



Not That I'm Committing To Anything, Of Course

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Freed from his cement form by a mysterious Darkwing Duck lookalike, The Liquidator ponders his offer to work for him. It takes a lot of consideration, he can't just commit to anything without looking at the fineprint.

Of course, helping with a little branding issue is hardly the same as joining the team, right?

My goal is to publish my 200th fic in March, 2025, a year after I started. After this, there's only 76 more to go!

Chapter 1: Rebranding

Edited on 16 October, 2024. Nothing major, I just switched it to present tense and fixed up a few typos/grammar errors.

Edited on 2 November, 2025. Just fixing some dialogue formatting, again nothing major.

The way I see it, Liquidator went through a series of extremely traumatizing things in a very short period of time. He as well has almost no non-salesman lines after his first appearance. Ergo, psychological stutter is entirely possible.

Negaduck was expecting something closer to the relatively calm and meek Liquidator from the Negaverse, so Liquidator's loud and shifting personality is throwing him a bit off balance.

"Tell me, why would The Liquidator ever agree to sign a contract with a Dipwing Dork Dark Mode?" Bud (not Bud, Liquidator, he has to get used to that) garbles, leaning back against the hideout wall. Despite his tone, he's honestly more curious than reluctant. It isn't like he has any plans besides 'get rich' anyways, so...

"What part of 'compare me to Darkwing and I'll hurt you' did you fail to comprehend?" Negaduck growls, not looking up from where he's typing away on a computer. From what Bu-Liquidator can tell, he has access to the SCPD records and is trying to find someone.

Liquidator flows through the dark space, still somewhat unsteady in his watery form, carefully avoiding numerous wires and weapons strewn about the floor (does this man ever clean his lair?). He curls around Negaduck, forcing eye contact, and throws an arm around the duck's shoulder.

"Your branding is 'Evil Darkwing'." He grins, the expression not entirely fake, and winks. "Own it! You're the one and only, all-original Negaduck — don't disregard part of your product just because a rival company has some similarities!"

It isn't exactly the message he wanted to get across, but he supposes it's close enough. He's going to have to deal with this stuttering issue eventually, or he'll be stuck speaking like a commercial forever. Then again, maybe that isn't necessarily a bad thing — all the best brands have some gimmick or other, something that people instantly connect with them, and sales-speech isn't the worst thing to be known for...

It's something for him to think about, at least.

"W-w-who are, who are you looking f-for?" Liquidator asks as calmly as he can while internally cursing this new weakness. He twists to look at the screen, surprised that the duck has gone back to working instead of telling him to move.

"The other members of our team," Negaduck answers, baring his (*rather sharp, what the Hell-*) teeth when he gets an *error* message. His fingers speed up, dashing across the keyboard.

"Ah, so we're not a two-act show?" Liquidator pools away from him, peeking over the back of his chair. He still hasn't decided whether he's joining this little 'team' or not, but he has to admit he's more than a little curious as to who else Negaduck has in mind.

"There's three others who'll be joinin'." Negaduck nods, smirking when he gets the computer to start working again. "And once I've gotten them all together, the Negaduck Squad will rule St Canard!"

"The Negaduck Squad?" Liquidator repeats, completely dumbfounded. He stares at the duck, slowly realizing he isn't joking. "P-please tell, tell me that isn't w-w-what you're c-calling us?" *Not that he's for sure joining, of course. Not with that name, certainly.*

"No!" Negaduck crosses his arms quickly, his tone defensive in a way that told Liquidator he'd *definitely* been meaning to call them that. "We're gonna be, uh... The Dangerous Denizens Of Demented Destruction."

Liquidator focuses hard to twist his eyes in a way that mimicks someone raising a single eyebrow, mouth partially open in utter shock at how anyone can *possibly* be this bad at branding. It's difficult, but definitely worth it.

"The Ruthless Rulers Of Rabble-rousing?" Negaduck asks almost sheepishly. At Liquidator's exasperated head shake, he growls, throwing his hands into the air. "Come on, what's wrong with any'a those?"

"The-they're too, too long!" Liquidator answers simply, gesturing with his arms and spraying water everywhere. He's momentarily distracted by how he's still *aware* of every lost drop, like he's inside each, for a little while after they leave him. It's... *weird*, and *definitely* going to take some getting used to. "You need something dynamic! Memorable! Something that will draw in consumers and intimidate competitors!"

"This isn't a clucking business, Mutt," Negaduck growls (he growls a lot, even for a canid, much less a duck), his blue eyes reflecting the light from the screens in a way that makes them seem to glow menacingly. Liquidator backs up a little, suddenly regretting provoking the man. "It's a Supervillain group. We don't have 'consumers' to please."

"I-I-I, that is-isn't what I m-meant!" Liquidator tries to explain, more than a little frustrated, not entirely sure about the wisdom of arguing with Darkwing's morally bankrupt double. But he'd rather be back in stone than be part of any enterprise with such *poor marketing* (he can still just leave, then there's no risk of either...). "A t- a team still n-needs proper b-b-branding! Pretending th-they aren't y-your ideas, would, would you respect a-anyone with those names?"

Negaduck opens his beak to argue, but paused thoughtfully. After a few seconds of silence, he reluctantly pulls back, beak clicking shut. It's a couple more moments before he roughly grumbles, "Fine, alright, what do you suggest, fleabag?"

Liquidator 'blinks' his non-eyes in surprise, not expecting to be asked for his opinion. "Uh..." There was a time not so long ago when his words could mold the minds of hundreds, his silver tongue dripping honey to catch eager listeners like so many flies. Now, he has to struggle to martial his thoughts just to answer a relatively simple question.

"I, um... It d-depends." He gets a brief flash of wishing he could breath deeply to calm himself, but he can just barely keep himself semi-humanoid, much less mimic breathing. Not that it would help to just mimic. "H-how, what are you tr-trying to get, get across?"

"That we rule everything and people should fear us," Negaduck answers simply, impatiently.

"Fear..." Liquidator thinks carefully, melting a bit as his focus is diverted. Thinking is harder than it used to be, and Negaduck's threatening stare doesn't exactly help. He has to admit, as dangerous as Darkwing has proven himself to be, Negaduck is much more panic-inducing. "Y-you said there, there were three o-others?"

"Yes?"

After counting in his head, Liquidator grins. *Perfect*. "Want to rule St Canard? Can't or won't do it on your own?" His voice that has been meeker than he's used to booms out clearly and confidently as he twirls around the hideout, briefly startling the other. "Then try out this team of tried-and-true Supervillains! For all your Darkwing-bashing, city-capturing, civilian-terrorizing needs – call *The Fearsome Five!*"

If he was still flesh and blood, he would be holding his breath in nervous anticipation, awaiting judgement on his suggestion. If Negaduck is the CEO of this venture, the say ultimately went to him (not that Liquidator haa actually agreed to anything yet, he reminds himself).

"Fearsome Five..." Negaduck's eyes widen, his gaze growing distant as he turns to the side in thought. "Friendly, Fearsome; of course."

"What?"

"Nothing," Negaduck dismisses, shaking his head. "You're just a lot more interesting than I thought you'd be."

Assuming that's a polite way of saying he's loud and flamboyant, Liquidator shrugs. "Can I assume you've accepted The Liquidator's branding suggestion, then?"

"Ya know what? Why not?" Negaduck chuckles, turning to look at his computer when it beeps. He grins viciously at what he sees, jumping up and heading to the door, stopping to grab his chainsaw on the way. "It's not the worst idea, after all. Now, come on, Dripbrain."

"W-where are we, are we going?" Liquidator asks, already following.

"I've found one of the other guys, we're gonna go collect him." Negaduck practically bounces up the stairs in excitement. He pauses at the top, grin turning into a scowl, his tone dropping to something menacing — suddenly, he's a major mastermind villain, instead of the threatening but kinda goofy duck Liquidator has thought of him as until now. "Listen, Mutt, I've got a reputation to upkeep. Once we're out and about, you do not *argue with me*. I've tolerated it in the lair, but not outside, capiche?"

"Y-yes, sir." Liquidator nods, struggling to flow up the stairs. When Negaduck's eyes darken at the stutter, he realizes that probably isn't the best look in public either — a feared Supervillain can't show such a weakness to civilians, can he? Like a new suit in a familiar cut, Liquidator pulls his grinning salesman persona over himself, finally deciding that it has to be a major part of his branding from now on. Just like his life before, but with a... twist.

Confidently rushing up the stairs to twist around Negaduck, he tries again. "Trust me when I say that Liquidator Brand Water delivers only the best service a villain could ask for! Every new venture needs a proper theme, and you can rest assured that I will stay on brand no matter what! That's a guarantee, Boss."

"Boss... Hmm, I like that." Negaduck nods, grinning again in a way that isn't exactly friendly but is probably as close as he gets, before his own not-quite-a-mask scowl shifts back into place. "Now stop wasting my time, Mutt, we've got to go!"

"Aye aye, Boss!" Liquidator obediently follows the duck out of the hideout and into the van, not even coming close to touching him now. The Liquidator is confident, bombastic, loud, efficient, and subservient — that's what he needs to be, at least, if he's really committing to the Supervillain lackey gig.

Not that he is committing, of course. He's just curious as to who else his would-be boss has chosen to join the team. He'll meet them, see how working with them feels, see how working for Negaduck really is. Honestly, he expects to quit within a week, considering:

- 1) He's unlikely to be paid well as a lackey.
- 2) His 'boss' is violent and domineering.
- 3) He'll regularly be fighting the guy that had turned him into a garden statue, while working for a guy that looks exactly like him.

He should probably just exit the van, but he really is curious. He'll go along for now, settle his wonderings as to the identities of his 'colleagues', then go back to being a solo

show. Well, maybe he'll stick around long enough to see how profitable the team would be, get a bit of cash before leaving...

His teammates were annoying and argumentive. He'd been spun around and electrocuted (apparently he could still feel pain, because *yowch!*). Negaduck betrayed them. He'd been turned into *pudding*. And he hadn't made a single cent.

He should quit. He had every excuse in the world to do so. Lousy pay, toxic work environment, risky working conditions... There was absolutely no reason for him to stay. So why exactly did he return like an excited puppy the moment Negaduck called?

Because, in the end, it was the most fun he'd had in *years*. He felt more alive fighting cops than he'd ever felt sabotaging competitors. He felt more himself yelling at Megavolt or Quackerjack than he'd ever felt charming customers. He felt more free following Negaduck than he'd ever felt running his company with the Board and the Law holding his leash.

And maybe, just maybe, that was worth a bit more than money.

Chapter 2: A Mad Greenhouse

Liquidator meets his first 'colleague'.

So, I added another chapter. I'm not sure if I'll add more, or how much more I'll add if I do, but I hope you enjoy!

I have the idea that Spike in the Negaverse is a lot more violent than in the Posiverse, which is why Negaduck low-key panics and gets confused when Spike is his adorable self.

The broken machine is the same one that mutated Bushy in the first place, in case that wasn't clear.

Am I the only one who thinks Bushroot's voice is weird? Not in a bad way, it just has a rather unique quality to it.

"A g-greenhouse?" Liquidator asks in surprise, looking out at where Negaduck parked. At a glare from Negaduck, he sheepishly melts a bit and tries again. "Need to grow plants? Want to keep them safe from poor environmental conditions? Hate people? Then try a greenhouse in the middle of nowhere! Caution; may not be suitable for hibernating bears, weapons testing, or housing major villains!"

Negaduck gives him a look that Liquidator might be offended by, if he didn't agree that it isn't his best material. He's going to have to get better at this...

"Trust me, Mutt, this is exactly where we need to be." Negaduck sends a dark look at the unassuming building, before strolling through the door as if he owns the place (as far as Liquidator knows, he actually might).

Liquidator follows after him dutifully, getting almost immediately distracted after entering; it definitely isn't a *normal* greenhouse, he has to admit.

It's filled with the most colorful and tropical plants Liquidator can imagine, the kinds that he's certain most greenhouse owners dream of getting their hands on, covered in dazzling shadows and soft sunlight.

The interesting part, however, are the plants he's mostly sure aren't supposed to exist: Flowers with mouths, panting tongues, and giant fangs; trees that seem to move their claw-like branches a bit too much; bushes that bear uncanny resemblance to animals, calmly milling about, occasionally turning to stare at the new visitors with bulbous eye-things.

Liquidator can't stop himself twisting to see as many of the bizarre flora as possible as he follows Negaduck along the dirt path that runs through it all. Small bits of dirt and rocks get caught up in his water as he moves, and he momentarily draws his focus

inward to filter out the contaminants before they can become mud — *Sparkling Crystal Pure Fluid Water* had always been the best quality possible, and he's determined to make sure *Liquidator Brand Water* won't be anything less.

"Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear!" A baritone voice draws Liquidator's attention back outwards, a quality to it he can't really place. It is deep but doesn't really sound deep, is the best way he can think to explain it. It does, however, sound rather panicked. "Where is it? Spike, have you seen the Rose Petal Extract? Spike? Oh, where'd he go this time? Spike!"

The path twists past some plants, who helpfully lift their large leaves out of the way to reveal what looks like a makeshift chemical lab, set up around the broken-down remnants of a giant machine. Gently patting the plants, Liquidator moves closer to the lab, staring at the man who's moving in the middle of the space.

At least, he thinks it's a man. He's a duck, incredibly tall and thin like a Monster, and looks like he's *half plant*. His vine-arm-things are full of glass beakers, chemicals sloshing out as he rushes between different tables, reading printouts and mumbling to himself.

"Doctor Bushroot?" Negaduck asks with a sneer, crossing his arms and glaring menacingly at the duck for no real reason other than the intimidation factor. Liquidator mentally applauds him for pulling off the overdramatic move.

"Yah!" the duck — *Doctor Bushroot* — yelps and jumps into the air, barely managing to catch his beakers before they can spill everywhere. His previously straight posture loosens as he pulls into himself, eyes wide with anxiety but slightly dazed as he tries to focus on them. "W-w-who-?"

A beeping from one of the many machines connected to various bubbling concoctions distracts Bushroot, making him jump again. "Oh cluck! Uh, here, hold these!"

Liquidator suddenly finds the duck's beakers shoved into his arms, forced to focus his energy on remaining solid enough to hold them or risk getting contaminated. He stammers, trying to think of a way to say 'I really don't want to hold these' in *salemanese*.

Four out of five dentists... No, that doesn't make sense.
Side effects may include... No, doesn't really fit the tone.
It slices, it dices, it... No, no, no, that doesn't work at all!

He growls — bubbly and gargled and more like a rushing tide than anything — in frustration, resigning himself to holding the probably-volatile chemicals while Bushroot adjusts something or other, the beeping getting increasingly urgent before it stops completely.

The doctor breaths out a sigh of relief, turning back to them with a much more focused gaze. Sharp blue eyes study Liquidator for a seconds before flicking over to Negaduck, recognition flaring at the sight of the Masked Mallard. Almost predictably, the duck panicks, dashing behind the ruined machine.

"D-d-darkwing! C-come on, I haven't even *done* anything recently!" Bushroot pleads, visibly trembling. "Give m-me a, a break, won't you?"

Liquidator shoots Negaduck a look that he hopes says 'this is the next member of the team? This *guy*?' but keeps silent, remembering the rule against arguing. He watches in mild fascination and not a little anxiety as Negaduck stalk closer to the panicking plant.

"I'm not Dipwing," he hisses, baring his (still too *clucking sharp*) teeth.

Unfortunately, Liquidator doesn't really hear much more of the conversation. At that moment, the beakers start sinking through his arms, and he has to focus completely on holding them up. Sound and light become distorted, random, nonsensical as he stops actively processing them. He's in a world of blue, the only information from the outside being the feel of the beakers as he molds himself around them, almost certainly not humanoid at this point.

Seconds, minutes, hours — time loses meaning, but he eventually feels stable enough to divert his focus back to, well, everything. It's like resurfacing from a deep pool, a comparison that sends rather mixed feelings through him. The patterns of light and color sharpen, revealing the greenhouse once more, as well as Bushroot standing right in front of him.

"-ou okay?" he's asking, the noise of his voice shifting into recognizable words.

Honestly? He isn't. He haa no idea what just happened or that he could even lose himself like that. But a good salesman (and a 'good' Supervillain) always projects complete confidence, so he just grina charmingly and announces, "Liquidator Brand Water is always in tip-top shape! Call for all your *watering* needs." He winks, realizing a second too late that he's slipped into the more flirtatious tone he used to use to get women to buy makeup when he was younger.

"I, uh—" Bushroot stammers, looking both confused and flustered, before he catches sight of one of the beakers. "Hey, my Rose Petal Extract! Where'd you find it?"

"You handed it to him, Weed," Negaduck growls out exasperatedly. Oh good, they're all getting disparaging nicknames. Fun.

"Oops, looks like I sorta loaded you up. Here, let me just..." Bushroot takes the beakers, stretching his arms to put them down on different tables. He smiles sheepishly at Liquidator, tiny fangs flashing briefly. "S-sorry, I get a little, um, a little distracted sometimes. Y-you know, when I'm working."

"Can we please go now?" Negaduck asks, his tone making it very clear that it isn't really a request. He stomps back down the path, towards the exit and the van.

"Oh, already? I didn't even have time to pack!" Bushroot looks around his lab, muttering. "Then again, it's not like I actually have anything to pack... Charlie, you're in charge while I'm gone!" he shouts, one of the trees saluting him in response, before hurrying after Negaduck.

"Oh, I'm Dr. Bushroot. Reginald Bushroot," the plant introduces himself nervously, sticking out a leafy hand as they both move along the path.

Liquidator reaches out his own hand to shake, but both of them immediately pull back a second after they touch, panicking as some of Liquidator's water is pulled in by Bushroot's skin. Curious, Liquidator reaches out slowly to feel the other's arm, marveling at the bizarre feeling.

"H-heh, stop that! It tickles!" Bushroot laughs, and Liquidator can't help chuckling along with him even as he creates some distance between them.

"The Liquidator is pleased to make the acquaintance of such an interesting business partner," he announces, gesturing to himself.

"Do you always talk like that?" Bushroot asks, receiving a shrug and a smirk in return. "Okay. Uh, I think you said it's nice to meet me, and you're called Liquidator?"

Liquidator blinks, not expecting the duck to actually try to clarify, then nods. "The old 9-to-5 getting you down? Need to take over a city fast, fast, fast? Then try the Supervillain services of Bushroot and The Liquidator! (*Subsidiary of the Fearsome Five*)."

"F-five? So there's two more?" Bushroot pales, hunching over as nervousness clouds his face again. "W-who are they?"

"That information has not been released to the public at this time." Liquidator shrugs. Then, something occurs to him. "I hope I'm not misbranding..."

"Misbranding?" Oh, how is he going to say this?

"Monster plants, mad experiments, and *beautiful* greenhouses — for all this and more, call Bushroot?" Liquidator's voice lifts into a question at the end, barely managing to avoid stuttering. Not that he really thinks the other would mind, considering his own anxiety-induced stutter, but still...

It takes Bushroot a few seconds to figure it out, eyes widening a little once he does. "Oh! Yeah, I, uh... I don't really have a villain name, I guess? I've always been Bushroot, and it fits, so..."

"No need for unnecessary rebranding!" Liquidator agrees, enjoying the way the duck's demeanor subtly brightens when he does so. They share a smile, but neither can say anything more before loud barking fills the air.

What looks like a *giant Venus flytrap* with orange hair comes bounding down the path, tongue lolling half out of its mouth. Out of the corner of his eye, Liquidator sees Negaduck tense and reach for his chainsaw, an angry kind of wariness crossing his features.

"Spike!" Bushroot shouts happily, kneeling to hug the creature. "Oh, look at you, you naughty thing — covered in dirt! Were you sneaking extra fertilizer again?"

Negaduck relaxes slightly, confusion showing only briefly before his normal scowl takes its place. "Great, you found your pet. Now LET'S GO!"

Liquidator chuckles lightly as Bushroot sent 'Spike' off to watch the Greenhouse, then follows him into the van. The plant duck starts rambling about a new mutation his pet has undergone recently, smiling as he explains science that is *far* above Liquidator's understanding.

Liquidator listens with a smile of his own. He still doesn't think the guy is cut out to be a *Supervillain*, but he is certainly *interesting*.

Honestly, if the other two are half as bizarre as Bushroot, Liquidator might just decide to stay after all...

— end of "Not That I'm Committing To Anything, Of Course" —