

Operation: Uncover - Part 2

For Halima Abdi

By TheSpiralledEye

Ines is struggling to live her new life as a journalist thanks to her secret agent alter ego, L'ombre, who just wants to seduce or fight her way through life. After being dragged back to help with the kidnapping of a famous scientist she is paired with Dahlia, a beautiful transformed woman who seems to get along with her own passenger much better. Love and understanding blooms but danger awaits around every corner, threatening to take the happiness Ines fought so hard to achieve.

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'You're acting like a little girl with a crush.'

"I just want to look professional."

'No, you want to look sexy. You can't lie to me Ines, I'm inside your brain. Just let me dress us, I'll pick something nice and slutty, perfect for seducing potential informants, and fellow agents...'

Ines pulled on her black, form fitting turtleneck and buttoned up her red leather skirt, doing her best to ignore L'ombre's groans as she picked out a pair of black stockings over the fishnets. She did want to impress Dahlia, but she was determined to do it as Ines, not as a spy. She would show the other agent her wit, her intelligence and her journalistic integrity. Then maybe, if she was lucky, they might even be friends.

Dahlia's allure was more than just her beauty; though of course that was part of it. The idea that there was somebody else out there like her, with another personality in their head made from a life of spy work, was fascinating to her. In Dahlia she had one chance to find somebody who she could be herself with, fully open and honest without feeling like a liar.

As wonderful as her life as Ines Yoshida was, it did come with some baggage; the imposter syndrome being the biggest. She had a whole set of memories, her girlhood growing up as a Japanese-French immigrant, her time at university, her first job. She even

met with her parents for dinner once a week. But there was always that niggling knowledge, egged on by L'ombre, that it was all fake.

None of the memories of her life before last year were real, they had just been created by a machine. L'ombre loved taunting her with that knowledge, each time her mother would fondly 'remember' a moment from Ines' childhood L'ombre was right there to point out that no, she hadn't gone to a sunflower farm, she'd been training to become a bloodthirsty killer.

She was so caught up in her thoughts she didn't have time to stop L'ombre taking charge and pushing her to the back of her own mind. L'ombre smiled, posing in front of the mirror so that she could examine the outfit from every angle.

"Not bad I supposed, at least this turtleneck is tight. Too conservative for my taste, but it does show off our assets."

She grabbed at their tits and pushed them with a grin.

"Look at these damn milkers, not many women with our small build have tits this big..." She sighed happily, "Oh, I know, next time we seduce a man for info, let's use these to smother him after; he wouldn't even mind, any man would be happy to die crushed beneath these-"

"Will you stop!" Ines hissed, reasserting control. "You sound like a bad porno."

'Fun one though.'

"Just don't embarrass us in front of Dahlia."

'If anybody is at risk of doing that it's you, you're a woeful spy. I bet I could impress her though, if you let me take charge we could get this mission done and I could get her into bed. That is what you want right?'

"What I want," Ines sighed as she locked her front door and started making her way to the rendezvous point. "Is to be rid of you."

'You don't mean that.' L'ombre said haughtily, 'You need me.'

Ines could have been wrong but she swore she felt a pang of...hurt? She quickly dismissed it though, she remembered all those times L'ombre took over, the ruthless way she fought and her bad attitude. Not to mention, she remembered herself as Roanoke, a cold, calculating monster. If L'ombre was born from that she wasn't capable of hurt; she was barely capable of feeling.

'Look Ines, we're going to do this mission, like it or not and you need me. So let me be me.'

"...Fine. But I am keeping you on a short leash."

'Kinky.'

"Oh shut up."

L'ombre sat in the back of her mind sulking the entire journey. It was the best Ines could hope for really so she wasn't going to look a gift horse in the mouth. Her handler had messaged her last night, telling her to meet Dahlia at a small hole in the wall coffee shop. Popular with tourists so it was always busy. An easy place to discuss their plans.

When she stepped inside she spotted Dahlia immediately. She was wearing a sleeveless singlet and jeans that showed off her midriff. Yet somehow, she managed to make it look sophisticated. Ines' heart began to thump and she could feel L'ombre's hunger.

"Dahlia." Ines greeted and the woman looked up from her phone and smiled.

"Ines, take a seat, let's get down to business."

The warm smile faded and Dahlia took on a colder, more focused look as she took out the laptop and angled it so that only they and the wall could see the screen.

"I've already organised a list of people present at the kidnapping. Odds are, one if not a handful were in on it. I have already cross checked the museum staff myself, since we've been working there for some time and know they are all clean."

Ines blinked in shock; she was so...matter of fact. She didn't even seem to notice how overwhelmed Ines already was as she continued listing off a novel's worth of information about her top suspects.

“Are you Dahlia’s...spy?” Ines whispered, finally making the other woman stop. “Her other personality?”

“Yes.” She replied, “You can call me Doll.”

Ines felt her cheeks flush at that, she couldn’t call her Doll, it would sound like some sort of pet name. Doll smiled coyly and before the warmth returned to the other woman’s eyes and Ines knew Dahlia was back in control.

“Don’t mind Doll.” She giggled, “She’s professional right up until she isn’t. Good at what she does though, I haven’t really got a head for investigation anymore so I let her take the reins, except when it comes to people.”

“Is she violent and overly sexual too?” Ines asked with sympathy only for Dahlia to throw back her head in laughter.

“What? No! She’s just horrible at talking to people. I was an analyst before I was...Dahlia. I had the charisma of a rock, and Doll seems to have inherited that.” She giggled again, “so...you were some sort of violent sex pest before you were a reporter?”

Ines felt her pink cheeks turn vibrant red and her ears begin to burn; in the back of her head L’ombre was positively *cackling* with laughter.

‘Hells yeah you were!’ she jeered, ‘not that you would ever admit it, my god, Roanoke was such a sad mother fucker, he was so repressed it was pathetic.’

Ines grit her teeth in fury, trying her best to block the voice out even though she knew it was hopeless. A moment later a warm hand gripped hers where it was white knuckling the table and she jumped, shocked to see Dahlia looking at her with concern.

“Are you alright?”

“Yes, fine just...L’ombre is being her usual irritating self.”

Dahlia pulled a face before turning serious as Doll switched in.

“You two need to start working better together. If not for the sake of the mission but yourselves. It must be exhausting if you are fighting like this all the time.”

“Easier said than done.” Ines ground out.

‘Can we please get back to the mission?’

“We should probably focus.” Ines said, even she was getting sick of her self pity party. “I think we should start with the journalists.”

“The press? You think one of them could be in on it?”

“Not necessarily, but journalists are observant. I should know.” Ines smiled proudly, “and plenty of them had cameras, you saw them all going crazy as Munroe walked in. There have to be thousands of photographs, hours of footage of the kidnapping. If we can get our hands on them, I bet we can at least find more information to narrow our search.”

Dahlia beamed.

“Great idea!”

Ines felt that fire inside her ignite; that passion for investigation. Yes, this was a spy mission but looking through photos, chatting with fellow members of the press and sweet talking them into giving up their information? That was all her domain. The fact that Dahlia seemed impressed was just the icing on the cake.

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Thanks to Ines’ connections in the Parisian journalist sphere, getting in contact with the members of the press who were at the kidnapping was easy enough. Of course, none of them made getting information easy. A good scoop made a journalist's career after all, nobody was willing to share anything they noticed, let alone photographs, without a good reason.

Ines managed to sweet talk a few, but ended up empty handed and Dahlia seemed to be having just as much luck. Those who did share didn't have anything of note and Ines felt herself starting to get nervous, she had been so sure this would help. The last thing they needed was to hit a dead end.

The sun was setting on their first day working together and so far they had nothing to show for it. There was one final office to check out, a small independent magazine that had only just managed to garner an invite; it was the publication's first big story so getting information from them was going to be difficult but Ines was determined. Her freedom and Dahlia's respect were on the line.

'Let me help, darling.' L'ombre purred, *'Come on, you know I can...hike up your skirt a little and lose the stockings.'*

Ines bit the inside of her cheek and pushed open the door. Dahlia took the lead, chatting with the publications owner, while Ines did her best to subtly glance over any computer screens and desks left unattended.

Ines watched, trying not to feel bitter as Dahlia and Doll effortlessly switched control. Nobody else would ever suspect they were different people sharing a body. It just appeared like Dahlia was the sort to hyper fixate at random moments, before relaxing once more. They worked so well together, and Ines cursed the universe for sticking her with L'ombre instead of somebody more like Doll.

'Will you stop it?'

"Stop what?" She whispered.

'The woe is me crap. Like it or not, I am here and despite what you think, I am useful.'

She was about to bite back, when she noticed something; a familiar face. A young man, only a few years out of college she would guess, with a handsome face and dark eyes. She recognised him; he'd been taking photos at the event! He had been especially keen, she remembered the hunger on his face. Clearly he was eager to prove himself as a real journalist.

'Young and naive still.' L'ombre purred, *'He wants to be a big boy reporter so bad he'll do anything. No amount of sweet talking is going to get him to spill...but I bet we can do it another way.'*

Ines ignored her, she was determined to do this without resorting to...that. Even if it did, admitably, sound fun. She cast her eyes over the desk, taking in the chaotic papers and

pencils scattered everywhere. A small, perfectly polished name badge was placed atop it all, Ethan Willow. She smiled, while the rest of the desk was a disaster zone. Ethan was clearly very proud of his first job judging by how well maintained and prominent that little item was.

"Hey, Ethan," she said with a warm smile. "Mind if I chat for a moment?"

Ethan looked up from his laptop and quickly shut it defensively.

"Sure, Ines. What's on your mind?"

"I saw you at the Louvre the other night," India began, tactfully curling a finger around her dark hair so that his eye would be subtly drawn down to her chest. "Anything interesting catch your eye? Maybe a shot of somebody suspicious?"

L'ombre purred in the back of her mind, she approved of this flirtatious approach. Ethan's eyes flickered with a hint of guardedness.

"Maybe, don't see how that's your business though, unless you're in the business of stealing stories."

Not a great start. India leaned in slightly, trying to charm her way into his good graces.

"I'd never steal a story but I was thinking maybe we could...collaborate. Get your name in a byline over at my humble little paper."

She could see it, the hunger in his eyes. Ines worked for one of the biggest Parisian news outlets, getting his name in a story there would mean way more than his little rag. But then his eyes flicked over to the editor and chief who was still talking to Dahlia and Ines could see loyalty there. That man had given Ethan his first big break, clearly the man didn't want to throw him under the bus.

'Come on Ines, stronger! Get overt!'

"Who knows, maybe some spots will open up on the team." Ines added, "I'd love to work with you."

There was a twinkle in Ethan's eye now, she could see his eyes dipping down to the curve of her breasts through the turtle neck and silently, Ines wished she'd listened to L'ombre and worn something low cut.

"I've read your stuff." Ethan admitted, blushing slightly, "you're a great reporter."

"Thank you." Ines smiled genuinely. "I am sure you are going to be amazing too, once you get a big break..."

'Oh, for fucks sake. If you won't take advantage of this dynamite body to get what we need, I will.'

Ines felt herself shunted to the back as L'ombre took control, sitting them up on the desk and crossed their legs before leaning over to touch Ethan's chin with a coy smile.

"Maybe..." L'ombre purred, "This story could be your big break, we could work on it together...I'll help you write the story, no credit given. If say, you let me see your pictures. We could make it a date."

"D-date?"

"Yeah...I'll tell my lovely partner over there that I need a break, we could go back to your place work a little...play a little...?" L'ombre's smile turned predatory and Ines watched as a passenger in her own body as Ethan's face turned redder.

"I was about to knock off and it would be a massive mistake to not take advantage of a famous journalist offering her help."

"Oh honey, you're not taking advantage at all." L'ombre purred, "shall I call us a taxi?"

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Ines was conflicted; on the one hand, it felt dirty letting L'ombre tease this man in the back of a taxi. She was petting his legs, whispering sweet nothings in his ear ranging from the dirty things she was going to do to him to promises of a big break. On the other, it was working. Ines could see Ethan letting down his guard, if he didn't share what he'd seen with them willingly she was sure L'ombre would have no issues using those talented fingers of hers to get access to the laptop that was laying forgotten on the seat beside them.

That and...well, it felt good. She may not be in control of their body right now but she could still feel everything. Including how wet L'ombre was getting them. It had been a while since she'd let the former spy out to play and her memories of that night were...fantastic if she had to be honest. Sex in this body was incredible, especially when L'ombre took over; she had no inhibitions and took pleasure as readily as she could give it.

By the time they reached Ethan's small, cramped apartment all pretext of working on a story together had gone out the window. The second the door closed behind them L'ombre was on him, pressing the man into the wall and wrapping a leg around his waist while kissing his neck.

"I can sense talent..." L'ombre said, stroking the man's ego. "It gets me all hot and heavy, come on, let's see if your body is as good as your mind, Ethan."

It was insane to Ines, how confident Ethan looked; he really had no idea that L'ombre was in control of this situation entirely. He was exactly where she wanted him to be. Ines could feel their body growing hot under their clothes; nipples hardening, panties growing wet. She could also feel L'ombre's teasing thoughts.

Both of them were keenly aware that if Ines wanted to, she could take over again, put a stop to this. But deep down she didn't want to, because she was just as horny as L'ombre and this was their best chance to achieve their goal.

Ethan stripped them and L'ombre divested him of his clothes in turn. He was overly eager, grabbing at their skin hard but L'ombre loved it. She moaned as he gripped their hips and squeezed at their tits.

"Finally, somebody who knows how to use these!" She groaned, pushing her chest further into his hands as they fell onto the bed.

Ines would have been annoyed by the jab but she was too awash with desire. There was something intoxicatingly sexy about being a passenger in your own body while it was being fucked. She could feel Ethan's cock brushing against their inner thigh, so close to their hole. Just as he was about to push inside though L'ombre grinned and flipped them over, clearly surprising Ethan with her strength and dexterity.

Giving him one more flirty look, she sunk down on him and began to ride. At first she showed surprisingly restraint, gliding up and down on Ethan's cock teasingly. Ines wasn't sure who was being tortured more; her or Ethan. Either way, L'ombre was loving every second of it.

“Oh yeah, you like that baby?” She cooed, “I can make it feel even better if I do this...”

She squeezed him and Ethan’s eyes almost rolled back. His hips were bucking up into L’ombre hard and his hands gripped their hips so tight Ines was sure they would have bruises. Yet L’ombre refused to speed up to give him relief.

“So...” She whispered, “We’d better work on your story don’t you think?”

“W-what?!”

“See anything or anybody suspicious?”

She rolled her hips, teasing him by speeding up and slowing down again until Ethan was nothing more than a babbling mess.

“Oh fuck ah...I uh...”

He couldn’t think clearly, not with L’ombre torturing him like that. Ines saw her game, she was getting off on the power she held over this man but also squeezing the information out of him.

“A man...with dark hair...” Ethan stammered as he thrust, “he kept watching the windows before those people came though ah...I thought he was bored but then he disappeared when Munroe was kidnapped-oh fuck please I’m so close.!”

“Good boy.” L’ombre cooed, “You’ve earned a reward.”

She began to ride him harder and Ines felt pleasure explode through their body as they came, seconds later, Ethan followed. Ines shivered, feeling herself back in control for the tiniest of moments, just enough for L’ombre to gloat.

‘Told you. Now, let me finish the job.’

Immediately the Alter was back in control and she continued to fuck Ethan back to hardness. Making him cum again, then a third time until he was finally spent and flopped back on the mattress, utterly exhausted.

'You do the cuddling.' L'ombre said flippantly, *'I fucked him good, he'll be fast asleep in ten minutes and we can check out that laptop.'*

Ines pulled herself off Ethan's softened cock with a shudder and laid down next to him, simultaneously feeling accomplished and ashamed of what she'd just been party to. She hated to admit it, but L'ombre had been right. This was the best course of action; and when Ethan woke up alone tomorrow his story would be safe. She would never steal another journalist's ideas.

Once Ethan was soundly asleep she crept out of bed and opened the laptop, searching through the photos to find the man he'd spoken of. Most of the images were of the fight, blurry and indistinct but Ines did blush when she saw one of L'ombre mid kick. In that outfit she looked...impressive. If only the top of her dress wasn't so exposed.

'Check us out Ines, look at what we can be when we work as a team.' L'ombre said quietly, *'We are stunning. I don't know why you're embarrassed.'*

Ines held her tongue for now and clicked to the next photo and her blood turned to ice in her veins. Instantly, she knew the man Ethan had spoken of, he'd kidnapped her not long ago. In the background of a photo, taken seconds before all hell had broken loose, was Watcher.

Ines felt panic begin to build in her chest as she remembered the terror that man had put her through. She had been just a civilian when he'd taken her, all memories of being Roanoke gone. It was only thanks to L'ombre she had survived. Her hands hovered over the keyboard, frozen in fear when suddenly, L'ombre was in control again. Wordlessly the Alter took over, looking through photos and notes Ethan had made with an eerie calmness.

"According to Ethan's follow ups, he's managed to spot the man entering a building not far from the Louvre itself. He was planning on going there to try and speak with him tomorrow." L'ombre muttered, half to herself and half to the panicking Ines.

Ines forced herself to calm and take control again; she refused to let that man beat her. She and L'ombre beat him once, they can do it again.

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She dressed quickly, leaving Ethan a kind note of thanks and a few pointers for his article before running out into the street. Her mind was racing, Watcher, how did he get out of

solitary confinement? And Why would he kidnap Dr. Munroe? Her thoughts were swimming as she reported back to Dahlia who seemed just as concerned.

“I heard what went down with you and Watcher.” She said sympathetically, “I’d do this on my own but I think L’ombre would kick my ass.”

Ines actually chuckled half heartedly at the joke; if nothing else she appreciated Dahlia trying to cheer her up.

“Let’s stake out that place mentioned in Ethan’s notes. We’ll see if we can figure something out.”

Ines swallowed and nodded.

“Alright.”

Dahlia placed a hand on her shoulder and smiled softly in a way that made Ines’ heart flutter.

“Hey, don’t worry, Doll and I will take care of you.”

‘I take care of us.’

Ines ignored her Alter and reached up to give the hand on her shoulder a quick squeeze. Her hopes for finding somebody with the same issues as her had been dashed for the most part, but at least Dahlia was shaking up to be the most understanding friend she had made in quite some time.

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Stakeouts were the worst part of being a spy. In the movies they would only show the last few minutes before getting right to the action and Ines couldn’t blame them; it was *dull*. Even L’ombre was getting stir crazy, luckily her desire for action was stronger than her sex drive or Ines might have worried about her taking over to try and seduce Dahlia out of pure boredom.

“That was good work, getting the photos.” Dahlia said quietly after almost an hour of silence. “L’ombre must be damn good in bed.”

Ines blushed, both curious and too embarrassed to ask how Dahlia had figured out her methods.

“I don’t usually...”

“No I mean it, gotta use every tool at your disposal.” She said before grinning and adding, “we don’t shame people for their natural urges here.”

Ines giggled half heartedly before sighing.

“How do you do it?”

“Do what?”

“Get on with your alternate personality? Doesn’t Doll existing just drive you insane?”

Dahlia raised an eyebrow.

“No? Why would it? If anything I get the best of both worlds; super spy and a normal life surrounded by art. I don’t even have to do half the hard thinking because she can do it for me. It’s sort of like having a sister, except we share a body.”

‘Aw, how sweet. Sisters.’

“L’ombre just likes to make me miserable.” Ines muttered, “She gets her kicks teasing me all the time. She’s not really a person, just that nasty voice most people have in the back of their mind, with more emphasis.”

A wave of emotion washed over her from L’ombre for the briefest moment but the Alter clamped it down before Ines could identify what it was. Dahlia pressed her lips together and looked conflicted for a moment.

“Maybe I shouldn’t be saying this but...have you tried being a little nicer to her?”

“L’ombre?” Ines said incredulously.

“I mean, since we started working together you’ve not said a single nice thing about her. That’s gotta really sting, maybe that’s why she teases you all the time.”

Ines scoffed.

“L’ombre is just all of Roanoke’s leftover aggression, she’s all action, no real personality.”

Dahlia raised an eyebrow.

“You really think that?”

“She didn’t even give herself a name until a few months ago, I just thought of her as The Agent.”

“If she really was just Roanoke’s knowledge and skills with no personality...do you think she would have given herself a name?” Dahlia pointed out, “or started referring to herself as a ‘her’?”

Ines felt dumbstruck; she’d never considered that before; Dahlia made a good point though. Why did L’ombre give herself a feminine name? Or start going by she? For that matter, why was she so sex obsessed when Roanoke had basically been asexual for all the thought he gave the act? Ines had assumed she just liked the power play but if that were the case; wouldn’t she just get off fighting?

“It took Doll and I a while to come to terms with things as well.” Dahlia admitted, “But we’ve each found our niche, the things we enjoy and I make sure to give her freedom. It’s not like we keep track or anything but I don’t want her to feel trapped.”

Ines bit her lip; she hated when L’ombre took over and left her stranded in the back of their mind; at least most of the time. She’d never really taken the opportunity to think about how it might feel for her Alter; spending 95% of her time a passenger in her body, doing things she disliked with the only company somebody who openly despised and told her as much constantly.

Was her attitude so bad because she was...hurt? Ines hadn’t thought her capable of it but maybe she’d been wrong. Ines was beginning to suspect she’d been wrong about a lot of things.

They all lapsed into silence once more and the night wore on without any sign of Watcher. The sun rose and Dahlia bribed a paper boy to go knock on the building's door to see if anybody answered; nothing.

“We should check inside ourselves.” Doll said seriously, “Come, I am sure I can get a window unlocked.”

Ines wasn't sure what to hope as they crept their way through the early morning dawn light to the side alley where Doll began to silently pick a window lock. L'ombre rumbled inside her head.

‘Do you want me to take over, Ines?’

The offer felt...oddly comforting. L'ombre sounded almost worried about her.

‘Only because you’ll probably fuck everything up if you try to fight or something.’
L'ombre added quickly, a little too quickly. Almost as if she was worried about showing any sort of genuine affection.

Doll had the window open and they slipped inside to find...nothing.

No, not nothing, it was worse than that. Nothing would imply dust or nothing of note, this place had all the hallmarks of being cleared out fast. Somebody had certainly been here, several somebodies if the amount of overturned chairs and footprints were to be believed. Whoever they were though, they were gone now. Leaving only an empty cork board filled with pin holes. Most damning of all were the dirty plates and the chair in the corner.

Ines ran her fingers over the wood, there were seemingly random indents that both she and L'ombre recognised were the sort left by chains. Somebody had been tied up here. L'ombre swore and Dahlia set about looking for anything that was left behind.

“Dammit, they got out.” She cursed, “They were definitely here though.”

“How can we be sure it was Walker and Munroe though?” Ines asked, “Paris is a big city.”

“Look.”

Dahlia pointed to the wall, it was so small even Ines had to squint but there was a smudge of gold.

“That is the paint from the gilded frames used on the pieces in the Louvre room the party was held at.” She said matter of factly, “I pushed a few of the assailants up against them by accident before coming to get you. It’s them.”

“How on earth can you tell?” Ines gaped, even L’ombre was impressed. “That’s like...Sherlock Holmes level shit.”

Dahlia flushed.

“Oh it’s just a niche, I am a spy and an art historian after all. Lucky break.”

“So now what?”

“We start again.” Dahlia shrugged, “search for where they have taken Munroe. At least this implies they are keeping him alive for some reason. We just have to figure out what, before his usefulness ends.”

Dahlia nodded, glancing about the room with her keen journalistic eye; if Dahlia could find a tiny clue so could she. She took a few steps and paused, thinking on Dahlia’s words and bit her lip. It was a stupid idea really, but her curiosity got the best of her.

“You take over, L’ombre.” She offered.

Even the controlling, stoic Alter couldn’t keep the wave of surprise from emanating out of her.

“I can watch, you know where to look.” Ines explained. “It makes more sense for you to be in control here.”

Dahlia gave her a soft, approving smile and went back to examining the chair for any further clues. Ines let L’ombre tentatively take control, settling back ready to observe. One trait they still shared was a keen sense of observation, between them, they would find something, she was sure.

L'ombre got straight to work, checking places seemingly at random while explaining her logic each time quietly under her breath for Ines' benefit. Ines couldn't help but feel impressed. It took several hours of searching, by which point it was almost mid morning and Ines was very grateful for her Alter's ability to work without rest. She was practically asleep in the back of her own head while L'ombre worked as smoothly as ever.

"Here." L'ombre announced, managing to slip one perfectly manicured nail beneath a floorboard to reveal a hidden trap door. "An escape tunnel."

Without hesitation or fear L'ombre dropped down into the dark space and lit it up with her phone torch, Dahlia followed soon after. The room they found themselves in was concrete all over and Ines felt panic begin to build up inside her once more, remembering the featureless room she had been held in all those months ago. L'ombre offered no comfort, but she was stalwart, unfazed and that helped Ines to stay calm. She was once again thankful to not be in charge.

Dahlia found the door, an old maintenance sign that had long since faded was on the front and when she pushed it open the metal screamed in protest. When the two spies stuck their heads out into the corridor the stench made their noses wrinkle.

"Sewers." Dahlia groaned, "There is no way we'll figure out where they went, the sewer system covers the entire city like a sprawling maze, it even connects to the catacombs in some places. They've been gone for hours, any evidence is probably long lost."

L'ombre cursed.

They were back to square one and there was something niggling at the back of Ines' mind, L'ombre's too. Only the Alter didn't have any qualms about blurting it right out.

"Somebody warned them."

"You think?" Dahlia yawned.

"Of course, this setup was working well, they left in a hurry." L'ombre explained, "Somebody tipped them off that we were coming, it's the only thing that makes sense."

“But how could they know? The only people who knew about this place were us, Ethan and our handler.”

L'ombre grit their teeth and said the words that turned Ines' heart to ice.

“There is a new traitor in our midst.”