

**maybe you can show me how to love, maybe**

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# **maybe you can show me how to love, maybe**

by [riots](#)

## Summary

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## Notes

thank you, thank you, thank you for your patience with me!! 💕 i hope you like your gift!!

Napoleon had underestimated what it would feel like, to be inside the con.

The job they're working is right up Napoleon's alley. So far up his alley, in fact, that he gets to play *himself* - it won't work, otherwise. Someone is selling off works stolen by the Nazis during the war, works that haven't surfaced in twenty years, great, rare works of art that their countries are very keen to repatriate. And Napoleon is *very* keen to repatriate them.

In this case, Napoleon's particular set of skills come in useful. They need a man to get inside the French art ring, and he's already a known quantity. Of course, he'll have to convince his contacts that the whole 'imprisonment and coercion into working for the CIA' thing was a rumour, but he wouldn't be half the con he is if he couldn't pull that off.

Gaby is to be placed as his paramour. While Napoleon plays the flashy role of the slick art thief, Gaby will be the girlfriend. She's uncannily good at playing a role, and at this point, they're all well familiar with how often people will underestimate a woman. It doesn't hurt that Napoleon has a reputation as a womanizer, never staying with a lover once the blush has worn off. As a beautiful woman, Gaby will slide right under the radar.

Napoleon had been certain that this would be an absolute breeze of a job. What easier role is there to play than himself? But now, as he strolls down the narrow Paris streets with Gaby on his arm, he's beginning to wonder.

"In place, Peril?" he asks, an easy smile on his face, as though making small talk with her. Their shoes are loud against the cobblestones, and the summer night is pleasantly cool. It's almost a shame that they're *not* on a romantic moonlit stroll. Gaby is beautiful as ever, soft brown hair swept up off her neck in an updo, her dress just a smidgen too flashy. A perfect choice on her part - she looks every inch a woman out of her depth, brought along to keep him company.

"Of course," Illya says tersely in their ears. He's a little bit cranky that he's been sidelined for this affair, but it had only been reasonable. An enormous Russian who has yet to manage to figure out how to hide his atrocious accent isn't precisely an asset on a case where they need to *keep* their cover, not blow it. "Remain in contact at all times. The stone in the underground will prevent long-distance radio."

"Makes for such a charming atmosphere, though," Napoleon says, and when he looks at Gaby, she's pretending not to smile. It's easy to needle the big guy when Napoleon knows that part of why he's so put off about this mission is because he's not the one at Gaby's side. He always gets a little shirty when he can't be looming over her, looking protective.

It's been a few months since the two of them started off their little relationship. Napoleon can tell, because that was about when Illya switched from staring after her with undisguised yearning to staring after her with a little more...heat. It's fascinating, and more than a mite amusing. Gaby, for her part, had surprised him. He'd expected someone with as much self-possession as she to have more of an idea of what she wanted from the Russian. Instead, she's tentative. He's seen her looking at him like he's a puzzle, a tough one she's ready to solve. It's just like her to love a puzzle.

And now, here comes the real problem with going undercover as himself: Napoleon has been saddled with the conundrum of pretending to head over heels with a beautiful woman whose company he's already terribly fond of. It becomes a *problem* when he watches her tip her head up to look at the lights as they walk, a little bit of that little chopshop girl peeking through at her genuine wonder. No matter how many big cities they visit, the sparkling high lives they step into, Gaby is still exactly who she was.

They near their destination and her hand on his arm tightens as she arches an eyebrow. "Ready to play?" she asks, and he should feel less charmed by the quirk of her lips.

He's always loved a woman with a backbone. He smooths a hand down the front of his suit jacket. "In this playground? I'm always ready." Gaby snorts and rolls her eyes, and in their ears, Illya lets out a disgusted noise. Napoleon knew they would. He smiles.

They enter a quaint little store front with a very broad-shouldered proprietor, and this time when Napoleon smiles, it's slick and much more manufactured. He flashes a card at the man (fine card stock with nothing but the symbol of the underground market and his contact printed on it. Very chi chi) and then the two of them slip through a door in the back and head down the stairs.

They've arrived fashionably late, of course. The auction is taking place in a secret underground market, invite only. The silent auction is set to start in half an hour, and everyone who's anyone in the historical art collector world is here to see exactly what they can get their hands on. Napoleon feels positively nostalgic. "Do you recognize anyone?" Gaby asks. The untrained eye would think the way that she scans the high-ceilinged room is wide-eyed wonder, but Napoleon knows she's scouting, identifying threats and targets. She's such a pleasure.

"A few faces," Napoleon allows. He got their invite from an old contact of his, a fence he worked with a couple of times before the CIA picked him up who still owed him a favour or two. Other than her, he sees a Belgian collector with impeccable taste in cars, art, and men, a Canadian dealer who is *impossible* to haggle with, and a wealthy Spanish man Napoleon has seen at all of these events, though he never seems to *buy* anything.

"It would be better if I were there," Illya says over the radio. His voice is staticky and disgruntled. "I do not like this."

Napoleon smiles a little, scooping a couple of glasses of expensive champagne off the tray of a passing server. "Relax, Peril," he says, and Gaby raises the glass in a salute before she takes a sip. "Your Gaby is just fine with me to look after her."

"I'm touched," she says dryly, prickly, but a flush creeping across her cheeks at his use of 'your'.

"It is not Gaby that I am worried about," Illya says, tone unreadable. Napoleon pauses, lips on his champagne flute. It's not often that Illya surprises him, and the warmth that floods his chest is just as startling. Napoleon recovers quickly, tipping his head back to drain his champagne. When he glances down, Gaby is watching him, eyes thoughtful.

Napoleon clears his throat, thrown. "It'll take more than a few art collectors to get me down," he promises, and he's embarrassed to realize that he sounds *earnest*, so he spins away, handing off his empty champagne glass and catching Gaby's hand. "Or shall we talk about Istanbul?" He heads towards the Belgian collector.

"No," Illya snaps.

"Please, no," Gaby sighs. "I am already getting a headache."

"I rest my case," Napoleon says, smiling again.

He taps the collector on the shoulder, and the man turns, polite interest wending very quickly into delight as he sees who it is. "Napoleon *Solo*," he says, and he pulls Napoleon in for a hug that's far too intimate for a man he hasn't seen in several years. This is an interaction he's far more comfortable with - he's clearly left *quite* the impression on him after their parting. He does so like it when it's all amicable.

"Matthias," Napoleon purrs. "It's been a while."

"I'll say," Matthias scolds. "What are you doing here? I'd heard you got nabbed by the CIA?" He clicks his tongue, looking Napoleon up and down. "Hard to believe you'd be dressed like that on a CIA paycheque." He's not wrong. This suit cost a mint, and it certainly didn't come from money he earned as a *spy*.

"Can't a man take a break from his hobbies?" Napoleon says, long-suffering. "Find a place on a beach, meet a charming German girl, have some fun..." He tugs Gaby forward like a trophy, presenting her for scrutiny. "Matthias, meet Birgit. My distraction for the past few months. Birgit, this is Matthias. We go *way* back."

Matthias glances at Gaby, finds her acceptably pretty, and promptly dismisses her. Perfect. "Charmed, I'm sure," he says. "So," he continues, and Napoleon discreetly lets Gaby's hand go, catching her eye and directing her towards the Canadian fence with his own gaze. She'll know something about who's shown up today. "You've come for the Morisot, yes? I can't imagine where they dug that up, it's astounding." Gaby taps her fingers against Napoleon's palm in acknowledgement and slips away. "You wouldn't know anything about it, would you?"

"Ah, not this time," Napoleon says. "Though I'm flattered you thought of me first." He's not surprised Matthias put together the pieces. Napoleon always did have a fondness for the Impressionists. "I'm just here to get the lay of the land. I'm afraid I'm a bit rusty."

Matthias rests his hand on Napoleon's elbow, and Napoleon isn't particularly interested but he allows it. Matthias was always more forthcoming with intriguing tidbits when he thought he was talking someone into his bed. "Well, you came at the right time," the man says. "It looks like you're not the only person who's lured in by the Morisot. There's this little *cabal* of the French who have been snapping things up left and right."

Matthias nudges him and Napoleon discreetly glances at a pair of women standing alone. Expensively dressed, but not flashy. They're trying to avoid attention. He has no idea who

they are, which is irritating, but now he knows their target. “I do love a challenge,” Napoleon says, and Matthias laughs, leaning in close.

In his ear, Illya makes a disgruntled noise. “You are here to work,” he reminds Napoleon, “not to flirt.”

Napoleon casually covers his mouth with his hand. “Who’s to say I can’t do both?” he murmurs, and Illya grunts, irritated. It makes Napoleon’s smile stretch wider. “Gaby?”

“On it,” Gaby says quietly.

“What was that?” Matthias asks, and Napoleon flashes him his most blinding grin.

“Nothing, nothing,” he says, touching Matthias’ hand on his elbow to bring him back to flirty, not suspicious. “Just thinking out loud. Tell me what you’ve been up to since I’ve been gone. I want to know *all* the naughty details.”

Delighted, Matthias catches his hand and tugs him into an alcove, purring something about a getaway in the Alps, but Napoleon is far more interested in what Gaby’s doing. This crowd is certainly used to him wooing everything that moves, and it leaves Gaby with a certain amount of maneuverability. They hadn’t discussed the play in great detail, both of them more interested in remaining ready to act on whatever strikes them, and Gaby’s reacting admirably.

“Oh, hello! I mean, *bonjour*.” From his vantage across the room, Napoleon can see that the French women barely give Gaby a second glance. “Your dress is lovely.”

“Merci,” one of them says disdainfully. “Yours is...charming.”

Napoleon lets Matthias nose at his throat, but his eyes are on Gaby as she smooths a hand down her skirt and beams at them. “Thank you!” she says, and he doesn’t miss how the women exchange a look. “It might be the most expensive thing I’ve ever worn.” It’s not. She does look lovely, though.

“Please,” the other woman says, drawing her stole around her shoulders, “excuse us.” They sweep away from Gaby, ducking, interestingly enough, into a side room that isn’t traditionally available to patrons before auctions. Well, isn’t that something.

Gaby hovers around the door, looking forlorn and clutching awkwardly at her champagne. “Did you get anything?” Illya asks.

“Mmm.” Gaby takes in the position Napoleon’s in and raises an eyebrow, expression suddenly unreadable. It occurs to him that he’s never made this propensity of his apparent to her, or Illya for that matter, before now. He’d like to say that it simply hadn’t come up, but the truth was that it’s simpler to play the womanizer, disguise himself behind the role. People are willing to let a lot slide when you’ve a charming enough smile, but some things are a step beyond. He can’t tell what she’s thinking, however, and that makes him nervous. “They’re armed, and one is wearing a signet ring. A serpent before a blade.”

Napoleon slides a hand into Matthias' hair and wonders when this got old for him. Matthias was handsome, flexible, and incredibly interested, and Napoleon's never let a job stop him from enjoying himself. And yet here he is, going through the motions. Seems a waste. "I don't recognize the crest," Illya grumps.

Napoleon does, though. "Vipers," he mutters, barely speaking. Matthias is close now, after all.

Illya curses. "What is it?" Gaby asks, hiding her mouth with her glass.

"Assassins," Illya says mournfully. "A whole ring of assassins. Very beautiful, very deadly. Prefer poisons." And generally, prefer the whole murder profession to anything else. Still, assassins have to get their funding somewhere. The black market is profitable, but it's astounding just how much money there is to be made selling to legitimate collectors. A bit of capital to keep the poisons flowing in. Smart.

"Sounds like trouble," Gaby says, completely unruffled.

"And I do so like a bit of trouble," Napoleon says.

"So do I," Matthias purrs. Napoleon blinks down at him, smile automatic. He'd completely forgotten Matthias was there, which is probably a bit insulting, considering the man's hand sliding up under his jacket.

He catches Matthias' wrist neatly before he can come too close to the gun strapped to his hip. Lucky for him, a slim man in a flawless suit steps to the doorway and rings a single bell. "Alas," he says, and the look he gives Matthias is entirely full of false promise. "The bell tolls."

He slips away with a final squeeze of Matthias' hand and rejoins Gaby. "Did you have fun?" she asks. It's half a tease, half a genuine question. She takes his arm and settles her face into a mask, a girl off balance. She was born to be a spy, right from the very start.

"Not as much as I'd imagined," he admits. Matthias should have been a pleasant surprise, a way to pass the time, a welcome memory. But somehow, the whole encounter was just a little bit off. It didn't seem as fun, anymore. He glances at Gaby, the sharp line of her nose, her dark eyes, and swallows, looking away.

Gaby's hand curls around his wrist, warm, firm. "You never told us about your...predilections."

*Us.* As they slide through the crowd, Napoleon's shoulders square, the picture of a man at ease. It's directly at odds with the nervous tightness in his chest. "It never came up," he says, a half-truth, but not a lie. "Is it a problem?" he asks.

"No." Illya's answer is immediate, harsh and loud in the earpiece. Next to Napoleon, Gaby tips her head away, and he can see the start of a smile. It's the kind of thing that sets a man's head in a spin. "No. Who you bed does not affect how well you do your job. It is of no matter."

There's a certain relief to hearing the words. Napoleon knows many people *intimately*, but friends are harder to come by. Just by nature of the job, but also because of who he is. Napoleon has spent so long playing this game that were he to stop and think, he'd have to address the fact that he's not sure he remembers how to be honest with people who matter.

But knowing that doesn't make it any easier. "Peril," he teases, "that sounds dangerously close to a compliment."

"It is not a compliment," Illya snaps. "I am simply stating a fact. Who you, you, you *sleep* with, it is of no consequence to me."

Wishful thinking, but Napoleon almost wonders if perhaps the lady doth protest too much. Napoleon is a man with broad tastes, for broader shoulders, and those *hands* - well. He can't say he's never considered it. But he knows how Illya feels about Gaby, and she him, right from the very beginning. Napoleon's not selfish enough, nor fool enough, to try to sidle between them.

"Well, thanks, big guy," Napoleon says. "That means ever so much."

Another man in an expensive suit holds his hand out for their ticket, and Napoleon hands it over. This one looks almost the same as the one who rang the bell. Neat trick. He points to their seats with one elegant hand, and Napoleon sweeps Gaby off.

"And you?" he asks as they settle into their chairs. He's not certain why it would matter

She sweeps her skirt under her as she sits and crosses her legs. She still has her hand around his wrist. Possessive. She could be playing the role, insecure little Birgit, but somehow, Napoleon thinks she isn't. More wishful thinking, perhaps. "I shouldn't be surprised that you're an incorrigible flirt with all genders," she says, and she settles his hand in her lap, not looking at him.

"I am that," he agrees, and he can see her suppress a smile from the tightness of her mouth.

The man with the bell stands on the stage, hands folded neatly in front of him while the first painting is wheeled out. Oh, he's never seen this Cassatt before. It makes him itch to see it up close. The crowd around them quiets to whispers, and Napoleon holds Gaby's hand. He's never really told anyone, before. He has, of course, had the kind of conversation poorly lit clubs that lead to a man under (or over) him, but nothing like this. He feels freer, but also exposed. He doesn't like vulnerability. He prefers expensive wine, expensive suits, and stealing fine art. Much less dangerous.

Illya clears his throat. "So. We did not plan for French assassins. What are we going to do?" They could, of course, reach out to Waverly, but underground as they were, it would take time. Better to react on their feet. If the Vipers were after the paintings, this would be their last best chance. A legitimate art auction would be more public, more security, harder to work their way into. Napoleon's contacts wouldn't help.

"We stick to the plan," Napoleon says. The auctioneer has started now, and Napoleon raises his hand in a bid. It would draw attention if he didn't. He does *so* like the Impressionists. "In



a few minutes, I'll excuse myself to the bathroom and help myself to some of the stock. If we're lucky, our charming surprise guests will never know we were there."

"And if we're not?" Gaby asks.

"I'll work fast," Napoleon says. In their ear, Illya sighs, mutters something that Napoleon doesn't catch.

They sit through a few more of the auctions until they bring out a painting Napoleon has no interest in, and then he stands. "Keep bidding," he murmurs.

"I know," Gaby says, a trace of ice in her tone. "Play it cautious, like I am out of my depth." She clicks her tongue.

"This is not her first rodeo, *Cowboy*," Illya says.

"I know," Napoleon says, and he squeezes Gaby's shoulder as he slips out of the room, avoiding Matthias' eye. He doesn't need someone trailing along behind him.

Napoleon charms his way past a couple of security guards, slipping down a series of increasingly narrow hallways. It's been a while since he's done this, but the steps are all so familiar, and so is the thrill that burns in his chest. He has to admit, he misses this.

Their entry point is a storeroom behind the secure art storage, with a weak point in the wall. Napoleon had scouted this out a long time ago, but he'd never taken advantage of it. Too flashy, too final. He'd liked the market. Now, however, he's got new thrills to seek. He thinks of the line of Gaby's long neck, Illya's wide hands. New company, too.

He's dropped to his knees by the doorknob, one pick between his lips, two more working the lock, when Illya speaks. "This is a mistake," Illya says. There's that typical Peril frustration again. "You put yourself too much at risk."

The lock clicks beneath his gloved fingers, and Napoleon smiles. "I'm touched," he says, and he's embarrassed to realize that he means it, too. "I'll be fine, Peril."

Illya makes a frustrated noise. "You cannot take on the Vipers alone," he chides. "There are almost certainly more than two."

"Probably," Napoleon agrees. He fumbles through his pocket, comes out with a device that Illya had insisted he carry. A small explosive, designed for minimum sound. At least some of these gadgets are good for something. He presses it against the wall. "I'm sure you'll come sweeping in to save the day as always." He won't be deterred. He *wants* these paintings, but he also doesn't want them to fall into the bad guys' hands. Napoleon steps back behind a shelving unit as cover and puts his hands over his ears, frowning. When did he start caring about doing the right thing? Terrible.

The little device explodes, and the wall crumbles. Not silent, but definitely not loud enough to catch the attention of the auction attendees above him. It'll do. "*Napoleon*," Illya says, and Napoleon pauses in the dust. "...be careful."

“I told you,” Napoleon says gently. “I can look after myself.”

The secure storage room is just as he remembers it, although there are a few upgrades. He slips under the line of sight of the camera, sliding a mirror up to block the view. He won’t have long, but it will have to do. He moves quickly, sliding as many paintings as he can back into their storage crates, tucking them all together. He keeps one ear open, listening to the background chatter of the street as Illya moves to get their getaway vehicle into place, and the noise of the auction.

It’s strange, doing a job like this with partners. He’s always worked alone, and he prefers it that way. But there *is* a certain pleasure in knowing that he doesn’t have to keep track of all of the pieces. The strings are just there for him to grab. It’s risky, but he likes it. “In position,” Illya says, just as Napoleon is sealing the last of the crates. “Are you ready, Solo?”

“Just about,” Napoleon says. “Gaby?”

“We have a problem,” she replies tersely. Napoleon straightens, and over the earpiece, he can no longer hear the sounds of the auction. Instead, he hears her heels on tiled floor. “One of the French women, the Vipers, she left after you.”

Napoleon grits his teeth. Their window is closing. Illya swears under his breath, something *very* colourful and very Russian. “I am coming in,” Illya says.

“No,” Napoleon says immediately. Not only would an enormous Russian arouse suspicion, Illya’s combat skills would be of no use against the Vipers. He likes to get in close, to wrestle. A pair of women who like knives and poison? They’d take him down in a flash. He doesn’t want that. “Stay with the truck.”

“You need me,” Illya protests. “I can - ”

There are heels coming down the hall towards the storage room. Somehow, Napoleon knows he’s not lucky enough that it’s Gaby already here. “No,” Napoleon hisses again, and he reaches for his gun. He has to keep her from getting too close. It’s the only chance he’s got. He ducks behind a stack of crates and he raises his gun, listening for the door to open.

The woman who slides the door open is unremarkable, well dressed, and armed with a wicked blade that Napoleon wants nothing to do with. He takes slow, even breaths, his gun at the ready. Napoleon thought that Illya was a machine, but this woman moves like something inhuman, careful, vigilant. It’s unsettling. More unsettling is how she steps precisely into the room, eyes on the hole in the back. He’s still close enough to slide through without much trouble, but he’d almost certainly take a blade to the back for his trouble. This is not good.

Napoleon raises his weapon, steadying himself against the crates, but he needn’t have bothered. A shot rings out before he can pull the trigger and the woman falls, silent. Behind her, Gaby stands, her little pistol in hand. She looks at him, lips pressed tightly together. She hasn’t had much chance to use her gun in the field yet. It’s not her first kill, but that certainly doesn’t make it easier. “Thank you,” Napoleon says. He steps towards her, pulling her into the room and cupping her elbow with her hand. “Are you alright?” His voice is soft.

“I’ll be fine,” she says, but she lets her hand rest on top of his for a moment.

“What’s happening?” Illya demands. “Gaby?”

“She’s alright, Peril,” Napoleon assures him. He stoops to rifle through the Viper’s pockets. She’s got all sorts of fascinating little vials, and he scoops them up for himself. Her knife, he takes that too. It can’t hurt to fight fire with fire. “Just a little date with an assassin. She didn’t get a chance to get frisky, though.”

Illya makes a noise in the back of his throat. “You have the paintings?” he asks. Napoleon smiles a little at that, at Illya’s impatience but also - he knows Napoleon will insist on seeing the job through.

“We’re ready. We’ll meet you there.” Behind Napoleon, Gaby is slipping out of her shoes to swap them with a pair of boots. Better mobility. He loves how sensible she is.

As he watches her, Gaby straightens, pulling her chin up and taking a deep breath. “Well?” she says. “Let’s get on with it.”

Napoleon only has to knock out a few security guards on the way down to the loading dock, which is a blessing. He’s still on edge, waiting for the other Vipers to slither out of the darkness. It’s only because of this paranoia that he catches the sound of soft footsteps as Illya sets the crate in the back of the truck. He spins, sliding between Gaby and the dark clad man. His knife catches the downswing of the assassin’s blade with a wicked clink of metal on metal, and Napoleon has to put his muscle into it to stop the downswing.

“Napoleon!” Gaby yells.

“Go!” he shouts back. The Viper recovers, slipping away like an eel, knife flashing. Napoleon can already tell that this is a lost cause. He’s no slump in a fight, but this man is faster than anything Napoleon has ever faced. There’s a reason he never tried to tackle the Vipers before now. All he can do is buy them some time. And that’s what he’ll do.

Napoleon loses track of Illya and Gaby, too focused on trying to keep the assassin’s attention, and trying to stay *alive*. The man is unrelenting, and Napoleon hisses as the Viper lunges forward, his blade scoring a red hot line across his cheekbone. *Well, shit*, he thinks.

He can already feel it starting to work, spidering burning hot up from the wound, and Napoleon staggers back a few steps and drops to his knees. He sees the assassin loom over him, teeth white in a triumphant smile, and as he hits the ground, he hears someone roar. Then, it’s nothing but blackness.

He’s getting a bit tired of this, if he’s honest. At least this will be the last time.

He comes to, and the world sways around him. It takes him several long moments to place it, then he realizes - they're in the van. The swaying is the vehicle, racing through traffic. As he slowly surfaces, he hears Russian from above him, swimming into real words as consciousness returns. "*Stupid bloody American,*" Illya hisses. He's cradling Napoleon to his broad chest, fumbling with something on the ground next to them. "*Trying to get himself killed before we can even -*" Napoleon hears something clink next to them and Illya cuts off again, cursing.

"Before what?" Napoleon asks. His tongue feels thick in his mouth. "Go on, finish what you were saying." His head is reeling with whatever still curls through his veins, and he clutches at the hand Napoleon has pressed over his heart.

"Napoleon," Illya breathes, and he bends over him, pressing his forehead to his. "I thought you'd -" Napoleon's eyes slide shut again, and he sucks in a breath.

"Thank God," Gaby says in Napoleon's ear. Ah, of course. Gaby always was the best driver. "Don't you *ever* do that again."

"Is this a dream?" Napoleon asks. It certainly feels like one. That's the only answer for the shaky, wounded, *relieved* sound of Gaby's voice, and for how Illya is folded bodily around him, like he could shield him with his entire being. It's the only way that this could be happening, right now.

"No," Illya says tersely. Napoleon can feel the rumble of his voice against his spine. "Because this would be a terrible dream."

The truck veers again, and through the small window between the cab and the truck, Napoleon catches a glimpse of Gaby's profile. Her brow is furrowed, her lips pressed into a worried line. "It's the only way I'd be in your arms, Peril," Napoleon laughs painfully. His head feels too large, too hot. Illya freezes, then pulls something up from the floor beside them. Vials, Napoleon realizes. It must be how he's even here, talking to them. Would be a poor assassin who didn't have the antidote on them.

Illya pulls up another small glass, squints at it, then flicks it open. "Drink," he commands. Napoleon doubts it can make him feel much worse, so he obediently opens his mouth, tips his head back, and lets Illya pour the fluid across his tongue.

"He bashed that man's head in," Gaby says, conversationally. Napoleon chokes. "We saw you fall, and he - I - I'm *glad*." She says it with a quiet ferocity, and Napoleon, for once, is struck dumb. "You are not allowed to sacrifice yourself like that."

"Seems a fair trade," Napoleon says blearily. The antidote is vile, but he swallows it down. It is a fair trade, to him. His life, for theirs? A bargain.

The truck swings again. "We cannot go on without you."

Napoleon opens his mouth to make another joke, but he freezes when Illya presses a toothy, open mouthed kiss to the side of his head. There is no ambiguity to it. Napoleon's heart pounds in his chest. Are they saying...? "I don't - "

"There is no us without you," Illya says against his skin. "No UNCLE without Napoleon." There he goes, using Napoleon's *name* again.

When he looks up, Napoleon sees Gaby looking back at him, something fierce and warm and fond in her eyes. "If you die on us, I will drag you back and kill you myself," she tells him, and Napoleon lets out a shaky laugh, grinning up at her. His smile is the one he's only ever worn with them, wide and real and too honest.

"How could I ignore a threat like that?" he says weakly, and he can feel Illya smile against him.

"Now rest," Illya demands. "We will get us home."

With Gaby behind the wheel, and Illya monitoring his pulse with a palm over his heart, Napoleon doesn't doubt it. "Best job I've ever pulled," he declares, words slurred, and Illya and Gaby laugh together as Napoleon's eyes slide shut again.

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