



The Doll

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The Doll

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Lord Negaduck doesn't feel pity, everything he does is strictly for his own gain. Even something like saving a slave is purely because he needs a minion.

And maybe if he says it enough times, he'll even believe it.

Chapter 1: The Acquisition

Negaduck accidentally wanders into a slave market, where he spots a familiar face.

Unlike some slave AUs, this will feature absolutely NO rape or suicide, nor will it feature thoughts/flashbacks of such. None of my stories ever will.

In this fic, Negs notices weird things and sometimes takes certain actions just to see what will happen. He's as well definitely a violent supervillain dictator, he's just somewhat nicer than in canon and has more of a moral code than he'll let on -- mostly due to Nega Gosalyn's influence.

There weren't many things Negaduck was *against*, per se, more just things he hadn't done yet or things he thought were stupid. The list of things that raised his moral hackles was very short, but it did exist, despite common belief.

Slavery wasn't on that list. He didn't have any slaves of his own, but only because he thought it ridiculous to let someone with every reason to want you dead work in your home. Negaduck had zero interest in slaves for practical reasons, not because of a memory of bright green eyes and curly red hair.

Which was why the fact he'd somehow ended up at the town's slave market was so infuriating. He hadn't been paying the slightest bit of attention to where he was walking, lost in thought about his continued failures to find the final member of his team.

How was he going to make an Anti-Friendly Four if he couldn't find-

Quackerjack. Negaduck blinked, clearing his eyes to make sure he hadn't imagined the duck on the podium. It was definitely the Jester, with his colorful outfit and oversized beak, but he wasn't acting right.

He was slouching, with an impassive, outright depressed look. He showed off (admittedly impressive) acrobatic tricks at his master's urging, but then fell silently back into place, not meeting anyone's eyes.

It was the sight of the master that made Negaduck hit his forehead in realization. Of course! His Quackerjack was an ex-slave, he'd been freed by his last master.

But PosiPaddywhack wouldn't free a slave out of the goodness of his heart, because he had no goodness in him (much less the area a heart would be if he was a Normal).

Negaduck pushed his way through the crowd, growling at people to move for their Lord. Once he was closer, a strange feeling of *wrongness* overtook him. This frowning, silent duck in torn and dirty clothing, passively obeying without a hint of distraction or mania? This wasn't Quackerjack.

But Negaduck could fix that. "How much?"

"Looooord Negaaaaduck!" Paddywhack's beak pulled into a fanged grin, technically friendly but vaguely threatening. Negaduck would be impressed if he didn't hate the other's guts. "Weeell, this one has been verrrrry entertaining to meeee. And the ssssell comes wiiiith a magicaaal binding. Hmmm... let's saaaay, a hundred gold?"

Negaduck growled, satisfied when the Spirit unconsciously leaned away from him. 100 Gold? Quackerjack may be young and hardworking, but still wasn't worth nearly that much. How dare Paddywhack try to rip off the Lord of St Canard?

He would've forced Paddywhack to just give him the slave, getting into whatever fight he needed to, if he hadn't noticed something. Quackerjack's hand was clenching and unclenching, his only movement, as if he was trying to squeeze-

The doll, his stupid doll was gone. The longer NegaQuackerjack went without recreating that thing, the more manic and unpredictable he became. How broken was this Quackerjack, that he was so calm without it?

For some reason, the idea of a physical conflict he might lose (he'd never admit it, but Paddywhack could beat him) didn't seem worth the chance. He threw a small bag of gold at the Spirit's head, hitting his beak and making him nearly fall over.

"Fifty gold, or I'm setting fire to that Box of yours!" Negaduck smirked when the other quickly nodded in agreement. Paddywhack's pyrophobia was a closely guarded secret, but Negaduck had long had suspicions.

Paddywhack counted the gold, then let it dissolve in a white mist. He'd been short-changed by three silver, but he wouldn't point that out. Honestly, he was lucky 'Lord' Negaduck hadn't decided to just take his toy.

"Beeee goood for your new maaaster, Doll." Paddywhack whispered into the clown's ear, getting a shaky nod in return. He handed Negaduck the lead, transferring the binding. It wasn't a permanent transfer, of course. Once Negaduck died, he'd come back to claim his prize, then play with him a while before selling him again. Not that Negaduck needed to know that, of course.

Negaduck took the brown leash, somewhat surprised when the jester *bounced* after him. So there was some of Quackerjack in there, after all.

"I've got a few errands to do before we go home." Negaduck explained as they moved through the market place. He glanced back at his new acquisition. "You got a problem with that?"

"N-no, Master!" Quackerjack panicked, his hands twitching upwards but coming just short of nervously pulling on his hat. *Interesting*. "I would never take issue with anything you desired."

Negaduck was going to ask if the leash was necessary, but he somehow doubted this panicky Quackerjack could navigate a crowd on his own. He cursed under his breath; this was going to be a lot of work.

He took his time going between shops, disguising his true purpose by buying stuff he'd technically needed for a while but put off buying. He had to admit, shopping was a lot easier when he had someone to carry stuff for him. The Mutt and the Weed were too conspicuous to take shopping, while Sparky would always fry half the packages.

He could get used to having another non-mutant around.

Chapter 2: The Jester

Quackerjack is brought home

Poor Quacky's really screwed up. It gets a bit worse before it gets better.

The Jester bounced, careful not to drop his burden as he followed his new Master. Master Negaduck's home was on the outskirts of town, a huge castle made of dark stone, spiky and decorated with statues bearing the Master's own likeness. It was intimidating, but at least it wasn't the Box.

The Jester was a little excited, actually. A place like this was sure to have dungeons, with separate cells. Maybe he'd get his own cell! Or at least some straw to rest on when he wasn't needed. It would be nice. And maybe, just maybe, he could steal some cloth and--

No! He couldn't think things like that. A slave did not steal things, except at their Master's command, no matter how desperate they were. All he would do was focus on his Master's orders, which right now meant transporting his new things.

He nearly dropped everything when they entered the main hall. Sitting around a table were two monsters and the strangest rat he'd ever seen, playing a card game he didn't recognize. But he was used to monsters, and the shock left quickly enough that he yearned to stay and watch them play, the idea of a game he didn't know awakening a long-buried part of him.

"Hey, Boss." The rat waved to Master Negaduck. He scratched his head, and the Jester could've sworn he'd seen lightning for a second. He pointed a hand, covered in a blue material, at the Jester. "Is that new?"

"Shaddup." Master grumbled, walking through a small wooden door.

Liquidator, Bushroot, and Megavolt shrugged at each other, continuing their poker game. If their Lord wanted to tell them why he was pulling a clown by a brown rope through the castle, he would. If not, they'd still find out sooner or later.

The Jester had started trembling as he followed his Master. The man was a wizard! Oh, how unlucky was he, to fall into the hands of a mage lord? His hallways were lit without torches, several doors opened of their own accord, sections of the wall changed to show images from outside.

It explained why the True Master had given in to him so easily, the duck must be frighteningly powerful, he was even served by sorcerers and monsters.

What could he possibly want with a regular old duck? Maybe as an entertainer, though surely the Jester's flips were nothing compared to what his Master's magic could conjure.

He didn't really get to think too much about that, as they reached their destination. It looked like a small storeroom, with boxes and such pushed against the walls, rather than a cell.

His Master had him put the new boxes with the old ones, then started organizing them himself. With no instructions, the Jester knelt in a clear area of the floor. His Master must know of the quality of the True Master's training, to plan to store him amongst so many other belongings.

Any other slave might've tried to steal something, or fashion a weapon, but not him. He knew how to be good.

"Alright, I-" Master Negaduck turned from the boxes, eyes going wide when he saw the other kneeling. The Jester's heart froze, wondering what he had done wrong. His Master groaned, running a hand over his own face, before speaking. "I have to get a space ready for you, so you'll have to stay here until then. Don't leave, alright?"

"Yes, Master." He nodded immediately, head slightly bowed, not looking his Master in the eye. "Of course, Master."

"Yeah, about that whole 'Master' thing..." Master Negaduck paused, thinking, then roughly said, "I am the Lord of St Canard, and the way you address me will reflect my proper title. Don't call me Master."

"Um, y-yes, of course," his Master wanted a different title? Why? "Milord."

"Better, I guess." Mas- Lord Negaduck rolled his eyes. Something seemed to occur to him. "Speaking of names, you got one?"

"My old Master called me Doll. My owners before that usually addressed me as Slave." The Jester replied slowly. Memories he'd carefully buried started to bubble up, and he actually fought against the Binding, trying not to finish answering. "B-before that, I was, I was called-"

No, no nonononono-

"Nevermind, I don't care." His Lord thankfully interrupted him, allowing the painful recollections to fade once more. "From now on, you're Quackerjack, got it?"

"Yes Milord." The Jes- Quackerjack nodded. "I am Quackerjack."

"Good. I'll be back soon, do whatever you want, just don't leave." And with that, Lord Negaduck left.

"Quackerjack." Quackerjack repeated, trying out the sound of it. It was almost familiar, though he couldn't remember where he'd ever heard it. He said it slowly, drawing the syllables out. "Quaacker-jaaack... Hello, my name's Quackerjack."

It was an unusual name, to be sure, but he found he actually kinda liked it. Maybe, if he was very good, his True Master would let him keep it after he was reclaimed. He hadn't said that he was going to reclaim him, of course, but Quackerjack knew how he thought.

Quackerjack. Why was that so familiar? It didn't matter, of course, his mostly-forgotten past had no bearing on how well he obeyed. Better not to think of it.

Instead, he looked down at his clothes. Lord had changed his name, would he change his outfit too? Quackerjack hoped not, those were a part of him by now, torn and dirty as they were.

He'd had such a brief period of time, between his last mortal owner and the True Master, where he was free. When he'd made the patchy outfit, he'd felt like he'd had an identity for the first time. It felt right, though he wished he could make it better quality.

He nawed on his lower beak, wondering whether he'd be allowed to keep the precious clothing, hands twisting around his- his hat! He'd been pulling on his hat!

His hands shot down as if burned, remembering how much his Master -- his True Master -- hated any self-soothing. At least his new Master hadn't been there to see it. He had to be more careful.

Quackerjack looked around the room, trying to distract himself with something productive, something to impress his Lord. He'd been told to do whatever he wanted, so long as he didn't leave, but he wasn't quite sure what to do...

One of the new boxes had fallen over, spilling its contents behind some others. Quackerjack decided to clean it up, hoping his Master would like tidiness and unprompted service.

He crawled over to the box, kneeling as he righted it, then reached to pick an item off the floor. It was yellow cloth. In fact, the whole box was nothing but cloth and sewing supplies. A familiar itch scratched at his brain, which he tried to ignore, but...

Wanna have some fun, Hun?

Quackerjack jumped backwards, dropping the cloth. "G-go away. You know I can't, I'll be punished."

It's been so long, Ron.

Quackerjack stared at the box, fingers twitching to just- no, he couldn't. Maybe he could convince Lord Negaduck to let him make money for him through sewing, like previous owners had. Then, if he did well enough, maybe he could ask to be allowed to keep a creation.

But who knows if he'll say yes, Bess? Dontcha wanna play ?

"Of course I do." Quackerjack muttered. Who knew when he'd get another opportunity like this? He'd be punished, he'd lose *him* all over again, but they'd have a few minutes (maybe even hours, though he didn't dare hope) before it happened. It had been years...

He couldn't. He had to. But he couldn't.

But you're going to, Lou.

He couldn't...

Chapter 3: The Shadow

Negaduck watches Quackerjack, feeling an emotion that definitely isn't sympathy.

I actually have no idea what the Shadow is. Maybe all Negaversians can hear their shadows, maybe it's a demon, maybe Negs had a mental break. I'm leaning towards it being Darkwing bound to Negaduck's shadow somehow, and at this point he's given up escaping -- he lives simply to mock Negaduck and point out/encourage the other's hidden morality. But I'm not entirely sure.

Comment what you think The Shadow is!

Negaduck watched the security monitors closely, sitting in his control room. The biggest difference between the worlds was the way they'd developed; Posiverse had better magic, Negaverse had better tech. Going between them let him have the best of both.

He watched Quackerjack find the box he'd knocked over. His original plan had simply been to give him the stuff to remake his doll, but he decided to see what would happen if he just left it visible. Besides, too much kindness right off the bat freaked slaves out, made it harder to decondition/recondition them.

Quackerjack's reaction to his hat had been interesting (he'd have to teach him that it was fine, if he wanted a way to keep the clown calm), but his reaction to this was *much* more fascinating.

He'd pushed himself away, tensed up, and started a conversation in two voices. One was mumbled and meek, the other excited and high-pitched.

"What's he doing?" Megavolt asked, fiddling with a broken computer console. He'd only even known about electronics for a year and a half, but was already much better at them than Negaduck. It was both annoying and useful.

"Talking with an old friend." Negaduck muttered, watching as Quackerjack suddenly lunged at the box, his hands moving in near-blurs as he worked. Negaduck made careful mental notes each time the other seemed displeased with one material or another.

"So that's Quackerjack, huh?" The console beeped to life, and Megavolt patted it happily before leaning on the control panel to watch the screen. "Stealin' doesn't seem like something a broken slave would do."

"Seems even Paddywhack can't break some things." Negaduck chuckled. He'd explained everything to his lackeys already.

"He was with Paddywhack?!" Or, almost everything. Megavolt frowned, watching Quackerjack on the monitor. "Poor guy..."

Negaduck hadn't told the rat about their counterparts being friends, he wanted to see what would happen if their connection developed naturally. So far, the results were interesting.

"What are you going to do with him?" Megavolt asked, something dangerous hiding under his tone. "I mean, he'll be more obedient than the rest of us, but I don't he'll be much of a fighter-"

"Do you really think I'm just gonna leave him like this?" Negaduck asked, growling. Megavolt shut up, leaning away slightly. "He's *wrong*, Sparky. You know how I feel about that."

Megavolt hadn't ever *heard* of a lightbulb. Negaduck had given him computers. Bushroot had grown up in a mining town. Negaduck had taken him to a rain forest. Liquidator was a stuttering mess with *stage fright*. Negaduck had shown him a new way of speaking.

He didn't like when the counterparts were *wrong*. It had nothing to do with how miserable they were, he felt no pity for any of them. It was purely self motivated.

Keep telling yourself that. His Shadow chuckled, but he ignored it.

Megavolt hadn't heard it (he never did). He just stared at the pitiful duck in the storeroom, hugging his doll with hurried whispers and poorly stifled sobs. "...So you'll fix him?"

"I don't know if he *can* be fixed." Negaduck sighed. "But I'll try. We can't be the Fear-some Five without our- the Clown."

The intercom buzzed, Bushroot's voice coming clearly through, <Guys, it's nearly time for dinner.>

"We'll be there in a minute, Melonhead." Megavolt said fondly. With a challenging glance at Negaduck (or as challenging as he could get when talking to *Negaduck*), he added, "And don't forget to add an extra place setting."

"Don't tell me you like him already?" Negaduck grumbled, shaking his head. "Well, I guess Chuckles can join us. This time."

As if *that hadn't already been your plan*. His Shadow smirked. He mentally told it to *Shaddup!*, but didn't deny its accusation.

Chapter 4: The Punishment

Quackerjack is not punished, and is really confused. Banana Brain is having fun.
I changed Mr Banana Brain to Sir Banana Brain, to fit the world better.

Poor Quacky... He's been a slave since young childhood in this, so he's been through a LOT.

Hear that, Nat?

Quackerjack listened, hearing footsteps. Lord was returning, and he would find out about his slave's misdeeds.

Maybe you can hide me, Lee? But they both knew that wasn't an option. Be brave, Knave. I've got your back, Mack.

"I'll miss you, Sir Banana Brain." Quackerjack whispered, hugging the doll. He positioned himself on his knees in the middle of the floor, leaning forward until his forehead was pressing on the ground.

You too, Boo.

Lord Negaduck entered, eyes flicking to the cloth still on the floor (*he hadn't cleaned it up, and he'd made a bigger mess. Oh nonononono-*). He smirked.

"I see you've been busy." His Lord circled him for a moment. "What d'ya make?"

"J-just a doll, Ma- Milord." He couldn't even get the title right, what a pathetic slave. He rose just enough to hold the doll (*so much more than that*) out. "This slave offers his sincerest apologies, Your Lordship. This was unfit behavior, and I will willingly accept any punishment." *Please don't use the Binding, I'll comply, I swear it.*

"Okay, new rule." Lord Negaduck growled, and Quackerjack tensed. "You absolutely cannot refer to yourself as 'this slave', it's stupid. Now get up, we're going to be late for dinner."

"M-Milord?" Quackerjack bounced to his feet, Sir Banana Brain somehow still in his grasp, not torn up on the floor. "Pardon my boldness, but aren't you... Angry with me?" He whispered the last bit, and wasn't entirely sure the other had heard him.

"If I was angry at you," Lord Negaduck said quietly, menacingly, "believe me, you'd know it. Now come on, Bushbrain gets upset if we're late for dinner."

Quackerjack silently followed his peculiar Master, disbelief ringing through him. He hadn't been smited nor cursed, not whipped nor beaten, not even slapped nor yelled at. Would his punishment be later, or would it be at dinner?

The idea of being punished in front of others was *unpleasant*, but at least he'd get a few more minutes with his doll.

Maybe we'll even have time to play, Ray!

Oh, Quackerjack hoped so not.

Chapter 5: The Dinner

Quackerjack meets the Team, and they have dinner.
What could go wrong with that?

I just realized I never explained where the leash went. Negaduck took it off when he left him in the storage closet.

"Guys, meet Quackerjack. Quackerjack, the guys." Lord Negaduck gestured around the dining table, to the same group Quackerjack had seen earlier.

"Nice to meetcha." The rat stuck out his hand, a friendly grin on his face. He wore bright yellow and blue, of a material Quackerjack had never seen before. "I'm El- Megavolt."

With a glance at his Master, Quackerjack shook the other's hand. Energy flowed out of the rat and into the duck, tickling across his feathers. He burst out laughing, clamping his hands over his beak in a futile attempt to stop the escaping giggles. But it was useless, once he started laughing it always took a while to stop.

Great, now they'd all know that he was 'different'. What use was a mad slave?

"No-one's ever reacted like that to one of my shocks before." Megavolt blinked, giving a sheepish smile. "Um, sorry about that, by the way. My powers aren't easy to control."

"I-" Quackerjack had to wait out a few more wheezing chuckles before he could speak. He hurried to assure the rat that he had not damaged the Lord's property. "It didn't hurt, Sir, merely tickled."

"Oh, for-" Lord Negaduck cursed, causing Quackerjack to jump and nearly drop to his knees in fright. "If he introduces himself as Megavolt, you call him Megavolt, not Sir. Got it?"

"Y-yes Milord." Quackerjack nodded quickly, though this new rule confused him. He turned back to the perplexed rat. "My apologies, Megavolt."

"No problem, pal." Megavolt waved it off, thankfully not angered over the apparent faux pas. His whiskers sparked, and he scratched his head. "Er, what were we just talking about?"

"Confused? Forgetful? Suffering from an overly energetic brain?" A garbled voice rang out, water rising to form a liquid dog. He gestured to Megavolt. "Then you might be the one and only Megadolt!"

"Lay off, Dripbrain." Megavolt scowled, coming nearly nose-to-nose with the canine. His eyes bugged out and he scrambled backwards over the table. "And keep that water away from me! You're going to short me out."

"Like I haven't already learned that lesson." The dog grumbled. He turned his non-eyes on Quackerjack, a (fake) grin spreading across his face. "Hello, potential consumer! The Liquidator is pleased to make your acquaintance. With Liquidator Brand Water, the only way to go is up, up, up! Operators are standing by for acceptance of this limited-time offer!"

"...what?" Quackerjack honestly didn't know what he was required to say. Was that even the right language?

"He's Liquidator, and he hopes you can get along." The duck-plant-thing-guy pushed the dog away, muttering something that sounded like 'Give him space, Bud', but that couldn't be right. He held out a hand - leaf? - and gave a small, oddly comforting (real) smile. "I'm Scholar Reginald Bushroot. I prefer Bushroot, but you can call me Scholar if you're more comfortable with titles. In fact, you can call me whatever you want, except 'Reggie The Veggie'."

Quackerjack shook Scholar Bushroot's hand, feeling nervous now that introductions were over. Would he face his punishment now? He hoped Lord Negaduck would just do it in private, not wanting these strangely nice people to know that he'd already messed up. But, as always, it wouldn't be up to him.

"Who's that?" Megavolt pointed to Quackerjack's left hand, where he was clutching- oh no.

Please don't... Quackerjack mentally pleaded. But, as always, he was ignored.

I'm Sir Banana Brain, Dwayne! The banana shot upwards, still in Quackerjack's grasp. *Speaking of brains, yours seem like scramble, Bramble.*

Quackerjack gasped. "I- I'm so sorry! He's not good around people, please forgive him."

"Hey, it's alright." Megavolt soothed, and it was then that Quackerjack noticed he'd started hyperventilating. This was just too much, he wasn't acting at all as a slave

should, why wasn't he being punished?! "It's nice to meet you, Banana Brain, even if you are a little rude. You're Quacky's pal, huh?"

I'm his bestest pal, Sal. I've been gone a while, but now I'm back! And we can play!

"No, we cannot play!" Quackerjack hissed, ignoring the old whisper of desire within himself. How many times had he spoken out of turn now? And had he just raised his voice? Lord Negaduck's fury would be terrible, he might even return him to the True Master.

And, oh, the punishment he'd get then...

"Enough with the 'hey, how are you?' and 'so nice to meet you'." Lord Negaduck plopped into a seat. "I'm hungry. Quackerjack, sit there."

Quackerjack immediately sat on the chair his Lord had pointed to, shivers running up his spine. When was the last time he'd sat in a chair? Scratch that - when was the last time he sat at all, rather than kneeled? How peculiar his new Master was, though it was scandalous for a slave to think such. He needed to obey without thought, it wasn't his place to worry over punishments or question motives. Less than a day away from the True Master, and he was already slipping.

Scholar Bushroot left the room, coming back carrying four plates of food. To Quackerjack's great surprise, he wasn't the one that ended up lacking a plate.

"The Liquidator requires no nourishment from the lovely Bloom's garden." Liquidator chuckled, seeing his confusion. "I run on alternative resources!"

"He doesn't eat the same way we do." Scholar Bushroot translated absently, shooting Liquidator a glare before sitting down with his plate of... Dirt? "Of course, I don't really eat normally either, but close enough I suppose."

"Likky joins us outta habit, but not always." Megavolt added. He was slumping a little in his chair, looking exhausted. "I eat stuff that normal people do, so you'll see me at mealtimes a lot more often than the others." He yawned. "I've gotta 'eat' this other, special thing, though. And I really think I need some soon, I'm kinda drained..."

Quackerjack quietly sat, listening to Megavolt's strangely pleasant chatter while he watched the others eat. He didn't even think about touching the plate in front of him, assuming it was extra if anyone wanted seconds, until Scholar Bushroot spoke up.

"I can make something else, if you don't like it?" The plant looked upset at the idea. Not *angry* upset, more *sad* upset, and wasn't that weird?

"I, what?" Quackerjack looked from the plate, to the other duck, to Lord Negaduck. Surely he wasn't expected to actually eat at the same table as his Master? Did the others not know his status? It would explain why they were so nice, but why would Lord not tell them? Didn't they see him with his leash when he first came in?

"Quackerjack, it's hard enough for me to remember to eat my own food." Lord Negaduck didn't even glance at him. "I'm not ordering you every single time. Don't skip meals, listen to the Weed when he says you need to eat more or less or a certain type of thing, and don't bug me about it unless you have to."

"Yes, Milord." Quackerjack said meekly, hesitantly reaching for a fork before deciding that was improper. He may be sitting in a chair, eating at the same table as Freeman, but that didn't mean he was allowed to use the silverware.

The meal was a type of small pie filled with boiled vegetables, with a side of salad and some sort of dark liquid that smelled like-

"Chocolate." He whispered, almost reverently, hoping no-one heard him. He didn't touch the liquid, as that was drinking instead of eating, and focused on the meal. It was delicious, tastier than anything he'd ever had, and he ate quickly.

He sighed when he was done, feeling better than he had in years. His belly was full, Sir Banana Brain was right next to him, and he wasn't being watched by a being who desired nothing less than his abject misery. He was still fearing the impending punishment, but for now he just savored this bizarre moment of contentment.

"You enjoyed the food, huh?" Scholar Bushroot asked, smirking

"Y-yes, Scholar, very much so!" Quackerjack agreed enthusiastically, his beak stretched in a wide grin.

His eyes bugged out, but the grin didn't drop right away. Just like with laughing, his body seemed to prefer grinning, and wouldn't let him stop easily once he'd started. It was so much worse this time than it had ever been before, his grin staying firmly in place even as his panic rose, almost certainly because of how long it had been since he'd last smiled.

No-one seemed to notice his distress, but of course they couldn't; he must've looked insanely happy. He grabbed the sides of his hat, pulling hard -- it didn't matter, he'd already broken so many rules, what was one more?

He had to stop smiling! He wasn't allowed- he wasn't allowed to *be* happy, he certainly wasn't supposed to *show* it. He wasn't happy, he was miserable, like he was supposed to be.

If only he could stop smiling!

"Quackerjack!" Lord Negaduck yelled, and his head snapped towards the sound of his Master's voice. "What's wrong?"

"I- I can't stop smiling." Quackerjack whispered. "I'm sorry, I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to. It just happened, please-"

He was rambling, he knew it, but he could hardly stop. He thought the others had started talking, but he didn't pay attention. A good slave listened to the words of all Free Ones, not just their Master, but he was hardly a good slave.

He was pulled back to the real world by something familiar; pain. He felt energy flow through his every cell, covering him in burning soot, snapping him out of his panic.

"Megavolt!" Scholar Bushroot yelled, then suddenly the rat was crouching in front of Quackerjack.

"I'm so sorry, I got freaked." Megavolt helped Quackerjack sit up from where he'd fallen (when had he fallen?), checking him for injuries. "Are you alright? I didn't mean to shock you."

"I- I'm-" he couldn't take this anymore. "Why do you *care*?!"

"Enough of this." Lord Negaduck scowled, and maybe he'd finally punish him. He didn't want to be punished, exactly, he just wanted things to *make sense* again. "Quackerjack, did Sparky hurt you?"

"Don't call me Sparky!" Megavolt yelled, startling the jester in front of him.

"Megavolt didn't hurt me, Milord." Quackerjack whispered. He didn't have the energy to speak louder right then. "It hurt, but not that bad."

"Qua-" His Lord was interrupted by the plant, who pulled him aside and began to quietly say something to him. Quackerjack couldn't make out the words, and he quite frankly didn't care.

Chapter 6: The Rules

Negaduck explains the rules to Quackerjack.

Quackerjack gets a gift.

Fair warning, Bushy's a bit different than usual. He isn't a meek coward, he's the three Cs: Calm, Confident, Caring.

And, as always, I headcanon Negaduck's favorite alias as being Nigel Lord.

The End! I'm planning a sequel, but I'm not sure I'll ever finish it. I hope this seems like a good place to end it.

Thoughts? Critiques? Compliments? Questions? Random ramblings you've been wanting to get out that have nothing to do with the story? COMMENT!

"You have to explain to him that he's safe here!" Bushroot demanded, a stern look on his features. Oh, how Negaduck missed the snivelling coward the plant once was.

"And what makes you think he's safe?" Negaduck sneered. "He belongs to the most volatile duck in St Canard. Who knows what I might do to him?"

"That might've worked on me a year ago, but I know you now." The plant didn't back down. "You don't hurt people unless they piss you off."

"And you're getting dangerously close to that, Weed." Negaduck warned.

"So get out the woodchipper, Boss." Bushroot shrugged, annoyingly calm. "I know what I'm getting into being a part of this team, and I know the consequences. He doesn't. That poor duck is afraid of *smiling*, Nigel."

He has a point. The shadow added, sounding completely not mocking for once. *Paddywhack doesn't mess around.*

Maybe it was the sound of his chosen name (few knew it, fewer could get away with saying it), maybe it was reminder that Paddywhack had done this, or maybe he just knew it was wrong, but Negaduck sighed, visibly deflating as he gave in.

"I guess he will be pretty useless if he has panic attacks all the time." Negaduck walked over to his slave, a tiny pang of concern annoyance going through him at how done with *everything* the other duck looked. "Quackerjack."

"Milord." Quackerjack repositioned himself so he was kneeling on the ground rather than sitting on it, looking as if he expected to be hit. Worse, looking as if he *accepted* he was going to be hit. As if it was the only proper, logical outcome.

"Everyone but Quackerjack out, now." Negaduck barked, rewarded with instance obedience. They were more rebellious nowadays, since they'd wormed their way into his heart, but still knew who was in charge. He sat cross-legged on the ground in front of Quackerjack, thinking for a few moments on what to say. What does one say in this sort of situation, what did the other need to hear? "Quackerjack, I'm not Paddywhack."

"I know that, My Lord." Quackerjack answered, flinching when his doll added Thanks for pointing out the obvious, Gus!

Negaduck smirked at the banana. He looked at Quackerjack. "I don't think you do. I don't feed off misery, it doesn't give me strength. You're allowed to show happiness, you're allowed to calm yourself."

He tugged on the side of the jester hat, causing Quackerjack to suck in a breath, hands twitching. Negaduck briefly wondered what would happen if he just pulled it off, but for once decided to ignore it for reasons he didn't think too hard about.

"I think it's probably past time I explained somethin' important." Negaduck rolled his eyes. "Listen up, because I'm getting sick and tired of tellin' this story."

He explained the concept of the Negaverse, a difficult one but he had practice describing it, and of the Friendly Four. He explained how the Four worked well together, how he'd often wondered what they'd be like as villains, how his plan to make his own team with their counterparts formed. He took a risk and explained that Quackerjack was an equal with the other members of the Fearsome Four, serving under him but still free (to a certain extent, he was a dictator after all).

And to help things along, he even gave Quackerjack a list of rules.

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1. Don't call Negaduck Master, he's a Lord
 2. Call anyone whatever he wanted
 3. It was fine to do things like smile, laugh, or pull his hat -- so long as he didn't bug Negaduck
 4. Don't skip meals, and obey Bushroot when it comes to food
 5. Don't leave the castle without another member of the team
 6. Use the furniture
 7. Don't kneel
 8. Look people in the eyes, if he wants
 9. Clean any messes he creates
 10. He can speak without being spoken to, but will only interrupt Negaduck if it's urgent.

11. He could keep Sir Banana Brain, and remake him if he gets destroyed.

Quackerjack followed Lord Negaduck through the castle hallways, head still spinning. After their talk (parallel realities -- why did that seem familiar?) Quackerjack had drank the dark liquid, which was called Hot Chocolate (the single best thing in the entire world, he'd been stuck grinning for three minutes afterwards), then his Lord had told him to come with him.

He wasn't sure where they were going, and he didn't care, he was too busy thinking. The rules were simple, easy to obey, but incredibly difficult to comprehend. He was to act like a Freeman, but a subservient one? And he was to be a 'supervillain', whatever that was, attacking real Freeman? It didn't make any sense!

And if his 'counterpart' was his Lord's enemy, why was Lord Negaduck not taking out his frustrations on him? Surely seeing the likeness of his opponent was infuriating.

And to think, there was a version of him that was not only free, but actively rebelled! The horror (the temptation).

He grabbed his hat, pulling down as he thought, since his Lord had said he could. Honestly, he wasn't panicking as badly as he might've been. He had Banana Brain, the tugging of cloth was soothing, and there was no Misery Demon to please by worsening his own panic. Maybe, just maybe, he could adapt to this. Well, not to the idea of being equal to *anyone*, even amongst slaves he was bottom rung.

But the rest? Maybe. Someday. Definitely not any day soon, but eventually. Maybe?

"Here we are." Lord Negaduck said, stopping at a dead end. A tapestry hung on the wall, of the Lord himself, with two doors on each of the side walls. Signs were attached to each door.

A yellow door had a messily scrawled sign with Elmo's Room Megavolt's Lab, disturb at own risk!!! written on it

The blue door's sign said Property Of Liquidator Brand Water, No Trespassing in a handwriting that was probably once neat, but looked as if water had been run over it shortly after writing.

The green door had elegant curls reading Scholar Reginald Bushroot.

Then there was the red door, with the letters QJ marked simply onto its sign. Wait...

"Milord, that doesn't look like a cell." Lord Negaduck had told him to speak up more, but he still flinched at his own boldness. "It looks like a bedroom."

"Gee, maybe that's because it is a bedroom." Lord Negaduck said mockingly, making Quackerjack cower. His Lord's head turned to the side for a second, as if listening to someone, then his features slackened for a second. He groaned and turned back to Quackerjack, looking tired. "I mean, I get a whole wing of the castle to myself, you each get a room. Unfairly fair, in my opinion. Stay in your room until at least sunrise, and stay with one of the others when out of it. Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Milord." Quackerjack bowed his head as the other walked off.

Sweet dreams, Reams!

"Is that even a name?" Quackerjack asked, moving towards the -- his..? -- door. He hesitated to open it, but the Binding pushed him to follow the order to stay in his room. He put his hand on the silver doorknob, taking a breath before he twisted it.

It was a simple room, with no windows but plenty of light coming from *somewhere*. The floor had a green carpet, though the walls were the same rough, dark stone as the rest of the castle. A desk was pushed against one wall, with one of the 'screens' (the same things that showed different images in the hallways) and a board with the alphabet along with stranger symbols on it. A small round mattress with a red blanket and pillows - pillows! - was in another corner.

But all of this -- even sleeping on a bed -- paled compared to the wooden chest in the center of the room, and what he found inside it. The note read 'A little welcome home gift, hope you enjoy -- Megs, Likky, Reg (and the Boss, but he'll deny it so don't ask).'

Board games, a set of playing cards, wood and basic tools, cloth and stuffing and sewing supplies, a handful of unusual toys he'd never seen before -- it was the best gift he'd ever gotten. Well, technically, it was the *only* gift he'd ever gotten, but still.

And he knew exactly what he wanted to do with it, spending a good chunk of the night working while Sir Banana Brain chattered happily on. There was a mirror behind the door, and he admired his work in it.

It was his suit, but clean and without patches. Bright red and deep purple-blue, soft white and striking yellow, tinkling bells and curled shoes -- for the first time in his memory, his reflection actually looked like it belonged to him.

He wasn't free, he wasn't stupid enough to believe he ever would be, but for the first time in years...

He was happy. Happy enough to play...

— end of "The Doll" —