

“By reputation, Christine is the woman you want to partner with...”

—*Newsweek*

# RULES FOR RENEGADES

how to  
make more money,  
rock your career,  
and revel in your  
individuality

CHRISTINE  
COMAFORD-LYNCH

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RULE


4

# Build Power Instead of Borrowing It

*Attempting World Domination  
in Bill Gates's Bedroom*

*Nothing external to you has any  
power over you.*

RALPH WALDO EMERSON



**Y**OU'RE THE CEO of your own life, and maybe even of your own business, so you often have to deal with power. As we go through life and meet people, we learn about power—who has it and who doesn't. You'll always be dealing with people who have power over you, to some extent, but I want you to be able to have power too—to know where it starts and where it stops, and to exercise it responsibly and compassionately over others. But how do you get it? And what, exactly, is it? Is it money? Is it position? Is it the ability to influence? I learned most about it by seeking out, and hanging out with, powerful people.

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**S**ubject: "If you donate to the AIDS Action Committee, you'll win dinner with a fabulous blonde!"

I press "Send" and the e-mail is on its way to the intended target. I'm the blonde bait; Bill Gates is the big fish. My office-mate Frank, at Lotus Development Corporation, has done so much for me: made me over, taught me to apply makeup, and now many of his friends are sick with AIDS. Some are dying. I need to help, and asking a billionaire for a small contribution to a worthy cause seems the least I can do. And besides, how cool would that be? To bag a donation from a billionaire? Maybe even

have dinner together? I've only met Bill once, and I doubt he'll remember me. He probably won't answer. But it's worth a shot.

Moments later a reply pops onto my screen. "How much?"

Whoa! I take a deep breath and type "One thousand dollars, paid to AIDS Action Committee, sent to me via FedEx," and press Send again. The next day there's an orange and purple envelope in my mail slot. Inside is a personal check from Bill Gates for \$1,000. It even has his home address on it.

"You should've asked for a million!" squeals Frank, grabbing the check and heading for the photocopier. The constant *voowoosh voowoosh* says he's making a ton of copies for his friends.

A thank-you e-mail, without specifying a date for the dinner, keeps me off the hook for a while. Heck, I'm now in Massachusetts, Bill's across the country in Washington. He probably won't follow through anyway. With the check passed along to the AAC I promptly forget the whole thing.

. . .

Months later my contract at Lotus is up. I hear rumblings from Redmond that the next version of Windows (3.0) will be all we engineers have dreamed of. I pitch myself via phone to the new head of Windows and lock in a programming gig. One day, after only a few months back at Microsoft, I get an e-mail with the subject: "I found you." The message: "I believe you owe me dinner. How's tonight?"

Yikes. Bill Gates has called my bluff. Why did I offer myself up in the first place? It seemed like a fun idea, but now that it's time to actually follow through, I must admit I want to be near him, to find out what a billionaire is like one-on-one. Will he spout words of business wisdom? Will he offer to become my mentor?

I want to reply, but my fingers are numb, my stomach's in knots, and my skin's indecisive—icy and sweating at the same time—and things look kind of blurry. Stop. Do something you know how to do from all that time as a monk. Use a relaxation mantra. Close your eyes, still your mind, meditate. Ready.

“OK, want me to come by your office?”

The response comes instantly. “No, your cardkey won't let you into my building. I'll come to you.”

“What time?”

“Seven OK?”

“Sure.”

“See you then.”

At Microsoft, the primary form of communication is e-mail, secondary is voice mail, tertiary is face mail, meaning you actually engage in a conversation with a fellow human being. We nerds avoid social contact at all costs.

I hope, I *pray*, that in two hours Bill will come directly to my office, instead of schmoozing his way down the hall talking to all the guys. If they find out I'm having dinner with him, they'll assume it's a date. As a technical woman at Microsoft your social position is precarious: if you date company guys, you're a slut; if you don't, you're a bitch. I learned this the first time I worked here. I didn't date the guys in Systems where I worked, so I was a bitch. I dated the guys in Applications, a few buildings away, so I was a slut. This time I'd promised myself I would skip Microsoft guys altogether.

Time speeds past as I fix an infinite loop and find a null pointer. At seven o'clock sharp Bill's tousled blonde head pops into my office. “Hey, Christine.”

“Hey, Bill.”

“Nice poster.” He nods toward the “My First Million” poster tacked to the off-white wall. It shows a million dollars loosely piled in the shape of a pyramid. I ordered it from *Inc.* magazine as a tool to help me focus on my goal: having my own company, being free one day from the wage-slave world.

“Oh, yeah, it’s a goal of mine.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah, you know, to make a million dollars. I mean, not just one million, many millions, but you’ve got to start somewhere, so one million seemed to be logical. . . .”

“Hungry?” Bill points his head out the door.

“Kind of.” I head into the hallway, Bill’s a few feet ahead of me. Please God, please let the guys be in their offices. Please.

They aren’t. They’re lining the corridor, like they’re waiting for a parade. And I’m in it. As we walk through the staring mob, Bill asks too loudly, “Can you drive me home after dinner?”

“Um, okay.” From the corner of my eye I see the guys elbowing each other, some leering, some snickering. Bill’s not walking fast enough. The stairwell is a few yards ahead; the elevator is way across the lobby. Waiting for the elevator will be excruciating with all these eyes drilling holes in my head.

Bill wants to chat. “So, I thought we’d have dinner . . . do you like Thai food? Then we could hang out at my place and . . .”

“Stairs,” I say, sliding before him. “Let’s take the stairs,” I hurl the door open and lunge down to the parking lot.

It’s dusk as my blue Mazda Miata zooms across the bridge to Seattle. Bill guides me to one of his favorite Thai restaurants.

As we peruse the menu, Bill appears calm. I’m twitchy . . . but trying to be cool. “So, what’s good here?”

“Oh, everything. I mean, all the chicken and fish stuff. I don’t eat meat.”

“Really?” *Ah, a subject I can actually talk about. Maybe even a potential bond.*

“Yeah, I thought it would be cool to avoid something because I want to. You know, kind of a willpower exercise.” This is the man who leveraged the crappy Altair computer into a booming business. Management says next year, 1990, Microsoft will hit \$1 billion in sales. No software company has done this yet, but I’m betting on Bill. I don’t really think he needs to enhance his willpower.

As dinner progresses I start to worry a little more. Bill’s a paradox: compassionate and cocky, genuine and arrogant, grown-up and elfin all at once. This little elf runs a software powerhouse that’s taking on the world, one software company at a time. This little elf has an arsenal of weapons to squash his competition. Lotus was a threat with its market-leading spreadsheet, then *boom!* Microsoft smashed them. WordPerfect was a threat with its market-leading word processing software, then *boom!* Microsoft smashed them too. Now the company is aiming for IBM. *IBM.* They’re, like, enormous. They’re, well, IBM for Chrissakes. I’m fascinated. I’m afraid. What if I actually end up liking him? He’s a Microsoft guy, he holds all the cards, he can’t be as nice as he seems. Yep, liking him would definitely be a bad thing.

“Hey! Can I drive home?”

“Um, okay.” I hand the keys to Bill.

“Super!” We jump in just as it starts to rain. “We need driving music, something lively.” I grope in the glove box, find Madonna’s latest CD, *Like a Prayer*, pop it in, relax in the bucket seat. I feel better having Bill behind the wheel. I bet the Mi-

crosoft shareholders do, too. We tear down the highway, with the rain obscuring the taillights before us. “This is fun, it’s like a little toy car,” Bill hollers over the slapping rain. He’s driving too fast for the poor visibility. I grip the dashboard as the car hydroplanes to the right.

We pull up to Bill’s middle-class suburban home. It’s stunning: it’s ordinary. It probably has three bedrooms, and it’s surprisingly light on curb appeal; you’d never know a billionaire lives here. You wouldn’t even think a millionaire did.

Inside, Bill turns to me with a bright face. “Hey! Today IBM endorsed Microsoft Windows in front of the world, and today I found out you’re the first female contract engineer we’ve hired without a college diploma . . . or even a high school one. Let’s celebrate!” He swings open the fridge, revealing a dozen neatly stacked bottles of Dom Perignon.

I don’t remember discussing my education at dinner. Maybe I forgot? Or was Bill checking me out? Is that good—or creepy? “What about OS/2?” I’d pounded away on that operating system the last time I worked at Microsoft. Was my work wasted?

“It’s IBM’s now. We’re going to make Windows the desktop standard.” Just like that. Bill seems certain of it.

“We better tell Lotus, Adobe, WordPerfect, all those guys who’re developing apps for OS/2.”

“We will. Don’t worry.” Pop! Bill uncorks the champagne like a pro. He has lots of reasons to celebrate. It’s 1989. Microsoft has swelled to 4,000 employees worldwide, just a few years after going public. And IBM, in its infinite brilliance, has just handed Bill the keys to the desktop.

This is the first billionaire bachelor pad I’ve ever seen. From the standard-issue 1980s kitchen to the living room with

low-slung couches, assorted surfaces are festooned with small yellow sticky notes, fluttering like tiny canaries. Scribbled with suggestions or reminders, each one chirps for attention. “Let’s replace this coffee table.” “A brown rug would suit this room.”

“Why the sticky notes?” I call from living room to kitchen.

“Oh. They’re from my mom,” his voice comes back softer. I can hear the fondness, the mother-melt. Then a hint of *Gosh, I wish she hadn’t seen that*. “Just her ideas and stuff.”

Continuing my tour, I walk down a short hallway and—voilà! Bill’s bedroom. Whoa! What’s this? A whiteboard! Bill’s standing behind me. He’d snuck up, Ninja-like. “My mom lists things, and just like in Windows, I check what I want. See: do I want any new suits? If yes, I check the box she drew next to the colors I want. Do I want to host a Christmas party? I fill in the radio button: yes or no?”

O-kay . . . “Well, uh, I mean, it’s a superefficient way to communicate. I mean, if she’s in your house a lot.” I want to compliment them both, but I’m kind of weirded out.

“Hey—I do puzzles really fast.”

Thank God, a topic change. “Oh?”

“Yeah. There’s one in the kitchen that says the fastest it’s ever been assembled is seven minutes. *Seven*. Can you believe that? I can do it in four minutes, sometimes even less. You can take it apart and time me!” He’s beckoning me toward the kitchen.

By this time, I’d witnessed countless attempts by nerds to impress me. Heck, I even had my own stupid nerd tricks I did to impress the guys. Burping the alphabet was my specialty. Think I’ll skip that one tonight. “Um, I believe you, Bill, really.

You're a supersmart guy. Why don't we just talk? And where's that champagne?"

Bill returns from the kitchen, and hands me a glass of golden bubbles as we settle on the couch. We gulp in silence, and he refills both glasses. A soothing calm overcomes me as my limbs loosen. "So, Truth or Dare?" I offer.

"Truth. Yeah, truth."

I would've thought he'd go for the dare. "All right, what's your deepest fear?"

"That's easy," He replies immediately, no thought required. "Not getting smarter. Did you know that after 30, you just stop getting smarter? And then you get older, and well, it's downhill from there."

"Wow." I never worry about not getting smarter. I worry about more pressing issues, like my job debugging the Windows Software Development Kit. And I really worry about the poor guys debugging Windows itself. Now *that* is a job that *really* sucks. "So, what's your plan?"

"Surround myself with smart people. As I get older, keep bringing in more young, smart people, so the intelligence at Microsoft will increase as the median age does."

"Wow." This guy has a plan for everything. "Do you think your plan will succeed?"

"Yes. Of course." Bill is surprised I've questioned him.

"How do you know? I mean, can you plan all aspects of life? Like what about miracles and stuff? Those are unplanned. How do you explain them?"

"There are no miracles. You can explain everything, *everything*, with physics. The universe is like a big plan."

Again I see the expression of supreme confidence, of resolution, of *knowing*, on his face. This guy has an answer for everything. Better skip the God topic; that might be depressing. “So, do you, ummm, have a plan for your life?”

“Yeah, sure. Get married in a few years, at around 40 have a few kids, take Microsoft to the next level.”

“You know all that? Now?” Hey, sooner or later his mom will want grandkids. Maybe she’ll put up a few sticky notes and off to the altar he’ll go.

“Oh, c’mere! I want to show you something.” Bill takes my hand, leads me to the kitchen. “You need to see these. Tell me what you think.” On the dining table are models of three homes. Not homes, really, not mansions, not even estates, but *compounds*. “So when I get married, and start having kids, well, this is the home I’m having built for them.”

“Wow.”

“So these are the finalists. I had a competition among these top architects, and I need to pick one. All of the designs are super. Here, I’ll walk you through them.” We pull up chairs, and he spends the next 30 minutes explaining the details that’ll be in the house regardless of design, followed by the specifics of each model. “Okay, now you’re well informed. Which do you like best?”

“This one.” I point to option two. “It’s less extreme, like a normal house that grew really, really big.”

“Normal’s good. I want my kids to grow up feeling normal, not with a huge house and servants and stuff like that.”

“Bill, all of these homes are huge, and your kids, they won’t have normal lives.” He frowns, slouching in the chair. Did he

really think they would? “I mean, you’re rich, you’re famous; you should enjoy that, and your kids should reap the benefits. But this house, the one we’re in right now, this is normal. These models, they’re not normal, Bill. Not normal at all.”

“Yeah. I mean, I know. Guess I just thought they’d be super-normal, but still kinda normal.” He’s tapping model number 2 with his right pointer finger, gazing down at the table. His face shows his disappointment that he can’t have fame and fortune *and* a low-profile middle-class life. Maybe no one has been as blunt as I have been.

“No,” I say. “I’m sorry.” And I am. Because I understand. All his life he wanted to be normal, to be accepted, to fit in, and in his quest he surpassed his goal and became supernormal, superaccomplished, and now he’ll never be normal, not ever.

Bill straightens up, smiles. “So, another bottle of champagne?”

“No, I’ve got to go.” I look away. I’m different from Bill, but my need is the same. I too was a misfit who wanted so badly to fit in, find my place, but I never could, and it makes me both sad and resolute because this is who I am, and there’s some good to it. At least that’s what I want to think.

“Please. Don’t go yet.” He’s not ready to be alone with all these feelings. He’s using his elfin look, with the tipped grin, big pleading eyes.

“Maybe just a few minutes.” *You know, a few blond highlights would really look good on him. Maybe shape his eyebrows a little too, and get new glasses. Needs wardrobe work, but he’s definitely got potential.* This time, I’m the one with the plans. I have big ones for Bill and me. Big.

. . .

A month later I get an e-mail entitled “Merry Christmas.” It’s from Bill. “My life is really complicated right now. I’d like to see you again. Beginning of the year OK?” We’ve exchanged friendly e-mails, so at least I didn’t blow it. No harm in waiting a little longer for our next date. Ohmygod. It was a date, wasn’t it?

It ends up being a *lot* longer—March 17—when we get together next. Clear-skinned on our last date, I now have an icky bout of stress-related adult acne. If I ask for a rain check Bill will forget about me, probably never ask me out again. Someone more interesting will come around and I’ll be “Christine who?” I’d better say yes. Leaning into the mirror I hear Frank’s first rule of makeup application: “less is more, else you look like a whore.” But I can’t use less and cover these pimples. So I layer it on. *Thick*.

Hey, I can do this, hang with the rich and famous. Piece of cake. Those self-improvement tapes are working. Yes, Brian Tracy, I am *Thinking Big*. And yes, Zig Ziglar, I’ve got a *View from the Top* and it is deeee-licious. Oh, yeah.

Everything’s cool until we arrive at the dining room of the Columbia Tower Club, high atop a Seattle skyscraper. The maître d’, the patrons, the busboys, *everyone* is staring at us. It’s unnerving. But still I make it through dinner, through the disco, through the comedy club.

The next morning I sneak out of bed, freshen up my makeup, tiptoe across the light shag carpet back to Bill’s bed.

“Good morning.” Bill sighs, smiling with closed eyes.

“Morning,” I reply, speed dressing, eager for my escape. I don’t want him to see my face—my acne ran rampant last night. “Well, thanks. Bye.”

Bill throws on a tan terrycloth robe and follows me to the door. He's still standing on his porch as I peel out of the driveway. As soon as he fades from my rearview mirror I smear the inch of makeup off my face.

Two weeks. No call from Bill.

. . .

After a few months it's clear: I've been dumped. I was like a dog chasing a car—there was no way I'd catch it, and all I did was look dumb and get hurt. Frank thinks otherwise. He says, "Honey, you darted the morning after. Everyone knows the darter is the dumper." I object but Frank insists, saying, "What was he supposed to do? Beg for you back with a humiliating phone call? He's Bill Gates, for Chrissakes."

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I started out wanting to raise money for AIDS, which led to dinner, which became a date, which resulted in my losing sight of why I wanted to hang with Bill in the first place: to learn from him. Many of us fall into a familiar trap: we choose power/money/self-esteem-by-association because we don't think we can create our own. We think we'll get a "contact high" from being close to power instead of by wielding it ourselves. Then we're left powerless when the relationship goes south, the association withers, or the bank balance plunges. What kind of power do you want in your life and over your life? Do you want power by association—with someone or some place? Or do you want to build your own power? We can't rock in business and life until

we untangle that relationship, claim our power, and start creating with it. Make the choice now to have your own power, money, self-esteem. Then no one can take it away.

One thing, though, struck me, stuck with me: Bill's supreme confidence, his certainty that he'd achieve what he set out to do. His ability to create his world, to influence outcomes—that's what power came to mean to me. *And as I watch more closely now, from a distance, I realize that power isn't something bestowed on a person due to wealth or position, but that it comes from that inner confidence.* Having that confidence puts one in a particular position, which people respond to. I decided to try on that illusion, adopt that sense of knowing that I'd get what I wanted. My study guide became *Fortune* magazine, where I read about powerful executives and tried to glean how they got that way. I embraced external evidence of power: the suits, the stature; I was trying to be like Bill.

And it was working. I wrote a letter to a particularly fascinating man and we ended up spending some time together. I didn't sleep with this second billionaire, I wasn't ready. What's the rush? When he asked me to meet him in a location that required me to miss some key business meetings, I said no. He persisted, offering to send his plane for me. I declined as gracefully as possible; I simply couldn't be his beck-and-call-girl. I'd learned my lesson. But he did have the same supreme self-confidence that Bill had. It was almost intoxicating.

## Enchiladas and the Internet

Life has its challenges, and five years later my confidence got wobbly again. I was the target of an ugly public attack, which you'll read more about in Chapter 5. Although I'd learned lots about how to act like I had power, and even how to gain it and use it, a big part of me was still looking for power outside of myself, forgetting the lessons I learned from Bill. My sense of power was wrapped up with my company, and then that company was gone once I sold it. A friend offered an intriguing diversion: an introduction to Larry Ellison of Oracle. I thought maybe he would provide a boost to my self-confidence and self-esteem.

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Larry was supposed to call me from the lobby of the Santa Clara Marriott at 6 p.m. Then I'd meet him and we'd go from there. It's 6:15 p.m. No call. Then 6:30 p.m. Nada. It's 7 p.m. when I remember the only other time I'd been stood up: for the high school prom by Jimmy. Jimmy the stoner and Larry the businessman blend into one. And I hate him. Hate him for making me feel so ugly, so undesirable, so . . . *optional*. Does he think he can get away with this? I call his office and get voice mail.

"Hi, Larry, it's Christine Comaford. We had dinner plans tonight. But I'm still here, at the hotel, and you're . . . well, I don't know where. Look, I don't care that you're a billionaire. I've

dated them before, so it's not like I'm impressed by your wealth or anything. I wanted to meet you because I thought you might be a fascinating person. Well, a fascinating person with no manners? *Not* fascinating." I hang up, strip, jump into the shower.

Thirty minutes later my skin is prunelike as I step from the shower. The red message light on the hotel phone flashes.

"Christine, this is Larry. There was a mix-up. My calendar says we're on for tomorrow night—my assistant and I must've had a miscommunication. I'm so sorry. I don't stand up women. Please call me tonight. Any time." He leaves his home phone number.

My personal digital assistant has two home phone numbers for my other failed relationships with billionaires. Am I really going to try this again? Another 30 minutes pass, and I decide to call him back. Just a quick call. Just to get closure before I walk away.

"Hi, Larry, it's Christine Comaford."

"Oh, hi, thanks for calling. I'm so sorry. Please understand this was simply a scheduling error . . ."

"Yeah, well . . ."

"Give me another chance. Are you still in town tomorrow night?"

"Yes, but . . ."

"I'll make it worth it. Hey," he laughs, "I'll even be your man slave for the evening. How can you refuse an offer like that?"

"Well, that is tempting . . ."

"Great. I'll pick you up at 6:30 p.m. tomorrow night at the Marriott."

"Okay, but let's make it casual attire. Jeans."

"Jeans. Deal. See you tomorrow."

He picks me up in a \$5,000 Brioni suit. Jeans, *right*. I should have worn a business suit. I would have been more confident in my clothing armor. We zoom from the entryway—he didn't even use the parking lot—in his silver Acura NSX. He says he's driven all the best cars on the planet, and this one handles so much better than the Ferrari Diablo. Gotcha. I'll remember that the next time I'm car shopping.

To his credit, Larry changes into khakis and a T-shirt shortly after we arrive at his samurai estate in Atherton, California. He's in the kitchen, says he's cooking dinner, but refuses to let me keep him company. Is that the crinkling sound of tin foil? Did his housekeeper make dinner? Is he just heating it up? Does it matter?

After chicken enchiladas, Larry says, "Hey, I want to show you something. It's the future." He jumps up from the table and leads me to the upstairs den. It's a steep flight of stairs, and he's ahead of me. His khakis cling to his perfectly sculpted tush. "Okay, so the Internet . . . it's the next big thing."

"Uh-huh." A fit nerd . . . *this* is a first.

"It's going to change everything. *Everything*."

"Sounds cool." Top of the stairs. Dang! There goes my view.

"It's like one huge database that everyone can tap in to, effortlessly." Larry walks over to a TV set and stands before it.

"Everyone?" Wow, I didn't notice the muscle definition in his shoulders, arms, chest. This guy must work out. *A lot*.

"Yes, consumers could shop online, research medical info, interact with others of similar interests. Employees could access their insurance benefits, salespeople could track their quarterly sales. All this self-serve data, empowering people.

And this,” he pats a VCR-like device on top of the TV set, “this is going to make it all happen.”

Another billionaire, another nerd trick, another attempt to impress. Bill wanted me to time him assembling a jigsaw puzzle; Larry wants me to watch a software demo. I want to scream, “Hey! I’m impressed already! You’re a titan of industry, and you’re sexy, and your body is spectacular! I’m impressed! I swear!”

Larry turns on the TV, pushes a button on the little box. “This set-top box turns your average TV into an Internet access point. This is going to blow you away.”

We stare in silence at the blank screen.

He fiddles with the knobs, cables, power cord. “Okay, there. This is going to blow you away.”

We stare in silence at the blank screen.

“Hmmm. Something’s not working. It worked yesterday . . .”

“I’m sure it’s really cool, Larry.”

We exchange e-mails several days a week. He’s witty and charming. He even e-mails me a haiku he wrote about hiking Half Dome—did I inspire him? I have Carson’s Ribs, his favorite, FedExed from Chicago to his office in California. He’s fun and smart and seems a little vulnerable beneath it all.

We talk on the phone after he returns from Hong Kong. “What was the coolest thing about your trip?”

“The watches. I got a few more Patek Philippes. They’re gorgeous. The jewelry, too. Enormous, perfect diamonds, emeralds, you name it.”

“Oh, I’m not really into rocks,” I say.

“*You will be.*” And he sounds like the Silicon Valley version of Yoda. I swear. And I get it then. Rocks. Rocks will be in my future. From him? For me? Wow! So soon?

A few dates later I decide to impress him. I plan a romantic day at the fabulous Meadowood resort in Napa Valley. A limo will whisk us there, we'll play croquet with a world-renown master, have champagne massages, and end the adventure with a candlelit dinner. Romantic, playful, a chance to get out together.

But no. Larry is stuck with "a dozen lawyers" at his Ather-ton estate. His former assistant-turned-girlfriend is suing him for sexual harassment. "Steve [Jobs] thinks I should change the Oracle voice mail system. 'Hello, thank you for calling Oracle. If you'd like to sue Larry, press 1. If you have friends or family who'd like to sue Larry, press 2. If your pet would like to sue Larry, press 3.'"

"You're taking this really well," I say.

"Oh sweetie," Larry coos, "I'm so sorry I can't make it. I'll call you tonight when all the lawyers are gone."

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As I look back on this evening, the amazing thing is that while I was disappointed, I wasn't really hurt. I barely minded being blown off at all. Because Larry had called me "sweetie."

Larry's schedule was so crowded we ended up dating only semiannually, but it made me feel good. Having a powerful guy attracted to me was the only high I had in my personal life. There was only one little thing that bugged me. For all the dates we planned, he often canceled, and always at the last minute. Why did I put up with this? For the power? He called the shots, he had the influence, he saw me as optional. Wait a sec, *he* had the power . . . like, *all* of it.

I began to realize that what I cared for, what I needed, was to see myself reflected in a powerful man's shiny surface. Oh, to appear as that reflection! Over time I saw that reflection more clearly—a scared young woman, unsure, and anxious as she waited to mess up, to make a fashion faux pas, to be ditched, to be dumped. Such foolish reliance on false idols never builds one's own true value.

How do women date the rich and famous? How do they make sure they're always having a good hair day, their outfit is hot, their nails are impeccable, their face is clear and well made up, they have the right shoes and bag, they don't get nervous, they order the right thing, they can discuss whatever random topic is thrown their way? It was exhausting. I was done. I did, however, remember what Larry said about the Internet. A year later I started a company that provided Internet-based promotions, and it made me a few million.

Larry was introduced into my life as a diversion, but I learned some helpful lessons from him, particularly about dealing with public attack and perception. In the heat of a legal battle with his former trusted assistant and then lover (I cannot imagine what that felt like), he could enjoy Steve Jobs's suggested new voice mail message. It might have made him cringe inside, but he carried himself like an elegant Mandarin warlord. Mess with him and he'd certainly reciprocate, but he wouldn't show that his feathers had been ruffled. Likewise, when people lavished him with praise, he made light of it.

And the supreme self-confidence I found so seduc-

tive in all three billionaires? I finally admitted that I couldn't get it from osmosis . . . I'd have to develop it myself.

### Why Borrow When You Can Build?

→ People do this with companies and job titles, too. They rely on the power and prestige of these external items to give them value. But they're borrowing power, not necessarily building it.

When you give your power to your company or your title, you define yourself by the work you do rather than your innate self-worth. If the job goes bye, so does your self-worth. I've been there. It's not pretty. Giving your power to an ideal, as when I decided to "become Bill Gates," isn't the worst power offense, but it's still borrowing—not summoning your power from within.

Are you borrowing power or building it? Here's how to tell: if you feel challenged, if you feel like you're growing, learning, and stretching each day, if you are acquiring new skills, trying to be the best *you* possible, you're building power. If you were to lose your job tomorrow, you know you'd find a new, better gig. You're not wasting time kissing up and playing office politics; you're investing time building your skill set.

I didn't become truly successful in business until I made the decision to stop giving away my right to feel powerful to a man or a title or even my company of the moment. *Power meant that supreme self-confidence I had seen in Bill so many years ago. Power meant I didn't have to grovel any longer,*

*for I brought value to the table, too.* I've seen so many people date or borrow power instead of creating it for themselves. Maybe we don't know how, don't think we can, or we let ourselves get shut down by society or people in our workplace. But *this* is the quest—to find our own power and keep it and grow it. I did it through my career; others do it through raising their families or their role in the community. Either way, start where it feels easiest, and then expand your personal power to the other realms of your life.

It took me decades to find peace and power in my life. Whenever I got wobbly I'd get in trouble because I'd start looking for power outside instead of within. You've got to look inside alone. That's where you find yourself. And that kind of power no one can ever take away. Here are some ways to power up so that when you're in a bind, you'll be able to tough it out without getting wobbly.

#### POWERING UP

There will be challenging times when you want someone else to take care of you or your troubles. But these, my friends, are things one cannot delegate. If you “power up” ahead of time, you'll greatly increase your chances of not only surviving but thriving.

1. Think about that Bill Gates's sense of supreme confidence in his ability to design his and Microsoft's fu-

ture. Do you have that confidence? If so, in what areas of your life do you have it? If not, what would be the easiest areas in which to start developing it? Go for it.

2. Think about how Larry Ellison dealt with attack. He knew he'd emerge triumphant, and so he wasn't ruffled. He declared war, and then he calmly executed his strategy. How do you react when attacked or insulted? Do you lash out or keep your cool? If the former, what self-image, what illusion, could you conjure? Mongol warlord? Xena? Gandhi?
3. Need more examples? Read the story about shaking hands with the rich and famous in Chapter 6. There's a lot to learn from Barbara Walters, Hillary Clinton, Stephen Hawking, and others.
4. What are your internal assets? List what you uniquely bring to the table, what skills or abilities that you've noticed in yourself or have been acknowledged by others (such as perseverance, problem solving, and efficiency). What are you doing to further develop these skills and abilities? To develop additional ones?
5. What's your brand: what three adjectives describe you? Is this the brand you want? If so, what power does it convey? If not, pick your new brand and the power it will showcase.

*(continues)*

6. What's your creed: what beliefs and values do you live by? Is this the creed you want? If not, define your new one.
7. Do you like being you? Are you happy with who you are? If not, describe who you want to be. Get to know yourself. Meditate, pray, exercise—somehow get time alone daily to get to know yourself.
8. As you come to know yourself better, you'll reinforce your brand and live by your creed more consistently. Yes, it takes investment. But what could matter more?

#### COOL FREE RESOURCES

Go to [www.RulesForRenegades.com](http://www.RulesForRenegades.com) and download “Overcoming Adversity,” “Seeking Balance via Connection,” “Power Boosters,” “New Illusion Worksheet,” and “Future Planning Worksheet,” and see the Personal Development section, too.