

The Big Idea

A comprehensive, well-researched synthesis of timeless philosophies –from Machiavelli to Sun Tzu, as applied in real-life situations by powerful figures in history such as Queen Elizabeth I and Henry Kissinger. Absorbing and entertaining, this book lends business people a wealth of ideas on the subtle art of playing the power game, exercising clever cunning, and understanding human weaknesses. Whether it is in the boardroom, at a power lunch, or a cocktail party– these laws will make you master of the game and give you the edge over your rivals.

1. NEVER OUTSHINE THE MASTER.

- Transgression of the Law.

Finance Minister Fouquet unintentionally outshone his master, King Louis XIV, making the King feel insecure by throwing a lavish party that would show off Fouquet's connections, cultivated manner and charm. Thinking this move would make him an indispensable asset to the king, Fouquet had actually offended his master who did not like the fact people were more charmed by his finance minister than by him. The King found a convenient excuse to get rid of Fouquet.

- Observance of the Law

Galileo was clever in observing this law by giving glory to his patrons. In order to solve his perennial problem of funding, he dedicated his discovery of the moons of Jupiter to the Medicis, since the royal symbol of the Medici family was the planet Jupiter. He then commissioned an emblem for them, with each moon representing one of the sons who revolved around the patriarch. The Medici family became his major patron, appointing him their official court mathematician and philosopher, thereby giving him a more comfortable life and a steady salary.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Present your ideas in such a manner that they may be ascribed to your master, or could be viewed as an echo of your master's thoughts.
- If you are more intelligent than your master, act as if you are not.
- Never take your position for granted.
- Never let favors you receive go to your head.
- Discreet flattery is much more powerful. Make it seem like you want to seek his expertise and advice.

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

- Transgression of the Law.

Michael III of the Byzantine Empire in the mid-ninth century A.D. placed too much trust in his friend, Basilus. This was a young man who had once saved his life, and in return, was given all the privileges an emperor could bestow on a friend. Michael turned the peasant Basilus into a sophisticated and educated courtier. Basilus later on became greedy for more wealth and power and had his former benefactor and best friend Michael III murdered.

- Observance of the Law

Emperor Sung of China in 959 A.D. was able to turn all his enemies into loyal friends. He persuaded his generals to retire to a life of nobility and give up their dreams of

grabbing his throne one day. He spared those who conspired against him, and was able to win over enemies with his generosity.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Do not rely on friends. They will never be totally honest with you. They will not openly disagree with you in order to avoid arguments.
- Enemies expect nothing so they will be surprised when you are generous.
- An enemy spared the guillotine will be more grateful to you than a friend.
- When you decide to hire a friend you will discover qualities she has kept hidden.
- Skill and competence are more important than friendly feelings.
- Hiring friends will limit your power.
- All working situations require a kind of distance between people.
- You destroy an enemy when you make a friend of him.
- An enemy at your heels keeps you sharp, alert, and focused.

3. CONCEAL YOUR INTENTIONS.

- Transgression of the Law.

The Marquis de Seigne was young and inexperienced in the art of love. He confided in the infamous courtesan of seventeenth-century France, Ninon de Lenclos, to instruct him on how to seduce a difficult young countess. She made him follow a plan over a number of weeks, where the Marquis would be appearing in public always surrounded by beautiful women, in the very places the countess would be expected to see him. He was supposed to assume an air of nonchalance. This increased the jealousy of the young countess, who was not sure of his interest in her. One day the Marquis, unable to control his passion, broke from Ninon's plan, and blurted out to the countess that he loved her. After this admission, the countess no longer found him interesting and avoided him.

- Observance of the Law

Otto von Bismarck was a deputy in the Prussian parliament at a time when many fellow deputies thought it was possible to go to war against Austria and defeat it. Bismarck knew the Prussian army was not prepared, so he devised a clever way to keep the war at bay. He publicly stated his praises for the Austrians and talked about the madness of war. Many deputies changed their votes. Had Bismarck announced his real intentions, arguing it was better to wait now and fight later, he would not have won. Most Prussians wanted to go to war at that moment and mistakenly believed their army to be superior to the Austrians. Had he gone to the king his sincerity would have been doubted. By giving misleading statements about wanting peace and concealing his true purpose, Bismarck's speech catapulted him to the position of prime minister. He later led the country to war against the Austrians at the right time, when he felt the Prussian army was more capable.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Use decoyed objects of desire and red herrings to throw people off scent.
- Use smoke screens (a poker face) to disguise your actions.
- False sincerity is one powerful tool that will send your rivals on a wild goose chase.
- Publicly declare your false intentions to give misleading signals.
- A noble gesture can be a smoke screen to hide your true intentions.
- Blend in and people will be less suspicious.

4. ALWAYS SAY LESS THAN NECESSARY.

- Transgression of the Law.

Coriolanus was a great military hero of ancient Rome. People held him in awe, until he opened his mouth. He spoke his mind, hardly able to control his arrogance and boastfulness. He slandered and insulted people. The more speeches he made, the less people respected him. He suffered the people's wrath and was eventually banished from the city.

- Observance of the Law

Masters of enigma Andy Warhol and Marcel Duchamp knew the power of saying less and keeping people guessing. The less Duchamp talked about his work, the more it was talked about in the art circles. Andy Warhol recognized it was hard to talk people into doing what you wanted, so when interviewed, he would give vague and ambiguous answers and let the interviewer find his own interpretation.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Saying less will keep you from saying something foolish or even dangerous.
- Once the words are out you cannot take them back.
- Keeping silent makes people reveal more about themselves. This is information you may be able to use against them later on.

5. SO MUCH DEPENDS ON REPUTATION – GUARD IT WITH YOUR LIFE.

- Observance of the Law

During China's War of the Three Kingdoms (A.D.207-265), General Liang was able to fool his rival Sima Yi simply by letting his track record for being an undefeated leader in battle do the work for him. Liang's troops were far outnumbered by Sima Yi's, yet he devised a clever last resort plan. Liang donned a Taoist robe and played the lute upon the wall of the city he was defending. His soldiers opened the gates and hid. When Sima Yi's troops advanced upon the unguarded city, Yi recognized his opponent sitting alone upon the wall. Fearing a trap, Sima Yi called his soldiers to retreat.

P.T. Barnum was an expert at destroying his competitor's reputation. He published letters in newspapers, warning the public against buying his opponent's stock. He was a master at poking mockery at the tactics of his rivals.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Sow doubt and spread rumors about your rival. Even if they vehemently deny it, people will still be wondering why they are so defensive.
- Use humor or gentle mockery at your rival's expense.
- A solid reputation increases your presence and exaggerates your strengths without your having to spend much energy.
- Never appear desperate in your self-defense against the slander of others.
- Be careful not to go too far in attacking another's reputation, it draws more attention to your vengeance than to the person you are slandering. Use subtler tactics like satire and ridicule.

6. COURT ATTENTION AT ALL COST.

- Observance of the Law

P.T. Barnum learned about courting attention to his favor. Any form of publicity would benefit his entertainment business, no matter if it were bad publicity. He promoted his shows of curiosities to audiences with all kinds of gimmicks. He would offer Free Music for Millions, but hire bad musicians, so the crowd would end up buying tickets to the show so they could avoid the bands. He planted articles in newspapers and even sent anonymous letters to keep his name in the limelight.

Margaretha Zelle was able to use this law to make a name for herself as the mysterious exotic dancer Mata Hari. It was rumored she was from India and danced in private parties, in an Eastern manner never before seen in Europe. She would slowly discard her veils and sarongs for the most prominent people in Paris who came to see her. Many years later it would be discovered she was just a native of Holland and had worked for the Germans as a spy.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Surround your name with the sensational and the scandalous.
- Create an air of mystery.
- It is better to be attacked and slandered than ignored.
- Make yourself appear larger than life.
- Any sort of notoriety will bring you power.

7. GET OTHERS TO DO THE WORK FOR YOU, BUT ALWAYS TAKE THE CREDIT.

- Transgression and Observance of the Law

Nicola Tesla was a Serbian scientist who never learned how this law was used against him time and again. His invention, the AC or alternating current system was associated not with his name but with that of George Westinghouse, who funded his research. Both Thomas Edison and George Westinghouse were ruthless businessmen who took credit for Tesla's work. In the end, Tesla was living in poverty, while royalties for his life's work went to Edison and Westinghouse. He accepted small sums as buy-outs for his work, when in reality his creations could have been worth millions. Even Marconi made use of a patent filed by Tesla in 1897. Tesla was the real "father of radio" but received no money or credit for this invention.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Save time and energy by hiring others to do the work.
- Your helpers will be forgotten and you will be remembered.
- Borrow from history. Use the past and profit by others' experience.
- You can only exploit others' talents if your position is unshakable.

8. MAKE OTHER PEOPLE COME TO YOU – USE BAIT IF NECESSARY.

- Observance of the Law

Napoleon's former foreign minister Talleyrand was master of this law. He knew Napoleon loved the adoration of the masses, and this was the perfect bait to make the former ruler play into the hands of his opponents. In 1814 Napoleon was banished to a small island called Elba near Italy. Here he was given information that France would embrace him again if he escaped. From Elba he was able to escape and march back into Paris with a small army. The people bowed to him, and soldiers changed sides to join him. The statesmen who had taken over his empire fled. Talleyrand watched as his plan unfolded. Napoleon ruled France again for a hundred days, but the country was bankrupt and could not sustain Napoleon's wars any longer. Napoleon was recaptured at the Battle of Waterloo and exiled to the barren island St. Helena, off the west coast of Africa. This was a much further place with no chance of escape, and was more to Talleyrand's liking.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- For negotiations and meetings, it is wise to lure others into your territory, or a territory of your choice.
- Once someone suspects you are manipulating him, it will be harder to control him. Making him come to you gives the illusion he is in control.
- Most often the effective action is to stay back, keep calm, and let others be frustrated by the traps you set for them.

9. WIN THROUGH YOUR ACTIONS, NEVER THROUGH ARGUMENT.

- Observance of the Law

Michelangelo knew how to satisfy a patron while getting his way at the same time. Piero Soderini, Florence's mayor, commissioned him to transform a ruined piece of marble into a statue. Soderini visited the studio one day and commented that the nose of the statue (that of David with a sling in his hand) was too big. Michelangelo invited the mayor to climb up a scaffolding, allowing him to look at the nose from a different perspective, while the artist chiseled a bit, pretending to correct the size of the nose. The mayor was convinced the nose looked much better. Michelangelo succeeded in making Soderini think his comment had helped improve the work.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Demonstrate, do not explicate.
- Arguing will only offend your superior.
- Learn to demonstrate the correctness of your ideas indirectly.
- Choose your battles carefully.
- Don't bother demonstrating if time and experience will eventually teach the other person what you are trying to say. Save your energy and walk away.
- No one can argue with a demonstrated proof.

10. INFECTION: AVOID THE UNHAPPY AND THE UNLUCKY.

- Transgression of the Law

In the 1840's Marie Gilbert, better known as Lola Montez, came to Paris to become a dancer and performer. She had many husbands, and caused the ruin of many a powerful man. Because of her ambition to be a dancer she "accidentally" ran into Alexandre Dujarier, then the owner of France's most popular newspaper and a drama critic himself. Although still legally married to an Englishman with whom she eloped at 19, Lola kept her status secret from all her husbands. Dujarier was shot dead defending her honor at a duel against another drama critic. Lola went on to have several husbands, even causing King Ludwig of Bavaria to abdicate. She left another man who later fell into a deep depression, became a drunkard, and eventually died at a relatively young age. The man who published her autobiography went bankrupt.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- In the game of power, the people you associate with are critical.
- An infector can be recognized by the misfortune they draw on themselves, their turbulent past, a long line of broken relationships, unstable careers, the very intensity of their emotions, and the force of their character.
- Gravitate towards prosperous, cheerful, and gregarious people.
- Never associate with those who share your defects.

11. LEARN TO KEEP PEOPLE DEPENDENT ON YOU.

- Observance of the Law

Michelangelo was able to keep his patron Pope Julius II dependent on him. When he and the pope quarreled over the building of the pope's marble tomb, Michelangelo left Rome in disgust. The pope sought him out and begged the artist to stay. Michelangelo knew he could always find another patron, but the pope knew he could not find another Michelangelo.

Michelangelo's power was intensive, depending on one skill. Henry Kissinger's power was extensive. He was so involved in so many areas of the political structure that to remove him would lead to chaos. The intensive form of power provides more freedom than the extensive.

Machiavelli said it is better to be feared than loved. Fear can be controlled; love, never.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Be the only one who can do what you do. Make the fate of those who hire you so entwined with yours they cannot possibly get rid of you.
- If you are ambitious, it is wiser to seek out weak masters with whom you can create a relationship of dependency.
- Possess a talent or creative skill that sets you apart from the crowd.
- By knowing other people's secrets and holding information they wouldn't want made public, you seal your fate with theirs.

12. USE SELECTIVE HONESTY AND GENEROSITY TO DISARM YOUR VICTIM.

- Observance of the Law

Count Victor Lustig promised Al Capone to give him \$50,000 on the terms that he would double this investment in sixty days. Lustig kept the money untouched in a safety deposit box. After the sixty days were up, he apologized to Capone saying he had failed to double the money. Capone expected either \$100,000, or nothing, what he did not expect was an honest gesture of Lustig actually returning the \$50,000. Al Capone was a man who lived in constant mistrust of people around him, and was so touched by the honest gesture he gave Lustig an extra \$5,000.

The classic tale of the Fall of Troy is one example of hiding your ulterior motives within a gift. The Trojan Horse was designed to hold soldiers that would attack the city of Troy and recapture Helen who had been taken away from the Greeks by Paris.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- The essence of deception is distraction. An act of kindness, generosity, or honesty will distract and disarm people and turn them into gullible children.
- Give before you take.
- Nothing in the realm of power is set in stone. Overt deceptiveness may sometimes cover your tracks. If you have a history of deceit behind you, then play the rogue, be consistent and this will be interpreted as you simply being yourself. Your dishonesty becomes an act of honesty.

13. WHEN ASKING FOR HELP, APPEAL TO PEOPLE'S SELF-INTEREST, NEVER TO THEIR MERCY OR GRATITUDE.

- Observance of the Law

Genghis Khan was known for his greed and self-interest. When he conquered China, instead of slaughtering all the citizens, his adviser Yelu Ch'u-Ts'ai persuaded him to reap the benefits of their new territory by taxing its people. It was Ts'ai who also convinced Khan to spare the inhabitants of Kaifeng, where China's finest craftsmen and engineers had fled. Ts'ai's reasoning was Khan could use these people for his own benefit.

Most people are very pragmatic, and when negotiating, do not bring up the need for gratitude for what you have done for others in the past. These appeals will be ignored. Pragmatic people look towards the future, so it is best to emphasize how they will benefit from an alliance with you.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Understand the other person's motivation.
- See things their way and offer suggestions that will advance their cause.
- For others who want to feel superior and do not want to appear selfish, appeal to their need to display their charity in the public eye.

14. POSE AS A FRIEND, WORK AS A SPY.

- Observance of the Law

Joseph Duveen was the greatest art dealer of his time; from 1904-1940 he single-handedly monopolized the art-collecting market through his ingenious spying tactics. He would place the household employees of his potential clients on his own payroll. These spies would provide him valuable information as the tastes of his mark. He would arrange "accidental" meetings in elevators, leading his prey of wealthy patrons right into his trap. When clients came to visit his galleries, they found themselves surrounded by works they would most likely buy.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Gather information at social events when people's guards are down.
- Use other people to give you the information you need.
- Mislead others by giving out false information. Watch them react and base your next action on what you discover.

15. CRUSH YOUR ENEMY TOTALLY.

- Observance of the Law

The great Empress Wu of China was ruthless in her rise to power. She started out as a concubine of an emperor, but did not want to follow the traditional path: that of living the rest of her life in a convent after the emperor's death. She had seduced the emperor's son in the royal urinal and befriended his wife. Because of this Wu was able to get a royal edict out of the convent. She returned to the harem, became pregnant, and murdered her own baby, knowing the prime suspect would be the jealous wife of the new emperor. The wife was charged with murder and executed. Wu took her place and her new husband handed over the reins of government to her, opting for a life of pleasure. Empress Wu ruled until the age of eighty when she was forced to abdicate. Throughout her rule she eliminated son after son, anyone who would challenge her throne.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Show no mercy. Crush your rivals or else you will give them time to regroup and plot their revenge.
- Banish enemies or plot for the best time to render them harmless.
- Leave your enemies no options.
- Sometimes enemies will destroy themselves.
- Thoughts of reconciliation will open you up to attack.

16. USE ABSENCE TO INCREASE RESPECT AND HONOR.

- Observance of the Law

This law is most appreciated in matters of seduction and love. Make yourself too available and your presence will be taken for granted. In the Middle Ages, ladies played the game of presence and absence by sending their knights off on long arduous quests. Sir Guillaume de Balaun wanted to taste the joy of love after reconciliation, and twice he intentionally made himself scarce, withdrawing his affections from Madame Guillelma de Javiac. The first time he drove his lover wild with grief, the second time she became angry and cut him off. When he wrote her begging to be let back into her favor, she allowed him back only on the condition he do penance for his cruelty.

With business, an early retirement at the height of your career will keep people holding you in high regard, and waiting to see you make a comeback.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Create value through scarcity. Make yourself less accessible; otherwise the aura you have created around yourself will wear away.

17. KEEP OTHERS IN SUSPENDED TERROR: CULTIVATE AN AIR OF UNPREDICTABILITY.

- Observance of the Law

Bobby Fischer beat chess champion Boris Spassky using this law of unpredictability. Spassky's method of playing chess was to base his strategy on the patterns he read in his opponent's moves. Fischer unnerved him by arriving late for the first two tournaments, even letting a match get forfeited. On the third game he made moves that were so uncharacteristic and bold Spassky was thrown off balance. Fourteen games later Spassky claimed Fischer was probably putting drugs in the orange juice they drank while playing. Spassky resigned a few months later and never recovered from his defeat.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- A person of power instills fear by deliberately unsettling those around him to keep the initiative on his side.
- Only the terminally subordinate act in a predictable manner.

18. DO NOT BUILD FORTRESSES TO PROTECT YOURSELF – ISOLATION IS DANGEROUS.

- Observance of the Law

King Louis XIV recognized the importance of always keeping his eyes and ears on everyone and everything around him. He built a palace in Versailles where all the nobility could keep apartments near to his. He knew that if he were to isolate himself for one moment, conspiracies would rise behind his back. The daily activities all revolved around the king, leaving no one unnoticed, hundreds of visitors and attendants were always present. There was not very much privacy for the king and he preferred this life to one of isolation.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- A fortress may be impregnable, but everyone knows you are there and it may easily turn into a prison.
- Power depends on social interaction and circulation.
- Isolation is deadly for the creative arts. Shakespeare was always producing plays for the masses. He was in constant touch with reality and what people wanted.
- Mobility and social contact protects you from plotters.

19. KNOW WHO YOU'RE DEALING WITH – DO NOT OFFEND THE WRONG PERSON.

- Transgression of the Law

In the early thirteenth century, Muhammad the Shah of Khwarezm made the grave mistake in offending a new tribal leader who was emerging in the east. His name was Genghis Khan. Khan offered to share the Silk Route with Muhammad, sending ambassadors to forge a deal. After his ambassadors were beheaded, Genghis Khan declared war. Eventually his forces seized the capital of the Shah's empire, Samarkand. Muhammad fled, and the Silk Route fell into the hands of Genghis Khan.

Learn to distinguish from opponent, sucker, and victim. The five difficult and sometimes dangerous marks are: the arrogant and proud, the hopelessly insecure, the suspicious, the serpent with a long memory, and the plain, unassuming, unintelligent man.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Measure up your opponent, but never rely on instinct. Do some research on concrete facts about that person's character and history.
- Never trust appearances.

20. DO NOT COMMIT TO ANYONE.

- Observance of the Law

Queen Elizabeth I managed to avoid the trap of marriage and war, by dangling the possibility of marriage to all who courted her. She forged alliances with the countries these suitors came from, all for the benefit of England. By keeping her independence above all, Elizabeth protected her power and made herself an object of worship.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- By refusing to commit, but allowing yourself to be courted, you become powerful because you are ungraspable.
- As your reputation for independence grows, more people will desire you and want to conquer you.
- Politely decline. You cannot allow yourself to feel obligated to anyone.
- Seek promises from both sides, so no matter what the outcome of an election or battle, your position is secure.
- Observe quarreling parties and stay neutral but supportive to both sides. Gain power as a mediator.
- You may commit to one to prove you are capable of attachment, but be emotionally uninvolved. Preserve the unspoken option of being able to leave anytime and reclaim your freedom. The friends you made while being courted will help you jump ship.

21. PLAY A SUCKER TO CATCH A SUCKER – SEEM DUMBER THAN YOUR MARK.

- Observance of the Law

In what was the biggest diamond scam of the century, prospectors Philip Arnold and John Slack fooled the biggest financiers of the time, Asbury Harpending, Baron Rothschild, and William Ralston into investing their millions in a fake mine site. The two men played up their small town, scruffy image; convincing the sophisticated tycoons that they would easily be bought out for their discovery of the mines. In the end, after the legal pay-off was made to the two men, the investors realized the mine had been salted with uncut gems by Arnold and Slack. Since all the business had been legal, and experts had inspected the mines, there was no way to go after the two men.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Intelligence is an important part of people's vanity. Subliminally reassure your opponent of his superiority.
- Playing naïve lets you see opportunities to deceive others.

22. USE THE SURRENDER TACTIC: TRANSFORM WEAKNESS INTO POWER.

- Observance of the Law

German writer Bertolt Brecht was called to appear before the US Congress's House of Un-American Activities Committee during the heyday of the Communist investigations. Unlike his companions in the Hollywood 19, (other producers, directors and writers who espoused communism in their scripts) he chose to be respectful to the committee. Subtly he mocked them by offering vague but polite answers, used an interpreter to run circles around them when asked about the lines from his poems, and was summarily dismissed. He was free to leave America and continue writing as he pleased, while his friends in Hollywood lost valuable working years as a result of being blacklisted.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Do not fight aggression with aggression. Put your opponent off-guard by yielding, and in effect have more control over the situation.
- Surrender is a way of mocking your enemies.
- Surrender disguises your real motives and allows time to plan your next move.

23. CONCENTRATE YOUR FORCES.

- Observance of the Law

The Rothschild banking family concentrated its wealth within a very tight-knit structure. Five brothers each controlled a part of the empire from Paris, Frankfurt, Vienna, Naples, to London. They established themselves as a powerful force in business and politics, keeping the secrets of the family business by exchanging internal communications only in code or Frankfurt Yiddish. Family policy ruled and their children intermarried, all of them first cousins.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Single-mindedness of purpose and total concentration on one goal will overwhelm the enemy every time.
- A single patron appreciates your loyalty and becomes dependent on your services.
- In the arts, being too single-minded can make you an intolerable bore.

24. PLAY THE PERFECT COURTIER.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Avoid ostentation. Talk less about yourself. Modesty is generally preferable.
- Practice nonchalance. All your hard work must come off as effortless.
- Be frugal with flattery.
- Arrange to be noticed.
- Alter your style and language according to the person you are dealing with.
- Never be the bearer of bad news.
- Never affect friendliness and intimacy with your master.
- Never criticize those above you directly.
- Be frugal in asking those above you for favors.
- Never joke about appearances or taste.
- Do not be the court cynic.
- Be self-observant.
- Master your emotions.
- Fit the spirit of the times.
- Be a source of pleasure.

25. RE-CREATE YOURSELF.

Observance of the Law

Julius Caesar always incorporated drama and theatrics in his speeches and daily appearances. He was a great public showman, timing his entrances and exits, sponsoring extravagant spectacles, gladiator shows and theatrical events. The masses loved him, but his rivals feared him.

Aurore Dupin Dudevant left her husband and family in the provinces to become a writer in Paris, something unheard of and almost impossible for a woman to do in 1831. For the publication of her novel *Indiana*, she assumed the pseudonym George Sand. She dressed in men's breeches, smoked cigars, and expressed herself in conversation like a man. She even carried on affairs with the most famous artists of Europe - Musset, Liszt, and Chopin - living with freedom and independence unlike any other female writer before her.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Control your appearances and emotions. Play sincere, but not necessarily be sincere.
- Create a memorable character. Do not limit yourself to the role society assigns to you.

26. KEEP YOUR HANDS CLEAN.

Observance of the Law:

Cleopatra was always able to get people to do her bidding without them realizing she was manipulating them. She was able to charm Julius Caesar into restoring her to the throne of Egypt, and playing her siblings against each other. Marc Antony was seduced by her, and had her younger sister Arsinoe executed, ridding Cleopatra of any threats to her place as Queen.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Conceal your mistakes. Your good name and reputation depends more on what you conceal than on what you reveal.
- Always have a convenient scapegoat.
- Never do the dirty work yourself.

27. PLAY ON PEOPLE'S NEED TO BELIEVE TO CREATE A CULT-LIKE FOLLOWING.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Keep it simple; keep it vague. Create new words for vague concepts.
- Emphasize the visual and sensual over the intellectual.
- Borrow the forms of organized religion to structure the group. Create rituals. Use names and ranks and titles. Ask them to make sacrifices and give alms. Act like a guru or a prophet.
- Disguise your source of income.
- Set up an us-versus-them dynamic. Keep followers united by identifying outsiders as a devious enemy.
- The tendency to doubt and reason is broken down when we join a group.

28. ENTER ACTION WITH BOLDNESS.

Ivan the Terrible waited five years before executing his first major bold move. After years of persecution by the Shuisky family, the poisoning of his mother Helena, and the banishment of his only friend Vorontsov, the thirteen year-old Ivan invited his rival Prince Andrei Shuisky into his room. No one feared the young boy and the boyars often ridiculed him. When the guards were suddenly ordered to seize Prince Andrei and execute him, no one saw it coming. This one swift and bold act secured Ivan's power for decades to come.

Ivan initially lay low, showing neither ambition nor discontent. He waited until he had won over the palace guards to his side. They had come to hate the cruelty of the Shuiskys over the years, and the time was at hand to strike boldly and swiftly.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- The bolder the lie, the better.
- Lions circle the hesitant prey.
- Boldness strikes fear; Fear creates authority.
- Going halfway digs the deeper grave. Do not negotiate if you opponent will more likely take the opportunity to destroy you.
- Hesitation creates gaps. Boldness obliterates them. Move swiftly and surely.
- Audacity separates you from the herd.

29. PLAN ALL THE WAY TO THE END.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Take into account all possible obstacles and circumstances that may prevent you from achieving your goal, and plan how you will overcome them.
- When you see several steps ahead, you will no longer need to improvise along the way, and risk deviating from your plan.
- Prepare alternatives and be open to adapt new routes to your goal.

30. MAKE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS SEEM EFFORTLESS.

Observance of the Law:

Sen no Rikyu was an important tea master and adviser on aesthetic and political matters to the Emperor Hideyoshi. He despised hosts who looked like they were trying too hard. Cha-no-yu, or the Japanese tea ceremony, is an art form, from the preparation to the serving; the whole process must look natural and easy. Accidental grace and beauty were Rikyu's specialty. On the night before the Emperor was to visit him for a tea ceremony, he artfully laid cushions in the snow on each stepping-stone to his house. In the morning, he removed the cushions revealing the pattern of the stepping-stones like a perfect mold within the snow. This was just one of Rikyu's clever aesthetic tricks which impressed the Emperor, never calling attention to the work gone into it, but implying a polite gesture in itself.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- What imitates nature by appearing effortless and natural approximates nature's power.
- Never show your work until it is finished. When people see the effort and time it takes to make it, and if they witness a work-in-progress, the magic of the finished piece is spoiled.

31. CONTROL THE OPTIONS: GET OTHERS TO PLAY WITH THE CARDS YOU DEAL.

Observance of the Law:

Seventeenth-century French courtesan Ninon de Lenclos needed to devise a way of maintaining her lifestyle while having the freedom no woman could achieve in her day. She gave her lovers and suitors three choices, a payeur would pay for her services, but she would only sleep with him when she liked, a martyr would not have to pay, and be part of her harem of men, and from the martyrs she would choose a favori, or one man to whom she would abandon herself to totally until she was tired of him. The payeurs were able to finance her needs while she enjoyed complete freedom, independence, and variety from her lovers. She had the equality to men no married woman of the time could possess.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Make people your puppets and give them options to let them feel they have control. Force them to choose between the lesser of two evils, both of which serve your purpose.
- Present options but color the one you prefer as the best solution.
- Force the resister into “choosing” to do what you want by appearing to advocate the opposite.
- Alter the playing field so the only options available are the ones you offer.
- Shrinking options force people to buy in now or else the goods won’t be available tomorrow.
- The weak man must be propelled into action through fear and terror.
- Involving your victim in your scheme with the threat of their exposure later will keep them tied to you. They cannot expose you because they will be found out as well.
- Use the horns of a dilemma: whichever way they choose, there is no escape.

32. PLAY TO PEOPLE’S FANTASIES.

Observance of the Law:

In the 1700s, a mysterious stranger named George Psalmanazar came to fame with his books and lectures on the language, culture and history of the island of Formosa (now Taiwan). After his death, it was revealed that he was in fact a Frenchman with a rich imagination who played on the British need for the exotic and strange. He had invented everything he had professed to be an expert on, having capitalized on it with best-selling books and having been a favorite guest at many royal dinners.

Abraham Lincoln created an image of himself as the homespun country lawyer with a beard. He played to the fantasy of the common man’s president.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- People need a fantasy to escape from the humdrum of everyday life. The more vague and exotic, the more captivating.
- Promise a pot of gold and instant gratification, rather than a gradual improvement through hard work.
- Keep your distance so the fantasy remains intact.

33. DISCOVER EACH MAN’S THUMBSCREW.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Every person has a weakness or insecurity you can use to your advantage.
- Train yourself to probe for weaknesses in everyday conversation.
- Find the childhood need that went unfulfilled, supply it, and your victim will be unable to resist you.
- People’s weaknesses are the opposite of the qualities they reveal to you. The shy person is actually dying for attention; a prude may be hiding a lascivious soul, etc.
- Find the weak link or the one person in a group who will bend under pressure.
- Feed on uncontrollable emotions or motive – paranoia, lust, greed, vanity, or hatred.
- When searching for suckers, always look for the unhappy, insecure and dissatisfied.

34. BE ROYAL IN YOUR OWN FASHION: ACT LIKE A KING TO BE TREATED LIKE ONE.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- How you carry yourself reflects what you think of yourself. Exude confidence and the feeling you were destined for greatness.

- Do not confuse regal bearing with arrogance.
- Dignity is the mask you assume under difficult circumstances. Act like nothing can affect you and you have all the time in the world to respond.
- Set your price high and do not waver.
- Deal with the highest person in the building.
- A gift is an equalizer. You do not beg but ask for help in a dignified way.

35. MASTER THE ART OF TIMING.

Time as a human-made concept

There are three kinds of time we deal with when building power: the Long Time is the years-long period of waiting for the right opportunity while creating a strong foundation or base to work from. Forced Time is upsetting the timing of others and setting their deadlines for them. The opponent will be more likely to make mistakes because of the need to hurry, or in the case of business, will be forced to buy whatever you offer because the time to make a decision is limited. End Time is when we execute a plan with speed and absolutely no hesitation.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Never look as though you are in a hurry. It betrays a lack of control.
- Learn to stand back and be patient. Strike only when the time is right.
- Anticipate events and work with the spirit of the times.
- Recognizing the prevailing winds does not necessarily mean running with them.

36. DISDAIN THINGS YOU CANNOT HAVE: IGNORING THEM IS THE BEST REVENGE.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- The more attention you pay an enemy, the stronger you make him. The less interest you show, the more superior you seem.
- Remember: You choose to let things bother you. You can just as easily choose to consider the matter trivial and unworthy of your interest. That is the powerful move.
- If it is impossible to ignore, then secretly get rid of it. Sometimes threats just go away by themselves.

37. CREATE COMPELLING SPECTACLES.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Never neglect the way you arrange things visually.
- Associate yourself with colors, images and symbols that communicate strong messages.
- People are always impressed by the superficial appearance of things, the grand, and the spectacular, what is larger than life.

38. THINK AS YOU LIKE BUT BEHAVE LIKE OTHERS.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Wise and clever people learn early on that they can display conventional behavior and mouth conventional ideas without having to believe in them.
- Put on the mask appropriate to the group you are joining.

39. STIR UP WATERS TO CATCH FISH.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Anger and emotion are strategically unproductive. Make your enemies angry but stay calm yourself.

- Angry people usually end up looking ridiculous.
- Nothing in the game of power is personal.
- An occasional outburst may be powerful, but use anger too often and it loses its power.

40. DESPISE THE FREE LUNCH.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- By paying your own way you stay free of gratitude. What is offered for free normally has a hidden obligation.
- Generosity is a sign of power. Most powerful people spend freely and are not misers.
- Use money as a way to give pleasure to others and win them over.

41. AVOID STEPPING INTO A GREAT MAN'S SHOES.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Choose a different path and personal style if you are the daughter or son of a great person. You will forever be in your predecessor's shadow unless you find a way to shine on your own.
- Only after the father figure has been done away with will there be space to establish a new order.
- Do not become complacent once you reach success and security. Prosperity makes us lazy. Writers like Tennessee Williams and Fyodor Dostoyevsky preferred the struggle to security; the way poverty or emotional difficulties pushed them to create good work.

42. STRIKE THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP WILL SCATTER.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Within any group, trouble can be traced to a single source, the unhappy, chronically unsatisfied one who stirs up dissension and infects the group. Recognize troublemakers by their complaining nature. Separate him from the group.
- In every group power is concentrated in the hands of one or two people. Human nature shows people will orbit around a single strong personality.

43. WORK ON THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF OTHERS.

Transgression of the Law

Marie-Antoinette was put to death by guillotine in 1793, after the French monarchy was ended by the revolution. Not a single soul came to her defense. Marie-Antoinette brought upon herself the hatred of all. Her jewelry, wardrobe, hair, and masked balls, her lavish lifestyle had been more important to her than the needs of her people.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Aim at the primary emotions: love, hate, and jealousy. Be alert to people's individual psychologies and their basic emotional responses.
- Maintain a stable of writers, artists, or intellectuals who are very good at appealing to people's hearts and minds.

44. DISARM AND INFURIATE WITH THE MIRROR EFFECT.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- The neutralizing effect: Do what your enemies do, follow their actions and they will not see what you are up to. When you mirror them, if mocks and humiliates them. Mimicry infuriates.
- The Shadow effect: Shadow your opponents' every move, gather information, and gain insight to their routines and habits without them seeing you.

- The Mirror effect: Show you understand by reflecting their innermost feelings.
- The Moral effect: Teach others a lesson by giving them a taste of their own medicine.
- The Hallucinatory effect: offer a perfect copy of an object, place or person and see how people take the bait.

45. PREACH THE NEED FOR CHANGE, BUT NEVER REFORM TOO MUCH AT ONCE.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Make change and reform seem like a gentle improvement on the past. People are creatures of habit and the sudden change will cause some to rebel.
- Disguise change by dressing it in tradition.

46. NEVER APPEAR TOO PERFECT.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- Never underestimate the power of envy. Occasionally reveal a weakness, defect, or anxiety, or find new friends. It is the people in your own circle of peers who will be the first to envy your success.
- Envy is often a problem for people who have great natural talent. You may think you are charming people with your natural talent when in fact they are coming to hate you for it.
- To deflect envy, employ a display of weakness, or a harmless vice.
- Envy is disguised sometimes as excessive praise, or slander and criticism. Win your revenge by ignoring the envious.
- Reversal: Display the utmost disdain for those who envy you. Instead of hiding your perfection, make it obvious. Make every triumph an opportunity to make the envious squirm.

47. DO NOT GO PAST THE MARK YOU AIMED FOR; IN VICTORY, LEARN WHEN TO STOP.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

- The powerful know that the essence of strategy is controlling what comes next.
- There is no better time to stop and walk away than after a victory.

48. ASSUME FORMLESSNESS.

Wisdom in a nutshell:

Accept the fact that nothing is certain and no law is fixed. Be as fluid and formless as water, adapting and moving with change naturally. The powerful are creative in expressing something new. This feminine, formless style of ruling as practiced by Elizabeth of England and Catherine of Russia, allows flexibility and makes subjects feel less coerced. Play the chameleon but break your enemy from the inside. Morph and adapt but keep your long-term strategy in mind at all times.