

## A Day in the Life

Napoleon Solo stepped smoothly through a grey, sliding door in UNCLE headquarters and straightened his tie as he headed towards his frequently used conference room. He'd just returned from a successful mission in Costa Rica and caught a late flight back to New York, arriving at 6:00 a.m. He'd showered briefly at home and returned to the office by 7:30. After dictating reports and checking mission reports from other agents, he grabbed a quick cup of coffee and settled into a cushioned chair with a sigh.

Three other Section Two agents sat up but remained silent as their boss flipped through a small stack of manila folders, quickly assessing information and formulating an action plan as a result of what he read.

Napoleon closed the folders, took a quick sip of coffee and addressed his agents.

"Alright gentlemen, let's hear what happened." He looked up and raised his chin slightly indicating his desire for a response.

"Sir, it fell apart rather quickly. We felt we had the situation in hand but under-estimated the Thrush resources on site." said Agent Burkhardt quietly.

Solo surveyed the men and waited for further comment. There was an uncomfortable silence.

"It was clear after the explosion, Mr. Solo, when the south end of the building was exposed; a lower level of the building housed another cadre of Thrush agents we had not accounted for." Agent Dae chimed in.

Again, Solo remained silent and waited for a response from the third agent on the team. Nothing could make the men more uncomfortable than pointed silence from UNCLE's normally affable CEA.

"We were able to call additional agents to the scene and eventually neutralized the Thrush force, sir" offered Agent Amaker. "All told, a good recovery."

Napoleon stared the men down and responded with a tone most agents dreaded hearing.

"Two injured agents." Solo glared. "That's your idea of a recovery? Unacceptable, gentlemen."

The three knew better than to respond. If there was one thing UNCLE's CEA couldn't tolerate it was injury to agents over sloppy preparation prior to an assignment. Solo protected his agents fiercely and it was one of the many reasons he was universally revered throughout Section Two.

"Mr. Dae, I believe you had mission prep. and research on this one?" Solo asked already knowing the answer.

"Yes, sir. I apologize Mr. Solo. I can assure you this will not happen again." Dae offered.

"I'm sure it won't." Solo stood and prepared to leave. "Mr. Dae, one month's suspension and restricted duty starting today. Burkardt....Amaker....you have a responsibility in this as well. It's called "redundancy" and it's a matter of policy. Don't forget it."

And with that, Solo was out the door and headed to a much dreaded bureaucratic meeting in Section Three. On the way, his secretary met him in the corridor with a handful of phone messages and a warm toasted bagel with orange juice.

"Raena, my dear, you are a lifesaver." Napoleon grinned and gave her a peck on the cheek. "You look beautiful today. How are we doing so far?"

His attractive secretary matched her boss's purposeful stride and briefed him on updates to his already busy schedule. Raena had been with Napoleon since he'd been named CEA six years ago and she read him like a book, often knowing what he needed before he did. She made it a point to strictly protect him from trivial matters and had the latitude to go toe to toe with him where Section Two agents never dared. It was a good match.

"Looks like something is cooking for you upstairs." She reported. "Mr. Waverly has been on the horn to Brazil all morning."

"Mmmmmmmmm. Better get a kit together and some extra clothes." Napoleon sighed.

"Already done Napoleon." Raena answered. "I had Section Four send up some extra clips, and one of those new tracers just out of development."

Solo grinned with appreciation. "Raena, will you marry me?" he teased.

"That's the fifth time you've proposed this year, Napoleon." She laughed. "I'm beginning to think you're serious!"

She took the files out of Napoleon's hands and replaced them with a new report.

"What's this one about?" he asked.

"There seems to be an argument over the old "Specials" and the new Walther we've been testing Blevins wants all the guns replaced for Section Two agents and Carlyle absolutely won't budge."

"Jolly."

Raena laughed and pointed towards the door. "In you go, boss."

Napoleon looked over his shoulder as he headed in to the meeting.

"Could you see if Illya...."

“He’s meeting you for lunch at 12:30. Oh and by the way, you have to re-qualify at the shooting range at 1:00. Sorry about that....Barkley put his foot down about rescheduling since it was the fifth time.” Raena smirked.

“Some people can be so difficult.” Solo winked at Raena.

Inside the small office, Napoleon observed Kevin Carlyle and Scott Blevins deep in conversation with the two weapons in question on the desk. Solo took off his suit jacket, draped it over a chair, rolled up his sleeves and joined the two men. He knew each of them to be intelligent, very capable men although both had a reputation for being a bit pig-headed and territorial when it came to gear issued to Enforcement Agents.

“The new Walther has proven to be a more efficient weapon, Kevin.” Blevins began. “It’s been tested and tested on the range and by 10 agents in the field.”

“The veteran agents hate it, Scott. You can’t put a gun in their hands they don’t have confidence in. There is absolutely no reason to replace the Special.”

Blevins leaned back and responded with sarcasm. “Gee, you mean there’s no added benefit for a gun that carries two more shots than the Special, and fires an entire round three seconds faster?”

Carlyle fired back. “Read the reports. There’s a bigger kick and the silencer is totally unreliable.”

Solo listened to the two carefully and let them argue themselves out knowing each needed to have their say. An authoritative approach would do no good.

“Where do you stand on this Mr. Solo?” Blevins asked.

“I think you’ve both got an argument.” He said easily.

“Well we need to make a decision on this. It’s been six months since we started looking at the new Walther and we just can’t leave the issue hanging much longer.” Carlyle griped.

“Tell you what.” Napoleon started. “Let’s issue the new Walther to everyone coming out of survival school as well as probationary agents. Anyone beyond that gets their choice. And let’s look at that silencer issue. That’s got to be fixed before we move ahead. We’ll re-evaluate in 6 months. You think you can both live with that?”

Blevins frowned with his arms crossed on his chest and Carlyle rolled his eyes.

“I’ll take that as a yes, then.” Napoleon chuckled.

Solo rose, grabbed his jacket, and was out the door.

Over the next hour, he reviewed reports from the latest class out of survival school, noting where each agent was being assigned and was relieved that none were headed to New York. Probationary agents

were time consuming and Napoleon preferred agents come to him with a little experience before entering the spotlight of New York's headquarters.

He met Illya at the commissary for a quick lunch as his partner complained about being bored down in the lab. Kuryakin was cheered by the news about a possible mission to Brazil with his partner. It had been two weeks since they had been in the field and Napoleon was hopeful they would be working together as well. The last three missions he'd been assigned to work alone and frankly, he was a bit fatigued although he'd never let the Old Man know it. As the head of Section Two, he knew the importance of his image to the other enforcement agents. He couldn't afford to show weakness, uncertainty, or vulnerability to his agents. They took strength from Solo's air of invincibility and he didn't let them down.

Napoleon easily qualified on the shooting range and headed back to his office mid-afternoon. He busied himself with a backlog of mission reports and read a dossier Waverly had sent down to him about a United Nations security detail he wanted Napoleon to attend to personally. He barely noticed when Raena popped her head in the door.

"Napoleon...it's 3:00....you wanted me to....." she began.

"I know." Solo sighed. "I need to see Javier."

"The medical report is in." she said softly. "It's pretty much what they expected."

"Thanks."

Raena left quietly and gave her boss time to get himself together. There was nothing more difficult for the CEA than a case where an agent was permanently injured or killed in action. She knew he felt these incidents deeply but he'd never missed spending time with an agent whose career was cut short due to an injury in the field.

Agent Javier DeBarra had been shot in the back on a recent assignment in Arizona. Although fellow agents got him to medical assistance quickly, it was feared injury to his spinal cord would leave him paralyzed. DeBarra was transferred to New York where UNCLE's keen medical staff performed the delicate exploratory surgery but the news was not good. It was clear the agent would not walk again.

Napoleon entered the post-surgical suite and sat down next to Javier's bed while the fallen agent slept. Having confirmed the news with the doctors, Solo insisted on talking to Javier himself. Section Two agents looked after each other that way, and Napoleon considered Javier a friend as well. It wasn't long before the agent stirred.

"Welcome back, Javy. It's good to see you." Solo smiled. "You came through the surgery just fine."

Javier worked hard to focus his eyes and was relieved to see Napoleon at his bedside.

"What's the word, my friend?" the patient asked.

Napoleon answered softly but with absolute honesty.

“Javy....I’m afraid it’s not good news. The injury to your spinal cord is not repairable.”

Javier looked away, knowing what this meant, and tears came to his eyes. He’d worked hard to become a Section Two agent and it was not an easy road. Things did not come as easily to him as it did to many agents, but he’d shown a stubbornness and tenacity that caught the interest of UNCLE’s CEA and Napoleon had taken a special interest in the young man over the years. Solo had a soft spot in his heart for the underdogs of the world and he frequently went out of his way to encourage Javier. In time, Javier became a solid agent and was well respected by his fellow agents.

Javier sighed and turned back towards Solo. There was nothing but complete understanding between the two. Solo reached out to take his hand.

“Javy, you are and will always be, my brother.” Napoleon began. “I am so proud of the work you have done as an UNCLE agent and of who you are as a man. This is a bitter, bitter pill to swallow, but you will not be alone. We are here for you. I am here for you. You can count on that.”

“Thank God for that Napoleon.” Javier’s voice broke. “I have always been able to count on you. I would not have become an agent were it not for you. I will always be grateful.”

“Better days ahead, my friend,” Napoleon assured. “I’m afraid we’ll whip you into shape in that wheelchair until you beg for mercy! And you have a place here as long as you want it. Trust me. Now, get some rest and I’ll check in on you before I leave tonight. We’ll be up here starting on your therapy first thing in the morning. No slacking off, Javier!”

“I wouldn’t dream of it, Napoleon.” Javier’s voice strengthened. “Thank you.”

“Thank you Javier. You have represented us with honor and I won’t forget it.” Napoleon’s eyes welled up but shone brightly towards his friend.

As he left the medical section, Napoleon reflected on the many times he had made these types of visits and nothing saddened him more except those occasions when he found himself the speaker at a memorial service for one of his agents. He couldn’t help but feel some sense of responsibility for the loss of life and Mr. Waverly often commented that this quality was precisely what made him so effective at his job. Today, this was of little comfort.

As he settled back into his office, he noticed that Raena held several agents at bay in the outer room. He took a moment for himself before hitting the intercom button.

“I see we have company, Raena. To what do we owe the pleasure?” he quipped.

Raena reported, “Several agents requesting logistical help, Mr. Solo.”

“Well, let’s not keep anyone waiting, shall we?”

“I’ll send them right in.”

An hour later and everyone's problems solved, Napoleon sighed and looked forward to heading home for the night. He loosened his tie, shoved a few papers around on his desk and decided to call it a day. It seemed like an awfully long time since his flight arrived this morning from Costa Rica and he looked forward to a good, strong drink and perhaps some lovely female companionship before the night was through.

Just as he was making his goodnights to Raena, her direct line to Mr. Waverly rang. Solo stopped cold, knowing what was coming next.

"Yes sir, he will be right up." Raena spoke efficiently to Number One, Section One. She hung up the phone and smiled sympathetically at Napoleon.

"Sorry, Napoleon. I'll have your bags sent up to the helipad. Your flight leaves in an hour and Mr. Waverly wants to brief you before you go."

"No rest for the weary, right Raena?"

She came around the desk and offered the handsome agent a brief embrace.

"Be careful out there Napoleon" she whispered.

"Always"

Solo made the quick trip up to Mr. Waverly's office and Lisa Rogers shooed him in after brushing an errant forelock of his hair into place.

Alexander Waverly turned to greet his top agent and began his briefing.

"Well, Mr. Solo....since you've had a relaxing day in the office....."

