

Author's Note: This story was written for the **2014 Easter Egg** in the mfuwws community on LiveJournal.

Some fun facts relevant to this story: Easter Sunday in 1963 fell on April 14th. At LaGuardia Airport in New York City the following high temperatures were reported that weekend:

4/12/1963	Good Friday	50°F
4/13/1963	Easter Saturday	63°F
4/14/1963	Easter Sunday	64°F

Some background info: In my MFU timeline, Illya was stationed in NY Headquarters sometime early in 1962 (see my story [ALL GOOD PEOPLE](#)). Napoleon became Chief Enforcement Agent in the summer of 1963 (see my story [THE NOT-SO-SOLITARY WEEKEND AFFAIR](#)). And the two men became permanent partners in the autumn of 1964 (see my story [CHIMERA](#)).

Therefore, in this story, Napoleon is not yet Number 1 in Section II, Illya is not yet Number 2 in Section II, and the two agents are not yet permanent partners. They have worked together on several missions, however, and are casual friends.



And he repents in thorns that sleeps in
beds of roses.

Francis Quarles

THE SUBJECT WAS ROSES... SORT OF

BY [LAH](#)

Spring 1963

Entering the office of his friend Napoleon Solo here in the New York headquarters of the United Network Command for Law and Enforcement, Illya Kuryakin was greeted by the unexpected sight of the American agent's desk laid out with about a half-dozen extremely elaborate and exaggeratedly eye-catching ladies' hats.

"Which do you like best, Illya?" Napoleon asked him without prologue.

"I don't think any of them suit your usual sartorial style... or mine either," deadpanned the Russian coolly.

That remark garnered a chuckle from Solo followed by an unexpected cough. He then cleared his throat before explaining, "I'm choosing one as a gift for my date to wear as we stroll Fifth Avenue on Sunday."

"In my experience, American women are not content with a date that involves nothing more than a stroll."

"This stroll is during the Easter Parade, tovarisch. It's traditional."

"Why fancy hats for a pageant involving bunnies?"

That garnered another chuckle from Solo, again tailed by an unexpected cough. Napoleon simply cleared this throat once more and subsequently questioned, "What makes you think it has anything to do with bunnies?"

"The Easter Bunny myth you Westerners forward."

"Hey, it was you Eastern Europeans who started the tradition of decorating eggs at Easter."

"Pysanky are never made of chocolate, Napoleon. And they certainly aren't delivered by a basket-carrying rabbit."

"Touché, my Russian friend. However, the Easter Bunny doesn't stroll Fifth Avenue during the Easter Parade either. It's humans only; humans in fancy hats. So which chapeau do you think for Susannah? That's my date. She's a transplanted Southern belle who is really excited about taking part in a quintessential New York spectacle."

Obligingly Illya cast an appraising glance over the displayed bonnets. "Every one of them looks rather flimsy: all frou-frou and no substance," he remarked bluntly.

"Frou-frou is the idea, Illya."

"Napoleon, what makes you think the weather will be conducive to wearing such an insubstantial bit of frippery? The temperature will be struggling to get to 10 degrees today."

"It's nowhere near that cold!" challenged the stunned Napoleon.

"Ah, I forget sometimes. 10 degrees Celsius; 50 degrees using the Fahrenheit scale," clarified Kuryakin

"Could have fooled me about the temperature," came Napoleon's response. "I was thinking it was a bit warm in here today. Guess maintenance has the heat jacked up. In any case, it really wouldn't matter if it was actually 10 degrees Fahrenheit on Sunday. The ladies would still wear their most frou-frou bonnets. However, Susannah has assured me it will be in the 60s for the weekend. She is planning to do the annual spring pruning on her rose beds tomorrow. Susannah is something of a fanatic about her roses; so I trust her assessment of the upcoming weather. She'd never risk her precious blooms."

Solo rubbed the back of his hand across his eyes. Damn, but they were itchy. Maybe he was allergic to something in the hat fabrics or ornamental adornments.

Illya cocked his head at the other man. "Napoleon, are you feeling all right? Your eyes look quite bloodshot."

"Probably over-sensitivity to an over-abundance of frou-frou," determined Napoleon with a mischievous grin.

"And hopefully not to any over-abundance of roses," teased Illya in counterpoint.

Solo went to laugh, but instead was hit this time by a rather violent fit of coughing.

Frowning, Illya walked closer to Napoleon and laid the back of one hand against the other man's forehead. The skin felt overheated to his touch. "I think a trip to medical is in order, my friend," he stated frankly.

"I'm sure it's just some sort of allergic reaction," protested the American.

"Be that as it may, I think you need to be checked over by the medical professionals," Insisted the Russian.

Several hours later...

"You sure it's okay for you to be in here, Illya?" queried a red-speckled Solo from where he lay on his sickbed in the quarantine section of U.N.C.L.E.'s medical facility.

"I had the measles as a child, Napoleon. I am, therefore, immune to the disease."

Napoleon sighed dramatically. "Wish to hell I was. It was that last assignment, guarding the son of that Lithuanian dignitary. Mr. Waverly said the boy, who we were all assured at the time had nothing more serious than a common cold, evidenced the telltale rash of measles not 48-hours after the protection detail concluded."

"And for your present discomfort born of safeguarding one of ours, we Eastern Europeans most sincerely apologize," noted Illya with a jesting smirk.

"Small comfort," grouched Napoleon in turn, "when my skin looks like the canvas used in some juvenile Seurat's crude attempt at pointillism during a crimson art period."

That elicited a small chuckle from Illya before he spoke on in supposed reassurance. "You can take greater comfort in this, Napoleon: Susannah will not miss her keenly anticipated stroll in the Easter Parade. When I called to inform her of your predicament, her evident disappointment was truly heart-wrenching. So much so, that I took pity on her plight and did the gentlemanly thing of offering her my companionship in lieu of yours for that quintessential New York spectacle."

The American squinted uncompromisingly at the Russian. "The gentlemanly thing indeed."

"It was the least I could do. She has invited me tomorrow to tour her rose garden, so that we can become fully acquainted before mutually participating in the traditional event on Sunday."

Solo groaned openly.

"Never fear, Napoleon. Susannah will no doubt have you in mind as I have taken the liberty of sending her one of the hats you were pondering as a gift. Dispatched in your name of course. I chose the pink one with the red polka-dots, subtly suggestive of your particular case of... uh... roses in bloom."

Napoleon's only response to his 'gentlemanly' friend's purposely flippant remark was an even louder groan.

—THE END—

