

Author's Note: Written for the [10/27/2015 PicFic Tuesday Challenge](#) in [LIVEJOURNAL'S SECTION VII](#) community



In the end all lie together:
The powerful and the weak,
The noble and the peasant,
The holy and the profane.

Man or woman,
the earth with equanimity
accepts us all.

Unknown

POWERS OF THE EARTH

BY [LAH](#)

Summer 1970

Exning, Suffolk, England

The two U.N.C.L.E. agents stared at the gold-and-gem-bedecked skeleton with true fascination.

“So,” ruminated Napoleon Solo, “the remains of some Anglo-Saxon great lady lost to history. A princess do you think?”

“Perhaps,” submitted Illya Kuryakin. “Or maybe one hailed as an Idesa.”

“Ah, one of the formidable females thought to be directly connected to the old Norse gods,” noted Napoleon with a brief nod. Mythology was a field at which Kuryakin could not trump him. Science might be Illya’s forte, but ancient legends were something Napoleon had studied at great length. Solo found such tales truly intriguing with regard to how they related to the perception of the human condition at the time of their creation. “Still, shielding someone already dead is a bit... out of the ordinary scope of our missions, no?”

“Absolutely,” agreed Illya. “And what Thrush is after by trying to abscond with these remains is still something of a mystery.”

“Perhaps the legends of the Idesa are more real to them than mere mythology,” suggested Napoleon.

Again Illya nodded. “There is a current theory that in actuality whatever special abilities the Idesa seemed to wield came to them scientifically, though unique understanding of the particulars of quantum mechanics.”

Undoubtedly this type of speculation was right up the Russian’s alley, though Napoleon found it lacking in the sheer romance of less logic-bound mythos.

“So they had a knack for controlling secret cosmic particles?” scoffed the American.

“Well, it’s a theory, Napoleon,” the blond defended the explanation of science for the supernatural powers heralded in folklore.

“Whoever she was,” Solo attempted to smooth the other man’s ruffled mental feathers, “she was certainly highly regarded. Those jewels are worth a small fortune.”

“More like a large one,” Illya readily agreed. “But what this skeleton is worth historically is much more pertinent.”

“Definitely,” Solo said with his own nod. “So how does one protect the dead?”

Illya shrugged. “We stand guard. Not much more we can do.”

“No, not much more,” seconded Napoleon as his eyes returned to the remains of the Anglo-Saxon luminary, perhaps more important in death than whoever of whatever she had been in life.

The makeshift shelter over the excavated barrow gravesite was little more than a wooden roof erected on metal poles and surrounded with canvas side hangings. It was, therefore, indeed fortunate for the two agents that the current season was summer and the weather in this part of England was pleasantly mild. They sat their vigil, passing the time initially in easy conversation, but as the night wore on the men fell into an uneasy silence. Neither could have explained why. There was just something in the atmosphere that seemed unnaturally charged with... well with something. Exactly what, who could say?

“I don’t like the feel of the air, tovarisch,” verbalized Napoleon at last.

“I know what you mean, my friend,” conceded Illya, no thought of gainsaying the other man’s less-than-rationality based reaction entering his mind.

With a frown, Solo rose up off the folding chair on which he sat. “I’m going to take a look around. You keep watch over the lady, Illya.”

Kuryakin nodded as Solo, drawing his gun as a precaution, set out beyond the confines of the canvas flaps to the main of the excavation site beyond.

The night was moonless and dark; the ground uneven under his feet from the remnants of other digs nearby. He didn’t know what he expected to find, but there was a nervous sensation in his gut that he had learned from many past experiences not to ignore. Reaching a hand into his suitcoat pocket for his flashlight, his foot hit an unseen rut and he sprawled headfirst onto the dirt. The metal barrel of his Special hit the hardness of rock and a spark flew from the impact out into the ambient blackness. That spark arced high in the air and suddenly there was a scream as the clothes of someone hidden in the darkness ignited with lightning speed.

Illya was beside his partner on the instant and both men watched in fascinated horror as the previously hidden Thrush assailant shot toward them, his jacket a mass of flame. Recovering from their momentary shock, the two men managed to force the Thrushie to the ground and roll him around over and over on the earth, finally suffocating the flames. He then lay motionless, moaning fitfully between the two kneeling U.N.C.L.E. agents.

“I’ll call for an ambulance,” stated Illya steadily as he stood.

Napoleon nodded as he also got to his feet. “And I’ll check the rest of the area for any unrevealed bad birds.”

“Likely just a scout,” surmised Kuryakin.

“Agreed, but we wouldn’t want to get careless and wind up as dead as our lady friend under the awning.”

The ambulance arrived with relative speed and, thanks to the actions of Solo and Kuryakin, the man was pronounced in stable condition by the medical experts. As he was transported away, the two U.N.C.L.E. men returned to the makeshift tent to wait out the remainder of the night.

The body of the Anglo-Saxon lady was due to be taken by special conveyance from the excavation site to a museum lab facility in the morning.

As he regained his seat on the admittedly less-than-comfortable wood-and-canvas folding chair, Napoleon glanced over at the remains he and his partner were protecting on this strange night. He noted that the index finger bone on the right hand of the skeleton was inserted deep into the surrounding earth. Had it been so previously? He wasn't certain...

"Illya, what do you think?" he asked, pointing toward the telltale finger. "Did the Idesa use the powers of the earth to save herself?"

Illya's brow furrowed. "Whatever are you babbling about, Napoleon?" That Thrushie was caught out by the potency of fire, not earth."

"Ah, but what was the cause of that fire, tovarisch?"

"The metal of your gun struck a lump of exposed flint," stated Illya logically.

"No question," conceded the other man. "But don't you find it odd that I tripped when I did just at the position for the barrel of my pistol to come in perfect contact with that flint?"

"Napoleon," broached Illya with a glare, "are you somehow suggesting that this dead woman manipulated the cosmic particles of the earth to her advantage?"

"Well, it's a theory, Illya," concluded Solo with just the ghost of a smile.

—THE END—

