

RIM SHOT
BY [LAH](#)

Spring 1967...

"The only way now is up."

"As opposed to previously?"

"I'm not the one who said getting down and dirty was just part of the job."

"Thrush has no sense of humor."

"Uh-huh. You're lucky, Kuryakin, that you're only wading and not drowning in milk chocolate."

"Luck had nothing to do with it. I saw this vat being drained, so I maneuvered my captors in its direction."

"You couldn't just maneuver yourself toward the door?"

"Nobody told you to come after me."

"Remind me tomorrow to get even with this nobody guy. Right now let's get you out of this candied mess."

Napoleon leaned into the vat as far as safety permitted and extended his arms toward his trapped partner.

"Grab hold."

Illya eyed Solo's arms dangling some four feet above his head.

"I will contact you when I've had another growth spurt, Napoleon."

"Funny Russian. Jump, will you? We don't have all day."

Normally taking such a 'leap of faith' toward his partner wouldn't have been difficult for Illya. But at the moment there was the hindrance of his right ankle that he more than suspected was broken. Napoleon wasn't aware of this and, even if he had been, there really weren't many options. The sides of the huge steel mixing tank were too slick to climb. There wasn't a ladder or rope available, nor was there sufficient time to scout around for one. So, taking a deep breath and backing up as far as he could to the opposite side of the vat in order to make a running start, Illya leapt... and missed... and crashed into a puddle on the sludgy floor.

"I thought you were a past gymnast?" Napoleon criticized. Then he peered down at the huddled figure of his friend. "You're hurt, aren't you? Leg?"

"Ankle," acknowledged Illya with an uneven breath.

Napoleon stood and worried his lower lip. This did present a problem.

He didn't get much chance to consider solutions, however, as one of the Thrush muscle came out of nowhere and body-slammed him toward the vat. Napoleon careened feet-first into the enormous metal container as he desperately clutched the rim with both hands.

Illya stood up, shouting "Hang on, Napoleon!"

"There's another choice?"

The Thrush was peering smugly over the rim. Both men knew he would, after his minute of gloating, stomp on Napoleon's fingers.

Illya reached up and grabbed his friend's ankles. "Stay loose and jackknife at the waist when I say."

Napoleon barely registered Illya's instructions before he found his legs being swung hard sideways, right up over the lip of the vat.

"Jackknife!" yelled Illya and Napoleon did, eyes closed the whole time as the Thrush goon was caught by his thrust-out legs. The Thrush collapsed to the floor, Napoleon solidly atop him and outside the vat.

Chatting later with the pretty nurse attending to his ankle, Illya boldly asserted: "I had to guide Napoleon in working the rim."

He totally missed the woman's stunned blink... or maybe not.

—THE END—

