



# CHAPTER ONE



**Law 31 - control the options:  
get others to play with the  
cards you deal**





# Chapter Summary

Law 31 teaches that true control comes from offering others the illusion of choice while securing your desired outcome. By presenting options that all lead back to your advantage, you manipulate the situation without revealing your intent. Historical examples illustrate how leaders like Ivan the Terrible and cunning figures like Ninon de Lenclos employed this strategy to reinforce their power. The technique hinges on framing the choice so that resisting leads to undesirable consequences. In essence, the power lies in crafting scenarios where others feel they are in command, while you remain the true architect of their decisions.





# The Illusion of Choice



True influence stems from giving others the perception of choice while steering them towards a predetermined outcome. This subtle deception ensures you control the dynamics of any situation without your opponents realizing it. It's a powerful technique that can turn adversaries into allies.



# Ivan the Terrible's Dilemma



Ivan faced a formidable challenge with the ambitious boyars threatening his reign. His realization that mere force would not suffice led him to employ cunning tactics to regain authority. By manipulating the options presented to his subjects, he framed the stakes in a way that left them no choice but to accept his terms.





# Creating Fear and Dependency

Through the strategic withdrawal of presence, leaders can evoke fear and desperation. When Ivan left Moscow, the citizens realized the dire consequences of his absence, compelling them to support his return. This created a scenario where acceptance of despotic power felt like a necessity for stability.



# The Power of the Dilemma

Presenting your adversaries with a dilemma ensnares them in a position where any choice they make becomes detrimental. This tactic effectively limits their options while enhancing your leverage. Both paths they face lead back to the advantages you've laid out.





# Ninon de Lenclos's Strategy

Ninon revolutionized the dynamics of relationships by introducing a system where men could choose between being her 'payeur' or 'martyr.' By making their choices feel empowering, she maintained control over her suitors while maximizing her desirability and power.



# The Art of Deception

By reducing choices and manipulating perceptions of freedom, you can effectively maintain control while appearing to give others autonomy. The illusion of choice serves to disarm your opponents, making them more susceptible to your influence. This approach can redirect their focus away from your true intentions.

"The savvy operator understands the power of suggestion."



# Understanding the Psychology of Choice

People typically resist examining the boundaries of their choices, leading them to accept manipulated options as fair and reasonable. By recognizing this psychological flaw, you can exploit it to ensure compliance with your designs, turning opposition into support as they unknowingly concede to your will.

"We prefer not to think too much about the depth of our liberty to choose."



# Long-term Planning



While controlling others' options, it is also crucial to reflect on your own choices. Limiting options can sometimes bind you into predictable paths. Balance between controlling situations and allowing them to unfold provides a tactical advantage for assessing and adapting your strategies.



# Embrace the Illusion of Choice



The ultimate lesson of this law is to embrace the illusion of choice. By cleverly framing situations to your benefit, you create a reality where others believe they are in control. This tactic ultimately elevates your status while securing the power you desire.





# Recap

- "The best deceptions are the ones that seem to give the other person a choice."
- "He would give it 'options': either his abdication, and certain anarchy, or his accession to absolute power."
- "She would sleep with them according to her whim."
- "If you can get the bird to walk into the cage on its own, it will sing that much more prettily."
- "The savvy operator understands the power of suggestion."





# **Thank You**

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