

## The Emperor

Long ago there was a golden age, when the Emperor was full of life. He was creative, generous, courageous, and vital. He endured risks, but enjoyed rewards both gross and sublime. His Empire was rich and strong.

One day an attack struck him very deeply. It opened a crack in his confidence. He began to question his ability to face the world, and gathered guards to protect himself. Over time, he relied on them, and his skills declined.

As the guards faced challenges, they grew strong, and their position solid. They filtered the information the Emperor received, and became the true seat of power, while his hold slipped.

The guards knew they held the reins of the Empire, but they lacked a noble spirit. They pursued their own power and satisfaction, and not the health of the Empire. The Emperor was easy to control, as he had become weak and self-indulgent. The more trappings of power and regalia he had, the more he accepted his loss of real power.

And the Empire rotted.

The Emperor was deeply shielded, but this was not enough to prevent his growing discontent and flashes of pain. He had a dim recollection of the golden age. He worried that trading his power and freedom for indulgence and comfort was a mistake.

He found a true patriot, a man of courage and vitality, with a noble spirit, and concern for the health of the Empire.

The task was not easy. The Emperor was ambivalent, the guards strong, and the patriot only one person. Without force on his side, he would have to be very clever.

Other men had tried to face the guards before, but they were all defeated. Without subtlety and the Emperor's commitment, they were quickly crushed by the guard's extensive network with its many hidden branches.

To help the Emperor regain his power and freedom, the patriot worked outside and inside the layers of defense. Outside he stirred the guards to activity, making them visible, by piquing their

interest that he might be a threat. Inside he strengthened the Emperor's will to move from his weakened state to his regal potential.

Not wanting to end up useless, dead, or in a never-ending battle, the patriot needed to see the full forces that he and the Emperor were against. He explored and agitated weaknesses in the guards' hold on power. He was careful to pursue his strategy of drawing out all the guards, so he engaged them only when necessary, and never gave them a clear target to attack. He pressured their weak points persistently, intensely, and cleverly until they marshaled their entire forces squarely against him, because they were terrified of what he might do.

While the patriot created worry and fear in the guards, he was building the Emperor's confidence and discontent. When the Emperor reached the point he felt compelled to act, the patriot showed the guards his clear intention to restore the Emperor.

The guards mobilized to preserve their status, and in so doing showed the Emperor their self-serving core and wish to keep him down.

The Emperor could no longer tolerate this. His nobility and desire for freedom would no longer let him remain a gilded slave. The guards were all in the open, their designs and abilities revealed, their attention focused on the patriot, and the Emperor now had the will to destroy them.

And with the help of the patriot, he did.

He broke through to freedom, but then had to face the risks and fears he had avoided. This was a difficult time, with change, destruction, and suffering, but at last the Empire was restored.

What remained was to prevent such a state of affairs from returning. The patriot helped the Emperor to understand the lessons of history, and the Emperor relearned his confidence and worldly skills.

The Emperor would be an emperor, and never again a slave.