

Just One More Thing.....

Illya Kuryakin paused briefly to straighten his jacket before entering the office of Number 1 Section 1. He'd been summoned late in the afternoon on Alexander Waverly's last day of work before formally transferring power to his long-time protégée, Napoleon Solo. It was something expected for so long, it had a profound sense of unreality now that the time was finally here.

Illya entered Waverly's office, surprised that Napoleon and his boss were not involved in conversation, briefings, or training. Solo and Waverly had been joined at the hip over the past 6 months since Solo's mandatory retirement from the field at age 40. Napoleon immediately named his long term partner as the new Chief Enforcement Agent and Section II agents universally approved of the promotion. Although the nature of their working relationship would surely change, UNCLE's top team would still be working closely together and this was a solid, stabilizing factor for every department in the New York office.

But now, Alexander Waverly was alone in the office and had only one more bit of business before taking his leave.

The old man motioned to a seat, smiled, and addressed the Russian.

"I believe I have one final debriefing to conduct, Mr. Kuryakin." He began.

Kuryakin smiled, surprised that the UNCLE Chief remembered.

"You'll forgive me if we make this a relatively informal debriefing, Mr. Kuryakin." Waverly spoke. "Would you join me in a brandy?"

"It would be my honor, sir." Illya replied.

"Let me pour then."

Kuryakin was perfectly comfortable with the silence between them and waited as Mr. Waverly settled into his familiar seat. The older man studied his glass and swirled the honey colored liquid with appreciation.

"I must congratulate you on a job well done, Mr. Kuryakin." Waverly started. "I was not sure this assignment could be completed successfully."

Illya smiled slightly at the remark. "Three years is a rather long time for such an elaborate and complicated project, sir."

"Indeed, young man." Waverly replied with just a hint of a twinkle in his eye. "Tell me."

“Initially sir, I experienced difficulty understanding Mr. Solo at all. He seemed extremely impulsive and unpredictable in his approach to most tasks. I found his interpersonal skills challenging as well probably due to his gregarious nature. I must admit there were times I wished you’d chosen someone else for this assignment.”

The old man tapped his pipe and let a knowing smile overtake his normally stoic expression. “You found this assignment frustrating, then?”

“Quite the contrary, sir.” Kuryakin replied. “I don’t think I’ve ever felt more privileged. Rarely are people what they seem in this business and this was most certainly the case with Napoleon.”

Waverly nodded in agreement.

“Go on, Mr. Kuryakin.” He urged. “I’m most curious about your observations.”

“Simply put, sir, Napoleon is the most extraordinary agent and friend I have ever known.” Illya began. “Most people don’t have a clue about who he is and it only serves to make him more effective both in the field and in his role as Chief Enforcement Agent. I’ve found the references so his so-called “luck” anything but true. Napoleon’s skill and preparation makes his performance only appear effortless. I’ve never seen him rattled, discouraged, or accepting of failure. He is remarkably generous, inventive, diplomatic, and loyal. I don’t think I could ever have asked for a better partner and despite your charge to protect him, I’ve lost count of the times Napoleon literally saved my..... ah....saved my.....”

“Bacon, Mr. Kuryakin.” Waverly filled in.

“Yes, sir.”

Waverly leaned forward towards the Russian and spoke with sincerity.

“Nevertheless, Mr. Kuryakin, on behalf of all of the Section 1 Chiefs, I thank you for delivering Mr. Solo to us to assume his new duties. I could not leave with anyone else stepping into this position.”

“You’re very welcome Mr. Waverly.” Illya replied. “Sir, is there anything else I can do for you before you leave?”

“I’m glad you asked, Mr. Kuryakin.” The old man mused. “I find myself in the position of asking you to accept one last...more of a personal favor... in regards to our dear Mr. Solo.”

Illya’s eyebrows rose with curiosity. “How can I help, sir?”

Waverly rose to refill his glass and paused as if not sure quite how to answer the Russian's question.

"Mr. Kuryakin, this job is one that, by nature, lends itself to stress and isolation. Mr. Solo will not be able to experience the same sense of camaraderie or social interaction he has enjoyed in his role as CEA. He will need to develop a certain sense of detachment that I fear, is not in his basic nature. I could not have coped with the demands without the support of my wife and family. My concerns for Mr. Solo at this juncture are more of a personal nature."

Illya let UNCLE's chief continue, not sure at all where this was headed.

"Mr. Solo has no such support systems in place, you see. He will need a foundation, reassurances, and a safe outlet to decompress." Waverly continued. "I believe you to be the solution to this problem."

Illya did not hesitate. "Sir, there is nothing we would not do for each other and I have no doubt our friendship will remain solidly in place. Napoleon and I are the best of friends." He offered.

"I believe you are more than that." Waverly stated, letting his words hang in the air.

Only now did Illya begin to feel an inkling of discomfort. Kuryakin took enormous efforts to keep the nature of his personal life carefully concealed. In particular, he felt his long-term amorous feelings towards his own partner had successfully been hidden. It had not been without great personal cost to the Russian over the years. The Old Man's latest observation unnerved him more than he cared to admit. What to do?

"Sir, I....." Illya began.

Waverly waved his hand, leaned forward in his chair and sighed.

"Don't be concerned, Mr. Kuryakin." He began. "I've known for quite some time about your personal orientation and let me assure you, I hold no judgment."

Astonished, Illya couldn't help but ask, "But in regards to Napol....."

"That too, Mr. Kuryakin. And may I say, your professionalism over the years has been noted and much appreciated. I commend you. It could not have been easy."

Kuryakin was shocked at these comments but quickly realized he probably shouldn't have been. The distinguished head of UNCLE never missed a thing.

"But sir, Napol....."

“What....doesn’t return the feeling?” Waverly mused. “Don’t be so sure, Mr. Kuryakin.”

“Mr. Waverly,” Illya began. “Napoleon is the most heterosexual man I’ve ever met. Surely his frequent and indiscriminate pursuit of young ladies....”

“Means nothing at all, Mr. Kuryakin.” Waverly interrupted again. “Consider it. There is nothing safer than frivolous encounters with individuals whose temporary presence has no depth, meaning, or longevity in his life.”

“Even so, sir, what makes you think....” Illya sputtered.

“Because, like you, I know him.” Waverly countered. “I’ve watched him grow up, recruited him in college, become an agent, and develop into a man that I am immensely proud of. I know because those same qualities you mentioned earlier were ever present with his wife before she passed. I’m quite sure that Mr. Solo isn’t even aware of his feelings for you as yet, but I have no doubts that, in time, he most certainly will be. I’m asking you to be there for him, Mr. Kuryakin. Don’t turn away from him when that happens.”

“I could never turn away from Napoleon, sir.” Illya spoke softly.

“Indeed.” Waverly rose from his seat. “I believe I have completed all of the business of the day then, Mr. Kuryakin.”

Both men turned when the sliding, grey doors whisked open and Napoleon Solo strode easily into the room carrying a fine bottle of champagne and three glasses. He set them casually on the conference table and spun it around to his long-time mentor. Standing behind Kuryakin, he playfully put his hands on Illya’s shoulders and smiled down at his partner.

Waverly popped the cork and poured for the three of them.

“To what shall we drink, Mr. Solo?” Asked Alexander Waverly.

“To your future, sir. May it be blessed with great happiness, love, and good fortune.”

“And for us all.”