Supreme Commander Durand sat by candlelight, deeply tucked away in the depths of the capitol's massive fortress. In a room with no windows and only one clear entrance, the leader of half of mankind stared, wiping the tiredness from his eyes as he went over another slip of paper, another missive from a garrison, another situation report, another tally, another…

Durand placed the stack of papers down on the table and stared off into thought, the flickering light of the sconce playing off the scars of campaigns past. It was a tired face. Yet beneath the tiredness lay something unfathomable and unyielding, as if the whole thing had been molded over some solid metal piece by an embarrassed artist, who was afraid to show the true nakedness of his design. It came out in his eyes, which flashed icy blue even in the tint of the light.

Still, a sigh appeared from the man.

Secretary Laurent looked aside from his own pile.

“Anything of note?” He asked, still half reading the inventory note which he held in his hand.

When no answer came readily from the large man, Laurent's pile went down as well. Secretary Laurent, administrative second and confidant regarded the man, the legend, in front of him.

The mountain that was Durand still held a quill, but forgotten, his gaze directed to one of the many clockwork models which sat around the room. A hand went out, and with surprising gentleness and care, slowly wound a miniscule winding arm on the model.

Laurent watched the Commander wordlessly. The model slowly slipped into action, hundreds of small pieces all interwoven with fascinating and incredible craftsmanship. It was merely a geometric assembly, no meaning at all, and had simply been the Commander's attempt at stretching his abilities at craftsmanship to their utter maximum.

The device was a marvel. The Commander's focus on it tonight rather than the papers at hand was worrying. There was something working there, in the man's mind, that went beyond Laurent, beyond even any of the other generals or merchant family patriarchs or southern lords. And he never strayed from his task, there was never distraction, only deeper contemplation. Laurent awaited Durand's pronouncement.

But all that came out was another sigh.

Laurent's heart sunk for a moment. This was most uncharacteristic.

Perhaps some motivation would help.

“...Sir? If I may?” Laurent spoke up, shattering the silence that had lain over the room for hours.

Durand slowly turned his head to the other man, but with half focus on the model, which still whirred and spun on its stand.

“Yes Laurent?”