altering Spassky's mind. The KGB went on alert: Boris Spassky was embarrassing the Soviet Union!

The chairs were taken apart and X-rayed. A chemist found nothing unusual in them. The only things anyone found anywhere, in fact, were two dead flies in a lighting fixture. Spassky began to complain of hallucinations. He tried to keep playing, but his mind was unraveling. He could not go on. On September 2, he resigned. Although still relatively young, he never recovered from this defeat.

Interpretation

In previous games between Fischer and Spassky, Fischer had not fared well. Spassky had an uncanny ability to read his opponent's strategy and use it against him. Adaptable and patient, he would build attacks that would defeat not in seven moves but in seventy. He defeated Fischer every time they played because he saw much further ahead, and because he was a brilliant psychologist who never lost control. One master said, "He doesn't just look for the best move. He looks for the move that will disturb the man he is playing."

Fischer, however, finally understood that this was one of the keys to Spassky's success: He played on your predictability, defeated you at your own game. Everything Fischer did for the championship match was an attempt to put the initiative on his side and to keep Spassky off-balance. Clearly the endless waiting had an effect on Spassky's psyche. Most powerful of all, though, were Fischer's deliberate blunders and his appearance of having no clear strategy. In fact, he was doing everything he could to scramble his old patterns, even if it meant losing the first match and forfeiting the second.

Spassky was known for his sangfroid and levelheadedness, but for the first time in his life he could not figure out his opponent. He slowly melted down, until at the end he was the one who seemed insane.

Chess contains the concentrated essence of life: First, because to win you have to be supremely patient and farseeing; and second, because the game is built on patterns, whole sequences of moves that have been played before and will be played again, with slight alterations, in any one match. Your opponent analyzes the patterns you are playing and uses them to try to foresee your moves. Allowing him nothing predictable to base his strategy on gives you a big advantage. In chess as in life, when people cannot figure out what you are doing, they are kept in a state of terror—waiting, uncertain, confused.

Life at court is a serious, melancholy game of chess, which requires us to draw
up our pieces and batteries, form a plan, pursue it, parry that of our

adversary. Sometimes, however, it is better to take risks and play the most capricious, unpredictable move.
Jean de La Bruyère, 1645-1696

KEYS TO POWER

Nothing is more terrifying than the sudden and unpredictable. That is why we are so frightened by earthquakes and tornadoes: We do not know when they will strike. After one has occurred, we wait in terror for the next one. To a lesser degree, this is the effect that unpredictable human behavior has on us.

Animals behave in set patterns, which is why we are able to hunt and kill them. Only man has the capacity to consciously alter his behavior, to improvise and overcome the weight of routine and habit. Yet most men do not realize this power. They prefer the comforts of routine, of giving in to the animal nature that has them repeating the same compulsive actions time and time again. They do this because it requires no effort, and because they mistakenly believé that if they do not unsettle others, they will be left alone. Understand: A person of power instills a kind of fear by deliberately unsettling those around him to keep the initiative on his side. You sometimes need to strike without warning, to make others tremble when they least expect it. It is a device that the powerful have used for centuries.

Filippo Maria, the last of the Visconti dukes of Milan in fifteenth-century Italy, consciously did the opposite of what everyone expected of him. For instance, he might suddenly shower a courtier with attention, and then, once the man had come to expect a promotion to higher office, would suddenly start treating him with the utmost disdain. Confused, the man might leave the court, when the duke would suddenly recall him and start treating him well again. Doubly confused, the courtier would wonder whether his assumption that he would be promoted had become obvious, and offensive, to the duke, and would start to behave as if he no longer expected such honor. The duke would rebuke him for his lack of ambition and would send him away.

The secret of dealing with Filippo was simple: Do not presume to know what he wants. Do not try to guess what will please him. Never inject your will; just surrender to *his will.* Then wait to see what happens. Amidst the confusion and uncertainty he created, the duke ruled supreme, unchallenged and at peace.

Unpredictability is most often the tactic of the master, but the underdog too can use it to great effect. If you find yourself outnumbered or cornered, throw in a series of unpredictable moves. Your enemies will be so confused that they will pull back or make a tactical blunder.

In the spring of 1862, during the American Civil War, General Stonewall Jackson and a force of 4,600 Confederate soldiers were tormenting the larger Union forces in the Shenandoah Valley. Meanwhile, not far away, General George Brinton McClellan, heading a force of 90,000 Union soldiers, was marching south from Washington, D.C., to lay siege to Richmond, Virginia, the Confederate capital. As the weeks of the campaign went by, Jackson repeatedly led his soldiers out of the Shenandoah Valley, then back to it.

His movements made no sense. Was he preparing to help defend Richmond? Was he marching on Washington, now that McClellan's absence had left it unprotected? Was he heading north to wreak havoc up there? Why was his small force moving in circles?

Jackson's inexplicable moves made the Union generals delay the march on Richmond as they waited to figure out what he was up to. Meanwhile, the South was able to pour reinforcements into the town. A battle that could have crushed the Confederacy turned into a stalemate. Jackson used this tactic time and again when facing numerically superior forces. "Always mystify, mislead, and surprise the enemy, if possible," he said, "... such tactics will win every time and a small army may thus destroy a large one."

This law applies not only to war but to everyday situations. 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.

Pablo Picasso once remarked, "The best calculation is the absence of calculation. Once you have attained a certain level of recognition, others generally figure that when you do something, it's for an intelligent reason. So it's really foolish to plot out your movements too carefully in advance. You're better off acting capriciously."

For a while, Picasso worked with the art dealer Paul Rosenberg. At first he allowed him a fair amount of latitude in handling his paintings, then one day, for no apparent reason, he told the man he would no longer give him any work to sell. As Picasso explained, "Rosenberg would spend the next

forty-eight hours trying to figure out why. Was I reserving things for some other dealer? I'd go on working and sleeping and Rosenberg would spend his time figuring. In two days he'd come back, nerves jangled, anxious, saying, 'After all, dear friend, you wouldn't turn me down if I offered you this much [naming a substantially higher figure] for those paintings rather than the price I've been accustomed to paying you, would you?"'

Unpredictability is not only a weapon of terror: Scrambling your patterns on a day-to-day basis will cause a stir around you and stimulate interest. People will talk about you, ascribe motives and explanations that have nothing to do with the truth, but that keep you constantly in their minds. In the end, the more capricious you appear, the more respect you will garner. Only the terminally subordinate act in a predictable manner.

Image: The Cyclone. A
wind that cannot be fore
seen. Sudden shifts in
the barometer, in
explicable changes
in direction and
velocity. There is
no defense: A
cyclone sows
terror and
confusion.

Authority: The enlightened ruler is so mysterious that he seems to dwell nowhere, so inexplicable that no one can seek him. He reposes in nonaction above, and his ministers tremble below. (Han-fei-tzu, Chinese philosopher, third century B.C.)

REVERSAL

Sometimes predictability can work in your favor: By creating a pattern for people to be familiar and comfortable with, you can lull them to sleep. They have prepared everything according to their preconceived notions about you. You can use this in several ways: First, it sets up a smoke screen, a comfortable front behind which you can carry on deceptive actions. Second, it allows you on rare occasions to do something completely against the pattern, unsettling your opponent so deeply he will fall to the ground without being pushed.

In 1974 Muhammad Ali and George Foreman were scheduled to fight for the world heavyweight boxing championship. Everyone knew what would happen: Big George Foreman would try to land a knockout punch while Ali would dance around him, wearing him out. That was Ali's way of fighting, his pattern, and he had not changed it in more than ten years. But in this case it seemed to give Foreman the advantage: He had a devastating punch, and if he waited, sooner or later Ali would have to come to him. Ali, the master strategist, had other plans: In press conferences before the big fight, he said he was going to change his style and punch it out with Foreman. No one, least of all Foreman, believed this for a second. That plan would be suicide on Ali's part; he was playing the comedian, as usual. Then, before the fight, Ali's trainer loosened the ropes around the ring, something a trainer would do if his boxer were intending to slug it out. But no one believed this ploy; it had to be a setup.

To everyone's amazement, Ali did exactly what he had said he would do. As Foreman waited for him to dance around, Ali went right up to him and slugged it out. He completely upset his opponent's strategy. At a loss, Foreman ended up wearing himself out, not by chasing Ali but by throwing punches wildly, and taking more and more counterpunches. Finally, Ali landed a dramatic right cross that knocked out Foreman. The habit of assuming that a person's behavior will fit its previous patterns is so strong that not even Ali's announcement of a strategy change was enough to upset it. Foreman walked into a trap—the trap he had been told to expect.

A warning: Unpredictability can work against you sometimes, especially if you are in a subordinate position. 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 of some more serious psychic problem. Patterns are powerful, and you can terrify people by disrupting them. Such power should only be used judiciously.

LAW 18

DO NOT BUILD FORTRESSES TO PROTECT YOURSELF—ISOLATION IS DANGEROUS

JUDGMENT

The world is dangerous and enemies are everywhere—everyone has to protect themselves. A fortress seems the safest. But isolation exposes you to more dangers than it Protects you from—it cuts you off from valuable information, it makes you conspicuous and an easy target. Better to circulate among people, find allies, mingle. You are shielded from your enemies by the crowd.

TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW

Ch‘in Shih Huang Ti, the first emperor of China (221-210 B.C.), was the mightiest man of his day. His empire was vaster and more powerful than that of Alexander the Great. He had conquered all of the kingdoms surrounding his own kingdom of Ch’in and unified them into one massive realm called China. But in the last years of his life, few, if anyone, saw him.

The emperor lived in the most magnificent palace built to that date, in the capital of Hsien-yang. The palace had 270 pavilions; all of these were connected by secret underground passageways, allowing the emperor to move through the palace without anyone seeing him. He slept in a different room every night, and anyone who inadvertently laid eyes on him was instantly beheaded. Only a handful of men knew his whereabouts, and if they revealed it to anyone, they, too, were put to death.

The first emperor had grown so terrified of human contact that when he had to leave the palace he traveled incognito, disguising himself carefully. On one such trip through the provinces, he suddenly died. His body was borne back to the capital in the emperor’s carriage, with a cart packed with salted fish trailing behind it to cover up the smell of the rotting corpse—no one was to know of his death. He died alone, far from his wives, his family, his friends, and his courtiers, accompanied only by a minister and a handful of eunuchs.

THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH

The “Red Death” had long devastated the country. No pestilence had ever been so fatal, or so hideous. Blood was its Avatur and its seal—the redness and horror of blood. There were sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores, with dissolution.... And the whole seizure, progress, and termination of the disease, were the incidents of half an hour. But the Prince Prospero was happy and dauntless and sagacious. When his dominions were half-depopulated, he summoned to his presence a thousand hale and light-hearted friends from among the knight, and dames of his court, and with these retired to the deep seclusion of one of his castellated abbeys. This was an extensive and magnificent structure, the

creation of the prince's own eccentric yet august taste. A strong and lofty wall girdled it in. This wall had gates of iron. The courtier.s, having entered, brought furnaces and massy hammers and welded the bolts. They resolved to leave means neither of ingress nor egress to the sudden impulses of despair or of frenzy from within. The abbey was amply provisioned. With such precautions the courtiers might bid defiance to contagion. The external world could take care of itself In the meantime it was folly to grieve, or to think. The prince had provided all the appliances of pleasure. There were buffoons, there were improvisatori, there were ballet-dancers, there were musicians, there was Beauty, there was wine. All these and security were within. Without was the "Red Death." It was toward the close of the fifth or sixth month of his seclusion, and while the pestilence raged most furiously abroad, that the Prince Prospero entertained his thousand friends at a masked ball of the most unusual magnificence. It was a voluptuous scene, that masquerade.... ... And the revel went whirlingly on, until at length there commenced the sounding of midnight upon the clock.... And thus too, it happened, perhaps, that before the last echoes of the last chime had utterly sunk into silence, there were many individuals in the crowd who had found leisure to become aware of the presence of a masked fzgecre which had arrested the attention of no single individual before.... The figure was tall and gaunt, and shrouded from head to foot in the habiliments of the grave. The mask which concealed the visage was made so nearly to resemble the countenance of a stiffened corpse that the closest scrutiny must have had difficulty in detecting the cheat. And yet all this might have been endured, if not approved, by the mad revellers around. But the mummer had gone so far as to assume the type of the Red Death. His vesture was dabbled in blood—and his broad brow, with all the features of the face, was sprinkled with the scarlet horror ... ... A throng of the revellers at once threw themselves into the black apartment, and, seizing the mummer, whose tall figure stood erect and motionless within the shadow of the ebony clock, gasped in unutterable horror at finding the grave cerements and corpse-like mask, which they handled with so violent a rudeness, untenanted by any tangible form. And now was acknowledged the presence of the Red Death. He had come like a thief in the night. And one by one dropped the revellers in the blood-bedewed halls of their revel, and died each in the despairing posture of his fall. And the life of the ebony clock went out with that of the last of the gay. And the flames of the tripods

expired. And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all.

THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH, EDGAR ALLAN POE, 1809-1849

Interpretation

Shih Huang Ti started off as the king of Ch'in, a fearless warrior of unbridled ambition. Writers of the time described him as a man with "a waspish nose, eyes like slits, the voice of a jackal, and the heart of a tiger or wolf." He could be merciful sometimes, but more often he "swallowed men up without a scruple." It was through trickery and violence that he conquered the provinces surrounding his own and created China, forging a single nation and culture out of many. He broke up the feudal system, and to keep an eye on the many members of the royal families that were scattered across the realm's various kingdoms, he moved 120,000 of them to the capital, where he housed the most important courtiers in the vast palace of Hsien-yang. He consolidated the many walls on the borders and built them into the Great Wall of China. He standardized the country's laws, its written language, even the size of its cartwheels.

As part of this process of unification, however, the first emperor outlawed the writings and teachings of Confucius, the philosopher whose ideas on the moral life had already become virtually a religion in Chinese culture. On Shih Huang Ti's order, thousands of books relating to Confucius were burned, and anyone who quoted Confucius was to be beheaded. This made many enemies for the emperor, and he grew constantly afraid, even paranoid. The executions mounted. A contemporary, the writer Han-fei-tzu, noted that "Ch'in has been victorious for four generations, yet has lived in constant terror and apprehension of destruction."

As the emperor withdrew deeper and deeper into the palace to protect himself, he slowly lost control of the realm. Eunuchs and ministers enacted political policies without his approval or even his knowledge; they also plotted against him. By the end, he was emperor in name only, and was so isolated that barely anyone knew he had died. He had probably been poisoned by the same scheming ministers who encouraged his isolation.

That is what isolation brings: Retreat into a fortress and you lose contact with the sources of your power. You lose your ear for what is happening around you, as well as a sense of proportion. Instead of being safer, you cut yourself off from the kind of knowledge on which your life depends. Never

enclose yourself so far from the streets that you cannot hear what is happening around you, including the plots against you.

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

Louis XIV had the palace of Versailles built for him and his court in the 1660s, and it was like no other royal palace in the world. As in a beehive, everything revolved around the royal person. He lived surrounded by the nobility, who were allotted apartments nestled around his, their closeness to him dependent on their rank. The king's bedroom occupied the literal center of the palace and was the focus of everyone's attention. Every morning the king was greeted in this room by a ritual known as the *lever.*

At eight A.M., the king's first valet, who slept at the foot of the royal bed, would awaken His Majesty. Then pages would open the door and admit those who had a function in the *lever.* The order of their entry was precise: First came the king's illegitimate sons and his grandchildren, then the princes and princesses of the blood, and then his physician and surgeon. There followed the grand officers of the wardrobe, the king's official reader, and those in charge of entertaining the king. Next would arrive various government officials, in ascending order of rank. Last but not least came those attending the *lever* by special invitation. By the end of the ceremony, the room would be packed with well over a hundred royal attendants and visitors.

The day was organized so that all the palace's energy was directed at and passed through the king. Louis was constantly attended by courtiers and officials, all asking for his advice and judgment. To all their questions he usually replied, "I shall see."

As Saint-Simon noted, "If he turned to someone, asked him a question, made an insignificant remark, the eyes of all present were turned on this person. It was a distinction that was talked of and increased prestige." There was no possibility of privacy in the palace, not even for the king—every room communicated with another, and every hallway led to larger rooms where groups of nobles gathered constantly. Everyone's actions were interdependent, and nothing and no one passed unnoticed: "The king not only saw to it that all the high nobility was present at his court," wrote Saint-Simon, "he demanded the same of the minor nobility. At his *lever* and *coucher,* at his meals, in his gardens of Versailles, he always looked about

him, noticing everything. He was offended if the most distinguished nobles did not live permanently at court, and those who showed themselves never or hardly ever, incurred his full displeasure. If one of these desired something, the king would say proudly: ‘I do not know him,’ and the judgment was irrevocable.”