

A templative tale from  
**Mischief Marketing**

## The Mischievous Duke

[ excerpted from Chapter 10 (print edition) ... ]

... More specifically, however, it teaches us that you don't always have to deal with people who don't understand what you're trying to do. Stop fighting these people! They're not worth your time and energy. Instead, go out and start finding people who do understand you and your work.

*Do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.*

— Matthew 7:6 (NIV)

**Warnings/Gotchas:** Being yourself does NOT automatically mean being antisocial, or rude, or any of that crap. Leave that childish stuff to people who are always merely trying to ACT like they're "being themselves."

If being yourself means dressing and acting like a Jehovah's Witness or like Bill Gates — well then, by all means dress and act like a Jehovah's Witness or Bill Gates.

Just please don't wear a sign that says, "I'm being myself." Don't run around insulting people and then singing "I've gotta be me" at the top of your lungs. In short, don't be rude to people. Unless, of course, that's the real you. ☺

*Does my sassiness upset you?  
Why are you beset with gloom?  
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells  
Pumping in my living room.*

— Maya Angelou

**Mischievous Foot in the Door Tactic #4 (“Parallel Plan B”): Have a parallel backup plan, so you can wait comfortably until a door opens for you.**

You need a backup, like the carpentry backup Ford had. You need a *Parallel Plan B*. The balance between Plan A (your long-term dream) and a Parallel Plan B (your short-term way of making a living) is a delicate balance indeed. It’s practically a tightrope walk. Note that word *parallel*, by the way. It’s important. We’ll come back to it in a minute.

Here’s a story that illustrates what we’re talking about:

### **The Sign-Painting Tightrope Walker**

One day, a musician with a band realizes something important.

He realizes that he needs to learn how to walk The Tightrope — that age-old tightrope that becomes, sadly, for too many brilliant people, before they get to do what they really want to do in life, a hanging rope. We mean the tightrope between pursuing a dream and making a living. (Do you know what we mean here? I think you do.)

So the musician decides to try a little mischief marketing.

It’s a simple tactic he tries. When prospects call to ask about his band, he talks so fast he sounds rush-rush See-ya yeah okay gotta go Bye now.

Which of course makes the callers think his band must be very busy (see the Wizard of Oz tactic in Chapter 14). Which of course makes them think his band must be very good. This simple but effective (and needless to say mischievous) strategy works so well that, eventually, the musician even starts sending out other bands under his name, on some nights as many as five different bands. He starts making his dream come true.

Yet (here comes the balancing act) he is practical enough to (a) not only keep his sign-painting business — but (b) tie his sign-painting business into his music business. How?

“When customers came for posters to advertise a dance, I would ask them what they were doing about their music. When they wanted to hire a band, I would ask them who’s painting their signs.”

That expert tightrope-walking musician’s name? **Duke Ellington.**

Incidentally, this is what one biographer said of Duke Ellington. Notice the use of the word *parallel*.

*Duke Ellington began to realize the significance of the interplay between management and artist and the*

*necessity for it... He had begun to learn the art of hustling in back halls and dark alleys, how to play at top level in places that were prepared for "sport." His mastery of this developed as a parallel until he was no longer a hustler but a businessman.*

— Hasse, John Edward.  
*Beyond Category:*  
The Life and Genius of Duke Ellington.  
New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993.

## Tailoring the Tale

Did you ever watch a cat wait by a mouse hole, or stalk a bird? Most of the time, the cat looks relaxed and comfortable, even bored. But as soon as that cat spots a chance to pounce — bang! It moves like lightning.

That's how you've got to be when you're pursuing your goal. You've got to be comfortable on the one hand, and ready to pounce on the other. Your *Parallel Plan B* makes it possible for you to be comfortable. Your mischief marketing Plan A makes it possible for you to pounce at precisely the right moment.

The following warning, however, is very important:

**Warnings/Gotchas:** A mischief marketing Parallel Plan B is very different from the conservative Plan B idea your relatives may have preached to you.

If it were up to your relatives, everyone would have a secure, sensible job at the post office, instead of pursuing "unrealistic" goals and dreams.

Whether your Parallel Plan B involves working at the post office, stuffing grocery bags, or writing speeches for politicians — whatever it is — do NOT allow that backup strategy to replace your true goal. Because it will (oh yes it will) usurp your true goal, if you let it. I repeat: It will.

And one other thing. Never, never, never say to yourself anything like, "Oh, I'll start working on my true goal as soon as I make enough money licking these floors at the convenience store." No!

No. Start working on your true goal NOW. Even if you think you need to continue licking floors for a while to put food on the table, by all means lick those floors, buddy — but pursue your true goal at the same time.

In short: Do NOT put your backup job first. Do NOT make it your first priority. It's the most common mistake in the world.

**Mischievous Foot in the Door Tactic #5 (“Exorcise the Demon Asoonezzeye”): Make sure your Plan B is a parallel plan, not a replacement plan.**

We call the problem we’re addressing here the Asoonazeye demon. Here’s the kind of stuff it whispers in your ear:

“Asoonezzeye make enough money selling cars, I’ll start my own business.”

“Asoonezzeye exercise and lose weight, I’ll start dating again.”

“Asoonezzeye get my degree, I’ll look for a job.”

“Asoonezzeye get an idea like Charlie Darwin’s, I’ll write something.”

“Asoonezzeye find a venture capitalist, I’ll market my idea.”

There is a dramatic scene in a movie called *The Exorcist* — considered to this day by many film critics to be the most powerful horror film ever made.

In this scene, the older priest, Father Merrin, quietly but forcefully gives the younger priest the following instructions, as they prepare to enter the room in which the exorcism is to take place:

*“You’re familiar with the rules concerning exorcism, Damien?”*

*“Yes, I am,” answered Karras.*

*Merrin begin buttoning up the cassock. “Especially important is the warning to avoid conversations with the demon ...”*

*“The demon.” He’d said it so matter-of-factly, thought Karras. It jarred him.*

*“We may ask what is relevant,” said Merrin as he buttoned the collar of the cassock. “But anything beyond that is dangerous. Extremely.” He lifted the surplice from Karras’ hands and began to slip it over the cassock. “Especially do not listen to anything he says. The demon is a liar. He will lie to confuse us;*

*but **he will also mix lies with the truth** to attack us.  
The attack is psychological, Damien. And powerful.  
Do not listen. Remember that. Do not listen.”*

— William Peter Blatty. *The Exorcist*.

Note the boldfaced words (which I boldfaced, not the author): *he will also mix lies with the truth*.

Yeah, the truth is that you have to earn a living. Yeah, the truth is that you have to be realistic, and face facts squarely. The truth is that you have to sell out and settle down and forget about those stupid dreams you have.

Whoa, wait a minute; that last sentence is a lie. Do you see what old Merrin is talking about?

The Asoonezzeye demons mix it all up mightily and merrily: truth and falsehood, good and bad, right and wrong. Do not listen. Do not fall for the “*As Soon as I ...*” argument.

It’s like the *If Onlys* we discussed earlier. Please don’t have conversations with that thing. Even if you take only one step, act NOW.

Well, maybe say a prayer first. And for heaven’s sake, put a mezuzah or something on that stupid door.

Speaking of which. There is at least one other little psychological “demon” that will get in your way as you try to pursue your goals. This nagging inner voice likes to keep criticizing what you’re doing. It sort of looks over your shoulder and makes snide comments from time to time about what you’re attempting to accomplish. We’ll talk about this more thoroughly in the next chapter.

*[... Chapter 10 (print edition) continues at this point ...]*

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