Interview responses from queer Tomb Raider fans

Template response form sent to consenting parties:

Your name or chosen alias (Anonymous is fine too):

Country:

Age:

How you identify:

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

Name: Joshua B.
Country: USA
Age: 22
How you identify: Cisgender gay man

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

I've only been a fan for about a year! I got into the series in 2014 with Tomb Raider (2013). I later branched out and explored the classic series by Core Design and disliked them, but I was only really inspired/convinced to return to the Core games when my ex-boyfriend brought up a new viewpoint: people play Tomb Raider for puzzles, not for plot. And so I went back and I was hooked! A year later, here I am as a Tomb Raider fanatic.

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

I really admired how 2013 Lara grew into this hardened “cool”-type character while still remaining grounded. I was drawn to her and I still think she’s a lovely woman, but classic Lara is my favourite. She does things with the elegant, posh finesse of an Englishwoman and manages to come out on top every time. She knows she’s attractive but doesn’t use that to get what she wants. She’s confident, beautiful, fearless, and sexy. She isn’t just some stone-cold badass, either; she has a wonderfully kind side and always wants to make sure genuinely good people can come out safely, like with the Russian general in Tomb Raider V, or the Australian soldier in Tomb Raider III.

3) Can you describe Lara Croft’s impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don’t feel she’s been an influence, that’s fine too).

I can't say she's honestly impacted my sexuality. I don't practice the art of drag and I'm certainly not a drag queen, but if I ever do decide to, (It interests me enough, that's for sure!) I want to do a Lara Croft cosplay/drag. I feel like she'd be a really interesting person to try and pull off. Also, I guess I never would've gotten into the classic games were it not for me being in a gay relationship with my ex-boyfriend, so there's that.

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

Classic. I never got the chance to play Tomb Raider as a boy--part of me says I wouldn't have had the patience for it--but she's just so charismatic. There's an "it" factor about this pixellated, cartoony woman toting shiny silver twin pistols and stealing artefacts of antiquity for fun and giggles. She's confident and handles most all of her adventures on her own, and that's probably the most attractive feature of all. It's no surprise at all that she's a world-renown celebrity in her universe.

I hope these questions were insightful. :) I could've just said "I like to see Mama Croft SLAY ME YAAAAS MAMA CROFTTTT SLAY ME BETCH SLAAAAAY" but that wouldn't have been helpful. :p

Name: Kelly
Country: South Africa
Age: 24
How you identify: Lesbian

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

I was 5, and I remember playing a very blocky Lara Croft on my Dad's new PC. I wasn't very good and my Dad did anything complicated, I suppose I mostly just ran around in circles at that age. Tomb Raider was my favourite game next to Warcraft: Orcs and Humans, which I was surprisingly good at. I also got Tomb Raider on my very first PlayStation, but that was some time later. So I guess I've been a fan for 19 years or so!

2) Why Lara Croft?

Lara is one of the first really strong females I'd ever encountered. I've always hated being told "you can't do that because you're a girl". I was raised mostly by my Dad and I wanted to be able to do anything he could, and I did. I played rugby (mostly to prove that girls could), cricket, and water polo. I found myself in leadership positions at School and even now, I like to be up in the front, although it takes a lot more climbing up the ladder now than it did then. I feel that Lara really proved to me that a woman can do anything, she isn't just meant to "floof" about in fairy dresses and obsess over clothes and makeup.

What do you like/admire about her?

I admire that she is determined and heroic, but still human. She may be quite well off financially but she still works to achieve her own goals. She has also faced loss (I relate on a personal level, I lost my Mom in my teens) and she's determined not to let that get in the way of things she hopes to achieve. She doesn't stick to the stereotype of hurt women, and I suppose I admire her strength more than anything.

What do you think drew you to her?

I loved any games even all the way back then and I think it was just by luck that my Dad picked up Tomb Raider. It was a fun game and different to anything else on offer at the time. As I've said above, she's strong and heroic but still approachable. Those are the characteristics I'm pretty drawn to in anyone, so I guess she's pretty human too.

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

Well I'm not too sure about this one. I've always known that I preferred women so she definitely didn't awake that part of me, but I think that Lara may have had an impact on the type of women that I would be sexually attracted to. I'm in a long term (nearly 5 years) relationship now with a woman who is strong, smart and a leader. I have been with others

who were much more dependent and it just didn't work out. I would like to point out that I don't identify as either a butch or femme lesbian, I just am me, a lady who likes other ladies, and Lara was always just who she was at all times too. I greatly admire that in any person.

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

I like the Reboot Lara, she looks more fierce! Pity I can't play the next damn game!

Name: A E Dooland, aka 'Asynca'
Country: Australia
Age: 33
How you identify: Queer

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

It was 1996, and I was in high school when I first heard about Lara Croft - through a gaming magazine I used to buy. Back in those days, magazines used to come with attached CDs with game demos that the lucky people who had CD drives in their computers could play. I was one of the lucky ones! I played a demo of the City of Vilcabamba Level and I was hooked. I loved the idea of a female protagonist, and I bought the game as soon as it was out.

I've been an avid fan of the game and Lara Croft every since!

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

Back in 1996, it was very rare for a computer game to have non-stereotypical female characters (prior to Lara, the last female characters I'd been exposed to at that point were the prostitutes you could have sex with in Leisure Suit Larry). So naturally, having this strong, independent female character who was totally badass and wasn't just an accessory to the men in the game was the main drawcard for me.

I'll admit it: I was very attracted to that fearless, take-no-prisoners attitude of hers. I admired it. I loved that she globe-trotted, and I wanted to be just like her! She was the inspiration behind my travelling; I've since visited a whole stack of locations from the games (and met a whole lot of other fans) and have more planned. Furthermore - and this was a very important lesson to a teenager - Lara's value didn't lie in how she looked. Sure, she looked great, but that wasn't where her value lay. To Lara, her value lay solely in her ability to endure through hardships and pursue her goals.

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

I was 14 when I first 'met' Lara. It's no coincidence that this is the year I came out, too. Lara may have been pixels on a screen, but to a 14 year old who didn't have internet at home, she was the person all over my wall who I was constantly looking at and the character in the games I was always playing. I wouldn't say she impacted my sexuality, because when I think back to being a pre-teen I can see clearly signs I was queer back then, too, but she definitely helped me realise it!

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

I love all the Laras for different reasons. Classic Lara is very nostalgic for me, I actually met my (to be) wife over fanfic I wrote for Legend-Underworld Lara, so she'll always have a place in my heart. But honestly, I think I like Reboot Lara is my favourite. She's the most meaty character, and I just love her dynamic with Sam Nishimura. Having a very close best friend adds depth to a character (and gives me something to write 600,000 words of slash about).

Name: AR
Country: Ireland
Age: 22
How you identify: Gay Male

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

My sister received the first game as a present with her PS1 in 1996, we sat up every night until we had completed the game and I was enamoured with Lara Croft.

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

I admired Lara Croft for her sense of adventure, her athletic ability, her overall powerful es and bravery. The game was also wonderfully appealing with its Tombs and controls. As a child I always loved the Indiana Jones movies and The Mummy series and anything involving adventure.

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

Lara was a strong female character fighting against a world of men and standing up for her believes and doing it all for herself and nobody else. Even her quotes that she only plays for sport proved that. She was fearless and courageous and perhaps those factors made a contribution to live my life the way I wanted to.

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

Whilst I like the characterisation of the latest rebooted Lara I feel like my heart will always belong to classic Lara. She is the iconic version of the character people recognise the most. Her signature duals, backpack and braid were refreshingly recognisable and she ruled the late 90's movement for Girl Power. How many videogame characters can actually endorse cars, bands, drinks and credit cards? She was a HUGE celebrity.

Name: Lauren Hill
Country: USA
Age: 27
How you identify: Bisexual, but prefers women

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

I'll say 2013 when I really got into the game and finding who Camilla was

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

I'm not a fan of female leads in games, but drew me to her is the accent or looked interesting to me. I love how badass she is.

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

There isn't an impact.

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

Definitely reboot.

Name: Alonzorion
Country: England
Age: 23
How you identify: As a genderfluid pansexual

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

I originally played the first Tomb Raider in the 90's as a child but didn't get particularly immersed and didn't pursue the remainder of the series. It would be until 2011 that I'd pick the same game up again after being requested to do a "blind" (first time, no guide, no help) Let's Play of it by my viewers of the time (found here: https://youtu.be/uI72EEoxQ_8), through that, a lot of Tomb Raider fans began to flock to me, claiming I was somewhere between incredibly brave and incredibly insane for doing it, never the less, I got on with the game and managed to get my way through it, very slowly, thoroughly enjoying it in the process. After it became my most popular series, I'd go on to continue doing the remainder of the series, doing Legend and II the following year, starting III the next and finishing it the year after, and I've recently finished Guardian of Light, Temple of Osiris, and have started The Last Revelation and am collecting views up by the thousands on launching. I'm still progressive taking more and more interest in the series as I go.

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

In the first game, she's quite a likable character, independent, daring... I'm glad I followed the first game up with Legend though as while she's a very likable character in that, I found her to be a near antagonist in the second and third games of the original series. Why? Well, her actions aren't particularly well explained other than being something of self-gain, killing security guards who're doing their jobs, breaking into people's houses, shooting harmless people point blank in the face (ending cutscene of the third game), jeez, but anyho, I'll write a little about what I like about Legend Lara in the 4th question.

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

If anything, reboot Lara might have turned me a little more straight though also wish I was more like her, if that makes sense.

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

I prefer the first reboot Lara, the one that appears first in Legend, why? Keeley Hawes. Her voice adds so much depth and personality to Lara, aside that, overall the way Lara is portrayed is excellent. She's very clever, confident, and independent, but not completely selfish, and solitary, and much more of a do-gooder than she was portrayed as being in the second and third game of the original series.

Name: Jason Croft
Country: United Kingdom
Age: 15
How I identify: Gay

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

Been a fan for as long as I can remember; I watched my dad play the games from a young age and have been hooked ever since we got our PS1 over a decade ago.

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

I think it was just the action and game itself rather than Lara as a character initially. I never thought about the fact that she was a woman and just thought she was an awesome person regardless. Ever since the first game though I have admired badass female characters a lot more than male ones. I feel like I identify with females more than my own gender in general.

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

I certainly never thought Lara was extremely sexy. Though she was a beautiful woman, I was never drawn to her impossible physique. I didn't drool over her chest, I just saw her for a person. I don't think she influenced my sexuality, just made me respect women more in a non-sexual way.

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

In terms of character, I prefer the reboot Lara mainly because I feel like I can relate to her more because she is younger, but also because we see her struggle. She's not perfect in the reboot, which is inspiring to me, as it shows that even the bravest of Tomb Raiders don't start off by raiding the pyramids. :)

Name: HeidiW
Country: Canada
Age: 28
How you identify: Lesbian

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

Of Lara? From 2013 -- I'd never played any of the previous "classic" series of TR as I'd never really found the character that inspiring, at least for me personally. When I first saw the preview trailers for the 2013 Reboot I became instantly intrigued, and it was probably the first game I've ever bought the day it became available. I was instantly hooked by Lara's story, and within a week of it coming out I'd already finished the game (wah). I became part of the fandom from that moment on.

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

I love the rebooted version of Lara as she is in her genesis; young, inexperienced, lacking in confidence, frightened, vulnerable, in short, she is someone we can all identify with. She is not the untouchable Teflon amazon of previous TR generations but instead feels very real: she can be hurt, both physically and emotionally. She experiences profound loss.

And yet, she still carries on regardless, something which I do intensely admire.
Her incredible resilience in the game is breath-taking to witness, and through her brutal physical punishments I grew to develop a protective inclination, and even affection, towards her. Yeah, I came to care for a totally fictional character. How crazy is that?

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

On this aspect, none really. Before reading any of Rhianna's interviews I'd wondered if there might be a special relationship developing between Lara and Sam as there was obviously a great deal of love between these two, but it didn't impact me personally. I'm just hoping that the developers will take that (admittedly commercially risky) step and make it official at some point in the future :)

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

Reboot, and it's not even close. The new Lara just feels alive :)

Name: Helena
Country: Germany
Age: 20
How you identify: as a trans woman

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

I grew up playing the Tomb Raider games at a very young age. My mother owned the games and my brother and I used to play them almost daily. When I got a little older I realized how much I loved Lara Croft and how fascinating she was to me.

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

She was the first badass and strong female character I came in contact with in my life. I have always admired her for being courageous, intelligent, determined, standing her ground at all times, fighting the most dangerous opponents and always getting what she wants. I love how unconventional, daring and rebellious she is and how she is perfectly capable of using a wide variety of firearms to defend herself. Of course, her looks (facial features, athletic body, the braid, the sunglasses, the holsters, the backpack) and wardrobe never ceased to amaze me either and are just as iconic as her adventurous nature.

I think what drew me to her the most was finding out about her biography and her past and upbringing as I got older. It was so inspirational to me how she could not stand the aristocracy and British high-society anymore and realized how she only truly felt alive and like herself when she was out in the world, climbing the highest mountains, raiding the most ancient tombs and fighting the worst of bad guys. At the end of the day, I always wanted to be like her.

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

She hasn't been an influence on my sexuality but she has had a huge impact on my gender. Growing up, I always wondered why I was so drawn to everything about her. Every time I heard the name "Lara Croft", something inside of my reacted. Over the years I had a lot of different theories. As a kid, I thought I just really liked the video game itself, not Lara in particular. Around the time I hit puberty, I figured I found her sexually attractive. A few years after that I found out none of that was true and instead, I had always wanted to be like her. That's when I realized I was transgender. So I guess, in a way you could say I found out thanks to Lara.

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

Definitely Classic! When I think of Lara Croft, Classic Lara is what comes to mind. Angel of Darkness included. I love the Legend/Anniversary/Underworld Trilogy Lara as well even though I never liked the fact they changed the biography I could relate to so much. I sort of

became estranged from Reboot Lara because to me she doesn't feel like the Lara Croft I know anymore. But I'm glad the reboot has such a huge fanbase and the franchise lives on!

Name: Gee
Country: England
Age: 20
How you identify: Lesbian/queer

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

I played the games under the supervision of my dad first in the late 90s then through the early 2000's. I got way back into it in 2013 when the reboot was released.

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

At the time there were near to no female protagonists in video games (still isn't really enough). I enjoyed finally being able to play as a woman, something that was still incredibly new. I certainly love the fact that her gender doesn't define how capable she is in situations. And particularly in the case of classic Lara she uses it at times to her advantage.

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

Honestly it's something I should have realised sooner. I had a huge crush on Angelina Julie playing Lara that's for sure.

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

It's something that is very much dependant on my mood, classic is far more light-hearted whereas reboot if far more realistic. Overall I think I do prefer the reboot but only marginally.

Name: Lodair Junior
Country: Brazil
Age: 27
How you identify: Gay

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (i.e., how long have you been a fan?):

I got to know Tomb Raider in 2003, by watching the second live-action film “Lara Croft: Tomb Raider - The Cradle of Life”. I was awed at the film and its main character, Lara Croft. For some reason I hadn’t heard about Tomb Raider up until that point in my life, but once I did the first thing I did was install a PS1 emulator on my PC and play the games, and later I convinced my dad to buy me a PS1. The first Tomb Raider game I played was “The Last Revelation”, which I totally loved (although I did find it really difficult) and it remains as my favourite Tomb Raider.

From then to now I have played pretty much every Tomb Raider game released, with the exception of some Nintendo Game Boy/Game Boy Colour ones and became a huge fan of the franchise. It is interesting noting that now, having known and played all the games, I consider the live-action films to be quite bad, but oh well, they’ve introduced me to the awesomeness that is Tomb Raider.

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

I think that what drew me to Lara Croft the most was the fact she was portrayed in the classic games up until “The Angel of Darkness” as a totally badass, strong and powerful heroine who doesn’t take any shit and openly faces her enemies and all sorts of danger, without breaking a sweat and all the while looking gorgeous. And of course, the fact she is a woman. For some reason I (and from what I hear, many gay men) have always been drawn to powerful, badass women, hence why so many of us (including myself) like pop singers, actresses and TV series, books and games and etc. that have female protagonists. So yeah, the fact Lara is a totally badass heroine was clearly the main factor that drew me to her.

3) Can you describe Lara Croft’s impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don’t feel she’s been an influence, that’s fine too).

I don't think Lara has had much of an impact on my sexuality per se, but she clearly has influenced me as a person. Since I got to know her, Lara has become a sort of role model to me. Her badass attitude, the fact she is totally independent, never relying on anyone but herself, is powerful and really successful in what she does and on top of all that travels around the world, visiting really cool places, always struck me as sort of qualities about her that I have since then admired and tried to have them myself. Also my career choice (biologist), my interest for ancient history and archaeology and the fact I really like to travel and get to know new places, new people and new cultures have a lot to do with Tomb Raider. I think it’s safe to say I wouldn’t be the same person if it wasn’t for Lara. She was

there for me during the good times and the bad times, when I felt lonely and needed to take myself out of this world or when I just wanted to have some fun. I do owe a lot to her.

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

Classic Lara, without doubt. She was the Lara that was portrayed as this really cool and powerful heroine, the one I first got to know and sort of “fall in love” with and the one that has influenced me and my life in so many ways, so in a way she’ll always be my favourite. Having said that, I do not dislike the post-reboot Lara and I can sort of understand why she’s portrayed as a more fragile and sensitive person, i.e., because she’s not that Lara yet, the badass one from the classic games. As I see it the reboot Lara is just starting to discover who she truly is. So yeah, maybe one day we’ll get to see that Classic Lara back in the new games, or maybe we won’t. Either way, I don’t dislike her, even though I prefer Classic Lara.

Name: Anonymous
Country: Italy
Age: 26
How you identify: DAMN LARASEXUAL - Ok, serious: lesbian

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

I became an obsessed fan when I first played Tomb Raider III on my prehistorical pc back in 1998. I was around 9 years-old.

I've always been a real tomboy, I couldn't stand girly games (like taking care of fake babies, doing housework…"seriously? I must have fun at this age!" I used to say), I liked to feel like a superhero, playing with guns, treasure hunting, being a boss (males were all my slaves)… I was a book eater, especially archaeology ones: my dad had this huge collection of archaeology books I used to read a lot, and I was a big fan of Indiana Jones.

When I discovered Tomb Raider, I thought I had found America: a strong badass woman, with brown hair and eyes ("just like me!" I thought), Aquarius ("just like me!"), a wonderful videogame full of adventure, mystery, GUNS and weapons ("hell yeah!"). I was a total noob at solving puzzles, so I usually used cheats to play other levels.

I began writing stories about her with my Grandma's Olivetti typewriter and on my secret diary, I drew her, I loved to cosplay her… it was love at first sight! I also bought the Top Cow comic where she meets dinosaurs (another obsession I have), but I lost it, unfortunately. Lara, since then, has accompanied me through my life, inspiring me a lot, to be strong. She's also the reason I chose classical studies for High School.

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

Because of her intellect, for the "homo faber fortunae suae" attitude, she doesn't need anybody's help, she doesn't need a man to guide her. A woman who can survive with her own choices and strengths, doing what she loves. This is what I love about her, I totally identify with her for these reasons. So, in short, because she's into archaeology and she's a strong woman.

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

Well, I've always been attracted to her, even if I wasn't still aware of my sexuality. She had an impact on me after the reboot: I was really caught by her relationship with Sam, I thought they were cute and so caring towards each other. I felt something untold was going on between those two, and I liked it a bit too much, I thought (I wondered why I had butterflies in my stomach when watching them interact). I didn't understand why, though. So I started reading few fanfictions, and I totally identified with girl-on-girl action moments, frowning at my reaction.

I've never felt that way before towards heterosexual kissing scenes and stuff, and I started thinking about my past experiences with boys: why did I feel nothing when kissing my ex-boyfriends? Why I came home disappointed the night I kissed the boy I liked? Why after three months I didn't have the desire to jump on my boyfriend? I really thought I was asexual or something like that. Everything was so mechanical, I was worried about myself. When hearing the word "boyfriend" I used to freeze and feel uncomfortable. After all this flashback movie in my mind, I kept reading, enjoying the sensation. I had many signals I was kinda attracted to girls, even dreams, but I did ignore them. That time, I couldn't let myself ignore them, so I opened my heart to the quest for answers, I needed answers, like Lara said at the end of the game.

After this discovery, I also felt so much comfortable with my body and started training hard for cosplay sake (and for feeling more attractive for girls! Concerning boys, at the time, I didn't actually care to get fit or look sexy, I was kinda close and shy about it).

So yeah, Lara Croft made me discover my true sexuality. God bless her. I would have discovered later, I guess, living in a sort of limbo for years, maybe?

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

When I hear the name and surname "Lara Croft", I instinctively think about classic Lara, chasing ancient mysteries and treasures with her double pistols, fearing no one. I prefer the old one, badass and witty, but I totally enjoy the new Lara: I like how the authors focused on her human side (something I've always wanted to see in the old Croft, and that's why I loved Legend and Underworld, where we got to see something about her inner self), making her more realistic. I love her look (she's so DAMN beautiful), her nerd side, being so private and caring at the same time.

Many fans complained about the whole crying and complaining in the reboot, but man, come on, she was a neo-graduated girl, thrown in an island full of crazy freaks, far from home and who had to survive somehow. I bet no one is born with the I-don't-fear-anything attitude, we are human. Tomb Raider has been an ordinary girl before becoming the badass superhero we all know. This new Lara Croft is growing, I'm confident about her becoming Tomb Raider. Just wait and see!

Name: Bella Eve
Country: UK
Age: 18
How you identify: Gay female / lesbian

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

Probably when I was around 5, so about 2002ish (quite a long time!)

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

My sister was always into gaming, and it never struck me as very interesting (except Resident Evil, that's fab) but one day I remember watching her play games, and that day she'd decided to play Tomb Raider, the very first one, and the main thing I remember was seeing one the very first cut-scenes (the one where Lara enters the caves and the wolves and poncho and stuff) and being amazed by it! (I was like age 5/6 at this time). It was the whole idea of this amazing, attractive woman, throwing off a poncho, revealing minimal clothing and absolutely kicking butt! Since then she's been like an idol to me. I like the fact she's independent, strong, and obviously beautiful. But of course, I do absolutely love the game-play and the story-lines are fab!

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

I think Lara may have had some impact on my sexuality, but more subconsciously. I've always been drawn to her as just a role model, but perhaps being exposed to this beautiful woman that we all know and love, at such an early age, made me more attracted to females in later life. However, I've never really been sexually attracted to Lara Croft (maybe Amanda when she's all black-clad! :P), I more wish she and Alister had hooked up in Legend, so I don't know :/

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

Classic, always!

Name: Keaton Johns
Country: USA
Age: 19
How I Identify: Gay

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

I have been a Tomb Raider fan since I was about 6 or 7. I used to play all the classic games and obsess over them, and continued to obsess when Crystal Dynamics took over to today.

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

I love Lara Croft because she is just such a powerful, intelligent, and beautiful woman. I think I was drawn to her as a kid because I loved the princesses in Disney and suchlike, so it was easy for me to love a female character who was also able to kick ass. I've always been able to connect with women a lot easier than men, fictional and real, so Lara was such a huge icon and inspiration for me.

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

I never objectified Lara as many who are attracted to women probably would because of her killer looks, and I never had a sort of crush on her. I respected her like I would a role model or even a great friend, so I think this was a major factor in realizing that I was gay. She also taught me that it's OK to stand out from the crowd. She does not let any man make her feel inferior just because she's a woman, and I love her for it. I feel that she taught me to be bold about me, my feelings, my sexuality, and more.

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

I prefer classic Lara. No doubt about it.

Name: Kyle Low
Age: 23
Country: Scotland
How I identify: Gay

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

I think it must have been 1997 when I first came into the fandom. I would have only been about 6 years old. My sister used to rent games from a local shop and one day she brought back Tomb Raider 2. I remember walking into the living room and seeing this women jumping around outside a house. I was hooked to the screen! It was actually the first time I had seen a female game character. It was incredible. Since that day Tomb Raider has been my favourite game always. My first Game Boy Colour game was Tomb Raider! Not Mario, not Pokemon, Tomb Raider and I would have it no other way.

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

It's so hard to describe why I like Lara Croft because she has such a powerful impact. She changed the entire gaming industry by proving that female leads can be the one of the most successful gaming characters of all time. In the classic era of Tomb Raider there wasn't much storyline to her character, but we didn't need one to understand who she was. You just needed to look at her and you knew what she was all about. At the time Lara was one of the most realistic looking game characters and that was always an appeal. You could believe she was a real person even if she was doing physically impossible things!

I always admired that Lara was shown to be a strong independent women. Something that was lacking in the gaming industries in the 90s. She wasn't some Princess in a castle waiting for a plumber to come save her. She was raiding through Tombs all on her own and there was no man in sight to aid her. You have no idea how much I cried when Lara "died" in The Last Revelation. I wasn't even old enough to understand true love, but I felt as if I had lost the love of my life! I can't even think of another game character who could have that impact on someone.

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

I think Lara may have had some impact on my sexuality. I think no matter what I was always gay, but I think she pushed courage inside me. Courage to be who I am and to be strong when others turn against me because of my sexuality. I don't think there is another game character who could make me feel more comfortable about who I am than Lara Croft could. I know Lara is a huge supporter of LGBT rights and she probably has a lot of gay friends she loves and cares for! Lara loves anybody no matter who they are. We have never known if Lara Croft is gay or straight, but we don't need to because it's it doesn't matter. She is Lara Croft and we love her unconditionally.

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

Now this is a VERY hard question to answer! I have so much love and passion for the classic Tomb Raider because it's the Lara I grew up with and feel in love with. However the rebooted Tomb Raider is a masterpiece because it redefines Lara and her image. It takes us back to the original Tomb Raider where Lara isn't an intentional a sex icon. She became a real person again. That's not to say that she become a bad character in between. Not at all.

However I think it's still a bit too early to judge which Lara I prefer because we have only seen her in one game. Rise Of The Tomb Raider could show a completely new side of Lara. It was quite the same with Legend, Anniversary and Underworld. Lara's character was finally dug into and we saw a new side of her. It was a wonderful and emotional side which made me fall even more love with her. That final scene in Tomb Raider Legend was the first time we see Lara in such an emotional and angry state.

So currently I can't give a preference because we need to see more of our new Lara. However I believe that the "new" Lara will be the Lara we have always known and loved.

Name: Cody Hathaway
Country: United States of America
Age: 23
How you identify: Homosexual Male

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

I remember it like it was yesterday, when my brother had begged my father to buy Tomb Raider II: Dagger of Xian from the video game store. By the time we were home, it was already my bedtime. (I was about 7 or 8 years old). I was the youngest of three, so I was never given the opportunity to play with my brothers. Instead I'd have to wait for them to get frustrated enough to where they'd give up and just drop the controller.

One day, I don't know what had triggered in me, but I picked up the controller by myself, and started a new game. I remember training myself over and over and over, memorizing every single trap and tiger that would leap out at you, and how I bragged about getting the Jade dragon secret in the first level before any of my brothers did. I was shaking from how nervous I was. Needless to say, I became completely and ridiculously obsessed the moment I picked up that controller, and I haven't looked back, now 23 years old. So yes, thanks to my eldest brother, I discovered Lara, or rather she discovered me in ways, too.

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

It isn't easy to full capture the spectrum of emotions that I feel when trying to describe to people about my admiration for the Tomb raider franchise. I was young, growing up in a destructive household, I had an alcoholic mother who was never there for me, and in ways, Lara Croft served as the woman role model in my life. Lara served as my catalyst. The video game itself was a way to escape reality, to forget about the harsh household that I was living in, and still to this day, when I am stressed out beyond belief, I simply grab my controller and play a classic Tomb Raider game.

I never really was able to see it like that as a child, but now that I look back, I genuinely believe that I was drawn to Lara at such a young age because my mother's role in my life was absent. Lara was, and still is, everything that I want to be, even as a male. Strong, brave, healthy, courageous, intelligent, and stalwart.

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

Lara really hasn't impacted my sexuality all too much. As a gay male, I find her physical appearance 0% sexually appealing, but I can tell you that she is still a strikingly beautiful woman, but you could say to some regard, that as far as hetero-romanticism goes, I do find that part of her very attractive (Post sassy classic Lara, and survivor-strength character development reboot Lara).

I think that since I am a gay male, it's actually been a blessing to watch her in the industry grow, to be able to appreciate her for the character that she is on the inside, and not what appeared on the outside.. We all know how drastic her body measurements started to get when Anniversary came around. Yes, it's true, Lara's physique was exploited in the media during those times. There is no denying that she was sexualized by her at-the-time developers, and even in the very beginning of the franchise, she was commercialized towards men to be a figure of sex. I could link you to half a dozen commercials right now, since back in the 90s, the gaming industry was thought to have been dominated by males. You know, the whole target audience stuff.

I've done my research, and I've been able to watch Lara's "evolution" so to speak, as the years have gone by. There is no denying it, but I wish to extend my gratitude to Square Enix (I believe it was SE) that put their foot down to finally give Lara Croft realistic proportions to her body. Media is so critical on our society. It's -so- important that we take care of ourselves with what we consume in the media, and I couldn't be happier to where Lara is at now as compared to where she was before.

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

I prefer Classic Lara as in Tomb Raider I, II, III, some of IV, and also the Reboot Lara. Reboot Lara is especially important because I cannot even tell you how many women I've come across who actually adore Lara Croft for who she is, how they aspire to be like her, and how they also adore Camilla Luddington. If it's one thing that the Reboot taught me that the classics were not able to teach me, is that feminism is important, that women can be just as strong as men, and that they are just as important. Bless.

Name: Raymond Croft
Country: USA/Los Angeles
Age: 22
How you identify: Gay

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?

I've been a fan of Tomb Raider since I was about 6 or 7 years old so I have been a fan for 16 years. I still remember one Christmas my brother and I got the first Playstation as a present. I don't really remember the first time I played TR or how I got the game, but I remember Tomb Raider 2 was the one I played the most and how I would always brag to my friends about how I beat the game even though I only got past the very easy first level hahaha.

I always tell this story that on one Christmas I got Tomb Raider 3 and that was enough for me because I didn't even open the rest of my presents. When a family member asked "Where's Raymond?" I heard my mom say "Raymond got Tomb Raider, Raymond is gone." Hahaha that is one of my most memorable stories.

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

Seeing as I was so young, Lara had me realize things about myself. Lara has made me way more adventurous. As a kid I used to climb my house or play in the yard pretending I was Lara. Even today I am still way more adventurous. I like to go on hikes and can walk around and climb the cliffs on the California beaches without being scared of falling off. I really want to skydive, base jump, rock climb, explore ruins, and recently climbing ice looks very fun as well *wonder what gave me that idea*. If I never had Lara in my life I could guarantee I wouldn't be able to take any of those risk. Also Lara has made me love archaeology! I love hearing about cultural myths, legends, and ancient civilizations. I am part Egyptian and because of Lara I have more interest in researching my culture.

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too)

I don't think Lara has had an impact on my sexuality per se, but she has made me a tougher person which has helped me with certain expected obstacles in my life. Though as a gay man I was able to appreciate Lara for Lara, she was more than just a figure and big boobs to me.

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

This is always a tough question for me. I would have to say they're equal. They both have traits that I love so much, I can't just choose one over the other! I do trust where Crystal Dynamics is taking Lara, and I am starting to see traits of classic Lara appear in reboot Lara.

I believe the next game is going to be a strong one that adds the classic elements into modern gaming. To me it looks like it's going to be the best game in the franchise.

Name: Constantine
Country: Czech Republic
Age: 27
How you identify: gay

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

I was 14 years old when I got my first computer (it was in 2002). I think I read about Tomb Raider before in some gaming magazines and I loved the idea. I like archaeology and history a lot, so exploring tombs and finding artefacts was very interesting for me. I remember I had walkthroughs of the first 5 games and I read them months before I got the PC, just to imagine what I will be playing. Then I got the computer and the first 5 games. I started with Tomb Raider 4, because Egypt was my biggest hobby back in 2002. AND I LOVED IT! 2003 was the year Angel of Darkness was released, so I bought it and played it. I remember being stuck (in the previous games as well), but it was not frustrating, it was a challenge.

I think in 2004 or 2005 I persuaded my parents to buy internet for our home (because I need it for studying high school of course!). They connected it at about 9am on Tuesday, and my mom wrote to my school that I am sick and will stay home that day. The first thing I googled? Tomb Raider! I found this Czech Tomb Raider website which I started to visit almost daily. A couple of years after I joined the team to write reviews and articles and now I am the main admin :) I met some very amazing people on that website and they are like a family to me.

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

I like her personality. She is fearless, she explores hidden tombs and travels around the world, she likes adventures. I just adore her (and envy her). I just wanted to be like her, explore tombs, look for artefacts. I studied history in high school and graduated in History (A+ :)). I wanted to be an Egyptologist or an Archaeologist, before I found out it's not that bug of a dream job as I thought before, and not very good paid. And being an Egyptologist in the middle of Europe is not the best option either.

Still, the personality and the life of Lara Croft amazed me.

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

I don't think there has been an influence on my sexuality by Lara. I like her a lot, I wanted be like her, but not like having breasts, long brown hair etc. I just wanted her personality, her experience.

At high school I wanted to date girls like Lara, fearless, adventurous. I think Lara is very sexy, I like her appearance a lot. I had a girl friend who played Tomb Raiders as well, we talked about the games, about going on an adventure... it was fun. Later I found out that girls are not the right option for me :) But again, I don't think Lara had any influence on this.

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

I like Classics. Definitely. For me it should have ended with Tomb Raider 4, or Angel of Darkness... It would have been very sad not to have new games, but still... it's not the same Lara in Legend and after. I liked Underworld and I like Tomb Raider (2013), as a game it's very good. It's just not the same Lara, fearless, dangerous, with her wit. I am still a fan and I think I will always be, but the old Lara from TR1-6 will always have a special place in my heart.

Name: Fabienne S.
Country: Germany
Age: 16
How you identify: Lesbian

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

I have been a fan since 2003, but first played the games in 2013 and then discovered the fandom.

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

Her attitude really got me. She just shows no fear and is an adventure girl. Lara gives no damn about certain things, which is something I admire. She explores places like a boss. I love her strength, her acrobatic skills, and her opinions about so many things. For me, she isn't just a sex symbol. Of course, she is beautiful - no doubt. I love CORE Lara's personality. Here is an example: She wanders around in the Great Pyramid and has to kill mutants and other weird creatures, that were made by Natla. I would have peed myself... but she doesn't care much.

Also, I love how clever Lara is. She knows soooooo much - it is amazing. Then there is Crystal Dynamics' trilogy Lara. She reminds me of myself, really. She searches for her mother and at the end, she finds an Amelia-Thrall. All her hopes are shattered after her fight with Natla and then Amanda is there and bitches around, yet life goes on and she continues her journey to get out of Helheim. You know the rest of the story. Still... she doesn't forget, what Natla OR Amanda have said and done. I do not want to get into a detailed description, but I have been through such a situation so often. There is this reminder, that life goes on and that I have to endure the pain, may it be physically or mentally. Let's say, I wish I could be like CORE Lara, but I am like L/A/U Lara at the moment. :D

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

Lara is a woman, who cannot be controlled by anyone... Okay, Natla manipulates her - though I see them as lovers, so that doesn't count! (Yes, I think both really "love" each other.) Back to this question: Before I really got into Tomb Raider, people could control me. I started to get confused about my sexuality, like "Maybe I'm not a lesbian, maybe I am... nothing..." Many people were like: "It is just a phase" or "You haven't found the right boy yet!" - I was so annoyed by that. Then suddenly I really got into Tomb Raider, and everything changed. Lara is all like: "Haters gonna hate!" She is full of self-confidence in my opinion. She helped me to ignore those dumb comments by other people. That is not quite much, but Lara was and still is helpful!

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

Oh,yes, I have. I prefer Classic and LAU Lara over the reboot Lara!

Name: Andrew John Harris
Country: Scotland
Age: 18
How you identify: Gay, Male

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

Since I was a small child I would watch my dad play it and I loved to watch him play, I started playing it for myself when I was 5 years old and have continued to play the games throughout my life.

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

I think what drew me to her at first was just how badass she was, she was so strong and confident; a perfect role model. Also I really liked the way she looked, her outfit and the gun holsters, I thought (and still continue to think) they're awesome! and to answer the "Why Lara Croft?" part - I guess because she's just been there my whole life, an escape from reality but also a really big part of my reality in a way, I still idolize her to this day.

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

I wouldn't say she impacted on my sexuality, but she did help me out in the sense of making me feel brave enough to be comfortable with who I am.

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

I have to say nothing will beat the original Tomb Raiders on the PS1 but the reboot is fucking amazing!

Name: James Gregory
Country: United Kingdom
Age: 28
How you identify: Gay male (and sometimes gaymer too! :)

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

I can't remember exactly, but I think it was 1998. I'd got hold of a demo of Tomb Raider 2 (the Great Wall level) from a friend, I think. I remember really enjoying the level - even if I couldn't quite get hold of the swimming technique then! I eventually got hold of the full game and I've been hooked since then! So yeah, about 17 years.

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

I'd seen one or two of the Indiana Jones films and played one of the Indiana Jones games prior to getting into Tomb Raider, and I imagine that association between the two characters drew me to Lara Croft. I think she's portrayed - at least in the classic series - as a strong, independent character who has had to find her way in life despite adversity, and I think that's what drew me to her. That and I'm something of a climber myself, so I imagine that aspect was a draw as well!

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

Hmm, I'm not sure to be honest. I've always been drawn to her, but not particularly in a sexual way. I think she's an inspirational character, and I like that about her.

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

I think it'd have to be classic for me, as that's where I've invested a lot of my time playing Tomb Raider. I've enjoyed the rebooted series - and continue to enjoy it - but I think I'm a classic series kind of guy at heart.

Name: Sapphire Bleu-Valentine
Country: USA
Age: 35
How you identify: Female Illusionist

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

I have been a fan since first playing Tomb Raider in 1996. I was never a gamer, but I came across the game in one of my brother's stashes of play station games. I was bored one day and thought, I'll play a video game.

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

I have always been enthralled with feminine heroines and the idea that a woman can be a hero. As a female illusionist, I'd admire all things feminine and for me, feminine is POWER and STRENGTH. That is what I admire greatly in Lara Croft's character.

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

Like so many female influences, Lara Crofts beauty as well as her strength impacted the vision I have for Sapphire. Strong and independent. Beautiful and crafty. Powerful and intelligent. All of those things are characteristics I'd like to think were partial influences on Sapphire by Lara's character.

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

Classic all the way. Some things are just better as they were...then again...Some might say Sapphire is sort of a reboot of Chris (my born and Male name) and that she is somehow better. For me it's just simple. The original is what I fell in love with.

Name: Alex
Country: Canada
Age: 25
How I identify: Non-binary (DFAB, genderfluid), pan/lithromantic asexual

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

I've been a fan almost as long as I can remember, though I've never actively participated in the Tomb Raider fandom until very recently. I grew up with my dad showing me games, and Tomb Raider is among the first I remember playing, starting with the first and continuing until now.

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

Lara was the first female character I played. I was young enough that I didn't realize what a big thing it was to play a female character, because I hadn't played enough games to see how many male characters dominated games, but she was someone I was able to connect with, even if I've never fully been comfortable identifying as female. What's more, she's confident, she knows what she wants and she does what she needs to do in order to get what she wants. She's incredibly confident in who she is and what her abilities are without being too cocky about it (i.e. she knows her limits and knows when she needs to pull away). I think the thing that drew me most to her though was the fact that she's human. Sure, the things she does are things most people aren't physically capable of doing, but it's not outside the realm of possibility. Even though there's an element of magic in her world, it's not the inaccessible "one person chosen to save humanity" type of magic, she's a human girl who stumbles into it and trusts that even if she doesn't fully understand it, her instincts can help her navigate it.

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

I think more than anything Lara has had more of an impact on my gender than my sexuality, besides letting me know that girls were definitely in the mix somewhere. Lara's definitely been sexualized for most of her run, but since I was too young to really be involved in fandom I managed to avoid a lot of that. Here was a woman who, while definitely not afraid of her femininity, wore combat boots and military clothes and wore her weapons as proudly as she did her make-up. A lot of badass female characters give me the impression that they're cool because they do things like men do, but Lara never did. Lara wore her guns differently than the men she fought, she took different strategies, all in all did things better because she actively took different methods than all the men did, if that makes sense. She taught me that I don't have to abandon the things that deemed me feminine by society, that femininity can be a useful asset, and that even if I'm in one of my more masculine phases, that I don't have to feel like my femininity is a weakness.

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

I don't really have a preference, I like classic and reboot Lara for different reasons. I'll always love classic Lara for introducing me to her world, for sparking a love of archaeology that, while I'm not pursuing academically for a lot of reasons, still burns strong to this day, for so many hours of enjoyment, and for largely being a blank slate that I could project what I wanted onto her. Reboot Lara came for me at a different stage of my life, when I started seeking out games for their storytelling more than anything else. She took the character and

humanized her a lot more, and as a long-time fan it was exciting seeing her build herself up and end up arguably close to the character I first loved. It was great for me, seeing her as a character with a story and proper motivations and a skillset she wasn't entirely sure how to use yet. I guess I don't really see them as different characters, more just different ways of approaching her story, but I think the decision to give her character vulnerability was a good one and I'm really excited to see where they take her next.

Name: Crystal Clitheroe
Country: South African, but currently residing in Japan
Age: 28
How you identify: Lesbian, maybe a little asexual

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

Oddly, I remember nightmares from playing the first game, better than I remember actually playing the game when I was about 8/9. It was more the dinosaurs than anything else that stuck out for me at that age.

I suppose I only really came to the fandom at about 13, when the first movie came out... It induced a serious girl crush on Jolie and the Bondish lifestyle of classic Lara. I spent a lot of time in a teenage fantasy, where Lara came crashing into my life declaring to adopt me and whipping me off into a life of adventure as her apprentice. I don't think it was a sexual thing, I just adulated the cool, confident Lara that Jolie portrayed and became obsessed with her.

These days, it’s the reboot Lara fanfic that I adore. Never having been a big gamer, I have enjoyed reading fanfics based on the reboot Lara, mostly by Pfangirl, and some of Asynca's, without having played the games, she's a very different Lara in my head, and I love her for different reasons.

I'm also addicted to Relic Run.

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

Lara is a symbol of female strength. Reboot or classic, she portrays an independent woman, who is capable of saving herself and is driven to get what she wants.

If I think about it, as a shy teenager with low self-esteem, Classic Lara appealed to me because her strength and her femininity was glamorous, she was completely self-reliant and strong, all the things I hoped I would become.

As I've grown into that person, struggling through incredible obstacles, and creating a life of adventure for myself, my idea of femininity and independent female strength has evolved. Reading reboot fanfiction, I connect at a more intimate level with Lara, I can relate to so many of her struggles and the violent ways she become a survivor, earning that sense of self-reliance. Through marvelling at her strength and story I have come to marvel at my own, and this has helped me to love myself more and grow.

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

I don't know whether classic Lara affected my sexuality, I always just admired and adored her. I wanted to emulate her, gain her respect, not date her.

It gets more complicated here.

Reboot Lara came to me in the form of another fan, a woman and passionate reboot cosplayer and fanfic writer. Her written interpretation of reboot Lara as a young, troubled gay woman draw me in so powerfully I fell in love with the literary character, and then inevitably with the woman who had re-envisioned her.

Having identified as gay/bi/confused/ashamed on and off since I was 18, it was this fanfic story, Easier to Run, and later the prequel, Can’t Go Home, that helped me really own myself, to shed the last painful ties of a heterosexual relationship. I had been hiding behind this half-hearted relationship, to protect myself from the more intense feelings and heartbreaks from attempts at relationships with other women.

It was recognizing the strength in Pfangirl's reboot Lara that helped me to recognise the strength I had in myself, that led me to risk loneliness and my heart and find real love in another woman.

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

I still adore the sassy Classic Lara over the reboot, but reboot Lara brought self-acceptance, incredible adventure and love into my life, so there will always be a special place for her in my heart.

Name: Gisele
Country: New Zealand
Age: 20
How you identify: Female/Transgendered

How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

I've been a fan since I was 7 maybe 8 years old, the first Tomb Raider game I played and got hooked was Tomb Raider 2 (I absolutely loved her ponytail).

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

As a young girl I always looked up to strong women for inspiration and what had drawn me to Lara Croft was how brave, smart, determined and beautiful she was but at the same time she was also ruthless and deadly! She is the epitome of a strong sexy woman and as a young girl wanting to become a woman myself she was a perfect inspiration for me and she still is to this day and she will continue to.

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

I don't feel that she made an impact on my sexuality :-)

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

I love them both! But I would love to see the classic Lara (Legend to Underworld) come back in more video game instalments (but not like the Lara Croft and the... and also not mobile games/apps).

Name: Charles
Country: Honduras
Age: 17
How you identify: Gay

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

I've been a fan ever since the first Tomb Raider Movie actually, when it was released. It was the first movie I ever saw in a theatre as a little kid. Later my mom bought me the two DVDs after the movies were out and would watch them basically every day (I know many TR fans hate them but They're my childhood) and started playing some of the games on the PlayStation 1 console, then the ps2, then the pc/ps games so I guess that's how it started for me.

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

I don't mean this in a stereotypical way, but simply an observation that most gay men are very passionate (when it comes to) and appreciate strong women. Lara's driven, she's in control, brave, fearless, beautiful, highly intelligent and determined, she also doesn't rely on a partner to help her through things and I think that those elements together make the perfect role model, with the edge/excitement/rush that comes along.

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

Lara's clearly a sex symbol, but I personally don't think that it's a defining thing in Lara's case, because of the strong aura that she oozes naturally, it's a sense of power, confidence, self esteem and stability and I find that very attractive in a person, and something that I put into practice simply because it works and It makes me feel great.

Also combat boots are hot, haha!

4) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot

I think that I'm in the middle, where Anniversary, Legend, Underworld, TAOD etc... Live in, but that's simply preference. Although I have very little complaints on the reboot but nothing that would make me not like them, still very fresh.

Name: Noelle
Country: South Africa
Age: 33
How you identify: gay woman

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1) How and when did you come to the fandom? (ie. how long have you been a fan?)

I remember the release of the first game back in 1996 when I was 14. It was huge news at the time – an instant hit – and its release coincided with my family getting our first computer. Indiana Jones had been my first ever pop culture obsession, I loved adventure-travel stories, ancient history and puzzle solving, so Tomb Raider was pretty much the perfect game for me. The fact that its main character was a woman – a female Indy – with an awesome, unusual backstory was an even bigger selling point. Tomb Raider became one of the first PC games I ever bought and played. I must have played the original game from start to finish around 5 times.

After the first game, though, I kind of lost touch with/interest in the franchise until a month before the 2013 reboot came out. I hadn't been tracking its development at all but suddenly I was like "Wow, that looks great." I immediately pre-ordered it, lost loads of sleep playing it when it came out, and fell in love with the franchise all over again – to an all-consuming level I hadn't experienced with anything since my teens. Suddenly I was drawing Lara, cosplaying Lara and writing loads of Lara fan fiction.

I've since gone back and filled in a lot of gaps in my Lara-ography, reading the old Top Cow comics, playing the Legend trilogy and Lara Croft offshoot games, and, of course, getting my hands on a lot of current material, from the novel and new comics to merchandise.

2) Why Lara Croft? What do you like/admire about her? What do you think drew you to her?

Initially I think I was drawn to her because of the franchise's overall escapist appeal – similar to James Bond. Lara has these thrilling globetrotting adventures that continually brush with the supernatural. She doesn't have a monotonous day job, sitting behind a desk every day, like most of us. Her concerns aren't mundane things like paying the rent; it's things like stopping a god from destroying the world. Plus, in her downtime she's not adverse to a little luxury and style in her surroundings – chilling on her yacht, relaxing in Croft Manor's library etc. Who wouldn't want a life like Classic Lara's?

In terms of the appeal of Lara Croft as a character, I admire her strong sense of self-confidence and self-reliance. She's incredibly courageous – never backing away from a new experience. Plus there's the fact that she is so well-rounded in terms of her abilities and accomplishments, from the mental (mystery-solving, vast historical knowledge, language skills) to the physical (superb athlete, master markswoman, skilled combatant). She excels in all these areas and has inspired me to diversify my skill set, along with believing in myself more and taking more risks; opening myself to new things.

I also like that Lara's inherently a lone wolf and not really a people's person – she doesn't suffer fools at all – yet at the same time she is an inherently good, principled individual who will do anything for the few people who are important to her; or the world's greater good on occasion. Yet she prefers to stay out of the limelight and certainly never expects gratitude for her behind-the-scenes heroics. I can identify with that. It's a kick to see my experience reflected in such a fantastic character.

Now most of my comments have related to Classic Lara, but I'll add that Reboot Lara struck a chord with me especially. This is because she is more human, whereas Classic Lara is like the Perfect Woman. Nu-Lara is allowed moments of weakness, physically and mentally. She takes a hit, suffers pain and doubt, yet she always gets up again despite it all. Her resilience is breath-taking, making her story especially inspiring. Underestimated and lacking confidence, this scrappy fighter, outsider and underdog steps up in a nightmarish situation and declares "I'll show you what this little rat can do!" **Chills…**

3) Can you describe Lara Croft's impact on your sexuality? (If not and/or you don't feel she's been an influence, that's fine too).

I'd say Lara Croft impacted on my sexuality in a roundabout way, yes.

I was a tomboy in childhood, favouring action figures over dolls and superhero comics over Archie. I've always felt drawn to strong, competent female characters, especially those who can hold their own among otherwise all-male teams. Think Cheetara in ThunderCats and Gadget in Chip 'n Dale Rescue Rangers. So I never felt that my feelings for Lara Croft were sexual attraction. The same goes for Catwoman. I thought it was pure admiration for these gutsy, no-fucks-given rule breakers. I still do, mostly.

However, in the aftermath of Tomb Raider 2013's release, I stumbled on fan fiction and fan art that speculated Lara and Sam were more than just friends. Before this, I had always been very resistant to lesbian experience – largely because rumours had swirled around me as a teenager. As far as I was concerned, it was all pure salaciousness, given the Sapphic porn I had encountered. So I'd hated being associated with that label in any way.

Then I read the Sam-Lara stories and found myself thinking, "Well, this is actually quite lovely." Their relationship was both sweet and sexy, and incredibly close-knit emotionally. For the first time I opened myself to an alternative to the hetero norm. This after years of feeling like something was always a little off in my relationships with guys, like I was always suppressing a part of myself to keep the "right" power dynamic in place. With women I suddenly didn't have to do that. I could be 100% emotionally honest. I didn't feel like I had to stifle the more masculine aspects of my personality – and it was liberating! Even with some initial anxieties, I felt a lot more comfortable in my skin. And that in turn made all aspects of my relationships better and more satisfying.

3) Do you have a Lara preference - Classic or Reboot?

I thought it would be a lot easier to answer this question than it ended up being.

I’m coming to appreciate Classic Lara more and more because she is just so “together,” accomplished, and FUN. Plus, she’s allowed to be an adult around my age – which is pretty rare in Pop Culture these days, where all the heroes seem to cap out at 25 years old.

Reboot Lara is, however, a psychologically meatier character, so I am far more emotionally invested in her ongoing evolution. I want to see her victorious – I’m always silently cheering for her – whereas with Classic Lara that’s unnecessary. Her success is a given every time.