

TUNNEL TROUBLE

TERRA SAURIA EPISODE TWO



AUDIOVENTURES

AUDIOVENTURES PRESENTS

TUNNEL TROUBLE

INTERACTIVE ADVENTURE EPISODE 2
OF THE TERRA SAURIA SERIES

A QUICK HEADS-UP

Dear adventurer,

we want to give you a heads up that we advise against turning the pages backwards when you are at the **beginning** of a choice. If you want to go back, use the links, because you may run into spoilers from other branches of the story by turning the page back. It's just one of the limitations of using links to specific chapters/choices/branches of the story.

We're extremely grateful that you are invested enough to check out the eBook version of our creation(s). Keep an eye out for the next one and we hope you'll have a great time with our story!

If you want to contact us in any way, you can do so on twitter ([@audioventuresyt](https://twitter.com/audioventuresyt)) or at audioventures.yt@gmail.com.

Thanks!

The Audioventures Team

START

Daniel stepped into darkness.

A cone of light appeared in front of him from the flashlight attached to his M4, dust swirling in the glow as he shined it forward and lit up the tunnel. To his left, Claire did the same with her MP7. She had her blond hair tied up in a knot behind her head and was wearing a similar attire to his: a dark, tight shirt under a technical vest with ammunition and supplies.

It was quiet in this abandoned section of the London Underground, and tracks still lay on the floor, covered in soot and rat skeletons as they led into the darkness ahead. Behind them the last remnants of light from Earl's Court Station—the last station before the edge of the cage—poured in through the metal grid that barricaded the way. Beyond, Daniel saw citizens cycle through the repurposed tubes to get around the city.

"Let's get a move on," Claire whispered. "Before someone spots us."

Daniel nodded and began to walk away from the grid, making sure not to stumble over the tracks. Their footsteps echoed through the round tunnel, but otherwise it was quiet. Eerily quiet. Daniel hadn't been alive when trains drove through the tunnels, but it still felt wrong to walk here, as if they could be met by two approaching headlights any moment now. Still, non-existent trains weren't cause for worry. Dinosaurs were. Plus the fact that if they got lost in these bowels, no one would come look for them. Not even the City Watch. Why had he agreed to that again?

Rumbling in the distance, like something falling over or... collapsing.

"That's not suspicious at all," Claire mumbled sarcastically.

"About as suspicious as you not being hungry at dinner when you've ravaged the biscuit tin ten minutes earlier?"

Claire paused. "You noticed that, huh?"

"You're eating all my biscuits, woman!" Daniel said a little too loudly, his voice echoing. Daniel tensely waited for his wife to reprimand him.

"Nice job," she finally said quietly. "There goes our surprise arrival."

They walked in silence for a while until the tunnel began to bend to the left. At this point they were well beyond the cage and therefore somewhere underneath the ruins of London.

"Hold up," Daniel eventually said, pausing in his step. "Do you hear that?"

"Skittering," Claire said after a brief moment. "Is that it already? So close to the city?"

"Could be rats," Daniel said.

"Sounds too heavy for that," Claire noted.

Daniel pressed on, moving his finger to the trigger as they rounded the bend in the tunnel. Then he saw them, standing on an intersection where the tunnel split into two, leading left and right. The two thin, raptor-like dinosaurs stood at about a metre high and two metres from their long necks to even longer tails, and were covered in light grey feathers. They immediately looked up and turned their narrow heads in Daniel and Claire's direction, spotting the flashlights on their weapons.

"Troodon," Claire whispered.

"Ah, that's just *lovely*, just what I was hoping for." Daniel paused and beside him Claire did as well, gun to her shoulder. Daniel's mind raced as multiple thoughts rushed through his head in the span of two seconds. It was unusual to see just two, since they usually lived in larger packs.

CHOICES:

OPEN FIRE

HOLD FIRE AND WAIT

CHOICE: OPEN FIRE

[\(BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE\)](#)

Daniel didn't want to allow the beasts to react, suppressed shots coming from his rifle as he opened fire immediately. Claire began to fire too, prepared to follow his example through years of going on jobs together. Their bullets ravaged through the animals' bodies, but not before the dinosaurs called out loudly in panic, screams echoing through the tunnels.

It fell still mere seconds later.

"Clear," Claire said, shining her light on the dead dinosaurs. "Was that a good idea?"

"Not sure," Daniel said. "We'll find out any mome—"

More skittering, and within seconds the rest of the troodon pack rounded the corner, coming from the tunnel to the right.

"Could've known," Claire groaned.

"It'll be fiiine," Daniel said, raising his weapon again.

They opened fire once more, making sure to preserve their ammo as they lined up their shots with the approaching predators. The tunnels lit up from the flashes of their weapons, and in those flashes Daniel saw feathers swirling down as the troodons crashed into the ground one after another.

Fortunately the tunnel wasn't wide enough for the beasts to spread out, and so Daniel took out several of them without much effort. He counted five of them dead at his hands by the time it fell still again, and Claire had taken out a fair few of her own.

"See? Daniel said, scanning the tunnels ahead with the flashlight on his M4. "We're way too awesome to die to a bunch of *troodon*. I mean, even geese are scarier."

"We should be more careful," Claire said as they continued walking, stepping over the dead dinosaurs. Some of them were still twitching, but quite clearly dead. "Besides, if geese are scarier, why have they all died out except for the ones inside the cage?"

Daniel did a mental count as they passed the troodons. He'd killed five in total. Claire had killed four. He decided not to mention it, since she may still beat him by the end of the job. No, he wouldn't tell her that he'd killed more than her until he was absolutely sure he'd won this time.

"Ah," Daniel said as they arrived at the intersection. "So this is why they were here."

Beside the two dinosaurs lay a corpse. A human corpse, partially eaten, throat ripped out, and covered in bite marks. His clothes were ripped and bloody, but Daniel could make out the colour and design. Somehow it looked familiar to him. He crouched down, inspecting the body more closely. A pistol lay beside it along with two casings. Unsuppressed.

Idiot.

"Poor guy," Claire said. "Not a good way to go."

"Should've known the risk in coming here," Daniel said. "There's something about him that I recognise, though."

"You know this fellow?"

"I just have a feeling I've seen him before somewhere..."

Daniel paused.

The pub.

Daniel crossed the busy sunlit street beneath London's domed cage, people chatting happily as they walked this way and that. Every now and then, a passerby—particularly young boys—shot him a glance upon recognition, their faces turning surprised. Daniel had never

gotten used to the stares since he made it big on the mercenary scene some three years back. He hadn't anticipated becoming 'famous' when he and Claire had become guns-for-hire.

He entered the pub on the other side of the street, which, Daniel knew, had actually been a pub before the dinosaur outbreak as well. This place had never been repurposed for more productive matters.

He glanced around as he stepped inside. It was dimly lit despite it being afternoon, and it was uncomfortably warm. It was full of people that could somehow afford spending time and money on being here instead of at their jobs.

Several eyes turned toward him as he walked between the tables. Here, too, he was recognised, though he would have preferred to keep these particular eyes off him. This place didn't have the greatest reputation, and the men here looked rough and unsophisticated. They could be their true selves here, for actually being street scum outside got you on the City Watch's radar rather instantly.

At one of the tables to his left, three men who seemed to have bought shirts too tight for their overly muscled torsos eyed him with unhidden disdain. Daniel paused and met their gazes.

CHOICES:

ANTAGONISE THEM

IGNORE THEM

CHOICE: ANTAGONISE THEM

[\(BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE\)](#)

Daniel gave them a grin. "Sorry lads, no autographs today."

One of them, the bald one with the stupid face—well, they all had stupid faces—eyed him up and down. "You think you're funny, superstar?"

Daniel smirked, raising his brows. "On occasion. You think you're tough, T-Rex arms?" The insult made no sense but it was always entertaining seeing how sensitive these kind of guys could be about their bodies.

The men stood up, towering over him as they stood at least a head taller than him, and were about twice his width.

Daniel had to turn his head to look up at them. "Oh."

"Yeah, 'oh,'" the first guy echoed him. "You wanna try that again?"

"Well, 'want' is overstating it, but I can try."

"You lookin' for a fuckin' fight, mate?" the second said, stepping up against him, his face now centimeters from Daniel's own. He reeked of beer. The cheap kind they made for the regular citizens that didn't have much to spend.

"Oy!" the landlord shouted from behind the bar. "No fighting inside! Take that shit outside!"

"You heard the man," Daniel said. "No punching here."

"Keep walking, wanker," the first guy said.

He didn't have to say it twice. Daniel quickly turned and walked off. *Whoops. Gotta watch my mouth in here.*

"Making friends, Mr. Shaw?" a voice said from the side.

Daniel turned and noticed a man in his fifties wearing a navy coloured suit, sitting in a relatively private booth by the wall, sipping what looked to be whiskey. "Oh, you know, just getting to know the sophisticated patrons of this excellent establishment." He grinned. "Jonathan Bates?"

The man nodded and gestured to the barman before turning back to Daniel. "Please, have a seat."

The cushioned bench creaked softly under his weight.

"You came alone. Where is your wife?"

"Doesn't seem like the place to bring your wife," Daniel said, glancing around. Most of the people had turned back to their conversations, but some still darted their eyes in his direction, as if he didn't belong.

Well. He didn't.

"How gentlemanly protective of you," Bates said.

Daniel snorted. "It's the men here who'd need protection from her."

The corner of Bates's mouth cracked into a faint, careful smile.

"You said you had a job offer," Daniel said.

"Indeed. An... unexpected problem has arisen down in the tube." Bates spoke with calculated caution.

Daniel raised a brow. "Haven't heard of anything going on down there. Besides, that's the Watch's jurisdiction. I do jobs *outside* the cage."

"Ah, but this *is* outside the cage," Bates said. "In the tunnels beyond the barricades."

Shady stuff, then, Daniel thought immediately. Who cared about what happened in the abandoned tunnels underneath the ruins of London's outskirts? He almost stood up there and

then, ready to leave, but before he could do so, the barman arrived with a glass of whiskey and set it down in front of Daniel. Bates nodded to the man as he retreated.

“I take it from your silence that you are willing to listen to my offer,” Bates said.

Daniel took the whiskey and sniffed it. Expensive stuff. Had to be over fifty years old. Whiskey, *proper* whiskey wasn't made these days for various reasons, though people produced a rather unpleasant brownish spirit made from grains that they *called* whiskey. This seemed to be the real deal. Well, it wouldn't hurt *listening* to what Bates had to say, would it? He gave the older man a brief nod.

“You see,” Bates said. “I have a personal interest in the tunnels to the west of the cage. Unfortunately, I've had reports of a dinosaur infestation. All stations beyond the barricades are supposed to be blocked off to keep the tunnels clear entirely, but somehow the nasty creatures have found a way in anyway. I'd ask the City Watch to take care of it, but... let us say I'd prefer them not to be poking around down there.”

Yep. Shady business.

Daniel sipped the whiskey and grimaced against the burn. “How much would it pay, if I were to accept?”

“Two thousand pounds.”

Daniel raised a sceptical eyebrow. “That's half a year's wage for most folk.”

“Now you see how important this is to me,” Bates said with a smile. “Clear those tunnels for me, keep the City Watch out of it, and I will pay you two thousand pounds. What do you say?”

“Payment up front,” Daniel said, realising he was already accepting without properly thinking about it. “Even if I fail, I want a guarantee. My equipment doesn't come cheap.”

“That hardly seems fair,” Bates said. “What if you fail?”

“That's a risk you'll have to take.”

“I'm afraid that risk is too great for a price so high, Mr. Shaw.”

CHOICES:

[STICK TO YOUR TERMS](#)

[ACCEPT THE TERMS](#)

CHOICE: IGNORE THEM

[\(BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE\)](#)

The men stared at him antagonizingly, but Daniel kept any remarks to himself. It was no time to make enemies, especially those that could crush his head with their biceps.

As he passed them he felt particularly proud of himself for keeping his mouth shut.

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CHOICES:

STICK TO YOUR TERMS

ACCEPT THE TERMS

CHOICE: STICK TO YOUR TERMS

[\(BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE\)](#)

“Suit yourself, then,” Daniel said, moving to rise.

“Come now,” Bates said. “You’re not honestly turning down a simple two grand job, are you?”

“I am, if you’re not willing to pay up front. I don’t know what shady business you’re doing down there, but I’m not risking it without a guarantee.”

Bates sighed softly through his nose, clearly contemplating Daniel’s terms.

“You could’ve known this before you contacted me,” Daniel said. “This is how I do business with everyone.”

“There is no way to sway your mind?” Bates asked.

Daniel held his eyes. “Not a chance.”

Bates drew his lips to a line before finally downing the last of his whiskey and nodding. “Very well, Mr. Shaw. I suppose I shouldn’t have expected otherwise. I will deliver the money at your apartment later today. Off the records, of course.”

Daniel nodded and rose fully this time, downing his whiskey as well. He fought the urge to cough—he wouldn’t want to look stupid, of course—and, after Bates gave him directions to find the secret passage at Earl’s Court Station to get him into the tunnels beyond the barricades, began his way to the exit.

“And Mr. Shaw.”

Daniel turned back.

“Need I remind you that screwing me has dire consequences?”

“That goes both ways, Bates,” Daniel replied with a shrug, and left.

“This is one of those guys that eyeballed me on my way to Bates,” Daniel said.

“Are you sure?” Claire asked.

Daniel nodded and picked up the dead man’s pistol. Something was definitely wrong here. Who was this man? “This job just got a whole lot shadier. I should’ve walked away from it.”

“Too late now,” Claire said, looking around with the flashlight on her weapon.

“Unless we turn back,” Daniel said, stuffing the pistol’s barrel into the back of his trousers.

“From your description,” Claire said, “I don’t think Bates is the kind of guy who likes paying two grand for a job we decided to abandon. And it *is* two grand.”

Daniel hated admitting it, but for that money it was probably worth the risk. “Let’s move on,” he said. “The quicker we finish, the quicker we’re out of it.”

They continued on their way, taking the left tunnel. They could check the one on the right on their way back.

“What would they even want these tunnels cleared for?” Claire asked idly as they passed through a broken down train car, hopping down on the other side.

“That’s dangerous, what you’re doing now.”

“What?” she asked, sounding panicked and looking for danger around herself.

“Asking questions,” he replied. “The less we know, the safer we are.”

She visibly relieved. “What, you think these people are actually dangerous?”

“I don’t know,” Daniel said. “But, I doubt it was a coincidence that we found a dead guy from the same pub I did negotiations in, somewhere beyond a secret passage into the abandoned tunnels that are off limits unless you specifically get clearance from the City Watch to enter.”

“Fair point,” Claire said. “What do you think, then? Cause for worry?”

CHOICES:

“MAYBE THEY WERE JUST EAVESDROPPING.”

“RIVAL MERCS TRYING TO TAKE US OUT?”

CHOICE: ACCEPT THE TERMS

[\(BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE\)](#)

“It’s not how I usually do business,” Daniel said.

“But for two grand...” Bates said.

“But for two grand I can make an exception,” he sighed, not entirely happy. Claire wasn’t going to like it, but then, if she wanted a say in the negotiations, she should’ve come along.

“Excellent,” Bates said, and explained to Daniel the directions to a secret passage that would get him past the barricade and into the tunnels that led westward from Earl’s Court Station.

Dangerous, that, Daniel thought. They specifically built barricades to keep the dinosaurs out of the cage, and this guy made a passage that renders them obsolete. If anything, this job will keep the citizens safe as well.

Daniel nodded once and rose, drinking the rest of his whiskey. He coughed slightly before departing.

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“MAYBE THEY WERE JUST EAVESDROPPING.”

“RIVAL MERCS TRYING TO TAKE US OUT?”

CHOICE: "MAYBE THEY WERE JUST EAVESDROPPING"

[\(BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE\)](#)

"Could've been simple eavesdroppers," Daniel said. "Trying to get a piece of the pie. They weren't sitting far from me."

"And what about the gun?" Claire said. "Can't be common folk."

"That's what's bugging me, too," he admitted. "Either way, we'll have to keep our eyes open, though I doubt there's anyone else. They wouldn't have left the gun."

"Unless they were forced to flee," Claire noted.

"Yeah," Daniel said. "But in that case the dinosaurs will have scared them off good. We'll report it to Bates when we're—"

Rumbling. Again. Much closer this time.

Daniel and Claire fell silent and into position for a fight, fingers resting on their respective triggers. There was nothing in the direct beams of their flashlights, but they didn't reach far enough to comfort Daniel.

"Doesn't sound like those troodon were the only dinosaurs down here," Claire said.

They started towards the receding darkness ahead. Dust in the beams of their torchlight swirled like snow in headlights on a dark winter night. The rumbling had stopped, as if it was holding its breath for Daniel and Claire to pass.

Then he noticed it: a tall silhouette blacker than the darkness beyond the reach of his light, with two red eyes in it reflecting the light back at him like a wolf hiding in the bushes. Daniel's stomach twisted at the nightmare fuel ahead of him, heart rate rising.

It came for them with sudden heavy footsteps, approaching at frighteningly high speed. The beast was much bigger than the troodon, but didn't reach the ceiling of the tunnel; in fact, it was only about as tall as Daniel. It was its length from head to tail that was an impressive seven metres at the least. It was broader than Daniel as well, yet still agile and fast, approaching at a speed that barely allowed him to react.

Daniel and Claire stopped in their tracks and immediately walked backwards as they opened fire simultaneously. The animal wasn't hard to hit, but it had been close by the time Daniel and Claire had spotted it, so they were forced to fire in bursts rather than single shots.

Blood and light brown feathers flew about as they pumped bullets into what Daniel now recognised to be a Utahraptor. The dinosaur quickly fell and rolled like a ragdoll over the tracks before finally falling still right before them.

Daniel turned to look at Claire. "All good?" he asked.

She nodded, wiping her forehead with her forearm. "That is *not* good, though," she said, nodding to the raptor.

"We've seen worse," Daniel replied.

"No, look," Claire said, stepping over to the dead predator. She cautiously approached it as she confirmed it was dead, and crouched down. "Utahraptor. They usually force troodon out of their territory. Why were they together in these tunnels?"

Daniel paused. "I didn't even think of that."

"Bates will have some explaining to do," Claire said, sounding annoyed.

"Yeah," Daniel sighed. "There's no way he's not involved in whatever is going on here. Come on, let's get to the next station and see what we can find. If it's clear we'll turn back."

A few minutes later, the tracks began to run upward toward the surface. The next station didn't come into sight, however; the tunnel that was *supposed* to end and lead into the building that lay above ground, continued on as a makeshift wooden tunnel, and bent off from the tracks.

“What the hell is this?” Claire asked, looking around.

“This, my dear Claire, is called wood. It comes from trees and it’s used for—”

“Oh, shut up.”

Daniel grinned. “This wood seems fresh, though. Someone’s built this not long ago.”

They cautiously walked through the wooden tunnel for a few minutes—weapons reloaded—and Daniel noticed several signs of a disaster. There were splotches of dried blood on the floor but no bodies and no signs of survivors. Something had gone wrong here, and his curiosity gnawed at him to find out.

Eventually the tunnel ended and they arrived at a wall with two grand doors that stood wide open. They had been led all the way to a building somewhere outside the cage, like a secret hideout. Inside, a corridor led to the left, the walls covered in dark blood spatter, while on the right there was a small room behind a counter. Above it hung a sign.

Under The Bridge.

“Wait,” Daniel said, pausing. He looked up at the ceiling. “I think I know where we are. We’re under Stamford Bridge.”

“As in the Chelsea football stadium?” Claire asked. “My dad used to be a fan before the outbreak.”

Daniel looked at her in shock.

“What?” she asked.

CHOICES:

TEASE CLAIRE ABOUT CHELSEA

DON'T TEASE CLAIRE

CHOICE: "RIVAL MERCS TRYING TO TAKE US OUT?"

[\(BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE\)](#)

"Rival mercs trying to take us out?" Daniel said, only partially joking.

"Don't be ridiculous," Claire said. "This isn't a movie. Besides, we know all of the other mercs and that guy wasn't one of them."

"Aspiring merc, maybe," Daniel countered. "Difficult to break onto a scene when people are already established."

"Now you're treading into paranoid territory," Claire warned him. "Maybe he was just one of Bates's men."

"That doesn't make the situation any better," Daniel said.

"Well, we'll have to ask him when we—"

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TEASE CLAIRE ABOUT CHELSEA

DON'T TEASE CLAIRE

CHOICE: TEASE CLAIRE ABOUT CHELSEA

[\(BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE\)](#)

“That’s grounds for a divorce, you know.”

Claire raised a brow, amused. “Because you know anything about football, am I right?”

“Well, no,” Daniel said. “But people say it was a shit club.”

“This is why my dad didn’t like you,” she said with a smirk.

“Is it? I thought it was the fact that I expose you to flesh ripping lizards on the regular.”

“Nah,” she countered. “He knew you needed someone to protect your arse.”

“Touché.”

Damn it, he thought.

They arrived in a place that looked like a former nightclub. It had a bar in the back that looked surprisingly well taken care of, and in the middle of the big room was built some kind of... fighting pit with sand covering the floor.

“What the fuck?” Daniel whispered, shining his flashlight around in the dark room.

Around the fighting pit stood tables and chairs—slightly higher to get a better view—and work lights intended for construction sites, though much of it had been knocked over.

“I think we’ve found Bates’s shady business,” Claire said quietly as she entered the spectator ring around the pit.

“He was hosting illegal dinosaur fights,” Daniel said in realisation. “Look, one of the fences is broken down there. Something must have gone wrong.”

“This explains the raptors and troodon together,” Claire said.

“Let’s see what else we can find,” Daniel said.

“Found a generator,” Claire called from the other side of the ring next to the bar.

A deep hum came from where Claire stood as she pulled on the recoil rope and the generator turned on. Work lights lit up the area.

A second later, the sound of rattling metal came from somewhere in the distance, as if reacting to the generator’s noise. Daniel and Claire shared a look and readied their weapons. They traced the sound until they ended up behind the bar, where two doors led to what had been the kitchen. The room was filled with cages.

And in more than half of those cages sat dinosaurs, ranging from small and feathered to larger and featherless. All of these, Daniel noticed, were carnivorous and *very* territorial.

Claire mumbled a curse as they froze in the doorway.

Daniel didn’t hesitate, and pulled Claire back to the bar area before closing the doors. Then he dragged over a bar stool, broke off the seat, and slammed the legs through the door handles to block them. This would at least win them some time in case they broke out of their cages.

“We gotta get out of here,” Daniel said, looking around.

“What about evidence?” Claire asked. “If we can find evidence of Bates being behind this, we can turn him in.”

“To what end?” he said. “It’ll only make an enemy of him. Our job was to clear the tunnel, not this place. So let him deal with this shit. It’s not our problem.”

“It is, though, isn’t it?” Claire replied. “If it happened once, it can happen again. And if we can get into the tunnels from Earl’s Court that easily, then the dinosaurs can get into the station as well.”

“So why don’t we just kill these?” Daniel asked.

“That won’t stop Bates from getting new ones,” Claire answered. “I’d rather let the Watch deal with it. All we need is evidence that Bates is the one who is behind this and this ends today.”

“You don’t need evidence,” a voice said from the entrance.

Daniel and Claire spun, raising their weapons.

Bates smiled kindly, holding a pistol, though he didn’t actually aim it at them. With him, the two other men from the pub stood with pistols in their hands as well, all unsuppressed.

“That would be unwise,” Bates said. “Lower your weapons. We’re on the same side here.”

“Not a fucking chance,” Daniel replied, heart pounding.

“Come now, Mr. Shaw. I thought we had an agreement. Besides, I know how you advertise. You don’t shoot people.”

“Then why’d you follow us here? To take care of us once we’re finished?”

“Don’t be so dramatic, the times where people kill each other on a whim are long past,” Bates replied calmly. “I came to see if you actually accomplished the task, of course.”

“And what of the dead guy?” Claire said. “Was he also checking up on us?”

“Actually, no,” Bates said. “I realised you two may change your mind upon finding this place. I sent him to remove the evidence in case you two slipped away before we could have a civilised discussion about this. I trusted him to be able to defend himself, but I was wrong.”

“Civilised,” Daniel said. “That’s why you brought guns and your lackeys?”

“Surely you don’t expect me to enter these tunnels alone and unarmed.”

Daniel kept his rifle aimed at Bates, and in the corner of his eye he saw Claire had her weapon trained on one of the two men with him. That left one unaccounted for, and Daniel had no idea how well these men could shoot, or how fast they were. There had to be a way out of this, even if it meant straying from his morals and shooting them. He’d rather live with that struggle than... well... die.

CHOICES:

TRY TO CONVINCe THEM TO LAY DOWN THEIR
WEAPONS

BLUFF A THREAT

CHOICE: DON'T TEASE CLAIRE

[\(BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE\)](#)

“Nothing,” he said. “Just didn’t expect you to know about football.”

“You don’t either,” she replied.

“No, but I know the names at least.” *And, he thought, that Chelsea was a shit club, but I’m not going to give you any ammo to get back at me later.*

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CHOICES:

TRY TO CONVINCe THEM TO LAY DOWN THEIR
WEAPONS

BLUFF A THREAT

CHOICE: TRY TO CONVINCe THEM TO LAY DOWN THEIR WEAPONS

[\(BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE\)](#)

“Listen,” Daniel said. “Even if we disagree and you try to shoot us, your weapon is unsuppressed. You saw what happened to your other man back there. You’ll alert anything else that’s down in the tube. So you’ll either die to us in a fight, or you will die to whatever still roams those tunnels.”

“Die to you?” Bates asked, amused. “I don’t think you have it in you to shoot me, Shaw.”

“In cold blood?” Daniel said, “no, you’re right. But self-defence is a powerful motivator. Think about this, Bates. We’ve got two automatic weapons aimed at you and your men. One unexpected move could send fifty bullets your way before you’ve managed to blink. Neither of us wants to die here, so let’s calm down and drop your weapons.”

“And how would I know that you wouldn’t turn me in the moment I do so?” Bates asked.

“Out of you and me, I’m the trustworthy one,” Daniel said.

Bates chuckled. “In that case, promise me one thing. Once we drop our weapons, listen to my offer. After that, you can decide what to do.”

“And if we refuse your offer?” Claire asked.

“Well, Mrs. Shaw, like your husband just informed me, you have two automatic weapons directed at me. I’d rather live in your custody than die in... well, it’s not exactly freedom in that cage, is it?”

Daniel glanced at Claire. She nodded once, briefly.

“We’re listening,” Daniel said. “You have five minutes.”

Bates nodded to his men, and the three of them tossed their pistols to the floor.

“Would you mind pointing that thing elsewhere, before you accidentally shoot us?”

Daniel lowered his M4, though he kept his finger on the trigger. Beside him Claire did the same. His heart pounded as they looked at each other in silence.

“Do you know why I do this?” Bates began.

“I have a feeling you’re going to tell me,” Daniel replied.

Bates ignored him and continued. “*Fun*. When was the last time you had fun, Daniel?”

“We have fun all the time,” he replied. “When we’re going out for drinks, when we’re going weapon shopping.”

“Very exciting, I’m sure,” Bates said, taking a step further into the room. Daniel raised his weapon somewhat, but Bates ignored the motion as he walked over to the fence that separated the pit from the spectator area, and laid a hand on it.

“We get enough excitement on the job,” Claire said.

“But not everyone gets to do what you do.” Bates turned to smile at her. “And that’s what I’m here for. To give people the *thrill* of something exciting. Something to get people’s hearts pumping. It may not be as dangerous as your jobs, but at least the people get to see the dangerous dinosaurs from up close.”

“So that’s why you’re doing this?” Claire said with a scoff. “Out of the kindness of your heart?”

“I like money as much as you do,” Bates said calmly. “Tell me, what is the difference between our jobs? We both make the world a better place for the common folk and earn good money doing it. Why is it that your job is so heroic and admirable, and mine makes me a criminal?”

“Oh, jeez, I don’t know,” Daniel said. “Could it be because you’re endangering the entire fucking city with an unsecured passage into the wilderness?”

“That’s it? That’s the only thing?” Bates asked. “And if I hired more armed men to keep this place safe, made a security system in the passage so nothing gets out? Would you approve of it then?”

“It’d be a start,” Daniel said.

Bates sighed and shook his head. “I’m going to have to offer you more than a promise, aren’t I? Well, I suppose I planned to do so all along.”

“If you were going to make us an offer all along,” Claire said, “why didn’t you do so immediately and skip the lies?”

“And risk you informing the Watch about what we were doing here right away? No, thank you. I needed you to *see* this can be secured. Yes, we made mistakes, but mistakes can be fixed and improved upon.”

“The offer,” Daniel said impatiently. “What is it?”

“I have resources,” Bates said with a faint shrug, hands in the pockets of his expensive suit. “We can help each other. In exchange for not ratting us out to the Watch, I will try my best to help you with things you may need for future endeavors. A partnership, if you will.”

“And what exactly do you get out of this?” Claire asked. “Besides avoiding the Watch.”

“I gain access to the best mercenaries London has to offer to go out in the field for me when I send you on jobs. It’s a win/win.”

“You could’ve had us either way, without this deal,” Claire replied. “What are you up to?”

“I am up to nothing, Mrs. Shaw. I am merely proposing a partnership that benefits us both.”

Daniel and Claire shared a look in silence and he could see they both thought the same. After the carnotaurus fiasco last month they needed a way to earn back their losses. Yes, this job alone would get them a fair way, but they still needed that new car. Without it, they were effectively unemployed. Bates gave them that opportunity. Besides, they still had two extra mouths to feed until Jill and Veronica could start looking for a job, and they were still getting accustomed to their new lives.

“So what will it be?” Bates asked.

“We’ll give you the benefit of the doubt for now,” Claire answered.

“Excellent,” Bates said. “Can I go grab my gun now? I feel *horribly* exposed without it.”

Daniel made a confirming gesture, and the three men gathered their firearms. He and Claire waited tensely, but Bates put his away, prompting his men to do the same.

“Now,” Bates said, walking toward the kitchen doors, “let’s go see if there are any dinosaurs unaccounted for.”

THE END

[BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE](#)

[BACK TO START](#)

CHOICE: BLUFF A THREAT

[\(BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE\)](#)

“You have ten seconds,” Daniel warned, “to drop your weapons.”

Bates smiled calmly.

“Ten,” Daniel began.

“Come on now, Daniel, there’s no need for that.”

“*Nine.*”

Bates sighed. “We both know you’re not going to shoot me.”

“Five.”

“You shouldn’t advertise yourself the way you do and then threaten to shoot people.”

Daniel kept his weapon trained on Bates’s chest, finger on the trigger. He could *do* it. One twitch of his finger was enough to end the snake’s lies. To end his criminal endeavours. To keep the city safe from his dangerous practices. The simplest of movements could end a human life.

Yet, he didn’t.

“Time’s up,” Bates said.

Daniel lowered his weapon.

“Killing another person isn’t quite as easy as the stories make you believe, is it?” Bates said, stepping further into the room.

Daniel clenched his jaws irritably. He hadn’t been able to shoot him. Was that a sign of weakness, or one of strength?

“If anything, I’m glad you didn’t shoot.” Bates walked up to him, coming face to face. “Not because it was my life in your hands obviously, but because you two appear to *think* about your actions. You consider the repercussions.”

Daniel remained silent, glancing to Claire. She too had lowered her weapon, though she kept a wary eye on the two men that still stood near the exit. In any other situation Claire would have taken the opportunity to joke that Daniel did anything *but* estimate the outcomes of his decisions.

“Why are you here, Bates?” he growled. “Really.”

“I came to make you an offer.”

“Could’ve done that before you sent us here,” Claire said from the side. “Why’d you risk your own life coming here? What’s so important that you do it here?”

“It’s hardly risking my own life when I have you two taking care of all the danger, is it? In any case, I came because I wanted you to see. Had I told you that I run a place like this, I highly doubt you’d be willing to cooperate. I saw Daniel’s hesitance when I even *mentioned* the idea of leaving out the Watch.”

“So what’s different now?” Daniel asked.

“Now you’ve seen,” Bates replied, spreading his hands. “Look at this place and tell me you don’t see the potential.”

“I see the potential of carnage and death,” Daniel said. “In fact, I see the *result* of it. You’re endangering the entire city with this shit, Bates. What if one of these dinosaurs had gotten through that passage and into the city?”

“It would have been a tragedy, to be sure,” the man said. “An unforgivable outcome. But it didn’t happen, and now we know what we need to do to prevent it.”

“What do you *want* from us?” Daniel asked, thoroughly confused. “We want no part in this.” He looked at Claire for confirmation, and she nodded once as she looked at Bates with disdain.

“All I ask,” Bates said, “is that you keep this to yourselves. Nothing more, nothing less.”

“And in return?” Claire asked. “What do we get for letting this abomination of a business slip?”

Bates smiled calmly. “In return, I will provide you jobs and information that the common folk of London couldn’t possibly match. I’m talking money, equipment, manpower even, should you require it.”

“We’ve done fine so far without your help,” Claire said.

“By all means, continue doing that,” Bates said. “Just... consider what I have on top of it all. I’ve heard of your little accident in the south last month. Lost your car, two extra mouths to feed...”

Daniel and Claire shared a look. Her eyes betrayed the truth. Bates was right. If what he said was true and he could provide them with more jobs that paid like this one, they could work their way back to where they had been at a much faster rate. Daniel hated admitting it, but he couldn’t deny the truth. Without a car they were essentially unemployed, and Bates’s resources provided an opportunity to get back out there.

“Are we seriously considering this?” Daniel asked her. “We’d become guilty by association.”

“Do we have a choice?” she asked.

Daniel turned to Bates again. “How do we know you can deliver? How can we know you won’t fuck us over once you’re in the clear?”

Bates chuckled softly in his calm, confident manner. “Not only would that be a terrible waste of two terrific mercenaries who may prove useful in the future, I’d rather not resort to such old fashioned measures. We’re a civilised society again. Besides, why would I risk giving you the opportunity to aim your weapon at me if I was planning such a thing in the first place?”

“We’ll accept your offer under one condition,” Daniel glanced at Claire in case she objected. “You will improve the security and you will make sure that under absolutely no circumstances any dinosaur could escape this place and enter the London Underground.”

“Naturally,” Bates said. “Do we have a deal? In exchange for not ratting on me, you will benefit from my resources. I’d say this is a better deal for you than it is for me.”

“That is exactly why we’ll be keeping an eye on you,” Daniel said.

Bates rolled his eyes. “I grow tired of this tough guy act, Daniel. Please, if you only have threats to make, feel free to leave. I have some business to take care of here.”

“Come on, Dan,” Claire said, joining his side and laying a hand on his shoulder. “We’ve heard enough.”

Daniel followed Claire past Bates and the men that had begun their way over to their employer.

“Do I have your word?” Bates asked after them.

Daniel and Claire paused near the exit and looked at each other for a moment. Then they both nodded once to Bates, and left the nightclub.

THE END

[BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE](#)

[BACK TO START](#)

CHOICE: HOLD FIRE AND WAIT

[\(BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE\)](#)

aniel held his fire and, because he did, Claire did the same. Years of working together had trained them to react to the other's actions in a fraction of a second. If Claire fired, Daniel would be ready to follow, sights lined up with the troodon on the right.

"Thoughts?" Daniel whispered, not averting his eyes from the dinosaurs.

"They don't seem to be threatened," Claire replied. "You think there's more of them?"

"Has to be," Daniel said. "That's probably why they didn't attack yet. Afraid unless they're with the entire pack. Bunch of chickens."

He glanced to his left to see what Claire thought of his wordplay.

She ignored it. "We should let them pass. No need to attract unnecessary attention."

"For now," he agreed, trying to hide the disappointment that she hadn't laughed. "We'll have to take them out on the way back, though. It's what we were hired for after all."

The troodon still stood on the intersection, staring in their direction, their large eyes reflecting in the torchlight. When Daniel took a careful step forward, however, the dinosaurs scurried away, off into the tunnel on the right and disappearing into the darkness beyond the reach of their flashlights.

"Looks like your shouting didn't warn them of our arrival," Claire said teasingly.

"Or they heard it was *me*, and they were too scared to act," Daniel said.

"Yeah, right," Claire mumbled.

"Ah," Daniel said as they arrived at the intersection. "So this is why they were here."

On the floor lay a corpse. A human corpse, partially eaten, throat ripped out, and covered in bite marks. His clothes were ripped and bloody, but Daniel could make out the colour and design. Somehow it looked familiar to him. He crouched down, inspecting the body more closely. A pistol lay beside it along with two casings. Unsuppressed.

Idiot.

"Poor guy," Claire said. "Not a good way to go."

"Should've known the risk in coming here," Daniel said. "There's something about him that I recognise, though."

"You know this fellow?"

"I just have a feeling I've seen him before somewhere..."

Daniel paused.

The pub.

Daniel crossed the busy sunlit street beneath London's domed cage, people chatting happily as they walked this way and that. Every now and then, a passerby—particularly young boys—shot him a glance upon recognition, their faces turning surprised. Daniel had never gotten used to the stares since he made it big on the mercenary scene some three years back. He hadn't anticipated becoming 'famous' when he and Claire had become guns-for-hire.

He entered the pub on the other side of the street, which, Daniel knew, had actually been a pub before the dinosaur outbreak as well. This place had never been repurposed for more productive matters.

He glanced around as he stepped inside. It was dimly lit despite it being afternoon, and it was uncomfortably warm. It was full of people that could somehow afford spending time and money on being here instead of at their jobs.

Several eyes turned toward him as he walked between the tables. Here, too, he was recognised, though he would have preferred to keep these particular eyes off him. This place

didn't have the greatest reputation, and the men here looked rough and unsophisticated. They could be their true selves here, for actually being street scum outside got you on the City Watch's radar rather instantly.

At one of the tables to his left, three men who seemed to have bought shirts too tight for their overly muscled torsos eyed him with unhidden disdain. Daniel paused and met their gazes.

CHOICES:

ANTAGONISE THEM

IGNORE THEM

CHOICE: ANTAGONISE THEM

[\(BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE\)](#)

Daniel gave them a grin. "Sorry lads, no autographs today."

One of them, the bald one with the stupid face—well, they all had stupid faces—eyed him up and down. "You think you're funny, superstar?"

Daniel smirked, raising his brows. "On occasion. You think you're tough, T-Rex arms?" The insult made no sense but it was always entertaining seeing how sensitive these kind of guys could be about their bodies.

The men stood up, towering over him as they stood at least a head taller than him, and were about twice his width.

Daniel had to turn his head to look up at them. "Oh."

"Yeah, 'oh,'" the first guy echoed him. "You wanna try that again?"

"Well, 'want' is overstating it, but I can try."

"You lookin' for a fuckin' fight, mate?" the second said, stepping up against him, his face now centimeters from Daniel's own. He reeked of beer. The cheap kind they made for the regular citizens that didn't have much to spend.

"Oy!" the landlord shouted from behind the bar. "No fighting inside! Take that shit outside!"

"You heard the man," Daniel said. "No punching here."

"Keep walking, wanker," the first guy said.

He didn't have to say it twice. Daniel quickly turned and walked off. *Whoops. Gotta watch my mouth in here.*

"Making friends, Mr. Shaw?" a voice said from the side.

Daniel turned and noticed a man in his fifties wearing a navy coloured suit, sitting in a relatively private booth by the wall, sipping what looked to be whiskey. "Oh, you know, just getting to know the sophisticated patrons of this excellent establishment." He grinned. "Jonathan Bates?"

The man nodded and gestured to the barman before turning back to Daniel. "Please, have a seat."

The cushioned bench creaked softly under his weight.

"You came alone. Where is your wife?"

"Doesn't seem like the place to bring your wife," Daniel said, glancing around. Most of the people had turned back to their conversations, but some still darted their eyes in his direction, as if he didn't belong.

Well. He didn't.

"How gentlemanly protective of you," Bates said.

Daniel snorted. "It's the men here who'd need protection from her."

The corner of Bates's mouth cracked into a faint, careful smile.

"You said you had a job offer," Daniel said.

"Indeed. An... unexpected problem has arisen down in the tube." Bates spoke with calculated caution.

Daniel raised a brow. "Haven't heard of anything going on down there. Besides, that's the Watch's jurisdiction. I do jobs *outside* the cage."

"Ah, but this *is* outside the cage," Bates said. "In the tunnels beyond the barricades."

Shady stuff, then, Daniel thought immediately. Who cared about what happened in the abandoned tunnels underneath the ruins of London's outskirts? He almost stood up there and

then, ready to leave, but before he could do so, the barman arrived with a glass of whiskey and set it down in front of Daniel. Bates nodded to the man as he retreated.

“I take it from your silence that you are willing to listen to my offer,” Bates said.

Daniel took the whiskey and sniffed it. Expensive stuff. Had to be over fifty years old. Whiskey, *proper* whiskey wasn't made these days for various reasons, though people produced a rather unpleasant brownish spirit made from grains that they *called* whiskey. This seemed to be the real deal. Well, it wouldn't hurt *listening* to what Bates had to say, would it? He gave the older man a brief nod.

“You see,” Bates said. “I have a personal interest in the tunnels to the west of the cage. Unfortunately, I've had reports of a dinosaur infestation. All stations beyond the barricades are supposed to be blocked off to keep the tunnels clear entirely, but somehow the nasty creatures have found a way in anyway. I'd ask the City Watch to take care of it, but... let us say I'd prefer them not to be poking around down there.”

Yep. Shady business.

Daniel sipped the whiskey and grimaced against the burn. “How much would it pay, if I were to accept?”

“Two thousand pounds.”

Daniel raised a sceptical eyebrow. “That's half a year's wage for most folk.”

“Now you see how important this is to me,” Bates said with a smile. “Clear those tunnels for me, keep the City Watch out of it, and I will pay you two thousand pounds. What do you say?”

“Payment up front,” Daniel said, realising he was already accepting without properly thinking about it. “Even if I fail, I want a guarantee. My equipment doesn't come cheap.”

“That hardly seems fair,” Bates said. “What if you fail?”

“That's a risk you'll have to take.”

“I'm afraid that risk is too great for a price so high, Mr. Shaw.”

CHOICES:

STICK TO YOUR TERMS

ACCEPT THE TERMS

CHOICE: IGNORE THEM

[\(BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE\)](#)

The men stared at him antagonizingly, but Daniel kept any remarks to himself. It was no time to make enemies, especially those that could crush his head with their biceps.

As he passed them he felt particularly proud of himself for keeping his mouth shut.

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Yep. Shady business.

Daniel sipped the whiskey and grimaced against the burn. “How much would it pay, if I were to accept?”

“Two thousand pounds.”

Daniel raised a sceptical eyebrow. “That’s half a year’s wage for most folk.”

“Now you see how important this is to me,” Bates said with a smile. “Clear those tunnels for me, keep the City Watch out of it, and I will pay you two thousand pounds. What do you say?”

“Payment up front,” Daniel said, realising he was already accepting without properly thinking about it. “Even if I fail, I want a guarantee. My equipment doesn’t come cheap.”

“That hardly seems fair,” Bates said. “What if you fail?”

“That’s a risk you’ll have to take.”

“I’m afraid that risk is too great for a price so high, Mr. Shaw.”

CHOICES:

[STICK TO YOUR TERMS](#)

[ACCEPT THE TERMS](#)

CHOICE: STICK TO YOUR TERMS

[\(BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE\)](#)

“Suit yourself, then,” Daniel said, moving to rise.

“Come now,” Bates said. “You’re not honestly turning down a simple two grand job, are you?”

“I am, if you’re not willing to pay up front. I don’t know what shady business you’re doing down there, but I’m not risking it without a guarantee.”

Bates sighed softly through his nose, clearly contemplating Daniel’s terms.

“You could’ve known this before you contacted me,” Daniel said. “This is how I do business with everyone.”

“There is no way to sway your mind?” Bates asked.

Daniel held his eyes. “Not a chance.”

Bates drew his lips to a line before finally downing the last of his whiskey and nodding. “Very well, Mr. Shaw. I suppose I shouldn’t have expected otherwise. I will deliver the money at your apartment later today. Off the records, of course.”

Daniel nodded and rose fully this time, downing his whiskey as well. He fought the urge to cough—he wouldn’t want to look stupid, of course—and, after Bates gave him directions to find the secret passage at Earl’s Court Station to get him into the tunnels beyond the barricades, began his way to the exit.

“And Mr. Shaw.”

Daniel turned back.

“Need I remind you that screwing me has dire consequences?”

“That goes both ways, Bates,” Daniel replied with a shrug, and left.

“This is one of those guys that eyeballed me on my way to Bates,” Daniel said.

“Are you sure?” Claire asked.

Daniel nodded and picked up the dead man’s pistol. Something was definitely wrong here. Who was this man? “This job just got a whole lot shadier. I should’ve walked away from it.”

“Too late now,” Claire said, looking around with the flashlight on her weapon.

“Unless we turn back,” Daniel said, stuffing the pistol’s barrel into the back of his trousers.

“From your description,” Claire said, “I don’t think Bates is the kind of guy who likes paying two grand for a job we decided to abandon. And it *is* two grand.”

Daniel hated admitting it, but for that money it was probably worth the risk. “Let’s move on,” he said. “The quicker we finish, the quicker we’re out of it.”

They continued on their way, taking the left tunnel. They could check the one on the right on their way back.

“What would they even want these tunnels cleared for?” Claire asked idly as they passed through a broken down train car, hopping down on the other side.

“That’s dangerous, what you’re doing now.”

“What?” she asked, sounding panicked and looking for danger around herself.

“Asking questions,” he replied. “The less we know, the safer we are.”

She visibly relieved. “What, you think these people are actually dangerous?”

“I don’t know,” Daniel said. “But, I doubt it was a coincidence that we found a dead guy from the same pub I did negotiations in, somewhere beyond a secret passage into the abandoned tunnels that are off limits unless you specifically get clearance from the City Watch to enter.”

“Fair point,” Claire said. “What do you think, then? Cause for worry?”

CHOICES:

“MAYBE THEY WERE JUST EAVESDROPPING.”

“RIVAL MERCS TRYING TO TAKE US OUT?”

CHOICE: ACCEPT THE TERMS

[\(BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE\)](#)

“It’s not how I usually do business,” Daniel said.

“But for two grand...” Bates said.

“But for two grand I can make an exception,” he sighed, not entirely happy. Claire wasn’t going to like it, but then, if she wanted a say in the negotiations, she should’ve come along.

“Excellent,” Bates said, and explained to Daniel the directions to a secret passage that would get him past the barricade and into the tunnels that led westward from Earl’s Court Station.

Dangerous, that, Daniel thought. They specifically built barricades to keep the dinosaurs out of the cage, and this guy made a passage that renders them obsolete. If anything, this job will keep the citizens safe as well.

Daniel nodded once and rose, drinking the rest of his whiskey. He coughed slightly before departing.

“And Mr. Shaw.”

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“RIVAL MERCS TRYING TO TAKE US OUT?”

CHOICE: "MAYBE THEY WERE JUST EAVESDROPPING."

[\(BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE\)](#)

"Could've been simple eavesdroppers," Daniel said. "Trying to get a piece of the pie. They weren't sitting far from me."

"And what about the gun?" Claire said. "Can't be common folk."

"That's what's bugging me, too," he admitted. "Either way, we'll have to keep our eyes open, though I doubt there's anyone else. They wouldn't have left the gun."

"Unless they were forced to flee," Claire noted.

"Yeah," Daniel said. "But in that case the dinosaurs will have scared them off good. We'll report it to Bates when we're—"

Rumbling. Again. Much closer this time.

Daniel and Claire fell silent and into position for a fight, fingers resting on their respective triggers. There was nothing in the direct beams of their flashlights, but they didn't reach far enough to comfort Daniel.

"Doesn't sound like those troodon were the only dinosaurs down here," Claire said.

They started towards the receding darkness ahead. Dust in the beams of their torchlight swirled like snow in headlights on a dark winter night. The rumbling had stopped, as if it was holding its breath for Daniel and Claire to pass.

Then he noticed it: a tall silhouette blacker than the darkness beyond the reach of his light, with two red eyes in it reflecting the light back at him like a wolf hiding in the bushes. Daniel's stomach twisted at the nightmare fuel ahead of him, heart rate rising.

It came for them with sudden heavy footsteps, approaching at frighteningly high speed. The beast was much bigger than the troodon, but didn't reach the ceiling of the tunnel; in fact, it was only about as tall as Daniel. It was its length from head to tail that was an impressive seven metres at the least. It was broader than Daniel as well, yet still agile and fast, approaching at a speed that barely allowed him to react.

Daniel and Claire stopped in their tracks and immediately walked backwards as they opened fire simultaneously. The animal wasn't hard to hit, but it had been close by the time Daniel and Claire had spotted it, so they were forced to fire in bursts rather than single shots.

Blood and light brown feathers flew about as they pumped bullets into what Daniel now recognised to be a Utahraptor. The dinosaur quickly fell and rolled like a ragdoll over the tracks before finally falling still right before them.

Daniel turned to look at Claire. "All good?" he asked.

She nodded, wiping her forehead with her forearm. "That is *not* good, though," she said, nodding to the raptor.

"We've seen worse," Daniel replied.

"No, look," Claire said, stepping over to the dead predator. She cautiously approached it as she confirmed it was dead, and crouched down. "Utahraptor. They usually force troodon out of their territory. Why were they together in these tunnels?"

Daniel paused. "I didn't even think of that."

"Bates will have some explaining to do," Claire said, sounding annoyed.

"Yeah," Daniel sighed. "There's no way he's not involved in whatever is going on here. Come on, let's get to the next station and see what we can find. If it's clear we'll turn back."

A few minutes later, the tracks began to run upward toward the surface. The next station didn't come into sight, however; the tunnel that was *supposed* to end and lead into the building that lay above ground, continued on as a makeshift wooden tunnel, and bent off from the tracks.

“What the hell is this?” Claire asked, looking around.

“This, my dear Claire, is called wood. It comes from trees and it’s used for—”

“Oh, shut up.”

Daniel grinned. “This wood seems fresh, though. Someone’s built this not long ago.”

They cautiously walked through the wooden tunnel for a few minutes—weapons reloaded—and Daniel noticed several signs of a disaster. There were splotches of dried blood on the floor but no bodies and no signs of survivors. Something had gone wrong here, and his curiosity gnawed at him to find out.

Eventually the tunnel ended and they arrived at a wall with two grand doors that stood wide open. They had been led all the way to a building somewhere outside the cage, like a secret hideout. Inside, a corridor led to the left, the walls covered in dark blood spatter, while on the right there was a small room behind a counter. Above it hung a sign.

Under The Bridge.

“Wait,” Daniel said, pausing. He looked up at the ceiling. “I think I know where we are. We’re under Stamford Bridge.”

“As in the Chelsea football stadium?” Claire asked. “My dad used to be a fan before the outbreak.”

Daniel looked at her in shock.

“What?” she asked.

CHOICES:

TEASE CLAIRE ABOUT CHELSEA

DON'T TEASE CLAIRE

CHOICE: "RIVAL MERCS TRYING TO TAKE US OUT?"

[\(BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE\)](#)

"Rival mercs trying to take us out?" Daniel said, only partially joking.

"Don't be ridiculous," Claire said. "This isn't a movie. Besides, we know all of the other mercs and that guy wasn't one of them."

"Aspiring merc, maybe," Daniel countered. "Difficult to break onto a scene when people are already established."

"Now you're treading into paranoid territory," Claire warned him. "Maybe he was just one of Bates's men."

"That doesn't make the situation any better," Daniel said.

"Well, we'll have to ask him when we—"

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Daniel looked at her in shock.

“What?” she asked.

CHOICES:

TEASE CLAIRE ABOUT CHELSEA

DON'T TEASE CLAIRE

CHOICE: TEASE CLAIRE ABOUT CHELSEA

[\(BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE\)](#)

“That’s grounds for a divorce, you know.”

Claire raised a brow, amused. “Because you know anything about football, am I right?”

“Well, no,” Daniel said. “But people say it was a shit club.”

“This is why my dad didn’t like you,” she said with a smirk.

“Is it? I thought it was the fact that I expose you to flesh ripping lizards on the regular.”

“Nah,” she countered. “He knew you needed someone to protect your arse.”

“Touché.”

Damn it, he thought.

They arrived in a place that looked like a former nightclub. It had a bar in the back that looked surprisingly well taken care of, and in the middle of the big room was built some kind of... fighting pit with sand covering the floor.

“What the fuck?” Daniel whispered, shining his flashlight around in the dark room.

Around the fighting pit stood tables and chairs—slightly higher to get a better view—and work lights intended for construction sites, though much of it had been knocked over.

“I think we’ve found Bates’s shady business,” Claire said quietly as she entered the spectator ring around the pit.

“He was hosting illegal dinosaur fights,” Daniel said in realisation. “Look, one of the fences is broken down there. Something must have gone wrong.”

“This explains the raptors and troodon together,” Claire said.

“Let’s see what else we can find,” Daniel said.

“Found a generator,” Claire called from the other side of the ring next to the bar.

A deep hum came from where Claire stood as she pulled on the recoil rope and the generator turned on. Work lights lit up the area.

A second later, the sound of rattling metal came from somewhere in the distance, as if reacting to the generator’s noise. Daniel and Claire shared a look and readied their weapons. They traced the sound until they ended up behind the bar, where two doors led to what had been the kitchen. The room was filled with cages.

And in more than half of those cages sat dinosaurs, ranging from small and feathered to larger and featherless. All of these, Daniel noticed, were carnivorous and *very* territorial.

Claire mumbled a curse as they froze in the doorway.

Daniel didn’t hesitate, and pulled Claire back to the bar area before closing the doors. Then he dragged over a bar stool, broke off the seat, and slammed the legs through the door handles to block them. This would at least win them some time in case they broke out of their cages.

“We gotta get out of here,” Daniel said, looking around.

“What about evidence?” Claire asked. “If we can find evidence of Bates being behind this, we can turn him in.”

“To what end?” he said. “It’ll only make an enemy of him. Our job was to clear the tunnel, not this place. So let him deal with this shit. It’s not our problem.”

“It is, though, isn’t it?” Claire replied. “If it happened once, it can happen again. And if we can get into the tunnels from Earl’s Court that easily, then the dinosaurs can get into the station as well.”

“So why don’t we just kill these?” Daniel asked.

“That won’t stop Bates from getting new ones,” Claire answered. “I’d rather let the Watch deal with it. All we need is evidence that Bates is the one who is behind this and this ends today.”

“You don’t need evidence,” a voice said from the entrance.

Daniel and Claire spun, raising their weapons.

Bates smiled kindly, holding a pistol, though he didn’t actually aim it at them. With him, the two other men from the pub stood with pistols in their hands as well, all unsuppressed.

“That would be unwise,” Bates said. “Lower your weapons. We’re on the same side here.”

“Not a fucking chance,” Daniel replied, heart pounding.

“Come now, Mr. Shaw. I thought we had an agreement. Besides, I know how you advertise. You don’t shoot people.”

“Then why’d you follow us here? To take care of us once we’re finished?”

“Don’t be so dramatic, the times where people kill each other on a whim are long past,” Bates replied calmly. “I came to see if you actually accomplished the task, of course.”

“And what of the dead guy?” Claire said. “Was he also checking up on us?”

“Actually, no,” Bates said. “I realised you two may change your mind upon finding this place. I sent him to remove the evidence in case you two slipped away before we could have a civilised discussion about this. I trusted him to be able to defend himself, but I was wrong.”

“Civilised,” Daniel said. “That’s why you brought guns and your lackeys?”

“Surely you don’t expect me to enter these tunnels alone and unarmed.”

Daniel kept his rifle aimed at Bates, and in the corner of his eye he saw Claire had her weapon trained on one of the two men with him. That left one unaccounted for, and Daniel had no idea how well these men could shoot, or how fast they were. There had to be a way out of this, even if it meant straying from his morals and shooting them. He’d rather live with that struggle than... well... die.

CHOICES:

TRY TO CONVINCe THEM TO LAY DOWN THEIR
WEAPONS

BLUFF A THREAT

CHOICE: DON'T TEASE CLAIRE

[\(BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE\)](#)

“Nothing,” he said. “Just didn’t expect you to know about football.”

“You don’t either,” she replied.

“No, but I know the names at least.” *And, he thought, that Chelsea was a shit club, but I’m not going to give you any ammo to get back at me later.*

They arrived in a place that looked like a former nightclub. It had a bar in the back that looked surprisingly well taken care of, and in the middle of the big room was built some kind of... fighting pit with sand covering the floor.

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CHOICES:

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CHOICE: TRY TO CONVINCe THEM TO LAY DOWN THEIR WEAPONS

[\(BACK TO PREVIOUS CHOICE\)](#)

“Listen,” Daniel said. “Even if we disagree and you try to shoot us, your weapon is unsuppressed. You saw what happened to your other man back there. You’ll alert anything else that’s down in the tube. So you’ll either die to us in a fight, or you will die to whatever still roams those tunnels.”

“Die to you?” Bates asked, amused. “I don’t think you have it in you to shoot me.”

“In cold blood?” Daniel said, “no, you’re right. But self-defence is a powerful motivator. Think about this, Bates. We’ve got two automatic weapons aimed at you and your men. Neither of us wants to die here, so let’s calm down and drop your weapons.”

Bates chuckled. “Promise me one thing. Once we drop our weapons, listen to my offer. After that, you can decide what to do.”

“And if we refuse your offer?” Claire asked.

“Well, Mrs. Shaw, like your husband just informed me, you have two automatic weapons directed at me. There’s not much I can do.”

Daniel glanced at Claire. She nodded once, briefly.

“We’re listening,” Daniel said.

Bates nodded to his men, and the three of them tossed their pistols to the floor.

Daniel lowered his M4 but kept his finger on the trigger. Beside him Claire did the same. His heart pounded as they looked at each other in silence. Then Bates turned away, looking towards the exit that Daniel couldn’t see.

“Well?” Daniel asked, growing more suspicious.

“There’s something there,” Bates said. He turned to one of his men. “Go have a look.”

“What’s going on?” Daniel said as one of the men walked off. “Stay in sight.”

Bates gestured for Daniel to wait, not looking at him. He didn’t even seem concerned about being held at gunpoint anymore.

A shout came from the exit around the corner. Then the man came running back, panicked. “Run!” he shouted. “Fuckin’ dinosaurs! Out of the way!”

All three men came running for the bar, ignoring their pistols on the floor, and Daniel nearly opened fire on them. Surely this was a ruse.

But what if it wasn’t?

Claire held her fire, and therefore so did Daniel. He would *not* shoot a person unless he was absolutely sure. Especially when they were unarmed.

Unfortunately, the true reason the men had started running became evident. Fast, skittering footsteps sounded on the concrete floor, and a second later a chaos of gray feathers entered the nightclub, spreading out immediately.

Daniel’s stomach twisted, and he and Claire unleashed hell upon the troodon without hesitation. The three men took cover behind the bar beside Daniel, helplessly unarmed. One of the two thick-necks grabbed one of the bar stool legs that Daniel had jammed into the door, as if it was going to be enough against a horde of hungry carnivorous dinosaurs that no longer had to worry about Utahraptors.

Many of the troodon fell to Daniel and Claire’s gunfire, crashing limply into tables and chairs as bullets ravaged through them, but some of them got through, jumping over the corpses of their fallen allies.

Daniel had to duck down as one of the beasts launched itself from a table and over the bar, aiming for his face. The animal screeched loudly as it landed next to Daniel and fluttered wildly, trying to recover. The man on his right began kicking it, but Daniel pulled the pistol

he'd found from the back of his trousers and emptied the magazine into the dinosaur's body with deafening shots, making it fall motionlessly to the floor.

Daniel tossed the pistol onto the bar, before the man, ears ringing, and hastily reloaded his M4. In the meantime, Claire had already taken out a fair amount of the troodon, while the third man was protecting the entrance to the bar area with his stick.

Only three dinosaurs remained when Daniel raised his rifle again, but the only dinosaur that was in line of sight for him died as its narrow head exploded into a mist of blood from Claire's shot. Daniel tried to turn to the final two, but Bates and his friend were in the way, and so he was forced to look on as they were jumped by the beasts and pushed to the ground.

Daniel pushed past the closest man, who helplessly watched on—he hadn't had the mags to reload the pistol—and rammed the butt of his rifle into the head of the troodon that was trying to rip out Bates's throat. Then he grabbed the dazed animal's neck and slung it to the side into a counter. Fortunately the beast's hollow bones made it very light.

Claire's suppressed shots destroyed its insides as Daniel moved on to the next, kicking it off the screaming man as he aimed his rifle. Dinosaur blood splattered onto the wall and furniture behind, and the beast fell still.

Claire immediately hurried over and crouched down next to the bleeding man. He was covered in bite marks on his limbs and neck, Daniel noticed, and Claire was already unrolling a strip of bandage.

Daniel wasn't sure if it was the best idea to help someone who could very well pose a threat in the long run, but damn it, he wouldn't be able to live with himself if he allowed the man to die like this.

"You two good?" he asked Bates and the man.

They both nodded, looking between Daniel and their wounded man. "How's he doing?" Bates asked.

"He'll make it," Claire said, finishing up the bandages. "It looks much worse than it is."

"Thank you," Bates said with a sigh.

"You lied to us," Daniel said with clenched jaws.

"Let me explain," Bates said quickly. There was not much left of his usually calm and controlled demeanor.

"You have thirty seconds."

"I was trying to give people excitement," Bates said. "A way to see the dangerous dinosaurs up close."

"Oh, I'm *sure* you're that kind hearted," Daniel said angrily.

"I did it for the money, I'll admit that," Bates admitted. "But so do you, and don't you deny it. Life is much more pleasant when you have luxury."

"Why didn't you tell us?" Daniel asked.

"I couldn't risk you running off to the Watch," Bates replied. "I wanted you to see before I made you my offer. Once you secured this place I could set it back up—with improved security, of course—and offer you several benefits in return, as long as you didn't rat us out. I have resources others don't have. Money, cheaper ammunition, information. I'll have jobs for you and I will reward you well for them. A partnership that we can both benefit from."

Daniel looked at Claire. He could tell she was thinking about it. They needed a way to earn back what they'd lost in the disaster with the carnotaurus last month. Besides, they still had two extra mouths to feed until Jill and Veronica could move out.

After a few moments Claire nodded once, stiffly.

"If you try to fuck us over, you're a dead man," Daniel said. "You get one chance."

"Excellent," Bates said, visibly relieved. "Then let us make sure everything else is still locked up tight in their cage before we get to business."

THE END

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CHOICE: BLUFF A THREAT

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“You have ten seconds,” Daniel warned, “to drop your weapons.”

Bates smiled calmly.

“Ten,” Daniel began.

“Come on now, Daniel, there’s no need for that.”

“*Nine.*”

Bates sighed. “We both know you’re not going to shoot me.”

“Five.”

Daniel kept his weapon trained on Bates’s chest, finger on the trigger. He could *do* it. One twitch of his finger was enough to end the snake’s lies. To end his criminal endeavours. To keep the city safe from his dangerous practices. The simplest of movements could end a human life.

Yet, he didn’t.

“Time’s up,” Bates said.

Daniel lowered his weapon.

“Killing another person isn’t quite as easy as the stories make you believe, is it?” Bates said, stepping further into the room.

Daniel clenched his jaws irritably. He hadn’t been able to shoot him. Was that a sign of weakness, or one of strength?

“If anything, I’m glad you d—” Bates paused, looking over his shoulder. Something rumbled in the distance, echoing through the tunnels toward them.

“Expecting company?” Daniel asked.

Bates didn’t reply. He gestured to one of his lackeys, and the man walked out of sight toward the exit.

“What are you up to, Bates?”

“Shut up, Shaw,” Bates hissed. “I’m trying to listen.”

Daniel gritted his teeth as they waited in tense silence, pulse beating in his ears. Finally, a shout came from the exit and loud gunfire followed. Daniel groaned against the noise and gave Claire a ‘be ready for anything’ look.

The man came running back, panicked and pushing past his mate. “Dinosaurs! There’s fuckin’ loads of ‘em!”

Chaos ensued. The three men came running for the bar, Bates in front, surprisingly fast. Daniel snapped his weapon to the approaching men. This had to be some kind of trick.

He didn’t have to wait long to find out, for a storm of gray feathers came rushing into the nightclub, spreading out immediately. They called out loudly with an excited, turkey-like calls, though it was more guttural and vicious than their evolved cousins.

As the men sought cover behind the bar next to Daniel on his right, Claire opened fire on his left. Suppressed submachine gun fire sprayed down the room towards the rapidly advancing predators. Daniel followed her example, firing in shorts bursts at the creatures that were jumping over and onto tables to launch themselves toward the bar with powerful leaps, flapping their arms, seemingly to help keep them airborne.

Even if it had helped, the bulletstorm from two automatic weapons put an end to it, killing the beasts before they hit the ground as they left swirling feathers in their wake.

The men on Daniel’s right finally began to open fire with deafening shots of their 9mm pistols, though it was obvious they were inexperienced marksmen. Daniel used their gunfire

as an opportunity to reload and Claire did the same. Immediately, the dinosaurs gained ground and came jumping for the bar.

Fire from five separate firearms took out the closest one, and Daniel had to duck down as the corpse's momentum made it fly toward his face. It crashed into the counter behind him and fell still, a puddle of blood forming around it.

"You okay, hun?" Claire asked it casually, as if he'd only stubbed a toe.

Daniel didn't reply as he jumped back up, shouldering his M4. A quick count told him there were four of the troodon left, but two of them were dangerously close to the men on his right, making it impossible to take them out without also risking friendly—well, sort of friendly—fire. It made him hesitate long enough for Claire to take out the other two troodon with two quick successive bursts. That left the three men against two troodon with pistols that were likely going to run out of ammo any second.

The first click came, and furthest of the two men grunted and looked at his empty weapon. Two shots later Bates did the same. One troodon had dropped, but the last managed to jump onto the first man, digging its claws into his shoulders. The man shouted in pain and stumbled backward under the sudden weight of the creature.

Daniel dropped his rifle, reached into the back of his trousers and pulled out the pistol he'd found on the dead man. This allowed him to stretch his arm over the closest man's shoulder and aim directly at the dinosaur, which still stood balanced on top of the first's shoulders with flapping arms, looking like it was about to jump off again. Four shots made it fall to the ground with a spray of blood and feathers.

The man followed immediately, sinking to his knees, while the other—the one Daniel had fired past—covered his ear with his hand as he ducked away.

Whoops, sorry about that mate, he thought.

Claire hurried over and crouched down next to him, reaching into her vest and fishing out a roll of bandage.

Daniel turned to the others. "You two good?"

"Yeah," the man said distractedly, hand still pressed against his right ear, and Bates nodded, patting his suit clean with shaking hands.

"Good. Start explaining."

"All I wanted," Bates said, still sounding somewhat distressed, "was to give people back some fun and excitement. I didn't foresee all this."

"You realise you endangered the entire fucking city?" Claire said from beside the wounded man as she was patching him up.

"Again," Bates said, calmness slowly returning to his voice, "I didn't foresee this. It was supposed to be safe. It *was* safe, until the fence gave in and the blasted beasts escaped."

"Why'd you follow us here?" Daniel asked.

"To make you an offer," Bates replied quickly, "before you made your mind up about turning us in."

"An offer," Daniel echoed disbelievingly. "For what, exactly?"

"A partnership," Bates answered.

Daniel raised a sceptical brow.

"In return for not informing the City Watch, I will reward you with jobs, information and even manpower should you require it."

"And if we refuse?" Daniel asked.

"My offer benefits us both. There really is no reason to refuse it."

"I know one. It involves the danger to every citizen back there in London, which are now at risk of running into dinosaurs in the tunnels because you thought it was a smart idea to make an unsecured passage."

“That will be improved, of course,” Bates said. “I will take the necessary measures to make this safer for everybody. All I need is your word and both of us will stand to gain from it.”

Daniel turned to Claire, who finished up with the man and rose to her feet. She was considering the offer and, Daniel realised, so was he. Bates was wealthy enough to give them an opportunity to undo the carnotaurus fiasco from last month, a way to gain back their losses and possibly even more, which was becoming increasingly harder without a car and two extra mouths to feed until Jill and Veronica were ready to move out.

“Do we really want to associate ourselves with someone like him? It’s torture what he does. They’re still animals.”

“It’s them or us, Claire. It’s always been like that.”

“But we don’t hurt them. We don’t profit off their suffering.”

“No,” Daniel said with a sigh. “We don’t. But we also don’t have a choice now. The moment we start refusing jobs because we don’t have the materials to do them anymore is the moment we’ll drop in the pecking order and the people will look to other mercs instead of us.”

Claire sighed and shook her head in disbelief as she turned back to the older man. “I guess we’ll have give you the benefit of the doubt for now.”

A smile cracked onto Bates’s face as if he hadn’t just heard their opinions of him.

“Fantastic. I’m sure we’ll make an excellent team.” He began his way to the kitchen doors.

“Now, before we shake hands and continue, let us see how many of the beasts are still unaccounted for, shall we?”

THE END

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