

Movie-watching wasn't just a hobby for Vince. It was an *experience*. Even re-watching a movie made him feel *alive* like no other thing could. He always dressed up and set up decorations that would harmonize with the world displayed on screen. It was one of his most well-kept secrets, lest it came out and everyone who knew him ended up thinking about him as a sort of freak for it. He didn't even know *how* they'd arrive at the conclusion that his behavior was worthy of scorn, but he thought that he'd rather be safe than sorry.

Despite that thought pinching his brain, he couldn't find himself getting mad. Looking over at the mail package, he excitedly tore it open to reveal the bootleg DVD of tonight's movie and a costume to go along with it. Previously, he'd only stuck to cosplaying with only materials he could find in his house. It wasn't today until he finally gave in to his wishes and finally ordered something online. How could he not? A spin-off *and* a high-quality costume of his favorite character? How could he refuse?

"Tai Lung... I can't believe that I can finally dress as you!" He squealed, his voice warped and nervous. His wide eyes scanned the costume, a large mascot-esque suit that sported large, bulky limbs to correctly portray the character's muscular build. Vince couldn't wait to be wearing that wonderful spot-filled body. It would be a dream come true!

Before putting the suit on, Vince put the DVD in. The black screen lit up to show clips from the movie with the logo and options coming on screen not too after. '*Kung Fu Panda IF: Tai Lung's Power*' The title sounded like it had been poorly translated from another language, but it didn't matter. Even if he didn't understand a single word, he'd still have the amazing animation to look at!

Vince slipped his feet into the baggy pant legs of the suits. He tugged at the fabric, stretching it up to his waist before fastening the strong zipper upwards halfway through. With every step, he could feel the thick foam-like padding move against him as if it were a giant mattress for pants. He tried walking across the room, but all he could manage was an awkward waddle. "Mgh, not too easy to maneuver in."

Next, he shimmied his arms through the long sleeves. The legs of the suit were thick, but the upper limbs were probably even thicker. The feeling could only be compared to wearing three coats at. Pushing his arms further through the sleeves, he stretched out his fingers to fit through the thick, glove-like digits. The costume's padding was so **large that it** was like being hugged by a giant Tai Lung plushie. Despite its bulky interior, the thrill alone of wearing it made him feel powerful, just **like** the character he was wearing. Looking at himself in the mirror, his head stuck from the suit in a comically small manner. It is almost like the tiny head of a human doll glued to the body of a Tai Lung action figure.

Then, for the final touch, Vince put on the head. It was the most detailed and heaviest part of the costume; the spots across his head sporting a little bit more fur than the base of the head to make them stand out, piercing yellow eyes that glinted against the light from the bulb above, and a jaw that seemed to be able to move in unison with the his mouth. Vince felt a shiver run down his spine as he gazed into the striking eyes, feeling as if he were looking into the eyes of a fierce warrior. He pushed his head into the neck portion of the headpiece, his own face disappearing into the mouth of the costume. He felt his breath quicken as he adjusted the head, his heart pounding with excitement. He was now Tai Lung, the most powerful and feared warrior in all of China—or at least a decent recreation of him! *I don't think it's even possible to be as cool as him... but this is good enough!*

Vince stared at the television screen, **realizing only now that he had forgotten to hit play on the DVD menu**. "Oh, *shit*." His muffled voice echoed through the mascot's head as he cursed under his breath, feeling perplexed by the warped sound of his own voice—the sound comparable to speaking through a long, thin cardboard tube. Encased head-to-toe in a thickly padded Tai Lung costume, he shuffled his soft, bulgy feet across the floor as he made a clumsy attempt to grab for the remote.

"Alright, I think I can just..." He tried scooping up the remote, but the chunky shape of the costume's paw made it impossible to try and grab it with his large, plush-like fingers

Vince double-checked that all the straps of the costume were secure and adjusted the oversized mascot head to ensure he had full visibility. Encased head-to-toe in a thickly padded Tai Lung costume, he shuffled his poofy, plush feet across the floor as he made a clumsy attempt to grab for the remote with the rounded out shape of the costume's paw. No matter at what angle he approached it, his paws refused to take hold with his fingers. Now desperate and unwilling to go through the long process of suiting, he just put the controller between his two paws to lift it up, putting it on top of his padded lap and pressing the confirm button.

"Alright... Now, let's watch!" Ready to start the binge of his favorite franchise's spin-offs.

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Vince's chest heaved as he struggled to take a breath, the weight of his soggy fur and the humidity making it almost impossible. The sweat-drenched padding of his costume clung tightly to his body like an over-saturated sponge, mere millimeters of air between them.

He thought that the movie would've been over by now, but the footage had kept rolling for hours. Tai Lung had completely steamrolled every opponent that dared to come his way. It started with random mooks dispatched with mind-blowing choreography—the characters zipping all across the screen with jaw-dropping animation. However, now two hours in, every enemy that showed up on the screen was a recolor of a previous character, with Tai Lung beating them in one or two hits. Whatever luster the experience was bringing had now completely worn off. Every time that he exhaled, he could feel the suit getting hotter.

*Screw it.*

His face scrunched up as he tried to move his hands closer to the zipper on the back of the costume. His fingers shook as he fumbled for the tab, but as soon as he tried pulling, his entire body became rigid. His muscles were paralyzed, not even his mouth able to move—a garbled, whisper-like moan instead of a scream parting his lips. His arms were stuck upwards and behind his head, sweat dripping down from them.

*W-what the hell?! Why can't I—*

***You were going to take me off before the good part!***

The voice echoed in his head, the afterglow of the gruff, tone pitch leaving Vince without words. The possibility seemed ludicrous, a figment made by his overactive imagination. He lingered in complete mental silence, eyes wide and heartbeat drumming in his ears. His fingers twitched as he still tried reaching for the tab, an unexplainable, creeping sense of paranoia worming itself into an already rattled mind.

***Are you ignoring me, you weak fool?! Don't you know that you need to show the Dragon Warrior some respect?!***

Vince felt his heart rate spike as he heard a familiar voice reach out to him—it was Tai Lung—not a reproduction based on his memories of watching the scenes with him over and over—but the *real* deal. His trademark arrogant drawl was unmistakable, striking Vince with the same depth of emotion he had noticed in the animated film years ago. Every syllable sent a chill down Vince's spine—the villainous yet alluring character that had captivated him for years bossing him around without care.

Vince's mind was reeling as he tried to make sense of what was happening. This wasn't possible, it couldn't be real. Tai Lung was just a fictional character, a figment of his imagination. But as the voice continued to speak to him, he couldn't deny the reality of the situation any longer.

*I-I'm not disrespecting you, Tai Lung!* he finally managed to think, his voice sounding small and pitiful inside his head. *I just need to take off this costume! Just for a second, I promise!*

Tai Lung's laughter filled his head, mocking and cruel. ***Do you think I care about your petty human needs? You are wearing my likeness, and as such, you will show me the respect I deserve. Now, stay still and watch as I crush everyone!***

Vince could do nothing but continue watching, feeling himself boil inside the suffocating mascot suit. From the inside, he could see the fake eyes of the mascot suit blinking as if they were a strange combination of plastic and flesh. His arms still remained upright, ache seeping across his muscles the longer he maintained the position.

*Can I at least lower my arms, Master Tai Lung?* He threw the 'master' in there to stroke the suit's ego. As expected, the recognition of authority and power earned a chuff out of him.

***Hmph! I'll assist you but don't think that I'll give you freedom of movement. I want you to make sure that escape is impossible, cub.***

*O-of course!*

***Good. I can appreciate a host who can understand clear orders.***

Before Vince could protest about the word 'host' and what it meant, his body suddenly sprung to life like a toy starting up with brand new batteries. His arms unlocked from the position they were bound to, settling on the top of his waist for something far more comfortable.

***There. Is this more to your liking?***

*Y-yes, of course!*

***Good! You better be comfortable, because I'll need you to pay attention to the movie. You have to learn how to fight like me!***

Vince stared at the screen, his pulse racing as he observed every punch, every dodge, and every painful scream from Tai Lung's enemies. His muscles flexed in anticipation as he watched the snow leopard move with feline grace and powerful martial arts mastery. He was consumed and enthralled by the movie—sharply aware of every frame that passed before him, almost believing himself to be an inhabitant inside of its world. Adrenaline coursed through his veins and a power surged through his ego like that of Tai Lung

***That's it. I'm sure that you're loving all that power.***

*S-so powerful...* Vince couldn't control his thoughts. He felt like a passenger not just in his body but in his mind. *I-I'd do anything to get a taste of that power...*

***Oh, is that so?*** Tai Lung asked, cockiness dripping from every word. ***How badly do you want my power, cub?***

Vince couldn't tear his eyes away as Tai Lung fought, watching with growing admiration and desire to possess the same power. His heart pounded in his chest as he saw enemy after enemy fall against Tai Lung's flames. Thoughts sharing the coveted strength and abilities of the man who *should've* been the Dragon Warrior filled his head, drowning any drive for escape. He sunk further into his chair, feeling

a strange urge coursing through his veins. *I want this! I need this!* His eyes followed every move as if he were Tai Lung's shadow, head cocking slightly before the snow leopard in his head corrected his posture.

***Oh, then that's just PERFECT!***

The suit squeaked as Vince's body jerkily started to move once again. Of course, he wasn't the one in control. Only those with strength could claim control—Tai Lung had made such a fact clear to him. His body was no longer his own as Tai Lung—now piloting Vince's body—began to stretch, his movements effortless, uninhibited by the padding that had made Vince into a waddling oaf mere hours ago.

***Observe how a REAL warrior moves!*** Tai Lung chuckled as Vince's muscles moved in angles he never thought possible for his body and began to demonstrate basic martial arts moves, feeling his host's adoration. ***Impressed? This is just the warmup.***

*W-what are we gonna do nex-WOAH!*

Vince felt a sudden thrill course through him as he stepped forward, his body feeling more alive than ever. As Tai Lung puppeteer'd his body around, Vince found himself malleable and strong—moving independently of the thick stuffing inside the suit just as when Tai Lung was controlling it—almost as if the suit was a shape-shifting entity that worked in unison with the parasitic snow leopard's presence. He panted as he continued doing flips and kicks in perfect coordination with the movie playing behind him.

Even if it was his body, he was still a spectator to the *main* character. He was mesmerized by the grace and skill of Tai Lung's movements and wanted nothing more than to command the same power that seemed to come so naturally to him. Such a feat would forever be out of reach for him, the crushing weight of reality only offset by the thrilling excitement of performing with his idol. Sweat poured down his face and body, but he didn't care. All that mattered was that—even as a spectator—he was *powerful*.

***That's it! Let yourself be consumed. Your weak, pathetic identity is only holding you back from your TRUE potential!***

Tai Lung stopped for a moment to flex, laughing at his enemy's weak attacks in the movie and at Vince's feeble will. His and his host's wills swirled around each other, their trains of thought crashing into each other as each kick and punch only made the distinction between the two harder to spot. The more that Vince gave into power, the stronger the snow leopard's will over him would grow.

*Yes! I want to reach my full potential! Teach me, Master Tai Lung, teach me!*

***With pleasure!***

Tai Lung continued to control Vince's every move, training him in the ways of kung fu and the art of combat. Vince's body moved with fluidity and grace, and he felt himself becoming stronger with every passing second. Tai Lung's words fueled his desire for more, and he found himself pushing his body to its limits, relishing in the feeling of his muscles burning with exertion.

***Let's turn you into a proper warrior...***

The after-credits scene began a nice thirty-minute workout without breaks awaiting Tai Lung's new host. However, just as he was about to start, Vince felt Tai Lung speak again.

**No, wait.** He said, voice shaky and madness echoing through his words. **The after-credits scene is not enough,** he spat. **I want deleted scenes and bloopers. And then I want you to recreate the film from the beginning—again!** His voice echoed through the room as Tai Lung grabbed the remote to prepare for future scenes, and Vince knew he had no choice but to comply.

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Vince didn't know what time it was. It could've been hours—days—weeks. All he knew was that he was exhausted. He loved the power, yet his mind couldn't handle the constant strain. Even if there was a small part of him inside their head, it would slow them down. *Master Tai Lung*, he whispered, his voice consumed by the presence of the snow leopard in his mind. *I want more. Teach me everything you know. Make me powerful. No matter the cost.*

Tai Lung chuckled, his voice echoing through Vince's mind. **Oh, I will make you powerful, cub. I'm sure you already know what that means, right?**

*Yes, Master Tai Lung. I'll do anything.*

Tai Lung laughed as the television was silenced, and he watched with delight as his influence began to take hold in Vince's mind. The world became a foggy haze of reality stemming from a patchwork of images played like a film reel on repeat in Vince's mind. His thoughts began to drift away from reality and into Tai Lung's realm of control, becoming his thoughts instead.

Vince knew that he was no longer just a simple fan of Tai Lung; he had become something beyond a disciple, a brimming, living host for the most dangerous and powerful villain in all of China. He would gladly offer his body, his consciousness burnt to embers by the snow leopard's will.

**Good boy...** Tai Lung cooed as he felt Vince's thoughts drift away into nothingness, more space made for his growing ego. **I'm sure if there's anything left of you in there, it'll love being part of me... because this is MY body!**