



# CHAPTER ONE



Keep your hands clean





# Chapter Summary

In Law 26, Robert Greene emphasizes the art of maintaining a pristine image while wielding power. Mistakes are an inevitable part of leadership, but how one addresses them is crucial. By using scapegoats and cat's-paws, leaders can deflect blame and avoid accountability for their errors. Historical examples, such as Ts'ao Ts'ao and Cesare Borgia, illustrate these principles in practice, where the clever use of another's culpability allows leaders to appear untainted. Ultimately, the law teaches that power relies heavily on perception, and maintaining a spotless reputation is essential for success.





# The Illusion of Clean Hands

In the realm of power, appearing immaculate is imperative. It is often more significant to conceal mistakes than to reveal them. A flawless image fosters trust and respect, while mistakes can tarnish one's reputation permanently.

"Your hands must never be soiled by mistakes."



# Scapegoats as Essential Tools

Every powerful leader should have a scapegoat ready to take the blame during crises. This strategy allows leaders to divert attention from their own slip-ups, maintaining their influence and authority.

"Let others bear the brunt of your errors."



# Clever Anecdotes: The Town of Chelm

The tale of Chelm highlights how the community's perception can be manipulated. By sacrificing an alternative target, the focus shifts, sparing the true perpetrator from blame.



# Ts'ao Ts'ao: A Master Manipulator

In a moment of crisis, Ts'ao Ts'ao exemplified the use of scapegoats by sacrificing an innocent man to pacify his troops, showcasing that the end justifies the means in leadership.



# Cesare Borgia's Brutal Strategy

Borgia gained control by employing a brutal lieutenant and then distanced himself from his actions. By publicly eliminating this figure, he maintained his image while ensuring order.





# The Cat's-Paw: A Convenient Ally

Utilizing a cat's-paw allows leaders to keep their hands clean while achieving their goals. Employ others to perform the undesirable tasks on their behalf.





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# Cleopatra's Tactical Charisma



Cleopatra masterfully manipulated her romantic connections to eliminate her threats without direct involvement. Her charm disguised her true intentions.



# Power Resides in Perception, Not Action



True power is not in taking direct actions but in how situations are perceived. The ability to manage appearances can often mean the difference between success and failure.





# Recap

- "Your hands must never be soiled by mistakes."
- "Let others bear the brunt of your errors."
- "Control through distance and strategic sacrifice."
- "We project our guilt onto others to lighten our load."
- "Use others as tools of your ambitions."





# Thank You

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