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MBS ([00:00](#)):

I've never been that great at following a map. I mean, I'm not being metaphorical here. I mean, literally. When I'd go hiking or I tried orienteering and I'll have this big ungainly sheet of paper with contour lines and mysterious symbols and the like. I had a compass and I was trying to make that point north, I just struggle to put it all together. The one and only time I did a solo hike back in Australia, I literally wandered off the path 10 minutes into the journey and then spent an entire day trying to find my way back.

MBS ([00:36](#)):

We've all got phones now, so the physical journeys are easier. But navigating the world, well, that's as tricky as ever. There's rarely a map. There's rarely a compass. Often what we need is a guide. So who's your hero, your mentor, your guide for how you navigate the world? Whose playbook do you follow? Lots of



us might pick a kind gentle type of guide. A Brene Brown or a James Clear or a Pema Chodron. Maybe something from the classic, maybe one of the stoic philosophers. But who these days would pick the scheming politics of Niccolo Machiavelli, author of the infamous guide to politics, The Prince?

MBS ([01:23](#)):

Welcome the 2 Pages with MBS. This is the podcast where brilliant people read the best two pages from a favorite book, a book that has moved them, a book that has shaped them. Stacey Vanek Smith is an author, a journalist. She's also the co-host of NPRs The Indicator from Planet Money. She's also on a mission to rehabilitate Machiavelli. Now, Stacey grew up on her parents' cattle ranch in Idaho, but perhaps like Elton John singing Honky Cat, Stacey wasn't going to stay on the farm.

Stacey ([01:57](#)):

I love books. I wanted to be a professor. I went to Princeton for college and I majored in comp lit. I just knew that I wanted to be a lit professor. That was the thing I wanted to do.

MBS ([02:13](#)):

So she does nothing in half measures, complete. It means looking at literature from other cultures. So she moved to France, enrolled in a master's program in French literature. But when she discussed her studies with her advisor, well, things took a bit of a left-hand turn.

Stacey ([02:31](#)):

I really wanted to study the period right after the French Revolution. People were very decadent. It was called the Thermidor Reaction from where we get lobster Thermidor, which is like cream and lobster and it's a pretty good metaphor for the time actually. My professor was like, "That's way too general. You could think about studying the fabric of the clothes that they used." I



remember just being like, "Oh man." In the meantime, the magazine I was copy editing for, someone dropped out, a reporter dropped out. They were supposed to be writing an article about Luxembourg Gardens, just like my trip to the Luxembourg Gardens. So the editor assigned it to me out of desperation.

MBS ([03:13](#)):

Stacey threw herself into that article. I mean, the editor expected maybe 250 words, a fluffy piece about, I don't know, rose flavored ice cream and beautiful fountains. That is entirely what she did not get.

Stacey ([03:26](#)):

I did all this research. I interviewed the beekeeper. I interviewed the guy who trimmed the trees. I looked up the history of it. There was of course, because it's Paris, the revolutionaries used to gather in this corner of the park. There's a statue of Balzac in this corner of the park. There's a model of the Statue of Liberty in this... I mean, I would wake up thinking about this really mundane article about the park.

MBS ([03:48](#)):

So basically she wrote a book on the Luxembourg Gardens. But this experience sparked something in Stacey who was otherwise facing the proposition of writing a very specific, very granular thesis, an old French clothing.

Stacey ([04:03](#)):

Then I was like, "Why is the thing that I'm doing to earn money the thing that I'm more excited about than the thing I'm trying to earn money to support?" So I moved back to the U.S. and I went back to Idaho and moved back in with my parents, which was a very humbling experience. I started working for the Idaho Statesman as a copy editor. I went on from there, but I just knew I had a direction at that point.



MBS ([04:29](#)):

It takes real courage to abandon something that you've thought of for years as your path through life. Study literature, become a professor. It was clear, it was simple. It wasn't enough. Which brings us both to Stacey's new book *Machiavelli for Women* and the link it has to the book she chose to read from today.

Stacey ([04:50](#)):

There was this moment in the book that I always thought about. When I was writing *Machiavelli for Women*. So there's history about Machiavelli in the book. I did a lot of research about the pay gap, the promotion gap, getting interrupted, harassments, negotiating, all of these things. I talked to a lot of women and I was trying to synthesize all this information in a way that would not seem depressing or weird, or I really also wanted the book to be funny and compassionate and readable. I kept thinking of how Proust can change your life because he does something pretty extraordinary in the book, which is he synthesizes just a lot of scholarship and information.

Stacey ([05:31](#)):

He presents it in such a warm, inviting, readable way that stuck with me for years. I mean, 1997 was a while ago.

MBS ([05:42](#)):

Absolutely, yeah.

Stacey ([05:42](#)):

I loved the book when I read it, but I've read a lot of books since then. This was the one that kept coming into my mind when I thought about the tone that I wanted in my book to have.



MBS ([05:51](#)):

Nice.

Stacey ([05:52](#)):

Like what I wanted to aspire to in terms of what-

MBS ([05:56](#)):

Lightness and rigor by the sound of it.

Stacey ([05:58](#)):

Yes. Exactly, exactly. I wanted it to be very deeply researched, but also readable. I wanted to synthesize the information in a way that wasn't like I've worked really hard, everyone.

MBS ([06:11](#)):

Exactly.

Stacey ([06:11](#)):

I wanted it to be like, here's my best conclusion from the work that I've done. I really think he achieves that in such a brilliant, easy, with an ease. I really admire his writing.

MBS ([06:26](#)):

Which two pages have you chosen?

Stacey ([06:28](#)):

I have chosen it's pages 46 and 47 of the vintage copy.

MBS ([06:37](#)):

Beautiful. Why these two?



Stacey ([06:40](#)):

Well, I mean, initially, this was the set part of the book that I remembered.

MBS ([06:48](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

Stacey ([06:49](#)):

The part of the book I thought about so many times and that I had thought about in terms of writing for podcasts, where details are so important. That's how you bring a scene to life. You're like I walked into the store, there are blue bottles on the shelf with little orange caps and a black cat running behind the cereal boxes. It's like those little things that will bring a scene to life. So I've always thought about this point, but when I was rereading it for your show, and I did reread this book as I was writing, as I was getting going on the writing for my book. I bought the book and re-read it, but this was the section that... Then I was thinking about why I picked it. I think there's a more profound reason for why I remembered it, but I will stop talking.

MBS ([07:34](#)):

Yes, we'll talk about that. All right. Well, let me do a little introduction. Stacey Vanek Smith, author of the wonderful new book *Machiavelli for Women*, reading Alain de Botton's book, *How Proust Can Change Your Life*. Stacey, over to you.

Stacey ([07:49](#)):

So just to set this up a little bit, this starts out with a diary entry from this man, Harold Nicholson who's just a young diplomat who runs into Proust at a party and makes this note about Proust in his diary. In his diary, Nicholson reported at the party, "A swell affair. Proust was white, unshaven, grubby, slip-faced. He asked me questions. Will I please tell him how the committees work?" I say,



"Well, we generally meet at 10. There are secretaries behind. [French 00:08:25]." Sorry. There's a lot of French in here. [French 00:08:30].

Stacey ([08:35](#)):

Well, the guy says like, "Well, we generally meet at 10. There are secretaries behind." Proust is, "No, no, no. You're going too fast. Start again. You take a car from the delegation. You go down to the [Quedorse 00:08:49]. You walk up the stairs. You enter the room and then [French 00:08:54]. Precisely my dear, precisely." So I told him everything, the sham cordiality of it all, the handshakes, the maps, the rustle of papers, the tea in the next room, the macaroons. He listens enthralled interrupting from time to time. [French 00:09:10] is don't go too fast.

Stacey ([09:17](#)):

It might be a pristine slogan. [French 00:09:19], and an advantage of not going by too fast is that the world has a chance of becoming more interesting in the process. For Nicholson, in early morning that had been summed up by the [inaudible 00:09:32] statement. Well, we generally meet at 10, had been explained to reveal handshakes and maps, rustling papers, and macaroons. The macaroon acting as a useful symbol in its seductive sweetness of what gets noticed when we don't go by [French 00:09:45]. Less greedily, more importantly, going by slowly may entail greater sympathy.

Stacey ([09:51](#)):

We were being a good deal more sympathetic to the disturbed, Mr. [Van Laurinburg 00:09:55] in writing an extended meditation on his crime than in muttering Grazie and turning the page. Expansion brings similar benefits to non-criminal activity. Proust narrators spends an unusual number of pages of the novel describing a painful indecision. He doesn't know whether to propose marriage to his girlfriend, Albertine, whom he sometimes thinks he couldn't live without and at other times is certain he never wants to see again.



Stacey ([10:22](#)):

The problem could be resumed in under two seconds by a skilled contestant from the all England summarized Proust competition, young men, unsure whether or not to propose marriage. Though not as brief as this, the letter the narrator one day receives from his mother expresses his marriage dilemmas in terms that make his previous copious analysis look shamefully exaggerated. After reading it, the narrator tells himself "I've been dreaming. The matter is quite simple. I am an indecisive young man and it is a case of one of those marriages where it takes time to find out whether it will happen or not. There is nothing in this peculiar to Albertine."

Stacey ([11:00](#)):

Simple accounts are not without their pleasures. Suddenly, we are just insecure, homesick, settling in, facing up to death or afraid of letting go. It can be soothing to identify with a description of a problem which makes a previous assessment look needlessly complicated. But it usually isn't. A moment after reading the letter, the narrator reconsiders and realizes that there must be more to his story with Albertine than his mother had suggested. So once again, sides with length with the hundreds of pages he is devoted to charting every shift in his relation with Albertine. [French 00:11:35].

MBS ([11:39](#)):

Wonderful. Thank you. Thanks for reading the French as well. It just to feel that much more sophisticated and elegant.

Stacey ([11:46](#)):

Well, I try to be as sophisticated as possible. Yeah, I forgot there was so much French in it. But it is in service of a really beautiful idea.



MBS ([11:55](#)):

It is. What is that beautiful idea for you?

Stacey ([11:58](#)):

For me? I mean, for a long time, the reason that I would think about that paragraph again and again is that in my job in writing long form podcasts, which are basically like a magazine feature, it is the little details that bring things to life. I think that make you a good reporter, noticing things, noticing the shift in someone's voice when they're talking about something. That's how you find a story. That's how you find the heart of a story is by noticing things. You do have to slow down and focus entirely, which is one of the things I love about reporting. It focuses you and it forces you to not go so fast. You have to listen so intensely.

Stacey ([12:44](#)):

Looking at it now, I think the thing that I love about it is... I mean, I also think that idea is very beautiful, but also the idea of how there's beauty and complication. I think there is an incredible... Especially now, right? I mean, listen, I'm as guilty as everybody else, social media, everything gets summed up in 180 characters. You want a headline. We're scrolling. It's just like there's that wonderful phrase in business, bottom line me.

MBS ([13:12](#)):

Yeah.

Stacey ([13:13](#)):

I feel that way all the time. I'm a very impatient person. But and I think-



MBS ([13:19](#)):

You're not good with change. You're very impatient. Why am I even talking to you?

Stacey ([13:24](#)):

I don't know. But I've got to go. No. I mean, I think there's a temptation now to say oh no, but this is really simple. We love black and white, as humans and I think also culturally right now in the U.S., we love black and white.

MBS ([13:43](#)):

Sure.

Stacey ([13:43](#)):

It's like, well, this is evil. This is good. We have in certain ways I think less and less room for subtlety. I think the idea that there is something important about the fact that things aren't generalizable always, that people are particular cases. I think it does open up... I mean, he mentions it briefly, but it does open up compassion and empathy. It's a lot harder to just slot someone into like, oh, you're like an anti-vaxxer or, oh, you're one of those people who X, therefore I don't have to consider you, therefore I can make all these assumptions about you. I think there's something really beautiful and very, very important about the idea that complicating something is maybe one of the keys to our own humanity and to recognizing the humanity in each other. That it's not so simple.

MBS ([14:36](#)):

Stacey. How do you practice sitting with the ambiguity and messiness that comes with searching out the complexity of things? Because it is, as you say, so much faster and easier just to kind of sum it up and dismiss it like we're done. You're inviting us to think a different way of how we show up. What's the disciplines you have that allow you to do that?



Stacey ([15:04](#)):

Well, this is funny. My family is super conservative. I grew up in Idaho. My family is very, very conservative. They are Republicans. They voted for Trump. I am definitely the weirdo in the family.

MBS ([15:20](#)):

The black sheep of the cattle ranch.

Stacey ([15:22](#)):

I'm the black sheep. It's true. It is very true. It forced me. I mean, my family is also, my parents especially, are very well read. They're very informed. It's not a lack of information. They have just come to conclusions that I don't...

Conclusions that are different from the ones I've come to. For a long time, it was very hard for me to go home because my dad loves debate and I hate arguing, hate it. I mean, it was sometimes a really hard thing. My family would be like, "Oh, so what do you think of Obama's take on education?" It was like I felt like I was getting baited, right? It was like an interesting sport.

Stacey ([16:03](#)):

I had to think about how to handle it, because I love my family. I wanted to see them. So I remember reading a book. I can't believe this. I hope my parents don't hear this. I read a book on compassionate listening. It was like this Buddhist practice of compassionate listening. I read it as a survival guide to Thanksgiving.

MBS ([16:20](#)):

Right.



Stacey ([16:24](#)):

Actually, I mean, the practice is very similar to being a good reporter I think. Because in radio, you can't make any noise when people are talking, right? You can't do some of the things you normally do, like say, "Oh right. Uh-huh." You can't interrupt people. You just have to listen silently. It's a very powerful practice. So I just started employing that practice with my family and just being like, "Why do you think that? That's so interesting. What about this?" and just talking to them, because I hope that when I interview people for the radio, that I also can bring that like, "Oh, that's interesting. So what is it about the vaccine that makes you nervous?"

Stacey ([17:03](#)):

Instead of just being like, "Oh, I get it." So I had to do it. I had to go into the subtlety of it. You know what, people have reasons for things. It's not just that they're evil or but I think just the... I was forced into a situation where I have to interact with people I love very much and disagree with very strongly. I had to do it in a way that was sustainable. So that really speaks to that for me, just that you allow people the complexity of their own experiences and points of view and the conclusions they draw from it.

MBS ([17:43](#)):

How does that generosity and kind of willingness to connect the humanity of the other person, how does that connect with some of the strategies and the insights you bring to your new book?

Stacey ([17:57](#)):

Oh, very much so. It was important to me that... I mean, I'm just laughing because I know Machiavelli's reputation is like... He really does advocate killing people and stuff in the book. You have to kill their kids and their whole family too. I mean, his reputation is not-



MBS (18:13):

Yeah, I mean, if you're going to somebody, you may as well kill the rest of them. I mean, it's like-

Stacey (18:17):

You got to go big. He makes a good point about why too. He's like, "Listen, you don't want to leave people who are angry at you plotting." Luckily in the modern workplace, as many flaws as it has, murder is generally off the table, so.

MBS (18:31):

Exactly. If it's murder, then it's not then patricide and fratricide and the rest of the kind of killing.

Stacey (18:36):

Right.

MBS (18:37):

So it's just a single assassination, so it's okay.

Stacey (18:38):

It's not Bourgeois situation. It's whatever, Roy from accounting. But I think what I tried to do was, in fact, my whole approach to negotiating is to not have it be a... It doesn't have to be an aggressive activity. It does not have to be high noon, right? Because in general, and this was a revelation to me because I am terrible at negotiating, terrible, uniquely terrible at it. I get so anxious and everything. Statistically speaking, I'm in the majority. So that made me feel better.

Stacey (19:08):

But one of the things that I think I went into was this idea that it was a zero sum game, that If I get what I want, you lose. If you get what you want, I lose. That is



actually not true. The approach I recommended was, and I got this from Dr. Linda Babcock at Carnegie Mellon who's done 30 years of negotiating research and is amazing and especially has studied the approaches that work for women, because people have different expectations of women and men and different reactions to women and men when they ask for things often.

Stacey ([19:41](#)):

What she recommended was think of 10 things you want, not just I want 10,000 more dollars. Okay, great. What else do you want? You want a bigger office? You want Fridays working from home? Start to think about it in a more holistic way. What would make you happy at work? Then when you go in to talk to your boss or whatever... Also do a lot of homework so you know what your colleague Jerry is making and how much experience he has.

MBS ([20:07](#)):

What the matching rate is.

Stacey ([20:08](#)):

Kelly makes at the competing firm across the street. You have your information, which is very grounding and you know the things you want. Then you go in and you're like, "Listen." You paint a picture. What I advise is painting a picture of a future that you want together with the company, "Look, I'm so excited about the work that I'm doing here. I really see that I'm growing in this way." You think about what they want too. I know that together we can create X. I really feel like we can grow. I always think of media. Together, we can grow this podcast. I really think I'm seeing so much potential for a really diverse, inclusive audience. That can be really big. I think we can help people.

Stacey ([20:51](#)):

Paint a picture of the vision and like, "Listen, I know that Jerry is making more than I am right now and that's not really sitting right with me. I want to feel



really good about this job and moving forward in this job. I think I'm going to need to get paid in a way that I feel good about in order to move forward and that is whatever, \$85,000 instead of \$75,000 or whatever it is."

MBS ([21:13](#)):

Right. I mean, Machiavelli as you said earlier on is really about understanding power and in a way that is kind of this is how power works on a day-to-day basis in reality. Particularly as you say you're a new prince, not an inheriting prince, which is to say is a nice metaphor for perhaps how women are showing up in the workplace. Do women need to think about power differently than men typically do?

Stacey ([21:42](#)):

In my experience, yes. That is a big generalization. But I think maybe we all should think about power a little differently, honestly. I think the way we tend to think about power in the U.S. is just very sort of swashbuckling, aggressive. It's like whatever, Clint Eastwood in his poncho asking how many bullets you think he fired, or it's whatever Gordon Gekko talking to [Tiff 00:22:08]. These are very dated references that I'm pulling out. But people would giant machine guns and rippling muscles standing on cars, blowing people away and flame throwers.

MBS ([22:17](#)):

Right, right.

Stacey ([22:17](#)):

I mean, I think that's how we tend to think about power. This is a cheesy wedding toast, but I looked up the word power for this book because Machiavelli talks about it so much. The root is it's *pouvoir*, which comes from to be able. At its heart, I think that is what power is, to be able, to have agency, right?



MBS ([22:41](#)):

Right, right.

Stacey ([22:42](#)):

A lot of historically what has characterized being a woman has been not being able. You can't own property. You can't have a credit card. You can't smoke. You can't drive. You can't X, Y, Z. I think that is what not only women want in the workplace, but really what we all want. We want to be able. I mean, yes, there's a category of wanting control over other people, but I think that's different than power. I think in of course, very new age-y way that power comes from inside of us. I think power over others, domination is different. A lot of people want that too. But what I'm addressing in the book is different. It's I guess a more holistic power.

MBS ([23:26](#)):

How do we deal with kind of the structural imbalances that, even if you're like going, "Okay, find your inner Machiavelli and claim your agency," it's still easier for some people like me, straight, white, poor dude to-

Stacey ([23:43](#)):

Tall is [inaudible 00:23:44]. It's true.

MBS ([23:45](#)):

Yeah, yeah. It is. I mean, there's that research that says every inch you are over six foot, you basically earn an extra \$200,000 over your lifetime. I mean, it's ridiculous.

Stacey ([23:55](#)):

That's fantastic. I need to start wearing heels or something.



MBS ([23:58](#)):

Exactly. And be a man and you'll be so-

Stacey ([24:03](#)):

That's more complicated, but I'm with you.

MBS ([24:05](#)):

It's more complicated, but it's worth it. Do you have insights around kind of from Machiavelli or from your research connecting Machiavellian power around the structural inequities that women as one group have to face?

Stacey ([24:20](#)):

I mean, it's all about the structural and systemic problems. You see it in the data, take the pay gap. That's one we hear about a lot. Women earn about generally in the U.S. about 80 cents on the dollar what a man earns. Black women, 65 cents, Latina and native women, 55 cents on the dollar.

MBS ([24:40](#)):

Crazy.

Stacey ([24:40](#)):

I mean, it's big. It's structural. It's not evil people supporting. It's people making assumptions, probably a lot of well-meaning people making assumptions. I think, I mean, a lot of this probably has to be addressed on a policy level, but my book is not dealing with policy level. I just wanted to give advice to individuals. So one of Machiavelli's big themes is look at the situation you're in clearly and how to deal with it. That is deceptively simple advice. He said, "A lot of princes lost their kingdoms because they could not make a change when their circumstances changed." When circumstances changed around you, look at it, see what's going on and act accordingly.



Stacey ([25:26](#)):

To take emotion out of that sounds easy. It is so hard. It's so hard for me when you see something that's unjust. But just like, okay. My workplace tends to pay men more than women or white people more than people of color, okay? I am a woman of color, so what do I do? Okay, well, you say, "Okay, how much do I want to get paid?" Then you go about going into a negotiation to get paid that way. You do the homework that you have to do. I mean, you have to put an extra effort is the short answer, I guess. Randy from accounting might be able to just get offered that salary when he starts.

MBS ([26:06](#)):

Randy.

Stacey ([26:06](#)):

I know. He's the worst. But I also think that there's real value in having to make that effort. Machiavelli makes the point that those who acquire with difficulty keep with ease.

MBS ([26:19](#)):

I like that.

Stacey ([26:21](#)):

I mean, I can rattle that quote off because I've thought about it so many times, that there is a gift in having to fight for things, which is that when circumstances change, you have all the skills to adapt and that can be harder if stuff just gets handed to you and then the circumstances change. You're like, "Hey, wait a minute. What happened?" I mean, we've all been in situations where stuff's been handed to us, big or small, right? Whatever, from Costco samples to executive jobs. For Machiavelli, he's like, "If you have to fight to get something, it gives you a gift."



MBS ([26:54](#)):

Yeah. How has your own sense of agency shifted since you started writing and finished writing the book?

Stacey ([27:04](#)):

That's a good question. It's more complicated when it's you. Someone comes to you for advice and you're like, "Oh, please."

MBS ([27:21](#)):

Take my advice. I'm not using it.

Stacey ([27:22](#)):

It's so easy. But the reason that it's easy to give other people advice is that you have that removal automatically, right? That Machiavellian removal. It's so much harder when it's you, because people are like, "You need to go ask for a raise." It's like, "Yeah. But it's just like a really bad time because. I just feel like next month—"

MBS ([27:39](#)):

It's complicated.

Stacey ([27:39](#)):

Oh my God. The gift that it has given me in terms of agency is that I think I'm able to step back from things a little bit more, that I don't react as... I don't have sort of the same maybe knee-jerk reactions I used to. I think from doing all this research, I know it's systemic. I know that a lot of these issues are systemic. I don't have to be angry about it or angry at people, not that I'm not still don't get angry sometimes. I definitely do. But that it's just the world we're in right now. It's also changed a lot. It was also very helpful to see how much things have changed, to see that progress is a wonderful thing.



Stacey ([28:28](#)):

To talk to so many women for the book, including Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen was very thrilling. Also the woman who wrote Crazy Rich Asians, Adele Lim, who walked away from the sequels because they offered her an eighth of the money they offered her male co-writer. I just feel like I have a lot more context. The world doesn't feel as small because sometimes when you're experiencing discrimination, you can feel very small and helpless and scared. I feel when you talk to Janet Yellen and she's like, "Oh yeah, there were no female economists. I felt really held back. I felt really isolated." It's Janet Yellen felt isolated? Oh, well I guess this is like... It expands the world a little bit in a way that that does I think help with agency.

MBS ([29:19](#)):

Stacey, this has been a wonderful conversation. As a final question perhaps, what needs to be said that hasn't yet been said in this conversation between you and me?

Stacey ([29:32](#)):

What needs to be said? I think for all the ladies and all the people who have struggled with feelings of worth and negotiating, which maybe just be all humans, is that I guess it's... There was an enormous relief to me in realizing that some of this stuff was systemic. One of the things that I looked into, which is from Dr. Linda Babcock's research was that women tend to negotiate way less than men, a fifth, a fifth as much. It sort of feels like, "Oh, it's my fault. I should negotiate more. Really, this is really on me." Then the more I looked into the research, the more I realized like, "Oh, it's a lot more complicated." There's often backlash to women when they ask for more. It often doesn't work.



Stacey ([30:20](#)):

If sort of your rational self is looking at a situation where the downside is certain and the upside is not, and so you make a call. Sometimes that call is actually better for you in the long run. So I think it helped me kind of release a lot of the sort of anger at myself where it's like why can't I just be... I should be tougher.

MBS ([30:40](#)):

What's wrong with me?

Stacey ([30:41](#)):

What's wrong with me?

MBS ([30:41](#)):

I'm an informed, intelligent, educated woman. I should be doing better at this.

Stacey ([30:44](#)):

I should know better. I know better. I'm researching negotiating. Why can't I swagger into my boss's office with all my info? I know I've been researching this for a year. I guess, to get back to Alain de Botton, it's more complicated than that. I think there's great wisdom and relief in the fact that it is more complicated than that. It's not so simple.

MBS ([31:12](#)):

It can be so difficult to be an advocate for your own needs, your own wants, your own ambitions. I mean, however, reasonable those might be from the outside, on the inside, in your own head, there's always some degree of imposter syndrome, confused counter-arguments. For many of us, for me it's certainly, a sense of, look, if I just work hard and be a good person, I'll get what I deserve. I'm taking away a mental lesson here from my conversation with



Stacey, which is to start thinking of myself as a prince. Okay, well perhaps not a prince, but maybe The Prince, Machiavelli's prince.

MBS ([31:50](#)):

The power of this is I get out of my own head my own subjective experience and I start seeing myself objectively. What should Michael be doing here? What's the bold move from Michael? What's Michael worth? Seeing myself as a piece on the board in a game I'm playing is liberating. I mean, it's not the truth, of course, but it is a perspective that can be empowering.

MBS ([32:16](#)):

Now, if you dug this conversation, enjoyed it, between Stacey and me, after you've told somebody else in your life how awesome it is and passed the word along, let me recommend a couple of other episodes you might enjoy. Check out my conversation with Oliver Burkeman, *How To Get To Grips With Reality*, it's a brand new book out in the world as well. Also my chat with Ashley Good, which is entitled *Transformed by Failure*. For more on Stacey, you can find her website, StaceyVanekSmith.com. You'll find details of her book, *Machiavelli for Women* there. You can find an extremely large body of work on NPR. She's there in social media world as well, on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter under Stacey Vanek Smith.

MBS ([33:02](#)):

Thank you for listening. It's always a pleasure to have you here with me as part of the 2 Pages Podcast. If you want a little bit more, there is a free membership site called the [Duke Humphreys 00:33:11]. You can get transcripts, you can get downloads, you can get unreleased episodes. Thank you for those of you who've already left reviews and stars and the like on your favorite podcast app. I certainly appreciate that. If you haven't done that yet, please do. I'd be grateful. Just as a reminder, you are awesome and you're doing great.