

Tomb Raider: Raw Recruit

Chapter 7

As the truck came to a shuddering stop, Lara let out a sigh of relief. She stretched her legs out, wincing at the painful ache that'd accumulated over the last hours. The rumbling, rocking of the truck paired with her own rigidity and lack of motion had done a number on her joints and muscles.

As she rose shakily to her feet, her legs feeling like cracked glass under her, Lara shook her head.

No wonder the others had decided to find their own ways here – wherever 'here' was. Cars and bikes and planes. Out of the entire squad, she'd been the only one to volunteer for this job.

Protecting the cargo.

Lara took a step forward, almost collapsing as her knees protested. She groaned, cursed under her breath, had to steady herself against one of the many wooden crates.

How many hours had she been back here, cramped in with all these crates?

Impossible to say. From before dawn to... whatever time it was now. Late afternoon? Evening? Hard to tell without being able to see the sky. Her uniform, unfortunately, didn't include a watch. Judging from the dimming light leaking in through the canvas, it was later in the day than Lara would've liked.

Trapped all day, surrounded by crates filled with who-knew what. No stops to relieve herself. No breaks.

At least it was over now.

Hopefully.

The sounds of boots on gravel, the general hum and hubbub of activity, brought a flare of hope to Lara's heart. Muffled voices that Lara tried hard not to listen to – being snoop and nosy was frowned down upon in the Vanguard's, or so she'd been told.

Eventually, someone opened the canvas at the very back of the truck, allowing late afternoon light to stream in. Casting the man in silhouette and momentarily blinding Lara.

"You, out!" A man's voice barked.

Eyes watering, Lara rushed to obey. Her body groaning and complained with every motion, but she ignored all that pain and discomfort.

She'd gotten very good at ignoring pain and discomfort.

When she dropped from the truck bed to the gravel road, her legs finally gave out in protest. She dropped onto her hands and knees, grazing and cutting herself on the rough terrain.

Around her, several men laughed.

One man barked at her to move.

It wasn't long before Lara was shoved aside so the Vanguard's could collect their supplies from the truck.

Finally free, out in the open air, Lara grinned.

She closed her eyes, basked in the dying light, stretched her arms out and curved her back – letting out a soft, satisfied sigh. Joints popped and muscles woke to dull, throbbing aches.

When she opened her eyes again, Lara gasped. Hunched.

It was like she'd been punched in the gut.

That view...

A thousand memories came flooding to her all at once. More. Years and years, from her earliest memories of childhood to memories just months old. Each recollection rocking through her like a thunderbolt, blasting away everything but shock and numbness.

That view.

She gaped, staring up at the Croft family mansion.

Home.

She was *home*.

Only...

Slowly, emotions lost in turbulent chaos, Lara looked around. Took in the sights of Croft Estate. The changes the Vanguardians had made.

Her personal training course had been expanded; new obstacles and a firing range added. The mansion's gardens had been trampled into a wet, muddy sludge. Tents had gone up in various places, and a small mountain of wooden crates had been piled up haphazardly along one wall.

Lara stumbled forward, a ghost drifting numbly towards the place that'd once been her home.

No-one stopped her. Several looked her way, scoffing or admiring the view. But none got in her way. Grunts going about their business, probably assuming she was following orders too.

Memories fogged her vision as she neared the mansion's main entrance. Voices from decades past; Lara's parents, laughing and talking and smiling. The rest of the world seemed to go quiet as she lost herself in those long-forgotten memories. Vanguardians shouting at each other faded into the background, the sound of trucks and the pop-pop of gunfire blurred away – until all that remained were their distant echoes.

Lara.

A memory of her father carrying her on his shoulders.

Lara...

Another memory, this time of her mother singing.

Lara drifted into the house, saw the discarded crates and muddy footprints, the walls devoid of ornaments and paintings – all likely sold by the Vanguardians, or stolen away and kept as prizes.

Mind empty, heart thumping painfully, Lara let her feet guide her. Torn between reality and recollection.

When she stopped before a discoloured wall, something snapped inside her. Some part of her mind shrivelling, another part boiling. Lara reached out her hand, touched the clear contrast on the wall – a rectangle of bright, unstained wallpaper surrounded by wallpaper aged and darkened by time.

A void where a priceless painting used to hang.

Priceless. And worthless.

For who else but Lara would care about *that* painting.

A portrait of Lara's parents, holding up an infant Lara. All three smiling. A time before the accident that'd stolen her parents away. An image that Lara cherished, but which meant nothing to anyone else.

Why would the Vanguardians take *this* painting?

They couldn't sell it. They couldn't-

The simmering rage grew. Her old self coiling in the back of Lara's mind. The hand touching the wall, the void where her family portrait should be, clenched into a fist.

"Lara?"

The voice jolted through her, doused her like a bucket of cold water. She flinched, turned slowly to stare at the man with wide, doe eyes.

"There you are," George smiled.

Every thought seemed to leak out of her, draining away.

George stepped forward, looking Lara over. His kindly, aristocratic face betraying the lust beneath. He was wearing his usual tan suit, which strained a little at his gut. His greying moustache and receding hairline, along with the pink cheeks and wide smile, made him look like a kind and trustworthy man – a friend of Lara's father. Practically family himself.

As soon as he reached her, George reached out and sank his fingers into Lara's tit-flesh. Kneading her breast as he smiled hungrily at her.

"Hello my dear," George said, his breath hot on Lara's face. "Welcome home."

"George," Lara whispered pathetically. She turned her gaze to the floor meekly, not wanting to offend him. "The portrait... The one with me and Mom and Dad... It's..."

"Hush now," George chuckled. "It was just a painting."

"But..." Her eyes stung, began to water.

"You're in the Vanguard's now," George tutted. "What belongs to one of us, belongs to us all. Like this mansion. It's not *yours* anymore. It belongs to the Vanguard's. And that's for the best, isn't it?"

Lara opened her mouth to speak, but her words were replaced by a sharp gasp when George pinched and twisted her nipple.

"You belong to the Vanguard's too, don't you?"

"I-" Lara bit her lip, nodded her head. "Yes."

"And what belongs to one of us, belongs to all of us."

Slowly, blushing bright red, Lara nodded her head.

"Come," George said, releasing her tit and taking her hand instead. "I'll show you where you'll be sleeping."

The room – if it could even be called that – was barely large enough for Lara to lay down in. When she tried, her head touched one wall while her feet were flat against the opposite one. Back when she'd owned the mansion, this room had been a closet used to store cleaning supplies and spare bedsheets. Now, it was her bedroom.

She hadn't been given a bed – just an old sleeping bag. And her 'wardrobe' consisted of a backpack with a single French maid costume in it. Her uniform.

When Lara tried closing the door to change, George stopped her. Told her there was no need.

And she hadn't argued.

She'd simply undressed in full view of the man, then put on the too-tight maid costume.

"It suits you," George chuckled.

"Thanks," was the only response Lara could think to give.

"Your duties will involve keeping the mansion spotless while you're here," George told her. "Whenever you're not seeing to the needs of Vanguard's men, you'll be cleaning and cooking and being a good little maid."

Lara glanced up at George with wide eyes.

"Is there a problem?" He asked, a warning in his tone.

"No!" Lara squeaked quickly. "It's just..." She bit her lip. "I don't know if I can do all that, George-"

"Sir," George corrected.

"I don't know if I can do it all, *sir*. The mansion is so big, I can't possibly clean it all on my own. Especially if you want me to cook-"

"Now, now," George reprimanded softly. "Is that the kind of attitude a member of the Vanguard's should have?" He shook his head, tutted disapproval. "We embrace challenge. We make the impossible possible. We are not defeatists, are we?"

Lara looked down, shook her head slowly.

"You *will* keep this mansion spotless. And you'll do it alone, without help. You'll cook for us, you'll take care of us. You'll be a good, loyal, obedient maid. Isn't that right?"

"I-" Lara sighed, shoulders slumping. "Yes, sir."

"Good." George stepped back from the doorway, waved for Lara to follow him out into the hallway.

She obeyed meekly.

"Your time in the Vanguards has been great for you," George said, eyeing her body appreciatively. "You always had a great body, don't get me wrong. But now..." He slapped her ass. "Perfection."

Lara took the blow like a champ.

She was used to surprise spanks and gropes by now. They didn't phase her, and she'd learned to resist reacting to the sudden, sharp pain and discomfort.

"I dare say, you're an even finer piece of ass than your mother. Just look at these curves..." George walked a slow circle around Lara, his eyes practically licking her with their intensity and hunger. A cold shiver ran down Lara's spine, but she ignored it. George was her superior. "Simply perfect."

"Th- thank you."

"And the attitude adjustment," he whistled. "I never thought I'd see the day. Bold, brave, buxom Lara Croft reduced to a plaything."

"A plaything?" Lara asked, then blushed and quickly added, "Sir."

He stopped circling her, stood in front of her. "A poor choice of wording on my part," George smirked. "You are a valued, respected member of the Vanguards. One with special duties and responsibilities."

Lara nodded her head, that word still bouncing around in her skull. *Plaything*.

"Get on your knees, Lara." George ordered.

Her body reacted before her mind registered the words, sinking down to her knees and positioning herself eye-level with George's crotch. She watched, wordless, as the older man unbuckled his belt and lowered his pants, fished out his cock.

"Here," George said. "Do your duty, Lara."

She hesitated. Only for a moment, a single second. But hesitate she did. Right before leaning forward, reaching forward; wrapping fingers and lips around George's cock in one go.

Thoughts retreated as her body and instincts took over. Lara stroked the length of George's cock as her mouth worked its head, tongue curving and curling, lips squeezing and sucking.

The fact that she was in the middle of a corridor where anyone might happen by meant nothing. The knowledge that this man had been friends with Lara's father, was old enough to be her father, had known Lara all her life, none of it mattered. She had a duty. And she'd fulfil it.

She slurped on George's cock, stroking him with a skilfulness that came from months of practice and improvement.

When her mouth moved further along his shaft, her hands moved to the man's balls. Massaging them, urging them to release their salty, sour milk for her to drink. She gagged when George's cock brushed the back of her throat but, instead of pulling back, Lara used that sound and sensation to surge forward. Impaling her throat on George's man-meat.

For these moments, that was the sole purpose of her existence.

Pleasure the cock. Suck it dry. Make it happy. Nothing else mattered, nothing else existed. Just the cock, and Lara's hands and mouth. Her body. *This* was her purpose. The reason she was alive. *This* was her calling.

As she bounced her head back and forth on his cock, Lara looked up at George. Her desperate, watering eyes searching for approval. But, of course, the man wasn't looking at her. He was standing with a smile on his face, his eyes closed, his hands on the back of his head. Relaxed and content.

Lara redoubled her efforts.

The rest of her squad wouldn't arrive for a few days. They had, apparently, taken a detour to party.

Lara's chest ached.

She wasn't quite sure why their absence pained her; did she miss them to the point of longing, or did she simply feel distressed at how many new faces she was seeing. A lack of familiarity, or the heartache of separation. Or was it something else?

She didn't have much time to consider the reason behind her aching heart. The Vanguard's kept her plenty busy.

Lara woke in the early hours of the morning, before the sun rose. As the rest of the Vanguard's in the mansion slept peacefully, Lara started on a massive breakfast for everyone. Cooking for dozens of men all by herself. And then laying out the feast as the morning bell woke everyone else.

The Vanguard's didn't clean up after themselves, so it fell to Lara to load the dishwashers and scrub pots and pans. And to keep cleaning, despite how impossible the task was. The Vanguard's didn't seem to care about how much of a mess they made, from dirt-soaked boots on expensive rugs to treating centuries-old dishware like frisbees.

No matter how hard she tried, keeping the place clean wasn't possible. Which didn't bother the Vanguard's at all, Lara knew.

She wasn't in a maid costume, bending over to brush and scrub because the men wanted a clean base of operations. They simply enjoyed watching her bend over and prostrate herself.

So that's what she did.

Exaggerating her movements to flaunt the body these men were so enamoured with. Making sure her skirt hiked up, exposing thigh and hints of ass when she leaned over. Tugging at the front of the costume to ensure maximum cleavage was on display at all times.

She got catcalls and whistles, compliments and lewd insults in abundance. And more than a few wandering hands.

But this was what she'd trained for. To embrace all this attention, to thrive under it. When a man slapped her ass, she bounced and giggled for their amusement. When someone tore down the front of her costume, exposing her large breasts, Lara gasped theatrically and tried – intentionally poorly – to hide her goodies from the laughing, mocking crowd.

When she returned to her room at the end of the day, Lara was exhausted. Drained. But in a good, earned way.

Despite the cramped space and the uncomfortable sleeping bag on a hard floor, Lara fell asleep easily. Only to be woken a few short hours later to repeat the day over.

Only, on the third night, the last one before her squad would arrive at the Croft Estate, she didn't sleep.

Lara rolled about in her cramped, tiny room. She struggled to get comfortable, failing with each attempt. She shut her eyes, body begging for sweet slumber. But sleep didn't come.

In the back of her mind, a voice that'd been growing ever louder these last days poked and prodded at her.

Lara. It said. Remember.

She didn't want to remember. The past was so different, so painful to look back at. All Lara wanted to do was close her eyes and sleep, let tomorrow come. Drift along. Forget.

But the voice refused to go away.

It nagged at her, tormented her, until Lara Croft finally stood up, left the small, cramped room.

Butt-naked – her maid costume was drying after a wash – Lara walked through her mansion, treading lightly and cautiously. Not wanting to make any noise, draw attention to herself.

Most of the Vanguard's were asleep, but a few might still be awake.

Why does that matter? She asked herself.

It wasn't like any of them would care if they saw her out of her room. They'd probably enjoy the view. Might even offer to share their bunk with her for the night – a prospect that Lara was plenty open to.

This is silly. I should just go back and try to sleep.

She didn't. Her feet led the way and Lara let them. An echo of her old self urging her onwards, to her old bedroom. The master bedroom. Where she belonged.

Stupid. She scolded herself as she ascended a wide staircase, careful not to creak any floorboards. *Someone's bound to be there. George or one of the other Vanguard's bosses.*

That image – the old man, or a complete stranger – sleep in her bed made Lara's skin prickle.

It's not mine anymore. I gave it to them...

As she approached the master bedroom, she noticed the door was already open. No light coming from inside.

Lara crept closer, slipped inside.

Empty. No-one inside.

She let out a breath, eyes scanning every corner. Until they fell upon something new. Something that hadn't been there when she'd last been here, before the Vanguard's.

A pedestal with a glass case atop. A display case.

Lara walked towards it, a thousand different emotions stirring beneath the numbing calm of her new persona.

Inside the glass case were two silvery pistols. Lara's pistols. Shown off like a prize, a trophy. And, between the pistols, a skimpy, lingerie thong – one Lara recognised as being hers.

With shaking fingers, Lara opened the display case.

She reached inside, fingertips brushing over cool metal. Her pistols. The guns she'd taken with her on so many adventures, that'd saved her on so many occasions. They were, more than anything else, symbols of her old life. The tomb raiding Lara Croft. A woman who'd lived by her own rules, had taken on all manner of threats and dangers with a smile on her face and a gun in each hand.

As her fingers wrapped around pistol grips, something deep inside Lara awakened. A fire long forgotten, rising from embers and ashes. The voice in the back of her mind purred in satisfaction.

Lara looked at the thong. A naughty, little thing. Sexy.

A prize that the Vanguard's had stolen.

Just like they'd stolen everything else.

A trophy to symbolise their conquest of Lara Croft.

She scowled at the thong, a cool breeze drifting into the room and tickling her bare skin.

And, for the first time in months, Lara *remembered*.

She turned on her heels, wielding a silvery pistol in each hand, and stormed out of the bedroom.