

**Author's Note:** Written for the [QUOTEME #4: 2016](#) Challenge in [LiveJournal's Section VII](#) community.



Look back, and smile on perils past.

*Walter Scott*

## THE VIEW ON THE OTHER SIDE

BY [LAH](#)

**January 1974**  
**U.N.C.L.E. HQ, New York**

Illya Kuryakin, former #2 Enforcement Agent in Section II Northwest and former Chief Enforcement Agent of the U.N.C.L.E. Auxiliary Office in Yugoslavia, took a deep, calming breath before walking into his newly assigned office in New York Headquarters. Today he started his career shift within the Command. No more field work for the Russian agent. He had reached the golden field retirement age of 40 late last year and had completed his final mission as a Section II agent this past December. Now he would be moving on to administrative work within the organization as Head of Section III Northwest.

Section III: Enforcement and Intelligence. Intelligence was definitely something that appealed to Illya; yet he realized this new position would surely involve far more politicking, as the saying

went, than he would likely be comfortable with. That realization had, in fact, resulted in him giving serious consideration to full retirement from U.N.C.L.E. In the end though he had come to accept that such wasn't the right route for him. As he had only last month told a young Nascosten princess<sup>1</sup>, though he truly didn't know if he had faith in mankind's ability to improve both itself and the world at large, he did believe that the striving for that goal was just as important as possibly achieving it. So he simply had to keep striving. He was well aware, however, that his new means of such striving would be fraught with difficulties as he just didn't have an innate "people knack" similar to that of his former field partner, Napoleon Solo.

Napoleon had himself been an administrator in the Command for a year now. After his own field retirement, Solo had initially been stationed as Section I, Number 1 in the Los Angeles HQ and currently was serving as Section I, Number 1 in the Rome HQ. Soon, however, he too would be returning to New York, stepping into the position of Continental Chief of U.N.C.L.E. Northwest as replacement for a retiring Alexander Waverly. Spring was the scheduled timeframe for that transition, with Napoleon coming back to the States in late winter to be brought up to speed on all current Northwest operations by the Old Man himself.

Uncertain that the calming breath had been sufficient to prepare him for this moment, Kuryakin nonetheless put his body in position for his badge to be properly detected by the pneumatic door to his new official workplace and subsequently walked through into the room. Inside was a simple enough layout, more expansive than that to which he was accustomed as office space to be sure, but otherwise unremarkable. A somewhat unexpectedly large desk, armed leather desk chair, several smaller armless guest chairs, a sofa stationed at the back wall of the area for catching catnaps during those sometimes late nights in HQ, a coffee table set before the couch to facilitate placement of hastily-downed meals and likely endless cups of joe, various monitors on the walls to access whatever was needed whether via direct feed from within HQ or stored film footage, several phones, and most importantly a control box on his desk to take full command of the entire setup. In short nothing out of the ordinary... except for a rather conspicuous striped gift-type box positioned quite prominently on his new desk.

Stepping gingerly toward the desk, Illya punched the intercom button on the control box to connect to his personal assistant. "Hazel, what is this object on my desk?" he then inquired bluntly.

"In this case looks do not deceive, Mr. Kuryakin," stated Hazel with perhaps more cheek than Illya deemed appropriate under the circumstances. "It is a gift."

"From where? Or more importantly from whom?" Illya demanded to be told.

"Ah, that would be telling, Mr. Kuryakin, and telling always ruins any surprise. But don't worry, it's been fully vetted." With that Hazel abruptly cut communication with her boss.

Cautiously Illya examined the outside of the package. Nothing suspicious. The card on the top of the box said nothing more than "*For Illya Kuryakin*" in typed block letters. No hint as to the sender there. He felt around the top, bottom and sides and found no out-of-place bumps or scores. The box was smooth and unblemished.

For a full minute (or perhaps two) he drummed his fingers against his lips trying to decide if he should open the package or not. Yet supposedly it had been checked and released by Security

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<sup>1</sup> Reference to my story [A Fault in Our Stars?](#)

and his curiosity was admittedly getting the better of him. Taking another deep, calming breath, Illya slowly raised the lid an inch or so and took a wary peek inside.

What he saw caused his brow to furrow in confusion. Blinking a couple of times to insure his vision wasn't fooling him, he finally fully removed the lid from the box. Within were nestled a series of tagged plastic bags and glass vials, each one containing what he supposed could be termed a "memento" from his past assignments as an enforcement agent. A bullet removed from his thigh in one tube, a scrap of bloodied shirt in a baggie, a bent communicator in another bag, the melted wire from some explosive device in yet another tube, and so on and so forth. There must have been at least a hundred such items in his quick visual estimation, each one carefully catalogued with a typed label as to date and mission name.

"Chto v Plazmopushku?!" he couldn't help exclaiming aloud.

His mind started churning with possibilities. Was this some kind of joke perpetuated by a past opponent in Thrush? Perhaps Angelique. It could be her way of saying you might have survived all this in the past, but we'll still get you in the end. The very idea of being taunted in such a visceral way made him incredibly angry. He was about to buzz Hazel and tell her to have the mocking parcel removed forthwith, when suddenly his mind cleared and his anger dissipated. This wasn't a joke or a taunt; this was a reminder. This was someone saying "You've made it though much worse than this, so you have nothing to fear now." And just as suddenly he knew without question the giver of the gift.

As if on cue, Hazel buzzed the intercom. "I have a call waiting for you, Mr. Kuryakin. From Mr. Solo in Rome."

A very silly grin broke out on his face. Fortunately, there was no one present in his office to see it. "Which one of you is psychic, Hazel? You or Mr. Solo?" asked Illya with a mischievous lilt in his tone.

"You do ask the oddest questions, Mr. Kuryakin," came Hazel's definitely equally as mischievous retort. "First asking what a gift is for goodness sake, and now asking if I can channel feelings like a medium? I'm just an average U.N.C.L.E. communications agent, I do assure you."

Yes, thought Illya again -- but this time with one of his patented half-smiles playing upon his lips -- this new assistant of his had cheek and absolutely no awe of the "legendary Illya Kuryakin". He had a feeling he and she would work extremely well together.

"Put Mr. Solo through," was the only remark he made in return.

Illya lifted the receiver to his private-line telephone. "For a minute or two I thought Thrush had sent the package to tweak my nose, Napoleon," he greeted his former partner.

"And after all the care I took with the contents," responded Napoleon with a detectable smile in his voice. "I am crushed, tovarisch, absolutely crushed. I had to get Lisa Rogers' permission to take that stuff from the evidence lockers and you know she is no pushover when it comes to breaking rules."

"Napoleon," doubted Illya with a vocal smile of his own, "any female in the world is a pushover for breaking rules when it comes to you."

Solo chuckled. "Well, I have got it, Illya."

"So I've heard... many times," rejoined Kuryakin.

Now Napoleon outright laughed.

"How did you make arrangements for this all the way from Rome?" Illya wanted to know.

"I actually made arrangements for this last year before I left New York for my first Section I assignment. Lisa kept the request on record and set it up for today as I planned with her back then."

"For my first day as an administrator in the Command."

"Exactly, tovarisch.

"You wanted to remind me that I've faced harsher challenges than this."

"More to the point, Illya, I wanted to recap for you the perilous journey you've survived to this point; yet make reference to the fact that the sustained trek isn't now over. Not by a long shot. You've gotten up the mountain, tovarisch, but now you get to see the view on the other side."

"And it's still full of obstacles," furthered Illya with an instinctive nod.

"And rough-going. But you're tough, Illya. You've got brains and you've got guts. You'll do fine."

"And you've got the soul of a true optimist, Napoleon."

"Oh?"

"A year before I left the field you were already thinking how to reassure me in a position there was no guarantee I would ever live to hold or even decide to take on," Kuryakin spoke appreciatively.

"I knew, tovarisch, I always knew. I had no doubt whatsoever,"

Those words filled Illya with a warm glow he could never explain. Such faith could move mountains, never mind scale them, and such faith resided in Napoleon Solo. But Illya Kuryakin was a pragmatist and something within him told him in just as certain terms that his friend would need that side of him in his new role as a Continental Chief for U.N.C.L.E. Together, the two of them were an unbeatable team... still.

—THE END—

