

Operation: Uncover - Part 4

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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They travelled in silence and Ines was glad, stealth was paramount so they had plenty of reason not to talk to one another. Bob's info had been right and Doll had managed to locate the secret door built into the side of the sewers. The rank smell of putrid water was now far behind them as they passed through the underground tunnels of Paris, following the directions he'd given to find the facility they were sure Watcher was using as a hideout.

L'ombre was prowling, right at the edge of taking over but for once staying quiet. She was focused, ready to spring into action at any second but only with Ines' consent. Ines couldn't believe how far they had come so quickly, all those months spent bickering and fighting one another for dominance seemed so very wasted.

Finally, they reached the end of the tunnel, a solid metal door stood in their way and Ines and Dahlia shared a look; there was no other way in as far as they could tell. Doll leaned in but shook her head.

"Nothing, she whispered, the room could be empty or there could be guards I can't tell. The metal is too thick."

Ines took a step back and called L'ombre out.

'This is your forte.'

"Stay behind me, Doll." L'ombre smiled, reaching for her hip gun. "Things might get messy."

The two spies took a deep breath each and pushed open the door. The room beyond was totally dark and even Ines could sense they were walking into a trap; but what other option did they have. L'ombre and Doll stepped inside and immediately were blinded by the bright lights turning on.

The door slammed closed and the spies found themselves in a large, concrete room. Every wall was coated in machinery including a massive supercomputer right at the back; Dr. Munroe was tied to a chair before it with his mouth taped shut looking exhausted as desperate. A beautiful woman with satin black hair stood at his side, a knife to his throat.

L'ombre's eyes darted about the room, instantly assessing seven assailants, all beautiful women. It was then both Ines and her Alter realised the machinery lining the room looked familiar, crude recreations of the machines that had made them what they were. It was then...Watcher stepped from the shadows.

Only...it wasn't Watcher. The features were slightly off, imperfections they had assumed were due to the slightly blurry photos were now stark. Even L'ombre's stoney facade broke a little in surprise as the man morphed into a red headed woman before their very eyes.

"Watcher really didn't escape." Dahlia whispered, or perhaps it was Doll, it didn't matter either way.

"No, he didn't." The woman said coolly, "We have been trying for months and run dry on funds, luckily, Dr. Munroe here is a great source of income, using his new energy technology to power our base and selling the technology on the dark web."

The dark haired woman poked her knife into Dr. Munroe's neck and he flinched.

"He's almost run out of uses though, we just wanted to keep him around a little longer, just for you, Roanoke."

"My name isn't Roanoke." L'ombre hissed. "And you did all this just to mess with me?"

"To lure you here." The woman who had posed as watcher glared, "to mess with you, ruin your little fairytale life where you get to go off and play journalist all while gaining us money and infamy at the same time."

“But...why?” Dahlia asked.

“Because of you, Watcher is gone!” The woman wailed, she even had tears in her eyes, “he was our leader, we were going to be great with him. Take over the agency entire...”

She sounded dreamy, almost deluded. A stone formed in Ines’ gut as she and L’ombre put the puzzle pieces together.

“You’re...you were all agents he experimented on to get the device right for me...” She whispered, “All of these...”

“Prototypes.”

“He brainwashed them.” Dahlia gaped, “they’re mad with devotion.”

“No wonder their plan is so shit.” L’ombre scoffed and the red haired woman’s face twisted in anger, her features half morphing to male and back again.

“Enough, you’re here, let’s do this.”

She whipped out the gun faster than Ines could follow but in an instant L’ombre was moving. All of the women were pulling out weapons and Ines was sure they were dead but L’ombre didn’t doubt them for a second. She moved with grace, firing off bullet after bullet with pinpoint precision. Ines wished she could close her eyes and not see the violence but of course that was out of the question. To her shock though all of the enemies were falling to the ground clutching their knees or hands; L’ombre was incapacitating, not killing. Doll followed suit, knocking out enemy after enemy until, somehow, between the two of them only the red haired woman remained.

“No! I will avenge Watcher!” She screamed, completely deranged as she launched for L’ombre’s throat.

The spy simply smirked, sidestepping elegantly before slamming her elbow down on the woman’s head, knocking her out instantly.

“Almost too easy.” She sighed, “After all that build up, they were just a bunch of insane fangirls.”

‘L’ombre, aren’t you forgetting something?’

“Hm?”

A muffled cry pricked their ears and L’ombre saw Dr. Munroe was still tied up by the computer, eyes nearly bugging out of his skull as he squirmed.

“Oh...dibs not.”

Ines felt herself thrust back in control and fighting the urge to roll her eyes.

‘If it’s not sex, you’re the people person.’

Ines ran up to the scientist and removed the thick tape as gently as she could while Dahlia set about tying up the deranged Watcher followers. He gasped as soon as his mouth was free.

“T-they changed faces? They would be men, then women and I...they kept on talking about some guy, I-like he was a God or something.” He stammered.

“Don’t worry,” Ines soothed, “you’re safe now.”

“I’ve called the handlers, a team is on their way to recover and interrogate.” Dahlia said, “You’ve got a hell of a story here, Ines. Something that’ll blow the kidnapping reports right out of the water.”

Ines couldn’t help but grin; she was right. Poor Ethan was only going to get fifteen minutes of fame, she was guaranteed a journalistic award for the story of Munroe’s recovery. She smiled at Dahlia before the other woman’s lips pressed together awkwardly.

“I almost forgot I was mad at you for a second.” She whispered, “...good job.”

“You too.”

The sound of footprints met their ears as new agents began to flood the room and the two spies left to be debriefed. Ines and L'ombre had done it, they'd saved the day, and she was happy about it. Ines just hoped she could save her relationship with Dahlia as well.

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The next few days felt like a blur, endless meetings as more and more information about Watcher came out. How he'd used the machines to experiment on random people and turn them into his own dedicated hareem, before the Agency ever got a chance to use it on their agents. It made Ines sick; how close had she come to being turned into one of those insane sycophants? Dahlia as well.

Speaking of, Dahlia was avoiding her. Which stung. They crossed paths at the meeting, but other than occasionally chiming in to add a detail or ask a question, the woman gave Ines the cold shoulder. She had to make things right somehow.

"At this stage, I think you ladies are free to go." Their handler smiled after what felt like the millionth meeting. "Dahlia, you will be on standby for more missions of course. Ines, you're free to go. If you would be kind enough to hand in your ID and weapons you can enter civilian life, full time. Just as agreed."

The words hit her like a tonne of bricks, and within her brain, she felt L'ombre shudder. After everything that had happened, she had totally forgotten about that deal. She waited for L'ombre to speak up but the Alter remained silent. L'ombre didn't want to be a civilian, she wanted adventure and daring, the secret spy life on the side if nothing else. But the fact that she was silent now told Ines that she was willing to let it go for her sake.

For a moment she sat there, thinking. She had wanted this for so long but after everything that had happened, meeting Dahlia, learning to work with L'ombre and coming to terms with her 'fake' life...giving it up seemed like such a waste.

"Actually sir, I'd like to stay on as a Paris sleeper agent."

Her handler raised his eyebrows and Ines smiled at the shock coming off L'ombre.

"I *don't* want to go full time." She added quickly, "but if there are jobs in and around Paris, or one of the places my job sends me; I'm open to doing agency work."

Her handler smiled.,

“Good, because you did fine work with Dahlia, perhaps you two could work together in the future?”

Ines glanced over at the other woman, reading her face as best she could. Her expression was hard, but her eyes betrayed something, a longing; and Ines latched onto it. On some level, Dahlia wanted to forgive her.

“Maybe.” Dahlia replied, “if I have to. Are we finished here?”

They were dismissed and Ines jumped to her feet, racing to follow Dahlia out of the room as she practically fled the room.

“Wait!” Ines called desperately, running and catching Dahlia by the wrist. “Please, I’m sorry, can we just talk?”

“I’d rather not.” Dahlia replied coolly.

“Please just, hear me out? I trust you, really I do.” Ines insisted, “but you have to understand how hard trust is, especially for people like us. L’ombre was just trying to look out for me, look at every angle, and I let her. I’m not saying it was right but...please, you’re important to me. You can’t deny we have a connection, I don’t want to lose that.”

“Neither do I.” Dahlia said, her voice breaking. “But I...I feel like I opened up to you and and you almost immediately betrayed that trust.”

“I know. I did.” Ines winced, “but if you let me I swear I will make it up to you. Just let me try, maybe as a friend first and then if you’re comfortable we could be...more.”

Dahlia glanced down at their hands, Ines’s fingers were still curled around her wrist.

‘Kiss her.’

Dahlia twisted her arm, freeing her hand for a moment before threading their fingers together again.

‘Kiss her you idiot come on!’

“I think...I would like that. Being more I mean.”

‘I swear to God if you idiots don’t kiss right now I will do it myself.’

Ines smiled, her eyes burned a little with happy tears.

“Me too.”

‘Oh for the love of-’

Ines didn't have time to prepare before L'ombre was back in charge, surging their body forward to press their lips against Dahlia's. For a second, she froze, sure that L'ombre had just ruined the tentative goodwill she'd built but then Dahlia responded and she didn't care anymore.

L'ombre faded back, allowing Ines to take control and fully enjoy her new love's lips. They were just as soft as she remembered and she didn't even care that they were making out like a couple of teenagers in the middle of a hallway. When they finally broke apart Ines could feel her heart pounding in her chest, a feeling that grew stronger watching Dahlia smile.

“It's a start.” She said quietly.

Ines smiled ear to ear and in the back of her mind L'ombre's satisfaction was coming in waves. Two spies and their Alter's, facing the secret agent life while in love. It sounded like exactly the sort of thing Ines wanted to avoid only weeks ago. Now she couldn't wait to see what the future had in store.