

# The Liquid

Eine Delta-Green-Geschichte

We know how this story will end.

Everybody knows it. Or at least everybody should know.

But let's face it: fact is that people aren't capable of seeing where their actions will lead to. Although it's so easy. They create philosophies about something they never really tried to understand. They give it names. They call it fate or luck – or faith. They talk about it, they write books about it, but if you tried to explain what most of them already know – if you tried to explain what fate really is – they would call you a liar.

Once in a while you can meet a person who knows what you are talking about. But those people are rare and usually they are unimportant or mad (or both) and nobody is listening to them

Actually, I don't want to discuss fate. It makes no sense to discuss something like that. You won't believe me anyway (that's why I like you so much). Let's have a look at our main character instead:

I will call him Angus. From our point of view he is the most important person of the story. We will watch his actions for a while and we will watch the surroundings that are influencing him.

Of course, we won't begin in the present; we will begin in the past:

Angus works for the NYPD. And tonight he has a job to do. The wonders of modern technology enable us to watch two places simultaneously. There is a young woman who is sitting on a couch. She doesn't look healthy; she's sweating and she's pale. If we tried hard enough we would be able to hear her heart beating. It's fast and loud. If we tried even harder, we could hear a second heart – another tiny little heart that beats within her body. She is far away from Angus, but like us she can watch him. And she does so anxiously, staring at the TV in front of her without blinking. She is the wife of Angus and she is the most important person for him. At least that's what he told her. We know that he believes in that. She would like to know, too. Memories of discussions she had with her husband echo through the room – discussions about his job, discussions about the future, about the importance of life.

We turn to the TV and see a live news show. Two cameras try to get pictures of a skyscraper. One of them shows the building from above, the other one is on the street within swarming people. A bodiless voice tells us about the situation and so we learn that a group of terrorists is within the walls of the building. Nobody knows what they are intending, it says, but there are people in the building who were taken hostage. The streets are crowded. Pedestrians are watching the police forces and their shields and weapons. From time to time we can see a face of one of the police officers. Someone from behind the camera tries to talk to one of them. As one of the policemen turns we can hear a sound from the couch. It's the woman. She's recognised the officer. He talks to the men behind the camera. They have to leave and while he guides them to the yellow plastic tape he tells bit about the incident. There are terrorists in the building, he says to a man that still cannot be seen. They have taken hostages and have already killed two people. They don't want to talk to the police and there seems to be nothing they want to achieve. They just want to be left alone. The police will have to go in and rescue the innocent people very soon.

That's what he says. And then he leaves.

Now, the camera in the helicopter is in charge. There is not much we can see, but still some information can be gained from the pictures. Reddish light is flickering in some parts of the building. Probably something is burning. As the helicopter goes down we can spot movements on the eleventh floor. A big room filled with people. The flickering light changes its colour to grey, then to green. The camera tries to catch exact pictures, but isn't able to get anything better. A radio message from the police sends it away.

Back in the streets, we see the police forces going into the building. There is some talk about what will happen and what could possibly happen. Pedestrians are asked why they are here and if they have seen something. The faceless man behind the camera finds someone who states that he saw it all beginning. He is the janitor, he says. The terrorists were suddenly in the building. Crazy looking men and women, punks with madness in their eyes. They took all the people in the building hostage; only some of them were allowed to go. A man in a black suit was talking about terrorism in its purest form: they want to destroy a building completely and show the world the power of their god. The janitor could leave. He didn't want to talk to the police, he says, not about this man. He is afraid. He had fled from the ambulance.

Suddenly, we hear shots. Something explodes, but nothing can be seen from outside of the skyscraper.

We should turn around and have another look at the woman in the room. She is lying on the floor and with her lies a piece of meat that fell from between her legs. Colourless and red body fluids are all over carpet. In her hand she holds a telephone and with trembling fingers she tries to dial a number.

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We know that Angus survives the mission. We also know that the woman survives. More discussions take place. This time they are mainly about guilt. We see Angus, who tries to argue, who is unable to leave his job for the woman, and we see him smashing a chair after his wife left.

Angus' Job never was able to influence his personality, although as a police officer in New York City he had seen things that usually weren't taken easily by a human mind. But Angus is a man with ideals and he always keeps his right mind. The woman in front of the TV changes all that. She sets a seed of anger in the protagonist of our story, which grows over weeks. And over time Angus becomes famous for being ruthless and brutal.

There is one thing that saves him from suspension: the creatures he saw in the building, creatures which made him vomit and shoot blindly. Of course, we know which organisation tests and finally contacts him. Delta Green goes into an already-changing life and brings the change to a completion.

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But let's leave our hero for a while. Before we go to present day we will have to watch another group of people and another police op. This time, the organised crime fighting is not about terrorism; it's about drugs that are sold by a former unknown organisation. The scene takes place in and around an oil tanker in a part of the haven that has not been used for quite a while. After the incidents on the ship New York citizens will learn about a new drug for the first time. It will be called 'the liquid'. The astonished reader will learn that the greyish and slimy substance is sold in plastic vials and that it has to be swallowed to have an effect. It does not seem to be a synthetic drug as it is composed of dozens of chemicals that are not fully identified at this date. NYC citizens will be warned that the drug is highly addictive and has dangerous mind-altering effects, which

have to be examined yet.

Rust predominates the area of the haven we are in – rust of the ship, rust of old machines, and rust of wire-mesh fences and handrails. Nervous or cold-blooded policemen with bullet-proof vests, flashlights, and a lot of guns are running over the tanker. The organisation of the group looks good; they move in unison, only stopping from time to time to wait for their comrades to follow. Flashlights are dancing. We see a young man, who is the first person to reach one of the entrances into the tanker. It is his first mission and we know that it will also be his last. Never again will he have the courage to take a weapon or to sleep in a dark room. We see his pale and motivated-looking face as he opens the rusty door to the ship's hull. Let us follow them as they descend metal stairs and cross narrow hallways and watch their faces when they become aware of the scene taking place deep in the ship. Our brave policemen stare at an enormously fat woman in a white wedding gown, leading a perverse ceremony. Businessmen in black suits seem to try to throw their limbs away with red-lipped whores and thin junkies accompanying them in the mad dance. The woman sings in a growling voice; all participants answer with wild screams. Religious agony prevents all clear thinking. We see our young friend and how he stops his movements. The young man is confused; he does not know what to do in a situation like this, but he knows that he has to descend to the mob. Across the gigantic room other black-clothed men can be seen as they also approach the wild masses, and he gets enough courage to move on. It does not take long until the shootings begin.

The papers will focus on the shootings. A lot of people died and the public will have to be informed about it. They will talk about brave policemen who lost their life for justice and for the safety of all citizens of New York. The ugly cult leader will be described in detail and speculations will be made about the meaning of the wedding gown. But the strange deformations of some of the bodies will not be mentioned.

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Delta Green changed Angus' life completely. They even gave him a new name. He is called Ethan by now. He is not a man without problems, though. Bad dreams torment him at night. He cannot stay alone for long and usually he tries to bring home some girl he can spend the night with. In his wallet, he carries a photo he once found in the streets. It shows a little girl of probably five or six years. The photo is dirty because it lay on the pavement for quite a while and people had stepped on it, ignoring the small piece of paper. Ethan does not know the girl. But probably his daughter would have looked that way in three or four years. Of course, Ethan is not insane. He knows that this photo does not show his daughter, that his daughter is dead, that she died before she ever had a chance to live. But he cannot bring himself to throw it away. It would be like ignoring the life of this little girl, just like he ignores the fact that he once had a chance to have a daughter.

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Ethan had a briefing. He met his two colleagues from E-Cell and a bespectacled man with greying hair in a dark abandoned office building in the middle of a night in September. The old guy handed over some papers (newspaper clips, descriptions of persons of special interest, and testimonies of eye witnesses), and he told the story of the oil tanker. There was not much information for E-Cell to use. They left the building half an hour later and immediately began to run through specific routines, which would help them to collect some of the information needed.

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It is weeks later. We follow Ethan through the streets of an ugly and somewhat dangerous

neighbourhood of the city. He easily blends with the crowd. Ethan talks to some people and finally arrives at an old warehouse. The huge brick wall dwarfs our hero and seems to swallow him as a small door – a backdoor of some sort – opens and he steps into the darkness behind it. We follow him into the building, past two big men with unsmiling faces, and through another door we enter a large hall. The ceiling is many stories above us; huge black boxes emit an irritating, irregular beat; the hall is crowded with people who dance or scream at each other through the noise. Some of the people don't do anything; they just stare into a void only they can perceive. Ethan looks around. Finally, he starts to move through the crowd. When we have a look from above, we can overlook the hall completely. A lake full of people, their movements like waves, grey waves in a viscous liquid. We see Ethan as he walks through it; he talks to people; the people point out some persons sitting next to the brick wall. There, a narrow-framed and pale guy with alien light-blue eyes sells Ethan two plastic vials, which are stored in Ethan's jacket.

Ethan continues his journey through the crowd. We follow his seemingly random movements until he stops. One of the people in front of him opens a small plastic vial just like the one Ethan bought and falls to the ground. He begins to scream, but his screams cannot be heard. The music is just too loud. He lies on the floor in obvious agony, his limbs are twitching spastically, his face is a grimace. Most people around try to ignore the scene. But Ethan kneels down to help. The moment he touches the man on the floor his hand moves with great speed and he grabs Ethan's arm. His fingers look like claws. They are claws. As the young party-goer turns around and his face can be seen in full light a change in his eyes can be noticed. They seem to darken. His skin becomes grey and ugly. His tongue is not a tongue anymore; it is a thick and swollen piece of black meat that sticks out of his mouth.

Men are coming. They lift the sick man and take him away. Ethan does not try to interfere. He just watches as the young man becomes a parody of life while he is carried away. People stare.

We can see Ethan leaving the building. He looks a bit pale. It is obvious that he would like to stop the rave and have all participants arrested, but he cannot call anybody. It would be too dangerous. The world must not know.

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As we watch our hero again we know that there will be some sort of showdown in this story. Some questions will be solved by E-Cell and they will destroy one wing of an organisation they think to be a drug seller with an unholy agenda. They will see one of the real leaders. They do not know very much, just that the building in front of them holds at least some of the answers.

There are fifteen men; all are Delta Green agents or friendlies. They are wearing a body armour of some sort and they are carrying automatic weapons. There are earphones under their helmets. Black clothes. Flashlights on the guns. As we come closer we can see the other members of E-Cell: Edward and Ernest. Everything looks a bit like the scene on the tanker some months ago, but this time it is an old warehouse they want to enter and we can hear noise from within.

A door is opened quietly. The lock breaks and the men are rushing into the building. We follow them into a small hallway with a metal door at the end. Behind the door we can see machines. It is loud. The machines are working. A grey substance is mixed with water, chemicals and other stuff until it looks like the slimy drug they call the liquid and is poured into small vials, which are closed and put into small boxes with the words 'Caution. Do not throw. Porcelain.' on them. The squad runs into the hall and Agent Edward shoots two people standing by the machine and talking. Not much noise can be heard; the agents are using silencers. Running again, and some shooting. Five more people die. They reach another door. A sign hangs on the wall over the door with big letters

reading 'Bow your head'. They have to break it. Another small hallway with other doors. Some more gangsters die. There is another sign on the wall. It reads: 'Obey the mother'

The agents find an elevator in one of the next rooms and some stairs leading down. Letters are sprayed on the door of the elevator: 'OBEY!' The agents disable the elevator within seconds. The basement is one big room with people in white coats or black cloaks. Obviously, the Delta Green agents are disturbing a ceremony held by the men and women in the cloaks. Blood is on the floor.

The people in black are unlike the other cultist we have seen in this story, but we know this sort of person. Madness can be seen in their eyes, a fanaticism typical for religious zealots. And obviously they are afraid – afraid of the guns pointing at them. They stopped the ceremony and now they are shot. The Delta Green agents began to shoot as soon as the first entered the room because of what they saw. The noise of the guns reminds us of the music we heard in the warehouse a few weeks ago. It is just a little less loud. Most of the shots are fired at the wall. There is a big hole in the wall very much like a window. It is framed by arcane symbols and filled with an oily black cloud. The dark mass has dozens of mouths with grey slimy saliva dripping from them. Horrible olive-coloured eyes stare tenfold at the agents and inky pseudopods reach into the basement room. It is the black stuff the agents are shooting at. And the men and women in white coats collect the greyish stinking substance that drips from the evil mouths in bowl-like artefacts and put it into containers that are brought to the elevator door. One of the agents shoots at them. The bowls fall to the ground; the slime covers the floor. One man lies in one of those pools, his face to the ground. There is a hole in his head that was caused by one of the pseudopods out of evil darkness.

The black cloud begins to move. It moves away from the hole in the wall. As the distance grows the agents can see that the hole actually is a window that opens into a vast landscape. A greenish wasteland can be seen deep down; plants like seaweed cover it. Ethan still stands on the stairs. He stopped shooting and watches. The cloud is hundreds of yards away, but still the beautiful body of the dark mother cannot be seen in all its evil greatness. Ethan starts moving again, when the window explodes. The arcane symbols are ripped to pieces by some explosives. Now it is just a hole in a basement wall.

The cultists and scientists are dead. A lot of people have collapsed, some of them crying. The liquid is still sold in the streets of New York.

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Later, I went to Ethan. He knew me; we had met before. This time, I explained everything to him (I am a messenger; it is my job to explain).

Again, we watch Ethan. The shootings were just a few days ago and now Ethan has to attend a meeting. A few people of Delta Green want to know what happened exactly; some of them are important for the organisation. We can see them talking. Nothing is said that we do not know – of course not. The dark mother is described as a ghastly slimy thing and as the source for the drug that is commonly called the liquid. All persons in the room think that the drug is banned from New York.

This evening Ethan has to talk a lot, and he does so with a blank and unchanging face up to the point when he pulls out the gun and begins to shoot. He is able to kill four men before he shoots himself. With them, important knowledge dies for Delta Green.

It is not very difficult to predict the future, when you know all the variables.

The last thing we should do for today is to look up into the skies. There in the far distance, Azathoth the crawling chaos, the blind and mindless Demon Sultan, rules the world from out of the centre of the universe.

And now his messenger bids farewell. Good bye. We will meet again.

– Andreas Melhorn im Februar 2000