

Lara Croft and Her Black Friday Adventure

An Original Tomb Raider Tale by Hunter Wolfe

The great adventure began on an exceptionally rainy day. The clouds were like gray waves and the trees were tornadoes of falling thistles that had browned during the fall. The roads and highways were oceans in themselves and several bridges were on the verge of flooding. It was supposedly the last summer storm, and it was by far the worst.

Lara Croft woke up around 11:45 PM, startled from a crash on the first floor of Croft Manor. She had been dreaming about opening the coffin of King Tutankhamen and collecting the lost Amulet of the Dead when the windows shattered and the sirens of her personalized home security system began blaring.

"What in creation could this home invasion be about?" she thought to herself. Sighing, she leaped out of her bed, grabbed her pistols from inside her pillow case, and slid into her army boots all in one swift motion. Her black lace nightgown and army boots made an odd combination.

She sprinted into the hall and down the grand staircase, noticing the bookcase against the far wall blown open and lying on the floor and the window nearby completely shattered. The bookcase concealed the vault where Lara kept all of her favorite treasures, and on a more important note, a bag of black tea which she'd wrestled a drug smuggler for.

Moments later she'd knocked that drug smuggler unconscious, she remembered. What could she say, she loved her black tea!

"Lara! He's getting away!" cried Winston wearing the bunny pajama pants she'd gotten him last holiday. He pointed outside to a red Suzuki Boulevard which the burglar was trying frantically to turn on.

“No problem, Winston. I’ve got this one.” She slipped one pistol into the maroon satin strap that held her nightgown snug and proceeded out the door. Hidden inside the mouth of the stone fish that topped the courtyard fountain was a pressure plate. Lara shot a bullet directly into the fish’s mouth and heard the *clink* of the bullet against the trigger. The slab of cement that formed the porch trembled violently and then split apart into two symmetrical pieces. A platform rose to ground level; on it sat a night-black Ducati that was ready for action.

As Lara vaulted onto her bike, which was now wet from the exceptional amount of rain, the burglar’s bike lights flickered to life and he drove off past the gates and swerved onto the main road.

“So it’s a chase, is it!” she called out to him. Grinning, she kicked her kickstand up and gunned it to the main gate, swerving more precisely than the burglar had and beginning her pursuit.

She chased him out of the Abbingdon countryside and into the more rural city area. Small houses were suddenly large buildings of inter-city London, which was bustling with life on this exceptionally rainy evening. Lara wasn’t sure why there were so many cars, and so many people in lines outside of the city shops, but the first thing on her mind was the burglar speeding away ahead of her. Due to the crowded streets he was too afraid to make sharp turns at such a high speed, so he continued forward and, becoming desperate, approached the one place in all of London that Lara hoped she would never, in all of her life, have to visit. The place that the man abandoned his bike was none other than the parking lot of Walmart.

And then she realized why the streets were littered with people; why the roads were so crowded.

It was Black Friday!

And *she*, Lara Croft, was about to chase the burglar into Walmart.

Abandoning her bike, she sprinted across the Walmart parking lot, in which all parking spaces were taken, and chased after the burglar who'd slipped past the crowd that stood restlessly in front of the main entrance.

Unlike most stores, Walmart was different on Black Friday. Most stores close down for a few hours to get organized for their midnight opening, but Walmart, true to its word, was open twenty-four seven. Lara walked into the store where mass chaos ensued.

She took it all in at once. What she saw was hundreds of shoppers cramming through the aisles with their own store maps to find the midnight door-busters. Large skids were being ferried through the aisles with boxes of products that were on sale that evening. It was mass misdirection and confusion. What she smelt was hundreds of stinky, un-bathed people who hadn't showered because they stayed up waiting for the best deals of the year. What she heard was:

"What's in that box?"

"Justin Bieber CD's!"

"Oh. He ain't cute enough to stand in *this* line for!"

And somewhere else:

"Ma'am, you can't take that because it isn't midnight yet!"

"It is unwrapped. It is on the shelf. It is my every right to take it!"

Close by she heard:

"Quick, they aren't looking. Just reach in and pull out those games. We'll hold on to them until midnight when the prices drop...heehee."

But the burglar had vanished. So Lara began shoving through the crazy shoppers to the gardening section.

The burglar took his ski mask off and threw it on the ground in anger; detest for his boss coursed through his veins. They were in the store manager's office. Michael, the burglar, stood angrily in front of the manager's desk. On the desk sat files and information on the mission they were pulling off that very evening. A single, dim lamp lit the room, but the manager's face was shrouded in darkness.

"You said this would work, Dan! But no, your Black Friday operation is a failure. I did everything according to your plan: I snuck into her house today while the butler trimmed the garden hedges; I hid inside of the vault until late this evening when I blew it open with your 'silent' grenade; I jumped out through the window and got on the bike that you guys hid by the main gate. But she had a freakin' motorcycle in her front yard! How the heck was I supposed to know that she would follow me straight here?"

"Oh Michael. You disappoint me. Let me remind you of all the hard work I put into this plan. Croft's private collections are priceless and promise eternal wealth to those who are in possession of them. I spent years working my way into the highest position in this store, many months employing all of my men into positions here. Tonight, every single person garbed in a blue Walmart jacket operates for us. This Walmart is our safe house. Once *you* delivered the artifacts here, there would be no stopping us. Lara Croft would have lost. But you brought her here. And when you do that much damage to my plan, you are out. And Michael...You. Are. Out."

The boss whipped out two pistols; silencers attached to the silver barrels and fired two shots into Michael's forehead. Michael's lifeless corpse dropped to the ground, a small stream of blood leaked from his forehead.

“Well then,” Dan said to himself, “Lara Croft is looking for her treasures. I guess I should go help her out. After all, I wouldn’t want a lady to get lost in Walmart on the busiest day of the year!” He glanced quickly to the sack of treasures Michael had stolen from Croft Manor, picked them up and walked to the intercom machine that hung on the wall. He pressed in the SPEAK button and said, “Kill Lara Croft.”

Lara was in the gardening warehouse when she heard the intercom announcement. There were people in lawn chairs lining one wall, all asleep and waiting for the five o’ clock specials on DSi’s to arrive. A man worked the nearby register. Shelves lined the aisles with rakes, shovels, pots, plants and other landscaping paraphernalia.

Suddenly, the man working the cash register near the doors pulled out a pair of Uzis and began firing towards Lara shouting out loud, “Hahaha! I’ll be paid *twice* over for being the one to bring your dead corpse to the boss. Haha!”

Lara dove behind a large gardening pot which shattered upon the stream of bullets’ impact. Lara grabbed her pistols from her strap and fired towards the man. She shot him in the chest twice and he collapsed to the ground.

Lara assumed that the Black Friday shoppers would be alarmed by the sound of weapons, but they stayed as they were. Then Lara noticed the headphones in each of the people in the lawn chairs’ ears. They couldn’t hear what was going on anyway!

Two janitors came around the corner with four Uzis total. Lara sprinted down a fertilizer aisle with the men on her tail. Desperate to escape from their approaching spray of bullets, she shot the braces that held the high fertilizer shelves in place. As the two men put their fingers on the

triggers of their Uzis, hundreds of pounds of fertilizer spilt out over them and smacked them to the floor as the shelves tumbled down.

“Oh pooh,” Lara said grinning at her pun.

The burglar with her treasures wasn't in this room. She raced out of the gardening warehouse and turned left sprinting down towards the athletic aisle. She could hear a group of men whispering around the corner. They had too many weapons and could easily dispatch her. Looking around the shelves, she picked up two basketballs and a jockstrap. She launched one basketball into the air and the other in another direction as her distraction. As she thought, a spray of bullets followed the balls through the air, which was their fatal mistake.

She jumped around the corner pouncing on top of one of the men and firing her pistol at another. She covered the man's mouth and nose with the jockstrap as the two standing men dropped to the ground. The fourth man in the group fled into the gun aisle. She stood up as soon as she finished suffocating the man and then wiped her hands on her nightgown.

“Interesting. I've almost died from heights, fire, drowning, guns, razor-sharp blades, spike pits, lions, tigers, bears, dragons and Atlantean goddesses, but death by jock-strap? I would have *never* seen that one coming,” jested Lara.

The burglar was obviously not in the athletic department.

She scanned a nearby map of the store which hung on the wall while pulling her hair back behind her ears. “Let's see. The next few aisles are foods, and then the technology department. If I cut through the clothing area though, I should be able to scout him out from there. It seems like that's in the center of the store. Whoa!” she shouted as the fourth man who had fled returned with a shotgun. The shelf of jockstraps exploded over Lara from the shotgun.

A skateboard fell to the ground. While the man reloaded, Lara dove on the skateboard and slid between his legs firing at his...jewels, so to speak. He crumpled to the ground.

She jumped back to her feet and ran towards the clothing aisle. Even with the threat of gunfire, shoppers were still all over the place! It was midnight now and people were tearing through the boxes that lined the middle of each aisle. In the clothing aisle, the boxes contained video games and accessories, DVD's and Blu-Ray's. People were piled on top of each other, shouting, fighting, throwing things around and chucking a few select words in an attempt to get the ten dollar games into *their* baskets.

"It's Croft! She's here!" came a voice.

She had to think fast.

She reached into the pile, tackling a group of ravenous teenagers and pulled out a copy of Summer Sports, Transformers: Cybertron Adventures, Madworld, Sonic Colors, Sonic and the Black Knight, NBA Jams, and a Playstation Move controller which had been dislodged from its packaging. With the games in hand, she sliced Summer Sports and Transformers: Cybertron Adventures through the air towards one of the Walmart employees who was pulling an Uzi up towards her from down the aisle. The game cases met at his throat and smashed into his Adam's apple, and the first man dropped to the ground.

She attempted the same maneuver with the second employee. He succeeded in firing his Uzis and the spray of bullets knocked the remaining games from her hands, all except the Move controller. She took it, dodged right behind a clothing rack and threw that. It smacked the employee in his head and he, too, dropped down unconscious.

"Well, he should have *Moved* out of the way. That controller really *Kinected* with his forehead!" Lara joked.

Past the men's clothing aisle was a kindly old woman who stood behind the register in front of the changing rooms. Spectacles sat on her tiny, crooked nose and a smile stretched from one cheek to the other. She had a hearing aid in her left ear.

"Ma'am," Lara began, "It's not safe here. You need to go now!"

"It's not safe here for *you* my dear." The old woman slowly bent down and picked up a grenade launcher from the floor behind the desk. Then she jumped back a few feet and fired at Lara. She dropped to the ground, the grenade soaring over her and bouncing across the ground in the book department. It blew into a million fiery pages that scattered around the area.

"Forget the clothing section; I don't stand a chance against an old woman with a grenade launcher!" Lara rolled out of the clothing section and back into the main aisle. Seven men armed with various guns stormed down the hall after her. She ran into the food section which was barely occupied by the shoppers.

"You can run, but you can't hide!" shouted one of the mercenaries.

Lara tried to reload her pistols but she was out of bullets. She had to think fast. In the food aisle was a large pyramid of cans stacked about six feet high. There was also a large sign suspended from the ceiling telling the shoppers what food was in each of the sub-aisles.

"Hmmm..." Lara said.

Then came the bullets. She dove behind the pyramid of cans and pushed her body against them as soon as the footsteps of the men were in earshot. Some cried out as it tumbled down on them. Others were fortunate and had dodged to the sides. Lara picked up a dropped shotgun and shot one of three guys who had survived the avalanche of cans. He was sent billowing backwards into a box-shaped meat cooler. Two were on the other side. Lara fired at one of the two ropes that

suspended the large food aisle sign. It swung down and collided with the two men. They both stumbled into the wall-coolers that lined the main aisle.

“Talk about cleaning up in aisle three...Haha. I’m just full of jokes today!” she said laughing out loud. Lara proceeded out of the food aisle and dove for safety in the toys department where the large mass of shoppers was. She was in an aisle of Legos. Harry Potter castles were in many people’s hands and the new Lego Atlantis set was already sold out. A life-sized statue of Indiana Jones, built from Legos, rested on the side of the aisle complete with Fedora and a real whip!

And then the world went black.

All of the lights in Walmart suddenly shut down humming with electricity. People screamed and cried out in fright. The only light was that of a few people on their cell-phones. Then a voice sounded from the intercom.

“It’s so great to see you, Lara. I mean, I was trying to avoid meeting you, but I guess meeting you is always the inevitable from what I hear.”

“Why don’t you come out so we can settle this face to face?” she called out.

“Thievery isn’t a gentleman’s sport, Lara. But it is a sport nonetheless. And you know how sports are; there is always competition. There is always someone who wants to be the winner. And I am the winner, Lara Croft. So I will turn the lights on so you can see what man has finally got you beat.”

And, true to his word, the lights turned back on. But Lara was no longer surrounded by shoppers, but by mercenaries in Walmart vests, and the old woman pointing her grenade launcher at Lara’s chest.

The man was young, and very tall. He had sleek brown hair which was combed back and sported a white shirt and tie. His black shoes were stained with blood.

“The name is Daniel Delone. I’m from America and I was an archaeologist, just like you-”

“And since when has thievery been a sub-activity of archaeological research, Dan?”

“You’ll do best not to interrupt me, Lara. Now, where was I? Oh yes. So a few months ago, I was on a hunt for Excalibur, an item you know well, from what I am told? Well, I was angry when I requested research money from the academy and they denied it. Do you know what they said, Lara? They refused my request because Lara Croft, British archaeologist adventurer extraordinaire owned that department and that third party research would amount to nothing! Ha! That’s where they made their mistake. I have found one of those daises’s nestled away in an Amazonian jungle. I bet you haven’t heard about that one!

“So I found my very own Excalibur. But that wasn’t enough. The academy suggested that it was a fake! They had articles about my false claim to have found the legendary sword of King Arthur! What fools! They wouldn’t know a lost relic if it slapped them in the face-”

“Why, a slap in the face would do you well right now, Dan.”

“Stop interrupting me!” Daniel snapped back. “One more time and Grammy, here, will let lose her fiery wrath! So it wasn’t enough for me to have just found this artifact. I would need the private collections of Lara Croft herself for my revenge. Those fools will die for what they did to me! And only when they see that Lara Croft isn’t all she seems to be. I was going to reveal your secret collections and make billions. In the end, I would have won tenfold!”

“Well. The master plan has been unveiled. Is this the part where I kick your butt all over the storefront? I’ve already suffocated a man by jockstrap, knocked a man unconscious with a Move controller and crushed two gunmen with fertilizer. What beating do *you* prefer?”

“Forget that, you die now! I will let nobody else get in my way! Nobody!” He revealed the sack of Lara’s artifacts which were in her leather pack. The Scion, the Dagger of Xian, the Meteorite Shards, Excalibur and her sack of Black Tea were all in there. He pulled out a second Excalibur and raised it above Lara’s head, the blade sparkling with green magical energy.

But Lara was fast, you see. She had stolen the whip from the Lego Indiana Jones statue and used it to strap onto her pack. She pulled the pack from Dan’s hands into hers and, in a swift motion pulled out Excalibur.

Lara and Dan stared each other down for a minute, and then they both swung the blades at each other with such force that the magic energy created a propulsive ring around them which grew outward pushing everything away. Racks of clothes, games, food and everything else you can possibly find at Walmart was pushed towards the far walls of the store. The people who hadn’t been crushed during this were now fleeing from Walmart all the way over, past Kohl’s, to stand in the line at Toys R Us!

They themselves had been pushed across the now empty center of the store. Lara was up first and sprinting towards Daniel. As he swung towards her legs, she jumped and flared over his back swinging towards his head, but he had countered it by swinging over his shoulder. Another explosion sent them backwards while green sparks emanated from the tips of their blades.

“Give up now, Lara! I have you beat. Men, take her down!” Daniel commanded. His mercenaries circled around Lara.

“Haha...losers.”

Lara slashed around herself in a circle. A ring of green light expanded outwards just like earlier knocking all of the men into the air, where they froze in time. Dan had avoided the attack with his blade.

“You should be the one giving up. I have my artifacts and all of your men are defeated. There is nothing you can do. If you turn yourself in, you might be able to serve a little less than a life sentence,” Lara said.

“NO! NOBODY WILL TELL ME WHAT I CAN AND CANNOT DO!”

He aimed his sword at Lara’s chest and threw it, like somebody would a throwing knife. It seemed to go in slow motion as it closed in on Lara’s heart.

She back flipped in the air just before Excalibur impaled her. As she was in midair, she caught the projected sword in her free hand. When she landed, two Excalibur’s rested in her palms. She slapped the two blades together in a shower of green sparks and all of the men frozen in time fell to the ground.

As CSI, FBI and the Police began to flood into Walmart; Lara turned and began walking leisurely towards the exit.

“Agh!” cried out Daniel. Grammy was nearby. He picked up the grenade launcher next to her unconscious body and fired at Lara. But she had expected it. As the grenade approached her, she twisted around and batted the grenade back at him. In a flash of green, the grenade vanished and then not a second later reappeared right in front of Daniel Delone, exploding upon impact.

“NOOOOOOOOO!” cried his dying voice through the flames.

“That’s a life sentence if I’ve ever heard of one.” Lara couldn’t believe the number of jokes she had made that night!

“Lara? Lara!”

Lara was awoken by Winston, her faithful butler. She had fallen asleep in her vault in front of a cozy fire that illuminated the whole room. Her head had tilted to the side and her hands held a cup of black tea...her favorite.

“What? What’s wrong?” Lara asked.

“You were having a nightmare, Lara. How many times have I told you not to drink Black Tea in front of the fire? Oh you girls! You never learn. But I guess you couldn’t have been dreaming of anything too scary. After all, it’s Black Friday. I just saw on the television that there was a disastrous mess at Walmart. Ha. You know, keep on dreaming. I wouldn’t want you going out there after all.”

Lara stared in confusion, and as Winston shut the door to her vault she sipped her Black Tea and then, five minutes later, she was asleep in her chair again, dreaming of an unfortunate misadventure at Toys R Us!

Lara Croft and Her Black Friday Adventure is an Original Tomb Raider Tale written by Hunter Wolfe and edited by Danie Martin.