

Re: Hey, stop picking that lock!

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- *From:* Jim Miller <yohocoma@xxxxxxxx>
  - *Date:* Sat, 03 Jun 2006 18:07:44 -0700
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On Sat, 03 Jun 2006 21:05:14 GMT, Jove <invalid@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>  
wrote:

1. Everyone who has a key has only a skeleton key; door-specific keys, though assumed, don't seem to exist in the dungeon.

Apparently most real-world locks have a built-in back door. This was reported in comp.risks as a security risk. There was a reaction from locksmiths, not to fix the back door, but that it should never have been publicly reported. (This is known as security through obscurity.)

Dungeon skeleton keys aren't a "back door" by any stretch – they lie all about and any untrained yokel can use them.

2. Disparate and competing figures in the dungeon somehow carry on their economic or other lives, living with the fact that they share skeleton-key access to each other's private places. Shopkeepers have skeleton keys – they can get into any other shopkeeper's shop.

But shopkeepers would have to leave their shops unprotected while robbing another shop. The other shopkeeper would have to be gone as well. (Perhaps out robbing the store of the first shopkeeper?)

Then:

Shopkeepers can NEVER leave their shops

and

Why have locks or keys at all?

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The  
gnome king's wine cellars, every locked box and chest somebody left in  
the dungeon, rooms in the castle, rooms in the quests, and on and on –  
the owners of all these things manage an unprecedented level of trust,  
for such a brutal environment.

So does the real world, BION. This may be why strangers are  
automatically suspected. They can't be relied on to automatically know  
what the local community's trust levels are.

Huh? In the modern western world I live in, people lock their  
possessions up to the yin yang. There is no trust.

You think they would slap a  
combination lock or a magic-only lock on everything they could.

Not cost effective. No one but the adventurer robs most things  
anyway.

But you just said that shopkeepers have to be wary of other  
shopkeepers. And the adventurers I know do a pretty good job of  
getting what they want from shops. You'd think the shopkeepers would  
detect a pattern.

We  
know combination technology does exist in some form – on the castle  
drawbridge.

Exactly, a high-value target has the best (i.e. most expensive)  
protection. Boxes, chests, etc. don't get that because they're neither  
worth it nor at risk.

I'll give you this one since the drawbridge lock seems to be magical  
rather than mechanical.

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3. The minetown guards are plenty suspicious about you opening a door with a skeleton key, and they should be, with the multitude of these keys just lying around the dungeon and the mines for the grabbing. But if they walk next to a skeleton key lying on the ground in the actual minetown, they just leave it there! Prevention isn't in their book apparently.

Just like the real world. The police don't get credit for crimes prevented. In fact, lower crime rates would lower police budgets. (Bureaucracies reward failure and punish success.)

Real world police don't take easy crime prevention measures that come their way? A real cop wouldn't pick up a wallet or a set of keys if he found them?

I could go on. It's best not to hold the game to too rigorous a level of consistency, but I also have to argue against those who try to make up a backstory that legitimizes every quirk of the game. It gets too stultified and constructed.

Again, just like the real world. See The Science of Discworld II: The Globe for why explanations are made up. Stories are described as the difference between animals and humans.

But you seem oblivious that your story isn't very consistent with the real world, which you keep appealing to for justifications anyway. If you want to supply a background story where the dungeon dwellers have fantastical and unrealistic motivations, fine, but it probably won't satisfy most people. The story has to be at least internally consistent, and consistent with a modicum of reality, to be satisfying to players (or readers).

Jim

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