

Tomb Drider

By Abe E Seedy, illustration by Angrboda

This whole tomb experience really was just *terrible*, Clara thought ruefully. Not only had that unfortunate cave-in had separated her from her assistant and left her unsure which way was out, but now some little *something* had bitten her on the side of the leg. Of course, nothing in this whole country was truly venomous - there would have been no way she would have agreed to go on this trip otherwise - but still, an ugly red mark on her calf was *not* the mark of distinction she was hoping to earn on this assignment. She'd been perfectly happy working in the home office, making sure her family's money secured the most interesting artifacts from around the world, but *apparently* getting tenure required going on at least one expedition herself, and so now here she was, picking her way gingerly through some long-forgotten tomb, hoping this pointlessly elaborate architecture didn't choose this very moment to give up on its duty and collapse on her entirely.

She rubbed at her leg irritably. Focus, Clara. Tombs of this make always had both a nobles entrance and a servants entrance, so if she had been blocked off from through the former then she would just have to make her way to the latter. That just meant being careful about putting one foot after the other, avoiding any further loose rocks or aggressive wildlife, until eventually she would find her way out and be rewarded for her efforts by never having to do anything remotely like this ever again.

Time passed, and she made what she could only assume was real progress. It was getting warmer, which surely meant she was getting closer to the surface, rather than the dim coolness of the deep underground. It was surprisingly tiring work though, so eventually Clara allowed herself a rest, finding a flat-topped marker stone of relatively little importance, and sweeping her short skirt forwards to make sure she wasn't touching it to any of her skin as she sat down. She set down her pack and her electric lamp on the ground next to her, then placed one hand on her chest as she breathed in and out slowly. It really was *abominably* hot down here. What exactly was that anyway? Had this place baked in the desert sun so long that the clay bricks radiated warmth? It felt like even the stone she was sitting on, a half-carved lump of simple granite, was projecting heat enough that she was reminded of sinking into a hot bath back at home. The feeling of the warmth sweeping up and through her, washing away her troubles, making her body relax as she lay back in bliss.

There was... something, and Clara's eyes shot open. That had been an odd digression, but it wasn't the realisation that she was daydreaming in the middle of a tomb that had snapped her out of it. No, there had been a feeling, some deep, internal... jolt, for lack of a better term, that had snapped her bolt upright and chased all thoughts of distant languor out of her head. And before she could determine the source it escalated considerably, making her double over at the... not pain, but quite overwhelming sensation that struck her most insistently.

"I'm sorry, what is *this* now?", Clara mumbled to herself, rubbing the sweat away from her forehead with one hand while the other touched her midsection tenderly. "Did I eat something unfortunate on top of everything else?"

Almost at that exact moment the feeling shifted, and it became immediately clear it wasn't related to digestion. Her hips drifted forwards unconsciously, and Clara found herself having to spread open her legs to appease the indefinable pressure. "...", she gasped wordlessly, but the only conclusion to that sentence was her hand burrowing rapidly into her undergarments. At first the goal was simply to clear away more space, removing another suddenly-unpleasant source of constriction, but then when her fingers brushed up against herself she suddenly realised she was *achingly* wet. Without any real rationality behind it she was soon teasing and coaxing at herself desperately, her voice long since trailed off as her eyes rolled back in her head.

The indecorous situation as it stood did not last long, but only because it was replaced by something even more unusual. Within a few moments Clara felt the private ecstasy rushing over her, except this time instead of a muffled moan and a contented night's sleep as she was used to, she felt the most bizarre sensation of movement within her, and then suddenly her sensitive region was being stretched wide with an utterly incapacitating sensation. Eventually, after a long, drawn-out moment, she felt something slip free, then she felt the fabric around her waist bend as something hit it, tumbling slickly down the inside of her skirt until it fell finally to the floor.

It was... it could only be an egg; small, white, and with the sort of slick rubbery shell that implied an insect rather than an avian origin. Except it was several inches across, and, rather crucially, it had apparently come from *her*, not some random insect. That thought would have been quite something, but Clara barely had time to consider it before that same sensation of pressure hit her once again, and then she was forced back to her previous ministrations unthinkingly, somehow rather desperate to ease the path of another egg, and then another, and another, and another, and another...

Clara lost count of both the eggs and her climaxes, not to mention losing track of the time it all took. It mustn't have been *too* long given that the lamp was still shining out next to her, but the light coming from it did seem to be notably weaker. More to the point, the pile of eggs resting beneath her was... substantial, a large clump of what would easily be dozens of them stuck together in one irregular mass just in front of where she was sitting. That was... certainly something.

Of course, the only *rational* explanation was that she was hallucinating, whether from the heat or from some unknown chemical property she'd been introduced to at some point, although if it was the latter she would certainly keep secret the specifics of her first experience when she brought it back to market to the medical world. The effects certainly seemed potent, and

surprisingly pleasant all considered, so perhaps it would have use as some sort of anaesthetic. Or maybe even more directly as an aphrodisiac, Clara added to herself, only just now remembering to remove her hand from inside her clothes and self-consciously wipe it clean on a handkerchief.

As she returned her handkerchief to her pack she caught movement out of the corner of her eye, and then as she turned she saw the eggs start to twitch. There was a short series of quick 'snap's, and then from the base of the pile something emerged.

It looked like nothing so much as a ball of fluff, a tangle of fuzz from which eight pokey little legs emerged as it staggered around insensibly. Even with how bizarre this new element to the hallucination was, Clara couldn't help but find the thing startlingly cute. She reached out a hand to it, and was happy to find that it took her offer of assistance, pulling itself slowly up onto her fingers and out from the mess of shell and slickness it was leaving behind.

"Hello there little fellow", Clara said to it, bringing her palm up to her face and eying the furry little thing intently. "Do you represent a... general yearning to bring good things into the world? Or my feelings towards my family perhaps?"

It turned as she spoke, dropping over the edge of her hand with a sudden burst of speed. Clara was concerned for an instant, but a light tug on her skin showed that it had in fact tethered itself, and was dropping down carefully towards the ground on a long strand of silk. "Oh! Well, then, I guess this psychotherapy session is adjourned?", Clara laughed to herself. "Yes, I suppose I should be going too, I've indulged this diversion quite long enough."

She went to stand, but quite unexpectedly she encountered resistance, a pull from beneath that kept her feet glued to the ground and left her dropping back down to her seat. The motion knocked the wind out of her for a moment, but it was when she looked down to investigate the cause of the problem that she was truly taken aback. Seemingly all of the eggs had now hatched, and a tide of black-furred bodies were making their way up her legs. Her feet were already completely wrapped up in what could only be described as a silk cocoon, the top of which was being stretched slowly but diligently up over her thighs even as she watched.

Somehow, despite all of this, the creatures never seemed threatening. Perhaps it was because they looked so harmless and inoffensive, or perhaps because they had somehow originated from her, but for all the confusion and quiet panic she felt, they never seemed malicious in their intent. Of course, while not being worried that she was going to die was certainly welcome, there still remained the fact that the creatures she had spawned were cocooning her for some unknown and misguided reason. If this was a hallucination, it certainly wasn't one she could imagine why she was having anymore.

"Uh, no, thank you", Clara tried hesitantly, rising awkwardly to a standing position but unable to do anything more than just slump against a nearby wall when she tried to break free. She tried

to push them back, but even if she did manage to knock one of the spiders off the rest just flowed around her hand, and in moments that too was stuck to the side of her body as they marched ever upwards. "I, uh, I think you're confused. I'm a person, I don't need to pupate."

They reached her chest, and Clara's words were momentarily interrupted by the feeling of pressure wrapping over her ribs. It wasn't enough to be dangerous, as she was still easily able to breathe, but it was inescapably *there* - the webbing pushed back against her every motion, and even when it gave it still pressed her close, the innumerable strands of it rubbing softly at every single part of her while she struggled uselessly.

With both her hands now confined to her sides, and the cocoon reaching up over her shoulders, it was all Clara could do to sputter on vainly. "Uh, thank you for your kind offer, but no thank you." The webbing grew, the tickling sensation of the creatures brushing up her neck and presaging her further encasement. "No", she tried firmly, even as they curled up over her chin. "No, go back please. I thi-

She was forced to take a breath as they swept over her mouth, then that too was wrapped up, and her eyes could only stare for a moment longer before the cocoon was completed, and she felt herself slump stiffly against the wall behind her. Clara struggled and strained as best as she could, but the webbing was far too thick for her to fight against, and eventually she found her movements growing slack. The thought of how to breathe in this had never occurred to her, but now she was finding that somehow unnecessary. Instead there was merely... warmth, a soft, pulsing heat that swept up and down her body again and again, encouraging her to relax as the rhythm settled into a long slow message. Maybe... maybe she could just rest her for a while longer, and then when she woke up things would be... perfectly alright...

Penelope drummed her fingers anxiously against her leg. It had been hours now since the cave-in. Professor Luddington had sounded filled with her characteristic confidence when she'd called out through the rubble and told her to stay with the camp at the tomb antechamber and wait for her to find her way out through the other entrance, but how long could that possibly take? Surely some ancient tomb couldn't be *that* large, and if there had been a problem then the professor could make her way back to the other side of the rubble and call for her to get help, right? That was why she was still here, wasn't it, so how long should she wait for that before deciding to get help on her own? Of course, it was dark now, so that raised its *own* problems, and then there was where exactly she should go for help, and also-

This latest circle of her worried thoughts was interrupted at the sound of movement, and Penelope turned to see a silhouette stepping into the tomb entrance behind her. "Oh professor, thank goodness!", Penelope gasped, standing and starting off towards her. "I was starting to get so worried and-"

She stopped, as the silhouette somehow rose up. It was as though the professor was riding something, like she'd found a horse outside and ridden it back into the tomb, but even that odd scenario could truly explain things. The legs were to the side of the creature she was riding for one, rather than straight down, and as it moved there were... too many of them, and Penelope stopped being able to make reasonable guesses as to what was going on right as the figure stepped fully into the light.

It was... profoundly different. A round, black spider-like body formed the base of it, and yet it was orders of magnitude larger than any spider she had ever heard of before, being as she thought earlier about the same size as a horse. And yet, that wasn't the end of the otherworldliness to it, because at the front of it, instead of some leering, monstrous spider face - instead there was something else entirely. Mounted on the front of the creature was the body of a woman, leaning forward and glistening as the lamplight caught the angles of the chitin that coated her like natural clothing. Her eyes reflected the light too, so large and red, and a smile tugged at her lips while twin mandibles twitched and stretched.

And then, all of a sudden, the pieces lined up, and the resemblance to her tutor became clear. This was professor Luddington somehow, but completely and utterly changed.

Penelope's mouth fell open, as the professor-creature stalked further forward. "Uh... p... professor? We uh, don't we have to get back to the university by tomorrow?"

In an instant there was movement, the creature pouncing forwards and landing in front of her, pinning Penelope to the floor with a single powerful limb. She leaned in closer, lowering her upper body down close enough to run one hand over her assistant's forehead, then leaning back as her spider body settled over her. With a visible shudder her bulbous abdomen twitched, then something emerged from the very end of her; a long, tapering tendril that Penelope somehow recognised instantly as an ovipositor. It drifted closer, making its way beneath her clothes and sliding slickly up the inside of her legs.

From above, professor Luddington leered, and Penelope found herself completely unable to imagine the thoughts going through her seemingly alien head. And then, with a click of her mandibles, she straightened up, and Penelope thought she maybe heard her hiss two words as the ovipositor pressed its way inside her.

"Class dismissed"