

Author's Note: Written for [QUOTEME #3: 2016](#) challenge on [LiveJournal's Section VII](#) community.



Loneliness expresses the pain of being alone and solitude expresses the glory of being alone.

Paul Tillich

THE WAY THEY WERE

BY [LAH](#)

Autumn 1964

Napoleon Solo was definitely acknowledged as something of a social butterfly. He had a natural, easy way with people and no question he absolutely loved being around them. His preference was always for company, whether for a pretty gal in his bed or a friendly companion across the table. His mega-watt smile and innate charm made him popular with his co-workers and gave him an instinctive inroad toward gaining the trust of the innocents that wandered in the path of U.N.C.L.E.'s hazardous missions on a rather regular basis. He had style; he had grace; he was handsome and intelligent as well as uncannily intuitive.

Yes, Napoleon Solo seemingly had it all. Yet the hidden truth was that an inner loneliness haunted his every waking hour. Few suspected it and certainly even fewer could understand it. After all, he was a man who was never alone, right? How could he be lonely? He had only to turn on that smile to have folks eating out of the palm of his hand. Still, deep inside him was a never-ending quest to feel... accepted for who he was.

It was of course, like most such internal workings, rooted deep in his past as the secret illegitimate offspring of a misty-eyed romantic of a mother and an embittered cynic of a father. He had been raised by grandparents who undeniably loved him, but who nevertheless had felt compelled to publicly hide the reality of his bastardy behind the elaborate smoke-and-mirror of a retroactively recorded certificate of his parents' marriage. And it must be emphasized that it was only publicly hidden, as certainly Napoleon himself was never granted this illusion of legitimacy by his guardian grandparents. His grandfather had wanted the boy to know the facts from a very early age and had seen to it that he did. Not unkindly, mind, but simply because Franklin Milbourne was who he was with his unwavering idea of personal responsibility. Both Napoleon's mother, Franklin's own daughter, and Napoleon's father, the enigmatic Darius Solo, had failed in their personal responsibilities according to Milbourne's exacting standards. And that was something he wanted Napoleon to understand was a character flaw it was wise he never even unknowingly emulate.

So it was now that Napoleon Solo, amiable charmer extraordinaire, never really felt he was one with the rest of humanity, no matter how much he made a point to remain always in its outward fellowship.

Ilya Kuryakin definitely appreciated some alone time. Because of this many saw him as "anti-social", but the truth was he simply realized the inherent value in occasional personal solitude. He hadn't really had that growing up. Yes, he wound up orphaned during the Great Patriotic War, but that didn't mean he had subsequently had the luxury of being absolutely on his own.

In the streets there was always the "companionship" of the other orphans that he found it necessary to run with in order to survive. In the state school in which he was later placed there was nothing that resembled privacy of any sort. In the military and the KGB there were rules and regulations that limited the possibility of personal separateness.

Oh he knew how to isolate his innermost self in such environments. Yet that was no more than a coping device, a mastered mental trick. It just wasn't the same as sitting in a secluded spot with a good book and maybe a glass of passable vodka, feeling free and totally unencumbered by surrounding society. Or sitting alone on his apartment complex rooftop and watching the moon and stars as they took their appointed places in the heavens at different seasons of the year. Such occurrences were an indulgence that, since his assignment to U.N.C.L.E., he found he could enjoy on a semi-regular basis, and thus he did.

Ilya Kuryakin didn't stress about the label of "mysterious loner" with which others, who did not understand this penchant for now-and-again being utterly by himself, tagged him. Such private time was a gratifying natural pleasure he didn't feel the need to explain to anyone. He also considered this focused inclination part of what kept him sane. And, in his profession, that was absolutely a positive thing.

—THE END—

