

Author's Note: Written for **8/26/14 PicFic Tuesday Challenge** on **LiveJournal's Section VII** community.

This is my version of Solo and Kuryakin's first joint mission soon after the latter's transfer to the New York Headquarters of U.N.C.L.E. Thus they are not yet permanent partners (in my timeline that happens in Autumn 1964) and know each other only slightly from a couple of previous missions that combined resources from both the North American and European offices of the Command. I should also note that in this story Napoleon is not yet CEA of U.N.C.L.E. Northwest (in my timeline that happens in Summer 1963); neither is Illya yet Number 2 in Section II Northwest (in my timeline that happens in Summer 1964).



A beach is not only a sweep of sand,
but shells of sea creatures, the sea
glass, the seaweed, the incongruous
objects washed up by the ocean.

Henry Grunwald

FLOTSAM AND JETSAM

BY [LAH](#)

Spring 1962
Somewhere in the Caribbean Sea

Illya Kuryakin looked impatiently after the man swimming in the waters of the Caribbean Sea too far ahead of him for comfort. He was not difficult to spot in his bright red polo shirt. Doubling the timing of his own efficient strokes through the waves, he managed to come up alongside Napoleon Solo.

“Slow down,” he advised sagely. “We still have a good bit of swimming ahead of us to get to that stretch of beach. At this rate, you’ll run out of energy long before we do.”

Solo ignored him as he again pulled ahead of this other Section II agent – the only such Soviet operative assigned to the New York Headquarters of the United Network Command for Law and Enforcement.

Illya frustratedly again swam forward and then grabbed a fistful of Napoleon’s brilliantly colored shirt, forcibly yanking him back. “I said to slow down! We’ll make it to land, Napoleon,” he furthered a bit uncomfortably. It still felt odd to be calling the senior agent by his given name, something the other man had insisted upon from their first meeting. “No need for all the hyperactivity. Conserve your strength and just go with the shore-bound flow of the current high tide.”

Solo stared at him as he treaded water to keep afloat, and it was then Kuryakin saw it unmasked ever so briefly in those dark eyes: uneasiness.

“*Chert!*” he surmised with a soupcon of anxiety entering his mental conjecture. “*He has a fear of the water!*”

“We should get to shore as soon as possible,” hedged Napoleon. “Despite the fact the present temperature of the water shouldn’t cause hyperthermia, better not to dawdle.”

“Agreed. We should get there together, however,” Illya arrived at a strategy to keep the other man from panicking. “Getting separated by the waves could pose but another issue we have to overcome. So, in tandem with me, Napoleon: stroke right, stroke left,” Kuryakin began counting off the strokes of their swimming.

Perhaps because it kept his mind from going off on an apprehensive tangent related to being surrounded and submersed in so much water, Solo willingly followed the regular beat of the count, keeping pace with Kuryakin and not again pushing out further ahead alone.

A couple hours later...

The two water-logged and exhausted men sat side-by-side on the beach, recovering their breath.

“Where would you say we are?” asked Napoleon after a few moments, likely to ease the existing awkwardness between them.

“One of the uninhabited Swan Islands, I would guess,” Illya responded, knowing full-well that Solo had likely surmised as much himself. But answering did serve to move the situation away from the self-conscious stillness that had arisen between them.

Solo nodded shortly and then the two retreated again into mutual muteness as both set their separate gazes noncommittally out over the tidally froth-capped yet amazingly blue waters of the Caribbean.

Solo and Kuryakin had been on a reconnaissance mission off the coast of Honduras when the small pleasure yacht they were using as a mobile base was targeted by artillery fire. They assumed their assailants were Thrush, the activities of whom they had been clandestinely

monitoring for some days. Several of the surprisingly powerful shots aimed with no forewarning at their vessel pierced the hull of the craft, causing it to take on water rapidly. There was no choice but to abandon ship, which they did posthaste. Taking cover behind a small rocky outcropping, they had waited while a motorboat powered by close enough to ensure that the marked cabin cruiser was fully sunk. The men in the speedboat didn't bother to look for survivors. Apparently they expected and desired to find none; so they moved off immediately after noting their target safely beyond recovery.

"There's a FAA hurricane tracking station here somewhere, as I recall." Solo at last again broke the silence, though his glance remained out to sea.

Now it was Kuryakin who nodded, his glance also on the water steadily lapping its way onto the beach. "Not to mention Radio Swan," he commented offhandedly, surprising Solo with his knowledge of that supposedly covert CIA operation.

"We should be able to contact U.N.C.L.E. from either location," furthered Napoleon.

Again Illya nodded.

Finally Napoleon let out a heavy sigh. "Okay, so now you know. I don't like being immersed in large bodies of water."

Illya turned to face the other man at last. "As you now know that I don't like sailing on large bodies of water."

Kuryakin had been quite violently seasick more than once during their stay on the floating control base for the mission.

Likewise at last focusing eyes on his companion, Solo gave the other man a rather wry grin. "But you were a lieutenant in the Russian Navy."

"Assigned to a submarine," Illya reminded him pointedly, "which type of vessel doesn't ride the tossing surface of the waves as a rule. And you," he then added just as pointedly, "passed all the underwater training for U.N.C.L.E. with flying colors. Cutter likes to flaunt your achievements at Survival School before the new classes of recruits, you know."

Napoleon chuckled. "That flinty drill sergeant knew damn well I dreaded being in the water; so he always assigned me the toughest of those underwater tasks."

Illya gave the other man a characteristic half-smile. "I suppose you have some interesting tales to tell in that regard," he prodded gently.

"And I suppose you have some just as interesting tales to tell about keeping hidden your tendency toward seasickness while commissioned in the navy," gibed Napoleon with an answering half-smile.

"Perhaps we'll share those tales... one day," Illya astutely closed this sensitive subject of conversation between them.

Napoleon nodded as he returned his gaze to the tirelessly constant movement of the waves. "The flotsam and jetsam of our past lives washed up by the ever-insistent sea of our present," he concluded simply.

Illya nodded in turn as his eyes also reverted to the vista offered by the relentless ebb and flow of the continually tiding water.

—THE END—

