

Lara stands, tired mentally and physiologically after having worked hours by the bar. She leans against the stand, silently tapping her fingers on the tabletop.

She then notices a movement by the door, expecting a customer. But the door opens too fast. Armed men stride in confidently. She growls. The self-proclaimed militia, *again*. They walk in, holding the weapons and looking around, seeking the threats. As the customers tense, they tell them to hold still. Scared or upset, they obey, as the men wave their guns around.

Seven men, one woman. *So they have women now*, Lara thinks. *Either they got even more loose or the babe is a tough one. Real tough.*

They are all too happy to relieve Irrit of his gun. Is he going to keep the hidden one? Ah, yes. Yes, he is. They barely even check him for weapons.

Lara looks in the direction of the storage room. From there, Tai is seen with an expression that makes it clear she has got enough of this in her life. Lara frowns to her. Tai responds by rolling her eyes and impulsively moving her tail.

Brown-skinned talkative bodyguard and an apathetic waiter catgirl. That makes two of the team ready. Anne is surely watching the show from the cameras now, and she is already alert and calculating. She is going to go with the plan. *Good*, Lara thinks, *It's up to me now.*

Lara straightens up with a nudge as the front man comes close. He is the least memorable type, visually. The only thing about him that catches attention is the acne spread on his face. He stops before her, across the bar stand, and quickly flashes the document to her, pointing the gun down. "Bernard, city militia," he says as if for the first time here.

"What now, Bernard?" Lara cuts off. She is going to talk until the time comes to turn the tide. Her gun is located under the table top and she only needs a good moment for a distraction.

"Hands up, miss Lara. I'd like you to come with us and be nice."

"How very descriptive."

"Raise your hands, please. Don't make a fuss out of this."

Lara puts the palms steady at the table, and the man raises his gun. "As if! And what if I don't?"

Bernard confidently points the carbine at her. "Lethal force was authorized. But you don't want to take it that far, do you?"

Lara doesn't even look at the gun, keeping her eyes on the man's face, right between his eyes. That can alert him, but it's not

important. If he even knows enough about watching the people. But that is something he's got to know. "Bribes, shipment interruptions, and now - this? You want me to be a good girl and turn myself in? And what's up with the 'lethal force' if you want me to walk, huh?"

Bernard's expression changes to sheer unamusement. He addresses the squad: "Take her. We're through being nice." He takes a short pause. "And if you try something funny - don't worry. Nobody wants you alive that much."

Two invaders walk towards her from behind his back. And fast.

It is time. Lara pronounces the password almost casually: "Tomorrow, maybe. But not tonight."

The lights go off everywhere immediately. Lara drops at once, evading the shot from the carbine. Glass shatter follows. She grabs her revolver and shoots straight through the thin inner wall of the bar stand. Bernard grunts heavily - even in the pitch black darkness shot in the torso from this range could not miss.

Militia frantically activate the headlights, and then the dim lights turn on. Covering and waiting for the enemies, Lara thinks, *Anne is right on time. Great. Now the show starts.*

With that comes a loud crash and a cacophony of grunts. Tai is the one to blame; she is perfectly comfortable in the dimness. And, given the noise, it was a moderately heavy chair flung in the mass of the unofficial militia. Lara peeks out of the corner, sending two shots in the nearest enemy. In this moment she sees a fluid silhouette of Tai, flowing towards the readying troops swiftly. She smashes a bottle she held square in the face of the victim. The sound of the glass impact is muffled by a *gulp* of the liquid coming from the breaking bottle. Tai blurs in motion, lowering herself. She runs on all fours, jumps and swipes her claws against the staggering man. Fire erupts from the weapons.

Gunshots come from the far side and join those coming from the center, spreading in all directions. Meanwhile the lights get brighter, showing the scene whole. Irrit is behind an overturned table, dual-wielding his guns. Close to him a body is sinking in its blood. Tai is jumping and swirling amongst the cramped pack of so-called militia, forcing them to try to get her without shooting their teammates. Customers either stay hidden behind whatever they found as the bout started or run out of the bar, not cared for by the fighting. Very few of them remain unmoved, watching the scene unfold.

Lara aims fast and shoots another two bullets. The woman she targeted reacted before Lara pressed the trigger. She drops and adjusts herself to unload gunfire. *Bad.* Lara starts immediately out

of the stand, realizing on the run why did she do so - the woman is low, not possible to aim at without getting shot beforehand and, wielding a carbine, is a serious threat to anyone who would choose to hide behind the bar section. Lara gets out of the barman's place and jumps to the storage area through the open doorway. She does so, firing a blind shot in the woman's direction. Lara somersaults into the room and keeps rolling as the shots graze the wall where she just was. Lara jumps up and runs for the drawer with the cylinders, since she had no time to pick a pack hidden in the bar. She finds the box, snatches a new cylinder with her left hand as she uses her right hand to pull the release and swing the revolver to the side to drop the empty cylinder. She inserts the new one and grabs yet another. Now she wants to have a bag or her coat or anything that has pockets. But she runs through the corridor because she has no time to reach for those. She hears the footsteps that come in intervals. Lara understands. *She scans the surroundings. The babe's good, alright. But that won't help her.*

Lara takes a hard turn to the right and rushes into the control room, clumsily opening the door with the cylinder in hand. In there stays Anne, fingering her long hair nervously. Lara closes the door with a slam and leans against the wall right next to it. She turns to Anne. "She's coming! Get ready."

"But I, I," Anne can only stutter. "I don't..."

"Then hide. Now!"

Lara knows that woman can locate her. She's got to take her on without Anne. And there's nowhere to cover. *I'm gonna hate it, I'm gonna hate it...*

The door swings open, and a gun muzzle appears. With a finger on the trigger, Lara jumps forward, right at the woman. The latter sends a shot that hits Lara's shoulder. She exhales in response to the pain, but she has the woman in sights, so she just unloads a bullet nearly from a point blank, right into the torso. Then another one. Then another. Woman drops heavily, barely moving. Lara stares at her. Then she lowers her gun, still holding it steady. The shoulder hurts.

"Fuck... Anne! She got me. Get over here!"

Lara does not have to yell, however. Anne is already by her side. She wraps a bandage around the wound, and Lara growls silently. As Anne whispers incantations with her eyes closed, the pain at first increases, then quickly grows weaker.

Sound of footsteps approaches. Lara bares her teeth and raises the gun.

"Lara! We took 'em down. You alright?"

She lowers her weapon again. That is Irrit. Sure enough, following the silent leaps of Tai, he turns the corner and runs toward the girls.

"Yeah, mostly. Any hostages?"

Dark-skinned young man stops and tucks his guns into the holsters, quickly recovering his breath. "Nope. They went for the kill."

"Alright. Not like we could use the morons anyway."

"So, what now?" Irrit places hands on his hips.

Tai, arms crossed, has her back against the wall. She sways her tail from left to right. She has blood on her clothes, but she herself is intact. Her face shows even more irritation than usual.

Lara spins her gun by the trigger guard, then moves her index finger to the frame. "I don't know. Probably, we can't stay here anymore."

"We absolutely can't." Anne got to her senses; she speaks with analyzing calmness. "Eventually, another group may arrive. Very likely it'll do so, and soon. We may not have much time. We still have some, because there's no backup around the building - I checked. It'll take time for the militia to find out about the incident, but they will, and they will arrive. Besides, the customers don't like them about as much as we do. That means a significant decrease in visitors even if we managed to stay. Or even worse incidents."

Lara nods. "You make sense. Then, everybody... Take as little as you can, and keep it valuable. We're leaving." She takes a pause. "Now's finally the time for a tour."