

Duck and Cover by Cheezey and Coldwin

Cossack the Terrible, fleet commander of Doom, feared conqueror, ruthless enemy, and self-proclaimed all around bad dude, sighed as he relaxed into the hot water of the spa in his quarters. The slave girl on duty, wearing a very tiny bikini for the occasion, carefully poured essence of lavender into the water before turning on the pulsing air jets. “Life is good, don’t you think, Sweetie?” he asked, luxuriating in the fragrant waters while the jets worked pleasantly on the muscles knotted from the stress of directing battle against that pain in the ass Voltron.

“Yes, my Lord,” the slave said demurely. She was pleased to see him in a good mood, not from any personal like of her master but because unlike some of the other nobility and officers, despite his title Cossack did not go out of his way to be cruel. He had earned his title due to his temper and mean streak, but as long as he was not angry, one did not generally have to worry about that same mean streak. That was one of the reasons she wore the ill-concealing suit without so much as a visible pout. She was of course aware of his eyes following her nearly exposed form, but that made him happy, and him being happy made for light work. “Will there be anything else, Sir?”

He considered, looking a tad comic submerged to his chin while still wearing his heavy battle helmet, but no one would tell him that. No one other than the royalty at any rate. After a few moments he sat upright and the comic look was gone. With his yellow eyes boring into her and the clear water streaming down muscles that looked as solid as rocks, he did not look comedic at all. She began to worry for a moment, but then he spoke. “Bring me the admiral,” he ordered sternly. “I have military matters to discuss with him.”

The slave bowed, intentionally giving Cossack a nice view down the top of her suit as an extra measure to ensure that his mood stayed pleasant. “I will fetch Admiral Quackers at once, Sir.” She then turned and left the bathing chambers.

Admiral Quackers was the fleet commander’s rubber duckie. While some may have found that strange, no one on Cossack’s personal staff found it the least bit amusing, and they never made a single joke. That was one of the first things the other slaves assigned to him warned newcomers—do not mock Admiral Quackers, and treat him with all the courtesy you would any admiral.

When Cossack had first assumed the position recently vacated by the deceased Mogor, one of the slaves at the time had made the mistake of unknowingly mocking the duck within Cossack's earshot. The newly appointed fleet commander, still in his dress uniform, had calmly strode over and lifted the wisecracker effortlessly by one wrist into the air until he was eye to eye with him.

"Admiral Quackers is far more valuable to me than you are, slave. For one thing, unlike you, he knows when to keep his mouth shut." His voice was as calm as a spring day but his eyes were as cold as a winter night. "The admiral is one of my most valued military consultants. He is also my lucky rubber duckie. I don't question that, you don't question that, it just is. Maybe if you had someone like Quackers, you wouldn't be a slave." With that he very casually and seemingly with no effort flung the hapless slave the ten feet across the room and left. The next day orders came down for the fellow to report to Haggar. He was not heard from again.

No, there was nothing funny about Admiral Quackers, nothing at all.

Walking swiftly the slave went to the admiral's "office". It was a locked strong box in Cossack's bedroom that only he and a couple of his more trusted slaves could open. Inside it was a miniature desk complete with a pencil and paper, and a small velvet pillow that the admiral sat upon.

She lifted the cushion out carefully so as not to drop the duckie and headed back to Cossack. "The admiral to see you, Sir," she said, lowering her head.

"Ah Quackers, good to see you. Join me. You're dismissed, Jiad."

The slave nodded and settled the duck gently into the water, hands under him and not held by the head, for one did not want Cossack to make an accusation of strangling the admiral. As soon as the duck was safely afloat in the steaming water she left as ordered.

Once the girl was gone and he was sure he was alone, Cossack scooped up the duck in the same manner as a child might have. Moving the duck through the water like a little speed boat he sang, “Yo, ho, ho and lots of luck! I’m conquering the world with my rubber duck.” He laughed and let Quackers drift free amidst the bubbles.

“You know, Admiral, I’m glad you don’t let rank get in the way of having a good time. The only problem with this job is that all those high admirals are so high on themselves.” Cossack took the duck’s bobbing up and down on the waves as nods of assent and continued. “Just yesterday that boob Dridoc was going on and on about how...”

Before he could say anything else a blue blur streaked across the room and leapt on top of his helmeted head. Without slowing, the devil cat Cobra leapt again, grabbed the admiral in midair, and shot from the bathing room like a flash.

“Admiral Quackers!” Cossack screamed in horrified panic as he jumped up, slipped and fell completely underwater, helmet and all. Undeterred he got back up and charged after the cat full speed ahead out of the bathroom, through his quarters, and out into the hallway, shouting furiously at the feline. “Come back here, Cobra!”

A startled pair of soldiers in the hallway looked after the retreating cat and barely avoided being run down by the wet and naked fleet commander.

“Yaklitz, was he?”

“I didn’t see anything, Achaq, I didn’t see a thing, and I’m not talking about it ‘cause I didn’t see it.”

The two stunned soldiers then went on down the hall pointedly discussing the weather.

Haggar was the next to encounter the running Cossack. As she stepped from another hallway she saw him barreling down on her, and stepping nimbly aside she grabbed his arm to stop him.

“No time, Haggar!” he said, attempting to pull his arm free, but she refused to let go.

“Cossack, I know you wear that helmet all the time, but are you aware that you’ve neglected to put on your pants?”

“Damn it, Haggar this isn’t the time to be worried about personal dignity! I’m on a military matter!”

“What are you talking about?” the witch demanded.

He jerked his arm free and took off in a run again. “The rescue of Admiral Quackers!” he shot back as he vanished around the corner, completely missing her following questioning shout and the accompanying rolling of her eyes.

“Damn that felinoid bastard! How dare he sneak up and try an attack like this?” Cossack demanded loudly to the air as he rushed heedlessly after the retreating blue form.

The staff in one of the control rooms, including King Zarkon himself, heard this outburst and looked up to see his naked rear vanishing down yet another corridor.

“What is he going on about?” High Admiral Dridoc demanded of no one in particular. “What felinoid? Is that even a word, Sire? Sneak attack? He has to have lost his mind, running through the halls naked like that.”

Zarkon held up a hand imperiously, cutting off the fellow, and turned to the lieutenant seated at one of the scanner consoles. "You start scanning for anything that could be felinoid," he ordered, and then turned back to Dridoc. "I don't know why my fleet commander is showing us his ass at the moment, but if it turns out he's right and something has sneaked through right after you finished assuring me that it was impossible, you'll be more concerned with your own ass than his mind." He turned away from the spluttering official. "What is that twit Cossack up to?" he wondered.

Meanwhile, Cobra shot through a barely open door which Cossack, right behind him, slammed open almost hard enough to knock it off the hinges. He skidded to a halt as the cat jumped into Haggar's arms. "Haggar, you caught him!" he beamed. "Good job!" He paused. "Hey wait a sec, how'd you know he'd come here and how'd you get here first?"

The witch sighed. "Where else would I be, dummy? These are my quarters. I beat you here because I was smart enough to know that this had to be where Cobra was going and took a short cut. I tried to tell you, but you ignored me."

"Oh," Cossack responded, feeling a bit dumb, though still unconcerned about his nudity. "Well since you're here, you can help me negotiate for the safe return of Admiral Quackers."

"Cossack, you're Cossack the Terrible," Haggar reminded him. "I've never seen you negotiate for anything."

"This is different, Witch. He has the admiral, his safe return is paramount!" He looked at her beseechingly. "It's your cat, ask him what he wants. I can get him almost anything. A gold litter box, a kitty sized space ship, a case of my parents' finest wine. We have to save Quackers!"

The witch sighed again. "Of all the asinine nonsense, Cossack." She looked into his eyes and sighed yet again before looking at the cat. "Cobra, give," she snapped, holding out her hand.

The cat obediently opened his jaws and let the duckie fall into her waiting hand.

She couldn't help but smile slightly as she handed the little yellow duck back to the beaming idiot. "Here." She opened her mouth to say more when the door burst open and King Zarkon strode regally into the room.

"Hello, old witch. I'm here to see Cossack on a military matter."

Cossack snapped to attention and gave his king a crisp salute. "The situation is well in hand, Sire."

Zarkon blinked. "Indeed it is, though I admit to being a little confused as to how you could know that." Before Cossack could respond with an account of how he had rescued the captive admiral, Zarkon continued. "I don't know how you knew they were there or why you called them felinoid, but you were right."

"Um, I was, Sire?" the puzzled Cossack replied.

"No reason to be modest Cossack, especially considering." He nodded at the fleet commander's improper attire and cleared his throat. "Regardless, Dridoc was right. His new scanners made it impossible for Voltron sneak up on us, but the fool failed to account for the robot lions, and they were almost on us when you sounded the alert."

Cossack opened his mouth, closed it, opened it again, and then closed it once more when Haggard elbowed him in the side. He opened a final time to just say, "Thank you, Sire."

"Good man, Cossack. Dridoc has been demoted for *fatal* arrogance and incompetence, and I have a reward for you."

The fleet commander beamed again. "You do, Sire? A nice new medal?"

"Better, Cossack." The king motioned a robot forward. "For bravery in my service and thwarting an invasion single-handedly I present you with," the robot whisked the item out of its box, "a new pair of pants!"

Cossack, remembering at last his unclothed state, took them, his face slightly purple. "Thank you, Sire," he said, sheepishly pulling them on.

“Think nothing of it Cossack, trust me I’m glad to see you have them.” He turned and strode from the room followed by his attendants.

When Cossack turned back to her, Haggar was pouring herself a glass of wine. “Can I have one?” he asked plaintively. “It’s been a long, cold day. This castle is draftier than you’d believe.”

With yet another sigh the witch got a second glass.

The End