

DEPENDENT

EXTRA

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LIFE'S A BATTLE

CAN EMMA GOLD TRIUMPH USING
THE 33 STRATEGIES OF WAR?

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Treachorous colleagues, competitive friends, bloody-minded commuters – it's a war out there. And according to Robert Greene, it's a conflict we're ill-equipped to deal with. Now, after analysing the moves of history's great military leaders, he's written a rulebook to achieving victory in life's daily battles. **Emma Gold** spends a week living according to his principles. But will they give her the ammunition to defeat her adversaries? And, faced with a bitter stepdaughter, what would Napoleon do?

Day 1 – Saturday

Today, I declare war on my enemies, in accordance with the first strategy of war: "Life is endless battle and conflict, and you cannot fight effectively unless you can identify your enemies. Learn to smoke out your enemies, to spot them by the signs and patterns that reveal hostility. Your enemies can fill you with purpose and direction, they are a source of energy."

So far, the energy has been negative. Upon meeting my boyfriend, Andrew, I automatically made three enemies - his 16-year-old daughter, his sister-in-law and his close female friend, all of whom had previously enjoyed the attention now being lavished upon me. His daughter, Lisa, didn't bother to disguise her antagonism, and, to date, neither have I. Hostilities escalated as a result of her attempts to host a party at our house while we were away, and she has now not spoken to either me or her father for six months.

The other two ladies have been more subtle but not much more welcoming. Neither have issued a return dinner invitation in the year since I've lived with Andrew. Instead of blaming myself for not being sufficiently charming, I recognise, with considerable relief, that this war isn't

personal. Because I have usurped their place in Andrew's life, I have become their enemy. Now, they are mine.

Day 2 – Sunday

Before engaging in battle, I follow the examples of every great military leader in history and form a grand strategy. Sitting atop my metaphorical mountain, escaping the smoke and confusion on the battlefield below, I start calculating ahead, and decide what I want from life – a happy boyfriend, resulting from harmony with his daughter, and a successful new business.

In order to achieve the former, I need to end the current stalemate with Lisa and turn her into an ally. In order to achieve the latter, I must adhere to Strategy 8, the Perfect Economy Strategy, and pick my battles carefully, which means disengaging my focus from Andrew's sister-in-law and friend. None the less, I am tempted by the ultimate reward that grand strategy brings: the last laugh. Perhaps just a few manoeuvres...

Day 3 – Monday

Currently, Lisa holds all the power. All attempts by Andrew to re-establish contact have been ignored. My frustrated and

angry responses to Lisa's initial hostility didn't help. By reacting emotionally, I broke a fundamental rule of war: "Amid the Turmoil of Events, Do Not Lose Your Presence of Mind", otherwise known as The Counter-balance Strategy.

Addressing the situation afresh, this time calmly and rationally, I decide upon two approaches. Employing a "forcing strategy" to wrest back control from Lisa, I decide to give the stalemate a major jolt and force her to do something different. "Injecting novelty and mobility is often enough to unbalance the minds of your rigid and defensive opponents," advises Greene. Lisa senses that I dislike her and am delighted that she is no longer around to plague me. Following the principle of always working against the enemy's expectations, I do the last thing she anticipates. I dispatch a warm, loving letter, full of praise for her and acknowledging and regretting my past behaviour.

Day 4 – Tuesday

Two new enemies emerge. I have monthly group training sessions at a woman's house, and it is absolutely freezing. Direct requests and hints, such as donning ski wear, have been steadfastly ignored. I have tolerated the situ-

'This war isn't personal. I've usurped their place in his life, so I'm their enemy. Now, they are mine'

ation but now that I am a warrior, this attack on my comfort can no longer be overlooked. I decide to utilise Strategy 16, "Hit Them Where it Hurts". The trainer is being paid by the organisation for whom I work, so I fire off an e-mail to the director. The trainer's salary must be more than the cost of heating a room. I receive an e-mail from the director assuring me that the trainer will be activating the radiator in future.

The second front is at home. Andrew's devoted housekeeper has shrunk yet another of my jumpers. In the past, there might have been an emotional confrontation resulting in bad feeling. Now that I know that direct attack is rarely, if ever, advisable, since it merely stiffens resistance and results in defensive behaviour, I go for the flank approach. After telling her how much I appreciate her, I present her with some new wool detergent and share my secret for wool - hand-wash in cold water.

If any more shrinkages occur, I'll take it as a declaration of war and at least I'll have smoked out my enemy. If Napoleon could take millions of unruly young men and turn them into one of the most successful fighting forces ever known, I should be able to manage a housekeeper. Napoleon's

praise was rare and therefore sought-after. Perhaps I've been overlooking the schmoozing...

Day 5 – Wednesday

I think more about setting up my business. A friend suggests running it with me. I'm tempted - I'd like the support and a share of the risk. Then I read that none of the great military leaders would consider divided leadership. In the Second World War, General Marshall insisted that one supreme commander should lead the Allied armies. "Better one bad general than two good ones," said Napoleon. I decline my friend's offer.

Once I've planned every detail of the business in the manner of a grand strategist, I'll give up all other freelance work. This decision was inspired by the Death Ground Strategy, in which one creates a sense of urgency and desperation: "Cut your ties to the past; enter unknown territory. Place yourself on 'death ground', where your back is against the wall and you have to fight like hell to get out alive." If I have no other source of income, I'll have to make the new venture a success. It will certainly add extra fire to my sales pitch.

Day 6 – Thursday

Andrew's sister-in-law, ▶

► Brenda, has committed a grave tactical error. Having returned very few of my calls over the last year, she has now left an urgent message to call her regarding a favour. Immersed in work, I don't return the call until later in the day when it's too late. Unconsciously, I have made an exquisite move in the strategy of one-upmanship, aka "Give Your Rivals Enough Rope to Hang Themselves".

Developed by history's savviest courtiers, it is based on the simple premise that your rivals harbour the seeds of their own self-destruction. "A seemingly innocent action that stirs an emotion like anger, frustration or impatience will cloud their vision," says Greene. "They will tend to misfire and start making mistakes."

Not returning Brenda's call seems to have activated all three emotions, and she lambasts Andrew so brutally, he swears to have nothing more to do with her. She then sends him an e-mail, full of demented accusations against me. Her mask has slipped, revealing a less-than pretty face, and it is one that Andrew, and the rest of his family, once they learn the story behind the row, will not forget. I think a strategy of non-engagement will be best for the time being.

Day 7 – Friday

A miracle. I receive a reply from Lisa. The first communication in six months. I feel all the elation of the warriors within the Horse, entering the walled city of Troy. She thanks me for getting in touch and agrees to meet.

I'm off to Jersey for the weekend, and on arrival, take a cab to the centre of the island. The driver wrongly decides that I'd like to hear his life story. Wracking my brains for a counterattack, I settle on Strategy 10 – "Create a Threatening Presence", more specifically, "Act Like a Crazy Fox".

A flash of insanity is normally enough to frighten most people off. Unfortunately, I can't think of anything enigmatic but disturbing enough to freak him out. However, I'm so consumed by the attempt, that I am almost armoured against the bitterness of his rant.

When Andrew and I reach the country-house hotel, we are alarmed by the short length of the bed. We are both of average height, yet our feet hang over the edge, making it an unsuitable resting place for an officer and her gentleman. When the manager insists that the bed is standard size, we decide to discuss our next strategy over tea.

Life looks much rosier after a full Jersey cream tea, and an afternoon siesta far more appealing, especially after a week of combat. Who cares about the size of the bed? It's time to make love, not war.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

6 SEGMENT YOUR FORCES: THE CONTROLLED-CHAOS STRATEGY

The critical elements in war are speed and adaptability – the ability to move and make decisions faster than the enemy. Break your forces into independent groups. Make your forces elusive and unstoppable by infusing them with the spirit of the campaign, giving them a mission to accomplish, and then letting them run.

7 TRANSFORM YOUR WAR INTO A CRUSADE: MORALE STRATEGIES

The secret to motivating people and maintaining their morale is to get them to think less about themselves and more about the group. Involve them in a cause, a crusade against a hated enemy. Make them see their survival as tied to the success of the army as a whole.

8 PICK YOUR BATTLES CAREFULLY: THE PERFECT-ECONOMY STRATEGY

We all have limitations – our energies and skills will take us only so far. Know your limits and pick your battles carefully. Consider the hidden costs of a war: time lost, political goodwill squandered, an embittered enemy set on revenge. Sometimes it is better to wait, to undermine your enemies covertly rather than hitting them straight on.

9 TURN THE TABLES: THE COUNTERATTACK STRATEGY

Initiating the attack will often put you at a disadvantage: you are exposing your strategy and limiting your options. Discover the power of holding back and letting the other side move first, giving you the flexibility to counterattack from any angle. If your opponents are aggressive, bait them into a rash attack that will leave them weak.

10 CREATE A THREATENING PRESENCE: DETERRING STRATEGIES

The best way to fight off aggressors is to keep them from attacking you. Build up a reputation: you're a little crazy. Fighting you is not worth it. Uncertainty can be better than threat: if your opponents are never sure what messing with you will cost, they will not want to find out.

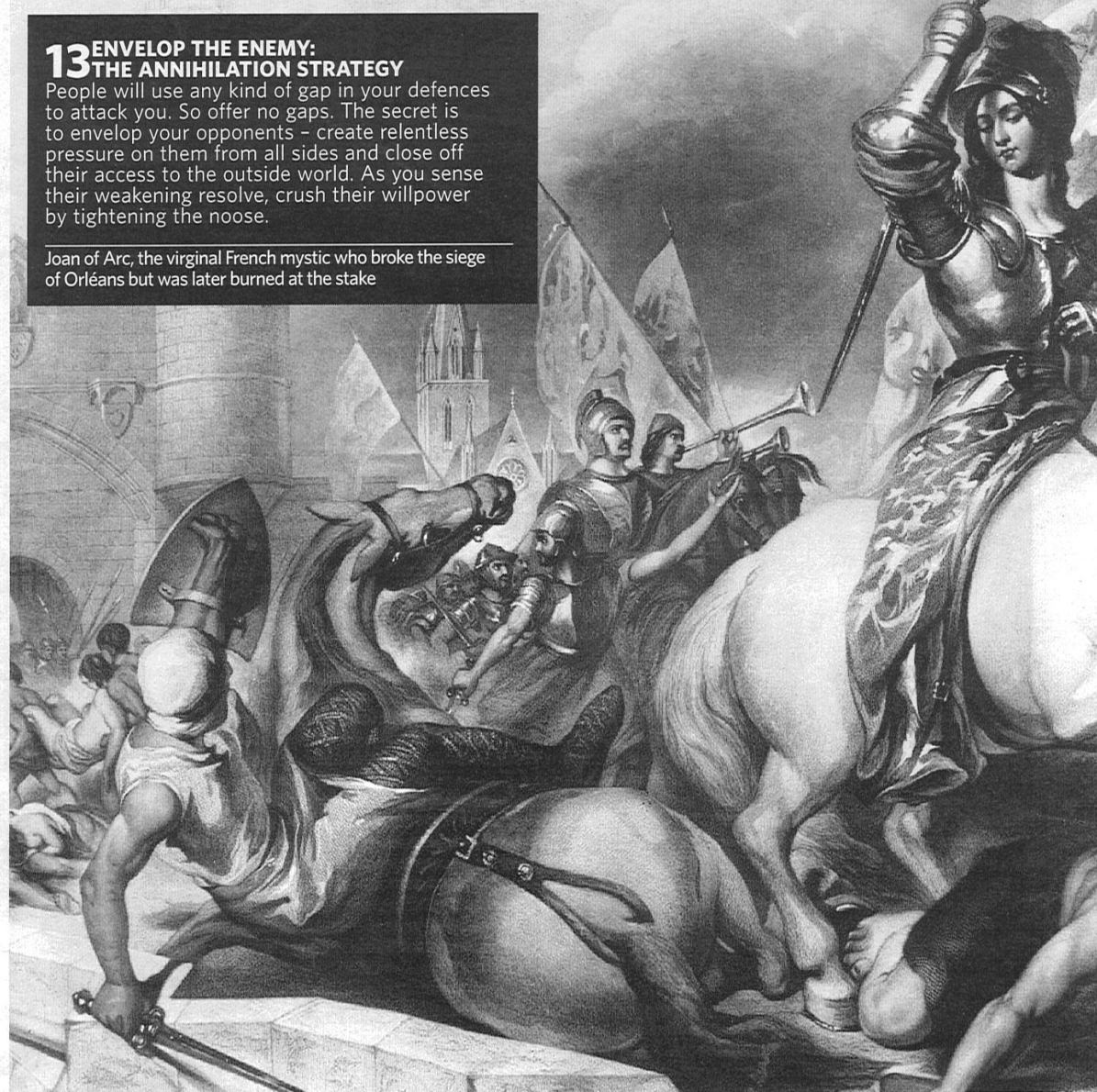
11 KNOW YOUR ENEMY

The target of your strategies should be less the army you face than the

12 LOSE BATTLES BUT WIN THE WAR: GRAND STRATEGY

Grand strategy is the art of looking beyond the battle and calculating ahead. It requires that you focus on your ultimate goal and plot to reach it. Let others get caught up in the twists and turns of the battle, relishing their little victories. Grand strategy will bring you the ultimate reward.

Lord Nelson at the pivotal Battle of Trafalgar. Courtesy of the National Maritime Museum



13 ENVELOP THE ENEMY: THE ANNIHILATION STRATEGY

People will use any kind of gap in your defences to attack you. So offer no gaps. The secret is to envelop your opponents – create relentless pressure on them from all sides and close off their access to the outside world. As you sense their weakening resolve, crush their willpower by tightening the noose.

Joan of Arc, the virginal French mystic who broke the siege of Orléans but was later burned at the stake

mind of the man or woman who runs it. If you understand how that mind works, you have the key to deceiving and controlling it. Train yourself to read people, picking up the signals they unconsciously send out about their innermost thoughts and intentions.

14 OVERWHELM RESISTANCE WITH SPEED AND SUDDENNESS: THE BLITZKRIEG STRATEGY

In a world in which many people are indecisive and overly cautious, the use of speed will bring you untold power. Striking first, before

your opponents have had time to think or prepare, will make them emotional, unbalanced and prone to error.

15 CONTROL THE DYNAMIC: FORCING STRATEGIES

People are constantly struggling to control you. The only way to get the upper hand is to make your play for control more intelligent and insidious. Instead of trying to dominate the other side's every move, work to define the nature of the relationship itself. Manoeuvre to control your opponent's mind, pushing their emotional buttons and compelling them to make mistakes.

16 HIT THEM WHERE IT HURTS: THE CENTRE-OF-GRAVITY STRATEGY

Everyone has a source of power on which he or she depends. When you look at your rivals, search below the surface for that source, the centre of gravity that holds the entire structure together. Hitting them there will inflict disproportionate pain. Find out what the other side most cherishes and protects – that is where you must strike.

17 DEFEAT THEM IN DETAIL: THE DIVIDE-AND-CONQUER STRATEGY

Never be intimidated by your enemy's appearance. Instead, look

at the parts that make up the whole. By separating the parts, sowing dissension and division, you can bring down even the most formidable foe. When you are facing troubles or enemies, turn a large problem into small, eminently defeatable parts.

18 EXPOSE AND ATTACK YOUR OPPONENT'S SOFT FLANK: THE TURNING STRATEGY

When you attack people directly, you stiffen their resistance and make your task that much harder. There is a better way: distract your opponents' attention to the front, then attack them from the side, where they least expect it. Bait people into going out on a limb, exposing their weakness, then rake them with fire from the side.

19 MANOEUVRE THEM INTO WEAKNESS: THE RIPENING-FOR-THE-SICKLE STRATEGY

No matter how strong you are, fighting endless battles with people is exhausting, costly and unimagined. Wise strategists prefer the art of manoeuvre: before the battle even begins, they find ways to put their opponents in positions of such weakness that victory is easy and quick. Create dilemmas: devise manoeuvres that give them a choice of ways to respond – all of them bad.

