



Titans Briefs

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Today's Titans Brief is attached for your convenience. It was written by Zach Rozinsky.
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Book: *The 48 Laws of Power*
Author: Robert Greene
Length: 10 pages
Sponsors: Chi Chai, George Roberts

Executive Summary:

The 48 Laws of Power stem from a collection of actions and behaviors observed over the course of three thousand years that are, if abided by, intended to make the reader more capable of achieving and maintaining power. The 48 Laws of Power offer cutthroat methods that enable readers to claw their way to the top by using ruthless tactics and deliberately attacking those that pose challenges to them during their ascent.

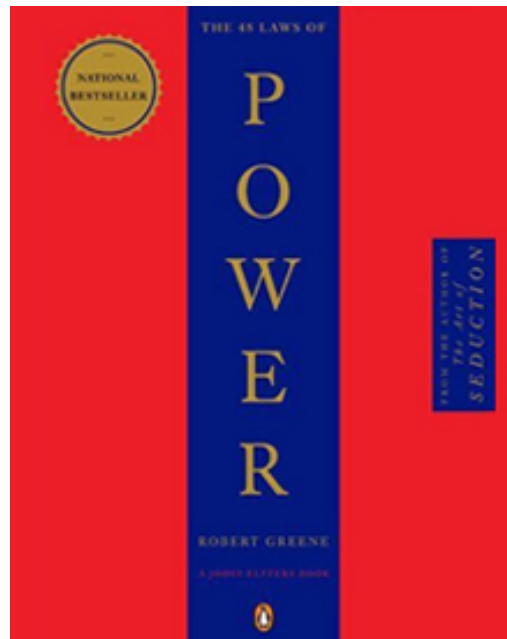
The tactics outlined in this book include: deception, dishonesty, manipulation, concealment, outmaneuvering, charm, mastery, seduction, judgment, and others. Every law is supported historically with different examples of individuals who have observed and/or disregarded them. When used in combination, the 48 laws will enable the reader to evaluate their own past actions and gain a greater degree of control over their immediate affairs. A thorough reading of this book will inspire thinking and reevaluation long after finishing it.

In the opinion of the author of this Titans Brief, while the 48 Laws of Power certainly possess effective lessons that can be observed throughout history, they should be exercised with extreme caution, if exercised at all. As mentioned in the book, power is essentially amoral and one of the most important skills you can acquire to achieve great power is the ability to see circumstances rather than good and evil. While this book outlines ways to gain power, it can be used much more appropriately to help individuals arm themselves against power fanatics who abide by such cruel and vicious methods.

By using the information in this book to defend against unmitigated power, the reader will be equipped with the knowledge necessary to stand up against amoral rogues that use society to their advantage. This book is designed as a piece of text that highlights effective, but vicious, methods of gaining control. By understanding that these laws exist and are effective, the reader can either choose to empty them or learn how to proactively defend themselves and others against those who choose to use them.

The author presents his "laws of power" in no particular order and, furthermore, assigns no moral distinction between them. This seemed unhelpful to me or any reader other than those most interested in attaining power by any means necessary. My view, however, is that the vast majority of readers will benefit from a more refined view, one that attempts to assign each "law" a moral value. As a result, I have attempted to reorganize the 48 Laws into three groups. First, positive ways to achieve power. Second, negative or ruthless methods. Third, various balanced approaches.

Positive Laws for Achieving Power	Negative Laws for Achieving Power	Balanced Laws for Achieving Power
2: Never put too much trust in friends, learn to use enemies 5: So much depends on reputation - guard it with your life 10: Infection: Avoid the unhappy and the unlucky 13: When asking for help, appeal to people's self-interest, never to their mercy 18: Do not build fortresses to protect yourself - isolation is dangerous 19: Know who you're dealing with - do not offend the wrong person 23: Concentrate your forces 25: Re-create yourself 28: Enter action with boldness 29: Plan all the way to the end 34: Be royal in your own fashion: act like a king to be treated like one 36: Disdain things you cannot have: ignoring them is the best revenge 45: Preach the need for change, but never reform too much at once 47: Do not go past the mark you aimed for; in victory know when to stop 48: Assume formlessness	3: Conceal your intentions 7: Let others do the work for you, but always take credit 12: Use selective honesty and generosity to disarm your victim 14: Pose as a friend, work as a spy 15: Crush your enemy totally 17: Keep others in suspended terror: cultivate an air of unpredictability 20: Do not commit to anyone 21: Play a sucker to catch a sucker - seem dumber than your mark 27: Play on people's need to believe to create a cult like following 31: Control the opinions: get others to play with the cards you deal 33: Discover each man's thumbscrew 37: Create compelling spectacles 39: Stir up waters to catch fish 44: Disarm and infuriate with the mirror effect	1: Never outshine the master 4: Always say less than necessary 6: Court attention at all cost 8: Make other people come to you - use bait if necessary 9: Win through your actions, never through argument 11: Learn to keep people dependent on you 16: Use absence to increase respect and honor 22: Use the surrender tactic: transform weakness into power 24: Play the perfect courtier 26: Keep your hands clean 30: Make your accomplishments seem effortless 32: Play to people's fantasies 35: Master the art of timing 38: Think as you like but behave like others 40: Despise the free lunch 41: Avoid stepping into a great man's shoes 42: Strike the shepherd and the sheep will scatter 43: Work on the hearts and minds of others 46: Never appear too perfect



THE 48 LAWS OF POWER

By Robert Greene

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Introduction. As a rule, we find the feeling of having no power over people and events to be unbearable – when we are helpless we feel miserable. Today, societies face a strange paradox. Everything must appear civilized, decent, democratic, and fair, but people who follow those rules are often crushed by others around them who are not so inclined. If the world is like a giant scheming court in which every person is trapped, there is no use in trying to opt out of the game. Learning the game of power requires a certain way of looking at the world, a shifting of perspective. *The 48 Laws of Power* are built upon a simple premise: certain actions almost always increase one's power, while others decrease it and even ruin people. These transgressions and observances are supported by historical examples. The laws are timeless and definitive.

Law 1: Never outshine the master. This law involves two rules. First, you can inadvertently outshine a master simply by being yourself. 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. Second, never imagine that because the master loves you, you can do anything you want. Knowing the dangers of outshining your master, you can turn this law to your advantage. You must flatter and puff up your master. Discreet flattery is much more powerful than overt flattery. Reversal to this law: *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. But if your master is firm in his/her position, bide your time and be patient. You will someday outshine him.*

Law 2: Never put too much trust in friends, learn how to use enemies. 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. 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. 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. You must first pick an enemy who you are sure you can defeat. Second, if you have no enemies, you must pick a convenient target, sometimes even turning a friend into an enemy. Third, use your enemies to define your cause more clearly, even framing it as a struggle between good and evil. Reversal to this law: *there are certain times when a friend can be used to greater effect than an enemy, e.g. when dirty work needs to be done. You must never let your guard down; even the closest friends can be transformed into the worst of enemies.*

Law 3: Conceal your intentions. Part I: Use decoyed objects of desire and red herrings to throw people off the scent. Dangle an object you seem to desire, a goal you seem to aim for, in front of people's eyes and they will take appearance for reality. Once their eyes focus on the decoy, they will fail to notice your real motives. One useful tactic is to appear to support an idea or cause that is actually contrary to your own sentiments. 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 error in their calculations. Hide your intentions not by closing up, but by talking endlessly about your goals and desires – just not your real ones. Part II: Use smoke screens to disguise your actions. People can only focus on one thing at a time. The simplest form of smokescreen is facial expression. Behind a bland, unreadable exterior, all sorts of mayhem can be planned, without detection. Another effective smoke screen is the noble gesture. People want to believe apparently noble gestures are genuine, for the belief is pleasant. Another effective smoke screen is the pattern, the establishment of a series of actions that seduce the victim into believing you will continue in the same way. The last mentioned smoke screen is to simply blend in with those around you. The better you blend, the less suspicious you become and the better you can conceal your intentions. Reversal to this law: *None of the aforementioned devices will work if you have a reputation for deception. If this is the case, it is better to appear the honest rogue, or better, the repentant rogue.*

Law 4: Always say less than necessary. In most areas of life, the less you say, the more profound and mysterious you appear. You can create the appearance of meaning and power. Also, the less you say, the less risk you run of saying something foolish, even dangerous. Reversal to this law: *There are times when it is unwise to be silent. Words can sometimes act as a smokescreen for any deception you might practice. By bending your listener's ear with talk, you can distract and mesmerize them; the more you talk, the less suspicious of you they become. By doing so and making yourself appear weaker and less intelligent, you can practice deception with greater ease.*

Lesson 5: So much depends on reputation, guard it with your life. In the beginning of your rise to power, you must work to establish a reputation for one outstanding quality, whether generosity or honesty or cunning. This single quality becomes a kind of calling card that announces your presence and places others under a spell. When you are first establishing it, you must protect it strictly, anticipating all attacks on it. Once it is solid, do not let yourself get angry or defensive at slanderous comments – that reveals insecurity. Then make your reputation known to as many people as possible and watch it spread like wildfire. If you ever stain your reputation it is wise to associate with someone who counteracts your own, using their good name to whitewash and elevate your own. It is necessary to break your enemies' reputations by any means necessary.

Law 6: Court attention at all costs. Part I: Surround your name with the sensational and the scandalous. You must not discriminate against any kind of attention; in the end every kind will work in your favor. At the start of your career, you must attach your name and reputation to a quality that sets you apart from other people. This can be something like a characteristic style of dress, or a personality quirk that amuses people and gets talked about. Never be afraid of the qualities that set you apart and draw attention to you. It is better to be attacked, even slandered, than ignored. If you find yourself in a position that offers little opportunity for you to draw attention, an effective trick is to attack the most visible/famous/powerful person you can find. Once in the limelight, you must constantly renew it by adapting and varying your method of courting attention. Part II: Create an air of mystery. The power of mystery is it invites layers of interpretation, excites our imagination, and seduces us into believing that it conceals something marvelous. Do not imagine that to create an air of mystery you have to be grand and awe-inspiring. By simply holding back, keeping silent, occasionally uttering ambiguous phrases, deliberately appearing inconsistent, and acting odd in the subtlest ways, you will emanate an aura of mystery. Reversals to this law: *Never wear the public thin with the same tactic. Also never let your mystery be transformed into a reputation for deceit. There are times when the need for attention must be deferred and when scandal and notoriety are the last things you want to create. The attention you attract must never offend or challenge the reputation of those above you. Lastly, never appear overly greedy for attention.*

Law 7: Get others to do the work for you, but always take the credit. Time is precious and life is short. If you try to do it all on your own, you run yourself ragged, waste energy, and burn yourself out. It is far better to conserve your forces, pounce on the work others have done, and find a way to make it your own. Find people with the skills and creativity you lack. Either hire them, while putting your name on top of theirs, or find a way to take their work and make it your own. Reversal to this law: *If your power is not firmly enough established, taking the credit for work that others have done is not the wise course. You will seem to be pushing people out of the limelight. It is especially important to not be greedy when you have a master above. Take the credit for the work of those below you and graciously give credit for your own labors to those above you.*

Law 8: Make other people come to you – use bait if necessary. Two things must happen to place you in a position of power. You yourself must learn to master your emotions, and never to be influenced by anger; meanwhile, however, you must play on people's natural tendency to react angrily when pushed and baited. When you make the other person come to you, they wear themselves out. One added benefit of making the opponent come to you is it forces them to operate in your territory. You have your bearings while they see nothing familiar and are subtly placed on the defensive. When you make your opponent come to you, you create the illusion that he is controlling the situation. If your trap is attractive enough, the turbulence of your enemies' emotions will blind them to reality. The person who makes others come to him/her appears powerful, and demands respect. Reversal to this law: *Fast attack can be an awesome weapon, it forces the other person to react without time to think or plan. This tactic is the opposite of waiting and baiting but it serves the same function: you make your enemy respond on your terms.*

Law 9: Win through your actions, never through argument. Action and demonstration are much more powerful and meaningful than words. The most powerful persuasion goes beyond action into symbol. The power of symbol is that everyone understands you without anything being said. When aiming for power, or trying to conserve it, always look for the indirect route and choose your battles carefully. Reversal to this law: *Verbal argument has one vital use in the realm of power: to distract and cover your tracks when you are caught in a lie. When caught in a lie, the more emotional and certain you appear, the less likely it seems that you are lying.*

Law 10: Infection: Avoid the unhappy and unlucky. The people you associate with are critical. The risk of associating with infectors is that you will waste time and energy trying to free yourself. Through a kind of guilt by association, you will also suffer in the eyes of others. Most important of all, do not take pity or enmesh yourself in trying to help. The infector will remain unchanged, but you will be unhinged. Never associate with those who share your defects – they will reinforce everything that holds you back. Only create associations with positive affinities.

Law 11: Learn to keep people dependent on you. Sooner or later someone will come along who can do your job as well as you can – someone younger, fresher, less expensive, less threatening. You need to be the only one who can do what you do, and make the fate of those who hire you so entwined with yours that they cannot possibly get rid of you. Power involves a relationship between people; you will always need others as allies, pawns, or even as weak masters who serve as your front. The best you can hope for is that others will grow so dependent on you that you enjoy a kind of reverse independence: their need for you frees you. The foremost way to do this is to possess a talent and creative skill that simply cannot be replaced. Another way is to know other people's secrets, holding information that they wouldn't want to broadcast. By doing this, you seal your fate with theirs. Reversal to this law: *Interdependence remains the law, independence a rare and often fatal mistake. Better to place yourself in a position of mutual dependence, then, and follow this critical law rather than look for its reversal.*

Law 12: Use selective honesty and generosity to disarm your victim. The essence of deception is distraction. An act of kindness, generosity, or honesty is often the most powerful form of distraction because it disarms other people's suspicions. Selective honesty is best employed on your first encounter; if someone believes you are honest at the start of your relationship it takes a lot to convince them otherwise. A single act of honesty is often not enough. What is required is a reputation for honesty, built on a series of acts. Once this reputation is established, it is hard to shake. Reversal to this law: *When you have a history of deceit behind you, no amount of honesty, generosity, or kindness will fool people. In these cases it is better to play the rogue. Overt deceptiveness will sometimes cover your tracks, even making you admired for the honesty of your dishonesty.*

Law 13: When asking for help, appeal to people's self-interest, never to their mercy or gratitude. Self-interest is the lever that will move people. Once you make them see how you can in some way meet their needs or advance their cause, their resistance to your requests for help will magically fall away. Reversal to this law: *Some people will see an appeal to their self-interest as ugly and ignoble. They actually prefer to be able to exercise charity, mercy, and justice, which are their ways of feeling superior to you. When you beg them for help, you emphasize their power and position.*

Law 14: Pose as a friend, work as a spy. The most common way of spying is to use other people. A friendly front will let you secretly gather information on friends and enemies alike. The trick is to find a way to probe them, to find out their secrets and hidden intentions, without letting them know what you are doing. During social gatherings and innocuous encounters, pay attention. This is when people's guards are down. One way to spy is to pretend to bare your heart to another person, in other words, making them feel more likely to reveal their own secrets. Another method of indirect spying is to test people, to lay little traps that make them reveal things about themselves. Reversal to this law: *Just as you spy on other people, you must be prepared for them to spy on you. One of the most potent weapons in the battle for information, then, is giving out false information.*

Law 15: Crush your enemy totally. Have no mercy. The goal of power is to control your enemies completely, to make them obey your will. Crush your enemies as totally as they would crush you. Ultimately, the only peace and security you can hope for from your enemies is their disappearance. Allow your enemies no options. Annihilate them and their territory is yours to carve. You cannot afford to go halfway. This is not, of course, a question of murder, but is a question of banishment. If you cannot banish them immediately, then plot for the best time to act. Reversal to this law: *This law should be rarely ignored, but it does sometimes happen that it is better to let your enemies destroy themselves, if such a thing is possible, than to make them suffer by your hand.*

Law 16: Use absence to increase respect and honor. Everything in the world depends on absence and presence. A strong presence will draw power and attention to you. But a point is inevitably reached where too much presence creates the opposite effect: The more you are seen and heard from, the more your value degrades. At the right moment you must learn to withdraw yourself before others unconsciously push you away. By withdrawing something from the market, you create instant value. Make what you are offering the world rare and hard to find,

and you instantly increase its value. Reversal to this law: *This law only applies when a certain level of power has been attained. The need to withdraw only comes after you have established your presence; leave too early and you do not increase your respect, you are simply forgotten.*

Law 17: Keep others in suspended terror: cultivate an air of unpredictability. A person of power instills a kind of fear by deliberately unsettling those around him/her to keep the initiative on his/her side. You sometimes need to strike without warning, to make others tremble when they least expect it. People are always trying to read the motives behind your actions and to use your predictability against you. Throw in a completely inexplicable move and you put them on the defensive. Because they do not understand you, they are unnerved, and in such a state you can easily intimidate them. In the end, the more capricious you appear, the more respect you garner. Reversal to this law: *Unpredictability can work against you sometimes, especially if you are a subordinate person. There are times when it is better to let people feel comfortable and settled around you than to disturb them. Too much unpredictability will be seen as a sign of indecisiveness, or even some more serious psychic problem.*

Law 18: Do not build fortresses to protect yourself – isolation is dangerous. Designed to defend you, fortresses actually cut you off from help and cut your flexibility. They may appear impregnable, but once you retire to one, everyone knows where you are. The danger for most people comes when they feel threatened. They tend to retreat and close ranks. In doing so, however, they come to rely for information on a smaller and smaller circle, and lose perspective on events around them. They lose maneuverability and become easy targets. To make yourself more powerful you must place yourself at the center of things. Since power is a human creation, it is inevitably increased by contact with other people. The more you are in contact with others, the more graceful and at ease you become. Reversal to this law: *It is hardly ever right and propitious to choose isolation. The weight of society's pressure to conform, and the lack of distance from other people, can make it impossible to think clearly about what is going on around you. As a temporary recourse, then, isolation can help you gain perspective.*

Law 19: Know who you're dealing with – do not offend the wrong person. Being able to recognize different types of people, and to act accordingly is critical. The following are the five most dangerous and difficult types of marks in the jungle: I) The arrogant and proud person. II) The hopelessly insecure person. III) Mr. /Mrs. Suspicion. IV) The serpent with a long memory. V) The plain, unassuming, and often unintelligent person. The ability to measure people and to know who you're dealing with is the most important skill of all in gathering and conserving power. Without it, not only will you offend the wrong people, you will choose the wrong types to work on, and will think you are flattering people when you are actually insulting them. Learn to see through appearances and their contradictions. Never trust the version that people give of themselves.

Law 20: Do not commit to anyone. Part I: Do not commit to anyone, but be courted by all. As your reputation for independence grows, more and more people will come to desire you, wanting to be the one who gets you to commit. The moment you commit, the magic is gone. Encourage the attention, stimulate their interest, but do not commit at any cost. Part II: Do not commit to anyone – stay above the fray. Most people operate in a whirlpool of emotions, constantly reacting, churning up squabbles and conflicts. Your self-control and autonomy will only bother and infuriate them. If you succumb to their emotional entreaties, little by little you will find your mind and time occupied by their problems. No matter how hard people try to pull you in, never let your interest in their affairs and petty squabbles go beyond the surface. Reversal to this law: *Both parts of this law will turn against you if you take it too far. If you keep your growing number of suitors waiting too long, you will inspire not desire, but distrust. Eventually you may find it worthwhile to commit. The key, then, will be to maintain your inner interdependence – to keep yourself from getting too emotionally involved.*

Law 21: Play a sucker to catch a sucker – seem dumber than your mark. Subliminally reassure people that they are more intelligent than you are, and you can run rings around them. The feeling of intellectual superiority you give them will disarm their suspicion-muscles. Taste and sophistication rank close to intelligence on the vanity scale; make people feel they are more sophisticated than you and their guard will come down. The easier they think it is to prey on you, the more easily you can turn the tables. Reversal to this law: *To reveal the nature of your intelligence rarely pays; you should get in the habit of downplaying it at all times. There is, however, one situation where it pays to do the opposite – then you can cover up a deception with a show of intelligence.*

Law 22: Use the surrender tactic: transform weakness into power. Do not resist or fight back, but yield, turn the other cheek, bend. You will find that this often neutralizes their behavior – they expected, even wanted you to react with force and so they are caught off-guard and confounded by your lack of resistance. Deprived of a reason to get angry, your opponents will often be bewildered instead. They are unlikely to react with more violence, which would demand a reaction from you. Instead, you are allowed the time and space to plot the countermoves that will bring them down. You have to remember only to appear to surrender. If you find yourself temporarily weakened, the surrender tactic is perfect for raising yourself up again – it disguises your ambition and it puts you in the best possible position for taking advantage of your opponent's sudden slide. *Reversal to this law: There are times when the enemy will not relent, and martyrdom seems the only way out. If you are willing to die, others may gain power and inspiration from your example. But, when power deserts you, it is best to ignore this law's reversal. Leave martyrdom alone: the pendulum will swing back your way eventually, and you should stay alive to see it.*

Law 23: Concentrate your forces. Concentrate on a single goal, a single task, and beat it into submission. Much energy is saved, and more power is attained, by affixing yourself to a single, appropriate source of power. Power itself always exists in concentrated forms. *Reversal to this law: Tying yourself to a single source of power has one preeminent danger. If that person dies, leaves, or falls from grace, you suffer. In cases when you may need protection, then, it is often wise to entwine yourself around several sources of power.*

Law 24: Play the perfect courtier. Great courtiers are gracious and polite; their aggression is veiled and indirect. Masters of the word, they never say more than is necessary, getting the most out of a compliment or hidden insult. Here are the laws of court politics: I) Avoid ostentation. II) Practice nonchalance. III) Be frugal with flattery. IV) Arrange to be noticed. V) Alter your style and language according to the person you are dealing with. VI) Never be the bearer of bad news. VII) Never affect friendliness and intimacy with your master. VIII) Never criticize those above you directly. IX) Be frugal in asking those above you for favors. X) Never joke about appearances or taste. XI) Do not be the court cynic. XII) Be self-observant. XIII) Master your emotions. XIV) Fit in the spirit of the times. XV) Be a source of pleasure.

Courtiers are like magicians: they deceptively play with appearances, only letting those around them see what they want them to see. With so much deception and manipulation afoot, it is essential to keep people from seeing your tricks and glimpsing your sleight of hand. Never risk being caught in your maneuvers; never let people see your devices. If that happens, you will instantly pass in people's perceptions from a courtier of great manners to a loathsome rogue.

Law 25: Re-create yourself. Remake yourself into a character of power. The first step in the process of self-creation is self-consciousness – be aware of yourself as an actor and taking control of your appearances and emotions. The second step is the creation of a memorable character, one that compels attention, and that stands out above the other players on the stage. Learn to play many roles, to be whatever the moment requires.

Law 26: Keep your hands clean. Part I: Conceal your mistakes – have a scapegoat around to take the blame. Besides conveniently shifting blame, a scapegoat can serve as a warning to others. In fact, it is often wise to choose the most innocent victim possible as a sacrificial scapegoat. Such people will not be powerful enough to fight you, and their naïve protests may be seen as protesting too much – may be seen as a sign of their guilt. Be careful not to create a martyr. It is important that you remain the victim. If the scapegoat appears too weak and his punishment too cruel, you may end up the victim of your own device. Sometimes you should find a more powerful scapegoat – one who will elicit less sympathy in the long run. Choosing a close associate as a scapegoat has the same value as the “fall of the favorite.” You may lose a friend or aide, but in the long run, it is more important to hide your mistakes than to hold on to someone who one day will probably turn against you. Part II: Make use of the cat's paw. If there is something unpleasant or unpopular that needs to be done, it is far too risky for you to do the work yourself. You need a cat's paw – someone who does the dirty, dangerous work for you. Truly powerful people keep their hands clean. Only good surrounds them, and the only announcements they make are of glorious achievements. *Reversal to this law: Rather than using a scapegoat or cat's paw in an action of great consequence, it is often wiser to use dupes in more innocent endeavors, where mistakes or miscalculations will cause no serious harm. Also, there are moments when it is advantageous to not disguise your involvement or responsibility, but rather take the blame for some mistake. You should sometimes play the penitent and upon occasion you may want to appear as the agent of punishment in order to instill fear and trembling in your subordinates.*

Law 27: Play on people's need to create a cult like following. Having a large following opens up all sorts of possibilities for deception; not only will your followers worship you, but they will defend you from your enemies and take on the work of enticing others to join your cult. This can be achieved in five steps: Step 1: Keep it vague, keep it simple. You must first attract attention. This you should do not through actions, but through words which are hazy and deceptive. Your initial speeches, conversations, and interviews must include two elements: on the one hand a promise of something great and transformative, and on the other a total vagueness. Step 2: Emphasize the visual and sensual over the intellectual. Once people have begun to gather around you, two dangers will present themselves: boredom and skepticism. You need to amuse the bored, then, and ward off the cynics. The best way to do this is through theater. Use the exotic to create theatrical effects, and to make the most banal and ordinary affairs seem signs of something extraordinary. Step 3: Borrow the forms of organized religion to structure the group. Create rituals for your followers, organize them into a hierarchy, give them names and titles with religious overtones, and ask them for sacrifices. To emphasize your gathering's quasi-religious nature, talk and act like a prophet. Step 4: Disguise your source of income. Never reveal that your wealth actually comes from your followers' pockets; instead, make it seem to come from the truth of your methods. Step 5: Set up an us-versus-them dynamic. First, make sure your followers are unified by a bond of common goals. Then, manufacture the notion of a devious enemy out to ruin you. If you have no enemies, invent one. *Reversal to this law: One reason to create a following is that a group is often easier to deceive than an individual. This comes, however, with a danger: if at any moment the group sees through you, you will find yourself facing not one deceived soul but an angry crowd that will tear you to pieces. For this reason you may often prefer to deal with people one by one.*

Law 28: Enter action with boldness. Hesitation puts obstacles in your path, boldness eliminates them. The following are among the most pronounced psychological effects of boldness and timidity: I) The bolder the lie the better. II) Lions circle the hesitant prey. III) Boldness strikes fear; fear creates authority. IV) Going halfway with half a heart digs the deeper grave. V) Hesitation creates gaps, boldness obliterates them. VI) Audacity separates you from the herd.

Boldness is outer-directed, and often makes people feel more at ease, since it is less self-conscious and less repressed. Boldness directs attention outward and keeps the illusion alive. It never introduces awkwardness or embarrassment. And so we admire the bold, and prefer to be around them, because their self-confidence infects us and draws us outside our own realm of inwardness and reflection. If boldness is not natural, neither is timidity. It is an acquired habit. If timidity has taken hold of you, then, root it out. Problems that arise from an audacious move can be remedied by greater and more audacity. *Reversal: Since boldness is a learned response, it is also one that you learn to control and utilize at will. Timidity has no place in the realm of power; you will often benefit, however, by being able to feign it.*

Law 29: Plan all the way to the end. Those among us who think further ahead and patiently bring their plans to fruition seem to have a godlike power. The ability to ignore immediate dangers and pleasures translates into power. When you see several steps ahead, and plan your moves all the way to the end, you will no longer be tempted by emotion or by the desire to improvise. It is the end of the action that determines who gets the glory, the money, the prize. Your conclusion must be crystal clear, and you must keep it constantly in mind.

Law 30: Make your accomplishments seem effortless. Avoid the temptation of showing how clever you are – it is far cleverer to conceal the mechanisms of your cleverness. The more mystery surrounds your actions, the more awesome your power seems. Because you achieve your accomplishments with grace and ease, people believe that you could always do more if you tried harder. *Reversal to this law: As long as the partial disclosure of tricks and techniques is carefully planned, rather than the result of an uncontrollable need to speak, it is the ultimate in cleverness. It gives the audience the illusion of being involved, even while much of what you do remains concealed.*

Law 31: Control the options: get others to play with the cards you deal. When examined closely, the choices we have are often a matter of choice simply between A and B, with the rest of the alphabet out of the picture. Our limited range of choices comforts us and we “choose” to believe that the game is fair – that we have our choices. This unwillingness to probe the smallness of our choices stems from the fact that too much freedom creates a kind of anxiety. Setting up a narrow range of choices should always be a part of your deceptions. The following are among the most common forms of “controlling the options.” Color the choices. Propose three or four choices of action for each situation, but present them so the one you prefer seems to be the best solution. Force the resister.

Push someone to “choose” what you want them to do by appearing to advocate the opposite. This is a good technique to use on children and other willful people who enjoy doing the opposite of what you ask them to do. Alter the playing field. Make the only options available the ones you give. In this tactic your opponents know their hand is being forced, but it doesn’t matter. The shrinking option. Every time your opponent hesitates in making a decision you either raise the price or remove one of the options from the list. This is an excellent negotiating ploy to use on the chronically indecisive, who will fall for the idea that they are getting a better deal today than if they wait till tomorrow. The weak man on precipice. When describing options, describe all sorts of dangers, until your target sees abyss in every direction expect for one. Use fear and terror to propel them into action. Brothers in crime. Attract your victim to some criminal scheme, creating a bond of blood and guilt between you. They participate in your deception, commit a crime, and are easily manipulated. The horns of a dilemma. Lead your victim between two possible explanations of a solution and make them react and answer questions that in turn hurt them. The key to this is to move quickly: Deny the victim the time to think of an escape. Reversal to this law: *This tactic works best for those whose power is fragile, and who cannot operate too openly without increasing suspicion, resentment, and anger. By limiting people’s options you sometimes limit your own. There are situations in which it is to your advantage to allow your rivals a large degree of freedom: as you watch them operate, you give yourself opportunities to spy, gather information, and plan your deceptions.*

Law 32: Play to people’s fantasies. The person who can spin a fantasy out of an oppressive reality has access to untold power. Never be distracted by people’s glamorous portraits of themselves and their lives; search and dig for what really imprisons them. Below are a few of the oppressive realities humans that endure that provide opportunities for power: I) Change is slow and gradual. It requires hard work, a bit of luck, a fair amount of self-sacrifice, and a lot of patience. II) The social realm has hard-set codes and boundaries. We understand these limits and know that we have to move within the same familiar circles, day in and day out. III) Society is fragmented and full of conflict. IV) Death. The dead cannot be brought back, the past cannot be changed. The key to fantasy is distance. The distant has allure and promise, seems simple and problem free. Never be too direct in describing your fantasy – keep it vague. Reversal to this law: *Never come too close to the place where you are actually expected to produce results. That place may prove extremely hazardous. Never make the mistake of imagining the fantasy is always fantastical. It certainly contrasts with reality, but reality itself is sometimes so theatrical and stylized that fantasy becomes a desire for simple things.*

Law 33: Discover each man’s thumbscrew. One of the most important things to realize about people is that they all have a weakness, some part of their psychological armor that will not resist, that will bend to your will if you find it and push on it. In planning your assault, keep these principles in mind: I) Pay attention to gestures and unconscious signals, and probe soft spots indirectly. II) Find the helpless child; look for childhood needs that lead to weaknesses. III) Look for contrasts in how people act and their true personalities. IV) Find a weak link behind the scenes who you can influence to indirectly influence the leader V) Fill the two emotional voids of insecurity and happiness. VI) Feed on uncontrollable emotions. Reversal to this law: *Playing on people’s emotions has one danger: you may stir up an action you cannot control. Know the limits of this game and never get carried away by your control over your victims.*

Law 34: Be royal in your own fashion: act like a king to be treated like one. If we believe we are destined for great things, our belief will radiate outward. This outward radiance will influence the people around us who will think we must have reasons to feel so confident. First, always make a bold demand and do not waver. Second, in a dignified way, go after the highest person in the building. This will put you on the same plane as the chief executive you are attacking. Third, give a gift of some sort to those above you. By giving a gift, you are essentially saying that the two of you are equal. Reversal to this law: *Never make the mistake of thinking that you elevate yourself by humiliating people. Also, it is never a good idea to loom too high above the crowd – you make an easy target. It is true that you can sometimes find power through affecting a kind of earthly vulgarity, but there will always be people more vulgar than you, and you will easily be replaced the next season by someone younger and worse.*

Law 35: Master the art of timing. Time depends on perception, which we know can be altered. If the inner turmoil caused by our emotions tends to make time move faster, it follows that once we control our emotional responses to events, time will move much more slowly. There are three kinds of time for us to deal with. First there is long time: the drawn out, years-long kind of time that must be managed with patience and gentle guidance. Our

handling of long time should be mostly defensive – this is the art of not reacting impulsively, of waiting for opportunity. Next there is forced time: the short-term time that we can manipulate as an offensive weapon, upsetting the timing of our opponents. Finally there is end time, when a plan must be executed with speed and force. We have waited, found the moment, and must not hesitate. Your mastery of timing can really only be judged by end time – how you quickly change the pace and bring things to a swift and definitive conclusion.

Law 36: Disdain things you cannot have: ignoring them is the best revenge. You need to turn your back on what you want, show your contempt and disdain. This is the kind of powerful response that will drive your targets crazy. If choosing to ignore enhances your power, it follows that the opposite approach often weakens you. The powerful responses to niggling, petty annoyances, and irritations are contempt and disdain. Never show that something has affected you, or that you are offended – that only shows that you have acknowledged a problem. Reversal to this law: *Most small troubles will vanish on their own if you leave them be; but some will grow and fester unless you attend to them. Learn to distinguish between the potentially disastrous and the mildly irritating.*

Law 37: Create compelling spectacles. Words put you on the defensive. If you have to explain yourself your power is already in question. The image, on the other hand, imposes itself as a given. Visual images often appear in a sequence, and the order in which they appear creates a symbol. The first to appear, for instance, symbolizes power; the image at the center seems to have central importance. The symbol has the same force, whether it is visual or a verbal description of something visual. The symbol is a shortcut of expression, containing dozens of meanings in one simple phrase or object. The best way to use images and symbols is to organize them into a grand spectacle that awes people and distracts them from unpleasant realities. People love what is grand, spectacular, and larger than life. Appeal to their emotions and they will flock to your spectacles in hordes. The visual is the easiest route to their hearts.

Law 38: Think as you like but behave like others. We all tell lies and hide our true feelings, for complete free expression is a social impossibility. For most of us this is natural – there are ideas and values that most people accept, and it is pointless to argue. We believe what we want to, then, but on the outside we wear a mask. Wise and clever people learn early on that they can display conventional behavior and mouth conventional ideas without having to believe in them. The power these people gain is that of being left alone to have the thoughts they want to have, and to express them to the people they want to express them to, without suffering isolation or ostracism. The logical extension of this practice is the invaluable ability to be all things to all people. Reversal to this law: *The only time it is worth standing out is when you have achieved an unshakable position of power, and can display your difference from others as a sign of distance between you. Additionally, there is always a person for the gadfly, the person who successfully defies customs and mocks what has grown lifeless in a culture.*

Law 39: Stir up waters to catch fish. Petulance is not power, it is a sign of helplessness. People may temporarily be cowed by your tantrums, but in the end they lose respect for you. If a person explodes with anger at you, you must remind yourself that it is not exclusively directed at you. Instead of overreacting, and becoming ensnared in people's emotions, you will turn their loss of control to your advantage: you keep your head while they are losing theirs. Once you train yourself not to take matters personally, and to control your emotional responses, you will have placed yourself in a position of tremendous power. In the face of a hot-headed enemy, an excellent response is no response. Reversal to this law: *When playing with people's emotions you have to be careful. Study the enemy beforehand. Choose carefully whom you bait, and never stir up the sharks. Also, there are times when a well-timed burst of anger can do you good, but your anger must be manufactured and under control.*

Law 40: Despise the free lunch. What is offered for free or at bargain rates often comes with a psychological price tag. The powerful learn early to protect their most valuable resources: independence and room to maneuver. By paying the full price, they keep themselves free of dangerous entanglements and worries. Being open and flexible with money also teaches the value of strategic generosity. Generosity softens people up – to be deceived. By gaining a reputation for liberality, you win people's admiration while distracting them from your power plays. Reversal to this law: *This law offers great opportunities for swindling and deception if you apply it from the other side. Lure people in with the prospect of easy money and you have room to work still more deceptions on them, since greed is powerful enough to blind your victims to do anything.*

Law 41: Avoid stepping into a great man's shoes. There is a kind of stubborn stupidity that recurs throughout history, and is a strong impediment to power: the superstitious belief that if the person before you succeeded doing A, B, and C, you can re-create their success by doing the same. But circumstances never repeat themselves exactly. The problem with the overbearing predecessors is that they fill the vistas before you with symbols of the past. You have no room to create your own name. To deal with this situation you need to hunt out the areas in culture that have been left vacant and which you can become the first and principle figure to shine. Powerful people recognize the danger of a powerful predecessor and are constantly trying to recreate themselves. Reversal to this law: *The shadow of a great predecessor could be used to advantage if it is chosen as a trick, a tactic that can be discarded once it has brought you to power. The past often has elements worth appropriating, qualities that would be foolish to reject out of a need to distinguish yourself. Making a display of doing things differently from your predecessor can work against you, unless your actions have a logic of their own. Finally, it is often wise to keep an eye on those rising from below, and never give them the chance to do the same to you.*

Law 42: Strike the shepherd and the sheep will scatter. In every group, power is concentrated in the hands of one or two people, for this is the one area in which human nature will never change. The reason you strike at the shepherd is because such an action will dishearten the sheep beyond any rational measure. With the leader gone there is nothing to revolve around and everything falls apart. Aim at the leaders, bring them down, and look for the endless opportunities in the confusion that will ensue. It is often better, though, to isolate your enemies than to destroy them – you seem less brutal. The result is the same, for in the game of power, isolation spells death. Once isolated they are vulnerable to you, and your presence becomes magnified. Reversal to this law: *You may often find it better to keep people on your side, where you can watch them, than to risk creating an angry enemy. Keeping them close, you can secretly whittle away at their support base, so that when the time comes to cut them loose they fall fast and hard without knowing what hit them.*

Law 43: Work on the hearts and minds of others. The key to persuasion is softening people up and breaking them down, gently. Work on the emotions and play on the intellectual weaknesses. Be alert to both what separates them from everyone else and what they share with everyone else. Aim at the primary emotions – love, hate, jealousy. Once you move their emotions you have reduced their control, making them more vulnerable to persuasion. Play on contrasts. Push people to despair, then give them relief. Creating pleasure of any kind, in fact, will usually bring you success, as will allaying fears and providing or promising security. The quickest way to secure people's minds is by demonstrating, as simply as possible, how an action will benefit them. Self-interest is the strongest motive of all. The causes that work best use a noble veneer to cover blatant appeal to self-interest; the cause seduces but the self-interest secures the deal. Finally, learn to play the numbers game. You must constantly win over more allies on all levels – a time will inevitably come when you will need them.

Law 44: Disarm and infuriate with the mirror effect. The mirror effect unsettles your targets, whether angering or entrancing them, and in that instant you have the power to manipulate or seduce them. There are four main mirror effects: 1) The neutralizing effect. Do what your enemies do, following their actions as best you can, and they cannot see what you are up to. Their strategy for dealing with you depends on your reacting to them in a way characteristic of you; neutralize it by playing a game of mimicry with them. 2) The narcissus effect. You fathom the innermost desires, values, and tastes of others and reflect it back to them. If you can show you understand another person by reflecting their innermost feelings, they will be entranced and disarmed. 3) The moral effect. You mirror what other people have done to you. You make them feel that their behavior has been unpleasant, as opposed to hearing you complain and whine about it, which only gets their defenses up. 4) The hallucinatory effect. You create a perfect copy of an object, a person, a place. This copy acts as a kind of dummy – people take it for the real thing, because it has the physical appearance of the real thing.

Law 45: Preach the need for change, but never reform too much at once. If you are new to a position of power, or an outsider trying to build a power base, make a show of respecting the old way of doing things. If change is necessary, make it feel like a gentle improvement on the past. The changes you make must seem less innovative than they are. The opportunity for change and renewal seduces people to the side of revolution, but once their enthusiasm fades, they are left with a certain emptiness. Yearning for the past, they create an opening for it to creep back in. The fact is that the past is dead and buried gives you the freedom to reinterpret it. Another strategy to disguise change is to make a loud and public display for the values of the past. Seem to be a zealot for tradition

and few will notice how unconventional you really are. Reversal to this law: *If what happened in the recent past was painful and harsh, it is self-destructive to associate yourself with it. If you make a bold change, you must avoid at all costs the appearance of a void or vacuum, or you will create terror. In the end, using the past for your purposes will bring more power than trying to cut it out completely.*

Law 46: Never appear too perfect. In the face of superior skill, talent, or power, we are often disturbed and ill at ease; this is because most of us have an inflated sense of ourselves, and when we meet people who surpass us they make it clear to us that we are in fact mediocre, or at least not as brilliant as we had thought. First, you must accept the fact that there will be people who will surpass you in some way, and also the fact that you may envy them. But make that feeling a way of pushing yourself to equal or surpass them someday. Second, understand that as you gain power, those below you will feel envious of you. Read between the lines of their criticisms, sarcastic remarks, signs of backstabbing, the excessive praise, and resentful looks. Expect that when people envy you they will work against you insidiously. By the time you realize that envy is the root of a person's feelings about you, it is often too late: your excuses, false humility, and defensive action will exacerbate the problem. You should always strategize to forestall envy before it grows. It is much easier than getting rid of it once it is there. Reversal to this law: *Once envy is there, it is sometimes best to affect the opposite approach: display the utmost disdain to those who envy you. If you attain a position of unimpeachable power, their envy will have no effect on you, and you will have the best revenge of all: they are trapped in envy while you are free in your power.*

Law 47: Do not go past the mark you aimed for; in victory, learn when to stop. The powerful vary their rhythms and patterns, change course, adapt to circumstance, and learn to improvise. They step back and look where they are going. They steady themselves, give themselves space to reflect on what has happened, examine the role of circumstance and luck in their success. Luck and circumstance always play a role in power. But despite what you may think, good luck is more dangerous than bad luck. Bad luck teaches valuable lessons. Good luck deludes you into the opposite lesson, making you think your brilliance will carry through. People who go past the mark are often motivated by a desire to please a master by proving their dedication. But an excess of effort exposes you to the risk of making the master suspicious of you. The moment when you stop has great dramatic import. What comes last sticks in the mind as a kind of explanation point. There is no better time to stop and walk away than after a victory. Keep going and you risk lessening the effect, even end up defeated. Reversal to this law: *The only reversal is when you beat an enemy, you should make your victory complete. Crush them into nonexistence.*

Law 48: Assume formlessness. The powerful are often people who in their youth have shown immense creativity in expressing something new through a new form. Power can only thrive if it is flexible in its forms. As you get older, you must rely even less on the past. Be vigilant lest the form your character has taken makes you seem a relic. Rather your mind must constantly adapt to each circumstance, even the inevitable change that the time has come to move over and let those of younger age prepare for their ascendancy. Learning to adapt to each new circumstance means seeing events through your own eyes, and often ignoring the advice that people constantly peddle your way. It means that ultimately you must throw out the laws that others preach, and the books they write to tell you what to do, and the sage advice of the elder. Reversal to this law: *Using space to disperse and create an abstract pattern should not mean forsaking the concentrations of your power when it is valuable to you. When you play with formlessness, keep on top of the process, and keep your long-term strategy in mind. When you assume a form and go on the attack, use concentration, speed, and power.*