

# The Obedience Mandate Betrayal

By Thaddeus Grimshaw

Once upon a time, in a land of divided hearts and warring words, a man rose to power, draped in the fabric of promises he never intended to keep. His voice boomed across the villages, declaring his undying loyalty to the common people. Yet, his hands were always busy signing agreements that only enriched the wealthy merchants and noblemen.



He did not wield a sword for the people, nor did he build bridges for their futures. Instead, he commanded a great army of whispers—faceless voices that echoed through enchanted mirrors, which the people called "screens." These voices spoke in riddles, wrapped in the illusion of truth, convincing the villagers that the emperor, in all his brilliance, had clothed them in prosperity when, in fact, they stood in rags.

Day after day, the voices told the people that their suffering was not the emperor's doing but the work of unseen enemies. The hungry were told they starved because of the baker down the road, not because the emperor hoarded the grain. The sick were told their suffering came from their neighbor's weakness, not because the emperor had sold the healers' potions to the highest bidder. The weary workers, cast from their forges and fields, were told their lost wages were the fault of the unworthy rather than the emperor's golden vaults overflowing with stolen labor.

Years passed, and the people repeated what the voices told them, convinced that if they just believed hard enough, the emperor's riches would one day be theirs, too. Yet, when asked to name a single blessing that had fallen upon them, a single gift from their beloved ruler's hand, silence filled the air. No law had lifted their burdens. No battle had been fought for their honor. No great edict had shielded them from suffering.

In the empire's tallest towers, where golden chandeliers reflected upon marble floors so polished they seemed like portals to another world, there lived a baron of unimaginable wealth. His fortune was not earned but inherited, stacked high from the labor of long-forgotten hands. He



wrapped himself in fine silk and adorned his fingers with rings heavier than the coins the villagers scrounged for bread. But beneath the silk and behind the rings, he was nothing more than a man who had never built anything with his own hands, who had never created, only taken.

The emperor found great use for this man, for he possessed a peculiar skill—he could weave words into riddles that made even the wisest question their own knowledge. He claimed to be the smartest man in the kingdom, a master of science and logic. Yet, his wisdom was an illusion built upon the unquestioned deference of those who feared looking foolish. He spoke with such bravado that even the poorest of the poor, who had never seen a book, believed his words to be gospel.

Together, the emperor and the baron devised a plan, one that would quicken the flow of gold into their vaults. The emperor had long fed the people stories of foreign enemies who sought to destroy them, but now he turned his wrath inward. He whispered to his subjects that their oldest allies were, in fact, traitors. Their healers, their teachers, their builders—all were accused of poisoning the empire from within. Those who had once stood shoulder to shoulder with them in battle were now branded as villains.

The emperor, however, did not turn his sword against those who had sworn to destroy him. No, he found a common cause with them. He dined with warlords who once vowed to tear his kingdom apart. He shook hands with those who had called for his destruction. He admired their ruthlessness and their ability to crush their own people without consequence. "They are strong," he told his followers. "They do what must be done."

In the shadows, another force stirred. The empire had long prided itself on freedom, the ability to speak, to think, to question. But a new order had risen, one wrapped in the banner of righteousness. They called themselves the Faithful, though their faith was not in the heavens but in control. They whispered to the emperor that free thought was dangerous and that too many voices led to chaos. The people must be guided, their tongues softened, their minds shaped. And so, ever so slowly, under the guise of protecting sacred traditions, speech began to wither. First, the voices of scholars fell silent, then the jesters who once mocked the powerful. Books vanished from shelves, ideas faded from discourse, yet the people were told they had never been freer.

All the while, the emperor and the baron reshaped the empire's great institutions. The healers' halls, once open to all, were now sold to those who could afford the price of life. The scholars' towers, once places of learning, now bore the sigils of noble families who charged gold for knowledge. Even the fields where the farmers had once grown food for their villages were seized and auctioned, their bounty no longer a right but a privilege. The people labored harder, paid more, and yet received less.

Still, the whispers continued. The enchanted mirrors told them that all was well, that those who suffered simply did not work hard enough, and that those who could not afford healing simply lacked the strength of spirit. The emperor and his baron, ever-growing in wealth, reminded the people that they were blessed to live in such a prosperous land.

The whispers grew louder, spreading like ivy across the walls of the empire. In every home, in every village square, in every hall of learning, the enchanted mirrors repeated the words of the emperor and his baron. But new voices joined the chorus—voices that sowed deeper fears, that tightened the noose around reason and replaced it with blind devotion.

At the emperor's side stood a man named Silas Divinus, a cunning prophet of deception. He wore the robes of wisdom, spoke with the cadence of a scholar, and wielded the confidence of one who had never doubted himself, though doubt was the only thing he should have possessed. He preached a dangerous truth—not one grounded in knowledge but in fear. He declared that the healers were frauds, that their remedies were poison, and that sickness was not to be treated but endured as a test of faith. He insisted that the body could mend itself through purity of spirit and that those who suffered simply lacked the strength of belief.

The emperor smiled upon Silas Divinus and gave him the power to shape the land's great halls of healing. The healers who dared to challenge him were cast out and accused of spreading false knowledge. Books of medicine were burned, research was declared heresy, and soon, the great houses of healing were filled with whispers instead of remedies. When sickness crept through the streets, when the people coughed blood and grew weak, the enchanted mirrors blamed the unfaithful, the disbelievers, those who sought knowledge rather than obedience.

As disease claimed the land, another figure rose beside the emperor—a man who did not bother to hide the rot in his soul. He was a master of division, a forger of enemies, and he wielded

his hatred with precision. He stood in the emperor's court and declared that the true enemy was not the sickness, not the famine, not the failing institutions, but those who did not share his skin, his tongue, his bloodline.

"The outsiders," he spat, "bring ruin to our land. They steal what is ours, they corrupt our culture, they infect our people with their ways."

It mattered not that many had lived in the empire for generations, that their sweat had built its cities, that their hands had tilled its fields. His words turned them into villains, their children into threats, and their presence into an infestation. The emperor, knowing that every crumbling empire needed a scapegoat, nodded in approval. The people, beaten and afraid, embraced the lie. Their suffering was not the emperor's doing, nor the baron's greed, nor Silas Divinus's deceptions—it was the fault of those who did not belong.

And then, in the deep shadows of the empire, there lurked another force, one more patient, more insidious than all the others. They did not wear the emperor's crown, nor did they crave the baron's riches, nor did they hunger for the prophet's false wisdom. Their desire was control—not just over land, not just over law, but over every soul in the empire.

They were the architects of a slow-moving coup, the patient snake in the grass. They did not need swords or banners; they did not need a violent revolution. Instead, they wove themselves into the empire's very fabric. They whispered into the emperor's ear, guided his hand, and placed their loyal followers in every hall of power, in every school, in every court. They preached of faith, but their faith was not one of spirit—it was one of domination. They did not seek to uplift but to rule, to twist belief into law, to erase any voice that did not sing their hymn.

They whispered to the people that freedom was dangerous, that questions led to corruption, and that only through absolute obedience could the empire remain pure. They rewrote the past, erasing the stories of those who had once fled oppression to build a land of choice. They replaced those truths with a new history, one where the empire had always belonged to them, where their rule was not only righteous but inevitable.

The slow unraveling continued. The patient snake in the grass, the one that whispered of obedience, of purity, of a righteous return to a past that never truly existed, now turned its fangs toward the mothers of the realm. It did not strike all at once—no, that would be too obvious.

Instead, it moved over decades, creeping through law and tradition, tightening its grip so gradually that few noticed until the air had all but left their lungs.

First, they were told that their purpose was sacred, but only in the home. Then, they were told that their voices in matters of law and governance were unnecessary, for the wise and faithful men would speak for them. Next, they were reminded that their very ability to decide their futures—whether to bear children, whether to work, whether to hold power—was not theirs to choose. The emperor's court, now filled with the patient snake's loyal disciples, stripped away their rights one decree at a time.

They were made beholden to their husbands, their fathers, the magistrates who claimed to know what was best. Their places in the great halls of knowledge grew fewer, and their ability to shape the realm's laws weakened. When they cried out, they were called unnatural, faithless, corruptors of the old ways. When they resisted, they were punished—not by the sword, but by the weight of a world closing in on them, pressing them into the shape the emperor's architects had designed.

At the same time, the empire's wealth, once vast and spread across the land, was reshaped under the name of progress. The baron and his kind, seated at the emperor's right hand, spoke of "reforms," grand visions of efficiency and prosperity. But beneath the fine words, the reality was bleak.

The markets were twisted into machines of control. The farmers who had once owned their land found themselves in endless servitude to faceless lords. The merchants who had once built fortunes from trade were crushed beneath impossible taxes. The artisans who had once sculpted the empire's wonders were cast aside in favor of those who could produce more, faster, cheaper.

The wealth no longer flowed among the people but pooled at the top, in golden towers and private halls. Those who had once lived with dignity were now bound by invisible chains of debt and dependency. Still, against reason, the enchanted mirrors proclaimed success. The people were told they had never been richer, even as their tables grew emptier.

Meanwhile, in the halls of learning, the snake slithered with patient intent. Knowledge was reshaped into obedience. History was rewritten, not only to erase the past but to twist it into a weapon. Schools became places not of thought but of submission. Students were taught not to

question but to accept, not to challenge but to repeat. The wisdom of scholars was discarded in favor of the proclamations of the faithful.

Books that once illuminated minds were now burned or rewritten. Science was labeled as dangerous, philosophy as treason, and logic as heresy. Instead, the emperor's chosen doctrine became the only acceptable truth. And those who refused to kneel before it found themselves cast out—not always by force, but by the slow erosion of their voices, by the quiet closing of every door until they stood in silence, alone.



To ensure that no one strayed from the emperor's path, he and his underbelly placed only the most corrupt and incompetent into positions of power. A kakistocracy of loyal fools now governed the empire's most critical institutions. The roads fell into disrepair, the wells ran dry, and the granaries emptied, yet no one dared speak against it.

The healers were those who did not heal. The scholars were those who did not think. The judges were those who did not seek justice. The ministers were those who did not serve. The generals were those who did not defend. Every corner of the empire was now in the hands of those who existed only to obey.

And soon, the military, once the great protector of the realm, became an instrument of its destruction. The emperor, now surrounded only by those who echoed his delusions, turned the sword not upon his enemies but upon his own people. He sent his soldiers to quell dissent, to crush

those who remembered what freedom once was. He aligned himself with those who had long sought to see his kingdom burn, convincing his subjects that they were now his allies.

His hunger grew. The empire was not enough. He turned his eyes beyond the borders, seeking to claim more. He taxed friendly lands, declaring that they owed their prosperity to him and that they should submit to his rule. But his greed was foolish, his conquests hollow. His demands drained the wealth of those who had once been allies, turning them into reluctant enemies. Trade crumbled. Economies collapsed. Those beyond his reach laughed at his folly, while those within suffered for it.

Against all evidence, the lies did not stop. The emperor's voice filled the airwaves, occupied every enchanted mirror, boomed from every pulpit, rang through every town square. He spoke endlessly, weaving grand fictions about triumphs that never occurred, threats that did not exist, and enemies that had already been vanquished.

The enchanted mirrors spoke only his words. All others were silenced. Those who questioned were branded traitors. The free press was declared the enemy, its halls shuttered, its writers banished. Only those who swore absolute loyalty to the emperor's vision were allowed to speak. The people, drowning in deception, could no longer distinguish truth from lie. And so, they did what they had been trained to do—they obeyed.

One day, a child stood before a great crowd in the village square. He looked at the men in rags, at the mothers who held their sick children, at the old warriors who had been cast aside. And in a voice clear and unwavering, he asked, "What have they given you?"

The crowd fell silent. They had no answer. When a ruler promises wealth, strength, and freedom but delivers only suffering, the truth is plain to see. If you must convince yourself that your chains are made of gold, then you are not free at all. A false leader does not fight for you. He fights for himself, for those who keep his vaults full and his throne secure. If his gifts never reach your hands, then he was never your champion to begin with.

And the people, too weary, too lost in their suffering, accepted it. They did not see the walls closing in. They did not feel the chains slipping around their necks. Like the frog placed in cold water, they sat in the pot, feeling only a comforting warmth as the temperature slowly rose. They

celebrated their obedience, they cheered for the loss of their freedoms, and they gave their last breaths in praise of their captors.

And so, after centuries of struggle, after generations who bled and wept to escape the tyranny of crown and creed, the people marched proudly back into the very chains their ancestors had shattered. They cheered as the gallows were rebuilt, as the inquisitors sharpened their quills and tongues, and as the high priests dusted off the old ledgers that dictated which thoughts were holy and which were treason. They had fled a land where kings ruled by divine right, only to kneel before rulers who declared themselves the voice of heaven. They had once burned their shackles in the fires of revolution, only to now forge new ones with their own hands, convinced that servitude was safety, that silence was strength, that ignorance was virtue. They had escaped the iron grip of a god-entwined throne, only to elect a new one, draped not in robes but in the illusions of freedom, promising salvation through obedience, righteousness through submission. And as they stood, heads bowed, lips mouthing prayers they no longer understood, they called it a victory—never realizing they had lost everything their forebears had once dared to dream.

The moral of the story: The greatest tyranny is not born in a single day, nor by the swing of a sword, nor by the decree of a king. It comes slowly, patiently, in whispers that reshape history, in laws that erode freedom by inches, in faith twisted into chains. The people who cheer their oppressor today will find themselves his slaves tomorrow. And by the time they realize the truth, it will be too late.