

Search for Delphi

Katie Fleming

Lara Croft lay in bed propped up against her pillows, pensively turning over the artefact in her hand. “The Amulet of Horus,” she whispered, staring at it for a few moments.

Someone cleared his throat. Lara glanced up. Winston stood beside her bed, his silver tray held in front of him, a white cloth draped on top.

“Good morning, Winston.”

“Lara,” he replied, smiling. “Looking wonderful as always.”

Lara grinned and ran her hand through her tangled hair. She nodded toward the amulet she’d placed on her bedside table. “What’s this doing out?” she questioned.

Winston removed the cloth from his tray to reveal an envelope, which he handed to her. “This came this morning,” he said. “I think it’s important.”

Lara glanced at the envelope. It was addressed to her, and had a message written in red ink. *Read immediately. Regarding the Amulet of Horus.* “Hmmm...” she pondered aloud, “I wonder what this is about?” Winston shrugged his shoulders and quietly left her room. Lara pushed herself up and swung her legs to the side of the bed. Ripping open the envelope, she walked over to the loveseat overlooking her balcony and sat down. Carefully, she carefully removed the paper inside and began to read.

Ms. Croft,

We have been informed that you are currently the holder of the Amulet of Horus. We have found something that you’ll be interested in hearing about, I’m sure. Our company name is Gibson Legend Seekers (G.L.S.). Two years ago we found a stone tablet in the Gibson Desert of Australia. There are hieroglyphics on it, informing us of the twin

amulet of Set. For a few years now we have been searching the desert for the amulet without any luck.

The tablet also explains in more detail about Set's sister. We would be honoured if you would help us acquire the amulet. Please contact us ASAP with your decision.

Yours truly,

Gibson Legend Seekers

At the bottom of the letter was the company's phone number, written in pencil. Lara looked outside at the sky just as Winston re-entered her room.

"I'm going to Australia," she said. She looked over at him. "I'm going to Australia!" Lara jumped off the loveseat and dashed past Winston, down the staircase.

Lara held the phone to her ear and tapped her foot. "Come on! Answer the phone!" she exclaimed impatiently.

"Hello? Gibson Legend Seekers."

"Hello, my name is Lara Croft. I received a letter today regarding—"

"Lara! Hold on a moment!" the voice interrupted. Lara smiled up at Winston, who had finally made it down the stairs. A moment later, a woman came on the phone.

"Lara Croft?" she asked.

"Yes?"

"My name is Linda. I'm the manager of G.L.S. I'm glad you received the letter."

"Just this morning! I *am* interested in talking with someone to discuss the tablet you found. I would also like to see it," Lara said.

"Of course, but this would mean you have to fly down here."

“Sounds good,” Lara replied.

“Great. Go to the airport, and tell them it’s business with G.L.S. They’ll direct you to the plane from there. Everything will be arranged for you by the time you get to the airport.”

Lara hung up the phone. “Well?” Winston asked.

“I have to pack right away and then I’m going to the airport.” She walked to the kitchen. Running her hand across the edge of the table, she scanned the assorted guns lying there where Winston had placed them and decided on pistols and Uzis. Winston, used to the routine, handed Lara a few medi-packs and a small bottle. She put the items in her backpack, then realized there was something she was missing. “The Amulet of Horus!” she exclaimed. Lara ran upstairs and grabbed the amulet. Quickly, she put on khaki shorts, a green tank top, and holsters, then hurried down the stairs and ran outside where Winston awaited her in a black limousine.

“All flights going to Canada are leaving in five minutes. Please board the planes now. All flights going to Canada are...”

“Thanks for driving me here, Winston,” Lara said.

“No problem. Have a nice trip,” he answered. Lara said goodbye and headed toward a nearby counter. A short woman with red hair looked up at Lara and smiled.

“Hi. I’m doing business with G.L.S.,” Lara stated.

“Lara Croft?” the woman asked.

“Yes.”

The woman walked around the counter. “I’ve been waiting for you,” she said, and then leaned in closer. “I hear this is top secret!” She looked at Lara, her expression eagerly questioning.

Lara simply nodded, smiling. “It is.”

Realizing Lara wasn’t going to give, the woman pointed to a closed door. “Just through there, then. Hope you have a nice trip!”

“Thank you,” Lara replied. She walked toward the door and took a deep breath.

After what seemed an eternity, the plane landed. Someone was waiting for Lara beside a helicopter. “I’m supposed to fly you to the G.L.S. headquarters. Hop in.” Lara climbed into the helicopter and sat down. The trip was silent, which was fine with her. She was too busy repeatedly reading the letter she’d received that morning, her imagination creating pictures of the tablet that G.L.S. had discovered.

An hour later the pilot landed the helicopter. Lara thanked him for the ride and he took off. A bead of sweat formed on her forehead as she viewed her surroundings. She was in the middle of a desert! Lara surveyed the area and saw a jeep driving toward her. Swerving just short of her, the jeep came to a stop and a smartly-dressed woman stepped out.

“Hi! I’m so happy you could make it! I’m Linda.”

Lara shook her offered hand. “Where are we?” she asked.

“The Gibson Desert. Our company is located in Lake MacKay. It’s not too far from here.”

“Great, let’s get going!” Lara climbed into the jeep and sat down. Five minutes later they arrived at the edge of a lake.

“All right, Lara. Swim to about what you think is the middle of the lake, dive down and look for a flashing red light.” Lara looked at Linda with an astonished look on her face. “I’m just joking!” Linda laughed. She walked over to the water and pulled a chain that was buried under the sand. Suddenly, a large piece of glass rose up from the water. Linda walked over to it and pushed a red button. The glass let out a suction sound as half of it moved away in the opposite direction. Lara watched with amazement as a pathway was created where they could walk and remain dry as the huge glass pieces held back the large volume of water.

“That is amazing!” Lara said. Linda nodded in agreement and headed to the pathway.

“Come on Lara, you’d better hurry. This thing only has a twenty-second delay on it!” Pushed to action, Lara sprinted toward the path and forward jumped over Linda. A moment later Lara stood at a huge glass door, impatiently tapping her foot. Linda ran to her.

“Wow! You’re fast!” she said. Lara smiled and turned to face the door. Linda punched in a nine-digit code. The door opened and the two stepped inside. Immediately, the door shut, and Lara watched the glass pieces join together again. The water rushed back to its place. “Now what?” she asked.

“Our company headquarters is under Lake MacKay.” As Lara listened to Linda, the small chamber they were in started to descend. “We have top security here. A computer always knows how many people are currently here, who they are, and also keeps track of how long they are in each room. This is extremely important for evacuation because it saves *a lot* of time searching for them: right now there are currently 122 workers at G.L.S.” Linda glanced over as a beeping sound indicated they had arrived. “Ready, Lara?”

“Oh yes.”

“Great.” Linda pushed open the door and both stepped out. “All right, I’ll call for Natalie. She’ll help me introduce you to our members who will be assisting us on the search.” Linda pressed a button on the wall. “Natalie, report to main.”

A moment later a woman turned the corner, smiling at Lara as she approached. Linda looked at Lara. “This is going *way* too slow! Let’s speed things up a bit!” They motioned for Lara to follow. Natalie and Linda ran ahead while Lara followed close behind. At the end of the hallway, Natalie paused at a door to insert her security card. The door opened and the three entered. An odd odour filled Lara’s nose. Two men stood on the opposite side of the small room in front of another door, arms crossed.

“Perte, Dema, this is Lara Croft. We’re here to see the tablet.”

“Welcome, Lara,” Perte said.

“Hi, Lara,” Dema greeted her. “Glad you’re here. I think you’ll find this adventure quite interesting.” Lara shook their hands. Perte unlocked the door and the two men pushed hard to open it. Lara walked into the room. A large table stood in the centre

of the room, a towel covering the stone tablet on it. A pad of paper and a pen had been placed beside it.

“We’ll leave you alone now. Just call if you need anything.”

“Thank you,” she responded. Perte nodded at Lara and Dema helped close the door. After hearing the click of the lock she sat down and reached for the towel.

Lara sucked in her breath as she ran her slender fingers over the tablet’s rough surface. Her eyes sparkled as she gazed at the remarkable writing she knew so well: hieroglyphics. Lara stretched her arm alongside the tablet, estimating the length to be about half a metre. The Amulet of Horus had been sketched in the stone at the top centre. Small scratches lined the bottom of the tablet, seeming to decrease its beauty. To the left of the picture, the name *Set* had been engraved; to the right, *Delphi*. Lara reached for the pen and began to translate the message.

The Amulet of Horus has a twin sister, the Amulet of Delphi. They were separated and must be brought back together. Fit the Amulet of Horus into the back of the Amulet of Delphi. Placed in Delphi’s tomb in the Bowl of Many Secrets and with the sacred water from Karnak poured onto them, the amulets will fuse back together.

When the amulets reunite Delphi will be reborn at the age she was before the amulets were separated. She will present a nine-pound solid gold statue to whoever reunites the amulets. Match each letter of her name with the number in the alphabet, add, then divide, accounting for the total number of letters in her name.

$D (4) + E (5) + L (12) + P (16) + H (8) + I (9) = 54/DELPHI (6) = 9 \text{ pounds.}$

When the amulets were separated Delphi vanished. She will remain lost until the amulets are back together.

Lara leaned back in her chair, gently tapping her pen against her parted lips. She looked at the scratches more closely, squinting and straining to see if there was anything else.

“Perte!” Lara shouted toward the door.

“Yes, Lara?”

“I need a magnifying glass!”

“All right!” he shouted back. Soon, the door was slightly opened and a hand held out the object she’d requested. Lara stood up and grasped the magnifying glass.

“Thank you!” she said. The door was shut and locked once again. She held the glass over the scratches, moving it higher to focus better. Several tiny pictures were sketched into the stone. Lara excitedly wrote down the translation as fast as she could.

In the desert you shall wait, take too long then you’ll be late. When the winds blow strong it won’t be long.

“The first clue,” Lara whispered. She glanced once more at the tablet as she stood up, taking the paper and pen with her.

Perte looked at Lara. "The closest desert by Gibson is the Great Sandy Desert. Why do you ask?" he inquired.

"You said you found the tablet in the Gibson Desert. Have you ever thought of looking anywhere else?"

"No, but I suppose it wouldn't hurt," he answered. "What do you think, Linda?"

"I think it's a great idea! When would you like to go, Lara?"

"As soon as possible. Why not tonight?"

"All right. Three more members will be joining us: Sid, Perry, and Katie. Natalie, please bring them here immediately. We'll go in ten minutes!"

Lara smiled. She could hardly wait for the adventure to *really* get going!

Five minutes later, the three members who would accompany them arrived. Linda introduced them and Lara shook their hands.

"I'm delighted to meet you, Ms. Croft!" Sid exclaimed.

"Thank you."

"Well, let's not waste any more time," Linda said. "To the chamber!"

7:05 pm: Great Sandy Desert. Lara lifted her hand to shade her eyes as the wind furiously blew sand around them. Sid and Perry set up the jeep with communications equipment. Along with Linda and Dema, they were going to stay at the jeep, while Natalie and Perte assisted Lara. Perry handed Lara an antenna.

“When you get to where you want, shove this into the sand and pull up the extension at the top. We’ll be able to find you if you get lost.” Lara nodded and set off, Natalie and Perte tailing her.

An hour later, Lara glanced at her watch.

“Are we almost there?” Perte whined.

“Well, considering I don’t even *know*...I’d say we’re getting close!” Lara smiled. Gusts of wind blew against them and whipped about their clothing, warning them about an approaching storm. Lara looked up. Black clouds were gathering. The sky’s pink colour slowly began to fade as the dark crept in.

Natalie looked over at Lara, worried. “Maybe we should head back, Lara,” she suggested. “We can always come back tomorrow.” Perte nodded enthusiastically.

Lara shook her head. “You can go if you like, but I’m continuing.”

“Okay,” Perte replied quickly. “We’ll see you later, then.” Natalie waved goodbye and both slowly headed back, following their footprints. Lara walked for ten more minutes. The wind increased, blowing her hair wildly about. The sky was completely darkened now and the black clouds looked heavier. Suddenly, lightning burst blindingly from the sky, illuminating Lara’s surroundings. She jabbed the antenna into the sand, twisting and pushing hard. Just as she pulled out the extension, a jolt of lightning struck the sand behind her. Lara jumped forward, rolling on the sand, and lay on her back. Momentarily, the storm lessened in intensity and the lightning stopped, but the sky was still pitch black. Rain burst from the clouds. Lara had no shelter, but a little rain never hurt anyone, she thought. She stood up and wiped the mud from her shorts. She looked up at the sky just as a huge lightning bolt sped toward her. Her eyes lit up

brightly. The lightning hit. Lara was thrown backward, landing roughly on the sand. She opened her eyes and gasped.

“The antenna!” she cried. The lightning had struck it, damaging the rod, and smoke drifted through the air, carrying an unpleasant smell. Lara walked toward the antenna, waving her arms around and coughing as she inhaled the smoke. She reached for the rod and tried to pull it out of the sand. It wouldn’t budge; it was as if something held onto it. On her knees, Lara began to dig with her hands at the sand around the bottom of the antenna. Her hand touched something hard and hot. Lara took in a deep breath and blew out as hard as she could. The sand flew in all directions. Lara looked down and gasped.

“I can’t believe it!” she exclaimed with joy. “A fulgurite!” It had been fused to the bottom of the rod. Lara carefully examined the surface. It was a shiny black and grey colour, rough and slightly crumbly. She moved more sand away from the fulgurite and peeked inside its hollow body. It was a light grey colour and very smooth. Lara carefully grasped the fulgurite and pulled it out of the sand. She gave a short burst of surprise when she saw what was attached to the bottom. A small flat tablet!

“What are the chances of *this* ever happening!” Lara said with excitement. She carefully separated the fulgurite from the antenna and tablet and dusted sand off the tablet. “More hieroglyphics! My day is getting better and better!” Lara took out the pad of paper and pen from her backpack and translated the short message.

if you want to LocAte the amulet, you won’t need a KEy. DIScover A Particular message POINTing you toward the Mouth of the tomb ENTRance.

Lara reread it two more times. “Discover a message...”

“LARA?!” a voice called. Lara looked up and saw the G.L.S. jeep driving toward her. She waved back and smiled. All the members jumped out and rushed to her.

“Are you all right?” Linda questioned.

“Yes, never been better!” Lara beamed. “You would *never* guess what I just found!”

“What?” Perte asked.

“A fulgurite!”

“Really!” Natalie exclaimed.

Lara held it out for everyone to see. “But that’s not all,” she said. She held out the tablet in her free hand. Their eyes widened and huge smiles lit up each of their faces.

“Unbelievable!”

“How did you find that?!”

“You’re amazing!”

“Incredible!”

But while she was being showered with compliments and questions, Lara continued to think about the message. How was she supposed to find the tomb? What *was* the message? She shook her head to become focused again.

“...does the message mean?” Linda asked.

“Pardon?” Lara responded.

“What does the message mean? Have you figured it out?” Linda repeated.

“I think I have an idea. I need to sit down somewhere.” Natalie motioned for Lara to hop in the jeep. After a few minutes Lara smiled. “I’ve got it!” she said.

“What does it say?” Dema asked. Lara pointed to the message that she had copied down on the pad of paper.

“See how some letters are capitals and the others are lowercase?”

“Yeah...so what?” Linda said.

“Within *this* message is another one. Watch.” Lara began underlining all of the capital letters. “See? It spells out something.”

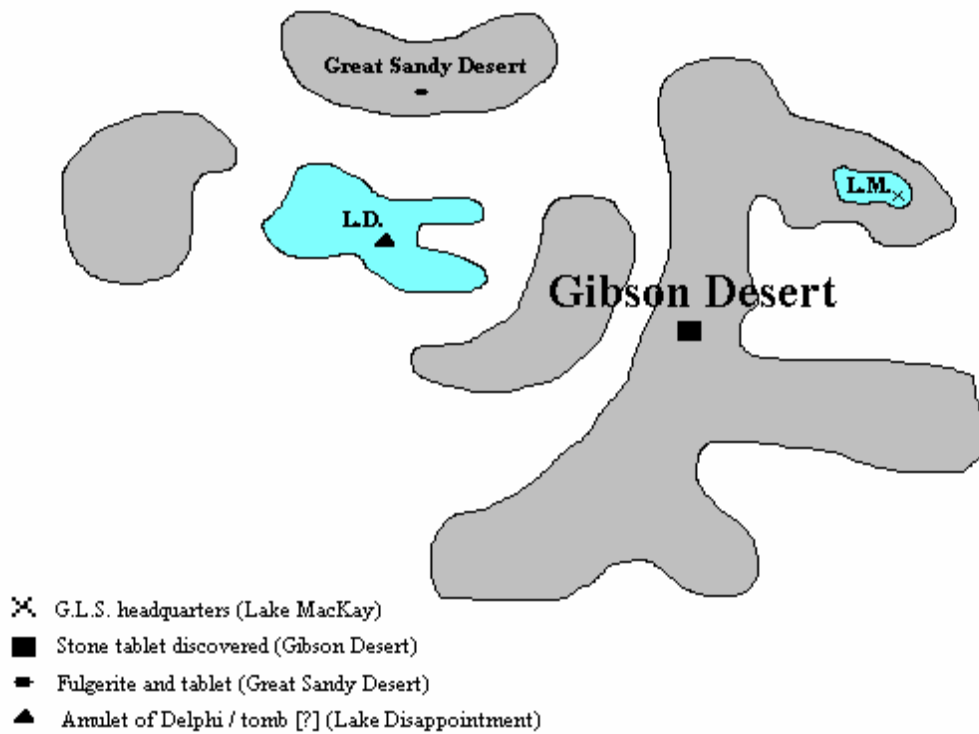
if you want to LocAte the amulet, you won't need a KEy. DIScover A Particular message POINTing you toward the Mouth of the tomb ENTrance.

“L-A-K-E D-I-S-A-P-P-O-I-N-T-M-E-N-T.”

“Great job, Lara!” Natalie said. Lara smiled.

“The amulet is in Lake Disappointment. *That's* where Delphi's tomb must be,” Lara said. “Perte, can you draw me a map of the areas we've been?”

“Sure.” She handed him her notepad and pen. When he was finished drawing, he handed it back to Lara and she studied it.



Lara pointed to the circle. “We’re here right now, and we want to get here,” she said, running her finger down and pointing to the triangle. Everyone nodded. Lara glanced at her watch. 9:10 pm.

“So, should we head back to the headquarters and then go back out tomorrow?” Perte asked.

Lara shook her head. “No stopping now!” She smiled and motioned for everyone to get into the jeep. “Natalie, about how long will it take us to get to Lake Disappointment?”

“Probably a good two hours. So let’s go!” Perte started the jeep and they drove off, leaving the ruined antenna behind.

11:26 pm: Lake Disappointment. “We’re here, Lara!” Perte said. Lara unbuckled her seatbelt and jumped out. As they walked to the edge of the water, she looked over at Linda.

“Okay, where’s the cord?” she asked. Linda laughed.

“Do you think the tomb is under Lake Disappointment?” she asked.

“Yes, but how do we get into it?”

Linda shrugged her shoulders and sat down on the smooth sand. “That’s why we hired you,” she grinned.

Lara suddenly turned to face everyone and spoke in a serious tone. “I like to work alone. I prefer if no one else is with me because I don’t like to be slowed down. I’m not stopping you from coming, but I’m telling you now how *I* like to work.”

Dema nodded his head. “What if we promise to keep up?” he asked.

“Then come along! But if you think you can’t do it, speak up now.” No one said anything. Lara nodded her head. “Great!” *Swim to about what you think is the middle of the lake, dive down...* Lara recalled what Linda had said to her before they had entered the G.L.S. headquarters. She turned to Dema. “Do you have a flare?”

He nodded and threw one to Lara. She lit it, ran through the water, and dove down. After about fifteen seconds, she reached the very bottom of the lake. Lara moved the flare in front of her, looking for some kind of trigger to allow them into the tomb. After seeing nothing, and needing air, she swam up to the surface and inhaled deeply.

“Find anything?” Natalie asked. Lara shook her head.

“I’m going to have another look.” She took in a deep breath and dove down once again. When she reached the bottom, Lara saw a large granite rock that had been

chiselled. She swam closer, using the flare to inspect it. A square had been cut out in the centre of the rock. In the middle of the square, shapes had been hollowed out. It looked as though something was meant to fit into the space. *The tablet!* Lara thought. She removed it from her backpack with her free hand and placed it into the square. She pushed down hard on it and surfaced for more air.

“I think I got it!” she said. Suddenly, huge bubbles rose to the surface of the water as though it was boiling. An instant later the bubbles stopped. Lara waited. Nothing happened. Perte raised an eyebrow at Lara. She looked back at the water, ran forward, and dove into the cool, dark water. Her flare started to die as she reached the rock once again. It looked as though the rock had been cracked halfway down! Lara reached out and pushed on it. The top part crumbled away, leaving a hole visible. She reached her hand down and grasped something. She brought it up. The Amulet of Delphi! Quickly, Lara reached her hand back down. Her fingertips brushed across a small button. She pushed it. Instantly, the ground opened up. Swimming to the surface as fast as she could, Lara felt a force pulling her down.

“I got it! I got the amulet! And there’s a hole in the bottom of the lake. I’m pretty sure it’s the entrance. Come on!” Lara gasped, out of breath from the swim. Everyone rushed into the water, splashing and yelling all at once.

“On the count of three!” Linda said.

“One.”

“Two.”

“*Three!*” At the same time, everyone plunged into the water, following Lara. When they reached the entrance to the hole, she motioned for everyone to follow, then kicked once, letting the force pull her down.

Lara felt a rush of adrenaline as her body sped down faster and faster. Suddenly, they were falling through air. Lara sucked in a deep breath as she continued to fall. A moment later they all landed on a large, soft pile of white cloth.

“Nice landing!” Perte said. Lara grinned and stood up. She removed the Amulet of Delphi from her backpack and showed everyone. It looked exactly like the Amulet of Horus, but as she turned over the amulet, she saw that the back had been dug out so that the Amulet of Horus could fit inside. With one last satisfying glance, Lara put it back into her backpack and looked forward. A large black door stood before them. She pushed it open and stepped into the first room.

Almost instantly Lara began to sweat. Lava spurted and boiled in front of them. They could see the heat rising off the surface, warming the air. There were small stepping stones on the lava. As Lara stepped onto the closest stone, she heard a soft rumble and it began to rise. All the stone pillars rose out of the lava and Lara continued to ascend. She saw ropes, a horizontal ladder, and poles suspended from the tall ceiling. She looked to her left and noticed what seemed to be a six-sworded statue. To her right was a large steel ball. Suddenly, the pillars stopped rising.

Lara was about 100 feet above the boiling lava. She turned to her left, instinctively deciding the statue would die first. Lara grabbed her Uzis and began firing at it. Suddenly, as she suspected, the statue came alive, his eyes glowing a bright red. His two bottom hands turned the swords horizontally, and his fingers began to twirl the

swords around. As the swords turned faster, the statue began to rise, slowly flying toward Lara. Quickly, she executed a clean back flip off the pillar and grabbed a rope behind her. The statue was gaining on her. Lara pushed with all her strength toward the wall behind the statue.

When she hit the wall, she jumped upward, flipped around, and grabbed the rope again. She swung back toward the statue, shooting at him with an Uzi. The statue flung a sword at her. Wasting no time, Lara put away her gun and let go of the rope with one hand. She swung her body on a ninety-degree angle with the rope, and the sword whizzed under her. The horizontal ladder was conveniently only a short distance away. She jumped forward and grabbed hold of the first rung. As Lara reached for the next rung, a low voice interrupted her.

Lara looked behind her and saw the statue was much closer. He wasted no time and used his advantage, throwing another deadly sword at Lara. Just as fast, Lara kicked up her legs into a perfect handstand. The sword was heading right for her legs. She dropped them into a V and felt the sword rush through. Lara swung herself back down and safely made it to the end of the bars. As she hung from the last rung she turned around. The statue had reached the bars! Lara hoisted herself up on the rung to a standing position and shot at it.

“Argh!” he yelled. She had hit his right arm. He dropped his sword. Lara raised an eyebrow and nodded, grinning. She shot forward abruptly and ran across the top of the ladder, careful not to lose her footing. The statue moved toward her. On the last rung, Lara and the statue were face to face. She smiled at him, then forward jumped over him

and grabbed hold of a rope. She turned in the air and shot at the statue again. Then she put her Uzis away.

The statue laughed. “You can’t kill me *that* easily!”

“Is that so?”

He pointed behind Lara who whipped around to see three razor-sharp swords slicing through the air, aiming right for her! Pushing with all her strength, Lara swung toward the blades. She aimed for the first one, swinging by it and catching it with a free hand. The second blade looked sharper than the first. Lara swung toward it, her teeth clenched, her face determined. She caught the sword between her boots. The last sword sped toward her face. Instantly, Lara let go of the rope and began to fall. The sword zipped by Lara’s head. She continued to fall closer and closer to the hot molten rock.

At the last second, Lara caught hold of the rope. Furiously, she began to climb, and the statue flew down toward her. She aimed very carefully, her arm muscles tensed. She threw the sword up as hard as she could. He didn’t have time to move. It sliced right between his eyes. He dropped the rest of his swords and fell. Lara quickly grabbed the sword between her boots and hurled it after him. It just missed the statue’s head as he plunged into the lava. The hot molten sea of rock seemed to explode beneath him.

Burning liquid showered around Lara as she continued to climb the rope.

When she was high enough, Lara jumped to grab the horizontal ladder again. She pulled herself up on top. Suddenly, Lara heard a horrible screeching sound. She looked to her right and saw that the huge steel ball was being lowered. Soon, it was half submerged in the lava. It began to move back and forth, stirring the liquid. Suddenly, the ball opened

and five paddles came out, flicking small amounts of lava in the air. It was beautiful to watch, but dangerous.

Lara motioned for the G.L.S. members to come up. Very slowly, they each started to climb the rope.

“You’re going to have to hurry!” Lara called down to them. Just then, a huge amount of lava was thrown upward. It was headed for Sid!

“*Watch out!*” Lara yelled. Sid didn’t hear her. The huge wave-like shape wrapped itself around him like a large blanket. It pulled him down into the hot bath. Sid’s screams echoed throughout the room. The rest of the members jumped onto the ladder with Lara. Lara jumped for a pole and climbed up, then out of the room. Moments later, the others joined her.

Lara glanced at the new room they had just entered. It was long and narrow. Torches lined the walls, nothing more. Her eyes searched the room carefully.

“What are you waiting for?” Perry asked. “Come on!” He proceeded into the room.

“Don’t go in there yet!” Lara warned. Perry ignored Lara and Katie followed him in. Linda tapped Lara’s arm.

“Why aren’t you going in?”

“There’s something about an empty room that makes me stand back, move cautiously, and carefully observe my surroundings.” Linda nodded her head and they both focused their attention on Perry and Katie. The two reached the centre of the room and looked back at Lara.

“See? It’s all right!” Perry yelled. Lara gave them a suspicious look. *Was* it okay? Should she go in? A sound of rushing water convinced her otherwise.

“Lara, what *is* that? Water?” Perte asked, frowning.

“It’s *not* water.” Just as Lara replied, tiny holes opened up in the walls on either side.

“*Run!*” Lara yelled. In an instant, jets of acid shot out into the room, showering Perry and Katie. They screamed as they frantically tried to move out of the way of the jets.

“Do something!” Dema yelled.

“I can’t!” Lara exclaimed. “We just have to wait.” Perry and Katie looked into her eyes. Their skin was being eaten away, their faces peeling and sizzling as their unbearable cries echoed through the room. Lara continued to watch as they helplessly fell to the floor, chunks of their skin falling to the acid-covered ground. A moment later all that was left of their bodies was bare bone and some loose flesh. Katie’s left eye hung loosely over her cheekbone. A strong bulging vein sprayed blood out of small punctures. The acid stopped shooting in and an acrid smell filled Lara’s nose.

“We have to move on,” Lara said, touching Linda’s arm. Dema nodded and cautiously moved forward.

“*RUN!*” Lara roared. This time everyone obeyed. She darted forward as the acid repaid a visit to the tomb’s guests. A stream of acid suddenly shot in front of Lara. She reverse-rolled under and continued to run forward. More jets burst out at her feet. Lara jumped over them, as if playing hopscotch. After making her way safely to the other door, and taking a quick breath, Lara turned around and watched the other members.

Dema jumped over the last jet of acid and ran toward her. Perte was holding his arm, yelling. When they made it to Lara, Perte showed his arm to her. Some acid had obviously hit it. His arm was a reddish colour and small bubbles formed on the surface. Lara took a medi-pack out of her backpack and carefully bandaged his arm. He gave her a weak smile and thanked her.

“Come on now,” Lara spoke, “let’s continue!”

Lara and the four remaining members of G.L.S. entered a square room. On the side opposite to them, a tall stone door stood closed. In the very centre of the room was a huge gold square. Lara walked over to it and took a better look.

| | | | |
|---------|-----------|-----------------|--------|
| 1 → | 2 ✘ | 3 Roll again | 4 ↙ |
| 12 ↑ | 13 ✘ | 14 ○ | 5 ○ |
| 11 ↓ | 16 ○ ✘ | 15 ✘ | 6 ✘ |
| 10 → | 9 ✘ | 8 ↑ | 7 ○ |

It appeared to be some sort of game board. It had a total of sixteen squares, four across and four down. Each square was numbered, the highest number being sixteen. Different symbols were also carved in each square. In the centre there was a black shiny

circle. Beside the game board was a small gold plaque. Lara crouched beside it and read it aloud.

“*Square Scare*. For the door to open, you must win this game. The first one to get to square sixteen wins. Take the gold die and roll it, making it land within the circle. Move your playing piece the number of squares that is written on the die. If you land on a square with an arrow, move your piece to where it points. An *X* means danger and an *O* means safe. Roll the die for yourself and me. Highest goes first. Good luck, and watch out...” Beside the rules were two small gold game pieces and a die. Lara placed the figures beside the first square.

“Seems like a pretty easy game!” Natalie said.

“Looks like it, but there’s *always* a catch,” Lara replied. Suddenly, the circle changed its colour from black to a dark royal blue. The game had begun! Lara shook the die between her closed hands and let go of it. It bounced on the circle and stopped.

“Three,” Perte said. Unexpectedly, the die was thrown upward from the board. It spun in the air and fell back down, landing on the circle.

“Four,” Dema whispered.

“So they go first?” Linda questioned. “Whoever *they* are?” Lara nodded her head. She tossed the die. Five. Lara moved their piece.

Perte tapped Lara’s shoulder. “What happens if we don’t win?”

“That door won’t open,” she replied.

“Then let’s cheat! To make *sure* we win!”

“*What?*”

“We could set the die on the board to what number we want.”

“Are you out of your mind?! It will *know* if we’ve cheated!” Lara exclaimed.

“Okay, skip the dice part. Let’s just move our piece to the last square!”

“You do that, Perte, and we’ll probably be killed!” Natalie cried out. As fast as lightning he sprang forward, grabbing their game piece.

“*Don’t!*” Linda yelled. He put the piece down hard on the sixteenth square. All of a sudden, the floor where Perte was standing shifted and he fell. Sharp spikes protruded from the hole. One punctured and shot through Perte’s leg.

“Lara, help me!” he screamed. Lara ran for the hole and reached her arm to Perte. “Grab my hand!” she said. He reached up and tightly grasped her outstretched hand. Lara began to pull upward.

“*Stop!*” Perte screamed in extreme agony. The spike was tearing his leg even more, and fresh warm blood flowed freely down.

“Natalie, I want you to carefully go down to Perte and pull his leg out of the spike. Then bandage it with this.” Lara handed her a large medi-pack and returned to the game. She placed their game piece back at the beginning and rolled the die. Four. She moved their piece.

“What’s on the square, Lara?” Dema asked.

“An arrow pointing toward square fourteen!” The die flung into the air once more, spun and twisted around, then fell back down. “Three.” Lara moved the opponent’s piece. “Six, seven, eight. Guys! There’s an arrow on this one...pointing to square fifteen!” Lara moved their piece. “It has an X!” Without warning, a huge boulder fell from the ceiling above Natalie and Perte.

“*Get out of there!*” Lara shouted. There was no time to move. The boulder landed on Natalie first, instantly breaking her back, and then on Perte. Lara clenched her teeth. Linda gasped. Blood and bodily fluids squirted out of the corners of the hole. Dema and Linda looked over at Lara, their eyes swelling with tears. Steeling her jaw, Lara turned back around and rolled the die.

“One,” Dema said.

“No, that one doesn’t count. It didn’t land on the circle,” Lara explained. She rolled once again. “Two! We won! There’s a safe circle on here, *and* an X!”

“That’s *not* good,” Linda cried out. She looked up and gasped. “Lara, look!” Lara tilted up her head and saw a huge cage lowering. A minute later it stopped before them, hovering slightly above the ground, and its metal door swung open. Lara climbed inside. Dema and Linda hesitantly followed. As soon as all three were inside the cage, the door swung shut. Inside the cage at the top was a single metal bar.

Unexpectedly the cage started to swing.

“Whoa!” Dema said and he quickly reached up and took hold of the bar. Lara and Linda did the same. The cage swung over the game board, knocking the opponent’s piece over. They swung back, quickly picking up speed.

“Hold on!” Lara shouted. They swung forward again, heading toward the door.

“We’re going to blast through!” Linda shouted, her voice full of worry. Lara smiled, enjoying the adrenaline rush. The cage moved forward once again, constantly increasing in speed. Lara clenched her teeth and tightened her grip. *Smash!* They hit the door. The cage stopped three-quarters of the way through and the door fell open. Lara let go of the bar and jumped out.

“I *have* to get one of these at the mansion. It’s better than drinking tea in the morning!” Lara exclaimed cheerfully. She dusted off her shorts and blew off the debris on her shoulder. Dema and Linda shakily climbed out of the cage.

“What’s wrong?” Lara asked. “A little *smashed* up today?” She laughed as she turned around, then gasped. Another huge door stood before them. There was a gold circle in the centre. Within the circle was a small button. Lara eagerly reached out and pushed it. The gold circle began to spin counter-clockwise, then clockwise. Faster and faster it spun, glowing intensely. Lara’s eyes widened in awe as she stood almost hypnotized. Then the circle stopped. It was pushed outward then turned to the right. Lara heard the door unlock. Then it suddenly crumbled away!

Gold pieces fell, sparkling all around them. Lara held out her hands in front of her, collecting bits on her palms. She looked forward through the sparkling particles. Her jaw dropped. Her eyes widened, glistening as she looked at the unbelievable sight before her.

A gold-coloured mist slowly drifted through the room. All of the walls were solid gold. Several torches hung throughout, their hot fire reflecting off the walls. Gold pieces and different-coloured jewels lay scattered about. In the centre of the room, on a raised platform, was a large gold bowl. Lara walked over and looked into it. Hieroglyphics were etched in the bottom. *Delphi*. Lara ran her hand along the smooth inside of the bowl and felt something rough. It was a small handle. Very carefully, she turned it and pulled it toward her. A small secret compartment! Lara reached inside with two fingers and pulled out a red gem. Again, there were hieroglyphics on it.

“The Bowl of Many Secrets,” Lara whispered. She put the gem in her backpack; it was too beautiful to leave behind! Lara felt the small bottle of water that Winston had given her. Craving a drink, she took it out and opened it. A very sweet smell, like perfume, stopped Lara from taking a sip. This wasn’t water! She looked at the bottle. On masking tape, in her handwriting, the words *Sacred Karnak Water* were written. Lara smiled. That’s what the tablet said she needed to fuse the amulets together! She took both amulets out of her backpack and set the bottle carefully in the bowl. Lara held the Amulet of Delphi in her left hand and the Amulet of Horus in her right. She took in a deep breath and fit the Amulet of Horus into the back of the other amulet. She picked up the bottle containing the sacred water and set the amulets in the centre of the bowl. Very carefully, Lara poured the water onto the amulets.

The bowl glowed, almost blinding Lara. She shielded her face until the light faded. Reopening her eyes, she looked down. The amulets were completely fused together. They formed one amulet. Lara picked it up, her jaw dropping as she looked at the hieroglyphics in the bottom of the bowl. *The Amulet of Delsetphi*. Lara’s whole face lit up. This was amazing!

“Dema! Linda! Come see this!” Lara called. They ran over and looked at the amulet and its new name in the bowl. They shook their heads. No words could describe how they felt at that moment. With Lara, unbelievable things became believable. The impossible was possible. The unlikely was likely. Suddenly, Lara looked up. Small pieces of gold scattered on the floor began to rise. Lara looked around the room. Slowly, the pieces were floating to meet each other. They hovered around the room, spinning, twisting, and shimmering. The moment was magical, peaceful, indescribable!

The gold fragments whizzed around Lara's feet, circling her legs and then the rest of her body. She turned around in circles as they spun faster and faster around her. Suddenly, they burst apart, and the sparkling pieces fell softly on her. Lara closed her eyes and smiled. This was truly her best adventure! She reopened her eyes, a large smile on her face. A beautiful woman stood in front of her. It looked as though she was made of gold! She smiled at Lara.

"Thank you!" she said. "You have saved me! My name is Delphi. Three thousand years ago I disappeared. Now I am free to roam the world once again! I am forever grateful."

Lara grinned. "It was my pleasure." She handed Delphi her amulet. Delphi took it gently from her hands.

"What is your name?" Delphi asked.

"Lara Croft."

Delphi smiled and held out her hands. Suddenly, a gold figure stood on them. Lara gasped. The figure was of Lara and Delphi! Lara beamed as Delphi held it out for her. Lara took it, then frowned.

"What's wrong, Lara?" Delphi asked.

"It weighs more than nine pounds!"

"You're right. That's because it's not just my name that determines its weight. Yours counts too." Delphi bent down and with her finger she drew in the sand.

DELPHI = 54/6

LARA = 32/4

$9 + 8 = 17$ pounds

Lara grinned. "Thank you so much!"

"No," Delphi corrected her, "thank *you*." Lara nodded her head.

"How do we get out of here?" Dema asked suddenly. Delphi looked at him.

"Like this." She blew in their direction and again gold sparkled around them.

At G.L.S. headquarters, Linda grasped Lara's hand. "Lara, we can't thank you enough for helping us! I had the time of my life!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, and Delphi even gave *us* a small statue." Dema held it up for Lara to see.

Lara smiled. "Anytime you need my help, you know my address!" She turned around and hopped into an awaiting helicopter. She waved as the helicopter lifted her off of the ground. Dema held the small statue to his lips and gave it a big kiss.

Lara laughed and blew gold dust off her hand into the air above them. It sparkled for a long time against the sky as the sun began to rise.

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