"So congratulations, Peril," Napoleon drawled, looking so amused that he could see it was literally setting Illya's teeth on edge. "You have the supreme good fortune of getting to kiss me senseless. Now be a good sport and put your hands on my backside, would you? I'm beginning to feel neglected."

In which the boys have to go undercover as a couple, with Napoleon having a whale of a time while Illya isn't sure whether to knock Napoleon's teeth out or kiss him.
When he looked at it objectively, it wasn't like this was the most compromising thing Napoleon had had to do in the line of duty. In fact, if he was perfectly honest with himself, it barely even unsettled his top five.

He had had to seduce genocidal maniacs and Nazis for information after all and Nazis, in particular, were sadistic sons of bitches who enjoyed abject humiliation and thought applying thumbscrews to their partners was an excellent form of foreplay.

And it was hardly as though Napoleon's occupational indiscretions had ended there.

There had been the scandal in Lisbon, which had somehow ended with a naked Napoleon hanging from the window ledge of an abbey and flashing half the congregation, at least nineteen nuns and the presiding Pope at the time, who had been on a state visit.

There had also been the situation in Kyoto, when Napoleon spoke little to no Japanese but still had to romance four sisters, their mother and a distant uncle simultaneously while they all lived in the same house (and he miraculously succeeded, even if he was run out of the village with pitchforks the next day).

Then there had been his time in Balmoral, which had included a post-coronation Queen Elizabeth II, the Kohinoor diamond and frankly the filthiest night of passion he had ever had in his life. Even now, Napoleon couldn't quite look at British currency (or a corgi) without feeling a little dirty.

So when Waverly briefed them on their newest assignment and what Illya, Napoleon and Gaby's roles were to be in it, Napoleon was mildly surprised by Waverly's words but not particularly horrified. He was, after all, rather used to taking one for the team.

Illya, on the other hand, had proven his enthusiasm for the situation by promptly flipping a table over.

Looking down at the stationary carnage that had landed at his feet, Napoleon wiped a smear of dust off his knee and couldn't help but feel the Russian was overreacting slightly.

"Clandestine lovers?" Gaby repeated Waverly's words, looking like Christmas had come early. She then pointed between Napoleon and Illya with a positively impish look on her face, her eyes sparkling. "These two? They'll kill each other in a day."

"Well, that's rude," Napoleon countered, easing to his feet and smoothly sidestepping the rather sorry-looking telephone Illya had thrown to the floor to pour himself a drink. The phone whirred sadly in response. "I'd at least give us two."

Illya's left eye twitched so dangerously at this that it looked likely to pop out of his head at any given moment.

"Why?" he eventually managed to ask Waverly through his teeth, seemingly unable to produce anything more than monosyllables in his rage. His body language alone was warning enough for Gaby to eye the peace lily by Illya's elbow with mild concern, in case he decided to flip that over in a pique of rage as well.

Luckily, Waverly was there to cut in before flora homicide could occur. Napoleon secretly let out a relieved exhale. He really was rather attached to Gladys.
"This is necessary, Kuryakin," Waverly said, wiping his glasses with a handkerchief and sounding like a man with an infinite reserve of patience, "because three of our finest agents have been sent to us in pieces and this is our last resort. We had Goldman try to infiltrate the group as a prospective thief and we got him back in a body bag. Ivanovic tried to break into their hideout and was blown to bits by their security traps. And as for Anderson, I'm still working out how to sugar-coat 'disembowelment' in my condolence letter to his wife. Having you and Solo make contact by appearing as a couple is our best method. From what we've gathered on The Fingersmith, an old-fashioned honey trap appears to be the best way to get our man."

Illya looked down at his feet, where a pen squeaked a little under his boot. Stepping off it, the tightness around Illya's jaw relaxed a little.

"I do not know this Fingersmith," he muttered grudgingly and Napoleon tried not to smile into his glass. He could always trust Peril to perk up at a wholesome bit of murder.

"Well, I'm afraid I do know him," Waverly responded, not looking entirely pleased about this fact as he opened the thick folder in his hand, "and he is one of the most dangerous characters we've ever come across."

Waverly then proceeded to look at the upturned desk. Illya, a little mollified, flushed and had the good grace to duck his tall frame down to put the desk back onto its legs with no effort at all. He reminded Napoleon of a contrite and particularly large puppy.

"The Fingersmith - born Reginald Edward Heath II," Waverly continued as though he hadn't been interrupted, placing a series of photographs of a dark-haired man in his thirties on the desk. A handsome face wearing a cold smile stared back at them, his eyes so intelligent that they looked like they were personally mocking each and every one of them. Illya, in particular, looked especially slighted as he narrowed his eyes. "British aristocracy. The youngest son of the Earl of Matlock. He attended Oxford and received a first class with honours in Political Science before promptly going off the rails when his father publicly disowned him for his more... alternative proclivities."

"The least of his crimes," Waverly said shortly, which was enough to make Gaby raise a perfectly-shaped eyebrow at Napoleon in enquiry. Napoleon immediately understood why. Waverly didn't often show such obvious distaste in their marks. Even the Vinciguerras -- who, as Napoleon was quick to remind everyone, had been monstrous enough to torture someone as handsome and agreeable as him -- hadn't inspired the dislike that now resonated through Waverly's every word.

"I believe the term is buggery," Napoleon translated shamelessly, leaning back into his chair like a particularly indolent cat. He had done enough of it himself to hardly be embarrassed by the word. Watching Illya blotch and glare at his crassness, however, was an added bonus. "He was caught in a public place, as I recall. Something about a tryst with a former Prime Minister's son. It was all very debauched. You would have loved it, Peril. In fact, I could have sworn there was talk of an orgy..."

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It was enough to make Napoleon actually give the man his full attention, something he had never deigned to give Sanders. After all, giving Sanders his full attention at any given time would have either given Napoleon a headache or driven him to commit homicide.

"After he was disowned, Heath became a society burglar," Waverly continued, "and a rather notorious one at that. In 1953, he was linked to the double murder of a couple after they allegedly discovered him in their home. The following year, he was linked to another similar killing. In both cases, the charges were most advantageously dropped."

"How fortuitous," Gaby commented with a little huff, even her earrings dangling with annoyance. "I see that money and power are a real burden for some people."
Illya was muttering in Russian about capitalist pigs under his breath, so Napoleon wryly assumed he agreed with her.

Waverly carried on.

"Before long the papers had dubbed Heath 'The Fingersmith', a name he soon adopted himself when he began to recruit others to his cause. Within two years, he had a criminal presence in every major city in Britain. Within five years, he had a gang in almost every capital city in the world. By this time, the diamonds of the rich and corrupt had begun to lose their sparkle and he and his crew, who became famed for their skill and sheer ruthlessness, began to focus on intimidation and stealing state secrets instead. The intel they acquired was usually harmless but last week we got word that they got their hands on a disk too dangerous to be left in their hands. It is this disk we need back."

"And Cowboy and I are having to behave like couple because...?" Illya argued once again, looking petulant about it as he crossed his arms over his chest. Had Napoleon had less of an ego, he would have felt offended by all this resistance. He was a catch, after all.

He even pointed this out to Illya, whose returning glare silently but effectively told him to shut up before he did him an injury.

"You're having to behave like a couple," Waverly said calmly over their bickering, "because Heath has an apparent fondness for breaking up a happy home."

Illya briefly paused at this before making an impatient noise.

"I do not understand," he said.

"It means," Napoleon cut in, his enunciation almost mockingly precise as he idly swirled the ice in his drink, "he likes taken men. I'd say that it's the challenge that appeals to him. The more serious the relationship the better." Napoleon then turned to Illya and made sure to give him his most infuriating smirk. "So congratulations, Peril. We're hopelessly devoted to each other. Do be sure to give me your ring size. I've got the perfect engraving in mind."

Gaby didn't even bother to contain her laugh. Illya, who had a talent for conveying whole sentences in his glares, gave her one that clearly said 'traitor'.

"Now, we have it under good authority that Heath, in his paranoia, has taken to keeping the stolen disk on his person at all times," Waverly said, putting another series of photographs on the table that proved this point. "It is up to the three of you to relieve him of it. The plan is to go to club Le Deuce on D'arblay Street, where we have learned he frequents. We've managed to pull some strings to get Miss Teller on their staff, so she will be on the ground providing additional support while you, Solo, do your thing."

"Thing?" Illya rounded on Napoleon, who briefly marvelled at the man's ability to make even confusion look bad-tempered. "What is this 'thing'?"

"Well, seducing him, I expect and stealing the disk from his discarded clothes," Napoleon said before casually shrugging a shoulder, as though sodomy with a notorious crime baron was part of his daily routine. He then turned to Waverly and held his drink aloft. "By the way, this scotch is exquisite. 1920?"

"1930, actually," Waverly said, looking immeasurably pleased someone had brought the subject up. "There's a particularly good place just off New Cavendish-."

"You would actually seduce this man in front of your boyfriend?" Illya cut in brusquely, flatly
ignoring the conversation to turn on Napoleon.

Lowering his glass, Napoleon raised his eyebrows in genuine surprise at the reaction. He didn't think it was possible but the Russian was even more put off than usual.

"Peril, you do realise you're not actually my boyfriend, yes?" he reminded Illya, wondering if his partner had suffered some sort of severe head injury without Napoleon noticing.

Illya sniffed almost imperiously.

"It is principle of the matter," he said tersely. "We are a couple. We will have rings. We are in a strong relationship. It is disrespectful to flirt in front of your partner."

Napoleon looked at Gaby and Waverly, feeling as though he was going slightly mad. Waverly looked just as baffled in response. Gaby, on the other hand, had her hands over her face, her shoulders physically shaking with silent laughter.

"Also," Illya added with an unimpressed look at Napoleon's feet, "I would never let my boyfriend leave the house in those shoes."

"And that is my cue to head off," Waverly said, sensibly getting to his feet before fashion-related bloodshed could occur. "The details for the safe house are in the file. I suggest you go there first to kit up, adopt your aliases and research everything you can about your target before contact. Solo, a hotel room at the Carlton is booked under your assumed name and is ready for you if you and Heath need it. And be careful. Don't let your guard down around this one. He is as dangerous as he is clever so, Kuryakin, try to make the romance look at least somewhat authentic. And lastly, Miss Teller?" Here Waverly looked at Gaby with utmost seriousness. "Do make sure these two don't kill each other in the process, won't you? The paperwork that would ensue would be an absolute nightmare."

Gaby opened her mouth to reply but before she could, Illya turned to Napoleon and stoically said, "You will need to change that belt as well." Which only made Gaby sigh, promptly take Napoleon's drink out of his hand and pour it into her own.

She had a feeling she was going to need it far more than he would.
The Prep

Chapter Summary

In which the boys practice their roles, Gaby is driven to drink and a toaster just wants to be used.

Napoleon had stayed in a number of safe-houses in his time and he knew more than anyone how vastly they ranged from the ridiculously opulent to the downright mundane. His particular favourite had been a penthouse on the Upper East Side of New York that had provided him with a walk-in wardrobe full of designer clothes, a veritable feast every night on the dining table and a masseuse who did such excellent work on his shoulders that Napoleon had had to bed them on principle.

The safe-house for this mission, however, was a dingy one-bedroom apartment that faced a brick wall, smelled like something had died there recently and included a possessed toaster that kept going off at such inopportune times that Illya had already pulled his gun on it twice.

The apartment was also so unassuming in appearance that Napoleon almost didn't notice it, even when he was standing right outside the front door.

Illya had approved of that feature right away.

"You will wear the black," he said briskly to Napoleon once they were settled inside, making himself at home instantly as he thumbed through the flimsy clothing rail in the front room. "It is good for date." Illya then pulled out a crisp black dress shirt and stared at it thoughtfully, as though all the answers to the universe could be found in its stitchwork.

Napoleon, who was trying not to preen at his reflection in the mirror and failing utterly and completely, happily ignored Illya's compulsion for dressing everyone within reach to grab an almost indecently small white t-shirt instead.

Illya just looked blankly in response to this choice, as though explaining the sheer breadth of Napoleon's stupidity wasn't even worth articulating aloud.

Cheerfully ignoring this, too, Napoleon peeled off his shirt and smirked at Gaby when he caught her brazenly ogling his chest. She had her head tilted curiously to one side as she sipped on a gin and tonic through a straw. She looked remarkably like a lazy lion eyeing a rather shameless gazelle that was, to be frank, showing off his rump like he wanted to be eaten.

Illya darted his eyes irritably between them both, his lips pursed as though he couldn't decide whose behaviour was more outrageous. He then caught sight of the t-shirt again and stared at it like it had personally insulted both his mother and Russia in one breath.

"This thing," Illya said, stabbing a large finger in its direction and frowning even harder when Napoleon pulled it on like a second skin, "is inappropriate."

"That is sort of the point, Peril," Napoleon returned smartly back to the mirror, admiring the way the t-shirt cut off high across the tops of his broad shoulders. In fact, it clung to him so well that it briefly made Napoleon actually lament the fact that he couldn't physically bed himself. "I'm trying to seduce
him, my enormously tall Russian cream puff, not look like I've come to do his tax returns."

Illya dropped the shirt in his hand immediately at the endearment. He then turned around slowly, his eyes narrowed and looked as far from endeared as it was possible to be without letting out a battle cry and physically attacking someone.

"Never call me 'cream puff' again," Illya warned dangerously, his finger raised with utmost seriousness. He then paused to sharply cock his head to the side and give Napoleon a critical once over. "Also, those pants make you look like Russian rent boy. Take them off."

"Peril, you could at least buy me dinner before you try to get me out of my clothes," Napoleon said in a reasonable voice. "I'm not entirely easy."

"You know," Gaby piped up before Illya could throttle him, watching them squabble with relish from a particularly worn-looking couch, "I like this so much better when it isn't happening to me. When are you boys exchanging rings, hmm? Can I be a bridesmaid? Or should I give one of you away instead? Because I have the perfect speech in mind."

Crossing his arms -- which was a particularly exceptional look on him in this outfit if he did say so himself -- Napoleon had a feeling Gaby was enjoying this a little too much.

"You, my dear, are not being helpful in the slightest," he said candidly before slapping Illya's hands away when he tried to fussily cover Napoleon's modesty up with the black shirt. "And you, stop that. I read the file and apparently, this look here? This is what Heath likes."

Illya glowered openly at that.

"This Heath likes too many things," he said with obvious distaste, shoving the shirt away with a savage sort of irritability. "The man is a scoundrel."

"Well, I can't argue with that," Napoleon said lightly, as though occasionally disembowelling one's enemies was just a minor character flaw, like leaving the top off the toothpaste or thinking you could pull off vertical stripes. "But considering that I'm the one who'll have to, quite literally, lie back and do it for my country, I'll attempt to forget his more homicidal traits, if you don't mind."

Illya gave Napoleon a quietly penetrating look at that, his jaw tight. If Napoleon didn't know better, he'd say that under the usual bad tempered glower, it had touch of sympathy.

"It is not right," Illya finally muttered with reluctance, as though it was being forced from his lips against his better judgement. "Waverly should not be making you do this. It is unseemly."

"It's not like I've not done it before, Peril," Napoleon put forth, mildly amused by Illya's prudery before getting completely distracted by his own reflection again.

Illya made an unimpressed scoff of a noise at both Napoleon's answer and his vanity.

"That was CIA," Illya said flippantly, clearly indicating that he thought the dirt on the bottom of his shoe had more grace and integrity in comparison. "And that was different. That was with women. They were not..." Illya then lifted a large hand and made an awkward sort of gesture that was utterly endearing. Napoleon couldn't stop himself from being both charmed and amused in equal measure.

"Peril, as touched as I am by you wanting to protect my non-existent virtue against wanton and depraved homosexuals," Napoleon said, a touch of honesty in his normally cynical voice, "I should really let you know that I'm not exactly averse to the practice."
Illya's brow furrowed.

"Practice?" he asked, confused.

"Sex," said Napoleon.

"Sex," Illya repeated, obviously not getting it.

Napoleon looked at Gaby, who was grinning.

"With *men*," Napoleon emphasised. Then because he felt he might as well do the thing properly, "A large quantity of men. Sometimes more than one at a time, if I'm feeling particularly adventurous."

Illya blinked at that. He then decided to blink again, looking as though his brain had short circuited somewhere along the way.

"Granted, I would usually prefer to choose the man or woman I sleep with," Napoleon continued, brushing lint off his outfit with a heavy sigh, as though the dirt on his shirt was the biggest problem he had encountered this year, "but that's the nature of this spy business, I'm afraid."

Illya stared at him for a further few seconds, his expression still completely flummoxed. He looked a little like someone had punched him in the face.

Smothering a smile, Gaby decided to take pity on him and changed the subject.

"You know, we really should practise our aliases."

"That," said an unruffled Napoleon, easing himself down into the space beside her smoothly as though they had just been discussing his partiality for green apples over red, "is an excellent suggestion."

That seemed to finally pull Illya out of his daze. He shook his head slightly, like a dog with water between his ears, still looking a little punch-drunk. He then opened his mouth, left it open for about a minute, closed it and promptly sat down at the weapons table in the corner, methodically disassembling an AKM assault rifle with an almost aggressive amount of attention.

Looking at Gaby with a quirked brow, Napoleon thought Illya was taking his admission exceedingly well considering that the last man who knew about his tastes had kindly called him a "fairy" and attempted to punch his teeth out with a pair of knuckledusters. Gaby just gave Napoleon a knowing sort of smile, sucking on her straw like she knew all the answers to the universe. Napoleon wasn't entirely sure he wanted to examine what *that* look meant but he was sure it was nothing but trouble.

"Now, Mr Kildaire," Gaby said, still looking mischievous as she leaned forward, her eyes almost dancing, "tell me exactly how you two lovebirds-" Illya shot her an unimpressed look over the gun barrel in his hand, "-met."

Smiling amiably, Napoleon did just that.

"My car broke down as I was travelling through Europe for work," he returned in a flawless British accent, his posture changing and the pitch of his voice more affable and soft. Gaby looked impressed by the change. Illya decidedly didn't as he snorted, picked up a Kalashnikov instead and began polishing it with a rag as though he had much better things to do than be there. "Stuck in the middle of nowhere, I pushed the blasted thing to the nearest garage where lo behold, a shirtless Adonis of a man covered in engine grease appeared and saved it. I fell in love at first sight."
Illya paused to look at Napoleon with a dour expression, the rag in his hand stilling.

"Shirtless?" he questioned, finally getting his voice back.

"It adds to the imagery, dear," Napoleon said with faux sweetness.

Illya just scoffed.

"Must be American car to break down so easily," he muttered under his breath as he carried on cleaning.

Napoleon's answering smile was sharp as he continued his story.

"Now, although this exquisite specimen - Vladimir - could barely speak English and had the manners of a caveman," he said, delighted when Illya began to grind his teeth, "I was absolutely smitten. The things the man could do with his tongue were absolutely remarkable. If I'm perfectly honest, my back still hasn't recovered from that first night. And as for his fingers..."

"Solo," Illya warned.

"So I brought him back to Cambridge with me where we happily live in sin together," Napoleon finished with another one of those wide disarming smiles that he knew made him look like a completely different person. From Illya's expression, it appeared to be creeping him out slightly.

"This weekend, we thought we'd go down to London to celebrate our anniversary."

Looking like a teacher who had just heard a particularly satisfactory book report, Gaby nodded then turned to Illya.

"And you?" she prompted.

"я не говорю по-английски," Illya said gruffly, eyes still fixed on the rag in his hand before lifting them up and clearly saying. "No. Speak. English."

Napoleon hid a smile behind his hand. Gaby on the other hand, narrowed her eyes with her hands on her hips.

"That's not clever."

"It's a little clever," Napoleon conceded, an idea forming in his mind, "and not the worst of plans, when you think about what we're trying to accomplish. Having Peril here focus on keeping his eyes on the room rather than on idle conversation suits our needs pretty perfectly. When does your shift start?"

"In an hour," Gaby said, checking the gold watch on her wrist that Napoleon had generously lifted from Victoria Vinciguerra for her. Every time he saw it, he immediately thought of that torpedo heading straight towards Victoria somewhere in the middle of the sea and it made him smile a little wistfully. Illya, who he had once told about this daydream, blankly told him he had serious problems before walking away.

Downing her drink Gaby got to her feet, impressively steady considering that Napoleon had seen grown men fall over with that much alcohol in their system.

"I'm going to go and get ready. Don't you boys fight while I'm away. Play nice."

"Gaby, darling, I always play nice," Napoleon responded, a hand on his chest as though wounded
by the insinuation. Illya looked like he really would wound Napoleon if he kept that nonsense up.

Momentarily feeling nostalgic for Nazi death threats over this, Gaby stomped over to where Illya was still tinkering with the guns. Even seated, he still somehow managed to have an inch on her. It made Napoleon briefly wonder why on earth a conspicuous angry giant thought a life of subterfuge and intrigue would be his calling.

"You," Gaby said firmly, prodding Illya in the chest. "Don't shoot him." She then pointed at Napoleon, just to clarify.

Following her finger to look at Napoleon, Illya was treated to a salacious wink in response. It made Illya's jaw tighten significantly.

"I make no promises." he returned curtly.

It was enough to make Gaby look between them both and very clearly say "Idioten," before picking up the bottle of gin, cradling it to her chest like a child and stalking with it to the bathroom.

Watching her go, Napoleon temporarily considered how fabulous their children would have been if Napoleon ever lost his mind long enough to think about procreation. As it was, he turned to Illya instead, who was still handling his guns with such love and attention that it was beginning to border on unhealthy. Never being the type of person who appreciated anything getting more attention than he did (especially inanimate objects), Napoleon decided to speak up.

"So, alone at last," he said in his most charming of voices, the one that had never failed to get him at least a swoon in response.

Illya responded to this by pointedly ignoring him, which Napoleon thought was a little rude considering he was the only other person in the room.

He valiantly tried again.

"You know, Gaby's got a point. We should really practise. A bit of role play is good for the soul, after all."

Still hunched over his guns, Illya grunted shortly. Napoleon saw this as progress.

"Role play what?"

"Why, the authenticity of our relationship, of course," Napoleon said, getting to his feet and moving towards his partner. "We're hardly going to win couple of the year by holding hands, Peril."

Illya, who had been holding a revolver, briefly froze mid-reload before carrying on. The back of his neck went a little red, however.

"I know how to kiss," the Russian said almost defensively and Napoleon didn't doubt it. You didn't get to look like Illya did on a daily basis and not get someone try to stick their tongue down your throat.

"Perhaps, but you don't know how to kiss me." Napoleon put forth because it was an art form really. He was sure he could have written books on the subject. "I've been told it's a life-changing experience. Of biblical proportions."

"Life-ruining maybe," Illya grumbled. He then looked up and was mildly startled by how close Napoleon had got. He narrowed his eyes suspiciously. "What are you doing?" he demanded.
"Come now, Peril," Napoleon said seductively as he perched on the edge of Illya's table, opening his legs and feeling inordinately pleased when Illya's eyes momentarily flickered between them, "you can't tell me you're not even slightly curious."

"Do not make me use this." Illya said dryly, gesturing to the revolver still clutched in his hand. When Napoleon leaned forward Illya purposely leaned back, frowning. "Stop that," he said tersely.

"What exactly are you so afraid of?" Napoleon asked, eyeing Illya with a gleam of curiosity in his eye. "It doesn't have to mean anything, Peril. Unless you want it to, of course."

Illya just glared balefully and Napoleon thought this was an excellent opportunity to test his luck and move in even closer.

Unfortunately, that was the moment the toaster loudly went off again.

Before Napoleon realised what was happening, Illya had raised the gun in his hand and Napoleon -- who had a split second of briefly hoping he hadn't driven yet another colleague to try and murder him -- had the rather surreal experience of watching the other man shoot the toaster right through its metal body and out the open window.

Leaning a little to the right to witness its descent, Napoleon watched the now deformed toaster spin around in free-fall before smashing rather sadly onto the concrete below. Illya and Napoleon looked at its crumpled form silently for a moment until Gaby's voice yelled out,

"Neither of you better be dead!" from the shower, indicating they definitely would be if she came out to find anything awry.

Illya simply turned to Napoleon blankly, eyeing him in such underwhelmed fashion that Napoleon -- who insisted he was overwhelming in every possible respect -- felt downright insulted.

The Russian then dropped his gaze to Napoleon's pants and boredly said, "Put it back in your holster, cowboy," before returning back to his guns.

For reasons that he preferred not to examine, both Napoleon and his pants visibly deflated.
The Honey - Part A

Chapter Summary

In which the trio go clubbing, Napoleon gropes Illya for purely professional reasons and the Fingersmith makes his first appearance

Considering the fact that Le Deuce was infamous all across Europe, Napoleon -- who carefully scrutinised his surroundings as he and Illya entered -- quite literally tsked aloud at its almost shocking lack of style. He had no doubt that the decor had once been the height of intentionally kitsch design but now it looked like the inanimate equivalent of an old dandy who had stopped showering, became an alcoholic and constantly woke up next to strange people he had never met before.

It still had the odd touch of effort in its surroundings, from the fish tank that lined the room to the obnoxiously large disco ball that appeared to intimidate people into having fun with its size alone but the place had certainly seen better days.

The faux-Tiffany lamps were chipped, the baroque wallpaper was ripped in more places than it wasn't and Napoleon was very sure the table they had just passed by had quite literally been set on fire recently. If the charred pattern on it wasn't an indication, the unmistakable aroma of bonfire around it was a definite sign.

Even Illya, with his almost snooty dislike of bourgeois fineries, looked at the interiors as though each and every wall had let him down personally. Clearly even a communist appreciated that they could have at least made more of an effort.

Despite this, however, Le Deuce was a remarkably popular destination that played a decent selection of new disco music and even had the odd transvestite in a feathered evening gown do a show, something Illya in particular had physically gawped at (doubly so when the singer turned out to have a voice like Shirley Bassey). The rather sizeable crowd inside were an outrageous, colourful lot who were clearly there to embrace their inhibitions and had excellent taste, considering how many appreciative looks Napoleon found himself receiving. One group of men in particular seemed to be looking at him a little breathlessly, a sight that would easily feed his ego for another day at least.

Napoleon had turned to arrogantly point them out to Illya but his partner was still examining the drapes as though he had never seen such shameful behaviour in his life, barely looking at the two men who were quite literally sucking on each other's tonsils beside him. Sighing, Napoleon diagnosed that his partner needed to get out more.

"Pah, even the curtains are torn," Illya continued with a huff of disdain, studying said curtains with twitching fingers that looked desperate to darn them as soon as possible. Instantly, the image of a crocheting Illya with thimbles on his thumbs and a look of utmost concentration on his face as he threaded a needle popped into Napoleon's mind. Amused, he reminded himself to ask Illya to make him a decent quilt when the mission was over. He had no doubt that the man had a cross-stitch deadly enough to kill.

"In their defence, Peril, this place does get raided every night by the over-enthusiastic boys in blue," Napoleon said, easing himself into a recently vacated stool at the bar as though he owned it.
He then threw a wink at his fans and amusingly watched one almost visibly swoon. "As shocking as it may seem, homosexual shenanigans are frowned upon. And speaking of homosexual shenanigans..." here Napoleon suggestively patted his lap in invitation, his eyes glittering with mischief, "...don't we have an anniversary to celebrate, Vlad?"

Clearly not trusting his bottom on Napoleon given the way he narrowed his eyes suspiciously at his lap (and oddly enough, a nearby potted plant), Illya pointedly stayed standing and turned to the bar.

"I need vodka," he said gruffly, like a man ordering his last meal.

Playing the part of the attentive boyfriend, Napoleon signaled a barmaid over before quite purposefully winding his ankle around one of Illya's legs like a possessive house cat marking its territory. Napoleon tried not to grin at the steam that was almost visibly escaping from Illya's nostrils but it was a close thing. Peril really did make it too easy sometimes.

"You know," Napoleon drawled, pulling Illya closer with his leg and getting extreme enjoyment when the other man glared at him like he wanted to smack him in the head, "I have to admit to being underwhelmed by your clothing choice for our date. You could have put a little more effort into it, darling."

"There is nothing wrong with my turtleneck," Illya said tersely, touchily putting a hand to his navy collar as though consoling it from Napoleon's cruel words, "and stop making eyes at those men. You are embarrassing me."

"Now, precious, there's no need to be jealous," Napoleon drawled, covering one of Illya's large hands with his own and almost spitefully watching the vein in his forehead pulse because of it. "You must know you're the best looking man in the room. Save myself, of course but that goes without saying."

"Then stop saying it," Illya snapped, before straightening when the pretty -- and incredibly familiar -- bar maid finally came over,

Dressed in a uniform that consisted of a white shirt, black waistcoat and black trousers, Gaby had donned an incredibly convincing blonde wig and wore it with such dark lipstick that Napoleon could easily pretend that he had never seen her before. She looked like a completely different person.

Gaby also appeared to be a doing a better job of not knowing each other than he was by flatly ignoring Napoleon to serve Illya instead. Napoleon didn't know whether to be offended or impressed.

"What'll it be, gents?" she asked, her accent convincing enough to fool even the most suspicious local. Napoleon would have to comment on it later. Their Chop Shop Girl was getting more and more magnificent with every mission.

Illya, however, was hardly a slouch either. Looking at Gaby with wide eyes, he stumbled over his words,

"I... yes. Vodka?" he stuttered nervously, his accent so thick and sniveling that the words were barely comprehensible. It was almost incredible to witness. How a gigantic man with the personality of a bear with a thorn in its paw managed to convincingly resemble a frightened rabbit was astounding. He somehow made himself look smaller, more lanky than powerful as he slouched almost self-consciously. If Napoleon could take a picture to capture the scene, he would. It really was a sight to be seen.
"And you, love?" Gaby asked Napoleon, smiling at him with a far nicer expression than she had ever directed at him in real life. It instantly made him a little nostalgic for an insult or at least a long-suffering look.

"Two glasses of your finest champagne, please," Napoleon said brightly. He then leaned into her with a jovial expression and said loudly enough for his voice to carry, "We're celebrating our anniversary. Which reminds me, we were told a certain act was going to perform. Have they arrived already? Because we certainly wouldn't want to miss it."

Sharper than a rapier, Gaby immediately cottoned on.

"Oh, I wouldn't say you have long to wait, sir," she said, her words pointedly phrased. "I've been told that they are due to arrive any time now."

"Ah, excellent," said Napoleon cheerfully. He then turned around and boldly put a hand on Illya's bottom, whose back immediately went ramrod stiff. "Thank you, bar maid, that will be all for now."

A smile twitching at her mouth, Gaby headed back to the bar but not before throwing Illya what she clearly hoped was a scandalous wink. Considering Illya's answering expression, she had happily succeeded.

"What are you doing, Cowboy?" Illya hissed from the corner of his mouth, trying not to move his lips as the pressure from Napoleon's hand on his bottom only increased. "You heard Gaby, Heath is not here yet."

"Yes but you see, Peril, the unfortunate thing is that I appear to have already started," Napoleon lamented, throwing in a squeeze just because he could. Illya didn't quite let out a squeak but it was a close thing.

"Unstart," Illya hissed, his hands slamming vice-like on Napoleon's upper arms.

Napoleon would have been more impressed by this display of strength if he wasn't rapidly losing the feeling to his fingers.

"Now, now, big guy," Napoleon placated through a fake rictus smile, trying to look like they were talking about something funny. "Pushing me off wouldn't exactly be considered very friendly, now would it?"

Illya gritted his teeth in a way that made Napoleon briefly worry he might lose both arms entirely when the entrance curtains were pulled open and a man Napoleon had only seen in photographs walked in with an entourage of men. From the crisp suit to the cold dark eyes, it was unmistakably Heath. Napoleon briefly shared a look with Gaby, came to a quick conclusion and then resolutely stuck his tongue down Illya's throat.

"What the-" said Illya. Technically, it sounded more like "agaghth" due to said tongue being down his throat, but Napoleon picked up the general gist of the conversation.

"Heath, 10 o'clock," Napoleon murmured against his mouth before diving back in again, half expecting the other man to push him off or land him on the floor with some fancy Russian move that -- aptly -- made him see stars. When this didn't happen, however, Napoleon was impressed with Illya's professionalism to simply let him get on with it, even if he didn't reciprocate. It was a bit like kissing a mildly disinterested wall with nice body odour.

Moving his head slightly to the right, Napoleon watched as one of the staff led Heath and his men into a dark, curtained area that faced the bar directly. Napoleon almost purred with satisfaction. Their
mark had an almost perfect view of them.

He was a little too far away to be sure but the line of Heath's suit told Napoleon there was probably an extra pocket added to the inside of it. He had no doubt that that was where the disc was, most likely stitched up to avoid light fingers trying to slip into his pocket to retrieve it. It was what a thief would do. It was what Napoleon himself had done countless times before.

Pleased with his assumptions, Napoleon celebrated by swooping down to neck his partner enthusiastically instead.

Illya stood stiffly, as though Napoleon would get bored and go away if he stayed still long enough. After a minute of fondling, which included three obscene gropes and a pelvic thrust that was worthy of instant incarceration, Illya hissed,

"You are making a scene."

"This is the type of place a person goes to make a scene, sweetheart," Napoleon murmured against his warm skin, biting his earlobe because really, it was right there and grinning when Illya let in a sharp intake of breath. "The people here don't get to be this open anywhere else. And don't forget, we want attention. We need Heath to notice us. So, congratulations, Peril," Napoleon drawled, looking so amused he could see it was literally setting Illya's teeth on edge. "You have the supreme good fortune of kissing me senseless. Now be a good sport and put your hands on my backside, would you? I'm beginning to feel neglected."

"This is ridiculous," Illya muttered.

"Mm, the unholstered gun pressing into my side tells me otherwise," Napoleon breathed, pushing his own hips forward to quite literally solidify the fact.

Illya flushed.

"It is natural reaction to being pawed at by mad American," he defended, his cheeks endearingly pink.

"As a patriot, I'm touched you would have the same reaction being fondled by Sanders."

Illya responded to this by grumbling something scathing in Russian under his breath. Napoleon tsked at words.

"Now, is that any way to speak about your mother-in-law?" he reproached, sliding his hands brazenly down Illya's hips. Illya's jaw tightened.

"You are enjoying this," he said testily, suddenly looking bigger and more awkward than usual. Napoleon tried not to find this adorable and failed horribly on all counts.

"Having a legitimate reason to have my hands all over you is hardly a hardship, Peril," Napoleon said with a genuinely fond quirk of his lips. "You're horribly attractive. You should really see to that. It's frightfully distracting."

Illya scoffed.

"You are distracted by everything."

"Tall Russian powerhouses especially," Napoleon put forth, feeling strangely pleased to see the almost coy expression on Illya's face. "So, I take my opportunities when they're presented."
"You take advantage," Illya shot back but he tilted his head back to give Napoleon more access to his throat. Napoleon couldn't have stopped himself from grinning at this even if he had tried to.

"Guilty," he purred and had just lifted his head to bite softly at Illya's chin when a throat cleared behind them.

Napoleon sighed like a martyr, suddenly feeling rather hard-done by. And just when Peril was getting into it.

"Yes?" he said, voice heavy with reluctance as he turned to face the interruption. The broad chest of an even broader man looked back at him.

Napoleon then blinked and looked up to see a scowling, chimp-like face glaring down at him.

Now that was a tall man. He made Illya look positively Lilliputian.

"My employer would like to invite you both to the VIP area," the giant said gruffly in what was possibly the least welcoming tone in existence. He even peered down at Napoleon with obvious distaste, as though he was trying to deliberately dissuade them from accepting his offer.

Napoleon thought about this briefly before smiling his thin, oily smile in response. It was the one that he always adopted when he wanted someone to punch him in the face. Illya, who knew it better than most and had punched him more than anyone else in existence because of it, looked like he was praying this didn't end in carnage.

"My, wasn't that an inviting invitation, darling?" he said disingenuously to Illya, trying not to stamp on Illya's foot when the Russian clenched his hand too tightly in warning. Napoleon then turned back to the thug to give him a patronising pat on a bicep the size of a tree trunk. "Thank you, my good man, but no thank you. We're having a good time on our own."

Napoleon then promptly turned his back on the man and resumed his previous necking.

"Now what are you doing?" Illya hissed in his ear as he watched the man scowl harder and storm off.

"Playing hard to get, my Russian bear. It wouldn't do to be mistaken as being too easy, would it? Now do try and look like you're enjoying yourself. You'll hurt my feelings."

"I will hurt more than your feelings if this goes wrong," Illya growled.

"You sweet talker. It really is little wonder we're so in love," Napoleon said drolly. "Now, stop looking at me like you're about to tear my head off and put your arms around me instead."

Which, surprisingly, Illya's did. He then, albeit grumpily, leaned forward and -- to Napoleon's amazement -- pressed their lips together, initiating a kiss that travelled so powerfully through Napoleon that he was downright embarrassed when he realised that Illya's arms were the only reason he was still on his feet.

By the time Heath personally came out to greet them, Napoleon had his arms wrapped around Illya's neck, had one leg curled around Illya's thigh and his hair was absolutely wrecked. He had honestly forgotten what they were actually there for in the first place. To own the truth, Napoleon had forgotten they were in London altogether. He blamed this lapse in memory entirely on Peril. Surely that mouth should have come with some sort of health warning.

"Gentlemen, I apologise for interrupting," Heath cut in smoothly, not looking apologetic in the
slightest if the appreciative leer in his eye was any indication.

Up close, Heath was actually better looking than his photos, with a tragically handsome profile that Napoleon would usually have appreciated if he didn't quite literally have 6 ft 5 inches of blond perfection in his arms. Secretly worrying if he had been ruined for life, Napoleon blinked, tried to gather himself and then turned around to face their mark.

"No apology necessary," he said flashing Heath his finest smile. "Now, how can we help you?"
In which the Fingersmith is terrifying, Napoleon comes to a mildly horrifying discovery and Gaby is too observant for her own good.

In the few short moments he had spent with the Fingersmith, Napoleon had quickly arrived at three conclusions.

One, the man had an obscene amount of money. Two, he was so intelligent it was actually intimidating to converse with him and three, he may have possibly been the most dangerous person Napoleon had ever come across in his life and Napoleon knew Illya.

All in all, they were particularly uneasy conclusions to come to and Napoleon -- who was consistently used to being the most efficient person in the room to the point of complacency -- had a horrible feeling this was all going to go very wrong indeed.

He recalled only one other time when he felt this uncomfortable against an adversary and that was during a certain extraction mission in East Germany when he had been chased by an inhuman man-mountain through the streets of Berlin.

Said man-mountain was sitting beside him now and holding his hand, which would have been a nice gesture if he wasn't literally crushing it between his fingers with trepidation. Considering how perceptive he was, Napoleon didn't doubt for a moment that Illya was just as wary about Heath as he was. He just wished he didn't break his fingers in the process. He was rather fond of his fingers.

Moments before Peril inadvertently attempted to reduce Napoleon’s hand into dust, they had made their introductions to Heath (well, Napoleon had done most of that), engaged in some small talk (Napoleon had done most of that, too) and had been invited to sit with Heath in the private alcove he had reserved. They had then been plunged into a silence so tense that Napoleon could almost taste it in the air.

Music played from within the main hall of the club, with dancing couples embarrassed themselves on the dance floor but it all seemed muted from where they were sitting, like a television set playing in the background. Heath himself was leaning almost idly against the plush seating, his face shadowed in the low lighting and only illuminating with every drag of his cigarette. With the smoke curling around his fingers, he fittingly looked like the devil himself.

His men had moved aside but now stood at the sides of the alcove like sentry guards, allowing no one to enter. Or, more importantly for Napoleon and Illya, not letting anyone leave.

Once again, the stench of bad tidings seemed to permeate around them. Napoleon dearly hoped he wasn’t sweating through his t-shirt.

"I must confess," Heath finally broke the silence, head tilted as he looked at them with those sharp,
dark eyes, "I find myself curious how long you two have been together. You certainly don't kiss like a couple celebrating an anniversary."

Trying not to wince or hit Illya when he felt his fingers audibly crack under his hand, Napoleon pulled out his most amiably confused expression from his arsenal.

"Now why would you say that?" he asked, eyes wide as he tried to sound genuinely curious. The way Heath's eyes twinkled somehow didn’t convince Napoleon that he bought it.

"You see, Mr Kildaire, I've often observed that most couples lose that spark after a few years," Heath said reasonably, eyeing them with a penetrating gaze that appeared to look through their every lie. "You two gentlemen, if you pardon the crassness, kiss like a one night stand. Wouldn't you agree, Vladimir?"

Playing the part of a meek, gentle giant to perfection, Illya blushed at being addressed directly and lowered his eyes to their joined fingers instead, as though highly embarrassed by this indecent, Western sort of talk.

It was a particularly delectable sight and Napoleon, even with the impending danger looming over their heads, found himself a little reluctant to pull his eyes away from his face. Unfortunately, it appeared as though Heath was having a similar problem.

The man's dark eyes seemed to do a slow trawl of Illya that was, quite frankly, nothing short of obscene. Napoleon, who rightfully felt only he could do that sort of blatant objectification of his partner with some semblance of class, experienced a strangely uncomfortable feeling wiggling about in his belly at the sight. He briefly wondered if it was indigestion before turning on his most devastating smile.

"Apologies, my Vladimir here isn't much of a conversationalist. He's more of the shy, silent type. I, on the other hand, consider talking my favourite pastime."

Heath just raised a perfectly-shaped brow at that and Napoleon suddenly realised, his smile frozen to his face, that he had somehow said the wrong thing.

"All swagger and no substance holds little interest over me, Mr Kildaire," Heath commented contemptuously, eyes boring coldly into Napoleon's own. "And conversationalists bore me." He then bypassed Napoleon completely, as though he had suddenly blinked out of existence, to address his next words to Illya instead. His gaze was still intensely approving over his form. "Conversely, I have always appreciated the shy, silent types."

Illya almost looked a little offended on Napoleon's behalf, as though he was the only one truly allowed to insult him. From anybody else (save Gaby), it was clearly bad form. He soon recovered from the slight, however, to flicker his eyes nervously back to Heath.

"I- thank you," he stuttered, the hand not in Napoleon's purposely shaky around his empty glass. This seemed to give Heath an idea because his eyes seemed to light up at a thought.

"Mr Kildaire," he said, his eyes continuing to trail over Illya in such a predatory fashion that Napoleon wasn’t sure whether he wanted to seduce his partner, eat him or both, “you couldn't possibly get me a glass of water, could you? I suddenly find myself uncommonly parched."

Having plenty of experience ordering people to get him a drink and very little of the reverse, Napoleon looked a little lost at the request, as though he had walked into some sort of alternate universe without noticing. It was only when Illya finally released his hand that Napoleon seemed to
snap out of it, abruptly feeling a little bereft without the warmth of it against his palm. Knitting his brow, Napoleon sincerely hoped he wasn’t going soft.

"Ah yes, of course," he said with a little bit of a distracted smile, wondering when this situation had completely spiralled out of his control. "I'll just go now, shall I?"

Both Illya and Heath appeared to ignore him to talk intimately amongst themselves, which was something that happened to Napoleon so rarely that he honestly didn’t quite know how one reacted in these situations.

Not only was Illya now the bait but he appeared to be taking the role on in his stride. He let Heath whisper in his ear, didn’t flinch when he leaned a little too close for comfort and looked at him so demurely through his eyelashes that Napoleon, had he been drinking something, would have either choked or sprayed the nearest person in the face. Just the thought of how well — and how far -- Illya was willing to go to play the part left Napoleon uneasy in a way he didn’t want to examine without a stiff drink in his hand.

He eventually got to his feet in a bit of a daze, bypassed the guards who barely gave him a second look and made himself to the bar, side-stepping happy, and somewhat handsy, dancing drunks on his way.

He was still a little thrown when Gaby shuffled over to take his order, weaving her way through the pulsating crowd like an expert and actually grabbing a glass mid-fall when it fell out of a clumsy patron’s hand. Placing the glass on the bar, she then turned to look at him and immediately frowned. Even in his mood, Napoleon had to admit Gaby would have been a hell of a bar maid.

"What’s happened?" she said in a voice that clearly asked what have you done now? Napoleon would have felt mildly offended if it wasn’t for the fact that in this case, her inside voice had a point.

"A small hitch to the plan," he said smoothly, even as he slickly stole the drink of a nearby patron quite literally from under his nose. Used to his thievery, Gaby barely raised an eyebrow.

"Hitch?" she asked.

"As unlikely as it seems," Napoleon said slowly, still a little perturbed to admit it as he took a slow sip of his stolen drink, “it appears that I'm not exactly Heath's type."

Gaby looked genuinely surprised by that, which did a little to help soothe Napoleon’s injured self-esteem. He then realised the drink was soothing it even better and decided to drink as much of it as possible.

"So shall we abort?" she asked. "If he doesn't like you, the plan is a bust."

Napoleon put his now empty glass back down on the bar, a humourless smile on his lips.

"Oh, he doesn’t like me -- I’m thinking bad eyesight in all likelihood --but that doesn’t stop him being utterly taken by the immeasurable charms of my monosyllabic Chop Shop Boy."

Gaby's heavily-kohled eyes widened and Napoleon was secretly glad that even she didn’t see this coming.

"Oh no," she said.

"Oh yes," Napoleon said in response, feeling a sense of mild hysteria briefly take over him. "Apparently, he has a thing for uptight blonds with an overabundance of height and terrible taste in
footwear."

Gaby immediately put another drink in front of him. Somehow, Napoleon fell a little bit more in love with her.

"How's your ego?" she asked genuinely as he sat down heavily on a rickety stool by the bar.

Napoleon took a large gulp of the new drink, trying not to gag as the liquid burned down his throat. Whatever Gaby had given him was lethal.

"Fairing quite well, considering," he answered hoarsely, curious himself why he wasn't feeling more bruised about it. He then ran his eyes over at where Illya was sitting and it made sense. "Let's be honest now, look at him," he said, gesturing towards the other man with an almost pained expression. "Who wouldn't want to climb that like a tree?"

They then turned as one to look at Illya, who was nodding his head while Heath whispered something in his ear, the man’s hand on his knee.

Napoleon felt his jaw tighten on impulse. Gaby's face, in contrast, looked almost amused.

"You're jealous," she crowed with not a small amount of glee.

"I certainly am not," Napoleon lied categorically, going back to his drink and making a face when it burned down his throat again.

"Oh, you are so," she returned, looking terribly fond. "You two have been dancing around each other since Rome. It's almost sweet. I mean, frustrating, too but mostly sweet."

Napoleon wrinkled his nose.

"Please don't use that word," he said because 'sweet' was even more ghastly a phrase than 'nice', and Napoleon could barely hear that in a sentence. "And in any case, I believe you and Illya were the ones who danced in Rome."

Gaby waved a nonchalant hand, her red nails slicing through the air.

"Oh, nothing happened really. Not that I didn't want it to, of course," she said, sighing almost wistfully as she eyed the Russian. She then turned back to look at Napoleon. "Unfortunately, you were always in the way."

Napoleon let out his smarmiest smile.

"I always knew you were in love with me."

"Schwachkopf," she snorted before placing a triple vodka in front of him. Napoleon was impressed. He hadn't even seen her make the drink. "For Illya. He's going to need that. You should also get back before your absence gets suspicious."

"I need a water first," Napoleon muttered, feeling almost galled at having to mention it out loud. "Heath wanted a water."

"Ouch," said Gaby, not even trying to hide her grin which, if you asked Napoleon, was just poor manners. "That must have hurt. Here you go," she cooed, placing a glass of water in front of him as though he were a thirsty little puppy. "A fresh glass straight from the tap, just for you. On the house."

"How considerate," Napoleon said dryly, not impressed by her antics in the slightest. He felt a bit
better, however, when the man beside him suddenly piped up and drunkenly demanded what she had done with his drink.

Smirking, Napoleon slinked away before Gaby could drag him into it and carefully carried the drinks through the throngs of dancers back to the curtained alcove where Illya and Heath were.

But they weren’t there anymore. Nobody was. Not the guards. Not Heath and certainly not Illya. The only thing left was a small Russian earpiece, lying sadly on the floor where Napoleon had been sitting. An earpiece Illya had no doubt left for him to find.

Slamming the drinks on the table with little care, Napoleon almost lunged for it. His heart pounding in time with the music, he fumbled to put it in his ear and prayed the giant Russian idiot hadn’t got himself killed. Being both giant and Russian, however, made Napoleon severely doubt that even Heath and his men could take him at once.

Fear lacing through him in a way he had barely experienced before, Napoleon found himself holding the earpiece so tightly against his ear it was beginning to hurt, frantically trying to listen through the static.

After a dozen or so distorted seconds that felt like a lifetime to Napoleon, Illya’s voice finally came through, healthy and clearly not under duress and it made a relief so powerful wash over Napoleon that he literally had to sit himself down before he fell over under the weight of it.

Peril was fine. He had just gone with Heath to fulfil what was supposed to be Napoleon’s part of the plan.

This should have made Napoleon feel better. Not surprisingly, it didn’t.

Looking down at his still shaking hands, Napoleon grimaced and fleetingly worried if he was defective in some way.

It was the feelings, he reasoned. That was the problem. Napoleon had had them before, of course, but they had mainly revolved around himself and occasionally the suit he favoured at the moment. It wasn’t until this whole U.N.C.L.E. business that he had other people to consider and it was all so frightfully inconvenient that he wondered if there was an official department he could submit a complaint to.

He had been perfectly happy on his own before this but now he had a German spitfire and an angry Russian who he would cheerfully murder for if anyone dared to look at them the wrong way.

And it was getting even more complicated with Illya. It was fine when Napoleon was just leering over his body (he was human, after all and his partner was almost audaciously attractive) but now he was thinking of Peril’s brooding looks and darkly funny quips and how even his homicidal fist shaking was delightful. Napoleon almost groaned aloud. He really was a lost cause. He was disappointed in himself. When they got back to headquarters, he would have to have Waverly check him in for a psyche evaluation.

But for now, he had to get back to Gaby. Sighing heavily, Napoleon momentarily wondered when this had become his life before getting back up to his feet.

Unfortunately he didn’t stay on them for very long.

Before he realised what had happened, Napoleon found himself on his back on the floor with a pounding ache in his skull and stars dancing almost mockingly in front of his eyes. Someone had hit him forcefully on the back of the head, which was honestly rather uncalled for. Blinking through the
pain, Napoleon tried to weakly get up onto his knees when a leg kicked him squarely in the chest so he fell flat on his back again. His vision dimming around the edges, Napoleon blearily looked up to see Heath’s giant, chimp-like goon sneering down at him.

“Well, shit,” Napoleon said to himself before being punched in the face so forcefully that he immediately lost consciousness.

Chapter End Notes

Massive kudos to everyone who figured out the Fingersmith would go after Illya.

Preview of Chapter 5

"Tell me where your partner took my disc, Mr Solo, or I'll break all the fingers on your other hand as well."
Chapter Summary

In which Napoleon is in a lot of trouble, Illya loses it completely and Gaby is determined to fix things, no matter the cost.

Chapter Notes

Warnings for torture of a main character (I know, I'm sorry. Forgive me.). Also, apologies for this taking so long. It just kept growing longer and longer.

To say that Gaby was concerned was understating things slightly. As the situation stood, with both Illya and Napoleon missing, Heath and the disc God knew where and the fact she had only just escaped a late police raid at Le Deuce (where the only casualties of war she knew of for certain were a handful of fish from the cracked fish tank and her singed and smoking blond wig), she wasn't just concerned, she was downright worried.

And, criminally, there was no alcohol at hand.

It was enough to drive Gaby to smoke as she paced the rendezvous spot the three of them had decided on; a shabby shop on the corner of Air Street with a worn-looking mattress on the floor and old shelves of dusty out-of-date produce that spoke of a previous lifetime of legitimate business. Gaby would have felt sorry for the dilapidation of the place if she hadn't had to put up with the distinct pong of cat urine for the past hour. It was so strong, in fact, that it made her glare at nothing in particular, mourn her abused nostrils and curse every incontinent feline in Britain.

Just that morning, Napoleon had picked the lock of this place, his usual smug smile in place as he gave both herself and Illya the particular details of the lock in question and why he, Napoleon Solo, criminal mastermind, lock-picker extraordinaire and professional lothario was one of the only people who had the skills to unlock it. Gaby remembered that she had rolled her eyes while Illya had simply grunted that Napoleon should try not to trigger the alarm this time, even as he reluctantly looked impressed when he finally did jimmy it open.

It was just one moment of many between the three of them but Gaby suddenly found herself longing for it.

How she had grown to care so much for these two infuriating men was beyond her. She would have blamed it on the forced co-habitation during missions but unlike her emotionally-constipated boys, she didn’t need to lie to herself to justify having feelings for people other than herself.

She still didn't mention it aloud, of course. Napoleon's head alread my struggled to get through most doorways as it was and Illya looked like a rabbit caught in the headlights whenever feelings were discussed. Nonetheless, her affection was there, constant and only growing with every day that passed.
Napoleon was brilliant and ruthless but fiercely loyal to those he cared about while Illya was brutal and efficient but as soft as a lamb when he wanted to be. If you asked Gaby, it was an impossibility not to love them both. It was extremely annoying.

It was no doubt the reason why they had unconsciously (to the point of closing their eyes and tripping over each other) fallen for each other. It appeared that even they weren't immune to their fellow agents’ charms.

The entire thing would have been adorable, really, if both Napoleon and Illya weren't so incredibly dense about the whole affair. It was enough to make Gaby let out a huff of air and actually wonder how they had managed to survive so long without her. The fact that they had made it through to adulthood without her being there to steer them away from their own stupidity was almost baffling.

Perhaps her Uncle Rudi had been right about her taste in men. Uncle Rudi, however, was also a psychotic, torturing Nazi whose current condition as a charred corpse told Gaby that the less she listened to his advice on making good life choices, the better.

The door suddenly rattled.

Almost burning herself with her cigarette, Gaby had her gun drawn and aimed towards the door in record time. When Illya slipped through the door as stealthily as a man of his size possibly could, Gaby felt physically winded by how relieved she was to see him.

"Illya," she breathed, lowering her gun as she rushed forward. She then stopped in her tracks to take him in properly and gasped. "You're hurt."

Because he was. From the blood dripping from his knuckles to the bruises on his face that, by tomorrow, would make him look like one of Napoleon's stolen Turners, Illya was most definitely a little worse for wear. Even his favourite turtleneck was ripped at the collar, something Napoleon would have approved of wholeheartedly since the last time he saw it he had offered to set it alight for the good of humanity.

Illya didn't seem concerned about his appearance though as he limped to the half-broken blinds around the shop and closed them with brisk efficiency, occasionally peeking through them to check he hadn't been followed.

Paranoia being perfectly acceptable in their line of work, Gaby let him continue silently, although moments like this always reminded her exactly how competent and well-trained Illya really was. The man who knew too much about how to dress a woman and nothing about how to dance with one was also the same machine who had ripped the back off a car with nothing but his bare hands.

He had no doubt been top of the class back in KGB training. Napoleon, in contrast, reminded Gaby of that cocky student in the back who never studied but inexplicably still knew all the answers. And occasionally smoked marijuana in the bike shed. And got punched a lot for kissing other people's girlfriends.

But she digressed.

"Illya," Gaby tried again when Illya's suspicious frown at the lamppost outside was beginning to get to the five-minute mark. Really, no lamppost was that shifty. "You're bleeding on the carpet. At least let me patch you up."

"Blood is not mine," he said tersely, his fingers between two dusty blinds as his sharp eyes scanned the dark street outside. The backs of his hands looked like they had gone ten rounds with a brick
wall. Just looking at them made Gaby's stomach lurch as she wondered just how close he had come to not returning at all.

"What happened?" she questioned, unnerved by both his appearance and behaviour. He was often like this after one of his episodes but that didn't mean she had grown used to it. Once again, Gaby wished that Napoleon was there. He had the skill (and a constitution so smug that you couldn't help but want to hit him in the face) to irritate Illya out of it. "The disc. Did you get it?"

"Da," Illya replied shortly, his jaw tight even as he finally looked satisfied there was no one outside. He then limped to the dirty basin to the side and proceeded to methodically wash his bloody hands, letting the water run over them until they stopped turning the bowl red.

Gaby watched him do this for a moment before finally throwing caution to the wind, moving forward to reach for one of his palms and gently turning it over to study his wounds. It spoke to how comfortable they were with each other that Illya, still charged and highly strung from the altercation he had been in, let her do it without even bestowing her with one his signature glares.

The size difference between their hands usually made Gaby feel like a child in comparison but there was something so vulnerable about the injured hand cradled in her own that for once, she felt like she was the one with super strength.

"Illya, tell me what happened," Gaby said, both stern and soft at the same time. "Because this? This doesn't look like it went according to plan."

Illya grunted in response, looking down at the floor with a bad tempered scowl.

“It didn't. The Fingersmith knew. I do not know how but he did.” His stony expression then immediately turned to concern when he looked at Gaby properly. From the soot on Gaby’s face to the cuts on her hands when she had crawled through fish tank’s glass, Illya frowned down at her injuries with a furious sort of worry. "You are hurt," he said in a voice that promised violent retribution to whoever had caused it. He sounded utterly homicidal. Gaby thought it was precious.

"Barely a scratch, big guy," she said with a fond smile, constantly amazed how a man who looked like he could murder you with his little finger could still be such a softie. “So Heath attacked you?"

"He tried," Illya scoffed with an almost flippant wave of his other hand, as though the very notion that anyone could best him was preposterous. Napoleon had obviously been rubbing off on him. "Once we got to the hotel room, it was like ambush. Three men were waiting. But Heath made amateur mistake. Did not realise the quiet little mouse was actually bear in disguise."

"Please tell me you didn't kill them," Gaby said hopefully. Not only was the paperwork a nightmare but Napoleon always tried to hand it off to someone else (specifically, her).

"No," said Illya, although he looked rather unhappy about the fact he hadn't murdered someone that day, his mouth practically pouting. "I left them unconscious on the ground before cutting the disc from Heath's pocket. For a genius, he is idiot for keeping it with him."

"He was overconfident," Gaby said from experience because the smart ones always were, often so blinded by their own hubris they could barely see anything else around them. "So now what?"

"Now we go," Illya said shortly, reaching for the bag they had stashed away in one of the worn-looking cabinets. “Come. Get cowboy. We need to leave immediately. I did not leave Heath or his men in good state."

"Wait," Gaby said, grabbing him by the arm as dread suddenly ran through her veins like ice. “Solo's
not with you?"

Illya seemed to freeze at that as well, his complexion looking particularly stark under the bright blood splattered on his face.

"He did not contact you?" he demanded.

"I thought he was with you!" Gaby said, feeling stricken. "The last I saw him was back at the club, giving you your drink."

"I had already left with Heath," Illya said, realisation and rage slowly dawning on his face as his fists began to tremble threateningly by his sides. His eyes looked almost wild. "He separated us so he could attack us one at a time."

Gaby felt sick.

"So they have Napoleon," she said with horror.

Illya didn't say anything in response. The shelf he tore through with his fists two seconds later, however, expressed his feelings better than anything else could have. He literally snarled aloud, ripping through it like it was tissue paper and then proceeded to beat the remains of it against the dusty floor so savagely that Gaby honestly didn't know how to stop him.

He was furious and Gaby knew why.

Not only was Napoleon MIA but the mission was accomplished. They had the disc. Their objective was completed and they were cleared to go home. Losing agents wasn't ideal but technically, the disc was the number one priority.

Technicality, Gaby decided, could bite her squarely in the ass.

"Illya!" she said, grabbing him before he tore the entire place apart. Pulling him away from a coffee table that he had already kicked his entire leg through, she firmly said, "We're a team. We are not leaving without him," as though daring anyone from Waverly to Buddha himself to fight her over the decision.

Still breathing heavily, Illya just gave her a look that frankly told her she was an idiot to think he'd ever suggest it.

Gaby would have felt a little insulted if she wasn't busy trying to formulate a plan. "Where do we even start?"

Breathing hard through his nose, Illya’s face was murderous.

"I have an idea," he said.

* ~ * ~ * ~ *

When Napoleon blearily woke up, he could immediately tell a number of things.

- His brain felt bruised.

- He had a bag over his head
- His face was uncompromised (thank God)

- And when it came to bad situations, the one he was in was pretty fucking horrendous.

He was also, most inconveniently, shackled to yet another chair by the wrists and ankles, although that part was such a staple in all competent kidnappings that he felt it didn't really need to be stated.

It was exceptionally problematic, however, and reminded Napoleon so much of his macabre history lesson with the certifiable Uncle Rudi that despite his insistence he was unaffected by the entire affair, he was feeling well and truly affected.

He had been kidnapped a total of seven different instances in his life and none of them had turned out well. Sure, he had survived every one of those encounters largely intact but the beatings, torture and electric shock therapy he really could have done without.

Also, he loathed having a bag put over his head. They were always itchy, unhygienically smelled like the blood and sweat (and occasionally, the vomit) of its previous wearer and were a nightmare on his hair.

When the bag on his head was removed a few minutes later, however, Napoleon uncharacteristically wished they’d put it back on. The view, though expected, was hardly agreeable, despite how handsome the face was.

"Where is the disc?" Heath had demanded, the deathly quiet of his tone more intimidating than a thousand raised voices. His previously unmarked face now had the added character of a black eye, a blood-encrusted mouth and a look so positively unhinged that Napoleon would have sacrificed his suave demeanour to shuffle his chair backwards had it not been drilled to the floor.

Thinking about what Heath had just said, Napoleon tried not to look triumphant. So Peril had been successful. And had apparently smacked Heath around in the process for fun. Napoleon was hardly surprised. Not only did the man have a penchant for hitting things but he was such an unstoppable force that he made Napoleon of all people look like a pacifist. Not that Napoleon would ever admit that to the man himself. He rather liked the arrangement of his face.

Wetting his lips, Napoleon feigned his best look of confusion.

"I'm sorry, disc?" he said, eyes wide in what he knew was a masterful performance. Heath didn't look taken in by it in the slightest, which only made Napoleon conclude the man was a philistine.

"Don't play games with me, Mr Solo," the Fingersmith snarled, leaning forward so their faces were inches apart. "I know who you are."

"Ah," said Napoleon. Clearly, the game was up. At least the man had the good grace not to actually call him ‘Napoleon’.

Napoleon tried to see how much give there was on the ropes on his wrists and was disappointed, but not immensely surprised when they moved snugly against him, biting into his skin. Sagging into his seat a little, he sighed. "You know, if you wanted to tie me up, you need only have asked."

Heath’s eyes were like flint.

"Where did Kuryakin take the disc," he demanded again. Evidently, he wasn’t in the mood for other conversation.

"I haven't the foggiest what you're talking about, old boy," Napoleon continued to deflect in his most
... jovial voice. "Although, if you keep losing your things, you should really consider where you saw them last. It's an excellent trick I employ when I misplace my keys."

Heath smiled then, his lips thin and his face almost reptilian. It wasn't a look that bode well. Napoleon much preferred the glare.

"Bosworth," the Fingersmith said shortly, glittering eyes still on Napoleon. Immediately, the gigantic ape of a bodyguard lumbered into view, towering over Napoleon like a building.

"Well, I see someone ate his greens," Napoleon quipped, looking up the man in slow awe because really, how could he not. He was almost too tall to be allowed.

'Bosworth' made a face that Napoleon assumed was a smile before proudly lifting up a hand that was adorned with the most savage looking knuckledusters he had ever seen. He looked a bit like a newly engaged debutante showing off her ring to her girlfriends.

Napoleon opened his mouth to make that very point but his words soon turned into a grunt of pain when he was hit so brutally in the face that he felt his neck pop, pain exploding over his cheekbone. When the fist retreated, Napoleon could already see flecks of his own blood clinging to the metal.

"Now, you were saying?" Heath said in pleasant voice, as though they were two old friends sitting down over afternoon tea.

Blinking the stars out of his eyes, Napoleon blearily hoped that wasn't going to leave a mark.

"Actually, I don't believe I was saying anything at all," Napoleon returned with as infuriating a smile he could muster, his hair falling over his eyes. "You couldn't possibly repeat the question, could you?"

Another savage punch caught his chin with such a ridiculous amount of force and Napoleon could actually hear the underside of his face crushing under the knuckleduster.

Ah, he thought to himself in passing, his fingers clenched weakly around the armrests. So that was what a dislocated jaw felt like.

Heath's eyes seemed to be drinking him in, his breathing unsteady as he witnessed Napoleon's injuries with an unhealthy amount of relish. Even through his pain, it made Napoleon want to sigh with annoyance because of course the sadist would finally be attracted to him now.

"Pity," Heath said softly, leaning forward and pressing his fingers almost savagely against Napoleon's bruised cheekbone, eyes alight with greed. Napoleon, who prided himself on embracing every sexual kink known to man (and woman), concluded that Heath had problems. He would have suggested help but frankly, he was a little tied up at the moment. "It's a shame you have to die, Mr Solo."

"I would prefer not to," Napoleon slurred woozily through the agony of his jaw, unable to stop himself from getting the last word in. "In fact, if you could let me go, I'd appreciate it."

There was a short pause as Heath coldly turned to his mountain of a henchman, silently conveying something with his stare alone. The goon obviously understood because he quickly nodded his head and turned his full attention back to Napoleon with a perturbing smile.

Napoleon, who generally enjoyed being the centre of attention, really would have preferred to have had that smile directed at someone - anyone - else. Not only did it promise violence but the man's poor dental hygiene was so off-putting from this angle that Napoleon was almost grateful that they...
were withholding food from him. He wouldn't be able to eat a bite with those choppers on show.

And then Napoleon saw the hammer.

Before he even had time to process that he had even seen it, the weapon was slammed down so ferociously into the back of his hand that he immediately felt his knuckles shatter under his skin. An excruciating pain that eclipsed all the others tore through him and it took everything Napoleon had not to cry out with pain.

Somewhere, fuzzily, in the back of his mind, he had a horrible feeling that he wasn't going to get out of this one. If Gaby and Illya had followed procedure, they were already halfway back to New York which, honestly, was one of the few comforting thoughts Napoleon had. Imagining either of them in this position wasn't pleasant. It was better it was him. Which was such an incredibly unselfish thought for him to have that Napoleon, dizzy and wracked with pain, had to double-check it had actually come from his own brain.

"Tell me where your partner took my disc, Mr Solo, or I'll break all the fingers on your other hand as well," Heath's voice purred in his ear, both sultry and dangerous in a way that permanently put Napoleon off bedding Englishmen for life. For as long as his life extended to, in any case. He had a nasty feeling a day was an ambitious estimate.

Fleetingly, he wished he had managed to charm Peril into a date at least. It would have been a nice last memory to dwell on.

As it was, he had Heath with his hands now high on Napoleon’s thighs and a look so malicious on his face that Napoleon, for one of the few times in his life, felt genuine fear sweep over him.

It was the man’s next words, however, that made Napoleon feel infinitely worse.

“Bosworth,” said Heath, the timbre of his voice mockingly pleasant. “Be a dear and get me my tools, won’t you?”
In which Napoleon's bad day continues, Heath escalates and Napoleon comes to a conclusion that everyone saw coming a mile away.

The first time Napoleon had passed out, it was because of a sharp blow to the head. His face had already been knocked about most unnecessarily during this ordeal but this one swipe to the back of the skull had rendered him unconscious almost immediately. It would have been embarrassing if he had actually been awake for it.

The second time he passed out, the culprit had been a substantial amount of blood loss. He probably shouldn't have been surprised over the inordinate pleasure Heath took from acquainting Napoleon with his tools but even as Napoleon had been losing consciousness, he thought the man's breathlessness at the sight of his blood was downright weird.

The third time Napoleon passed out was apparently due to dehydration, which was almost too humiliating to think about ever admitting out loud. Peril in particular would never let him live it down.

It was the fourth time he passed out, however, that Napoleon felt was the most memorable by far. Not only was it caused by asphyxiacion but it also happened to be the first time that night his heart had stopped.

Napoleon had barely registered that he had actually died at all until he suddenly woke up gasping for breath, the feeling of cold lips on his own and brute hands beating compressions into his chest. Looking up into the face of a particularly pleased-looking Heath, Napoleon had a feeling that death would have been an infinitely better alternative to that view. Even perfectly defined cheekbones couldn't mask that ugly a soul.

"You're not allowed to die, Mr Solo," Heath had said, his words soft against his mouth. It was like a cruel parody of a lover's sweet-nothings as he stroked a hand almost affectionately through his hair. "We're not finished with you yet. It's rude to leave a party early."

"My apologies, I wouldn't want to appear rude," Napoleon had murmured weakly in response, stirring in the gurney he suddenly found himself handcuffed to. Wetting his dry lips, he tried to focus on a body part that wasn't in agony and was saddened to report that even his hair follicles appeared to hurt.

Letting his eyelids droop, Napoleon briefly thought about how dire the situation was when even Uncle Rudi was a more hospitable host in comparison. He at least gave Napoleon a short (albeit horrendous) bedtime story.

And then Heath started speaking and the phrase 'silence is golden' had never seemed more apt.

"I must say, I do wish we had met under more agreeable circumstances, Mr Solo," the man said slickly, the hand in Napoleon's hair tightening enough for his fingernails to press into his scalp. Napoleon, who was already bleeding from more places than he wasn't, felt that extra claw at him
was just mean. "I've always been a great fan of your work. You're infamous in my circles. You've inspired many, including myself, over the years."

"You're too kind," Napoleon said in a voice that he hoped had enough nuance of tone to wordlessly convey "rot in hell." He had a feeling his dislocated jaw and general fatigue may have ruined the effect. The Fingersmith's amiable smile didn't let on either way.

"Come, Mr Solo, don't be so modest," he said, letting Napoleon's scalp go to brace his hands on either side of the gurney's extended rail. "Modesty doesn't suit you at all. You're the Nightcrawler, are you not? Credited for the biggest heist in art history? Four countries joined together to hunt you down. Rumour has it that you almost succeeded stealing the Mona Lisa herself. You're a genius in your own right. Your partner on the other hand," despite the exhaustion deep in his bones, Napoleon popped a heavy eyelid open in concern at the mention of Illya, "he appears to be more brawn than brains."

Napoleon didn't realise he had physically bristled at the insult until Heath's mouth curved, looking remarkably like a shark in a three piece suit.

"I was beginning to wonder if that was the real reason you wouldn't give the disc up," he said softly, pleased with himself the way most men were when they had solved an especially frustrating puzzle. It looked remarkably supercilious on Heath, however, which was a talent all on its own. "I must confess to finding myself a little disappointed, Mr Solo. Sacrificing yourself to keep your lover safe is so terribly cliché."

Lover? Napoleon thought immediately, because really, chance would have been a fine thing. Even with half the bones in his body broken and him quite literally dying a few moments earlier, the idea of Peril and sex was still a highly appealing proposition. Sometimes even Napoleon marvelled at persistence of his libido.

The Fingersmith had obviously noticed his distraction because his eyes had narrowed significantly at the sight. It was apparent the man wasn't a fan of sharing the limelight, even with a (very naked) figment of Napoleon's imagination.

Clearly, he had been an only child.

"I must say, Mr Solo, I can't fault your taste," Heath cut into his thoughts, his tone deceptively friendly as he leaned forward against the rail with an ominous-sounding creak. "Were I as sentimental as yourself, I'd certainly keep him around as well. The man is a veritable beast in the sack."

Heath then hooked a finger to the collar of his white shirt and pulled it down to reveal evidence of said beastly behaviour with a smug sort of aplomb.

Having left so many similar bruises around the world that his mouth could probably be charged with a number of international felonies, Napoleon weakly questioned why his stomach was sinking so abruptly at the sight.

Of course Peril had slept with Heath. It had been the plan, after all (well, the impromptu plan b) but despite this, Napoleon had still assumed Illya had stolen the disc another way.

A karate chop to the head was a method Napoleon's brain preferred to conjure. A kick to Heath's groin was also an excellent visual. Illya sucking those bruises into Heath's pale skin, however, was as appealing as flicking through Uncle Rudi's scrapbook for entertainment. Or wearing socks with flip-flops. Or the general existence of flip-flops altogether because honestly, just thinking about it upset
Napoleon.

Heath was watching him closely again, clearly thrilled with whatever pained expression Napoleon had given away.

"If I didn’t know any better, Mr Solo,” he said. “I’d say that was the look of love.”

Napoleon closed his eyes, the world suddenly feeling like it was spinning wildly off its axis.

“Steady on now, old boy,” Napoleon croaked feebly, still fighting for consciousness as green spots danced behind his closed eyelids. “There’s no need to insult me.”

But Heath didn’t appear to be listening to him as realisation dawned in his sharp, clever eyes.

“My my, you are in love with him, aren’t you?”

Napoleon thought about denying the preposterousness of this statement. He even opened his aching mouth to do so with a one-liner that was bound to get him the final smack to the head that would finish him off. But he didn’t. Instead, he tilted his head to the side and thought about Peril.

About how overbearing his partner was. How stubborn. How he was too strong for his own good and far too tall for Napoleon’s masculinity to accept when they stood next to one another. How he was obsessed with his watch, wore ridiculously unflattering caps and sneered down at Napoleon’s Western decadence like it was a stray cat who had pissed on the carpet. He was terse, extremely bad-tempered and violent to the point that his episodes really should have been treated by a medical professional years ago.

He was also sort of, a little, quite possibly, the person Napoleon was ass over heels for.

“Well, shit,” Napoleon admitted aloud. That was certainly a bit of a revelation. Napoleon was almost glad he was on the cusp of croaking it because frankly, he wasn’t sure what to do with that information.

And then Heath slumped boneless on top of him, which made matters even more confusing. He could feel the distinct sensation of warm blood seeping into the front of his shirt, however. Even half-delirious, he mourned that he was never going to get that stain out. He had been such a fan of this suit.

“Cowboy?”

The supreme joy Napoleon felt coursing through him at the sound of that voice made him groan at his own reaction. If he hadn’t surmised that he was half gone for the man earlier, he certainly would have realised it just then. It was dreadfully embarrassing.

“I’m fine, Peril,” Napoleon tried to say in response but he wasn’t quite sure that was true. Not only was his mouth not working the way it should have but his body in general was misbehaving all over the place. What wasn’t broken was bruised or bleeding and most worryingly, slowly turning numb.

He could feel his teeth chattering, his vision spinning dizzyingly and briefly hoped he wasn’t going into shock.

Even with all that, Peril’s face popping into view was by far the best thing he had seen all day.

Throwing Heath’s limp body to the floor like it was nothing, Illya then looked at Napoleon, his eyes running a little frantically over his wounds with pure horror. Illya’s eyes then blazed a little madly before he pressed his lips together into a thin line, pulled his gun out again and shot Heath in the
head again with a vengeful type of wrath.

It was probably the most romantic thing Napoleon had ever seen.

"You know, if you heard any of that conversation," Napoleon slurred tiredly, nipping the thing in the bud as he fought to keep his eyes open, "I must tell you that I'm extremely mortified right now. If I don't look it, it may be because my face is slightly broken. But trust me, mortally embarrassed here."

Illya didn't reply. He was vibrating with a furious sort of anger as he continued to look over Napoleon’s injuries, his hands flexing and trembling as they hovered over his wounds, as though they wanted to help but didn't know where to start. He then, quite literally, let out a growl of a noise before tearing the handcuffs on Napoleon’s wrists away from the rails they were attached to with his bare hands. It was almost primal, animalistic and even in the sorry state he was in, Napoleon could admit the sight was pretty damned arresting.

Illya then, without any indication he would do so, swept Napoleon into his arms almost like a caveman claiming his property. Napoleon wasn't sure whether to be horrified or simply take advantage of the arms circling around him. Being a shallow opportunist, Napoleon found himself doing a bit of both, complaining as he did.

"This is incredibly undignified you know," Napoleon said weakly as Illya carried him fireman style out of the warehouse. Napoleon then threw the rest of his dignity out the window as he dropped his head against Illya's shoulder, feeling light-headed. "Although I must say, you are an excellent pillow..."

"Shut up," Illya said tersely, his face so dangerously still it could have been carved out of stone. Napoleon could practically feel the barely-restrained ferocity pumping through his partner and fuzzily hoped he didn't drop him.

“I can’t believe you shot Heath in the head,” said Napoleon a little sleepily, still mildly shocked.

“Twice,” Illya corrected savagely.

“Mmm, twice,” Napoleon hummed even as his eyes blurred dangerously out of control. "Where’s Gaby?"

"In getaway car," Illya said shortly. His accent always got thicker when he was angry. Right now it was almost unintelligible.

Illya wasn't just angry, he was incensed. Over him, of all people. It was enough to make Napoleon smile before he promptly cursed himself for doing so because it hurt like hell.

"Were you worried about me, Peril?" Napoleon murmured tiredly into his neck, trying to joke. Somehow, horribly, it ended up sounding sentimental instead. His tongue also suddenly felt far too big for his mouth and his sight was beginning to disappear under spots of black. Closing his eyes, Napoleon firmly felt that sleeping on it was the best course of action.

"Cowboy? What are you- ne smey - Solo! Napoleon, open your eyes! Wake up, idiot!" a distant voice said urgently from far away before letting out a choked, desperate, "please."

But Napoleon already felt himself slipping into unconsciousness and, as trite as it sounded, he couldn't imagine dying anywhere better.
When Napoleon woke up to see a bright white light, he naturally assumed he was in a hospital because even he knew there was zero chance he would have made it into heaven. If that time flashing the Pope hadn't been reason enough for him to be damned to an eternity in hellfire, his private-time in a confessional with a young French priest in '53 was most definitely a one-way ticket to the pit itself.

Also, the IV unattractively marring his arm pretty much gave the game away immediately.

Pleasantly numb in places he knew should not have been, Napoleon woozily turned his head and spotted Gaby sitting curled up in the chair by his bedside, her hair tied back in a loose but messy bun. She was flicking through a magazine and occasionally paused to thoughtfully ponder over certain dresses, as though debating with herself how many she could cleverly get U.N.C.L.E to expense for her.

Napoleon, who had fully expected to wake up to tears, a hand lovingly clutched in his own or a heartfelt bedside confession of some sort, found himself rather disappointed by the lack of ceremony. Someone could have at least put a little effort into the thing. He had died, after all. That warranted a few balloons at the very least.

"Oh, stop pouting, you baby," Gaby spoke up, briefly lifting her gaze up from her magazine with a fond sort of scoff. Napoleon was slightly mollified to see her eyes were a little more red and puffy than usual. His ego dearly hoped there had been sobbing. "We were all very worried, princess. You even have a fruit basket from Waverly. It's very tasteful."

Napoleon perked up a little at that. It came with wine.

He was about to reach for it when Gaby gave him a withering look that told him she'd stick something else in his arm if he attempted to drink alcohol while on heavy medication. Being a born survivor, Napoleon moved his hand at the last minute and snagged a grape instead.
"So," he said, taking two tries to pop it into his mouth because although morphine was excellent stuff, it was a nightmare on one's depth perception, "where are we exactly and please tell me my face will be all right."

"St Thomas' Hospital and bad news; the doctors couldn't do anything. You'll look exactly the same as before," Gaby said, watching his medical loopiness with mild amusement. Napoleon, who maintained it was rude to laugh at the plight of an injured man, tried to look disapproving. Whatever it came out looking like only made Gaby smile wider until her expression slowly turned a little sombre. As much as Napoleon had asked for tears, seeing them sparkling in Gaby's eyes only made him want to hurt whoever had caused them and frankly, he didn't think he had any more space on his body for yet another wound. "Dummkopf," she bit out, her voice a little shaky, "don't ever do that to me again."

"In my defense," Napoleon reminded her, lifting up a hand in clear retreat because he could barely match Gaby even when he was at full strength, "Heath was the one who did it. I was just an unwilling participant. You should have smelled the bag he put on my head. Talk about torturous." Gaby just gave him a glower at his flippancy. Napoleon felt she was clearly losing her sense of humour if he couldn't even joke about violent kidnapping anymore. "How did you even find me?"

"Illya bugged your cuff links," Gaby said, easing herself down to sit on the edge of his bed. She then paused and quirked her head to the side to add, "and most of your shoes. And all of your underwear. And that ugly blue tie you have."

"I'll have you know that tie is a Cardin," Napoleon said, hand to his chest as though wounded by the slight, "and it's periwinkle."

"Still ugly," Gaby quipped, unmoved even as she companionably shifted backwards to rest against his pillows, her shoulder bumping his own as her ankles crossed daintily over the bedspread. Usually disapproving of footwear on beds, Napoleon let it lie completely because those Pradas were exquisite enough to do whatever they wanted. "Anyway," Gaby continued, "the bugs gave us enough to pinpoint your location and send it to Waverly. Not that we even needed to. Illya decided they were taking too long and stormed in by himself like a one man machine gun. Most of Heath's men were dead by time U.N.C.L.E's reinforcements had even shown up. Waverly's still a little embarrassed about the whole thing. The tardiness, mainly. I think it's illegal to be late here."

"Well, that explains the fruit basket," Napoleon remarked dryly, finding himself far fonder of Waverly's little finger than he had been of Sanders' entire body. "How very British of him."

"Heath's dead, too, in case you wanted confirmation," Gaby said with a certain amount of relish. Napoleon didn't know their Chop Shop girl had it in her to sound so spiteful. He could have cried with pride. "Waverly isn't very convinced by Illya's self-defence story. Strangely, it doesn't work as an argument when the victim has two shots to the back of the head. Especially when one," and here Gaby looked poignantly at Napoleon, clearly trying to infer something through her eyelashes, "was when the body was already dead on the ground."

"He must have twitched," Napoleon replied utterly unconvincingly, snagging another grape. "Dead bodies are known to do that."

"Which is what I wrote in my report," Gaby said sweetly. "Illya's report, on the other hand was pretty much angry slashes on the back of a napkin with the occasional scribbles of 'capitalist' thrown in. It was worth submitting it just to see the look on Waverly's face."

Napoleon, who imagined the Englishman's baffled expression, didn't doubt it for a moment.
"And ah, where exactly is Peril?" Napoleon tried to say subtly. Gaby just gave him an unashamedly unladylike snort, as though she wondered why she bothered working with a spy who was so damned transparent.

"Terrorising the doctors again. You were supposed to wake up two days ago. He's been bothering every person in a white coat within a ten-mile radius. He nearly knocked out a poor dentist who just came in to get his hand stitched. The poor man still hasn’t recovered."

Napoleon took that all in, realised he was too doped up to understand most of it and focused, as he usually did, on the part about himself.

"I've been asleep for two days?"

"You've been asleep for a week," Gaby tutted, as though it was pure laziness on Napoleon’s part. Personally, Napoleon was impressed that even unconscious, he was still fashionably late. It was enough to make him marvel at his ability to exude style without trying.

"And you can stop looking so pleased with yourself about it," Gaby said, even as she reached over Napoleon to brazenly pluck the wine from his fruit basket. "I'm the one who has had to deal with Illya. He's been almost impossible to control throughout this thing. He's broken the record for the amount of property damage caused by a single agent in a year and we're still in March. Gott, I deserve a raise."

Gaby then expertly pulled the cork of the bottle out with her teeth and spat it out so it pinged off a sickpan. Sniffing it, she shrugged her shoulders as though it would have to do and proceeded to take a swig so hearty she would likely be tipsy before she even finished swallowing. Napoleon, who watched this blatant show of thievery, briefly wondered if this is how his victims felt when he happily lifted their property. It was rather emasculating from this side of the fence.

"You're drinking all my wine," Napoleon said, feeling rather hard done by about it. It really was an excellent vintage.

Gaby obviously agreed because she simply drank some more, her lips stained delectably red.

"This is the least you owe me after the past couple of weeks," she scoffed, pointing at him from around the neck of the bottle. "This is all your fault anyway. Illya ended up trashing three hospital rooms, kidnapped a doctor for you and had to be handcuffed to a radiator by the police when he was finally apprehended. I had to stop it from turning into an international incident. The Daily Mail were about to put him on their front page with the headline 'Rabid KGB Giant Attacks Hospital'."

Ignoring the image of Peril scaling the building King Kong-style with a tiny Napoleon clutched in his fist, Napoleon innocently asked,

"And how is this my fault exactly?"

Gaby just gave him a look, clearly telling him to stop being stupid.

"I am not," Napoleon protested, mildly perturbed by the fact that she managed to beat him in an argument without uttering a single word.

"You're both stupid," Gaby said aloud this time, taking another swig of the wine. "And I've had enough. Do something about it, Solo, before I go insane and lock you both in a room together."

Napoleon tried to raise an eyebrow. His face being numb, he wasn't too sure he succeeded.
"And by 'do something'," he tried to clarify as smoothly as he could, "you mean--"

"Each other," Gaby said, as blunt as a hammer to the head. "And do it soon. If Illya destroys another public building, I'm going to shove the paperwork down his throat before turning on you."

Napoleon, who really didn't think he needed to be threatened into riding his partner into the sunset, was about to tell Gaby as much when the doors suddenly opened and Illya himself was frogmarched in, looking especially irritable with two London bobbies half his size flanking him.

Were he objective about it, Napoleon would have said the Russian looked like a petulant schoolboy whose trousers were too short, whose jacket did little to flatter his frame and whose hat really should have been burnt for its crimes against fashion. As it was, Napoleon was probably the most partial person in existence around Peril so he happily leaned back into his pillows and devoured the sight of him with the gluttony of a man who would never tire of the view.

Gaby on the other hand, lowered her magazine onto her lap abruptly and sighed like a long-suffering wife.

"Hello, officers, what did he do now?" she asked them with polite exasperation, like a woman who had clearly had this conversation far too many times. "Cause another diplomatic inquiry?"

"Made a consultant and two nurses cry, ma'am," the older of the two policemen responded, looking pretty harassed himself if the skewed hat and ruffled moustache were any indication. The younger officer just stared up at Illya as though he couldn’t understand how he had managed to physically get so large before squeaking when Illya turned to glare at him.

"British are too soft," Illya said, glowering down at them all like an uncommonly tall child. "It is miracle they won the war."

"Well," Napoleon reasoned, conceding that his partner had a point. "They did have some outside help that time, Peril."

Illya could have given himself whiplash considering the speed with which he snapped his head towards Napoleon. He then gawped at him for a full ten seconds before moving forward with all the finesse of a concussed bull in a china shop, dislodging things on his way and shrugging off the police officers with such ease they may as well have been toddlers trying to cling on to his legs.

Brain still slightly lethargic, Napoleon momentarily tried to fathom how Illya had got so close so fast as the Russian suddenly grabbed Napoleon's chin in his usual abrupt fashion and jerked it from side to side to expertly assess his injuries with pursed lips. Napoleon would have complained about the excessive manhandling but he was too busy wondering if those eyelashes were real because having such naturally good features was appallingly unfair on the rest of the population.

And then this vision, this Adonis, spoke and said in a very clear voice,

"You are an idiot."

"Well, that's not a very nice thing to say," Napoleon had replied, feeling that was uncalled for even as he brazenly eyed his partner’s lips. "I'll have you know that I'm not very well. I'm an invalid. My bones are terribly broken. You should be nicer to me."

"I should smack you in head for getting captured," Illya ground out, lowering his hand from Napoleon's face to clasp it into a fist by his side. He looked irritable but there was something so endearingly vulnerable about his expression that Napoleon had a horrible feeling that that look might just be the death of him. "You nearly died, Cowboy."
"I did actually," Napoleon put forth, not seeing the way Gaby groaned and dropped her head in her hands beside him. He did see the way Illya’s jaw tightened however, and quickly added, “only momentarily of course but it was hardly fun. Were Heath alive, I'd consider giving him a piece of my mind about that. It wasn’t pleasurable in the slightest.”

To his surprise, Illya seemed to nod at that, so calm that Napoleon almost believed his constitution had finally mellowed for good.

And then Illya serenely walked over to the fruit basket and threw it out the nearest window, making Napoleon change his mind almost immediately. Somewhere from the street below, a cat yelped with injustice about flying produce.

"And that final bit of insanity," said Gaby, throwing up her hands in defeat as she got to her feet, "is my cue to leave. Officers, you couldn't help me carry a few things, could you?"

Before they could even respond, Gaby handed the half-empty bottle to one of the bemused men and her powder-pink handbag to other. They were still looking at the items with some confusion as she practically dragged them out after her but not before she turned to give Napoleon one last look. It veered more towards ‘angry threat’ than ‘thumbs up in encouragement’ but Napoleon decided to take it anyway because he needed all the help he could get.

Trying to seduce someone he didn’t know was simple. Trying to seduce someone he did was highly problematic, especially when that someone was a blank-faced communist with rage issues who had a habit of disliking almost everything Napoleon did.

It was tricky enough that that it made Napoleon of all people flounder in the face of sex, and he had once added a dozen or so pages to his copy of the Kama Sutra purely because he felt it was lacking a few key moves.

But as stellar as Napoleon's usual seduction technique was, Illya had seen it far too many times not to call him out on it. Napoleon's patented sultry look was also out, partly because his face had been rearranged but mostly because Illya had once told him his best smoulder made him look like a duck (which was just mean). Failing everything, he could always be shameless and quite literally strip his clothes off but the protruding rib he was currently sporting was probably not his best look. Funnily enough, visible bones didn't do it for most people.

It was a conundrum and caused a feeling to suddenly come over Napoleon that he didn't recognise at all. It took a moment to diagnose his symptoms but when he concluded, to his horror, that it was a case of nerves, he was very tempted to throw the nearest object at his partner’s stupid Russian head. This sort of nonsense had never happened to him before that gigantic wrecking ball had come into his life, ripping the backs off of perfectly good cars. It was ghastly and gave Napoleon the nasty feeling that Illya had broken him far more than Heath ever had.

His condition was so critical, in fact, that it made Napoleon – womaniser extraordinaire and notorious commitment-phobe – finally throw caution to the wind and, for once in his cheating, thieving life, tell the absolute truth. So turning to his partner with utmost seriousness, he candidly said with no hesitation,

“We need to have sex.”

Illya, who was still leaning over him and had been studying his wounds with a frown, widened his eyes almost comically.

“What?” he spluttered out, looking so scandalised by the risqué talk that he took a moment to look
wildly around at the room to make sure no one was listening. Even paranoid, Illya was delightful to look at.

“Sex,” Napoleon clarified cheerfully because life-changing confessions really were a delight on morphine. “You know, hanky-panky, fooling around, making whoopee, all that jazz. I really think that it’s an excellent idea that would not only improve our relationship but would greatly benefit us both. Also, not to blow my own horn but I’m remarkably good at it, so you really should consider taking me up on the offer. If I were you, I'd sleep with me in a heartbeat.”

Opening his mouth and then closing it when he didn’t know what to say, Illya just looked at Napoleon like he’d grown another head.

“You want to have sex,” he repeated in a strained sort of voice, his accent making the last word sound so positively filthy that Napoleon almost squirmed at the sound of it. “Now?”

“Well, perhaps not right now,” Napoleon admitted, because even he had his limits. Sex after torture was usually a pain, and not the fun kind. “I’m too numb to appreciate it and will probably end up dislocating something. I would, however, expect you to nail me into a mattress in the foreseeable future. And take me out to dinner, of course. I’m not cheap. Somewhere with an excellent wine selection would be ideal. Also,” here Napoleon held up a bandaged finger, “I like the theatre, so tickets to a show wouldn’t go amiss either.”

“Cowboy,” Illya finally croaked a little weakly, looking at him with a flummoxed sort of expression, as though someone had hit him too hard in the head. Napoleon disliked himself a little for finding it so appealing. The man looked cross-eyed, for heaven’s sake. “Are you actually asking me to be your boyfriend?”

“I’ll have you know that I find that term excessively trite,” Napoleon responded, avoiding Illya’s ridiculous gaze because Napoleon was trying to concentrate here, damn it, and those eyes were distracting. “But technically, I suppose I am. Not that I should be the one ‘asking’, of course. I’ll have you know I’m a catch. You should be asking me, really, Peril. I have admirers constantly trying to get me to settle down. And as for my stamina, it’s legendary throughout most of Europe. Well, save Germany, of course, but we don’t need to talk about the incident in Hamburg. In any case, if you would agree, that would move things on excellently. So, what do you say?”

Illya blinked a little stupidly at that. He then blinked again, swallowed, looked even more thrown than he did previously before eventually saying,

".... Okay," still a little stunned about the whole thing, including his own agreement.

Napoleon’s heart leapt like a horrible cliche but he couldn't control it even if he wanted to. He momentarily hoped he wasn't having a heart attack but found, at that moment, he honestly couldn't care if he was.

"Okay?" he said, trying not to sound hopeful and failing entirely.

“Okay,” Illya said again, firmer this time before pressing his lips together, looking determined and boldly, shakily, taking his hand.

“Oh,” said Napoleon, going a little breathless himself when Illya's thumb stroked a stripe of heat through his hand that shot straight up his arm. “Okay. So we're really doing this?”

Illya responded by lifting Napoleon's hand to nuzzle the back of it with his lips. It was such an excellent reply that Napoleon didn't even mind when he softly grumbled, “Da, even though you are
worst spy I have ever met.”

“Well, that’s blatantly untrue,” Napoleon argued, trying to sound contrite even as he pulled Illya’s face closer to his own and purred against his mouth. “In fact, that’s slanderous. I should sic my partner on you. He’s large and angry and has a habit of insulting my impeccable footwear.”

“He sounds like dreamboat,” Illya returned, brushing their lips teasingly together, making Napoleon’s mouth literally tingle with anticipation.

“Mmm, he’s not hideous,” Napoleon agreed, stroking the fair hair at the nape of Illya's neck, just breathing the earthy scent of him in. “It’s just a terrible shame about his love for bow ties. And his hat. And his compulsion for bugging everything I own.”

Illya pulled back, his face suddenly so sulky he could have put a bad-tempered child to shame. It was terribly endearing.

“What is wrong with my hat?” he demanded petulantly as he lifted a hand to it, as though its honour had to be defended at all costs.

Napoleon considered telling Illya, in detail about the countless things wrong with that abomination but the pout currently being fired at him was practically a weapon of mass destruction in itself. It was so impressive in fact that Napoleon simply shook his head in marvel, reminded himself to ask his partner to teach him how to do that at a later date and murmured, “Nothing at all, Peril,” against his lips, pulling him in for a searing kiss instead, their fingers tangling together on the bedspread beside him.

It was pathetic, vomit-inducing and frankly pitiful behaviour.

Napoleon, who lived in a constant state of self satisfaction, could easily say that he had never felt happier.

“By the by, Red,” he murmured a few minutes later when they eventually pulled apart for air, his lips swollen, his hair misbehaving and his hospital robes wrinkled, “just so you know, we’re not seeing other people.”

Illya just scoffed, as though that much was obvious, before licking the closed seam of his mouth filthily and bluntly saying, “You see anyone else, Cowboy, and I’ll kill you myself.”

Feeling more pleased with himself than he had possibly ever been in his life, Napoleon smirked and dryly responded with,

“What a romantic,” before greedily swooping back in for another kiss.

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Meanwhile, on the other side of the door, Gaby Teller was on the look out for another drink. She had a feeling that something with bubbles would be appropriate.
Three weeks later

"You know," Napoleon commented breathlessly as he lay on his back, sweating obscenely into the sheets under him and even more so onto the large naked Russian slumped on top of him, "I think I may have just had a religious experience."

Looking unlikely of moving any time soon, Illya just grunted against Napoleon's neck, limbs boneless and his lips vibrating pleasantly against his collarbone.

He was approximately a solid ton of muscle but Napoleon could forgive a case of mild crushing for that exceptional an orgasm. He was seeing stars of all things. It was delightful.

"No, really I think I may be having some sort of divine hallucination," Napoleon continued seriously, still getting his breath back. Running a greedy hand down Illya's flank and over the swell of his excellent bottom, Napoleon found that he was not only incapable of not touching him but that the compulsion wasn't even his fault. A body like that was simply made to be fondled. "Of course, I won't be able to sit down for a week, every inch of me is covered in bruises and we may get arrested because the neighbours undoubtedly called the police but I really am loving your work, Peril. Truly. I bent in ways that had never been bent before. You make me believe in a higher power. If you weren't currently squashing me into the mattress, I would go as far as to call this a perfect moment."

Illya made a noise. It was somehow expressive enough that Napoleon could almost hear the rolling eyes accompanying it.

"Quiet, Cowboy," Illya grumbled, nuzzling his throat in a way that put Napoleon to mind of a grumpily affectionate blond bear. "I am trying to nap."

"And here I was trying to compliment you," Napoleon sighed heavily, as though he was grossly under-appreciated in his lifetime. It didn't stop him from exposing more of his throat, however, so Illya's lips could sleepily trail their way across the length of it. "By the by, that trick you did with your tongue? I have never felt so used - so objectified - in all my life. Nice work, partner. I didn't know you had it in you."

"Says man who still has it in him," Illya grunted against his Adam’s apple, still an immovable lump.
"Mm, you make a considerable point there, Red," Napoleon conceded, brazenly tightening his legs around Illya's broad waist and grinding down on said point ruthlessly enough for Illya to let in a sharp intake of breath. "In fact," Napoleon murmured with a smirk, his breath devilishly ghosting across Illya's ear, "it's nothing short of impressive."

Illya tried to let out a snort. The fact that it wasn't one of his finest made Napoleon feel so exceptionally pleased with himself that he didn't realise that level of self satisfaction was possible. Illya not being able to snort derisively was a bit like Elvis accidentally breaking his hip during a routine pelvic thrust.

"You," Illya said irritably through clenched teeth, his large hands clamping down to hold Napoleon's thighs around him like a vice, "are shameless."

"Utterly and completely," Napoleon panted unabashedly, wiggling a little more to literally prove that fact. “Now come on, Peril, be a good boy and show me some of that infamous Russian stamina I keep hearing about. You don't want to let the side down, do you? Your boys are already losing the war. Yet another defeat for your country would just be embarrassing."

Illya finally lifted his head from the curve of his throat at that jibe, the challenge of it making him narrow his eyes at Napoleon for a moment. He then let out a tight smile that would have made the bravest of men flee in the face of it before using the hands he already had on Napoleon’s hips to suddenly flip him over onto his stomach and clamber on top of him like a competitive wrestler. He did it with such immense strength and speed that Napoleon, the breath winded out of him, had barely registered what was happening until Illya slammed himself inside him in one piercing move, pounded him so brutally into the mattress that he almost blacked out.

Muffling his gasps as he sunk his teeth deeply into his pillow, Napoleon scrambled desperately for the metal head board, which was rattling and smashing so violently against the wall that the tiny part of his brain that was still functioning wondered if they were going to take the whole building down with them.

And then Peril did something exceptional with a roll of his hips and the whole world could have exploded for all that Napoleon cared.

“Is this what you wanted, Cowboy?” Illya hissed hotly into his ear. He grunted almost like an animal in heat with every excruciatingly good thrust, hitting Napoleon so perfectly every time that it was little wonder the man was such an expert marksman with a rifle. His aim was inhumanly accurate.

Napoleon would have replied with a vociferous “Absolutely,” but he was too busy rolling his eyes into the back of his head, mouth slack as he gripped the rattling headboard tighter. He felt it was a more productive use of his time because trying to talk at that moment would have only been embarrassing.

He did let out a ragged, “ugh” however, to show he was listening because as much as he lifted jewellery and shot people for a living, he still had manners.

Illya on the other hand, had none whatsoever, throwing Napoleon this way and that and contorting his body into such ambitious positions that Napoleon found himself on his back again, his legs quite literally splayed akimbo in the air as Illya bent him in half, spread his thighs apart and savagely pistoned into him at such a furious rate that Napoleon was beginning to lose all sense of reality.

“Peril-!” he somehow managed, feeling delirious and hoping he wasn’t sobbing because he would never live that down. Illya let out something that could only be described as a roar before throwing back his head and looking so majestic that Napoleon, had be not been having the most earth-
shattering climax of his life, would have stopped to admire it.

As it was, he arched his back like a bow and messily, desperately reciprocated when Illya bent down to smash their mouths together as though Napoleon’s lips were the only thing keeping him alive.

Napoleon had a feeling that he may have gasped out one or two horrendously affectionate things against Illya’s lips but he blamed it on the orgasm entirely for being a bad influence and leading his thoughts astray.

And then Illya flopped on top of him with exhaustion while a pleasantly dizzy Napoleon let him, mentally patting himself on the back for being, quite frankly, the luckiest bastard on earth.

Looking down at them both, Napoleon felt a profound sense of déjà vu.

“And,” he said breathlessly, Illya’s mouth on his collarbone, “we’re back here again.”

Raising himself up onto his elbows to pull out of Napoleon as gently as he could, Illya looked down at himself and promptly wrinkled his nose at the sight. Napoleon had no idea why. That was one of the man’s best angles.

“You made a mess,” Illya said with disgust, reaching down between them to wipe at the wetness on their abdomens.

Napoleon just shrugged like a lazy cat, happily buzzed. It was an excellent time for a nap.

“You fault,” he said through a yawn, feeling sensitive and achy and sweatily wonderful all at once. “You drove me to it. You only have yourself to blame. There's nothing else to do but clean it up yourself, I'm afraid.”

So Illya, with an expressionless shrug and a curious lift of his now dripping hand, did, licking between his fingers and looking so obscene that Napoleon, who honestly thought he would never manage to get it up again that night after two crippling orgasms, felt himself stir.

“God,” he croaked a little, sounding pained. “You’re going to be the death of me, aren’t you?”

Looking a little smug himself, Illya didn’t reply. He just moved onto his side and yanked Napoleon unceremoniously against him, Napoleon’s back to his chest as his arms wrapped tightly, possessively, around his waist from behind. The fact he was the cuddly type still never failed to bemuse the American, who enjoyed it far more than he liked to admit.

They were quiet for a while, just enjoying the moment of peace when Illya suddenly said.

“We’re telling Waverly tomorrow,” as Napoleon felt himself beginning to drift off.

Eyes still closed, Napoleon raised a brow at that.

“Well, you really know how to kill the mood, Peril,” Napoleon said sleepily, their interlinked fingers resting against his stomach. “How about we talk about Sanders, too. I must confess, he’s my favourite topic when I’m naked in bed. And as for Uncle Rudi...”

“Solo.”

"Alright, alright, I'll book some time in with him," Napoleon yielded with a tired wave of his hand, so pleasantly exhausted at that moment that he would have agreed to give Illya his soul if he asked for it. He might have given it to him anyway, just for the hell of it. He was shamelessly taken with
the man, after all. "But you had better be in the room with me when I tell him. No backing out. We're doing this together."

"Together," said Illya in a voice that wouldn't have it any other way. It was enough to make Napoleon's stomach flutter a little.

"Well," Napoleon remarked aloud as Illya dropped a kiss on a shoulder-blade, "I'd say that that was almost sentimental."

This time when Illya rolled his eyes, Napoleon had a feeling that even passers-by on the street could hear it.

"Just shut up and go to sleep, Cowboy," he said.

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Alexander Waverly had been sipping on an Earl Grey and reading through an especially dry expense report on paper clips when Agents Solo and Kuryakin walked into his office and the former of the two clearly said,

"Peril and I are sleeping together. Just thought you might want to know."

It was a rather dramatic state of affairs for a Monday morning which, for Waverly, usually consisted of meeting the U.N.C.L.E accounts team, getting his shoes polished between meetings and wondering which careless agent had left the milk out over the weekend.

This, however, was definitely a departure from the norm. Coupled with the fact that Solo was smiling charmingly as he perched on the edge of Waverly's desk while Kuryakin was standing with his arms crossed, wearing his most deadly poker face, Waverly found himself compelled to lower his cup of tea.

"I see," said Waverly because of course he did. They were hardly subtle. Even the florist down the street knew about the two of them. Considering that their day job was subterfuge, it was almost ironic how obvious the two of them were.

The real surprise was that they were actually coming to him about it at all, which indicated a seriousness Waverly (who prided himself on his perception skills) honestly hadn't factored in. Chewing gum usually lasted longer than most of Solo's relationships.

It was enough for Waverly to lean back into his desk chair and look at them properly, genuinely pleased for them both.

"Congratulations," he said and meant it, especially when Kuryakin blotched a little at the praise. "Now, is there anything I can do for you both?"

The wide-eyed look the two agents shared was almost comical.

"That's it?" Solo asked, looking a little flummoxed. The expression was such a departure from his usual knowing smirk that Waverly couldn't help but feel a little entertained by the proceedings. He may have been fond of the man but having the opportunity to fluster Napoleon Solo was an awfully enjoyable experience.
"I confess, I would have sent a fruit basket had I known this was official before but considering your history with fruit baskets," here Kuryakin looked abashed, "I imagine a flower arrangement may be a better alternative."

The men were silent for a moment. Solo, in particular, looked like this had veered widely away from his expectations.

"And we're still assigned together?" he asked, his voice betraying more emotion than it usually did. It was almost fascinating to witness. As was the fact that Kuryakin's father's watch was sitting very snugly on his wrist like it had always been there. It seemed to be clashing with his expensive suit but uncharacteristically, Solo didn't seem to mind.

"Who am I to break up a happy home?" Waverly asked lightly, taking another sip of his tea because cold Earl Grey was a nasty affair. "In any case, with Miss Teller on your team, I don't imagine I'll ever find a better partnership. Now, gentleman, I don't mean to be rude but I have a particularly tedious set of reports to go through and very little time to do it. So if there isn't anything else?"

Solo got to his feet, still looking terribly confused. Waverly wasn't a petty man but watching him flounder was far too satisfying for words.

Moving towards the door a little dazedly, the two men were just about to leave when the taller of the two suddenly stopped to turn around and sheepishly say,

"Sorry about fruit basket."

Waverly couldn't have stopped himself from looking fond for all the Earl Grey in the British Empire.

"That's quite alright, Kuryakin. Cheerio, gentlemen."

Watching as they left, with Solo holding the door chivalrously open for his partner and receiving a death glare in response at the courtly treatment, Waverly shook his head slightly.

He did, however, wait a whole five minutes before reaching over to buzz his secretary.

"Ah, Wanda, yes, just a memo to myself. A reminder to push through a commendation for Agent Teller. That girl may be the best agent we've ever had. Also, put an order through with Arundel Florists, would you? I think a flower arrangement may be in order. Something in red and blue would be appropriate."

Finis