

Rising Star

THE MAKING OF A RAINMAKER

Cordell Parvin

and

Kristi Sebalj

Life
Career
Publishing

Rising Star

The Making of a Rainmaker

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PRAISE FOR RISING STAR

“This is no simple ‘how-to’ rainmaking book filled with lists and instructions that you promise to read once you find the time. This is a book you will pick up and read cover to cover, and likely read again. Mr. Parvin has brought rainmaking and career development to life through this story of a young lawyer struggling to balance professional and personal life. There is helpful advice for all lawyers here — from setting specific goals to making a name for oneself. I highly recommend it.”

Christina Plum

Attorney,

Stenzel Law Office LLC

Past Chair, American Bar Association

Young Lawyers Division

“*Rising Star* is a motivating book that not only tells the compelling story of a young woman trying to juggle family and a challenging law practice, but also provides all the tools a lawyer needs to put his or her career on the path to success. *Rising Star* should be mandatory reading material in law school.”

Karin Crump

Attorney,

Martin, Disiere, Jefferson & Wisdom, LLP

President, Texas Young Lawyers Association

"Rising Star is written in the entertaining parable style of *Say Ciao to Chow Mein* and uses a familiar story of an up and comer who faces difficult decisions about work-life balance to teach innovative, yet practical techniques for achieving professional and personal goals. No other book on the market brings life planning into such clear focus."

Christy Crider

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"In Rising Star, Cordell offers valuable and practical advice for people searching to be a superstar attorney without having to sacrifice being a good parent and spouse. Cordell provides a formula for finding career success without losing sight of other life priorities."

Kirstin Donahue Dietel

Attorney

Kirkpatrick & Lockhart Preston Gates Ellis LLP

ALSO BY CORDELL PARVIN

Say Ciao to Chow Mein: Conquering Career Burnout
Prepare to Win: A Lawyer's Guide to Rainmaking,
Career Success and Life Fulfillment

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THIS IS THE SECOND book I have written about Tony and Gina Caruso. In *Say Ciao to Chow Mein: Conquering Career Burnout* I focused on Tony, who after finishing his first year as an associate in a large Texas law firm is burned out and struggling to find meaning in his career. In *Ciao*, Gina loves her work as a clerk for a Federal Court judge. At the conclusion of *Ciao*, Tony has just been promoted to partner and he and Gina have two children. *Rising Star: The Making of a Rainmaker* is about Gina, who is now a partner in a mid-sized firm. She is the talk of the firm, having brought in \$1 Million of business. Yet, she feels like a one-hit wonder because her success was a result of one big case from one big client.

I have known Tonys and Ginas throughout my 35 years practicing law. Their characters are a composite of lawyers who have worked for me and lawyers I have been blessed to coach and mentor. Many of those lawyers have caused me to study and examine differences between lawyers who are successful and happy and lawyers who are not. Interestingly, many of the people who are truly successful also have a great personal life and are very family oriented.

I have coached two junior partners that on paper look alike. They are both women. They are both in about the

same size firms. They both bill about the same number of hours. One has two children, is incredibly successful, and will become even more successful. The other is incredibly bright. She is a graduate of an Ivy League school. Yet, she feels overwhelmed and like she is burning out. What are these two people doing differently and what can you learn from those differences?

It begins with attitude. We all talk to ourselves and we sometimes convey our attitude about things when we talk to others. When I meet with young lawyers I am listening to what they say to learn what they are likely saying to themselves. To borrow a quote from Winston Churchill, less successful lawyers see the problem in every opportunity and successful lawyers see the opportunity in every problem.

Less successful lawyers frequently say: "Yes, but..." Successful lawyers say: "Sure, how?"

Less successful lawyers say: "My problem is..." More successful lawyers say: "My opportunity is..." Less successful lawyers say: "I need to..." More successful lawyers say: "I want to..." Less successful lawyers say: "I am not willing to be successful if it means..." More successful lawyers say: "I can be successful and..." Less successful lawyers say: "I will try my best to..." More successful lawyers say: "I will achieve..." Less successful lawyers find something wrong with any new idea. More successful lawyers figure out how

they can use the new idea. So, the first step to making this year your best year ever is to listen to your self talk and, if necessary, consciously make a change in what you are telling yourself.

Second, successful lawyers have a very clear idea of what they want to accomplish. They know where they want to be five years from now, maybe even 20 years from now. I frequently urge young lawyers to write down what their life is like five years from now. Having clarity on what you want to accomplish with your career actually enables you to have more time for your family. How do you suppose that happens? Put simply, lawyers with clarity on what they want to do with their career do not waste lots of time. Lawyers without clarity do waste time and frequently are spinning their wheels and frustrated by it. Clarity about what you want also gives you energy.

Really successful people set goals and have a plan to achieve them. Years ago I was giving a presentation at my firm's orientation for new partners. I was teaching them how to prepare a business plan. I asked how many had set goals for that year. Not one of them had set goals. It caused me to wonder why young lawyers do not set goals. Here are four reasons:

- They don't see the value in it
- They don't know how
- They are afraid of being criticized by someone
- They are afraid of not achieving them

There is a quote I like: "Most people aim at nothing and hit it with amazing accuracy." There are scientific studies showing that people who have written goals achieve far more than those who do not and they are happier with their careers and life. Why is that? I think it is in part because they feel they have more control of their destiny. They also are going after something.

Studies have shown that if people who write down goals and develop a plan of activities to achieve them, make up about 3% of the our population and are far more likely to achieve them.

I have always had lifetime goals. Recently, I put my lifetime goals in four categories:

- Physical/Finances
- Mental/Learning
- Emotional/Relationships
- Spiritual/Values

I share my lifetime goals with lawyers I am coaching. Many of the lawyers I am coaching have developed their

own lifetime goals and shared theirs with others. So, consider thinking about your own lifetime goals in those four categories. If you want to share them with me for my thoughts I would be happy to take a look at them.

Really successful people are constantly getting better. I love the Ed Bradley interview of Tiger Woods on 60 Minutes. Bradley says something like: "Tiger in 2000 you were the number one golfer in the world and you completely changed your swing. Why did you do that?" Tiger replies: "Because I knew I could get better." Then Bradley says: "But, you were doing pretty well with the old swing." Tiger responds again: "But I knew I could get better." The discussion ends with a video of Tiger Woods final day chip shot on the 16th hole of the Masters. I love the video in large part because of Verne Lundquist's commentary. The ball rolls to the lip of the cup where viewers can see the Nike logo. It stays on the lip for a two full seconds and then rolls in as Lundquist exclaims "Oh wow, in your life have you ever seen anything like that?"

There is a commonly heard phrase that if you are not getting better, you are actually getting worse. That expression is especially true for lawyers today because it is increasing difficult to stand out from the crowd. I often suggest that lawyers take one area of their practice to focus on getting better. It might be communication skills, drafting skills, or

a particular legal topic.

In addition to improving legal skills, successful lawyers focus on improving better understanding their clients and focus on building a team to serve them. I have always been an avid reader of books I thought would improve my skills in client development, leadership, teamwork and a variety of other topics, and help me use my time more effectively. I learned long ago a way to read business books. I first skim the book. In that process I decide what is important that I want to go back and read in detail.

Time is our most valuable resource and the truly successful lawyers who also have a family life do not waste it. If you have a clear idea of what you want in your career, have goals, and have decided what you want to learn this year, you are well on your way to not wasting time because you can see whether a potential activity advances you towards your goals or not.

Stephen Covey suggests that we have four quadrants of activities:

1. Urgent and Important
2. Not Urgent, but Important
3. Urgent, but not Important
4. Not Urgent and Not Important

The real key for a successful career and for a fulfilling life is to focus on the quadrant 2 activities. Keep in mind that you have to make choices both in your non-billable investment activities and in your personal time. In *Rising Star*, Gina learns that you can't do it all and you have to make choices.

When I first started practicing law, there were way fewer lawyers, more locally owned businesses, and getting business was a matter of doing good work, being active in the community, and obtaining an AV rating in Martindale Hubbell. Since that time getting and keeping clients has become increasingly more complicated. If you look at law firm web pages, most firms look alike. They are "full service" "represent small and large companies." They are "client focused" and so forth. As lawyers we all are alike in many ways. We all went to law school, we use the same statutes, regulations, and case law. So, how do you stand out from the crowd? How do you differentiate yourself?

Gina learns you must begin by knowing what you want. Then becoming credible to your potential clients and finally by understanding their wants, needs, and perceptions so that your service and what you provide them is "remarkable" in their eyes. When I developed my own successful law practice, and when I wrote *Rising Star*, I was not familiar with marketing guru and successful author Seth Godin. The

main focus of his writing has been about the need in our complex society to be “remarkable” to be even noticed. In the November/December 2006 issue of *Selling Power*,” Seth Godin talks about three kinds of customers. I will put it in the context of clients:

1. Clients who don’t need the services you or your firm offer.
2. Clients who need the services you or your firm offer, but are using another lawyer or firm.
3. Clients who are ignoring you.

Godin says you can’t market directly to the second and third group. “Instead, have them come to you.” How do you suppose you can get them to come to you? Godin suggests you have to create something “remarkable.”

Gina learns that principle and I have taught others to do the same thing. Jennifer is a labor and employment lawyer I am coaching. She created the “Easy Guide” which is a compilation of labor and employment laws on laminated cards which an HR person can attach to his or her monitor. Jennifer has the clients in the second and third category calling and asking for an “Easy Guide.”

Writing *Rising Star* has been a labor of love, but not nearly the joy I have had over my career working with

young lawyers like Tony and Gina. I hope you will use *Rising Star* as a guide to develop your own success.

What remarkable thing can you create that will cause clients to come to you?

Cordell Parvin

May 2007



CHAPTER 1

IT WAS PAST MIDNIGHT, and the downtown canyon of Louisiana Avenue was deserted, its glass and steel towers lashed by gusting winds and horizontal rain.

A black Lincoln town car rounded the corner and glided to a stop in front of the fifty-story building. A chauffeur exited and opened the back door for his passenger. Holding on to his cap with one hand, he helped the young woman to her feet. Then, as she weaved toward the entrance, it appeared she might be blown across the plaza like an air-hockey puck.

The chauffeur considered taking her by the arm, but that might lead to trouble. She *was*, after all, a lawyer and might interpret his chivalry as sexual harassment. She was fairly petite, with straight brunette hair and a flawless complexion. *Pretty, smart, and probably rich*, he thought. *No*,

better not take any chances.

In the lobby, the woman skidded on the marble floor after spinning through the revolving doors. The security guard nearly laughed out loud, but then recognized the woman and rushed to her side.

"You all right, Ms. Caruso?" he asked, offering a hand.

"I'm fine, Johnny. It's just so windy outside. I was practically blown through the doors."

"What are you doing back so late? I thought there was a Christmas party."

"There was. I just have a few documents to bring home over the holidays."

Johnny shook his head and clicked his tongue. "Working over Christmas. Did you at least have a good time at the party, or did you talk shop the whole time?"

Gina Caruso smiled wanly as she signed in. "I talked shop ... over apple martinis. That's as close to fun as it gets."

"Whew! Those drinks are tricky. Taste like they don't have any alcohol in them until—BANG!—you're passed out on the men's room floor ... or so I hear."

"You're OK, Johnny. The world's all wrong. See you in a few."

She walked to the elevators and pressed the "up" button. Her office was on the twenty-fifth floor, one of twelve

occupied by Parker & McEvoy. Gina had nicknamed the law firm “OGRE”—for Oil & Gas ‘R’ Everything.

* * *

Gina flipped on the light switch in her office, tossed her briefcase to the floor and collapsed in her chair. The rain had not let up. If anything, it had gotten heavier. The sheets of water cascading down the window created a miniature waterfall—through which the lights of downtown Houston were magnified and distorted.

“So bye-bye, miss american pie.”

Why had the lyrics of Don McLean’s song, *American Pie*, come to mind? Was it stream of consciousness? Or was it because tonight was the end of the line, or because she felt like a one-hit-wonder? Parker & McEvoy had brought her to the firm when she was a rising star. Now, she was a failure waiting to be exposed. This couldn’t continue any longer.

It wasn’t just the martinis talking, though she’d had a few—well, more than a few. But she didn’t feel drunk, even though one mixed drink was usually her limit. Instead, she felt energized and determined—determined to set things right. Yes, there would be consequences, especially for her husband, Tony, but this *had* to be done.

She opened a desk drawer and reached inside, grasping

the hard, cold plastic.

I have to do this now, or I'll go insane, she thought. I have to end this now.

She extracted the microcassette recorder, checked to see if there was a tape inside, and pressed "record."

"Good morning, Lisa. I hope you had a wonderful Christmas," she dictated. "This is a letter to the managing partner, Hugh Bessemer; the address is this building; the 're' is 'Letter of Resignation.'"

Dear Mr. Bessemer,

Please accept this as my letter of resignation, effective immediately. It has become obvious that since I came over from Wilcox & Bailey and my promotion to partner nearly twelve months ago, I am incapable of fulfilling my obligations with regard to generating sufficient revenue for this firm—in other words, of carrying my own weight. The promotion was given to me based on my success in acquiring the United LNG matter and successfully litigating the environmental lawsuits against their proposed liquid natural gas terminal. Unfortunately, this is an accomplishment that I am unlikely to duplicate. It was a fluke ... a one-hit wonder ... a ...

Gina pressed "pause." She had to think about this and

not pour her every emotion into the letter. For Pete's sake, this was a resignation, not a confession to her priest! Keep the letter terse; keep it professional and stick to the facts.

But what were the facts?

One fact was that she'd never intended to become an energy lawyer in the first place—at least, not when she was in law school. She loved “the law” and had considered getting an LLM and teaching law school. Instead, destiny led her to being in private practice and becoming an energy lawyer. Her father was a homebuilder in Houston. When she was young he had started his own company, and she had watched it prosper as she was growing up. Taking risks and being entrepreneurial. Even though her father was not in the business, she'd grown up with plenty of kids whose families were in the oil and gas industry. Heck, oil and gas are in the blood of most Houstonians. It's hard to grow up in Houston and not be exposed to it.

After law school, she'd clerked for Judge Comstock, a federal district court judge in Houston. Judge Comstock had asked her to consider becoming his permanent clerk. However, during that time she had become involved in a FCPA (Foreign Corrupt Practices Act) suit brought by the U.S. government against a fledgling liquid natural gas company seeking the rights to certain fields in the Republic of Angola. Essentially, the FCPA is federal legislation prohibiting U.S.

companies from bribing foreign government officials. In other words, approaching, for example, the Angolan minister of petroleum and saying, “I want to invest in oil and gas in Angola, and that particular field looks really, really good. What can I do to make it worth your while to give us the deal?” is a big no-no.

While she was flattered that Judge Comstock had asked her to become his permanent clerk, there was something inside her that just would not let her take that easy path. She just had to see if she could make it in private practice.

She’d learned a great deal during the FCPA case, and when she made the move to private practice, she fell into energy law because of her experience and growing interest in the field. After joining Parker & McEvoy, she managed to get herself on a panel sponsored by the Association of International Petroleum Negotiators (AIPN), where she discussed facets of the FCPA case. After the panel discussion, she was approached by Jim “Slim” Wodehouse, in-house counsel for United LNG, who asked if she’d be interested in litigating suits brought against the company by several environmental groups and community organizations—groups opposed to developing a liquid natural gas terminal at the proposed site (NIMBYs, he’d called them, for “Not In My Backyard”).

The ensuing litigation generated more than \$1 million

in revenue for Parker & McEvoy, catapulting Gina into the limelight—making her an instant celebrity, the firm’s rising star.

I’m a victim of my own success, she thought. Everyone thinks the sun rises and sets on me

It was true—every day a young associate dropped by her office saying “I don’t know you. I haven’t met you. But I talked to a partner who said I should introduce myself, because you know what you’re doing, so if you have any work you can push my way, I’d love to get involved in something.” And if she asked for money on budgeting, it was given to her on a priority basis—all because she brought in one big chunk of change.

Never mind that I developed a great business plan, held regular meetings and put together a great marketing and legal team. The big question, the only question, is what next? Where’s the next big client going to come from—or even the next small client? I’ll never be able to follow up on that one success with another big file.

Maybe she was being too hard on herself. It’s true she was something of a perfectionist—and the words “law” and “perfection” rarely belong together in the same sentence. But it was in her nature to drive herself hard. In law school, she’d aced every exam she’d ever taken, but would obsess over the one or two questions she’d missed. Talk about a

glass-half-empty attitude!

Then again, she was determined never to be like those late-season replacement players that every major league baseball team brought in—after they'd either clinched a play-off spot or had nothing to look forward to but next season. Inevitably, there was one prospect for the Astros who'd wallop a couple of homers and doubles, or make spectacular defensive plays, during his first few days in the majors. Then the streak would end, and the guy would be exiled to the minors—never to be heard from again. She didn't want that to happen to her, but it looked like it was about to.

She pressed "play" once again on the recorder.

I will make no excuses, nor will I waste your time with explanations for my failures. As you well know, law firms are composed of "finders" and "grinders." It's always been my belief that the successful partner must be a combination of the finder and grinder. If you're just a grinder, people will write you off because you're only a technician, and as you have said: "We can hire all the technicians we need." If you're a finder, you are bringing in the work and having the grinders help you get it done. But, the more work you bring in, the more pressure there is to bring in more to justify what the firm

is paying you. Sooner or later, you come under serious scrutiny—the “what have you done for us lately” attitude. To prevent this inevitable outcome, therefore, I hereby tender my resignation—as painful as it is both personally and professionally ...



CHAPTER 2

“WHAT THE HELL DO you think you’re doing?”

Gina literally jumped from her chair, dropping the recorder. Standing in the doorway, half bathed in the shadows, was her husband, Tony.

“Tony! Jeez, you scared me. What . . . how did you get up here? Who’s with the kids?”

“Johnny let me up,” said Tony, stepping into the office. In one deft motion, he scooped the microcassette recorder from the desk and pocketed it. “He knows I haven’t committed any serial killings—not lately, anyway. And the kids are with the babysitter. When I saw you weren’t home, I made a few calls and then paid Tina double time to stick around.”

“How’d you know where to find me?”

"I took a wild guess," he said, embracing her tightly and giving her a peck on the lips. "Honey, just what are you doing? How could you possibly think of resigning? You've worked so hard for this."

"I'm a fraud, and you know it. I've told you what's been happening here."

"Have you been drinking?"

"Have *you*?"

"A little. If you'll recall, I had my *own* office party tonight. On the other hand, I'm not a lightweight."

"I don't like being called a lightweight. I can hold my liquor just as well as any hotshot litigator in Houston."

"Now I *know* you've had too much to drink."

"OK, maybe I overdid it, but there's a good reason. Halfway through the party, Nicole and Ralph dropped a bombshell on me. The leadership is bringing in a consultant to coach some of the junior partners on client development, and I've made the hit list."

"And your associates know this ... how?"

"They have their sources."

"Gina, you should be flattered that the senior partners think you're worthy of this kind of program. Most firms only hire client-development coaches to work with the best and brightest junior partners."

"Or the basket cases—right before they're fired. Nicole

has a friend who works for an executive outplacement and HR consulting firm. This is precisely the kind of coaching they give to the 'problem' people."

"It's not just coaching, it's training. Believe me, if the senior partners were dissatisfied with your performance, you'd know it. From what you've said, if they thought you were a loser, your office would be in a storage closet by now."

"That's not very comforting, babe. This place already looks like a storage closet."

Tony scanned Gina's office and chuckled. The walls were lined with bookshelves filled with reference volumes and trade journals that Gina had meticulously alphabetized. Most of the documentation was neatly tucked into filing cabinets, and even those documents on which she was currently working were labeled and stacked on one corner of the desk. By contrast, the offices of most attorneys looked as though someone had just lobbed a grenade inside.

"I think it's time to go home. It's been a long day, you're being too hard on yourself again, and you've had one too many apple martinis. Let's kiss the kids goodnight and talk things over in the morning."

"Maybe I just let the pressure get to me."

"Self-imposed pressure."

Gina donned her coat and hit the lights. "Wait. How did

you know I had apple martinis?"

"I have my sources."

"Johnny! That traitor."

"No, no. Just a husband's intuition. By the way, I hear those apple martinis are tricky. They taste like they don't have any alcohol in them until—BANG!—you're passed out on the men's room floor."

"Johnny's not getting a Christmas bonus this year."

"Too late."

* * *

At 10 AM the next morning, Gina was awakened by a small, sandy-haired boy wearing Spider-man pajamas. Six-year-old Matty was jumping on the bed, singing, "Spider-man, Spider-man, gonna wake up Mommy, Spider-man."

"Matty, Mommy's got a headache. Could you be quiet and stop using the bed for a trampoline?"

Pointing to the ceiling, Matty shouted, "There's no need to fear! Spider-man is here!" Whereupon, he resumed his jumping.

Her face flushed and temples pounding, Gina managed to sit up and grasp her head. "Honey, honey, please be quiet. Mommy's got a really *big* headache."

"Can I get you aspirin, Mommy?"

"Where's Daddy?"

"He's in the kitchen making you bed and breakfast."

"You mean, breakfast in bed."

"Yeah!"

Gina picked up her little Spider-man, giving him a hug and a kiss on either cheek. "Do me a favor, Spider-man. Run and ask Daddy to bring me a Virgin Mary with a big splash of Tabasco sauce."

"The Virgin Mary cures headaches?" asked the little boy, a look of wonder on his face. Before Gina could respond, he shouted, "Yeah! Jesus's mom can do anything!"

Matty scurried from the room, yelling, "Daddy! Daddy! Mommy needs the Virgin Mary to cure her headache with Tobasso sauce!"

As hungover as she was, Gina was grateful for three things this morning: one, for her delightful children, Matty and Emma; two, a husband who cared enough to keep her from impulsively resigning; and three, that it was Saturday and she could sleep late.

Moments later, Tony entered the room wielding a tray loaded with eggs, bacon, orange juice, and (per her request) a tall Virgin Mary.

"How are you feeling?"

"I'll recover."

"That good, eh?"

Gina reached for the Virgin Mary and took a sip.

"Mmm. Not bad, but it needs more Tabasco."

"I'll keep that in mind if I ever become a bartender."

"Thanks for last night. I nearly made a colossal mistake."

Tony sat on the edge of the bed. "Maybe I should get a job talking people down from ledges or become a hostage negotiator."

"Unfortunately, your intervention still doesn't change my situation. I have no idea how to live up to my reputation—my status as Little Miss Rainmaker and the rising star. I brought in United LNG nearly a year ago, and I've done nothing since then. Zero. Nada. Pretty soon, I'll be headed for the minor leagues."

"That's not true, and you know it. Bessemer has faith in you. You just need to refocus on key client-development activities—getting published in industry trade publications, putting in face time at industry meetings, and getting invited to more panel discussions and seminars. You need to build more relationships."

"You sound like your old mentor Jim Hardy."

"I learned from the best."

Years earlier, Jim Hardy, then a partner in the Austin office of Roundtree & Morgan in charge of attorney development, helped Tony overcome a career crisis. As an associate who spent twelve or more hours a day reviewing documents—an unrewarding job that he thought any well-

trained paralegal could do—Tony had nearly reached his breaking point before being introduced to Jim. After a number of informal coaching sessions, Jim helped Tony find a reason for being a lawyer, find a “legal niche” that inspired him to get up in the morning, master the art of time management, and focus on priorities. Eventually, Tony’s revamped attitude and performance were recognized by the firm’s leadership, which promoted him to partner the first time he was eligible.

“All that ‘rainmaking activity’ stuff is easier said than done,” Gina exclaims in frustration. “One thing to keep in mind about the oil and gas industry is that the players are *very big*. We’re talking about the Exxon Mobils, Chevrons, and Royal Dutch people here. Yes, those companies *do* hire outside legal counsel, but they also have huge in-house legal departments. You have folks at Exxon Mobil who’ve been doing oil and gas deals for years. They’ve forgotten more about the industry than I’m ever going to know.

“And when these boys *do* go outside, they look for specialized expertise and gray hair. That’s the problem for a young attorney trying to generate revenue. The companies investing in these oil and gas deals have enormous dollar amounts at stake, so when they bring in outside counsel they want someone with demonstrated experience and expertise and also a certain degree of seniority, so no one

will ever question the decisions they made. When they hire someone with twenty or more years' experience—someone who's a partner in a 'Big Tex' firm—even if things go south later they can say, 'We hired the best.'

"So even if you're ten years out of law school, it's almost impossible to persuade a big oil company to throw business your way. Sure you can build relationships with existing clients, but so far, that hasn't produced new projects. I haven't gotten anything new from United LNG since last year."

"Well, you can't expect clients to be sued every day."

"It would be nice. And let's not forget that I'm a woman."

"You are?"

"You know what I mean. It wasn't Gloria Steinem who founded the oil and gas industry in Texas, and even though they have diversity programs that require women to be on the team of lawyers, women are not generally the client contact. Some of the overseas 'upstream' clients (the oil and gas explorers and producers) are big on visiting Houston's famous strip clubs after hours. Needless to say, I don't get many invitations to come along and talk biz."

"Really?"

The daggers shooting from Gina's eyes forced Tony from the bed. He took her Virgin Mary from the night table and

practically ran for the door.

"I'll toss a little more Tabasco in this."

"Tony!"

"Gina, I was just kidd—"

"How is your old sensei—by the way?"

"Jim? I thought I told you. He left Roundtree to open a consulting firm here in Houston. Hey, I'm glad you reminded me. I've been meaning to set up a lunch date for months."

"That's great! Could you contact Jim and gather a little 'intel' for me?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well . . . maybe he knows something about the consulting firm that's leading the program at Parker & McEvoy. If so, he could give me some tips on what to expect. That way, I'm sure I'd feel more comfortable and confident going in—less likely to get stressed out."

"Sure. I can do that."

"Thanks. I'm feeling better already."



CHAPTER 3

COLONIAL ARCHITECTURE IS NOT indigenous to Texas—or anywhere west of the original thirteen states—but Gina’s father had always loved building colonial houses. He loved brick chimneys and fireplaces and also liked having the bedrooms separated from the common areas downstairs. Although some “paranoid” parents constantly worry about children falling down the stairs, Gina’s father knew—having grown up in a five-story Brooklyn brownstone—that kids aren’t *that* fragile. (He’d fallen down enough subway stairs to know that.)

So it was that six-year-old Matty and five-year-old Emma snuck down the hardwood stairs that Christmas morning (6 AM, to be exact) to get a crack at all those presents under the big tree in the living room.

Soon, their giggling and the sound of ripping paper

roused the other occupants. Grandma and Grandpa came hurriedly down the steps, equipped with digital cameras—video and still picture. Gina and Tony followed like zombies resurrected from the graveyard.

Flash! Grandma digitally captured Emma holding up her CSI Fingerprint Investigation Kit like a trophy. Matty's eyes widened, and his lower lip began to tremble.

"Mommy! You know that's what *I* wanted!"

"Before you get upset, Matty, try opening yours."

Matty tore into the wrapping paper like a starving raccoon, revealing a CSI Facial Reconstruction Kit, complete with a model skull and other "components" needed to identify a victim of foul play.

"Cool!" shrieked Matty.

"There's one more for both of you to share," added Tony. "The one you're almost sitting on, Matty."

Again, Matty shredded the wrapping—unveiling the ultimate gift for today's six-year-old sleuth: the CSI Forensic Lab, containing a variety of test tubes, faux chemicals, latex gloves, and other pseudoscientific apparatuses.

Tony smiled, thinking of the chemistry set he'd received on his eighth birthday. Like most boys his age, his first "experiment" was trying to make gunpowder, especially after seeing the classic *Star Trek* episode in which Captain Kirk fashioned it from materials he found on the planet

he was transported to in order to fight a big lizard. But for some reason, Tony could never get the experiment to work—realizing only later that the manufacturer had purposely excluded the right combination of chemicals, for fear that kids would do ... well, exactly what Tony had wanted to do.

After setting the room ablaze with a few more flash photos, Gina's mom turned to her daughter, saying, "You don't actually let the children watch those shows, do you? I mean, aren't they a bit violent for such young kids?"

"Now, Mother," said Gina's father before Tony came to the rescue.

"We don't let them watch the shows," said Tony. "But the older kids always talk nonstop about CSI this and CSI that, so Matty and Emma want to be CSI detectives."

"Must be a generational thing," said Gina's father. "When I was a kid, I wanted to be a cowboy."

"Open the presents that Grandma got you," said Gina's mother to the kids. "Every good detective needs to be dressed for the occasion."

Gina took Tony by the arm and led him to the kitchen. Opening the refrigerator, she poured some eggnog into a mug.

"Did you get in touch with Jim?" she asked.

"Yeah. It's ... kind of a sticky situation."

"Sticky how?"

"Well ... Jim didn't have time to meet with me, but about the consultant leading your firm's program ..."

"It's not Jim, is it?"

"How did you know?"

"Let's just say that you need to work on your poker face."

"Jim asked that I not say anything more. But he did say that you have nothing to worry about. It's just like I said before. Parker & McEvoy has launched the program for their most promising junior partners—to train them to become more focused on client development and better rainmakers."

"I hate that word," Gina snapped.

"It's fine. Jim said you should just relax. This is going to be a program that will change your life."

"For the better, I hope."

"Jim assures me that if you're open to coaching and work on client development as part of your normal routine, this program will change your life for the better."

From the living room, Matty could be heard yelling, "*Mommy, Daddy!* Grandma got us sweaters for Christmas! CSIs don't wear sweaters!"

"I'll take this one," said Gina, exiting the kitchen.



CHAPTER 4

A WEEK LATER, GINA ENTERED conference room “A” on the twenty-fifth floor. There, she met Jim Hardy for the first time. His appearance was just what she’d expected—tall, well-built, gray hair, and dressed like he had just stepped off the cover of *GQ* magazine. Just from his appearance, Gina had a good idea why clients had confidence in him.

Jim looked up from his laptop, where he’d been fine-tuning his PowerPoint presentation, and extended a hand. “You must be Gina. It’s great to finally meet you. Tony never stops talking about you.”

“I feel like I’ve gotten to know you, too—in absentia.”

“We’ll get to know each other even better in the weeks ahead. It looks like we’re about to start.”

As Gina took a seat at the boardroom table, she scanned the faces of the other fourteen members of ParkerRain, the

official name given to the program. They were from different offices and practice groups. She knew three of them only by sight and had exchanged pleasantries with another. But she knew Jeff Forestieri very well. Jeff had volunteered to help Gina with one of the first cases for United LNG and he was tireless in his research.

He was, as it turned out, also concerned about the direction of his career at Parker & McEvoy, but for reasons nearly the opposite from Gina's. Over a recent lunch, Jeff confided his greatest fear—that he'd already been typecast as a grinder, a legal "Bartleby the Scrivener" who was being shunted into a corner, where he'd be loaded down with grunt work for the rest of his life.

"Until I go completely insane and start muttering 'I would prefer not to,' whenever I'm asked to tackle a new assignment," he had joked.

In the year before making partner, Gina's revenues were off the charts because she'd brought in the United LNG matters. She'd kept a lot of other associates busy, including Jeff, and she'd devoted an immense amount of time to marketing. She had a very respectable 1,850 billable hours, but also 500 non-billable hours, much of which was in client-development activities. Meanwhile, Jeff had zero revenue, but had chalked up 2,500 billable hours.

What a study in contrasts, she thought.

Jeff felt stifled, thinking that the senior partners weren't allowing him to open files in his name, but forcing him to work like a dog.

Conversely, Gina was frustrated because she'd been out pounding the pavement, but with nothing new to show for it in the last twelve months. She'd been spinning her wheels and had no idea of how to get moving again. Client development had been so much fun, but now it was drudgery.

Jim Hardy cleared his throat, indicating that he was about to begin.

"Well, now that we're all here, let's get started," he said.

"First of all, I'd like to state that *none* of you has been selected for this program because something has been lacking in your performance. On the contrary, each of you has been hand-selected by Parker & McEvoy's leadership for precisely the opposite reason—you have demonstrated remarkable talent, ability, and perseverance. Some attorneys, especially those on the East Coast are allergic to the word 'coaching,' thinking that anyone who needs coaching isn't performing up to snuff. Well, I can understand the sentiment, but that's certainly not the case here. Even the greatest champions are always seeking to improve their game.

To read the rest of Chapter 4 and the rest of *Rising Star*, please visit our website to get your copy – we will ship it to you immediately – discounts are available based on quantity – email me for details:

www.cordellparvin.com

After this page you will find additional pages about the authors and other useful information.

Thank you,
Kenneth Flo

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Cordell Parvin is among the nation's most widely known and respected transportation construction lawyers. With thirty-five years of experience, he has established himself within his field as a rainmaker, instructor, and career coach. Cordell is passionate about teaching young lawyers. He works with them individually and seeks to inspire them based on their specific career goals.

His enthusiasm for helping firms and lawyers achieve greater success prompted him to leave *Jenkins & Gilchrist* in January 2005 to open a consulting practice. He continues

to practice construction law, frequently representing the nation's leading contractors.

Cordell earned his law degree from the University of Richmond and his Bachelor's degree from Virginia Tech. He is a member of the American Bar Association, the Texas State Bar Association, the Virginia State Bar Association, Associated General Contractors of Texas, the American Road and Transportation Builders Association, and the American Arbitration Association.

Cordell makes his home in Dallas with Nancy, his wife of thirty-six years and greatest supporter. Nancy is an avid golfer who started playing when she was forty years old and now has a 1 handicap. She plays in tournaments in Texas and across the United States. While Cordell is proud of the work he has done for clients and, more recently, for lawyers, law firms, and law students, he is most proud of his daughter, Jill, who follows her passion and teaches middle-school students.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Kristi N. Sebalj is a Canadian lawyer who coauthored *Rising Star*. Kristi practices in the energy and environmental fields. She is presently working as legal counsel with the Ontario Energy Board in Toronto. She began her career as an associate in Halifax, Nova Scotia and moved to an energy boutique in Toronto where she honed her legal skills and learned the “business” of law in the fast paced, sink or swim environment of “Bay Street” (Canada’s slightly over-dramatized version of Wall Street). She then moved to a mid-sized, well-established and highly reputed firm where, by publishing, speaking and attracting

fantastic clients she was able to make partner in her 6th year, become Co-Chair of the Energy Group and enjoy some incredible early successes. Upon hitting her “sophomore slump”, Cordell came to her rescue in the form of coach extraordinaire. She and Cordell hit it off and Cordell has been working with Kristi ever since to help keep her career on track and to manage her slightly obsessive need to “hit it out of the park” every time she works on a file.

Kristi is a 1998 graduate of Dalhousie Law School in Halifax, Nova Scotia. She has a Bachelor and Master of Science in Biology from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. Recently married to her devoted and incredibly understanding husband Rafael, a professional in the banking industry, both she and Rafael strive to strike a balance between work and play. Their successes are dubious; however, as they have witnessed during an otherwise glorious canoe trip in remote Northern Ontario reaching up to the skies with their respective RIMs in hand in a desperate attempt to stay connected with the office. Kristi and her husband are both avid marathon runners, convinced that the rhythmic sounds of shoe strikes on pavement melt away stress and keep them positive, energized and focused in the face of whatever challenges are thrown their way.

SERVICES AVAILABLE

Cordell Parvin speaks at law firm retreats and conducts training and development programs on mentoring, client development, developing the next generation of rainmakers, and practice group leadership. He coaches lawyers on career and client development, setting goals, and rainmaking skills.

Cordell Parvin is available to give presentations and conduct seminars. To make arrangements, contact:

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12 MONTH RECOMMENDED READING LIST

People often ask Cordell for a list of books he would recommend they read. So, he put a list together with the idea of reading a book a month. You may view that list at the Law Consulting Blog website:

www.lawconsultingblog.com/?p=105

I hope you have enjoyed reviewing the sample copy of *Rising Star*. My intention in providing a sample is to kind of do what Amazon does with "search inside this book." They usually provide the Table of Contents, Introduction, a chapter or two, Index, etc. so people can get a better idea of what the book is about and how it is written. If you would like to read the rest of *Rising Star*, please visit our website, and, when you purchase the book, if you send me an email letting me know you would like Cordell to sign the book, I will send you an autographed copy.

Best regards,

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