

LARA CROFT GOES TO CHURCH

by Elle Coe

INT GOTHIC CHURCH SANCTUARY DAY

Under one of the pews hides LEE, an attractive twenty-something woman dressed in a black wet suit that still is damp from its earlier underwater swim. She glances at her high-tech watch, pushes a button and the display shows ten minutes to noon. Footsteps echo and she rolls under another pew to get a better look. Two of Big Louie's MEN have started to look under the pews at the back. With the sanctuary empty, it is only a matter of time before they find her. LEE crawls out into an outside aisle and, keeping bent, stealthily heads toward the front. She knows this church well and makes for one of the doors that lead behind the stage.

The main doors to the sanctuary open in the back and parishioners begin to take their seats. ORGAN MUSIC starts. Louie's men are forced to hide their guns, but ironically their tailored suits and ties help them blend in.

INT CHURCH FRONT HALLWAY DAY

Lee loses sight of them as she slips through the door, and into the long stone hallway that wraps down, and into a tunnel under the church. She emerges into the choir practice room.

INT CHOIR PRACTICE ROOM DAY

MUSIC and VOICES sing out in praise as LEE hugs the doorway into the room. Choir members decked out in robes, holding matching music folders, gather around the piano in the center to warm-up as the Choir Director leads them. They watch the director and don't notice the wet-suit clad FIGURE slipping behind them into one of the dressing rooms.

INT MEN'S CHOIR DRESSING ROOM DAY

Lee does a quick surveillance check of the room. Thankfully it is empty. She peels off her wet-suit to reveal adventure style shorts and t-shirt, with a sleek waterproof pack on her back and black pistols strapped to each thigh - her personal tribute to Lara Croft. Of course much to her happiness, keeping her hair pulled into one long braid down her back makes her look like Lara too.

She grabs a robe from the rack and pulls it on. The sleeves and length swamp her. She grimaces at herself in one of the full length mirrors. Figures this would be the Men's dressing room. Grabbing another robe, it doesn't swamp her as much. She quickly stows the wet suit out of sight, checks her pistols and gives one more glance in the mirror to make sure the large robe hides them.

INT CHURCH SANCTUARY REAR BALCONY DAY

From their balcony at the back of the sanctuary, choir members sing in glorious anthem. The music echoes in the large ancient auditorium. LEE scans the room from her position behind the last row of ladies. She holds up her music folder to partially block her face and zeros in on Louie's men.

They stand pretending to be ushers at the front, passing the offering plate and searching the pews as they move along the aisle. All the while they discreetly watch the floor, waiting for her to emerge.

Distracted by watching them, the anthem ends and the choir has filed out. Lee realizes she's the only one left up there - exposed.

Now almost to the middle of the sanctuary, one of the men lifts his eyes and spots her. He motions to the other and they make toward the back doors.

Haunting organ MUSIC begins as a robe clad soloist sings from the stage.

Lee knows her time is short. Rushing to the front of the loft she looks down on the backs of the crowd.

INT CHURCH STAIRWELL DAY

The men, now wielding their guns freely, take two steps at a time as they climb the winding stairs to the choir loft.

INT CHURCH SANCTUARY CHOIR BALCONY DAY

Lee eyes the huge ornate chandeliers that hang from the ceiling. Heavy metal chains hold them and look sturdy. The door to the loft opens as the men sweep in. Left with no choice, she perches on the balcony edge and leaps out just barely grabbing hold of a curved end. The chandelier begins to swing under the force, making it swing wider and closer to the next one.

Organ MUSIC swells magnificently as the soloist hits a high note. Parishioners enjoy the music all the while oblivious to the action above.

The men shoot several times at Lee but miss. She is in her element. Braid flying, robe billowing she swings with the grace of a trapeze artist from one chandelier to another, dodging bullets along the way. Music clashes loudly with gunfire, as bullets and Lee fly through the air.

The soloist, caught in the rapture of the song and the great acoustics, doesn't notice Lee's life threatening acrobatics around the ceiling.

With a herculean effort Lee swings from the last chandelier. Twisting with perfect precision, she grabs onto a main ceiling beam and uses it to slide down a column onto the sanctuary floor, right beside the pew where she first started.

The music ends and in the silence an alarm RINGS!

Everyone turns to look at her. Lee looks embarrassed. It is her watch alarm. She climbs over several people and eventually over her mother's legs and sits back down on the pew, instantly transforming into ELLIE, an eleven year old girl decked out in gobs of pink frilly Easter clothes, sitting sublimely in church. She silences the watch as her mom motions her to be quiet. The preacher gets up to begin his sermon.

Ellie looks again at her digital black sports WATCH hidden beneath her white glove. Her mom points to the watch. She gives an "Ah Mom do I hafta look?" but her mom gives the "Do it now or else look." Reluctantly ELLIE relinquishes the watch. She settles back, sighing sadly. But then she pats her thigh. Let's see where was she? That's right.

ELLIE fades and is once again LEE sitting beside her mom, patting her thighs to make sure her guns are still there. She smiles at the preacher. No matter if she dropped her watch while swinging, she could still out smart Big Louie's guys. Was that one of them pretending to be a preacher?

FADE OUT