

Author's Note: Written for the [WHAT'S MY LINE](#) challenge on [LIVEJOURNAL'S SECTION VII](#).
Prompt: *I took a shortcut*

I really took some liberty with the prompt, so hopefully folks will still find this appropriate to the spirit of the challenge.



Gratitude is one of the sweet shortcuts
to finding peace of mind and happiness
inside. No matter what is going on
outside of us, there's always
something we could be grateful for.

Barry Neil Kaufman

THE PERFECT SHORTCUT

BY [LAH](#)

Spring 1969

It was one of those rare moments of downtime for Section II enforcement agents Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin of the United Network Command for Law and Enforcement. For the nonce, Thrush was posing no immediate threats, there wasn't any fermenting revolutions or coups threatening the peaceful governments of U.N.C.L.E. member nations, and there were no reconnoitering rendezvous in the offing to gain needed intelligence on this or that matter. Everything was for the moment relatively peaceful.

Illya sat in a completely relaxed pose on the leather sofa resident in the office of his partner, the CEA. He leaned his head against the supportive back of the couch, relishing the quiet. Inside that blond head he ticked off a list of what he had to be grateful for beyond this temporary space of sheer serenity.

1. A job that he believed in. He was a pragmatist; thus he knew U.N.C.L.E.'s actions did not always work to fully salubrious effect. Yet the organization strove constantly to keep the world at peace and safeguard mankind from the machinations of the power-mad. That was worth the struggle and the danger and the oft-times encountered pain.
2. Not needing to give up his country to work for the global organization. Russian to his core, he was grateful beyond measure for this boon.
3. Serving under a man with the world vision of Alexander Waverly. Mr. Waverly wasn't pro-West or pro-East. He was pro-peace and pro-balance and pro-humanity as a whole. That was a rare thing indeed in this era of Cold War relations.
4. Sufficient food, a decent roof over his head, and a sense of sanctuary if not of complete safety. He had grown up on the streets of Kiev during the Great Patriotic War. He had known hunger, cold and isolation. But now he had a place, both physical and emotional, where he felt he belonged and which belonged to him in ways he would never be able to explain.
5. And far from last on the list, a true friend in the person of Napoleon Solo, a man who had risked his life for him numerous times and for whom he had in turn often risked his own life. No one would ever have placed these two as being "simpatico", to borrow a term Napoleon often used to describe their relationship. An American and a Russian: different as day and night. Yet, rather like day and night, they complimented each other perfectly, and seemed more a cohesive whole than disparate pieces.

Glancing up from the deluge of paperwork on his desk that was part and parcel of the administrative side of his position as Chief of Enforcement for U.N.C.L.E. Northwest, Solo cocked his head at his partner. Kuryakin had such an ingenuous and contented little smile on his face; it gave the other man pause.

"You seem quite happy and rather serene there, tovarisch," he noted simply. "Care to share the cause?"

The Russian shrugged. **"I took a shortcut** to that state of being is all."

The American blinked in some bewilderment, but simply accepted the other man's cryptic explanation for his current frame of mind.

"Well, time to cease your pleasant daydreaming. We have a meeting in Mr. Waverly's office in ten minutes," Napoleon reminded his partner.

With a sigh, Illya put away the mental tally of his reasons to be grateful for his current life and rose from the comfortable sofa ready to meet the next possibly uncomfortable challenge of existence as an U.N.C.L.E. Section II enforcement agent.

—THE END—

