GIVE YOUR RIVALS ENOUGH ROPE TO HANG THEMSELVES

THE ONE-UPMANSHIP STRATEGY

Life's greatest dangers often come not from external enemies but from our supposed colleagues and friends, who pretend to work for the common cause while scheming to sabotage us and steal our ideas for their gain. Although, in the court in which you serve, you must maintain the appearance of consideration and civility, you also must learn to defeat these people. Work to instill doubts and insecurities in such rivals, getting them to think too much and act defensively. Bait them with subtle challenges that get under their skin, triggering an overreaction, an embarrassing mistake. The victory you are after is to isolate them. Make them hang themselves through their own self-destructive tendencies, leaving you blameless and clean.

THE ART OF ONE-UPMANSHIP

Throughout your life you will find yourself fighting on two fronts. First is the external front, your inevitable enemies--but second and less obvious is the internal front, your colleagues and fellow courtiers, many of whom will scheme against you, advancing their own agendas at your expense. The worst of it is that you will often have to fight on both fronts at once, facing your external enemies while also working to secure your internal position, an exhausting and debilitating struggle.

Life is war against the malice of men.

BALTASAR GRACIAN, 1601-58

The solution is not to ignore the internal problem (you will have a short life if you do so) or to deal with it in a direct and conventional manner, by complaining, acting aggressively, or forming defensive alliances. Understand: internal warfare is by nature unconventional. Since people theoretically on the same side usually do their best to maintain the appearance of being team players working for the greater good, complaining about them or attacking them will

only make you look bad and isolate you. Yet at the same time, you can expect these ambitious types to operate underhandedly and indirectly. Outwardly charming and cooperative, behind the scenes they are manipulative and slippery.

You need to adopt a form of warfare suited to these nebulous yet dangerous battles, which go on every day. And the unconventional strategy that works best in this arena is the art of one-upmanship. Developed by history's savviest courtiers, it is based on two simple premises: first, your rivals harbor the seeds of their own self-destruction, and second, a rival who is made to feel defensive and inferior, however subtly, will tend to act defensive and inferior, to his or her detriment.

People's personalities often form around weaknesses, character flaws, uncontrollable emotions. People who feel needy, or who have a superiority complex, or are afraid of chaos, or desperately want order, will develop a personality--a social mask--to cover up their flaws and make it possible for them to present a confident, pleasant, responsible exterior to the world. But the mask is like the scar tissue covering a wound: touch it the wrong way and it hurts. Your victims' responses start to go out of control: they complain, act defensive and paranoid, or show the arrogance they try so hard to conceal. For a moment the mask falls.

When you sense you have colleagues who may prove dangerous--or are actually already plotting something--you must try first to gather intelligence on them. Look at their everyday behavior, their past actions, their mistakes, for signs of their flaws. With this knowledge in hand, you are ready for the game of one-upmanship.

Begin by doing something to prick the underlying wound, creating doubt, insecurity, and anxiety. It might be an offhand comment or something that your victims sense as a challenge to their position within the court. Your goal is not to challenge them blatantly, though, but to get under their skin: they feel attacked but are not sure why or how. The result is a vague, troubling sensation. A feeling of inferiority creeps in.

You then follow up with secondary actions that feed their doubts. Here it is often best to work covertly, getting other people, the media, or simple rumor to do the job for you. The endgame is deceptively simple: having piled up enough self-doubt to trigger a reaction, you stand back and let the target self-destruct. You must avoid the temptation to gloat or get in a last blow; at this point, in fact, it is best to act friendly, even offering dubious assistance and advice. Your targets' reaction will be an overreaction. Either they will lash out, make an embarrassing mistake, or reveal themselves too much, or they will get overly defensive and try too hard to please others, working all too obviously to secure

their position and validate their self-esteem. Defensive people unconsciously push people away.

At this point your opening action, especially if it is only subtly aggressive, will be forgotten. What will stand out will be your rivals' overreaction and humiliation. Your hands are clean, your reputation unsullied. Their loss of position is your gain; you are one up and they are one down. If you had attacked them directly, your advantage would be temporary or nonexistent; in fact, your political position would be precarious: your pathetic, suffering rivals would win sympathy as your victims, and attention would focus on you as responsible for their undoing. Instead they must fall on their swords. You may have given them a little help, but to whatever extent possible in their own eyes, and certainly in everyone else's, they must have only themselves to blame. That will make their defeat doubly galling and doubly effective.

To win without your victim's knowing how it happened or just what you have done is the height of unconventional warfare. Master the art and not only will you find it easier to fight on two fronts at the same time, but your path to the highest ranks will be that much smoother.

Never interfere with an enemy that is in the process of committing suicide.

--Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821)

HISTORICAL EXAMPLES

1. John A. McClernand (1812-1900) watched with envy as his friend and fellow lawyer Abraham Lincoln rose to the U.S. presidency. McClernand, a lawyer and congressman from Springfield, Illinois, had had this ambition himself. Shortly after the outbreak of the Civil War, in 1861, he resigned his congressional seat to accept a commission as a brigadier general in the Union army. He had no military experience, but the Union needed leadership of any kind it could get, and if he proved himself in battle, he could rise fast. He saw this army position as his path to the presidency.

> *First of all, a complete definition of the technical term "one-upmanship" would fill, and in fact has filled, a rather large encyclopedia. It can be defined briefly here as the art of placing a person "one-down." The term "one-down" is technically defined as that psychological state which exists in an individual who is not "one-up" on another person.... To phrase these terms in popular language, at the risk of losing scientific rigor, it can be said that in*

any human relationship (and indeed among other mammals) one person is constantly maneuvering to imply that he is in a "superior position" to the other person in the relationship. This "superior position" does not necessarily mean superior in social status or economic position; many servants are masters at putting their employers one-down. Nor does it imply intellectual superiority as any intellectual knows who has been put "one-down" by a muscular garbage collector in a bout of Indian wrestling. "Superior position" is a relative term which is continually being defined and redefined by the ongoing relationship. Maneuvers to achieve superior position may be crude or they may be infinitely subtle. For example, one is not usually in a superior position if he must ask another person for something. Yet he can ask for it in such a way that he is implying, "This is, of course, what I deserve."

THE STRATEGIES OF PSYCHOTHERAPY, JAY HALEY, 1963

McClernand's first post was at the head of a brigade in Missouri under the overall command of General Ulysses S. Grant. Within a year he was promoted to major general, still under Grant. But this was not good enough for McClernand, who needed a stage for his talents, a campaign to run and get credit for. Grant had talked to him of his plans for capturing the Confederate fort at Vicksburg, on the Mississippi River. The fall of Vicksburg, according to Grant, could be the turning point in the war. McClernand decided to sell a march on Vicksburg as his own idea and use it as a springboard for his career.

In September 1862, on leave in Washington, D.C., McClernand paid a visit to President Lincoln. He was "tired of furnishing brains" for Grant's army, he said; he had proved himself on the battlefield and was a better strategist than Grant, who was a little too fond of his whiskey. McClernand proposed to go back to Illinois, where he was well known and could recruit a large army. Then he would follow the Mississippi River south to Vicksburg and capture the fort.

Vicksburg was technically in Grant's department, but Lincoln was not sure the general could lead the audacious attack necessary. He took McClernand to see Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, another former lawyer, who commiserated with his two visitors on the difficulties of dealing with military brass. Stanton listened to and liked McClernand's plan. That October the onetime congressman left Washington with confidential orders, giving him approval for his march on Vicksburg. The orders were a little vague, and Grant was not informed of them, but McClernand would make the best of them.

McClernand quickly recruited more soldiers than he had promised Lincoln he would. He sent his recruits to Memphis, Tennessee, where he would soon join them to march on Vicksburg. But when he arrived in Memphis, in late December

1862, the thousands of men he had recruited were not there. A telegram from Grant--dated ten days earlier and waiting for him in Memphis--informed him that the general was planning to attack Vicksburg. If McClernand arrived in time, he would lead the attack; if not, his men would be led by General William Tecumseh Sherman.

McClernand was livid. The situation had clearly been orchestrated to make it impossible for him to arrive in time to lead his own recruits; Grant must have figured out his plan. The general's polite telegram covering his bases made the whole affair doubly infuriating. Well, McClernand would show him: he would hurry downriver, catch up with Sherman, take over the campaign, and humiliate Grant by winning the credit and honor for capturing Vicksburg.

McClernand did catch up with Sherman, on January 2, 1863, and immediately assumed command of the army. He made an effort to be charming to Sherman, who, he learned, had been planning to raid Confederate outposts around Vicksburg to soften up the approach to the fort. The idea was heaven-sent for McClernand: he would take over these raids, win battles without Grant's name over his, earn himself some publicity, and make his command of the Vicksburg campaign a fait accompli. He followed Sherman's plan to the letter, and the campaign was a success.

At this triumphant point, out of the blue, McClernand received a telegram from Grant: he was to halt operations and wait for a meeting with the general. It was time for McClernand to play his trump card, the president; he wrote Lincoln requesting more explicit orders, and specifically an independent command, but he got no reply. And now vague doubts began to trouble McClernand's peace of mind. Sherman and other officers seemed cool; somehow he had rubbed them the wrong way. Perhaps they were conspiring with Grant to get rid of him. Grant soon appeared on the scene with detailed plans for a campaign against Vicksburg under his own direction. McClernand would lead a corps, which, however, was stationed at the faraway outpost of Helena, Arkansas. Grant made a point of treating him politely, but everything together added up to a humiliating setback.

> How to be one up--*how to make the other man feel that something has gone wrong, however slightly. The Lifeman is never caddish himself, but how simply and certainly, often, he can make the other man feel a cad, and over prolonged periods.*
>
> *THE COMPLETE UPMANSHIP,* STEPHEN POTTER, 1950

Now McClernand exploded, writing letter after letter to Lincoln and Stanton to remind them of their earlier rapport and of the support they had once given

him, and complaining bitterly about Grant. After days of fuming and writing, McClernand finally received a response from Lincoln--and, to his shock and dismay, the president had somehow turned against him. There had been too many family quarrels among his generals, wrote Lincoln; for the sake of the Union cause, McClernand should subordinate himself to Grant.

McClernand was crushed. He could not figure out what he had done or how it had all gone wrong. Bitter and frustrated, he continued to serve under Grant but questioned his boss's abilities to anyone who would listen, including journalists. In June 1863, after enough negative articles had been printed, Grant finally fired him. McClernand's military career was over, and with it his dreams of personal glory.

Interpretation

From the moment he met John McClernand, General Grant knew he had a troublemaker on his hands. McClernand was the type of man who thought only of his own career--who would steal other people's ideas and plot behind their backs for the sake of personal glory. But Grant would have to be careful: McClernand was popular with the public, a charmer. So when Grant figured out on his own that McClernand was trying to beat him to Vicksburg, he did not confront him or complain. Instead he took action.

Knowing that McClernand had an oversensitive ego, Grant recognized that it would be relatively easy to push the man's buttons. By taking over his subordinate's recruits (technically in his department anyway) while apparently covering his bases in the telegram, he forced McClernand into a rash response that seemed like insubordination to other military men and made it clear how far he was using the war for personal purposes. Once McClernand had rushed to take his troops back from Sherman, Grant stood aside. He knew that a man like this--vain and obnoxious--would irritate the hell out of his brother officers; they would inevitably complain about him to Grant, who, as a responsible officer, would have to pass the complaints upward, apparently without personal feelings in play. Treating McClernand politely while indirectly checkmating him, Grant finally got him to overreact in the worst possible way, with his letters to Lincoln and Stanton. Grant knew that Lincoln was tired of squabbling within the Union high command. While Grant could be seen working quietly to perfect his plans for taking Vicksburg, McClernand was acting petty and throwing tantrums. The difference between the two men was all too clear. With this battle won, Grant repeated it, letting McClernand hang himself with his unwise complaints to the press.

There are other ways to fray nerves. During the Gulf War, President Bush kept pronouncing the name of the Iraqi leader as "SAD-am," which loosely means "shoeshine boy." On Capitol Hill, the ritual mispronunciation of a member's name is a time-tested way to rattle opponents or haze newcomers. Lyndon Johnson was a master of the practice. When Johnson was Senate majority leader, writes J. McIver Weatherford, he applied it with junior members who voted the wrong way: "While slapping the young chap on the back and telling him he understood, Johnson would break his name into shreds as a metaphorical statement of what would happen if the disloyalty persisted."

THE ART OF POLITICAL WARFARE, JOHN PITNEY, JR., 2000

You will often come across McClernands in your daily battles--people who are outwardly charming but treacherous behind the scenes. It does no good to confront them directly; they are proficient at the political game. But a subtle one-up campaign can work wonders.

Your goal is to get these rivals to put their ambition and selfishness on display. The way to do this is to pique their latent but powerful insecurities--make them worry that people do not like them, that their position is unstable, that their path to the top is not clear. Perhaps, like Grant, you can take action that thwarts their plans in some way while hiding your own beneath a veneer of politeness. You are making them feel defensive and disrespected. All the dark, ugly emotions they strive so hard to hide will boil up to the surface; they will tend to lash out, overplaying their hand. Work to make them grow emotional and lose their habitual cool. The more they reveal of themselves, the more they will alienate other people, and isolation will be their doom.

2. The Academie Francaise, founded by Cardinal Richelieu in 1635, is a highly select body of France's forty most learned scholars, whose task it is to oversee the purity of the French language. It was customary in the early years of the academy that when a seat became empty, potential members would petition to fill it, but on the occasion of a vacant seat in 1694, King Louis XIV decided to go against protocol and nominated the bishop of Noyon. Louis's nomination certainly made sense. The bishop was a learned man, well respected, an excellent orator, and a fine writer.

The bishop, however, had another quality as well: an incredible sense of self-importance. Louis was amused by this failing, but most in the court found it

downright insufferable: the bishop had a way of making almost everyone feel inferior, in piety, erudition, family pedigree--whatever they had.

Because of his rank, for instance, the bishop was accorded the rare privilege of being able to have his coach drive up to the front door of the royal residence, while most others had to get out and walk from the entrance doors of the driveway. One time the archbishop of Paris was walking along the driveway when the bishop of Noyon passed. From his carriage the bishop waved and signaled for the archbishop to approach him. The archbishop expected him to alight and accompany him to the palace on foot. Instead Noyon had the carriage slow down and continued his drive to the front door, leading the archbishop through the window by the arm, as if he were a dog on a leash, meanwhile chatting away superciliously. Then, once the bishop did get out of the carriage and the two men started up the grand staircase, Noyon dropped the archbishop as if he were nobody. Almost everyone in the court had a story like this one to tell, and they all nursed secret grudges against the bishop.

With Louis's approval, however, it was impossible to not vote Noyon into the academy. The king further insisted that his courtiers attend the inauguration of the bishop, since this was his first nominee to the illustrious institution. At the inauguration, customarily, the nominee would deliver a speech, which would be answered by the academy's director--who at the time was a bold and witty man called the abbe de Caumartin. The abbe could not stand the bishop but particularly disliked his florid style of writing. De Caumartin conceived the idea of subtly mocking Noyon: he would compose his response in perfect imitation of the bishop, full of elaborate metaphors and gushing praise for the newest academician. To make sure he could not get into trouble for this, he would show his speech to the bishop beforehand. Noyon was delighted, read the text with great interest, and even went so far as to supplement it with more effusive words of praise and high-flying rhetoric.

On the day of the inauguration, the hall of the academy was packed with the most eminent members of French society. (None dared incur the king's displeasure by not attending.) The bishop appeared before them, monstrously pleased to command this prestigious audience. The speech he delivered had a flowery pomposity exceeding any he had given previously; it was tiresome in the extreme. Then came the abbe's response. It started slowly, and many listeners began to squirm. But then it gradually took off, as everyone realized that it was an elaborate yet subtle parody of the bishop's style. De Caumartin's bold satire captivated everyone, and when it was over, the audience applauded, loudly and gratefully. But the bishop--intoxicated by the event and the attention--thought that the applause was genuine and that in applauding the abbe's praise of him,

the audience was really applauding him. He left with his vanity inflated beyond all proportion.

Soon Noyon was talking about the event to one and all, boring everyone to tears. Finally he had the misfortune to brag about it to the archbishop of Paris, who had never gotten over the carriage incident. The archbishop could not resist: he told Noyon that the abbe's speech was a joke on him and that everyone in the court was laughing at the bishop's expense. Noyon could not believe this, so he visited his friend and confessor Pere La Chaise, who confirmed that it was true.

WHEN TO GIVE ADVICE

In my own view (but compare Motherwell) there is only one correct time when the gamesman can give advice: and that is when the gamesman has achieved a useful *though not necessarily a* winning *lead. Say three up and nine to play at golf, or, in billiards, sixty-five to his opponent's thirty. Most of the accepted methods are effective. E.g. in billiards, the old phrase serves. It runs like this: Gamesman: Look...may I say something? Layman: What? Gamesman: Take it easy. Layman: What do you mean? Gamesman: I mean--you know how to make the strokes, but you're stretching yourself on the rack all the time. Look. Walk up to the ball. Look at the line. And make your stroke. Comfortable. Easy. It's as simple as that. In other words, the advice* must be vague, *to make certain it is not helpful. But, in general, if properly managed, the mere giving of advice is sufficient to place the gamesman in a practically invincible position.*

THE COMPLETE UPMANSHIP, STEPHEN POTTER, 1950

Now the bishop's former delight turned to the most bitter rage. He complained to the king and asked him to punish the abbe. The king tried to defuse the problem, but he valued peace and quiet, and Noyon's almost insane anger got on his nerves. Finally the bishop, wounded to the core, left the court and returned to his diocese, where he remained for a long time, humiliated and humbled.

THE LION, THE WOLF AND THE FOX

A very old lion lay ill in his cave. All of the animals came to pay their respects to their king except for the fox. The wolf, sensing an opportunity, accused the fox in front of the lion: "The fox has no respect for you or your rule. That's why he hasn't even come to visit you." Just as the wolf was saying

this, the fox arrived, and he overheard these words. Then the lion roared in rage at him, but the fox managed to say in his own defence: "And who, of all those who have gathered here, has rendered Your Majesty as much service as I have done? For I have traveled far and wide asking physicians for a remedy for your illness, and I have found one." The lion demanded to know at once what cure he had found, and the fox said: "It is necessary for you to flay a wolf alive, and then take his skin and wrap it around you while it is still warm." The wolf was ordered to be taken away immediately and flayed alive. As he was carried off, the fox turned to him with a smile and said: "You should have spoken well of me to His Majesty rather than ill."

FABLES, AESOP, SIXTH CENTURY B.C.

Interpretation

The bishop of Noyon was not a harmless man. His conceit had made him think his power had no limits. He was grossly unaware of the offense he had given to so many people, but no one could confront him or bring his behavior to his attention. The abbe hit upon the only real way to bring such a man down. Had his parody been too obvious, it would not have been very entertaining, and the bishop, its poor victim, would have won sympathy. By making it devilishly subtle, and making the bishop complicit in it as well, de Caumartin both entertained the court (always important) and let Noyon dig his own grave with his reaction--from the heights of vanity to the depths of humiliation and rage. Suddenly aware of how people saw him, the bishop lost his balance, even alienating the king, who had once found his vanity amusing. Finally he had to absent himself from court, to many people's relief.

The worst colleagues and comrades are often the ones with inflated egos, who think everything they do is right and worthy of praise. Subtle mockery and disguised parody are brilliant ways of one-upping these types. You seem to be complimenting them, your style or ideas even imitating theirs, but the praise has a sting in its tail: Are you imitating them to poke fun at them? Does your praise hide criticism? These questions get under their skin, making them vaguely insecure about themselves. Maybe you think they have faults--and maybe that opinion is widely shared. You have disturbed their high sense of self, and they will tend to respond by overreacting and overplaying their hand. This strategy works particularly well on those who fancy themselves powerful intellectuals and who are impossible to best in any kind of argument. By quoting their words

and ideas back at them in slightly grotesque form, you neutralize their verbal strengths and leave them self-doubting and insecure.

3. Toward the middle of the sixteenth century, a young samurai, whose name history has left behind, developed a novel way of fighting: he could wield two swords with equal dexterity in his right and left hands at the same time. This technique was formidable, and he was eager to use it to make a name for himself, so he decided to challenge the most famous swordsman of his time, Tsukahara Bokuden, to a duel. Bokuden was now middle-aged and in semiretirement. He answered the young man's challenge with a letter: a samurai who could use a sword in his left hand with the same effectiveness as his right had an unfair advantage. The young swordsman could not understand what he meant. "If you think my using a sword with my left is unfair," he wrote back, "renounce the match." Instead Bokuden sent off ten more letters, each repeating in slightly different words the charge about the left hand. Each letter only made the challenger more annoyed. Finally, however, Bokuden agreed to fight.

The young samurai was used to fighting on instinct and with great speed, but as the duel began, he could not stop thinking about his left hand and Bokuden's fear of it. With his left hand--he found himself calculating--he would stab here, slash there. His left hand could not fail; it seemed possessed of its own power.... Then, suddenly, out of nowhere, Bokuden's sword cut deeply across the challenger's *right* arm. The duel was over. The young samurai recovered physically, but his mind was forever unhinged: he could not fight by instinct anymore. He thought too much, and he soon gave up the sword.

In 1605, Genzaemon, head of the renowned Yoshioka family of Kyoto swordsmen, received the strangest challenge of his life. An unknown twenty-one-year-old samurai named Miyamoto Musashi, dressed like a beggar in dirty, ragged clothes, challenged him to a duel so haughtily that Musashi must have thought himself the more famous swordsman. Genzaemon did not feel he had to pay attention to this youth; a man as illustrious as he could not go through life accepting challenges from every bumpkin who crossed his path. Yet something about Musashi's arrogance got under his skin. Genzaemon would enjoy teaching this youth a lesson. The duel was set for five o'clock the following morning in a suburban field.

Genzaemon arrived at the appointed time, accompanied by his students. Musashi was not there. Minutes turned into an hour. The young man had probably gotten cold feet and skipped town. Genzaemon sent a student to look

for the young samurai at the inn where he was staying. The student soon returned: Musashi, he reported, had been asleep when he arrived and, when awakened, had rather impertinently ordered him to send Genzaemon his regards and say he would be there shortly. Genzaemon was furious and began to pace the field. And Musashi still took his time. It was two more hours before he appeared in the distance, sauntering toward them across the field. He was wearing, too, a scarlet headband, not the traditional white headband that Genzaemon wore.

Genzaemon shouted angrily at Musashi and charged forward, impatient to have done with this irritating boor. But Musashi, looking almost bored, parried one blow after another. Each man was able to slash at the other's forehead, but where Genzaemon's white headband turned red with blood, Musashi's stayed the same color. Finally, frustrated and confused, Genzaemon charged forward yet again--right into Mushashi's sword, which struck his head and knocked him to the ground unconscious. Genzaemon would later recover, but he was so humiliated by his defeat that he left the world of swordsmanship and entered the priesthood, where he would spend his remaining years.

> [*Christy*] *Mathewson in his later years recounted a knockdown incident from the first game of the 1911 World Series, which he won for the Giants, defeating the Philadelphia Athletics 2 to 1. Charles Albert "Chief" Bender started for the Athletics, and Bender was throwing harder that day than Mathewson had ever seen him throw. Twice Bender drilled Fred Snodgrass, the Giants' young center fielder. When Snodgrass came to bat for the third time--in a "pinch"--Bender smiled at him. "Look out, Freddie," he said, "you don't get hit this time." Then he threw a fast ball at Snodgrass' head. Snodgrass ducked. Ball one. "If you can't throw better than that," Snodgrass shouted, "I won't need to get a hit." Bender continued to smile. ("He had perfect teeth," Mathewson remembered.) Then he threw a fast-ball strike that overpowered Snodgrass. "You missed that a mile," Bender said, grinning again. Snodgrass set his jaw in anger and began overswinging. "Grinning chronically," in Mathewson's phrase, Bender struck out Snodgrass with a curve that broke down into the dirt. Snodgrass was not afraid of Chief Bender's pitches. He was a solid hitter who finished with a lifetime average of .275. What happened, Mathewson said, was that a combiination, the knockdown pitches, the sarcastic banter, the condescending grin, distracted Snodgrass. Then, having struck out his man, Bender pushed the needle deeper and twisted it. "You ain't a batter, Freddie. You're a backstop. You can never get anywhere without being hit!" Although beaten that day, Chief Bender won two other games. The Athletics won the World Series, 4 games to*

2. Across six games, the rattled Fred Snodgrass, a .294 hitter all season, batted .105. But as Mathewson interpreted the episode, he was a victim of gamesmanship, obviously and distinctly quite different from being terrorized. "Chief took Fred's mind right out of the game," Mathewson said.

THE HEAD GAME, ROGER KAHN, 2001

Interpretation

For a samurai, losing a duel could mean death or public humiliation. Swordsmen sought out any advantage--physical dexterity, a superior sword, the perfect technique--to avoid that fate. But the greatest samurais, the Bokudens and Musashis, sought their advantage in being able to subtly push the opponent off his game, messing with his mind. They might try to make him self-conscious, a little too aware of his technique and style--a deadly trap for anyone who must react in the moment. They might trick him into focusing on the wrong thing--the left hand, the scarlet headband. Particularly with conventional-minded opponents, they might show up late, sparking a frustration that would upset their timing and concentration. In all of these cases, a change in the enemy's focus or mood would lead to a mistake. To try to repair this mistake in the heat of the moment would lead to another, until the one-upped fighter might literally walk into the other man's sword.

Understand: what will yield the greatest effects in the game of one-upmanship is a subtle disturbance in your opponents' mood and mind-set. Be too direct--make an insulting comment, an obvious threat--and you wake them to the danger you represent, stir their competitive juices, bring out the best in them. Instead you want to bring out the worst. A subtle comment that makes them self-conscious and gets under their skin will turn them inward, get them lost in the labyrinth of their own thoughts. A seemingly innocent action that stirs an emotion like frustration, anger, or impatience will equally cloud their vision. In both cases they will tend to misfire and start making mistakes.

This works particularly well against rivals who must perform in some way--deliver a speech, say, or present a project: the fixating thought or bad emotion you create in them makes them lose touch with the moment and messes up their timing. Do this right, too, and no one will be aware of your involvement in the bad performance, not even the rival you have one-upped.

4. In January 1988, Senator Robert Dole of Kansas could smell victory in his quest to become president of the United States. His main opponent for the

Republican nomination was George H. W. Bush, the incumbent vice president in the administration of Ronald Reagan. In the Iowa caucuses, the first test in the primary season, Bush had been lackluster and had finished a distant third, behind Dole and televangelist Pat Robertson. Dole's aggressive campaigning had won him much attention--he had the momentum and was clearly the front-runner.

To Dole, however, there was one blemish to his great victory in Iowa. Lee Atwater, Bush's thirty-six-year-old campaign strategist, had spread to the media a story that questioned the integrity of the senator's wife, former secretary of transportation Elizabeth Dole. The senator was an elected politician of nearly three decades' standing and had developed the necessary thick skin, but attacks on his wife, he felt, were beyond the pale. He had a temper that his advisers worked hard to keep under wraps, and when the story broke, he lashed out at reporters--giving Atwater the opportunity to say, "He can dish it out, but if someone hits him back, he starts whining." Then Atwater sent Dole a ten-page letter enumerating the many times the Kansas senator had gone negative in the campaign, and this letter, too, made its way into the media. Dole was furious. Despite his victory in Iowa, he could not get over seeing his wife dragged into the dirt. He would get back at the Bush folk and Atwater.

> Silence.--*The way of replying to a polemical attack the most unpleasant for both parties is to get annoyed and stay silent: for the attacker usually interprets the silence as a sign of contempt.*
>
> FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, 1844-1900

Next up was the New Hampshire primary. Victory here would put Dole well on his way, and he was ahead in the polls, but this time Bush came out fighting and the race tightened up. The weekend before the vote, the Bush people ran an ad portraying Dole as a "straddler," a man with two faces whose senate votes depended on expediency, not sincere belief. Humorous, deceptive, bitingly negative, the ad had Atwater's fingerprints all over it. And the timing was perfect--too late for Dole to respond with an ad of his own. The ad helped propel Bush into the lead and, a few days later, to victory.

Shortly after the results of the New Hampshire primary were in, NBC newsman Tom Brokaw caught up with Bush and asked if he had any message for his rival. "Naw," he replied with a smile, "just wish him well." Then Brokaw found Dole and asked the same question. "Yeah," said Dole with a bitter scowl. "Stop lying about my record."

In the days to come, Dole's answer was rerun again and again on television and discussed in the papers. It made him look like a sore loser. The press began

to pile on, and Dole was ungracious--he seemed whiny. A few weeks later, he went down to a crushing defeat in South Carolina and shortly thereafter an even worse string of losses in the Super Tuesday primaries throughout the South. Somewhere along the line, Dole's campaign had crashed and burned. Little did he suspect that it had all begun in Iowa.

Interpretation

Lee Atwater believed that adults could be divided into two groups: the overly mature and the childlike. The overly mature are inflexible and overserious, making them highly vulnerable in politics, particularly in the age of television. Dole was clearly the mature type, Atwater the child.

It didn't take Atwater much research to see that Dole was hypersensitive about attacks on his wife. Replaying old charges against her in Iowa, Atwater was able to get under the senator's skin. He kept Dole's blood boiling with the letter that accused him of starting the dirty campaigning, and he upped the pressure with the perfectly timed ad that mocked Dole's record for New Hampshire voters. Although Atwater was the one pushing buttons, Dole's outburst to Brokaw focused all attention on him and his unsportsmanlike behavior. Atwater, a genius at one-upmanship, now stood back. Dole could only respond with more sourness, compounding the problem and leading to electoral suicide.

> Glaciation ...*is the name for the set of gambits which are designed to induce an awkward silence, or at any rate a disinclination to talk, on the part of possible opponents. The "freezing" effects of these gambits is sometimes of immense power:...If someone else tells a funny story, do not, whatever happens, tell your own funny story in reply, but listen intently and not only refrain from laughing or smiling, but make no response, change of expression or movement whatever. The teller of the funny story, whatever the nature of his joke, will then suddenly feel that what he has said is in bad taste. Press home your advantage. If he is a stranger, and has told a story about a man with one leg, it is no bad thing to pretend that one of your own legs is false, or at any rate that you have a severe limp. This will certainly silence Opponent for the rest of the evening..... If, for instance, someone is being really funny or witty and there is a really pleasant atmosphere of hearty and explosive laughter, then (a) join in the laughter at first. Next (b) gradually become silent. Finally (c) at some pause in the conversation be overheard whispering, "Oh for some real talk."*
>
> *THE COMPLETE UPMANSHIP,* STEPHEN POTTER 1950

The easiest types to one-up are those who are rigid. Being rigid does not necessarily mean being humorless or charmless, but it does mean being intolerant of anything that breaks their code of acceptable behavior. Being the target of some anarchic or unconventional antic will trigger an overreaction that makes them look sour, vindictive, unleaderlike. The calm exterior of the mature adult is momentarily blown away, revealing something rather peevish and puerile.

Do not discourage such targets from getting personal: the more bitterly they protest and criticize you, the worse they look. They forget that the real issue is how they are perceived by the people around them or, in an electoral race, by the public. Inflexible to the core, they can be induced to make mistake after mistake with the slightest push.

5. In 1939, Joan Crawford (1904-77) talked her way into a relatively minor role in the film *The Women*: the lower-class perfume salesgirl who steals the husband of an elegant woman played by Norma Shearer. Crawford and Shearer were also bitter rivals in real life. Shearer was the wife of the movie producer Irving Thalberg, who always managed to get her the best parts. Crawford hated her for that, and for her haughty manner. Thalberg had died in 1936, but, to Crawford's disgust, the studio was still pampering Shearer. Everyone in Hollywood knew of their mutual dislike and was waiting for the showdown. But Crawford was the consummate professional on the set, and she kept matters civil.

The Crawford and Shearer characters in *The Women* share only one scene: the climax of the movie, when Shearer finally confronts Crawford about the affair with her husband. The rehearsal went well, as did the master shot showing the two actresses performing together. Then it came time for close-ups. Of course Norma Shearer went first. Crawford sat in a chair off camera, delivering her lines to Shearer. (Many actors would have an assistant or the director feed the lines while they retired to their dressing rooms, but Crawford always insisted on reading them herself.)

Crawford was knitting an afghan at the time, and as she said her lines, she knitted furiously, then stopped when it was time for Shearer to respond. She never looked Shearer in the eye. The needles made a loud clicking sound that began to drive Shearer crazy. Straining to stay polite, Shearer said, "Joan, darling, I find your knitting distracting." Pretending not to hear, Crawford kept knitting. Finally Shearer, a woman famous for her elegance, lost control: she *screamed* at Crawford, ordering her off the set and back to her dressing room. As

Crawford walked away, still not looking at Shearer, the film's director, George Cukor, ran to her side, but Shearer commanded him to come back. Her voice had a bitter tone that no one there had heard before and few would forget--it was so unlike her. Or was it?

In 1962, Crawford and Bette Davis, longtime stars who had never appeared in the same movie, were finally to costar, in Robert Aldrich's film *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* Crawford and Davis had never been thought to like each other too much, but Crawford had encouraged the pairing--as good publicity, it would help to extend their careers. Once again their behavior was civil on set, but after the film came out, it was Davis, not Crawford, who was nominated for a Best Actress Oscar. Worse, she immediately started crowing about it, proudly announcing that she would be the first actress to win three Oscars. Crawford had only one.

Davis was the center of attention at the Oscars. Backstage before the event, she was unusually gracious to Crawford--after all, she could afford to be; this was her night. (Only three other actresses were nominated, and everyone expected Davis to get it.) Crawford was equally polite. During the ceremony, however, as Davis stood in the wings, waiting, she hoped, to accept the award, she got a shock: she lost. Anne Bancroft won for her role in *The Miracle Worker*. And there was more: as Davis stood taking it in, she felt a hand on her arm. "Excuse me," said Crawford, and she strode past the stunned Davis to accept the award on Bancroft's behalf. (The Oscar winner could not be there that night.) On what was supposed to be Davis's night of glory, Crawford had somehow stolen the limelight, an unbearable affront.

Interpretation

A Hollywood actress has to be thick-skinned, and Joan Crawford was the quintessence of the Hollywood actress: she had a huge capacity to absorb and deal with insults and disrespect. Whenever she could, though, she plotted to get the last laugh on her various nemeses, leaving them humiliated. Crawford knew that people thought of her as somewhat of a bitch, a tough, even unpleasant woman. She felt this was unfair--she had been kind to many--but she could live with it. What annoyed her was how Shearer got away with playing the elegant lady when in fact, Crawford believed, she was a nasty specimen beneath her charming exterior. So Crawford maneuvered to get Shearer to expose a side of herself that few had seen. Just that glimmer was memorable to the Hollywood community and humiliating to Shearer.

With Davis it was all in the timing: Crawford ruined her night of glory (which she had been gloating about for months) without even saying a mean

word. Crawford knew that Bancroft would be unable to attend and learned from inside information that she would win, so she happily volunteered to accept the prize on her behalf.

> *Inevitably a patient entering analysis begins to use ploys which have placed him one-up in previous relationships (this is called a "neurotic pattern"). The analyst learns to devastate these maneuvers of the patient. A simple way, for example, is to respond inappropriately to what the patient says. This places the patient in doubt about everything he has learned in relationships with other people. The patient may say, "Everyone should be truthful," hoping to get the analyst to agree with him and thereby follow his lead. He who follows another lead is one-down. The analyst may reply with silence, a rather weak ploy in this circumstance, or he may say, "Oh?" The "Oh?" is given just the proper inflection to imply, "How on earth could you have ever conceived such an idea?" This not only places the patient in doubt about his statement, but in doubt about what the analyst means by "Oh?" Doubt is, of course, the first step toward one-downness. When in doubt the patient tends to lean on the analyst to resolve the doubt, and we lean on those who are superior to us. Analytic maneuvers designed to arouse doubt in a patient are instituted early in analysis. For example, the analyst may say, "I wonder if that's* really *what you're feeling." The use of "really" is standard in analytic practice. It implies the patient has motivations of which he is not aware. Anyone feels shaken, and therefore one-down, when this suspicion is placed in his mind.*
>
> *STRATEGIES OF PSYCHOTHERAPY*, JAY HALEY, 1963

You will often find yourself nursing the desire to revenge yourself on those who have mistreated you. The temptation is to be direct, to say something honest and mean, to let people know how you feel--but words are ineffective here. A verbal spat lowers you to the other person's level and often leaves you with a bad feeling. The sweeter revenge is an action that gives you the last laugh, leaving your victims with a sense of vague but corrosive inferiority. Provoke them into exposing a hidden, unpleasant side to their character, steal their moment of glory--but make this the battle's last maneuver. That gives you the double delight of showing you are no one to mess with and inflicting a wound that sticks around. As they say, revenge is a dish best served cold.

> *"I wonder if that's really what you're feeling." The use of "really" is standard in analytic practice. It implies the patient has motivations of which he is not aware. Anyone feels shaken, and therefore one-down, when this suspicion is*

placed in his mind.

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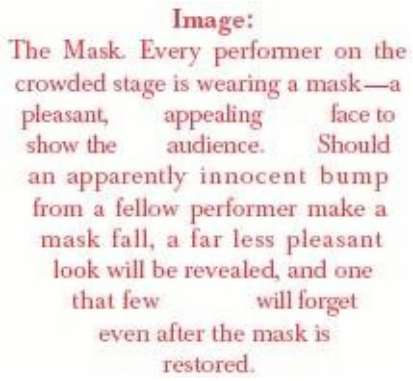

Authority: We often give our rivals the means of our own destruction.

--*Aesop (sixth century B.C.*)

REVERSAL

Sometimes outright war is best--when, for example, you can crush your enemies by encirclement. In the ongoing relationships of daily life, though, one-upmanship is usually the wiser strategy. It may sometimes seem therapeutic to outfight your rivals directly; it may sometimes be appealing to send an overtly intimidating message. But the momentary gains you may earn with a direct approach will be offset by the suspicions you arouse in your colleagues, who will worry that someday you will strong-arm them, too. In the long run, it is more important to secure good feelings and maintain appearances. Wise courtiers always seem to be paragons of civilized behavior, encasing their iron fist in a velvet glove.