

by Negaduck 1 year ago

"Oh jeez.. how are you even still alive? Clearly somebody hasn't been topping up the mouse bait."

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"Not everyone tries as hard to kill me as you do, you know..."

by Negaduck 1 year ago

"Try?" purred the villain with a sort of patronising reassurance. "Since when have I ever tried? If I had, I would suspect a little thing like you would be six feet under by now..."

Either his memory had failed him or he planned on toying with her. Chances were fifty fifty.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"W-what do you mean you haven't tried?" she asked incredulously, nervously as she wondered what he had up his sleeve. Though of course, it was only a matter of time before she took the so-called 'mouse bait'. She never did learn...

"Of course you've tried! I mean... what do all those other encounters qualify as?"

Mental torture, clearly...

by Negaduck 1 year ago

"Minor... diversions." Sensing that this downplay of their colourful history may have drawn objections, the crook caught her eyes and chuckled preemptively.

"Oh come on, you don't think I'd waste my time hunting down a lamb like you, do you?"

That carefree 'reassurance' was blackened by the ominous rumble that came next.

"Not unless you give me a ~reason~..."

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"You act like I go out of my way to give you reasons..." she said weakly, looking all about for a decent exit, or at least something heavy to throw. Wondering once again why she always somehow came across Public Enemy Number One when all she wanted was a nice walk. ALWAYS. It was like running across him and being threatened or sniped at was becoming a mandatory part of her life.

"I haven't even DONE anything to you! not lately at least. Nothing that can constituted as annoying..."

by Negaduck 1 year ago

"And I'm sure you'll keep it that way."

A thoughtful pause, and a sudden change of tack.

"So, I hear that cowboy of yours is back in town." The nonchalance of that revelation was new, the menacing smile that followed was not. "Will we be actually -invited- to the church this time?"

As if the issue of marriage was not sensitive enough between the two, there was also the problem of dealing with armed and dangerous gatecrashers.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"No, you're not, because there isn't going to be a need for a church," she said, folding her arms and hiking her shoulders up a bit in a defensive gesture.

"There isn't going to be any wedding. And I'd appreciate it if you stayed away from him and refrained from telling him ridiculous stories about how -I- jumped you."

That had been an embarrassing question to be asked out of nowhere in bed.

"You were doing so well. Leave us alone, won't you? You can't be as bored as all that."

by Negaduck 1 year ago

"Sweetheart, I wouldn't ~dream~ of ruining your little love-in," he, surprisingly, conceded. "I mean, from all accounts you make such a fine couple. Sure, some may have their doubts, but it's how you feel for each other that matters, right?"

What was this, reverse psychology? It must have been, for there was no hint of sarcasm or taunting. There was no way on Earth he could have possibly been sincere.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

Lilly blinked. Really? He was going to leave them alone? She should be suspicious. She should be very wary, worried, puzzled...

It may have been naive of her, but she beamed.

"You mean that? That's... that's fantastic, thank you! Right, if that's all, I'll be going now."

by Negaduck 1 year ago

And he wiggled his fingers cheerfully in goodbye, an unusually pleasant smile across his beak.

"Toodles!"

Whatever he had in the works clearly did not require her to be worried. How un-Negaduck of him.

~~~~~

**by Lilly Teal 1 year ago**

A rather unhappy young woman sighed as she stepped in and waited. She was all for getting used books to sell on, and it really didn't matter to her where they came from, but did she really have to come to the donator's place of work for this? Of course she did. She was an idiot like that.

'I'm sorry I can't bring them over. Why don't you come over THE LOCAL JAIL and collect them yourself?' 'Why that sounds perfectly agreeable and I'm sure waiting in sight of the holding cells will not be unpleasant in any way!'

Stupid stupid stupid. If only the man would hurry. Luckily most of the holding cells seemed to be empty. She didn't want her amazing knack of getting into trouble catching up with her at this point.

**by Negaduck 1 year ago**

Empty.

Except one.

"Well, fancy meeting a girl like you in a place like this." Slinking out of the shadows, the sole prisoner draped his yellow-jacketed arms around the cell bars in the suavely casual manner that better befitted a nightclub. Normal manner, normal cliched greeting, odd situation.

"Come to share a delightful story or two?" Negaduck inquired of her lightly, with only a hint of spite.

**by Lilly Teal 1 year ago**

Caught off guard, Lilly let out a frightened squeak and instinctively started stammering.

"I- I what, no, I was just... that is, I only- ah, came to get... something, it's not..."

Finally getting herself under control, she blinked. "Wait... you're on the other

side of the bars. You- you got arrested? Oh. Well. Um."

**by Negaduck 1 year ago**

"Yeah, but when they hear my side of the story, I'm sure I'll be in the clear," he drawled sardonically, inspecting his nails - how did ducks even HAVE nails? - before glancing up at Lilly again.

"You didn't know? It's been all over the news for HOURS. My, they don't get much more sheltered than you, do they?" A grin spread over his bill, but Negaduck returned to the topic at hand. "That's where half the station is. Revelling in their blind luck."

With a jerk of his head, the captured crook indicated down the 'authorised access only' hallway, from where the sounds of a television and congratulatory chatter could be heard. That would explain why nobody was rushing out to help her.

And why nobody was monitoring their conversation.

**by Lilly Teal 1 year ago**

"I don't watch the news much. At all," she admitted sheepishly. It would explain why she never knew anything about the villain of the moment chatting it up with her all friendly-like, which happened a lot more often than it should.

"Oh. Celebrating, how nice," she added with slight annoyance. "No wonder everyone was 'too busy' and I had to come here myself. And why I have to wait here. I did wonder about that." Folding her arms, she huffed a bit, looking as fearsomely annoyed as a dewy-eyed kitten.

We're TERRIFIED.

**by Negaduck 1 year ago**

"They probably won't be the slightest bit interested in you until after the transfer for the Supervillains Prison arrives." His gaze lingered down the hall too, mostly to avoid the temptation to goad her 'fierceness'. "Then there'll be more cops, more politicians and... ergh, more press."

From the pained way he massaged his forehead, it was obvious it was a process the masked mallard had been through many times. It never got easier or less humiliating. And he hadn't even been caught doing anything bad-ass! Hardly made it worth it.

Perking up though, he suddenly beamed his most convincing smile at Lilly.

"You know, if you REALLY want to teach them a lesson, you could let me loose. That'd show 'em."

That'd show them alright.

**by Lilly Teal 1 year ago**

For a few moments she could only stare, the monumental brazenness of the suggestion catching her off guard once more.

"What? No. That's just... disproportionate retribution. It's like burning down a whole office block because you had to wait while the receptionist was gossiping on the phone."

Which he might actually have done. She took a teensy step away from the bars.

"Besides, you'll kill me..."

**by Negaduck 1 year ago**

That produced a quirk of the brow.

"And why would I do that?" Resting his head on his hand, which was in turn resting on a horizontal bar, Negaduck drummed on the steel with bored irritation. As if the question was so absurd it barely warranted an answer. "If you were so ~kind~ as to give me my freedom, I'd hardly be in the mood for murdering you."

A pause, then a vaguely reassuring 'hush hush' sort of gesture.

"Now don't.. don't get your feathers in a fluster." There was actually an element of worry in his smile, making it look more genuine than his usual sly expression. Who knows how he faked THAT. "You could very well be the last pretty face I get to talk to in a long time. You wouldn't deprive me of that, would you?"

Or, to put it another way, you wouldn't run away before I've had a chance to manipulate you properly, would you?

**by Lilly Teal 1 year ago**

So many ways to answer that. She could leave quietly, she could shut him down and leave, she could scream and hope someone would come and shut him up, or hope the imminent threat of someone coming would shut him up, she could... stay... he looked more sincere than he ever ha- WHAT wait NO. We're not entertaining that choice. Not ever.

It was vital to end this conversation somehow so she wouldn't get sucked into trouble. Again. And again and again and AGAIN.

"... don't look like that. Seeing you worried is very... um, worrying. Because you never worry..."

**by Negaduck 1 year ago**

The bars were gripped frightfully tight, mostly because she was not quite within range of a good shaking by the collar. That would probably scare her away anyway.

"I'm going to prison," urged through clenched teeth so the force of a yell didn't alert the supposedly vigilant guards. "You understand that, right? I H--"

Suddenly, he stopped short (don't even start with the puns). There was no point telling her how much he hated it - nobody liked prison, aside from Quackerjack, and chances were she would imagine he was only hating on the food choices.

No, he had something much more powerful to work with.

Eyeing her intently, he asked, "You do know what'll happen to me if I don't get out of there fast enough, don't you?"

Come on, there was no way she was possibly sheltered that much.

**by Lilly Teal 1 year ago**

"But... you've been to prison so many times," she said in flusteration, a headache building. "Supervillain high-security and all that, and you've always managed to get out. How would this be any different?"

She had a point there, Negs.

"... wait, what? I mean, life imprisonment, isn't it? That's what's presumably going to happen?"

Because if they really wanted him dead, they'd just do it instead of ferrying him all about the prisons, right? Made sense to her.

"You won't be there long enough for any lasting consequences. You always manage to get out."

We believe in you Neggie!

**by Negaduck 1 year ago**

Her non-realisation was too big a hit for his patience, resulting in a crazed cross between a wild flail and an attempt to claw at her like a rapid polar bear.

Sucking in a breath though, the villain quickly forced himself calm. Well. Calm-ish.

"I'm not due for life imprisonment, I'm due for execution," he hissed urgently.

"Yeah sure, I've escaped before. But that's because there's a whole lot of bureaucratic nonsense that goes on before you can kill a guy legally."

Becoming increasingly twitchy at the mere thought of it, his masked eyes darted around, full of fear.

"But they're catching on. Speeding up the process so there's not a huge delay between when they catch me and when they can finish the job. Hell, they're probably already warming up the Chair now!"

Sheer panic fell into defeat as he stared through the cell, and yet saw nothing.

"I.. I don't know whether I'll make it this time."

A gold star performance.

The truth was, of course, that Negaduck was highly confident of his own escape abilities. But a prison break didn't happen magically on its own. He made it happen. By pinning down a flaw in the security system. By fighting his way out with pure force. Or by roping somebody unsuspecting in to do the hard work for him.

And guess who the somebody was this time.

**by Lilly Teal 1 year ago**

Jumping back at his aggravated reaction, she watched his performance with increasingly worried eyes, her tender, gullible heart breaking.

Then she blinked slowly, realising something. Since she had never exactly had a pokerface, the dawning was quite plain on her face.

"You deserve to die."

There wasn't even an ounce of malice in that statement. It was more like she was talking to herself, and he wasn't even part of the conversation anymore.

"I mean really, after everything you've done... and in any case what did you even expect me to do to help?"

Another valid question.

**by Negaduck 1 year ago**

Shards of true, genuine, sincere shock broke through the cracks of what was a highly engineered front.

"... you can't mean that."

The devastation the assertion carried was not the result of being hurt - that would require the capability to feel - no matter how similar to hurt it sounded. It was the devastation of having her shatter his plan with one swift blow.

"Well... there is... uh..."

Oh Negaduck had suggestions aplenty for how she could help him.

Without the premise that he was somehow worth saving, however, he had no answers as to why.

**by Lilly Teal 1 year ago**

"At the moment, I do," she said half-worriedly, feeling horrible and wishing she'd just gone away without saying anything.

"I don't want to wish death on anyone, but..." Deep breath. "There isn't a single reason you could give me that would make me want to help you, I don't think."

Not one. Challenge laid down.

"So if that's all..."

If it WAS, she might as well wait outside.

**by Negaduck 1 year ago**

His last card. Not one he particularly wanted to use, for a host of reasons. Not so much a host as a swarm. A killer bees swarm. Of reasons.

Still, it would be easier dealing with those after the fact than busting out of the maximum security jail once he was on the inside. Those walls.. they seemed to get higher every time he was back.

"Mal's pregnant," he blurted out.

And, if he survived, she was going to kill him.

**by Lilly Teal 1 year ago**

If Lilly had had anywhere near the lung power of the masked mallard, the walls, or at least the bars, would have set a-shaking at her reply.

"Pregnant?!"

This garnered a lot less of the sympathetic response he might have expected in place of an irate one.

"Pregnant! What were you THINKING?! or were you thinking at all? I just... it

isn't... you... she's not FIT to be a mother!" At least not yet, unless it was a totally demon baby... "And you're not fit to be a father!" EVER!

"The poor thing is going to DIE! This is... I don't... aaagh!"

Arms were flailed. She picked up the keys as if to open the door and strangle him, then dropped them again.

"No. I don't care." She'd... never been this honestly angry at him before. Rage against his smugness was one thing, but if he was telling the truth, there was a baby at stake. "I can't believe... of all the irresponsible... find your own way out! The baby will benefit from a few days of sa... halfway sanity. GoodBYE."

**by Negaduck 1 year ago**

What a scolding. He even cringed a little. All worth it for the sight of her picking up the keys; right up until the moment she dropped them again.

Panic after that was not to do with escaping, it was to do with the consequences of Lilly walking out that door and who she would likely speak to.

"No... no, wait!"

To no avail.

Silence followed.

"Well," he announced with the chipper cheerfulness of somebody who may have shot himself in the head had his weaponry not be confiscated.

"That backfired."

~~~~~

by Negaduck 1 year ago

The world of crime was tough. It was cruel. It chewed up those who wandered greedily into its mist and spat them out again like an over-used piece of tobacco.

Which did not explain in the slightest why Negaduck was relaxing on a pool side banana lounge at one of the city's best roof top resorts.

"Doesn't get much better than this..." he murmured, stretching out with a newspaper that hid his face.

The black skull boxers-- er, improvised 'swimming trunks' -- were a little harder to hide, but nobody seemed to question him on it anyway.

Peeking around the corner of the paper, he noticed a wealthy couple glide on by... just in time to trip them into the pool and catch their drinks.

"Huh. What'd you know." Slllllurrrrrrp. "It does."

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

The old dog sitting next to him, similarly engrossed in his paper, turned the corner of it towards him to dispassionately observe the couple fall with many enraged and startled squawks. Flicking a few drops off his fur, he turned back to the paper with a light "Good show."

Clearly he wasn't the type to sympathise.

"Ghastly, isn't it?" he continued, not lifting his gaze and apparently speaking to the paper he was reading. "Top of the world, money and power, and all these louts do is come to the pool every week to bask and call it exercise. Oh."

The oh of interest was prompted by a little article in the paper. "Plans to unearth rumoured Tesla blueprints. Is the device really as dangerous as they say? Good luck, good luck, they wouldn't find it..."

Lilly, go away and relax. Take money. Take ALL my money. Darryl had been very insistent, worried that she'd fret herself to death. He had been right, all in all. She was feeling much calmer now that she was out and about. Granted, she wasn't the tax-bracket to actually be here, but no-one had said anything so far. No embarrassing sneers, everyone was too busy chilling. She had intended to do the same, especially when she found out there was a pool. First order of business with the money had been a nice swimsuit so she could actually, you know, swim.

Second order of business was to relax for a bit before actually swimming, so she picked a nice spot on the edge of the pool and stretched. This was something like it. There was no way she was going to let anything stress her this time.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

"The Tesla doomsay device?" The criminal's non-existent ears pricked up at the subject. "Not much is known about it, but they say it definitely packs enough bang for its buck."

Tilting his head, gears turning, he asked the obvious question, "What'd you mean, 'they wouldn't find it'?"

Out of purely scientific curiosity of course. Nothing he was genuinely interested in. Really, what could a psychotic, destructive, twisted megalomaniac do with a doomsday device?

The presence of Lilly, meanwhile, went unnoticed. Not even a wolf whistle. How thoughtless.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"I mean," the dog said in a rather bored tone of voice, "that the plans themselves, half-burnt and illegible as they are, were secured by a collector, a very rich and mistrusting man. I don't believe anyone knows where he kept them, though I have a shrewd idea."

And you are indeed shrewd. He turned the page, still acting as if the paper was the most interesting thing he'd seen all day.

"The plans themselves are valuable for what they are, but ultimately useless. What one would want is the restored copy of the plans. He had them made only out of curiosity, the old fool, and didn't care what became of it. Left it in his library somewhere. Probably using it as a bookmark."

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Eyes narrowed, and thoughtfully he handed over the one drink he hadn't yet slurped out of. There was something about free liquor that tended to keep people talking.

"You sound like you know an awful lot about this," he inquired, weighting the statement carefully. "Any reason why that would be...?"

People didn't generally dangle tantalising bits of information in front of the city's most prominent Public Enemy unless they were going somewhere with it, or they were incredibly stupid. Certainly not when said Enemy had such a short fuse he would put someone through the ring out of sheer frustration should they prove unable to provide further fundamental details.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"I'm something of a collector myself," he said as he just as thoughtfully accepted the drink, taking a measured sip before setting it aside. Loose lips sink ships, after all.

"Not to mention I do like to help people in the market for anything not strictly straightforward. I was hoping to get at both copies. The original for myself, of course, but the restored copy with it's full details to the highest bidder. Unfortunately I can't pinpoint the exact location of either. If you could, with your so many contacts and frighteningly effective techniques, find both of them, all I really want is the illegible original. The copy belongs to whoever

finds it."

Another sip. Exposition was thirsty work.

"My own contacts have been no use. The old man's very, very careful. All I've heard is that a dark-haired girl's been there to collect some books. Perhaps she's seen something, but I haven't any detail on her."

by Negaduck 1 year ago

To say the offer had piqued his interest would have been somewhat of an understatement. Not that he was particularly keen to do ground work himself, but with such a promising venture, he was willing to make an exception.

"Dark-haired girl?" Wrinkling his bill in thought, it took a few moments to make a connection.

But lowering the newspaper to consider it revealed the answer nicely.

Eyes locked onto the timid beauty opposite, seemingly oblivious to the discussion, and it all came together.

Not with a wolf whistle. Just a disbelieving,

"You've got to be kidding me."

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

Lilly indeed had no inkling that she was being discussed. Utterly oblivious, she sighed happily. This was clearly the best idea ever.

"What?" the dog turned another page, apparently not even hearing mental gears grinding to a halt of startled realisation next to him. "I'm not kidding. 'Dark-haired girl' was all they gave me. I mean, what do I even pay them for? Certainly not falling asleep on the job."

It was so inconsiderate of them, forcing him to discipline them so messily, it really was.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Mental gears were cranking up slowly again, from the look of the thoughtful stare, and the sound of his far off,

"Yeeeeeah..."

Before the crook had any opportunity to put a plan into action, however, somebody else did. Namely six other somebodies, all dressed in blue, all carrying rather solid looking beating sticks.

"THERE HE IS!"

From there there was a flurry of chaos. Apparently a supervillain in disguise - disguise being his shorts and a newspaper - getting entangled in a sunlounge as he attempted to escape a mob of police was quite a scene.

Sure, he was gone in seconds, but it hardly made for a relaxing atmosphere, did it?

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

It wasn't relaxing at all. Not even the very slightest bit. Which was why a marginally less relaxed than previously Lilly was back home soon enough.

Well, she was a lot more relaxed than before she'd gone, at least. Lord only knew what the fuss was about. There'd been so much commotion and shouting and too much action going on everywhere, and it had made her so nervous she'd had to slip out before she figured out what was going on.

Ah well. Home had none of that fuss...

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Scarcely a day later, a little chime at the door indicated the arrival of a new customer. A customer who intended to let himself in, hopefully unnoticed, and find the needle in a bookshelf he was after.

And if that didn't work, Plan B was to insinuate himself into her confidence.

How? Why, by turning himself into a nerdy, bookish girl she could relate to.

Which may have sounded simple, but without assistance of magic or freakishly improbable science, it required a wee bit of work. The clothes, the hair, the attitude, had to all scream 'geek girl'. Well, not so much scream as hint gently, because Lilly's type didn't generally scream anything. Something that would take an amount of discipline on his part. But he was Negaduck, and he was naturally brilliant at everything.

Except keeping the long, fussy brown hair of the wig out of his still masked eyes long enough to see anything.

"Goddamnit, where are-- ow!" Growling and grumbling under his breath, fighting both the wig and the overly geeky glasses slipping down his bill was quickly feeding into frustration. The resultant bumping into bookcases and the random junk Lilly had scattered around the store did not help any. "Stupid, bloody..."

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"Um." Came a sound as Lilly stepped out the back to see what looked like a

very messy young woman slamming into everything. It was just as well for Negaduck's plans that she hadn't heard him muttering and grumbling in his battery-acid voice.

"Can I help you? Are you looking for..."

She paused, not sure a book was the first priority.

"A bandaid? ... a comb?"

by Negaduck 1 year ago

The question gave him enough of a startle to help blow the loose strands of hair out of his eyes. The coke bottle glasses conveniently were enough to cover the mask... if usual St Canardian logic applied.

"No." Idiot, defaulting to his regular all-too-male voice. Covering it up with a cough, he tried again, in as high a pitch as his physiology would let him. "I mean.. no, I'm fine. I'm just too shy and dainty to take care of myself properly sometimes."

Okay, maybe that was too much too soon. Pull it back, Negs.

"Erm... is this your store?"

There, that was harmless enough. Couldn't go charging in like he knew her and knew the shop and knew that incredibly infuriating cousin of hers or anything.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

She gave him a long, nearly disbelieving stare at the weak and timid woman comment, but luckily for him bizarre St. Canardian logic was still in effect.

"Yes, this is my shop. I'm Lilly, pleased to meet you." At least I think I am... I'm certainly MEANT to be. "Can I help you with anything? You seem a little lost..."

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Having finally regained his balance physically, Negaduck regained it mentally, and straightened. Then he remembered he was meant to be reserved, and hunched over nervously.

"Yeah, I'm just a little shaken... my good old Uncle Stinky passed away today." Cue the waterworks. Yeah, he was good at those. "We were so close... I-I don't know what I'm going to do without him..."

Bawl bawl. Sniffle sniffle. Blowing his not so dainty beak with a handkerchief, he dabbed his eyes dry, doing his best

brave-face-crumbling-under-the-weight-of-heartfelt-sorrow. Not that Lilly would be pulled in by that, surely.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

She was supposed to be sympathetic, she knew, but it wasn't coming out properly.

"Er... I'm so sorry," she said, sounding more confused than remorseful. Did you just come in here to tell me that? "But I'm afraid this isn't a... look, this is a bookshop not a... did you come to get a book on coping or something?"

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Sympathetic? Maybe a little. Then again, she hadn't exactly turned on the sympathy last time he had tried to toy with her emotions, so who knew what triggered the mothering instinct with this one.

Thankfully, what he needed did not hinge on receiving sympathy.

"I.. I heard before he passed, he had donated lots of books from his collections to a local girl. And since you're the only book collector around these parts... I figured they may have come to you."

Another nose blow, 'bravely' gathering 'herself'.

"I would love to get them back... so many memories attached to them, you know? Sitting there, losing ourselves in the stories..." Le sigh, focus. "Just something to remember him by."

Wringing the handkerchief, meeting her eyes.

"I'm happy to pay."

Not that a poorly dressed young thing like her would have piles and piles of money to just throw around, oh no.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

The mothering instinct was mostly triggered by anything that was NOT making her too confused to react any other way. You know, just like Negaduck was doing. Overdoing. She sighed, feeling a little bad for her lack of overbearing sympathy.

"Sit down, dear. Have some water. Now, you say he donated quite a few books here? I'll be happy to help you, of course, if you could just give me the name, or the address, anything I can identify the books with."

After all, if they had really been donated, she would have made a note of them before organising them into their respective shelves. You knew that, right

Negsie?

by **Negaduck 1 year ago**

Doing as instructed, he sat and tried to not appear startled by the question. Or the obvious logic to it. Or the fact he hadn't even considered to investigate the apparent giver's details.

"Er... you mean you don't remember?" Stalling, sounding somewhat indignant despite himself. "It was yesterday! How many old rich guys on hills do you visit?!"

A cough, and he toned it down to bashful and genuinely-happy-thoughtful-kind again.

"I mean... business must be running awfully well then."

Under his breath, because that same St Canardian logic meant he could get away with it:

"Like hell."

by **Lilly Teal 1 year ago**

"What was that?"

Goodness she could be perceptive at terrible moments. Luckily she hadn't heard properly. "Do you have a cough?"

Got me some cough syrup to pour down you throat.

"And no, I really can't remember, I'm sorry. If I could have a name, or even the names of a few books, it would help me find them for you."

by **Negaduck 1 year ago**

Winning inwardly at the close call, the disguised villain recovered with grabbing motions to his throat.

"Yes, I'm sorry, a bit of a sore throat..." Rasp rasp. Cough cough. Engage higher pitch. PROPERLY, this time.

To the last statement though, he had another kind of reaction.

The 'oh crap' kind.

"Uh.. sure. It's... it's..."

A folded newspaper, probably dropped by a customer, caught his eye. The article he couldn't make out, but a name he could.

"Fudgeinhiemer RattleStink," he blurted.

There. It was a probability against all probabilities that was the name in question, but it was a name. And while she was busy looking that name up, he could whack her over the head and search through the piles of books himself.

Couldn't be THAT hard, could it?

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

Lilly just stared blankly at 'her' for a few moments.

"I don't want to say you're not telling the truth. You must just be distraught and confused. Because there has never been any donations by that name. Believe me, I'd REMEMBER a name like that."

It was so long and bizarre, how could one not?

"Here. Have some water, take a deep breath, think, and try again..."

You're starting to worry me.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

"What? Oh..."

Taking a small obligatory sip of the water, he rubbed his forehead in the manner of one 'distraught and confused'. Strangely enough, it also fitted the manner of a maniac reigning in the last vestiges of a highly flammable temper.

'A full frontal nuclear assault would've been easier. Now I'm gonna have to...'

Suddenly, a thought struck him.

"Hornswell."

Yes, he'd heard that name around the traps, hadn't he? After all, a rich old collector didn't go unnoticed in criminal circles. Sitting up straighter, he pronounced again with confidence,

"His last name was Hornswell."

Odd, perhaps, that a hornbill had a duck for a niece, but St Canard was a cosmopolitan city. Interspecies families weren't that uncommon.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"Hornswell?" she perked up at that. "That's a name I seem to remember. Give me five minutes while I go look it up."

She rushed off obligingly. Well, this seemed to be going well.

"Hewwo," said a one-year-old voice cheerfully.

... well dang.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

"WAGH!"

Recoiling in horror, Negaduck flailed and toppled backwards off his chair. Frantically, not wanting to be ambushed by whatever THING was out there, he fixed himself, brushed the wig out of his face and with big, startled eyes, stared out from under the table.

"What the HELL was that?!" murmured to himself, every muscle tense as his eyes darted about, searching for the existence of a pink, fluffy nightmare vision.

His one terrible weakness.

The Cute.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

There was a delighted giggling as the strange woman performed such an entertaining escapade, and the patter of unsteady little feet.

Feet? It had started learning to walk?

"Hai!" Rosa greeted again, suddenly appearing in his line of vision, and close enough to be right up in his beak. How'd he get so close so fast?

"Who yu?"

Oh God, it had learned speech.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Another violent startle. Except this time he was under the table rather than at it, and the flinch caused him to whack his head on the woodwork.

"OOF!"

Suppressing a curse - luckily, lest Rosa raise suspicions by referring to her new friend as "#\$*&!" - Negaduck rubbed his skull in pain, then turned that scowl on the cuteness before him.

It induced horrible, violent feelings in him.

That would not be good for his cover.

Picking himself up, he decided that ignoring the specter of doom would be the most effective, less bloody approach. So he sat back in the up-righted chair, tried to look 'proper', and warned the child off with an urgently whispered,

"Go. Shoo. Beat it."

Like that would ever work.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

Shoo? This was her house, dammit and no-one shooed her. Oh he was going to pay. In affection. Toddling on over, she looked solemnly up at the strange woman, before giving 'her' leg an experimental hug.

OH GOD GET IT OFF.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

ARGH THAT WAS HIS LINE.

Nevermind, he managed to convey that with body language alone. The sort of body language that would be expected from a person who had a rabid monkey climbing up their limb wielding rusty knives and wearing a BANDANA. That was the only possible explanation for the panicked epileptic jig he performed, wildly scattering furniture and literature across the storeroom floor.

There was frantic yelling too, needless to say. But it wasn't like Lilly would ever hear that, would she? Arguments on the laws of cartoons aside, if she returned to find him treating her baby as if she was a zombieified, blood-sucking creature from beyond, his torment would suddenly be over. Surely the laws of karma would have something to say about that.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

With a surprised squeal, Rosa held on grimly as the woman flailed about, fixing her grip a little higher until Negaduck overbalanced and smacked onto his back. Giggling delightedly, she perched herself on the disguised villain's chest and clapped.

"Yay!"

Aaaaw, she thought they were playing.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Once the daze had worn off, his eyes locked onto the little giggling mass of joy on his middle. Except 'locked' indicated some level of focus; the unhinged,

dilated pupils of a madman taunted were anything but.

Growl rolling around in his chest - the burbly vibrations of which probably only encouraged her - hands reached back to find something, anything, to strike at the scourge of sweetness. Fingers closed around an item that had been knocked off the shelves during the scuffle... a thick, leather-bound copy of Magnets, Magnets, Magnets. This riveting read was as large as an encyclopaedia and three times as heavy.

Carefully assessing his target, watching for any sudden movements, he waited for the perfect moment and then ---WHACK!--- Negaduck slammed the book down over his head to clobber the unsuspected chickling on his stomach with every ounce of force he had.

If he could stun it, shoving the troublesome creature into an office shredder would be a piece of cake, right?

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

As soon as the book began to swing, fate decreed that the giggling child should squeak and lose her balance, rolling off of her new friend. His stomach no doubt got the full brunt of the blow.

Ah well, that's what happens when you don't play carefully, isn't it? Someone's going to get a bump or two. Unfazed by any sounds of pain or rage that may have manifested after that event, she crawled right back, sat by his head, and cutely picked his glasses off of his face to try for herself.

Awwwww.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Full brunt was right. He damn near flattened himself.

Wheezing and gasping from the boulder-esque winding, the incognito criminal rolled painfully onto his side, edging to stand.

Except before he did, Negaduck came face-to-face with triple cuteness.

Shock melted into rage as a determined scowl crossed his features. Fingers twitched. Slowly, carefully, he drew himself up. Soon he would be prepared to pounce. And as soon as the child was within his grasp, it was bye-bye Rosa.

"Come here you little..." he breathed as much as growled, just a whisper, as the moment for lunging drew imminent.

His predatory hunting instinct, his focus on his prey, however, meant that he was nowhere as near concerned about the disappearance of the glasses as he was destroying the creature that held them. But so what? They only hid his

mask. And nobody ever noticed that anyway.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

Trying on the glasses, Rosa squeaked as the world suddenly got huge and distorted, looking all around and blinking adorably until they fell off on their own accord.

"Whups."

She looked up at the advancing criminal in surprise. "Yu gotta mawsk." What, was it October already? "Wai yu gotta mawsk? I can has?"

Oh what a happy thought. She pre-empted the pounce by toddling right up to him instead, reaching up for his beak.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

"NO YOU CAN NOT HAS." His grammar devolving alongside any sense of villainous dignity. Honestly, how was it again that a child that tiny could trounce him so easily?

Speaking of trouncing, since Negaduck was no higher than a low crouch, the curious toddler was able to place most of her weight on the tip of his bill as she leaned for the mask. And since his bill was so large, it bent down further and further until... THWACK! It sprang back with enough force to catapult a diminutive chickling well into the air.

Or with enough force to thwack himself in the face. Really wasn't his day, was it?

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

Why go for either when you could have both? The beak catapulted the baby into the air, thwaked him int the face, and came to rest with an odd little woioiiiiing noise like a ruler plucked over the desk, just in time for the airborne chickling to land on top of his head, knocking his hat right off. Whether the force was enough to knock him on his face was yet to be seen. No. Really not his day at all. For Rosa, though, it was all excitement. Clapping her little hands together with a happy squeal, she would lean over to tug at his fuzzy cheeks whether he was flat on his beak or groggily just managing to keep his feet. Either way, cheeks would be tugged.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

"MFFFFFF EY OWW!" Cheek tugging was not appreciated from the sounds of that, however it may have been exaggerated due to his burning dislike for affectionate touch.

Flailing uselessly, Negaduck struggled to pry the baby off - why did a grown drake struggle with a baby? Turned out there was not so much a hat upon his

head as a ratty wig, and that wig had been pushed over his eyes with baby's sudden landing. No vision, no patience, hence flailing.

In true form, however, he eventually got the fake hair out of his eyes enough, and a snatch at the chickling accurately enough, that it looked like he was soon to turn triumphant.

Yet it was not to be - in his struggles he failed to notice an abandoned rattle lying around, which his big webbed feet soon slipped on. Skidding along uncontrollably as if the toy underfoot was an actual roller-skate, the two of them hurtled across the store. All aboard chaos express! Crashing, into something large and painful, was inevitable.

"YEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEAAAAAAAARGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGHHHH
HHHHH!!!"

Oh yeah, it was a wonder he didn't drop past the bookstore more often.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

Once again landing on top of without a scratch, the giggling little girl picked up her rattle and smiled goily at Negaduck as she chewed on it. Yum. It occurred to her that her friend might want to play, so she held it out, utterly miscalculating the distance. The result was a cartoony bonk that initially startled her, but soon set her off giggling again. What a funny noise! bonk bonk bonk The sticky, well-chewed rattle made short work of the stability of the wig on his scalp.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

The cartoony bonk initially enraged the beset crime boss, but before he could react with semi-unwarranted violence, the subsequent bops made short work of his consciousness too.

My, the girl had a strong arm. Wonder where that could have come from?

Dazed, delirious, but not out, the freshly de-wigged deviant wagged a finger aimlessly about as if to make a greatly insightful point.

"When beetles fight these battles in a bottle with their paddles..." he garbled. Not a bad start.

Too bad if he snapped out of it before he finished it though.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

Lilly had found a folded bit of paper. This did not look like anything you'd use as a bookmark and forget about. In fact it looked like something Darryl would

heartily approve of with a mad gleam in his eye.

Surely the girl had no idea.

Even though she hadn't known the name.

And was very strangely insistent...

Oh dear.

Worried, she tucked the paper into her pocket and ran to the front again.

Oh God.

"Rosa!" she squeaked in horror. Yes. The baby was the one to worry about, not the poor supervillain. So much for priorities.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

"... they call this a puddle tweetle poodle beetle noodle bottle paddle battle," he concluded in a babble, oblivious.

Full consciousness returned sharply, however, the moment a new voice entered the conversation.

Propping upright, he snapped back into character.

"Oh I'm sooo sorry," crooned in a timid 'ladylike' pitch. "Your little lady and I were getting getting to know.. each.. other..."

Cue gradual realisation that his wig and his glasses - essentially the better part of his disguise - had been lost in the scuffle.

Funny how even a supervillain could appear intimidated by a concerned mother. With nowhere else to go, he scooted backward, conveniently but not deliberately carrying the baby on his middle back with him.

Then, a resigned pause.

"Ah crap."

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"NEGADUCK." If Lilly had ever sounded disbelievingly enraged, it was now at being fooled so thoroughly and then seeing the fooler in question with her baby.

"What on EARTH are you... of all the STUPID- give me Rosa this instant!"

Ah, there was the underlying worry again, slipping out with the tail-end of her demand. As much as her anger often blinded her to basic common sense and survival, she didn't want anything to happen to her child. Negaduck wasn't the sanest of people, after all, or one with any morals.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Slumped as he was on the floor, back against the shop wall, toddler propped on his middle, Negaduck looked her up and down for a moment.

Then, not roughly, just enough to prevent her from say crawling off and somehow running a tank over him, he held onto Rosa.

"No," stated simply enough, as if keeping a mother from her child was a matter he could be flippant about. "Not until you give me THAT."

A nod with his head, since his hands were full of toddler, towards a piece of paper that happened to be sticking out of her pocket. Maybe it was fantastic eye sight, maybe it was fantastic instinct, but regardless of how he deduced it, he knew what he wanted.

And she wasn't getting what she wanted until he had it.

At least, that was the plan.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

She stared at him. Stared at him long and hard, her stare getting harder by the minute.

Oh no he DIDN'T.

"Give. Her. Back," she said softly, sounding almost eerily calm. "When she's with me, and I've made sure she's alright, then you can have it."

What guarantee do I have you won't hurt her for the heck of it when i give you the paper? Your good nature?

by Negaduck 1 year ago

For once in her life, Lilly actually looked fierce. And not just any fierce; fierce enough to put the fear of God into a hardened felon.

Unfortunately, this backfired in that it had the effect of causing him to be even more reluctant to give up his bargaining chip. Drawing Rosa closer to his chest as a shield, not entirely dissimilar to a frightened child holding a favourite teddy tight, he backed up further.

Since he was already against the wall, however, that meant he just sat up straighter. No way was he going to risk taking his attention off Lily for a

second to stand up, not under THAT stare.

"No." Stubborn, perhaps, but that almost came out as a squeak. "You first."

What guarantee do I have that you're not going to pummel me with something heavy when I give her back?

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

No guarantee but my good nature, really.

Her eyes widened, just a little, in something like disbelief. She took a very deliberate step forward, and then three more, still staring at him.

"Mama," Rosa said happily, having no idea what was happening at all. It was rather scary to note that Lilly's face didn't flicker back to motherly softness for even that. She was too busy trying to burn Negaduck's brain through his eyes. How DARE he? How dare he come into HER home, and threaten HER child?

She pulled the paper out of her pocket. "Give her to me. Right NOW."

The, 'or you get this in the throat' was merely implied.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

The uncharacteristically firm demand made him wince back further, tightening his hold on Rosa even more so. He was fearsome, he was ruthless, he was... a coward at heart, really.

Back-pedalling helped to slide his back up the wall, almost into a standing position. At least until one clumsy webbed foot landed on a book that had been displaced during the earlier chaos, and SLIP! Down he went again.

Thankfully, however, the suddenness of gravity allowed for the squirming duckling to 'fall' out of his grasp. Except in this case, falling meant she remained suspended in mid-air for a few crucial seconds. Probably gurgling happily, until gravity took hold of her too...

Negaduck, for his part, was rather groggily sitting back up, having smacked his head on the wall as he had slipped. There was a moment before realisation dawned that the bargaining chip was no longer in his possession...

Nervously, he smiled up at the mother hen, part fearful of her wrath, and part hopeful she would still hand over the plans. He had let go of her daughter, hadn't he? So what if it wasn't voluntary.

"Heh..."

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

No sooner had the baby slipped from his arms... well, first she landed on Negaduck's stomach with a smack, causing her to squeak in surprise. But as soon as that happened, Lilly darted forward and scooped her up with cuddles and coos.

"Are you alright, my darling?"

"Yei mama!" Rosa cheered, finding all this very exciting as she reached up and nuzzled bills with her. Looking down at the drake, who her mother was now standing over, she waved companionably for providing such a nice time.

"Right," Lilly sighed softly, her gentle manner returning slowly as she took the paper out of her pocket. "Take it, then. Take it and get out before I honestly try and hurt you."

It wouldn't be that easy, of course. There was the extreme likelihood of Rosa latching onto a corner of the paper with a fascinated 'ooooooo' while it was being taken away.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Eyeing her carefully - did he believe her? Was she going to hurt him anyway? Was she not? Mothers were a tricky and frankly frightening bunch - Negaduck stood and reached for the paper.

Finally, the work, the humiliation, the exposure to (ugh) babies, would have all been worth it.

Except there was one slight snag. That being the slight little pink thing that had snagged a corner of the blueprints.

Frowning, Negaduck tugged at the other corner. And frowned some more. The chickling would not let up. Either that weirdly amazing baby strength was showing again, or he was worried about tearing it, or the combination of the two; either way, he did not come away with his end of the bargain.

Stepping back and glaring at the tiny child, hands on hips, he attempted to fear her into releasing her diminutive grip. Which may have been more effective if he had not still half been in drag, but one could only guess.

"That's **mine**," he growled, directly at the ball of fluffy feathers and happiness.

Funny how so many things he insistently labelled as his were distinctly not.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

Babies had that exact same problem of claiming things that didn't belong to them...

True to form, Rosa gurgled at him and nibbled the corner of the tasty, tasty blueprints.

"Sweetheart, don't do that. You don't know where it's been..." Lilly chided her gently, detaching her daughter's mouth from the corner, all gummed and gooey.

"Myah!" Rosa burst out, lunging at the plans and proceeding to gnaw until she was forcefully separated from them.

"ROSA. Here. Take it. Go AWAY now."

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Taking the paper by the corner with obvious distaste - the long list of disgusting things he enjoyed did not include anything baby related - Negaduck shook off the drool and tucked it in his pocket.

"Thanks." How sarcastic and snakelike that word seemed coming from him.

No time to retort, however; he was off, albeit with a stumble or two caused by being decidedly unused to wearing a long skirt.

A supervillain didn't have any time to lose when it came to doomsday devices. All the same, he took a copy for himself, and set up a meeting to urgently deliver the plans to the guy who had put him on that path in the first place. The collector. Not that promises meant anything to him, but he was willing to help such a relationship healthy - particularly if it meant easy money for him in the process.

Too bad he hadn't bothered to fully check the damage prior to attending the rendezvous, however.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

The bulldog had little to say, merely raising his eyebrow skeptically at the crumpled and soggy plans. Straightening them out, he looked through the hole chewed smack dab through the centre and raised his eyebrow further.

He sighed.

"Useless. And these the last copy. Well, you tried..."

Son, I am disappoint.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Snapping out of a spontaneous daydream, Negaduck was stunned. He had been so caught up with getting out of there, getting the arrangements sorted and dealing with totally non-demon-related distractions that he hadn't even

bothered to examine the blueprints thoroughly.

"Let me see that." Barging in on the bulldog's space, he flattened out the plans on the bench, searching for confirmation that they weren't really THAT bad.

Except they were, really, that bad.

As realisation set in, outrage swelled in him. Finally, to somebody in particular, he hissed, "It's that baby."

With more vigour, and a distinctly mad gleam his eyes, he wheeled on the collector, and pulled him by the collar so they were maw to beak.

"**That BABY is going to RUIN me!**" he roared, nigh deliriously, before stomping off, flipping over a table and backhanding a random onlooker on his way.

And people wondered why he wasn't fond of children.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"There you are!" came Lilly's voice. Luckily for his continued sanity, or what was left of it, she hadn't brought her baby with her to torment him. "YOu left so quickly, I thought I'd enver find you!"

Lilly... why are you willingly looking for him?

"You dropped this," she added helpfully, rummaging about in her bag for the spare hat he always seemed to have under his cape. At least it wasn't a weapon, so she could return it with a clear conscience.

"Um... did something happen? You look... manic..."

More than usual, I mean.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

However could she have picked up on that. Did it have anything to do with the poor shop clerk whom he had caught without any warning whatsoever by the throat and was, at that very second, struggling to breathe in his murderous grasp?

A pause, a stare, and Negaduck finally dropped the blue-faced innocent in exchange for the hat. Not a word of thanks, mind you, only a bitter explanation as he continued storming down the street, evidently assuming the meek bookkeeper would trail after him. Or not, he didn't really care.

"Oooooohooooo, no, everything is just dandy." The twitch in one eye seemed to say the opposite. "Except for your baby being an unstoppable

doom-bringing gremlin on sugar pops."

And he wasn't meaning doom in a good way.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"What on earth are you... She's a BABY, Negaduck," she felt it necessary to point out as she speeded up to keep up with his enraged stalking. "Hardly a year old. What could the poor thing have possibly done to you?"

Yes. THE POOR, HELPLESS DEAR.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

"EXIST." Simple answer enough. Although it was not really a problem of her existing so much as her refusing to not exist, no matter how many times he found something heavy to drop on her or a handy height to throw her off.

Honestly, that was probably more enraging than the mere act of destroying a priceless, irreplaceable piece of villainy by using it as a teething toy.

And so he continued storming, muttering various violent intentions towards supposedly 'helpless' beings. Particularly of the little and cute kind. Oh, how he hated them. How he hated them all!

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"... you really need to calm down," she sighed after about fifteen minutes of ranting. "I know that sounds very stupid of me to say, but I mean it. What are you going to do later on, otherwise? What with Malicia angling for a baby and all, I'd have thought you'd be trying to come to terms with being a father."

OOPS WAS THAT THE WRONG THING TO SAY?

by Negaduck 1 year ago

His frantic pacing slowed to a walking pace. Morbid curiosity slid his eyes over to Lilly's. No, he hadn't collapsed in shock, because the simple probability of it was that either he had misheard, or the girl had misunderstood. There was no WAY what had tumbled out of her beak could be correct in the way most people would understand it.

"What do you mean, she's 'angling for a baby'?" he probed, warily, careful not to put too much weight on his concern. Lest Malicia put her weight on his...

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"Oh!"

It occurred to her, belatedly, that perhaps Malicia hadn't told him. Clearly she wanted to break it to him gently.

The idea of Malicia not telling him at all never occurred to her.

"Nothing. My mistake. Malicia will tell you when she wants to."

Beam.

"I'm happy for both of you in any case."

I mean... god why, but if Malicia thought he was a good pick... good for her.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

By this stage, the drake had stopped and was staring at Lilly with disbelieving horror, the sort that one might regard an intelligent zombie with.

"What do I want your sickening happiness for?!" As though it was the single most disgusting idea he had ever had the pain of hearing. "Malicia's not into kids. You haven't corrupted her with your hideous caring and motherly love! If her brain had rotted to such a degree, don't you think I would have noticed?!"

That would be a reasonable assumption, yes.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

That's all YOU know. It wasn't me, but she CERTAINLY seems to want one.

"Yes, yes, of course you'd have noticed," she said soothingly. Not that the tone would help his enragement one little bit.

It was perfectly possible she knew that. But Lilly wouldn't choose the tone to be mean on purpose, would she?

"Just forget I said anything at all. Just... good luck?"

"Because... I mean... she's... and you're... both very... um." Violent? Possibly insane?

"Yes, I'm sure it'll all work out."

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Unsurprisingly, he bristled.

"Don't give me that," snapped as his fists balled by his sides. "It will all work out because there's nothing to work out. You're acting if she's become a baby-brained looney, all parenting pointers and nest building!"

A horrible thought caught up to him.

"Waitasec... what does a nest look like?"

You've had thought he would have destroyed enough nurseries to know, but it was doubtful he had been paying attention to the decor at the time.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"Well... er..." she flailed her hands about a bit. It was hard to believe she was telling Negaduck, public enemy number one and attempted ruiner of her life several times, occasionally only by accident, what a nest looked like.

"Malicia's a demoness, so her's might be different... but they're generally sort of round, like a little bed, but like a bed where you've ruffled up a sheets around the sides so it can hold the egg safely, you see... um. Why?"

by Negaduck 1 year ago

No answer. One wasn't really needed, judging from how his bill gaped slightly.

Then all the colour drained from his face.

Which was sort of handy, because it gave more than fair warning that his legs were about to buckle and send him kneeling over. And that was when Public Enemy Number One, ruiner of so very much and the guy that put the Fearsome in Fearsome Five, fainted.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"... oh... oh dear..."

Lilly looked around nervously. What did one do with a supervillain passed out on the street? You took people who had fainted in somewhere calm and safe and tried to rouse them, right? Was that... wise, with someone like this?

For Negaduck's peace of mind, there didn't seem to be anyone around to have seen it. At least it didn't seem so. Maybe we'd see a picture of him having fainted on tomorrow's newspaper.

Unfortunately, it meant that when Lilly sighed, pulled his arm over her shoulders and dragged him towards the shop, she had to struggle on alone. God he was heavy... Eventually, though, she'd managed to get him on the couch in the front room.

"I don't believe this," she muttered to herself, wetting some cloth and putting it on his forehead. "This is ridiculous."

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Groggily and with a groan, he came to. A moment of minor confusion as his vision slowly focused on Lilly's face. Then it all came back abruptly, the recognition, the memories, and his eyes snapped wide open.

"I've got to get out of here!" he proclaimed with no warning whatsoever, making to leap to his feet immediately.

Probably not the best plan of action for somebody whose circulation just failed them. Or for anybody in his position, really.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"Oh no you DON'T," Lilly said firmly, catching him by the back of his turtleneck and pulling him, with an unexpected amount of effort, back onto the couch. "You're not fit to move. Do NOT tell me you're fine. I'll tell you when you can get up, thank you."

She was scolding him like a mother. How horrifically embarrassing.

"Why on EARTH did you faint, anyway?"

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Negaduck probably would have protested the misleading use of the term 'faint' - it was really a strategic pause to allow for a moment of deeper contemplation - had he not been in the middle of a total freak out.

"She IS clucky!" he howled, restless with panic. "It wasn't clear before, but now I see it. Don't you know what this means?"

Snatching Lilly by the collar, he dragged her in until they were beak to beak, eye to masked, unfocused eye. Not in a threatening way. Not even in a sexually inappropriate way. More of the 'crazy guy screaming on a bus' kind of way.

"IT'S THE APOCALYPSE."

It would have been easy to dismiss him as dramatic... but Malicia threatened the structural integrity of the city on a daily basis. Imagine if she was pregnant. Was 'apocalypse' really that far off the mark?

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"You're... overreacting..." Lilly winced as his yelling smashed into her ears. Lifting her hand, she firmly tried to detach his hands from her collar, but he appeared to have embedded his finger right into the fabric, and the only way to pull away was to lose half her poor collar. What was a nice shirt now looked more like a bizarre sort of button-up turtlenck. She sighed.

"It's not like you... look here- you haven't- and-"

But he still seemed hysterical with no end in sight. There was nothing else for it. Knowing full well she'd probably regret this later on, she pulled back her hand and gave him a powerful slap.

"Calm down!"

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Like a giant bell chime, his head vibrated back and forth with a resounding 'DOOOONG'. When it eventually settled, the expression the masked mallard was wearing indicated that she would regret it immediately, although not for the reasons that she may have believed.

"Ooohoo baby, I didn't think you had it in you." With that husky growl, his eyes and cunning smile gleamed in the manner of a wolf who had spied a plate of lamb steaks stacked a few feet tall. Which served to only encourage a second slap, although it appeared he would have enjoyed it.

Fortunately for Lilly, he moved away from that of his own accord.

"Now, what were we talking about?"

Unfortunately, it came back to that. Oh well. Perhaps it was a good time to discuss why he was purring seductively at other women when he already had one apocalypse - or potential apocalypse - to deal with?

Perhaps, as Lilly would have known, the simple answer was that he was hardwired to cause trouble.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"We were talking about you calming down," she said firmly, trying very hard not to be disturbed and a little fascinated by his sudden shift in mood. There was something very, very wrong with him...

"I'm not letting you out until you're calmer and less likely to go into another fit."

You might end up KILLING someone. Or fainting again and tumbling into the bay and I'll feel terrible because you might be horrible but you're still a person. Stretching the definition of person.

"I'll tie you down if I have to, until you're settled."

I'm sorry, no. She really had no idea how that sounded. She was only trying to sound firm.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Brow quirk. My, he was nearly impressed how readily she walked into that one.

"Now why on earth would I bother staying calm if you've promised something like that?" The sly half-grin lingered at the corners of his beak, waiting to see

whether she would pick up on the connotations herself or whether she would need more help.

In a case like this, help of that nature was something he was willing to provide. Day or night, near or far, Negaduck could make you sound five times dirtier than you actually are!

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

She was clearly too focused on the continued survival of St. Canard for his sly quip to quite register just yet, but it was just waiting for her to come back down before assaulting her.

"I... what-"

Nevermind, her brain said, since the realisation hadn't hit yet.

"In any case, you're not leaving, even if it takes all night."

Oh GOD Lilly. At this point even she paused.

"Did... did I really just...-"

by Negaduck 1 year ago

A laugh, not even a particularly cruel one by his standards, and the criminal waved it off.

"Freudian slip. Don't worry about it. Freud had a few crazy ideas."

Pun intended.

What was distinctly unfunny, however, was his leaning forward to slide a hand wantonly up her leg. Under some fabric too, if he could manage it.

"Let's try some of them." Same husky growl, completely serious. At least, as far as one could tell. He was near impossible to read.

What could be read though was something beyond harassment under the attempt. Sure, propositioning a girl like Lilly if only to cause a stir was nearly a hobby of his. But there was a need, a need for distraction.

Please help me pretend I don't have a demon mistress at home who will do anything and everything to me to ensure we breed horrible, horrible hellspawn.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"W-wha-" was all she initially managed, because it appeared that the bright red colour on her face was tied to stammering as well. Rallying herself, she

pushed his hand away and took a step back.

"What is the matter with you?"

She wasn't really sure if she was agitated or worried.

"I know you're sticking with this so you don't have to think much until your head settles, but this isn't the time." You have a problem and you have to deal with it before it gets out of control, after all. THINK, man, come on. ... come to think of it, has anyone tried simply telling her Negaduck didn't want to be a baby-daddy?

by Negaduck 1 year ago

If only it was simple as that.

Not too dissimilar to a child unexpectedly deprived of their favourite toy, he huffed.

"Well what is it the time for? For running for the hills? Assuming I get past you-" A scoff; the very idea of her coming between him and freedom was laughable. "-And she doesn't track me down like a bloodhound in heat, all my disappearance would do would leave her alone in a city full of unworthy, second-rate perverts."

Whereas he was a worthy first-rate pervert, thankyouverymuch.

"And I don't think I need to tell you I'm not the settling down, running-after-a-mental-preggo-woman type," eyes narrowed somewhat at Lilly, making sure she appreciated the sincerity of his hate. Eventually, however, his hands were simply thrown up in the air.

"So what other options are there?!"

Oh, Negaduck could up with a few, in little enough time. But it was doubtful any of them would be Lilly approved.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"... I could talk to her?" She suggested. "Since she certainly isn't going to talk to you about this."

And you'll just end up either in bed with her and nearly murdering each other.

"Not to actively discourage her, mind. I don't think I could." Nor do I want to, seeing how happy she is at the prospect. "But I could at least find out where she stands on this. If she actually realises you want nothing to do with it and all that. It's possible she's not even thinking of it."

Obviously.

"At least you'll have more to go on."

Wait, why are you suggesting you help him again?

Because he looks so pathetic.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Whatever patheticness Negaduck was exuding didn't last. Something she said got those devious gears in his head turning, and soon he was back to his usual psychotic self, sitting up, scheming a mighty scheme.

"... see where she stands..." murmured as he rubbed his chin in thought. "Yes, that could work..."

One would suspect he was not simply contemplating the 'talking to her reasonably' plan. No, he was too enthusiastic for that.

A second later, and he realised Lilly was still there, apparently waiting for a response. Rather than addressing her suggestion, he stood and smiled amicably. As if that wasn't warning enough.

"You've been real helpful, toots." A casual wave and he headed for the door. "Ciao!"

There was sounding suspicious, and there was knowing you were sounding suspicious and not caring. Really, what was Lilly going to do about it? Threaten to tie him up again?

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"Wait!" she squeaked, hastening to follow him. This was worrying. Very, VERY worrying.

"What are you going to do?"

Clearly, she didn't trust him at all, even if he HAD thanked her so nicely.

"Tell me, please?"

by Negaduck 1 year ago

"I'm going to find out where she stands," he repeated matter-of-factly, spinning around in the doorway to face his follower, and thereby prevent her from following him much further.

Adding, deadpan, "And no, this is not going to end in us falling into bed together, and/or the loss of any limbs. I won't touch her."

Dark determination flashed over his masked face. For a moment, he wasn't talking to Lilly.

"I'll make sure of that."

And, slamming the door after him, he went off to do exactly that.

[[Off to [Baby Trap](#) blog]]

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Sometime before the cage crisis that blocked off half the CBD, for what may have been the first time in known history, a certain masked mallard stormed into a second hand bookstore... to actually buy a book.

Unconcerned with the time of day, or with the concerns of any already present customers for that matter, Negaduck strolled down an aisle and began for something he thought he had seen, somewhere.

"I wonder where the Dewey classification is for 'psycho women from hell'," smirked to himself, scanning the labels, overall far calmer than the last time he was in the store. Which, in a way, was far more worrying.

Because if he was calm, it usually meant he had a plan.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"I think the books on demonology are near the back," Lilly said as she passed, almost before she registered who was answering. "Anywhere else and they start upsetting the more religious p- what on EARTH?"

Because she'd just registered, and there was no response to the realisation than 'what on EARTH', unless it was 'what in the nine HELLS?'

Clearly, nothing in the nine hells. Hell was quite suddenly right here. Grabbing his arm, she pulled him off towards the shelves on demon-lore, thankfully at the back where most of the customers would NOT be. Less chance of the police being called and her whole new system destroyed.

"What are you DOING here?"

by Negaduck 1 year ago

No objection to the dragging. Being manhandled by a lovely young woman was not something Negaduck normally opposed, not if it lead to what he wanted. Which was demon books. Nothing dirty.

"I need to do some research, and on the rare occasion I'm been here - when

not being clobbered or attacked by rapid babies - I've noticed you have the oddest collection of supernatural books this side of Transylvania."

Through half lidded eyes, because he could do suave so much better when not in the middle of a panic attack, he smiled drily and raised a brow.

"Is that a crime?"

Loaded question.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"It's no crime to notice, no... but almost everything you do ends up in being crime of some sort."

Valid.

"And it's no crime to own them either," she said defensively. "I got them perfectly legally. Admittedly there was some talk about a potion and the Baron of Keepgrave but he did NOT steal anything out of his mother's library to give me, he's just an exceedingly nice man."

What?

"Er... I mean... look, I'll help you find what you're looking for. Just please don't get arrested in my shop. Or get ME arrested for that matter," she groaned, running her hands through her hair to shove them out of her face. Her hair had trapped all of that lovely old-book smell because of all the new, or rather old, boxes, but even that couldn't relax her at the moment.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

"Really? But you'd look so much better in cuffs." It was a flippant remark, the dirtiness of it not meant to hit her immediately. There was even a slight eye roll; honestly, did she think he WANTED to be arrested?

Picking a book at random, if random could be said to be determined by how leather bound and bad ass a book looked, idly he thumbed through the pages.

"Geez, this store does have its own musk, doesn't it?" Pausing for a moment to wave the book clean, as if that would shake out the smell. "I'm surprised you don't have cobwebs hanging on the air."

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"I keep it clean, thank you. And the air's a lot fresher than a lot of bookstores I won't mention," she said, on the defense again, though by her face you could see she was trying to work out what he'd meant by the previous remark.

Oh Lilly, when will you learn not to ever think about what he says to you?

"You're making such a fuss. You're not even going to be here very long. I ju... uh... when you said cuffs..."

Why, it was a world record of realisation!

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Aside from a sly smile, he left that alone. It was so much crueler to watch them flail without further explanation.

Instead, the malicious mallard continued browsing the shelves, swapping that book for another.

"Suuuuure." Sarcastic drawl. "And yet YOU even smell like books. Talk about fresh."

Reflective tilt of the head as he scanned distractedly through huge chunks of text. Curses, where were the pictures? The DIY demon cage diagrams?

"You know it's funny, there's this chick I know - raging lesbian but refuses to admit it - and she smelt like books too the other day. And women, of course." Casual page turn. "I mean, what library is she visiting that I don't know about?"

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

The smell wasn't THAT bad. Well, it was more prominent now that she'd been digging in all those boxes, true... but it was oddly relaxing. Except now where the mere presence of it coupled with it's mention made Lilly freeze.

"U-um... what... did she look like?" she asked, trying to be as subtle as she could. "Out of sheer curiosity..."

Because that was entirely believable.

--- missing post???

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"... n-not that curious after all, come to think of it," she said unconvincingly, taking a step back. Damn these narrow shelves. This close it was like he was planning to smell her, and that would just be CREEPY.

"As a matter of fact, not at all. I mean... clearly, it's a very boring topic. Suppose we talked about something else? Did you find the book you were looking for? I mean I imagine yo- ... what ARE you doing, I'm running out of backstepping space!"

by Negaduck 1 year ago

For the moment, there would be no smelling. Not that his continued invasion of her space was any comfort. As if magically in tune to this - her protests may have also been a giveaway - he casually propped one arm against the bookcase she was backed up against, thus cutting off that avenue of escape too.

Trapped.

"So not so curious then as to allow a gaunt Russian broad to wear down your defences and corrupt you with her wrong ways that were oh so right?"

Really, with his imagination he should have gone into writing.

Who knew where THAT would have fitted under the Dewey classification system.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

She gave a small squeak at realising she was trapped, not that it would help matters at all. Although maybe it was less that realisation and the realisation that 'gaunt' and 'Russian' confirmed everything.

"I have no idea what you're talking about," she said, the lie so monumental that the air should have burst into flames.

... well, maybe it wasn't entirely a lie. There was a modicum of confidence in her tone, mostly because she was sure, just as Kachka was perfectly sure, that nothing had happened at all.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

That grin. The bloodhound had caught a rabbit.

"Oh yeah?"

There was no way Negaduck was going to accept that atrocious lying. Not on principle, not without a challenge.

"Come 'ere, let me smell you properly."

Which was no less creepy when he said it like that.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

WHAT. NO. GET AWAY.

Her brain was this close to screaming RAPE, but then it usually was when he started getting far too close on the sole purpose of worrying her.

"Well you're WRONG. Because I'm fairly certain," she squeaked, ducking away from him first to one side, "that she's," and then the other, "Ukrainian!"

Damn him for being so short. It made getting under his arm nearly impossible. In fact is WAS rather impossible, as she would soon learn after a rather ridiculous attempt left her on the ground.

Admittedly, it left her on the ground on the safe side of his arm.

"Just you stay away."

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Right, because Negaduck was the type who would do what he was told.

No, instead he was the type to be confused, then enraptured, by what was a tacit admission from the last person he would have expected such an admission from.

"You mean..."

Now that grin was far too devilish, even for him.

"... oh man, I've got to check this out now!"

Then, without doing anything crazy such as acquiring her consent, the arm was dropped, but only so it could be used to lunge at her. As if any virile woman would object to having his big bill in their space. Now now, good little bookworm, hold still and it won't hurt a bit. Run and, well, the chase would be on.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"No!" she squeaked, flailing her arms helplessly. "There is nothing to check out! Nothing happened!"

And then, against all laws of common sense but well in line with all laws of being a hunted rabbit, she ran, giving no thought to not causing a commotion.

Well, the good thing was someone might call the police if they saw a villain chasing a civilian.

The bad thing was the people who had been browsing had gone on their merry way.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Oh what a fun game this was! Chasing AND psychological scarring!

Clearly enjoying himself much more than she was, the determined fiend tore

after her, giving new meaning to being 'hot on her tail'.

"I smell one big fat lesbian lie!"

The lie being big and fat, not the lesbians.

Weaving through aisles and hopping over small stacks of books, he kept up with her far too easily. Lilly had the advantage of longer limbs, but he was surprisingly agile for his height and the mass of weaponry he carried. Being constantly 'on the run', literally and otherwise, tended to do that to a mallard.

On the other hand, Lilly also had the advantage of knowing the shop far, far better than he did.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

Indeed she did. Unfortunately knowing all the dead-ends and crannies of the place only bought her precious seconds. Still, seconds were something. They could build up into minutes if one was careful, and those are even more vital.

Losing him by moments around the science-fiction section, she made a bid for the door set in the ceiling near the back corner, which expelled a sliding stepladder arrangement which she shot up and closed after herself.

What, you thought she slept among the books? Only after drunken binges.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Screeching to a halt as he came around the corner, Negaduck faltered, having apparently lost sight of her.

Some brief searching the vicinity - she was so slight maybe she had squeezed between the shelves - and he let out a disappointed sigh.

"Curses, and just when she was getting interesting..."

One last glance around and he headed back in the direction of the section she had lead him to in the first place.

Really, as if her life was there for his entertainment. Luckily she had lost him so quickly...

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

She waited a few minutes, listening carefully, but got no indication that her hiding place had been found.

Thank Heaven. The worst was apparently over. Giving herself the luxury of a smile, she slipped out from behind her little cupboard and sat on the bed, heaving a deep sigh of relief. Now all she had to do was keep an ear out for

the bell over the door. Once he was gone, all would be well. What a very lucky day this was.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Which is exactly when two yellow-jacketed arms grabbed her by the waist from behind and threw her further back on the bed.

Negaduck wasted no time or large amounts of energy pinning her down, wrists held down above her head. It was the timeless question as to how he had possibly managed to get up there at all, much less unseen. Suddenly his 'creep' points tripled.

"Now be a good girl, and this won't have to hurt..." The smile and smooth reassurance may have actually been comforting had it not been him.

Before she had time to protest, however, his bill was against her neck. Not touching. Just taking a deep breath in.

"Oh yeah, I'd recognise that rotten Eastern European cigarette stench anywhere," concluded with satisfaction, before grinning brightly down at Lilly as this was an entirely ordinary conversation.

"You want one?" Somehow the image of a flustered girl spawned across a bed triggered that impulse. As did living in general.

"... unless you're happy with what she's already supplying." Wink wink nudge nudge say no more.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"No, what?! Let me GO!" She would have liked to go on to say 'not from her, and not from you in any circle of hell', but her throat could only accommodate so many words after the shock had closed it. All she wanted to do right now, more than anything, was to get out from under him. A secondary desire was possibly to beat his face in, but that might lead to chainsaws and other painful implements if she wasn't careful.

Amazing how he was one of the few people who could make her angry enough to make her develop a temporary spine despite being afraid. Must be his smarmy attitude in making her feel totally helpless.

... that fact that she had gotten away with beating him up before may have had something to do with it.

"I swear to God, I will slap you SO hard," she burst out, not bothered for the moment if she would get to keep her hands, and certainly not in the mood to remember what his reaction had been the last time she'd done that. "Get OFF!"

Long limbs may be better for running, but it didn't do much for struggling when the person being struggled against could only be reached by half one's limb length. All she really seemed to succeed in doing was kicking something open.

Oh dear... I wonder what it was...

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Had he been so inclined, Lilly's last command may have been twisted in a way that she could not possibly have meant. No doubt he took an unnecessary amount of pleasure in tormenting her, but she was too meek and docile for that to be a serious goal. No, she was a toy, an amusement, another thing to corrupt and destroy.

"My, aren't you full of surprises?" His overall smug smoothness not affected one iota by her struggles or her 'threats'. "First getting 'close' with a female friend, then getting feisty with me?"

A deep chuckle. "For all we know you could be leading a double life as a courtesan..."

And there was where he trailed off as his drifting attention finally noticed what she had kicked open.

Not surprisingly, his mind jumped to the most perverted of conclusions.

Because it was a closet, and it was full of the exact types of outfits Lilly would normally never touch, no matter how many femme fatales dragged her out shopping. Some colourful, some glittery, some lacy, and many irresistibly skimpy.

Suddenly the whole courtesan bit didn't sound so ridiculous.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"Hey?" she paused a bit, looking up at him in confusion as he trailed off, wondering what had distracted him. He was looking off...

Wait.

With a growing dread, she craned her neck to try and match his line of sight. Oh dear.

"... um. You know, I was positive I'd locked that."

Judging by your expression, this looks rather bad for me and very interesting for my continued torment. Realising that fairly quickly, she tried to get at least

her arms free, hoping to take advantage of his distraction.

"Look, just get off me, will you?! You've had your fun."

by Negaduck 1 year ago

As the sight loosened his jaw into a slight gape, his steady grip on her arms loosened too.

Unfortunately, the caped criminal slipped away a little too fast for any slap that may have been intended to make contact. Which, really, was probably fortunate given the circumstances.

"LOOK at that." Approaching the closet like a Negaversian child reverently staring at a bloodied Christmas tree, his eyes glimmered with depraved joy. "Just think of the wild and twisted things you could do..."

Diving into the hanger, semi-metaphorically, Negaduck greedily snatched up his favourite - the most revealing, obviously - of the bunch. Or maybe a few of them. A glitzy cocktail dress, a french maid outfit, exotic silks, something with leather...

"You GOTTA show me this. And this. And this and this and this..."

Underneath it all, however, deep down a part of him was disappointed that she would not be as much of a challenge to lead astray as he had always assumed.

Actually no, 'part of him' was better described as 'not a single part of him at all'.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"What on earth are you... give those BACK," she snapped, snatching as many of them away as she could get in one swipe. "If you think I'm really going to... have you lost your mind?"

Not that there was any to lose, be honest.

"No, stop pulling them out. Put them back in and turn the key in the lock," she said insistently, partially angry and partially extremely embarrassed. "They're not supposed to be out. I haven't used them in YEARS now."

Pausing, she gave him a look. "I hope you aren't thinking what only you could be thinking... these are just for my stage-work, especially when there was dancing and the like."

'stage work'? 'dancing'? Oh God even I can't help you if you keep putting your foot in it so badly.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Negaduck shot her a look of his own.

"Dancing?" Questioned in disbelief as he held what outfits he could keep away from her with speed rather than height. "You? You're kidding me. On a STAGE?"

Yes, indeed he was thinking what only he could be thinking.

It didn't take him long to put a plan together to test it. Maybe it was the blackmail in his blood. Maybe it was her passing mention of being out of the gig for years.

"How about a little demonstration then?" he began slyly.

"Otherwise, well, I might have to confirm this piece of background independently. And you know how these things go, once somebody else knows, the rest of the town knows awfully quickly..."

Feigned concern. Not that he bothered to feign it TOO much, because even Lilly would have been able to catch onto his true purpose.

So, as unusual, that devilish, predatory smile grew across his beak.

"Whatever would your daughter think..."

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

She blinked at him, once, twice...

And then burst out laughing.

"ACTING. Musicals, theatrical dance performances. Oh goodness, yes you go and tell her that her mother used to be part of a group of theatrical performers, and that the closest she got to what you're thinking is a cabaret project in high-school. HORRIFYING!"

Pause.

"I'll grant we did a fair bit of cabaret, and Latin dances aren't the most innocent looking, but there you are."

Aaaaaand wounded your own argument.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

It was horrifying indeed. He even drew back in shock, running a stare over the bookworm's body as if to double check whether those nipple tassels were

actually there or just in his head.

Alas, it was the latter.

How DARE she ruin his fantasies.

"Perfectly innocent acting? That's it?" spat with melodramatic venom. "I've heard more interesting stories in 1930s news reels."

Frustration passed as insanely as it had come. Calm, calm. She's only a meek little lamb. Not much of a meal for a hungry wolf, but she would do, when boredom - or in this case, procrastination - called for it.

"Which isn't to say I couldn't easily make it interesting..." continued craftily, the smile returning. "It's not like acting is the most moral profession on Earth, sweetheart."

Through half-lidded eyes he lectured, as if she were the one missing the point, "Cabaret is awfully similar to burlesque, did you realise? Combine that with common ideas of the wild romps to be had and shared in a 'performance troupe', and the rumours will generate themselves."

Maybe it wasn't blackmail fail. Maybe it was blackmail 101.

"I wouldn't even need to embellish much. I can let these-" Taunting shake shake of a beaded costume. "-do it for me."

Overkill in effort for an ordinary person, but Negaduck could manipulate an entire city's law enforcers without so much as leaving the hideout. Sullyng an innocent girl's reputation? Definitely less effort than, say, walking down the street to visit the 'professionals'.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"What?"

That wasn't a surprised what did you just say. That was a disbelieving what the HELL is wrong with you.

First order of business, snatch at the dress, which she attempted as soon as he shook it in her direction.

"Give me that! Don't you DARE."

She'd ask what purpose that would serve, but it wasn't like he needed an excuse.

"What do you WANT from me, for heaven's sake?"

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Nope, Lilly could snatch at the dress all she liked, she wasn't getting it. It would take more than pure reach to swipe something off Negaduck when he wanted to keep it.

"Is a little entertainment too much to ask?" sighed with exasperation too dramatic to be serious, the grin giving it away again. Really, the things he had to put up with.

"Listen toots, you can't spend the whole afternoon teasing-" Trying to fend him off was teasing? "And then NOT give me a private show. Why, if you used to dance in front of crowds of people, then this should be a snap!"

Finally, the costume was returned to her.

"There, get changed." Sitting himself down on the end of the bed, the criminal watched her expectantly, only to add with a patronisingly smug rumble,

"It'll make up for all those times you've lost it and taken it out on me."

Because he had just 'put up' with such annoying occurrences, and had nothing to do with instigating them whatsoever.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

That patronising smugness again. AUGH, she hated him from the bottom of her heart when he did that, so really did.

"You... you..."

Here, dance for me after I've broken into our loft and harassed you or I'll tell people you're a stripper AND BY THE WAY THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT.

Oh he was a dead man. Throwing the dress down with a surprisingly satisfyingly loud clatter, she marched up to him and prodded his chest with her finger.

"You listen to me. Not in all the nine levels of HELL."

I am THIS close to causing you grievous bodily harm, so step off this INSTANT.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

For some reason, the rage of a door mouse didn't affect him.

Instead, while the semblance of a smile lingered on his bill, behind the mask

his eyes hardened. No jokes. This was serious.

Oh he was a dead man, was he?

Time for her to receive a reminder of the facts.

"You'll do what I say."

Strange, in a way, that that emotionless unyielding order carried more authority due to the absence of anger. In case that wasn't enough for her though, the arm doing the prodding was captured and crushed in his grasp, and down she was pulled to his level.

"Perhaps I haven't put in enough effort to remind you of late, but I'm the most notorious, the most feared and the most ruthless supervillain in this entire city." Leaning in, twisting the limb cruelly as he did so, the felon hissed, "You're lucky I haven't wiped this dreary little shop off the face of the planet after all the trouble you've caused me."

Releasing her callously, as if she was little more than a slave, or dirt - which wasn't entirely accurate, he liked dirt - he sat back in the chair. Er, bed.

"Now show me there's something worthwhile to be gained out of keeping you alive, or I'll show you, this worthless store and your pathetic family what hell really means."

How cruel, how heartless. It was as if he had to make up for a recent fainting and nervous breakdown incident or something.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

There were tears there at the corners of her eyes from the pain. She could feel them, but she couldn't quite register all the burning ow because he had said something very, very wrong indeed. Her, fine. Her store even, that was fine. Her books, alright, if you must.

But her family?

The bloody hell you will.

One good thing that had come out of this was that they were level now, which would help what she was going to do. Just as soon as the searing pain, which was not WHOLLY capable of being ignored, died down a bit. Damn, she needed to stall.

Um.

UM.

Oh Hell.

Well they WERE on the same level... pulling at his turtleneck, she yanked him, or rather herself, forward and kissed him. Never had there been so much absolutely angry oh god I hate you passion in a kiss. Possibly.

Then again, there were many people who hated him, so who can say?

And if the same beak wasn't at least a little dented from the punch she gave it after that, she would be very disappointed. At least the momentum allowed her to grab him and kick him firmly in the stomach, RIGHT off of the bed. Which was really perfect because it meant she could open her dresser and pull out a gun.

Wait, a gun? Well, Pancho HAD left an unloaded one for Rosa to play with...

This didn't look like that one. In fact it looked, very faintly, like a mad scientist had added more pain to the punch of it. Oh Darryl, how kind. Breathing heavily, she pointed it at him rather levelly for a mouse who had just bitten and scratched a wolf.

"Alright. You're a villain. You're terrible and evil and everyone's terrified of you, and you can burn all my things and me included. But, by GOD, I've beaten your face in and I WILL do it again if you ever, EVER talk about my family again."

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Letting out a cough, an effect of having the wind kicked out of him, Negaduck struggled to push himself up from the floor. Argh, head spin. Dazed, he reached up to uncrumple his bill with an unpleasant krick. That punch had really done a number on his face.

And then there was the kiss. Where had that come from? Wherever it had, it had certainly put him on the back foot. Wasn't he the one supposed to be in control?

After all that, it took a moment to register the gun.

Double-taking, he stared, then rose to his feet slowly.

"What has gotten into you, woman? You think you can lay one on me in both senses of the phrase and I'll be scared of you?" A scoff, although his dark and calculating stare hinted as his preparing to lunge the moment her guard was down.

"You don't have the guts to use that..."

It was a gamble, but it was Lilly. It was a safe bluff. Or so he assessed.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

Eyes were narrowed, though yes, she was shaking the slightest bit.

Firmer stance was taken.

Grip on the gun was tightened.

And the gun was aimed right between his eyes. Not that she intended to do that. It was just a good central point to move from.

She nudged the aim upwards and pulled the trigger, thanking god he had such an unnecessarily large hat at what looked, well more felt really, like a pressurised pellet of pure pressure ripped it off of his head.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

With a yelp, he ducked, catching the fedora as it fell to the floor post-blast.

Straightening, the crook examined it cautiously, only to find the crown shot off. Fantastic. Then it disintegrated into dust. Double fantastic.

Slowly, Negaduck raised his hands, while simultaneously raising an eyebrow. Best to play it cool. Violence wasn't in the girl's nature, and he was willing to bet she was incapable of sending him much more than a warning shot.

Not that he was unnerved or anything...

"Okay, okay, no dancing, no murdering your loved ones and roasting their mangled bodies over the charred remains of your home." As much as that DID sound pleasant. "I got it. So how about you put the.. whatever the hell that thing is, away, and we'll get back to doing what we were before you so rudely distracted me."

Sounded reasonable enough.

If reasonable included giving up your sole defence against a bloodthirsty maniac AFTER having shot at him.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"Good..."

I'm glad you sort of seem to be seeing sense. She didn't lower her weapon, nor did she look away from him, but she seemed rather confused now that

she'd had a chance to think about it.

"What on earth possessed me to kiss you, I have no idea," she muttered, mainly to herself. "I could have found ANY OTHER WAY to stall but no. Why?" she demanded, and while she would have liked to shake the gun at him, it was better to keep it targeted at him where it would cause internal bleeding if he moved. "Why did I do that when I hate you so much? What the heck is it with you that makes me so angry and do such stupid things?!"

by Negaduck 1 year ago

"... because you wanted to?" he answered, keeping his hands raised, like it couldn't have been any more obvious if it had been written in neon. All shapely, attractive women were drawn to his irresistible animal magnetism. The fact he was a total jerk just drove them crazier. It was his job. A-DUH.

"Deny it all you like, but there's a part of you that longs to her herself go and enjoy being bad. That's why you make best friends with criminals, that's why you took to the stage in that-" Risking a gesture to the discarded costume. "-and that's why you pounce me whenever a reasonable excuse presents itself. I have no idea why you fight it."

Looking her up and down, the bookish outfit a dim comparison to the glittery, tiny thing on the floor, he added reflectively,

"Maybe if you showed a little cleavage once and a while-" And rubbed it on someone. "-You wouldn't go utterly nuts."

Just a suggestion.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"I do not POUNCE you wh- alright, I'm not going to deny that it's immensely satisfying to hit you, even though you know I don't really go for violence. I LIKE not being afraid. I just can't keep it up when I'm not furious, or performing because that's something else to focus on..."

Kick him out. Stop talking and kick him out right now, her brain said. He'll find some way to get the upper hand if you don't. No wait, make sure he won't wreck your life after. He will if he's bored, you know he will. Don't let him go until you talk this out. Talk about it. Eventually.

"You have no idea how good this feels..." It was rather satisfying to unnerve him in place of being scared herself. "Well you probably do."

Of course he did. Scaring people and feeling empowered without worrying was his life. Wonder.

"Is this how you feel -all the time-?"

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Warily, Negaduck eyed her, not sure about this change in mood. But it was what he was encouraging, wasn't it?

"Like what?" he responded carefully, wanting to make sure he understood.

Oh he was more than happy to talk about the fantastic benefits of violence. Yes, it felt fantastic. Both in the moment and the respect that came from it. And it wasn't a bad tool for motivating people, either, so the positives were too numerous to list.

Except when he was the one on the receiving end.

Maybe he wouldn't be playing the role in bringing her over to the dark side that he had expected. There was a whole lot less boobage and a whole lot more waiting to get fried.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"Like this! Feeling... in charge, I suppose you could say? I'm not sure it that's the right word. Standing up to something. Not feeling so... vulnerable. Getting back at the people who step on you..."

There had been a lot of stepping done.

"Not worrying about consequences? I think, it's all very hard to explain. Doing all this without me worrying about hurting you or what you would think or what would happen after... ha. And then kissing you out of nowhere without being bothered."

You should have seen your FACE. Ahahahahah.

"It all felt pretty amazing. Like being on the stage again..."

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Mild annoyance at being laughed at, but it soon switched back to calculating cunning.

So she enjoyed it, did she? Finally, an admission of what he knew all along. That everybody wanted to be like him. Most people didn't have the bloodymindedness, the nerve - and, let's face it, the complete disregard for others - that it required.

But if Lilly, dear sweet innocent Lilly, was beginning to understand the temptation, maybe he had something to work with.

Only one little matter was in the way...

"I can teach you to feel that way every day. It's not hard..." A step, two steps, forward, slowly. "Just put the weapon down and we'll have a chat, how's that sound?"

Does it sound like a trap? Well it probably should have, but then he had always wanted to corrupt her. Why would he miss a golden opportunity just to get the upper hand?

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

Every natural instinct was telling her to step backwards, to drop the weapon and run, but where would that get her?

"That's close enough, please," she said firmly. It was rather funny hearing the polite please in the firm tone. "Look, I don't mind talking, but I'd like to keep the gun. This may shock you, but I don't really trust you... you can sit if you like. Just where you are."

by Negaduck 1 year ago

No, he did not want to sit. He did not really want to talk. All he wanted was to corrupt her, in FUN ways, get out of there and let her deal with the consequences. Not so much now though; this firm, assertive Lilly was weirding him out.

"Not really what I had in mind..." Nervous tug on his turtleneck, with a smile as thin as silk paper.

Suddenly it occurred to him that leaving too big a pause there might prompt her to ask what exactly he had in mind originally, which would likely prompt her to shoot at somewhere rather sensitive, so he resumed talking as quickly as possible.

"Look, you're a kind, devoted mother who gives everything of herself to make people happy. That must suck, right? And then you've got your shyness and general inability to stand up for yourself... But why can't you take control? Do what you want when you want."

A slight grin.

"And it wouldn't just have to be limited to fending off incredibly handsome bad guys."

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"That sounds lovely," she admitted. "Sticking up for myself once in a while. I don't know HOW to, though. Only when I'm really furious, and only YOU seem to trigger that."

But people did it all the time. She was the only one that seemed unable to.

"I have no idea how I can..."

The steady aim wavered, ever so slightly, and she realised that she was thinking too much. Focus now. Stop listening PLEASE. we were supposed to kick him out five minutes ago!

by Negaduck 1 year ago

SIT ON MY LAP AND FLASH **ME** GODDAMNIT.

No, he was brimming with frustration, but not of that type ... not completely, anyway.

"It's hardly difficult, you naive bat!" he snapped, legendary impatience winning over fear of being blasted. "I've taught **toddlers** how to be meaner than you! In a single summer camp!"

Wait, what was Negaduck doing running a summer camp?

And would anybody have been actually surprised?

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

Naive bat, was it? Well at least it snapped her focus back. She flinched visibly as he snapped at her, but straightened up as the feel of the gun in her hands gave her a bit more confidence to show how much she didn't appreciate his comment.

"What was that Negaduck? I didn't hear you clearly. "Did you want a hole in your arm to match your hat?"

She may not be capable of killing him, but if he kept this up she could make it hurt like hell.

"You can either be helpful, if you think you're so good or you can leave before I get a clear aim..."

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Grumpily, yellow jacketed arms were folded.

"The day you get any result from a 'clear aim' is the day I hang up my machine guns," he muttered bitterly, more to himself than anything.

A pause, then in a stubborn refusal to openly acknowledge the power she held with that weapon, the mallard directed a bitter glare at her.

"If by 'helpful' you mean 'show you how to grow a spine', yeah, I can do that."

A challenging, almost sulky, brow was raised in her direction. "But I don't see what's in it for me."

Really? Those scanty costumes he had been droolin-- er, considering -- over the idea of a young, supple female filling a minute ago were RIGHT THERE. The tauntingly sinful sparkle even kept dragging his attention over every now and again, as much as he pretended to ignore it.

Maybe he did see after all.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

She really should have expected him not to be co-operative in the least, but groaned a little all the same, as if it was an entirely new concept.

"What do you want?" she sighed. Hopefully it wasn't TOO high a price to pay, but knowing him... he'd find some way to make it as ridiculously high as possible. Well, she always had the option of refusing. Except if it was that easy to do that she wouldn't still be talking to him in the first place.

Decisions, decisions...

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Funny that, Lilly was the one holding the weapon, and he was the one still giving a list of demands. No need to demonstrate his qualifications as a manipulation guru any further than that.

"Well you could throw that tiny terror of a toddler of yours into an incinerator," he began nonchalantly, taking 'ridiculously high' and quadrupling it.

"Or... you can show me what you can do in that little number-" Head gesture to the dropped sequin-covered item behind them. "-And we'll call it even."

Because if he did a good job at corruptin-- er, teaching her, 'what she can do' was bound to be entertaining. Entertaining enough to make all of this trouble worthwhile.

And that was exactly what he was thinking, if that reassuring-and-not-sly-at-all smile was any way to judge.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

Thinking it over, she tilted her head.

"It sounds worth a try, but I can't really guarantee you'd like what you get out of a more aggressive personality..."

There was no telling what she'd do out of her regular mind.

"I mean, what if I end up shooting you after my end of the deal anyway? You already know I stop thinking when I lose my temper. I don't really have any objections, though... I'll agree."

Because somehow I think being more assertive will be much more fun dealing with you. Kicking you is so satisfying.

"BUT. I reserve my right to drop the whole thing if I find you're just wasting my time out of boredom."

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Oh no, what if she lost her temper? How scary.

If she was in the habit of forgetting to keep him out of her life, he was in the habit of forgetting how badly bruised it could see him. The grin said it all; no, not taking her seriously in the slightest. As if a more assertive Lilly was anything he couldn't handle.

Well, perhaps that was going to change.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah." Terms and conditions waved aside. "You think we have any time to waste?"

A dramatic flourish and he declared,

"To badness!"

And lightning and thunder clapped, as if he could control those on cue.

From there began a funny little montage of Negaduck Brand Aggression Training. Vocal projection lessons. Selfishness training. Intimidation through body posture. Maybe a little electroshock therapy thrown in for good measure. Turned out with a little incentive he made an effective, albeit merciless and demanding, coach. Not that was surprising - anybody who would whip the Fearsome Four into any sort of functioning body should have easily been able to handle a quirky but timid bookkeeper.

Until one little hiccup.

"Argh!"

This particular exercise posed a unique hurdle. Even if they were only using props and a soft-toy stand-in because the maladjusted mallard couldn't withstand lengthy exposures to the real thing without being hit with violent waves of nausea.

Rubbing his forehead, as if that would miraculously ease his uncontrollable temper, Negaduck gathered himself and tried again.

"If you can't take candy from a baby, how are you going to take it from someone that MATTERS?!"

Villaining 101.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"Well why can't I just take it from someone who matters?" she objected. "It's a BABY. Why would I ever want to take anything from it?"

I mean... really. It's a baby, it's candy, it makes no sense from anywhere.

Aggressive, maybe. More spine, certainly. But evil was something Lilly was having the absolute hardest time grasping. Odd, it was as if she wasn't evil at heart at all.

Was there even a reason necessary to steal from children? You do it because it's mean and you can.

"Can't we do something else?"

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Another patience fortifying intake of breath.

"No, look, the point about having a spine is believing your opinion trumps everything else." General gesture at the baby, aka vaguely baby shaped collection of books that was not Rosa at all.

"Why does a baby have candy, anyway? As a mother, shouldn't you know best when it comes to appropriate dietary requirements? Oral hygiene? And what about the effects on other children, who either feel put out by their lack of candy, or by the sugar-induced hyperactivity spree this kid will cause if he's left unchecked?"

My, he had a surprising amount of insight into the repercussions of feeding little ones things they should probably not be eating.

"You can't be worried about hurting feelings. Unless you agree with this situation, you have to stop it. Simple as that."

So it wasn't really evil, more like benevolent overlord. But whatever worked.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

Benevolent overlord sounded good...

HAPPINESS WITH AN IRON FIST.

Lilly perked up at his reasoning. Of course, it made perfect sense if she was only doing what was best for the child.

The candy was willingly swiped, accompanied by the satisfaction of having done something nice.

"There we are!"

by Negaduck 1 year ago

"Perfect," he purred, swiping the treat from her in turn. To prevent it from being an object of fixation, that was, and not because he planned on devouring it later in private.

"Now let's give that new spine of yours a workout-" How did every word that came rumbling out of his beak sound so foreboding? "In a real test."

Before Lilly could get too worked up about what he was planning - honestly, it was a cut scene, only half a second - they were on the outskirts of St Canard, looking into a green canyon below. From the equipment and signage, it appeared to be some kind of forestry.

A forestry were trees were farming people rather than the other way around.

To save any explanation, one green plant duck was not too far down the drop, cheering on the large oak trees as they chased the workers as fast as their roots would allow them.

"That's it!" cried Bushroot enthusiastically to his forest friends. "Round them up! Let's see how THEY like to be harvested!"

Negaduck, meanwhile, watched on, arms folded. This sort of madness was hardly new to him.

"You-" The instruction to his apprentice carrying a hint of bemusement. "-Have to tell him to stop."

But Bushroot was a shy, sympathetic character. Always being trampled on and pushed around. The sort of pitiful soul that Lilly could relate to. How could she tell him to stop anything?

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"Ask him to stop?"

No, TELL him to stop.

"B-but..."

He'll give me those big, sad eyes and tell me they were trying to hurt his tree friends or something...

But then she noticed something that instantly made her run over to the plant-duck.

"Bushroot!" she said in concern, any assertion or dominance she may have had giving way to a tender, motherly tone. She couldn't help it. Bushroot just constantly looked like he needed niceness. "What on earth are you doing?"

People are being hurt!

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Bushroot near jumped out of his green skin, having been so enthralled in finally getting the upperhand in something he had not noticed the company.

"L-L-L-Lilly! Er, hi!" Swallowing thickly, he did his best to look friendly rather than fearful. And failed. "Oh, I'm doing a little 'pruning'. Heh heh.. heh."

Aaaaand humour fail.

Feeling the comment flop as soon as it left his beak, he gestured weakly to the ongoing chaos and petrified loggers below. "These.. these.. MONSTERS have been tormenting my darling saplings for years now. I thought it was about time they understood what it was like to be at the other end of the chainsaw."

The chainsaw carrying mallard overseeing the proceedings quirked a brow, first at the obvious lead, and then at Lilly. Hurry this along or you'll both be seeing the end of one soon.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

Lilly gave Bushroot the longest, most level look of her entire life. And then-

"CHAINSAW?!" That voice actually made two of the nearest trees flinch. Not because it was fearsome, but it was the incredulous 'what are you THINKING' tone of an irate mother. Nobody messes with a momma.

"Bushroot, dear, I say this with all the love in the world, but WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?!" In total loving concern, of course. "That doesn't fix anything! That just makes you sink to their level. You don't want that, do you?"

A look that said if you DO I will slap you upside the head, dear.

"Why don't you just scare them away? Wouldn't that be more effective? They'll run off and tell everyone to stay away because the trees can fight back. If you kill them people will just keep coming..."

by Negaduck 1 year ago

The smile tried to stay put, it really did, but irate mothering woman was oh so intimidating.

As was every other life force on the planet.

"I.. I was speaking metaphorically," Bushroot shakily attempted to reassure her.

Yes, because how insane and cruel it would be to enforce your will through the removal of any vital parts via chainsaw.

In an entirely not insane or cruel way, instead, he picked up a sealed formula tube and held it aloft for his challenger to see.

"I'm going to turn them into plants instead."

Okay, so maybe there was a SLIGHTLY insane sparkle in his eyes.

"That'll show them, won't it? They'll finally understand what we're going through! No more axes, no more second rate fertiliser! It'll be PERFECT!"

Let's see total loving concern deal with that.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

Another, very level, very calm look.

"No," she said firmly. "Would you like someone to take the plants and turn them into humans against their will?"

I'm sure you don't.

"Give me the bottle, dear. You'll just make everything worse. Just scare them away. Please?"

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Ah, the voice of reason. That would sort it all out.

Or not.

"N-no way! Do you know how hard I worked on this?!" Clutching the formula protectively, the mutant scientist backed away. "I put my own blood, sap and tears into this! Literally!"

Meanwhile, Negaduck unfolded his arms only to place them on his hips, signalling his impatience. This caring, considerate approach was nothing like what he had taught her! Sure, the confidence had improved, but there was no command. Lilly was asking, not telling. And her levels of rudeness and selfishness were well under par too!

How easy would it be for him to cut in and remind her how it was done.

But the point was to test her, no matter how much it tested his perseverance.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"BUSHROOT," she snapped suddenly, like a mother who has officially reached the end of her tether.

He's not even listening, she thought to herself. And if he could do it to these poor people he could do it to anyone. And he's supposed to be the nicest one. What, was he going to try and cut down everyone who hurt a plant? Even babies who don't know any better?

Oh hell no you do not threaten the babies, even in her imagination.

Intimidation factor over nine thousand.

"Give it HERE."

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Shrinking back even further, Bushroot cowered. He may have had superpowers, but he did not have a spine. Funny, how similar they used to be in that.

With a pout, he begrudgingly stretched out a leafy hand and offered it for the taking.

"Fine..." sulked, almost childishly. The trees below seemed to sense his change in mood, and creaked up at their two legged friend in concern.

Their interest brought a smile back to the plant duck's face, and he called down enthusiastically, "Come on boys, how about we go check out that new mineral-enhanced irrigation system on the other side of town? Would you like that?"

Apparently they did because, after some flailing of branches in what appeared to be their version of a happy dance, the oaks scooped up Bushroot and off they scurried, Bushroot giggling all the way.

A moment spent watching the departure of the odd trio with obvious

abhorrence, Negaduck turned his cold gaze back to his student.

"Not bad."

That being HIGH PRAISE in Negaduck Land.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"Thank you," she sighed, tucking the bottle into her pocket. By right she should get rid of it right now, but who knew what would happen if she tried to pour it onto the grass or down the drain? It would be best to take it back to Darryl and Frankie so they could deal with it.

... and hopefully not use it...

"Hee. That felt lovely."

I have helped!

"So I passed, yes?"

by Negaduck 1 year ago

"Well, you could have done with more ferocity," mused the villain, rubbing his chin in consideration. So much consideration it was practically a tease. "And I'm not sure I like what you're doing with this whole rational thought business..."

Followed by a light shrug.

"But yeah sure, why not."

Because he didn't have a vested interest in passing her as quickly as possible or anything.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

She was this close to going YES and fistpumping in triumph, but she restrained herself, settling just for looking delighted.

"Fantastic! So that's done, then? Lovely, thank you."

She seemed to have entirely forgotten. Or chosen to forget.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

A slight tilt of the head, like a puppy waiting for a treat. Did I just compare Negaduck to a puppy by way of analogy? OH YES I DID WHATCHA GONNA DO ABOUT IT.

Come on now, that expectant look, those wide waiting eyes, those fluffy

cheeks, it was all too cute. Nobody would ever say it to his face, but there it was.

"And.. what about my end of the bargain?" It was a gentle reminder, half-smirking; he must have thought she was only toying with him. There was no way anybody could forget the only reason he did anything was for his benefit.

The whole 'gimme a lap dance already' undercurrent though - not so cute.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"Hm? Oh RIGHT!"

She had only forgotten for a brief, happy time. Oh dear, she HAD promised him, hadn't she? And he'd made good.

... well, she'd only promised him that much, so there was that.

"Well, come on, then. I suppose you're going to choose what I wear?"

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Bad move, Lilly. Surely you couldn't be that naive?

"Why, naturally, my dear," Negaduck grinned wolfishly, leading the way out. It was a particularly large grin as the attire of his choice had not been part of the original agreement, but if it was offered, he was going to play along as if that was normally expected in this sort of arrangement.

As if this arrangement could ever sit alongside 'normal'.

Suddenly they were back in the shop, and he had taken significant delight in selecting the most risque item in the closet he could find. Thankfully he had allowed her to change in private; couldn't corrupt an innocent young thing too much first time around.

If all went well, that innocence wouldn't last much longer.

And so he sat, waiting, getting to the point of glancing at his watch and grumbling about how long women took to get ready. Not that Lilly's preening had anything on some other unnamed females he dealt with, but still, all he required was that they got their kit off - how difficult could that possibly be?

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

As women getting ready go, he didn't have to wait that very long. Most of the wait consisted of her in the other room, in front of the mirror, and taking very long and deep breaths.

"I can't do this. What the heck am I thinking, eh?"

~Well you agreed to do this, so you're thinking about as much as you were thinking then. You damn idiot.~

~Shut up, please?~

~No. What's wrong with you?~

~I just missed it, that's all.~

~That's... true. Ugh, FINE. Look, just... switch off, alright? Be the dancer, let her enjoy her time in the spotlight. You just sit down here and calm down, okay?~

~That's fair.~

Taking a final deep breath and a final look at herself in the mirror, she switched herself off and went to sit in a comfortable corner of her mind while the other half, the half of her that wasn't really Lilly but something undefined waiting for the mold of a costume or script, took over.

Stage-Lilly slipped out of the room and smiled. "It's been a long while since I've done this. It feels... nice. ... I might sing, I'm not even sure. You can stop me."

After all, if she was going to dance, why not sing and enjoy herself because she felt in the heart of a performance? Not giving him any real time to approve or object either way, she pushed her hair out of her face (probably the only time it would be entirely out of her face), and began. She didn't get all those costumes for all those parts for nothing.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

That.. took him by surprise. If the slackened jaw and vacant stare was anything to go by.

Where had the meek girl gone? Surely this was a stunt double. There was no way that librarian-fashioned lesbian-loving mouse-quiet waif could move like that.

And that voice...

You white and cold Don't you know your Mama Has a heart of gold

To be fair, Negaduck had seen girls move like that before, and with bigger assets too. But with bigger stage presence? Probably not.

When his jaw finally closed, a satisfied smirk was across it. After all this time, he had finally corrupted her. Now she would be another play thing at his mercy, a puppet that would dance on his orders.

Exactly as planned.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

Well, he was certainly having a nice time. Lilly was too, for that matter, mostly because she had stopped registering him.

And JUST when it was getting really good, and though she was utterly lost in enjoying herself, she stopped. JUST when he would be really enjoying it, the whirl suddenly stopped, and a brightly smiling, flushed young woman grinned at him just inches from his beak before backing up into open space, seeming to know exactly the terrible timing of the stop.

"I think that's quite enough, don't you?" she said, catching her breath and still smiling that little smile of knowing it wasn't enough. "Well this was nice. Let's not do it again."

~He's going to try and kill us, maybe...~

~Well you should have stayed in charge then, instead of sending me up.~

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Enough?

Coming out of a sequin-and-tailfeather induced haze, Negaduck struggled to wrap his mind around this unwelcome concept. All shades of confusion washed over his face. Like an avaricious supervillain could understand the meaning of 'enough', particularly when it was delivered by a scantily clad beauty who had been swaying tantalisingly in front of him only moments before.

"What are you talking about?"

Disbelief shifted into the beginnings of anger, but he remained seated. Perhaps if she saw the threatening flash in his eyes, she would get back on with it.

Teeth ground; a reminder was issued. "You're **not** finished."

Puppets did not decide to cut their strings.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

The smile snapped off at that response. She was very tired now. Really, all

she wanted was for him to go away so she could get some rest. Her legs were exhausted from all the standing up she'd tried to do today.

I can't keep this front up any longer. I just want to go back to being quiet and pack the stage-me in again. But if I back down now he'll snap my neck...

He's going to try and do that anyway, to be fair. And I think you know that. I saw you get the gun off of the bed before you backed up.

... yes, alright, so sue me for not trusting him.

"Let me rephrase that," she said calmly, trying not to let her tiredness get the best of her as she kept a firm grip on the weapon at her side. If it did, she'd either break down into fear again or lose her temper horribly. Again.

"No."

Dear GOD it felt good to say that, even if inside she was quailing.

"Since I've been unlucky enough to cross paths with you, you've coerced, seduced, lied, begged and threatened. You've never told me what I can and can't do and you are NOT starting now. Negaduck, I'm tired, you've had your fun, and I'm asking nicely. Go away."

Alright, not so much nicely as she really was starting to lose her temper, but it was the thought that counted, right?

by **Negaduck 1 year ago**

Correspondingly, his smile - or sneer - snapped off her response. Pure shock. Enough that he didn't even register the gun. How **dare** she speak to him like that. Like he was a troublesome child rather than the embodiment of sheer terror.

It was as if she had grown a spine or something.

Then the smile returned. It was not a pleasant smile. It never was with him.

"And what in dear, sweet Hades gives you the idea-" cooed with patronising smoothness. "-that that will actually work?"

Really, asking nicely? It was nearly as crazy an idea as letting him back in the house in the first place.

by **Lilly Teal 1 year ago**

She groaned. No, she hadn't really expected that to work, but hope springs eternal.

"Aren't you always saying you hate getting mixed up with me?" she tried. I have no idea why she's trying reason... "Wouldn't it be nice if we just parted ways and try really hard not to run across each other more than we have to?"

Giving that a bit of thought, she sighed. "I'm getting far too mixed up in you as it is. It's worrying. So... you've actually been perfectly civil, so I don't want to have to lose my temper at you again."

Raise gun... aim... steady hand...

"Out. Please," was added as an afterthought.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

'Perfectly civil'? Now she was just being insulting!

The appearance of a barrel in his face though curtailed any thought he may have had to immediately prove her wrong on that front.

"After everything I've done for you?!" snapped the villain, launching to his feet with a dramatic snap of cape. "I ask for one little strip tease, and you **kick me out?!"**

Really, the nerve!

Turning on his heel, the malevolent mallard stormed out, only to turn back again at second thought, and waggle a finger at the suddenly assertive woman.

"One day you'll be sorry you missed the opportunity to get 'mixed up' with me in a good way. One day!"

With that, he completed the storm out, nearly slamming the door off along the way. Just to make it clear he left on his own terms, and was not, in fact, being forced out like a spineless coward.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

Well, that was fun! said her spine.

No it was NOT, said the rest of her. I'm never letting you take charge again!

You always say that, but you always do.

And everytime it nearly gets me KILLED! Never again!

Argument with her own confidence over, she forced it back down and collapsed on the bed to get some sleep. Come tomorrow, she'd barely remember her latest near-death experience. It was possibly the only reason

she was still sane.

... for a given value of sane...

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Sometime in the not-too-distant future, the big bad wolf came a'callin. And no, not a certain FOWL department head who had made his weariness with such species stereotyping clear. Another less than tenderhearted character who had dropped by Second-Story Books far too often.

"Alright, let's make this quick," announced Negaduck, the door creaking precariously on its hinges after being slammed open like that.

The customers browsing in the poor little shop dived for cover, but he paid it no notice.

"You give me what I want and--" Then he did take notice, but not of the commotion - of the lack of response from the lady of the shop.

"Heeeello?" Impatience piled upon impatience as he pushed over a pile of books to see into a clearing. "Anybody home in this dump?"

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"Sorry!" Lilly called out from the back, hurrying out. Was that how she always reacted to bossy people barging into her shop? Oh dear, and your backbone was doing so well. "I was sorting something out, so sorry to keep you wai- oh. It's you."

Aw Lilly, show a little enthusiasm for a familiar face. I'm sure he's happy to see you too.

"I'm sorry, could everyone just... leave? Sorry," she said weakly, waving at everyone. Several cowering customers looked at her gratefully and started inching towards the door, trying to edge around Negaduck without making eye contact. Maybe if they were subtle and quick, nobody would stop them.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

A roll of black masked eyes. Did she have to be so polite AND considerate?

"What're you knobs waiting for?" Stepping well clear ever so kindly so they could pass. "SCRAM!"

As the remaining few citizens stampeded as directed, Negaduck let out a put upon sigh and turned to Lilly.

"Okay. Here's the deal. I've misplaced a small but essential component of one of my machines." Yes, just an ordinary machine, very benign. "I've torn apart everywhere else it could be-" Literally, knowing him. "-And I've narrowed it down to here."

A growl. "Probably dropped it when those rotten kids of yours tried to jump me."

That combination bite-and-book attack had not been appreciated.

"So..." Stepping forward, eyes sliding right to left before locking on her. "Have you seen it? Small, smooth orb, about yae big, real shiny?"

Noting that a 'no' would likely result in him turning the place upside-down until he found it, which would so not be good for the furniture.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"I... I could look?" she offered, seeing that exact possibility looming up large before her and trying to put it off as long as possible. "It doesn't sound familiar..."

Possibly because anything in a two-year-old's pocket would not remain shiny and clean for long, or maybe more possibly because Rosa had mostly forgotten about it and had not yet taken it out to play with.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

Silence as his eyes narrowed, studying every nuance of her expression. Determining her response to be truthful, although inconvenient, he backed off.

"Fortunately," Like anything involving Negaduck was fortunate, unless it involved him leaving. "I have THIS."

And reached within his cape to produce a...

... Small digital beeping.. thing?

"Modified metal detector." So not something he had pinched out of Malicia's bottom drawer. "The orb is very highly refined, so this has a limited range, but if it's here, I'll find it."

And without waiting for any sort of permission, he immediately began trawling the walkways.

BEEP.

BEEP.

BEEP-BEEP-BEEP-BEEP!

His face lit up. Which could never be a good thing.

"A-HA!"

Particularly not when his violent, selfish nature meant he wouldn't be gentle when it came to retrieving what he was after.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

Lilly would have liked to wonder how on earth what he was looking for could have ended up here. It was like she and her family were a magnet for trouble. She was more about how Rosa was asleep back there, precisely where he was headed.

"Wait, I'll get it, shall I?" I'll do it gently, please?

And she would have liked to worry more, especially about how he wouldn't listen at all.

Unfortunately there wasn't time for any of those things, as an angry growling approached at speed, racing along the top of a bookshelf and launching itself at the intruder's face.

Well, at least it wasn't a book this time?

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

"YAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAARRRRRRRRGGGGGGGGHH!!!!!"

Oh the bedlam that broke loose. Nothing like being hit in the face with a tornado of clawed crazy.

Initially knocked onto his back, the caped criminal - although not much would remain of his cape for very long - confused and panic-stricken, thinking only about scrambling the heck out of there.

For all he had been assaulted with in recent times - Darkwing Duck fandorks, mobs of Malicias, attack eels named Cisca - this attack was well up there on the pain scale.

A fact of which was easily detectable through the screaming.

"Get OFF you--" Incoherent screeching. "--gonna turn you into an umbrella stand--" More shrieking, crashing as they tumbled into shelves. "AARRGH my **FACE!!**"

Oh yeah, this was so much better than just giving him what he wanted and letting him go.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

Did the hurricane of death and fur that was attacking him just snigger? It sounded very much like it. It sank its claws in deep and went to town, apparently having the time of its life.

"Javert!" Lilly squealed. As welcome as a turn of events this was, they were probably going to end up bringing the shop down around them. "Heel!"

'Javert' did not feel like heeling. This thing was making his owner feel threatened and angry, and was ALSO lots of screechy, claw-able fun!

"Javert!"

Awwwww, but I wanna plaaaaaaaay. Or kill.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

The distraction was enough for Negaduck to zip out and put some distance between him and the Machine of Pain. And he was normally so fond of those...

In any case, the masked mallard of meanness was left panting, backed up against the wall. For all intents and purposes it appeared somebody had put him through a blender. Karma was a.. uh, jerk, like that.

One arm lifted under shredded yellow fabric to point in horror at the fur-covered fiend, aghast eyes wide at the now very satisfied and thoroughly defended Lilly.

"What the death-dealing devil is THAT?!"

((I thought it was the honey badger's attitude that made it such a nastyass, but have you SEEN its wiki page? 'Honey badgers are very difficult to kill with dogs ... The skin is also tough enough to resist several machete blows.' WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO TO ME.))

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

(OOC: Oh my dear god I had no idea. BEST. PET. EVER.)

"My pet. Javert honey, heel!"

Muttering in disappointment, Javert turned and leapt at Lilly instead, but with every sign of affection, trying to jump into her arms.

CUDDLES.

"This is why I was offering to look instead. He doesn't like strangers, do you boy, no you don't."

Possibly nobody had ever cooed at a machine of horrifying destruction with that much love.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Morgana had her molds. Malicia had her cerberus puppies. And even Negaduck was known to hold an odd attachment to certain bazookas. No, showering horrible things with affection was not uncommon in the underworld.

But Lilly? That was a completely different story.

Once he had recovered from the shock of that image, it was overtaken by outrage. "You've taken it on as a pet? Have you lost your MIND?!"

Sweeping gesture over the shop, and the damage caused therein. "You can't keep it here!"

How am I meant to break in and harass you whenever I damn well please?

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"Why not?" she looked surprised as she picked the manifestation of murder up and gave it a kiss on the top of its head. "Yes, he's a little destructive... but he's so good with the the children, and he loves us so."

Javert snuggled into her chest and grinned a grin at Negaduck that suggested the mallard would be good with ketchup.

"Isn't he cute?"

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Ignoring the niggling recollection of a particularly troublesome demonling brought about by Javert's smugness, Negaduck pressed on. "Look, you want to let a horrible, menacing psycho creature into your home, that's your funeral."

The irony lost on him as much as the concept of snuggly love times were.

"Hand over the fuel source already, and I'll leave you to your little love-in."

As if he had the ability to be commandeering. As if he was the one calling the shots. As if his dignity hadn't been torn to shreds along with his hat.

"Like I want to waste more time in this dump than I have to..."

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"That's good, we don't want to keep you," remarked Lilly. "Alright, just let me look for it."

Rosa, meanwhile, was safely tucked away in the back room, playing with the shiny she had just today remembered was in her pocket. It made a pleasant humming noise and felt rather cosy, as if it were a tiny engine trying to start up. It was also very round and rather slippery, as she found out when she dropped it.

"Come bawk!"

Toddling as fast as a toddler could toddle, she chased her new toy out, across the front room of the shop, and out the front door.

"Wha- ROSA!"

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Out the front, Negaduck was in the middle of discovering that magical killer badgers were as impervious to glares as they were to knives when Rosa came rollin' on through.

"HEY!"

That startled cry was all there was time for as he leapt after the little escapee. Well, technically after the sphere she was chasing rather than the girl herself, but an overly protective guardian could be forgiven for assuming otherwise.

Outside, Rosa would come face to face with another shiny. Except this one was truck-sized; strangely enough, being, in fact, a truck. Not a very supervillainous looking one, and actually quite grubby and run-down.

It was what was inside its long, enclosed trailer, however, that was far more enthralling.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

Ooooooh, this looked exciting! What was it? Picking up her toy, she trotted closer, and the power source started to hum louder. It sounded like whatever it was would make playtime more fun! Maybe it was from the same playset as her toy?

Presumably Negaduck had intended to start a very efficient reign of terror once he'd gotten what he wanted, because getting to the mysterious item was quite easy, even for a child.

Oooooh, comfy seat!

And look, there was even a nice little space for her to put her toy so it wouldn't roll away. How thoughtful!

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Backing out the door, mysteriously in a new and unshredded costume - although there may have been a tenacious tug of war required to get his hat free - when Negaduck finally made it onto the street, things were looking on the up and up.

No psycho-badger out there, and that thieving tot couldn't be too far away. It was a relief, in a way.

Until a giant robotic spider burst out out of the nearby truck like it was no more than a metallic egg and clunkered its way downtown.

Watching his latest death machine go off rampaging with a giggling chickling at the controls, the beleaguered villain's brim drooped to match his face.

"I knew I should've put a padlock on that thing."

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"Rosa! Oh for heaven's SAKE, why can't you take better care of your things!"

Well yes, clearly this was ALL Negaduck's fault.

"WELL?! Is there any way to stop the thing?"

"HAI MAMI! BAI MAMI!"

"ROSA GET BACK HERE!"

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

"Don't yell at **ME**," he blustered right back. "If you had **let** me grab the sphere in the first place, we wouldn't be in this mess!"

Out in the distance came the crushing of metal and the blaring of car alarms.

"Argh!" Unable to stand the sound of wanton destruction occurring without him, Negaduck ditched the disagreement to take after his creation. On foot.

Here was hoping peak hour traffic in the city would hold it up somewhat...

[[to the Rampaging Rosa blog!]]

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

It was a day like any other. A lazy Sunday afternoon, the sun shining, an odd (literally) customer filtering through Second Story Books looking to gift shop or merely pass time.

And in came another.

A tottering old drake, with a beard so long and white it looked like it could have been nicked off a store Santa, flashed around eyes far too bright and cunning for his age. Satisfied, he hobbled into an aisle.

Not without jabbing a young canine so hard with his cane as he passed that the poor boy crumpled to the floor.

"Out of the way, fatso."

Malicious chuckling. But he wasn't there to cause trouble. That was the whole point of the disguise. Easy in, easy out, no need to get anyone's suspicions up at all.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"I've told you before, if you only come here to create a mess and make trouble, you can LEAVE," came a familiar but very annoyed voice from over the shelves, followed the sound of a door being opened and closed very, very quickly.

And quite possibly the faint click of a bat being put down.

Clearly Lilly was not in the best of moods.

Glowing a little, she came into view, spotted the venerable old customer, and plastered a helpful smile on her face.

"Good morning! Anything I can help you with, sir?"

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

"Gawwgh!"

Backwards flail. Recovering, both his balance and his persona, he clutched at his chest.

"Ah, me 'ol ticker." A patient - and hopefully not overtly evil - smile. "Oh, yes, miss, if you could be so kind, to point me towards the science section."

Not that he couldn't bloody well find it on his own. But anything to keep her occupied.

"For my grandson," he related oh-so-harmlessly as he shambled along. "It's a particular passion of his."

What a loser.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"Oh, absolutely. You're in luck, I got a donation just recently and I've been told there are some excellent things in there you wouldn't find on the market anymore," she said cheerfully, well in her stride now as she led the way. "The shelves can be a little confusing, so I'll show you where to go. This way, please."

Sniff sniff snuffle went Javert's nose in the back room of the shop as he prowled around the sleeping babies' cribs. What on what was that tantalisingly familiar smell?

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Dubious eye up at the wavering stacks of literature. "Confusing, right..."

As the Negaverse could show, he was all for pandemonium and disarray. Not when it was threatening to bury him alive, though.

"If you have anything on quantum mechanics and cosmic level energy fields, that would be swell." Before she could ask, "At least, that's what I think his latest project is on. So hard to keep up with the young 'uns these days!"

Yes, particularly when they're into quantum mechanics.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"He sounds like a bright young man. You must be so proud." Smiling, she lapsed into thought as she tried to remember having anything like that.

"... hm. Well, let me look," she offered as they reached the shelves. Running a finger along the spines, she pulled out one in surprise.

"Oh! Yes, Doctor Tex donated quite a few of these, I haven't really looked at them... this might interest your grandson?"

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Those crafty little eyes lit up immediately on sight of the title.

"Yes! That'll be perfect!"

Keen to help that grandson of his, wasn't he.

So keen he particularly snatched the book out of her hands, before turning on

the other new donations.

"Dimensional Physics and.. Metaphysical Transfers'?" Oh what a grin that put on his beak.

Very keen indeed.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"Hm? Ah, would you like this one as well?" Well, that was an abrupt snatch. But he was probably just eager, one couldn't blame him.

Reaching up, she secured the book in question as well as one or two others that might be of interest to him. "Shall I get you a chair so you can look them over?"

That wouldn't be necessary. Javert's eyes glinted from out of the darkness behind the old man, waiting for that instant when his owner had taken her hands away from the books after handing them over. She might get knocked over otherwise.

As soon as that happened, a honey-badger with a very, very evil grin was going to appear in Negaduck's immediate, flat-on-face vicinity.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

There was a moment, just a spilt second before the pounce, that Negaduck realised something was wrong. And his bearded face fell.

Oh. Had forgotten about that.

"BLAARGH!!!"

Slammed onto his front by the sheer weight of the maundering mustelid, the cane skittered across the floor, knocked out from underneath him. Just like his dignity.

"CALL IT OFF! CALL IT--" Incomprehensible screaming. "--OFFF!!!"

Then, amidst all that scratching and screeching, her kindly old customer's beard would be ripped off to reveal exactly who was really interested in dimensional physics.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"Javert!" Lilly squeaked. "Heel! You'll ruin the books!"

The animal paused just long enough for her to scoop him up, still growling and flailing his claws more carefully so he could still be threatening without actually hurting her.

"Honey, no," she said, seeming to have forgotten that there was a living person in great pain in the vicinity, simply because the more important tragedy of almost-damaged books was present. "Doctor Tex gave these to us to take care of them. We can't get more if you tear them."

Blink blink.

"YOU." She looked like she was going to let go of Javert then and there. "What do you want this time?!"

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Comical, really. The amount of damage done to the books - zilch - versus the amount of damage done to him.

Groaning, the crook shakily pushed his face up off the cold floor to shoot her.. his most disarmingly charming smile.

"Would a doctor be too much to ask...?"

Or more importantly, would it be too much to ask her not to notice that he was trying to subtly keep a hold of those books from Doctor Tex. Whoever that was.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

Charming smiles will not work, Negaduck. You nearly damaged BOOKS.

You have crossed a line.

As if she hadn't heard his comment at all, she set Javert down with a very stern 'heel' that left him confusedly stuck to the side of her leg, lest moving a few inches out of place would get him into trouble. And with the threat of claws on covers out of the way, she bent over and gracefully scooped the books up and away from the mauled marauder.

"They seem all right... darling you really must be more careful."

"Mrrraun?"

"But I forgive you."

"Mreeewgh." It was amazing how an animal who could produce such evil facial expressions could look so relieved.

Still standing over the flattened criminal, she folded her arms and frowned. "Well? Do you want to buy the books or not?"

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Also comical was the speed with which he could go from falsely endearing to truly furious the moment the prospect was raised of him actually paying for anything.

"Buy?" He spat. "You've got to be kidding. Your filthy little monster there nearly butchered me! You're lucky I don't raze this entire place to the groun--"

Aaand it was about that point he remembered that his face was on level with one vicious set of teeth. His delicious, handsome face.

Maybe not the best strategy for getting out of there trouble free.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"Well it really is your fault for scaring him!" she objected, still not very happy at all. Yes, the poor nervous darling.

"And for scaring away my customers, frightening my pet, threatening my shop, and generally being very unpleasant, I'm going to double the price," she said very seriously, leaning over so he could see her serious face better. Then she straightened up and walked towards the counter. Seeming to sense what was going on, Javert kept his teeth towards Negaduck, ready to pounce as soon as he tried to back out of this.

"Or, you can leave, and I won't tell Javert to chase you out. I doubt you'll get these books any other place."

And that is that.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

"WHAT?!"

Man that was rotten. He would have almost admired her for it, had it not been his hard stolen dollars involved.

Gritting his teeth, Negaduck picked himself up gruffly - but warily, too, watching Javert watch him - and stomped over to the counter.

Out of the now very shabby old man coat came a weighty wad of cash. Only one or two bills of which he would slide off in preparation of an offering.

Either he had no idea of the value of rare hard copies, or he was expecting her to realise she would be fortunate with even that, and take what she was given.

"And to think, all this effort I went to, to avoid showing up in costume and

causing a scene..." Because if she wanted to stack the guilt on his side, he could play that game too.

Because there was no other reason he would want to stay undetected. Like avoiding drawing attention to what currently had his attention.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"I've never known you to EVER want to avoid a scene," Lilly commented, studiously refusing to look at the money. Not only would whatever he was planning to offer not be enough, but she refused to do this in anything less than a business-like manner. For one thing, that meant the books would go very neatly in a bag, which was indeed what happened.

For another thing, there would be a receipt. It was highly possibly Negaduck had never gotten a receipt for anything in his life. Totting up the (doubled) prices, she handed the slip of paper over and waited, a hand still on the neat package on the counter.

"But I suppose you made an effort to be subtle about getting the books, which is something. What do you need these for, anyway?"

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Receipt promptly tossed over his shoulder.

"Research." Taking snippiness to lubricious new levels. "Can't a mallard have a hobby?!"

At least Lilly was smart enough to fill in the blanks.

Meanwhile, in due disregard for her oh-so-unfairly inflated prices, a single measly note was thrown down on the table, and he made a grab for the books.

Too bad his hobby couldn't be learning to control that impatience.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"Negaduck, pay me properly," she said patiently, moving the books under the counter. "That is NOT how much they're worth and you know it. You'd be paying like any normal customer if you hadn't been caught, right?"

At least TRY to continue avoiding a scene. The sooner you do it the sooner we can move on.

"... should we be worried you've found a hobby in science? More worried than usual, I mean."

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Rest assured, he was quick to settle all her worries.

With a high-pitched, "Mehmehmeh, meh meh meeeeh!"

Snorting, Negajerk dropped the mocking imitation and dropped back.

"Who're you, my parole officer?"

A blink, a light hearted chuckle, as if he had caught himself saying something silly. "Kidding, of course..."

Suddenly, palms down on the table, bill to snarling bill, no longer light hearted any more.

"I don't have a patrol officer, because I'm still on the run from the last time **your stupid antics landed me in the slammer.**"

Yup. All Lilly's fault. She should be grateful he was volunteering any money at all.

Conveniently forgetting, that was, why he was 'volunteering' it in the first place.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"Yes yes, I'm a big bully and we should all feel very sorry for you," she said shortly, making no move to put the books in his reach again. "Would you like me to promise to leave you alone?"

Javert, now very bored with all of this, gave the back of Negaduck's foot an interested sniff before opening his mouth wide.

"Rwwooooaaaaaargh."

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Seethe. Not that he would outwardly let on how much her disrespect got under his feathers, instead expertly hiding it under a veil of sadistic amusement.

"Look at you. Those Build Your Own Backbone lessons have clearly stuck."

Low. Venturing into dangerous territory.

"How about I give you a new lesson in-- YIPPPEEEEE!!"

Which was when the sudden searing pain cutting through his Achilles tendon sent him shooting so hard into the ceiling, his head was lodged into the ceiling. And while all that ruckus and fuss was going on, the wad of cash fell from his possession and straight onto Lilly's desk.

That ought to about cover it.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

That will do!

Cheerfully sweeping the money into her register, she took the books out from under the desk again, so he could pick them up once he'd fallen back to earth.

"Well, best of luck with them all the same," she said as she gave Javert a pat that was in no way related to his most recent action. "I looked through them and I can't make head or tail of what Doctor Tex reads on a daily basis."

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

And fall he did, but in the grand scheme of Negaduck plummets, it was nothing.

Still enough to distract him from the sudden loss of moneys, however.

"Who is this Doctor Tex you keep babbling about?" Said while flipping through one of the impatiently unpacked books. "Must be a real dingus."

Considering the amount of geekdom packed into those pages, that was likely an understatement.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"Cornelius Tex. He's the one who donated the books. I couldn't understand a thing he was going on about while he was here, but he seemed a very nice man."

A very nice man who took very good care of his books, that was important. All right, so one of them looked disturbingly like it had been used as a coaster for a coffee-cup full of acid, but if he was a scientist you had to make allowances.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Unlike a vicious honey badger, or smarmy come-backs from usually timid bookkeepers, that gave him reason to truly pause.

"Cornelius Tex? Doctor Cornelius Tex?" Incredulity. "The socially oblivious, scientifically slick, butchering butcherbird Doctor Tex?"

So in their last meeting the butcherbird in question may have provided advanced warning of Malicia MaCawber's pregnant state. No reason why that was bookmarked forever in his brain.

It just hadn't been bookmarked in a way to provide easy cross-reference to FOWL.

"Argh, I can't believe I didn't think of that earlier!"

Slapping his forehead, Negaduck tore off the old man disguise in one swift moment - by some miracle of villaining, revealing his full costume beneath - slapped a magically presto'd hat upon his skull, and tore out the door.

Because his enthusiastically charging off somewhere didn't bode ill for anyone.

[[off to Cornelius's page]]

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

Rosa squinted at the paper, willing her grown-up brain to read at more than a snail's pace as she walked down the street.

The conclusion she had come to was this. Fixing them was all very well, but searching on an empty stomach was not doing them any favours. To that end, she had put Javert and Lilly in a little daycare she had been passing with a promise to come back really quickly with groceries.

Hopefully Javert wouldn't eat any children. That might put a damper on things.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Don't walk and read. A valuable lesson commonly forgotten by the herds of texting teenagers who follow their mobiles into traffic.

Or, on this day, of not-really-teenagers wandering down city streets and inadvertently into grimy alleys.

The problem with grimy alleys was that they tended to attract some rather grimy individuals. The sort you wouldn't want to run into.

"Hey!"

Like that.

"Watch it, kid," growled a voice from underneath a crimson fedora. While he couldn't exactly loom over Rosa, the effect was there. Maybe because it looked as if he would bite her hand off if it came too close again.

Strangely enough, he seemed more focused on hurrying on his own task, carrying something large under one arm that he was sure to keep hidden with

his cape. As if his very appearance wasn't unsettling enough.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

She blinked a few times, mouth still half-open to voice some vague apology. That hat. Now why did that hat look so very familiar?

Some small parts of her grown-up brain and residual memories from her child brain were telling her that growling was not a good sign, but she was too busy thinking to pay attention.

Hm...

"Oh!" she said, delighted recognition lighting up her face. "You're the weird guy! Hi weird guy!"

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

That was a first.

"I'm the weird guy?" sneered he. "Check out your face. Looks like someone threw a chicken and a turnip in a blender."

Not to mention she was standing in an alley happily conversing with an armed supervillain as if it were a perfectly commonplace occurrence. Now where could she have possibly picked that trait up from.

Bundle under one arm shifted impatiently. It was only a mixture of caution - not wanting to crush what he was carrying - and curiosity that kept him from simply bowling her out of the way.

"Don't you know who I am?"

Not talking childhood memories here. More like.. common sense.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"Chicken and duck in a blender," she corrected cheerfully. "I don't know your name, but I know you. You're the weird guy I used to play with!"

He used to make the FUNNIEST faces (of fury) and the FUNNIEST noises (of agony). Ah memories.

"Don't you remember me? Well I guess you don't. I'm big now. You're TINY now! What you got there?"

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Stared back at her. Like she was on some marvellous SPACE DRUGS.

"What? No!"

Package hugged out of her reach protectively. Whatever it was, he did not want to do Show and Tell.

"I'm Negaduck!" How dare she even make him explain that! "Criminal mastermind! The most feared felon in this entire damn city!"

Adding, rather pointedly, "And I DON'T play with children!"

What was she, some kind of psycho?!

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"But you DID." Pout. "You REALLY don't remember me, huh. I'm Rosa! And I know you're Negaduck now, so we're even again."

Putting her hands behind her back with a huge grin, she leaned over and to the side, trying to see behind his back.

"Oooh, is it sweets? Or glowy stuff, like that toy you gave me once?"

... yeah. 'Gave'.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

The mystery box was yanked out of her line of sight again with increasing aggravation.

"Toy'? Gave?! What are you..."

Then, suddenly, it clicked.

"Waitasec... chicken and duck..." Not to mention overbearing cheerfulness and obliviousness to danger. "You mean.. you're Lilly and Pantso's brat?"

Hardly a happy reunion, considering how much damage the fluffy indestructible chickling had done to his work on multiple occasions, but there was the little matter of the time space continuum first.

"How.. how is that even possible?" Incredulous gesture to her newly discovered... height. "You barely scrambled your way out of the egg a few weeks ago!"

To be fair, he was no expert on picking children's ages. He only had a busload or two of illegitimate spawn. Nothing he paid any attention to.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"Ding! Right answer. Took you long enough!" she cheered. "I know, right? Isn't it cool? Something weird and magical happened and now I'm big!"

IS THIS NOT THE COOLEST?

"Yay you remember me. So, so, so? Lemme see what's in the box. Shaaaaaare."

Oh honey. No. He doesn't share.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Doesn't obey orders either. And determined pestering was guaranteed to fall on deaf ears. After all, he was used to working with Quackerjack.

That wasn't why sharing was not forthcoming, however. It was because Negaduck was staring up at her with dawning shock.

"You mean... you have a child's level of understanding in the suddenly teenage body inherited from the two most insipidly nice people to curse this city?"

Regardless of whether she responded, the stare only grew more shocked...

... until he suddenly and inexplicably burst into tears. And not silent tears, either. Loud, uncontrolled sobs.

"Wwwwhhhhhhhhhhhyyyyyy....."

Awkward.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

... what?

Rosa tilted her head in confusion, trying to figure out why he was suddenly so upset. Then, a metaphorical light bulb pinged into existence over her head.

"Awww, it's okay Negaduck! I know I'm too tall to play with you properly anymore, but I'm looking for a way to fix it. Don't you worry!"

... that's... one way of interpreting his reaction.

"Then when I'm back to baby size you can visit again!"

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Having collapsed back to sit on an overturned box - mystery box of mystery put to his side, out of grabbygrab range, thankyouverymuch - through the bawling he managed to shake his head.

"No, that's not it. In fact, you're the perfect height for me to play with you now!"

The verb in that context would probably go over her head, so after a few more sobs, Negaduck choked out an explanation.

"An opportunity like this... I would do something so wonderfully horrible...!"

Having only wiped his bill on his sleeve to look up at her, a second's pause and the injustice (or was that justice?) of it all shook him again.

"But I caaaaaaan't!"

More bawling. Perhaps freer with his emotions knowing full well she would not have the street smarts to record this patheticness and post it on DuckTube.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"Well then that's good, isn't it?" she laughed. "Why're you getting so upset about not being able to be horrible? You're SO weird."

HOWEVER. Still curious, she put her hands on her hips. He was crying an awful lot for such a silly and probably fibby explanation.

"... was someone mean to you? Is that it?"

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Far too devastated to pay any attention to the free character assessment, the felon blew his beak on his cape. Classy.

"You could say that..." Looking up at her with wet, shiny eyes like a freshly kicked puppy. "Malicia... she cast a spell on me... that means I can't play with anybody ever again!"

As unplanned as this little breakdown was, somewhere in the back of his devious brain, Negaduck knew that keeping this at a level she wouldn't understand and possibly only sympathise with, could only be to his advantage.

Sniffing, he wrung the dark black and crimson fabric in his hands. "I couldn't give her what she wanted to remove it... and she won't be convinced otherwise! I don't know what to do-hoo-oooo!"

Either he was putting it on, or that spell had zapped away his drakehood in more than just one manner of speaking.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"She took away your toys?!"

How terrible! How must have done something really bad to be grounded this much. Then, another light bulb.

"... is that why you won't share the box? Are you hiding some toys you still have?" Because say what you will about kids' attention spans, they could be remarkably insistent about things that grownups try to hide from them. The box WOULD be opened, dammit, if she had to try all day. "C'mon, I won't take them away! Pleeese I just want to see."

Taking advantage of the emotional state of what looked like a drake having an breakdown to try and look in the box again? I have no idea what you mean.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Well, 'toy', singular, but close enough.

Rosa was equally devious, it appeared. But that would work out fine. Besides, the mention of the box triggered his own lightbulb moment.

If he was embarrassing himself enough in front of a female already, why not get some feedback from one?

"I was going to give it to her, try to get her to be.. uh, 'nice', again."

Reaching down, he scooped up the box and held it open to the young Rosa.

A centipede. Not your garden variety one, this was HUGE. Thicker than a water pipe, it was curled around on itself.. but there had only been room for the upper segment. Green bile oozed out of the wound where it had been decapitated.

One of the many legs poking outside of the lid twitched.

"Women like slimy dead things, yeah?"

Couldn't be far wrong, he had seen Malicia put this sort of thing on sandwiches!

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"... gross. Kind of cool, but really, really gross." Rosa screwed up her bill. The mental image of her own mother pitching the box away from her at a hundred miles an hour with a shriek told her that women did not, in fact, like dead slimy things.

"I don't think that's going to work... Why don't you give her something NICE?"

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Look at the box.

Look at Rosa.

Look back in the box.

Then, eventually,

"This... isn't 'nice'?"

How the hell was he meant to know!

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"... no?" How don't you know this? EVERYONE knows what nice things are.

"Nice things are... nice! Like toys, and food, and soft things. Hugs! And if you're getting something for her, nice is whatever she wants nice to be, I guess. Things she likes. What does she like?"

Rosita Gonzales Teal, niceness expert.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

"HUGS?! Honey, this is Malicia we're talking about."

Still, what she said did make a kind of sense. A illogical, schmaltzy kind of sense that women bizarrely seemed to prefer. And if that was what it was going to take...

What did she like? Besides slimy dead things? Besides the sorts of activities she had rendered him incapable of conducting?

"She likes... burning..... stuff?"

And tormenting him, obviously, but that was hardly an acceptable proposal.

After a moment of struggling, the box was thrown aside in a huff.

"Oh, this is impossible!"

Head in hands. Really, who ever expected him to be nice? And not just faked, silver-tongued nice, but genuinely thoughtful. Impossible was too weak a term!

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"Eh... does she like flowers? Shiny things?... shiny flowers?" Rosa was running out of suggestions.

"How can you not know what she likes! I thought Aunty Mal was your friend! Isn't there anything she talks about?"

You've got to give me something here, please.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

"FRIENDS DON'T ZAP AWAY FRIENDS' PRIVATE-- toys."

Catching himself just in time, which involved also remembering not to scare his only helper away by correcting her impression on exactly how 'friendly' they were.

Or on the 'Aunty' thing. Errrgggh. The sweetness of it sent shudders down his spine. So much wrong. And not good wrong.

Patience gathering. "Look, girly, nobody listens to Malicia, because the only thing Malicia ever talks about is herself, like she's the centre of the whole damn univer--"

Finger snap.

"Ah-hah! That's it!"

And without a word of explanation, in a trail of dust, he zipped away.

Leaving Rosa holding a half a centipede.

Which he, scarcely a second later, zipped back to snatch.

"One for the road."

Brow wiggle, and he was off again.

Surely to woo Malicia's favour as fast and as smooth as a myriapod.

—

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

In what appeared mere seconds after Rosa saw him shoot off in a trail of smoke and determination - thanks, cartoon physics - a red, yellow and black pancake inch-wormed its way back towards her.

A masked face, just recognisable in amongst the smearings of tread marks and shattered windscreen glass, gritted out through an entirely flattened beak,

"Just be nice to her, huh?"

Because it was entirely Rosa's fault that such a ridiculous strategy was doomed to failure.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

She stared, blinking a few times as her brain cast around for an appropriate response.

Finding it, she started to laugh. It was highly possible that there was an 'oh my god, just LOOK at you' gasped out in there somewhere, but she was laughing so hard it was difficult to tell.

"It's not -my- fault you both suck at being nice," she finally managed, leaning against a wall for support. "Did she yell at you? She's awesome at yelling."

Almost as good at yelling as she was terrible with talking.

"... you didn't try to talk, did you? She's awful at it."

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

The piece of paper pushed itself upright, very wobbly - it was hard to stand when your feet were effectively 2D - stuck a thumb in his beak, and blew. Instant reinflation.

There, 3D again.

"I can out-awful her any day!" Roared whilst dislodging what appeared to be a car's handbrake from his spine. "And that's exactly what I'm going to do."

It was always worrying when Negaduck switched from indignant fury to malevolent scheming, and no time more so when it was directed at a magically aged teenager.

"And you're going to help me."

Because actually asking for assistance would fall into the 'being good at nice' category.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

Rosa regarded him a moment, considering. Then, she asked the question. The question that is programmed within every child to ask and insist on at the most inconvenient moment possible.

"Why?"

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Because an 18 wheeler compressed a postbox into the back of my head and I'm holding you indirectly responsible.

Because this plan requires an innocent patsy and you're the closest one about.

Because I said.

"Because," began he with a calm once-over of her current 'situation'. "I'm guessing there's a reason why you're still wandering around, clueless and alone. Could it be that Malicia refused to help you too?"

Either Negaduck had good sources... or his demonic semi-companion's selfish nature was as predictable as a Hollywood ending.

"Wouldn't you like to teach her a lesson, just a little bit?"

Sure, just a little bit. Because he did things by increments.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

Rose considered this for the requisite amount of time toddlers considered implications, which was about half a second. This deep consideration completed, she shrugged. "Nah. If she feels silly she can be silly. There's oodles and oodles of weird people who can help here."

You being among one of the weirdest and lest helpful.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Deep, put-upon sigh.

"Suit yourself. Such a shame, I won't be able to give you that treat I had been planning as a reward..."

The mystery of it all dangled tauntingly over her cheerful, unknowing head.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

Eyes brightened up in excited interest. Excellent.

"Is it your hat?"

... wait, what? For a second there was a flashback to her baby days where she remembered trying to take his mask. 'I can has?'

"Can I have it?" Same situation. Better grammar.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Deadly stare of deadliness.

"If I gave it to you, it wouldn't be MY hat anymore, would it?"

With many underlying layers of 'touch it and you die'. Rosa would pick up on that, wouldn't she?

Before she could test him on that, cue classic strategy of redirection. Hey, it wasn't his first time dealing with grabby-grabby troublemakers.

"No, I'm talking about another treat. Something you can really get your hands all over."

Then out from his cape came something big, brash and.. covered in question marks.

"A mystery box."

I saw your earlier weakness, young one, and I took note.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

Question marks! Even more mysterious!

"Oh my god it looks awesome!" She made a sudden grab for it, but he was no doubt fully prepared for that, even with her new range of reach.

"Whatisitwhatisitwhatisit?"

It has QUESTION MARKS.

SO MYSTERIOUS.

MUST HAVE.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

The box was, of course, snatched out of her path at the last second.

"Oh I'll tell you, my enthusiastic little fiend."

Turning, off in the direction of the next adventure he went. The prize dangling within Rosa's sight on the off chance she needed a visual carrot.

"After we pick up a few supplies."

Taunting. One of Negaduck's many 'talents'.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

He REALLY didn't know how children operated, did he?

Well. Here's hoping he enjoyed being followed by a curious child who was going to consider and question what exactly the surprise was out loud. Constantly.

"It's not another gross bug, is it? Oh oh, is it shiny? Does it make noise? What

colour is it? IS IT A HAT? Oh oh oh oh a ball? A TINY HORSIE?"

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

By the time they arrived at a warehouse in the bad part of town, Rosa would find her bill firmly gagged.

He knew enough about children not to try to argue with them. It was just fortunate for her he wasn't carrying any beak glue.

"Ah, here we are." The hideout was looking less and less like a slaughterhouse - and smelling less and less like one too - much to his disappointment. But if the woman lacked his finally tuned taste, what could you do?

Turning back to his string-along, "Okay, sweetheart, we're going to go on a treasure hunt! Isn't that fun?"

Maybe the hunting part.

"But as there's a mysterious magical spell that stops me from poking around, you're going to have to go on your own. But you'll have this.. uh, super.. thing to guide you!"

On her head he slapped a headband with tiny spycam and earpiece.

"I'll be able to talk to you through your fantastic adventure through that. And don't forget, once you get the treasure, you get the mystery prize! Ready?"

Gag whipped off, but she had no real time to answer - she was already being heaved through a secret side entrance.

OooOooo adventure!

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

ADVENTURE! With a little 'humph' at having not been allowed to talk all the way here, she skipped into the warehouse.

"Can I take other things?" she asked cheerfully? "Ooooooh, what's thiiiiiiis."

Was it really the best idea to send her alone into a building full of mysterious and interesting looking things?

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

"Sure, whatever, go nuts," came Negaduck's voice through the earpiece.

What did he care what she took?

"Just go forward, up the stairs, and about three quarters of the way up, there should be a secret door. You won't be able to see anything. Press the wall near the blo-- red marks, see if that works."

Adding, as a second thought, "And watch the spike trap on the fourth stair. Can't remember if I disabled that."

Minor detail.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"What's a three-quarter?" came back Rosa's voice cheerfully.

... right. Toddler.

The cheery question was followed by the sound of heavy thuds and bangs as Rosa no doubt found something suitably stick-like to 'press' every part of the wall until it gave way.

"FOUND IT!"

Well at least it was effective...

"What now?"

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

"What do you think, doofus? Walk straight ahead. I know the wall looks solid but you should be able to phase through."

Unless it was booby-trapped. Hey, her funeral.

The video feed dissolved into static for a moment, presumably a result of being caught between dimensions. That or Rosa had walked head-first into the wrong, non-portholey part of the wall. Being an ambitious villain, he chose to go along with the former.

"Now, we're after something very specific..."

That may have been his intent, but Rosa's? Exactly how wise was unleashing a toddler-brained teenager in Malicia's apothecary, full of magical potions, creatures, and the most dangerous collection of all - her 'exotic' cooking ingredients?

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"SHINIES!" crowed a triumphant voice that would probably rattle his eardrums. "SHINIES AND SLOSHYS AND CRACKYS."

What followed was a succession of roars, rattles, thuds and clunks as the proverbial bull was let loose in the proverbial china shop.

"BEST. PLACE. EVER."

Her pockets were probably full now.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

"ARRGH!" Ripping out the earpiece temporarily to deaden the sound, only to bring it back to shout into it.

"No, look-- HEY, PAY ATTENTION!" Which seemed to have no effect on the chaos at the other end whatsoever. "You need to find a tiny bottle! Something marked 'gravity defying'. Can you see that?"

Maybe. Maybe not. What she would be able to see, however, were three yellow eyes staring out of the darkness of a cage, a cage shaken by a deep, rolling grumble...

A new friend! HURRAY!

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

You're telling a toddler in a new, shiny place to pay attention?

What you're hearing is the sound of half a million parents laughing long and loud.

"HELLO!" she said happily, ignoring Negaduck entirely. "Wanna play?!"

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

"HISSSSSSSSSS!!!"

That was not the highly frustrated drake on the other end of the earpiece, but her new playmate, who had darted forward to wildly swipe at the toddler/teen with both front claws.

Of course, knowing Rosa's luck, it would have no effect on her whatsoever.

Now in better light, it was clear that the creature was some sort of demon cat.. thing. It burned red - literally, as it appeared to be made out of flame itself. Despite that, something was keeping it from escaping the cage... and it did not appear to be very happy about that..

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"Oh my God HI! You're SO COOL." Talk about natural people skills. "This place has the BEST pets."

No harm was done to her whatsoever, possibly because she hadn't been in lunging range. Due to, you know, pocketing shiny things over at the table.

"Aw, why're you all cranky?" Yes, let's go with -cranky-. "You want out? Huh?"

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Letting out a yowl that appeared to be in the affirmative, the creature paced the small cage. Eventually, sitting back on its hindquarters, it pawed at the lock.

It appeared to be contained by a mere padlock, but odd inscriptions on the keyhole indicated otherwise.

Free me. Let me.. play...

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

Bah, who had the time for odd inscriptions? At a certain age the world was nothing BUT odd inscriptions.

And if that stage never passes you become a conspiracy theorist.

"Okay, hang on. I'll get a key. Or wait... OH YES. Look, this hissy bottle made this block disappear." Read: corrode due to it being some sort of potent acid. "Maybe it'll make the lock disappear."

Let's be careful of it now. Splash.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

BOOM!

GLIMMER!

POOF!

... No change. Pretty though.

Maybe that key over there would be of more use?

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

Key?

KEY!

Picking it up, Rosa poked the lock quizzically with the key a few times, trying to work out how it operated.

"Oh, it goes in HERE. Okay."

Click.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Success! The lock dissolved into a pile of ash.

... not really environmentally friendly, a one-use lock, but that was black magic for you.

"RAAAAARRRRHHH!!!"

The cute little kitten of flaming doom burst forth, leaping over Rosa by a feather's width...

... immediately causing a whirlwind of damage in the small spell closet. Jumping here, knocking over that potion, breaking that vial, setting that book alight.

Woooo, fun times!

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"You WERE bored," Rosa remarked happily, glad she could help. Wisely deciding to let the poor thing frolic about freely, she went about pocketing the things she liked before they could be set on fire. Ooh, a shiny, pink bit of paper with squiggles on it.

It wasn't stealing. He'd said she could have anything she liked.

"Kay, I'm coming out," she said into the headset. "This was FUN!"

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

"The hell you are!" blasted back a miffed voice at the other end of the connection. "I'm coming in there first!"

Grunting, a crowbar was pried back in what had - during the last ten minutes - been a concerted effort to target a weak spot in the warehouse's exterior. Finally, success! A large-ish hole opened up in the wall.

... just in time for him to be beset by everything that had been let loose from the apothecary.

"BWWWAAAAAAH!!!"

... including the fire cat.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"Aw, he likes you!" Rosa said cheerfully, stepping out of his flailing way and

retrating a few steps away so he could play undisturbed.

"That was a great place. Let's do it again!"

by **Negaduck 1 year ago**

And there was flailing indeed.

"GAAAAAH!!" Yellowed jacketed arms grabbing at air outside the fire/smoke cloud for something, anything, to pull to freedom. "Wwwwwhyyyyyy....!!"

For once, that was a reasonable question. He hadn't done anything this time! Mostly. Only manipulate a child into a break and enter.

That, and be within the same vicinity as Rosa.

by **Lilly Teal 1 year ago**

Catching his hand, she tugged him out of the cloud with a lot more strength than she knew she had (possibly due to being so much bigger now), so the intended yank wouldn't so much move him out horizontally as send him flying in a less-than-graceful arc down the stairs, trailing pain and smoke.

"Whoops!"

by **Negaduck 1 year ago**

"YYYYYYAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!!"

Smashing through a wall, collecting parts of the warehouse's somehow ritzy decor along the way, he finally made a crash landing in the street outside. On his face.

Which happened to be stuck in the bust of a (marble) Malicia bust.

Dignified.

The fire cat had lost interest by that stage - fortunately, given his tailfeathers were up in the air as he tried to jig and jostle out of the sculptured muzzle - and instead it took advantage of the opportunity for freedom.

It, along with the any other beasties and one-eyed critters that had inadvertently been released in the chaos, scurried and slithered and slugged away, dispersing themselves through the city.

At least they hadn't exactly been going for a covert break-in.

by **Lilly Teal 1 year ago**

"BYE!" Rosa bellowed merrily, waving as the creatures vanished into the

distance. She made no further effort to aid the mallard back on his feet, presumably under the notion that he needed no help whatsoever, but simply hummed to herself as she waited for him to finish 'playing'. It wasn't as if she was in any hurry.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

With a final 'YANK' he tugged himself out of the chesty tomb and landed flat on his back. Staring up at Rosa-

- or more accurately, what was sticking out of one of Rosa's pockets.

That looked suspiciously like Malicia's handwriting.

"What'd you have there?" Grabby grabby didn't work so well from the ground, but he was faster than he looked when it came to snatching. "Did you steal something?"

Because doing so wilfully would have been so much more impressive than loosing a swarm of critters into St Canard.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"I didn't steal!" she objected loudly. "You said I could take what I liked!"

Still assuming this was his place. Let's keep going with that.

"And it was SHINY." Why exactly a post-it note had glitter on it was an entirely different question.

Pause. Perhaps wondering if maybe this was not, in fact, a place she was allowed to take things from?

"... I can keep everything else, right?"

Or not.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

The enjoyment of misleading an innocent was wiped off his masked face the moment his eyes read the note.

Or more accurately, the words 'date' and 'Rey' combined with highschooly lovehearts scribbled all over the self-reminder.

All Rosa would get then was a distracted, "Yeah, go for it, sweetheart."

The note crushed in one hand like so many rivals' spleens. "I've got something of my own to take."

And he was off, leaving the not-so-little one to find her way back to her usual state - and her home - herself.

[[Off to [Date with Disaster](#) blog]]

—

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

Things always worked out in the end. There was always that to look forward too.

Another thing, quite unexpected, that had worked out, was a certain very enthusiastic old friend of Lilly's bearing down on her when she was at her lowest and looking for a way to distract herself. Somehow reorganising everything over and over again just wasn't cutting it.

What WOULD cut into the stress of constant unwanted visits, as he had loudly insisted, was to get started doing something she enjoyed, rather than sitting by herself all the time while her husband was working the night-shift and her children were asleep.

Singing would be a start. It would just make it easier to throw her into theatre again. And he had the connections now to get her into something quiet and classy. Only the best for his friends.

It had only been a week since then, and already she had the biggest smile on her face, and she wasn't at all nervous talking to the band or the other singers. Maybe this would work out after all.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

"Ooohhooohoo, how I do love a good show!"

Out front, the various seats were filling up. Quite literally, as a booth near the front squeaked and groaned as a rather weighty walrus bounced into one.

His companion, a scowling mallard in a deep blue suit and matching fedora, did not match his enthusiasm.

A friendly elbow to the side cut short a bout of incoherent grumbling. "Come now, Negaduck, this is your chance to take in some culture!" Tuskernini roused. "Besides, this place has had marvellous reviews. Perhaps I shall even find some talent for my next.. venture."

"I'm only here because I lost that ridiculous bet!" snapped back the incognito criminal. "Which I'm certain you rigged..."

"My good duck, while as a master of theatre I am more than familiar with working the 'rigging', if you chose to underestimate the fondness of a flock of penguins for raw fish, that is entirely your own undoing," came the response, utterly unfazed by the accusation. "Hush, it begins!"

The lowering of the house lights did seem to indicate exactly that. Unless there was a mysterious phantom messing with the circuits..

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

Unfortunately the place did not boast a mysterious phantom to add a touch of drama and intrigue to each night. Not for lack of Oz wishing for one, but you couldn't have everything.

The mood backstage was perhaps a tad too giggly to do Tuskernini's reverent 'it begins' justice, it having had been a very pleasant week for all the girls. However, in the interest of professionalism, they deferred all further gossip until later as they were shooed into position with last minute dusting of dresses and checking of jewellery.

A spotlight wandered across the stage to the slow sway of the music, picking up the front singer's silhouette and holding place as she started to sing. The best girls tended to rotate between backup and front both for a little variety and so everyone could get an equal footing, but as the curtain rose it was clear that front or back, everyone was certainly a dancer, and very good ones at that.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

This had the intended effect on Tuskernini, who watched, enthralled, eyes lit up like so many Parcans (that's parabolic aluminized reflector lamps, kiddies).

"Oooh, look at that! Isn't it wonderful? The life, the passion..."

The black masked grouch beside him, meanwhile, sat with arms crossed, refusing to pay the slightest bit of attention whatsoever.

"If you wanted dancers with 'passion' I could've picked a better place than this dump..."

Whether he would've been allowed in was another matter. Unfortunate turns of events kept seeing him kicked out of his favourite establishments. Nothing to do with his own behaviour, of course.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

Obviously nothing to do with his own behaviour. Hopefully that blamelessness would continue while he was here. It looked like he was too busy sulking to cause much trouble.

Now that the curtain and lights had stopped playing coy, it appeared as if the front singer of the moment was Lilly, if a little hard to recognise in the new clothes and new confident manner. She wasn't the one with the most powerful voice, that honour went to one of the girls who could literally shake the rafters, but the songs had been picked carefully to take full advantage of what the varied singers could do, and it suited her voice to a T.

So what if she still hadn't reached the point where she could look straight at the audience, the song let her get away with keeping her eyes half-shut.. She was having a marvellous time.

At least someone was happy.

The music swept and spun, clearly no expense had been spared on good musicians either, and it all came to a head as each girl made a graceful flourish that swept all the way down the line and to the front.

Ta-daaaaah.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

The walrus was on his feet and clapping wildly like something out of Sea World.

"Bravo! Bravo!"

"Are we done here?" said his less than impressed associate.

"I would quite like to have some words with that last singer," murmured Tuskernini in thought once his excitement reduced to plot-able levels. "Such a beautiful, delicate flower. And you know what they say about flowers..."

"Fun to step on?"

"That they are the music of the ground, from Earth's lips spoken without sound..." Flitting from poetic to malicious in adding, "And people will always pay to see them."

Negaduck, as it happened, did not appreciate poetry. "What, you think you are going to waltz in there, and sweep some song bird away to join your certifiable circus? Willingly?" A snort. "Even you aren't capable of producing the amount of fertiliser needed for that garden, pal."

Dramatic determination. "Just watch me!" And off he swept for backstage.

"Arrgh..." The sulker following, if only for the sake of getting ahead in the

betting stakes.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

Backstage was full of heady giggling and the resuming of chatter as the girls started scattering a little. Some retreated into the rooms further back to fix their hair and makeup, some just leaned against the walls and sent someone running for drinks to cool down, and some in more definite hurries had dashed on to the rooms to change and head out to wherever they needed to be next.

"What are you doing back here?" a voice sounded above them. Standing in their way and staring them down was a woman of Amazonian proportions even before the strappy heels and updo, towering easily over everyone there. As a result she was never in a backup group, but her voice, as mentioned, could shake foundations in a beautiful way. She had just been on her way to start serving the drinks, which was how she passed the time when not singing.

"The bar's that way."

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

That was enough for Negaduck, who indifferently headed in that far more interesting direction, only to be hooked by the collar.

"My dear," True to his profession, the wayward director didn't miss a line. "The only nectar we would delight to sup from is the amazingly sweet waters of your talent pool."

Taking the female by the shoulder, should she permit it, he would walk them collaborative fashion further backstage.

"I am a, as you would call it, a scout searching for the best and brightest in the theatrical world. I would very much like to have a talk with some of you jewels of the stage to see whom would be most fitting for branching out in a.. different direction."

Stopping for a Tuskerniny chuckle. "If, if it were not too much trouble."

Oh yes, they would hate to cause trouble.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

She shrugged his hand off her shoulder, not too harshly but enough to indicate she didn't like being touched without invitation. And judging by her expression it was clear she didn't think much of his theatrical phrasings. I mean, 'the amazingly sweet waters of your talent pool'? Gag.

Still, not the slimiest talent scout she'd ever met. Folding her arms, she gave it a bit of thought and nodded. "Back rooms, then. But," she added, putting her hands on her hips and looming over the both of them to her full potential,

"make it quick. And if the girls don't want to talk to you, you LEAVE. If it sounds like you're overstaying your welcome, I throw you out myself. Clear?"

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

"Of course, of course," fluttered Tuskernini, keen not to lose the opportunity.. or face, in front of a very judgemental fellow supervillain.

Under his best behaviour or at least the pretence of such, the walrus waddled onwards to his target.

Leaving a not-so-wellbehaved mallard trailing through, with a slimy line of his own.

"Can see why they chose you as the bouncer, honey." Which sounded like a compliment, in the face of her sensible handling of the situation, but where his gaze lingered as he passed suggested otherwise.

Emphasis on the bounce.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

The comment was met with a cheeky salute. She was clearly much more at home with sliminess if it was up-front. And given the fact that she had passed off her tray to one of the other girls with time so she wouldn't be too far or too busy for the next ten minutes, his observation had made them even less trustworthy.

She might have been the only one who thought so, but then again everyone was much too busy amongst themselves to pay much attention to the pair as a few more girls retreated into the rooms. The duo went quite unmolested, and more worryingly quite unquestioned. One of the perks of having so many different performers walking in and out all the time, perhaps.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

He may have not been recognised, but away from the lights and costumes - and other bustier distractions - Negaduck finally recognised her.

"Hey!" snapping his fingers at a passing helper. "Give me one of those programmes!"

The booklet of which was helpful not only for better covering his face, but for confirming who this performer was. Yes, right there - Lilly Teal. Her onstage persona was so different, he barely could get his head around it being the same person.

Even with the advantage of having seen it before.

This little revelation went unnoticed by his companion, too occupied with the

subtleties of conning.. that was, conversation.

"My name is Tuskernini." No point hiding it, he was all over the news! "World famous filmmaker and director. I am about to begin a unique stagemusical, and have been looking for someone to play the starring role..."

Sneering, Negaduck watched this exchange over the top of the paper. Surely she couldn't be that gullible...

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

She looked up in the process of taking off her jewellery and blinked, still coming down from the high of the excitement and perhaps not quite alert yet.

"Oh," she said finally, a little uncertainly, though she smiled brightly at the compliment. "That's very kind of you."

Wanted to chat? About what exactly? But, she concluded, if he'd been let in, he was probably harmless. And a quick look around confirmed that while people were in a hurry, there were still plenty of them around and nobody was leaving quite yet. That was always good.

"I suppose I can spare a few minutes..."

Negaduck had so far gone unrecognised, not that it would have been easy to spot him past the immediate view of Tuskernini's bulk. And to be fair, sober colours of any kind were out of character enough to be an excellent disguise.

by Negaduck 1 year ago

The worry in her tone did not go amiss.

"Now, now, my dear, no need to fret. As any police officer will confirm-" With a gun to the head. "I have truly reform'ed."

Guiding her, with big friendly gestures, away to a somewhat quieter part of the area, away from any prying eavesdroppers.. save for his accomplice, of course.

"In fact, to give a little something back to the community, all profits from this tour will be donated straight to the Tiny Orphan Puppy Foundation."

Turning to face her with pleading puppy eyes of his own.

"You would not deny the tiny orphan puppies, would you?"

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

The conversation hit her in order of least to most suspicious, which ended up to be entirely backwards.

Starring role.

'Unique' stagemash.

Tuskernini.

A good St. Canardian always watched the news so they knew what to look out for, and the name rang a bell, even if it was just to confirm that he actually was a director of sorts.

"Ah. That sounds... interesting. Define unique," she replied weakly. Maybe it would be best to get all suspicious wording settled before they went any further. And maybe she WAS learning after all, just a little bit.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

((XD Had misread that as 'definitely unique'. Was like.. what question? Sorry!))

"Oh! Well, a spectacular..ly touching tribute that--"

"--That isn't something you want to get involved with, sweetheart."

Finally the fedora-wearing stranger had spoken. Only to be promptly pulled aside by Tuskernini.

"What ARE you doing, my good man?" The friendly terminology undermined by the demanding nature of that hiss. "This is MY scheme..."

Stubborn as always, that 'good man' refused to be budged. "Find another 'talent', hotshot. Can't be that hard, with your 'world renowned' skills, right?"

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"Oh no, no, of course not." I mean they were tiny. And orphans. And puppies.

"But... uhm, you didn't answer my question," she somehow managed to persist, presumably utilising all the backbone she was capable of. "N-not that I'm implying you're not reformed." Because reformed or not it was best not to annoy villains if there was a possible chance you could get away unscathed. "I'd just like to know."

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

An aggravated sigh, and grasping the confused duckette by one arm, the mallard practically threw her into a side room for a quiet chat.

One moment to bar the door of the fortunately empty dresser - surprising how sturdy the old 'broom through the handles' could be, even with a walrus

thumping against it in outrage - and back around to the starlet for a good dressing down.

Get it, dressing room, dressing down, ah ha...

... ahem.

No pretence now in cloaking his voice, identity, or disbelief.

"Can you honestly be this hopeless-"

Surely easier to recognise him without the brim covering his face now.

"-At spotting a bad thing?!"

She would have to be blind to fail to spot this one.

by Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"I can recognise at least one!" she shot back quickly, just in case her throat was going to decide to close up at the unfairness of it all. It really WAS unfair. Why couldn't she have a whole week to herself without something happening?

"I'm not GOING with him." She always ended up trying to justify herself to him, it was rather impressive how their interactions managed to skew that way when she wasn't the one who was the villain. "I'm trying to figure out a way to put the 'reformed' villain down nicely so nothing bad happens! We can't all just take out a hammer and punt people out of the way!"

by Negaduck 1 year ago

"Well why not?!" A reasonable question from an unreasonable fellow.

Listening at the door for a moment to both establish Tuskernini's bellowing was worse than his battering, before jerking a thumb in the direction of the noise.

"You were going to let that down nicely, were you?"

Certainly the self-styled director seemed far more insistent now his prey was snatched out from under him.

"And what was your plan there?" Adopting exaggerated Lilly brand meekness. "Oh please tell me more, Mr Well Known Nutjob'? 'Nooo don't hurt the imaginary furballs!"

His personal aversion to furballs, real or imaginary, notwithstanding.

y Lilly Teal 1 year ago

"The PLAN was not to get him as worked up as you've just made him!" And then make some excuse and escape. "And get away as politely as I can without getting someone hurt!"

... wait a minute.

"Why are we even discussing this? You're as big a bully as the rest of them!"

Hey not, that wasn't fair at all. He was a bigger bully. Although maybe the fact that she was perfectly capable of kicking THIS bully in the face while she tried not to cause trouble with all the others was what had him so baffled.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

"Because he's a pompous jerk," stated simply enough, no argument over the bully label. If anything it was a little soft for his liking, but that was Lilly for you.

"And there's no way I'm going let him at a mark as easy as you."

Head-kicking, whether she was capable of it against a less.. familiar villain or not, was not classed as a serious deterrent in his books. Perhaps that had something to do with her difficulty in deterring him thus far.

.. or the rest of the criminal element of St Canard, for that matter.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

This may be the one time on the world her being an easy mark was working out in her favour. If you could call being stuck in an enclosed space with a psychotic maniac being 'in her favour'.

It was perhaps even more unsettling for him to be making some kind of sense at the moment.

"Oh how very considerate of you. Why don't you just both go aw..."

She paused, perhaps realising that asking had never worked before and likely wouldn't now. "I don't even understand how you're here in the first place. This is supposed to be a quiet place. Away from the lot of you for once."

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Having been about to ignore her requests, as expected, and go ahead with his plan, those last grumbings posed too tempting a diversion to resist.

"Oh? And what, exactly, do you mean by that?"

Not he cared what she - or anybody else for that matter - thought. But theoretically Negaduck could have grand designs about associations like 'class' and 'respect', and theoretically the grand non-confronter might squirm a

bit putting those insinuations into words.

After all this time, after all the headkickings, so hard to see her as anything other than a plaything.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

As predicted, she squirmed, searching for a way to couch this in inoffensive terms that would make it possible for her to leave with the largest amount of original limbs. And also so as not to be rude. That was right up there with survival.

"Just... just not your sort of place," she mumbled, folding her arms and looking studiously at the door-handles. "Nice place. That's sort of the point."

Why, it almost sounded as if she was avoiding him and other assorted troubles.

So maybe about half of her decision to come here had been less about just de-stressing and more about it being a place where her customary bad luck was unlikely to find her. She was more than a little disappointed that it hadn't worked.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

No such thing as luck. Unless you were a witch doctor or bumbling superhero. Luckily Lilly was none of these things.

Not today, anyway.

"When the Spearmint Feather has you on a blacklist because someone thought bringing in a horde of ravenous demon-spawn would be a laugh, what're you going to do?"

Not blaming her for that, oh not at all.

That 'reminder' dealt, his tone lightened, as much as a murderous supervillain's tone could lighten. "But, given I am in a generous mood, I am willing to overlook that and tell you the sole phrase you need to simply utter to make Blubber-for-Brains go away."

Without even hurting his widdle fweelings.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"Look-"

Wait, what? She stopped mid-counter-argument, looking rather startled at this sudden helpfulness. She was inclined to find this very, very suspicious.

Except for the tiny fact that she was very optimistic at heart and it only took a few minutes of fairly decent behaviour; relatively, anyway; to trigger that.

"... really? I mean... really?"

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Eye roll. Really, was it so hard to believe he would do absolutely anything that was in his favour?

"Yeah, I told you, he's a jackass. So come here..."

Scooping Lilly in conspiratorially whether she liked it or not, turned out oversized bills were handy for whispering. Just in case any enraged walrus were listening at the door, although from the continued hollering, perhaps not such a threat...

And soon enough, she was released into the wild! Or at least, through the doors to practise those lying skills she really needed to work on...

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

Half the problem was lying. The other half was the need to keep a straight face as she realised the sheer ridiculousness of what she was about to say. It certainly sounded like it would be effective. It was just...

Oh goodness.

Fixing her hair after all the yanking around, just to give her enough time to get her desire to giggle under control, she turned to the walrus with her brightest smile.

"I've given it some thought," she said equally brightly. "And well goodness, you've inspired me to strike out for reality television."

Not sure what was more horrifying, the idea that she was going to go into something so... deplorable or the implication that he was a cause.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Agape was one word for it.

"Good gracious...!" gasped the Director, hand to forehead as he took a fittingly theatrical tumble backwards.

Into the arms of a much tinier co-performer who struggled to bear his immense weight.

Gracious indeed.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

The co-performer let out a terrified squeak as she felt herself being slowly but inexorably crushed by the massive weight, but she somehow managed to stay on her feet.

"I knew you'd understand," Lilly chirped, taking his arm and helping, with great difficulty, to haul him back upright. "Well I certainly mustn't keep you!"

There's the door!

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

The words barely registered as Tuskernini was lead mid-swoon out the stage exit.

"The terrible travesty..." Fittingly theatrical moans. "The demise of culture..."

Equally amused, although for slightly different reasons, her impromptu advisor waited until she was done gleefully throwing the other into the street before taking his turn to be smug.

"You want to know how to scare off any supervillain in this goddamn city?" Spoken for her ears only, taking a short self-congratulatory bow. "Just ask."

And with that obviously rhetorical brag of badness, he turned to leave. "Later, sweetcheeks."

Refreshingly simple, wasn't it?

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

... surely it couldn't be that simple, could it?

It really was very tempting, but she'd have to make her mind up quickly before he disappeared. She had no intention of going to look for him if she could help it, but if... possibly, he somehow decided to continue being helpful while he was still here...

"Wait!" she squeaked, darting forward with every intention to block his way. She didn't, of course, but the intention was there.

"Could you? Help me, I mean," she asked nervously. Oh God what am I doing. "I mean, can we talk? Somewhere?"

Apparently arranging clandestine discussions was one of the many things she wasn't very good at.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Well, wasn't this... interesting.

Despite the clear bemusement, he acquiesced. "I don't know about 'helping'-" A word he could never, ever be associated with. "But sure, we can talk."

Later, somewhere suitable - most likely the bar out front, as that was comfortably familiar terrain for her, and comfortably alcoholic for him - they found a quiet spot.

Somewhat more preoccupied with said alcohol and eyeing the scattered post-show patrons, but semi-listening nevertheless. "And what was it you would like to talk about?"

Be fast, I have a full schedule of debauchery and granny-kicking to get back to.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

The was, she was starting to realise, a very bad idea. One of these days her luck was going to run out and she would get ki-

Oh wait. That had already happened. Ah well.

Ordering some courage for herself, she took a deep sip of it and made a face. Courage still tasted disgusting.

Right. Deep breath. And suddenly it all tumbled out.

"Like you said. You know how to scare off anyone and everyone. How... how do you keep people away? From your ho... whatever you call it. Base? Hideout?" Irrelevant. "How do you keep them out?"

More importantly, how can I keep them out? It wasn't so much Reynard's visit in and of itself, but simply because it was the latest in a long line of villainous visits and she was really tired of not being able to defend herself from them.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

A moment of pure failure to comprehend. Clearly she couldn't be asking his advice on how to keep himself away, but who else was there that would require supervillain-level intervention?

"Oh right, you and Mal had some kind of falling out, didn't you?" Amazing, really, that he had finally picked up on that at all.

At least when it came to frustrating his supposed partner, he was happy to work pro bono.

Teehee, bono...

"Look, all you need to do is place some full length mirrors on every approach path and bam, instant demoness decoy..."

What? So he was recycling Malicia-repulsion strategies. It wasn't like he had ethics or anything.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"What? No! I mean, yes, but that wasn't what I meant," she said hastily. Malicia had been doing very well keeping away on her own since their fight. To be honest, until FOWL had started interfering, the lack of Malicia and Negaduck had made everything blessedly villain-free. Especially Negaduck.

"I meant on more general terms. I've been having some trouble," big surprise right there, "that I can't exactly hit with a bat," on account of world-wide organisations not exactly being easy to aim at, "and-"

Wait a minute...

"How do you know about THAT?" Forgive her for sounding incredulous. She had come to the assumption that he never noticed anything that wasn't in some way related to him.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Snort.

"You kidding? You're the only slightly 'normal' person who would come within ten feet of her. Not hard to notice the absence of you stinking up her hideout with your-" Deeply disgusted shudder. "Friendship."

Or annoyingly indestructible geek boys.

Back to business. "So when you say you can't hit it with a bat, is it you're dealing with a destructive gelatinous mutation, or you just need a bigger bat? Because I could sort you out with something with spikes..."

Spikes were always the answer.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

She wasn't getting away without giving some details, was she? Why did he have to be persistent at exactly the wrong time?

"If you MUST know," and of course he must, "I've been having some trouble with FOWL. Look I wouldn't ask if I thought there was anyone else capable of being as bad as they are."

You know exactly how evil people think. Anticipating them should be a breeze.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Damn near choked on his drink.

"FOWL?"

That was amusement, however, not shock. Sitting back, Mr Badness That She Had Rightly Acknowledged swirled his glass and considered the more likely alternative explanations. Like someone being cooped up with too many crime drama novels...

"What idiot from FOWL would be wasting their time on spooking a mouse like you?"

Where to begin?

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

Yes it did sound a little unbelievable, didn't it? But there was a reasonable explanation for it.

"They're doing it because of Darryl." Surely you can appreciate the sentiment that Darryl is the root of all problems. "Twice I got dragged off by that very big one with the metal beak. And Feathers was apparently digging around for the labs too. And once there was someone with a rather strange hat and a bow tie."

Lilly, have you met EVERYONE from FOWL's St Canard branch? Pretty much, Cornelius and Mischa included. Come to think of it...

"I think that last one just stumbled on me by accident. But it doesn't matter. None of you need an EXCUSE to start with the bullying..."

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

The usuals from FOWL did not bother him. Those he could handle - some more enthusiastically than others.

But the moment the description matching a 'strange hat' was mentioned, it was as if he zoned out into another world. A happy fun-time world of repeated stabby stabbings. Even more so than with Darryl.

Fortunately Lilly continued to rabbit on for long enough to - mostly - work through this murderous change.

"The... one with the bow tie." Tapping fingers on the tabletop with nonchalance that, for anyone in the business, would have been entirely see-through. "... Do you think he'll be back?"

Call it idle curiosity.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"He... implied as much," she said, folding her arms and frowning a little. Not a repeat visit you're keen about, eh? "And if I can't keep you out what chance do I have of keeping him out?"

Here implying, possibly, that she felt they were on equal terms of 'do not want'.

"I don't want him to. It was bad enough last time I was sort of hoping I wouldn't have to undergo anymore emotional torment now that you're so busy."

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Her aggravation, as amusing as it was, was appreciated. Nothing like a source of mutual loathing to bring opposite sides of the morality spectrum together.

"I can solve this little dilemma of yours. Nothing messy. Totally within your control."

Sitting back with wry superiority, then came the inevitable moment Lilly should probably have addressed up front.

"Of course, I expect there will be something in it for me..."

Of course.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

Oh. Right. She really should have considered that before she tried to stop him.

Hindsight is always 20/20.

"Right. Right." Said in a tone that proved she really hadn't thought any of this through. "Of course."

Still, if he really could help... She thought quickly, unsure there was anything she could offer that he would actually want.

"... I could get you back into that stupid club of yours, I guess." Because you keep **COMPLAINING** about it.

No word on how she had contacts to a place like THAT, but Lilly wasn't one to lie.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

That kind of came out of nowhere. And spoken so casually too!

"... you realise we're not talking about a book club here, yeah?" he asked after a hesitating double take.

Slight chuckle. "How could you possibly pull that off?"

As much as that would be fun to believe, who really did she think she was fooling?

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"I think I know which one we're talking about by now." Having it flung in your face a few times could make an impact. She frowned, taking another gulp of her drink so that embarrassment wouldn't win out over getting this over with. It wasn't exactly casual, given the subject matter, but it was definitely on the way to it.

"I know someone. Friend of mine." Such a great friend. He got me the audition here, but my hasn't he branched out in his interests since I last saw him. "He seems to be in everything now, I know I heard him talking about the place. He does work with them sometimes."

You think places like that just arrange themselves? Ozymandias didn't seem to care what kind of stage work people were doing, as long as it was done right and to his specifications. He was very open-minded like that. That and he seemed to have friends all over town, in every town, and he loved to drop in to see what his friends were doing. More often than not he'd accidentally take over, but he was getting very good about that.

"I'll talk to him and you can go hole yourself up in the Spearmint Feather out of everyone's way again." Specifically mine. Life is so peaceful when you're occupied. "If you help."

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

He would have taken umbrage at the idea that the fearsome Negaduck would have 'been out of everybody's way' even while at a titty bar - he made a point of always being in the way, and the fact he could manage a little downtime while doing so only reflected on his extreme efficiency at being troublesome - but the straightfaced way she had offered that deal...

Lilly? Little librarian Lilly, the blusher at all things, knowing somebody who knows somebody who runs a strip joint?

A stare, then an appreciative chuckle. "This I've got to see."

Quick glance to check for any onlookers, and under the table from out of his jacket he passed something long, hard and.. cold?

Right, the Anti-Rey Gun. Or at least, what appeared to be the Anti-Rey Gun.

"Before you get in a tiz, it's non-lethal." Relaxing back, because dealing with weaponry was relaxing business. "Well it will be lethal if you shoot him enough, but you won't need to be doing that."

Way to understate the effect of having one's very existence torn painfully away from the physical dimension. Technically he was correct, though.

"One peek at that thing and he'll be running for the hills, out of your backwards alley bookstore forever."

See? Helping.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

She blinked a moment in surprise. Obviously she hadn't really expected him to be helpful at all, so the fact that he'd apparently pulled through had thrown her for a loop.

Taking a gun, a little uncertainly, as if expecting some hidden catch to suddenly appear out of nowhere, she tucked it into her purse.

"Thank you?" This is weird. I don't know how to respond in situations where you're acting semi-decent.

How about another drink. That sounds like a good idea.

And get Darryl to check that gun before using it.

"Alright. I'll talk to my friend today. They'll let you back in by tomorrow, if I know him." Heck they'll even give you another stupid VIP pass. It'll keep you busier. "Then I can keep everyone away for a bit."

Progress!

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

"Everyone?" Increasingly mischievous smirk. "Even that naughty bit of Ukrainian muffer you've got going on the side?"

And thhhhheere goes semi-decent.

"Did your someone who knows someone get you in on that too?"

Ah, Lilly-taunting. Never gets old.

... except when she's somehow got a gun to one's head or a rapid honey badger, then it was worth leaving. None of those in sight this time!

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

Maybe it was the drink, but her first instinct was to object to the second statement first.

"NO he did no-"

And then she realised exactly WHAT he was saying, and sputtered. You'd think she'd be able to control going red by now, given all the conversation she's had with him, but apparently not.

"She is NOT my-"

In her mind she was making very pointed strangling motions. In reality she just attempted to ignore him.

"Don't you have somewhere to be?"

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

"You keep drinking like that-" A nod towards the evidence of her uncharacteristic consumption. "And I'll tell you where I'll be."

Cocky bastard with a cocky bastard grin. It wasn't that he was unaware of 'polite social cues'; he just preferred to trample all over them.

Because it was always fun to see how much redder she could get.

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

Definitely the drink. It explained how she understood that much faster than she normally would. So instead of blinking a few times before realising, she choked on her mouthful almost at once. There's another level of red beyond the one she had been before, how fascinating!

Grabbing a napkin, she tried to stop coughing and choking first.

"Will you STOP that."

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Oh ho, just as fun as expected.

"And what are you going to do-"

Leaning in devilishly.

"-If I don't?"

Nobody has ever managed to stop me before; what chance do YOU have?

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

Well...

Blink, blink.

"You still haven't gotten back into your club, you know," she managed, leaning back. I could ask my friend to blacklist you permanently.

Erm.

Possibly?

Please get out of my space.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

Stunned blink.

"Did... did you just try to blackmail me?"

On another occasion Negaduck might have been proud, but not when it was getting in the way of his fun.

"When I was trying to help you too?! You cheeky..."

Outraged lunge for her purse.

"Gimme back that gun!"

That'd learn her!

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

Quick, use your power of being taller!

With commendable speed, she snatched the purse out of his way before the startled squeak had even fully left her bill.

"No!"

Well look at that. Another word she never really used.

"I'll get you in, I'll get you in!" It was worth a try, even as she slid off the stool and held her purse in a death-grip close to herself. And if it didn't work, well she was going to scream and run. It'll hold him up for a moment.

by **Negaduck** 1 year ago

The highly embarrassing flail for the purse - which hopefully nobody noticed, bar Lilly - stopped.

Straighten collar. Resume looking menacing.

"Damn straight."

A thought, and a finger waggle, just as it looked like he was about to leave.

"And if you think of trying anything cute - like hiding a pack of rapid biting infants in the champagne room - you and I will be having a little talk."

by **Lilly Teal** 1 year ago

"Oh you're one to talk." Let's not forget who STARTED tossing around rabid biting infants. "But I wouldn't dream of it." That was a lie, she could have many, many pleasant dreams about that possibility.

"... thank you. Hopefully we won't be needing to have a talk..." Now go AWAY.

by **Negaduck** 11 months ago

Sliding out of the booth and into a sardonically sweeping bow.

"Oh honey." That was not a particularly pleasant smile, but when was his ever? "My pleasure."

With that ominously polite sign off, Negaduck took his exit.

And waited for the results.