual powers can make the master feel insecure, as if he were only there to supply the funds—an ugly, ignoble job. The producer of a great work wants to feel he is more than just the provider of the financing. He wants to appear creative and powerful, and also more important than the work produced in his name. Instead of insecurity you must give him glory.

Galileo did not challenge the intellectual authority of the Medicis with his discovery, or make them feel inferior in any way; by literally aligning them with the stars, he made them shine brilliantly among the courts of Italy. He did not outshine the master, he made the master outshine all others.

KEYS TO POWER

Everyone has insecurities. When you show yourself in the world and display your talents, you naturally stir up all kinds of resentment, envy, and other manifestations of insecurity. This is to be expected. You cannot spend your life worrying about the petty feelings of others. With those above you, however, you must take a different approach: When it comes to power, outshining the master is perhaps the worst mistake of all.

Do not fool yourself into thinking that life has changed much since the days of Louis XIV and the Medicis. Those who attain high standing in life are like kings and queens: They want to feel secure in their positions, and superior to those around them in intelligence, wit, and charm. It is a deadly but common misperception to believe that by displaying and vaunting your gifts and talents, you are

winning the master's affection. He may feign appreciation, but at his first opportunity he will replace
you with someone less intelligent, less attractive, less threatening, just as Louis XIV replaced thesparkling Fouquet with the bland Colbert. And as with Louis, he will not admit the truth, but will find an excuse to rid himself of your presence.
This Law involves two rules that you must realize. First, you can inadvertently outshine a master
simply by being yourself. There are masters who are more insecure than others, monstrously insecure;
you may naturally outshine them by your charm and grace.
No one had more natural talents than Astorre Manfredi, prince of Faenza. The most handsome of all
the young princes of Italy, he captivated his subjects with his generosity and open spirit.
In the year 1500, Cesare Borgia laid siege to Faenza. When the city surrendered, the citizens
expected the worst from the cruel Borgia, who, however, decided to spare the town: He simply
occupied its fortress, executed none of its citizens, and allowed Prince Manfredi, eighteen at the time,
to remain with his court, in complete freedom.
A few weeks later, though, soldiers hauled Astorre Manfredi away to a Roman prison. A year after
that, his body was fished out of the River Tiber, a stone tied around his neck. Borgia justified the
horrible deed with some sort of trumped-up charge of treason and conspiracy, but the real problem
was that he was notoriously vain and insecure. The young man was outshining him without even
trying. Given Manfredi's natural talents, the prince's mere presence made Borgia seem less attractive
and charismatic. The lesson is simple: If you cannot help being charming and superior, you must learn
to avoid such monsters of vanity. Either that, or find a way to mute your good qualities when in the
company of a Cesare Borgia.
Second, never imagine that because the master loves you, you can do anything you want. Entire

books could be written about favorites who fell out of favor by taking their status for granted, for daring to outshine. In late-sixteenth-century Japan, the favorite of Emperor Hideyoshi was a man called Sen no Rikyu. The premier artist of the tea ceremony, which had become an obsession with the nobility, he was one of Hideyoshi's most trusted advisers, had his own apartment in the palace, and was honored throughout Japan. Yet in 1591, Hideyoshi had him arrested and sentenced to death.

Rikyu took his own life, instead. The cause for his sudden change of fortune was discovered later: It seems that Rikyu, former peasant and later court favorite, had had a wooden statue made of himself wearing sandals (a sign of nobility) and posing loftily. He had had this statue placed in the most important temple inside the palace gates, in clear sight of the royalty who often would pass by. To Hideyoshi this signified that Rikyu had no sense of limits. Presuming that he had the same rights as those of the highest nobility, he had forgotten that his position depended on the emperor, and had come to believe that he had earned it on his own. This was an unforgivable miscalculation of his own importance and he paid for it with his life. Remember the following: Never take your position for granted and never let any favors you receive go to your head.

Knowing the dangers of outshining your master, you can turn this Law to your advantage. First you must flatter and puff up your master. Overt flattery can be effective but has its limits; it is too direct and obvious, and looks bad to other courtiers. Discreet flattery is much more powerful. If you are more intelligent than your master, for example, seem the opposite: Make him appear more intelligent than you. Act naive. Make it seem that you need his expertise. Commit harmless mistakes that will not hurt you in the long run but will give you the chance to ask for his help. Masters adore such requests.

A master who cannot bestow on you the gifts of his experience may direct rancor and ill will at you instead.

If your ideas are more creative than your master's, ascribe them to him, in as public a manner as possible. Make it clear that your advice is merely an echo of *his* advice.

If you surpass your master in wit, it is okay to play the role of the court jester, but do not make himappear cold and surly by comparison. Tone down your humor if necessary, and find ways to make him seem the dispenser of amusement and good cheer. If you are naturally more sociable and generous than your master, be careful not to be the cloud that blocks his radiance from others. He must appear as the sun around which everyone revolves, radiating power and brilliance, the center of attention. If you are thrust into the position of entertaining him, a display of your limited means may win you his sympathy. Any attempt to impress him with your grace and generosity can prove fatal:

Learn from Fouquet or pay the price.

In all of these cases it is not a weakness to disguise your strengths if in the end they lead to power.

By letting others outshine you, you remain in control, instead of being a victim of their insecurity. This will all come in handy the day you decide to rise above your inferior status. If, like Galileo, you can make your master shine even more in the eyes of others, then you are a godsend and you will be instantly promoted.

Image:
The Stars in the Sky. There can be only one sun at a time. Never obscure the sunlight, or rival the sun's brilliance; rather, fade into the sky and find ways to heighten the master star's

intensity.
Authority: Avoid outshining the master. All superiority is odious, but the superiority of a subject over
his prince is not only stupid, it is fatal. This is a lesson that the stars in the sky teach us—they may be
related to the sun, and just as brilliant, but they never appear in her company. (Baltasar Gracián,
1601-1658)

REVERSAL

You cannot worry about upsetting every person you come across, but you must be selectively cruel. If
your superior is a falling star, there is nothing to fear from outshining him. Do not be merciful—your
master had no such scruples in his own cold-blooded climb to the top. Gauge his strength. If he is
weak, discreetly hasten his downfall: Outdo, outcharm, outsmart him at key moments. If he is very
weak and ready to fall, let nature take its course. Do not risk outshining a feeble superior—it might
appear cruel or spiteful. But if your master is firm in his position, yet you know yourself to be the
more capable, bide your time and be patient. It is the natural course of things that power eventually
fades and weakens. Your master will fall someday, and if you play it right, you will outlive and
someday outshine him.LAW 2

NEVER PUT TOO MUCH TRUST IN FRIENDS, LEARN HOW TO USE ENEMIES

JUDGMENT

*Be wary of friends—they will betray you more quickly, for they are easily aroused to envy. They
also become spoiled and tyrannical. But hire a former enemy and he will be more loyal than a
friend, because he has more to prove. In fact, you have more to fear from friends than from
enemies. If you have no enemies, find a way to make them.*

TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW

In the mid-ninth century A.D., a young man named Michael III assumed the throne of the Byzantine
Empire. His mother, the Empress Theodora, had been banished to a nunnery, and her lover,
Theoctistus, had been murdered ; at the head of the conspiracy to depose Theodora and enthrone
Michael had been Michael's uncle, Bardas, a man of intelligence and ambition. Michael was now a
young, inexperienced ruler, surrounded by in triguers, murderers, and profligates. In this time of peril
he needed someone he could trust as his councillor, and his thoughts turned to Basilius, his best
friend. Basilius had no experience whatsoever in government and politics—in fact, he was the head
of the royal stables—but he had proven his love and gratitude time and again.

To have a good enemy, choose a friend: He knows where to strike.
DIANF DE POITIERS. 1499-1566. MISTRESS OF HENRI II OF FRANCE

They had met a few years before, when Michael had been visiting the stables just as a wild horse
got loose. Basilius, a young groom from peasant Macedonian stock, had saved Michael's life. The
groom's strength and courage had impressed Michael, who immediately raised Basilius from the
obscurity of being a horse trainer to the position of head of the stables. He loaded his friend with gifts
and favors and they became inseparable. Basilius was sent to the finest school in Byzantium, and the
crude peasant became a cultured and sophisticated courtier.

Every time I bestow a vacant office I make a hundred discontented persons and one ingrate.
Louis XIV, 1638-1715

Now Michael was emperor, and in need of someone loyal. Who could he better trust with the post
of chamberlain and chief councillor than a young man who owed him everything?
Basilius could be trained for the job and Michael loved him like a brother. Ignoring the advice of

those who recommended the much more qualified Bardas, Michael chose his friend.

Thus for my own part l have more than once been deceived by the person I loved most and of
whose love, above everyone else's, I have been most confident. So that I believe that u may beright to love and serve one person above all others. according to merit and *worth, but never to*
trust so much in this tempting trap of friendship as to have cause to repent of it later on.

BALDASSARE CASTIGLIONE, 1478-1529

Basilius learned well and was soon advising the emperor on all matters of state. The only problem
seemed to be money—Basiiius never had enough. Exposure to the splendor of Byzantine court life
made him avaricious for the perks of power. Michael doubled, then tripled his salary, ennobled him,
and married him off to his own mistress, Eudoxia Ingerina. Keeping such a trusted friend and adviser
satisfied was worth any price. But more trouble was to come. Bardas was now head of the army, and
Basilius convinced Michael that the man was hopelessly ambitious. Under the illusion that he could
control his nephew, Bardas had conspired to put him on the throne, and he could conspire again, this
time to get rid of Michael and assume the crown himself. Basilius poured poison into Michael's ear
until the emperor agreed to have his uncle murdered. During a great horse race, Basilius closed in on
Bardas in the crowd and stabbed him to death. Soon after, Basilius asked that he replace Bardas as
head of the army, where he could keep control of the realm and quell rebellion. This was granted.

Now Basilius's power and wealth only grew, and a few years later Michael, in financial straits
from his own extravagance, asked him to pay back some of the money he had borrowed over the
years. To Michael's shock and astonishment, Basilius refused, with a look of such impudence that the
emperor suddenly realized his predicament: The former stable boy had more money, more allies in

the army and senate, and in the end more power than the emperor himself. A few weeks later, after a night of heavy drinking, Michael awoke to find himself surrounded by soldiers. Basilius watched as they stabbed the emperor to death. Then, after proclaiming himself emperor, he rode his horse through the streets of Byzantium, brandishing the head of his former benefactor and best friend at the end of a long pike.

THE SNAKE. THE FARMER. AND THE HERON

A snake chased by hunters asked a farmer to save its life. To hide it from its pursuers, the farmer squatted and let the snake crawl into his belly. But when the danger had passed and the farmer asked the snake to come out, the snake refused. It was warm and safe inside. On his way home, the man saw a heron and went up to him and whispered what had happened. The heron told him to squat and strain to eject the snake. When the snake snuck its head out, the heron caught it, pulled it out, and killed it. The farmer was worried that the snake's poison might still be inside him, and the heron told him that the cure for snake poison was to cook and eat six white fowl. "You're a white fowl," said the farmer. "You'll do for a start." He grabbed the heron, put it in a bag, and carried it home, where he hung it up while he told his wife what had happened. "I'm surprised at *you, " said the wife. "The bird does you a kindness, rids you of the evil in your belly, saves your life in fact, yet you catch it and talk of killing it. She immediately released the heron, and it flew away. But on its way, it gouged out her eyes.*

Moral: When you see water flowing uphill, it means that someone is repaying a kindness.

AFRICAN FOLK TALE

Interpretation

Michael III staked his future on the sense of gratitude he thought Basilius must feel for him. SurelyBasilius would serve him best; he owed the emperor his wealth, his education, and his position. Then, once Basilius was in power, anything he needed it was best to give to him, strengthening the bonds between the two men. It was only on the fateful day when the emperor saw that impudent smile on Basilius's face that he realized his deadly mistake.

He had created a monster. He had allowed a man to see power up close—a man who then wanted more, who asked for anything and got it, who felt encumbered by the charity he had received and simply did what many people do in such a situation: They forget the favors they have received and imagine they have earned their success by their own merits.

At Michael's moment of realization, he could still have saved his own life, but friendship and love blind every man to their interests. Nobody believes a friend can betray. And Michael went on disbelieving until the day his head ended up on a pike.

Lord, protect me from my friends; I can take care of my enemies.
Voltaire, 1694-1778

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

For several centuries after the fall of the Han Dynasty (A.D. 222), Chinese history followed the same pattern of violent and bloody coups, one after the other. Army men would plot to kill a weak emperor, then would replace him on the Dragon Throne with a strong general. The general would start a new dynasty and crown himself emperor; to ensure his own survival he would kill off his fellow generals.

A few years later, however, the pattern would resume: New generals would rise up and assassinate him or his sons in their turn. To be emperor of China was to be alone, surrounded by a pack of enemies—it was the least powerful, least secure position in the realm.

In A.D. 959, General Chao K'uang-yin became Emperor Sung. He knew the odds, the probability

that within a year or two he would be murdered ; how could he break the pattern? Soon after
becoming emperor, Sung ordered a banquet to celebrate the new dynasty, and invited the most
powerful commanders in the army. After they had drunk much wine, he dismissed the guards and
everybody else except the generals, who now feared he would murder them in one fell swoop.
Instead, he addressed them: “The whole day is spent in fear, and I am unhappy both at the table and in
my bed. For which one of you does not dream of ascending the throne? I do not doubt your allegiance,
but if by some chance your subordinates, seeking wealth and position, were to force the emperor’s
yellow robe upon you in turn, how could you refuse it?” Drunk and fearing for their lives, the generals
proclaimed their innocence and their loyalty. But Sung had other ideas: “The best way to pass one’s
days is in peaceful enjoyment of riches and honor. If you are willing to give up your commands, I am
ready to provide you with fine estates and beautiful dwellings where you may take your pleasure with
singers and girls as your companions.”
The astonished generals realized that instead of a life of anxiety and struggle Sung was offering
them riches and security. The next day, all of the generals tendered their resignations, and they retired
as nobles to the estates that Sung bestowed on them.
There are manv who think therefore that a wise prince ought, when he has the chance, to foment
astutely some enmity, so that by suppressing It he will augment his greatness. Princes, and
especially new ones, have found more faith and more usefulness in those men, whom at thebeginning of their power they regarded with suspicion, than in those they at first confided in.
Pandolfo Petrucci, prince of Siena, governed his state more bv those whom he suspected than by
others.
Niccoi o MACHIAVELLI, 1469-1527

In one stroke, Sung turned a pack of “friendly” wolves, who would likely have betrayed him, into a group of docile lambs, far from all power.

Over the next few years Sung continued his campaign to secure his rule. In A.D. 971, King Liu of the Southern Han finally surrendered to him after years of rebellion. To Liu’s astonishment, Sung gave him a rank in the imperial court and invited him to the palace to seal their newfound friendship with wine. As King Liu took the glass that Sung offered him, he hesitated, fearing it contained poison.

“Your subject’s crimes certainly merit death,” he cried out, “but I beg Your Majesty to spare your subject’s life. Indeed I dare not drink this wine.” Emperor Sung laughed, took the glass from Liu, and swallowed it himself. There was no poison. From then on Liu became his most trusted and loyal friend.

At the time, China had splintered into many smaller kingdoms. When Ch‘ien Shu, the king of one of these, was defeated, Sung’s ministers advised the emperor to lock this rebel up. They presented documents proving that he was still conspiring to kill Sung. When Ch’ien Shu came to visit the emperor, however, instead of locking him up, Sung honored him. He also gave him a package, which he told the former king to open when he was halfway home. Ch’ien Shu opened the bundle on his return journey and saw that it contained all the papers documenting his conspiracy. He realized that Sung knew of his murderous plans, yet had spared him nonetheless. This generosity won him over, and he too became one of Sung’s most loyal vassals.

A brahman, a great expert in Veda who has become a great archer as well, offers his services to his good friend, who is now the king. The brahman cries out when he sees the king, “Recognize me, your friend!” The king answers him with contempt and then explains: “Yes, we were friends

before, but our friendship was based on what power we had.... I was friends with you, good
brahman, because it served my purpose. No pauper is friend to the rich, no fool to the wise, no
coward to the brave. An old friend—who needs him? It is two men of equal wealth and equal birth
who contract friendship and marriage, not a *rich man and* a *pauper.... An old friend—who needs*
him?
THE MAHABHARATA, C. THIRD CENTURY B.C.

Interpretation

A Chinese proverb compares friends to the jaws and teeth of a dangerous animal: If you are not careful, you will find them chewing you up. Emperor Sung knew the jaws he was passing between when he assumed the throne: His "friends" in the army would chew him up like meat, and if he somehow survived, his "friends" in the government would have him for supper. Emperor Sung would have no truck with "friends"—he bribed his fellow generals with splendid estates and kept them far away. This was a much better way to emasculate them than killing them, which would only have led other generals to seek vengeance. And Sung would have nothing to do with "friendly" ministers. More often than not, they would end up drinking his famous cup of poisoned wine.

Instead of relying on friends, Sung used his enemies, one after the other, transforming them into far more reliable subjects. While a friend expects more and more favors, and seethes with jealousy, theseformer enemies expected nothing and got everything. A man suddenly spared the guillotine is a grateful man indeed, and will go to the ends of the earth for the man who has pardoned him. In time, these former enemies became Sung's most trusted friends.

Pick up a bee from kindness, and learn the limitations of kindness.
SUFI PROVERB

And Sung was finally able to break the pattern of coups, violence, and civil war—the Sung

Dynasty ruled China for more than three hundred years.
In a speech Abraham Lincoln delivered at the height of the Civil War,
he referred to the Southerners as fellow human beings who were in error. An elderly lady chastised him for not calling them irreconcilable
enemies who must be destroyed. "Why, madam," Lincoln replied, "do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?"

KEYS TO POWER

It is natural to want to employ your friends when you find yourself in times of need. The world is a
harsh place, and your friends soften the harshness. Besides, you know them. Why depend on a
stranger when you have a friend at hand?
Men are more ready to repay an injury than a benefit, because gratitude is a burden and revenge a
pleasure.
TACITUS, *c*. A.D. 55-120
The problem is that you often do not know your friends as well as you imagine. Friends often agree
on things in order to avoid an argument. They cover up their unpleasant qualities so as to not offend
each other. They laugh extra hard at each other's jokes. Since honesty rarely strengthens friendship,
you may never know how a friend truly feels. Friends will say that they love your poetry, adore your
music, envy your taste in clothes—maybe they mean it, often they do not.
When you decide to hire a friend, you gradually discover the qualities he or she has kept hidden.
Strangely enough, it is your act of kindness that unbalances everything. People want to feel they
deserve their good fortune. The receipt of a favor can become oppressive: It means you have been
chosen because you are a friend, not necessarily because you are deserving. There is almost a touch
of condescension in the act of hiring friends that secretly afflicts them. The injury will come out

slowly: A little more honesty, flashes of resentment and envy here and there, and before you know it
your friendship fades. The more favors and gifts you supply to revive the friendship, the less gratitude
you receive.
Ingratitude has a long and deep history. It has demonstrated its powers for so many centuries, that it
is truly amazing that people continue to underestimate them. Better to be wary. If you never expect
gratitude from a friend, you will be pleasantly surprised when they do prove grateful.
The problem with using or hiring friends is that it will inevitably limit your power. The friend is
rarely the one who is most able to help you; and in the end, skill and competence are far more
important than friendly feelings. (Michael III had a man right under his nose who would have steered
him right and kept him alive: That man was Bardas.)PROI LING BY OUR \111
King Hiero chanced upon a time, speaking with one of his enemies, to be told in a reproachful
manner that he had stinking breath. Whereupon the good king, being somewhat dismayed in
himself, as soon as he returned home chided his wife, "How does it happen that you never told me
of this problem?" The woman, being a simple, chaste. and harmless dame, said, "Sir, l had
thought all men breath had smelled so." Thus it is plain that faults that are evident to the senses,
gross and corporal, or otherwise notorious to the world, we know by our enemies sooner than by
our friends and familiars.
PLUTARCH, C. A.D. 46-120
All working situations require a kind of distance between people. You are trying to work, not make
friends; friendliness (real or false) only obscures that fact. The key to power, then, is the ability to
judge who is best able to further your interests in all situations. Keep friends for friendship, but work
with the skilled and competent.

Your enemies, on the other hand, are an untapped gold mine that you must learn to exploit. When Talleyrand, Napoleon's foreign minister, decided in 1807 that his boss was leading France to ruin, and the time had come to turn against him, he understood the dangers of conspiring against the emperor; he needed a partner, a confederate—what friend could he trust in such a project? He chose Joseph Fouché, head of the secret police, his most hated enemy, a man who had even tried to have him assassinated. He knew that their former hatred would create an opportunity for an emotional reconciliation. He knew that Fouché would expect nothing from him, and in fact would work to prove that he was worthy of Talleyrand's choice; a person who has something to prove will move mountains for you. Finally, he knew that his relationship with Fouché would be based on mutual self interest, and would not be contaminated by personal feeling. The selection proved perfect; although the conspirators did not succeed in toppling Napoleon, the union of such powerful but unlikely partners generated much interest in the cause; opposition to the emperor slowly began to spread. And from then on, Talleyrand and Fouché had a fruitful working relationship. Whenever you can, bury the hatchet with an enemy, and make a point of putting him in your service.

As Lincoln said, you destroy an enemy when you make a friend of him. In 1971, during the Vietnam War, Henry Kissinger was the target of an unsuccessful kidnapping attempt, a conspiracy involving, among others, the renowned antiwar activist priests the Berrigan brothers, four more Catholic priests, and four nuns. In private, without informing the Secret Service or the Justice Department, Kissinger arranged a Saturday-morning meeting with three of the alleged kidnappers. Explaining to his guests that he would have most American soldiers out of Vietnam by mid-1972, he completely charmed

them. They gave him some “Kidnap Kissinger” buttons and one of them remained a friend of his for
years, visiting him on several occasions. This was not just a onetime ploy: Kissinger made a policy
of working with those who disagreed with him. Colleagues commented that he seemed to get along
better with his enemies than with his friends.
Without enemies around us, we grow lazy. An enemy at our heels sharpens our wits, keeping us
focused and alert. It is sometimes better, then, to use enemies as enemies rather than transforming
them into friends or allies.
Mao Tse-tung saw conflict as key in his approach to power. In 1937 the Japanese invaded China,
interrupting the civil war between Mao’s Communists and their enemy, the Nationalists.
Fearing that the Japanese would wipe them out, some Communist leaders advocated leaving the
Nationalists to fight the Japanese, and using the time to recuperate.
Mao disagreed: The Japanesecould not possibly defeat and occupy a vast country like China for long. Once they left, the
Communists would have grown rusty if they had been out of combat for several years, and would be
ill prepared to reopen their struggle with the Nationalists. To fight a formidable foe like the Japanese,
in fact, would be the perfect training for the Communists’ ragtag army. Mao’s plan was adopted, and
it worked: By the time the Japanese finally retreated, the Communists had gained the fighting
experience that helped them defeat the Nationalists.
Years later, a Japanese visitor tried to apologize to Mao for his country’s invasion of China. Mao
interrupted, “Should I not thank you instead?” Without a worthy opponent, he explained, a man or
group cannot grow stronger.
Mao’s strategy of constant conflict has several key components. First, be certain that in the long run
you will emerge victorious. Never pick a fight with someone you are not sure you can defeat, as Mao

knew the Japanese would be defeated in time. Second, if you have no apparent enemies, you must sometimes set up a convenient target, even turning a friend into an enemy. Mao used this tactic time and again in politics. Third, use such enemies to define your cause more clearly to the public, even framing it as a struggle of good against evil. Mao actually encouraged China's disagreements with the Soviet Union and the United States; without clear-cut enemies, he believed, his people would lose any sense of what Chinese Communism meant. A sharply defined enemy is a far stronger argument for your side than all the words you could possibly put together.

Never let the presence of enemies upset or distress you—you are far better off with a declared opponent or two than not knowing where your real enemies lie. The man of power welcomes conflict, using enemies to enhance his reputation as a surefooted fighter who can be relied upon in times of uncertainty.

Image: The Jaws of Ingratitude. Knowing what would happen if you put a finger in the mouth of a lion, you would stay clear of it. With friends you will have no such caution, and if you hire them, they will eat you alive with ingratitude.

Authority: Know how to use enemies for your own profit. You must learn to grab a sword not by its blade, which would cut you, but by the handle, which allows you to defend yourself. The wise man profits more from his enemies, than a fool from his friends. (Baltasar Gracián, 1601-1658)

REVERSAL

Although it is generally best not to mix work with friendship, there are times when a friend can be used to greater effect than an enemy. A man of power, for example, often has dirty work that has to be done, but for the sake of appearances it is generally preferable to have other people do it for him;

friends often do this the best, since their affection for him makes them willing to take chances. Also, if your plans go awry for some reason, you can use a friend as a convenient scapegoat. This “fall of the favorite” was a trick often used by kings and sovereigns: They would let their closest friend at court take the fall for a mistake, since the public would not believe that they would deliberately sacrifice a friend for such a purpose. Of course, after you play that card, you have lost your friend forever. It is best, then, to reserve the scapegoat role for someone who is close to you but not too close.

Finally, the problem about working with friends is that it confuses the boundaries and distances that working requires. But if both partners in the arrangement understand the dangers involved, a friendoften can be employed to great effect. You must never let your guard down in such a venture, however; always be on the lookout for any signs of emotional disturbance such as envy and ingratitude. Nothing is stable in the realm of power, and even the closest of friends can be transformed into the worst of enemies

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LAW 3

CONCEAL YOUR INTENTIONS

JUDGMENT

Keep people off-balance and in the dark by never revealing the purpose behind your actions. If they have no clue what you are up to, they cannot prepare a defense. Guide them far enough down the wrong path, envelop them in enough smoke, and by the time they realize your intentions, it will be too late.

PART I: USE DECOYED OBJECTS OF DESIRE AND RED HERRINGS TO THROW PEOPLE OFF THE SCENT

If at any point in the *deception* you practice *people* have the slightest *suspicionas to your intentions, all is lost. Do not give them the chance to sense what you are up to: Throw them off the scent by dragging red herrings across the path. Use false sincerity, send ambiguous signals, set up misleading objects of desire. Unable to distinguish the genuine from the false, they cannot pick out your real goal.*

TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW

Over several weeks, Ninon de Lenclos, the most infamous courtesan of seventeenth-century France, listened patiently as the Marquis de Sevigné explained his struggles in pursuing a beautiful but difficult young countess. Ninon was sixty-two at the time, and more than experienced in matters of love; the marquis was a lad of twenty-two, handsome, dashing, but hopelessly inexperienced in romance. At first Ninon was amused to hear the marquis talk about his mistakes, but finally she had had enough. Unable to bear ineptitude in any realm, least of all in seducing a woman, she decided to take the young man under her wing. First, he had to understand that this was war, and that the beautiful

countess was a citadel to which he had to lay siege as carefully as any general. Every step had to be planned and executed with the utmost attention to detail and nuance.

Instructing the marquis to start over, Ninon told him to approach the countess with a bit of distance, an air of nonchalance. The next time the two were alone together, she said, he would confide in the countess as would a friend but not a potential lover. This was to throw her off the scent. The countess was no longer to take his interest in her for granted—perhaps he was only interested in friendship.

Ninon planned ahead. Once the countess was confused, it would be time to make her jealous. At the next encounter, at a major fête in Paris, the marquis would show up with a beautiful young woman at his side. This beautiful young woman had equally beautiful friends, so that wherever the countess would now see the marquis, he would be surrounded by the most stunning young women in Paris. Not only would the countess be seething with jealousy, she would come to see the marquis as someone who was desired by others. It was hard for Ninon to make the marquis understand, but she patiently explained that a woman who is interested in a man wants to see that other women are interested in him, too. Not only does that give him instant value, it makes it all the more satisfying to snatch him from their clutches.

Once the countess was jealous but intrigued, it would be time to beguile her. On Ninon's instructions, the marquis would fail to show up at affairs where the countess expected to see him.

Then, suddenly, he would appear at salons he had never frequented before, but that the countess attended often. She would be unable to predict his moves. All of this would push her into the state of emotional confusion that is a prerequisite for successful seduction.

These moves were executed, and took several weeks. Ninon monitored the marquis's progress:

Through her network of spies, she heard how the countess would laugh a little harder at his witticisms, listen more closely to his stories. She heard that the countess was suddenly askingquestions about him. Her friends told her that at social affairs the countess would often look up at the marquis, following his steps. Ninon felt certain that the young woman was falling under his spell. It was a matter of weeks now, maybe a month or two, but if all went smoothly, the citadel would fall.

A few days later the marquis was at the countess's home. They were alone. Suddenly he was a different man: This time acting on his own impulse, rather than following Ninon's instructions, he took the countess's hands and told her he was in love with her. The young woman seemed confused, a reaction he did not expect. She became polite, then excused herself. For the rest of the evening she avoided his eyes, was not there to say good-night to him. The next few times he visited he was told she was not at home. When she finally admitted him again, the two felt awkward and uncomfortable with each other. The spell was broken.

Interpretation

Ninon de Lenclos knew everything about the art of love. The greatest writ ers, thinkers, and politicians of the time had been her lovers—men like La Rochefoucauld, Molière, and Richelieu.

Seduction was a game to her, to be practiced with skill. As she got older, and her reputation grew, the most important families in France would send their sons to her to be instructed in matters of love.

Ninon knew that men and women are very different, but when it comes to seduction they feel the same: Deep down inside, they often sense when they are being seduced, but they give in because they enjoy the feeling of being led along. It is a pleasure to let go, and to allow the other person to detour you into a strange country. Everything in seduction, however, depends on suggestion. You cannot

announce your intentions or reveal them directly in words. Instead you must throw your targets off the scent. To surrender to your guidance they must be appropriately confused. You have to scramble your signals—appear interested in another man or woman (the decoy), then hint at being interested in the target, then feign indifference, on and on. Such patterns not only confuse, they excite.

Imagine this story from the countess's perspective: After a few of the marquis's moves, she sensed the marquis was playing some sort of game, but the game delighted her. She did not know where he was leading her, but so much the better. His moves intrigued her, each of them keeping her waiting for the next one—she even enjoyed her jealousy and confusion, for sometimes any emotion is better than the boredom of security. Perhaps the marquis had ulterior motives; most men do. But she was willing to wait and see, and probably if she had been made to wait long enough, what he was up to would not have mattered.

The moment the marquis uttered that fatal word "love," however, all was changed. This was no longer a game with moves, it was an artless show of passion. His intention was revealed: He was seducing her. This put everything he had done in a new light. All that before had been charming now seemed ugly and conniving; the countess felt embarrassed and used. A door closed that would never open again.

Do not be held a cheat, even though it is *impossible* to live today without being one.

Let your greatest cunning lie in covering up what looks like cunning.

Ballasar Gracián, 1601-1658

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW In 1850 the young Otto von Bismarck, then a thirty-five-year-old deputy in the Prussian parliament, was at a turning point in his career. The issues of the day were the unification of the many states

(including Prussia) into which Germany was then divided, and a war against Austria, the powerful neighbor to the south that hoped to keep the Germans weak and at odds, even threatening to intervene if they tried to unite. Prince William, next in line to be Prussia's king, was in favor of going to war, and the parliament rallied to the cause, prepared to back any mobilization of troops. The only ones to oppose war were the present king, Frederick William IV, and his ministers, who preferred to appease the powerful Austrians.

Throughout his career, Bismarck had been a loyal, even passionate supporter of Prussian might and power. He dreamed of German unification, of going to war against Austria and humiliating the country that for so long had kept Germany divided. A former soldier, he saw warfare as a glorious business.

This, after all, was the man who years later would say, "The great questions of the time will be decided, not by speeches and resolutions, but by iron and blood." Passionate patriot and lover of military glory, Bismarck nevertheless gave a speech in parliament at the height of the war fever that astonished all who heard it. "Woe unto the statesman," he said, "who makes war without a reason that will still be valid when the war is over! After the war, you will all look differently at these questions. Will you then have the courage to turn to the peasant contemplating the ashes of his farm, to the man who has been crippled, to the father who has lost his children?" Not only did Bismarck go on to talk of the madness of this war, but, strangest of all, he praised Austria and defended her actions. This went against everything he had stood for. The consequences were immediate. Bismarck was against the war—what could this possibly mean? Other deputies were confused, and several of them changed their votes. Eventually the king and his ministers won out, and war was averted.

A few weeks after Bismarck's infamous speech, the king, grateful that he had spoken for peace, made him a cabinet minister. A few years later he became the Prussian premier. In this role he eventually led his country and a peace-loving king into a war against Austria, crushing the former empire and establishing a mighty German state, with Prussia at its head.

Interpretation

At the time of his speech in 1850, Bismarck made several calculations. First, he sensed that the Prussian military, which had not kept pace with other European armies, was unready for war—that Austria, in fact, might very well win, a disastrous result for the future. Second, if the war were lost and Bismarck had supported it, his career would be gravely jeopardized. The king and his conservative ministers wanted peace; Bismarck wanted power. The answer was to throw people off the scent by supporting a cause he detested, saying things he would laugh at if said by another. A whole country was fooled. It was because of Bismarck's speech that the king made him a minister, a position from which he quickly rose to be prime minister, attaining the power to strengthen the Prussian military and accomplish what he had wanted all along: the humiliation of Austria and the unification of Germany under Prussia's leadership.

Bismarck was certainly one of the cleverest statesman who ever lived, a master of strategy and deception. No one suspected what he was up to in this case. Had he announced his real intentions, arguing that it was better to wait now and fight later, he would not have won the argument, since mostPrussians wanted war at that moment and mistakenly believed that their army was superior to the Austrians. Had he played up to the king, asking to be made a minister in exchange for supporting peace, he would not have succeeded either: The king would have distrusted his ambition and doubted his sincerity.

By being completely insincere and sending misleading signals, however, he deceived everyone, concealed his purpose, and attained everything he wanted. Such is the power of hiding your intentions.

KEYS TO POWER

Most people are open books. They say what they feel, blurt out their opinions at every opportunity, and constantly reveal their plans and intentions. They do this for several reasons. First, it is easy and natural to always want to talk about one's feelings and plans for the future. It takes effort to control your tongue and monitor what you reveal. Second, many believe that by being honest and open they are winning people's hearts and showing their good nature.They are greatly deluded. Honesty is actually a blunt instrument, which bloodies more than it cuts. Your honesty is likely to offend people; it is much more prudent to tailor your words, telling people what they want to hear rather than the coarse and ugly truth of what you feel or think. More important, by being unabashedly open you make yourself so predictable and familiar that it is almost impossible to respect or fear you, and power will not accrue to a person who cannot inspire such emotions.

If you yearn for power, quickly lay honesty aside, and train yourself in the art of concealing your intentions. Master the art and you will always have the upper hand. Basic to an ability to conceal one's intentions is a simple truth about human nature: Our first instinct is to always trust appearances. We cannot go around doubting the reality of what we see and hear—constantly imagining that appearances concealed something else would exhaust and terrify us. This fact makes it relatively easy to conceal one's intentions. Simply dangle an object you seem to desire, a goal you seem to aim for, in front of people's eyes and they will take the appearance for reality. Once their eyes focus on the

decoy, they will fail to notice what you are really up to. In seduction, set up conflicting signals, such as desire and indifference, and you not only throw them off the scent, you inflame their desire to possess you.

A tactic that is often effective in setting up a red herring is to appear to support an idea or cause that is actually contrary to your own sentiments. (Bismarck used this to great effect in his speech in 1850.) Most people will believe you have experienced a change of heart, since it is so unusual to play so lightly with something as emotional as one's opinions and values. The same applies for any decoyed object of desire: Seem to want something in which you are actually not at all interested and your enemies will be thrown off the scent, making all kinds of errors in their calculations.

During the War of the Spanish Succession in 1711, the Duke of Marlborough, head of the English army, wanted to destroy a key French fort, because it protected a vital thoroughfare into France. Yet he knew that if he destroyed it, the French would realize what he wanted—to advance down that road.

Instead, then, he merely captured the fort, and garrisoned it with some of his troops, making it appear as if he wanted it for some purpose of his own. The French attacked the fort and the duke let them recapture it. Once they had it back, though, they destroyed it, figuring that the duke had wanted it forsome important reason. Now that the fort was gone, the road was unprotected, and Marlborough could easily march into France.

Use this tactic in the following manner: Hide your intentions not by closing up (with the risk of appearing secretive, and making people suspicious) but by talking endlessly about your desires and goals—just not your real ones. You will kill three birds with one stone: You appear friendly, open, and trusting; you conceal your intentions; and you send your rivals on time-consuming wild-goose

chases.
Another powerful tool in throwing people off the scent is false sincerity. People easily mistake
sincerity for honesty. Remember—their first instinct is to trust appearances, and since they value
honesty and want to believe in the honesty of those around them, they will rarely doubt you or see
through your act. Seeming to believe what you say gives your words great weight. This is how Iago
deceived and destroyed Othello: Given the depth of his emotions, the apparent sincerity of his
concerns about Desde mona's supposed infidelity, how could Othello distrust him? This is also how
the great con artist Yellow Kid Weil pulled the wool over suckers' eyes: Seeming to believe so
deeply in the decoyed object he was dangling in front of them (a phony stock, a touted racehorse), he
made its reality hard to doubt. It is important, of course, not to go too far in this area. Sincerity is a
tricky tool: Appear overpassionate and you raise suspicions. Be measured and believable or your
ruse will seem the put-on that it is.
To make your false sincerity an effective weapon in concealing your intentions, espouse a belief in
honesty and forthrightness as important social values. Do this as publicly as possible. Emphasize your
position on this subject by occasionally divulging some heartfelt thought—though only one that is
actually meaningless or irrelevant, of course. Napoleon's minister Talleyrand was a master at taking
people into his confidence by revealing some apparent secret. This feigned confidence—a decoy—
would then elicit a real confidence on the other person's part.
Remember: The best deceivers do everything they can to cloak their roguish qualities. They
cultivate an air of honesty in one area to disguise their dishonesty in others. Honesty is merely another
decoy in their arsenal of weapons.