

Call it What You Like

"Sorry, guys, full up," the helicopter pilot shouted above the thunder of the spinning rotors. Standing on the small, fairly flat area between swift-flowing stream and mountain slope, Napoleon Solo peered into a cabin crowded with armed UNCLE agents and manacled Thrush minions.

"OK," he agreed reluctantly, dropping his sleeping bag roll at his feet. "How long before you can get back for us?"

"Tomorrow morning," the pilot called out as the chopper began to lift off. "Losing the light." He gestured toward the darkening sky, sketched a wave and turned his attention to his craft.

Next to Napoleon, his dirty hair flying in the backwash, Illya Kuryakin squinted into the disappearing sun. "Well," he commented wryly, "goodbye hot bath."

"Goodbye medium-rare sirloin," Napoleon added.

"Goodbye soft bed."

"And goodbye lovely Maria."

"Maria?"

"Communications in the local office. I, um, made a date with her when I called in for the helicopter. Guess I'd better cancel."

Napoleon stepped away from the chatter of the stream and pulled out his communicator. When he turned from making his apologies, he found that Illya had the camouflage tent that had been their home for the past tiresome week almost re-raised on the grassy flat by the stream. With a sigh, Napoleon walked over to help.

"Well, at least we can have a fire, now that the baddies are gone," Illya commented as they stowed their sleeping bags inside the tent.

"Do you suppose this stuff tastes any better hot than it did cold?" Napoleon said, digging out a couple of cans and squinting at the labels in the fading light.

With a can each of nondescript but hot food in their bellies, the two men shared a log near the campfire, listening to the rush of water in the mountain stream and the stuttering comments of insects. The last lozenge of light disappeared behind the cliff on the west, the summer heat fading with it.

"Do you suppose the paperwork will be taken care of when we get back?" Illya said wistfully.

"Well, they'll have to do some of it, just to get all the baddies tucked away in their cells. And Waverly will likely want some sort of a report right away on how the exchange and the capture went; Klein will have to handle that. And medical will be dealing with Brian's sprained wrist, so that will have to be written up tonight. And the equipment will be checked in, except for what we have here... You know, we might just get out of most of it."

Illya indulged in a wide smile. "Perhaps we should make a habit of being left behind. Peace and quiet, a chance for reflection in an idyllic setting."

"Illya, we have just had a week of reflection waiting for the bad guys to make their meeting. I, for one, could do with a change of setting."

"You've never lived rough, that's your problem."

“And you have? I’ll have you know I went camping two or three times when I was a teenager. I grew out of it.”

Illya shrugged. “For many people, this would be the perfect vacation.”

Napoleon plucked irritably at a shirt that was stiff with the dirt and dried sweat of a week in the wild. “If this is a vacation, ask the bellboy to bring me some clean clothes,” he said. “I’d give a lot just to smell better.”

"How about a sauna?" Illya said.

"How about a cold bottle of Dom Perignon?" Napoleon countered.

"Champagne will have to wait," Illya said, "but we could manage a sauna."

"Do you know of some alpine lodge around here that you haven't seen fit to mention, IK?"

"I'm afraid not. But there is that cave."

"Cave?" Napoleon said. "Are you talking about that hole in the rock where we stored the provisions?"

"It's big enough," Illya said, in what Napoleon thought of as his engineer voice. "You wouldn't want it to be too big a space, say 25 square feet. We could hang one of the sleeping bags over the entrance, tie it to the bushes on either side. There's enough of a breeze, I think..." He licked and raised an index finger experimentally. "If we left a space at the top it would draw the smoke out."

"Illya, as fun as it sounds to bump around in the dark building a sauna, I think I'll just wait for the real thing."

"Suit yourself," Illya said, pushing himself off the boulder. He snagged one of the rolled sleeping bags from the tent and filled a bucket from the stream. He set off up the steep hillside to the smudge of greater darkness that marked the small cave.

Napoleon listened to the faint sounds of his partner crackling through underbrush gathering dry wood. Silence then, except for the occasional pop from his own dwindling fire and the faint breeze murmuring through the trees. He sighed. The attractions of the natural world were short-lived, in his estimation. If Illya weren't so pig-headedly pursuing his backwoods spa, they could at least have a rousing game of Botticelli.

He twisted on the rock, squinting up the dark slope. A warm light glowed; firelight diffused by a red sleeping bag, Napoleon figured. What did Illya think he was doing in there, anyway? They'd be back in civilization in 15 hours or so, if the chopper pilot got moving early.

Heaving another long-suffering sigh that really deserved an audience, Napoleon rose. Might as well see what his partner had rigged up.

He pushed past the edge of the sleeping bag, stooping his way into the small hollow in the hillside. Across the large fire that dominated the space, a dark thing squatted. It was almost black from head to toe and including, Napoleon noticed with amusement, the dangling genitals. Illya's blue eyes glowed in the dark face.

"New look for you, isn't it?" Napoleon commented.

"Mud," Illya explained. "I have to maintain my complexion." White teeth flashed.

"Mind if I join you?" Napoleon asked, tugging his shirt over his head. Illya nodded toward the crumpled pile of his own clothes against the cave wall. Napoleon's joined them.

Napoleon settled cross-legged, squirming to create a hollow to suit his butt in the cave's dirt floor. Illya remained squatting, elbows on knees and hands dangling. The fire crackled, filling the small space with fragrant smoke and heat. They stared into the flames. The silence stretched comfortably. Napoleon felt the tickle of sweat down his side, squishing behind his knees, under his arms. Sweat traced streaks through Illya's mud coating.

After another few minutes, Napoleon creakily uncrossed his legs. "Well, I think I'm about medium rare," he said,

"And my pores are open," Illya said. He began awkwardly kicking dirt over the fire as Napoleon crawled out of the cave. The night air stirred softly, not warm enough for languor, not cool enough for discomfort. The sensation was unsettling and somehow promising.

Napoleon stretched out his arms toward a black sky filled with a rich sprinkle of stars paying homage to a full, fat, buttery moon. Behind him Illya chuckled. "Master of all he surveys," he said.

"Well, king of this mountain, anyway," Napoleon said.

"Not if I beat you down," Illya challenged. He whooped and set off on a hazardous flight, leaping over brush and stones. Tutting over his own competitive nature, Napoleon recklessly dashed after his partner, trusting to his legendary luck and arriving at the tent in a dead heat. A small, sharp pain stabbed at his left foot. He used Illya's shoulder as a prop while he examined the bottom of his foot. "I think I picked up a sticker," he complained.

"We'll rush you to medical as soon as we're back in civilization," Illya said unsympathetically.

"Tweezers?"

"In the First Aid kit," Illya said. "On the helicopter."

Napoleon straightened and with a click of annoyance gestured back toward the cave. "Clothes," he said succinctly.

Illya wrinkled his nose with distaste and instead walked to the bank of the shallow stream glittering in the moonlight. Squaring his shoulders, he stepped in.

"How is it?" Napoleon asked apprehensively as Illya lowered his body into the water.

"Warmer than snowpack, but not much," Illya murmured with control. He squatted, then stretched out on his back, one hand clutching a rock for stability. The contours of his body emerged palely as the mud swirled away.

Napoleon wavered, glancing back at the cave where his filthy clothes waited. "Yuck," he said, and stepped into the fiery cold of the water. He improvised an imaginative string of obscenities as he sank into the chill, but Illya's head was underwater and he missed the show.

Once he was numb, it really wasn't so bad, Napoleon reflected. The water generously carried away the grime of the past week, its current moving along his muscles like the fingers of a masseur. A masseur with really, really cold hands, but still... He tilted his head back and let the water comb his hair. Bubbles tickled in the stubble of beard on his cheeks. He had abandoned shaving during their expedition, but Illya had suffered the self-imposed scourge of a dry shave each morning.

Napoleon raised his head and saw Illya, a couple of feet away, intently stroking between his legs. Making sure the mud was gone, of course; this was certainly not the time or place for jerking off.

But he was suddenly remembering camping with James, four years older and already a young

man. As they huddled by the fire, faces burning and backs freezing, James had produced a bottle of harsh whiskey. It tasted like the kerosene lamp smelled, but if his hero could keep it down, so could Napoleon. Barely.

Later, warmed by their raucous laughter at something that had seemed like the funniest thing in the world, James had proposed a game – see who could shoot further. It had seemed an adult extension of schoolboy exploration. Napoleon had joined in, a little uneasily, and James had won – by a mile. The look on his face afterwards as he watched Napoleon finish – his cheeks flushed, his mouth slightly open, his eyes hungry, his hands clasping nothing. What might have happened if James hadn't driven his car off a bridge into the black depths of the Sans Espoir two months later?

Napoleon sat up abruptly and, scooping up a handful of sand from the creek bed, began to scour industriously at his arms and legs.

Illya glanced at him and borrowed the idea to scrub at his hair. When he stretched out to rinse the sand away, his hair floated like seaweed, his face peaceful, like a sleeper under the glittering water. The image made Napoleon uneasy. He grabbed Illya's shoulder, hauled him up into the air.

"You know, we left our guns up in the cave," he said, by way of excuse.

Illya peered at him through the water running down his face. "Mine is in the tent," he said, "should a rabbit attack. And what's got you so jumpy, Napoleon?"

Napoleon shrugged. "I guess I'm just a city boy," he said lamely. "Nature makes me nervous."

Illya grinned. "And there is the grievous wound on your foot. Perhaps you're in shock."

"Well, I'm about to be hypothermic." Napoleon pulled his legs under him and stood up, shivering in the breeze, his cock aching and shrunken with the cold.

Illya led the way up the bank and walked along the stream to a large, relatively flat boulder, where he stretched out on his back. He patted the rock. "Come lie down," he called. "It's still warm."

Napoleon limped to the waist-high rock and lay down beside Illya. The boulder was nicely warm, releasing the heat it had stored up all day. Napoleon pressed himself against it, willing his muscles (all of them) to loosen. Now, if they had one of the sleeping bags to spread over them. No, a nice thick duvet to capture the heat as they lay on the rock. No, not a rock - a bed with clean sheets. Well, not completely clean. Sheets smelling cozily of sex and clean perspiration...

Napoleon sat up suddenly. Illya looked at him through one slitted eye. "What?" he demanded.

Napoleon pulled his left foot onto his right knee. "This damn thorn," he improvised.

Illya sighed. "Very well, I suppose immediate surgery is required." He slid off the rock and knelt at Napoleon's right foot. He motioned impatiently and Napoleon straightened his left leg. Illya squinted at it in the moonlight. "I don't see anything."

"It's right there on the ball, just to the outside of the middle," Napoleon directed, flexing his toes. The tiny jolt of pain that resulted reassured him. There really *was* a thorn.

Illya blew gently on the foot. "Dirt," he explained. He ran his fingertips lightly over the sole of Napoleon's foot, gentle and slow. Intimate. Napoleon shivered reflexively.

"You are ticklish?"

"Apparently."

"And I thought I knew everything about you."

"Same here. I would never have taken you for a hedonist."

Illya's voice was guarded. "Hedonist?"

"The sauna."

"Ah. Well, why not? It felt good, did it not?"

"I've just never been aware that that was a priority for you."

"All animals seek pleasure...Ah! There it is." Illya's fingertip brushed softly against the thorn. He pinched at the area and Napoleon jerked.

"Hold still if you want this out. Just because I seek pleasure in different ways doesn't mean that I don't seek it. I am simply more democratic in my pleasure than you are."

"Democratic?" Illya dug deeper and Napoleon couldn't resist another wince.

"I attempt to find pleasure in the circumstance I'm in. You attempt to create a situation that you know, from past experience, will please you. You are trapped into repeating your previous pleasures."

"That is not true," Napoleon said with annoyance, "and you know it. I'm more than open to new experiences."

"Within a narrow constraint," Illya said stubbornly. "Tonight, denied the company of the lovely Maria and the comfort of an expensive hotel, you are at a loss. Your openness extends to a new cuisine at a fine restaurant, a new dance step. A new position with the lady of the evening."

"My openness extends a good deal further than that. But, there's something to be said for refining what pleases you."

"There's something to be said for trying something new."

Napoleon arched an eyebrow. "What did you have in mind?"

Illya didn't answer. He ducked his head and something warm and wet lapped the sole of Napoleon's foot. "Hey!" He tried to jerk his foot away, but Illya had a firm grip on his ankle. "What the hell are you doing?"

Illya looked up, his eyes silver in the moonlight. "My nails aren't long enough," he said, and bent to close his lips on Napoleon's foot. There was suction and a slight scrape of teeth. Illya leaned back and spat to the side. "Got it," he said.

"Yeah," Napoleon said thoughtfully. "I think I'm beginning to get it, too."

They sat for a long moment, unmoving, staring at each other. Napoleon scooted to dangle his legs over the edge of the boulder in front of Illya. Too close. Not close enough.

Illya remained where he was, sitting on his heels, hands on his thighs. His eyes were on Napoleon's face. Napoleon's eyes were on Illya's partially erect penis. Want to see who can...? No, wrong game. What exactly was the game here? He shivered, recalling the sensation as he stepped out of the sauna, of being suspended between possibilities.

After a few moments of reflection, Napoleon slowly spread his legs.

Illya snorted an uncertain laugh. "You have another thorn?" he said.

"Well, I think I'd really like you to check," Napoleon said.

With a slow nod, confirmation of something unspoken, Illya rose to his knees and shuffled close to the boulder. His cock, Napoleon realized, must be pressed against the warm rock, squeezed firmly between the roughness of the boulder and the soft skin of Illya's belly. Throbbing like a heartbeat, it must be, because Napoleon felt an answering pulse between his own legs.

Now Illya's hands were on Napoleon's thighs. Warm. Pressing his legs further apart.

Illya's head dipped again. His hair brushed Napoleon's stomach. There was an aching moment and then enveloping heat and warmth. Napoleon moaned, a helpless exhalation. If he closed his eyes, this might have been any of a number of past encounters with Ritas and Nicoles and Teris and Susans. But there was the smell of smoke and pines and warm grass in his nose, the sound of rushing water and sighing branches in his ears, the grit of rock beneath him and Illya's strong hands on his thighs.

"Something new," Illya had said. Jesus.

Napoleon opened his eyes, watched the muscles of Illya's shoulders flex and shift as he moved. He laid a hand gently on Illya's hair, still gritty from the sand. Illya's tongue, soft as velvet, curled around the underside of Napoleon's cock, massaged the head, molded itself onto the contours. "Oh, wow," Napoleon breathed; Illya's laugh tickled along the length of his cock.

"Could you..." Napoleon began and then couldn't express what he wanted. But with the telepathy that served them so well in the field, Illya knew, and pressed his lips tighter, increased his tempo. "Thanks," Napoleon rasped.

And he was close. Time to help things along with a little imagery. Napoleon riffled through images of ladies, lush and lean, en flagrante and needing coaxing to get that way. But the image that settled in behind his eyelids was of Illya leaning on the boulder, his swollen cock pinned between warm flesh and cooling granite, scraping deliciously with his small movements.

When Napoleon arched helplessly up from the rock, forcing himself deep, Illya accommodated him, drew him in. When he spasmed, and again and again, Illya took it all. Sagging with a contented sigh, Napoleon thought he would be grateful forever.

He opened his eyes. Illya still knelt by the boulder, his head tilted quizzically as he regarded Napoleon.

"Come lie down," Napoleon echoed Illya's invitation. "It's still warm."

Illya smiled and crawled up on the flat rock. He stretched out on his side, his cock pointing expectantly at Napoleon.

"Um," Napoleon said uncertainly. He carefully curled his fingers around the warm column. He tamped down the ingrained instinct to shake it as he would a hand. Illya pushed himself up on one elbow to watch with an amused expression. Napoleon began moving his hand, gently pumping. He forced his other hand between Illya's legs to cup the taut balls.

Napoleon closed his fingers, rolled the balls ungently. Illya jerked; his expression was no longer amused. A growl rumbled in his throat.

"Ssshh," Napoleon said, and continued. Illya's breath was audible, a little harsh, but Napoleon wasn't satisfied. After all, Illya could give himself a hand job.

He removed his hands and bent his head. Mimicking Illya's earlier attention to his foot, he gently scraped his lower teeth along the underside of Illya's penis. Illya made a long, soft sound. Napoleon swiped his tongue wetly over the head – salty, he thought – then continued the damp trail upward. He dipped briefly into Illya's belly button. Sand there, too.

Illya's hands closed on his head, trying to push him back down. Napoleon shook them off impatiently and closed his mouth on Illya's stomach, blowing a resounding raspberry in warning. The muscles tightened and vibrated with Illya's silent laughter.

Napoleon continued his journey. If he were with a woman, the next stop would be the breasts. Uncertainly, he found Illya's flat nipple and, as an innovation, rubbed his hairy chin over the nub.

Little reaction, except Illya was apparently ticklish here and wriggled away from the teasing.

OK, neck. Stubble dragged at his tongue. A noticeable Adam's apple. Cords of muscle. Napoleon nuzzled into the soft skin just under Illya's jaw, sucked hard. Let Illya explain *that* tomorrow morning. He licked at the spot, a little apologetic, a lot excited at having marked his partner.

Illya grunted and shifted restlessly against him.

"You close?" Napoleon demanded, and felt a tingle of excitement at asking such an intimate question, at forcing an answer. Illya nodded slightly. Did he blush? Hard to tell in the moonlight.

"Good," Napoleon said, levering his leg between Illya's, stretching out partially on top of him. Napoleon grasped Illya's arms, pulled their bodies close together. Illya's cock was a hard column between them, pulsing with blood. Napoleon felt it beating, as though they shared a single organ.

Napoleon began moving, undulating against Illya. His own spent cock roused weakly. Without thought, he pressed his mouth against Illya's. For a long moment, he was in the kiss by himself, then Illya's lips softened and opened, Illya's hand closed softly behind Napoleon's neck, thumb ruffling the edge of his hair.

Illya pushed against him, rolling them to lie side by side, both of them moving now, chafing elbows and thighs on the rock in their fever. The cock jerked, jerked between them.

Illya moaned around Napoleon's tongue, pulling him into a crushing embrace. Warmth spread between their bellies and they lay for a moment, breathing against one another's neck.

Finally, Illya sank back on the rock, pulling Napoleon with him. Napoleon lay for a moment, feeling Illya's hip bone digging into his stomach, Illya's soft cock and his own, slightly swollen, nestled together like old friends.

Napoleon rolled onto his back. Their hands touched but did not clasp.

They lay in silence for a long while, staring up at the heavy moon. The wetness on Napoleon's stomach cooled and began to itch as it dried.

"So," he finally said, falsely casual, because somebody had to say something, "you ready to go get those clothes out of the cave?"

"No."

"Well, it's going to look a little peculiar if the helicopter finds us lying here buck naked in the morning." Napoleon edged onto his side to look at Illya.

Illya stared fixedly into the night sky. "I suppose you're right," he sighed, and sat up. "We certainly wouldn't want to look peculiar."

Which opened the subject. "Illya, what are we going to call this?"

"You mean in our report? I thought we might gloss over it."

"I mean," Napoleon emphasized, grasping Illya's arm to draw his eyes, "between us."

Illya shrugged, but his expression was uncertain, his eyes exploring Napoleon's face. "We'll call it pleasure modified to circumstances. Like the sauna. It need mean nothing more than that. You are the one with the reputation for keeping sexual encounters inconsequential."

"In the first place, thanks a lot. In the second place, this wasn't my usual inconsequential encounter. This was us. And in the third place, you started it. Why?"

Illya sighed, his expression frustrated. "Because it's been a long week. Because the sauna and the stream excited my senses. Because we trust each other. Because the moon is full and we're alone and it feels better to be naked than dressed. If it's anything more than that, I haven't

realized it yet. It happens, Napoleon. Forty-six percent of the male population in the United States has done it."

"You've done a survey?"

"Alfred Kinsey did. You really should pay closer attention to your own culture." Illya turned away, scratched at his stomach. "I think I will pay another visit to the stream, with my clothes." He slid resolutely off the rock and began picking his way up the slope.

He stopped after a few steps and turned, the moon behind him and his face in shadow. "Call it what you like, Napoleon. It means whatever we believe it means." He resumed his climb, outlined in moonlight.

Napoleon stared after him for a moment, then slid off the rock and set out after Illya.

"Forty-six percent, you say?"

Illya's chuckle floated back to him on the breeze.