

The Dark Emperor casually ripped the chain link fence aside, his gaze focused on the cellular tower blinking with a red light in the early morning atmosphere.

This would be one of the last targets he was preparing for sabotage before the big day would begin. For his plan to succeed, all communication networks in the area needed to be disabled, both wired and wireless.

“Hey, what the hell?” The dark figure glanced at the source of the voice. A couple of weary-looking maintenance workers at the base of the tower, likely performing an early morning shift. One of the figures began walking towards him, “what the hell are you doing? You’re damaging private property and trespassing, get outta here before I call the cops!”

“You will do no such thing,” the Emperor spoke with a distorted but clearly masculine voice. “Bow to me and this will be much easier on the two of you.”

“Dude, this ain’t Halloween, what’s with the weird getup and facepaint? And how’re you doing those glowing eyes?” The second worker said, his gaze scanning the Emperor’s figure.

Indeed, the Emperor would look strange with the dark armour covering most of his body, the grey cloak and the helmet covering most of his head. His skin was almost black as night and his eyes glowed softly but distinctly red.

“Oh, this isn’t a costume, gentlemen,” the Emperor chuckled with a smirk. “I am the Dark Emperor, the future ruler of this world. I will not warn you again. Bow before me.”

The two maintenance workers just stared at him, blinking, and then back at each other. A moment’s pause. And then they began to laugh, nearly doubling over in their mirth.

The Emperor clenched a fist, and quietly used a couple of the runes gifted by his ‘associate’ to cast a quick spell. The runes ‘Sound’ and ‘Barrier’ together, with enough mana, would create a large, nearly invisible barrier that very few would be able to properly perceive in the early morning light, covering the entire area.

These two would regret mocking him. All of them would rue the day they mocked and humiliated him. He was done being a pathetic nobody.

“That’s a good one!” The first worker said, trying and failing to calm himself down. “I can’t believe you’re actually trying so hard to act like a real supervillain! You should be an actor, maybe on screen your act might actually be taken seriously rather than being funny as hell.”

“Yeah, you just going out on the street doing that act or something?” The second worker was calming down, but seemed to be a bit more wary. “Though, how did you break through that fence?”

“I am under no obligation to tell you,” the Emperor responded dryly, as he held a hand up to chest level, palm facing upwards. From his form, two black orbs emerged, floating in the air. “I warned you. Now I will enjoy making you two experience true terror.”

“Mate, you can cut out the act, it ain’t working. Nice trick, though, how’re you doin’ that?” The first worker came to take a closer look. The Emperor just smirked. The poor fool should’ve fled.

The first of the two orbs suddenly shot at the man, sticking to his torso in a splatter of black mass. The man gawked down at it, bewildered. “What the... This stuff is kinda-” Then the black substance began to expand outwards across his clothes. “H-Hey, what’s going on? This ain’t funny anymore!”

“Derek, what’s happenin’ over there?” The other worker started approaching, but paused as he saw the black mass expanding rapidly over his co-worker’s body. “What the hell is that stuff?!”

“I don’t know! Get it off me! Paul, help!” The first worker (whose name was apparently Derek) screamed in panic as the mass spread, covering most of his torso and spreading to his limbs, beginning to pull his entire body together. He was rapidly silenced as the mass spread over his neck and mouth, with only muffled screams to be heard.

It finally seemed to dawn on Paul what was really happening, and he tried to flee, his face frozen in abject terror. It was utterly cathartic for the Emperor to watch, and it only got better when the man found his way blocked by multiple humanlike figures with black skin, glowing red eyes and dark armour like the Emperor himself, but more like simple foot-soldiers than his more regal attire. “What the fuck are those things?!”

“Worry not, my good man. You’ll be joining their ranks soon enough,” the Emperor smirked, as Derek was completely covered by the black mass, forming a cocoon around him.

Moments later, something formed from the cocoon. It was a black-skinned doppelganger of Derek in similar likeness to the foot-soldiers.

Paul’s eyes widened when he turned around, his jaw open wide. The man tried to flee, but the soldiers grabbed his limbs. As he struggled, the second orb shot towards him.

Paul’s screams were swiftly silenced, and heard by none beyond the sound barrier. Another two

victims to add to the list.

The Emperor watched in satisfaction as Paul's doppelganger was formed. "Soldiers, take the cocoons back to the lair, as usual. You two workers will pretend nothing is wrong, stay out of sight, prepare the tower for sabotage, and destroy the tower's electronics when I give the order. Am I clear?"

"Yes sir," the two doppelgangers replied obediently, saluting, before getting to work preparing for the sabotage to come.

"You are doing well, my liege," spoke a voice over the Emperor's shoulder. The Emperor glanced to his side to see the shadowy spirit hovering over his shoulder, with his red eyes being the only clear feature anyone could see of him. "You are exceeding my expectations. I was right to choose you."

"And I owe you much for giving me these incredible powers," the Emperor replied, watching the soldiers perform their work. "But there is still far more work to be done before we can even so much as make our claim to this town, nevermind the continent. And then once we have an entire nation's worth of people as our soldiers, spreading across the globe, the world will bow to us."

"Well said, well said," the spirit nodded approvingly. "You were destined for true greatness. Continue on this path, and the world is your oyster."

The Emperor, however, wondered if it was really going to be so easy...