



CHAPTER ONE



Law 46 - never appear too perfect



Chapter Summary

In this chapter, Greene explores the dangers of appearing too perfect and the effects of envy. He emphasizes that showcasing some flaws can make one more relatable and lessen the chances of attracting envy. Using the tragic story of Joe Orton and Kenneth Halliwell, the chapter illustrates how overt displays of success can irreparably damage relationships. The chapter also discusses strategies to deflect envy, such as exhibiting modesty and sharing successes with others. Ultimately, it reinforces the idea that none of us can escape the consequences of envy and the importance of managing perceptions of our accomplishments.



The Danger of Perfection

To appear better than others invites danger, with no one more prone to attack than the seemingly perfect individual. Perfection can foster envy and induce silent hostility in those around you. To navigate this peril, one must be willing to reveal harmless imperfections, making oneself relatable and approachable.

The Case of Joe Orton

Joe Orton's rise to fame serves as a testament to the volatility of success. His pronounced talent creating envy in his partner, Kenneth Halliwell, demonstrated how success can strain relationships. Halliwell's internal struggles reflected the insidious nature of envy, which can transform affection into resentment.

Understanding Envy

Envy is hidden beneath surfaces, often masked by compliments or criticism. Those who feel inferior may express 'unhappy admiration' instead of jealousy outright. Recognizing this behavior is crucial for safeguarding oneself against undermining assaults from others.

"Envy torments... it makes others shine their light upon you like madness."

Deflecting Envy

To reduce the sting of envy, cultivate humility around those who may feel it. One can indicate success is due to luck or the contributions of others. This strategy softens resentment and allows for continued support from peers.

"Subtly emphasize how lucky you have been, to make your happiness seem more attainable."

Communicating Flaws



Sometimes, acknowledging minor flaws can disarm potential envy. By presenting oneself as imperfect, one discourages scrutiny of one's successes. This is especially important as envy can fester in environments of perceived equality, where every achievement is magnified.

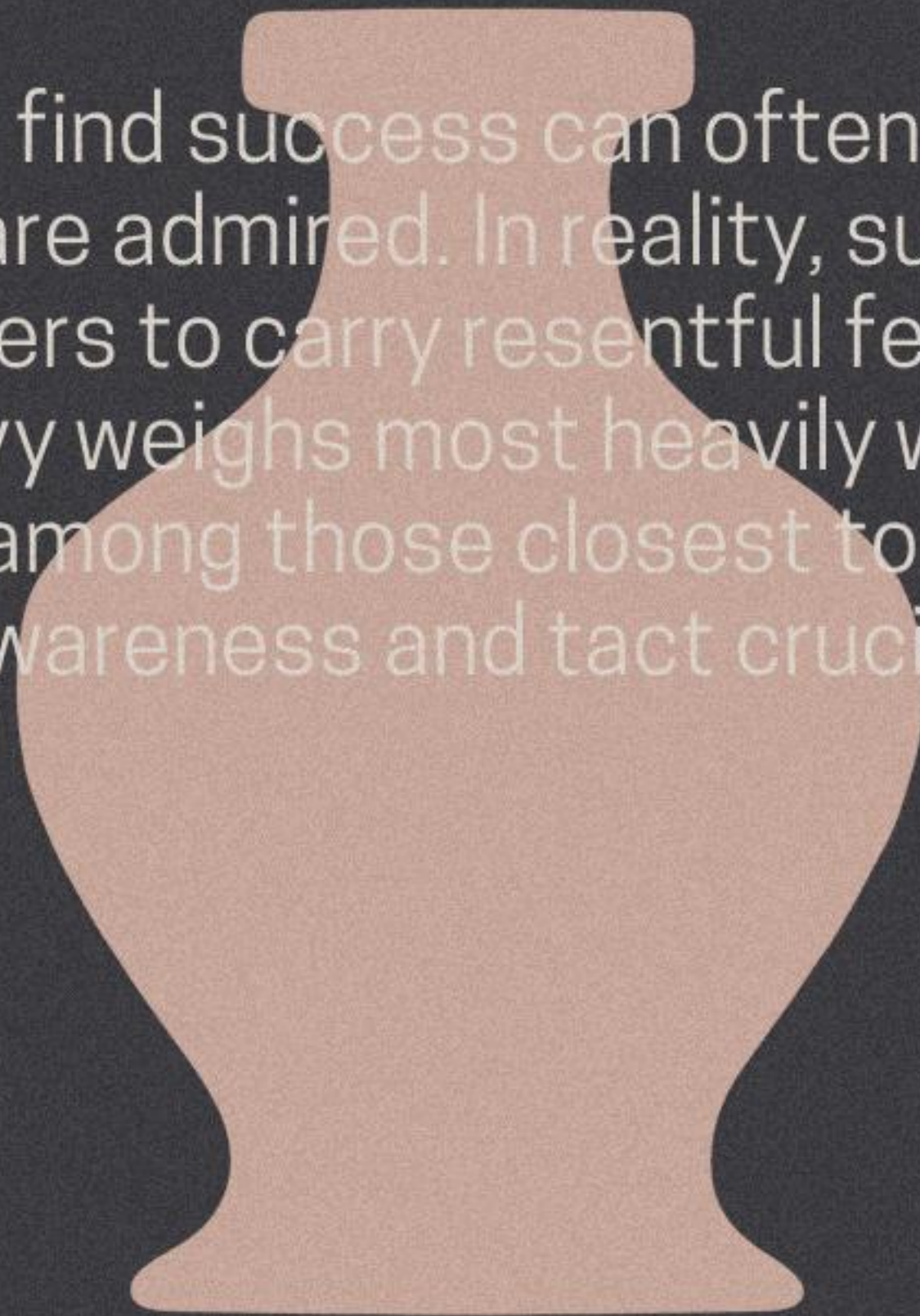
Cosimo de' Medici's Strategy



Cosimo de' Medici mastered the art of appearing modest while wielding significant influence. By downplaying his power and supporting others, he strategically avoided envy. His approach highlights that true control often lies in subtlety rather than ostentation.

The Weight of Envy

Those who find success can often mistakenly believe they are admired. In reality, such power may cause others to carry resentful feelings. The burden of envy weighs most heavily when it breeds in silence among those closest to us, making awareness and tact crucial.



Breaking the Cycle

Once you recognize envy, know it's often best to distance yourself from those who harbor it. Attempts to appease or help can backfire, intensifying feelings of inferiority. Let go of toxic relationships to maintain your own peace and power.

Frequent Displays of Humility

To escape envy's grip, act humbly amidst successes. This creates a buffer, allowing individuals to feel included rather than threatened. By showing vulnerability, you disarm possible envious reactions and secure ongoing support.




Final Reflections



In the end, understanding and managing perceptions of perfection are crucial. Cultivate relationships based on authenticity to repel the sting of envy. When you are conscious of envy, you can transform it from a threat into motivation and strength.



Recap

- "Only gods and the dead can seem perfect with impunity."
 - "Envy is a weed that should not be watered."
 - "You must learn to wield the power of appearance."
 - "A wise man knows how extraordinary things that are seen make men much more envied."
 - "Political power creates envy; don't be blind to its roots."
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Thank You

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