Is There a Russian Word for Drabble?

by Avira

Summary

Started out as a challenge to write a drabble a day for a week - then a month - then a year. After almost 6 years, now complete. Since we're past the 50th anniversary, I divided them into chapters of 50 drabs each. 20 chapters - 1000 drabs altogether.
#1: Awkward Positions

"This is not going to work."

"It's going to work. I've done this hundreds of times, I'll have you know."

"Were any of those attempts successful?"

"Oh ye of little faith. Just - sort of angle that arm there and then put that leg there. Okay - that should work."

"It seems to be a terribly unnatural position that you are attempting to put yourself in."

"Perhaps it is a bit more awkward than what I was aiming for."

"For pity's sake, Napoleon - just go and rent another hammock."

"See if I bring you to the beach again."

#2: Choosing a Companion

"How about her?"

"Nyet. Hair is too long."

"Odd complaint - considering your own hair."

"My hair has nothing to do with this."

"Fine, fine. Well, how about her?"

"Too old."

"That one?"

sigh

"Far too young."

"Now there's an oriental beauty."

"On that we are in agreement."

"So?"

"Yes. She will do. She is perfect."

"You've spent a lot of time finding a companion for him. Will Wellington appreciate all the trouble you've gone to getting him a girlfriend?"

"He had better."
"You spoil that cat."

"No-one can spoil a cat. They do that for themselves."

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**#3: THRUSH Nest**

"Illya! Keep your head down! You look awful as a redhead."

"It was not intentional. I only knew of the two birds in wait, not of the third one."

"He was a bit of an unpleasant surprise to me too."

"Were you hit, Napoleon?"

"Nothing to write home about. You?"

"The same."

"I'm all in favor of wiping out this nest and grabbing lunch on the way back."

"If you are asking me for an opinion, I approve of that plan."

"I'll go low and to the left - you go high and to the right. Ready, tovarich?"

"Ready."

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**#4: Pest Control**

"Do not move."

"Trust me, I have no intention of it, but please hurry. He's looking twitchy."

"Considering where he would hit, I am surprised you are not twitchy yourself."

"Less talk - more action, partner."

"You surely do not wish me to rush this?"

"Rush, no - hurry, yes."

"Easy now. Stay steady. There. You can breathe again, he is gone."

"You have my most heartfelt thanks."

"You are very welcome. I imagine that a hornet sting there would not have improved your social life."

"It certainly would have spoiled my plans for this evening at the very least, chum."

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**#5: Teal**

"No. No way, no how."

"It is only an assignment, Napoleon."
"Then you wear it."

"That would not work as well. You said so yourself."

"Me? When did I say something like that?"

"When I had to dress as a nun. Do you remember your remark about my face?"

"Hey, I didn't mean it as an insult, Illya."

"Still, the remark you made did have merit. Perhaps neither of us have many feminine features, but you have fewer than I. And he is known to like masculine women."

"Fine. Just hand me the damn dress."

"Teal is your color."

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#6: Quicksand

"Stretch a little further towards me, Napoleon."

"I'm trying. This stuff is like quicksand."

"As you have said in the past, less talk and more action. Reach back just a bit more."

"Be easier if I could - wait. Please tell me that's your hand, Illya."

"It is. I have you, my friend. Just try to relax your body. Let me do all the work."

"I've got sand in uncomfortable places right now."

"If that is your worst problem, we may be thankful."

"So what was that?"

"Quicksand."

"But. -"

"I did not say you were wrong, did I?"

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#7: Flatline

beep . . . beep

How many times have I sat by a hospital bed and watched as one of us fought for life? So many tubes. They had to shave his head. He'll hate that. He's so vain about his hair.

beep . . . beeeeeeee

The doctor murmurs something that sounds like offering me condolences and begins turning off the machines. How can a life lived so fully be over so fast?

"Napoleon?"
"Anders didn't make it."

His hand is on my shoulder. Illya knows me well enough to know that now and then? I just need him to be there.

#8: Hit & Run

"Don't you dare do anything like that to me again, Mark!"

"But April . . ."

"And don't you 'But April' me. I swear that if you make me gain so much as one gray hair or wrinkle, I'll . . ."

"Luv, what was I supposed to do? Let that ruddy car flatten you?"

"No. But for future reference, getting flattened yourself is not a suitable alternative."

"I wasn't flattened, luv. Nothing worse than a few colorful bruises that will fade. You'd do the same for me, eh?"

"You know I would, darling."

"Can we call a truce then?"

"Truce."

#9: Taking Time

"For pity's sake, Napoleon. Would you just pick one? Please?"

"These things shouldn't be rushed, chum."

sigh

"What rush? I have been waiting now for over five minutes."

"I just don't want to end up picking the wrong one, alright?"

"Fine, fine. Just please try to choose one before we both hit retirement age."

"Russian."

"American."

"Fine. There. Are you happy, tovarich?"

"Immensely, Napoleon. Gin."

"Damn it! I knew I should have picked the other card to discard."

"This is a perfect example of why I am the one that goes in to disarm the bombs."

#10: Sniper
Icy eyes scanned the area looking for the dark haired agent. There - Solo beyond doubt. Before the blond could make a move came the whisper of a sound. It didn't fully register with him even as his vision blurred. A shadowy figure approached, jerked the knife free from the man's back, then kicked the body to the ground contemptuously.

Napoleon had a bad second when the body fell until he saw the other man drop down lightly.

"Fine. There really was a sniper. How many meals do I owe you now?"

"One more than you owed me before."

#11: Rain

"Whose bright idea was it to come here?"

"I had nothing to do with the choice of this locale."

"I've never seen so much rain. Feels like we're under water."

"If it rains much more, we may well be."

"I'm beginning to think I should have packed my scuba gear."

"Or brought along plans for an ark."

"I didn't think you were religious?"

"Why would I need to be to see the value of a large boat here? Well - it could be worse, Napoleon."

"Worse? How?"

"We could have been sent here during their rainy season."

#12: Suspect Behavior

"She was coming on to you, you know."

"No. She was definitely not."

"It sure looked like it from where I was sitting, chum. How can you be so sure she wasn't?"

"Because I already approached her a week ago and all that she did was ask about you."

"Really? Odd."

"How is that odd?"

"Because when I approached her, all she did was ask about you."

"That would seem to be suspicious behavior, does it not?"

"It does indeed, partner mine."

"We probably sound terribly paranoid."
"Ah, but better paranoid and alive than trusting and dead."

"Very true."

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#13: Wet

"Breathe for me, damn you. Come on, Illya."

_ cough _

"Better, but open those baby blues for me. There we go."

"I am - wet?"

"Very astute observation, partner mine."

"What happened? The last thing I remember is being on the dock."

"Our feathered friend decided to take a swim and managed to drag you down with him. Whoa, don't try to get up so fast. He's gone now."

"Where is he?"

"Now? With Davy Jones."

"You went in after me? But you hate the water."

"Yeah, well, apparently not as much as I hate breaking in a new partner."

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#14: Boredom

"So, Illya. Are you as bored right now as I am?"

"Not quite."

"How can you tell?"

"I am not quite bored enough to ask you how bored you are."

"Great. I'm stuck with a smart-alecky Russian out here a hundred miles from nowhere."

"I think we are bound to be far closer to nowhere than that. Napoleon."

"You may have a point, chum. Pretty desolate around here."

"If you happen to be a fan of desolate, then yes. Pretty."

_ sigh _

"You know what I mean."

"Rarely, but I have grown adept at faking it over the years."

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#15: Long Story
"Miss Dancer. Mister Slate. I trust you have an explanation?"

"Yes, Mister Waverly."

"Then let's have it, Miss Dancer."

"It's a bit of a long story, sir."

"Always seems to be a long story where the pair of you are concerned, Mister Slate. Go on."

"Well you see, sir, everything was going fairly well until the bomb went off early."

*soft throat clearing*

"Actually, Mark? I think things may have started going wrong when the car hit the tree."

*sigh*

"I've changed my mind. I want full details in writing on my desk by morning."

"Yes sir."

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**#16: Workmanship**

"Wow."

"Impressive, is it not?"

"Extremely. You know, they just don't build places like this anymore."

"I suppose that is true. It is all hand cut stone. The labor costs for that alone would make this structure out of reach to any but the wealthiest."

"I wonder how long it took to even get the materials for it? Let alone how long it took to build. Magnificent."

"Napoleon? Are you trying to talk me out of blowing this building up?"

"Perish the thought, chum. Just admiring it before it's gone."

"Best to admire quickly then."

*explosion*

"Satisfied?"

"Da."

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**#17: Chinese Takeout**

"Ready?"

"Always."

"Chicken, pork, beef or seafood?"
"Pork."

"Spicy, sweet or savory?"

"Spicy."

"Noodles or rice?"

"We cannot have both?"

"I guess. No reason we can't."

"Then both, please."

"White or fried rice?"

"You are making this far more difficult than it needs to be, Napoleon."

"Oh? How do you normally order take-out?"

"Shall I demonstrate my technique?"

"Please do. I always like to see a master at work."

dialing

"Good evening, Mister Huang. Yes, this is Mister Kuryakin. I would like two each of all the daily specials delivered. Yes. Both please. Thirty minutes? Thank you."

"Cheater."

#18: Ripple Effect

"Mark?"

"Yes, luv?"

"If you could change one thing, what would it be?"

"We wouldn't be in this ruddy cell for a starter."

"I didn't mean now, you goose. I meant if you could go back into the past."

"Oh. We're in an introspective mood at the moment, are we?"

"A bit. Well?"

"Tricky - take a fair bit of thought. If I changed something, would the events affected by that change lead me to a better place or a worse one?"

"That's rather deep."

"Are you saying you think of me as shallow, April?"

"Never, darling."
#19: Eye of Newt

"Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble."

"You are not assisting the cooking process."

"Probably not hurting it though."

"My cooking is not that bad, Napoleon."

"Not that good either, chum. Any eye of newt in there?"

"The grocer was out and I had to substitute. Take over the cooking yourself if you are unhappy."

"I must confess that you have a lighter touch with - whatever that is - than I would."

"Knowing the ingredients would not improve your appetite."

"I was afraid you'd say something like that."

"The nearest restaurant is over fifty miles away. Pretend it is snails."

"Not helping."

#20: Mark Slate b: Jan 29, 1936

"Happy birthday, dear Maaa-ark. Happy birthday to you."

"Good lord. Three people and three entirely different pitches. Is that possibly a record?"

"No one in their right mind would want to make a record out of that. Blow out the candles."

"Illya! Not that kind of record, darling."

"Come on - it wasn't really all that bad, partner. Cut the cake already."

"Give that up, Napoleon. I've heard alley cats fight in better tune than you lot sing."

"Cute. Very funny, Mark."

"Another year older, another year fuddy-duddier."

"No cake and ice cream for you, my girl."

#21: Bad Day at the Beach

"I hate this."

"It is your fault, you know."

"My fault? How do you figure that?"

"You were the one that told Mister Waverly you would like some beach time to work on your tan."

"Forgot to stipulate a THRUSH-free beach, didn't I?"
"The sin of omission, my friend."

"I really must learn to be more specific."

"Yes, you must. Good news, Napoleon. I have spotted our mystery shooter's location."

"Return the favor, would you?"

"You mean shoot and miss him by about two feet?"

"No. Demonstrate for him how it's supposed to be done."

"Gladly."

#22: Prickly Situation

"I am so, so sorry."

"Napoleon, please. Just stop talking and let us get this over with."

"I didn't have the slightest idea of what was on the other side of the wall."

"I know that. It could as easily have been you that landed on the plant. Besides, I doubt this procedure is any more pleasant for you than it is for - ."

hiss

"Sorry - sorry."

"Napoleon - if you continue to apologize after removing each cactus needle from my . . . body, this will take far longer than I would care for it to."

"I know - I know."

hiss

"Sorry."

sigh

#23: Waverly's 65th Anniversary m: Feb 1, 1918

"Alexander? Do you need a reminder, darling?"

"No, not at all, my dear. In fact, I've already made reservations at our favorite restaurant."

"How thoughtful of you."

"Hardly seems possible, does it? Sixty-five years today."

"That is the only trouble with a full life. The years do seem to fly by so."

"Any regrets, Millicent?"

"None worth the name, Alexander."
"Shall we drink to our next sixty-five years together?"

"Goose. But if I do have another sixty-five years granted to me, there is no-one I'd rather spend them with."

"Happy anniversary, Millicent my dear."

#24: Groundhog Day

"Groundhog Day."

"Still perplexed by the occasion, chum?"

"Da, but I have decided it is best for my sanity to file it under holiday idiosyncrasies."

"Oh? What other holiday traditions fall under that umbrella?"

"Rabbits that gift eggs, green beer, parading large floats made of flowers - things of that ilk."

"I could never figure out that rabbit/egg connection myself. So I vote we stick with my grandfather's holiday rationale."

"And what was your grandfather's rationale?"

"Holidays let us toast with others so that we don't drink alone."

"Your grandfather was a wise man, my friend."

"Cheers."

#25: Wee Hours

"Mark?"

\textit{snore}

"Mark?"

"Hmn?"

"Mark?"

\textit{yawn}

"Napoleon? Is something wrong?"

"No. Just wanted to talk."

"Wait. What time is it?"

"Half past three."

"AM?"

"AM."
"Damn you, Napoleon."

"What?"

"I accused Illya of exaggerating all those stories about you waking him up in the wee hours."

"Oh. You didn't make a bet with him over this, did you?"

.....

"Oops. Guess you did. So, what do you owe him for losing the bet?"

"Illya's standard wager, what do you think?"

"I think between me and you, Illya won't be having to buy his own meals for awhile."

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**#26: Goliath**

"You can come out now. He is down, Napoleon."

"Good shot. Wait a minute. I thought we were both out of ammunition. Weren't holding back on me, were you, chum?"

"Not in the least. I simply gathered new ammunition."

"Gathered? Bullets don't grow on trees. What did you use?"

"I believe the common term is a rock. I managed to rig a passable sling."

"You hit him with a rock? As in David versus Goliath style?"

"Let us not argue with a track record of proven success, my friend."

"The boys in Development are going to love this."

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**#27: Harem**

*soft creaking*

"April?"

"Oh, thank God. I hope you brought your lock picks with you, Illya."

"I never leave home without them. How is it that you ended up here? We had a difficult time locating you."

"A long and embarrassing story, darling. Suffice to say, don't drink any wine that you might be offered around this place."

"I doubt I am the type the 'gentleman' is after for adding to his harem numbers."

*click*
"That feels ever so much better."

"I know what will feel even better."

"What's that, darling?"

"Outside air."

"Very true. Lead the way."

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**#28: Bomb**

"Will the bomb go off before we're clear of the blast area?"

"Possibly. Sorry, I did not take you into account."

"I didn't expect our feathered friends to drop me off here and neither did you."

"Keep moving. Faster."

"Would it be ironic to be killed by your own bombs?"

"More unfortunate than ironic. The wall. Hurry, I will boost you to the top."

"But who'll boost you?"

"I am not the wounded one. I will manage. Go."

*rumble*

"Illya? Illya!"

"... here."

"Thank God. Next time? We go over together."

"Please, Napoleon - no next time."

"Okay, chum."

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**#29: Kindergarten**

The bickering started up before they had even passed Miss Samuels desk.

"You exaggerated that report so much, Mark."

"I most certainly did not. If anything, I understated it."

"Never."

"Did too."

*hrumph*

Miss Samuels looked over to the door leading to the office. Mister Waverly was standing there,
watching as the two agents exited.

"Miss Samuels? Do you recall when we put together the list of my duties for Mister Solo?"

"Yes, Mister Waverly."

"Do you still have it?"

"Of course, sir."

"Make an addition to the list please."

"Yes, Mister Waverly. What needs to be added?"

"Nursery supervisor."

#30: Tiger, Tiger

"They are beautiful creatures, aren't they?"

"I suppose so."

"You know something, Illya? From an avowed cat fancier, I really expected more enthusiasm."

"You obviously are suffering from partial amnesia, Napoleon."

"Really? What is it you're implying that I've forgotten?"

"That less than a year ago, I had been trussed up and left out as bait for some of those creatures."

"You're right, that had slipped my mind. I can see where that would drastically lessen a tiger's appeal."

"I now stick to felines close to Wellington's size."

"Sounds like a sensible approach, tovarich."

#31: Proper Caution

"Switzerland is always so lovely this time of year."

"It will do us good to have a small vacation. The conference won't be taking up all of my time."

"I suppose I must have a body guard for when you're in meetings?"

"Yes, Millicent."

"Will it be Napoleon?"

"Certainly not! I mean - Mister Kuryakin has been assigned to the job."

"Of course, I am quite fond of Illya - but why not Napoleon?"

"That young man hasn't learned the proper restraint around beautiful women."
"Why Alexander - is that a touch of jealousy?"

"Just exercising proper caution, my dear."

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#32: Lawan

"Come in, Napoleon."

"Is there a cat ambush waiting in there?"

"None that I am aware of. Wellington generally prefers to hide until you are seated. Ah, but it seems that Lawan has decided to greet you."

"You named her Lawan? Does the name have a meaning?"

"It is a Siamese name that means beautiful."

"Very fitting. Hello, Lawan - ow!"

"Ah - and there is Wellington."

"What in the hell was that ankle swat for?"

"I would suppose that he has heard of your reputation with the ladies."

"Do you think that liver will help this time?"

hiss

"I doubt it."

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#33: Brake Failure

"The brakes are not working?"

"Afraid not. This road is a very bad place for this to happen."

"I doubt it was by accident - chyort voz'mi!"

"I hate to say this, but I don't think I'll be able to get this around another curve, Illya."

"Hit those bushes!"

"Those bushes aren't going to be thick enough to stop us."

"But they may slow us down some. We must get out."

"Not a lot of choice, I guess. Running out of ground - jump now!"

". . . Napoleon? Where are -"

"Here, chum. Damn. Another suit ruined."

laughter
"S'not funny."

#34: Leaving the Backway

"The young lady seemed rather unhappy with you, Napoleon."

"I had to tell her that she isn't my type."

"She quit breathing?"

"Harhar - how about just a little support, chum?"

"Sorry - I will try to be more sympathetic. What was wrong with her?"

"Too aggressive. I don't grope other people and I don't care for being groped myself."

"Napoleon? She is returning with a trio of rather large males."

"Looks like our cue to exit."

"Just once, I would like to attend a party with you and be able to leave by the front door."

"Sounds dull."

#35: Apology

"Hey. Are we talking again, partner?"

"You are speaking and I am speaking, so the answer would be yes."

"That's not what I meant. sigh "I know I was out of line yesterday."

"Yesterday is over and done, Napoleon."

"But far from forgotten. Here. This is for you."

"What is this?"

"It's a peace offering."

rustle

"A Wes Montgomery album? I am impressed. I did not think you knew jazz that well."

"I admittedly asked for help at the store."

"You did not need ."

"I wanted to, Illya. My way of apologizing. I really am sorry."

"Apology accepted."

#36: Valentines Day
"Alexander – they're beautiful."

"Iris and tulips. I know how much you love them."

"You didn't need to get anything me, darling. Our anniversary wasn't even two weeks ago."

"Really? Then am I to presume that package in my chair is for someone else?"

"Of course not – it's for you."

"That's what I thought. Millicent? We wed so close to Valentine's Day. I've always wondered why you didn't want to be married then?"

"Valentine's is for fancies about love. The genuine article deserved its own special day."

"Savvy as always, my dear."

#37: Bunny & Kitty Pt 1 of 2

"Remind me not to bet with you again unless I know the stakes."

"Now, now, partner of mine. It's just one evening. What's one measly evening out of your life?"

"Possibly an eternity, I fear."

"Hey, you never know. It could be that you and Bunny have a lot in common."

"Bunny? Please, Napoleon - tell me that is a nickname?"

"Err - Mark will be there with you too."

"He lost the bet as well, I take is? What is the name of his date?"

"Would you believe Kitty?"

"I believe that it will be a very long night."

#38: Bunny & Kitty Pt 2 of 2

"Illya?"

"Yes, Mark?"

"What did you think about last night?"

"I am grateful it is over."

"Agreed, mate. This Ginger that Napoleon wanted to date? Do you think she was worth what we put up with from Bunny and Kitty?"

"I do not see how she could have been. I hope to never again go out with a woman that counts being able to twitch her nose as a social asset."

"Could have been worse, mate. Did you hear Kitty's so-called giggle?"
"True, it was hard to miss. So, no more wagering with Napoleon?"

"Sworn off for life."

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**#39: Fashion Magazine**

"Are you thumbing through one of my fashion magazine, Mark?"

"I most certainly am. Would you look at the length, or lack thereof, of these skirts? When I was a lad, if my da caught me looking at girls showing this much flesh, he'd have thumped me one."

"Why's that? He didn't like you ogling women?"

"More like he'd be mad because I'd found where he hid his stash of books from me mum."

"Oooh - look at that dress. Could you imagine me in that number?"

"Not and continue to keep our partnership pure, luv."

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**#40: Skin Secret**

"I know it bothers you when people talk about you being cute, Illya darling, but seriously? There are any number of women that would kill to have your skin tone. So tell me - do you have a secret?"

"As a matter of fact, I do, April. A scientist once tried to turn me into a mummy."

laughter

"No - seriously."

"He is being serious, April. I was the one that had to unwrap him."

"For which I was grateful, Napoleon."

"Good Lord."

"While that method seems to have worked for me, I could not in good conscience recommend it to others."

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**#41: Borrowed Car**

"Phew! Illya? What in heaven's name is that horrible smell?"

"The details regarding the source of it will not make it smell any better."

"Wait a minute. You didn't get any of that mess in my car, did you?"

"More, how do you say, the other way around?"

"The other - oh no. My car in in that stuff? How deep?"

"Just past midway on the tires. I would suggest a tow truck and a breathing mask."

"You are never going to be borrowing my car again, you know."
"I did have a feeling that would be the case."

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**#42: A Night & A Bottle**

"You're holding that bottle like a man who is determined to get drunk."

"That is because I am determined to get drunk."

"Tovarich?"

"Please? Do not try to talk me out of it, Napoleon."

"I wasn't going to. Just getting glasses."

"Glasses?"

"An advantage of having a partner is never having to get drunk alone. Unless you'd rather?"

"No. I would prefer to have company."

"Then let the two of us share the night and the bottle."

"Napoleon? Do you think we will always end up alone?"

"Naw. Like you said once, we always have each other."

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**#43: Fever**

"Easy there, tovarich. Just me."

"Napoleon?"

"Don't try to move. Let me do that for you. Pretty hefty fever you have there, chum. Drink this."

"How did you know -?"

"Two things. I doubt you remember it, but I spoke to you on the phone. You said you weren't hungry and that's never a normal sign where you're concerned. The second thing? When I let myself in, Wellington actually greeted me."

"Not even a hiss?"

"Not a one. Nice of your cat to declare a truce so that I can take care of you."

"Da. Very considerate."

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**#44: Funeral Aftermath**

"You seem down, my friend."

"I feel down, tovarich."

"Care to talk about it?"
"No. Yes. Hell - doesn't matter."

"Is this about Anders' funeral yesterday?"

"Sort of. Anders was a damn good agent and an even better man. Who was there? Some U.N.C.L.E. representatives. No family. No friends."

"And you see your own funeral as being similar someday?"

"Yeah. We're out fighting the good fight, but when the end comes, will anyone even remember? I mean, who'll really give a damn?"

"I will."

"Because we're partners?"

"Because we are friends."

"Spasibo."

"Pożalujsta."

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**#45: Parachute Mishap**

"Ow . . ."

"Mark? How is it that you managed to end up in that tree?"

"Give me a break and just help me down, Illya. It's not like I aimed for the ruddy thing."

"How else did you manage to hit it?"

"He has a point, you know. It's the only tree of any size in this entire field."

"You're kidding me. Napoleon is kidding me, isn't he, April?"

"No, he's quite right, darling. Only one tree and you nailed it."

"Perhaps skydiving is not really your sport."

"I think that's a safe assumption, mate."

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**#46: Getting Loose**

"I have a large dislike for blindfolds."

*mmph*

"Agreed, Napoleon. Gags are equally annoying. Are you blindfolded as well?"

*mmph*

"See if you can put your back to me and let me check your wrists."

*shuffle*
"Rope. Good. I was afraid that you would be handcuffed as I am. Hold still. My range of motion is limited and I cannot see what I am doing."

"You did it. Thanks, chum. Thing tasted awful. Hang on. I'm not as fast with lockpicks as you are."

"Much better. Shall we blow this ice cream cart?"

"That's popsicle stand. And yes."

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### #47: Old Rope Bridge

"April, I don't like this."

"Can you think of a better way?"

"We'll find another way, luv."

"We're on foot and there's no other way across that I can see."

"This rope bridge has seen better days. Likely before either of us were born."

"They're bound to know we escaped and be tracking us by now, Mark. And you know what happens if they catch us?"

"I know. We've no choice. Just - take it easy. No stomping."

"Ladies never stomp. See you on the other side."

"One way or the other."

**kiss**

"For luck."

---

### #48: Lean on Me

"Just a little bit further."

"You've been saying that every five minutes for three miles."

"Nonsense. Surely it has not been more than two miles."

"It really would've been better if you'd left me behind."

"Napoleon? If I confess something, will you keep walking?"

"Depends what you plan to confess."

"I am no more able to walk without aid than you."

"Wait - you mean we're each other's crutch?"

"Da."

"Illya! Why the hell didn't you tell me how badly you were hurt earlier?"
"What would that have changed?"

"Nothing, I guess. Keep walking, chum."

---

**#49: Switzerland**

"Alexander, you really shouldn't be lifting me."

"Nonsense. I'm not feeble, my dear. Besides, you are quite light and you can't view the stars properly from your chair."

"So lovely. The sky is so clear here. It seems like ages since we were in Switzerland last."

"Do you remember our honeymoon?"

"Of course. And I recall a night very much like this."

"The stars are the only things that have stayed the same."

"True. But you've always said that we hadn't need to fear change, that the best was yet to come."

"It still is."

---

**#50: Fate**

"Do you believe in fate, Illya?"

"Is this a trick question, Mrs. Waverly?"

*chuckle*

"No, no at all, my dear boy. Just curiosity on my part."

"Then I would have to say – yes and no."

"Is that what is known as hedging your bet?"

"No, ma'am. It is just - I believe that there are things intended to be, but I also believe we decide the way in which we will get there."

"Ah - fate may form the paths, but we choose which ones are the ones we actually take?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"I rather like the sound of that."
#51: Foot in Mouth

"I still can't believe Mister Waverly assigned you to that Switzerland trip and not me."

"The occasional hefty price of being known as a ladies' man, my friend."

"But him not trusting me with his wife? She's old enough to be—"

clearing throat

"-my very attractive older sister. Mrs. Waverly, how very nice to see you again."

"Always a pleasure, Napoleon, my dear boy. It's not silly, you know."

"I beg your pardon, ma'am?"

"I may be old, Napoleon, but I am not dead."

soft laugh

"You know, your partner blushes very well, Illya."

"He does."

#52: Wardrobe Adjustment

"How on Earth did you end up in this?"

"Could we possibly discuss it later? Like after you work your magic with your lock picks and we're long gone?"

"Fine, but these are not ideal conditions. Try to hold still."

"I'm trying."

"You know, I was not even aware that they designed any of these things for men."

"Me either. And I hope to never see one again."

"There. Free, if slightly chafed. You know, if they were actually worried about your chastity, they were at least a decade too late with the belt."

"Love you too, pal."

#53: Blackmail

"That was certainly quite a predicament you found yourself in, darling."

"What are you talking about, April?"

"That little incident? In Marrakesh?"
"I swear, I'm going to murder my partner."

"Now, don't go after Illya. He didn't breathe a word."

"Then how do you -?"

"Someone sent me this. What is that saying - a picture is worth a thousand words? Though I admit this one left me speechless."

"Shame that didn't last."

"Temper, temper. Unless you want me sharing with the girls in the secretarial pool?"

"You wouldn't . . . you would, wouldn't you?"

"In a heartbeat."

#54: Appendicitis

"Napoleon? How is he?"

"The surgery went well, Mark. I got him here in time."

"Thank heavens."

"Come on, you two. You can get a look at him in Recovery."

"Poor love. Is it me or does this man go back fifteen years in age when he's ill?"

"You're right, April. He does look pretty young at times like this."

"Rather scary how one can forget there are other dangers beyond being shot at and blown up."

"Lucky the appendix hadn't ruptured."

"You must've lent him a bit of the Solo luck."

"I certainly tried to."

#55: Movie Night (You Only Live Twice)

"Don't hog all of the popcorn, Illya."

"Then you hold it, Mark. I have candy."

"Ugh - burial at sea. If you're taking notes, that's not the way I want to go."

"Why would I be taking notes in a theatre?"

"Good lord - seems every bird in this movie gets between the sheets with that bloke."

"Is he's related to you, Napoleon?"

"Nonsense, April. Man's obviously an amateur."
"Obviously."

"I heard that giggle."

"Seems to take this 'license to kill' to heart. What is the body count?"

"Eleven, I think."

"Hate to do his expense report."

---

#56: Piggyback

"Mark, I'd feel silly."

"Can you walk now, luv?"

"Well, no."

"Would you prefer to be dragged?"

sigh

"Of course not."

"Well then, piggyback it has to be, my girl."

"I probably haven't had a piggyback ride since I was six years old."

"Have you had a broken foot since then?"

"No."

"Had a broken foot when you needed to evade THRUSH lunatics wanting to stuff you into a cell before?"

"No."

"Look luv - would you rather sit tight and hope help comes?"

sigh

"... no."

"Good girl - you'll get a lolly later."

"Don't press your luck."

---

#57: Cookies

"Uhm, Illya?"

"Yes, Napoleon?"

"Why are all those boxes stacked behind your desk?"
"Because it was the most convenient place to store them."

"Wait a minute. Are those what I think they are?"

"The answer to that depends on what you think they are."

"Girl Scout cookies?"

"Then yes, they are what you think."

"Why so many?"

"I bought a case from one young lady, then another came over and one thing led to another."

"The Troop Leader must love you."

"We have a dinner date Friday."

"Let me guess. She's bringing dessert?"

"You do know me so well."

---

#58: Horseback Riding

"I haven't done this in years."

"I doubt anyone would guess. You have an excellent seat, ma'am."

"Thank you, Illya. So do you."

"Are you enjoying yourself, Millicent?"

"Very much so, Alexander. It's lovely to move about without the chair. I hadn't realized how much I've missed riding."

"I must thank you for suggesting this, Mister Kuryakin."

"My pleasure, sir. When one of my old professors wrote me about the RDA in Britain, I recalled that Mrs. Waverly spoke once about equestrianism."

"We shall have to do this again soon."

"As often as you wish."

---

#59: Smoke

"Keep low to the ground. The smoke is not as bad near the floor."

"I don't think we're going to make it, pal."

"We will, my friend."

"Aren't you usually the pessimist between us?"

"You are doing a fine job of that without my assistance, but if we do not make it, I give your ghost
permission to beat up mine."
"And if we do make it out?"
"Then there will be no ghost to give permission to."
"That made more sense to me than I think it should have."
"Forget it. Save your breath - crawl."
"Right."

#60: Modern Dance

"Oh come on, darling. You agreed to dance with me tonight."
"Yes, I did agree to dance with you, but I don't believe this qualifies as a dance."
"It most definitely does qualify. The Boogaloo is very popular nowadays."
"So is the Popcorn and you aren't going to convince me that it's an actual dance either, April."
"Honestly, Mark - please?"
"The dance floor is awfully crowded."
"For me? Just this once?"
"I need to trade partners with Napoleon. Illya's eyes don't have the same effect on me that yours do."
"I should certainly hope not."

#61: Workout

slam
"That makes the count at three falls for you - two falls for me."
"You sneaky little Russian. Where did you pick up that last move from?"
"From a THRUSH agent I had to fight while we were on the Tarragona mission."
"Hmm. The mission I remember - that move I don't."
"You were rather busy at the time wrestling for possession of a gun."

slam
"Now we're three and three, partner mine."
"And where did you pick up that move, Napoleon?"
"That redhead from the secretarial pool that I dated last week."
"Why does that not surprise me?"
#62: Pacing

"Pacing isn't going to help anything, you know."

"I know."

"Really, if you think of some of the other places where we've been held in the past, this is quite nice."

"A gilded cage is still a cage, Napoleon."

"I know, chum. It's that feline inside of you."

"Would you care to explain that?"

"Cats can be content anywhere - so long as it's their choice. You didn't pick this place, so you're never going to settle down."

"Then since you know I am not going to settle, may I return to pacing?"

"Be my guest."

#63: Guitar

"April?"

"Yes, Napoleon?"

"Is that your partner and my partner making music?"

"It is indeed, darling. They're rather good together, aren't they?"

"Very. I knew Illya played a few different instruments, but I didn't know that Mark knew his way around a guitar."

"They have lovely singing voices as well."

"Yes, they do. Should we be worried about them abandoning us for a career on the stage?"

"Goose. Why would they abandon us? I, for one, would be an excellent good groupie."

"I'm not the groupie type."

"They might need a road manager?"

"That has possibilities."

#64: Thunderstorm

"Thunderstorms are magnificent, aren't they?"

"They admittedly have a certain charm when viewed through the large window of a warm room. When I am drenched and feeling as if I am dodging lightning, the appeal is lost."
"Alright. I'll concede that I'd be enjoying this more if I were warm and dry. Hm – April showers are supposed to bring May flowers. I wonder what March showers bring?"

"Probably pneumonia."

"Look on the bright side, chum."

"I was."

"That was the bright side? What's the dark side?"

"Do you really wish to know?"

"On second thought, no."

---

#65: Ballgame March 14, 1967

"This has been a very different assignment. I have never been bodyguard to a sports figure before."

"Yes - but gratifying in its own way, partner mine - wait. Listen."

Three balls - two strikes - Mantle waits - Stu Miller is ready - here's the payoff pitch from Miller to Mantle - and there she goes! Mickey Mantle has hit the 500th home run and the score at the end of seven complete innings - New York, 6 - Baltimore, 4.

"THRUSH must have had a sizable bet against this Mantle to have wanted him removed so badly."

"Reasonable guess, chum. I hope we broke their bank."

---

#66: Solitaire

"You could play the eight on that nine, chum."

"Napoleon?"

"Hmm?"

"Do you know what this game is called?"

"Sure. Solitaire. Didn't you know?"

"I know the name. And the game is called Solitaire because how many people play it?"

"Ah - are you giving me a non-subtle hint not to kibitz?"

"Evening, gents. Quiet night?"

"Hi, Mark. Yeah, pretty quiet."

"Good evening, Mark."

"Having a bit of a game? You know, Illya, you could play that eight on - Napoleon?"

"Yes, Mark?"
"Why did Illya stomp off without saying anything?"
"Moody Russian. After awhile, you get used to it."

#67: Tennis Anyone?

"Explain to me again how me with Mark versus you with Illya counts as being a mixed doubles match?"
"Well, not standard mixed doubles, Napoleon darling. But still mixed because we've switched partners."
"Why don't you and I team up against Illya and Mark?"
"That is because April wants to win, Napoleon."
"Are you implying that you play tennis better than I do, partner?"
"I was not implying it. I was stating it."
"Alright. This means war. Ready, Mark?"
"April warned you I've not played since prep school, didn't she?"
"Next time I call the teams."

#68: Holding Hands

"Can you get these cuffs off of us?"
"Yes, but not now. We do not have the time. The water is rising too quickly."
"Then we make run for it. Try and stay close or we're going to damage each other's wrist worse than they already are."
"Hold my hand, Napoleon."
"Excuse me?"
"If we are holding hands, we will not jerk the chain linking our cuffs."
"Okay, that makes sense. Does this mean we're going steady?"
"Hardly."
"Not even buying me dinner first? I'm not that easy, pal."
"That is not what the secretaries say."

#69: First Spacewalk - March 18, 1965

The latest news came across the wire. When it finished, Mister Waverly briskly tore the sheet free, read it, then spoke to his two agents.
"Gentlemen, Alexey Leonov has completed a twelve minute, nine second space walk today. The first man to walk in space."

"The goal of the late President Kennedy to put a man on the moon seems closer to reality."

"You know, Mister Solo, I can recall Millicent writing me about the first flights across the English Channel."

"A great deal of change to occur during any one lifetime."

"Indeed. These have been momentous times, Mister Kuryakin."

---

### #70: Compatibility

"What are you reading about?"

"You, chum."

"Pardon?"

"Astrology, partner of mine. More specifically, you being Virgo."

"That book tells about me?"

"Yep."

"You are going to simply sit there and smirk until I ask, are you not?"

"Probably. I was looking at our compatibility as partners."

"And you are?"

"Sagittarius."

"Fine. What does it say?"


"I think you are making that up."

"No, really. Look for yourself."

"Perhaps there is something to this."

"Our success is in the stars - hey! No throwing the book at me!"

---

### #71: First Day of Spring

"Why are we in the park, Napoleon? It is too cold."

"We're here because April asked us to be here, chum."

"Fine. April? Why are we in this very cold park?"
"Today is the first day of Spring, my darlings."

"She's right, Illya. I just saw the first robin of Spring - frozen to a branch."

"You aren't helping, Mark."

"Sorry, luv - just trying to keep spirits up."

"Fine. It is Spring, but still too cold to be out."

"I brought fried chicken and potato salad for a picnic."

"You could simply have said that to start with."

---

**#72: Astrology**

"What has you looking so amused, my dear?"

"Napoleon lent me his book on astrology. Have you ever read anything on the subject, Alexander?"

"Only if the daily horoscope in the paper counts. Doesn't say we're incompatible or other rot, does it?"

"Hardly, darling. Highly compatible and prone to long term relationships."

"It does have that right. Even if it is all balderdash."

"Now, dear. We know environment affects how a child develops. Couldn't timing of a child's birth be a factor as well?"

"Ah – sways, without dictating outcomes?"

"Precisely."

"Is there a section on agents?"

---

**#73: Khatyn Massacre - March 22, 1943**

"Illya, I know something is wrong."

"Da. Give me until tomorrow. I will be better then."

"Come on - talk to me, chum."

"You will not drop the subject?"

"I will if you insist, but I don't think I should."

*deep breath*

"Alright. Twenty years ago today, I was nine. We were constantly moving to find a place to be safe. Find food. Stay alive. We were approaching Khatyn and stopped to rest the horses. Then we heard machine guns. 149 dead. Over half were children. Who still remembers what happened then?"

"You do, tovarich. And now so do I."
#74: Bareback

"There - I see our way out."

"Please tell me that you're joking."

"Hardly. Hand me that rope, Napoleon - I will be right back."

"Impressive, tovarich. I didn't know you knew how to make a halter from rope."

"It is not really something that comes up in everyday conversation. Time to mount."

"Um - I've never ridden bareback before, Illya."

"I have - many times. Take my hand and swing up behind me."

grunting

"They make this look so easy in Westerns."

"Unwelcome company is coming. We will have to gallop. Hold onto my waist tightly."

"No worries there, chum."

#75: Tenderness

"Ow."

"I would offer you liniment, but for one thing? I do not believe it will help where you ache. Two, I am not volunteering to rub it in."

"No sympathy. I'm dying here."

"You are merely saddle-sore, Napoleon."

"Can't be saddle-sore. We didn't have a saddle."

"You did not complain this much the last time you were shot."

"I wasn't shot where I have to sit."

"I am afraid that my news will not make you feel better."

"Please don't tell me -"

"I am afraid so. Our flight departs in one hour."

#76: Rescue

"Napoleon? He's barely breathing."

"Easy, April. We'll get him down from there. Illya?"

"That beam he is hanging from looks strong enough. Boost me up. I will work on the locks from
there."

"Alley-op. Sturdy enough, partner?"

"Yes. The two of you need to support his legs. Otherwise it will be a nasty jolt after I open the first cuff."

"We got him - go ahead."

"One down."

"He's not responding at all."

"He appears drugged, April. Get ready to catch him."

"Let's get him out of here."

"The important thing is that Mark's alive."

#77: Missing

"Come on, mate - let's get you to the doctor. Your head is bleeding pretty badly."

"Nyet, Mark. I must find her."

"April and Napoleon are already searching for your girl."

"Chyort voz'ni - they wanted me. Why could they not leave her alone?"

"T.H.R.U.S.H. isn't big on the concept of innocent bystanders - wait. I see Napoleon and April coming."

"Look who we found hiding under a bush, partner."

"Lawan! Moya krasivaya devushka!"

mrrrr?

"You know, Wellington might not appreciate you calling her your beautiful girl."

"I will guard my ankles if I must."

#78: Beginnings : Backup

"Stop! What in the hell is going on here?"

"Oh – hi, Napoleon. Just . . . a friendly workout."

"Really? Looks a lot more like three guys against one without the friendly part."

"It's just the Russian. He can take it."

"Yes, I'm sure he can. May I join?"

"Hey, the more the merrier – wait. Are you seriously going to fight with him against us?
"You hadn't heard? We're a team now. Right, tovarich?"

"Da."

. . . . .

shower

"Three agents in Medical. Do you not think that Mister Waverly will be angry?"

"Naw. It was just a little training accident, chum."

#79: First Impressions

"You sent for me, Mister Waverly?"

"Indeed, Mister Slate. High time you were partnered for the field."

. . . . .

"I remember that as if it were only yesterday. I'm quite sure I seemed like a right fool."

"It was a bit mean of Mister Waverly not to warn that you were getting the first official woman field agent."

"Good lord, April. My expression must have been priceless."

"It was, but give yourself credit, darling. You recovered very quickly. Have you ever regretted our partnership, Mark?"

"Never, luv. Well, maybe when you try to drag me along for your shoe shopping."

"Goose."

#80: Push

"Come on, April. You can do this, luv. Deep breath, then another push."

"It doesn't feel like I'm making any progress, Mark."

"You're doing great. Once the shoulders are out, it should go much easier."

"This is a lot harder than I thought it would be."

"I wish I could help you, but I really can't yet. One more big push - you can do it."

"Arrrgh! Please tell I'm finished."

"Yes - you've done it. I'm out. Thanks, luv."

"Next time, wait until you're with the boys before getting stuck in a pipe."

#81: Bossy
"Illya? Sorry, chum - this is far as I can make it. Get going."

"I am not going. Not without you."

"Listen, partner, this isn't my first choice, but there isn't another one - go."

"Nyet. We go together or not at all."

"I could order you, you know."

"And I could suddenly develop a hearing problem."

"Russian."

"American. Well, do we keep this up all night or get out of here?"

"We get out of here. Has anyone ever tell you that you're cute when you're being bossy?"

"Bah, I am always cute. It is my curse."

#82: A Death in the Family

Kissing his hand gently, Millicent brushed back the thin wisps of hair. His skin was cool, her heart breaking knowing he would never be warm again.

"Mrs. Waverly?"

"I know that he's gone, Illya, but I can't leave him yet."

"We're staying with you then."

"Thank you, Napoleon."

Laying the hand down, her hand gripped the edge of the coffin. She straightened as her voice became icy.

"I want that assassin's head."

Mister Waverly's voice was steel as he joined her by the body of their five-year old great-grandson.

"THRUSH will rue this."

#83: Blue Eyes

"Have I ever mentioned how much I really love the color of your eyes? That almost frosty shade they have when something is bothering you. That sort of grayish tint they take when you're just daydreaming. And of course, there's that warm spring day china blue that they get when you're in a good mood."

"Napoleon?"

"Yes, Illya?"

"Are you practicing your pick-up lines on my cat?"
"Lawan happens to be a very good listener. Besides - it's all true. Her eyes are absolutely gorgeous."

*purrrrr*

"Be wary of him, Lawan. He is an incorrigible flirt."

---

**#84: Hoisted by His Own Petard**

"This is ridiculous, Napoleon. How long will you keep pouting?"

"I'm not pouting. I'm . . . alright, so I'm pouting."

"Just because I did not fall for any pranks yesterday, does not mean you should pout."

"I'm not pouting about that."

"Then what is it that you are pouting about?"

"I rigged your office chair yesterday. New adhesive from the labs"

"Is it still on my -? Wait. This is not my chair."

"I know that. Apparently the cleaning people swapped our chairs around when they straightened up."

"Napoleon? Are you stuck in my chair?"

*laughing*

"Oh shut up."

---

**#85: Cold**

"Oh bloody - April? Can you hear me? Easy. I've got you now."

*low moan*

"THRUSH gits. Let's get my jacket around you. There. No arguing with me carrying you, my girl. You need to be somewhere warmer sooner than later."

"M-mark?"

"Ssssh. None other, luv. You've a wee bit of hypothermia, but you'll feel better once you've warmed."

"Ar-are we still at their satrap?"

"Yes, but you just let me worry about that, eh?"

"But you w-won't get away ca-carrying me."

"We will, I promise. Trust in me?"

"Al-always."
"Learning more and more about my new partner every day."

"What are you talking about this time, Napoleon?"

"That tune you were just humming while fiddling with your beakers. It's that Beatles' tune that just hit the top of the music charts, right?"

"Da. Can't Buy Me Love. Why?"

"I thought you liked jazz."

"Pardon? I cannot like more than one music style?"

"Well, yeah. Sure you can. I just hadn't pegged you as a Beatle fan."

"Perhaps I prefer not to be pegged so easily."

chuckle

"Alright, alright. I'll try not to assume any more."

---

"Illya? Do you think there's such a thing as being too good looking?"

"If you are fishing for a compliment, you have cast your line in the wrong pond, Napoleon."

laugh

"No, not me. This morning, one of the secretaries was telling me about how difficult it can be to be as beautiful as she is."

"Then it sounds like she was the one fishing for compliments. Surely you did not indulge her. It sounds as if her ego is already enormous."

"Perish the thought. Although I must say that she seemed annoyed that I didn't agree."

"Shocking."

---

"Remain calm, old woman. Don't scream."

"I am calm and screaming is vulgar. Aren't you insulted that THRUSH thought they had to send two of you to kidnap a woman in a wheelchair?"

"You should watch that mouth of yours before -"

"Mrs. Waverly!"

"Dammit! Solo and Kuryakin! Quick, take care of her."

shots
"Napoleon?"

"They're dead, Illya. Go check on her."

"Are you alright, Mrs. Waverly?"

"No need to fuss. I'm fine, Illya."

"Nice weapon, ma'am."

"British Webley Mark IV. Nearly as old as I am."

"And nearly as deadly."

"Always the flatterer, Napoleon."

---

### #89: Executive Decision

Over forty-eight hours since last contact. Every hour passing lowered the odds that they were alive. Four more hours and he'd have to make the call. Cut their losses or send in another team. Possibly into another trap.

He felt her come by his side. He kept looking outward as he spoke.

"It never gets any easier. Sending them out. Knowing some will never return."

She took his hand, kissing it.

"The day it becomes easy is the day you need to retire."

He looked to her and took a deep breath, decision made.

"Quite right, my dear."

---

### #90: Amezaiku

*heavy sigh*

"What's wrong, April?"

"You know that I've always wanted to visit Japan, but not during Easter."

"Sugar withdrawal hitting you, my girl?"

*swat*

"Don't make fun of me, Mark. I like my annual sugary bunny treat."

"Hang on. If what our mutual pilot friend told me is right... yes. There. Come on."

"What on earth?"

"Amezaiku artist. Forms all sorts of things from hot candy. Ni Usagi, onegai shimasu."
"Impressive. I don't think that even took him three minutes. What an adorable sugar rabbit. Almost a shame to eat it. Almost."

"Happy Easter, luv."

---

#91: Pearshaped

The slender blonde didn't know how that term had come to mean something had gone awry, but this mission? Definitely had gone pear-shaped.

The dark night and black clothing helped, but a soft Russian curse was uttered as a searchlight split the night. A dive to cover any exposed pale flesh, then scrambling for the wire fence. There was no way over it, but under? A stockier body couldn't have made it, but the lithe form did. Barely. Further action was brought up short by a familiar voice.

"Millicent?"

"Alexander - it's done."

"Excellent. Let's go."

---

#92: Titanic's Maiden Voyage Apr 10, 1912

"Napoleon, Illya, Mark, April - thank you all for coming."

"Thank you for inviting us, Mrs. Waverly. What's the occasion?"

"The whims of fate, Mister Solo."

"Pardon?"

"April 10th. I'm sure you aren't aware, but Alexander and I were aboard when the Titanic began her maiden voyage. We were just aboard for the channel crossing to Cherbourg, but still."

"You've known one another since 1912?"

"It was the day that we first met, Miss Dancer."

"An anniversary then, sir."

"Indeed, Mister Kuryakin. A bittersweet one."

"A toast. In memory of those who were lost. Rest in peace."

---

#93: Illya Darling - Opening Night Apr 11, 1967

"I have a suspicion that you dragged me to that musical simply because of the name, Napoleon."

"It was opening night for Illya Darling and I just happened to have two tickets. Didn't you like Melina Mercouri in the lead role?"

"She sings well, but she was playing a prostitute."
"So?"

"I am supposed to enjoy the fact that there being a musical on Broadway using my name as the name of a prostitute?"

"Not like it's actually related to you, chum. Lighten up."

"This from the man who became grumpy the time we visited Napoleon's tomb."

---

**#94: Taurean Bosses**

"Mister Waverly's birthday is soon, right?"

"If we are to believe Mrs. Waverly's invitation for the celebration, yes."

"So, that would put him under the sign of Taurus."

"Oh for pity's sake, Napoleon. Back with the astrology book again?"

"Why not if it helps us to figure him out? Let's see - stable, cautious, attentive to detail."

"Rather general. They could apply to many people."

"Would you apply them to me?"

"True. I would not. Napoleon? Now what?"

"I'm not sure if I should be pleased or irritated that you just agreed with me."

"Typical Sagittarius."

---

**#95: Pie**

"So? Why apple?"

Spoon halfway to his mouth, Napoleon paused, confused. Especially since what he was currently eating was beef stew.

"Huh?"

"Why is apple pie considered to be American? Why not cherry pie? It would seem more appropriate."

"Why would cherry pie be more American than apple pie?"

"Your first President did not chop down an apple tree, did he?"

"No, cherry. Huh. You know, I've never really thought of that. I've no idea why it isn't 'American as cherry pie'. What brought this up?"

Illya just gestured to the pie wedge on his tray.

"Dessert."
**#96: Ice**

He held on tightly, but his friend was heavier than he and getting heavier every second. His friend’s clothing was sodden with icy water, the weight dragging him down. Illya refused to let go though he was being drug onto the thin ice. Any minute, it would be over.

Hands clamped onto his ankles and he felt hope, but the hope was short-lived as the fingers slipped from his grasp. He saw the blue lips smile at him as they slipped beneath the slushy water.

Gasping, Illya woke, shivering. There would be no more sleep for him tonight.

**#97: Dripping**

Watching the blood drip slowly to the floor while being unable to stop it was painful. He had to reach Illya.

Napoleon had tried every trick in his huge bag, stretching his body as far as bone and sinew allowed yet all he could accomplish was touching the cold fingers of his partner’s hand.

That touch stirred the dying embers. Illya's eyes slowly opened and looked at him. Napoleon's breath caught as the blue dripped away like the blood, leaving only white behind.

Stifling a scream, Napoleon sat bolt upright. So much for getting any sleep tonight.

**#98: Night Terrors**

"You don't look so hot, chum."

"You are not exactly bright eyed and bush tailed yourself, Napoleon."

"That's bushy tailed. I've just not been sleeping well."

"Nor have I. I have not had a full night of rest since our last escape from THRUSH."

"Me either. Bad dreams?"

"Horrible dreams. Wait. You have been having nightmares as well?"

"Very much. You know how I feel about coincidences."

"You think perhaps THRUSH did something to us while we were in their care?"

"Don't you?"

"Yes, I do. Come. Let us go to Medical and have blood drawn."

**#99: Ninety Nine**

"Ninety-nine bottles of beer on the wall –"

"Please, no more bottles, Napoleon. Is it not bad enough to be stuck in this cell without all of that noise?"
"Don't you like the song?"

"After three hours of your screeching? No."

"Fine. That means war, pal."

*scuffling sounds*

*cell door opening*

"Hey – break that up -"

*thud*

"He's down – let's go. That was a good idea, Illya. Drawing him in by pretending to fight."

"That was not exactly the plan."

"What was the plan?"

"I had been hoping that he would come in to stop your singing, actually."

---

**#100: One Hundred**

"One hundred."

"Unlikely as it sounds, you are making even less sense than usual, Napoleon. One hundred what?"

"One hundred times that Miss McIntosh has turned down an offer to go out on a date with me."

"I will regret asking this, but why have you not given up the chase? I would have thought the first fifty refusals would have dampened your spirits."

"Normally yes, but every time I ask, she sounds sincerely regretful that she can't make it."

"So hope springs eternal?"

"Yep. Plus, have you taken a really good look at her legs?"

"You are hopeless."
#101: Evolution

1952

"Comrade Kuryakin, you have been accused of disloyalty to Comrade Stalin."

"That does not surprise me, but it is unfounded."

1960

"Mister Kuryakin, we have had complaints that you've been cheating during testing."

"That does not surprise me, but retest me if you feel you must."

1962

"I don't trust you, Kuryakin. U.N.C.L.E. doesn't need your kind in the organization."

"That does not surprise me, now you will remove your hand or lose it."

1964

"Solo betrayed you. He sold you out to THRUSH, Kuryakin. Join us."

"Liar. I know my partner."

---

#102: Left for Dead

Clothes tattered with copious amounts of blood and mud discoloring what fabric remained, he shambled up the drive like a zombie from a horror movie. But the signs of life were in his eyes and dark fires flared within them as he concentrated on the building ahead.

They made two mistakes. THRUSH assumed he was dead and they had hurt his partner. He could still hear the sound of breaking bone and his partner's choked-back scream.

THRUSH would pay for those mistakes. He was going to find his friend. And then? Then there would be hell to pay.

---

#103: Alexander Waverly - b: Apr 21, 1892

"I do appreciate the thought, my dear, but I feel a bit old for a birthday party."

"Nonsense, Alexander. I treasure every year we've had together, so why wouldn't we celebrate the start of another?"

"You always have a way of making things sound sensible even if they aren't."

"Years of practice, my dearest. We had a lovely luncheon with the children. Tonight is going to be a pleasant dinner with our favorite associates."
"And I'll have the most charming dinner companion there."

"I shall have an equally charming escort. Let's not keep them waiting."

---

#104: New York World's Fair - April 22, 1964

"Do you really think THRUSH might try something at this World's Fair, Napoleon?"

"Well, we can't discount it, chum. Not when President Johnson is here for the opening ceremonies."

"At least with where it is in New York, Mister Waverly will be happy about the lack of travel expenses."

"True. The distance between where we live and Queens isn't exactly daunting."

"The opening speeches are nearly over. Thank goodness."

"So, what do you want to do once we're freed up, Illya?"

"Take a deep breath, Napoleon. Smell that tandoori?"

"Right. Silly me. We eat, of course."

---

#105: Taking Stock

"How's the ankle doing, tovarich?"

"Bruised and swollen, but I do not believe it to be broken. Your wrist?"

"Like as your ankle. Swollen and painful."

"I will relieve this agent of his shirt and we will see about wrapping them both. How is your other hand?"

"I can still shoot if needed. Will you be able to walk?"

"Walk yes, but not run."

"I wouldn't advise running here anyway. Can you wrap that a little tighter?"

"Better?"

"Much. Need some help with wrapping your ankle?"

"No, I will be done in another minute. There."

"Let's go."

---

#106: Dragonfly

"That's a beautiful brooch, Mrs. Waverly."

"Thank you, April. The dragonfly is lovely, isn't it?"
"Did Mister Waverly give that one to you?"

"No. Actually, he never gave it to me. He loaned it to me when we separated."

"Loaned?"

"A promise to me that he'd return."

"Back before you were married?"

"Yes, years before. It was his mother's. As I recall, she received the dragonfly brooch as a gift from Alexander's father the year before I was born. And no remarks about that making it antique."

"I wouldn't dream of it, Mrs. Waverly."

---

#107: Promise

1941

"Mum, please don't cry."

"Don't worry about your Mumsy, Mark. It's only a bit of dust in my eyes that's making them water."

"That's a brave lad you have there, Missus Slate. How old?"

"Five years old. Oh, if only the bombs would stop falling!"

"Easy there. I know, Missus. These are hard times for London."

"When I get bigger, I'll make them stop, mum."

1963

"So, Mister Slate, why is it you want to join our organization?"

"Truthfully, Mister Waverly? I'm trying to keep a promise I made to my mum."

---

#108: Precocious

"You have quite a number of photographs of ladies displayed, Napoleon."

"Yes, I suppose that I do. Just a collection of pleasant memories."

"As long as one lady does not see all of the others. Why is this one different?"

"Pardon?"

"This one is signed. And dated."

"Ah. That lovely lady was my . . uhm . . first."

"Truly? Hm – from the date on it, I assume you were sixteen years old?"

"That I was. Why? You didn't think I was that precocious?"
"Not that at all. Just a bit surprised that in this case, I was more precocious than you were."

---

**#109: Poetry**

"So tell me, what type of special place might you be off to tonight, partner mine?"

"What would make you think that I am going anywhere special, Napoleon?"

"Because you happen to have on your good black turtleneck."

"Wait - you can tell the difference between my turtlenecks?"

"You're evading the subject, chum."

"Fine. After work, I will be heading to a reading of lyrical poetry in Greenwich Village."

"No kidding? You mean the kind like 'there once was a girl from Nantucket'?"

*sigh*

"Lyrical, Napoleon, not limerick."

"Shame. I know lots of limericks."

"Somehow that does not surprise me."

---

**#110: Monotony**

"This is getting monotonous."

"The scenery? I have to agree. Do all THRUSH satrip cells have to be the same color of grey? There must have been a sale on ugly paint."

"I was referring to the fact that this is the third time this week we have been tied back to back."

"Well, yeah. That's admittedly getting old too."

"So glad you agree. Making any progress on your side?"

"Not really. You?"

"If they leave us alone another five minutes, I think I will have worked a hand loose."

"Great. That means I might still make my date."

---

**#111: Batman**

"Illya? Are you actually sitting there reading a comic book?"

"You were the one that suggested I should brush up on American pop culture references, were you not?"

"Well, true - I did. Which one is that? Superman?"
"No. Batman."

"Ah, yes. The Caped Crusader."

"You are going to make fun of me for reading this and you know that?"

"Oh, sure. I read all of them as a kid. What about you? What did you read as a kid?"

"Propaganda leaflets that were dropped or handed out."

"Find any differences between the two?"

"The comic books are far more believable."

#112: A Matter of Trust

"You want relationship advice from me, April?"

"Well, I wanted to ask someone who's been in a very successful relationship. How did it start?"

"Not to go into too many details, we were thrown into a difficult situation when we first met and I placed my trust in him. I've never regretted it."

"When did trust turn to love, Mrs. Waverly?"

"Trust doesn't turn into anything, my dear. Trust stays. But I did know when love had been added."

"Might I ask how?"

"Alexander wrote to me about another lady and I nearly ripped the letter up."

#113: Pennies

"You're looking a little pensive, pal."

"Am I? Sorry, I was just thinking. Napoleon, why did you toss a coin on my desk?"

"Penny for your thoughts?"

"Are you implying that you think that my thoughts are not worth much?"

"No, not at all. It's just an old saying."

"Really? At last week's meeting, you said you were going to put in your two cents worth, so you must think your thoughts are worth twice as much as mine."

"That's not what I meant! That's just another saying!"

"Oh, I know."

"Smart aleck Russian."

"American."
"Any hot water left, chum?"

"Possibly, but not for lack of trying to use it all."

"Let me get a look at you. At least you've stopped shivering."

"I did not think I was ever going to be warm again."

"You know if anyone had asked me before I actually knew you, I'd have guessed you'd like the cold."

"Being cold brings back memories, few of which are pleasant. Cold is an enemy unless one is where they can easily access a fire and hot cocoa."

"Speaking of, I have something for you."

"Cocoa?"

"Marshmallows and all."

#115: Backup Team

"April! Over here. They're both here, but . . oh, ruddy hell."

"We're running out of time, dear."

*sharp intake of air*

"Mark? Please tell me you're finding a pulse for them."

"Far too faint for my liking, but yes. Who knows what those maniacs put in their systems?"

"Apparently not any food. They've both lost noticeable weight."

"Just as well since we need to fireman carry them out. You take Illya. I've got Napoleon. We need to get them to Medical."

"What if we run into more birdies, darling?"

"Shoot 'em like you mean it, luv."

#116: Fair Warning

"Close the door behing you, Mark."

"Yes, Mrs. Waverly."

"As you know, I am retired except for advisory status. But you know why I asked for you, I trust?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"He doesn't tend to show it, but when you miss a scheduled call-in - especially after there were reports of shots? Alexander shouldn't have his blood pressure raised unnecessarily, should he?"
"No, ma'am."

"Might we agree that you will report promptly in the future, saving me the trouble of advising that you should be used for new truth drug testing?"

*audible swallow*

"Yes, ma'am."

---

**#117: Advice**

"Supper smells absolutely delightful, my dear."

"I'm pleased things have calmed enough so that we can enjoy it together."

"Millicent? Have you by chance been threatening any of my people recently?"

"Certainly not, Alexander. When have you ever known me to threaten anyone?"

"Ah, quite right, my dear. Well then, have you perhaps been offering advice?"

"I do like to try and offer timely advice to those that appear in need."

"I believe you have made Mister Slate highly nervous."

"Have I, Alexander? I cannot imagine why."

"Perhaps because you don't bluff."

"I suppose that is a possibility."

---

**#118: Hangover**

"Ooooooooooo." "Ah, the dead, it seems, has finally arisen."

"Is my head still attached to my body?"

"Possibly. It is hard to tell, but regardless, you are holding onto it too tightly for it to fall off."

"How is your head?"

"Very well, thanks. I stuck to Sangria all night. You, on the other hand, seemed to sample a bit of everything available."

"Mixing different alcohols never has worked out well for me."

"So I see. Here, my friend. Try this."

"What's that?"

"A bit of, how you say, hair from the dog that bit you?"

"Bless you, Illya."
#119: Paris Peace Conference - May 7, 1919

"Let me get a good look at you. My God, you look lovely, Millicent. Married life must agree with you. And Waverly, good to see you again."

"Good to see you as well, Lawrence. Hard to imagine that we'd all meet up in Paris. You're here with the Hejaz deligation?"

"More or less, old boy. Trying to help promote the Arab interests. Speaking of which, have you been keeping up your studies in Arabic, dear girl?"

"As much as I was able during the war."

"Let's all be thankful that it's finally over."

"Amen to that."

#120: Doubts

"Mark?"

"Yes, luv?"

"Do you think we actually make any difference?"

"That's exhaustion talking, my girl."

"Possibly, but you didn't answer."

"Alright. Yes, I believe individuals can change things. Therefore, I believe a group with a common goal will make a difference. We just can't see it from our level all the time."

"Hence someone like Mister Waverly?"

"Right you are. Someone who is above it enough to see the bigger picture so that he can direct the rest of us to where we'll do most good. We must have faith in our director."

"I do."

#121: Implosion

"Illya? Move it. We're running short on time."

"I know, Napoleon. I just – there. I have found the spot for the last bomb."

"Not that you usually throw bombs around haphazardly, but you seem to be taking more care than usual."

"I am trying something new. With this structure, it seemed the perfect opportunity."

"My curiosity is peaked, chum."

"I will hopefully satisfy it in a few minutes. Quickly now, take cover"
"Whoa. It went straight down? How did you do that?"

"Precisely placed and detonated charges. It is called implosion. I have always wanted to try it."

"Impressive."

---

**#122: Butterflies**

"The rainforest is nothing if not full of bugs, but that one's pretty. What kind of butterfly is that, partner?"

"It is a Giant Blue Morpho. I have never seen a live one before."

"Just ones that were pinned to boards?"

"Yes. They are much more beautiful in motion."

"Definately, but I supposed that preserved is the only way most people would ever get to see them."

"Would that be such a bad thing?"

"What?"

"If people went without seeing them in order to allow them to live."

"I'd bet the butterflies like your way of thinking, chum."

---

**#123: Sunrise**

"The sky is starting to lighten, Mark. They'll be coming for us soon."

"I know, April. Strange though. Of all the ways I'd thought I might go, execution as breakfast entertainment for a despot somehow never made my list."

"Truthfully, darling? I'd be more worried if this actually was on your list."

"You haven't seen my list. Even included death by python."

Have I ever mentioned there is a difference between prepared and paranoid?"

"You have, but I have to think it's hard to call me paranoid when we get in situations like this."

"True."

---

**#124: Mark's Got a Little List Pt 1 of 6**

"Here you go, my girl."

"What's this, Mark?"

"Don't you remember? You made me promise if we got away, I'd show you my list."

"My God - you weren't joking? No, no. Stay right there. You're going to have to explain how some of these made your 'ways to die' list. Hmm – all the generic ones are grouped, aren't they? Blown up,
"Ah, Napoleon's fault there. He talked me into attending the running of the bulls in Pamplona."

#125: T.E. Lawrence Accident - May 13, 1935

"Millicent? I'm afraid that there's bad news, my dear."

"Whatever has happened, Alexander?"

"It's Lawrence. He was a bad accident today. He was on one of those motorcycles of his and lost control when he swerved to miss a couple of boys on bicycles."

"How horrible. How is he? Was he hurt badly?"

"Very. He's hasn't woken up yet. They've got him at Bovington Camp Hospital in Dorset."

"The accident happened near Clouds Hill then? So very close to home."

"It does seem strange after facing so many dangers in so many foreign lands."

#126: Mark's Got a Little List Pt 2 of 6

"Skipping down the list a bit. Thrown from a horse?"

"Remember that rodeo incident?"

"Oh, of course. I'd forgotten that one. That was where 'smashed by a covered wagon' came from as well, wasn't it?"

"It was indeed."

"There's that python you mentioned. Where's that one from?"

"Remember that cellar in Burma?"

"Hold on. That was a boa constrictor, wasn't it?"

"Yes, it was. It got me thinking about pythons though. Look down a bit - boas made the list as well."

"So, boas are in the crush category and pythons are in swallow?"

"Basically, yes."

#127: Mark's Got a Little List Pt 3 of 6

"Shoved off of a tall building. That was you and Illya at the Empire State Building?"

"Right on the first guess, luv."

"Impaled on a tree - I know where that came from. Devoured by a tiger. Eaten by piranha. You do seem to have a bit of a fixation about being eaten, darling."
"I cannot help but imagine that being eaten is unpleasant."

"Well, I don't suppose I can argue that. Ah, a new addition. I see that you put in execution for entertainment at the bottom."

"I think the experience rated a spot."

"Can't argue that either."

---

**#128: Mark's Got a Little List Pt 4 of 6**

"Caught in earthquake above ground. Caught in earthquake underground. Why the distinction there, darling?"

"Well, it's a bit like where I list mudslides and avalanches separately. Similar, but different. To my mind at least."

"Mudslides would be more drowning and avalanches more suffocation, I suppose. And there's landslide, I knew it would be on the list. Hurricane, tornado, flash flood - ugh. I've seen a flash flood. Nasty."

"Very much."

"Lightning strike, struck in the head by hail. Aren't those a touch unlikely?"

"As compared to being eaten by a shark?"

"Alright. I'll give you that."

---

**#129: Mark’s Got a Little List Pt 5 of 6**

"Plane crash - onboard and off? Alright - explain those two."

"Well, one could be on a plane that is crashing or one could be standing where that plane is about to crash."


"I wasn't listing attractive ways to die, luv. Just listed them as they came to me. But that might make an interesting sub-list for Napoleon. Ways you could get killed while leaving a good looking corpse."

"Goose. Still, look at these. When did you do all of this?"

"Long story."

"I've got time."

---

**#130: Mark's Got a Little List Pt 6 of 6**

"So tell me, when did all of this start?"

"Croatia. It kept me from going bonkers in that tiny cell."

"I wouldn't have put a dog I liked in it. After being cramped up so long, everything hurt. I had to occupy my brain somehow."

"But ways to die?"

"Thinking of nice things didn't help, but the list did. You know, at least I wasn't being eaten by a shark?"

"Oh darling, I am so sorry it took so long to rescue you."

"Don't be, luv. You came back."

---

**#131: Death of T.E. Lawrence - May 19, 1935**

"Millicent? I've received word from Bovington Camp Hospital."

"He's gone, isn't he?"

"I'm afraid so. Lawrence never woke up after the accident. I spoke with one of the attending doctors, Doctor Cairns. He seemed highly affected by Lawrence's death as well. If only his head had been protected somehow."

"It all seems so unfair. He was only out riding for a bit of enjoyment."

"Life doesn't deal much in fairness, my dear."

"I know, Alexander. I will miss him terribly. He was a true individual."

"I believe he would have considered that high praise."

---

**#132: Paris**

"Come on, guys. It's Saturday night, we're in Paris, our mission was a rousing success and our plane doesn't leave until Monday morning. And it's May 20th. I'd say all of that calls for a celebration."

"May 20th?"

"That's what he said, Mark. Illya? Do you have any idea what Napoleon is going on about?"

"Not in the least, April. I have, however, found that just nodding and going along with him is usually the least troublesome best option."

"Come on, mates. What could go wrong?"

"I believe you have just doomed us, Mark."

---

**#133: After Paris**

"Please?"

"I think not."
"I'll buy you lunch."

"You already owe me lunch."

"Picky, picky. Supper then?"

"No."

"Sorry for my poking my head in, but my hearing must be going bad. Did Illya really just turn down a meal?"

"No. I just turned down a bribe. Do your own paperwork, Napoleon."

"What paperwork could be so bad that you'd turn down food?"

"Well, you see, April - Mister Waverly wants a write up of everything that happened in Paris before we left."

"Oh. In the case, Illya's right. You're definately on your own there, Napoleon."

"Chicken."

#134: Beatlemania Pt 2 - May 22, 1965

"Still listening to the Beatles, are you?"

"Very much so."

"Let me guess. They've got another number one hit?"

"A good guess. And an accurate one."

"So, tovarich, what's this one called?"

"The title of it is 'Ticket to Ride'."

"How many number ones does that make that they've had now?"

"Altogether or just the ones they've had in this country?"

"Fine, fine. I'll concede now that they aren't just one-hit wonders."

"I am certain that the four of them will breathe much easier now that they have gained your approval."

"Smart aleck."

#135: Rainbow

"Look over there."

"You see the THRUSH courier coming, Napoleon?"

"Nope. He must have ducked in somewhere to get out of the rain."
"Then what am I supposed to be looking at?"

"The rainbow, tovarich. You don't often see one that bright."

"Did you know there is a legend that if you pass beneath a rainbow, your sex alters?"

"Say what? You mean physically change from male to female?"

"Nothing so drastic. But men begin to think as women do and women as men do."

"I think you're proof that it's possible to be too well read."

#136: Blood

"Are you bleeding, Illya?"

"I am not sure. Does it matter?"

"Of course it matters - why can't you tell?"

"Your blood is all over me. I cannot tell the difference between your blood and mine on sight, Napoleon."

"Are you having any pain?"

"Yes. But pain does not always mean bleeding."

"Think our docs could figure a way to color code our blood so we could tell whose is whose?"

"You are the one who has the signs of blood loss. Let us worry about you first."

"Fine, if you see a doctor too."

"If you insist."

"I do."

#137: Clouds

"Kind of nice having a day off."

"It would be nicer if we were not both in casts."

"Don't be such a picky Russian. Lay back, look at the clouds."

"Why?"

"Why not? You know, I always liked to pick out shapes in the clouds when I was a kid. Like that cloud there. It reminds me of a bullfrog."

"I suppose I can see a bit of a frog shape in that."

"Your turn."

"Alright. That one reminds me of a scoop of vanilla ice cream."
"You see food. That figures."

"I cannot help it. I am hungry."

---

**#138: Russians**

"Thank you for agreeing to see me, Mrs. Waverly."

"We've worked together on and off for over ten years, Samuel. You may call me Millicent. What is this about?"

"It's about Mister Waverly. He's making a terrible mistake, Millicent."

"I need something a bit more specific than that. What terrible mistake is he making?"

"Bringing that Russian fellow into U.N.C.L.E. - no Russian can be trusted."

*laughter*

"Oh, Samuel, I'd forgotten how very little you know. And you may go back to calling me Mrs. Waverly. I do believe we're done here."

---

**#139: From Russia With Love**

"Pass the popcorn."

"Why did you come to this? I didn't think that you liked Bond movies, Illya."

"I do not. Chalk it up to my inability to learn from the past. I allowed Napoleon to pick the movie."

"Loosen up, chum. What's not to like? Secret agents, lovely women, Russian scenery -"

"That scenery is not Russian. More like Turkey."

"I saw some Scottish areas too."

"It's an action movie, not a travel documentary, Mark dear. Oh! I like that shoe blade."

"Maybe R&D could whip one up for you in a more stylish shoe, April."

---

**#140: Kneading**

"Illya? A little help, please?"

*chuckling*

"I did warn you about the hazards of falling asleep in that particular chair."

"I know, I brought it on myself, but what is she doing to me?"

"Ah. Most people refer to that action as kneading. Like kneading bread."

"I'm certainly not dough, so why me?"
"Lawan is purring for you, yes? It means that she likes you."

"Considering where Wellington has decided to nap, I suppose I should be grateful that he doesn't like me well enough to do that."

"Were I you, I would not be giving Wellington ideas."

#141: Poker Night

"Illya? Your call."

"Go Fish."

"You do remember we're playing poker, darling?"

"You could not tell that by looking at my hand, April. I fold."

"Mark?"

"Uhm - two cards."

"Napoleon?"

"One, please."

"And dealer takes one card. Mark, since Illya's out, you start the bid."

"I'll bid five."

"Hm - I'll see that five and raise you five more."

"Dealer sees you two clowns and raises another five."

"Too much for what I've got. I fold. Napoleon?"

"I'll see your five. Show 'em, April."

"One pair of Jacks."

"Darn. I really thought you were bluffing."

#142: A Toast

"Napoleon?"

"Illya, go the hell away. Please?"

"I cannot do that. You are the one that taught me that drinking alone is not a good thing."

"I really did love her."

"I know that you did, my friend."

"Hell, grab a glass. Let's have a toast to those of us who have loved and lost."
"What if instead we toast to those who dare to search to find love again?"

"Have you turned into closet romantic on me, partner?"

"I prefer to think of myself as one who has not yet given up hope."

"That I'll drink to."

#143: Sponge

"This is embarrassing."

"Would you prefer to be returned to Medical, Napoleon?"

". . . no"

"I thought not. Then you must, as thay say, grin and bear it."

"I did this to myself again, didn't I, Illya?"

"What are you talking - ah. Let me guess. You made the mistake of asking for a blonde to assist you with your personal needs without specifying gender."

"I really do need to learn to be more specific when I put in a request."

"Yes, you do. Now, hold still so that we can get this sponge bath over with for both of our sakes."

#144: Elevator

"This is ruddy well ridiculous. Isn't there a generator?"

"You may as well sit down, Mark. Getting power back could take awhile."

"You know, this is my first time getting stuck in an elevator."

"There is always a first time for everything, April."

"Hey, at least you have company. My first time, I was all by myself in the dark."

"We are still talking about elevators, aren't we?"

"Mark! Behave yourself!"

"Behave? Why, whatever did you think that I was talking about, luv?"

"And the lights come back on in time for us to see that radiant blush."

#145: The Hardest Job

This is killing me. How far are they going to push this to 'prove' I don't care if Illya lives or dies? His legs have already given out. Part of me wants to see his face - another part is glad I can't. I can barely make out that he's still breathing.

That fair skin has gone past red to blistering. I keep a bland expression as I hope they tire of this
while there's still life in him. New agents never believe it - that sometimes the hardest thing is the world is doing nothing at all.

#146: The Easier Job

"Napoleon, you can stop hovering any time."

"Sorry, it - damn."

The blond agent turned his head slightly from where he lay in the hospital bed, glancing at his pacing partner.

"You know that had you expressed concern for me, we both would be dead."

"I know, Illya. But you almost died any way."

"Almost can be recovered from. Are you alright?"

"You almost died and you're worried about me?"

"I had the easier job. All I had to do was stay alive. You had to keep up the act. I would not have wanted to trade places with you."

#147: SPAM

"Once we leave here, I am never going to willingly eat another piece of SPAM again."

"When have you ever willingly eaten SPAM before, Napoleon?"

"Well, never. But what kind of an idiot stocks a safe house with nothing but cans of green beans, SPAM and Tang?"

"I have no idea, my friend, but if you manage to identify them, I will gladly help you force-feed this combination to them. Six days already past and at least two more to go before our transport arrives."

"By then, I'll be willing to eat the transport."

"You had better share."

#148: Start of the Six Day War - June 5, 1967

"Ladies and Gentlemen, you have been called in at this hour because we are now in world-wide alert status. The climate around the Sinai Peninsula reached a boiling point. The Israeli Air Force has launched pre-emptive attacks on Egypt and Syria."

"What are we to be doing currently, Mister Waverly?"

"Keep a close eye on the region. Even the smallest sign of T.H.R.U.S.H. activity in the area must be squelched immediately. There have been two World Wars. I do not want a third to erupt on my watch. Are we clear?"

"Yes, sir."
#149: Waiting

"April? Sit down. You're wearing the carpet out."

"I can't, Mark. Honestly, if I have to stop moving, I think I will absolutely explode."

"Just remember that saying 'they also serve who stand and wait'."

"Well, I'm more a 'they also serve who stand and pace' type."

"That you are. You know, this waiting isn't my preference either, my girl."

"I know it isn't. I just wish we had some sign - any sign - of how things were going."

"Let's assume no news is good news. The wait won't be much longer."

"Thank God."

#150: One Hundred Fifty

"Well, Illya, I'm up to one hundred and fifty rejections now."

"Napoleon, are you telling me that you are still in pursuit of Miss McIntosh?"

"You know that I like challenges."

"This has gone beyond the challenge stage to obsession."

"It's her fault. She never just says 'no'."

"Does that mean that you plan to keep asking her out until she runs out of excuses?"

"Hey, some of them have been pretty imaginative."

"Such as?"

"Last night, she said she had to bleach her poodle."

"Now I am no longer sure which one of you worries me more."
#151: Obligation

"Hey. Talk to me, tovarich."

"It would not make any sense to you, Napoleon."

"Try me. I might surprise you."

"Alright. It is just - I feel I have not done enough with my life. That I have failed to do as much as I must."

"Must? Why must?"

"So many died when I was growing up. The odds were that I would not survive either, but I did. I feel - obligated."

"To live for them? Do things they might have? Sounds like survivor's guilt, chum."

"Perhaps."

"It is. I've been there myself. Come on. Drinks on me tonight."

#152: Coin Toss

"Call it in the air."

"Heads."

"Heads it is. How about we make it best two out of three?"

"Why? I won the first toss to begin with."

"Oh, you know. Good faith gesture to show there wasn't anything hokey with the coin or with the toss."

"Hokey? Napoleon - not only was it your coin, but you were the one to flip it."

"So I take it that's a no then."

"You are correct on the first guess."

"I need better luck."

"You need a new partner who is not aware that you own a two-headed coin."

#153: Subterfuge

"Illya, please try to eat something, darling."

"Thank you, but I am not hungry, April."
"We'll find Napoleon -"

"ringing"

"Excuse me - I'll get the call in the office. Hello?"

"I'm glad that you're the one who answered, April. Any improvement?"

"No, Mrs. Waverly. He won't eat. He says he isn't hungry."

"There's your problem, dear. Don't ask if he wants to eat. Just set sandwiches, fruit and such in his vicinity without comment. Distracted men will often eat without thinking if food is nearby."

"Sneaky."

"Just practical usage of subterfuge, dear child."

#154: Sleep aids

"I hate staring at the ceiling all night."

sigh

"Have you tried counting sheep?"

"Yes, I have. I keep losing count somewhere after the five hundred mark."

"Cup of warm milk?"

"Makes me want to go out and get cookies."

"Sex?"

"Also makes me want to go out and get cookies."

"What is it with you and cookies, Napoleon?"

"I like cookies."

"Could Medical give you a prescription?"

"Tried that. Makes me too groggy in the morning."

"What if I come over and beat you senseless?"

"You certainly are a cranky Russian tonight."

"Lack of sleep does that to me."

#155: Professionals

There is no light except for the pale illumination from the window. My partner and I move like ghosts - bare whispers of sound as we patrol for the intruder who has invaded our territory.

My fair hair picks up even this slight light, but my partner blends with the shadows as if a part of
them. I flush out our quarry to where he lies in wait and hear the slight noise as he efficiently snaps the intruder's neck. Suddenly, the lights blaze.

"Wellington, Lawan? Ah moi koshki, you caught the mouse."

Of course. We are professionals, after all.

#156: Fog

"Miserable weather. The fog is thick enough to remind me of my days in London."

"Or pea soup."

"Stop talking about food. I am already hungry."

"You're always hungry, tovarich."

"Are we moving out to head for the satrip, Napoleon?"

"Of course. Weather won't slow us much. You know what they say - 'neither rain nor sleet nor gloom of night'."

"That is for postal workers. Also, I do not believe fog is even mentioned."

"Huh, I guess it isn't. Well, we brave fog as well."

"We brave fog - that is one to leave out of recruiting speeches."

#157: Yawning

"I'll be glad when this mission is over."

"I as well. It has been two very long days."

yawn

"Stop that, Illya."

"Stop what?"

yawn

"That yawning. There's not enough coffee in the world to keep me awake if you keep doing that."

"You mean that my being tired and yawning is making you tired?"

"Yes. Haven't you ever heard that yawning is contagious? Hell, even reading about someone yawning can trigger a yawn."

yawn

"No, I was not aware of that."

yawn
"Damn you. Now I'm yawning too."

"Sorry, Napoleon."

"Somehow I doubt your sincerity."

---

**#158: Palm Reading**

It was hard to guess her age, though Napoleon suspected that under all that makeup, she was younger than she appeared. She hummed, studying his palm.

"An interesting love line, sir."

"You are not telling us anything that we do not already know about him, beebee."

Her head rose sharply at the word beebee. Nodding to herself, she reached down, brought up a pouch and thrust it at Illya.

"Take it and run, young Ruv. Luck go with you."

The two agents exchanged looks as she quickly disappeared through back door.

"Can't we ever have a simple day off?"

---

**#159: B Movies**

"Napoleon, do you invite me to movies for my company or because you enjoy watching my reactions to ludicrous plots?"

"Honestly, it's a bit of both. My admitted weakness, tovarich. I love B movies."

"You love movies about bees?"

"No, no. A B movie is a low budget film. Some are pretty good, but there are admittedly some that are just plain bad. Some are so bad that they're actually fun to watch, but they're better when you watch them with someone else."

"Like a comedy being better when someone is there to share the joke?"

"Exactly."

---

**#160: Father's Day**

"Did you enjoy having everyone over for your Father's Day celebration, Alexander?"

"Does it sound bad that I was very pleased to see all of them come but equally pleased to regain the quiet after they all left again?"

*chuckle*

"No, not at all, darling. We aren't as young as we once were and our descendents do tend to be a lively bunch."
"I cannot imagine who they got their restless streaks from."

"No need to imagine when you know very well they came by it very honestly."

"From the two of us, my darling girl. True enough."

---

**#161: Clothes Horse**

"Don't you think you should spend a little bit more on clothing?"

"Napoleon, where was I last Tuesday?"

"Uhm - the infirmary's burn ward."

"Why?"

"You got caught too close to a lab explosion."

"And, while I personally was not hurt too badly, my clothing was a total loss. Then, the month before that, THRUSH forced my motorcycle off the road. Both my cycle and what I was wearing at the time were beyond repair. Why spend more? I doubt it impresses the nurses much when they are cutting the remains of the clothing away."

"You'd be surprised."

---

**#162: Pearls**

"Is that a pearl necklace?"

"As a matter of fact, it is."

"Have you gotten serious with a lady without letting your partner know?"

"Hardly, Napoleon."

"While I admit that pearls go well with your basic black theme, they really don't seem your style."

*throat clearing*

"Actually, those belong to my wife, Mister Solo. I gave that strand to Millicent after the birth of our first child. It needed restringing and Mister Kuryakin was kind enough to pick it up for me since he was going to be in that neighborhood. Thank you, Mister Kuryakin."

"My pleasure, Mister Waverly."

---

**#163: First Day of Summer**

"Gather round, boys."

"And we are back in the park. Again. Is this due once again to the changing of the season?"

"It is indeed, Illya darling. Would you pour the lemonade, Mark?"

"Of course, luv. Did you make this yourself?"
"I did indeed. From Grandmother Collins old-recipe."

"There's a recipe for lemonade?"

"Tell me, have you ever eaten or drank anything April's made without a recipe, Napoleon?"

"Err - no, Mark."

"In that case, just be grateful she has one."

swat

"That's the thanks I get. I'm never cooking for you again, Mark Slate."

"Promise?"

#164: Baker Hotel - June 31, 1946

"June 21st."

"Does the date have significance for you?"

"In a way, yes. Twenty years back, my father made a business trip to Dallas and took Mom and me along."

"What happened, Napoleon?"

"We were staying at The Baker Hotel and heading out to get some lunch when an explosion rocked the building."

"What caused it?"

"So far as I know, they never did figure that out."

"How old were you then?"

"Just a few months shy of my fourteenth birthday, tovarich."

"Your famed Solo luck existed even back then."

"For which I am grateful."

"As am I, my friend."

#165: Room With a View

"The view from here is quite nice."

"I suppose."

"Your room is nice and quiet."

"I suppose."

"They serve the meals very punctually."
"You are truly stretching now, Napoleon."

"You're not really very enthusiastic about this place, partner mine."

"No view looks that good when is must be seen through a hospital window. The quiet does not help because the staff is determined to wake me every two hours to inquire if I am resting. And the food? Hardly merits the name."

"In other words, it's a good thing I'm holding onto your gun for you."

"Precisely."

#166: Vacation

"So . . . this is it? This is where we're going to be staying for the next week?"

"Yes. What were you expecting, Napoleon?"

"Oh, I don't know. A roof maybe?"

"Only part is gone. It will not take long to fix. Having second thoughts?"

"Up to tenth thoughts, partner. I did it again, didn't I?"

"What it is you think that you have done again?"

"I said I wanted to get away from it all. I should have specified that I was referring to work responsibilities and not civilization as a whole."

"Yes, you have done it again."

#167: Playing Doctor

"Got it yet?"

"Almost, Napoleon. There - done."

_hiss_

"What did you pour on that? Liquid fire?"

"Sorry, my friend, but the bullet is out. The burning was the last of the vodka. That should keep out infection until we get out. The wound is now bandaged, so I have finished playing doctor with you."

"When I was younger, someone playing doctor had an entirely different meaning. Come to think of it, please don't mention to anyone at headquarters about playing doctor."

"This is another one of those American phrases I would prefer not to know that meaning of?"

"Probably."

#168: Tracking Illya Pt 1 of 3

"Napoleon, what are you doing out of Medical?"
"They've got me bandaged up. Have you found Illya yet, Mark?"

"Not yet. This damn complex is huge."

"That's why we're here. I know that time is running out."

"We? Wait, a Siamese cat? Isn't that -?"

"Go find Illya, Lawan."

"We'll never be able to keep up with her in this maze."

"We don't have to run after her. I put a tracker on her collar."

"Do you think she can really find him?"

"Ever seen Illya with his cats? Yes, I'm sure she can."

#169: Tracking Illya Pt 2 of 3

She stalks to the door, intense blue eyes looking in.

The one with her human smells and looks like a veterinarian. One who unwisely has his back turned to her. The temptation is too much. A leap has her claws digging into the back of the man's left thigh. He spins and screams as he tries to stab her with the hypodermic needle in his hand, instead injecting himself as she darts away.

Lawan watches impassively as he falls, twitches then stills. Leaping up beside her human, she begins washing herself. Humans simply aren't as challenging as mice.

#170: Tracking Illya Pt 3 of 3

"If Lawan went to Illya as hoped, Illya should be – oh my God . . ."

"Mark? What do you see?"

"He's dead."

*sharp breath*

"Illya is -?"

"No, sorry. The dead man is a THRUSH scientist. Illya doesn't look too well, but he's breathing. Lawan's by him washing her paws. How did – do you think she could have had something to do with this?"

"Let me by. From the blood on the THRUSHee's leg? I'd say so."

"Remind me to stay on his cats' good side."

"Know what's even worse?"

"What?"

"She's the mellow one."
#171: False Assumptions

The THRUSH agents flanked the screen their chief was watching. One of their best interrogators was dead and Kuryakin gone. That was bad enough without the footage from the security camera.

"A cat. A Siamese cat weighing around ten pounds infiltrated our holding area and killed one of our men?"

"Indirectly, sir."

The chief glared before looking back to the screen.

"U.N.C.L.E. must be training animals. Kuryakin should be at their Medical. We still have his weapons and keys. Take them and search his apartment. Bring back any animals you find there for our researchers."

"Yessir."

#172: Catnapping Pt 1 of 12

How did Illya manage to talk him into things like this?

Napoleon was not a cat person. Yet here he was, Lawan riding on his shoulder as he walked into Illya's building to check on Wellington, a cat that hated him. At least Lawan liked him, though her 'talking' into his ear took getting used to.

At the door to Illya's apartment, Lawan suddenly began to make the peculiar humming growl of an angry Siamese. Napoleon immediately drew his weapon before trying the door. Unlocked. Ransacked. And no Wellington.

"Lawan, your Papa is not going to be happy."

#173: Catnapping Pt 2 of 12

Wellington had been happily sprawled on the back of his couch when the door opened. The strangers entering didn't know enough to shut down the protections that were installed in case anyone got past the lock and Wellington was well out of sight by the time the cursing from the men stopped.

Still, the men had come prepared to find and remove cats. Wellington gave them a few bites and scratches, but was finally sedated and packed into a carrier. He woke in a strange place with a fuzzy head, in a foul mood. Someone would regret this indignity.

#174: Catnapping Pt 3 of 12

Wellington observed the area. The human in the space didn't like any animal, but particularly disliked a large dog - and the feeling was obviously mutual. Wellington's tail twitched as the human left.

One paw through the bars, he tripped his cage's latch, dropped and moved to the dog's cage. The dog growled some, then they stared at one another briefly before Wellington deftly used his paws to undo the dog's latch. Wellington quickly leapt to a shelf to await the human's return. He doubted the human
would be as brave with an uncaged dog.

#175: Catnapping Pt 4 of 12

The door opened and the dog 'greeted' the man. Wellington laid his ears back at the unpleasant shrieking before jumping down and opening all of the rest of the cages.

He exited while the man and dog were still concentrating on one another, ignoring the large numbers of rats and mice that scattered. They all steered clear to him, of course. Just as well. He certainly wasn't going to chase them down. They smelled diseased.

The sleek black form paused as a scent made him growl. One of the ones that had invaded his home. It was payback time.

#176: Catnapping Pt 5 of 12

"The tracking signal leads here. Come on, folks. Let's go and get Wellington out of there."

"Wait a minute, Napoleon - Illya's cat? He's here? I thought Mister Waverly sent us here to recover the U.N.C.L.E. items stolen from Illya's apartment?"

"Officially? Yes. However, if either of you want to be the one to tell Illya we recovered his communicator, but left his cat behind with THRUSH, be my guest."

"Not bloody likely. Come on, April. Let's go spring a cat."

"Are we going to be getting hazardous duty pay for this?"

#177: Catnapping Pt 6 of 12

Wellington closed in on his target, snarling softly as alarms started sounding. Humans were running everywhere, some screaming loudly. Apparently some of them hated rodents more than he did. But the mice and rats weren't avoiding the humans the way that they instinctively dodged the cat. In fact, they seemed to be actively attacking humans.

A door opened suddenly, his quarry heading out into the fresh air. Darting, the nimble feline pursued him through the door before it sealed, trapping numerous yelling humans inside. The human got into a car, never seeing the shadow that got inside with him.

#178: Catnapping Pt 7 of 12

The trio paused, surveying the scene. Mark lowered his field glasses.

"I don't know what's happening in there, Napoleon, but it's pandemonium."

April looked up from her communicator.

"Headquarters has tapped into their outgoing traffic. It's a bit garbled, but it seems some experiment has gone wrong. People are dying."

"Hold on. Mark, focus your glasses over to the left. I think I see movement."
"You do. It's a car leaving - wait. It's going out of control - whoever it is has hit a tree and stopped."

"Let's go have a look, shall we?"

---

**#179: Catnapping Pt 8 of 12**

Shaking his head to clear it, Wellington looked over the situation. The human had reacted more dramatically to Wellington's claw/bite combination on his calf than expected. Still, deeming there was nothing wrong with himself that a good nap couldn't fix, Wellington looked for an exit from the wrecked car.

A door was pried open and familiar scents came in. At Wellington's sudden leap, the woman let out a brief squeal as he made use of her as a 'stepping stone' to get to the man's shoulder. Even without liver, this one was welcome for once.

---

**#180: Catnapping Pt 9 of 12**

"The driver's unconscious, but alive, Napoleon. Looks like the missing items from Illya's apartment are in the boot."

"We're in America, darling - it's called a trunk. The man's leg is bleeding. It looks like Wellington bit and clawed him."

"No wonder he crashed. Little doubt that he deserved it though, April. Let's get him to headquarters for twenty questions."

"Wellington or the THRUSHee?"

"If you can make Wellington talk, I'm all ears."

"What about the satrip?"

"You want to break that seal without knowing what's in there first?"

"Right - headquarters for questioning."

---

**#181: Catnapping Pt 10 of 12**

"The THRUSH satrip was destroyed?"

"Yes, Mister Waverly. We've determined they were conducting experiments geared toward making animals far more aggressive to humans, focusing on mice and rats. From what remains we recovered, they had definitely succeeded in making them deadly."

"Isn't Mister Kuryakin still in medical?"

"Yessir."

"Then explain to me why it is that they are laying blame for the satrip on him?"

"Well, sir, it was him. Indirectly. You see, his cat did it."

"His . . . cat? Destroyed a THRUSH satrip?"
"Yessir."

sigh

"Nevermind. I want a full report on my desk tomorrow."

"Yes, Mister Waverly."

---

#182: Catnapping Pt 11 of 12

"Welcome home, tovarich."

"It feels odd to be welcomed home to a place that I have never been to before."

"I know, chum, but Mister Waverly says your old place was too compromised. I made sure I got everything moved from there and I've got a couple of days off, so I can help if anything needs to be rearranged."

"What is that?"

"That? That is probably the most elaborate cat tree ever built. Courtesy of Mister Waverly to Lawan and Wellington for their recent contributions. R&D made it."

"Long story?"

"Very long story."

"Break out the glasses."

---

#183: Catnapping Pt 12 of 12

Illya woke to find Lawan content, curled on his lap and Wellington, equally content, stretched out across his shoulders. He was reminded again that falling asleep on his couch did not do his neck or back any favors.

A soft snore from the chair drew his eye and he knew that he would not be the only one waking up to stiff muscles. Illya watched Napoleon, debating waking him, but contentment radiated from Lawan into his body. His truest friend and beloved pets were safe around the Russian and blue eyes closed as dual purrs lured him back to sleep.

---

#184: Feed a Cold

"It should be illegal to have a cold in July."

"Germs are very hard to arrest, Napoleon. Do you need more tissues?"

"Yes. More aspirin as well. I think my fever's going up."

"Should I make you some chicken soup?"

"That depends. Are you going to use chicken feet to make it again?"

"For a sick man, you are quite picky, but I will not use chicken feet if you are so squeamish."
"I forget, is it 'feed a cold, starve a fever' or 'feed a fever, starve a cold'?"

"Does it truly matter? You have both."

"Guess not."

---

#185: Plant Talk

"Come on, Illya. I did warn you when you gave it to me that I wasn't good with plants."

"Not good with plants is one thing, but this? To go from glowing with health to dead in a week? You watered it?"

"Yes, just like you said to."

"You kept it in this window?"

"Yes, also as per your instructions."

"Did you do anything else?"

"Well, I heard it was good for plants, so I talked to it."

"What about?"

"Mostly about some of my recent dates."

"That is what did it. You probably traumatized the poor thing."

"Hey!"

---

Chapter 186: Cast Party Pt 1 of 7

"Do either of you boys want to sign my cast?"

"What on Earth have you done to your leg, April?"

"It's a long story, Illya"

"Isn't it always?"

"Oh hush, Napoleon."

"She's right though, lads. It's a very long story. Well, maybe it's really more complicated than it is long."

"So? We have time for you to tell us the whole sordid tale, Mark."

"Well, luv? It's your story."

"Oh, go ahead, Mark. These two stinkers won't rest until we tell them."

"Fine then. Everybody gather round. And get me something to drink."
"So, April invited me over to her place to watch television."

"And you managed to drop the TV on her?"

"Do you want to hear the story or not, Napoleon?"

"Just ignore him, Mark. I, for one, am listening to you."

"Alright then. Well, there was a rerun showing on the Dick Van Dyke show. Have you ever seen the one where Laura gets her toe stuck?"

laughter

"Oh April - tell me you didn't do that. You did! You did! You're blushing!"

"What are you blathering on about, Napoleon?"

"You've got to start watching more television, Illya."

"As I do not plan on immersing myself in television programming, would you please tell me what you are talking about?"

"Well, the show is about the writer of a comedy show and his wife. The couple were at this hotel. The wife decides to take a bath, starts playing with the tub faucet using her foot and gets her big toe stuck."

"Oh, April. Still, while I see how that situation would be embarrassing, I do not see how that led to you being in a cast?"

"That's a good question. How did that lead to a cast?"

"I dozed off. April decided to let me sleep while she took a bath. When she got stuck, it took her a little while to rouse me, but she managed. Fortunately, she hadn't locked the bathroom door. More fortunately, she owns a hacksaw. Took a bit of work, but I cut the faucet in two. Then I tried to help April out of the tub, but I'd forgotten she uses bath oil. I pulled, lost my grip, got off-balance and hit my head on the sink."

"Still doesn't explain the cast, Mark."

"I'm getting there."

"Mark hit the sink and was knocked out cold. It was a bit awkward with the end of the faucet still attached to my big toe, but I managed to get out of the tub. I couldn't get him to wake up, so I called for medical aid from headquarters. I managed to slip on some clothes in time to let the medics in."
"I feel like I should be taking notes."

"Don't be a smarty-pants, Illya."

"Still doesn't explain how you broke your leg."

"Well, you see Napoleon, that's because of what happened next."

#191: Cast Party Pt 6 of 7

"So - the medics arrived?"

"They asked me what happened to Mark, so I started telling them the story. They were listening while they were starting to lift Mark onto the gurney. Then one of them noticed the piece of faucet still stuck on my toe and started laughing so hard that he lost his hold on Mark. I automatically tried to get over to Mark to stop him from falling to the floor, but the faucet piece snagged on the carpet. I fell sideways against my coffee table and managed to crack a bone."

"Almost sounds like a vaudeville sketch."

#192: Cast Party Pt 7 of 7

"There you have it - the reason April is in a cast as well as why I have of a couple of stitches in my head."

"I am not certain whether the television show or the bath oil is the culprit here."

"Possibly the medics with the ill-timed sense of humor."

"How about a combination of all three? Now, will you sign my cast?"

"Sure. You know, only you two could go from a relaxing evening watching television to a trip to Medical."

"Like you and Illya haven't?"

"Ah, but not with your style and panache, April dear."

hrumph

#193: Voyeurism

"I feel like such a voyeur."

"I know. I've often felt that way. Like I'm intruding into an intensely personal moment."

"What amazes me is how he can totally tune out the conversation around him. Like he doesn't even hear us."

"I hear you, Mark. As well as you, Napoleon and you, April. However, if you sincerely wish to engage in conversation rather than just making annoying statements, you will have to wait until I finish eating."
"I would never think of coming between you and your food."

"As if you could."

"Ouch. Cold, tovarich."

"But accurate."

---

**#194: Another Tennis Challenge**

"Hold still."

"This is ridiculous."

"You are the one that said it, Napoleon. You should have known that April would insist on it."

"Yeah, I should've. Ow - watch it. That's a little tight."

"Sorry. Better?"

"As good as it will get, partner, I suppose. I'm ready, April."

"By the way, I think you will still beat her at tennis. Even with one hand tied behind your back."

"Really, Illya? You think my game is that good?"

"Not really, but I think she will be laughing far too hard to play well."

"Your faith in me is staggering."

---

**#195: Weather**

"Hm - your eyes look a little glassy. Are you feeling under the weather, chum?"

"Excuse me?"

"Under the weather? Feeling sick?"

"What does the weather have to do with being sick? Are we not always under the weather?"

"Huh, I suppose we are. Wonder where that saying came from?"

"If I knew, I would not have asked you, would I?"

"I suppose not. I wonder where I could look that up?"

"I am not sure, but have we gotten off the topic?"

"Possibly. Err, what was the topic?"

"I do not remember. I think this cold is affecting my memory."

---

**#196: Gesundheit**
"You know, you didn't have to share your cold."

sneezing

"We are partners. Seemed only right to share with you, Napoleon."

"Yeah - thanks heaps, chum. I wonder how we manage to get colds in the middle of summer?"

"Where were we last week?"

"Louisiana. The Honey Island Swamp to be precise."

"The air there was as thick and damp as the swamp itself. And the week before that, where were we?"

"Northern Alaska."

"You had to handle a dog team. And before that?"

"The Sahara Des - wait. I think I just answered my own question."

"Excellent. Pass the tissues."

---

#197: Snubbing

"That man you were just talking to, Napoleon. You know him?"

"Good guess since I called him by his name, Suzette. But yes, he's a friend of mine."

"How can you be friends with one of them?"

"You don't like blondes?"

"Don't be dense."

"Blue eyes. You don't trust people with blue eyes. No wait - you have blue eyes yourself."

"You know very well what I mean."

"Yes, I suppose I do. So, thank you for a lovely start to the evening. Good night."

"Wait! You can't just leave me here!"

"Oh, really? Just watch."

---

#198: A Nasty Cough

cough

"Nasty cough there, partner."

"Thank you for pointing that out. I am overcome by your sympathy, Napoleon."

"Sorry, Illya. I know what to say when someone sneezes, but 'bless you' doesn't sound right for a cough. What do people say after someone else coughs anyway?"
"My Babyshka always said 'prikryvaĭte rot'. Also not terribly sympathetic."

"But practical. Mom always told me to cover my mouth after a cough too."

"I suppose some things are universal with mothers and grandmothers world-wide."

cough

"Prikryvaïte rot."

"Yes, Mother."

"Are all Russians smart-alecks?"

"Only those that stay around Americans."

#199: The 199th Time is the Charm

"Illya, guess what? You will never believe what happened today."

"If I will never be able to guess, I will not bother to try. So tell me - what is so unbelievable?"

"Miss McIntosh finally said yes to going out on a date with me. In fact, we're going out tonight."

"The same Miss McIntosh that turned you down 150 times previously?"

"Actually, we were up to 198 refusals. It was the 199th time that was the charm."

"This I will have to hear about tomorrow."

"Well, I'm not one to kiss and tell -"

snort

"I heard that, Illya."

#200: Fizzle

"Well, Napoleon? How did your date with Miss Hard-to-get go?"

"Horrible. All she wanted to talk about all night was Mark. Apparently some Russian told her that Mark and I know one another fairly well."

"She did ask me. I merely answered her question."

"You could have warned me."

"I gave up on warning you after attempt 125."

"Fine, I admit it. I got a little obsessed."

"A little?"

"Alright, a lot. Hey, who's that?"
"The new receptionist."

"Not into British agents, is she?"

"You could ask her when you introduce yourself."

"True. See you later, Illya."
#201: Twostepping

groan

"I hate THRUSH scientists."

"I am hardly fond of them myself, Napoleon, but I admit you have extra incentive for your dislike. Feeling any better?"

"No, dammit. And all Medical did was say that it should wear off in another hour or two. Assuming I live that long."

"Definitely one of the worst side effects of a truth serum yet, my friend."

"I haven't felt like this since I was a kid. Back before I was warned about what eating green apples will do to you."

"No need for the warning afterwards. I doubt you forgot it again."

#202: One Time Too Many

"Illya? You awake?"

sigh

"Is it three o'clock in the morning again?"

"Yes, but -"

"So tell me, Napoleon. Is the building we are in on fire or in danger of collapse?"

"Uhm, no."

"Is someone shooting at us?"

"No."

"Is a bomb about to go off?"

"None I'm aware of."

"Then it would be my recommendation that you allow me to get some sleep before I become delirious enough to mistake my partner for a THURSH agent and shoot."

"Why don't you grab a couple more hours of sleep before we head out?"

"Thank you. I will."

#203: Limits to Partnership

"Doing alright, Napoleon?"
"I guess, but I've felt better. How did you talk me into this after last time?"

"The only practical way to get to where we are going is horseback. The trails are too narrow for cars, the gas stations are too far apart for a motorbike, it is too rough for a bicycle and walking by foot would take far too long."

"I know. No other option. Sure am sore though."

"Do not expect me to kiss it to make it better."

"Some partner."

"There are limits to what a partner should be expected to do."

---

**#204: No Friend of Mine**

"Let me see your calf. I'll need to cut your pants."

"They are already ruined. Go ahead."

"Material's sticking to the wound - damn. It's a bad bite, chum. We've got to get you to a doctor."

"Do you think there are any around here that wouldn't turn us in?"

"Maybe not. We at least need to steal supplies and get this cleaned out. I suppose the only plus is that, as a guard dog, he's probably had all his shots."

"Man's best friend. With a friend like that, I do not need enemies."

---

**#205: Side Effect**

"I never thought I'd say this, but you really need to eat something, Illya."

"I do not think that I can."

"Oatmeal?"

"Definitely not."

"Toast?"

"I have tried, Napoleon. It would not stay down."

"Hot tea with sugar?"

"I have not tried that yet."

"Sip slowly. Damn – that's not staying down either. Sorry to tell you this, chum, but you officially are having a worse reaction to truth serum than I had."

"I was not competing."

"I know you weren't, pal."

"If you see a THRUSH agent today, shoot them for me."
"I'll do my best."

---

**#206: Comforts of Home**

"It figures."

"What does?"

"Austere as the rest of your apartment is, your bedroom's rather luxurious. Solid wood, quality mattress. Also down-filled pillows and comforter, if I'm not mistaken."

"You are not mistaken. Since you seem to be taking notes, the sheets are linen."

"Very nice. Just seems a little out of character for you."

"How so? Linen sheets have been in some families for hundreds of years and goose down comforters are also passed down as heirlooms. A properly taken care of down pillow can last fifteen years"

"So, more an investment than a purchase?"

"Exactly."

---

**207: Homesick**

"You've been terribly quiet today, Mark darling."

"I suppose I'm fighting off a bout of homesickness."

"Poor dear. What's brought that on?"

"It's - well, today's my mum's birthday. Just thinking of the little things. She'd always make bubble and squeak for breakfast on our birthdays. We ate that a lot during the war. You'd think we wouldn't ever want it again."

"Do you remember much of the war? You were awfully young."

"Nothing clearly, other than my mum. She was an absolute brick."

"A brick? That's good, right?"

"The best."

---

**#208: Poison Ivy**

"Have you seen Travers, Napoleon?"

"I saw him when they first brought him in, Illya. Can't say that I like THRUSH's latest torture experiments."

"Nor I. At least our doctors have him sedated now. Confining his hands and then smearing his legs with poison ivy was bad enough. Continuing upwards to his genitals after he refused to talk? Not an experience I would care to have to endure."
"Me either. Not that I'm fond of other methods of torture, but this is nasty."

"It is amazing how little irritations can be worse to stand than larger pains."

---

**#209: Mission Assignment**

"We have to pose as husband and wife? Not our usual gig."

"So the orders say, luv. One happily married pair."

"No chance of anyone else pulling it off?"

"Napoleon refuses to wear another dress and Illya claims that he's not permitted to be married since he had to be a nun. Besides, they outrank us."

"Not to mention Napoleon heard that I got the giggles over that teal dress."

"That might have had something to do with it, but come on, luv. We've the obvious pick."

"I know. And we'll be smashing."

"That's my girl."

---

**#210: Judge Crater's Disappearance August 6, 1930**

"What is that file you are looking over, Napoleon?"

"An old case. Back before either of us was born."

"It could not have been an actual U.N.C.L.E. case. That was before it had been formed."

"True. Looks like we were asked to relook over the evidence regarding the disappearance of a judge thirty-five years ago."

"Make I see? Ah, the Judge Crater case. I remember reading about that one. They never did find him, either dead or alive, did they?"

"No. If he's still alive, he'd be 76 now."

"A large 'if'."

"True."

---

**#211: Poisoned**

"What the hell do you mean you can't do anything for him? He's in agony!"

"We know that, Mister Solo. There isn't anything that we can administer until we know exactly what was injected. Attempting an antidote could kill him."

"Not doing anything might kill him."

"It might, but for now, we're keeping watch and hoping his body can fight it off. Wait, where are you going? You can't go in there."
"Watch me. If Illya has to fight, he's not going to fight alone."

ragged breath

"Napoleon?"

"Here, tovarich. And not going anywhere."

---

#212: Peaches

"Here, Illya - catch. I bet this is something you've never eaten before."

"I have had a peach before, Napoleon. I have even had peach pie."

"Ah, but have you ever bitten into one just picked off of the tree and still warm from the sun?"

"Admittedly, no."

"Then take a bite. I guarantee that there's nothing quite like a fresh piece of fruit."

"You are right. This is very, very good and very juicy."

"One of the joys of the season is biting into fruit so juicy that the liquid runs down your arm."

"For once, we agree."

---

#213: The Name Game

"Mind handing me the file on our last case, Illya?"

"Surely."

sliding drawer

"Napoleon?"

"Yes, Illya?"

"Remind me to stop letting you name files. How do you find anything?"

"Word association. I pick a name that reminds me of the case."

"Could you possibly give me a clue as to what you called it?"

"I believe I called it the 'Yo-Ho-Ho and a Bottle of Rum' Affair."

"You are joking."

sliding drawer

rustling

"You are not joking. May I ask you something, Napoleon?"

"Anything, partner of mine."
"How long have you desired to be a pulp fiction writer?"

#214: Sayings

"Your elbow is close, yet you cannot bite it. Napoleon, did you have to try it?"

"Couldn't resist. False friends and shadows are only with you when the sun shines."

"That is a good one. All cats are grey in the dark."

"Trust you to come up with a cat one."

"What on earth are you lads doing?"

"Hello Mark. We've just been comparing sayings we were told by older relatives when we were kids."

"Care to toss one in yourself?"

"Alright, I'll go with one of my Gran's. Better untaught than ill-taught."

"Also good."

#215: Beginnings : New Partners

"Miss Dancer?"

"Yes, Mister Slate?"

"Call me Mark. You seem - edgy."

"I suppose I am. Can I ask something?"

"Certainly."

"Are we partners?"

"You were standing with me when Mister Waverly - wait. Are you saying you don't trust me to have your back?"

"I've heard rumbles that many think if my first assignments are rough enough, I'll resign."

"Our assignments may get rough, but it won't be because I add to them. Still if you can't trust me, I can't trust you. Look in my eyes - what will it be?"

"I'll trust you."

#216: Civilian Casualty

"Mark?"

"I don't want to talk, April."

"I know you don't want to, darling, but maybe you need to."
"Who sent for you?"

"Well, it was pretty much a three way tie. You've got everyone worried. Especially me."

"April, I - why are you turning the lights out?"

"Shh. Here. Lean against me. I won't make you talk."

_hitched breath_

"Just let me be here for you. Partners, remember?"

"She was just a little girl. Should've been me."

"It wasn't your fault, Mark. It wasn't."

_soft sob_

"We're all alone. Let it out."

---

#217: Watching Over

"How is he, April?"

"Shh. He's finally resting. He'll be fine, Illya. Not today and probably not tomorrow either, but he'll be fine."

"You'll need to keep a close eye on him for awhile."

"Oh Napoleon, you didn't buy that idiot doctor's opinion that Mark might harm himself?"

"No, not at all. But once he processes his grief and puts the blame on THRUSH, where it belongs? He might get reckless against them in the field."

"I hadn't thought of that, but you're right. I'll keep watch."

"We know you will."

---

#218: Clotted Cream

"Good morning, Millicent."

"Good morning, Alexander. A tray? What are you up to?"

"Just a little something for you, my dear."

"Is that clotted cream and strawberries?"

"And scones. It isn't a subtle peace offering, but a sincere one. I am very sorry."

"Oh for pity's sake. I didn't take the way you were fussing and growling seriously, darling. I think that a man's entitled to a bit of ill-humor when he's sick."

"You don't want the clotted cream then?"
"Alexander - do not put words into your wife's mouth. Hand it over."

#219: Ivory

"Be brutally honest with me, Mark. Which color do you think looks better on me?"
"To tell the truth, they look identical to me, luv."
"Nonsense. This one is ivory and this one is eggshell."
"I really can't see a difference."
"Illya! Come over here. Which is better, ivory or eggshell?"
"Ivory, most definately."
"Thank you. At least someone here can make up their mind."
"Now that she's gone, could you really see a difference in color?"
"What color? April asked me which is better, ivory or eggshell. Ivory is much rarer."
"Wish I'd thought of that."

#220: Sandwiches

"Do you even have a favorite sandwich?"
"What kind of question is that, Napoleon?"
"Pure curiosity, chum. You rarely order the same thing. Don't you care for any you've had before?"
"Actually, many were delicious and I have had those more than once. Are you saying I should pick one sandwich and stick with it?"
"No, just saying most people do."
"Perhaps, but I will continue trying new sandwiches. I may find one that I like better than any that I have ever tried before."
"Huh - that's the same reason that I have for not getting married."

#221: Smoke & Mirrors

"Mark, April and I are going to go catch a show. Are you in?"
"I suppose that would depend on the show."
"We're going to catch David Nixon's act. He's a magician."
"In that case, I think I will refrain. Though I would be happy to meet the three of you for dinner before or after the show."
"You don't like magicians?"
"It is not so much that, Napoleon. But what we do for a living is so much smoke and mirrors, I cannot bring myself to view more of it as a way to relax."

#222: Yellow Journalism

"Newspapers seem to be misnamed."

"Really? What would you call them, chum?"

"Opinion-papers. None of them simply give out the news. They also want to tell you how you should feel about the news."

"I suppose you have a valid point there. I don't think its as bad as it used to be in the days of yellow journalism."

"Yellow?"

"Long story. There was a war between two rival newspapers in the 1890s. Kind of a journalistic one-upmanship - going for sensationalism to boost circulations."

"But why yellow?"

"Would you believe because of a cartoon character?"

"Sadly? Yes."

#223: Fleas

"You say that your apartment has a flea infestation?"

"That's what they're telling me, as unbelievable as that sounds. How could I have fleas in my carpet? I don't even own a goldfish."

"Goldfish do not get fleas, Napoleon."

"Yes, I know that, Illya. I was just remarking that I don't have any pets in my place. Not even visiting ones. So how did I get fleas?"

"I seem to recall you buying an oriental throw rug recently. Perhaps there were flea eggs on it."

"Great. Just great. I need a flea collar for my rug."

#224: Old Faithful

"So, this is Old Faithful."

"Yep. This is it, chum."

"Not that I am unimpressed by geysers, Napoleon, but do we have a reason to be here beyond sight-seeing?"

"We do indeed. Apparently, some naughty birds have slipped something into the crater. Our job is to figure out what and why as well as to remove it without causing damage to the geyser or disrupting
its famed timing."

"In other words, just another typical day."

"Pretty much. How hot do you think the water gets?"

"Around two hundred degrees."

"I think we'll need a pot holder."

"At least."

---

**#225: Spaghetti**

"April, I must say that while I love you dearly, you should never be allowed near a stove."

"Mark, I know you like to tease me about my cooking attempts, but it isn't that bad. Is it?"

"Take a look into the dining room, luv. What is Napoleon doing?"

"Twirling the noodles around his fork. Continually."

"Now, see Illya sitting there with his plate of spaghetti in front of him? Do you notice anything unusual?"

"He's not eating either. It is that bad."

"April, you have other talents. Just remember that there's nothing wrong with take-out."

---

**#226: Dog Days of Summer**

"The Dog Days of Summer have arrived."

"Do you mean it is hot and humid? If so, I agree."

"I wonder why so many bad things are associated with dogs?"

"I could think of a few reasons, but what things are you referring to?"

"Like 'let loose the dogs of war'. And 'going to the dogs'. If you get jumped by several fellows, it's a dog pile. A nasty guy is called a junkyard dog. And that's without counting the ones associated with a female dog."

"Man's best friend."

"Pardon?"

"Dogs must hang around men too much."

---

**#227: Lunar Orbiter 1 - August 23, 1966**

"That is quite impressive, is it not, Napoleon?"

"Have to agree there, chum. The first picture of the Earth taken from the Moon. Makes you wonder..."
"about the mysteries that are out there, doesn't it?"

"A bit, my friend. However, I find there are still many mysteries for us to wonder about right here."

"True enough, Illya. Still, I wouldn't mind getting a look out there."

"If the opportunity presented itself? No, I would not turn it down either."

"Odds are against that, of course."

"Odds have been against many things that we have been through."

"Also true."

#228: Catsitting Pt 1 of 9

"Looks like they have you on the heavy duty pain stuff. How long are you going to be out of the field, chum?"

"Nine weeks. About the same amount of time as you will be, Napoleon, but I will not be able to return home. They say my leg must be elevated at all times."

"That's rough. Anything I can help with?"

"You could watch Wellington and Lawan for me."

"I asked, didn't I? Well, at least I already have a key to your place."

"Do you remember where the first aid kit is?"

"With Wellington around? Memorized."

#229: Catsitting Pt 2 of 9

"I should have asked Illya if his cats would understand 'Ya prishel s mirom'. Probably doesn't matter. Wellington would never buy that I was coming in peace. Good thing the apartment is soundproofed - what's with all that yowling?"

doing opening

"Hello there, Lawan. That was you making all that noise? Guess Illya must have shut you up in his bedroom by accident, girl. May as well start by packing a bag for Illya. No sense having you guys in a carrier longer than you have to be. And no scratching the furniture at my place. Visitor manners please."

#230: Catsitting Pt 3 of 9

"Good to see you, Napoleon. These walls are dull and television? Not really an improvement."

"Sorry I haven't been by more. I've been guest lecturing new agent training these past five weeks."

"Showing them the art of how to stay on a bridge while crossing it?"
"I already apologized for that."

"Does not mean I will let you forget. So, are my two behaving?"

"Oddly enough, yes. I didn't expect trouble with Lawan, but even Wellington's behaving well. Sorry, Illya - I have to run. Have my own doctor appointment to get to."

"Take care, my friend."

---

**#231: Catsitting Pt 4 of 9**

*mrrrrrr?

"Hello there, Lawan. You want to lay down here? Come right on up. And here comes Wellington."

*hissing - growling

"Whoa - what did Wellington do to make you mad?"

*growling - spitting

"Sorry, Wellington. Doesn't look like she cares for your company tonight. What's the matter, girl? Missing Illya or just wanting to get home to your apartment? Either way, Illya won't have to be in Medical much longer, so you'll be going back soon."

*purrr

"Illya's probably going to fuss at me for overfeeding you two. Well, he can deal that when he comes home."

---

**#232: Catsitting Pt 5 of 9**

"Hello, Sunshine. I hear you've been terrorizing the nurses again."

"You are obviously listening to propaganda from the enemy."

"To their relief and yours, I'm told I can spring you at the end of this week so long as you promise not to go skiing to celebrate."

"Hardly likely. It will take awhile to get my leg muscles back in tone. I am looking forward to simply lounging with my cats. How are they?"

"Very well. I think Lawan's even put on some weight."

"Have you been bribing them with pate'?"

"Just a little now and then."

---

**#233: Catsitting Pt 6 of 9**

*phone ring

"Three am? Who on earth is calling me at 3 am? Hello?"
"April? How much do you know about cats?"

"Napoleon? Why? Please don't tell me something's happened to Illya's cats."

"Sort of."

"Sort of doesn't cut it - especially after waking me up in the middle of the night. Now, what's happened?"

"I'm not sure. There's a bloody mess on one side of my bed and I can't find Lawan now."

"Give me a minute to get myself together and I'll head over and help you look for her."

---

**#234: Catsitting Pt 7 of 9**

"Thanks for coming so quickly, April. Mark? I didn't know you were coming."

"Neither did I until April banged on my door. So, missing Siamese to track? Mind if I take a look at your bed?"

"Sure. Right there. Wait, what's so funny?"

"Hate to tell you, but we've got more than one cat missing."

"No. Wellington's on the couch."

"Trust me, Napoleon. Never had a house cat, I take it?"

"No. Why?"

"Shh - I think I hear - ah. There's the little mother."

"Mother?"

"Congratulations, Napoleon. Your bed was the maternity ward for three kittens."

---

**#235: Catsitting Pt 8 of 9**

"It is good to be home after so long. Wait. Why are you looking guilty, Napoleon?"

"Well, it's kind of about your cats."

"If you are about to tell me one of them has gone missing?"

"No, no - nothing like that, Illya. They're all healthy."

"That is a relief. Wait. All?"

"Uhm, yeah. All five of them."

*sigh*

"The drugs."

"Drugs?"
"Remember? I was on what you called the heavy duty ones? I forgot to mention Lawan needing to stay in my room."

"Oh? Oh! That's what the yowling was for. I just thought she was mad."

#236: Catsitting Pt 9 of 9

"Hello, April."

"Before you ask me, no."

"Was that nice?"

"Possibly not, Napoleon, but my place doesn't allow me to have pets."

"I wasn't even going to ask you, Miss Smarty-pants. I've already found homes for the three little stinkers."

"Since Illya declared you their godfather, what did you end up naming them?"

"Odin, Dva and Tri."

"Odd set of names."

"Not really. Russian for 'one, two, three'."

"Ah, which one of those name was for the girl?"

"That would be Dva."

"Sounds rather like diva."

"Which is perfect for the offspring of Lawan and Wellington."

#237: Tangled

"Try not to struggle, Napoleon. We do not want to attract more attention than the blood in the water already is."

gasp

"Any luck, Mark?"

"The line tangled around his leg is tough to cut through. Can you get him more vertical to give me a litte slack?"

"I'm right here and conscious."

"Sorry, Napoleon."

"This is the best I can do and keep us both above water. Try again."

hiss

"Feels like he's trying to saw my foot off. Wait - I'm free!"
"Now what, mates?"

"About half a mile swim to reach land."

"Piece of cake."

#238: Jealousy

"What are you looking at, my dear?"

"Just my box of letters, Alexander."

"Good heavens, Millicent. You still have them all?"

"I do indeed. Like this one. The first letter you sent to me after we became engaged."

"December of 1916. Almost fifty years ago. Millicent? Why is that letter taped?"

"Ah. That was the first letter to me where you mentioned seeing another young lady. The victim of a fit of pique."

"You were jealous?"

"More envious really. Someone else was getting to spend time with you."

"You didn't rip up any mentioning Lawrence."

"Fine. I was jealous."

#239: Embarrassed

"This feels like a cheesy movie, Mark. I'm so embarrassed."

"April darling? We're about to be killed and all you're worried about is being embarrassed?"

"Dying in the line of duty is one thing. Getting killed by being tied to a railroad track? If I were already dead, I'd be turning over in my grave."

"Admittedly, I don't know if I could handle that being all anyone remembers of my career."

"Things like this never happen to Illya and Napoleon."

"They probably do. They're just bright enough not to mention it in their reports."

#240: Fixing a Problem

"Are your cats home from the vet?"

"Yes. I brought them home last night."

"No more kittens in your future?"

"No. At least not where either Lawan or Wellington are concerned."
"Poor Wellington. Cut down in his prime."

"You are being melodramatic, are you not, Napoleon? Although I suppose that at least the term 'cut' applies."

"Just feeling uncharacteristically sympathetic for the ankle clawer. How is he adjusting?"

"Slowly. He lounged on the back of my couch, glaring at me all night."

"Didn't you buy them pate' to atone?"

"I did."

"That's serious business then. Watch your ankles."

#241: Mystery Meat

"Illya? You're actually eating the cafeteria's 'Thursday Mystery Meat'?"

"I am eating the special of the day if that is what you are referring to."

"Do you know what it is?"

"Not a clue."

"How can you eat something when you don't know what it is?"

"Because I know what it is not."

"Meaning?"

"It is not on the ground or in a garbage pile. It is not smelling rancid. It is not moving. It is not covered with mold, ants or maggots. I have eaten worse."

"I think I just lost my appetite. Want my sandwich?"

#242: Knots

"Trying for your next badge?"

"My next what? It is a bit early in the day to be drinking, Napoleon."

"Hm. I don't suppose they would have Boy Scouts in Russia, would they?"

"You know, I began this day without a headache. What are you talking about?"

"That. You practicing knots. Boy Scouts do things like that to earn merit badges."

"Interesting, but unrelated to what I am doing."

"Which is?"

"How often have we been tied up? I am hoping a better knowledge of knots will aid in escaping them."
"Got a spare piece of rope for me?"

#243: Beginnings : April - Pt 1 of 11

"Mister Kuryakin, have a moment?"

"Yes, what might I do for you, Mister Slate?"

"I wanted to introduce you to my partner. April, this is Illya Kuryakin, partner of our CEA, Napoleon Solo. Mister Kuryakin, this is April Dancer."

"Miss Dancer, a pleasure."

"Thank you, sir. Nice to meet you as well."

"I am glad to see that you are getting a chance to hit the field with a partner, Mister Slate."

"No comments about my being a woman?"

"Just one."

"Go ahead."

"Now there is someone else they can send as a nun."

"Nun?"

"It is a long story."

#244: Beginnings : April - Pt 2 of 11

"You have two more seconds to get out of my way before I do something extremely unladylike."

"Agent Warren? I do not imagine that you could have any business with Miss Dancer that would require you being that close to her."

"Buzz off, Kuryakin. Solo's in a meeting, so your babysitter isn't here to save you. Besides, April and me were just getting acquainted."

_gasp_

_thurd_

"I like that move, Mister Kuryakin. I'd appreciate it if you'd teach me that."

"After lunch perhaps? I fear I can guarantee you will need it, Miss Dancer."

"April."

"Illya."

#245: Beginnings : April - Pt 3 of 11

"Miss Dancer, hitting the gym already?"
"Yes, Mister Solo. I'm waiting to be shown a few pointers."

"Oh? Who are you waiting for?"

"She will not be waiting if you quit blocking the way, Napoleon."

"Illya? You're going to spar with Miss Dancer?"

"I am. Are you ready, April?"

"And willing, Illya."

"First name basis already? How did that happen?"

"We found we have things in common. Besides, she would do well with a fighting style similar to mine."

"How so, chum?"

"We are both, as a general rule, smaller than our opponents."

"Makes sense. Have fun, kids."

#246: Beginnings : April - Pt 4 of 11

"Give me your hand and let me help you up, April. That is enough for today."

"Has anyone ever told you that you're a hard taskmaster, Illya? I don't think I'm going to be able to sit properly for a week."

"Would you rather learn from someone that stops when you hit the mat or someone who does not stop unless ordered to?"

"Valid point, darling. Same time tomorrow if neither of us are on assignment?"

"That will be fine."

"Mind if I bring Mark by some time?"

"Not at all. It would be a good idea."

#247: Beginnings : April - Pt 5 of 11

"Mister Solo?"

"You're on first name basis with Illya, so it's Napoleon."

"Then call me April. I have a question about Illya."

"You'll need to ask him about anything personal yourself, April."

"No, not personal. I want to know if, as his partner, you've noticed attitudes toward Illya improving any?"

"I'm still the wrong one to ask. People with a problem toward Illya? They know better than to show
"it around me and - much as I tell him not to - Illya keeps stuff to himself."

"Actually, you just answered my question."

"I guess I did."

#248: Beginnings : April - Pt 6 of 11

"Illya?"

"Yes, April?"

"Where do you draw the line? With how others treat you?"

"I presume you mean our fellow agents?"

"Yes."

"With verbal attacks, I ignore them as one ignores monkeys screeching in jungles. The words I do not tolerate are those that imply that I am disloyal to either my partner or to U.N.C.L.E."

"And physical attacks?"

"We are trained agents, April. Simply 'react', then apologize for your reflexes when they are picking themselves up off the floor. For you? Allow nothing physical to go without immediate retaliation. Show no weakness."

"I won't."

#249: Beginnings : April - Pt 7 of 11

"Thanks for letting me watch your gym session."

"No need. It will be best for you as a team in the field if you know what she is capable of. Ready, April?"

"Ready, Illya."

thud

"Bloody hell, luv - that was a low blow."

"Perhaps, Mark, but Illya's taught me to make use of it."

"Her opponents will not get any shorter or lose weight to make a fight more even, will they?"

"Well, no. Still?"

"Consider it evening the odds."

"Right. I can do that. I think I should invest in a protective cup though."

"I would recommend it."
"Come in, Miss Dancer."

"Yes, Mister Waverly."

"Do you know why I summoned you?"

"No, sir - but if I were to hazard a guess, I would suppose it might have something to do with Agent Warren's hospitalization."

"Precisely. Agent Warren is claiming that you assaulted him. I should like to hear your version of events."

"Of course, sir. Agent Warren came up behind me without my hearing him. When he grabbed my shoulders from behind, I'm afraid my reflexes took over."

"Reflexes?"

"Yes, sir."

"I understand Mister Kuryakin has supplimented your training?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good. Carry on."
Drabs 251-300

#251: Beginnings : April - Pt 9 of 11

"So, you actually went to visit Warren in the hospital, Mark?"

"I did, Napoleon. He seems convinced that Mister Waverly is going to have April drummed out – or however that's done."

"I had not checked his condition. What exactly was he hospitalized for?"

"Dislocated shoulder, mild concussion plus pronounced swelling and bruising in the old family repository."

"Nothing broken? I must see about providing more training for her."

"Wish I could have seen the look on his face."

"You can - I have a copy of the security footage."

"This I must see."

"Better than most prime time shows, mates."

#252: Beginnings : April - Pt 10 of 11

"Mister Warren, you've been released to light duty?"

"Yes, sir. Did you get my complaint about Dancer?"

"Yes, about that. Tell me, would you walk up behind Mister Solo and clap a hand down on his shoulder?"

"No, Mister Waverly."

"Why not?"

"Mister Solo reacts first and questions second."

"A trait more common than not to Section II agents. In the future, never approach Miss Dancer or any other Section II agent in any way you would not approach Mister Solo."

"She won't be reprimanded?"

"Of course not. We pay a considerable amount to train our agents' reflexes."

#253: Beginnings : April - Pt 11 of 11

"A toast. To April and Mark on their first successful mission as partners."

"Hear, hear. And you have both returned to us without major injuries."

"Though don't expect that trend will continue."
"You pair are enough to make a bloke paranoid."

"It is not paranoia when they are actually after you, Mark."

"I caught a glimpse of Napoleon's medical record. He practically needs his own file drawer."

"If you think mine's thick, you should see Illya's."

"You boys - always comparing sizes."

"Don't even go there, luv."

"Yep. You were right, Illya. She fits right in."

#254: Illya Kuryakin - b: Sep 19, 1933

"That's a beautiful cake, luv. Where did you buy it?"

"What makes you think I didn't bake it, Mark?"

"The fact that when he saw you in a kitchen, you asked him which appliance was the oven."

"I'm not that bad, Napoleon. But, fine. A new bakery opened up near me that makes a delightful Swiss chocolate cake."

"And we all know how much Illya loves chocolate."

"Speaking of the birthday boy, where is Illya?"

"He's coming. Everyone ready?"

"S Dnem Rozhdeniya, Illya!"

"You are very kind. I will even refrain from commenting on your accents."

#255: Hurricane

"Napoleon?"

"Yes, Illya?"

"Explain to me again why we are headed toward a hurricane instead of away from it as any sensible person would be?"

"Because we received word that a THRUSH satrip is located on the little off-the-map island that we're heading for. Due to the hurricane, it was evacuated rather quickly. Headquarters wants us to check out what might have been left behind."

"Despite the fact that the island was evacuated for a reason?"

"Even so, partner mine."

"We need to find a new line of work."

"That thought had crossed my mind as well."
#256: After the Storm

"Who the hell takes the time to rig explosives when a hurricane is on the way?"

"Now, Napoleon. Were we to find ourselves in a similar situation, I would do the same. I have to admit that I admire the use of wind speed as a trigger."

"You would admire something that almost ended our careers with a literal bang."

"Look at it as them doing our cartographers a favor."

"How so?"

"They would have had to correct our maps to show the location of the island."

"Yes, so?"

"Now the island is gone, so no correction needed."

"Some favor."

#257: First Day of Autumn

"We are being drug into a park again?"

"Looks that way, chum."

"Don't blame me, mates. It's not my fault that my partner has a thing for seasons changing."

"The three of you can stop being wet blankets at any time. It's the first day of Autumn - there's a grill that's hot and ready for the kielbasa and hamburgers. Plus I have a mulled cider and a lovely cherry pie from that bakery you all like so much."

"Alright, but if you insist on celebrating the first day of Winter, find an indoor location."

"Spoilsports."

#258: Beginnings : Wellington - Pt 1 of 7

The blond stumbled into his small apartment exhausted, hungry and discouraged. Moving to the window, he threw it open and leaned out, taking in a deep lungful of air. For the newly arrived Russian, New York was not a welcoming place.

A soft noise below caught his attention and he looked down, finding himself looking into a pair of china blue eyes. Before he quite realized what he was doing, Illya was down in the alley, coaxing out the small black kitten.

"Come, little one. Where I live is not a home, but perhaps together we can make it one."

#259: Beginnings : Wellington - Pt 2 of 7

Once under better light, Illya knew the kitten needed two things badly - a bath and food. Making a
temporary bed from a box and towel, he closed the kitten into the bathroom while he walked to a nearby store to get the basics and picked up some take-out for himself on the way back.

The bath came first. Fleas had the kitten so miserable that he didn't fight the bath. Wet, the kitten looked even thinner. Illya wasted no time drying him thoroughly, then filled bowls with fresh food and water. His reward was the sound of purring.

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#260: Beginnings : Wellington - Pt 3 of 7

Illya's ribs were sore and bruised. He never went to Medical over the incidents, he used his own pain killer. From the small freezer containing only ice-cube trays and a bottle of vodka, he pulled out the vodka, pouring a fair amount down his throat.

He stretched out on the bed. It, like everything he currently owned, was old - bought from resale shops. He wondered if his aches would let him sleep, then he felt a small warm body settling. The tension seemed to melt as the purrs vibrated against him.

"Spasibo, little one. You earn your keep."

---

#261: Beginnings : Wellington - Pt 4 of 7

Illya's mood was lighter when he came home carrying a treat for the kitten. A smile formed as his ankles were circled and rubbed against. Regular feedings and brushing were already showing positive results.

"I think perhaps things may be changing for better, little one. Mister Waverly has teamed me with Mister Solo twice now and we seem to work together well."

Smelling the treat, the kitten just mewed before trying to climb the leg of Illya's pants. Smirking, he unhooked the tiny claws.

"You would rather eat than hear about my day? Well, I cannot blame you."

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#262: Beginnings : Wellington - Pt 5 of 7

Illya had just given the kitten his treat - chopped chicken livers - when there was a knock at the door. He certainly wasn't expecting anyone, so he had one hand on his gun as he glanced through the peephole. The sight surprised him and he opened the door.

"Napoleon?"

"In the flesh. You know, when you said the place you were living in wasn't much, I assumed you were being modest."

"Come in. What brings you to -"

An ear-splitting screech followed by inarticulate cursing from Napoleon derailed Illya's question as a black streak fled from the room.

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#263: Beginnings : Wellington - Pt 6 of 7
First, Illya checked on the hissing ball of fur in his bedroom. A quick exam showed the little one's tail was trodden on, but unbroken. Next, he grabbed gauze and antiseptic to tend to Napoleon's ankle.

"You could have warned a fellow that you own a Tasmanian Devil."

"He is only a kitten, Napoleon. A small one at that."

"Huh - must have huge claws then. What's his name?"

A ghost of a smile formed as amusement flickered in the Russian's blue eyes.

"I had not named him yet, but I think I will call him Wellington."

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#264: Beginnings : Wellington - Pt 7 of 7

"Wellington? You are seriously going to name your cat Wellington?"

"Considering how well the initial meeting between the two of you has gone, it seems appropriate enough. Besides, the duke is said to have had blue eyes, so that fits as well."

"I cannot seriously believe you."

That got a rare laugh from the blond.

"And I cannot believe that you are so serious about what I am naming my cat."

Napoleon huffed slightly, but did see the humor of it himself.

"Fine. Just make sure that Wellington knows that this Napoleon doesn't surrender."

"They are your ankles, tovarich."

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#265: Remembering James Dean - d: Sep 30, 1955

"Hard to believe that it's been ten years."

"Ten years since what, Napoleon?"

"Since James Dean died."

"James Dean, the actor? I did not realize that you were a fan of his."

"Oh sure. I saw all of his movies. He was only a year older than me. Maybe that's part of why I related to him."

"Other than age, I cannot see it. I doubt you were ever a rebel. And you have always had a cause."

"That's true enough. Still, there was something about him."

"I suppose it is that something that makes a legend."

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#266: Drizzle
"You seem slightly down today, chum. What's wrong?"

"Nothing truly, Napoleon. I suppose that it is just the weather."

"You mean all the rain?"

"It is not raining. I do not mind the rain. It is drizzling."

"Okay, partner mine - I give up. What's the difference?"

"Drizzle is water falling from the sky that cannot work up the enthusiasm to become rain. I find it depressing."

"Ah. Lackluster precipitation. I can see where that definition fits. I can't pep up the weather, but why don't we go for some hot chocolate?"

"The day looks better already."

#267: Three Little Kittens : Odin

Illya had been adamant that he wanted good homes for the kittens, but didn't want people trooping through his apartment. They agreed that Napoleon would hand-deliver the little rascals once they were twelve weeks old. Well, Napoleon had named them by number, so Odin was first to go to his new home.

Odin was showing signs of being much like Wellington, black as soot but with deeper blue eyes. Odin seemed to like Napoleon though, purring contentedly as the doorbell was rung. Napoleon almost regretted handing the kitten over.

"This is harder than I thought it would be."

#268: Two Little Kittens : Dva

Napoleon picked up Dva the next night. He had to admit Dva had a beauty he could appreciate. Her eyes were a vibrant Persian blue and her coat was a deep grey-blue with black points, tail and face that showed her Siamese blood. Though still a kitten, she had the regal air of Lawan.

As he held her in his arms while waiting in the hallway, she stretched up her head, rubbing against the underside of his chin. Then the door opened and she was gone. Napoleon stared at the closed door for a moment before turning away.

"Damn."

#269: One Little Kitten : Tri

Tri had been the smallest of the kittens at birth and had remained as delicate looking as a porcelain cat. His main body was a pale silver with Siamese markings of dark silver. His eyes were a pale icy blue - very unlike his siblings, but very striking.

As he tried to hand Tri over to his new owner, the kitten mewed in distress and tried to hang onto Napoleon's jacket. Even though he could see the kitten was being smothered with affection, those pale blue eyes staring back at him sent a pang of guilt through Napoleon.
"Double damn."

#270: Then There Were None

"Alright, Napoleon. Explain."

"Explain what?"

"You have an expression on your face that I have not seen since the secretarial pool boycotted dating you for a month."

"Oh. I was just thinking about the kittens."

"Have you not always told me you were not a cat person?"

"Well yes, but -"

"But what?"

"Tri tried to hang onto me when Sharon reached for him."

"Napoleon - you became attached to them?"

"Guess I did. They even seemed to like me."

"They were born in your closet, my friend. You meant home. Security."

"It's crazy but I miss them."

"Not so crazy."

#271: The Cat Came Back

Sharon was waiting by Napoleon's car when he left work that day. He could hear the pitiful crying kitten noises long before he saw the carrier at her feet. She scowled at him as if he'd deliberately told Tri to keep her awake all night. Her scowl deepened further when the kitten went silent the second Napoleon opened the carrier and Tri practically leapt into his arms.

Scratching one secretary permanently off of his dating list, Napoleon considered the kitten in his arms. A slow smile began to spread. Yes - this could be the best of both worlds.

#272: Part of the Family

"You are looking to be in far better spirits today, my friend."

"I am actually, Illya. Turned out that Sharon and Tri didn't get along at all and he was rather emphatically returned to me last night."

"Is this good or bad? I thought that you had said you did not see how you could keep pets?"

"It's all good, partner mine. Do you remember my darling aunt?"

"Of course."
"She and Tri adored one another at first sight. Plus, my aunt figures I'll visit more often with him there, so it's a win-win situation."

#273: Columbus Day

"Does not celebrating Columbus Day seem a bit odd to you, Napoleon?"

"I suppose it does in a way, chum. I mean the man got hopelessly lost and never did accomplish what he set out to do. Still, I can see that from another angle, it's worth commemorating."

"And what angle might that be?"

"Even when things are going horribly wrong and all your plans go to hell, something good can come out of it."

"We have certainly had missions such as that."

"We have indeed. So - a toast to those who have survived SNAFUs past and present."

"Salud."

#274: Dancing into Danger - Pt 1 of 24

"You sent for us, Mister Waverly?"

"Indeed. Come in and be seated. You four will be changing partners for this assignment. Mister Kuryakin and Miss Dancer will be partnered as ballroom dancers. An instructor is standing by and you pair will be undergoing intensive dance training starting this afternoon. Mister Solo, your cover is going to be a journalist with Mister Slate as your photographer."

"Why ballroom dancing, sir?"

"Very simple, Mister Solo. A non-allied country that we need access into is holding a competition."

"And our participation will get us in without drawing excess attention."

"Precisely, Miss Dancer."

#275: Dancing into Danger - Pt 2 of 24

"You have dancing experience, Miss Dancer?"

"Yes. Mostly modern."

Their dance instructor, Mister Kerr, didn't quite cover up his look of disdain as he turned next to Illya.

"And you, Mister Kuryakin?"

"I have done some of the dances, but not as competition. And the variety of samba that I know is the street dance."

Kerr moved to the record player, starting a song playing.
"Show me the samba you know."

By the time he stopped the record, Kerr had a slight smile on his face.

"We can work with that."

April thought she needed ice or a fan.

#276: Dancing into Danger - Pt 3 of 24

The lessons came easier to Illya. He had undergone regimented training before in gymnastics and a variety of martial arts. April took a little longer to catch on, but once she moved past the drudgery of learning the basics, she began to enjoy herself and blossomed. After that, Kerr turned from dictator into their mentor.

Mister Waverly watched as the pair glided through a Viennese Waltz. His two agents had worked very hard the past six weeks and looked ready to go. Tomorrow, he would inform them about the competition they would be attending. The acid test before the mission.

#277: Dancing into Danger - Pt 4 of 24

The night of the competition was the first time Mark and Napoleon saw their partners perform together. As Illya and April molded themselves to one another in an Argentine Tango, Napoleon watched their moves with open admiration.

Meanwhile, Mark was hard pressed not to squirm. He had thought all ballroom dancing was stiff and formal.

"I feel like a ruddy voyeur."

Mister Waverly was satisfied and spoke to the four agents as they left.

"The four of you will be flying out tomorrow to the Principality."

A cold shiver went through Napoleon. His guts were warning him, but about what?

#278: Dancing into Danger - Pt 5 of 24

At Headquarters that morning, they were finally filled in on the details of their mission. The Principality of Baneria was small and, on the world scale, generally unknown. THRUSH had started courting the Prince and that led to U.N.C.L.E.'s attention. Whatever THRUSH's interest, it wasn't a matter of idle concern. An agent from Paris office, Marin Laurent, had gone into the area undercover and disappeared.

Their mission - find Agent Laurent and determine what had drawn THRUSH's interest to the region. Without drawing attention. The four exchanged glances before heading for the airport.

#279: Dancing into Danger - Pt 6 of 24

The first stage of the operation went off without a hitch. Illya and April were accepted under their new identities as competitors. Mark and Napoleon were also accepted as a freelance journalist and
photographer.

The second stage was going to be trouble. Napoleon felt his guts give out another warning the second he saw the dark eyes of the Prince's wife latch onto a certain blue-eyed blond - not unlike a lioness eyeing a juicy steak.

Napoleon did his best to ignore his gut feelings and tried to concentrate on finding what had happened to their missing agent.

#280: Dancing into Danger - Pt 7 of 24

It became obvious that a fix was in, making all four agents ill at ease. April and Illya were good, remarkably good considering their short time together - but there were couples competing that had been dancing together for years. Still, as couples were cut from the competition, the pair remained as more seasoned couples were eliminated until only they and two other couples remained.

Napoleon shared his misgivings with Mark.

"You know, Napoleon, our missing boy is also fair haired. What if his cover wasn't blown? What if he just attracted the wrong attention?"

"Not settling my nerves."

"Sorry."

#281: Dancing into Danger - Pt 8 of 24

The finals concluded with Illya and April placing third. The awards ceremony was followed by a press conference and the couples posing for photographers. Mark and Napoleon played their parts, concentrating mainly on the first and second place finishers. Taking a glance around while Mark was getting closeups of the winners, Napoleon saw April sitting out on the balcony, but the expected blond wasn't nearby.

Moving to 'interview' the also-rans, Napoleon's bad feeling returned when April didn't respond to his approach. As he feared, she was soundly asleep - apparently drugged. Illya was nowhere to be found.

#282: Dancing into Danger - Pt 9 of 24

After Napoleon woke her, they agreed April should pretend that she thought she'd only suffered from a combination of adrenaline mixed with too much champagne. April expressed concern over Illya - which didn't take any acting. She was informed by the Prince's secretary that Illya wasn't missing at all, but had accepted employment with the Principality.

Despite her fears, April feigned anger at Illya's desertion and made it plain that she had no intentions of trying to locate him. Mark and Napoleon fought to keep their expressions neutral. Now they had two missing agents to find.

#283: Dancing into Danger - Pt 10 of 24

Illya woke slowly, head pounding in a way far worse than any hangover. Recognizing the symptoms
as his usual reaction to certain knock-out drugs THRUSH was fond of, it didn't really surprise him to
discover he was in a locked room. For once, a nice room, but as the saying went, a gilded cage was
still a cage.

Making his way to the bathroom, he relieved himself and then took a long drink of cool water to help
clear his head. No windows and only one door. He checked it over - solid. He'd seen flimsier cell
doors.

#284: Dancing into Danger - Pt 11 of 24

Still sluggish from the drug, Illya gave in to his body's demands and laid back down on the bed. He
was nearly asleep when the sound of the lock opening drove sleep away instantly. He braced
himself, but was totally unprepared for who came through the door. It was a little girl, looking no
more than five years old.

"Chyort. . ."

Her grey eyes widened as she spoke softly.

"Vy ne dolzhny proklinat'."

At her reprimand of his cursing, Illya found himself apologizing.

"Pozhaluysta, prosti menya."

Illya was rewarded with a shy smile that made him uneasier than a gun.

#285: Dancing into Danger - Pt 12 of 24

They watched one another intently until Illya broke the silence.

~I am Illya. What is your name?~

The girl lowered her eyes, embarassed.

~The woman only ever calls me Sirota.~

Whoever this woman was that the girl spoke of, she was cruel to call the child Orphan. Illya spoke
softly like he was speaking to a timid fawn, likely to bolt away at any second.

~I grew up in an orphange myself. Would you mind if I called you Vasilisa?~

Her grey eyes grew large again as she whispered.

~Like the Princess?~

A smile formed on Illya's face.

~Yes.~

#286: Dancing into Danger - Pt 13 of 24

Napoleon and Mark managed to get their stay extended, pretending to be enamored by the
Principality enough to desire to write about it for a travel magazine. April couldn't remain without drawing suspicion, so she left, but she didn't go far.

Altering her hair to dark brunette and changing her style to something more in line with local fashions, April reentered and began gathering rumors from the citizens. The more she heard, the more she began to fear for Illya as well as for their other missing man. Mothers here darkened the hair of their fair headed sons.

#287: Dancing into Danger - Pt 14 of 24

Illya and Vasilisa were left alone most of the day, but at last, the other shoe dropped. A male voice coming slowly and precisely from a speaker informed Illya that he was expected to both behave himself and to keep Her Highness amused. So long as he obeyed? Food, clothing and other small luxuries would be amply provided. Disobedience would mean the ceasing of food as well as punishment, but the punishments would be exacted on the girl rather than on Illya.

With effort, Illya forced his temper into check. Risking himself was one thing. The child was quite another.

#288: Dancing into Danger - Pt 15 of 24

Two hours after the announcement, the Princess came to the room along with two guards. Vasilisa was taken away, leaving Illya alone with Her Highness.

Illya would've gladly strangled the woman, but for Vasilisa's sake, he took on the persona of an ardent lover. The Princess didn't have to command him or threaten him with the girl. Had anyone been watching, they wouldn't have guessed that he loathed the woman he was having sex with.

Illya tried remembering more distasteful things he'd been forced to do in the line of duty. None came to mind.

#289: Dancing into Danger - Pt 16 of 24

Finally it was over. The Princess was gone, then Vasilisa and food were brought to the room. As they ate together, he spoke softly.

~What stories do you know of Princess Vasilisa?~

~I do not know any stories. I saw her picture in a book and was told her name was Princess Vasilisa.~

~Ah, then you do not know how special she was. Some called her the Beautiful, but those knowing her best called her Vasilisa the Brave.~

She flushed.

~I am not brave, Illya.~

~Do you know what I think? I think you are far braver than you know.~

#290: Dancing into Danger - Pt 17 of 24
It hadn't taken Illya long to figure out that Vasilisa was a good deal older than she appeared. Much as his own had been, her growth must have been stunted from improper nutrition. He suspected she would have been small framed regardless.

It was reevaluating her age that made him feel somewhat better about what he was going to ask her to do - find Napoleon. It was more for the girl's safety than an escape plan for him. Illya knew his own temperament all too well and didn't trust himself to be able keep holding his tongue.

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**#291: Dancing into Danger - Pt 18 of 24**

Illya formed a rag doll from some of the items in the room. It was rough since he had nothing to sew with - little more than artfully tied knots in the cloth, but Vasilisa didn't seem to mind in the least.

~This doll will not speak to you like the Princess' did, but she will remind you that you are not alone. You are sure you can get away from the palace safely, little one?~

~i am sure. The woman often sends me to fetch things for her from the village.~

~Go then - luck fly with you, little Vasilisa.~

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**#292: Dancing into Danger - Pt 19 of 24**

Two hours later, the Princess came back in with her guards, looking annoyed.

"Where is Sirota?"

Moving toward her, Illya gave her what he hoped she would take for a look of desire.

"Who cares? You are here and I am here - is that not enough?"

There was a brief hesitation before she laughed and moved toward the bed.

"Yes, I believe it is enough, Zherebets. Guards - wait outside."

Illya ignored the nickname and concentrated on making her forget about looking for Vasilisa. When the Princess left an hour later, she had indeed forgotten what she had originally come for.

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**#293: Dancing into Danger - Pt 20 of 24**

"We have a visitor."

At Mark's remark, Napoleon turned from his meal and looked down to the small girl by his side. He took her for a street urchin and was about to try to find a coin to give her when she spoke softly.

"Napoleon?"

All he could manage was a nod, but the girl smiled.

~Illya sent me.~

~How did you know I was Napoleon?~

~Illya said you would look very American.~
That made him chuckle.

~Do you even know what an American looks like?~

~No, sir - but you do not look like you are from here.~

#294: Dancing into Danger - Pt 21 of 24

Napoleon and Mark sent word for April to join them. Careful questioning of Vasilisa gained them vast information about the palace. Most people there confused uneducated with unintelligent so words had not been guarded around the girl. Noting just how much Vasilisa paid attention to her surroundings, Mark pulled out a picture of Agent Laurent to show her. The girl bowed her head and whispered.

"Mir prakhu yego."

Napoleon stiffened.

~He's dead?~

~When the woman tires of one, the man has them killed.~

Translating that for Mark and April, they quickly agreed they needed to get Illya out. Immediately.

#295: Dancing into Danger - Pt 22 of 24

The next day when the Princess came, she found Illya to be a wholly different man than the one she had become accustomed to. Vasilisa had been gone long enough that Illya no longer feared she was in the palace and, with that restriction lifted, the Russian no longer hesitated to let his true feelings of disgust for the woman come out.

The result was a severe beating from her guards and being thrown into an actual cell. Even with being informed that he would be executed the following morning, Illya still considered it preferable to sleeping with the Princess.

#296: Dancing into Danger - Pt 23 of 24

Vasilisa gave Napoleon two sets of directions.

~If he still has favor, he will be here. If not, then here.~

Knowing his partner, Napoleon bet Illya wouldn't be in favor long and started with the second location. He had just reached the cells when a roaring mob joined him, helping him free and remove the badly beaten blond. Vasilisa had told what happened to the missing sons of Baneria and the people were revolting.

Afterward, the successful rebels escorted all four agents and the girl to the airport as heroes for providing the motivation necessary to overthrow the tyrants.

#297: Dancing into Danger - Pt 24 of 24

Epilogue
"A bit of dirty pool mentioning the girl to my wife, Mister Kuryakin."

"My apologies, sir, but I named her for the heroine of a fairy tale."

"Ah - an obligation to provide a happy ending?"

"Or at least the opportunity to make her own happy ending, sir."

"Truthfully, having another great-granddaughter is rather pleasant. Vasilisa is remarkably adaptable as well as highly intelligent. According to her tutor, she will be up to her age level by the time summer comes around. You will be coming by to see her, I presume?"

"I would like that very much, sir."

---

**#298: April Dancer - b: November 2, 1942**

"And here's the birthday girl."

"Oh boys - you shouldn't have."

"Like hell, luv. The last time I forgot your birthday, you pouted at me for a solid week."

"You're my partner, Mark. You're supposed to remember things like that."

"It does not matter since we have obviously remembered this year, does it?"

"Illya has a point. Make a wish, blow out the candles and cut the cake."

"Wait just a minute. There are two more candles on this cake than there should be!"

"I think you are doomed to an entire month of pouting now, Mark."

---

**#299: Launch of Sputnik 2 - November 3, 1957**

"What's on the news, chum?"

"Not much, Napoleon. I was listening to a report mentioning that this is the anniversary of the launch of Sputnik 2."

"That was the one that had the dog onboard, wasn't it?"

"A female one, yes. Laika. She had the dubious honor of not only being the first creature to orbit the Earth but also to be the first living creature to die in orbit."

"What breed was she?"

"All breeds, I suppose. She was a street dog. And a good example of why living in shadows can be far preferable to fame."

---

**#300: Three Hundred**

"Illya - I'm starting to run low on ammo. How much longer do we have to hold this area?"

"I was told that it will be another half hour before this outpost will be able to be fully evacuated."
"They better speed it up. I don't know if we can hold out that long."

"Faith, Napoleon - faith. King Leonidas held out against superior numbers with 300 Spartans for three days."

"We're about 298 Spartans short here, partner mine."

"But you have something the King did not."

"What's that?"

large explosion - screams

"A demolitions expert for a partner."
#301: Invitation

"Illya! Wait up."

"What is it, Napoleon?"

"Aunt Amy called. She would like for us both to come to her place for dinner on Thanksgiving Eve
and stay overnight. She wants company for the Thanksgiving Day parade that morning."

"I can understand her inviting you, but -"

"No buts. There's going to be incredible food, chum. Aunt Amy used to attend shooting parties over
in England and does what she calls a 'hunt breakfast' on Thanksgiving morning. Kippers, kedgeree,
grilled tomatoes, gammon steaks and more."

"I would not want to insult your Aunt by refusing her invitation."

"Of course not."

#302: Pampered

The cherry sideboard was a French antique - her grandmother's wedding present. Admiring the plush
cat bed at its center, Amy wondered briefly what Grandmere would have thought about this use - no
matter. This arrangement meant that she could feed and tend Tri without bending over so much. She
told Napoleon that she hated making concessions to age, but she would swallow her pride for Tri's sake.

Tri leapt delicately atop the sideboard, daintily making his way to his food and water resting in

#303: Post-Election Day

"Yesterday was your first election day since becoming a citizen. How did it feel, chum?"

"Exhilarating, but a bit surreal as well, Napoleon. I believe that part of me was still expecting to be
handed a ballot that had been pre-filled out for me."

"I don't think a lot of folks know what a rare privilege it is in the world to cast ballots."

"You do."

"True, partner of mine, but I've traveled enough to see firsthand what goes on in the countries that
don't have free elections."

"That does make a difference."

"It does indeed."
"Mark?"

"Keep talking, April. Can't see my hand in front of my face."

"Oh no."

"What? Are you hurt?"

"Just a little bruised. And stuck - a shelf fell on me after the explosion. I can't lift it off of myself."

"Ah - there you are. Let me feel around a bit and get a good grip. Think you can pull yourself free after I lift it?"

"Yes - hurry please."

grunting

"I'm free! Now, take my hand. I'll help you out of here."

"When did you learn to see in the dark?"

"Darling? It isn't dark."

"Damn."

---

#305: Venlo Incident - November 9, 1939

"Sir Menzies - please come right in."

"Thank you, Millicent, dear lady. I am afraid I need to see Alexander."

"Of course. I'll fetch some tea. You're chilled to the bone."

"Stewart."

"Alexander. Ah, thank you, Millicent."

"Shall I leave you two alone?"

"No. You'll hear soon enough and I'll need you both for damage control. Germans crossed into the Netherlands at Venlo. Surrounded and opened fire on a Dutch intelligence officer and two of ours. Witnesses say all three were forced across the border into Germany."

"How badly might we be compromised?"

"Possibly our entire network."

---

#306: Darkness - Pt 2 of 3

"How is your head today, Mark?"

"Still tender enough that I appreciate the low voices more than I can say, Illya. April's napping - been sitting up all night, fussing."
"She's just worried about you, Mark. Why didn't you tell April your head had been hit during the explosion?"

"I didn't know, Napoleon - disorientation from the blast, I guess. Hell, I didn't even know my vision was wonky until April told me it wasn't dark where we were."

"Is that better?"

"Much, but the doc says I should stick to dim lights for another day."

#307: Darkness - Pt 3 of 3

"Get dressed, Mark. The doctors signed your release. On the condition that you rest and take it easy over the weekend."

"Trust me, while I'm feeling better, I know I'm not up for anything beyond being a lump on my couch."

"Actually, you're going to be a lump on my couch. You still have a tender head and my neighbors are much quieter than your neighbors."

"I don't want to ask you to muck up your weekend, luv."

"You haven't asked - I've insisted. Now get dressed."

"Yes, Mum."

"Be glad you're already injured."

#308: Cider

"I hate that it was due to a mission, but it's nice to have you boys up in Maine this time of year."

"So this is where you grew up, luv?"

"Very close, Mark - we're only about fifty miles away. But come along, we used to come here every year as a treat."

"That is a mill, is it not?"

"Indeed it is, Illya darling. And they still make apple cider here every fall."

"Is it not a bit early to be drinking?"

"America cider is generally fresh and non-alcoholic, chum."

"In that case, lead on, April."

#309: Bad News - November 13, 1916

"If I have to conjugate another French verb, I shall be forced to throw myself before stampeding horses."
"Ermie dear, I'll help you after I read my mail. Can't have you frightening the horses."

"Thank you, Mill. How do you keep it all - what's wrong? You've gone pale."

"It's from a military hospital, Ermie. Alexander's been injured. They think he'll . . ."

"Don't even think it - we must get you there. I'll tell the headmistress to telegraph your guardian immediately."

"Bless you, Ermie. I can't think straight."

"What else are friends for?"

---

#310: S'mores

"No, I have never made one before."

"I can't believe Napoleon hasn't ever taught you how to make S'mores."

"It's never come up on a mission, April."

"Excuses, excuses, Napoleon. Now, you want the marshmallow throughly hot and melted, but not burnt. Then, right on top of the chocolate and then squish down with the other cracker. Yes, Illya - that's perfect."

"It is very good. However, do you always wait until it is so cold to camp out?"

"I did warn you that my partner has anti-freeze instead of blood in her veins, Illya."

---

#311: Cold Season

ahchoo!

"Bless you, luv."

"Is that tea for me? Thank you, Mark."

"With lemon and honey like me Mum used to make it. You should have stuck closer to the campfire."

sniffle

"You know, they say that getting chilled doesn't cause a cold. Being around someone else with a cold does."

"I know - a virus and all that. But someone had to kick off the very first cold, didn't they? How did they catch it? Besides, you were mainly around the three of us and none of us have shown any -"

ahchoo!

"I stand corrected. Bless you, Napoleon."

---

#312: New Assignment
So - what's our latest assignment, chum? Are we headed off to someplace warm?"
"Yes and no."
"Okay, I'll bite."
"Do that and expect to be punched in return, Napoleon."
"No, no - not literally bite, Illya. That means 'I know you want me to ask, so I'm asking'."
"What does biting have to do with that?"
"Can we discuss oddities of certain phrases later? Where are we going?"
"Our new mission is taking us to Greenland."
"How is that yes and no? It's below freezing there now."
"True, but they have an abundance of hot water geysers."

#313: Leonides Meteor Shower Peak - November 17, 1966
"Wow."
"Impressive, is it not?"
"Impressive doesn't begin to cover it, Illya. I've never seen so many shooting stars."
"1833 was the last time this part of the world was treated to such a large display of the Leonides meteor shower."
"Now and then, Mother Nature reminds me that I'm not quite as jaded as I think I am. How many do you think there are?"
"My astronomer acquaintance said tonight is the peak - over 150,000 meteors an hour."
"That's too big a number to wrap my mind around."
"Why bother when we can watch?"

#314: The Orient Express
"Change of pace, chum. Traveling by train for once."
"And on the Orient Express. I must admit that it has been a source of fascination for me ever since I read the mystery by Agatha Christie."
"That was 'Murder on the Orient Express', wasn't it? I think I read that. It involved the murder of a kidnapper, right?"
"Worse than a kidnapper. He had taken ransom for a three year old girl, then murdered her and fled with the money."
"Not exactly the type of guy that the world would mourn the loss of."
"I know I would not."

#315: Assassination Attempt - Pt 1 of 3

"Please come back to me, Millicent. That's my girl. Open your eyes."

"Alexander? My legs feel so peculiar."

"Try not to move for now, my dear - your back was injured. Can you remember what happened?"

"Raining. It was raining. Agent Caldwell told me to stay under the awning while he fetched the car and then, I saw -"

"Millicent? Talk to me."

"It was a car bomb, wasn't it?"

"Yes."

"How is Caldwell? Alexander - please? Hiding things makes me assume the worst."

"I'm afraid it is the worst. I'm sorry, my dear. He didn't make it."

#316: Assassination Attempt - Pt 2 of 3

"Come in, gentlemen."

"Yes, Mister Waverly. We have the information you wanted, sir. The bomb had been intended for you and not your wife."

"I suspected as much, Mister Solo. I am normally the one that makes use of that car. I want the ones responsible."

"We already have one of them in custody, Mister Waverly."

"Very good. Mister Kuryakin? I want you to see to his interrogation personally."

"It will be my pleasure, sir. If I may ask, how is Mrs. Waverly?"

"The doctors say her injuries aren't life threatening, but her ability to walk may be impaired."

#317: Assassination Attempt - Pt 3 of 3

"Gentlemen, come New Years, I shall be moving into an advisory role and turning the reins over Mister Solo. Mister Kuryakin, I think it best you retire from the field and keep to the primary job you have done so admirably - having Mister Solo's back."

"Is this due to Mrs. Waverly's health, sir?"

"In part, yes. The recent incident has reminded me that time marches on. It is time for the changing of guard to your generation. I believe I am leaving it in worthy hands."

"We won't let you down, sir."
"I know you won't."

---

**#318: Napoleon Solo - b : November 22, 1932**

"Happy birthday, Napoleon!"

"April, you know I love you like a pesky kid sister, but was the confetti in the face necessary?"

"Who was it that put frosting in my hair on Mark's birthday?"

"That was an accident. Quit smirking, Illya."

"It was not exactly an accident, my friend. Simply bad aim as I believe that you were aiming for Mark."

"Regardless of who the target was, it was my hair that paid the price and I'd just had my hair done."

"Did you have your hair done today?"

"No, why?"

"Food fight!"

**shriek**

"Napoleon!"

"A direct hit!"

---

**#319: The Day After**

"You know, I think this is the first time I've ever seen you looking too full to move, pal."

"Your Aunt Amy is a most gracious and generous hostess, Napoleon. Between the hunting party breakfast with the parade and the actual Thanksgiving meal in the afternoon? I cannot think of another time when I have enjoyed the meals of a day so much."

"Aunt Amy's already talking about kidnapping you for Christmas dinner. There's nothing she enjoys more than watching someone that appreciates the food she pulls out."

"Trust me, my friend - no need to kidnap me."

---

**#320: UNCLE's 20th Anniversary - November 24, 1965**

Mister Waverly lifted his glass.

"I wish I could provide a more festive location to celebrate this milestone, but such an august gathering of U.N.C.L.E. agents would represent too tempting a target for our adversaries."

"UNCLE was formed twenty years ago, fueled by high hopes. Because of you and former agents, including those who paid the ultimate price, we have succeeded and will continue to defend the innocents against all those who do not believe in the worth of the individual. As we begin our next decade, I am – as always – proud to stand among you."
"Come, sit by me, Alexander. Are you absolutely certain?"

"I won't be entirely retiring any more than you did, Millicent. Just stepping away from the day-to-day chores."

"You've been the Number One of Section One since the New York office opened."

"Twenty-seven years ago. But, now I have someone I trust to take over the position. Men like that don't come along often."

"Didn't our Mister Solo just turn forty?"

"Yes, my dear."

"Hardly seems possible so many years have passed. I suppose the time really is right, isn't it?"

"It is."

"Kuryakin reporting as requested, sir."

"Be seated, Mister Kuryakin. It is time that we discussed your future. You are in a unique position as you are qualified for any number of positions - including replacing Mister Solo as head of Section II."

"With all due respect, I am close to Napoleon in age. I would no sooner adjust to the role before I would have to retire myself. If I am to continue to have Napoleon's back, I think the position that would serve both myself and UNCLE best would be Section VIII."

"We are in full agreement then. Excellent."

"Do join us, Mister Solo."

"Mister Waverly - Illya. So, what's on the agenda?"

"With Mister Kuryakin's choice of reassignment to Section VIII, we need to consider how best to fill the upcoming opening in Section II. Any thoughts on your successor, Mister Solo?"

"Well, my first choice was Illya, of course. But as second choice, I believe my inclination would be to offer the position to April."

"Why Miss Dancer and not Mister Slate? He is the elder of the partnership."

"April and Mark interact much as Napoleon and I do, sir."

"You both agree?"

"We do, sir."
Settled on April's couch, Mark's arms firmly wrapped around his partner whose eyes were closed, the back of her head resting against his shoulder.

"You haven't said much since Waverly offered you Napoleon's job, luv."

"I don't know what to say, Mark. I feel it should be your position."

"If I was offered it, I'd turn it down. I know where my strengths are and that stuff's not where they lie."

"You think I can do it?"

"I know you can. You'll be bloody brilliant."

"And you'll have my back?"

"Always."

"Gentlemen, Miss Dancer has agreed to accept the position of Number One of Section II once Mister Solo moves to Section I. Mister Kuryakin is going to Section VIII and taking over as head following Mister Guerlais' retirement."

"And me, sir?"

"I will let Mister Solo address that."

"Mark, you'll still be backing April if she has to go into the field. However, I'd like you to consider heading development of a new section. One focused on keeping us at the forefront of computer technology."

"Going with your strengths, darling."

"Sounds like an interesting challenge, Napoleon. I accept."

"Thank you for having us, Mrs. Waverly. Everything was wonderful."

"You're quite welcome, April. I know Illya has, but I hope that the rest of you left room for dessert. Alexander tells me the scene has been set for the new year."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Will you be making any sort of announcement in advance, Napoleon?"

"No, ma'am."

"Very wise, I think. Some tend to view announcements as giving them carte blanche to put forth their own opinions on the changes."
"I think our announcement will more closely resemble a blitzkreig attack, Mrs. Waverly."

"Whatever works, my dears."

---

**#327: Mistletoe**

"Wow, hard to believe. December the first already. This year is really flying by. Time to gear up for the holidays, chum."

"You are just gearing up for the first mistletoe of the season."

"Can I help it if the sight of mistletoe makes me feel festive?"

"Festive is not the word I would use for what mistletoe appears to make you feel."

"Oh? And what word would you use?"

"I believe I will be polite and simply borrow a term I have heard the secretarial pool use in the past. Frisky."

"Frisky? I guess I can live with that."

---

**#328: Fruitcake**

"You know, partner mine? I think you're the only person I know that actually eats fruitcake."

"But I often see people giving one another fruitcakes. What do most people do with them?"

"If they're like me, they give them to somebody else. Like that one in front of you? No telling how many hands it passed through before reaching you."

"More for me then."

"Wait a minute . . . what's that smell?"

"Just something I add to make the cake moist. Even I do not care for dry fruitcake."

"Spiced rum?"

"Do not knock it until you try it."

---

**#329: Hanging the Greens**

"Pass me that nail, April?"

"Isn't it awfully early to be hanging evergreens for Christmas, Mark?"

"For Advent, luv. This is the first Sunday of Advent, the day my Scottish gran always hung her greens. Guess I'm feeling a bit of the longing for home."

"You asked me over to celebrate one of your family's traditions?"

"We're partners, luv. You know things about me that my family never has. Never will. I think that gives us a bond that's thicker than blood."
"I think that's the sweetest thing you've ever said to me."

#330: Gingerbread

"Since you boys are stuck in Medical for a couple of days, I thought I'd bring something to keep your hands busy."

"Very thoughtful of you, April. So - what's in the basket?"

"You sound like the wolf speaking to Red Riding Hood."

"You know, sticking your tongue out at your partner makes you lose your suave appearance, Napoleon. And I've brought gingerbread."

"No offense, April, but this gingerbread is rather hard."

"It's supposed to be, Illya. It's to build a gingerbread house."

"Should have told him that sooner. I think he's eaten the roof."

#331: UNCLE Christmas Tree

"That's a lovely tree you've set up in the outer office, Miss Eklund. A bit bare though, isn't it?"

"Mister Waverly's idea, Mister Solo. He's requesting that all the staff here at the New York headquarters to put one thing on the tree. Bought or handmade."

"That should make for a very interesting display. What's that you're putting on it?"

"Mister Waverly and his wife's contribution - a cranberry and popcorn garland."

"Very nice. I'm looking forward to seeing how it shapes up."

"Don't forget your own contribution."

"I won't."

#332: Caroling

"You want me to go caroling with you and Mark, April?"

"Of course I do. You have a lovely voice, Illya."

"Thank you for that vote of confidence, but I really do not know the words to any carols."

"That's why I'm asking now. It give you time to learn the ones we'll be doing."

"How many songs would I need to learn?"

"We repeat a lot, so probably no more than seven. Please?"

"Alright. I will do it on one condition."

"Which is?"
"We visit Napoleon's aunt and sing for her."

"Of course we will."

#333: Candy Cane

"What on earth are you doing with that candy cane, Illya?"

"I would have thought that was rather obvious, Napoleon. I am using it to stir my tea."

"Won't that add a weird flavor to your tea?"

"Considering that I am drinking a mint tea today? It blends very nicely."

"Don't you normally only drink mint tea when you're trying to ward off a cold?"

"Very true."

"Let me guess, partner mine. It's due to that slush that nailed us when it slid off the roof of the Embassy this morning."

"Right on the first guess."

#334: Hanging the Stockings

"Pardon me, please. This won't take a minute, mates."

"Why are you hanging stockings over our desks, Mark?"

"Because April told me to, Napoleon."

"Not exactly the answer I was looking for, but fair enough. April - why are you making Mark hang stockings over our desks?"

"Because we don't have fireplace mantles in here to hang them from."

sigh

"I keep forgetting that I work with a bunch of smart alecks."

"I fail to see how you keep forgetting, Napoleon. You are reminded of it on a daily basis."

"You're one of those smart alecks yourself, tovarich."

#335: Annual Ornament

"Come on, Mark - don't dawdle."

"Why do you need me to go shopping, April?"

"Because you're my first partner."

"That I am, but again, what's that got to do with shopping?"
"This is our first Christmas together so I want my ornament for this year to remind me of you."

"You get a new ornament every year, luv?"

"Yes. And I hope to live long enough to need an enormous tree to display them all on."

"And you're positive that by then you'll actually want to remember me?"

"Of course I will, you silly goose."

---

#336: Mark's Tree Contribution

"Pardon me, Miss Eklund, would you mind giving me a hand?"

"Certainly, Mister Slate. Oh, how very nice. Did you make this yourself?"

"Yes. It's something my family used to do. We had cousins that lived outside the city, so we'd visit and gather up the nuts and string them for our tree at home. Come Boxing Day, we'd take the garland down, bust the nuts open and Mum would make a nutcake."

"Your garland looks very nice next to the dried berry and popcorn one."

"Not too many ornaments yet."

"No, but it's early still."

---

#337: Viewing Christmas Lights

"A little chilly, but nice. Ever done this before, Illya?"

"Taken an evening stroll to view Christmas lights and displays? No, but I may make more of a habit of it in the future. Some of them are quite elaborate."

"Yes, they are. Thanks for coming with me. You're the one that might see holidays the way I do."

"Because we were both children caught in a war zone, Mark?"

"Yes. Don't get me wrong - I love Christmas, but it makes me melancholy in a way I can't explain."

"I know that feeling."

"I thought you would."

---

#338: Wrapping Presents

"You are so kind to come here and help me with wrapping presents, Miss Dancer."

"When your nephew, Napoleon, told me that business was calling him away, I was delighted to fill in for him."

"You do such a lovely job."

"Thank you. I made my spending money as the wrap girl at one of the stores during the Christmas season back when I was still in school."
"Napoleon said your company has a community tree. Have you already decided on your contribution?"

"Not yet, ma'am."

"You do such lovely bows. You should consider them."

"You know, I might."

---

**#339: Snow Maiden**

"Good morning, Miss Eklund."

"Good morning, Mister Kuryakin. Oh, how lovely. May I see that?"

"Yes, of course. I have brought her for my contribution to the tree."

"She has such a lovely gown. She's a porcelain doll, isn't she? Is she a Russian figure?"

"Yes. She is Snyegurochka, the Snow Maiden. The American Santa has elves to help him, in my homeland, Ded Moroz or Father Frost, is helped by her. She is his granddaughter."

"She's absolutely charming. I think that she'd be perfect for the top of the tree. Let me get the ladder."

---

**#340: Christmas Cookies**

"Did everyone remember to bring in cookies for the swap?"

"Yes, luv. I brought my contribution - Scottish shortbread."

"I was hoping you'd bring those. Alright, that's Mark. Illya?"

"I found a store that sells Medianyky from the Ukraine."

"I've never heard of those, but they look tasty. Napoleon?"

"I brought an old childhood favorite of mine - jam thumbprint cookies."

"I remember having those as a girl. I loved them. Are they made with strawberry jam?"

"I brought a mix. Some strawberry, some raspberry and some apricot."

"And what have you brought, April?"

"Gingerbread men. Candy buttons included."

---

**#341: Ribbons**

"Good morning, Miss Dancer."

"Good morning, Miss Eklund. The tree beginning to fill out, isn't it?"

"Yes it is. I have to watch myself or I end up spending far too much time looking at it. Did you bring something for it today?"
"Yes. I hope they're alright. I made different styles of bows from gold and silver ribbons to spread around."

"I'm jealous. I can't make pretty bows like these to save my life. Are those ribbon roses?"

"Yes - I was pleased as how well they turned out. I hadn't done one for years."

#342: Over-Decoration

"No."

"But, Mark, they're just -"

"No, April. Yes, your glittery pinecone . . . thingamagigs . . . are cute, but you've already got me afraid that if I sit still too long, you'll put tinsel in my hair."

"You think I've gone overboard decorating our office?"

"I know you have. You've got a tree in the corner, smaller trees on each of our desks, fake snow and a little village on the filing cabinet, stockings and garland on the walls, a wreath on the door . . . do I really need to list the rest?"

"Fine. No more decorations, Scrooge."

"Bah humbug."

#343: December Snow

"See anything, tovarich?"

"It is starting to snow."

"I usually like December snow, but I was really hoping for a helicopter."

"I am losing hope of that, Napoleon. They may not be able to come with the weather worsening."

"That's not good for us."

"No. It is not."

"So, I guess we need to prepare for an extended stay. Be better if we had some sort of shelter."

"Be best if we were not here at all, my friend. But we will figure something out."

"We are good at ad-libbing, aren't we?"

"Da. We have to be."

344: Candles

"The mantle is looking more festive every day, Millicent."

"Yes, it is. I was trying to remember when we began lighting candles for Christmas."
"The children were still small. I can't recall the year myself, but I remember we started off with just the tall Christmas candle in the center, then one year, you added twelve smaller candles on either side."

"Lighting a new candle every night after supper did become a ritual that the children enjoyed. It's nice that they carried that over for their own children."

"The best traditions are those that simply happen, my dear."

#345: Silver Bells

"Good morning, Mister Solo."

"Good morning, Miss Eklund. You're certainly looking festive today."

"Thank you, Mister Solo. Did you need to see Mister Waverly?"

"No, I came by to bring my contribution for the tree. My aunt always puts these all over her tree, so they seemed appropriate."

"Silver jingle bells - those will add a nice sparkle to the tree. Care for some help hanging them?"

"I certainly wouldn't turn down your assistance. And if you aren't already booked, I'd love to take you to lunch as a proper thanks."

"That sounds absolutely delightful, Mister Solo."

#346: Holiday Wreath

"Come along, my dear girl. As you are the newest member of the Waverly family, you are the one that gets the honour of hanging this year's holiday wreath on the door."

"It smells so nice, Ded Alexander. Like the deep forest after a new snow."

"Your Babushka Millicent is very fond of that scent as well, Vasilisa, so we bring freshly cut boughs into the house every week during the season. You'll be able to smell them to your heart's content."

"My heart is already content, but now my nose is happy and content as well."

#347: First Day of Winter

"Isn't it lovely taking a carriage ride in the park when there's just enough snow to make everything sparkle?"

"It is pretty, if a bit chilly. Why exactly are we - no. You did, didn't you?"

"Did what, Napoleon?"

"Drop the innocent look, Dancer. You've drug all of us out to the park on the first day of Winter."

"I specifically requested indoors."

"I know you did, Illya, but the weather's so nice and mild."
"Now you've done it. I'm going to be stuck with a cranky Russian for the rest of the day."

#348: Tree Viewing

"You know something, Illya? Considering the number of people that decorated it, that is one good looking tree."

"I admit that I did not think it would all come together, but the end effect is both pleasing and unique. I doubt there is another like it."

"Where on Earth did all the little packages under it come from?"

"Mrs. Waverly. She wanted to make sure everyone that worked here had a small token of appreciation."

"She's a very thoughtful lady. I wonder where she came from?"

"You could ask."

"Naw. Every woman should have a little mystery about her."

#349: Christmas Plans

"Solo speaking."

"Napoleon, I was just calling to remind you about tomorrow night."

"Aunt Amy! No worries - Illya would hardly let me forget. You promised him a real, old-fashioned plum pudding and he's been looking forward to that all month."

"The dear boy is fond of his food. He went without as a child, didn't he?"

"He doesn't talk much about his past, but honestly? I think he came close to starving a few times."

"Well, we shall make some newer memories to help dim those times, won't we?"

"You're the best, Aunt Amy."

#350: Wassailing

"Well, mates, are we ready to go wassailing?"

"I thought we were going caroling?"

"I prefer wassailing, Illya."

"Same thing, isn't it?"

"Not exactly, April. They do both involve singing, but wassail songs are aimed at encouraging trees to be generous with the harvests in the coming year."

"Traditionally, yes. But in modern days, what's the real difference, Mark?"

"Well, I suppose the only difference I can think of is that wassailing involves more drinking,
Napoleon."

"Right then. ~*Here we go a-wassailing~Among the leaves so green~*Here we come a-wandering~So fair to be seen~"
#351: Christmas Miracle

"Didn't I tell you after you took that car hit for me that I'd be very cross with you if you did something like that again?"

"Sorry, luv. Reflex."

"Shhh - lie still. Let me keep pressure on the wound. Help should be on the way."

"No - go. Not safe."

"Easy, Mark. Your aim was better than his. He's dead. Keep your eyes open. I refuse to lose you on Christmas."

"April? That light?"

"I see it, darling. That's our own Christmas miracle. Our backup has arrived. We'll have you to Medical in no time now."

---

#352: A Good Memory

"Good morning, Aunt Amy."

"Good morning, Napoleon. It's been so nice having you boys here for the holidays. Must you leave so soon?"

"I'm afraid we have to catch a business flight later, but we don't have to leave until after lunch. Where's Illya? He wasn't in his room."

"We both had trouble sleeping and ended up chatting in front of the fire. Illya dozed off and looked so peaceful that I covered him with quilt."

"I don't see him smile in his sleep often."

"Then I succeeded with creating a good memory?"

"Absolutely."

---

#353: Christmas Aftermath

"You know, there are times that you absolutely disgust me, partner mine."

"Pardon? What is it you think I have done?"

"We ate the exact same food over Christmas at Aunt Amy's. Not to mention, you ate far larger amounts of everything than I did, but you don't look like you gained a single ounce. Look at me - my suits aren't going to fit right again until around the end of January."

"How your suits are fitting is hardly my fault, Napoleon."
"Yeah, I know. Still, it hardly seems fair."

"The world is not a fair place."

---

**#354: Beatlemania Pt 3 - December 12, 1968**

"I see that look, Kuryakin - I know why you're smirking."

"Really, Napoleon? Not that I am admitting that I am smirking, but if I were, what would my reason be?"

"You are most definitely smirking. As to the reason for your smirk, I heard on the news that the Beatles' White Album went to number one on the charts."

"Not bad at all for a flash-in-the-pan group, is it?"

"It was years ago that I made that one-hit wonder remark about them. You're never going to let me forget that, are you?"

"Highly unlikely."

---

**#355: Year End Plans**

"Two days left until the year's end, chum."

"This year seemed to pass quickly. My Babushka said that was a sign of getting older."

"You're only as old as you feel."

"Actually, that is not an improvement."

"Then we'll just have to lighten your mood and make you drop a few years."

"What do you suggest?"

"You, me, a couple of attractive ladies and a New Year's Eve party?"

"Fine, I will come. Wait - why are you looking so shocked, Napoleon?"

"I thought I'd have to argue with you more to talk you into it."

---

**#356: Other Year End Plans**

"Good morning, April. Feeling better?"

"Good morning, Mark. I'd feel much better if they'd release me. I don't want to spend New Year's Eve in Medical."

"I certainly understand that. I'll go chat with the docs."

*fingers drumming*

"Well?"
"If I keep an eye on you and make sure alcohol is limited to one toast at midnight, they'll release you tomorrow."

"You shouldn't be stuck babysitting me, darling."

"Stuck? I'd be delighted to spend New Year's Eve with you - if you don't mind."

"Then tell them it's a deal."

---

#357: Another New Year's Eve

"So here we are once again, tovarich. How times have we rung in the New Year together now?"

"Counting the first time you coaxed me into spending New Year's Eve with you, Napoleon? I suppose that would be eleven times now. Fourteen years counting occasions that we could not meet due to situations."

"Wow. Time flies when you're busy. And in good company, partner mine."

"Technically, we are no longer partners."

"Please. Since when have we bothered with technicalities?"

5 . . . 4 . . . 3 . . . 2 . . . 1

"True. Why should we start now? Happy New Year - partner."

"Happy New Year, Illya."

---

#358: Millicent Kildare Waverly - b: January 1, 1900

"Happy Birthday, my dear girl."

Millicent chuckled at the familiar term of endearment before reaching over to fondly lay her hand over her husband's.

"I think at age eighty-four, I hardly qualify as a girl any longer, Alexander."

"As I am very nearly eight years your elder, I retain my rights to it."

Lifting her hand in another long-standing show of affection between them, he gave a light kiss to her wedding ring.

"It has been wonderful to come here again. I'm so glad you were feeling well enough to venture out today."

"So am I."

---

#359: Endgame - Pt 1 of 8

"Here, Mrs. Waverly. Let me assist you into the car."

"Agent Grimes, why are you here? Where is Agent Patel? He's our usual driver."
"Yessir, Mister Waverly. Family emergency. I was requested to fill in."

"I very much doubt that. I know the roster of drivers authorized for us and you are not on it."

"Very well - we'll do this the hard way. Climb into the back seat unless you prefer to become a widower tonight."

"Alexander - don't."

"It will be alright, Millicent."

"Settle down for the ride, old man. The doors only open from the outside."

---

#360: Endgame - Pt 2 of 8

Millicent gripped the armrests of her wheelchair as she watched Alexander getting into the back seat. She had expected to join him and her mouth formed a thin line when she was put into the passenger seat instead. She gave a glance to Alexander through the clear divider that separated the back seat from the front. He was sitting stoically still, catching her eyes for a brief moment and giving her a tiny nod.

As Grimes settled into the driver's seat, Millicent reviewed their options. For now, she decided it best to follow Alexander's example and remain silent.

---

#361: Endgame - Pt 3 of 8

At first, Grimes appreciated that neither of his passengers were raising a fuss but after a few minutes, it began to get on his nerves. Finally, he broke the silence himself.

"I figured you'd be screaming - or begging - by now."

Millicent didn't bother to look in his direction.

"Hardly. Whatever should happen, Alexander and I shall do something that you shall never do."

"Yeah? What's that?"

"Live to a ripe old age."

The slight snort from the back seat had an amused tone to it.

"You think that's funny, old man?"

"Not at all. Simply accurate."

---

#362: Endgame - Pt 4 of 8

The rest of the trip passed in silence, Millicent's toying with her dragonfly brooch being the only show of nerves. A large number of the THRUSH hierarchy were present at the satrip Grimes pulled up to.

Millicent was placed into her wheelchair, then her left wrist was handcuffed to the armrest. She merely gave the cuff a bemused glance. She did favor them with a sour look when they handcuffed
Alexander's left wrist to her other armrest, but at least enough chain was between the cuffs that he wasn't forced to stoop as they were taken inside.

#363: Endgame - Pt 5 of 8

Grimes was smug as he pushed Millicent's wheelchair into a large room, locking it beside a chair. It reminded Alexander of his boyhood classrooms where the desk was at the lowest level and the chairs around it in a semi-circle on risers. Most of the seats were occupied by THRUSH officials.

"Goodbye, geezers. The money I'm getting for you will set me up for life."

Alexander gave a dry chuckle.

"Indeed. You won't need a great deal for your lifespan."

Grimes looked puzzled - Millicent clarified.

"Not even THRUSH trusts a man whose loyalty is for sale."

#364: Endgame - Pt 6 of 8

Alexander looked to the THRUSH chief.

"What are your intentions?"

"You two are our bargaining chip against Mister Solo."

"Oh, I highly doubt that, sir."

"Why is that, Waverly?"

"Dead hostages aren't worth a thing."

The THRUSH chief's eyes narrowed.

"Suicide, Waverly?"

Alexander reached out, taking Millicent's free hand in his own.

"More a pre-emptive strike. We agreed long ago that we'd never allow ourselves to be used against the organization we dedicated our lives to."

"You can't prevent it."

"On the contrary. Can you imagine the amount of C4 a wheelchair frame holds?"

#365: Endgame - Pt 7 of 8

The THRUSH chief stared at Millicent's wheelchair, paling as her hand moved, reveling a descending LED counter.

"Alexander and I are quite content to leave this world together. If, however, the rest of you prefer not to join us, you have just under three minutes to evacuate the area. Unless someone believes they
could undo Mister Kuryakin's work in that amount of time?"

Following the activated tracer attached to Mrs. Waverly's brooch, Napoleon, Illya and a team of a
dozen other agents arrived in time to see THRUSH abandoning the building like rats off a sinking
ship.

#366: Endgame - Pt 8 of 8

Leaving the others to corral THRUSH, Napoleon and Illya hurried inside to find the Waverlys
laughing. Illya pulled out his lockpicking tools as Napoleon checked for injuries.

"Dare we ask what's so funny?"

"Alexander convinced THRUSH that Illya rigged my wheelchair with C4."

"We convinced them, Millicent. You were right, Mister Kuryakin. LED clocks are quite handy.
Especially the stopwatch function."

"Remind me never to play poker with either of you."

Heads turned as April and Mark entered.

"We've got them all - except Grimes. THRUSH thought they'd been double-crossed - he's dead."

"No loss, Mister Slate."

#367: Stalled

"How close are we getting to the airstrip, tovarich?"

"We should be there in another hour give or take a few minutes."

cough

"That didn't sound good."

sputter

"Oh hell - our engine has stalled, Illya!"

"I know, Napoleon. Believe me, I am currently doing everything in my power to get it going again."

"We're losing altitude fast - is there anything I can do to help?"

"You might try praying."

"Wait - aren't you an atheist?"

"Yes. Hence why you should be doing the praying while I try everything else."

"Covering all the bases, chum?"

"Not limiting our options."
#368: Morning Routine

He stretched and yawned before turning to look at the trim female form still snuggled up against him. He nuzzled against her to start her on the way to waking.

One eye opened slightly, studying him before determinedly burrowing deeper into the blanket. An amused noise came from his throat as he nudged her again. With a soft grumble of resignation, she finally stretched and joined him.

They went side by side into the bathroom together and, a moment later, the tiles were echoing an unearthly yowl.

"Wellington - Lawan! Patience - I will feed you after I have finished drying off."

#369: Moral Support - Pt 1 of 17

"Good morning, gentlemen. Have you seen -?"

"April, thank goodness. We were trying to contact you all night."

"My communicator never went off, honest. What's wrong, Napoleon?"

"It's Mark."

"Oh, no - is he hurt?"

"No, not physically. There's been a death in his family - he's flying out this afternoon for Scotland."

"Oh no - not his grandmother?"

"I'm afraid so. He's pretty torn up."

"Napoleon, I don't want to leave you shorthanded -"

"Go. Pick up a new communicator pen first and pack a bag. I'll have a ticket waiting for you at the airport."

#370: Moral Support - Pt 2 of 17

"Mark, we've just gotten back from the funeral. Don't start going through things now - rest. Do you want to go back to the hotel?"

"The way that vulture was talking? No. I'll stay here until I've got the estate settled. Otherwise I'll come back and find she's left with everything including the wallpaper."

"Who is she, by the way?"

"She was married to the grandson of one of Gran's younger sisters."

"Was?"

"Divorced years ago - no children. Before I even joined UNCLE."

"Not a blood relation?"
"No relation at all since the divorce."

#371: Moral Support = Pt 3 of 17

April came back to the sound of rising voices.

"You're being unreasonable, Mark. She told me I could have whatever I wanted!"

"Then you should have chosen while she was alive to approve of it, Janice. She left the settling up of the estate to me. Everything - and I do mean everything - in this house has to be inventoried before the reading of the will next week. So kindly haul your arse out of here - let me get back to work."

As the woman stormed past her, April had a gut feeling. That one was going to be trouble.

#372: Moral Support - Pt 4 of 17

Mark insisted that April do some sightseeing. She was unpleasantly surprised to return to find a doctor attending Mark.

"Is he alright? What happened?"

The doctor, who looked to be Mister Waverly's contemporary, spoke soothingly.

"He'll be alright, Miss. Apparently, a shingle came off the roof and clipped his head. Fortunately it wasn't a direct hit or we might be at the morgue."

"From a shingle?"

The doctor looked puzzled, then seemed to understand. He showed her a flat grey stone resting on the table.

"This is the shingle, my dear. This home has a slate roof."

#373: Moral Support - Pt 5 of 17

The family's solicitor came by with more paperwork for Mark. April quietly called him to the side as he was getting ready to leave.

"Excuse me, Mister Dawes. Could I ask you to clarify something for me?"

"I will certainly try, Miss Dancer."

"If anything were to happen to Mark, what would happen to the estate?"

The question caused him to raise a brow and take hold of her arm.

"I think perhaps we might need to sit down for this one, dear lady. The old caretaker's house is empty but in good repair. Shall we speak there?"

#374: Moral Support - Pt 6 of 17

Mister Dawes led the way to the caretaker's house with the air of someone who knew every inch of
the property well, including where the key was kept behind a trellis of roses. Once they were both seated in ancient looking but sturdy wooden chairs, he began.

"I shouldn't say anything, but since you don't seem to have a concern beyond young Mark's welfare, I will say that should anything happen, the estate will be thrown into a state that it will likely take years to sort out."

April frowned, leaning forward.

"May I ask why?"

#375: Moral Support - Pt 7 of 17

"Well, you see, Isabella was very active in the community and left a sizable part of her estate to various causes, but she never bothered to write down which ones were to get the bequest. She told it all to young Mark over the years - left it for him to sort out. Were anything to happen to him before the reading, it would likely be contested. I know Janice has made inquiries regarding it."

"But she isn't related."

"Actually, she is. Her husband had filed for divorce, but died before it was finalized. She's legally still his widow."

#376: Moral Support - Pt 8 of 17

Hearing about Janice set April's alarms off. She thanked Mister Dawes before heading back to the main house, determined Mark would be in her sight as much as possible until the will was read.

She entered the study to find Mark with his head in his hands.

"Headache, darling?"

"You've no idea. Gran, bless her, had her own way of doing things. She wanted an open house party on the night before reading the will."

"I might not be able to help with most of this, but let me worry about the party."

"You're an angel, luv."

#377: Moral Support - Pt 9 of 17

It was three days before the reading of the will. Mark had finally made enough headway with the inventory that he allowed himself some time for fresh air and invited April to join him for a walk around the property. The time of year was right for the heather to be in bloom and the hillsides were patches of brilliant purple.

Mark was pointing out spots and telling her some amusing tales from his youth when he suddenly stopped talking and shoved her down. The rifle shot was still echoing as April frantically looked to where her partner was lying.
"Mark!"

The groan was a reassuring sign of life, but April winced when she saw blood on his hand as it emerged from underneath him.

"Ow. April? Are you alright?"

"I'm fine. You're the one bleeding."

"I know. Dammit - could you lend a fellow a hand here, luv?"

"Mark, you probably shouldn't move. Let me go get the doctor."

"Stay here? Are you insane?"

"Alright, alright - let me . . . wait, what's this?"

"I landed on some ruddy thistle plants. Oh - laughter? Thanks for the sympathy."

"No, no - it's not that. I thought you'd been shot."

---

#379: Moral Support - Pt 11 of 17

On the night of the open house, April spent a large portion of her time extending Mark's apologies.

"There was a small accident the other day. The doctor has him on bedrest, but says Mark should be fine to attend the reading of the will tomorrow."

As a local began demonstrating his skills at the bagpipes, a lone figure slipped away and headed stealthily upstairs to the master bedroom. As door opened slowly, the light revealed a hint of blond hair peeking out from the quilts. Light also glinted off a gun barrel as the shadowy figure took aim.

#380: Moral Support - Pt 12 of 17

A cool voice spoke from another shadowed area down the hall.

"It would not be in your best interest to pull that trigger."

The gun shifted to point at the pale blond dressed in black who had emerged into sight when the sound of another throat clearing made it freeze.

"Not in your best interest to shoot my partner either. In fact, if you care to remain healthy, I suggest you lower your gun now."

The bagpipes had just silenced when a gun shot rang out upstairs. Janice sat back, smiling into her glass as April ran for the stairs.

#381: Moral Support - Pt 13 of 17

April's heart was in her throat as she reached the top of the stairs. Napoleon and Illya were looking down at a body. She breathed again when Mark appeared in the doorway.

"Mark? Who is it?"
"He looks like a bloke Janice used to date years back. I don't recall his name. Is he dead?"

Napoleon shook his head.

"Sleep dart."

"Good. Less paperwork to fill out. April? Mind heading back down and see the folks out?"

"I'll try, darling, but how do I explain the gun shot?"

"Noisy radiators. Trust me - they can make a racket."

#382: Moral Support - Pt 14 of 17

Janice wasn't sure what to think when April quickly wrapped up the open house and sent everyone on their way. She was even less sure what to think when Craig didn't meet her at her home. She could hardly go back to the house and ask about him though, so she would just have to wait for the reading of the will.

When the time came for all to gather for the formal reading, Janice barely managed to conceal her frown when Mark entered the room - hale, hearty and most definitely still alive.

"Well, shall we begin then?"

#383: Moral Support - Pt 15 of 17

Sitting quietly by Mark's side, April wrapped her right hand around his left as the family solicitor read the will aloud. She quickly saw what Mister Dawes had meant about the will being contested if Mark had died.

The reading only took a few minutes. Isabella had bequeathed her house, property and a quarter of her other worldly possessions to her beloved grandson Mark Slate with the other seventy-five percent of the worth of her estate to go toward her final expenses and the remainder to be divided equally among her favored charities - none of which were named.

#384: Moral Support - Pt 16 of 17

The local police inspector and two constables were waiting. As Janice was taken into custody, she alternated between protesting her innocence and screaming at Mark.

Mark didn't even have time to take an easy breath before representatives of various institutions descended - each trying to lay claim to part of the estate. It took an hour to send them on their way.

Illya recognized Mark's look, guiding him to a quiet room, speaking softly before leaving him alone.

"We must give him a minute. Too much has happened too quickly and left him no time to mourn his loss."

#385: Moral Support - Pt 17 of 17

It was an hour before Mark rejoined them.
"I want to thank you all for sticking by me through this. Irony is? She didn't leave much. She was generous while she was alive. Never believed in hanging onto things just to have them. After funeral expenses, the charities will only see a hundred pounds each, if that."

"Are you keeping the house, darling?"

A hand on the wall, he shook his head.

"Maybe it was growing up during the bombings, but I've never gotten attached to houses. I'll worry about that later. Let's go home, mates."

#386: Mark’s Birthday - January 29

"It just occurred to me what day it is, darling. We're flying back to New York on your birthday and I haven't planned a thing."

"April, don't worry about that, luv. After everything that's been going on, I'm perfectly alright with this birthday just slipping by.

"You're sure?"

"Positive. I'm actually thinking of returning to work as a present of sorts."

"How's that, Mark?"

"I guess that I've discovered I prefer total strangers trying to kill me as opposed to relations trying to off me."

"Leave it to the pros?"

"Exactly."

#387: Double Cross

"Illya? Wake up."

groan

"Napoleon - please, no. It has been three days since I have gotten more than an hour of sleep at a time."

"I know. Sorry, chum, but it looks like we've been double-crossed by our local contact. We need to disappear."

"Chyort - you and I will not be able to blend very well with the local population well."

"True - neither of us resemble your average Thai on the street."

"Perhaps I can pull off looking like a half-asleep Thai."

"Right now, chum? You'd probably only be able to pull off a Thai zombie."

#388: At a Loss
"So . . ."

"So."

"This is bad."

"I know. This is the last thing I expected to happen, tovarich."

"Maybe it is because I am awake. You always find something to talk about if I am trying to sleep."

"Just what I needed - stuck in a cell with a funny Russian."

"Napoleon?"

"Yes, partner?"

"Does talking about having nothing to talk about count as having something to talk about?"

"Hm. You know, odd as that sounds, I think it does. So we haven't run out of things to talk about."

"Of course, I am not convinced that is a good thing."

#389: Wounded

"How is he?"

"As well as can be expected. The bullet didn't do as much damage as it could have, still it didn't do him any favors."

"There won't be any lasting damage, will there?"

"We won't know for sure until he wakes up and we check his responses, but I expect him to recover fully, Mister Solo."

"Good. Illya will be happy to hear that."

"He's the owner, isn't he? I can't imagine why anyone would shoot a man carrying his cat. How is he, by the way?"

"Like Wellington here. Recovering."

#390: Another Groundhog Day

"February second. Groundhog Day is upon us once again, Napoleon. Would you like to celebrate it with me by coming over to my apartment and eating sausages?"

"Didn't we go over this last year, Illya? It's not a pork holiday."

"I know, I do remember. However, when faced with the choice of watching a rodent to see if it will come out of a hole to see its shadow or eating sausages? Sausages won out."

"You have a valid point there, chum. Sure, I'll come. Anything I can bring to go with sausages?"

"Beer would be pleasant."
"Open Channel D. Come in, Mister Waverly."

"Waverly here. Anything to report, Mister Slate?"

"All the THRUSH had fled the lab by the time we arrived, sir. We found Illya, but no sign of Napoleon."

"What is Mister Kuryakin's condition?"

"According to the machines he's hooked up to, he's asleep - but we haven't been able to wake him, sir."

"Get him out of there and to Medical with all due haste before resuming the search for Mister Solo."

"Yessir. Slate out."

"Mark?"

"Yes, luv?"

"Look at these records. Illya's been like this for thirteen hours."

Despite his unease about the situation, Mark had done exactly as Mister Waverly had ordered - gotten Illya to Medical, then headed back to see if they could figure out where Napoleon was. They weren't even positive whether THRUSH had him or if he was currently busy evading them.

The doctors quickly began their examination of Illya. It didn't take them long to determine that the blond agent was in REM sleep. What they couldn't determine was why they couldn't rouse him from it. Not with noise, not with pain. They didn't dare to try drugs.

"Report, Doctor?"

Doctor Filleman jumped, not having heard Mister Waverly entering the area to stand by Kuryakin's bed. He quickly swallowed, trying to regain his composure.

"Agent Kuryakin's blood work shows a drug in his system that we have not been able to identify. It's the only abnormality we can find, so it must be what is causing this."

"Prognosis?"

"We have inserted a feeding tube into Mister Kuryakin as well as an IV. We are keeping his body going and hope that when the drug is out of his system, he'll wake on his own."

"Open Channel D - international relay to New York. Solo to Waverly."
"Waverly here, Mister Solo. It is a relief to hear from you at last. Where are you?"

"Believe it or not, Uruguay. I've managed to get away from THRUSH and retrieve my communicator, but I'm stranded without funds or identification."

"We have people close enough to that region that can reach you in about four hours. Can you continue to evade THRUSH that long?"

"Not as if there's an alternative, sir. I'll do my best. How's Illya?"

"First worry about extracting yourself, Mister Solo."

---

#395: Sleep - Pt 5 of 10

It was approaching midnight when an exhausted Napoleon finally boarded the plane that would start his journey back to New York.

Much as he desperately needed the rest, Napoleon was finding it hard to fall asleep. He'd wished he'd been told something - anything - about Illya. He hoped that whatever was actually wrong with his partner wasn't as bad as what his mind kept dreaming up.

Glancing out of the airplane's small window at the moon, his body finally pulled his tired mind into a deep sleep. He only woke long enough to change planes in Miami.

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#396: Sleep - Pt 6 of 10

April and Mark were waiting at the airport to pick Napoleon up.

"You look a bit rumpled, darling."

"Love you too, April. Considering my ride down to Uruguay was inside of a baggage compartment of a plane that seemed to have trouble staying aloft, I think I look pretty good. Never mind that though. How's Illya?"

"I wish we had good news for you, mate. Whatever drug they stuck into Illya put him into a deep sleep and, even though the lab says the drug should be out of his system now, he's not responding."

"Take me there."

---

#397: Sleep - Pt 7 of 10

There were no pleasantries of any sort when Napoleon came through the entrance. He didn't even pause to report to Mister Waverly. He made a straight bee-line to Medical, not stopping until he reached Illya's side.

Paying no mind to the doctors and nurses, Napoleon took hold of his partner's wrist, feeling the steady pulse beneath his fingertips. It was obvious Illya had lost weight and his coloration was poor, still - nothing that couldn't be dealt with once they got him to wake up.

An idea formed - possibly crazy, but what was there to lose?

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#398: Sleep - Pt 8 of 10
When Napoleon made his proposal, doctors assigned to Illya's case immediately objected to the point of calling in Mister Waverly. The old gentleman moved to stand by Illya's bedside, looking down at the sleeping agent while listening first to Napoleon's plan and then to the doctor's objections. Once they were done, he turned, fixing his gaze on the lead doctor.

"Have your attempts brought any results?"

"No, sir, but -"

"Have you something new to try?"

"No, sir - still -"

"Then do as Mister Solo wishes. If it fails, we will hardly be any worse off, will we?"

#399: Sleep - Pt 9 of 10

Napoleon watched as the feeding tube and IVs were removed from Illya and the monitors disconnected. Mark assisted Napoleon in moving Illya out of Medical and to the section of the building where hotel-like rooms were set up for when special security was needed. April was waiting and already had one of the twin beds ready. Once Illya was settled, she and Mark retreated to the small sitting room.

Napoleon settled on the other bed, closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

"Illya?"

. . . .

"Illya?"

As the blond made a soft noise and shifted slightly, Napoleon began smiling again.

#400: Sleep - Pt 10 of 10

Napoleon leaned closer.

"Illya?"

He was rewarded by a glimpse of blue.

"Easy, partner. Take it slow. Mark - April! Bring some water, please? Illya could use a drink."

Sipping the water slowly, Illya took in the story the three of them told. It seemed almost unbelievable, but the state of his own body served as proof. Then a small smirk formed.

"What's so funny, chum?"

"The hours you spent conditioning me to wake up when you are bored proved stronger than the THRUSH drug."

In the hallway, Mister Waverly heard the laughter, chuckled lightly and returned to his office.
**#401: Trading Duties?**

"Anything, Napoleon?"

"Only sore ears from listening to four hours of music so dull that it makes Muzak seem toe-tapping in comparison.

"All part of the glamorous life of a spy, my friend. If you like, next time we can trade duties."

"Really? And what is it that you're doing?"

"I have been checking the pipes and tanks to see of anything of interest was flushed."

"Tanks. As in septic tanks?"

"One and the same."

. . . . .

"You know, Illya? After you listen to it for awhile, this music kind of grows on you."

"I had a feeling it might."

---

**#402: Valentine's Raffle**

"What's with all the money, April? Rob a bank?"

"Hardly, Napoleon. This is all thanks to your partner."

"Illya donated all that?"

"No, silly. He's allowing us to raffle off a Valentine's Day date with him."

"That sounds hard to believe. What's the money for?"

"Remember Agent Anders? He was supporting his kid sister. We're going to do several money raising events to create a scholarship for her. It was all Illya's idea, so he thought that he should kick off the fund raising."

"Yes, I remember Anders. Put me down for two tickets."

---

**#403: Raffle Winner**

"What's this, Napoleon?"

"It's called a raffle ticket, April."

"That much I knew, but why are you giving it to me? Wait - you won?"

"I did."
"How do you plan to tell Illya?"

"I don't - that's why I'm giving the ticket to you."

"I can't win - I was the one selling the tickets."

"Well, I'm not going out on a date with my partner."

"Wait - what if you bought them for someone else?"

"Who?"

"I bet your aunt wouldn't turn down a nice dinner out."

"April, you're a genius."

"I know."

#404: A Little Too Perfect

"Napoleon! How very nice of you to drop by."

"How's my favorite aunt tonight?"

meorow

"I see you, too - how are you, Tri?"

chuckle

"We're both fine. That reminds me. I wanted to thank you for that ticket. It was a lovely dinner."

"Did my partner behave himself?"

"A perfect gentleman. A little too perfect."

"Aunt Amy!"

"Honestly, Napoleon. Old doesn't equal dead."

"You know, Mrs. Waverly once said something very similar to me."

"She sounds like the type of woman that I would like."

"I'd be scared to have you both in the same room"

#405: Home Protection

After the first noise from the entryway, he had taken a higher vantage point. The pale blue eyes glittered coldly in the dim light as they focused on the door.

The burglar never saw who was watching him from above as he moved further into the room.

The attack was swift - without mercy. The burglar's screams in the dead of the night quickly caused the police to be summoned.
As the would be thief was led away in handcuffs, Tri gave him a disdainful glance. The praise and treats from his human were accepted graciously as his just rewards.

#406: Alone - Pt 1 of 20

April shivered in the sparse room. The bed was of no help in getting warm - it was nothing but a bare mattress on a frame. Everything had been taken from her including her earrings and she'd been given nothing but a thin, over-sized man's undershirt to put back on. It didn't help that her hair was still damp from where they'd pulled her from the water.

She gave herself a moment to grieve - they told her Mark never made it back to the surface. Then, blinking back the tears, she turned her attention to escaping.

#407: Alone - Pt 2 of 20

The bruises on his face and torso were already beginning to color, but he'd been through worse interrogations. Now, alone in the cold room, he shivered involuntarily. All of his clothing was gone, replaced with shorts at least three sizes too large.

Mark found it hard to believe that April had drowned - she was a strong swimmer, but even the strongest swimmer didn't stand a chance if they were unconscious. Closing his eyes, he pictured her then took a deep breath. He wanted his pound of flesh for her death, but first, he had to get himself free.

#408: Alone - Pt 3 of 20

A grey drizzle was falling that made the night even darker with no moonlight penetrating the cloud cover. April eased open the room's solitary window. There were no bars - apparently the height off the ground was meant to be a sufficient deterrent.

Reaching a hand out, she felt the rough hewn stones that formed the outer wall of her prison. Larger hands and feet might not have been able to get a proper grip, but she felt sure that she could manage.

Taking a deep breath, she eased backwards out of the window, her cold toes feeling for purchase.

#409: Alone - Pt 4 of 20

Mark grimaced as he leaned out of the window to survey the situation. The way down was rough hewn, but there wasn't enough space for him to be able to get a decent grip - especially with wet stones.

Shifting his attention upwards, he shielded his eyes from the drizzle. The building's upper floors had the stones alternating from indented to jutting out, forming a pattern. Down wasn't an option, but up? Knotting the shorts to keep them from sliding off of him, Mark eased himself out of the window and began his slow climb to the roof.

#410: Alone - Pt 5 of 20

April's fingers and toes were raw feeling when the sound of footsteps had her freezing in position about twelve feet off the ground. Glancing down, she saw a guard wearing rain gear coming around
the building for a smoke break. The raised hood and his tilted head prevented him from spotting her.

She quickly calculated risk versus gain. She needed a weapon and a better shot at getting one was unlikely. She needed to hit fast and hard - he was larger. There wouldn't be a second chance. All or nothing - she shoved herself loose and dropped on him.

#411: Alone - Pt 6 of 20

Mark's fingers were damp with both rain and blood as he neared the top. He bit back a curse when a voice came from above him.

"Keep coming slowly or I'll blow your head off."

When he reached the roof, Mark was forced to stand with his hands behind his head - then the storm granted him a reprieve. One of the features on the roof was a lightning rod which picked that moment to do its job and attract a bolt. The noise and searing light behind him startled the guard - Mark didn't hesitate to take advantage.

#412: Alone - Pt 7 of 20

April was breathing deeply to get her adrenaline levels back under control as she knelt by the guard's dead body. Much as she preferred not to take a life whenever it could be avoided, she was now operating by a motto Illya had taught her in training - when outnumbered, mercy is a luxury that too often comes back to bite you in the rear.

His belt was a web belt, so she appropriated that along with his shirt, pants, rain gear and weapons. His shoes were too large to be anything but a hindrance, so those were left behind.

#413: Alone - Pt 8 of 20

The man Mark had taken down was shorter, but a bit larger. Regardless, he'd call far less unwanted attention to himself fully dressed. Eyes unusually hard, Mark had entered a mindset foreign to him. He didn't care whether he ever left this satrip or not. He was going to pull it down and if that meant he had to go down with it? So be it.

As Mark started downstairs, a quote came unbidden to his brain - 'the most fearsome adversary is one who is willing to be destroyed for revenge'. Time to test the truth of that.

#414: Alone - Pt 9 of 20

April's first priority was to get out of sight. She needed to find shelter and she needed to find a phone. She found a semi-sheltered area in some thick brush near the gate guardhouse. She used the dead man's knife to cut the pants into strips that she used to wrap her feet to give them some protection.

The table-top radio in the guardhouse came to life. The report that one of the prisoners escaped didn't hold her attention. The report that the escaped prisoner was loose inside of the building and causing havoc did.

#415: Alone - Pt 10 of 20
"I am impressed, Hines. Capturing two of their agents alive. How did you manage it?"

"I must confess that sheer luck had a great deal to do with it, sir. One of my men recognized Miss Dancer when they chartered a small boat for the afternoon. We took advantage of the situation."

"Excellent work. Have you kept them separated?"

"Yessir. In fact, they both think that the other is dead."

"That was a bad idea, Hines. Their partnerships tend to be close."

"They were stripped and tossed into near barren cells. What could they do?"

explosion

"You'd be surprised."

---

#416: Alone - Pt 11 of 20

Mark cleared rooms as he came to them, collecting anything he came across that might help destroy the building. When he found a maintenance closet, he hit the jackpot. Almost everything inside was highly flammable.

Looking over the larger containers, Mark knew that some of them would explode when hot enough. For a moment, he pondered if the fire might spread too quickly, but he cut off the line of thought. Starting a fire in one corner, he vacated quickly, heading for the stairs. He'd barely made it down to the next floor when the first explosion sounded above.

---

#417: Alone - Pt 12 of 20

April wondered briefly if the message over the radio had been bait designed to try and lure her out. Her concern over that ended when she heard the explosion. So, she hadn't been the only prisoner - whoever else they'd taken was still in that building and fighting back. Whoever it was, they were outnumbered. They could use help and she could certainly do with a little payback on them herself.

First, she eased inside the gatehouse, quickly surveying the controls and accessing them to secure the gate. Then she flipped another switch, plunging the outer compound into darkness.

---

#418: Alone - Pt 13 of 20

Mark took down another guard, pausing to swipe blood away from his eyes before stripping the guard's equipment. He added them to his own and continued on his path. Visibility was starting to get a bit dodgy by the time he approached the ground floor from the fires he left burning behind him.

Shots ringing out near the door drew his attention - Mark froze as he saw April, very alive, positioned there. She looked up, spotting him as another shot rang out. Mark dropped, tumbling down the few remaining stairs before coming to a rest on the bottom step.

---

#419: Alone - Pt 14 of 20

The elder THRUSH chief tried to regain control while simultaneously degrading Hines, who he held
responsible for the mess. He saw Hines freeze, then followed his eyes to the stairs where he saw one of the UNCLE agents. Before he could say a word, Hines fired and the agent tumbled down the stairs.

"Idiot! You can't get information from a dead -"

Hines ignored his superior, shifting his aim. Another shot rang out. Hines crumpled, his gun dropping as a cold female voice spoke.

"You can surrender or I can shoot you now. I'm equally good with either option."

---

#420: Alone - Pt 15 of 20

There was a momentary sense of disappointment when the THRUSH chief put his hands up. April forced him outside, handcuffing him to the fence before heading back inside. She started toward Mark, but a familiar sound had her moving to Hines' body. She quickly found the source - their communicator pens.

"Dancer here."

Napoleon's voice came over the tiny speaker.

"April, is everything alright? You and Mark didn't make your scheduled call-in."

She swallowed hard.

"No. Our boat was rammed and - I need help."

Napoleon noticed her use of the singular.

"Illya and I are on the way."

---

#421: Alone - Pt 16 of 20

Now that contact had been made, April headed back toward the stairs to where Mark was. She automatically wiped some of the blood away from over his eye, then stared at his forehead as more blood came from the head wound. She recalled a saying she'd been told about dead bodies not bleeding and reached out with shaky fingers for Mark's neck. It took a moment, but she felt his heart beat beneath her fingertips.

There was no more hesitation as she activated her pen.

"Open Channel D - calling Napoleon Solo."

"Napoleon here."

"Bring Medical. Mark's alive."

---

#422: Alone - Pt 17 of 20

April hated having to move Mark when she didn't know how badly he was hurt, but they couldn't stay in a burning building until help arrived. He weighed considerably more than she did, so there was only so gentle she could be as she hooked her arms under his and pulled him out.
The only good thing about this was that the remaining lesser rats had already jumped ship and she didn't have to worry about dealing with them. The THRUSH chief was saying some uncomplimentary things, but honestly? She had more important things to deal with.

---

**#423: Alone - Pt 18 of 20**

Mark didn't regain consciousness until the next day. It took a moment for the sounds and smells of Medical to register with him enough for him to risk opening his eyes. He immediately regretted that. His head hadn't pounded so badly since his first serious introduction to hard liquor.

A cool cloth settled over his eyes and the relief was immense, but not as immense as the sound of the voice he heard.

"Don't scrunch up your face, darling. I'm sure your head aches enough without making it do contortions."

"You're alive."

"So are you."

---

**#424: Alone - Pt 19 of 20**

The doctor came in after April informed him that Mark had woken up. After a brief examination, the doctor left to make his report to Mister Waverly and they had a few minutes alone. April laid her hand over Mark's.

"You started all that ruckus when you still thought I was dead, didn't you?"

"I didn't know you were alive until I saw you in that doorway. I thought I was hallucinating."

"How were you expecting to get out?"

The pause told her his answer.

"Oh, Mark - never do that again. Promise me."

"Alright, luv. For you."

---

**#425: Alone - Pt 20 of 20**

"So, let me get this straight, Mister Waverly. THRUSH rammed the boat your agents were on, sank it, kept them seperated and told both that the other one drown after they were fished out of the water?"

"Correct."

"Then they locked them up in in fairly barren rooms without so much as a stitch of their own clothing?"

"Also correct"

"Even with that, they escaped their respective cells, captured a THRUSH chief and destroyed a previously unknown satrip?"
"You seem to have the essential facts, Mister Cutter."

"You're right. I want them to teach a session at Survival School."

---

**#426: Extraction**

"Just relax, lay back and let me do all the work, Napoleon."

"Easy, Illya! Slower, please."

"If I go any slower, I will stop completely."

"Fine by me. That hurts."

"You are acting as if this were your first time."

"Hardly the first time, but I don't think I've ever had anything penetrate this deeply before."

"Kindly do not squirm or I will never finish. Almost there - finally."

"Please tell me that was it?"

"Yes Napoleon. I have it pulled out now."

"Felt like it was a foot long."

"Hardly. For a thorn though, it was very long."

---

**#427: Scrabble**

"Tell me again - why are we playing Scrabble?"

"Because, Napoleon, we are not allowed to leave this room until we receive the all-clear from Mister Waverly. The television is broken, there is no radio and the only deck of playing cards is missing three of the cards."

"With the lack of other accommodations here, how did you manage to scare up a Scrabble set?"

"It was in the closet under a layer of dust."

"The dust was probably the remains of the owner. He must've died of boredom."

"Dying of boredom is wishful thinking."

"Is, isn't it?"

---

**#428: Keeping Track**

"Illya - just the man I wanted to see."

"You and I share an office, Napoleon. I am not that difficult to find."

"When you spend time in our office, no. But you've been in the labs a lot. It's hard to pick you out from all those other white coats."
"Had you considered just using my name?"

"Last time I yelled in the labs, Mister Waverly made me pay for the equipment that was ruined in the acid spill."

"You could have simply asked for me instead of bellowing."

"Funny. That's the same thing Mister Waverly said."

---

### 429: Wallflowers

"I feel like a wallflower just sitting here watching them."

"I know, Napoleon. I suppose I can see where April and Illya want to keep up the dances they learned though."

"True. Sort of like keeping up the combat skills. Might not need them today, but you never know when they might come in handy on assignment."

"They look like they're having fun though."

"They do, don't they, Mark?"

"Instead of sitting, we could try our luck with the birds here."

"I know several dances, but the Merengue isn't one of them."

"Me either. Another drink?"

"Sure."

---

### 430: Imagine

"Illya? Ever wondered what it would be like to be a woman?"

"Truthfully, I cannot say that I have given it any thought. From the question, might I assume that you have?"

"Oh sure."

"An example, please?"

"I wonder about how I would react if a guy approached me like I approach women."

"Let me see if I understand this correctly - you are trying to determine if you would be able to pick yourself up?"

"Well, I wouldn't have put it quite that way -"

"But?"

"But - yeah. I suppose."

"Everyone is right. Even you are not safe from you."
#431: On the Job Injury

"Good morning, Napoleon. How are you?"

"I'll live, but I'm sore. Embarrassed."

"Are you not the one who once told me that unusual injuries are part of the job?"

"I didn't mean this unusual."

"Camels are ill tempered beasts."

"Yes - very. If I ever see one again, it will be too soon."

"Does resting on your stomach help?"

"A little. What are you doing?"

"Just checking your bruising."

"Vivid?"

"Very. The teeth marks are easily seen. But look on the bright side."

"There's a bright side?"

"Yes. Mister Waverly approved the replacement cost of your trousers."

#432: Our Man Flint

"Hey, Illya! Let's catch a movie tonight. We'll grab April and Mark as well."

"If you drag me to another Bond film, I will not be responsible for my actions."

"No Bond movie. Promise."

. . . .

"I am not talking to you."

"Aw, come on, Illya. It wasn't a Bond movie."

"And a spoof of a Bond movie was supposed to be an improvement?"

"What did you think, April?"

"You have to admit it was close to the same thing, Napoleon."

"I liked it."

"You also liked 'The Russians are Coming'."

"Did you have to bring that up, Mark?"

#433: St Patrick's Day
"You aren't wearing green."

"A very astute observation, Napoleon. If a bit of a peculiar one. Should I be wearing green?"

"Well, it is St. Patrick's Day, tovarich."

"How would that concern me as I am neither a Catholic nor Irish?"

"Good morning, my dears! Illya - you aren't wearing green."

"Good morning, April. Should I be preparing myself for people commenting on my lack of green clothing all day?"

"Not at all - I came bearing a gift."

"A green tie?"

"It will stop folks from commenting on you not wearing green."

"Hand it over."

"You're welcome."

---

**#434: On the Run - Pt 1 of 11**

Breathing hard, he took refuge in a patch of deep shadows, still clinging to the too still body of his partner. There was a lot of blood, but most of it seemed to have come from their contact. That man had never even stood a chance - he was obviously the primary target, but the assassins hadn't struck quickly enough. The information had already been passed.

A not quite steady hand felt for and found a strong pulse. It was the only measure of reassurance he could find as he tried to peer into the dark to get his bearings.

---

**#435: On the Run - Pt 2 of 11**

The next spot he found to hide them afforded a little light. Enough that he could finally find where the newest blood had been coming from. Nothing either of them is wearing was still what could be called clean, but first order of business was to stop the bleeding. He decided infection would be worried about later as he careful ripped off a section of already tattered shirt. He tried to make as little noise as possible. Drawing attention again would be very bad.

Satisfied that he's stopped the flow, he shifted and got ready to move them again.

---

**#436: On the Run - Pt 3 of 11**

As he was about to move them again, a blinding bright searchlight pierced the darkness. Suddenly grateful for their grubbiness, he dropped them back to the ground. A voice boomed out - probably over a megaphone.

"Mister Solo - Mister Kuryakin. You may as well surrender now. It will go far easier on you. There is no escape."

The loud voice brought the first signs of life from his partner. A good sign, but at a bad time. Any
thrasing would draw attention to them and he knows THRUSH's idea of easier is a quick death versus a drawn out one.

**#437: On the Run - Pt 4 of 11**

Mentally apologizing, he began to use more of the ruined shirt, this time as ties to keep his partner from moving too much while still unaware. There was small comfort in the fact that the voice was continuing to try persuading them to surrender, but speaking in different directions. It meant they didn't know where they were.

"Be reasonable. We saw the blood - one of you was hit. You have fifteen minutes to reconsider your very limited options before my handlers arrive with the dogs."

He suddenly felt a lot more sympathetic toward his partner's dislike of dogs.

**#438: On the Run - Pt 5 of 11**

Napoleon was actually doing what the THRUSH man suggested - going over his options. He remembered something Illya had shown him weeks before - an adjustment that could be done to a communicator pen that would create a high pitched sound that would repel dogs. He really wished he'd paid closer attention at the time.

Pulling out Illya's communicator, Napoleon fidgeted with it as best as he could remember. Shame there was no way to test it before the dogs came, but even if it didn't work, they wouldn't be any worse off. Or that was his hope.

**#439: On the Run - Pt 6 of 11**

A van pulled into the clearing and Napoleon swallowed hard as he saw five dogs being unloaded. Large, shaggy dogs - a breed he didn't recognize. His attention was drawn to one of the men who was starting to approach the dogs holding a plastic bag containing a scrap of cloth. It came to Napoleon that the men had probably rubbed a piece of cloth over some of Illya's blood. Closing his eyes in silent prayer, he activated the pen before the man opened the bag.

His breath caught in his throat as the five dogs froze in unison.

**#440: On the Run - Pt 7 of 11**

No-one was more surprised than Napoleon when the dogs sat. Raising their noses to the skies, their howling filled the night air. Napoleon looked from the dogs to the pen, smiling as the men began yelling over the howls - only managing to add to the chaos.

Napoleon carefully used a small scrap of the shirt to tie Illya's pen firmly to a nearby bush. Then he picked up his partner and quickly headed them toward the abandoned van. With all the arguing going on, there was no worry about stealth. They just needed to stay out of sight.

**#441: On the Run - Pt 8 of 11**

Napoleon had managed to ease the passenger door open and get Illya inside when he was spotted. While he still couldn't hear anything over the howling and yelling, the window of the door exploding
in a shower of glass told him they were in deep trouble.

He ducked down, then the entire area suddenly lit up like broad daylight. It had the effect of getting the dogs to pause their howls, allowing everyone to hear the helicopter along with a very familiar voice coming over a loudspeaker.

"Throw down your weapons now. You are surrounded."

Napoleon slumped in relief.

---

#442: On the Run - Pt 9 of 11

The helicopter touched down not too far from the van and a hunched over figure immediately got out, hurrying over. Napoleon smiled in greeting.

"Mark, it was so good to hear your voice that I could've kissed you."

"None of that, mate - you ruined my reputation badly enough that time in Paris. Where's Illya?"

"I managed to get him into the van. We need to get him to Medical ASAP."

"Let's carry him over to the helicopter. Fastest way to get him there. April's with the ground forces. She'll take care of the netted birds."

---

#443: On the Run - Pt 10 of 11

Mark noted, but didn't question the ties as they moved Illya. Napoleon settled by Illya, keeping a protective hand on his partner's arm.

"Not to question good fortune, but how did you find us?"

Mark's voice rose as the helicopter blades picked up speed for liftoff.

"We were searching the general area we knew you were in when those dogs howled and drew the ground crew's attention. April used night vision goggles for a visual confirmation, sent us the coordinates and voila."

"The tracking dogs worked better for us than they did for THRUSH."

"Thankfully so."

---

#444: On the Run - Pt 11 of 11

"Hey there. Good to see those blue eyes again, chum. Sorry I wasn't here when you first woke up."

"Do not apologize. I was being cared for and you needed the rest. Mark told me some of what you went through to get us away."

"Part of that credit goes to you. I never would have thought of altering our pens to affect dogs. Even if I did it wrong and got them howling instead of running."

"From what Mark told me, that was for the best. It drew the right attention."
"Your inventiveness and my luck. Winning combination."

#445: Gelatin

"Free again - just in time for the weekend. Mister Waverly said he doesn't expect to see us until Monday morning."

"That is good. I could use some recovery time from my recovery time."

"Me too. I never sleep as well in a hospital bed as I do my own."

"That is because you stay awake in order to flirt with the nurses."

"That might have something to do with it. So - what shall we do first, chum?"

"Guess."

"Eat?"

"You know me so well."

"Anywhere in particular?"

"Anywhere they do not consider green gelatin to be a food group."

#446: Eggs

"Napoleon?"

"Yes, Illya?"

"Why is there a pink basket on my desk?"

"I suspect for the same reason there was one on mine. Holiday happy April strikes again."

"The eggs are decorated quite beautifully. They - wait. They seem heavy."

"Just normal boiled eggs, chum."

"She spent all that time decorating the eggs without hollowing them first? What a shame."

"Why a shame? Don't you like boiled eggs?"

"I love boiled eggs, but the part that is decorated is not edible. I would have liked to have been able to keep them intact."

"Ah - I see what you mean now."

#447: Easter Brunch

"It was so kind of you to have us over for an Easter brunch, Aunt Amy."

"Oh, you are quite welcome, April. It's nice for Tri and I to have a little company now and then."
"Little Tri has certainly grown into a beauty. How old is he now?"

"Seven months yesterday, Mark. Seems like only yesterday you found him and the others in my closet."

"I certainly couldn't imagine life without Tri now. He's such a lovely companion. Napoleon, why don't you pass the deviled eggs to Illya? The dear boy's plate is empty."

---

**#448: Home Coming**

At the sound of the lock turning, Wellington and Lawan fled - each to their own favored vantage point. When the door opened, Lawan shook her head at the scent, knowing what the smell of antiseptic meant. Once Napoleon had helped Illya over to the couch, Lawan lightly jumped down and joined Wellington, both purring and rubbing against the blond in greeting.

"Quite a reception, chum. Need your prescription?"

"No need, Napoleon. There is no better sleep aid than a purring cat. Are you staying?"

"Yes. They may be good sleep aids, but I bet they stink at helping you walk."

---

**#449: Anniversary of Luna 4 Launch - April 2, 1964**

"Why are you looking at your calendar, chum?"

"Just remembering last year. It was this date a year ago when Luna 4 was launched to perform a moon landing by the Soviet Union."

"Really? I don't recall hearing about that."

"That is because they failed to make a course adjustment and missed the moon by around 8,400 kilometers. I have little doubt there were a few who found themselves in hot water over the incident."

"Well, no wonder I never heard of it."

"True. It is not the sort of incident that the space program cares to advertise."

---

**#450: Cry Me a River**

"Illya? Are you sure you're alright? Your eyes are streaming tears."

"Eye irritation, Napoleon. Nothing more serious than that."

"I don't know how you can see what you're doing."

"It is admittedly not as easy as I could wish it to be. I do not advise you to come any closer."

"Just wanted to see if I could help. Great - now my eyes are starting to water."

"I tried to warn you."

"You did. I should really have listened. I think that's the strongest onion I've ever smelled."
"A potent one at the very least."
#451: Memoriam

"We are gathered to remember James Bond, recently passed from this life. He was in his prime, but his time was tragically cut short. Though no longer in our midst, his memory remains."

As they walked away from the grave site, Millicent gave a light squeeze to her husband's arm.

"That was lovely, Alexander."

"That was possibly the silliest thing I have done in my life, Millicent."

"Just remember that you made our great-grandson feel better."

"Hopefully, he will keep his aquarium out of the cat's reach now."

"James Bond was an odd name for a goldfish."

#452: Death of Svend Fleuron April 5, 1966

"Svend Fleuron has died."

"That name sounds familiar."

"You glanced over one of his books at my apartment last week."

"That Danish one?"

"Yes. He was a popular author before the second World War."

"What happened?"

"He was labeled as a collaborator - based on being popular in Germany. Or at least, I have never heard of another reason. They expelled him from the Dutch Writers' Association and renamed a street that had been named for him."

"Ouch. They ever clear him?"

"In a way. They eventually offered to allow him to rejoin the writers' association, but he turned them down."

#453: One More Time

"Here we are again. We're in some forsaken over-heated backwater area, ducked down behind what little remains of a wall. And of course, we're outnumbered with people shooting at us. How do we keep managing to end up in these sorts of situations, Illya?"

"If I were to have to make a guess, I would highly suspect it has something to do with our choice of employer, Napoleon."

"We need to work on your understanding of sarcasm. That was meant to be a redundant question,
"I know - which is why I gave you a redundant answer."

---

**#454: Another Sleepless Night**

"Illya?"

*sigh*

"I heard that sigh."

"Since you are talking at three am, might I guess that this is another of those nights? What odd thoughts are keeping you awake tonight, Napoleon?"

"Just musings, chum. If someone were to walk up to you and offer you anything, what would you ask for?"

"Anything?"

"Anything non-edible."

"That narrows it down considerably. Hm - land."

"Land? Like a farm?"

"Not necessarily something so large. A spot to build a small home with a yard would suffice."

"Why land?"

"It would be nice to own something I cannot simply pick up and carry."

---

**#455: Joint Effort**

"Illya! Are you alright?"

"I . . . not sure, Napoleon. My head hurts very badly."

"I hate to ask this of you, chum, but can you move?"

"Yes. Think so."

"Easy. Don't get too far over the edge or you'll end up down here with me."

"I have found something to hang onto to steady me. Grab onto my hand."

"Got it! You just keep a firm grip - I'll try to climb up you. Almost there . . .

*retching*

"Sounds like you've got a concussion, tovarich. Here - use this to rinse your mouth, then let's get out of here."

---

**#456: Exceeding Expectations**
"Well, Doctor?"

The doctor glanced toward the room he'd left then turned back to Mister Waverly, shaking his head.

"Honestly, sir? I have no idea how they managed to make it the three miles that they did to find assistance. Given their injuries, I wouldn't have thought they could have even made a quarter of a mile. And now? A day later, they're in there joking with one another like they just got back from vacation."

"It has never ceased to amaze me what one can accomplish when they feel the life of another depends on them."

---

**#457: Training Aid**

"You can stop laughing any time now, you Russian hyena."

"Admit it, Napoleon. It is funny."

"No, it isn't."

"Someone release laughing gas in the ventilation shafts? I swear I hear Illya laughing."

"More like cackling, Mark darling. What's so funny?"

"You have not heard?"

"Illya . . ."

"This sounds like it will be good. Come on, spill."

"Mister Waverly has assembled a collection of old expense accounts submitted by Napoleon and is using them to train new accountants in the types of reimbursements that are not allowed."

"Darling - you're an official training aid!"

"Everyone's a comedian today."

---

**#458: Riding Lessons**

"Ah, the unmistakable smell of horse manure."

"There are worse scents, Napoleon. Everyone choose a horse to partner with."

"We appreciate you giving us a few pointers on horseback riding, Illya."

"I am glad to help, April. It was fortunate Mister Waverly could see the value of us spending some of our training time this way."

"Do you recommend saddled or bareback?"

"If you have time and choice, Mark? Saddled will be more comfortable for both you and the horse."

"Really? These hard saddles are more comfortable?"

"Without them, you have too much skin friction."
"Ugh - chafing. Saddle it is."

#459: Salk Vaccine-10th Anniversary - April 12, 1965

"What has you pensive, chum?"

"I was reflecting on medical advances that have been made in our lifetime. See this article? Today is the tenth anniversary of the polio vaccine being declared safe for use."

"I remember my mother was scared to death I'd come down with that. And the older I got, the worse the outbreaks seemed to get. I can't say that I've heard much about it lately though."

"The year before the vaccine was approved, there were around 37,000 cases in this country. According to this, last year there were only 121."

"Impressive."

#460: The Big Question

"Illya, ever ponder the big question?"

"Always."

"Really? Any answers?"

"Yes. I think I will have the pot roast for lunch."

"Not that big question. The big question - why are we here?"

"We work here, Napoleon."

"Not literally here."

"I should be recording this."

"Why?"

"So I can play it back and allow you to confuse yourself."

"It's not confusing. It's an existential question."

"Then I have another. Where would you rather be?"

"What?"

"If you do not want to be here, you must want to be elsewhere."

"Not really."

"Then why question where you are?"

sigh

"Nevermind."
"Napoleon, you are obviously tired and cranky. Let me push you for awhile."

"I am not cranky!"

"Oh really?"

"Fine - maybe a little cranky. I hate this."

"I know, my friend, I know. It is only for a couple of weeks. It could have been far worse."

"Yes, it could have been. I never even thanked you for the save yet."

"One, you were in a great deal of pain. Two, we are partners. Watching out for one another is what we do. Speaking of which - are you going to stay at my place or am I staying at yours?"

Napoleon groaned at Illya's question. His partner misinterpreted the groan.

"There is no use in fussing, Napoleon. The only way that the doctor would agree to allow you to leave was if I agreed to stay with you."

"I know that - but think about where we live. We can't possibly wrestle this chair up the stairs."

"Ah. I had not stopped to think of that. I could always carry you up the stairs?"

"Not on your life. What I can do for myself is going to be limited enough until my feet heal."

"I will call Mister Waverly."

Napoleon looked out of the passenger window, highly curious about where Illya was taking him. His blond partner had been quiet since having a brief chat with Mister Waverly.

When they pulled up beside a clinic, Napoleon balked.

"Whoa - trading a hospital bed for a clinic bed is not an improvement in my books, chum."

"Do not fuss so, Napoleon. Wait until we are inside. If you still feel the same, I will call Mister Waverly again."

"I'll hold you to that, partner."

"I know you will. Turn a bit so that I can lift you into the chair."

Illya pushed Napoleon's chair into the clinic and Napoleon recognized some of the faces as fellow agents. In the rear, a small freight elevator led to the upper floor. That proved to be a spacious apartment with maneuvering room and furniture designed to accommodate a wheelchair.
"I must admit, chum - this is a pleasant surprise."

"This is a safe house Mister Waverly set up for Mrs. Waverly. Now, take your pain pills before I change the dressings on your feet. It will not be pleasant"

"I'm just grateful you found me before the burns went beyond second degree."

#465: Wheelchair - Pt 5 of 11

By late afternoon, Napoleon had explored the entire space thoroughly. A delivery meal was routed through the clinic and Napoleon wheeled himself to the table as Illya divided out the ravioli and garlic bread, then poured an extra large glass of water for his partner. Napoleon gave the water a glum look, but Illya knew the orders about keeping well hydrated.

"You know, after propelling myself around for a few hours, I have a whole new respect for Mrs. Waverly. My arms and shoulders ache."

"If that is a hint for a massage, you are speaking to the wrong Russian."

#466: Wheelchair - Pt 6 of 11

Since Napoleon was under literal orders not to get up on his feet for any reason, Mister Waverly had courier drops made to the clinic so that both he and Illya could at least catch up on their paperwork. Illya opened the latest dispatch packet and started laughing.

"What's so funny, tovarich?"

"This attached note for you from Mister Waverly."

"Let me see: 'Mister Solo, Please remember when filling out this form that it is an expense account, not a creative writing project.' He's never going to let me live that tuxedo claim down, is he?"

"No - never."

#467: Wheelchair - Pt 7 of 11

"Don't shoot, darlings. We come in peace."

"With Chinese takeout."

"In that case, you may both come in."

"Thank you for that warm welcome, Illya. So, you and Napoleon haven't shot one another yet?"

"It's been close a time or two, but he hid my bullets."

"Good evening to you as well, Napoleon."

"Do I smell Mongolian beef?"

"You do indeed, my dear. We came to exchange food for a story."

"Also to give you someone to talk to besides each other."
"Both appreciated."

"So - how did you end up with your feet in such awful condition?"

---

**#468: Wheelchair - Pt 8 of 11**

April and Mark had brought Egg Drop soup to go with the meal, so Napoleon waited until he'd finished that before starting his story.

"Well kids? You all know how THRUSH takes a perverse pleasure in trying out truth serums and the like on us?"

"Ugh - don't remind me, mate. Wait - is that a side effect of a new one?"

"No. We had gotten an old fashioned captor who was convinced that the old ways are the best. I found Napoleon hanging by his wrists over a brazier of hot coals."

"For the record? I prefer the vomiting."

---

**#469: Wheelchair - Pt 9 of 11**

Mark winced in sympathy.

"There wasn't any permanent damage done to your feet, was there?"

"Thankfully, Illya got there before we got to that stage. Another week off my feet and I should be allowed to start walking again. I'll have wear protective shoes until the soles have a chance to toughen back up, but? Could have been far worse."

"I propose a toast - we have to use water - but it's the thought, not the beverage that counts. To partners."

"Amen."

"We'll toast to that again properly once I'm cleared back to duty."

"Here, here."

---

**#470: Wheelchair - Pt 10 of 11**

Even with the best efforts of Illya, April and Mark, Napoleon was ready to climb the walls by the time the week was over and Illya was sorely tempted to dart him.

When the day of Napoleon's doctor appointment finally arrived, it was hard to say who was happier. It was equally hard to say which of them was more relieved when the doctor said that Napoleon could walk again He would need to take things gradually - short distances only. For longer distances, the wheelchair would still be needed, but probably for no more than another week at most.

---

**#471: Wheelchair - Pt 11 of 11**

For once, Napoleon obeyed doctor's instructions to the letter. When the follow-up visit determined he no longer needed the chair, Napoleon decided to celebrate by inviting Illya, April and Mark out to
dinner.

"Now that I'm off of the pain medication, I'd like to give a proper toast. First, to friends. The three of you made a very difficult situation tolerable. And finally, to partners. Good as we are as individuals, we are better together."

"I feel like someone should be adding 'and God bless us everyone'."

"Things are already getting back to normal. Cheers, mates."

#472: War

"What is in the newspaper than has you so sober, Napoleon?"

"An article about what's happening over in Vietnam. They're sending more troops over."

"You do not think that will mean the conflict will be over faster?"

"Personally? I have my doubts. This situation reminds me of Korea in all the wrong ways."

"There is no right way to be reminded of a war, my friend."

"You have a point, tovarich. Neither of us are pacifists - obviously. And I know that some fights need to be fought."

"Knowing which ones need to be - that is the tricky part."

#473: Being First

"Congratulations on being the first, Napoleon."

"Pardon me if I don't feel like - ow! - celebrating."

"Due to your headache, no doubt."

"No doubt. Will the doctors let me have anything stronger than aspirin?"

"Only if you agree to let me drive you home."

"Sure."

"Sure? The pain must be bad."

"It is - trust me. I will never make fun of a boomerang again."

"You were lucky it was only a glancing blow."

"I know. Bad enough being the first agent injured by a boomerang without being the first killed by one."

"Your hard head was a saving grace again."

#474: Travel Mix-up
"I think our meeting last Thursday with Mister Waverly has come back to bite you, Napoleon."

"I have not the slightest inkling of what you're referring to, chum."

"You have not gone through the morning dispatches yet?"

"Not yet. I had to help straighten out a SNAFU in the travel arrangements for April and Mark first thing this morning."

"What happened?"

"Two different secretaries handled the tickets. Mark got his ticket for Austria fine, but the other secretary had April going to Australia."

"Remember when they accidently routed us to Mexico instead of New Mexico?"

"How could I forget?"

---

### #475: Paint

"Thanks for letting me stay here a couple of nights, Illya."

"You are quite welcome. No-one should have to sleep with the smell of new paint. Besides, Lawan approves of you being here. You are one of her favorite warm cushions."

"Better than how Wellington views me as a scratching post."

"Will your apartment be done in two days?"

"Considering the painters have to answer to Mister Waverly if they aren't done in time? It'll be done."

"We are fortunate he is on our side."

"No kidding - imagine him as a THRUSH chief."

"I would rather not."

---

### #476: Waking Up

"Good morning, Napoleon. Did you sleep well?"

"As a matter of fact, I did. Lawan claimed the other pillow and her purr is better than a sleeping pill. Or listening to Jenkins from accounting lecture."

"Jenkins does have a rather droning voice."

"That's putting it mildly. They could use him as an endurance test in Survival School."

"Far too cruel to new agents. Coffee first or juice?"

"What kind of juice?"

"I have tomato or orange."

"Orange please. You fixed breakfast while I was showering? Impressive."
"It is only fried sausages, boiled eggs and toast."

"Sounds good here, chum."

---

**#477: Jet Lag**

"And here we go - off again on another long plane trip."

"You know, whoever it is that tries to make jet-setting sound glamorous needs to be shot. Jet lag is exhausting."

"At least planes are quicker than they used to be. And a lot faster than taking a ship across the ocean."

"Admittedly the amount of time needed to travel is against ships, but you can move around and also you have a bed to sleep in."

"We'll be there early enough for us to grab a nap once we get there."

"I will hold you to that."

---

**#478: May Day**

"It's May Day, partner."

"So it is, Napoleon. That is another oddity of the English language I have yet to figure out."

"What's odd about the first of May being May Day?"

"That is not odd. What is odd? Using the same words to name a festival welcoming Spring and to signal some sort of emergency."

"Oh - like when a plane is in trouble and the pilot signals mayday? Hm. Never really thought about that. I wonder how that came about?"

"Tragic Maypole incident. Took days to sort the ribbons."

"And thank you, Mark, for that mental image."

---

**#479: Upgrade**

"Come with me to the labs, Napoleon."

"What's up, chum?"

"We are turning in our communicators for new ones."

"Really? But these aren't that old and they're a good size. They also don't draw too much attention."

"The new ones are both more powerful and smaller. They take advantage of satellite technology to relay information."

"Really? So does this mean we'll have better range?"
"Better range and better reception, my friend. And instead of being the size of a cigarette case, it is the size of a pen."

*low whistle*

"Impressive."

"Times are changing rapidly."

---

**#480: Honeycomb**

"As many food items as I've seen you try - including whale blubber, might I add - and you've never eaten honeycomb?"

"It is not as if I have been actively avoiding the experience, Napoleon. More the case of the opportunity has never presented itself before. The entire thing is edible?"

"Very much so. My grandmother always claimed it helped her digestion. Not that I've noticed your digestion needing any help."

"How would she eat it?"

"Generally with an English muffin or regular toast. Occasionally, just as is. Well?"

"I like it. And it would pair well with cheese."

---

**#481: Rock Paper Scissors**

"How do we decide which of the three of us has to go?"

"How about 'Rock, Paper, Scissors'?"

"Can you do that with three people, Napoleon?"

"Sure. If we all three pick a different one, it's a draw. Otherwise, at least one will win the first round."

"First one to lose goes?"

"Agreed."

"One - two - three!"

"One rock - two scissors. It is between you and Mark now."

"One - two - three!"

"Paper covers rock - you should have stuck with scissors, Napoleon."

*knock*

"Come in, April."

"So, which of you boys is taking me shoe shopping?"
"That would be me."

#482: Post-Shoe Shopping

"How did the shoe shopping expedition go, Napoleon?"

"Very well, Mark. April wasn't the only lovely lady looking for new footwear - I managed to get a couple of numbers. In fact, I have a date with one of the ladies tonight."

"Daring. Going out with a lady that you already know is a shoe maven."

"I like to live dangerously. I even admitted to April that I couldn't tell Green Apple from Jade in the heels she was considering. She said I was as bad as you."

"And?"

"And next time, she's taking Illya."

"You sly dog."

#483: One of 'Those' Missions

"And why is April not doing this?"

"Two reasons. One - she's supposed to be there and someone might notice if she's missing. Two - she's a little too short."

"She could wear higher heels."

"Quit fussing. You didn't complain this much about having to be a nun."

"I look good in black. White? Not so much. Besides, I am hardly a virgin."

"Don't even go there. Mark! Did you bring the dress?"

"Have it right here, Napoleon."

"Look on the bright side, chum. At least the dress doesn't have a sweetheart neckline."

"Imagine my relief."

#484: Distraction

"Hey, the moon's coming up. See it?"

"Yes. Very full tonight."

"That it is. Do you know any stories about the moon?"

"It is an odd time to ask me for a bedtime story, Napoleon. I am cold."

"I know, chum. Humor me?"
"Do I not always? Let me think. There is one story you might like about a beautiful woman that they called the tsar-maiden. Her mother was the moon and her brother was the sun."

"So the moon is the sun's mother?"

"I suppose so."

"Napoleon?"

"Over here, Mark! Keep talking, partner - help just arrived."

---

**#485: Bad Career Move**

"Wonderful movie."

"Of course. Mark picked it out instead of Napoleon."

"Now, Illya, be nice. I - hey!"

"Stay calm and the lady won't be hurt. You three - hand over your wallets."

"Easy. No need to do a lot of damage."

"Cooperate and she won't be hurt all."

"I wasn't talking to you, mate."

_inarticulate gurgle_

"Ow - bet that hurt. Illya teach you that move, April?"

"Yes, he did."

"Nice instruction job, partner."

"How did I do, Teach?"

"You get an A plus. Nicely executed."

"When you're in your cell, request an ice pack for down there."

---

**#486: Self-Defense Class - Pt 1 of 6**

"Good evening, ladies. As you already know, Mister Waverly has decided that a basic course on self-defense for the secretaries and clerks would be a good idea. Mister Kuryakin and I will show you a few simple, but effective moves."

"Yes, Miss Fowler?"

"Mister Kuryakin? We aren't going to be learning martial arts, are we?"

"In a way, but not in the way I believe you are thinking. I will list what equipment we will show you to use. A magazine, your house keys and your shoes."

"You're kidding."
"Do I look as if I am joking?"

#487: Self-Defense Class - Pt 2 of 6

"The keynote here is for you to be ready for something to happen without looking as if you are ready for something to happen, if that makes sense. Yes, Miss Parker?"

"Wouldn't they just leave us alone if we look prepared, Miss Dancer?"

"Some might, but honestly? One of your best defenses is not drawing attention in the first place. I would like to say, if someone attacks you who is armed and only seems to want money? Let them have it. The whole point of this is to get you out of a situation without harm to yourself."

#488: Self-Defense Class - Pt 3 of 6

Illya picked up a small magazine from the desk he was leaning against.

"One thing I feel I should say at the beginning. We are not trying to make it sound as if it is your fault if someone decides to attack you. The fault is solely that of the one who made the decision to attack. We only wish to possibly reduce the chances of a successful attack - to help you evade it or get to help if one occurs."

April nodded in agreement.

"Illya's quite right. Did you know I was attacked while leaving a movie theatre?"

#489: Mother's Day

"It is so nice having Mother's Day brunch with you two - even if I'm not your mother."

"There's no reason at all why my favorite aunt doesn't deserve to be pampered as much as any other woman, right partner?"

"Napoleon is right, Aunt Amy. I appreciate very much the way you have accepted me."

"Who wouldn't accept you, dear? I sure I'm quite the envy of the entire restaurant sitting here with two such handsome gentlemen."

"More Eggs Benedict, Aunt Amy?"

"No thank you, but a little more tea would be delightful."

"Allow me."

#490: Self-Defense Class - Pt 4 of 6

Illya held up the magazine he had picked up from the desk.

"For this, you can use a newspaper, magazine, a small stack of papers - it does not matter. I think a magazine best because the pages are already together. Just make sure that what you pick may be rolled into a tight tube that fits comfortably in your hand."
Once he had the magazine rolled, he hit it hard against the desk.

"A cylinder is surprisingly strong. This is rather like carrying a police baton, but nowhere near so obvious. Aim for the navel - or a few inches below."

#491: Self-Defense Class - Pt 5 of 6

"Mister Kuryakin?"

"Yes, Miss Grace?"

"What do you do next?"

"After the blow? The blow is only to give you time to run. You get away from them and to as public a place as possible, while making as much noise as possible."

"If I may interject?"

"Please do, April."

"Strange as it sounds, if you're outside where it won't cause a panic, yell 'fire'."

Illya turned his head, giving April a puzzled look. April shrugged.

"It was recommended to me by a policeman I dated once. People, for whatever reason, will congregate to look at a fire."

#492: Self-Defense Class - Pt 6 of 6

April joined Illya, leaning on the desk as the first group filed out after the initial self-defense session.

"That went rather well, darling."

"It went better than I expected, April. They all seemed to take it seriously and the questions were sensible."

"Do you think any of it will stick with them if it ever comes down to them needing it?"

"I believe so. We kept things basic and did not involve anything that takes a special skill or a great deal of practice. Besides, my true hope is that they never need use it."

"I second that hope."

#493: Reincarnation

"Illya?"

"Hm?"

"Do you believe in reincarnation?"

"It is two am, Napoleon. You usually allow me to sleep until at least 3 am before waking me for these things."
"Sorry. Blame the jet lag. So - do you?"

"I am not even sure that I believe in incarnation, Napoleon. Since I do not believe in a deity, I do not believe in a deity taking human form."

"Hmm - just consider reincarnation for now. If you could come back, what would you come back as?"

"Something nocturnal preferably. Then I would not mind being kept up all night."

"Subtle. Real subtle, chum."

---

#494: Remembrance - Pt 1 of 7

"What an unexpected pleasure. Do come in."

"Thank you, Mrs. Waverly."

"Sorry to drop in without calling ahead."

"Nonsense. The two of you are welcome here any time. However, from your expressions, I take it this isn't a social call?"

"To be honest? We're worried about Mister Waverly."

"Come - sit down. I believe I know what it is. He seems distracted? A bit - maudlin, perhaps?"

"Yes. That's it exactly."

"It will pass. We're approaching the anniversary of the death of a dear friend of ours. He survived the war only to die in a motorcycle accident."

---

#495: Remembrance - Pt 2 of 7

"How long has your friend been gone?"

"It will be thirty years this year, Illya. Lawrence was such an interesting man, but perhaps he made such an impact because I was at an impressionable age when I met him."

"Wait a minute - thirty years . . . Lawrence as in Lawrence of Arabia - T.E. Lawrence?"

"One and the same, Napoleon - though we never called him that, of course. He was only four years older than Alexander and they had enough similar tastes that they became good friends. He's the one who inspired me to make a study of the Arabic languages."

---

#496: Remembrance - Pt 3 of 7

"If you will pardon my asking, you said you were at an impressionable age?"

"Yes. As I recall, I first laid eyes on Lawrence when I was thirteen. He was a rather dashing twenty-five."

Napoleon did the math in his head while trying to remember his history dates.
"So - you met him prior to the first World War?"

"Yes. In Carchemish. My guardian at the time volunteered me to do some translation work there."

"Not exactly a safe area, was it?"

"Not at all - in fact, we got out just before a local war broke out."

"Close call."

"Very."

---

**#497: Remembrance - Pt 4 of 7**

"Pardon my saying, but it doesn't sound like your guardian took your safety into account."

"He didn't. He was, quite frankly, more interested in the political capital he could get by making use of me."

"And Mister Waverly?"

"Oh, Alexander was quite incensed by it. He even managed to use his contacts to get my guardianship changed. It really wasn't considered quite proper for an unmarried man to have that responsibility over me any way."

"Did you former guardian take that well?"

"Hardly. That is, however, a long story and off the subject."

"Off topic, but fascinating."

---

**#498: Remembrance - Pt 5 of 7**

"How was it that Mister Waverly met T.E. Lawrence?"

"Just Fate, I suppose, Napoleon. Alexander accompanied a minister on a mission to the Persian Gulf region as his clerk. Lawrence was the one who ended up being assigned to them as an interpreter. The others in the group weren't terribly interested in the area, but Alexander was, so Lawrence took him on a tour. After the mission was finished, they kept up with one another through correspondence - Lawrence was always a great one for letters. Once we'd met, he and I exchanged a few letters as well."

---

**#499: Remembrance - Pt 6 of 7**

"Did you all keep in touch after the war?"

"Oh my, yes. I suppose the first time we all got together after the war was in Paris. Rather fitting that. We were only able to meet every few years, but we kept the letters up. Alexander and I even named one of our children after him."

"I've read he had his share of idiosyncrasies."

"No offense, my dear Napoleon, but the same could be said of you. Actually, I suppose the same
may be said of any man who has led an interesting life."

"Even Mister Waverly?"

"Most certainly."

---

#500: Remembrance - Pt 7 of 7

"But, in regards to why you came, you needn't worry about Alexander - though I do appreciate others watching over him. Simply a byproduct of living as long as we have. Friends, associates, family - we've lost a good many over the years. Now and again, the weight of all of that tells."

"Except on you. You are one of those women who will always wear your age lightly."

"Napoleon - statements like that are the reason Alexander never assigns you as my bodyguard."

"Why doesn't he ever worry about Illya?"

"I do not have the reputation you do, tovarich."
"You're joking."

"I'm serious, April."

"All of us?"

"It's a big job, Mark. If you two don't think you can handle the cover, speak now."

"No, I'm fine with it. Funny though."

"What is funny about it, Mark?"

"My mum always used to joke about me running off to join a circus. Now I'm doing it."

"April - you'll be teaming up with Illya as a trick riding team. Mark and I will be clowns with a trained dog act."

"Can you teach me enough for an act, Illya?"

"Yes. Come. We need costumes."

April's bodysuit was covered with beading, shimmering with every movement. The vibrantly dyed scarlet plumes in her hair completed the costume.

"Well - I admit I look the part, Illya. I just wish I felt the part."

"The horses are highly trained, April. We just have to get you comfortable with moving along with them."

"That's probably a lot harder than it sounds."

"The same may be said of many things in life, my friend. But much of this is a matter of trust between you, I and the horses."

"I already trust you, so we're halfway there."

That afternoon, they got a look at the clown makeup Napoleon and Mark would be sporting. Napoleon's costume was Harlequin style, red and white - Mark's was the reverse, only in black and white. Napoleon's makeup featured a red heart surrounding his right eye. Mark carried a mandolin and sported a black club around his left eye.

April applauded her approval.

"Two Kings from a deck of cards? Very nice makeup job, darlings."
"Can you play that mandolin, Mark?"

"Yes. Believe it or not, Illya, I learned how to play something similar while working at a Greek restaurant."

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**#504: Memorial Day**

"Before we dig into this vast array of food, I've asked Mrs. Waverly to say a few words."

"Thank you, Napoleon. I know some question the marking of Memorial Day with an atmosphere more in line with a picnic than a funeral. I can see both sides, but as one who has seen more wars than I hope any of you have to see, I must admit that I prefer this to a more somber affair. Today, let us remember and celebrate the lives of those who gave all to preserve our way of life. Let the stories begin."

---

**#505: Big Top - Pt 4 of 34**

"Gather around, kids - time for mission details."

"Good, I'm dying of curiosity. So, what has a traveling circus got to do with THRUSH?"

"We aren't positive yet, April. We had rumors of some heavy weaponry being set up - aerial photography has confirmed some of it. The setups would normally require heavy equipment, but nothing like that is available in those locations."

"How would a circus play into - the elephants?"

"Right on the money, Illya. Elephants have the strength and the training to move the weapons. And no-one would question their presence with a circus in the area."

---

**#506: Big Top - Pt 5 of 34**

"So, the thought is that the elephant trainer is working for THRUSH?"

"Yes, but whether willingly or unwillingly? That we don't know, Mark - which is why the four of us are going in. If the man is an innocent party, our goal is going to be to try and find out what hold THRUSH has on him and remove it."

"A circus that travels relatively freely across borders may be hiding other THRUSH activities as well."

"Good point, Illya. Let's face it - if THRUSH has its claws into one of these people, it might have claws into more."

---

**#507: Big Top - Pt 6 of 34**

The retired circus performer who was helping the agents fine tune their acts praised their progress, but also cautioned them that no matter how good they were, their plans might fall through. Marco, who had worked with both horses and big cats during his day, explained.

"Circus folk tend to be clannish. It can be years before you are accepted. Or you may never be
accepted at all."

The man's accent struck a chord with Illya. He moved next to the man, whispering a few words. Stepping back in surprise, the old man began laughing.

"You will do alright."

---

#508: Big Top - Pt 7 of 34

Marco pronounced them ready.

"The basics? Those you have. What you need is the dazzle."

She hesitated, not wanting to be the one to ask, but since the boys were being maddeningly quiet, April finally questioned him.

"Excuse me, but what is dazzle?"

"Dazzle is what happens between you and the crowd. A mediocre talent with dazzle will bring down the house. Without it, even the best performer will bore. A topline act with dazzle? Those perform at royal command performances."

Marco paused, looking over each one.

"You will only know if you have it once you have an audience."

---

#509: Big Top - Pt 8 of 34

Marco spoke with Mister Waverly and there was a change of plans. Marco would accompany the team to the small European town where the circus was currently camped and make introductions. As the final arrangements were being made, Mister Waverly summoned his four agents to him.

"Gentlemen and Miss Dancer, Mister Salazar believes that he can successfully pass off Mister Kuryakin as his nephew. He is well-known to have had a sister who left the circus to marry an non-performer. Miss Dancer, you will be going as his wife. Mister Solo and Mister Slate will be his cousins."

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#510: Big Top - Pt 9 of 34

On the flight over, the agents worked out the last few details with Marco giving out a few family facts that Illya would be expected to know. After that was settled, they tried to get what rest that they could.

There was one last part of their training and that was meeting up with the animals for their acts. The horses and dogs were all well-trained and made the adjustment over to their new human partners easily. One of the small dogs was so taken with Mark that anyone would have thought he'd raised it from a pup.

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#511: Big Top - Pt 10 of 34

After a week of getting acclimatized to the animals, the time came for Marco to introduce the team to
the owner of the circus. The four stood back as the owner and Marco met with boisterous greetings and backslaps. Then Marco waved Illya over.

"My boy, this is Yanoro. Yanoro, this is my sister's oldest boy, Emilian."

Yanoro studied the blond before him before offering him a hand.

"Your mother approves?"

Illya gave a casual shrug.

"No, but she understands. The call ran too deep in my blood to ignore."

A smile signaled Yanoro's approval of that answer.

---

#512: Big Top - Pt 11 of 34

Yanoro was persuaded to try the four on a trial basis - acts with dogs and horses always appealed to children. Draw in the children and you have the parents who are buying tickets, snacks, drinks and souvenirs for their little ones.

"We will have you work the matinee show first and see how the crowd reacts to you. Then? Then we will talk."

Napoleon's clown charmed the ladies by using slight of hand, pulling out daisies to present to them, but the real surprise was Illya. Whatever the dazzle was that captured an audience's attention, he had it.

---

#513: Big Top - Pt 12 of 34

While it was true that Illya had the dazzle, it was Mark that cinched their position with the show. For whatever reason, Schnitzel - the dog that was so taken with Mark - had started jumping on top of Mark's back any time he bent over to do anything. Especially if he was tending one of the other dogs.

Since Mark found the stunt to be amusing, he encouraged Schnitzel to continue. It turned out his instincts were right. The children roared with laughter at the little dog's antics and the way he 'got the better' of his clown-trainer.

---

#514: Big Top - Pt 13 of 34

After the four officially joined the circus, it proved to be Mark again that paved the way to acceptance. While good-looking, he wasn't in the same category that Napoleon and Illya were in, so the other men didn't view him as a threat. Mark also went out of his way to behave in a brotherly way toward the group's women. Napoleon complimented him on that tactic at night when they were by themselves.

Mark gave a self-deprecating chuckle.

"Good looking birds always seem to view me that way. About time it worked to my advantage."
 Increasingly, April, Illya and Napoleon found they were eating by themselves as Mark was constantly being invited to join some of the older families. Amusingly, Schnitzel was also always invited. Illya chuckled softly as he noticed April and Napoleon's expressions as they watched Mark heading off one evening.

"You two need not look so abandoned. At least one of us is making inroads with the core group. Which is far better than Marco had expected us to do."

April sighed, picking up her coffee cup.

"I feel like I've been replaced by a dog with a ruffled collar."

Mark came back in rather late one night, a few drinks in him - enough to make him loose but not drunk. He was in a singularly good mood.

'We have a possible stroke of luck, mates. You know Sheba?"

Illya nodded, bemused by Mark's question.

"Of course. She is the star of the elephant show. What about her?"

"Sheba has taken a shine to one of our little group. The ringmaster wants to work out an act."

Napoleon turned fully around at the table.

"Sheba's taken a liking to you?"

Laughing, Mark shook his head.

"Not me. Schnitzel."

Napoleon, April and Illya were all present to watch as Sheba and Schnitzel began to work together. Mark was right - the large elephant seemed absolutely enamored of the little dog, following him around and gently running her trunk over him in a petting fashion.

"Mark really wasn't joking. Sheba's definitely a dog lover."

Chuckling, Napoleon agreed.

"Even better - it gives Mark an excellent excuse for staying near the elephants."

Illya's gaze settled on a scowling man in the background.

"One of the elephant handlers seems displeased by the change."

"That's one to keep our eyes on."
The team wasn't having any luck finding any links between the circus and the weapons. Finally one night as Napoleon gave their status update, Mister Waverly gave the order they had been expecting.

"We may be following a Will o' the Wisp. If you are unable to locate any evidence by month's end, you and Mister Kuryakin will be recalled. If Miss Dancer and Mister Slate have no results following another month, we will end the operation altogether."

Napoleon was also considering they were on a wild goose chase. Or he did until Schnitzel came back without Mark.

Mark's head was killing him. Being bound and stuffed into a small dusty compartment certainly wasn't helping matters either. Sighing, he testing the ropes one more time. Another disadvantage to dealing with circus folk - they knew their knots.

After all the active searching he and the others had done, it figured that he'd stumble across something when he was taking Schnitzel over to have a word with George, Sheba's handler that worked her in the main show. Unfortunately, he ran into Rigo - the one Illya had said was giving them what Napoleon termed the 'stink eye'.

Napoleon tried calming the fretful little dog as he called over to Illya and April.

"I want everybody armed. This could just be a case of Schnitzel running away from Mark, but I doubt that."

April came over, shaking her head.

"We're going to follow a dog. I feel like I should be asking him if Timmy's fallen down a well."

While strapping on his holster, Illya gave her a puzzled look.

"Who is Timmy?"

Napoleon passed Schnitzel over to April while he got his own gun.

"Long story, tovarich. I'll tell you after we find Mark."

It wasn't a shock that Schnitzel made a bee-line for the elephant enclosure. What was perhaps less welcome was that Sheba called out a greeting when she caught scent of her favorite canine. That sound bought a trio of men out of a nearby tent.

"It's that dog again, Rigo. It came back."

"Good. Catch it. We'll bury them together."

Those words sent chills down April's spine, but things started happening quickly. One of the men
went to grab Schnitzel and found himself on the wrong side of Sheba's anger. And within her reach.

#522: Big Top - Pt 21 of 34

Rigo cursed as he pulled a gun, aiming at Schnitzel and firing. At the little dog's yelp and the scent of blood, Sheba went from angry to rampaging, her chain snapping off at the peg.

Knowing they had nothing powerful enough to do anything to an enraged elephant, the three agents chose to use the distraction to go into the tent and look for Mark. A closed box in the center of the tent drew them immediately and they found Mark inside, blue-lipped and still. They quickly pulled him free, starting rescue breathing without bothering with the ropes.

#523: Big Top - Pt 22 of 34

It seemed dreadfully long before Mark gave a small gasp and began breathing on his own again. April closed her eyes and said a little prayer, then she joined Napoleon in getting the ropes off Mark. It had gone quiet outside and Illya eased to the door of the tent to see what was going on.

"Not much left of those three. We are going to need a story. The noise is bound to have alerted the rest of the troupe."

April fretted over the bruises starting to darken on Mark, but looked up.

"I've got that covered, Illya."

#524: Big Top - Pt 23 of 34

Yanoro ran to the elephant enclosure, freezing at the sight before him. Sheba had retreated to the far side, standing next to a wagon of hay. When April called out to him, Yanoro turned to her, looking both sickened and stunned.

"What happened here? All these years - we have never had a problem with Sheba. And now?"

April hurried to interrupt his thoughts.

"It wasn't her fault. Rigo should have known better than to fire his gun near her."

"He shot at my Sheba?"

"Actually, we think he shot Schnitzel."

"Come. We will go in the tent and talk."

#525: Big Top - Pt 24 of 34

Yanoro entered the tent, saw Mark's condition, and April no longer had to make a story. Yanoro provided his own as he began to apologize.

"I am so sorry. I knew Rigo was angry about the act featuring Sheba and Schnitzel, but I never thought he would act on it. He must have been drunk. Rigo has always been a mean drunk."

A whimper from the tent door drew their attention as Schnitzel pushed in. The little dog's fur was
matted with blood. but the trunk that also came through the door made everyone hesitant to approach Schnitzel.

#526: Big Top - Pt 25 of 34

It was fortunate that one of the people coming to see what had happened was George. Sheba trusted him enough that he was able to get hold of Schnitzel and tend to him without the elephant getting angry. While everything was still chaotic, Napoleon slipped out of the back of the tent long enough to contact Mister Waverly with an update.

"Mister Slate hasn't regained consciousness?"

"Not yet, Mister Waverly. We're sure he came across something to do with the weapons though."

"See what you can discover, Mister Solo. The faster this mission can be concluded, the better."

#527: Big Top - Pt 26 of 34

Yanoro got the circus group moving and had the area cleaned in a remarkably short amount of time. He then sent everyone back to bed. Finally free of the crowds, the three agents got Mark back to their own quarters just as he was starting to show signs of coming to.

Mark's first reaction was to fight. Napoleon and Illya quickly pinned him until April could talk him down. When Mark finally calmed, the first words he said didn't make sense.

"Big cats."

"Easy, darling. You're safe now. Gather your thoughts and tell us what you mean."

#528: Big Top - Pt 27 of 34

Mark took a drink of the water Illya offered him and started again.

"I came across Rigo using Sheba to haul one of the wagons used for the big cats - and even though the tigers weren't in it, Sheba seemed to be having some trouble pulling it. Well, that struck me as odd and I was about to come for back up when the wind shifted."

Napoleon winced.

"Let me guess - Sheba caught scent of Schnitzel and called out a greeting."

"Right in one guess. I didn't even know those other two were around until they jumped me."

#529: Big Top - Pt 28 of 34

"April, keep your gun handy just in case and keep an eye on Mark. Illya and I are going to go check out that wagon."

"Right. Be careful, darlings."

The partners made their way back to the area silently. While Napoleon stood guard, Illya worked his way underneath the wagon.
"The undercarriage is far sturdier than I would expect for a wagon of its kind. Also, the side decorations are hiding the fact that this has a large space between the bottom and the floor of the cage."

"How much space are we talking, chum?"

"Two foot deep - possibly more."

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**#530: Big Top - Pt 29 of 34**

Napoleon quickly joined Illya in searching the sides of the wagon. It took several minutes, but Napoleon located the latch hidden among the ornate decorations. Illya hurried over to assist Napoleon in lowering the section. When they looked inside, there was not any doubt about the weapons connection.

"One thing bothers me, Napoleon. The design of this wagon - it matches the others too well. To me, that would seem to mean -"

The sound of a weapon being cocked behind them and Yanoro's voice confirmed Illya's suspicions.

"That the owner is involved? Correct - but who are you two really?"

---

**#531: Big Top - Pt 30 of 34**

Before either agent even had the chance to answer, Yanoro fired without warning, hitting Napoleon in the upper right arm.

"Does not matter. Drop your weapons immediately or my next shot will do far more damage."

The partners exchanged a quick look before complying, Illya muttering a few words in Romani as he did.

"Good - now, both of you inside the wagon."

As he helped Napoleon, Illya's nose wrinkled at the prevalent smell of tiger, but at least the straw inside was fresh and free of droppings.

"This will hold you, I think, while I get the other two."

---

**#532: Big Top - Pt 31 of 34**

As Yanoro approached where Mark and April were, then eased his head in slightly.

"Sorry to disturb you, but I was concerned and wanted to make sure you didn't need anything else tonight."

April had her gun by her side, but didn't reach for it since the voice was familiar.

"We're fine, thanks."

Yanoro smiled, pulling out his gun and pointing it toward Mark's head.

"Good. I will need you both to come with me."
April wavered, but suddenly, Yanoro let out a scream of pain. Not questioning her luck, April grabbed her gun and fired.

#533: Big Top - Pt 32 of 34

Illya was doing what he could for Napoleon's wound when he heard a rustling and turned to look. To his relief, it was April.

"Be careful, April. Yanoro is looking for you and Mark."

"I know, darling - he found us. Fortunately for us, Schnitzel doesn't like guns being pointed at Mark and sank his fangs in Yanoro's ankle - which allowed me to shoot first."

"Ah. He is unconscious then."

"He is. Let me get this padlock off the door. Is that blood?"

"Yes, Napoleon was shot. Once you have the door open, we can tend him properly."

#534: Big Top - Pt 33 of 34

While Illya and April tended Napoleon, Mark contacted Mister Waverly to relay the mission's status. In turn, Mister Waverly contacted nearest U.N.C.L.E. branch to them. Things moved rapidly from there. The clean-up crew arrived before dawn.

No more arrests were made. None of the rest had anything to do with the plot and the circus was released to them. Taking joint ownership, the group put George in charge as he knew the most about the business of running the show.

It was time to leave, but the sticky part was separating Mark and Schnitzel.

#535: Big Top - Pt 34 of 34

Illya came up with the solution.

"Mark, you will not have the time for a dog until you leave field work. By the time you leave the field, Schnitzel will be ready for retirement as well. Let him remain a circus dog and do what he knows how to do for now."

George spoke up at that.

"Sheba and I will be glad to keep working with him until then. If you find yourself in the area, you are welcome to visit any time."

Mark agreed and the team headed back to New York. And a waiting mountain of paperwork.

#536: Boots Recommended

"Hello, Napoleon. Reports finished?"

"Not yet, April. Just stretching my legs. What about you?"
"All finished and turned in, darling."

"Then what are you doing?"

"These are Mark's reports. Poor dear is still recovering so I told him I'd handle them for him."

"Hmm - you know, my arm's still stiff. Maybe I'll go see how Illya's doing on his report. Oh, hi Mark. See you later."

"Here's your coffee, April."

"Thanks, Mark. You know, I hope Illya's wearing boots today."

"Boots?"

"Yes. I think Napoleon's about to give him a snow job."

#537: Nice Try

"Have a good stroll, Napoleon?"

"It was alright. How's the report coming?"

"Just finished. Are you feeling alright, Napoleon? You keep rubbing your arm."

"Still a little stiff from the gunshot wound, I guess."

"Hm. A mild workout might help with that. Fortunately, you have your report to work on, so that might help you get reused to using it."

"You have no sympathy."

"For bad acting? No. You realize, you could have simply asked me if I would do your report."

"Would you have done it?"

"No, but you would have gotten the 'no' without the added sarcasm."

#538: Making Plans

"It's going to be the Fourth of July soon, Illya. Have plans?"

"Why yes, I do, April."

"You stinker!"

"And why is it that you are calling me names?"

"Didn't I come up to you two months ago and tell you that I was going to be having a party on the Fourth?"

"Yes, April. You did."

"And now you tell me you have plans?"
"Yes, April. I made them two months ago when you told me you expected me on the Fourth."

"oh... sorry about the stinker comment."

"Have a cherry pie and all will be forgiven."

#539: Nationwide Zip Codes Begin July 1, 1963

"Wait - why is all the mail that I sent to the Mail Room back on my desk?"

"Because you did not read your memos again, Napoleon."

"Oh great - what memo did I miss this time, Illya? Is the Mail Room on strike?"

"Today is July the first."

"So it is. What does that have to do with my mail?"

"Starting today, you must use a zip code with the address on your envelopes."

"I thought that was non-mandatory?"

"For everyone else, perhaps, but not so far as our Mail Room is concerned."

"Pass me some new envelopes please, chum."

#540: Party Preparations

"Thanks so much for helping me with the party shopping, Mark."

"My back is at your service, luv. What's next?"

"I'm not sure. I think I have everything now, but I'm afraid I'm forgetting something."

"You're worrying too much, April. We're all coming over to enjoy each other's company. Everything else is just icing on the cake."

"Really?"

"Really. Well, except maybe for Illya. If you don't feed him, you might lose your houseplants to his grazing."

"That's it! Cherry pie! I owe Illya a cherry pie. Mark, you're wonderful!"

#541: More Mail Problems

"Why is my mail piled back on my desk again? I used all the zip codes."

"May I see one of the envelopes, Napoleon?"

"Sure - here."

"You still have not read the memo?"
"No. Why? Now what?"

"Along with the zip codes, they standardized the abbreviations for each state to two letter codes."

"So I can't used Calif for California like I used to?"

"No, now you use CA instead."

"Huh. How will that work for states that start with the same two letters?"

"They all have two letter codes - how they decided them? That I do not know"

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**#542: 4th of July Party**

"See, April? You worried for nothing, luv. Everything is absolutely wonderful."

"You're right, Mark. I guess I was being a worrywart. More pie, Illya?"

"Yes, please, April. It is excellent. Is there any of the ice cream left to go with it?"

"There certainly is. Here you go. Napoleon?"

"I'll take another sliver of that apple pie with a slice of cheddar on top. You know, the Fourth of July seems to be the one American holiday that you enjoy, Illya."

"Of course, Napoleon. What is not to like about a holiday centered around food and explosive devices?"

---

**#543: Retirement - Pt 1 of 4**

"Illya?"

"Uhmmm?"

"Illya? Ever think about what you'll do when you hit retirement age?"

*yawn*

"Without looking, I believe I can guess the time. Three a.m.?"

"Close. Two forty-five."

"And thoughts of retirement are keeping you awake?"

"I know. Strange."

"No stranger than other thoughts that have preoccupied you at this time of day. To answer your question, I have given it some thought. And decided it was not worth thinking on."

"Why not?"

"Because where would I go? In many ways, it is just as well that I will probably never live to reach that age."
"At the risk of possibly making you sound upbeat, if you do manage to make it to retirement, what would you like to do?"

"Over the years, different thoughts have gone through my mind. At present, I would say I would like a piece of land and some horses."

"Where at?"

"Ah, there is the problem, Napoleon. The chances are very good that my homeland no longer wants me and that this country will not allow me to stay. That narrows my options. England might be a possibility, but I could end up as the proverbial man without a country."

"That stinks, Illya. You've done more for this country - hell, for the free world - than most of the people that are citizens. There's bound to be something that can be done."

"I thank you for you vote of confidence, my friend, but -"

"No buts, tovarich. When we get back to New York, I'm going to talk to Mister Waverly about it."

"I think this is bothering you more than it does me."

"Hey, we're partners. How the hell would I ever enjoy my retirement without knowing you at least had a decent shot at enjoying yours?"

"So - you speaking to Mister Waverly about my future would actually be because you are concerned with your own retirement?"

"Of course. I know you have some pride issues in asking for help, chum, but surely you don't mind me checking into it for my own sake?"

"No. How could I object to you looking after your own interests? Napoleon?"

"Yes?"

"I do not say it enough, but you are a very good friend."

"So are you, chum."

"Could I make one request?"

"Sure."

"Could we save the remainder of this conversation for over breakfast?"

"Hint taken - shutting up."
"What are you looking at, chum?"

"It is an article about Andy Warhol. It was five years ago today that he had his exhibit at the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles."

"Back in 1962? That was the Campbell Soup Cans exhibit, wasn't it?"

"That was the one. Thirty-two canvases, each with a different variety of soup."

"They were well done, but not really my taste in art."

"I suppose you prefer French nudes?"

"That goes without saying, but I thought we were talking about paintings?"

"Sometimes it is impossible to know if you are teasing me or not."

#548: Close Call

"My poor partner. Mark's going to be alright, isn't he?"

"He should be, April. They're just going to keep him overnight for observation and to make sure no complications pop up."

"I suppose he'll be adding this to his list."

"List?"

"Didn't you boys know? Mark has a list of ways to die."

"You are joking."

"No - not a bit, Illya. If you don't believe me, just ask Mark when he wakes up."

"Don't look at me, chum. I can't tell if she's pulling our leg or not."

"Gospel truth, boys."

#549: Trust but Verify - Pt 1 of 5

"It's nice to see you awake again, Mark. How are you feeling?"

"Very sore. Badly enough that you're a sight for sore eyes, Napoleon."

"Everybody's a comedian. So - April said that you were going to be adding this one to your list."

"Oh yes. It's definitely going on there. Silly me, but somehow getting stabbed with the horn of a hunting trophy was one I missed."

"Up until now, I thought she was pulling my leg. You do have an actual list?"

"Would April lie to you, Napoleon?"

"You don't want me to answer that."
"I'm still not convinced of this list. If there's really one, name me ten items off of it without pausing."

"Oh, ye of little faith. But, fine. One, getting trampled by an elephant. Two, being shackled and tossed into a lake. Three, starving in a barrel. Four, getting caught in the propellers of a boat. Five, getting sucked into a jet engine."

"Ouch. I remember the THRUSHee that one happened to. Very nasty."

"You interrupted me, so that doesn't count as a pause."

"Fine - that didn't count. Five more to go."

"Right. Now, where was I?"
#551: Trust but Verify Pt 3 of 5

"You were at five - jet engines."

"Righto. Six, hit by an exploding tree."

"Hey, you lived through that."

"I've also lived through being shot. Doesn't mean that it couldn't have killed me. You're interrupting again, Napoleon."

"Sorry, Mark. Carry on."

"Seven, getting trapped under ice. Eight, parachute and emergency chute both failing. Nine, stepping on a landmine. Ten, getting hit by an anvil."

"That last one makes it sound like you've watched Wile E. Coyote cartoons a little too often."

"Guilty as charged. But since you know about him, you've watched a few yourself."

---

#552: Trust but Verify Pt 4 of 5

Settling back on his pillow, Mark gave Napoleon a tired smile.

"You know, if you're that curious about my list, just wait until I'm released and back at the office. I'll give it to you to read."

"You actually have all this written down?"

"Napoleon, Napoleon, Napoleon. If it wasn't written down, it wouldn't really be a list, now would it?"

"I guess I have to concede that point. But weren't you calling it a list before writing it down?"

"Only reason it wasn't written to start with was lack of materials, mate."

---

#553: Trust by Verify Pt 5 of 5

"Doing some paperwork, partner?"

"No, just some reading, Napoleon. Have you been checking on Mark?"

"Just came from seeing him. He's much more alert now."

"Excellent. That will be a large weight off of April."

"Speaking of April, you know that list of Mark's that she was mentioning? It really does exist. He even has it written down."

"I know. That is what I am reading."
"How did you get hold of it?"

"April had a copy and lent it to me. If nothing else, Mark has both a good memory plus a vivid, if slightly morbid, imagination."

---

### #554: Cruelty

"Breathe deeply, then talk to me. What happened?"

"It was probably the worst thing I've ever had to witness, April. His hands were tied in front of him and then they shoved him at the roof's edge. There was no way for him to regain his balance. Two of them held me back as I had to watch him go over."

"Oh, Napoleon . . . THRUSH seems to keep getting crueler."

"I keep trying to think of anything else I could have done."

"It was Adler's first field mission, wasn't it?"

"First and last. What a damn waste."

---

### #555: Burdens

"Bad business with our Mister Adler. Are arrangements being made for his memorial service?"

"Mister Kuryakin is taking care of that."

"Excellent. Have him to provide me with the details when they are finalized."

"Yes, sir."

"Mister Solo, the loss of any agent is always tragic, but you are not the responsible party. That burden lies on the shoulders of THRUSH."

"I know, but - Mister Waverly? Does it ever get any easier?"

"My dear Millicent once informed me that the day it becomes easier is the day I need to consider retirement."

"You have a wise wife."

"My greatest asset."

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### #556: Launch of Gemini 10 - July 18, 1966

"What's on the television that has your attention?"

"Gemini 10 is about to launch."

"Really? Who are the two men going up this time?"

"Commander John Young and Major Michael Collins."

"Hard to believe that it's only been five years since the first man went into space. Think folks will
ever become blasé about this?"

"Most likely. It seems to be a human trait that nothing remains new for very long."

"That seems a little sad."

"Perhaps, but I would imagine that being in a constant state of awe would be very tiring."

"You have a point, tovarich."

---

#557: Expectations - Pt 1 of 4

"Illya? You're quieter than usual - and with you, that's saying something. Is anything wrong?"

"Yes and no. I have met someone."

"As in a female someone?"

"Yes."

"How long?"

"Six weeks now."

"I do have to hand it to you for your ability to keep a secret. She's not in our business?"

"No. She works as a translator."

"Sounds good so far, chum. So what is the problem?"

"She is looking toward settling down. Starting a family. I feel as if I am leading her on when I already know I cannot give her what she wants."

---

#558: Expectations - Pt 2 of 4

"You know, Illya, there are agents that keep their business and home lives separate."

"I know. I also know we have our share of enemies. Would it not be unfair to her when they may one day target my wife? Should she not know the risk involved in loving me?"

"There's something else, isn't there?"

"You know me too well. Napoleon, I have fought, killed and bled to try and make a difference for the good."

"And you have."

"But how much is enough? What I wish for - what I feel is my duty - they do not mesh."

---

#559: Expectations - Pt 3 of 4

"I wish I could advise you, chum, but only you know how much is enough."

"And there is the rub, Napoleon. I have this feeling that, even in the unlikely event that I live to see
Mister Waverly's age, if I hear news of an incident, the thought that I might have been able to do
something to prevent it might haunt me."

"Yeah. Unfortunately, I can see that. I wonder if that might be what keeps the Old Man going?"

"I have heard him use the phrase 'never again in my lifetime' before."

"I guess that answers that."

---

#560: Expectations - Pt 4 of 4

"Illya, I know I'm hardly the person you would tend to go to for advice on relationshiprs, but mind if
I put in my two cents?"

"I would very much appreciate it, Napoleon."

"Dating is just that - dating. Continue to see her, continue to enjoy her company. Assignments will
come as they always do. If she can't handle our irregular schedule, she may end up as a good friend
that you see occasionally. If you and she are still an item six months from now, then maybe you can
ask Mrs. Waverly or April to sound her out."

---

#561: Beginnings : Failure

It was late. There were few on duty at headquarters to see Illya stumbling in, battered, with his first
assignment in shambles. He dully wondered if they would shoot him here or ship him back to Russia
to allow them do it. Then he heard Waverly's voice.

"Mister Kuryakin, why aren't you in Medical?"

Illya stared at him, not quite comprehending, as Waverly seemed bemused.

"My dear boy, if I got rid of every agent that had a mission go sour on him, I wouldn't have any
agents left. Come, I'll see you to the doctor."

---

#562: Looking Back

"No kidding? You thought Mister Waverly was going to shoot you?"

"No. I thought Mister Waverly was going to have me shot."

"Po-tay-toe, po-tah-toe."

"Not really. Those are quite different, Napoleon."

"What was that job?"

"Courier. I was supposed to pass on some papers to a contact."

"You didn't make it to the drop?"

"I did, but my contact was ambushed. Then Thrush tried to relieve me of the papers."

"Did they get them?"
"Of course not - do not be insulting."

"Sorry, tovarich. Guess this was a new world to you."

'You have no idea."

---

**#563: Explosion**

As the dust began to settle, Napoleon panicked when he couldn't see his partner. Then he heard a cough and spotted Illya, his leg trapped under some of the debris.

When he saw Napoleon coming, Illya waved him off.

"Go. Leave me."

Napoleon shook his head and hurried to shift the mess enough to give Illya a chance to pull free. Once the leg was loose, Napoleon helped Illya and they both hurried away.

"Why did your bomb go off early?"

"It did not."

A second later, another explosion knocked them both to the ground.

"That was my bomb."

---

**#564: Feathers**

Napoleon glanced at the crutches by his partner's desk. They were both lucky to have escaped serious injury.

"Still trying to figure out where that other bomb came from, chum?"

"No. A group has taken responsibility for it. They seek to rid the world of both THRUSH and UNCLE."

"Great. Just what we need. So, what are they calling themselves?"

Illya looked to be a mix of bemused and exasperated.

"Catalytic Revolutionaries Ordaining War."

A laugh broke out from Napoleon before he could help it.

"CROW?"

"I know. Can none of our opposition find an acronym lacking in feathers?"

---

**#565: CROW Pt 1 of 36**

"CROW? Seriously?"

"If I were inclined to make a joke, I would hope I would be able to do better than that, April."
"Sorry, Illya. And I suppose if I were being honest about it, CROW sound more threatening than THRUSH does. If you were just hearing the names and had no prior history with either one, I mean."

"It's not like we need another group of crazies to deal with though."

"Right you are, Mark, so let's put our heads together, kids. I'd like to nip this bunch in the bud."

"Where do we start, Napoleon?"

#566: CROW Pt 2 of 36

"We start with finding out just who is behind CROW. The fact that they know that UNCLE and THRUSH exist in order to target us means that they must have some ties to the espionage community."

"Might I suggest we divide our efforts? I will check on agents that have left due to injury, April can look into agents that did not make it through survival school and Mark could check into our retirees. You can check for any air traffic from THRUSH on the new group."

"Sounds like a decent plan of attack, Illya. Any questions? Let's go."

#567: CROW Pt 3 of 36

"Anything from your research, Illya?"

"Nothing. Everyone is accounted for and no activity that raises any blue flags."

"That's red flags."

"Red, blue - what does it matter? No flags of any color."

"Am I interrupting?"

"Not at all, April. Napoleon is only arguing about color swatches."

"I think I may have something. A trio who all flunked out of survival school and were less than graceful in their exits. And I haven't been able to track down any of them."

"Hmm. Not being able to find one? That I could see. But all three? That's pretty fishy."

#568: CROW Pt 4 of 36

"What luck - I didn't think I'd find all three of you together."

"Come on in, Mark. April may have found something."

"I think I might have something myself. Do all of you know Agent Haddix?"

"Yes, but he hasn't retired."

"Quite right, Napoleon, but he does next month. Haddix caught wind of what I was looking into and brought up an item I think should be of interest. We all have THRUSHies we've run into on multiple
occasions. Rumor has it Haddix's old playmate found out the THRUSH retirement plan is a bullet and disappeared.”

#569: CROW Pt 5 of 36

At Napoleon's request, Mark brought Haddix back to speak to the group.

"Thank you for coming. What can you tell us about the THRUSH man who disappeared?"

Haddix nodded.

"His name, or at least the name I know him by, is Gordon Ridgway. Deadly, but not cruel. If he needed to kill someone, he did it without prolonging it. Don't ever recall him going for torture either. But he fully believed in THRUSH and its goals. I was the one that told him to look into their retirement plan."

"Which he obviously did and didn't care for."

#570: CROW Pt 6 of 36

"What can you tell us about Ridgway?"

"Decent shot, but prefers rifles to handguns. Good at demolitions - nowhere near Mister Kuryakin's level, but THRUSH rarely cares about finesse. Don't know if he still does it, but he used to be a competent dog trainer and handler."

"No offense, but you seem to know a great deal about this bloke."

"None taken, Mister Slate. Gordon and I have known one another since our college days. It was a bit of a shock first time we ran into one another in the field and realized we were on opposite sides."

#571: CROW Pt 7 of 36

"That must have made an awkward report back to Mister Waverly."

"Yes, Miss Dancer. Or at least it was until Mister Waverly told me about a man whose life he'd saved back during the war becoming a THRUSHie as well."

"Oh my. Now there's a story that I haven't heard."

"Not my story to tell, Miss Dancer. You'll have to get that one from Mister Waverly."

"Back to the subject at hand, do you believe that Ridgway could be behind this CROW business?"

"Very much so. The college fraternity he belonged to had a crow mascot."

#572: CROW Pt 8 of 36

"Mister Solo, I want to volunteer for this assignment. That is, if you're going after Ridgway as I think you are."

"I'd honestly like to have you onboard, but are you sure, Haddix? You're close to retiring with a
whole skin."

"Retiring doesn't hold any appeal for me, Mister Solo. I'm too young for spending my days playing shuffleboard even if I'm officially too old for a field agent. Taking one more shot at keeping the world on an even keel? I can't think of a better note to end my career on."

#573: CROW Pt 9 of 36

Napoleon and Illya left the room briefly to speak with one another. Mark and April both treated that as if it were standard procedure with Haddix, but they were both wondering about the action.

When they re-entered, Napoleon started speaking without sitting back down.

"Alright, Haddix, you're in. I'd like for you and Illya to go back to where you and Ridgway attended school. He has to have set up shop somewhere and maybe CROW has more than one meaning here. The rest of us will continue following the trail of the others we believe are involved."

#574: CROW Pt 10 of 36

The flight to Maine was uneventful. Illya found Haddix to be a quiet traveling companion, which was perfectly alright with him. It allowed him to spend the flight reading instead of trying to make polite conversation. A car was waiting for them when they landed and Illya agreed that Haddix should do the driving since he was familiar with the area.

During the drive, Haddix seemed to transform from an agent to a tour director, pointing out what he considered to be points of interest that they passed. Why the majority would be considered interesting was a puzzle to Illya.

#575: CROW Pt 11 of 36

Illya paid attention, more or less, to the ongoing narrative without interruption for about half an hour before interjecting a question.

"Where is it that you are taking us?"

"I was thinking during our flight, Mister Kuryakin. The building where the fraternity is now isn't where it was located back when Ridgway and I were going to school. I thought we might want to start with the original building and perhaps go on from there since it's closer to the airport than our motel is."

"That sounds like a good plan. How much further?"

"Four, maybe five miles."

#576: CROW Pt 12 of 36

Before long, Haddix pulled up beside a weathered building with a heraldic crow - wings spread on either side, one claw raised, beak open and head facing left - stationed over the doorway arch. Illya read the Latin inscription aloud.

"Ubi pus, ibi evacua. Rather a peculiar motto unless the fraternity was one for medical students."
"You understand the Latin, Mister Kuryakin?"

"Yes. As well as the basics of heraldry. It became a hobby of mine in England. The crow has several meanings. Which one do you suppose this one represents?"

A different man's voice answered him.

"Divine providence, Mister Kuryakin."

Illya turned slightly in the direction of the voice. The man standing there had the appearance of extreme amusement about the whole situation.

"You are Ridgway?"

"I am indeed, Mister Kuryakin. A pleasure to finally meet the Russian agent I've heard so much about."

"I fear that the feeling is not mutual."

"Somehow I didn't suppose it would be. But perhaps you'll change your mind in time."

Illya didn't have the opportunity to respond to that before Haddix's gun went off. He felt a burning sensation in his back just before his legs gave way.

Illya woke up cold and uncomfortable with a pounding headache that didn't improve his mood in the slightest. As he started to regain his bearings, he recalled that Haddix had said that Ridgway trained animals. It was that fact that made it click in his still slightly fogged mind where he was being kept.

He was in a dog kennel - one of a set of five that were side by side, lying in the 'run' area. Two of the other runs were also occupied, but by dogs. Extremely large dogs that were both studying him intently through the fencing.

A far too cheerful came from nearby. Could they not wait until he was fully alert to start gloating?

"Nice looking animals, aren't they? They're part of an experiment to create a new breed in Russia. They're meant to be used as watchdogs. In fact, that's what they're calling them: Moscow Watchdogs."

Illya started to speak in response, but was stopped when a electric shock ran through him. Reaching up, he felt what seemed to be some sort of collar encircling his neck.

"First stage of your training. I believe I'll name you Malchik."

As he went through the indignities the day brought, Illya was glad that he was the one going through
Napoleon was a talker. Illya could and had gone for long periods without feeling the need to speak. And while he did feel the indignity at being forced to get both his food and water from a bowl, there had been times in his life when that would have almost been a luxury.

Illya decided to simply take things as they came and wait. His time would come - Ridgway and Haddix would pay and pay dearly.

As evening began to fall, Ridgway returned to the kennels. The two dogs immediately turned, heading out of the run and into their kennel boxes where the food and water bowls were kept. Illya briefly considered balking, but decided his strength would be better saved for other things than useless protest. Once inside, the door slammed shut, sealing him in the dark for the night.

Inside the box, he could sit, but not stand - lie down, but not stretch out. The only way to attempt to rest was to curl up. Repressing the desire to sigh, Illya settled to sleep.

That evening, Haddix watched as Ridgway poured drinks for them both. He hesitated before commenting.

"It won't work."

A puzzled look was on Ridgway's face as he handed one of the drinks to Haddix.

"What is it you don't think will work?"

"Turning Kuryakin. Not a trait I associated with Ruskies before him, but Kuryakin has a deeply engrained loyalty streak. Possibly not to the organization itself, but most definitely to Waverly and Solo."

"My dear fellow, I haven't the slightest desire to turn Kuryakin against UNCLE. I plan to unleash my Russian Wolfhound on THRUSH."

Ridgway tsked at the confused look Haddix gave him.

"If you get a hound trained to flush birds, you don't try to make him into a foxhound. Since I want to destroy both THRUSH and UNCLE, why not use the two I have against the ones they are already conditioned to see as their enemy? The only difference will be that the master holding their leashes has changed."

"You really think Kuryakin will follow your orders even with THRUSH as the target?"

"Once he's convinced that he'll be avenging the deaths of Waverly and Solo? Most definitely."

The relaxation that had crept into Haddix with the drink evaporated instantly when his communicator
went off. Ridgway seemed highly amused, continuing to sip his own drink while Haddix answered.

"Haddix here."

His tension ratcheted upward at the sound of Solo's voice.

"Is Illya with you?"

"No, sir. We split up in order to check over the area quicker."

"How long ago?"

"Mid-afternoon. We're due meet at lunch tomorrow."

"Have him contact me. Solo out."

April and Mark were watching Napoleon intently.

"Haddix is lying through his teeth. Get a plane - I want us there before morning."

---

#585: CROW Pt 21 of 36

Mark took a long look at the old fraternity building.

"Definitely a crow motif, but are you sure Illya was here, Napoleon?"

"Positive. This was the last place that he sent a signal. Neither of us was too sure about Haddix, so we arranged that Illya would send a signal periodically. When they stopped coming, I knew something was wrong."

"Mark dear, you took Latin. What does that motto mean?"

"Ubi pus, ibi evacua - roughly? Where you find pus, there you evacuate it."

"Ugh. Sorry I asked. Wait - I found a dart. One of ours."

"Haddix shot Illya?"

"Looks like."

---

#586: CROW Pt 22 of 36

"I've got the tracer on Haddix's communicator, Napoleon."

"And I've got the address of the place that Ridgway owns nearby."

"I'd lay odds that the two are going to match up. Let's go pay Mister Ridgway a visit."

It didn't take long to get to the property entrance, but there were several official vehicles including an ambulance already there when they arrived. Napoleon looked around and spotted a detective that appeared to be in charge, walked up to him showing his credentials.

"What's going on here?"

"Dead body found on the property, sir."
April and Mark were called to show their credentials as well and then the three of them accompanied the detective to the spot where the body was covered with a sheet while the surrounding area was being processed. Kneeling beside the body, the detective pulled back the sheet to expose the face.

"Any of you recognize him?"

Napoleon nodded.

"That's the man we were on our way to arrest. Benjamin Haddix."

"Looks like someone beat you to him. The owner, Mister Ridgway, is missing as well."

"Mind if the three of us take a look around?"

"Go right ahead."

Something was off, though what or why was beyond Illya's ability to decipher from what few clues he had to go by. For one thing, he had heard the dogs get excited about something earlier, but now he hadn't heard either of them for quite some time.

While he was re-examining his 'kennel' for probably the hundredth time, Illya stopped and strained to hear. Napoleon. Talking to April from the sound of it. Without thinking, he automatically called out - or tried to. The sensor on the collar reacted to his voice and sent another shock through him.

As the three agents started toward the house, one of the police officers came over.

"Pardon me, Mister Solo, but we found this inside. Detective Bell said to bring it to you."

The envelope offered to him had Napoleon's name on it in neat, precise calligraphy. Accepting it, he opened it carefully.

~Mister Solo. Sorry to leave a mess for you to clean up, but Haddix unwisely answered his communicator on my property. I regret having to leave my Russian Wolfhound behind, but I trust you will take good care of him - I will be back to reclaim him.~

As Napoleon read the letter aloud, April's head snapped around, looking back in the direction they'd come from.

"Russian Wolfhound? That set of kennels that we passed by just a little while ago. You don't think Illya's there, do you?"

Mark and Napoleon immediately turned and headed for the kennels.

"I don't know, but I do know that I'm not going to leave without checking them."
It wasn't hard for them to decide which of the inner kennels to check - only one was padlocked. Mark Immediately dropped down and began picking the lock.

#591: CROW Pt 27 of 36

It seemed to take a long time from Napoleon's point of view, but Mark actually managed to get the lock open quickly. The first sight of his partner made Napoleon coldly furious. Whatever else had happened to Illya, he'd definitely been forced to be in the sunlight for too long. The collar around the Russian's neck though? That was receiving the brunt of Napoleon's displeasure.

"Look around - see if you can find anything to help get this collar off of him. I've got a feeling it may be part of the reason he's unconscious."

#592: CROW Pt 28 of 36

As Napoleon used his hand to try and get a better feel for how tight the collar was, he jerked back his hand.

"Son of a - this thing is rigged to give shocks if you mess with it."

Wincing at the sound of that, April pushed open a door and found a tiny office with a locked desk.

"Mark! Bring your lockpicks here. This looks promising."

Hurrying over, Mark was relieved to find the lock was a simple one and he opened it in near record time. April spotted a key ring and snatched it up, taking it to Napoleon.

#593: CROW Pt 29 of 36

Napoleon took the keys from April and immediately started going through them to find the ones that looked most likely to release the collar. On the third try, the lock gave way and he gave a sigh of relief before quickly getting it off of Illya and tossing it to the side. There were a pair of marks that stood out starkly from Illya's pale skin from where the metal contacts had pressed into him.

Mark moved over and gave Napoleon a hand with maneuvering Illya's limp form out of the kennel.

"Local doctor or back to Headquarters?"

#594: CROW Pt 30 of 36

It didn't take long for Napoleon to make the call.

"Let's get him back to New York. We have no idea who might be working for Ridgway in this area. I don't like his threat about coming back for Illya."

Mark looked down at the pale face, nodding.

"Listen, why don't you and April head on back with our boy? I'll stay here. See if anything else turns up we need to know about."

"Are you sure that you'll be alright by yourself, darling?"
"Yes, mum. Honest."

"Don't get cheeky with me, Mark."

#595: CROW Pt 31 of 36

Napoleon made their exit from the grounds expedient by saying they needed to get Illya to a doctor immediately. He certainly didn't view it as his fault if they assumed he would be taking Illya to the local clinic instead of back to New York.

After a brief debate, they decided that it would be best if April drove them to the airport because Napoleon would be most likely to be able to handle Illya if he woke badly. That theory was put to the test halfway to the airport.

"Easy, tovarich. Vy v bezopasnosti - you're safe now."

#596: CROW Pt 32 of 36

Illya stilled after Napoleon spoke to him and then he opened his eyes slightly.

"Good to see that blue again, chum. We're on our way to the airport. I'd advise you to refrain from talking until one of our doctors looks you over. Looks like you took a few bad jolts from that collar they had on you."

Illya's hand reached up tentatively to touch his neck, relief evident when his fingertips didn't brush against the collar.

"No worries on that account - we started working on getting that off of you the second we saw it."

#597: CROW Pt 33 of 36

When they got to the plane, Napoleon settled Illya down, then called Medical to get advice from the doctor for what they could do for Illya while they were in transit.

April was handing Illya a pad and pen when Napoleon came back with a cup in hand.

"We're lucky that Mister Waverly occasionally likes honey in his tea. Here, partner. The doctor said a little honey in warm water will help reduce the swelling around your vocal cords. And no talking until they can access the damage."

Illya only wrote one word on the pad - Haddix.

"Dead, chum."

#598: CROW Pt 34 of 36

Illya slowly sipped the warm honey drink as Napoleon and April filled him in on what they'd found on Ridgway's property. His face showed his disgust at being referred to as a Wolfhound plainly without any words needed. He also wasn't pleased about Mark remaining behind by himself but, since there was little that could be done about it at that point, he didn't waste time writing about it. Besides, April was already unhappy enough about it for both of them.
As soon as the plane landed, April pulled her communicator to check in with Mark.

#599: CROW Pt 35 of 36

Mark found that once Napoleon and April were gone, so was any pretense of cooperation from the local authorities. The sudden shift had him worrying if Napoleon and April had made it to the airport without incident, so when April called him, he was relieved.

"Good to hear your voice, luv. Looks like more of these rotters are on Ridgway's payroll than we thought. Good call on getting Illya clear of here."

Napoleon borrowed April's communicator briefly.

"If the locals are restless, pull out and head to the airport. We'll send the pilot straight back for you."

#600: CROW Pt 36 of 36

It bothered Mark somewhat to be leaving, but staying in a hostile area without backup was foolhardy at best. The wisdom of leaving was emphasized when he noticed he was being tailed all the way to the airport. In a way, he supposed leaving really didn't matter. He was sure that Ridgway, wherever he might be, wasn't still in the area.

Once Mark was on the plane and the confirmation rippled through the area, workmen immediately went to work at the old fraternity house, carefully removing the block with the heraldic crow carving and crating it for shipment.
Chapter 601: Aging 6:10:14

"Illya?"

"Yes, Napoleon?"

"Am I looking older?"

"Older than who? You look older than myself and Mark, but then again, you are older than myself and Mark. On the other hand, you are not in any danger of Mrs. Waverly mistaking you for her husband. Not in good light, at least."

"Har har. Very amusing."

"Seriously, Napoleon? Why would you worry? You are in very good shape and the few grey hairs only serve to make you look distinguished."

"I guess you have a point. I mean I . . . wait. Grey hairs? Where?"

"Possibly I should not have brought those up."

Chapter 602: Taking a Chance 6:11:14

"All right - we go on three, agreed?"

"Agreed."

"Mark? What on earth are they doing?"

"Napoleon and Illya are doing a round of 'Rock, Paper, Scissors' to see who gets to tell Mister Waverly about what happened to the car."

"The one currently being dredged from the river?"

"That's the one."

"Napoleon didn't go for a coin toss?"

"Illya knows about his 'lucky' coin."

"I supposed knowing about the two-headed coin does remove a lot of the suspense."

"Paper covers rock. You get to inform Mister Waverly, Napoleon."

"Napoleon - watch your language. There's a lady present."

Chapter 603: Double Date 6:12:14

"How was the double-date . . . Mark? Napoleon is glaring - Illya is smirking. How would you translate that?"
"I would guess that means Illya ended up with the better of the two ladies, April."

"Quit growling, Napoleon. Come on, Illya - tell us about it."

"There is not much to tell. Napoleon's young lady turned out to be a jazz fan while her friend intended for my date had a 'thing' for dark haired men."

"Surely she wasn't that bad?"

"I would have had better conversation if I'd asked Illya's cat out."

"Lawan is too good for you."

---

**Chapter 604: Houseguest 6:13:14**

"Napoleon, you are such a dear to let us stay here while my apartment is being repainted. Are you certain we won't be in your way?"

"You couldn't possibly ever be in my way, Aunt Amy. Besides, it isn't Tri's first time here. He was born here."

"Really? I thought his parents belonged to Illya?"

"They do. I was watching Illya's cats while he was in the hospital and didn't know to keep them separated."

"I, for one, am glad you didn't. I cannot imagine being without Tri. He's a wonderful companion."

---

**Chapter 605: Scars 6:14:14**

Napoleon sat by his partner's bedside, lost in his thoughts. In the brief time Illya had been awake after the surgery, he'd been dismissive of this latest injury - 'just another scar'. Just another scar he'd gotten from breaking into a satrip to save Napoleon's life. Of course, Napoleon had a few scars himself from coming to Illya's rescue.

Mrs. Waverly referred to the scars as badges of honor. Napoleon considered them to be marks of determination. No-one would end their partnership if they could prevent it. And they had the scars to prove it.

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**Chapter 606: Beginnings: Tête-à-tête Pt 1 6:15:14**

Illya wasn't sure who had summoned him to Mister Waverly's office or why. Mister Waverly was currently in Paris meeting with his Eastern European counterpart with Napoleon at his side acting as both bodyguard and assistant.

Opening the door, he heard a familiar female voice and wasn't quite sure what he should do as he found himself in the presence of Mrs. Waverly.

"Thank you for coming, Mister Kuryakin. Close the door, then come sit by me."

Meeting her blue eyes, he found that, for the first time, he understood how his own stare could unnerve someone.
Sitting as requested, Illya's mind was awhirl wondering why he was here as Mrs. Waverly poured them each a cup of tea. Once she had resettled a cozy over the pot, she began speaking.

"It has occurred to me that you have been partnered with our dear Mister Solo for nearly a year now. From all indications, the two of you are getting along famously, but what I am wondering is how the other agents are treating you."

The look in her eyes seemed to say that she already knew that answer, but wanted to hear it from him.

Illya didn't intend to stiffen, but he did.

"I am capable of taking care of myself, madam."

A trace of amusement flickered across Mrs. Waverly's face as she sampled her tea before speaking.

"My dear Mister Kuryakin, of course you can. However, that is entirely beside the point. Perhaps if I gave you an example? What if an agent happened to be a Nazi-sympathizer? If those above him were unaware of that trait and he was assigned to the protection detail of a Jewish scientist? Surely we can both agree that situation would be far from ideal."

Illya nodded silently to Mrs. Waverly's comment as she toyed with her cup. Finally, she gave a soft sigh.

"While I am not the spry young woman I once was, I - like you - rather fancy I can still take care of myself. But Alexander worries. Napoleon usually draws bodyguard duty for me when necessary and you have once as well. But the two of you will not always be available."

To his surprise, she switched to an old-fashioned, but fluent Russian dialect.

~You may have been the first Russian agent here, but not the first with Russian blood.~

As Mrs. Waverly chuckled softly, Illya realized that he was staring. He also took a moment to reclose his mouth as Mrs. Waverly continued.

"My mother was a dancer. Full-blooded Russian and quite a beauty in her day. She never married and, so far as I am aware, I never met my father. She traveled a great deal and was living in London when I was born. Still, my first words were Russian and I still consider that to be my first language."

"You keep your heritage a secret?"

"No, but neither do I shout it from the rooftops."
Nodding, Illya believed he understood.

"And since you do not hide your heritage, Mister Waverly is concerned that an agent opposed to Russians might someday be assigned to protect you and not perform their duties as strictly as they should."

"You have summed up the crux of his concerns quite well. Of course, there will be other occasions where we are called upon to protect current or former Russian citizens. I am more concerned about their welfare than my own."

A smile quirked on Illya's face.

"Because you and I can take care of ourselves, da?"

"Precisely, Mister Kuryakin."

Chapter 612: Beginnings: Tête-à-tête Pt 7 6:21:14

"Welcome home, Alexander. How was your flight?"

"Tolerable, my dear. I know now why the records always indicate Mister Kuryakin takes the window seat. That seems to be the only way to keep the stewardesses from constantly annoying him in their quest to get to Mister Solo. Speaking of Mister Kuryakin, how did your chat with the lad go?"

"Very well once we got past the sticking point of him feeling that telling was the equivalent of admitting he couldn't take care of himself."

"I knew I left the matter in the best hands. The names?"

"After dinner, Alexander."

Chapter 613: I Remember Paris Pt 1 6:22:14

"How was Paris, Napoleon?"

"The city, magnificent. The women, gorgeous. The food, divine. The meetings? Bored me to tears."

"What kind of food?"

"Figures that's what you'd focus on."

"The city, I have seen. The women, I can imagine for myself. The meeting, I would prefer not to imagine."

"All right - I'll grant you that. Okay, our welcoming dinner was unusual. Every course was several little things. For example, our first course was a carrot and ginger soup, thin slices of cucumber in a mint yogurt sauce, and white asparagus in a vinaigrette."

"How many courses?"

"Four."

"Tell me more."

"You aren't going to drool on my desk, are you?"

"No guarantees. What was the second course?"

"I should have taken notes. Do you really think I remember all the details?"

"So tell me about your waitress."

"Hmm - she was five foot four. Short curly blonde hair. She wore one of those scooter dress in blue and white and . . . I walked into that, didn't I?"

"You did indeed."

"Fine. We had roast chicken stuffed with fennel, roast pheasant stuffed with apples, and steak stuffed with a spinach mixture. Happy?"

"Hungry. Is it lunch time yet?"

Chapter 615: I Remember Paris Pt 3 6:24:14

"Next course was a very nice artichoke heart salad accompanied by a selection of cheeses and sliced fruits. You know, come to think of it, Mister Waverly said he'd have to tell his wife about the dinner. Maybe food fetishes are something you blue eyed folks have in common. Of course, he did mention that France was one of their favorite countries and you attended the Sorbonne, so it makes sense you'd both like French cuisine."

"That is not all she and I have in common. How much do you know about Mrs. Waverly, Napoleon?"

"Not much. Why?"

Chapter 616: I Remember Paris Pt 4 6:25:14

Illya gave his partner a small smile.

"From what little snippets I have heard from Mister Waverly, she has led an interesting life. It makes one curious."

"Now that you mention it, I'd like to hear some of those stories myself. So, what other than stunning blue eyes do you and Mrs. Waverly have in common?"

"A love of languages. I have heard her speak French, Italian and German. In each case, her accent was like that of a native speaker."

"Is that a subtle dig at my French accent, chum?"

"Nothing is subtle about your French accent, Napoleon."

Chapter 617: I Remember Paris Pt 5 6:26:14
"You have forgotten the most important part, Napoleon."

"I have? Oh, right - dessert. The dessert table was unbelievable. You seen croquembouche before, right?"

"Yes, several times. What was special about this one?"

"The size. It was close to four feet high at its peak and the puffs in the tower were possibly the best I've ever tasted. The croquembouche was surrounded by a selection of hand-sized pastries on small plates - tarts, eclairs and mille-feuille with little bowls of assorted truffles scattered between the plates."

"Mille-feuille? You cannot bring yourself to call them Napoleons?"

"Sounds too cannibalistic."

---

Chapter 618: I Remember Paris Pt 6 6:27:14

With a longing sigh, Illya leaned forward.

"It is a sad thing to hear of such food when all one has available is our cafeteria. Hopefully I will get to return to Paris myself and indulge."

"It hasn't been that long. You were just in Paris two months ago, chum."

"So, after your date with Miss Logan tonight, do you plan to refrain from dating for the next two months?"

Opening his mouth to reply, Napoleon hesitated, then frowned briefly before starting to chuckle.

"I have to admit - that was an odd way of making your point, but effective."

---

Chapter 619: I Remember Paris Pt 7 6:28:14

"From the heavy sigh when you looked at your desk, might I assume that Mister Waverly said that report must be in today?"

"You may so assume."

"Pass it over, Napoleon. I have no date tonight, so I will finish it for you so that you can meet Miss Logan."

"Not to look a gift horse in the mouth, but why the reprieve?"

"Can I not simply be nice to my partner on occasion? Besides, you had more than one meal in Paris."

"So I'll need to provide details later? Fair enough."

"Good night. Enjoy your date, my friend."

---

Chapter 620: I Remember Paris Pt 8 6:29:14

"Good morning, Napoleon. From your mood, might I assume that your evening with Miss Logan"
"You may so assume. Here - this is for you."

"A cardboard box. Just what I have always desired. How did you know?"

"Open the box, you Russian smart-aleck."

"Croissants? Thank you, Napoleon. I am glad that I had just finished making my tea."

"You can thank Miss Logan for those. Her neighbor is a lovely little French grandmother who loves to bake and supplements her husband's pension by selling the fruits of her labors."

"I wonder if she accepts regular customers?"

---

**Chapter 621: The Pits 6:30:14**

"Temperature's not bad here - not too hot."

"I suppose."

"The clouds are interesting shapes."

"You are stretching, Napoleon."

"Hey, why not look at the bright side?"

"We are stuck in a pit. The only bright side is outside of the pit."

"Don't be such a Negative Nellie. At least it isn't raining."

*thunder*

"Of course, you had to say that."

"Don't give me that look, Illya. Great - it's a downpour."

"At least the rain is nicely wet."

"Sarcasm, partner?"

"You would prefer me to air my true feelings on the subject?"

"On second thought, no."

---

**Chapter 622: Inedible 7:1:14**

"Morning, chum. Why are you staring at that bowl like it's about to attack you?"

"The bowl does not worry me, but what it contains does. Whatever that might be."

"What does it look like?"

"Hard to say. A bit like someone attempted making Cream of Wheat, but substituted wood shavings for wheat."
"Oh come now. It can't look that bad."

"Okay, I stand corrected. If anything, it looks and smells worse."

"I dislike the thought of wasting food, but . . "

"This doesn't qualify as food, pal. Come on - let's hit the diner. My treat."

Chapter 623: Suspicions 7:2:14

Napoleon grew quiet after he and Illya ate breakfast at the diner. Since it merely seemed his partner was deep in thought, Illya didn't worry about it. Instead he went about doing the morning paper, taking care of Napoleon's as well to thank him for the meal.

The more Napoleon thought about the so-called food in Illya's bowl, the more it bothered him. He'd come in earlier than usual to meet with Mister Waverly and when he'd gone into the cafeteria for a quick bite, there hadn't been anything vaguely like that mess.

Chapter 624: More Suspicions 7:3:14

Napoleon was on his way back to the cafeteria when he heard a soft hissing noise. Turning toward it, he saw April and Mark motioning him into one of the briefing rooms. Neither said anything until he was inside and the door was shut.

"Okay, kids, you have my attention. What's going on?"

Instead of answering Napoleon's question, April asked a couple of her own.

"Has Illya been ill lately that you've noticed? Or reluctant to eat?"

His thoughts went immediately to the unknown substance that Illya had been served that morning.

"You two know something. Spill."

Chapter 625: Eavesdropping 7:4:14

"Mark and I were seated against the north wall - that little table hidden behind that huge potted sago palm?"

"I know the one you mean. Go on."

Mark took up the tale from there.

"We overheard a man and woman arguing. He said that he'd won fair and square, but she argued that he hadn't because it hadn't even been tasted. He argued back that it would have been if you hadn't shown up and thrown it into the garbage."

April joined back in.

"When they mentioned you, we knew they'd been talking about Illya."

---
Chapter 626: Man with a Plan 7:5:14

Napoleon was scowling by the time April and Mark finished.

"So, some of the cafeteria workers have a bet on who can make something vile enough that Illya would toss it out after a taste?"

April nodded.

"They didn't seem particularly worried about Illya being made ill by it either."

When Napoleon went silent, the two junior agents remained quiet until Mark saw a slow smile start to form on Napoleon's face.

"That looks like the face of a man with a plan."

"Right you are, Mark. Gather round, kids - here's what we're going to do."

Chapter 627: Back at the Cafeteria 7:6:14

The next day, Illya again went through the cafeteria line alone, not commenting on the food given to him even though it looked very much like the same substance that Napoleon had dumped into the trash the day before. Picking up his tray, he started to walk off, then stopped and turned back to speak to the server.

"Could you please prepare a second tray for me? I will be back for it in a minute."

The man looked dismayed.

"You want seconds already?"

Illya shook his head.

"Oh, this tray is not for me. It is for Mister Waverly."

Chapter 628: Panic 7:7:14

At Illya's causal comment, the eyes of the server grew huge. The counter setup allowed quick access to the kitchen area, but not to the dining area. By the time he had maneuvered out, Illya was already through the door.

Just as the server started to follow, Illya walked back in minus the tray and gave a bland look at the flustered man.

"Is there a problem?"

"No, but - where? What did you do with the tray?"

"Mister Solo was passing by and offered to take it to Mister Waverly so that I could return to my own breakfast."

Chapter 629: Analysis 7:8:14
Illya declined another tray, instead choosing to go take two pastries and tea to go with him. A few minutes later, he entered the lab area to join Napoleon.

"I sat the 'food' down over on the table over there for you, Illya. Let's see what it is other than unappetizing."

Once the results were in, it was what Napoleon had suspected. Very little actual nutrition, but nothing that would have caused any harm beyond a possible stomach ache. Napoleon dumped the rest of the glop into the trash.

"Seems like a prank that got out of hand, chum."

Chapter 630: Confessions 7:9:14

Napoleon let it be known that he wanted to speak to the cafeteria staff. All of them. Once they were gathered, it didn't take him long to get the story.

It had all started innocently enough. One recently married worker had bemoaned his new bride’s lack of cooking skills and made the remark that even Mister Kuryakin wouldn't eat her meals. Urged by his co-workers, he brought a sample of her cooking and served it to the agent. When Illya ate it, the staff began speculating if there was any food that he wouldn't eat.

Chapter 631: Exposition Pt 1 of 6 7:10:14

Napoleon looked over the group.

"Is everyone in here an American?"

At the nods, Napoleon nodded before continuing.

"You know, a good part of this incident is stemming from the fact that we, as Americans, are spoiled. No - please don't interrupt. I know some of you have seen hard times and poverty, but you haven't had to live with the combination of hard times and poverty in the middle of a war zone. Almost all of our European agents have had experience either in or around wars."

After considering, Napoleon reached for the intercom.

"Send Mark in. Thanks."

Chapter 632: Exposition Pt 2 of 6 7:11:14

Mark entered the room, giving a cool look to the group.

"Napoleon asked me to talk about London during the war. I was three years old when rationing started - me Da was off fighting. We were luckier than most - Mum was a cook and they let her cook our veg in their pots so we got some meat flavor. A fry up of those mashed veg was our usual meal - bubble and squeak - with an egg for breakfast, with a small SPAM meat pie for lunch and with a piece of cheese for high tea. On good days, that is."

Chapter 633: Exposition Pt 3 of 6 7:12:14
Some of the cafeteria workers were already shifting in their seats uncomfortably when Mark leaned forward a bit.

"Now, let's talk about what else was going on. I turned five in a bomb shelter. The Blitz on London had already been going on for five ruddy months. I didn't know the word for it at the time, but Mum was claustrophobic, so there I was at the grand age of five trying to comfort her. There was one period were the bombs fell every single night for almost two whole months. Still, we weren't surrounded by battlefields."

**Chapter 634: Exposition Pt 4 of 6 7:13:14**

Mark looked down at his hands

"There are habits you get as a tyke that are damn near impossible to shake. Me? I can't stand overcooked veg, but can't bring myself to throw them away. Almost like a slap to Mum's memory because for years, that was the best she could feed me."

As he looked back up, there was no mistaking the anger in his eyes.

"Some of us might eat whatever rot you give us because we've known hunger. Throwing away food offends us to our very core. Don't mean we enjoy it."

**Chapter 635: Exposition Pt 5 of 6 7:14:14**

Pausing to gather his thoughts, Mark sighed.

"Some of you may well be sadistic, but I reckon most of you are simply ignorant. I can't enjoy going to a fireworks display. Sound takes me right back to nights inside of tunnels listening to bombs fall. Setting off a firecracker might be something you'd call a harmless prank, but it wouldn't feel that way to me."

Making one final comment, Mark exited.

"Making folks relive the worst times of their lives shouldn't be a source of amusement. We're supposed to be on the same ruddy side."

**Chapter 636: Exposition Pt 6 of 6 7:15:14**

Napoleon waited until the door closed then leaned against the desk before speaking again.

"Some of you may be wondering who reported you to me. Nobody. I've never received a complaint, but I'm not blind. I hope this talk today will prevent any further actions and believe me, I will be watching more closely in the future."

"If any of you ever get tempted to 'prank' again, keep this in mind. One of the foreign agents assigned here is Mister Waverly, survivor of both World Wars. You don't want to get on his bad side. Trust me."

**Chapter 637: Tune In Pt 1 7:16:14**

Entering their office with a fresh cup of tea for himself and fresh coffee for Napoleon, Illya noted the
report in Napoleon's hand and the frown creasing his forehead.

"What is troubling you, my friend?"

"New report on the variety of drugs available on the streets now. I don't get it, Illya. Why would people do that to themselves?"

"Some would argue that we do similar things with alcohol."

"Yes and no. If I was buying home-made hooch, it would be a better comparison, but I know where my alcohol comes from and what proof it is."

Chapter 638: Tune In Pt 2 7:17:14

Illya's eyes went back to the folder.

"Might I see that went you are finished with it, Napoleon?"

"Sure, chum. In fact, you can look at it now if you like. I just need it back when you're done."

"Thank you. If these are what are available on the streets, I fear we will become far too acquainted with them. THRUSH is bound to make use of them or some variation of them on us eventually. Perhaps if we know what effects they cause, we can be better prepared to withstand them."

"Forewarned is forearmed?"

"We can hope."

Chapter 639: Theatre Date 7:18:14

Looking down at his watch, Napoleon smiled.

"Quitting time on a Friday and no new mission to interfere with our weekend. When was the last time this happened?"

Closing the folder on his completed paperwork, Illya considered the question seriously, then shrugged.

"Long enough ago that I cannot recall off the top of my head. Do you have plans, Napoleon?"

"I do owe Aunt Amy a theatre date and she has requested to see 'Man of La Mancha'. Care to join us if I can get tickets?"

"Surely. After all, we have occasionally tilted at windmills ourselves."

"Too true, chum."

Chapter 640: Impossible Dream 7:19:14

"Last night was pleasant.

"Very. Thank you for bringing me along, Napoleon. Your Aunt Amy has a very nice singing voice. For the most part."
"She does, but 'The Impossible Dream' is really not in her vocal range."

"No. Unfortunately not."

"Thanks for complementing her."

"I did tell the truth. It was impressive that she recalled all of the words."

"Tri didn't seem terribly impressed."

"To be fair, that one note was hard on my ears and I do not have a cat's keen hearing."

"Think he's still hiding under the sofa?"

"I would not be surprised."

---

**Chapter 641: First Step on the Moon 7:20:1969**

April broke the silence that had held since they had listened to Neil Armstrong's words.

"A man has actually left his footprint on the moon's surface."

"Remarkable when one considers that only sixty-six years ago the first powered plane carried one passenger for a little over a hundred yards."

Illya was still watching the screen.

"Do you think today will have a great deal of impact, sir?"

"Perhaps not immediately, Mister Kuryakin, but the children of today have learned that the moon is not untouchable. That fact alone will cause more impact than we may ever know."

---

**Chapter 642: Spice 7:21:14**

"Yesterday, we watched men walk on the moon - today we're about to enter an alligator infested swamp to look for documents on a plane that crashed here."

"They say variety is the spice of life, Napoleon."

"In this case, I think someone went overboard with the seasonings. Check list - bug repellent? Sunblock lotion?"

"Check and check. Also a first aid kit. We will need the first two, but let us hope we will not need the third."

"Agreed. Do we have a direction?"

"For so long as the beacon on the plane remains operational."

"Good. Let's move out."

---

**Chapter 643: Got an Itch 7:22:14**

"I hate swamps."
"So you mentioned yesterday, Napoleon. At least you were not bitten by an alligator."

"I think alligators are the only thing that didn't bite me."

"With the number of bites you have, have you considered oatmeal?"

"I'm not in the mood to eat, Illya. This itching is making me crazy."

"Not to eat. I will be right back."

"What are you doing?"

"Preparing a bath for you. Now, come. Lie down in the tub."

"This looks like thin oatmeal."

"It is. Relax. This was a remedy of my babushka."

"Bless your babushka - it's helping."

---

**Chapter 644: Hot Dogs 7:23:14**

"Good afternoon, Napoleon. I was beginning to think your morning meeting was going to last all day."

"It still might, chum. One of the joys of being CEO - budget talks. We're only breaking for lunch and I am in desperate need of food and caffeine before round two. I would ask what's for lunch, but by the selection on your tray, the cafeteria is having a hot dog fest of some sort."

"I had no idea that there were so many different regional variations."

"And you're planning to try them all?"

"I would hate to show favoritism."

---

**Chapter 645: Hot Dog Aftermath 7:24:14**

"You look unhappy, chum."

"Very observant, Napoleon. I am."

"Why the long face?"

"You recall all of the hot dogs from yesterday?"

"Did eating all those different varieties give you a stomach ache?"

"No, but there was not enough time during lunch to sample all of the offerings."

"Does this mean I have to look at a sad face until next year?"

"Only until lunch."

"Why? What's for lunch?"
"I do not know."

"Then how do you know it will help your mood?"

"Because I am hungry and being hungry -"

"Is making you think about hot dogs. Got it."

---

Chapter 646: Afterlife Pt 1 7:25:14

"Help is on the way, Napoleon. Has the bleeding slowed?"

"A little. Illya?"

"Yes?"

"Do you believe in an afterlife?"

"Did we not have this conversation before?"

"Sort of. You never answered."

"I have no real answer to give. I have seen quirks of fate I can only call miracles and think - yes, God is real. But I have also seen and experienced acts of cruelty and cannot imagine God would allow them."

"And your call?"

"I will keep living as my heart tells me is right and hope, if God exists, He is just enough to understand my doubts."

---

Chapter 647: Afterlife Pt 2 7:26:14

"What about you, Napoleon? Do you believe in an afterlife?"

"I was raised to."

"So was I. I did not ask that, I asked if you believe."

"I used to. And if Aunt Amy ever asks, I will wholeheartedly deny having any doubts."

"But you do have doubts?"

sigh

"Mine started when I was shipped to Korea. No one thing really, but like you? I saw things that made me wonder."

"And now?"

"Now? I like your way of dealing with it. We fight the good fight while we're alive and worry about the afterlife when we're dead."

---

Chapter 648: Afterlife Pt 3 7:27:14
"Mister Solo - Mister Kuryakin. Good to have you back, gentlemen. Your doctor has informed you that you will both recover completely, hasn't he?"

"Yes, sir - but might I ask why the question?"

"Of course, Mister Solo. After summoning assistance, Mister Kuryakin left the channel open. A communications technician overheard you conversing about the afterlife and believed one or both of you thought yourselves mortally wounded."

"Not at all, sir. Napoleon and I have had conversations on a variety of topics, especially when one or both of us need to stay awake."

"A simple leaping to conclusions then. Very good."

Chapter 649: Afterlife Pt 4 7:28:14

"Mister Waverly? Do you mind a question, sir?"

"Do I believe in an afterlife, Mister Solo? Most assuredly."

"The things you've seen haven't made you wonder?"

"Of course, they have, but do recall that our Maker gifted us all with free-will. That is an awesome responsibility that many do not give the proper weight to. We can reason, learn and change."

"And the circumstances around us?"

"Those will alter a man to a degree, but not their core. You and Mister Solo grew up very differently, yet you both became fine young men with strong moral standards."

Chapter 650: Afterlife Pt 5 7:29:14

"Well, gentlemen, I must return to the office. We aren't all on medical leave, after all."

"Yes, Mister Waverly. Thank you for stopping by."

"One last thing. Try not to fret about the afterlife. We shall all find out what happens eventually. What really matters is the other afterlife."

"I am sorry - what other afterlife, sir?"

"Our legacies, Mister Kuryakin. I perhaps flatter myself by saying so, but by our deeds, we will leave the world a better place than it would have been without us. Now - rest and heal. Still a great deal more to do."

"Yes, sir."
Chapter 651: Saved by the Cat 7:30:14

"Good morning, Illya."

"Good morning, Napoleon. Did you have a pleasant visit with your aunt last night?"

"I did indeed, thanks to Tri."

"How was it that Tri was involved?"

"Aunt Amy was scheming to introduce me to the granddaughter of a friend of hers, not knowing the young lady and I have met before or that I found her a colossal bore. One of those that can speak for hours about clothing but nothing else."

"I can imagine that would make for a tedious evening."

"It would have, but it seems that she's allergic to cats."

"Fortunate."

"Very."

Chapter 652: Lunar Rover First Driven 7:31:1971

"Hey, April, have you seen the footage of Apollo 15's lunar rover yet?"

"Not yet, Napoleon. Is that it? Rather resembles something made for an erector set."

"Only two years, the first step onto the moon and now they're driving around up there. Rather amazing that."

"Not really, Mark. It was inevitable after Apollo 14's moon landing."

"How's that?"

"Remember Commander Shepard hitting those two golf balls? I knew as soon as I saw a man playing golf on the moon that they would start figuring out a way to get a golf cart up there."

Chapter 653: Ask Mister Owl 8:1:14

"Hello, darling."

"Hello, Napoleon."

"Hello, April - Mark. Why the two of you are parked in the doorway of my office?"

"Pure, unadultered curiosity, mate."

"Regarding?"

"Illya is trying to solve a puzzle of our times and we're helping."
"With a counter?"

"Yes. April agreed to be the official counter in this science project."

". . . is Illya eating candy?"

"Licking candy technically."

". . . . you are seriously counting the number of licks it takes him to get to the chocolate center?"

"Admit it. You've been curious about that yourself."

"What's the current count?"

"314."

"That's better than the owl did."

---

Chapter 654: Things We Don't Discuss 8:2:14

"I have never been so embarrassed in my entire life."

"Not even the incident with the dancing gorilla?"

"I thought we agreed not to talk about that again."

"I am not talking about it, Napoleon . . well, perhaps I am, but only to wonder if that was not more embarrassing."

"Hold on - you aren't telling me that you weren't embarrassed, are you?"

"I never said that. But I also did not try to make a case for it being the penultimate embarrassment of my life."

"You've been more embarrassed that that?"

"I prefer not to talk about it."

---

Chapter 655: Too Many Options 8:3:14

"Hello, boys. What are you up to?"

"Illya and I were discussing most embarrassing moments."

"Care to share?"

"Only if you agree that you go first, April."

"That would be silly. You all already know my most embarrassing moment."

"Oh - was it when you got your toe stuck in the bathtub faucet?"

"I bet it was when you were trapped in that harem."

"I would guess that it was when your foot was broken and Mark carried you out piggy-back."
"Luv? Why the blush?"

"I had no idea I’d given you boys that much material to choose from."

---

**Chapter 656: Bad Memories 8:4:1967**

"What are you reading, Napoleon?"

"The newest copy of Life. Browsing over some of the news I missed while we were out of the country."

"Do you read that magazine often?"

"Sure - I’ve got a subscription. I remember when I first started getting them, they were twenty cents an issue. Now, they're thirty-five cents each."

"Is that a war scene on the cover?"

"In a way. There was a riot in Detroit. Some 8,000 National Guardsmen got called in along with paratroopers from two different divisions."

"That reminds me a bit too much of my youth."

---

**Chapter 657: Relaxing 8:5:14**

"So tell me, Illya - what are your plans for tonight?"

"I am sore, tired and hungry. Some Chinese food to go, some soft music on my stereo, my bottle of vodka from the freezer, then relaxing on the couch with Wellington and Lawan."

"Sounds like a pretty mellow evening."

"After a day like today, mellow is exactly what I want. Surely you are not looking for excitement yourself after everything that happened?"

"Well, maybe not excitement, but I was thinking of hitting a club. Noise, people, dancing, drinks."

"We have very different ways of relaxing, my friend."

"That we do."

---

**Chapter 658: Occupational Hazards 8:6:14**

"How is your hand feeling today?"

"The swelling has gone down somewhat. I suppose if the situation was desperate enough to warrant it, I could fire my gun, but I would not want to have to rely on the accuracy."

"I'm really sorry about that."

"We have been over this already, Napoleon. THRUSH set up the situation, therefore they and only they are at fault."
"Doesn't mean I liked having to injure you to get us out."

"Trust me, I am quite pleased that you did not enjoy that, but we are both free and I am healing."

---

Chapter 659: All in a Day's Work 8:7:14

"So - what's on the agenda today?"

"You have a meeting with Mister Waverly. If he does not present you with a mission for us at that time, I will be spending most of the afternoon in the labs."

"New project of yours?"

"No, one of the lab technicians has requested my assistance in an experiment she is working with involving incendiary devices."

"Certainly your realm of expertise. Does it look promising?"

"It sounds promising. I have yet to see it, but if all works as it should, we may field test it before long."

"Big boom?"

"Very big boom."

---

Chapter 660: Friday Evening 8:8:14

"Another Friday night approaches and the possibilities are endless. So, what do you think we should do, chum?"

"We? You do not already have a date for the evening?"

"Nope. To be honest, I was expecting that we'd be working, but THRUSH has been quiet this week. So join me for a little wine, women and song?"

"As long as you are not the one singing."

"Gentlemen - I need to see you both in my office."

"Yes, Mister Waverly. On our way, sir."

"It seems tonight will meet your expectations after all."

"I wouldn't have minded being wrong."

---

Chapter 661: Math Problem 8:10:14

"Illya? Am I dying?"

"No, Napoleon. You will live."

"Damn. The thought of a nice, peaceful death has been all that's been keeping me going."

"You really should have asked if she actually knew how to cook."
"When a woman invites me over for a home-cooked meal, I've always assumed she knew how."

"You may wish to revise that policy."

"What happened anyway?"

"Mathematics. She believed that if the recipe said to cook at 350 degrees for two hours, it would work out the same if cooked at 100 degrees for seven hours."

"Yep - revising that policy."

---

**Chapter 662: New York Style Pizza 8:11:14**

"So, where is it that you are taking me to, Napoleon?"

"I was fussied at by April for not introducing you to pizza yet. Specifically, New York style pizza. She gave me the name of a little place in Brooklyn that opened last year named Di Fara Pizza. Haven't eaten there myself yet, so this will be a first for both of us. And here we are."

"I will admit that the smell is very promising. April was not joking when she said it was little."

"As with many other things, quality over quantity, chum."

"Agreed. Lead the way."

---

**Chapter 663: Taste Testing 8:12:14**

April stuck her head into Illya and Napoleon's office on her way by.

"How did trying New York style pizza work out?"

"Very well. I think we both enjoyed it, didn't we, partner?"

"We did. It was far more enjoyable than I expected. In fact, Napoleon and I are thinking of trying a different place every week until we try them all."

You are joking, right? Do you have any idea of how many pizza places there are in the New York area? There must be hundreds of them.

"I, for one, am willing to make the attempt."

---

**Chapter 664: Countdown 8:13:14**

Napoleon sighed theatrically.

"How much longer?"

"Five more minutes, Napoleon."

"Waiting is my least favorite thing in the world."

"I thought that being shot was your least favorite thing?"

"Re-phrasing. Waiting is my least favorite thing that doesn't involve bodily injury. Now how much
"Three minutes. Remind me never to go on a long car trip with you. I would end up stuffing you in the trunk."

An explosion shattered the night's quiet and a jet of flame spat into the air in the distance.

"Worth waiting for?"

"You know? It was, chum. Time to go."

Chapter 665: Into the Pool 8:14:14

"Hey, Illya - want to join me in the pool?"

"Since when do you take company with you to the secretarial pool? Have they boycotted you again?"

"No, they haven't, but wrong type of pool. I was referring to the swimming variety."

"Swimming? Have I ever mentioned that for someone with a distaste for water, you certainly seem to be drawn to it?"

"I admit to being a bit of an enigma, even to myself. So? Swim a few laps with me?"

"You are not planning on turning this into a competition, are you?"

"Not my intent, but no guarantees."

Chapter 666: The Devil You Say 8:15:14

"Illya?"

"Four am. You are later than usual."

"Jet lag."

"What is it that has your brain puzzling tonight?"

"The Devil."

"If you are about to claim the Devil is making you do this, I believe a comedian has already laid stake to that claim."

"Not that. Do you believe in the Devil?"

"Allow me to run a few names past you. Caligula, Nero, Torquemada, Robespierre, Himmler."

"Not sure that I'm following you, chum."

"I believe evil exists. Do we need to concern ourselves with the possibilities of a supernatural being when so many mortal examples exist?"

"Maybe not."
Chapter 667: A Change in the Weather 8:16:14

"Where are we off to today, Napoleon?"

"Canada. Banks Island, to be precise."

"Banks Island, British Columbia or the Banks Island that is part of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago?"

"There's more than one? Errr . . . we're going to Sachs Harbor."

"The Canadian Arctic Archipelago then. Dress warmly. The temperature in August is 45 degrees."

"What's the high temperature?"

"That is the high temperature. Lows are around 35. You are looking guilty, Napoleon."

"It's possible I may have complained a bit too much about the current heat wave."

"The heat should be welcome by the time we return."

Chapter 668: A Bad Call Pt 1 of 6 8:17:14

Solo was nearly broken. Warrick could feel it and he had what should be the last straw. He herded the uncharacteristically dispirited agent down a dimly lit hall to a small cell. Inside was Illya - obviously badly injured.

Looking in, Napoleon took in the canine bite marks and bruises on the exposed flesh as well as the unnatural flush to Illya's usually pale skin as Warrick gloated.

"So much for your would be rescuer. A day, maybe two, and he will be dead."

Warrick had misjudged Solo badly. Napoleon's resolve strengthened tenfold - he had a partner to save.

Chapter 669: A Bad Call Pt 2 of 6 8:18:14

As Napoleon hoped, Warrick bought into the act that seeing his partner had broken down his remaining resistance. Warrick proved to have a grandiose scheme - he wanted no less than Mister Waverly under his power. After he had hedged enough that it didn't feel like he folded too soon, Napoleon agreed to lure Waverly to a meeting.

It told Napoleon just how little Warrick knew about Mister Waverly if he thought the Old Man would ever fall for that. Napoleon also knew that, regardless of the supposed agreement to the meeting, Headquarters now knew that they were in trouble.

Chapter 670: A Bad Call Pt 3 of 6 8:19:14

At the appointed meeting place, Napoleon drew a shocked breath as he saw the approach of the familiar combination of tweed coat and dark brown fedora, but what really had him concerned was the woman in the wheelchair accompanying him. Warrick gave a hiss of pleasure.

"Excellent, Mister Solo. Mister Waverly and his wife as well. Were I paying you, you'd get a
bonus."

After the initial rush of panic, Napoleon began to notice little things that weren't quite right. Something slightly off about Waverly's movements. He mentally braced himself for whatever might be about to happen.

Chapter 671: A Bad Call Pt 4 of 6 8:20:14

Leaving Napoleon with two of his men, Warrick stepped out to intercept the couple. When the woman tilted her face up, Napoleon didn't see icy blue eyes, but rather the familiar green eyes of April Dancer. Which meant the man in Waverly's clothing had to be Mark.

Not expecting trouble from the wheelchair bound woman, Warrick ignored her and looked to 'Waverly' - which was all the opening April needed. Wincing even as he made his own move, Napoleon reflected that THRUSH must not have someone like Illya who advised all men in the field to wear protective cups.

Chapter 672: A Bad Call Pt 5 of 6 8:21:14

Fight over, Napoleon's main concern was getting back to his injured partner, but Mark pointed to a helicopter in the distance.

"See that? Mister Waverly sent another team in to extract Illya while we attended the meeting. He'll beat us back to Headquarters."

"How did you know where to send them?"

April smiled, patting Mark's arm.

"Remember that phone tracing system Mark's been refining? It worked like a charm."

"Good work, Mark. You know, I never realized how close you and Mister Waverly are in height."

"Half an inch. Doubted anyone would be able to tell."

Chapter 673: A Bad Call pt 6 of 6 8:22:14

Napoleon had been treated and ordered to rest, but Illya still hadn't woken up. As Napoleon had feared, some of the dog bites had become infected and fever had set in. Just cleaning and bandaging the numerous bites had taken the medical team quite awhile.

Napoleon was reading in Illya's room when the blond agent finally started to awake.

"Hey, welcome back, partner."

"Napoleon?"

"Easy. We're both safe back at Headquarters."

"No thanks to me."

"Actually, chum? I give you all the credit. I'll explain later. Rest."
And knowing his partner was on guard, Illya did.

Chapter 674: Soup 8:23:14

Napoleon waited until the exasperated nurse exited his partner's room before entering.

"Evening, chum. The doctor says they're going to release you in the morning if your temperature stays down. So, what did you do to the nurse?"

"Nothing beyond stating what I would do should they present me with another bowl of lukewarm water purporting to be chicken soup."

"No taste?"

"I doubt that water had even seen a picture of a chicken. Wait, what is that smell?"

"Your favorite wonton soup. Your doctor approved so long as it was mostly broth."

"You are my favorite partner."

Chapter 675: Yippies at NYSE 8:24:1967

"I don't often see you chuckling while watching the news, chum. What's going on?"

"I am not sure if it was a protest or some silly prank, but a group of around a dozen people led by James Fourrat and Abbie Hoffman went to the New York Stock Exchange and caused a bit of a commotion by tossing down dollar bills from the viewing area down to the trading floor."

"Well, that's a novel way to protest, I suppose. Think that they managed to prove anything?"

"Probably only that the Stock Exchange needs to tighten their security."

Chapter 676: Not So Clean Getaway 8:25:14

"Crutches? What happened, Illya?"

"It is a long story, April."

"I'll tell the tale, chum. Hear anything about our assignment yesterday?"

"Just a few things through the office grapevine, Napoleon. Your meeting with an informant turned out to be a set-up?"

"That's the one. We had to jump fences, walls - it was a regular obstacle course to get away."

"Illya twisted his ankle while escaping?"

"No. I started the car moving before Illya was fully inside. The car door slammed on his ankle."

"That hurts to even think about it."

"Try owning the ankle it happened to."
"How badly are you bleeding?"

"I have managed to wrap it tightly enough to slow the bleeding, but it has not stopped yet. And you?"

"I've admittedly been better, chum. Stay here and wait for backup or do an all or nothing charge?"

"If we wait much longer, we will not make it regardless, my friend. If I cannot live, I would rather die in action than in wait."

"Same here. If this is it? It's been an honor and a pleasure to fight by your side."

"I feel the same. Once more into the breach, dear friend."

---

"Oh my God. We're too late."

"No, we aren't, April. I've found Illya. He's in bad shape, but I've got a pulse. Look around. If Illya's here, Napoleon's not far. Open Channel D. This is Slate. We need an emergency evac team here and we needed it an hour ago."

"Mark, I've found him! He's not doing well either, but he's still breathing."

"That's a far sight better than their opponents are going. Do what you can with first-aid. Mister Waverly has help coming."

"They better be fast."

---

The sounds and smells told Napoleon that he was either in Medical or that Heaven was over-rated. The pain that took his breath away the first time he tried moving had him reevaluating which direction he might have gone in the afterlife.

"Easy, Mister Solo. I had forgotten how quickly you and your partner tend to shake off the effects of sedatives."

Napoleon calmed down at the familiar sound of Doctor Riker's voice. Sinking back into his pillow, he murmured softly.

"I thought we'd bought it this time."

"You didn't, but not from lack of trying."

---

Napoleon finally moved his head enough to glance at the other bed in the room and his heart monitor's rhythm changed. Instead of the expected blond head in the next bed, it was empty.

The monitor had the doctor turning immediately and he understand what had happened when he saw
the direction Napoleon was looking.

"Mister Kuryakin is still in intensive care. As soon as he's stable, he'll be joining you."

"We'll be here awhile?"

"Oh yes. I've heard of that Solo luck but this time, you nearly stretched it to the point of snapping."

---

**Chapter 681: 50th Anniv Set - Movie Night - 1 of 50 - Prompts: First Time & Badge**

"This is your first time watching a Humphrey Bogart movies, isn't it, pal?"

"It is. I have heard of him, of course, but never actually seen any of his movies. How old is this one?"

"I was a teenager when The Treasure of the Sierra Madre first hit the theatres so I guess close to twenty years now."

'Badges? We ain't got no badges. We don't need no badges. I don't have to show you any stinkin' badges!'

"You know, I believe I have heard that line before, Napoleon."

"Not surprising. It gets quoted a lot."

---

**Chapter 682: 50th Anniv Set - Key to the City - 2 of 50 - Prompts: First Time & Keys**

"Why do they always pick the hottest day of the year to hold outdoor ceremonies?"

"That is not true, Napoleon. They often pick rainy days as well."

"Good point. At least we're at the main presentation. Not much longer to go."

"What is that they are giving him? I have never seen that award."

"Oh, that? The Mayor is giving him the Key to the City."

"What does it open?"

"Nothing really. It's just symbolic."

"If they want symbolism, they should give him the Manhole Cover to the City."

"Doesn't have the same ring to it, chum."

---

**Chapter 683: 50th Anniv Set - Saints & Smart-alecks 3 of 50 - Prompts: First Time & 3 Ring Binder**

"I see your paperwork stack is already deep, Napoleon. If you like, I will sort through your inter-office mail."

"I would appreciate that, chum. Offer me a cup of coffee as well and I'll nominate you for sainthood."
"I will get coffee after sorting. I see your latest expense report is back."

"How many changes do I need to make this time?"

"None. Everything is approved."

"Why are you putting it into a binder?"

"The binder will keep it safe until we can frame it. This is a momentous first occasion."

"I'm withdrawing your nomination for sainthood."

---

**Chapter 684: 50th Anniv Set - Divided by a Common Language - 4 of 50 - Prompts: First Time & Thumbtack**

Mark stuck his head into Napoleon and Illya's office.

"Either of you gents have a drawing pin handy that I could have? I couldn't find any in our office."

Napoleon gave Mark a puzzled look.

"I didn't know you did artwork."

Then Mark looked just as puzzled.

"I don't."

Illya was wearing his half-smile as he opened one of his drawers and produced a thumbtack.

"Here, Mark. You are experiencing the gap between the Queen's English and American English."

"They don't call them drawing pins here?"

"No. Thumbtacks."

"Sounds like a torture device."

---

**Chapter 685: 50th Anniv Set - Hope Springs Eternal - 5 of 50 - Prompts: First Time & Safe**

Napoleon let out a long whistle as he looked into the THRUSH chief's office.

"That is one massive safe. How much do you think it weighs?"

"A bit over 1400 kilograms, I would estimate."

"In American, please?"

"3000 pounds or so."

"So picking it up and carrying it out isn't an option."

"Not unless you have a crane available at short notice."

"You plan to blow it open, don't you?"
"In a word? Yes."

"I hope this goes better than first time."

"Surely people storing explosives in their safe is a rare thing."

"We can only hope."

Chapter 686: 50th Anniv Set - Fixing Mistakes - 6 of 50 - Prompts: First Time & White out

"You know, we owe a debt of gratitude to whoever it was that invented this White-out correction fluid stuff."

"Especially people who type as badly as you do, Napoleon."

"Hey, I was hired as an agent, not a secretary."

"I am surprised you have not sweet talked one of the ladies in the secretarial pool into typing that for you."

Napoleon sighed, picking the bottle back up.

"I would have, but Mister Waverly's banned me from asking them for a month."

"When did he first discover that you were using them?"

"No correction fluid on my last report."

Chapter 687: 50th Anniv Set - Hot Water Enema - 7 of 50 - Prompts: First Time & Eruption

As the plane's wheel touched down on the runway, Napoleon leaned over his partner to glance out of the tiny window.

"Ah, Iceland. Just as I remembered it."

"In that case, I trust that this time you remembered to pack your flannels."

"I most certainly did. Speaking of remembering, do you remember the first time we saw a geyser erupt together?"

"I do indeed. It was a memorable sight. The grandeur and raw power of Mother Nature on full display."

"And the fact that THRUSH agent was standing over it when it went off?"

"An unexpected, but welcome bonus."

Chapter 688: 50th Anniv Set - A New Tradition - 8 of 50 - Prompts: First Time & Calendar

"Our new calendars are here."

"Already? There are still four more months to the year, Napoleon."

"That's right, you probably haven't noticed but Mister Waverly has us use calendars that go by the
same fiscal year as the United States Federal does, so it starts on October first."

"I see."

"You know, it's not a particularly attractive calendar. Why are you staring at it?"

"Do you know this is the first time I will have been in one office long enough to change out the calendar?"

"Hopefully changing out your calendar here will become a tradition, partner."

---

Chapter 689: 50th Anniv Set - History Lesson - 9 of 50 - Prompts: First Time & Swizzle Stick

Napoleon studied the object in his drink.

"I wonder why they call this a swizzle stick? It isn't made from wood. I'm not even sure what a swizzle is."

Illya lifted his glass.

"For once, I can answer one of your questions on the oddities of language, my friend. In Bermuda, there is a drink called a Swizzle – more specifically, a Rum Swizzle. The drink is mixed and then frothed using the stem of a native plant. After awhile, anything used to stir a drink became known as a swizzle stick."

"Now I want to try a Swizzle."

---

Chapter 690: 50th Anniv Set - Celebration Dinner - 10 of 50 - Prompts: First Time & Dinner

"To the first successful mission of the Slate and Dancer team."

"Why not Dancer and Slate, Illya darling?"

"The old adage, April. Age before beauty."

"Not that we don't consider you beautiful in your own right, Mark."

"Not to worry, mates. I'm fine with April being the beauty in our partnership. Keeps me from having to worry about Headquarters wanting me in a dress."

"Do not rub it in, Mark."

"Sorry, Illya, but face it. I don't have the knees for today's skirts."

"Patterned stockings hide a multitude of sins, darling."

"Not before dinner, please, guys?"

---

Chapter 691: Lesser of Two Evils Pt 5/7 8:30:14

Between healing and medications, Napoleon slept, but didn't really rest. Every time he woke, he immediately looked to the second bed - every time that he found it empty added another notch to his worry.
By the clock, it was about forty hours from when Napoleon had first opened his eyes to when his partner was finally installed into the neighboring bed. The nurses looked at each other knowingly and rolled the bed closer to Napoleon's to let him get a good look at his sedated partner. Napoleon rewarded them with as dazzling a smile as he could manage.

Chapter 692: Lesser of Two Evils Pt 6/7 8:31:14

Now that Illya was in the same room, Napoleon's mind finally gave in to the demands of his body and slept. He even slept through the first wakening of his partner, not that it lasted for long. The blue eyes only opened far enough and long enough to verify that Napoleon was nearby before he succumbed to sleep again.

Neither woke again until the nurses began making their morning rounds. It was the first time they had both been conscious at the same time since making their desperation move.

"So . . . we lived?"

Napoleon chuckled softly.

"Seems that way, chum."

Chapter 693: Lesser of Two Evils Pt 7/7 9:1:14

Twenty-four hours after Illya woke, Mister Waverly entered their room after consulting with the doctors.

"Gentlemen, I am gratified to see that you are still among us."

"We're pretty pleased about that ourselves, sir."

"But a bit hazy on the details."

"From what we could determine from the scene, it appears the two of you chose the one option that your opponents did not expect. They expected you to surrender, not to commit yourselves to an assault. Why did you do it?"

"We knew what to expect at their hands, sir. Death was the lesser of two evils."

Chapter 694: Back in the Saddle 9:2:14

There was still going to be some desk duty in their immediate future, but the day Napoleon and Illya re-entered their office again was a cause for celebration. April and Mark had returned from a mission of their own the night before and were standing by to welcome their friends and sometimes mentors.

"Nice to see you blokes somewhere outside of a hospital room."

"Welcome back, darlings. Until we have a new mission, Mister Waverly is allowing us to act as your gophers. Speaking of which, coffee for Napoleon and tea for Illya."

"Angelic in both looks and action."

Chapter 695: Change of View 9:3:14
"You're being awfully quiet, chum. Hospital food have you depressed?"

"No, Napoleon. I am simply adjusting a new truth about myself."

"And what new truth is that?"

"Had you asked me when I was younger if there was such a thing as a fate worse than death, I would have said no. Now, I have not only acknowledged that such a thing exists, but I have proven myself willing to die to avoid such a fate."

"I've admitted the same. I wonder what that says about us?"

"Possibly that we no longer view death as fearsome?"

"Could be."

Chapter 696: Mark Spitz 9:4:1972

"I dislike waiting to be contacted."

'I'm not thrilled with it either, partner. At least we have an air conditioned room to wait in with a television set. Speaking of? Come over and watch this. We could get to see history being made."

"What sort of history?"

"Mark Spitz is swimming the third leg of the Men's 4 × 100 meters Medley Relay. If the US takes the gold, that will put him at seven gold medals in one Olympics."

"That has not been done before?"

"Nope . . . but it has been now."

"And with a world record time. Impressive."

Chapter 697: Munich Olympics Massacre Pt 1 9:5:1972

"Over twelve hours on planes reaching our assignment and you turn on the news? I can barely keep my head up."

"I am tired as well, but I heard part of a newscast in the airport. I was hoping that I had misheard."

"Why? What's wrong?"

"A group called Black September went into the Olympic village and has taken several of the athletes and coaches from the Israeli delegation hostage."

"What are they demanding?"

"The release of over two hundred prisoners from Israeli jails as well as two prisoners in Germany - the founders of the German Red Army Faction."

Chapter 698: 50th Anniv Set - Traitor 1/3 - 11 of 50 - Prompts: Partners & Bus
It was the worst day since Napoleon had assumed the mantel of Number One. An agent had turned traitor, framing his own partner in the process. Mark was having a hard time processing the deceit.

"I don't get it, April. James and Victor had been partners and seemed to be best mates for years . . . and James threw Victor under the bus like he was nothing to him. How could he? Victor saved James' life last year."

April wrapped her arms around him.

"That only shows that he was a man beyond redemption, darling. Poor Victor is devastated."

"No doubt."

Chapter 699: 50th Anniv Set - Traitor 2/3 - 12 of 50 - Prompts: Partners & Program

Napoleon sat at his desk sadly looking at what James' treachery had done the most damage to - his former partner. Victor had been taken into custody until Illya found the proof of his innocence, but even though he was now freed, Victor still couldn't bring himself to meet Napoleon's eyes as he spoke.

"It's like I suddenly need a program to tell the good guys from the bad guys, Mister Solo. I believed in James - I trusted him. How can I trust my own judgment anymore? How can I ever trust another agent to have my back?"

Chapter 700: 50th Anniv Set - Traitor 3/3 - 13 of 50 - Prompts: Partners & Noise

Illya made a soft noise to alert them as he entered the room, then spoke to Victor directly.

"You were deceived by a man skilled at hiding his true self. You were not the only one fooled. So were his instructors and other agents who had worked with him. Betrayal is never easy to deal with, but you are not the first to deal with it. I wish I could say you will be the last, but we both know this is not true."

Victor finally looked up.

"How did you get past it?"

"I finally found the right partner."
Chapter 701: 50th Anniv Set - 14 of 50 - Candy

"That is a rather large box of candy."

"Five pounds of assorted deluxe chocolates, my friend."

"Have you developed a large sweet tooth or do you owe someone a large apology, Napoleon?"

"Actually, I owe someone a huge thank you."

"If they enjoy chocolates, then that will do an admirable job."

"Glad to hear that, because they're for you."

"Me? Not that I will turn down chocolate, but why?"

"I know I've been obsessing about my new role and calling on you to do more than your share."

"I will always have your back, Napoleon."

"I know. Thanks."

Chapter 702: 50th Anniv Set - 15 of 50 - Love Song

Packing after the end of their temporary partnership, April glanced over at Illya. He was quieter than he usually was.

"That Russian song that you sang while we were in that coffee house. What was it?"

"It is called 'Gde Ty'. It is a sad love song."

Closing her suitcase, April gave in to a momentary daydream that Illya had been singing that song just for her.

"You sang it beautifully."

Glancing over, Illya saw her back was to him. He started to speak, but refrained. They were co-workers. It was best things stay as they were.

"Thank you."

Chapter 703: 50th Anniv Set - 16 of 50 - Swing

"First time sitting on a porch swing, chum?"

"It is. I can see why they would be popular. The motion is very peaceful. Are they common in America?"

"Mostly in rural areas, but I don't see as many of them as I used to, which is a shame. My second favorite memory of porch swings is seeing my grandfather and grandmother cuddling together on
their life partners in every sense of the word."

"And your most favored memory?"

"The night I talked Elizabeth Walsh into sitting on it with me after the prom."

"I should have known."

Chapter 704: 50th Anniv Set - 17 of 50 - Petals

"That's a beautiful drawing, Illya. Lotus blossom, right?"

"Yes, Napoleon. I am studying the various symbolisms associated with lotus plants."

"Such as?"

"Such as the eight petals of a purple lotus are thought to represent one of the principal teachings of the Buddha - the noble eightfold path."

"While I won't deny that I find all of this fascinating, I do have to wonder why you're studying it."

"One never knows when a piece of obscure knowledge might come in handy, Napoleon."

"True, partner mine. There have been times when something odd has helped us with a puzzle."

Chapter 705: 50th Anniv Set - 18 of 50 - Laughter

The ringing of April's laughter drew Napoleon to the office she shared with Mark. Looking in, he saw she was laughing so hard that she was crying.

"Good heavens, Mark - I think you've broken your partner. What did you do?"

"Not much, honestly. I only told her about my Aunt Eleanor and how she would always complain about the young men in her neighborhood whistling the tunes to dirty songs as they passed by her house."

After a moment, Napoleon's laughter mixed with April's as Mark grinned, shaking his head while debating tossing some cold water.

Chapter 706: 50th Anniv Set - 19 of 50 - MP3 Player

"Your expression says you have a new toy to show us, Mark."

"Right you are, Napoleon. Take a look."

"I give up. What is it?"

"An MP3 player with a small screen. Plays audio, video and has a voice recorder as well. Remember the first desktop computer I set up for your partner, Illya?"

"Very well."

"Remember how much memory it had?"
"128 kilobytes, I believe."
"Correct. Guess how much memory this has?"
"With the progress since then - 50 megabytes?"
"Not even close. 4 gigabytes. The equivalent of over 7,800 of that first computer."
"That's a little scary."

Chapter 707: 50th Anniv Set - 20 of 50 - Desktop

"Adjusting to sitting behind the big desk, Napoleon?"
"Honestly? It has a huge disadvantage."
"And what is that?"
"Big desktop for folks to pile paperwork on."
"And my desk too far away to discreetly push some of it over onto my desk?"
"I do miss sharing an office with you, but not for that reason."
"Napoleon . . ."
"Well, not only for that reason. What I miss most is how we tossed ideas back and forth."
"Then we will create another office. One we may both work in and use our current offices for meetings."
"You know? That's a great idea."


After the news, neither Napoleon nor Illya could sleep. The television remained on.

It was nearing 3:30 am in Germany when sports journalist Jim McKay gave the news from Munich.

"When I was a kid my father used to say "Our greatest hopes and our worst fears are seldom realized." Our worst fears have been realized tonight. They have now said there were 11 hostages; two were killed in their rooms yesterday morning, nine were killed at the airport tonight. They're all gone."

Both men silently bowed their heads. Napoleon turned the television off. There were no words.

Chapter 709: In Sickness Pt 1 9:7:14

When Napoleon received a soft moan in answer to his 'good morning', he was up in a flash. Pulling back part of the blanket cocooning his partner, there was little doubt that Illya was sick. Inflamed eyes and a rash on his face that looked like it continued down. The rash set off an alarm as Napoleon pulled out his communicator pen.
"Open Channel D. Solo to Mister Waverly."

"Good morning, Mister Solo. Has a problem arisen with your assignment?"

"I'm afraid so, sir. Unless I am mistaken, Mister Kuryakin has come down with a case of the measles."

Chapter 710: In Sickness Pt 2 9:8:14

Napoleon had to admit one thing - Mister Waverly was a man of action. Within a half-hour after calling, there was a knock at their door and a three-person medical team entered. Illya's condition was quickly verified and, as Napoleon feared, both his partner and himself were placed in quarantine. After the doctors called in their report, Napoleon's communicator chirped. As expected, it was Mister Waverly.

"Bad luck, Mister Solo. Of course, these things are beyond our control. I have already assigned another team to cover your assignment, so you may concentrate on your partner's recovery."

Chapter 711: In Sickness Pt 3 9:9:14

While Mister Waverly frowned on frivolous expenditures, he had no difficulties with spending money when needed. The telephone rang and Napoleon found himself talking to the owner of the hotel who informed him that money had been wired to cover the cost of their food and lodging for the quarantine period. An envelope would be passed under the door three times a day giving food options and the food would be left outside of the door within an hour.

Napoleon already knew his major problem would be boredom, so he requested that all available newspapers be delivered with the food.

Chapter 712: In Sickness Pt 4 9:10:14

As the time passed, Napoleon came to be very glad that the hotel owner seemed to take extra steps to get him several newspapers.

Illya was achy, but his eyes seemed to be his major complaint. They were inflamed and watery to the point that Illya wasn't able to immerse himself in reading as he usually would when stuck in bed. Reading the papers to his partner gave Napoleon something to do to help pass the time and also provided them with fresh material to discuss. By the end of the quarantine, they were thoroughly abreast of current affairs.

Chapter 713: Free at Last 9:11:14

"Don't take this the wrong way, chum, but I'm really looking forward to a couple of days without seeing you."

"No offense taken, Napoleon. Also, thank you for everything you did while I was ill."

"You've done the same for me - and we'll have to do the same for each other again in the future."

"All the more reason for some time to ourselves right now."
"Exactly. I have a night of dinner and dancing planned. You?"

"Oddly enough, the same, though I will watch the dancing instead of participating."

"Ballet?"

"You know me so well."

Chapter 714: Cat Envy 9:12:14

Illya came home in the early afternoon. He and Napoleon had spent a hectic four days avoiding THRUSH while unraveling another plot against humanity. Now he was sore, tired and wanted a long, uninterrupted sleep desperately.

Turning after securing his door, Illya saw Wellington and Lawan had both laid claim to patches of sunshine coming through the windows. Both gave a lazy glance, but neither budged from their sunny spots. Chuckling, Illya dropped his bag and removed his jacket.

"I do not blame you. Were I able to fit in one of those spots of sunshine, I would join you."

Chapter 715: 50th Anniv Set - 21 of 50 - Smartphone

"You wanted to see me, Mister Solo?"

"The door's shut, Mark. It's Napoleon. I was just curious about this $900 bill for the purchase of a smartphone. What is a smartphone and why do we need one?"

"Well, having one's hardly a life or death matter, but it is state of the art technology - all sorts of features. I bought one to see if we can convert some aspects of it for field use."

"Think this is a flash in the pan or is it going to be a thing?"

"It's going to be a thing."

Chapter 716: 50th Anniv Set - 22 of 50 - Scars

After their weekly workout session, Napoleon leaned against the tiles, letting hot water pound into his sore muscles. As they stepped out of their respective showers, Napoleon quickly wrapped a towel around himself. Illya didn't bother, merely toweling off in the steamy warmth.

Napoleon studied his partner's exposed back. He had his share of scars, but Illya had far more. Napoleon knew his question might verge on rude, but asked any way.

"Do your scars bother you, chum?"

"Not at all. They are the signs that we chose to fight and live instead of give up and die."

Chapter 717: 50th Anniv Set - 23 of 50 - Caring

You should really go home and get some rest."

"I can't go, Miss Dancer. Lena and I have had each other's back these past two years. I won't leave
her now."

April cast a sad look at the battered figure hooked to the monitors.

"Cody . . ."

"I know. But right now she's still alive and as long as she is, she's my partner."

Nodding slowly, April gave Cody's shoulder a light squeeze before exiting the hospital room. Mark was waiting for her and she walked into his embrace.

"There but for the grace of God . . ."

Chapter 718: 50th Anniv Set - 24 of 50 - Anniversary

"Know what today is?"

"Wednesday."

"Smart-aleck. Today marks twenty-five years since Mister Waverly teamed us up."

"Does this mean that I am in the dog pen for forgetting our anniversary?"

"That's dog house and no, you aren't. I was looking through Mister Waverly's old notes. Did you know he kept notes on every team?"

"He was a very thorough man. See these symbols next to the hospital visits?"

"I was wondering about those. What are they?"

"The alchemy symbols for life and death."

Okay - these notes have taken on a whole new level of creepy."

Chapter 719: 50th Anniv Set - 25 of 50 - Retirement

"I do not like being stuck in a hospital room."

"Neither do I, but until the doctors figure out exactly what we were exposed to and if we're contagious? Not a lot of choice. At least since we were both exposed, we have each other for company."

"I suppose that is a bright side to the possibility of having some fatal disease threatening our lives."

"No point in dwelling on what we can't control. Let's talk about what we'll do when we retire."

"Avoid hospitals."

"You take everything literally."

"Thank you."

"That wasn't a compliment."
Chapter 720: 50th Anniv Set - 26 of 50 - Partners

Illya kept vigil beside the hospital bed. For once, a THRUSH concoction had affected Napoleon far worse than it had him, not that he was celebrating that fact when his friend and partner was suffering.

Napoleon was talking despite Illya urging him to save his strength.

"After I'm gone . . ."

Illya's eyes nearly sparked with anger.

"Nyet! You will not even consider such a thing. You have never given in to THRUSH before and you will not start now."

Napoleon gripped Illya's hand, giving him a weak smile. Illya knew then Napoleon would live to fight another day.

Chapter 721: 50th Anniv Set - 27 of 50 - Retreat

"This is it, chum. We must choose whether to stand our ground or retreat. I personally am leaning toward that old philosophical quote - 'he who fights and runs away, lives to fight another day'."

"Feeling a bit melodramatic today, are we, Napoleon?"

"Melodramatic? Me?"

"Yes, you. This is merely a water balloon fight with April and Mark, not a THRUSH attack."

"Technically, this is worse than a THRUSH attack."

"How so?"

splosh

"That's payback for that frosting you put in my hair, Napoleon!"

"April is a lot sneakier."

"And has better aim."

"That too. Hand me a towel please?"

Chapter 722: 50th Anniv Set - 28 of 50 - Agenda

Napoleon's good mood practically radiated off of him.

"Good morning, tovarich."

"Good morning, Napoleon. You had a pleasant evening?"

"I did indeed. It's a great day to be alive. So - what's on the agenda for today?"

"We have an agenda? I did not receive a copy."

"It's an expression."
Illya gave his partner an exasperated glare.

"You will be the death of me. How am I supposed to know what is on an expression?"

"You aren't."

"Then why ask?"

"Let's start this over. Good morning, tovarich. Let's go grab some pastries."

"Much better."

Chapter 723: 50th Anniv Set - 29 of 50 - Catalog

"Flipping through catalogs, chum?"

"I am trying to decide on an important purchase."

"Illya . . . these are coffins."

"I am well aware of that, Napoleon."

"Why are you going to buy a coffin?"

"If I wait until I actually need one, it will be a bit late to choose one for myself. Does it bother you?"

"Seems a bit morbid, chum."

"I think of it as practical. I have no family, after all."

"You have me."

"But what if we go together?"

"I guess I see your point. Mind if I look through them when you're done?"

"Not at all."

Chapter 724: 50th Anniv Set - 30 of 50 - Directory

"Hot off the presses, darling - the new UNCLE directory."

"Thank you, April. How did you get roped into delivering it?"

"I wasn't, Napoleon. I wanted to grab a new one for our office so I grabbed one for you and Illya while I was at it."

"Very thoughtful of you. You know, while I understand that putting names in the directory could get someone killed if there was a leak, it does make it difficult when you remember someone's name, but not their title."

"If you get stuck, ask Mark. His memory is phenomenal."

"I'll do that."
Chapter 725: First Things First 9:13:14

"No arguments, Alexander. You may go to the office, but only after a proper Saturday brunch with me on the patio. Our roses are blooming and you can feel the beginnings of Fall in the air. It won't do to forget what you fight to preserve."

Chuckling, Mister Waverly escorted his wife out to where their meals were waiting under domed covers. He took a deep breath, enjoyed the soft rose scent in the air - still too warm for a sweater, but there were hints that the seasons were changing.

"Thank you, Millicent."

"Whatever for?"

"Keeping my priorities straight."

Chapter 726: Vengeance 9:14:14

Mister Waverly was in his darkened office, quietly smoking his pipe. It was official. One of his top teams, Derivaux and Kemp, were dead, their bodies contemptuously dumped on a garbage heap. According to the autopsy reports, neither agent had been granted a quick death.

The anger he felt was a red-hot coal inside. To lose agents was one thing - to have them treated so disrespectfully was another. The THRUSH sub-chief responsible must pay - and he knew exactly who to send to extract the pound of flesh.

"Miss Eklund? Summon Mister Solo and Mister Kuryakin to my office."

Chapter 727: Last Respects 9:15:14

"I hate this, Illya."

"I know you do, my friend. You knew them both better than most of the other agents, did you not?"

"Stan was my last partner before Mister Waverly teamed us up."

"And Derivaux?"

"Bob was also a former partner. Mister Waverly didn't like how they meshed with me, but he saw something and teamed them up three years ago. They've been . . . were one of the top teams ever since."

"Napoleon, it is time for us to go to the service."

"Come on, pal. Let's go pay our respects to two of the best."

Chapter 728: Learning Empathy 9:16:14

Napoleon's hands dug into the upholstered back of the chair he was leaning against as Illya bandaged his leg.

"Hold still, Napoleon. You do not want this to get infected."
Illya kept his touch gentle, but a sharp intake of air signaled how badly it hurt.

"I'm trying not to move, but that's really tender."

Standing up, Illya laid a hand on his friend's shoulder.

"I have done what I can, but the bite is very bad. We need to get you to a doctor."

"You know, I'm beginning to understand your dislike of dogs."

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**Chapter 729: Out of Sorts 9:17:14**

"Come sit by me, luv. You've been out of sorts all morning."

Sitting by her partner's side, April burrowed closer to him, something she rarely did and only when needing comfort.

"Remember that THRUSH machine we destroyed? The doctor said that with what I was exposed to, I should avoid having children. I suppose getting upset is silly - I mean, I wasn't planning on children, but -"

Mark wrapped his arms around her.

"But the choice has been taken away. Sounds like a perfectly legitimate reason to be upset to me. Just us here, luv. Let it out."

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**Chapter 730: Death of Jimi Hendrix 9:18:1970**

"Are you feeling all right, April? You seem a million miles away."

"I'm fine, Napoleon. I was listening to the news and heard that Jimi Hendrix died in London. He was almost the exact age I am, only 25 days younger."

"I didn't realize you were a fan."

"Oh yes - the man was an absolute genius with a guitar. I got to see him at Monterey - I even got his autograph. Oh - do you know where Illya is? I want to let him know."

"Illya's a fan too?"

"Who do you think went to Monterey with me?"

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**Chapter 731: David McCallum's 81st Birthday 9:19:14**

"A horror movie tonight, Napoleon?"

"Why not, chum? Like some popcorn, April?"

"Please. So this is called 'Dogs'? Doesn't sound very scary."

"You have not met some of the dogs I have then."

"You know, that actor playing Harlan Thompson reminds me a bit of you, Illya."
"I am quite sure that I have never gone out looking so... scruffy except when under cover."

"You know, Mark is right, darling. I'm surprised that I never noticed you and David McCallum resemble one another before."

"Probably the difference between seeing someone on a screen and seeing someone in person."

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Chapter 732: 50th Anniv Set - 31 of 50 - Interrogation

The captured THRUSH agent glared at Napoleon and Illya.

"Do your worst. You won't get anything from me."

Napoleon gave the agent a cool smile.

"Oh, you don't have anything to worry about from us. You'll be interrogated directly by Madame Cheval."

The first flicker of uncertainty crossed the agent's face.

"Cheval? Cheval is dead."

The laughter coming from the doorway drew the attention of all three men to the woman in the wheelchair.

"Dead? Hardly - though that THRUSH bomb did give me a bad moment. Merely retired. I agreed to return to chat with you."

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Chapter 733: 50th Anniv Set - 32 of 50 - Suspect

After securing the THRUSH agent to her specifications, Napoleon and Illya left 'Madame Cheval' alone with him. Sitting down, Illya glanced back toward the door.

"Have you ever seen her work?"

Napoleon shook his head.

"She was already retired when I started here. But you don't get a reputation with THRUSH without there being a reason."

To their surprise, she signaled for them to open the door in less than half an hour.

"I have a list of three other suspects that he says may have been involved. Ask him any other questions you have now. He'll answer."

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Chapter 734: 50th Anniv Set - 33 of 50 - Provoke

Once Napoleon and Illya had finished questioning the THRUSH agent, they rejoined 'Madame Cheval', better known to them as Mrs. Waverly. She accepted their offer of tea and waited for the questions that were bound to come. Napoleon was the first to voice them.

"Could we ask how were you able to provoke that sort of response? I didn't think we were going to get anything out of him."
The retired agent smiled.

"I will let you two in on a little secret. It isn't so much what one does, it's what they believe you might do."

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**Chapter 735: 50th Anniv Set - 34 of 50 - Divide**

Mrs. Waverly found that she had a rapt audience. Refilling her tea, Illya spoke next.

"I am not sure I understand your meaning. Would you be so kind as to explain?"

"Certainly, my dears. First, a good portion of my work was already done - he knew of me and the bomb. With what he'd heard of Madame Cheval added to the implication that I wanted payback for my forced retirement? He expected the worst and I played to that."

"Played to it how?"

"I divided his attention. I worked various props with my hands, but spoke of unrelated things."

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**Chapter 736: 50th Anniv Set - 35 of 50 - Friendship**

Intrigued, Napoleon sipped his coffee.

"Do you think we could pull off something like that?"

Laughing, Mrs. Waverly reached over and patted Napoleon's arm.

"Easily. You could use the friendship between the two of you since that is already well known in THRUSH circles."

Pausing briefly to reach into her bag, Mrs. Waverly pulled out a small case, opening it to reveal a scalpel.

"As an example, you hold and study something similar while speaking about how very annoyed you are about the treatment your partner received when last in THRUSH hands."

"Ah - I see how that would work."

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**Chapter 737: 50th Anniv Set - 36 of 50 - Soap**

"Thanks for letting me use your shower, Illya. I hate a cold shower."

"How long will it be before they can replace your hot water heater?"

"They said I should have hot water again by tomorrow night. Where do you keep your towels?"

"In the small closet by the bathroom door."

"Holy . . . Illya, you have more soap in here than I've seen in some grocery stores."

"I like to stock up when there is a good sale."

"Stock up? You probably have enough soap to do you through retirement."
"One less thing to have to buy on my pension."

**Chapter 738: 50th Anniv Set - 37 of 50 - Thumbtack**

"Hand me a thumbtack, would you, chum?"

"Here you are. What is all of this that you are putting on your board?"

"Pictures of places I'd like to see one of these days after we retire."

"I recognize that one area. We have been there, Napoleon."

"Okay, let me rephrase that. These are places I'd like to see when not running through them, avoiding bullets."

"True. Hard to appreciate the architecture of a building when one is ducking behind it."

"Any pictures you want to add?"

"Me? Why?"

"I can't imagine going to see them without you."

**Chapter 739: 50th Anniv Set - 38 of 50 - Fingernails**

Napoleon's final assignment before retirement from the field had gone terribly wrong. He woke from his restless sleep when the cell door banged open and Illya was tossed in like a rag doll. Despite his worry, Napoleon remained still until the door shut again.

Rushing to his unconscious partner's side, Napoleon surveyed the damages, wincing. Blood was underneath each of Illya's fingernails and bruises shaped like fingers were starting to form on his pale throat.

Holding Illya, Napoleon made a silent vow. They would survive this - and Illya was going to retire from the field with him.

**Chapter 740: 50th Anniv Set -39 of 50- Shower Curtain**

"Napoleon?"

"Yes, Illya? What is it? You aren't going to skip out on my retirement party, are you?"

"With the food that is being served? Of course I will be there. I simply wanted to give you your present before everything begins."

"You didn't need to get me . . . a shower curtain?"

laughter

"It is good to know I can still surprise you, my friend."

"Admittedly nothing I expected. Why a shower curtain?"
"Once you assume the position of Number One, you will be more of a target. This one is both bullet and knife proof."

"Scary, yet thoughtful."

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**Chapter 741: 50th Anniv Set - 40 of 50 - A Minute**

"Here's your glass, Illya. How long?"

"A minute left until 2014, Napoleon."

"We haven't always spent them together, but this marks the fiftieth New Year since we became partners."

"Had anyone told us then that we would still be side-by-side past field retirement, we would have laughed at them."

"We would have, wouldn't we? And yet, I'm approaching my 82nd birthday."

"I expect you will surpass Mister Waverly in your span of years on this globe."

"You going to do it with me?"

"Certainly. Who else would watch your back?"

"Happy New Year, chum."

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**Chapter 742: A Week in Provence Pt 1 9:20:14**

"Good morning, Illya."

"Napoleon? I . . . where are we?"

"In a pleasant little farm house in Provence, France. How is your head?"

"Tender. Weren't we in Paris?"

"Quite right. What you don't remember is the ambush. You were grabbed and knocked out before I even knew what was happening. They led me on quite the chase, but - obviously - I managed to get you away from them."

"And we are in hiding here?"

"That we are. Mister Waverly wants us to lay low for a few days."

"I think that is about all I can manage for now."

"Rest, chum."

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**Chapter 743: A Week in Provence Pt 2 9:21:14**

A soft knock drew Napoleon's attention away from his partner. Getting up, he moved to the door and opened it, smiling at the young woman in the hallway. Her English was excellent with a charming
"My grandmother asks if you will come down to eat or if I should bring your meals."

"Much as we would enjoy the company, I don't believe my friend is up to moving very much today. Perhaps if we could take our meals here today and then join you and your grandmother tomorrow?"

"Of course. I will return with a tray, monsieur."

Chapter 744: A Week in Provence Pt 3 9:22:14

With Napoleon's help, Illya managed to make it downstairs the next morning so they could join the family for breakfast. The grandmother looked to be a contemporary of the Waverlys and greeted them warmly.

"Welcome to our table. I am Cerise Bissette and you have already met my dear granddaughter, Fleur."

Fleur smiled brightly as she carried in a basket of fresh bread.

"Grand-mere has always told me stories of Oncle Alexandre and Tante Millicente. You know, for cousins, you two do not look very alike."

Napoleon smiled slightly to cover his confusion.

"We hear that a lot."

Chapter 745: A Week in Provence Pt 4 9:23:14

Something about the name Cerise teased Illya's memory. Halfway through the meal, it clicked in place for him.

"Excuse me, but was your maiden name Doucet?"

Cerise smiled again.

"It was indeed. You have heard stories of my father?"

The name made the connection with Napoleon now that the surname had been spoken.

"Yes - Lucien Doucet. Tante Millicente always spoke of him with great fondness."

Cerise nodded at Napoleon's words, but her eyes remained on Illya.

"Millicente said that the maternal side of the family came from Eastern Europe. You must be from that side of the family."

Chapter 746: A Week in Provence Pt 5 9:24:14

Now that they knew who they were talking with, Napoleon and Illya found themselves hearing stories about the young Alexander and Millicent Waverly - who Cerise referred to as Alexandre and Millicente Cheval after giving a meaningful glance toward her granddaughter.
Cerise was plainly delighted to have new ears for her memories. An old album was pulled out - Cerise and her father had been guests at the wedding and there were photographs of the Waverlys taken in the stiffly posed style of that era. More photographs followed - it was easy to see the Waverlys had kept close ties to the family.

Chapter 747: A Week in Provence Pt 6 9:25:14

Despite the interesting conversation, Illya's injuries still had him tiring easily. Cerise motioned to Napoleon who followed her to what appeared to be the house's formal parlor. By the window was an old Louis XVI style daybed, in excellent condition.

"This was my dear Papa's favorite place to nap during the day with the window raised for fresh air. Why not bring your cousin in here and let him rest here during the days instead of climbing the stairs?"

Napoleon thanked her again for everything, but she waved him off.

"We are practically family. It is nothing."

Chapter 748: A Week in Provence Pt 7 9:26:14

During the daylight hours over the next three days, Illya rested on the daybed, breathing in the fresh air. With the hearty country fare he was also being fed, he was regaining his health and strength steadily. After watching his partner sleep for a minute, Napoleon followed Cerise to her small dairy. She laughed lightly.

"Have you ever milked a goat?"

Napoleon shrugged, but smiled.

"No, but I'm willing if the goats are."

The goats seemed to approve of him and Cerise began milking as well.

"Your Illya will be well enough to travel soon."

"Yes - thanks to you."

Chapter 749: A Week in Provence Pt 8 9:27:14

Two days later, Napoleon was not only an old hand at milking goats, but two of the best milkers, Bluet and Belle, bleated when he came in, jostling each other to be the first to get ear rubs. Illya laughed when Cerise told him.

"That is the trouble with not being able to turn off the Solo charm, Napoleon. Now you have goat groupies."

Napoleon smiled. It was good to see Illya feeling well enough again to make jokes. But knocking at the door saw him shifting to defensive in a flash. He looked to Cerise.

"Are you expecting anyone?"
Chapter 750: A Week in Provence Pt 9

9:28:14

Cerise stared at the door as she answered Napoleon, reverting to French.

"Non pas du tout"

He motioned for her to wait as he moved to the side and drew his weapon. At Napoleon's nod, Cerise moved to the door. Glancing out discretely, she suddenly laughed, opening the door.

"Alexandre! Entrez!"

"Good to see you again, Cerise. Lovely as ever."

"I fear your eyesight is going, Alexandre. Millicente is not with you?"

"Not this time. Today I have come to retrieve our nephews. Do try not to discharge your weapon, Napoleon. Your aunt would be quite cross with you."
Chapter 751: 50th Anniv Set - 41 of 50 - Fire

At the stop sign, Napoleon gave a glance to the chocolate cake resting in the passenger seat. It had been a close call for his partner, but Illya had not only survived a harrowing mission, but had reached his first anniversary at the New York Headquarters. He knew his partner wasn't happy about being stuck in a safe house until his healing finished, so the chocolate cake was to cheer him up as well as celebrate.

The sight of several fire trucks ahead where he knew the safe house to be gave him a bad feeling in his guts.

Chapter 752: 50th Anniv Set - 42 of 50 - September

Parking his car well away from the emergency vehicles, Napoleon barely paused to lock the doors before hurrying down the street, anniversary cake forgotten. The September air took a chill that had nothing to do with the first day of Autumn when he confirmed that it was the safe house that was the center of attention.

The sight of the flames coming from the window of the room where he'd last seen Illya had his pace increasing to a near run. Spotting a police officer, Napoleon Headed straight for him.

"That's my uncle's house. What happened here?"

Chapter 753: 50th Anniv Set - 43 of 50 - Tongue

The officer gave Napoleon a sympathetic look.

"Well, Mister . . . ?"

"Solo."

"Well, Mister Solo, we haven't caught the man responsible, but a neighbor said she heard a man's voice yelling something about an anniversary present before hearing a window break and a car peeling out. She called us to report the vandalism. Fortunately, she looked back toward your uncle's place and saw smoke coming from the broken window while she was still speaking with our dispatcher."

The officer paused - incongruously, the tip of his tongue touched his upper lip as he thought.

"Did your uncle have a houseguest?"

Chapter 754: 50th Anniv Set - 44 of 50 - Towel

Napoleon was trying to think who else knew the anniversary date as he answered.

"Close friend of the family. He had been in an automobile accident and his doctor said he couldn't handle stairs, so my uncle offered him use of the house until his leg finishes healing. I was on my way here to check on him. Is he alright?"
"He's already been taken away in an ambulance. Lucky guy - first time I've ever seen the ambulance beat us to the scene. Guess he got some burns, they had a damp towel draped over his head."

Chapter 755: 50th Anniv Set - 45 of 50 - Scotch tape

Alarm bells were sounding in Napoleon's head as he thanked the officer. Who had called the ambulance? Napoleon went to speak with the neighbor.

"Are you the one I have to thank for keeping an eye on my uncle's house?"

"Yes, but I'm so sorry that gentleman was injured. I had no idea that anyone was inside, but I really should have guessed when that man yelled about the anniversary. Oh . . . that reminds me."

She pulled a note free that was stuck to her doorframe with scotch tape.

"I jotted down the name of the ambulance service."

Chapter 756: 50th Anniv Set - 46 of 50 - President

The neighbor lowered her voice after giving Napoleon the note.

"I don't mean to be nosey, but who is that man? I heard one of the attendants call him the Russian, but I didn't catch the word he said after that."

Thankful to have a name to go on, Napoleon decided to give her a good story.

"It needs to be kept quiet, of course, but he's a special ambassador. Reports directly to the President."

Napoleon left her his card and headed back for his car. The anniversary cake's icing was as droopy as his spirits.

Chapter 757: 50th Anniv Set - 47 of 50 - Forgiveness

Napoleon briefly wondered if the anniversary cake could be saved with refrigeration as he contacted Headquarters and updated Mister Waverly about Illya. April and Mark were put immediately on the trail of the ambulance company – Napoleon was told to return.

Driving slowly, Napoleon was brooding when a red glint to his left caught his eye. Turning his car around, he took a closer look – it was an ambulance. He'd ask forgiveness for ignoring an order later. Parking a discreet distance away, he gave a silent prayer that seeing the glint had been the Solo luck extending to his partner.

Chapter 758: 50th Anniv Set - 48 of 50 - Comb

Getting closer verified that the ambulance by the building was the right service. Any doubts were erased when a well-armed man exited the building - oddly enough, humming the 'Happy Anniversary' song from The Flintstones - to retrieve something from the ambulance. A gust of wind gave Napoleon an unexpected opening - the man was apparently highly vain. He pulled out a comb to straighten his hair back and Napoleon made his move.

This building was apparently only a stop-over - only two other men were present. Napoleon wasted
no time liberating his partner from them - no telling when others might arrive.

Chapter 759: 50th Anniv Set - 49 of 50 - Bank

Illya was still extremely dazed from whatever had been given to him to keep him docile, but Napoleon eventually managed to get him into the car. There was no other place to put the anniversary cake, so it ended up in Illya's lap. Opening the box, Illya helped himself to a finger's worth of frosting. He didn't speak until the car had pulled away and some of the fresh air hitting his face helped revive him.

"Napoleon? Do you think they were THRUSH?"

"Pretty sure you can bank on that, chum."

"Bank?"

"I'll translate later, chum."

Chapter 760: 50th Anniv Set - 50 of 50 - Bedtime Story

After Napoleon reported Illya's rescue, Mister Waverly ordered Napoleon to stay with Illya and sent them to the safe house normally reserved for visiting dignitaries.

Half the cake's icing was missing by the time they arrived and Illya was giggling. Drugs plus the sugar rush were combining in odds ways - Napoleon suspected Illya would crash hard soon.

"Not exactly the way I wanted to celebrate your anniversary, pal. Let's get you to bed."

"Will you tell me pered snom skazka?"

Napoleon chuckled - Illya was going to be so embarrassed by this later.

"A bedtime story? Why not?"

Chapter 761: A Week in Provence Pt 10 9:29:14

Napoleon was shocked. Mister Waverly never called him by his first name, but then he remembered he was supposedly Mister Waverly's nephew. The man would hardly call his nephew Mister Solo.

Mister Waverly had moved over to Illya and was examining him critically.

"Still looking a bit rough, my boy. Shame to go to a city like Paris and encounter a pack of ruffians."

"Fleur, put on the kettle for tea. I know you must go soon, Alexandre, but surely you will eat with us first?"

"I would never pass up the opportunity to sample your cooking, Cerise dear."

Chapter 762: A Week in Provence Pt 11 9:30:14

The meal was an experience for them. Neither had ever seen Mister Waverly so at ease, smiling, joking - even mildly flirting with Cerise and Fleur. Humorous recollections of her great-grandfather
delighted Fleur, who kept herself busy pouring tea and wine for their guests and, after the main course, brought out sliced baguettes and a selection of the goat cheeses they made in their small dairy.

As it had to, the time came when Mister Waverly announced that they needed to depart. Napoleon and Illya thanked the two women again and had to promise that they would come back again.

Chapter 763: A Week in Provence Pt 12 10:1:14

Napoleon took the wheel and Illya went into the backseat. They were halfway to the airport when Mister Waverly spoke.

"I am trusting to your discretion, gentlemen."

"Of course, sir."

"Yes, Mister Waverly, but might I ask a question?"

"Certainly, Mister Kuryakin, though I suspect it is in regards as to why I sent you to that location to recover?"

"That is the question, sir."

"Very well then. Cerise and her family have been under the UNCLE protective umbrella since our formation. Since I expect you two to be carrying on after me, the time seemed right for an introduction."

Chapter 764: Carry that Weight 10:2:14

"Is something troubling you, Napoleon?"

"Just thinking, chum. About Cerise and Fleur - and by extension, all of the innocents that we're trying to protect. Guess I'm just feeling the weight of the responsibility - and the trust that Mister Waverly has that we can shoulder it."

"We have been helping to shoulder that weight since the first time we took to the field, my friend. Remember, Mister Waverly is not a man who tilts at windmills. He has faith in what we can accomplish for a reason."

"You missed your calling as a cheerleader, Illya."


Chapter 765: Death of Woody Guthrie 10:3:1967

Illya's morning had been filled with running and dodging THRUSH agents, so he was currently catnapping in the passenger seat. Turning on the radio to keep him company, Napoleon tapped his fingers on the steering wheel in time to the music.

When news came on at the top of the hour, he turned the volume up a little to hear it clearly.

"And, in other news, folk music legend Woody Guthrie passed away today after a lengthy illness. Credited with writing over 1000 songs . . ."
Shutting off the radio, Napoleon sighed, later finding himself humming 'This Land is Your Land'.

Chapter 766: Witching Time Pt 1 10:4:14

From his desk, Napoleon could hear their voices even before the door opened. Whatever the subject being argued was, April sounded determined.

"Come on, Illya. Please? You would look absolutely smashing."

"I am not so sure."

As soon as the door opened, Illya beat a hasty retreat behind his own desk. April stopped just inside the door and shifted her attention over to Napoleon.

"Napoleon, don't you think Illya would make a great vampire?"

Sure that his mouth was bound to have dropped open at the unexpected question, Napoleon deliberately shut it as he glanced over at his partner.

Chapter 767: Witching Time Pt 2 10:5:14

"Before I comment, what exactly are we talking about?"

April laughed as she pulled an envelope out of her bag and offered it to Napoleon.

"My fault, darling. I'd forgotten for a moment that I hadn't given yours to you yet."

Napoleon glanced back to Illya, who shrugged.

"Open it at your own risk."

Curiosity was too much after that. Opening it, Napoleon found an invitation.

"You're throwing a Halloween party, April?"

"Mark and I are, yes."

Illya lifted his own invitation.

"I would suggest you open it and read the rest before agreeing to anything, Napoleon."

Chapter 768: Witching Time Pt 3 10:6:14

Napoleon opened the invitation as if expecting something to jump out of it. Nothing did, but the writing inside had him staring.

"Werewolf? You want me to dress up like a werewolf for the party?"

April rolled her eyes.

"Honestly. Anyone would think that the two of you never heard of a costume party before."

"A costume party? Yes. One where I was assigned a specific costume? No. And from the earlier discussion, I suppose Illya is supposed to come as a vampire?"
"Mark and I wrote down classic monster types and drew them as each invitation was written out."

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**Chapter 769: Witching Time Pt 4 10:7:14**

Glancing back down at his invitation, Napoleon frowned a bit.

"Why not just tell us to dress up as something from a classic horror film? Why assign roles?"

"I thought it would be a blast if everyone was unique. Asking everyone to coordinate with everyone else seemed a terrible bother - not to mention possible fights over who claimed a costume idea first. This way, everyone was equal."

"What about you and Mark?"

"I did a random draw for Mark and he did one for me. I got a witch and Mark got a mummy. Please say you both will come?"

---

**Chapter 770: Witching Time Pt 5 10:8:14**

Napoleon and Illya exchanged glances, but they both realized the futility of trying to say no to April. Napoleon sighed, laying his invitation down on his desk.

"You know that if we turn down the invitations, she will send Mark in here with his Bambi eyes until we cave in."

"So we are bowing to the inevitable without a fight?"

"How about we compromise instead? What do you say, April?"

April pursed her lips slightly while listening. Napoleon was up to something.

"I suppose that depends on what you have in mind as a compromise, darling. Let's hear it."

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**Chapter 771: Witching Time Pt 6 10:9:14**

Napoleon smiled, tapping lightly on his invitation.

"Give us the option of trading costumes with anyone else coming to the party. You'll still have one of each but it gives us a chance to avoid a costume we'd rather not wear, for whatever reason."

As April lightly bit her lower lip while considering, Illya chimed in his opinion.

"Come now, April. Surely if Mark had drawn mummy for you and you had drawn witch for him, the two of you would have swapped."

Seeing the sudden blush forming, Napoleon knew that was exactly what happened. They had her.

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**Chapter 772: Witching Time Pt 7 10:10:14**

Illya didn't miss the blush either.

"So you and Mark did swap. Come now, April - as the charming hostess we all know you to be,
surely you will allow your guests to take the same liberty you took for yourself?"

April sighed and nodded.

"You're right, of course. It's only fair. I still think you would make an absolutely fab vampire though, Illya."

"Perhaps I will still be one if I cannot find anyone with a costume I would feel more comfortable with."

A trill came from April's communicator.

"That's Mark - got to run. Later!"

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**Chapter 773: Witching Time Pt 8 10:11:14**

Napoleon idly tapped on his desk until April was gone, then turned his best smile onto his partner. Illya rolled his eyes.

"You can turn down the wattage, Napoleon. If you want the vampire, it is yours."

"Really? You won't mind the werewolf?"

Brushing his bangs back with one hand, Illya shrugged.

"I do not find it any more objectionable than I do the vampire. Besides, this way one of us will be happy and I may yet find someone else to trade with."

"Thanks, pal - tell you what, I'll put out feelers for other costumes."

"Thank you."

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**Chapter 774: Witching Time Pt 9 10:12:14**

A new mission was given to the Solo/Kuryakin team and all thoughts of April's party shifted to the back of their minds. Even more so when the mission went bad and landed both agents in Medical. Napoleon was released from the ward first, though he was strictly limited to desk duty. It was while he was shuffling papers that one of the other agents invited to April's party ventured in to talk about the costumes.

Pleased to have something to discuss with Illya that wasn't related to work or health, Napoleon took the offer to him.

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**Chapter 775: Witching Time Pt 10 10:13:14**

Napoleon maneuvered around a flushed, rapidly exiting nurse and glanced into his partner's room.

"How are you feeling, chum?"

A disgruntled pair of blue eyes glanced his way.

"How do I always feel in these rooms?"
"Hmm - irritable, annoyed, bored - oh, and hungry."

"You forgot desperate to escape, but otherwise correct."

Coming further in, Napoleon noted a green stain on the wall that trailed down to a green blob on the floor.

"I see that they haven't learned to keep gelatin off of your meal tray yet."

"No. One would think that experience should have taught them better."

Chapter 776: Witching Time Pt 11 10:14:14

Napoleon made sure none of the green goo had landed in the chair and settled down at Illya's side.

"Shame a glob of green gelatin wasn't on April's list of horror icons. It would have put fear into the heart of many an agent to see it coming it."

"Have they told you yet when I may leave here?"

"Trust me, chum - the nurses want you out of here as badly as you want out of here, so hopefully soon. In the meantime, I have an offer from a fellow party attendee for you to look over."

Chapter 777: Witching Time Pt 12 10:15:14

Illya didn't say anything to Napoleon, but he held out his hand. Napoleon continued smiling as he handed the invitation over, then watched intently as his partner read it over.

He read it over twice before looking up.

"And they are aware that they are exchanging this for a werewolf?"

"They not only are aware, but are quite excited about it. Turns out that they have a penchant for elaborate Halloween costumes and the one they were assigned didn't fill the bill for them."

"In that case, please inform them that we have a deal."

"Will do, partner."

Chapter 778: Witching Time Pt 13 10:16:14

When Illya woke up from his pain medication, Napoleon was looking through a catalogue with a selection of fabric swatches in his lap.

"Dare I ask what you are doing?"

Looking up, Napoleon seemed as enthusiastic as a boy.

"My tailor knows how to make an opera cape, so I'm ordering one from him. I'm glad you're awake - mind helping decide on what materials to use?"

"It may be an odd question, but since you attend operas with your aunt, should it be functional as outer wear for your tuxedo?"
"Actually, that's a very good question."

Chapter 779: Witching Time Pt 14 10:17:14

Idly running a finger across the fabric swatches, Napoleon considered silently for a moment.

"You know, you're right. If I'm going to spend the money on a cape, I really should get one made that I can use for opera dates with Aunt Amy."

"Of course I am right. Now, since we are looking toward a real cape that will be used as a costume rather that a one-time use item, I would personally suggest the black wool outer cape as it will repel snow and water. For the liner? Hmm - I would suggest the silver material."

Chapter 780: Witching Time Pt 15 10:18:14

Napoleon raised a brow at his partner's suggestion.

"I suspect that there's a member of the beau monde hiding inside of you. That's a rather extravagant suggestion."

Napoleon could almost hear Illya roll his eyes.

"April would not wear farmer boots with her designer dresses. You should not wear a shepherd cloak over a tuxedo. Were your opera attire less extravagant, my suggestion would be less extravagant as well. Besides, if you protect it from insects, a good wool cloak will outlast you."

"Like your linen bedding, eh?"

"You pay for quality, but you only pay once."

Chapter 781: Witching Time Pt 16 10:19:14

Napoleon grinned at his partner.

"Fine - I'm convinced. A good wool cloak that will wear better than I will. But I have to ask, why silver for the liner?"

Illya shrugged.

"I like silver. Besides, if the liner is black, your tuxedo will blend in - I doubt you want something like that to blend in. White is too hard to keep clean with a cloak. I suppose you could go with another color, but silver goes with anything and would not clash with anything your Aunt Amy wears should you have to lend her your cloak for some reason."

Chapter 782: Witching Time Pt 17 10:20:14

Napoleon made the appropriate notes for his tailor, then sat back.

"That takes care of the main component of my costume. Need any help getting anything for yours while you're laid up?"

Illya settled back into his bed. The fact that he wasn't demanding to be released told Napoleon better
than any doctor's exam that his partner was hurting pretty badly.

"I appreciate the thought, but I believe I already have most of what I need and the rest should be easily obtainable."

"If you think of anything, you know how to reach me."

"Spasibo, my friend."

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**Chapter 783: Witching Time Pt 18 10:21:14**

Napoleon left Medical quietly after Illya dozed off again. He ran by his tailor during lunch and was slightly amused to note that his tailor also seemed to approve of the choices Illya had made. After verifying that the cape would be ready in a week, he decided to walk back to Headquarters and enjoy the nice weather while it lasted.

As Napoleon strolled, he mused over the coming holidays. Illya had brought up Aunt Amy and Napoleon recalled something she'd said in passing during his last visit. It could work out nicely if Illya wasn't too stubborn.

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**Chapter 784: Witching Time Pt 19 10:22:14**

The next morning found Napoleon in an exceptionally good mood - good enough that Illya became immediately suspicious, but he was more than willing to go along when Napoleon offered him a box containing a makowiec - a Polish poppy-seed pastry that he'd grown fond of during a mission in that country. The tea inside of the Styrofoam cup wasn't the best, but it was actual tea instead of what Medical called tea.

Illya cut two thick slices, offering the first to Napoleon.

"Is this to celebrate that I am getting out or to pacify me because I must remain?"

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**Chapter 785: Witching Time Pt 20 10:23:14**

Accepting the piece of rich pastry to go with his coffee, Napoleon reassured his partner.

"Not only are you getting out of here this afternoon, but Aunt Amy has insisted that you come over for dinner."

"That is very kind of her, Napoleon, but I do not know that I would currently be very good company."

"She knows that, pal. I let it slip that you were getting out of the hospital and I was thoroughly chewed out for not letting her know so that she could visit you. Please? You'd help get me out of the dog house."

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**Chapter 786: Witching Time Pt 21 10:24:14**

Napoleon knew what was coming as soon as he saw the frown forming on Illya's face, so he shook his head and chuckled.
"No, Aunt Amy hasn't gotten a dog. Being in the dog house is a slang saying for someone being unhappy with you."

"So my going to your Aunt's home will get you back in her good graces?"

"It would certainly go a long way to helping, pal."

"In that case, how could I refuse?"

"I believe she plans to ask you over for Thanksgiving again as well. You're one of her chicks now."

Chapter 787: Witching Time Pt 22 10:25:14

As soon as Illya was released from Medical, Napoleon drove him to his apartment long enough for him to get a good shower and change before heading over to see his Aunt. When they arrived, Aunt Amy fussed over Illya enough to make him blush, but not so much that he became embarrassed. There was a light meal waiting on them and Aunt Amy made sure they knew she intended for them to join her for supper as well.

They covered many subjects and Napoleon smiled when his Aunt and his partner started an enthusiastic discussion of their favorite ballets.

Chapter 788: Witching Time Pt 23 10:26:14

Napoleon watched in awe as Aunt Amy skillfully drew in her net.

"That reminds me. I bought a block of tickets for the Nutcracker from one of the charities I support. I do hope I can count on the two of you to escort me if business doesn't call you out of town."

Illya looked both enthusiastic, but hesitant.

"It will be a formal affair, yes?"

"Yes - oh, that reminds me. I hope you don't think I'm being rude, but I absolutely abhor waste, don't you?"

"Yes, of course."

"Then I have a tuxedo for you."

Chapter 789: Witching Time Pt 24 10:27:14

While Illya was too stunned to speak, Aunt Amy continued.

"My dear friend Amanda decided to surprise her grandson with a new tuxedo made to his measurements. Well, the lad surprised her back - she forgot that some boys are late bloomers - he'd grown four inches. When she told me her dilemma, I told her I knew someone of about the correct height and there you have it. The adjusments needed should be minor and you'll have a perfectly good tuxedo."

"I... could I reimburse her?"

"Nonsense, dear boy. She's thrilled that it will be put to use."
Chapter 790: Witching Time Pt 25 10:28:14

Illya found himself being shoed into the guest room to try on the tuxedo and found that it did fit fairly well. Napoleon leaned in the doorway, watching his partner.

"Now you'll need an opera cape. No arguments - remember, you yourself said it was practical."

Illya looked at Napoleon suspiciously.

"I feel I am being streetcarred."

"That's railroaded. But why fight it? You enjoy concerts, ballets and occasional operas. Now you'll have the right attire. Besides, it will work great for April's party."

"I suppose it will. Besides, I would not want to insult your Aunt."

Chapter 791: Witching Time Pt 26 10:29:14

Illya was on limited duty, but happily ensconced behind his desk with a pot of real tea and a pastry covered plate. The secretarial staff, though occasionally a bit overbearing, did 'get well' baskets right.

April stuck her nose in periodically, trying to weasel which costume he had ended up with out of Illya. Napoleon barely kept from chuckling as all of her wiles and charms got her nowhere at all. She eventually left puzzled, at a loss to figure out when talking about Halloween turned into talking about the Nutcracker ballet.

"You are way too good at that, chum."

Chapter 792: Witching Time Pt 27 10:30:14

Napoleon sat a sizable box on his desk. This, of course, drew April's attention and, since she already knew he was coming as a vampire, Napoleon showed her the opera cape.

"Oh my - the real deal. It's lovely, Napoleon."

"It is, isn't it? I really will need to thank Illya for point out how practical it is."

"For a man who owns his own tuxedo? Definitely. So - Illya's out right now. Couldn't you give me just a teensy hint, Napoleon?"

"Fine. Okay, Illya's costume? Not a vampire."

Napoleon fully expected the swat he received.

Chapter 793: Witching Time Pt 28 10:31:14

The Halloween party was in full swing - all of the secretarial pool had come early so they wouldn't miss Napoleon's entrance as a vampire. April heard a collective appreciative gasp, turning to see a dramatic flourish of an opera cape lined with silver-blue satin. April frowned. Napoleon's cape had had a silver lining.

The section of cape that had been covering his face was flung away. The blond hair over top of the
white mask concealing half of his face made Illya's character unmistakable. April gave a pleased sigh. It had been worth the wait.

Chapter 794: Morning After 11:1:2014

"You were definitely the belle of the ball last night, partner."

Napoleon held back a grin as Illya actually blushed slightly. Neither one of them had suffered any lack of female attention at the party, but Illya had fallen into a character for the night and, for once, had flirted back at a level that neared Napoleon.

"I was probably freer with the flirting than I should have been with those we must work with."

"They had a good time - did you have a good time?"

"I must admit that I did."

"Then I say no harm, no foul, chum."

Chapter 795: Dia de los Muertos 11:2:14

"This is my first time attending a Dia de los Muertos celebration, Napoleon. The skulls . . . I had never thought of ever calling a skull beautiful, but many of these are."

"My first time as well, partner. Is it wrong to view ladies wearing skull makeup as quite attractive?"

"I would guess those ladies who have gone to so much effort to appear as La Calavera Catrina would be insulted if you did not find them attractive. Especially the one now wanting to dance with you."

"Think I should?"

"Why not? We dance with Death all of the time, my friend."

Chapter 796: Desperation Pt 1 11:3:14

His lungs burning - legs threatening to cramp - heart feeling like it was going to explode from his chest, but he couldn't stop. Couldn't stumble. He had one chance only - the train would be picking up speed soon. He had to reach it before the caboose rounded the curve.

Desperation added that tiny extra kick to his adrenaline and he made the final leap, almost falling back off the small platform before his hands clenched tightly around the railing. Shivering, he gave himself time for his body to adjust. Then he would find where they were holding his partner.

Chapter 797: Desperation Pt 2 11:4:14

He could hear their taunts as soon as he entered the car. A private car. Convenient. He needn't worry about innocents. Pulling his gun, he briefly considered something less lethal. A sharp cry of pain ended that debate as he moved forward.

A well-placed kick and two better placed shots and the enemy was dead. Hurrying over, he sliced the ropes binding his partner to a chair.
"I swear, Alexander, I'm finding a safer line of work. Tailoring maybe."

"If we make it through this mission. I'll help you find a spot for a shop, Del."

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Chapter 798: New York Roots Pt 1 11:5:14

"So, it's official. You've requested to be removed from field work?"

"Yes, Alexander. It's not like I'm leaving you in the lurch. Rumors have it that you're leaving the field yourself."

"You're right. I hit fifty next year and I've been in the field about ten years too many. But there are big changes coming, Del - and I want you to be part of them. How would you feel about settling in New York?"

"You know, you promised me a tailor shop."

"I still intend to honor that promise."

"You have my attention."

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Alexander unrolled a blueprint and Del leaned over to examine it.

"So, we'll be helping to design the offices?"

"More importantly, the entrances. We have a rare opportunity here to put things in place from the foundations up."

Finger moving to tap on one particular spot, Alexander smiled.

"One secret entrance will be in the back of a tailor shop. We'll need at least four others."

Pointing on the other side of the proposed office space, Del looked to Alexander.

"Remember the Author's Club in Whitehall?"

"Yes - and I see what you're saying. That's brilliant."

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Chapter 800: Misconception 11:7:14

"Good morning, Del."

Looking up from his steam press, Del greeted Napoleon, then exchanged a nod with Illya. Del's hearing was better than he pretended it was, so he bit back a smile as he heard Napoleon speak.

"I bet our folks behind the scenes occasionally wish they were out in the field."

"What makes you think that?"

"That's where all the adventure and excitement is."

"Not everyone wants an exciting life, my friend."
Del chuckled to himself after the agents had entered the secret passage.

"Very true, Mister Kuryakin - some of us had our fill years ago."
Chapter 801: Infiltration Pt 1 11:8:14

It started small, but Alexander Waverly was not a man who had obtained his position from ignoring small details. One or two secretaries complaining of a headache might not have seemed out of line, but the number suffering was closer to the entire secretarial pool. Eyes narrowed, he went for a walk through the offices and training areas. Even those not admitting to headaches were showing the signs.

Mister Waverly also did not believe in coincidences. He picked two secretaries and two agents randomly and sent them to Medical - where he found most of the personnel in the same condition.

Chapter 802: Infiltration Pt 2 11:9:14

Mister Waverly did a quick check on ten of his people and then headed to the Communications area, putting out the general broadcast himself.

"All agents not currently at Headquarters are to implement emergency order epsilon-omega under command of the CEA until further notice. Effective immediately - Waverly out."

Napoleon and Illya had been in route back to Headquarters when the broadcast came across. They exchanged a glance before Napoleon altered direction.

"Epsilon-omega. That means that there has been a major infiltration at Headquarters?"

"Right you are, chum. And that means that you and I open the emergency office."

Chapter 803: Infiltration Pt 3 11:10:14

Even as Napoleon and Illya arrived at the emergency office, a car pulled up in front of the tailor shop that the owner himself came out to meet. Del Floria opened the rear door and offered his hand.

"Millicent. I wish my shop had a way inside other than stairs."

"We have more to worry about than my comfort, Del. Besides, if we take our time, I can make it."

The agent behind the wheel remained on guard until both Del and Millicent were safely inside before driving off. Del locked the door behind them, flipping over the closed sign.

Chapter 804: Armistice or Veterans Day 11:11:14

Napoleon gave his calendar a thoughtful look before sitting at his desk. Illya pushed his glasses up, watching Napoleon breifly.

"Is something bothering you, Napoleon?"

"No. Just thinking about how Veterans Day used to be called Armistice Day when I was young."

"Really? Why did it change?"
"Originally, it was to honor veterans of the 'War to end all wars'."

"Ah - but other wars came along despite that title."

"Exactly. So they replaced Armistice with Veterans to cover everyone who served."

"That seems only fair. After all, each served their country despite the year of their service."

"Too true, chum."

Chapter 805: Infiltration Pt 4 11:12:14

Waverly looked over the assembled personnel - Millicent, Del, Harv Davis, and others. A bit over thirty individuals all together with two things in common: UNCLE and being over the age of fifty.

"While Doctor Mallard has not yet been able to determine the exact cause, we do know that whatever substance THRUSH has managed to introduce into our workspaces has an increased effect on the youngest of our personnel with the worst symptoms being felt by those under the age of thirty. I am told they are in no immediate danger, but they are quite incapable of performing their duties."

Chapter 806: Infiltration Pt 5 11:13:14

Del spoke up.

"Do you think they mean to attack our offices here?"

Waverly nodded.

"That is my belief and that incapacitating our younger operatives is a means of giving them access to a large number to take to their interrogation division. If successful, they could cripple UNCLE operations world-wide for years to come - and if successful here, we may be assured other offices will meet the same fate."

Leaning on the table, Waverly looked over those gathered one by one.

"Agents Solo and Kuryakin are taking care of our field agents. Protecting this building is in our hands."

Chapter 807: Infiltration Pt 6 11:14:14

The contact with Mister Waverly would be short by necessity - Napoleon and Illya would have their hands full contacting the other offices and all their agents on missions.

"Up and operational? Excellent. I have one further job for you, Mister Solo. We fully expect an attack at any time. You will be alerted when a breech occurs. If you have not received further communications after fifteen minutes, you are to implement plan Omega-Omega. There is too much at stake for any lesser protocol."

While Illya had never heard of Omega-Omega, Napoleon's sudden pallor told him a lot.

Chapter 808: Infiltration Pt 7 11:15:14
Waverly watched with no small amount of pride as his people exited the meeting. He stole one private moment, sharing an embrace with his Millicent before she took position in Security. Millicent had limitations in moving her lower body, but her eyes were still as sharp as her mind, making her the best candidate to coordinate the group.

Like Millicent, the others were old hands at this and knew where they were best suited to be. For the game he was playing now, Waverly was counting on their combined experience to defend both their Headquarters and their vulnerable younger agents.

Chapter 809: Infiltration Pt 8 11:16:14

All of Waverly's team were wearing earpieces, so everyone heard Millicent's broadcast.

"No penetration yet into Headquarters proper, but we have intruders in the Masque Club. Oh for . . . be advised. Intruders are all in contained suits, dressed to resemble exterminators."

Waverly's mouth twitched slightly in amusement as he activated his microphone.

"Mister Wilkins. We will need a rapid distribution of the AL7 with a means to dispense it at a distance."

"At once, sir."

By the time the THRUSH agents located the entrance and started to break past it, all non-medical personnel were armed and ready.

Chapter 810: Infiltration Pt 9 11:17:14

The leader of the THRUSH invaders smiled thinly as they entered the UNCLE Headquarters. Not a single defender in sight.

"Remember, the bonus to whoever manages to capture Waverly. Alive - he's worthless to us dead."

No flashing lights, no alarms sounding - obviously the gas had exceeded all expectations. As his men moved forward, he divided them into ten separate search groups of five men each. As they began their penetration, he stayed back to report their success to THRUSH Central.

"Harden here. We are encountering no resistance. I will call for transport once we have located and secured Waverly."

Chapter 811: Infiltration Pt 10 11:18:14

The THRUSH troops had been full of confidence striding into the enemy's territory without so much as a voice raised against them, but the deeper the teams got, the more ill at ease the brighter members were becoming. Where were the agents? The secretaries? Anybody? Finally one of them gained enough courage to question what they were finding - which was nothing.

"Chief Harden . . . we still have not located any personnel. Might they have evacuated the building?"

Harden snapped at the team leader.

"Nonsense. We've had the entire block of buildings monitored continually. There's been no mass
Chapter 812: Infiltration Pt 11 11:19:14

As a trio entered last through the Masque entrance, Millicent noted they were dressed differently than the rest.

"Radio silence for the next few minutes please. We may have a development."

Concentrating solely on the microphones in that sector, she noted that the leader was coming to confer with the newcomers.

"We should locate Waverly soon. Is the ambulance standing by?"

"Yes, sir. Immediately in front of the building."

"Very good. Do you have the counteragent in case we locate Solo or Kuryakin?"

"Smithers has it in his case, sir."

Millicent made careful note of Smithers before keying her microphone.

Chapter 813: Infiltration Pt 12 11:20:14

After the sitrep from Millicent, Waverly gave his orders. Much as he preferred being directly involved himself, for now, he needed to remain behind the scenes and direct. Harv and Del were sent to go out one of the older passages that was no longer commonly in use to deal with the THRUSH near the entrance. The rest of the group were told to remain out of sight for five minutes more before beginning their counter-measures. The five minutes would give the others time to get in position.

Millicent watched the clock for the group.

"Time is up. Begin."

Chapter 814: Infiltration Pt 13 11:21:14

Neither Del or Harv had done much in the way of stealth work for over a decade, but were pleased to find it was like slipping on a comfortable pair of slippers. The ambulance out front was guarded only by the driver - quickly and quietly taken down with a dart. Making use of the gurney that was obviously intended for Mister Waverly, they insured that the driver would stay out of their way once the drugs wore off.

Harv pocketed a few medical supplies, then followed Del inside as they made their way to the entrance of the Masque Club.

Chapter 815: Infiltration Pt 14 11:22:14

Immediately after announcing it was time to begin, Millicent put out a jamming signal to prevent the THRUSH groups from using their communications gear. Once the screaming started, there was no feedback about what was going on. Cursing as he tossed down his earpiece, Harden stalked into the Headquarters to see what was going on for himself.
Left unguarded and with no weapons of their own, it wasn't difficult for Del and Harv to convince the trio that it was in their best interests to surrender. Soon the three were secured in a private dining room in the Club.

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**Chapter 816: Infiltration Pt 15 11:23:14**

The sight that met Harden's eyes when he saw the first of his men puzzled him. They were yanking off their protective gear! Idiots! Didn't they know they would be affected by the gas?

Then he saw it - the thin streams of smoke rising from parts of the gear. Before he had time to fully process that, there was the sound of liquid hitting his own protective suit. Acid - and if it was already starting to eat through his suit, how quickly would it eat through flesh? The threat of the acid trumped the danger of the gas.

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**Chapter 817: Infiltration Pt 16 11:24:14**

Harden kept up a string of curses as his protective gear began dropping to the floor. As he bent over to pull the leg free of his shoe, a sharp sting to his posterior made him let out a rather undignified yelp. One hand reached around to where the dart had lodged, but the THRUSH man collapsed to the floor before he was able to pull it free.

The jamming signal was turned off.

"Oh, good shot, Alexander."

"Thank you, my dear. However I would need to have had my eyes examined had I missed such a . . . ahem . . . prominent target."

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**Chapter 818: Infiltration Pt 17 11:25:14**

The case containing the counter-agent that had been liberated by Harv and Del was put into the hands of the remaining lab workers to make sure that the substance really was what it had been purported to be. Mister Waverly had made it clear that nothing the THRUSH personnel said was to be taken as truth without verification.

While the testing was taking place, the THRUSH infiltration team was rounded up and placed in secure cells. Busy directing their team, Waverly requested Millicent to contact their outside agents. Headquarters was still not safe for the younger agents to return.

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**Chapter 819: Infiltration Pt 18 11:26:14**

Napoleon answered his communicator the second it made a noise.

"Solo here."

Millicent thought it was rather sweet that he sounded so worried, but decided it would be best not to draw attention to that.

"Alexander requested I give you the word that you may step down the alert status, Mister Solo. For the time being, however, you will still need to run operations from your current location until the contaminant can be located and neutralized."
"No infiltration into the main building then, ma'am?"

Napoleon couldn't see her face, but she sounded amused.

"None worth bothering you over."

Chapter 820: Infiltration Pt 19 11:27:14

Illya waited patiently until Napoleon had finished the call, unable to listen in because he was monitoring and answering the calls from the other agents.

"Well? Is it safe to return yet, Napoleon?"

"Not yet, pal, but the lab is in the middle of testing a possible antidote to what was used. They're still trying to pinpoint the source though."

Illya listened quietly to the rest of the details, frown growing.

"I worry that there may be someone on the inside. Out of our entrances, I would think the Masque Club as the one least likely to be noticed."

Chapter 821: Infiltration Pt 20 11:28:14

The laboratory results were positive in more than one sense of the word. Not only was the counter-agent effective, it was easily reproduced. Mister Waverly gave the order for it to begin to be administered immediately, with the youngest of the stricken given the counter-agent first since they were suffering the most intense symptoms.

The source of the contamination had finally been traced as well to the Masque Club. His thoughts running along the same lines as Illya's, Mister Waverly only shared his suspicions with the few he viewed as beyond suspicion, which included Napoleon and Illya.

Chapter 822: Infiltration Pt 21 11:29:14

Once the canister responsible for spreading the contaminant was removed, it still took the better part of the day before the labs tested the air and pronounced it safe. Napoleon and Illya were called back to help with the investigation of a probable mole in the ranks.

As the odds were that whoever was involved would not have stayed and risked exposure themselves, the primary suspects were those workers and agents outside of Headquarters. Their standing orders remained the same - stay clear of the area until further notice. No news of what happened inside Headquarters was to be given out.

Chapter 823: Infiltration Pt 22 11:30:14

With their combined talents focused on the task, the list of possible moles rapidly dropped down to ten. Another few hours of work narrowed that list to four. All four were members of the support staff.

The second one they checked in on, Donna from the secretarial pool, was dead in her apartment from what appeared at first glance to be a suicide. Something about the scene bothered Illya though and
Napoleon wasn't one to dismiss his partner's gut feelings. Careful examination revealed an injection site near the base of her skull that was covered by her hair.

**Chapter 824: Infiltration Pt 23 12:1:14**

Years of working with both men had taught Illya that both Napoleon and Mister Waverly had their triggers. Few things made Waverly angrier than someone that would turn traitor for money. With Napoleon, absolutely nothing made him madder than someone killing an innocent. Killing an innocent for no other reason than to cover their own tracks raised that heat to near incandescence.

Whoever had thought to imply Donna had killed herself from guilt and throw suspicion off of themselves had made a grave error. Napoleon would be relentless in tracking them down and Illya would back that one hundred percent.

**Chapter 825: Infiltration Pt 24 12:2:14**

A quick round of consulting between Napoleon and Illya confirmed to both their satisfaction that there were still only two viable suspects remaining - and one of those two was a cold-blooded murderer. Illya ventured the option that, since both of them worked together, it was even a possibility that they were in it together.

After a longer look around Donna's apartment, Napoleon conceded that the chance did exist. It would be an unusual approach, but Napoleon suggested that they talk to both women at the same time under the guise of asking if Donna had been acting strangely.

**Chapter 826: Infiltration Pt 25 12:3:14**

Napoleon called for the two women to meet them at one of UNCLE's safe houses. Neither looked particularly worried as Napoleon had them take their seats. Illya remained silent, watching and listening as his partner asked them several questions about Donna. When one of them finally voiced a question about if Donna was all right, Illya spoke up before Napoleon could say a word.

"We are wondering that ourselves. When we went to her apartment, we found her possessions had been ransacked. She is missing."

The reactions of the women to that statement were, to say the least, priceless.

**Chapter 827: Infiltration Pt 26 12:4:14**

Napoleon had to hand it to his partner. It was obvious that the two women had been prepared to respond to the shocking news that Donna was dead. Illya's statement that Donna was missing had them thrown for a loop.

"We are wondering that ourselves. When we went to her apartment, we found her possessions had been ransacked. She is missing."

The reactions of the women to that statement were, to say the least, priceless.

**Chapter 828: Infiltration Pt 27 12:5:14**

Napoleon had to hand it to his partner. It was obvious that the two women had been prepared to respond to the shocking news that Donna was dead. Illya's statement that Donna was missing had them thrown for a loop.

The younger woman, Francine, seemed close to hyperventilating and Napoleon feigned concern over her, taking her into another room - quite effectively cutting off the pair from one another. Napoleon left her then, saying he would fetch some aspirin. Thinking herself alone and still rattled that someone had stolen Donna's carefully staged body, Francine paced fitfully, muttering to herself.
Vivian, the remaining woman, kept casting glances toward the door that Napoleon and Francine had disappeared behind. Illya gave her a sympathetic look.

"I feel sorry for you. Napoleon has a flaw when it comes to women. He equates youth with innocence. You know that young woman is quite likely to get away with saying you were responsible."

Vivian's head snapped around.

"I had nothing to do with Donna disappearing."

Illya made a soft tsking sound.

"I believe you know as well as I that our search is not for a kidnapped woman, but rather for a missing body."

Chapter 829: Infiltration Pt 28 12:12:14

Years of reading body language told Illya that his comment had struck a nerve, but Vivian put on a show of bravado.

"I think you're quite mad. I'm sure I don't know what you're implying but even if there were something for Francine to tell Mister Solo - which there isn't - she wouldn't. She and I are like sisters."

Illya let a slight smile form on his face.

"You have heard my partner's reputation, Miss Windler?"

Vivian looked unsure, but nodded.

"Have you ever heard of a woman being able to tell him no?"

Chapter 830: Infiltration Pt 29 12:13:14

Actually, Illya knew one or two ladies who were resistant to the Solo charm, but they were vastly outnumbered. In her current state of mind, he was sure that Vivian wouldn't remember the rare exception.

The blond agent had read her correctly. She seemed to wilt before him as she began to confess everything. She was quick to claim that neither she or Francine laid so much as a finger on the unfortunate Donna. They had merely been the ones that convinced her to open her door allowing the THRUSH agents out of sight at their sides to enter.

Chapter 831: Infiltration Pt 30 12:14:14

Illya kept his expression under control, but the things Vivian was saying sickened him to his core. How could she be acting as if she held no responsibility for the death of the woman that she had tricked into opening the door for the assassins to enter?

To his mind, she and Francine were worse than the assassins were - little doubt the THRUSH men had no knowledge of who Donna was, only that she had been chosen to die to create a diversion.
Vivian and Francine had known and worked with the woman they had knowingly led the killers to.

Chapter 832: Infiltration Pt 31 12:15:14

Napoleon soon emerged and motioned Illya over. After comparing notes, he had gotten very much the same story from Francine, albeit with a great deal more weeping and, in general, over-acting. When the whole of the story emerged, the underlying motive was envy that Donna had been recently earned a promotion.

After a brief consultation with Mister Waverly, agents were sent to take the two women into custody. While Illya had not an ounce of sympathy for either woman, he did feel badly for any friends or family they might have who would never know what became of them.

Chapter 833: Infiltration Pt 32 12:16:14

Shortly after the women were taken into custody, Napoleon and Illya were summoned to Mister Waverly's office.

"In one very loose sense of the word, we should be grateful to Mister Harden and his associates. He pointed out a substantial flaw in our security. Mister Kuryakin, I would like for you to work with R&D to develop a monitor for our air quality that will sound the alarm if any foreign substance is introduced."

"Yes, sir. Should the alarm also automatically shut down the affected air intake?"

"Good thought, Mister Kuryakin. Yes, I believe that would be best."

Chapter 834: Infiltration Pt 33 12:17:14

That night found Illya sitting with Napoleon as each held a glass of their favorite libation. After several minutes of quiet fellowship, Napoleon sighed.

"I still can't wrap my mind around it, Illya. Donna wasn't simply handed her position, she worked hard for it. She even took night classes using her own money to get better at her job. Of course Mister Waverly took notice and rewarded her initiative."

Nodding, Illya looked at the clear liquid in his glass.

"Instead of seeing why Donna was promoted, they chose to be envious. Her death is entirely upon their shoulders."

Chapter 835: Infiltration Pt 34 12:18:14

Wrapping up the loose ends of the attack on the New York Headquarters didn't take long. Harden, Francine, Vivian and the other THRUSH agents were shipped off to the secure prison facility. Donna had no immediate family remaining, so Mister Waverly had arranged to have her body claimed and had her laid to rest with the other honored dead of UNCLE with Napoleon and Illya requesting and being granted positions as her pallbearers. Few others attended.

Napoleon glanced at his friend, knowing this lonely burial was the scenario that the blond believed would be his own fate one day.
Chapter 836: Vacation Pt 1 12:19:14

Napoleon knew it was going to take some doing to break Illya out of his current mood. Fortunately, Mister Waverly provided assistance in the form of an almost unheard of two weeks off, starting immediately. Even more astonishing was that it meant they had not only Christmas off, but New Years as well.

As they walked down the hall together, Napoleon gave his partner a friendly nudge.

"I don't believe I've had both Christmas and New Years off together since I turned twenty. What do you say you and I take a real vacation? Just me and you?"

Chapter 837: Vacation Pt 2 12:20:14

Illya didn't respond for a minute, but when he did, it was with a soft sigh.

"Much as that sounds enjoyable, I am afraid I have a prior commitment. As do you."

That wasn't the response Napoleon expected and he frowned as he tried to think of what Illya was referring to. After another moment, Illya had pity on his partner.

"Your Aunt Amy? She had already extended an invitation to us both for Christmas."

Napoleon's expression shifted to a smile.

"How about a vacation then with just the three of us? Aunt Amy loves to travel."

Chapter 838: Vacation Pt 3 12:21:14

While calling to verify Aunt Amy was home, the two agents found themselves invited to lunch and accepted since that would be the perfect opportunity to talk to her about a possible vacation trip.

As Napoleon had suspected, the thought of an impromptu vacation appealed to Aunt Amy. Since they had tickets to a Christmas Eve showing of 'The Nutcracker', she suggested that they enjoy Christmas in New York, fly to London for a couple of days there. Then they could cross the channel and take the train to Paris to celebrate New Years before flying back to New York.

Chapter 839: Vacation Pt 4 12:22:14

To Napoleon's dismay, once they agreed that Aunt Amy's itinerary sounded perfect, she insisted on handling everything as their Christmas present. She dismissed all protests saying that it was a present to herself as well as to them.

"I can most certainly afford it, dear nephew. You wouldn't deny me the pleasure of giving you something you've already admitted that you will enjoy, would you? Though I suppose if you boys insist, you can take care of carrying the luggage."

Napoleon knew he was beaten. Chuckling, he urged Illya to throw in the towel as well.

Chapter 840: Vacation Pt 5 12:23:14
Once everything was decided, Aunt Amy insisted both men stay in her guest rooms over Christmas. Wellington and Lawan were also invited as Aunt Amy pointed out all three cats had gotten along in the past and, this way, one set of arrangements for feeding and tending litter boxes would serve for all of them.

Again, knowing better than to argue, they first went to Napoleon's apartment to pack what he would need for their vacation and then to Illya's to gather his things and both cats - who both protested riding in Napoleon's car in their carriers.

Chapter 841: Vacation Pt 6 12:24:14

As they attended The Nutcracker's Christmas Eve performance, both Illya and Napoleon began to notice that Aunt Amy seemed to be greeting a great many other women that she knew. It soon came out that one of the philanthropic groups that she worked with had agreed to attend. More than one of the other women cast envious glances at Amy's two escorts. When asked, she introduced them both as her nephews.

Napoleon saw Illya's expression go from surprise to pleasure. Smiling at his aunt, he wondered if she knew how much those few words meant to Illya.

Chapter 842: Vacation Pt 7 12:25:14

Christmas Day was a quiet affair after their night at the ballet follower by a late supper. They slept late before dining on a leisurely brunch.

Later they settled around the fireplace sipping mugs of hot cocoa with plates of shortbread nearby. Aunt Amy began telling stories of Christmases from her youth and, in the warm family atmosphere, Illya spoke of his earliest memories of the holidays. As the afternoon grew late, Napoleon found a radio station playing Christmas music and they sang along. Looking at his partner, the word Napoleon found to best describe Illya's look was contentment.

Chapter 843: Vacation Pt 8 12:26:14

Boxing Day began early as their tickets were for the first plane departing New York that morning which would have them arriving in London that evening. Tickets had already been arranged for them to see a musical version of Chaucer's 'The Canterbury Tales' at the Phoenix Theatre that night, so they checked into their suite at The Savoy and began preparing for a night out.

Napoleon was a bit concerned about Aunt Amy's endurance, but she seemed fresher than either he or Illya did, so he resolved not to fuss over her. At least, not more than usual.

Chapter 844: Vacation Pt 9 12:27:14

It was easy to tell that this was not Aunt Amy's first time as a guest at The Savoy nor her first time in London. She wanted to share her favorite sights and, though neither man was a stranger to London, they were quite willing to allow her to set both the pace and the itinerary.

How she arranged it from was something she didn't reveal to Napoleon, but once she saw there was snow on the ground, they spent the afternoon in a horse-drawn sleigh viewing Regent's Park with the coachman acting as tour guide.
Chapter 845: Vacation Pt 10 12:28:14

THRUSH Central kept track of known UNCLE operatives. When reports came in that both Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin were in London, it was, of course, assumed they were on a high priority mission. When reports also mentioned that the pair were always in the company of an elderly woman, the conclusion was reached that they were acting as her bodyguards.

When they estimated the woman's age and took into account that Waverly's top team chaperoned her everywhere, they decided that the woman must be Waverly's wife. Plans were immediately formed to take advantage of the opportunity.

Chapter 846: Vacation Pt 11 12:29:14

It would have been a close call as to whether Napoleon or Illya was the first to notice they were being followed. Since they had already given Aunt Amy control of what they were doing and when they were doing it, they couldn't alter anything due to safety concerns without possibly alarming her and they weren't about to let a few THRUSH in the bushes ruin her holiday.

When they spoke privately, Illya pointed out that Aunt Amy's schedule was actually to their advantage - neither of them were going anywhere in London that they normally would.

Chapter 847: Vacation Pt 12 12:30:14

A quick call to the London office and an agent drove them to the airport with Aunt Amy being none the wiser about it. When they deplaned in Paris, Illya's soft hiss of breath drew Napoleon's attention to who was nearby. Angelique.

Leaving Illya to look over Aunt Amy, Napoleon went to have a word with THRUSH's femme fatale. She greeted him as an old friend and pulled him into a hug, whispering in his ear.

"It isn't my mission, darling, but Central is looking to kidnap Mrs. Waverly away from you and your Russian shadow."

Chapter 848: Vacation Pt 13 12:31:14

Napoleon's first thought was to tell Angelique who the woman actually was, but with his enemies, he might actually make his aunt more of a target. He decided to simply thank Angelique before rejoining his partner and his aunt. He filled Illya in when Aunt Amy went to freshen up before supper and they decided not to alter their reservations.

The restaurant they went to had a spectacular view of the Eiffel Tower. Both men kept watch but still managed to enjoy both the evening as well as Aunt Amy's delight at the fireworks display when midnight arrived.

Chapter 849: Vacation Pt 14 1:1:15

While Aunt Amy enjoyed sleeping late after the New Year's celebration, Napoleon and Illya contacted the New York Headquarters and filled Mister Waverly in on the THRUSH activity. Since there was only such much that his agents could do without alerting the innocent they were traveling with, Mister Waverly made arrangements with the Paris office to provide them security until they were on the plane back to New York.
Though he didn't mention his plans to his agents, Mister Waverly also took his wife out for a public luncheon. Word of that quickly got back to THRUSH Central.

Chapter 850: Vacation Pt 15 1:2:15

Napoleon breathed much easier once their plane landed in New York. He was even gladder to see Mark and April were waiting for them. Ever since the first appearance of THRUSH, he and Illya had been sleeping in shifts of four hours each, so both were exhausted. Aunt Amy, with a full eight hours a night was far more fresh. Neither man argued about staying in her guest rooms another night.

April was amused when Aunt Amy confided to her that Napoleon and Illya had been so worried that she would overexert herself that they hadn't slept well themselves.
Chapter 851: Vacation Pt 16 of 18 1:3:15

The two agents were barely holding themselves together by the time they arrived back at Aunt Amy's apartment and were greeted by a trio of cat yowls. Mark assured Napoleon and Illya that he and April would keep watch while the exhausted men got some sleep.

April and Mark accepted Aunt Amy's offer of tea - she, in turn, accepted Mark's offer to build a fire. It wasn't long before they were settled in chairs before the fireplace, teacups in hand and cats making use of their laps. Wellington had chosen to grace April with his presence.

Chapter 852: Vacation Pt 17 of 18 1:6:15

After Aunt Amy was sure that both Napoleon and Illya were asleep, she began confiding in her two guests. When she told them about being unable to sleep well one night in London, she also mentioned hearing peculiar noises in the hall. She had, of course, immediately called hotel security, sure that anyone rattling doorknobs at that time of morning were either drunk or up to no good.

Mark excused himself and made a discrete call to Headquarters while in the bathroom. After the call, he couldn't wait to tell April about the two THRUSH arrested for attempted burglary.

Chapter 853: Vacation Pt 18 of 18 3:8:16

It was their first working Monday of the new year. Illya sank into his chair at exactly the same time Napoleon sank into his, both emitting near identical sighs - much to the amusement of April and Mark, who were hovering nearby.

April couldn't resist teasing.

"Vacation not terribly restful, darlings?"

Illya only moved his head enough to shoot her a glance that could freeze water. Napoleon picked up one of the many papers stacked on his desk, then let it flutter back down to the top of the pile.

"Truthfully? I need a vacation to recover from our vacation."

Chapter 854: Not the Normal Mash 3:9:16

"Hey, that looks pretty good, chum. Mind if I try a taste?"

"Go right ahead, Napoleon."

"Thanks. I love good mashed potatoes."

"Um - Napoleon? Those are not -"

"Ugh! What it that?"

"That is what I was trying to tell you. These are not mashed potatoes. It is a mixture of mashed turnips and parsnips. They taste fine - if you are not expecting to taste potato."
"When did the cafeteria start carrying that?"

"Since the head of the cafeteria put out a questionnaire to non-American agents asking for menu requests."

"Warn me next time."

"Next time, get your own tray."

Chapter 855: Reparations Pt 1 of 3 3:10:16

The more Napoleon thought about the questionnaire that Illya mentioned, the more his natural curiosity was tweaked. After the midday cafeteria crowd had dwindled down, Napoleon went to the office of Brent Wolfe, the current man overseeing the food services.

The man seemed a bit apprehensive about the head of Section Two showing up in his office, but Solo's easy smile and tone of voice soon had the man relaxing.

"No, no - nothing in the line of complaints, Brent. I actually wanted to commend you. The additions to the menu seem to be a hit with our transplanted agents."

Chapter 856: Reparations Pt 2 of 3 3:11:16

Wolfe looked embarrassed by Napoleon's comment.

"Actually, my wife deserves the credit, Sir."

A frown formed on Napoleon's face.

"Surely you don't discuss UNCLE business with her?"

Wolfe's eyes were wide as he shook his head.

"No, not at all, Mister Solo. But she knows I work in food services and I mentioned hearing a British man talking about the food situation during the war and how it still affected him when he got overcooked vegetables. She nudged me and suggested I should make an effort to provide some foods that might bring up better memories."

Chapter 857: Reparations Pt 3 of 3 3:12:16

After a sigh, Wolfe continued.

"To be completely upfront with you, Mister Solo, I suppose you could say the added menu items are my attempt at apologizing. I viewed my position as more of the job of making sure we had enough food on hand to prepare the meals throughout the week and I let the staff do the actual menu planning. After that talk from Mister Slate, I realized that if I'd been keeping a closer eye on things, that entire situation could have been avoided."

Napoleon smiled, patting Wolfe on the shoulder.

"Keep up the good work."
Chapter 858: THRUSH Experiments 3:13:16

"I wonder what they injected us with this time."

"I do not even know if we received the same injections, Napoleon. How do you feel?"

"Like something underneath my skin is crawling up my leg. How about you?"

"My leg is burning as if the skin were melting off and leaving the nerves exposed to the air."

"Does it worry you? Thinking about the number of nameless chemicals we've had shoved into our veins?"

"Occasionally. I wonder if we will self-combust when the day comes that they embalm us."

"I'm in no hurry to find out, chum."

Chapter 859: Chemical Burns 3:14:16

April hissed softly in pain.

"Sorry, luv - being as gentle as I can be."

"I know you are, darling. A butterfly landing on me would hurt right now."

"Have they figured out what it was that THRUSHie sprayed on you?"

Shifting to allow Mark to spread more cream on her burns, April shook her head.

"Nothing left but traces by the time help arrived. I thought I was on fire."

Mark leaned forward, giving the top of her head a gentle kiss.

"I'm simply grateful none of it got in your face or eyes."

"That's two of us."

Chapter 860: Death in the Ranks 3:15:16

"Report, Mister Solo."

"Sorry, Mister Waverly. Whatever was tossed into Mister Gaine's face caused every mucous membrane in his body to solidify. Medical couldn't find a way to reverse the process. He died a few minutes ago."

Mister Waverly frowned while reaching for his pipe.

"That makes ten attacks against our personnel in as many days and all involving chemicals of some sort. I want you and Mister Kuryakin to devote your full efforts to finding and halting this menace. And Mister Solo?"

"Yes, sir?"

"Terminate whoever is behind this with extreme prejudice."
"In this case? Gladly, sir."

**Chapter 861: Oddities 3:29:16**

Illya looked up as the door to their office opened and his partner practically stomped over to his desk. Napoleon dropped heavily into his chair, frowning.

"Mister Waverly wants whoever is behind these attacks dealt with promptly and permanently . . . but how do we trace them? Any ideas?"

Tapping the reports on his desk, Illya shook his head.

"We have been left precious little in the way of clues, my friend. We do not even know if we are after a chemist or one who has a chemist in his employ. Also, something strikes me as very . . . odd. Out of place."

**Chapter 862: Gut Feelings 3:29:16**

There were things Napoleon doubted, but Illya's gut feelings weren't among them.

"Odd how?"

Swiping his blond bangs back in exasperation, Illya stared down at the reports.

"I am not certain. There is something that is not right, but it seems that the longer I look at the reports, the more elusive it is to spot."

The distinct sound of a grumbling stomach brought a smile to Napoleon's face, even though Illya seemed not to have noticed it.

"Papers down - lunchtime, chum. Come along - I'm buying."

"Who could pass up such a momentous occasion?"

"Smart-aleck."

**Chapter 863: Cafeteria Chat Pt 1 of 4 3:30:16**

Napoleon and Illya settled down at their preferred table in the cafeteria, Illya's tray notably fuller than Napoleon's as usual. Napoleon started to eat, but put his fork down as he saw April and Mark approaching.

"Mind if we join you?"

"Not at all, Mark. Grab a seat. How are the burns healing, April?"

Mark held April's tray as she eased into her seat.

"Not much worse than a bad sunburn now, thanks to that cream. The lab boys tell me that you helped develop that mix, so thank you, Illya."

"I am pleased that it helped."
Chapter 864: Cafeteria Chat Pt 2 of 4 3:30:16

The four ate in companionable silence for several minutes before Napoleon spoke again.

"No offense, April, but you seem a bit down."

A sigh escaped the young woman.

"Sorry. I know I'm a bit of a wet blanket. I can't seem to stop thinking about poor Sam."

Napoleon frowned, trying to place the name.

"Sam?"

"Sorry - nickname. Thomas Samuel Gaine."

Illya joined the conversation.

"I was not aware you and Agent Gaine were close, April."

"We went through Survival School together, Illya. That sort of makes a bond."

"Ni figa sebe! That is what has been bothering me!"

Chapter 865: Cafeteria Chat Pt 3 of 4 3:31:16

Napoleon, April and Mark were all staring at Illya, but Napoleon was the first to speak.

"I take you've made the connection that was eluding you?"

Illya had pulled a pad and pen from his pocket to scribble a note with.

"Da. They all have Survival School in common. Thank you, April."

April exchanged a concerned glance with Mark before responding.

"You're welcome, darling, but - well, don't all of us have Survival School in common?"

"That is true, April, but you, Agent Gaine and at least two others who were attacked all attended it the same year."

Chapter 866: Cafeteria Chat Pt 4 of 4 3:31:16

Napoleon picked up his coffee cup.

"So, four of the ten attacked went to Survival School during the same year. What about the other six?"

"The ages are close enough that they may have attended then as well, but I must check their files to verify it."

Mark interjected his question next.

"If all ten were there that year, what does that give us?"
Napoleon answered that as he signaled one of the cafeteria staff that they needed a doggie bag.
"We'll have what we don't have right now in our search for the culprit. A starting point."

---

**Chapter 867: Verifying Records**

All three agents followed closely behind as Illya headed to the office he and Napoleon shared. The files had already been pulled of all ten agents. Each of them grabbed a folder from the stack.

Illya opened the first one..
"Same year."

April closed the folder she had been looking at slowly.
"He was in the group just ahead of mine."

Napoleon's expression was grim as he looked over to Mark, who simply nodded.
"That makes it unanimous, chum. Either THRUSH got hold of a year's worth of our graduation class records or we have an internal problem."

---

**Chapter 868: No Good Answer 4:1:2016**

April shuddered at Napoleon's statement.
"It doesn't sound good either way, but I sincerely hope this is an internal problem."

Mark grimaced.
"The thought of the levels of mayhem THRUSH could cause with that information? Bloody hell - she's right. Internal would be the lesser of two evils."

Laying the folder back on his desk, Napoleon turned to his partner.
"So - what's our next step?"

"The attacks have thus far been limited to agents working from this office. I suggest we find out who else attended Survival School that year. They are either suspects or potential targets."

---

**Chapter 869: Fact Checking 4:5:2016**

Illya immediately made the call to Personnel to find out the information they needed, then the four agents began to study the ten files they already had for any other similarities. Napoleon was about to make a coffee run when Illya's phone rang. They all watched as Illya began immediately scribbling down information.

"Thank you. Please send that file up immediately."

As he ended the call, Illya started to talk, only to be interrupted before a full word was out by the phone ringing again.

"I see. You are sure? Yes, please have those records sent here as well."
Chapter 870: Another Connection 4:5:2016

Illya's expression was sober as he put the receiver back on the phone's cradle.

"There is only one other agent, a Robert Larrabee, who graduated from Survival School that year who is assigned to the New York office."

Napoleon frowned.

"No way it could be that easy."

"It is not. The second call informed me that Agent Larrabee has died. He has been dead for three days, but his body has only now been identified. It was burned beyond recognition."

Mark winced and wrapped his arm around April. It could so easily have been her instead of Larrabee.


Napoleon gestured for April and Mark to have a seat while they waited for the files Illya requested to be delivered.

"April, can you think of anything that happened during your time at Survival School? Anything traumatic with your classes?"

April closed her eyes to help her concentrate.

"Nothing worse than what I've heard always happens there. Several washed out, but none spectacularly that I recall. No, sorry. I can't think of a thing, Napoleon."

Illya tapped his pencil against his desk pad thoughtfully.

"Perhaps Jules Cutter might recall something of note?"

"Couldn't hurt to ask, chum."

Chapter 872: Arrangements 7:14:2016

Of course, contacting Jules Cutter involved going through Mister Waverly. On being brought up to date on the connection found among the attack victims, he agreed.

"As part of our usual routine, Mister Cutter and I have a phone conference once a week. That would normally be two days from now, but in view of the urgency of your investigations, I will send a message asking him to move the conference to tomorrow morning. I am afraid that will be the absolute earliest you will be able to ask your questions. Gentlemen and lady - be here promptly at 0600 hours."

Chapter 873: Teleconference Pt 1 8:19:2016

All four agents were in Mister Waverly's office thirty minutes before the call, delighted to find tea, coffee, and a selection of pastries waiting. When the call was routed through secure channels and connected, they heard the unmistakable voice of Jules Cutter coming across the speaker.
"Good morning, Mister Waverly. What is the emergency?"

"Good morning, Mister Cutter. We have a situation here that seems to be connected to agents that attended Survival School in 1965."

"That was a memorable year. What was it that you wanted to know?"

"For that, I will turn you over to Mister Solo."

---

**Chapter 874: Teleconference Pt 2 8:22:2016**

Napoleon leaned forward toward the speaker.

"Might I inquire as to what made 1965 a memorable year?"

Cutter's sigh could be plainly heard.

"That was the year we had a terrible scandal here. We tried to keep it quiet, of course, but we had to pull twenty agents and dismiss an instructor for cheating. It turned out that he would hide certain aids in the testing areas and give a map to those that paid him a tidy sum to insure they passed. I'm sure Miss Dancer will remember - it was her group that accidently uncovered the problem."

---

**Chapter 875: Teleconference Pt 3 8:30:2016**

April's mouth dropped open in surprise before she found her voice.

"My group? What did we do?"

"You and the three with you set a new record for running the Martengale course. You were suspected of cheating."

"Yes, but we were exonerated."

"Yes, you were. Your group used several cheats, but since you didn't know the cheats existed, you simply made use of the resources that you found wisely. Those who paid for knowledge of the cheats were told to keep their times reasonable to avoid drawing attention."

"Sounds like you ruined their source of extra income, luv."

---

**Chapter 876: Teleconference Pt 4 8:31:2016**

Illya mulled over what had been said before speaking.

"Might we presume that money trails were how you determined which agents had deliberately cheated using the aids?"

"Quite correct, Mister Kuryakin. The agents that found themselves teamed up with the cheaters, but who had no indicators of being cheaters themselves, were allowed to return and retake the course - all but two were successful. The cheaters were, of course, drummed out as not having the moral fiber that we expect in our agents."

Napoleon nodded solemnly at Cutter's words.
Chapter 877: Teleconference Pt 5 9:2:2016

April's brow furrowed.

"Twenty-three? I only come up with twenty-one."

Mark laid a supportive hand on her shoulder.

"Think about it, luv. We've all been through Survival School. Now, imagine passing and then, through no fault of your own, you have to go through it again, but the second time, you don't make it."

Wincing, April nodded.

"Twenty-three. Mister Cutter, could you possibly get us the names of those men?"

"I can tell you about half of them off the top of my head, but the others will take a bit of archive digging."


Mister Waverly took the conversation over at that point.

"Very good then, Mister Cutter. If you would be kind enough to give us the names you already know, we will get started with vetting those gentlemen while you look up the remainder."

"Of course, Mister Waverly. Shall I give the list to Miss Eklund?"

"Please do. I will inform her that you are waiting for her on the line. Thank you, Mister Cutter."

"To help ferret out a skunk in our midst? Anytime, Mister Waverly."

Mister Waverly returned his attention to his agents after relaying the call to Miss Eklund.

Chapter 879: Illya's 83rd Birthday (1933:2016)

"Happy birthday, Illya darling."

"Do all of us a favor - do not light those candles. We will be soaked by the sprinklers going off."

"Hey, come on, chum. Think of how long it took her to get all of those candles on your cake."

"I would guess it took her less time than it will take her to put the candles on yours."

"That was a low blow, Partner."

"Behave, both of you. Now, I'm lighting these so get ready. See if you can get all eighty three in one breath."

"That's a lot of work for cake."
Chapter 880: Battle of the Sexes 9:20:1973

"What are you watching, Napoleon?"

"The Battle of the Sexes, chum."

"Odd. It looks more like tennis."

"It is tennis. Billy Jean King versus Bobby Riggs, to be precise."

"Who is winning?"

"She won the first set and is well on her way to winning the second, from the looks of it."

"It seems to be a sizable crowd for an exhibition match."

"Well over thirty thousand inside the Astrodome with millions more watching like I am."

"I am impressed at the power shown."

"By the two players?"

"No, by the public relations team that came up with this spectacle."


"Napoleon, I heard on the news that Bernardo Houssay has died."

"I'm afraid I have to confess that I don't know who he was."

"Houssay was a brilliant man. He attended Pharmacy School at the tender age of 14 and began medical school by 17. In his third year, he became a teaching assistant and researcher. Later, he became the first Argentinian Nobel laureate in the sciences."

"Impressive. How did you learn about him?"

"I admittedly learned of him when researching that THRUSH drug that affected the pituitary gland."

"Ah, that was his specialty?"

"Gland secretions were, yes."


"Ugh, today is putting the eerie in dreary. Nothing but cold, gray rain all day."

"In that case, I'm right on time, Napoleon."

"Something smells very good, April."

"It does smell good, doesn't it, Illya? Hot, spiced cider with fresh donuts Mark bought from the bakery down the street. While I normally prefer to celebrate the first of a new season outside? Not in this weather."

"Here, let me clear off a section of desk for you to put everything down, Mark."
"Thanks, mate. Try a donut - they're apple and cinnamon."

"Don't mind if I do."


"Ah! Nothing quite like Autumn in London. Thanks for inviting me to go to the theatre with you, Illya."

"My pleasure. I am glad we were able to get seats. This is opening night. They originally had to delay it."

"Delay? Why?"

"The Theatres Act was only recently passed. It abolished censorship of stage performances."

"Exactly what kind of play are we attending?"

"One that moved from off-Broadway to Broadway back in April."

"Wait - are we seeing 'Hair'? As in the one with the nudity?"

"That is the one, Napoleon."

"I'm always up for a new cultural experience."

Chapter 884: Death of Harpo Marx 9:28:1964

"You look pensive this morning, Napoleon."

"Yea, I guess I am. Remember that black and white comedy I took you to see at that art theatre?"

"The Marx brothers one, yes? 'A Night at the Opera', I believe."

"That's the one. I was reading the paper and saw in the obituaries that Harpo Marx has passed."

"He was the one that never spoke, was he not? He had very expressive features. Are the other brothers still alive?"

"All except Chico. According to the obituary, he died in 1961."

"I thought there were three. How many brothers were there?"

"Five."

Chapter 885: Founding of the UN (10:24:1945)

"Perfect timing, Alexander. Supper is ready to go on the table."

"Smells wonderful, my dear. So tell me, what would you think about moving in the near future?"

"Oh Alexander! Does that mean they finally reached an agreement?"

"As of today, Millicent, the United Nations Charter has been ratified. The first meetings will be in
London this January and, if the rumbles are correct, there's a good chance that New York will be picked as the site for the UN Headquarters."

"So, not an immediate rush then. I'll begin getting things ready. Come eat before it gets cold."

**Chapter 886: Saint Crispin's Day 10:25:1965**

"We need to go out for a hearty lunch, Napoleon."

"Not that you don't usually want a hearty lunch, but any particular reason why today?"

"Today is the feast day for Saint Crispin."

"One, you aren't Catholic. Two, why does that sound so familiar?"

"One, I believe in feasts. Two, recall your Shakespeare, my friend. Henry V to be precise."

"Ah, yes. The Battle of Agincourt. *We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.* How long ago was that?"

"The battle took place in 1415, so today makes 550 years."

"My partner, the walking encyclopedia."

"You asked."

**Chapter 887: Scents of the Season 10:27:2016**

"Are they baking in the cafeteria? Something smells very nice."

"We shouldn't be able to smell the cafeteria here, chum, but I agree that something smells tasty."

*knock*

"Good morning, Mister Solo - Mister Kuryakin."

"Good morning, Mister Waverly. Are those delectable aromas coming from your basket?"

"They are indeed, Mister Solo. I was pulled into service as a delivery boy by my granddaughter. Our Vasilisa is developing into quite a talented baker and insisted that I bring you some of the fruits of her labors."

"That is very kind of her. We must send her an appropriate thank you."

**Chapter 888: More Treats 10:27:2016**

"Good morning, Napoleon. I suggest you fill your coffee before setting down. We have been graced with more baked good from Miss Vasilisa. A variety of muffins to be precise and enough to share with April and Mark if we are feeling generous."

"Let me sample one before deciding whether to be generous or greedy. Hmm, how nice, she labeled them. Orange-cranberry, pumpkin-pecan, raisin-walnut, and apple spice."
"I am currently having one of the orange-cranberry ones. It is very good."

"Mmmm - wonderful. We'd better share or I'll need to have my pants let out."

Chapter 889: Cake as an Antidote 10:27:2016

"Good morning, April. You are just in time to have a piece of cake."

"Have mercy, Illya. Mark will need a forklift to get me up from my desk."

"Well, if you do not want any -'

"Don't put words in my mouth, darling. What delicacy did Miss Vasilisa send today?"

"It is a lemon cake with a blackberry jam between the layers, topped with a lemon buttercream frosting."

"Hand over two slices. Mark would never forgive me if I didn't take him one to counteract the food in Medical."

"How is he doing?"

"He should be released tomorrow."

Chapter 890: Jean Shrimpton's Derby Dress 10:30:1965

"What is it that has your attention in the news, luv?"

"Look at this, Mark. Today is the anniversary of Jean Shrimpton causing such a stir when she wore that scrumptious white shift dress to Derby Day in Melbourne, Australia."

"I never read the story - just looked at the pictures. What was the fuss about?"

"Her skirt was four inches over her knees. Plus, she eschewed wearing a hat, gloves and stockings."

"They were fretting about her skirts being four inches over her knees? Good heavens, their first sight of an actual miniskirt must have made them faint dead away."

Chapter 891: Fullscale Thermonuclear Test (11:1:1952)

"Millicent, my dear, I fear we have entered yet another new age of warfare."

"The full-scale thermonuclear test was successful, I take it?"

"If the initial reports are correct, yes. The device itself was not designed to be suitable for warfare, but now that the concept has been proven, that is only a matter of time."

"And that sort of knowledge never stays secret long. UNCLE's role in maintaining balance between countries will become more crucial, Alexander."

"Quite true, my dear. High time I start hunting for a new breed of agent to deal with these new challenges."
"Napoleon, if you do not stop pacing, we will have to put in a request for a sturdier floor before you fall through and land in the middle of Accounting."

"Sorry, chum. Aunt Amy called this morning and threw me for a bit of a loop."

"She is not sick, is she?"

"No - nothing like that. By the way - she expects us to spend the night before Thanksgiving with her and join in her hunter's breakfast during the parade."

"I will look forward to that with great pleasure. Surely that is not what has thrown you for a loop?"

"An envelope?"

"Not just any envelope, Illya. this envelope contains an invitation. Aunt Amy wants Mister Waverly and his wife to join the festivities."

"So, is the problem that they might accept her hospitality or that they might not?"

"Both, really."

"I begin to think that I will be visiting Medical for a dose of migraine medication by the time you have explained that."

"Well, on one hand, I'd like them to accept because Aunt Amy wants them to come. You know how happy being a hostess makes her."

"Your Aunt Amy is an excellent hostess and the enjoyment she gets from entertaining is part of the pleasure of being her guest."

"She'd like the way you phrase that, pal."

"So, what is on the other hand?"

"Two-fold. One, the amount of security that we'd need to put into place without Aunt Amy noticing and without disrupting her holiday. Number two is more personal."

"How so?"

"It's a bit intimidating to think of Mister Waverly, Millicent Waverly, and Aunt Amy all in the same room."

"Ah, but think of the stories we might hear, Napoleon."
Chapter 895: Thanksgiving Conundrums, Pt 4 11:3:16

"Go on. Give the envelope to Mister Waverly's secretary. Do not be goose livered."

"You mean chicken livered."

"With your designer suits, foie gras goes better."

"Smart aleck. So, you don't think I should deliver it personally and wait for an answer?"

"Of course not. For one thing, Mister Waverly will surely need to consult with his wife. Secondly, the Waverlys have impeccable manners and would never dream of answering a written invitation verbally. I am sure Aunt Amy will receive her reply in the mail."

"I guess you're right. Might as well get it over with."

Chapter 896: Thanksgiving Conundrums, Pt 5

"I'm back."

"So I see. I was beginning to wonder. How did it manage to take you more than an hour to drop off an envelope?"

"Well, Miss Eklund was having a little trouble swapping out her typewriter ribbon, so I stayed to give her a hand."

"I take it she was unaware that you ruined three ribbons before calling for assistance the last time your own typewriter needed a new ribbon?"

"Those things are trickier than they look. Any way, Mark happened to be dropping off a report and got the ribbon changed in less than three minutes."

Chapter 897: Thanksgiving Conundrums, Pt 6

"Millicent?"

"In the library, Alexander. You're home early for once."

"A rare quiet day at the office, my dear."

"What do you have in your hand?"

"A very lovely invitation from our Mister Solo's aunt. She has invited us to a hunter's breakfast on Thanksgiving morning to coincide with the annual parade."

"How charming We're spending the afternoon with Jeremy and his family, but I see no reason why we can't attend her breakfast. I'll sit down to my desk and send her our acceptance."

"Excellent. Now, where did I leave my tobacco pouch?"

Chapter 898: Arno River Flooding 11:4:1966

"Good afternoon! Oh, sorry. I didn't know you were listening to the . . . news? Is that broadcast in
"Yes, April. The Arno River's flooding, driving people out of Florence. They've reported that an embankment has collapsed and they aren't sure yet how many people were killed when it went. The water is over sixteen feet in Santa Croce and still rising."

"How awful, Napoleon."

"The loss of life and homes will be devastating. On another level, the Mayor of Florence says that the flooding is damaging and possibly destroying thousands of art treasures and rare books."

---

**Chapter 899: Thanksgiving Conundrums, Pt 7 11:4:16**

The doorman at Aunt Amy's apartment accepted the delivery for her and had it taken to her door. The crystal bowl with fresh fall flowers was given a place of honor on her table before she read the attached note.

"It is with great pleasure that Alexander and I accept your kind invitation to Thanksgiving breakfast. It has been several years since we have watched the parade and we look forward to doing so in your company, though I must confess that the appeal of conversation with a contemporary has even greater appeal. Ever yours very truly, Millicent Waverly."

---

**Chapter 900: Thanksgiving Conundrums, Pt 8**

The reply to her invitation still in hand, Amy gave her nephew a call.

"Aunt Any, how lovely to hear from you. Nothing is wrong, is it?"

"Not at all, my dear boy. I've just received a charming note from the Waverlys along with a lovely centerpiece. My heavens, Mrs. Waverly's handwriting looks like a sample out of a calligraphy book and her stationery is as nice as the type that your darling mother used to prefer."

"Are they coming then?"

"They are indeed. I am so looking forward to it."

"If you need any help, call me."
Chapter 901: Thanksgiving Conundrums, Pt 9 11:6:16

Napoleon was more than a little shocked at the chaos current reigning in his aunt's apartment.

"Thank you for coming, Napoleon. Really, I don't know what has possessed the management that my apartment ceiling and walls simply had to be painted this week. At least they've assured me that they will be finished and the paint smell gone well before Thanksgiving."

Aunt Amy spun around in righteous indignation as Tri yowled.

"See here, young man! You will not open a single can of paint until absolutely every piece of my furniture is thoroughly covered by drop cloths!"

Chapter 902: Thanksgiving Conundrums, Pt 10

Fortunately, one of the workmen was recognized by Napoleon and he quickly realized that this so-called paint job was a cover for installing extra security measures without his aunt being any the wiser. He stepped in to make things easier for the men.

"Aunt Amy, you simply can't stay in here with these paint fumes. I insist that you and Tri spend a few days at my apartment until this is finished."

"That is so kind of you, Napoleon, but there is so much to be done."

"Illya and I will help you get everything ready, Aunt Amy."

Chapter 903: Thanksgiving Conundrums, Pt 11 11:7:16

After a quick call from Napoleon, Illya was waiting at the door of Napoleon's apartment to help take Aunt Amy's things into the guest room. To Napoleon's vast amusement, Illya's blushed a brilliant hue when Aunt Amy gave his Russian partner a loving kiss on the cheek.

Shooting his partner a dirty look when Aunt Amy wasn't looking, Illya led the way to where he had put out the temporary supplies needed for Tri's stay. Napoleon wasn't thrilled about his bureau being used for Tri's food and water, but didn't fuss.

Chapter 904: Thanksgiving Conundrums, Pt 12

It was quickly decided that Chinese delivery was going to be their dinner as it would allow Aunt Amy to relax after all the fuss of packing and moving as well as allow Tri time to acclimatize to his new surroundings before bedtime.

Napoleon remembered a slight problem and excused himself to make a quick call, cancelling his date with Babette, an airline stewardess he'd met on his last flight back from Paris. She wasn't inclined to believe Napoleon's story about his aunt.

Napoleon apologized again before hanging up and crossing her name from his address book.
Chapter 905: Thanksgiving Conundrums, Pt 13

The Chinese food was plentiful and delicious, but what made the meal special was the combination of the stories that the food brought to Aunt Amy's mind and the rare open laughter her stories brought out of the usually taciturn blond.

Listening to some stories that he hadn't heard before himself, Napoleon began to relax a little. He began to imagine his aunt and the Waverlys exchanging stories and acknowledged to himself that Illya had a point. The experience of the breakfast with the Waverlys might still be daunting, but the tales they hear would be worth it.


"What's inside the package, chum? From the size, I'm assuming an album."

"You are correct, Napoleon. Today the newest album by those one-hit wonders that I enjoy was released."

"You are never going to let me forget I said that about the Beatles, are you?"

"Highly doubtful, my friend."

"So, what's the name of the album?"

"The Beatles."

". . . that's it?"

"That is it. The cover does not even have any artwork. See?"

"Talk about your plain wrapper. Still, the straight white does sort of make it stand out."

"A perfect example of less being more."


"We only have a couple of days in London and it's raining."

"Of course it is raining. It is London."

"Yeah, yah. Hey, what are you watching?"

"Doctor Who."

"That's not Doctor Who. I remember watching one with you a couple of years ago and that was a different guy."

"It was a different Doctor then. This is the second Doctor."

"The second Doctor? What happened to the first Doctor?"

"This will require a rather lengthy explanation, Napoleon. Why not watch the show with me for now and I will explain later."
"Sure. Over dinner?"

"No better way."

---

**Chapter 908: Thanksgiving Conundrums, Pt 14 11:24:16**

Thanksgiving had become rather surreal for Napoleon.

Mister Waverly somehow managed the feat being lovingly attentive to his wife while flirting outrageously with Aunt Amy. The food had been excellent and, as Illya had predicted, the stories being shared by his aunt and the Waverlys were fascinating glimpses into other times and places. Especially intriguing were the stories that Aunt Amy was telling that he'd never heard.

Refilling her tea, Napoleon asked why he'd never heard those tales before. Giving a merry laugh, she patted his arm.

"You weren't old enough to hear them before, dear boy."

---

**Chapter 909: Holiday Decompression 11:25:16**

"Is Aunt Amy resting, Napoleon?"

"Oh yes. And Tri is standing guard on a pillow at the foot of her bed. That cat has been good for her."

"I am sure that Tri feels the same. Come enjoy the fire with me. I have a Scotch already poured."

"That sounds like an offer I can't refuse. It was a good holiday, wasn't it?"

"Most excellent. Were you surprised when the Waverlys invited Aunt Amy to spend Christmas Eve with them?"

"Not really. They really got along great."

"And have a great number of common interests."

"Almost scarily so."

---

**Chapter 910: Penny Ann Early 11:27:1968**

"So, April, rumor has it that the first woman is scheduled to play on a professional basketball team."

"So I've heard, Napoleon."

"You don't seem particularly impressed. I thought this would be a big step forward for women in sports."

"It would be - if the woman was a legitimate basketball player and not some publicity stunt."

"I haven't seen the woman in question, but what makes you think it's just for publicity?"

"Do you know what her previous sport was, darling? She was a jockey. All of five foot three inches tall."
"I see your point."

**Chapter 911: Last Executions in Paris 11:28:1972**

"Despite my overall love for Paris, this duty is . . . disagreeable."

"Not my idea of a good time either, pal, but . . ."

"I know, Napoleon. Orders. Still, I would have fallen victim to a guillotine had you not acted quickly."

"Does give one a different perspective. Seems odd that in an age of cars, airplanes, and rocket ships that the guillotine is still in use. It brings to mind the French Revolution, not modern day France."

"At least it is not longer considered public entertainment with vendors selling snacks and programs to the proceedings."

"Also not my idea of a good time."

**Chapter 912: Year End Blues 11:30:16**

"You seem pensive, chum. Something wrong?"

"Nyet, not truly. I was simply thinking that when we tear off this calendar page tomorrow, only one will be left. A new calendar seems full potential for the year to come. A calendar near the end of a year seems a sad thing that recalls lost opportunities."

"That's both deep and sort of depressing. Maybe you have a case of the blues."

"Perhaps. Never fear. It will pass."

"Maybe I can help shoo it off. I brought pastries to go with our tea and coffee."

"Spasibo. You are a thoughtful friend, Napoleon."

**Chapter 913: Cocoa and Cookies 12:1:16**

"Good morning, darlings! I've brought a thermos of frothy hot cocoa to celebrate the first of December."

"You are welcome even without the cocoa, but it does admittedly cause us to be more enthusiastic. Napoleon and I have cookies to share that will go nicely with it."

"Are those French macarons?"

"They are indeed, Mark. Try one."

"Grab one for me while I pour the cocoa, luv. The colors are gorgeous. What bakery did you find them at?"

"No bakery. These are more of Vasilisa's work."

"That young lady has a gift for baked goods."
"She certainly does."

Chapter 914: 1st Human Heart Transplant 12:3:1967

"We live in remarkable times, Napoleon."

"So Mister Waverly says, but what brings on that sentiment, chum?"

"Look at this article that came over the wire. The heart from a twenty-five year old car accident fatality was put into a fifty-four year old man."

"They transplanted a heart?"

"Yes. The first human one."

"Okay, I agree. That deserves a bit of awe. It was only ten years ago that they began teaching mouth-to-mouth resuscitation in the military and CPR has only been around seven years."

"One wonders what strides will come in the next ten years."


"Ah, the first Christmas party of the season. The lovely scent of the ladies' perfumes in the air."

"The smell of fresh baked cookies from the tables. They must have baked them in the commissary."

"The festive holiday dresses. The hemlines are a bit higher this year. I approve."

"The platters with sliced meats and crudites. The dips look very tasty."

"Another sign of the season. New hairstyles, higher heels."

"That is a very nice tiered display of cakes. The petit fours are all decorated with poinsettia blooms."

"Illya?"

"Yes, Napoleon?"

"Are you sure we're at the same party?"

Chapter 916: The Holly and the Ivy 12:15:16

"Good morning, Sylvia."

"Good morning, Napoleon. Are you responsible for all the greenery?"

"What greenery?"

*calling over her shoulder*

"It wasn't Napoleon, ladies."

*back to Napoleon - offering up a pot of ivy*
"Someone left one of these on the desk of every secretary in the building."

"It's very pretty, if a bit prickly. I didn't think ivy had thorns."

"You must have hit the sprig of holly that's in the pot. Good morning, Miss Dancer."

"What a lovely plant. Holly and Ivy - isn't that the name of a Christmas carol?"

"I do believe it is."

---


"The tree looks especially lovely this year."

"It does. If one ignores the riot of ripped paper and abandoned boxes at the base of it, Millicent. But the children and I wanted everything to be perfect this year since you weren't able to enjoy Christmas at all last year."

"I don't need to ignore the boxes and paper, Alexander. They are festive in their own right. Besides, a bit of chaos in the morning makes one appreciate the peace of a quiet cup of tea in the afternoon."

"Very true, my dear. Care for some gingerbread?"

"Yes, please."

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Chapter 918: Waverly's Platinum Anniversary 2:1:1988

"Alexander! What a beautiful bracelet. This isn't silver, is it?"

"Platinum, my dear. I was told that is the appropriate metal for one's 70th anniversary. There is a blue diamond for each of our children, our grandchildren and so on. May I help you put it on?"

"Yes, please. Seventy years. It hardly seems possible."

"Harder still to think that I shall turn 100 in just a bit over four years. Seems a shame that I've aged more like cheese than fine wine."

"Nonsense, Alexander. Besides, you know how fond I am of cheese."

"Fortunately for me."

---

Chapter 919: Easter Aftermath, Part 1 4:19:17

"Darn it! It's still there!"

"What's still there, April?"

"Oh, hello, Napoleon. I'm talking about that chocolate bunny I gave Illya for Easter."

"Is there a problem with it?"

"Yes! He hasn't eaten it yet!"

"Why . . . let me guess. You made the mistake of betting with my partner?"
"I must confess that I did. I was teasing him when he was unwrapping it and said he would probably have it devoured before I could get back to my desk. We ended up betting over whether or not he could leave it uneaten for an entire month."

Chapter 920: Easter Aftermath, Part 2, 4:19:17

"I fail to see how anything I said is so funny, Napoleon."

"Oh, April . . . let me catch my breath. Follow me. There's something I want you to see."

"In Illya's desk?"

"Well, in his top drawer. See that little bowl?"

"What on Earth are those things in there? There's over a dozen."

"Candy eyeballs. Illya doesn't like the way they taste, but can't bring himself to throw them in the trash. You bet him he wouldn't eat THAT bunny. These eyeballs are all that remain of the other chocolate rabbits he's devoured instead."

Chapter 921: Birthday Surprise 4:21:17

"Happy birthday, Alexander. It's a beautiful day outside. I've been out to the bakery and purchased some lovely croissants. They're still warm."

"Thank you, Millicent, but you haven't been feeling well lately. You should be resting."

"No need, my dear. The doctor told me that my condition is temporary."

"You mean the doctor told you what the problem is and you didn't tell me?"

"Do forgive me for worrying you, but I thought the news that we will be parents would be a lovely birthday surprise."

"I could not imagine a better one, dear girl."

Chapter 922: Brush Up Your Shakespeare 4:22:17

"Napoleon? Say something romantic to me"

"Here? In the office, Nancy?"

"Why not?"

"Oh. Um . . . your hair looks lovely today."

"That's not romantic - honestly, I bet Mister Kuryakin could do better."

"Are you willing to take that challenge, chum?"

"Doubt thou the stars are fire; Doubt that the sun doth move; Doubt truth to be a liar; But never doubt I love."
"Now **that** was romantic. Thank you, Mister Kuryakin."

"You are quite welcome, Miss Warren."

*door closes*

"Where did that come from, partner?"

"Shakespeare, my friend. A quote or two from the Bard rarely fail to impress."

---

**Chapter 923: Too Close for Comfort, Pt 1 of 4 6:5:17**

"Damn - that was close."

*cough*

"Closer than you think, Napoleon."

"Illya? Are you hurt?"

"Not so deep as a well nor so wide as a church-door, but 'tis enough, 'twill serve."

"This is no time to quote Shakespeare. Open Channel D - this is Solo. We need an immediate medical evac."

"Seems like the perfect time to quote Shakespeare - I may not have another opportunity, my friend."

"Fine then - but pick something upbeat to quote."

"Words are easy, like the wind; faithful friends are hard to find."

"All the more reason for you to hang on, chum. You're irreplaceable."

---

**Chapter 924: Too Close for Comfort, Pt 2 of 4 6:5:17**

"Napoleon, the drugs that the doctors have me on are making my head a bit . . . fuzzy. Could you explain something to me?"

"No guarantees, but I will certainly try, chum. What's your question?"

"I was the one shot, yes?"

"Yes, you are correct."

"And the THRUSH shooter missed you, yes?"

"Also correct."

"Then why are you in the hospital bed next to mine?"

"That's a bit complicated."

"From all appearances, neither of us are going to be leaving soon. There is time to explain it."
"Fine. Not really that complicated, but embarrassing."

"You have my full attention, Napoleon."

---

**Chapter 925: Too Close for Comfort, Pt 3 of 4 6:6:17**

"Okay, Illya, it happened like this. Shortly after I called for extraction, you passed out."

"I am with you so far."

"I heard a helicopter, but hadn't been contacted over my communicator, so I wasn't sure if the helicopter was on our side or their side - then they opened fire."

"On us?"

"That's what I thought at the time. What I didn't know was a couple of THRUSHies had worked their way around out of my sight and had been about to attack before our folks spotted them from the air and took aim at them."

---

**Chapter 926: Too Close for Comfort, Pt 4 of 4 6:13:17**

"That does not explain why you are in a hospital bed. Were you hit in the crossfire?"

"Uhmm no, I wasn't shot."

"I doubt they put you in here to keep me company, Napoleon."

"They didn't. I mean, I was injured."

"So what happened?"

"I pulled out my weapon to cover us."

"You said you were not shot, so I assume you did not accidentally shoot yourself."

"No, Mister Smart-aleck, I didn't shoot myself. I didn't see a gopher hole and caught it with my toe. Twisted my ankle."

"Perhaps it was a THRUSH gopher."

---

**Chapter 927: A for Alexander 6:13:17**

"Grandfather?"

"Yes, child?"

"Why does Grandmother call you Alexander instead of Al or Alex?"

"Because your dear grandmother knows that I dislike nicknames, so she calls me by my full name. Just as I call her Millicent because she dislikes Millie."

"Oh. When Mama calls me Reginald instead of Reggie, I'm in trouble. How do you know if you're in trouble?"
"For one thing, I try very hard not to get in trouble with your grandmother. For another -."

"Alexander Reginald Waverly! What is in our drawing room?"

"Does that mean you're in trouble?"

"I am afraid so."

Chapter 928: B for Bomb

"I don't see how you can do that."

"Do what, Napoleon?"

"Stay so calm, cool, and steady when you're working with enough explosives to blow us to the moon."

"I fail to see the problem, Napoleon. Surely you would not prefer me to be working with this amount of explosives if my hands were shaking, my forehead was covered with sweat, and I was looking nervous?"

"Well, when you put it that way, I do prefer a calm bomb expert to a jumpy one."

"Does that mean I can now continue with my work?"

"By all means, chum."

Chapter 929: C for Cat

*door opening*

"Illya? Ready to go?"

"I will be another minute or two, Napoleon. Getting my sleeve over this cast is proving to be more awkward than I had anticipated. Would you mind turning off my stove? The water should be boiling by now."

"Sure thing, chum. Call out if you need a hand getting untangled."

_purrrrrrr_  

"Why, hello there, Lawan. You are looking as beautiful as always, I see."

_hissssss_  

"And the same back at you, Wellington."

"Are you fighting with my cat again, Napoleon?"

"Hey, he started it."

"What are we ever going to do with them, Lawan?"

Chapter 930: D for Dog
"That bite looks painful, Napoleon."

"I won't be flopping down into a chair any time soon, I can guarantee that, pal. That bite on your arm looks bad too. By the way, I know how you feel about dogs, so I doubly appreciate you stepping in and forcing him off of me."

"You are welcome, my friend. As for the bite on my arm, it appears worse than it is due to the bruising. My jacket took most of the puncture damage, but that brute had powerful jaws."

"My pants are a lost cause, aren't they?"

"Utterly lost."

---

**Chapter 931: E for Economizing**

*grumbling*

"Scoot over, Illya. I'm about to fall off the bed."

"This is all your fault, you know."

"My fault? My fault? How is it my fault that Mister Waverly booked us into a room with only one double sized bed?"

"We had a lecture not three weeks ago on economizing."

"Yes - so?"

"And did you or did you not make a claim on a hand tailored bespoke suit last week?"

"That was legitimately damaged in the line of duty."

"But duty did not call for that level of apparel to be worn."

*sigh*

"I'll take the couch."

---

**Chapter 932: F for Flatulence 6:14:17**

(Author note: sound effects were deliberately left out - fill in the blanks yourselves)

"Excuse me."

"Only if you excuse me in turn, Napoleon."

"I think this is the first time we've both had the same reaction to one of THRUSH's concoctions."

"I believe you are correct. Unfortunately, this highlights the lack of proper ventilation in their dungeons."

"An open window and a fan would be very welcome about now."

"I cannot disagree, my friend. Pardon me."
"On the plus side, we might be able to escape. I believe our guards abandoned the area."

"Or are seeking gas masks."

Chapter 933: G for Gall 6:15:17

"Ah, duty calls, fair Penelope. I will be counting the minutes until Friday night."

"Penelope?"

"Penelope Daniels. The newest addition to our secretarial pool."

"It sounds as if she is the newest addition to something else as well."

"Hmm? Oh, yes. She and I have a date Friday night."

"You are shameless, but it seems you managed to reach her before gossips did."

"Shameless? Moi?"

"Napoleon, if we were able to divide your gall by half, you would still have far more than your share."

"It's all part and parcel of that Solo charm, pal."

"If you say so."

Chapter 934: H for Hurly-burly

"You know, Illya? This is not how I envisioned spending Saturday night - trying to spot a THRUSH courier in Times Square."

"It does seem to be a daunting task with the number of people milling about."

"The milling about isn't so bad, but this hurly-burly is a bit much."

"Hurly-burly?"

"You know - noise. Confusion."

"You could simply have said that it is very noisy here."

"True, but then I would have lost the opportunity to expand your vocabulary."

"You think my vocabulary is inadequate?"

"That's not what - hey, I think I see our man. Come on."

Chapter 935: I for Imagination

"Cheer up, Illya. Look on the bright side."

"In case it has escaped your notice, Napoleon, we are currently locked in a pitch-black cell. There is no bright side. There is not even a dim side."
"Consider it a great opportunity to let your imagination run wild, chum. Elaborate parties, lovely ladies - there's no limit to what you can dream up to help pass the time until we can figure a way out of here.

"Fine. I will try to imagine having something that I would very much like to have."

"What would that be?"

"A sane partner."

Chapter 936: J for Jewelry 6:16:17

"Illya?"

"Yes, Napoleon?"

"Are... are you wearing an earring?"

*sigh*

"Since you are staring at it, that is a rather foolish question."

"Okay, okay. Why are you wearing an earring?"

"It is a necessary part of the disguise I must wear for our next mission. Mrs. Waverly provided it and recommended that I wear it until the mission so that I am accustomed to it by then."

"You didn't have to pierce your ear, did you?"

"Fortunately not. Mrs. Waverly obtained one that is held in place by a small, but strong magnet."

"What will they think of next?"

Chapter 937: K for Kite 6:17:17

"Beautiful day for a picnic. Thanks for inviting us, Illya."

"Thank you for coming. It is all too rare that we are all both off duty and enjoying fine weather."

"Speaking of weather, the wind is perfect for your kite. It's a real beauty, Illya. I never knew you liked kites."

"I did not know either. I must thank Agent Webber for making the suggestion."

"Illya luv? Did Webber tell you to go fly a kite?"

"Why yes, April. I had never considered it before, but it is actually quite relaxing."

"Mind if I watch when you thank him?"

Chapter 938: L for Lemon

"Watching you and Illya eat breakfast always fascinates me."
"Breakfast? How is that fascinating, luv?"

"Well, Mark, most people put lemon in tea and jam or syrup on pancakes. Both of you put lemon on pancakes and Illya puts jam in his tea."

"Caster sugar and lemon over pancakes is how we always ate them at home, luv."

"And jam in tea is how it was preferred by my family, April. Also, black cherry jam goes very well with a strong black tea. Have you ever tried either yourself?"

"Admittedly no."

"Do not knock it until you have tried it."

---

**Chapter 939: M for Menu**

"Thanks for letting me come over, Illya. My hot water heater should be fixed tomorrow, but I despise cold showers."

"As do I, my friend. Enjoy your shower, Napoleon."

"Illya - where do you keep your towels?"

"In the bureau - third drawer down."

"Holy . . . my god, Illya - How many of these things do you have?"

"That is the second drawer, Napoleon. And over fifty, at least."

"You know, menus are supposed to stay at the restaurants."

"All those were purchased or gifted to me. Many owners are flattered that you found their food so enjoyable that you want a permanent souvenir."

---

**Chapter 940: N for Niece**

"Dyadya Illya - Dyadya Napoleon! You came!"

"Of course - we would not miss your graduation. Have you picked which college you wish to attend, Vasilisa? As class valedictorian, you should have plenty to pick from."

"Wow, that's quite a hug, young lady. Say, what's that peeking out of your pocket?"

"This? It is a little cloth doll that Dyadya Illya made for me before he sent me to find you, Dyadya Napoleon. I have always kept her for luck because my life improved so much after that day."

"It was a fortunate day for all of us, dear niece."

---

**Chapter 941: O for Onion or Olive**

"Napoleon, you are experienced with mixed drinks, are you not?"

"I have been known to man the shaker at parties, chum. Did you have a question?"
"As a matter of fact, I do. Why is it that when you mix gin and vermouth together and drop in an olive, you call it a martini, but if you mix that same gin and vermouth together and drop in an onion, it is called a Gibson?"

"Huh. I hadn't really thought about that and I must admit that I don't have a clue."

"It is peculiar though."

"That it is."

---

**Chapter 942: P for Parrot 6:18:17**

"Why are you carrying a cage, Napoleon?"

"Ah. This is Sweet Polly's cage - Miss Adams' parrot."

"That explains what it is, but not why you have it."

"Miss Adams is traveling back to her hometown to tend to her sick mother. She couldn't take Sweet Polly along, so I volunteered to watch over her bird."

"Have you ever tended to a bird before, Napoleon?"

"My mother had a canary. How much different could it be? A bird is a bird, right?"

"By that logic, you should also be able to tend to an eagle. I wish you luck."

---

**Chapter 943: Q for Query**

"Good morning, Napoleon. Or perhaps not. You do not appear to have gotten much sleep."

"I didn't. Sweet Polly talked, screeched and squalled all night. That's not the worse part though. Illya? Have you ever heard of ways to unteach a parrot?"

"Why would you need to unteach the bird?"

"I got mad at Sweet Polly around 3 am and used a bit of colorful vocabulary - now that crazy bird is repeating what I said constantly."

"You taught Miss Adams' bird how to swear? The woman that blushes if someone says heck?"

"I'm doomed."

"Yes, you are."

---

**Chapter 944: R for Reprieve**

"Miss Adams, how is your mother?"

"Please call me Janice, Mister Solo. She's doing much better, thank you. My brother is with her now."

"So pleased to hear the good news, Janice. And please, call me Napoleon. Here to retrieveSweet
"Polly?"

"Yes. I've missed him so much."

"Well . . . I think I should mention something about his language. . ."

"Oh no! I'm so sorry, Napoleon. I was so worried about Mother that I forgot to warn you about his tendency to say bad words. My brother taught him those."

"Don't trouble yourself. It didn't bother me."

Chapter 945: S for Salmagundi

"Hello, Mark. Are we late?"

"Not at all, Napoleon. You blokes come right in. April's already at the table because her leg is a bit stiff."

"I have the same problem after having a cast removed. Good evening, April."

"Come here for a kiss, Illya. You too, Napoleon."

"After April releases you, be seated. I'll fetch the salmagundi."

"Salmagundi?"

"A fancy arranged salad. Mark let me peek - it looks fab."

"Impressive. What went into that?"

"Roast chicken, veal, oysters, mushrooms, figs, olives, currants, and nuts with assorted fruit slices and lightly dressed fresh vegetables."

"Looks and sounds delicious."

Chapter 946: T for Tempest

"Why is it that every time we have an outdoor assignment, the weather decides to change for the worse?"

"No idea, chum, but I have to admit that we do seem to draw more than our share of bad weather."

"It seems most likely to occur when the area we must be in has no decent place to shelter."

"Yeah, I've noticed that too. At least it's a warm rain."

"As I am already soaked, I suppose I must take some comfort in that."

"Was that thunder? The wind is picking up too."

"So much for small comforts."

Chapter 947: U for Unbuxom 6:19:17
"English is a puzzling language, Napoleon."

"How so, chum?"

"When I began learning English, I was told that the prefix un made a word mean the opposite of the word without it. As in, if you do something, you put it together, but if you undo, you take it apart."

"With you so far."

"Do you know what buxom means?"

"Not to be crude, but it generally means a lady has generous upper proportions."

"Do you know what unbuxom means?"

"Err . . . small breasted?"

"No. Disobedient."

"You're joking."

*page flip*

"You aren't joking. Okay, you win. English is puzzling."

Chapter 948: V for Vacherin

"This is one thing I love about France, Alexander - these charming little bistros and their wonderful food."

"Quite true, my dear, but it always leads to the difficult question of whether I revisit an old favorite or seek out something new."

"A bit of both perhaps? I believe I will have a different appetizer and starter then go with an entree and dessert I'm already fond of."

"A most excellent plan, Millicent, and one I believe I shall follow as well."

"Oh, look! They have vacherin aux fraises des bois today."

"Shall we split one, dear girl?"

"Yes, please."

Chapter 949: W for Washi

"I'm glad Mister Waverly picked us to represent the New York office at this meeting, Mark. I love Japan."

"It certainly has a style all its own, luv."

"Remember last time we were here? You bought me a rabbit handmade from barley sugar."

"I remember. But today, I'm looking for a gift to take back to Illya. Remember watching him fly that kite?"
"Vividly. He was actually smiling."

"There's supposed to be a craftsman here that make kites from washi."

"Washi . . . that's that lovely paper they use for origami, isn't it? He'll love it."

---

**Chapter 950: X for Xanthocyanopsy**

"Alright, we've learned the identity of the THRUSH agent we're after. Illya, you read the report. Anything unusual about him?"

"Yes, but I am not sure it is anything we could use to our advantage."

"What is it?"

"Mister Brock has xanthocyanopsy - a form of color blindness that allows him to discern only yellows and blues."

"So he can't discern the color red? Huh. We might be able to do something with that, but I'm not sure what yet. Anything else?"

"Unfortunately not. Physically, he is the textbook example of average."

"Perfect for a spy."

"True."
Drabs 951 - 1000

Chapter Summary

The final 50 drabs of the 1000 set.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 951: Y for Yesterday

~Suddenly I'm not half the man I used to be.~There's a shadow hanging over me.~Oh, yesterday came suddenly.~

"The album you're playing is one of those by The Beatles, isn't it?"

"Yes, Napoleon. It is their fifth album, Help!"

~Why she had to go, I don't know, she wouldn't say.~I said something wrong, now I long for yesterday.~

"This song is pretty, but very melancholy. What's its name?"

"Yesterday."

"I should have been able to guess that. Mind if I start it over from the beginning, chum?"

"Be my guest."

Chapter 952: Z for Zaftig

"Illya, could I talk you into double-dating with me? I've encountered a lovely model named Anita, but she's reluctant to go out on the town without her roommate."

"And she is?"

"Another model. A lovely brunette named Janice."

"I think I will pass. Have you asked Mark?"

"No, I haven't, but I will. Mind if I ask why you aren't interested?"

"The current look of models does not appeal to me. I prefer a woman whose figure is more zaftig than skeletal. Perhaps it is my past, but I view women that thin as unhealthy."

Chapter 953: Undercover Angel 7:7:77

"Napoleon, what are you listening to?"
"Listening to a top 10 show. This song is currently number one."

"Dare I ask?"

"Undercover Angel by Alan O'Day."

"Is Mister O'Day the singer or the songwriter?"

"Both, if the deejay I'm listening to is right."

"If I am hearing the lyrics correctly, he is attempting to seduce a woman by telling her he would like to see if she is the incarnation of a woman who appeared in his bed one night and made love to him?"

"Pretty basically."

"That man has problems."

"But a unique pick up line."

---

**Chapter 954: A Stitch in Time 7:28:17**

"Mister Waverly actually approved the cost of replacing your jacket, Napoleon?"

"Unusual, but true, April. To be fair, my jacket gave itself up to get myself and Illya out of a nasty situation."

"This I have to hear. So, what happened?"

"Illya and I managed to work enough bars out of our prison window to squeeze through, but the distance between us and the rocky ground below looked like a guaranteed broken limb. The extra couple of feet that my well-constructed jacket gave us made all the difference between bruising and breaking."

"So, good tailoring saved the day?"

"Indeed."

---

**Chapter 955: Devastation 8:1:17**

Illya's face was immobile, but there was devastation in his eyes as he eased another small body from the wreckage. Only THURSH would be callous enough to build a laboratory underneath an orphanage - or cruel enough destroy it without regard for the lives above.

Napoleon was about to go Illya's side when he overheard another agent.

"Look at that Ruskie. From his face, you'd think he was hauling out logs."

Napoleon turned, eyes blazing, but was stopped by Mister Waverly's voice.

"See to your partner, Mister Solo. Mister Franklin and I shall be having a chat."

---

**Chapter 956: Tea Time, Part 1 of 7 8:11:17**
"My dear Mister Kuryakin - please do come in and be seated."

"Thank you, Mrs. Waverly - and please, Illya. Mister Waverly will not be joining us?"

"He had intended to, but - well, you know better than most how business can interfere with one's plans."

"I do indeed. Would you like me to pour?"

"That would be lovely, thank you. I had no idea what jam you might prefer, so I have a variety - raspberry, strawberry and black cherry. The strawberry jam was homemade in France from wild strawberries."

"From Madame Bissette's farm?"

"Quite so."

"I will have strawberry then."

Chapter 957: Tea Time, Part 2 of 7

"Would you please pass the cheese plate, Illya?"

"Of course, Mrs. Waverly. Could you please pass the kielbasa plate?"

"Certainly. Please help yourself. There is plenty in the pantry should we finish off this platter. Oh, that reminds me. I do wish that you would have a discreet word with our Miss Dancer."

"I would be glad to, ma'am, but regarding what?"

"I know young ladies these days are concerned with their food intake, but she should be aware for the sake of both missions and diplomacy that one should never drink tea without partaking in any offered foods."

Chapter 958: Tea Time, Part 3 of 7

"Ah. Might I presume Miss Dancer had tea with you recently?"

"You may so presume."

"Not to be rude, but why did you not mention it yourself at the time?"

"She was here as a guest and while not eating anything would be considered rude, it is far more rude to correct one's guests."

"My apologies, I should have thought of that."

"Pish tosh, think nothing of it. I practically begged the question when I made my request. Do try the sushki."

"Thank you. This jam is as good as I remember it being. More tea, ma'am?"

"Please."
Chapter 959: Tea Time, Part 4 of 7 8:16:17

"You have a lovely samovar."

"Thank you, Illya. It took me years to find one similar to my mother's. but I was finally successful. I see the question in your eyes. Nearly all of my mother's things were lost to me when she passed away. Something that I never did forgive certain individuals for. So many small things that I associated with her and our life together that would have meant so much to have."

"If you will pardon my saying so, Mrs. Waverly, some things are not forgivable."

"Thank you. I feel quite strongly that way myself."

Chapter 960: Tea Time, Part 5 of 7 8:17:17

"Thank you again for coming, Illya."

"Thank you for inviting me, but if I might ask a question?"

"Please feel free."

"I am well aware of my shortcomings as a conversationalist. Why me?"

"Forgive my laughter, but that is part of the reason why. Are you familiar with the German word fernweh?"

"I have heard it, but . . ."

"It doesn't really translate very well, but roughly it means that one has a longing for a place even though they have never been there. I get that way for Russia even though I wasn't born there and never lived there."

Chapter 961: Tea Time, Part 6 of 7 8:18:17

"So - it is because I am Russian?"

"Not exactly. Please do not take this the wrong way, but even though it is very pleasant to be able to converse in Russian freely as well as to be around someone that doesn't think my preferred tea foods are strange, the real reason is that many of your mannerisms remind me of my dear mother. She also possessed a dry sense of humor that verged on the morbid at times. And despite her many years in London, jam in tea remained her preference for life. Black current jam, to be precise."

Chapter 962: Tea Time, Pt 7 of 7 8:19:17

"As I am sure that your mother was a remarkable woman, I will consider any comparison to her as a compliment. I hope that you will also not be offended that you sometimes remind me of my Babyshka - or at least of how I imagine she would have been as a young woman."

"I can see that our Mister Solo is rubbing off on you. You've gained his gift for flattery."

"I have always had it, Mrs. Waverly. I simply do not use it as indiscriminately as Napoleon does. Bal'shoye spasibo for a most enjoyable afternoon tea."
Chapter 963: Ten Missions Gone Wrong : 1

Illya stood silent guard over his fallen partner, weapon out and wary. For once, the Solo luck had failed. Illya was grateful that Napoleon was unconscious because he knew the man would be in agony and there was little to nothing that Illya could do to help him until the extraction team arrived.

What little that could be done, Illya had already done, carefully forcing open the leg-catcher trap that had snapped shut on Napoleon's left leg, breaking the bone just above the ankle. The noise of the approaching UNCLE helicopter was like music.

"Soon, tovarich. Hang on."

Chapter 964: Ten Missions Gone Wrong : 2

"Are you injured, Napoleon?"

"Yes. Nothing in a vital spot and I have the bleeding mostly under control. I think I was just hit by shrapnel. You?"

"Nothing deep, but it is a scalp wound and the blood keeps getting into my eyes."

"Sorry, chum. Not exactly the milk run we were told this would be."

"The milk certainly seems curdled from here, my friend. Are you able to make a break for the car if I cover you?"

"I won't break any speed records, but I believe so."

"Then let us depart this place. Ready, Napoleon?"

"Now, Illya."

Chapter 965: Ten Missions Gone Wrong : 3

"April, are you alright?"

"As Bond would say, shaken but not stirred, darling. I don't know how you managed to keep control of the car when they rammed us."

"We were fortunate our car was built sturdier than theirs was, luv."

"Hang on, Mark - why are you driving with one hand?"

"My left arm hurts - might possibly be broken. At any rate, I'm trying not to aggravate it until we reach safety. If I could be sure we've lost them, I'd pull over and let you drive, but since I can't? One handed it is."

Chapter 966: Ten Missions Gone Wrong : 4

"Napoleon?"
"Thank God - over here, Illya!"

"I will have you out in a minute."

"You wouldn't happen to have any spare clothing with you, would you, pal?"

"Is your clothing damaged?"

"Errr . . . more like nonexistent. The THRUSHie were paranoid that I might have tracking devices in my clothing and had it all burned."

"I sometimes think they do this sort of thing to you to annoy Mister Waverly."

"Yeah, I can already hear what he's going to say about my next expense report."

"At least you will be there to hear the scolding. Blanket?"

"Small comfort, chum. Thanks."

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Chapter 967: Ten Missions Gone Wrong : 5

Napoleon already had the car in gear as Illya scrambled into the back seat and turned to help another agent in as bullets started flying. As soon as Napoleon saw that Illya had a tight grip on the other man's jacket, he peeled out - bullets hitting the back window but, thankfully, not the tires.

"Did Roderick manage to hang onto the file?"

There was a pause before Illya answered softly.

"Yes, Napoleon. He has a death grip on it."

Napoleon started praise Roderick, but Illya's tone stopped him.

"You mean literal death grip, don't you?"

"Da."

"Damn."

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Chapter 968: Ten Missions Gone Wrong : 6

"Please tell me that isn't what I think it is?"

"That would all depend on what you think it is, Napoleon. If you are thinking that it is a bomb, then I am sorry, but I will not lie to you."

"Great."

"Not in my opinion. The device is both live and in the process of counting down. There is no time for me to attempt to disarm it."

"Any good news?"

"That also depends. How fast and far can you run in just over two minutes?"
"Prepare for the setting of a new landspeed record, chum. Move it!"

**Chapter 969: Ten Missions Gone Wrong : 7**

Illya plodded tiredly behind Napoleon, who was in the midst of a lengthy rant.

"They wreck our car... toss us in a cell with ankle deep stagnant water... then we have to escape through a sewer pipe. Now? Hiking out in the middle of nowhere without any clue as to where we are. No weapons, no communicators. What else could possibly go wrong?"

Wincing, Illya waited. Sure enough, as if on cue, there was a crack of thunder and cold rain began falling.

Pulling his ruined jacket a little tighter, Napoleon spoke to the heavens.

"That was a rhetorical question."

**Chapter 970: Ten Missions Gone Wrong : 8**

Head ringing in the aftermath of the explosion, he couldn't hear anything. Not that it mattered. He was too dazed to respond. The only thing keeping him moving was the slender form he was clutching against him. One step after another. He had to get his partner to safety.

When other arms tried to take his partner from him, he fought back as best as he could until a sharp pain erupted in his back, dropping him to his knees before consciousness fled. Napoleon hated having to dart his friend, but Mark and April both needed immediate medical treatment.

**Chapter 971: Ten Missions Gone Wrong : 9**

"We had a good run, didn't we?"

Illya's gun didn't waver, but he did shift his gaze to take a closer look at his partner. Napoleon's expression was resigned. Illya took a moment to choose his words carefully.

"We are currently pinned down, but our backup will be here shortly if we can hold on a few more minutes. I have too much left to live for."

"What's that, chum?"

"At least a dozen uneaten boxes of Thin Mints."

Napoleon's laughter raised both of their spirits while simultaneously unnerving the THRUSH agents. Win-win.

**Chapter 972: Ten Missions Gone Wrong : 10**

"When I said I would like a long beach vacation, this isn't what I had in mind."

"I keep telling you to be careful what you wish for, Napoleon. Still, we must be grateful for this small stretch of land. In our current condition, we would be too likely to attract sharks or other predators."
"Too true. Not much we can do but forage and stay alive until we're found."

"Hopefully, we are found by UNCLE and not by lurking THRUSH."

"Yeah - they might be crabby that we blew up their boat."

"They blew ours up first."

"True."

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**Chapter 973: Hunger 11:12:17**

"Illya?"

"Yes, Napoleon?"

"I'm so hungry, I can't sleep."

"I know, tovarich. My stomach is as empty as yours, but it is too dark to search for food. We would be likely to make our situation worse by injuring ourselves. At least we found a source of decent water before dark. Animals are surely drawn there. If nothing else, surely we will find some insects."

"I'm hungry enough that bugs sound good. Sorry, but I can't seem to think of anything else."

"Hunger and I are old acquaintances. Rest. I swear we will find food tomorrow."

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**Chapter 974: Small Fry 11:12:17**

"What are you doing, Illya?"

"I am getting us such food as I can find, Napoleon. I already have several on my shirt."

"Minnows? No offense, but those are pretty small."

"I promised you food, not a feast. Some food is better than none at all. Had we a place to fish and equipment, we could go for larger and use these as bait. Since that is not currently an option, we eat the bait."

"Raw?"

"Unless you have a pot hidden in your pocket? Yes. I have a dozen so far, so six each."

"Ah well. Bon appetit, chum."

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**Chapter 975: Misery and Company 11:12:17**

"Illya?"

"Yes, Napoleon?"

"Sorry I've been such a downer."

"Nonsense. I have done my share of complaining about our situation."
"True, but you've been helping instead just complaining."

"You have been helping as well. You found that metal we were able to beat into a bowl to boil water in. We need water more than food."

"Speaking of the water, I think it's ready."

"Excellent. Something warm to drink while we eat the inner basswood bark we harvested earlier."

"We harvested that to eat? I thought it was for starting fires."

"Eat. Tomorrow we find better shelter."

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**Chapter 976: Shelter 11:13:17**

"Where are you going, Napoleon?"

"I think I caught a glimpse of - yes! There's a cave back behind this bush. It's not huge, but that means it will be easier to heat."

"Dry and the mouth is facing away from the direction the wind comes from most often. I think you have saved us a great deal of time."

"If we can get some branches to form a lean-to against the opening, we'll be even better protected. In fact, why don't I work on that while you see what food might be around?"

"Excellent idea."

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**Chapter 977: Portable Feast 11:13:17**

Napoleon was maneuvering the final pine bough into position when he felt the first drop of rain hit his hand. Hurriedly finishing his task, he was relieved to see Illya was approaching. Even better, the blond had a satisfied smile on his face.

Napoleon's nose scrunched as he detected a faint odor of skunk, but that was forgotten as Illya opened a piece of torn canvas he was using as a bag and revealed several cans of potted meat, soup, and baked beans. Illya left the canvas piece outside and, fortunately, most of the skunk smell stayed with it.

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**Chapter 978: Skunk Assistance 11:13:17**

They had to keep their fire small enough that the smoke could escape through the sides of the lean-to easily, but the real comfort was digging into the cans of food. Both of them had to force themselves to eat slowly, but eventually, both men had full, satisfied stomachs.

"Not to look a gift horse in the mouth, chum, but did you mug a passing camper?"

"No. A skunk did that job for me. From the looks of the campsite, likely a week or so ago. Everything perishable was ruined, but we may be grateful for the canned goods."

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**Chapter 979: Rain 11:13:17**
The rain that fell continually the next day didn't bother them. Napoleon had enough wood stockpiled to keep their small fire fed for the day and they carefully sat out their rough bowl to catch the rainwater to drink. Between that and the remaining cans, they didn't need to venture out into the rain, so they stayed inside and dry, using two of the emptied soup cans to drink from.

"Only three days remain, Napoleon. Even if we find little else, we will be fine until then."

"I'm glad they let us stay together."

"So am I."

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Chapter 980: Fresh Fish 11:16:17

The rain continued falling over the remaining three days, but Illya was pleased. He found a deeper section of water and several fish were captured with the crude fishing net he was able to rig. Since Illya was catching, Napoleon took the job of cleaning the catch without complaint. Hot, fresh food made them both feel better - though a set of drier clothing or even a towel would have been appreciated. Rain was still coming down when the signal came that their ride out had arrived.

They surprised the pickup team when the offered k-rations were politely turned down.

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Chapter 981: Surprises 11:16:17

Mark was waiting to greet them when they arrived back at Headquarters. To their surprise, he led them immediately to one of the apartments kept for emergencies or visitors in protective custody. Fresh clothing was laid out on the two beds and Mark gestured toward the bathroom.

"Mister Waverly wants to see you both after you've made yourselves presentable. I believe he plans to run you both past Medical as well and have you sleep here overnight."

Seeing frowns forming, Mark quickly handed them a take-out menu from their favorite Chinese restaurant.

"Anything you want - on Mister Waverly."

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Chapter 982: Jules Cutter 11:16:17

Neither man hurried the first hot shower they had enjoyed in over a week, so it was slightly over an hour before they reported to Mister Waverly's office. He didn't seemed to mind a bit. In fact, he seemed to be in a singularly good mood.

"Gentlemen. Do come in and be seated. I believe that you both remember our Mister Cutter?"

Jules Cutter rose from his seat near Mister Waverly, offering his hand to first Napoleon and then to Illya while smiling ruefully.

"I'm torn between being proud and annoyed that you both look so well."

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Chapter 983: Incentives 11:17:17

Neither man knew how to respond to Cutter's remark, but Mister Waverly chuckled.
"Consider losing our little wager as proof that you do not enough faith in your own teaching methods, Mister Cutter."

Mister Waverly then looked to his agents.

"Mister Cutter was grumbling that he didn't think any of you retained his lessons more than long enough to pass the survival course. You two were the first pair to go through it, but we will be having quarterly survival testing with random agents to make sure the incentive is there for everyone to keep their skills sharp."

Chapter 984: Archives 11:18:17

Mister Waverly tended to his pipe before speaking again.

"Be that as it may, that was not the reason for Mister Cutter's visit."

Cutter lifted a briefcase to the top of the table, then opened it and pulled our a thick stack of folders.

"I thought it best to bring the full records of that unfortunate scandal at the Survival School. The more I pulled that year's records, the more I was convinced that I needed to bring these here in person rather than entrust them to a courier."

Napoleon took the top folder.

"Any stand out, sir?"

Chapter 985: Delay 11:20:17

Cutter shrugged.

"Bound to be more than I have in my files, but while there are some I find to be highly unlikely, I can't say any of the remaining are more likely suspects than the rest. Perhaps we should wait until Dancer and Slate arrive and we can go over them together."

Waverly frowned at his pipe.

"They should have returned by now. What the deuce could be keeping them?"

Napoleon got a bad feeling in his gut. A glance toward Illya told him his partner had similar misgivings. A sharp rap on the door startled them all.

Chapter 986: Another Attack 11:25:17

Miss Eklund entered and her expression validated the feeling in Napoleon's gut before she said a word.

"My apologies, Mister Waverly, but I thought you'd want to know at once. There has been another attack. Agents Dancer and Slate are in Medical being evaluated right now."

Napoleon and Illya were already half out of their seats before they looked back to their superior. Mister Waverly gestured with his pipe.

"Go on, gentlemen. I will be there shortly myself and trust you will have a report on their general
condition for me by that time."

"Yes, sir - we will."

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**Chapter 987: UNCLE Medical 11:25:17**

It was no surprise to the Medical staff when Napoleon and Illya rushed in. With a sympathetic smile, Nurse Rollins came over.

"Agent Slate is still being examined, but Agent Dancer is in room 5. Bruised, but otherwise fine - she'd probably appreciate company while waiting on news of her partner."

Napoleon smoothly took her hand, kissing the air just over the back of it.

"Thank you, lovely Genevieve. If you weren't married . . . "

"It wouldn't make a smidge of difference - you aren't my type, Agent Solo. Shoo."

Napoleon conceded defeat while steadfastly ignoring his partner's smirk.

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**Chapter 988: Room 5 11:26:17**

It didn't surprise either agent to find April pacing instead of resting on her bed. She rushed into Napoleon's offered arms as soon as they entered.

"Have you seen Mark? Have they told you anything? Dear God, I don't believe I've ever heard him scream like that."

Illya moved to pour April a glass of water as Napoleon tried to soothe her.

"No news yet. We were only told that Mark is still being examined."

"Have a drink, April. Can you tell us what happened?"

Taking the glass of water from Illya, April gulped it down.

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**Chapter 989: Leather 11:27:17**

After swallowing the last of the water, April took a deep breath.

"I wish I had more details to give you, but I know Mark saw something because he grabbed me - so roughly that it took me by surprise and, if it had been anyone other than Mark, I'd have jeopardized their future children. Then he screamed, but he managed to both keep on his feet and keep hold of me . . but . . over there. On the table. Take a look at my leather purse."

Napoleon looked at what he knew had been a smooth leather purse and felt ill.

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**Chapter 990: Mark 11:30:17**

Illya followed Napoleon's eyes to April's purse. The leather looked bubbled and twisted, causing their concerns over Mark's health to skyrocket.
A soft knock at the door preceded Nurse Rollins glancing in.

"Agent Slate is awake and insisting that he needs to speak with you immediately, Agent Solo. In fact, he's refusing pain medications until you arrive and, to be perfectly frank, he needs them quite badly."

Napoleon nodded, giving orders as he headed for the door.

"Illya? Stick with April until I find out what has Mark so upset. Nurse Rollins, please lead the way."

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**Chapter 991: Eye-witness 12:7:17**

It would have been easy even for someone that didn't know Mark to tell he was agitated. A look of relief crossed his face when he saw Napoleon, but his first question was about his partner.

"Is April alright? Is someone with her?"

Napoleon didn't hesitate.

"Easy, Mark - the only thing damaged on April was her purse - and Illya with her. So, why the urgency?"

"I don't know her name, but I recognized the bird that attacked us - one of ours. I'm not sure where she's assigned, but I've seen her in our labs."

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**Chapter 992: Capture 12:7:17**

Waverly and Cutter had been close enough to hear Mark's statement. Both immediately left the medical section and rapidly narrowed down the suspects by seeing which female staff members had not been in the offices at the time of the attack. Due to the timing of the attack, that eliminated the majority. Getting verification of a rough age and hair color eliminated all but eleven and those photographs were taken up to Mark. He had no hesitation in picking out the woman's photo.

Things moved rapidly from there and the woman was intercepted as she boarded a train.

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**Chapter 993: Wool 12:10:17**

While others were attending to the rogue agent, Napoleon asked the doctor about Mark's condition.

Motioning him to the side, the doctor displayed the jacket Mark had been wearing. Taking a closer look at the back of the jacket, Napoleon saw dozens of small holes.

"Whatever substance was sprayed on him doesn't affect wool, but this jacket is a wool blend. Had it been 100% wool, Agent Slate probably wouldn't have suffered any damage."

Looking back at Mark, knowing that every one of those small holes equated to a burn on his back, Napoleon repressed a shudder.

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**Chapter 994: Best Served Cold 12:19:17**

It was a convoluted story that emerged when the woman, Meribeth Telfer, was questioned. She had been engaged to Joseph Bender, the instructor at the Survival School who had been dismissed for
taking bribes to allow cheating on the Martengale course.

When Bender was deprogrammed and released from U.N.C.L.E., the deprogramming team unknowingly also wiped his memories of his fiancé. Furious at the derailment of her expected future, Telfer had kept her head down and slowly gathered the information on everyone she felt was responsible.

Napoleon gave a low whistle as he read through the details.

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**Chapter 995: Triggers 12:20:17**

Hearing Napoleon's whistle, Illya went over to him and, after putting on his glasses, read through the report as well. When he finished, he tucked his glasses back away with a thoughtful look on his face.

"I do not understand why she waited for so long before seeking her retribution."

A soft throat clearing drew the attention of both agents to George Dennell, who was standing in the doorway.

"Mister Waverly asked me to research what had happened to Joseph Bender even before the attack on Mister Slate and Miss Dancer. I believe I know what set her off."

---

**Chapter 996: Joseph Bender 12:20:17**

Napoleon gestured to a chair.

"Sit down and fill us in, George."

Pleased that Napoleon still remembered his name, George sat down and took a deep breath.

"Well, Mister Solo -"

"Napoleon, please."

That got another short smile as George began to speak.

"Mister Bender's done quite well for himself in the civilian world. He's now well-regarded as a commodities broker and earns a substantial salary, but I think this was the breaking point for Miss Telfer. This appeared in the society section of the newspaper shortly before the first known attack."

George offered over a newspaper clipping.

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**Chapter 997: Spark 12:20:17**

Napoleon took the offered clipping as Illya leaned over the back of Napoleon's chair to look over it with him.

"An engagement notice for Colette Moulay and Joseph Bender."

The announcement had an accompanying photograph and Napoleon squinted at it.

"Is it my imagination or does Miss Moulay bear more than a passing resemblance to Miss Telfer?"
Illya nodded.

"Nothing like twins, of course, but very similar in type. 'Wedding to be held on Long Island at the Swan Club followed by a honeymoon cruise on the Mediterranean.' Yes, I believe you found the spark for the powder keg."

Chapter 998: Solemn Contemplation 12:20:17

George was sad at the deaths and injuries that Miss Telfer had caused, but satisfied that he had, in his own small way, helped to bring an end to the threat. He simply couldn't understand the mindset of some people - how they could deliberately set out to harm others. That was a trait his mind associated with THRUSH and, to him, there was not really any lower category he could place someone in.

Nurse Rollins interrupted everyone's thoughts when she opened the door. The smile on her face was welcome.

"If you gentlemen would care to follow me?"

Chapter 999: On the Mend 12:21:17

All three men followed Nurse Rollins to room 5, where they found April perched by Mark's bedside. Mark had obviously finally agreed to the pain medication because he was laying on his stomach, sound asleep.

April looked over and smiled at them all.

"The doctor's said that even with the mixed fibers with the wool, Mark's jacket took enough of the damage that he'll have minimal scarring. He'll be in a good bit of pain until it all heals up though."

"I will make up another batch of burn cream."

"That would be perfect, Illya."

Chapter 1000: Why We Do What We Do 12:21:17

Napoleon and Illya entered while April was gently applying burn cream on Mark. Napoleon went to the head of the bed.

"It was a very good thing that you insisted on seeing me when you did, Mark. That train Miss Telfer was catching was intended to take her to crash a wedding."

"Bender's?"

"Right on the first guess, Mark. It looks as if she was targeting the entire wedding party."

Mark sighed and closed his eyes.

"At least the innocents were spared that."

April gave Mark a light kiss.

"That's exactly what we're all fighting for, darling."
This is it - the end of a project that started small back in January of 2012 (attempting to do a drab a day for a week - which turned to a month - which turned to a year - which turned into 1000 drabs altogether). I already have plans for other drabs, but they'll be self-contained story lines and not monsters like this one. Thanks to all who have read and encouraged this project - it's been fun.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!