Strategy 16—In order to capture, one must let loose. Cornered prey will often mount a final, desperate attack. To prevent this, you let the enemy believe they still have a chance for freedom. Their will to fight is thus dampened by their desire to escape. When, in the end, the freedom is proven a falsehood, the enemy's morale will be defeated and they will surrender without a fight.

Strategy 17—Tossing out a brick to get a jade. Prepare a trap, then lure your enemy into the trap by using bait. In war the bait is the illusion of an opportunity for gain. In life the bait is the illusion of wealth, power, and sex.

Strategy 18—Defeat the enemy by capturing their chief. If the enemy's army is strong, but is allied to the commander only by money or threats, then take aim at the leader. If the commander falls, the rest of the army will disperse or come over to your side. If, however, they are allied to the commander through loyalty, then attack the commander. If the commander falls, their army will disperse or come over to your side. If, however, they are allied to the commander through loyalty, then attack the commander. If the commander falls, their army will disperse or come over to your side.

Strategy 19—Remove the firewood under the cooking pot. When faced with an enemy too powerful to engage directly, you must first weaken them by undermining their foundation and attacking their source of power. When the enemy's power is weakened, then you can engage directly.

Strategy 20—Fish in disturbed waters. Before engaging your enemy, create confusion to weaken their perception and judgment. Do something unusual, strange, and unexpected; this will raise the enemy's suspicion and distract them. When you are in danger of being defeated, and your only chance is to escape, create an illusion to weaken their perception.

Strategy 21—Slough off the cicada's shell. When you are in danger of being defeated, create an illusion to weaken their perception. While the enemy's attention is focused on this illusion, secretly remove your people, leaving behind only the facade of your presence.
The 36 Strategies presented here are the result of the oral folk tradition of ancient China; they are not the result of a single author, as is *The Art of War*. With a bit of creativity, many of them can be applied to nearly every situation, from guerrilla property destruction to public demonstrations, to outright insurrection; thusly, anarchists will find much to interest themselves with herein. We suggest that affinity groups sit down together to read each strategy in turn, and discuss how it can be applied to the various struggles they find themselves involved with.

Of course, there are certain strategies that may seem to never be applicable to anarchist struggle, strategies that disgust, or simply seem misguided. But this does not mean that we shouldn’t remain aware of all the 36 strategies; our enemies have discarded all sense of mercy and we can expect them to do *anything* in their power to stop us as we attempt to save the world.

### Strategy 13—Startle the Snake by Hitting the Grass Around It

When you cannot detect the opponent’s plans, launch a direct but brief attack and observe their reaction. Their behavior will reveal their attack. When you cannot detect the opponent’s plans launch a direct, but brief attack and hitting the grass around it.

### Strategy 14—Borrow Another’s Corpse to Resurrect the Soul

Take an institution, a technology, or a method that has been forgotten or discarded and appropriate it for your own purpose. Revive something from the past by giving it a new purpose or to reinterpret and bring to life old ideas, customs, and traditions.

### Strategy 15—Entice the Tiger to Leave Its Mountain Lair

Never directly attack an opponent whose advantage is derived from their position. Instead, lure them away from their position, thus separating them from their support. For instance, junk an opponent whose advantage is derived from their support.

### Strategy 22—Shut the Door to Catch the Thief

If you have the chance to completely capture the enemy then you should do so. This is similar to catching thieves in ancient times. Once the enemy has been isolated or captured, they cannot escape.

### Strategy 23—Befriend a Distant State While Attacking a Neighbor

It is known that nations that are close together become enemies when one nation becomes stronger than the other. Nations separated by distance and obstacles make better allies. When one country becomes stronger than the other, it is known that the nations that are farthest from each other become enemies while nations that are near each other face common enemies.

### Strategy 24—Obtain a Passage to Conquer the Kingdom of Guo

Borrow the resources of an ally to attack a common enemy. Once the enemy is defeated, use those resources to turn on that ally that has helped you.

### Strategy 36—If All Else Fails, Retreat

If it becomes obvious that your current course of action will lead to defeat then retreat and regroup. When your side is losing there are only three choices remaining: surrender, compromise, or escape. Surrender is complete defeat, compromise is half defeat, but escape is not defeat. As long as you are not defeated, you still have a chance.
Chapter 1—Winning Strategies

Strategy 1—Deceive the sky to cross the ocean.
Moving about in the darkness and shadows, occupying isolated places, and hiding behind screens will only attract suspicious attention. To lower an enemy’s guard you must act in the open, hiding your true intentions under the guise of common, everyday activities.

Strategy 2—Surround Wei to rescue Zhao.
When the enemy is too strong to attack directly, then attack something they hold dear. Know that in all things they cannot be superior. Somewhere there is a gap in their armor, a weakness that can be attacked instead. You may try to attack the relatives or dear ones of the enemy to weaken them psychologically.

Strategy 3—Borrow one’s hand to kill. (Kill with a borrowed knife.)
Attack using the strength of another (because of lack of strength or because you do not want to use your own strength). Trick an ally into attacking your enemy, bribe an official to turn traitor, or use the enemy’s own strength against them.

Strategy 10—Knife sheathed in a smile.
Charm and ingratiate yourself to your enemy. When you have gained their trust, you move against them in secret.

Strategy 11—Plum tree sacrifices for the peach tree. (Sacrifice the silver to keep the gold.)
There are circumstances in which you must sacrifice short-term objectives in order to gain the long-term goal. This is the scapegoat strategy whereby someone suffers the consequences so that the rest do not.

Strategy 12—Stealing a goat along the way. (Take the opportunity to pilfer a goat.)
While carrying out your plans be flexible enough to take advantage of any opportunity that presents itself, however small, and avail yourself of any profit.
Strategy 4—Make your enemy tire themselves out while conserving energy.

It is an advantage to choose the time and place for battle. In this way you know when and where the battle will take place, while your enemy does not. Encourage your enemy to expend their energy in futile quests while you conserve your strength. When they are exhausted and confused, you attack with energy and purpose.

Strategy 5—Use the opportunity of fire to rob others. (Loot a burning house.)

When a country is beset by internal conflicts, when disease and famine ravage the population, when corruption and crime are rampant, then it will be unable to deal with an outside threat. This is the time to attack.

Strategy 6—Feign an attack in the east and attack in the west.

In any battle the element of surprise can provide an overwhelming advantage. Even when face to face with an enemy, surprise can still be employed by attacking where they least expect it. To do this you must create an expectation in the enemy's mind through the use of a feint.

Chapter 2—Enemy Dealing Strategies

Strategy 7—Create something from nothing.

You use the same feint twice. Having reacted to the first and often the second feint as well, the enemy will be hesitant to react to a third feint. Therefore the third feint is the actual attack, catching your enemy with their guard down.

Strategy 8—Secretly utilize the Chen Chang passage. (Repair the highway to take the crude path.)

Attack the enemy with two convergent forces. The first is the direct attack, one that is obvious and for which the enemy prepares their defense. The second one is elusive and for which the enemy prepares their defense. The second one then becomes the crucial element which determines the outcome of the battle. The first is the direct attack, the second is the indirect attack.

Strategy 9—Watch the fires burning across the river.

Delay entering the field of battle until all the other players have become exhausted. When the battle is at its height and the enemy's strength is at its peak, then you, with full strength and pick up the pieces, move in to destroy your enemy.

Strategy 28—Remove the ladder when the enemy has ascended to the roof. (Cross the river and destroy the bridge.)

With baits and decoctions lure your enemy into treacherous terrain. Then cut off their lines of communication and avenue of escape. To save themselves they must break both your army's front and the elements of nature.

Chapter 6—Defeat Strategies

Strategy 31—The beauty trap. (The tender trap, use a woman to ensnare a man.)

Send your enemy beautiful women to cause discord within their camp. This strategy can work on three levels. First, the ruler becomes so enamored with the beauty that they neglects their duties and allows their vigilance to wane. Second, other males at court will begin to display aggressive behavior that inflames minor differences hindering co-operation and destroying morale. Third, other females at court, motivated by jealousy and envy, begin to plot intrigues further exacerbating the situation.

Strategy 32—Empty fort. (Mental trap; empty a fort to make the enemy think it is filled with traps.)

When the enemy is superior in numbers and your situation is such that you expect to be overrun at any moment, then drop all pretense of military preparedness and act casually. Unless the enemy has an accurate description of your situation this unusual behavior will arouse suspicions. With luck they will be dissuaded from attacking.