

The Silven
Trumpeter
The Official Magazine of Silven Crossroads

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From the Editor

Sound off!

Got an urge to send a note to our editor? Would you like to volunteer as a writer?

Write to Dana at
adriayna@yahoo.com

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the pilot issue of The Silven Trumpeter, the official magazine of Silven Crossroads. We are honored to have you as a reader and member in our fine community.

The Silven Trumpeter is the brainchild of our founder and site admin, Kosala Ubayasekara. Kosala decided to create the Silven Trumpeter for two reasons: to provide a high quality free e-zine to the RPG community and to showcase, distribute, and archive selected content from the Silven Crossroads site in a convenient manner for readers who are unable to stay online for long periods of time to browse the site.

While The Silven Trumpeter contains quality articles from our online e-zine and game-specific subject areas, it also includes exclusive content not found anywhere else on the Silven Crossroads site. The Silven Trumpeter's exclusive material includes maps, placeable tokens, and other gaming aids that are adaptable to a variety of systems.

Our aim is to provide our readers with a useful, informative, thought-provoking magazine of the highest quality on RPG gaming. Feel free to contact me, as I would love to hear your comments, suggestions, and feedback.

best regards

Dana Driscoll

Dana Driscoll

Editor In Chief
Silven Crossroads E-zine

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image by Florin Badita



Come Out and Play : Gender Equality at the Gaming Table

by Dana Driscoll

Gender equality has been and still is a heated issue in the tabletop gaming community. As a female gamer and dungeon master, I have paid specific attention to how gender is discussed in the gaming community at large and how it affects my players in the games I run. Every few months, the debate will heat back up on one of the major gaming message boards—what to do about the stats female characters, sexy artwork in the gaming books, how to handle diverse gaming groups, etc. So what is so important about gender equality? Who cares? What can be done to help create a more equal gaming environment? This article is your guide to the what, why, and how of gender equality at the gaming table.

Discuss gender equality in RPG's on our forums at the URL below:

[http://www.silven.com/forums.asp?case=showthread&forumgroupid=2&forums
ubsectionid=3&threadid=748](http://www.silven.com/forums.asp?case=showthread&forumgroupid=2&forumsubsectionid=3&threadid=748)

What is the big fuss about gender equality? Gender equality stems from a larger equality movement in general; a movement that has been gaining momentum in Europe and United States in various forms since the early 1800's, believe it or not! Equality, whether it is based on ethnicity, gender, class membership, or sexual orientation, is simply an idea that all people deserve to be treated the same. The term "sexist" or "sexism" is often dropped when discussing gender equality. Sexism is simply discrimination based on gender. Simple enough, but how does it relate to gaming? As with everything else, your gaming world is populated with people, each with a gender. Your players too, have a gender, which while the stereotypical gender is male; the gaming community does include the female sex. There are just as many females as males in the world, but that statistic is not necessarily shared in the tabletop gaming community. Still, there are others to think about, and that is where equality comes in.

An easy way to promote gender equality at the gaming table is through the use of language. Anyone who has browsed a gaming message board in has encountered the acronym BBEG (a.k.a. Big Bad Evil Guy). This term comes from the assumption that the NPC villain is often, just that—a big, bad, evil guy. For dungeon masters, an easy way to promote gender equality in your games is to use both sexes when dealing with NPCs and/or villains. A neat trick to do is to let the dice decide. Roll a die. If it comes up even, the NPC is a female, if odd, the NPC is a male. Simple, yet effective. Even monsters have a gender, and characteristically using the pronoun "he" to describe every one the party encounters leaves the gals out. After all, there are "Big Bad Evil Gals" too!

One of the hottest debate topics dealing with gender is whether or not female PC stats should be adjusted. Usually, these stat adjustment comments are focused on giving female characters a negative to strength and a positive to some other stat (in the D20 system, constitution, dexterity, and wisdom are all debatable choices). Gamers on both sides of the debate use real world examples to prove their points, which condense to: while women in general might be weaker than men, a minority of women are stronger than most men. The arguments usually end in a deadlock, with both sides refusing to budge. Unfortunately, most of the arguments are based on realistic examples. And fantasy or sci-fi games are anything but realistic. From spacecraft to spell resistance, gaming has little to do with reality. So why drag reality into it? PCs are meant to be extraordinary people with extraordinary abilities. Fantasy is just that—being able to do something or be something that you aren't in real life. Gender stat adjustments create many problems, including forcing players to play female characters only in roles where strength based abilities are non-essential. If a gamer wants to play a female fighter and the group uses gender based stat adjustments, taking the hit to strength is going to be a major blow for the character. And if gender based negatives stack with other racial negatives, then female halfling fighters simply wouldn't exist, because few players would be willing to take a -4 hit to strength. But gender issues extend further than just player characters themselves.

Worlds are created and destroyed by a dungeon master. Gender equality comes into play even at world creation—is sexism prevalent in your world? If so, how will it affect your players? This article is not in any way condoning worlds that are entirely “equal” and free from problems. It might be fantasy, but humanity has a hard time believing in perfection. Sexism exists for two reasons in a created world—because a dungeon master has decided it exists, or because he or she has assumed it exists.

As a DM, you can use sexism to advance a plot or challenge your characters. It can be a tool like any other, but it is best to be sensitive to your players while using it. It is still possible to create a world, race, city, or tribe that is sexist, and yet give your PC’s a memorable experience without walking a shaky line. A world that is sexist, in both directions, can present very interesting chances for character development and role-play. For example, the town of Englave has a group of Orcs that have established a lair nearby and have been raiding the town food stores. The town solicits a party, including a male paladin, to take care of the problem. Englave, however, has a certain philosophy about male paladins. Male paladins are not accepted in the town and any that the townsfolk encounter will be treated with disdain. Does this present a problem for male paladin in the party? Certainly, but now the male paladin has a choice. He can either avoid the town and ignore the town’s request, or he can help the town, try to change their way of thinking, and even work to find out the root of their sexism.

Gender equality is something to consider when creating a character, a world, or adventuring in it. The most important thing to remember is make sure everyone, not just players of one gender, are having fun. While this article’s focus was gender equality, one can easily take the examples and ideas applied and add it to race, sexual orientation, and class status as well.

Discuss this article at Silven Crossroads

▶ <http://www.silven.com/articles.asp?case=show&id=44>

Don't forget to swing by our CRPG section on the site at the URL above.

It's a great month for fans of Black Isle's RPG games as we have coverage of two of their most highly anticipated games.

[Lionheart : Legacy of the Crusader](#) (screenshot on the left) has just gone gold and is due out in shops near you in August. We have a preview, screenshots and the trailer for you to drool over while you wait to pick up the game!

View the Silven Gamecorner for Lionheart : Legacy of the Crusader at the URL below:

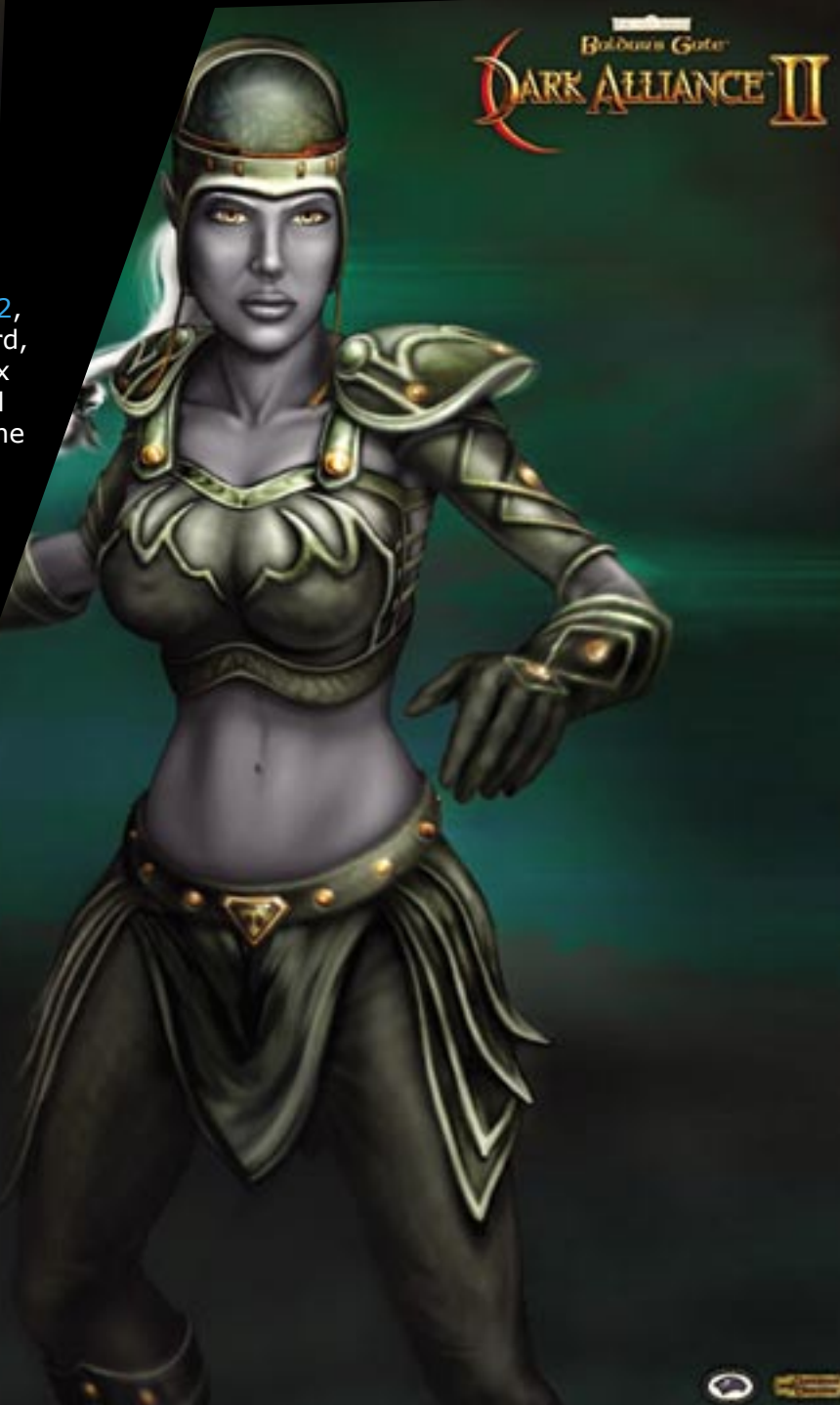
▶ <http://www.silven.com/pcmac.asp?case=gamespace&id=14>



[Baldurs Gate : Dark Alliance 2](#), our winner of the Best PS2 RPG of E3 award, is due out this fall for the PS2 and the Xbox platforms. We have the trailer and two cool gameplay footage videos to show you on the site. Vhaidra, one of the player characters available to you in the game is depicted in the image on the right.

View the Silven Gamecorner for Baldurs gate : Dark Alliance 2 at the URL below:

▶ <http://www.silven.com/console.asp?case=gamespace&id=10>



As a veteran computer gamer, I have come to the conclusion that every CRPG I buy will have, at the very least, one flaw or limitation that keeps it from true perfection. I'm not referring to bugs, but rather the small gameplay quirks that seem to come packaged with modern CRPGs. Whether it's the real-time combat of *Baldur's Gate* or the very short and disappointingly linear quest of *Arx Fatalis*, I know something will arise in the game to keep it from being 100% enjoyable. Unlike some of my friends, I have come to accept this fact, and continue enjoying CRPGs for what they are, not what they could be. Yet, as a veteran gamer, I feel compelled to do something about this nasty trend. After all, the last "perfect" CRPG that I played was *Daggerfall*, and that was almost seven years ago.

Unfortunately, I'm not a programmer, nor do I know one of sufficient skill to make the kind of CRPG I want. Although there are CRPG creation kits such as the one in *Neverwinter Nights* and the ever-popular RPG Maker 2000, neither gives me the kind of flexibility I need to change the way combat or NPC interaction is handled in the game. Knowing this, I decided to do the next best thing and write about my idea in this month's webzine. With a little bit of imagination, and some wishful thinking, maybe my perfect game will come into being. Who knows, someone with the power to create a game may be reading this. Even if that isn't so, it makes me feel better to just get the idea out and hear your opinions.

Instead of starting from scratch, I intend to take a different element from each of the industry's best games and combine them all into one perfect game. After all, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and taking the very best aspects of each classic CRPG and combining them into one "Ultimate game" does make sense when you think about it. Now, on with the show.

The first and most important aspect of a CRPG is the character creation system. Sure, you can get on your high horse and declare the storyline to be the most important element, but if you really want that level of storytelling, you are better off reading a book. This is a CRPG we are making here, not the next *Lord of the Rings*. With this taken into account, let us begin with the character creation of our CRPG.

My ideal character creation section would not only give you unprecedented depth of options, but also prevent you from making a character who is unable to complete the game. A good example of a flawed system would be *Planescape Torment*, since it forced every player to play a Mage/Thief in order to complete most of the quests and equip most of the game's mage-only items. The perfect system would instead give you enough options and variations to create any type of fantasy character you can imagine yet also balance out your character so that he or she can beat the game as easily as a normal character class such as a Knight or Mage. A good example of this would be *Daggerfall*, whose character generation is legendary amongst veteran CRPG fans. In the second Elder Scrolls game, you could create everything from a magically immune Evil Paladin that takes damage in sunlight to a Health-regenerating Nordic Barbarian who can't see in the dark and is deathly afraid of animals. The system allowed you to change every single aspect of your character, even their reputation amongst the different social classes living within the game world. Knowing this, it shouldn't surprise you that I have around 50 *Daggerfall* saves, all belonging to 20+ different characters I've made in Bethesda's rather robust system. Admittedly, I've only completed the game with six of my character creations, but all of these heroes excelled in their chosen professions while also opening up entirely new gameplay experiences. That is the mark of a great character creation system.

Next comes the combat system. Very few modern CRPGs are able to make their combat entertaining, which is a shame since I have yet to see an RPG (Other than *A Tale in the Desert*) that doesn't have at least a few hundred battles in it. Combat takes up a very large part of every CRPG, so it shouldn't be asking too much if we demand that the combat be enjoyable. Diablo-esque clickfests and first person whack-a-mole games like *Morrowind* just don't cut it in my dream CRPG. Instead, why not take the turn-based, strategic, 3D combat of *Wizardry 8* and put it in my perfect game? Not only can we keep the game in the same first person view that seems to be so popular nowadays, but we can still place strict rules on movement range and even incorporate something along the lines of D&D's attacks of opportunity. The only thing I would change about *Wizardry 8*'s combat system is how the player is unable to see the rest of his or her party. With an

engine tweak, my game could have all your players walk behind you in formation and give you the option to switch to another character in combat so that you could view the fight from their eyes rather than the party leader. Later in production, the engine could be modified even further to allow the player to pan around and zoom out from the battlefield in real-time, giving them the ability to survey the area and carefully plan his or her next move. Simply put, combat should be nothing more (or less) than a fancy 3D chess game. Turn based, strategic, and 3D. That really isn't asking much, now is it?

Now we move on to the artificial intelligence and NPC interaction. This aspect of the CRPG isn't being paid as much attention by game developers as graphics, and many games that claim to have deep interaction are, in fact, quite shallow. For instance, *Morrowind* was credited with having "Unheard of levels of NPC depth", yet all that the NPCs do is stand outside in the same exact place all day and every night. About the only interesting or realistic thing the NPCs do in *Morrowind* is hold their hand up to their face during a sandstorm. They never go to their home to eat, they never seek cover from rain, they never sleep, they never walk to another NPC to engage in conversation, and their attitude towards you is expressed through cookie cutter responses built into the game's main conversation tree. A good example to follow would instead be Piranha Byte's *Gothic*. Not only do NPCs sleep, eat, hunt, and visit their neighbors, but they also remember what you said or did to them, and spread rumors about you around camp. However, artificial intelligence shouldn't just end with NPCs. Another thing *Gothic* got right was the way it handled its enemies. Monsters were held to the same rules as they are in our own world. Predators slept during the afternoon hours and only came out after midnight, while other monsters (such as wolves and giant lizards) prowl the forests looking for meals during the day. My perfect CRPG would borrow from *Gothic*'s NPC and AI in much the same way I borrowed from the other games. Although in this case, no late production tweaking would be needed, since Piranha Byte's NPC interaction and Intelligence was dead-on and about as good as anyone has ever done in this genre.

So far, we have the basic gameplay down. Wizardry 8's combat system, Daggerfall's character creation and skill system, and *Gothic*'s NPC Intelligence-but what about the story? Sure, I did say story takes a back seat to gameplay. What is needed is a great non-linear storyline and a gentle, yet experienced, hand to sand off the rough edges and guide the game's design along. My Ultimate CRPG needs to be designed by a programmer who is not only a gifted writer, but also very passionate about this hobby. Someone who is a gamer first, and a programmer second.

My Ultimate CRPG would be made by Warren Spector.

No one has redefined the CRPG genre the way Warren Spector has-nor even as many times as he has. He created the first true 3D Role playing game with *Ultima Underworld*, and created the first RPG/FPS. Always known as a very humble man, he was once quoted during the early Ion Storm days as calling his production team "The Other Ion Storm." This was a sharp contrast to the boastful attitude of Ion Storm's other big name, John Romero. Though anyone who has accomplished as much as Spector did obviously had no need to brag. His track record spoke for itself. *Ultima Underworld*, *System Shock*, *Thief*, *Deus Ex*-all superb titles that changed the way we look at gaming. If anyone could take my formula for the Ultimate CRPG and make it happen, it would be him.

So there you have it! The next big thing in computer gaming history. All that you have to do is find a way to fit all of those perfect little pieces together. Although the chances of this game getting made are rather slim, I have found some CRPGs now in development that come awfully close to mimicking it. The Xbox's *Fable* is one of those games, and can best be described as Daggerfall's younger brother. Another game that holds some promise is *Greyhawk: Temple of Elemental Evil*. Earlier articles I have written here reveal as much, but I firmly believe Troika will reinvent the D&D CRPG and bring back an era reminiscent of the Gold Box games.

Only time, or a programmer with time on his or her hands, will tell.

Discuss this article at Silven Crossroads

▶ <http://www.silven.com/articles.asp?case=show&id=43>

Contests, contests and waffles!

Did I say waffles? I meant raffles!

d20 encounter contest

Silven Crossroads is holding a summer contest to see who can come up with the best stand-alone encounter.

Time frame

The contest will last from 15 July 2003 to 31 August 2003. Submissions sent after 31 August, 2003 will not be accepted into the contest.

Prizes

Monte Cook and Malhavoc Press will be sponsoring our first prize.

1st Prize - A copy of the Monte Cook module "The Banewarrens", value \$17.95

2 Consolation Prizes - A DM Screen, value ca \$9.00 to each consolation prize winner

Find out how to submit an entry by visiting our D&D/d20 page at the URL below:

<http://www.silven.com/adnd.asp>

Aside from our d20 contests, we also have a raffle sponsored by Gary Gygax and Hekaforge Productions.

Swing by our forums at the URL below:

<http://www.silven.com/forums.asp?case=showthead&forumgroupid=1&forumssubsectionid=55&threadid=789>

You will find out how you can buy a virtual raffle ticket and put yourself in the running for this amazing RPG bundle worth over \$100:

Lejend Master's Lore/Author's Edition - HFP1004/MSRP \$34.95

Beasts of Lejend/Author's Edition - HFP1007/MSRP \$34.95

Lejendary Rules for All Players/Premier Edition - HFP1002/MSRP \$29.95

Silven Crossroads will be hosting several contests this summer where you can win some fabulous prizes. The contests and the raffle end on the 31st of August so make sure you visit us and get your entries in on time.

Contest sponsors include Monte Cook, Hekaforge Productions, Goodman Games and Gary Gygax.

d20 monster contest

Silven Crossroads is holding a summer contest to see who can come up with the best d20 monster.

Time frame

The contest will last from 15 July 2003 to 31 August 2003. Submissions sent after 31 August, 2003 will not be accepted into the contest.

Prizes

Goodman Games will be sponsoring our second prize.

1st prize - A copy of Creature Collection II: Dark Menagerie by Scarred Lands, value \$24.95

2nd prize - Monsters of the Endless Dark from Goodman Games, value \$18

3rd prize - A DM Screen, value ca \$9.00

Find out how to submit an entry by visiting our D&D/d20 page at the URL below:

<http://www.silven.com/adnd.asp>

All 3 books will be autographed by Mr Gary Gygax and contains all you need to get started with this great RPG!

A consolation prize will also be randomly given out to 3 winners. Each consolation prize will consist of a d20 DM Screen of high quality.

Chasing your prey - A guide to tracking

by Kosala Ubayasekara

Tracking has been around in fantasy RPG's since the very beginning, and many gamers have utilized this feat for finding foes, clues, and food. However, there is much more to tracking than simply stating to your gaming group, "My ranger tracks the wolf to his den." This article introduces elements of tracking in brief and should serve to allow both gamers and Game Masters to incorporate tracking as a plot driver and as an opportunity for role-playing. Throughout this document, we will refer to the person doing the tracking as the "tracker" and the person or creature being tracked as the "quarry."

Reading Footprints

When pursuing a fleeing quarry, footprints are the most commonly tracked items. Generally, tracking footprints is the simplest form of tracking available and requires the least practice or experience to carry out, provided that the ground is wet or soft. On hard ground, even the most experienced trackers may find difficulty in seeing a readable footprint.

What can you tell from footprints? When looking at a selection of footprints from a single source, a tracker will be able to instantly tell a few things.

Whether the footprints were made by a humanoid or animal...

Naturally, this will be easy to distinguish since humanoids and non-humanoids have vastly different kinds of feet.

How many feet the quarry has...

Generally, this will be easily apparent by simply counting the number of different prints that occur from the same source. In the event of an extremely large amount of prints being present, this may wind up being more difficult. For example, if you look at the prints left by a centipede in soft soil, it is almost impossible to count the individual markings.

Whether the feet were shod (wearing shoes) or not...

Shod feet do not leave markings of individual elements of the feet. In other words, toes and heels will not show up in prints left by shod feet. Keep in mind that in medieval times there was seldom a high heel on shoes or boots, most being flat-soled.

Tracking will also tell you whether a horse was shod or not. Metal horseshoes were generally expensive in medieval times and un-shod horse signifies either a horse belonging to a poor person or coming from a culture or civilization that does not believe in using horseshoes (ex: Barbarians, Nomads).

Whether the quarry was running or walking...

The distance between footprints is a good indication of speed. Very large creatures leave a large distance between prints even when they walk. However, you can always tell the difference between a run and walk by looking at the depth of the print around the back of the foot. A deep heel print signifies a running gait on a humanoid, as a quarry will generally land heavily in the back of the foot when running. Four-footed creatures generally run on their toes, so a large depth on the front of the footprint on a four footed creature indicates a running pace.

The size and approximate weight of the quarry...

Most humanoid characters follow a general scale of proportions; the size of the footprint can be used to extrapolate the average height of the quarry. For quadrupeds and multipeds, such extrapolation may be difficult if the quarry is not a creature previously known to the tracker.

The depth of a footprint in soft soil is a very accurate guide to the weight of the quarry. In order to get a point of comparison, the tracker can use one of his or her own footprints as a benchmark of what depth his or her own weight would leave on the same surface and then compare that with the print of the quarry to get a best guess value for the quarry's weight.

Reading Ground Tremors

If the tracker is pursuing a quarry consisting of a large group, such as an army, then it may be possible to follow them by listening to the tremors made by the many feet marching in unison. Such a feat requires that the group is moving on firm ground and keeping a steady pace. A skilled tracker can put his ear to the ground and feel the vibrations.

The act of placing the ear to the ground has nothing to do with listening in this case. The ear lobe is sensitive to soft touches and vibrations and a tracker will pick up movements in the earth better with his ear than with other parts of the body.

This method is largely useless on soft ground since tremors will not travel far through soil and soft sediment. On hard ground it may be possible to feel tremors or large groups or armies from up to a mile away.

Reading Foliage

Reading foliage trails left accidentally by a quarry can be very tricky and require much experience to be able to do well; however once mastered, this is one of the most reliable methods of tracking a quarry that is moving through an area thick with flora.

Small branches or twigs on branches that are bent as a quarry passes through them. They always bend in the direction the quarry is moving. Flattened grass or low bushes will also have their tips facing the direction the quarry passed on. A tracker following a fast moving quarry through a forest can use the presence of disturbed flora to very accurately track the path of a quarry that has passed that way.

Sharp twigs also catch onto clothes and may leave traces of string and stitching for the observant tracker to follow.

Reading Droppings

If the tracker is following a quarry that is an animal, then its droppings can serve as a reasonable judge of time in a long hunt.

Droppings from warm-blooded animals typically remain warm to the touch for between 4-6 hours after being secreted from the body. After a day, droppings will typically petrify, and after 4-6 days will start to crumble into small pieces.

The contents of droppings are also excellent indicators of the quarry's diet, if such information is interesting to the tracker.

Reading Objects

Objects are a difficult way to track a quarry and often prove to be an unreliable marker at best. However if the tracker is lucky there is one situation where a dropped object might prove useful.

If the quarry is moving at a run and drops an object, it will most likely roll in the direction of the quarry's motion upon hitting the ground. If the tracker can find the indent in the ground that was made by the object when it hit the ground and match it with the final resting place of the object, he will know which direction the quarry was approximately heading in.

Reading Airborne Signs

Airborne signs are generally very unpredictable and temporary forms of locating a quarry, but there are a few signs that can be helpful.

When a bird or flock of birds is startled on the ground, it will usually rise vertically to gain altitude and then proceed to fly away from the thing that startled it. If the tracker is tracking the quarry through a forest or wooded area, this might come in handy.

The only other airborne sign that is of any use is smell. If the tracker knows the distinctive odour of its quarry, then it may be possible to track the passage of the quarry using olfactory capabilities if the quarry is moving into the wind.

Discuss this article at Silven Crossroads

▶ <http://www.silven.com/adnd.asp?case=show&id=36&pageid=3>

Chatting with Gary Gygax

by Kosala Ubayasekara
& Gary Gygax

Welcome to another edition of our regular monthly debate and information pieces done in collaboration with Mr Gary Gygax, the original creative mind behind the Dungeons and Dragons roleplaying game. Mr Gygax and our own Silven Crossroads site admin Kosala Ubayasekara have spent some time discussing Gary's RPG *Legendary Adventure*:

Q1: When did you first get the idea to create the *Legendary Adventure* RPG and what prompted the decision?

It was after the third CRPG that had been optioned didn't go forward, in 1994. Back to PnP RPGs, I thought. The good part from my perspective is that I developed less complex systems for CRPG play, and from those came the LA game.

Q2: How long did it take you to go from idea to published product when designing the *Legendary Adventure* core rules?

I began writing the LA game system material in 1994, and it took me a bit over two years to have the core system material far enough along to post on my website as a beta test game. After that was done and up, I play-tested the system and wrote more source material for it. My LA game campaign has been running steadily since 1997. LA game's *Legendary Rules* for all Players were first published in July 1999, and the other two core books the following year.

Q3: Were there other key people involved in the design of the game other than yourself or was this a completely solo effort?

The core rules design was as much my own as any such work can be. Of course, the input from my player group, others playing, and fans was a part of the development. There are credits given to testers and a number of names used for spells (Powers) and magic items (Extraordinary Items) to identify the persons who devised the bases for such contributions. Most of those are

actually not yet published, however. I have a lot of additional material collected since the system came out.

Q4: I have seen the terms *Legendary Adventure* as well as *Legendary Earth* used in context of the game. Are they synonymous terms or do they reflect two facets of the campaign setting?

The *Legendary Adventure* title describes the game system. The world setting for the game is the *Legendary Earth* World Setting. The latter is in process of publication, the globe-spanning *Gazetteer* in print, and the first continent-specific book, *Noble Kings & Dark Lands* (covering the continents of the LE world that are Europe like and Africa-like) has just released in pdf, with the actual book to follow in a week or so. Three more books will cover the remaining continents and islands. They are in process of development now.

Q5: For those of our readers unfamiliar with the product line, what are the core rule books necessary to start playing a *Legendary Adventure* game and who are the books targeted at?

As a player one needs only the *Legendary Rules* for all Players. The *Lejend Master* needs the other two books, *Lejend Masters Lore* and *Beasts of Lejend*. As the LM for my group, I am happy to see a player with the other two books, especilly the LML, because it means he can look up the information he needs, saving me the time and the others in the game the lag in play.

Q6: What are the significant differences in the *Legendary Adventure* RPG compared to other RPG's that you have worked on or played?

It is better that disinterested reviewers comment on the system's pros and cons. The LA game is a rules-light system with only three base stats, so character creation is relatively quick and yet still a lot of fun as players assign points to stats, increase the totals through die rolls and selection of skill bundles. It uses skill

bundles called Abilities, a new Avatar beginning with five of them if human, six or seven if non-human, Players can opt for set Abilities, thus having an archetype-like Avatar, or they can choose all their Abilities for a completely unique one.

Abilities of a set sort make the Avatar Ordered (these mainly human characters), that status (Ordered) being indicative of a recognized profession, calling, or vocation that has formal organization such as a guild, association, company, etc. There are plenty of Orders to choose from; likewise sufficient Abilities to enable the creation of a character the player really wants to play. From selection of Abilities the player is directed to equipment lists, including Powers (spells) to select for the new Avatar,

When completed, the new Avatar is quite able, not a struggling character that needs to run away a lot as do low-level PCs in a class-based system. However, gaining capacity is a longer-term thing, so longevity of a campaign is not a problem. Maxing out an Avatar is something that takes years and years.

Experience is given in Merit points. for general play the Avatars should receive from 40 to 75 an hour, depending on how actively they were participating in events. Successful and meaningful use of an Ability in play earns 10 or so Merits specific to the Ability, The game does not favor any particular element of the game, as the above indicates. Time spent exploring, fighting, problem solving, or role-playing games the same reward for the players' Avatars.

Finally, the game-speak for the LA system is different. I purposefully altered the patois so as to assist participants to adapt the LA game's mindset and lose that of class-based games such as the D&D one, for there is no question that the LA game plays differently and needs to be approached thus.

Q7: What supplemental material has been developed in addition to the core books and are any third party publishers working on supplemental Legendary Adventure game material?

In addition to the products already mentioned, there is an LM screen and several adventures now available--Legendary Road, Dance of the Fairy Ring, Mouth of the Marsh, Enclave. Coming in the future are a rules supplement to add Shamanism & Witchery, a book of deities, Legendary Pantheons, and several sourcebooks-

-Key of Sand and Maledicted being completed and ready. With the last-named book will follow a special adventure set within the territory covered, the module a large and difficult one called Well of Shadows. In a year or two, we plan to release a genre expansion now virtually ready. This is the Legendary AsteRogues Fantastical Science Fiction game for a sort of super-science steam punk milieu.

Troll Lord Games has published several products that are made for use with the LA system as well as the d20 one. The Hermit is a dual system module, and they are currently working on the preparation of a super module I wrote called The Hall of Many Panes, also dual system. It is very large, should take a year to play through, and is likely going to be a boxed set with two books included. The "Gygaxian Fantasy Worlds Series from Troll Lord Games is a generic one containing specifics for the LA and d20 systems. So far it's titles are Canting Crew, World Builder, and Everyday Life, the latter expected to come off the presses immediately. Several other titles are in process including one on essential places in adventures, a book of names, a nation builder, and one for adventure plots.

Inner City Games has a super module that they plan for dual system release, it being titled Castle Wolfmoon. The adventure is sufficiently generic to enable it to be used as the basis for the final round of play in the OAD&D tournament at Milwaukee Gamefest. I'll be the DM for that round on 2 August.

Q8: Now we have already mentioned in a previous Q&A that you are collaborating on a massively multiplayer game based on the Legendary Adventure concept, are there also other related table top products planned for the campaign setting during the coming year?

I think that I have pretty well covered this question. We have a lot of modules waiting in line, and there will new product coming out for many a year to come. At some point I want to do a new edition of the rules to get in all the new material that's been developed--a few new abilities, Several Orders and sub-Orders, much added equipment, a few weapons, many Powers, Extraordinary Items, and creatures. I hope that in about two years I can compile the lot in a general core rules supplement. Thereafter the material can be added to the separate core books as a second edition. That way those with the old books won't need to buy new ones.

Q9: Without needing to go into specifics, can you tell us if you are working on any more table top RPG concepts aside from the Lejendary Adventure RPG?

That's easy. No. I am already competing with a couple of my older systems, so why add another one to the mix? Of course I do plan to do some genre expansion work for the base LA game system. Those will be done so that about 90% of the rules and mechanics are the same as the fantasy genre's, naturally.

Q10: For those that do not live near hobby stores that carry the Lejendary Adventure RPG, are there other methods for gaining access to the rule books and supplements?

Hekaforge wants to support all the brick and mortar game shops, so I urge the interested persons to ask at their FLGS that the books they wish to purchase be ordered. Only if that request is refused, or there is no such shop nearby, do we direct persons to an online shop.

If the LA game products are ordered online, we highly recommend <http://www.rpgme.com> they have been supplying product to our fans for some years now.

Discuss this article at Silven Crossroads

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Introduction:

Hello and welcome to the first monthly article of Polyglot. I am Dana Driscoll, resident linguist and language loremaster at your service. This column will be focused on a very important yet often overlooked aspect of RPG gaming—language.

How important is language to your average tabletop game? Extremely important! Over 90% of the game play in a role playing game is language specific. While some now use visual aids to enhance their gaming experience—pen and paper, battle mats, miniatures, or even elaborate crafted dungeon pieces, the majority of players use good old fashioned questions to find out who, what, where, why, and when.

Even those (myself included) who use visual aids only employ them for the most basic of uses—monster/PC locations during a battle, a map of a dungeon, or lists of found items. When PC's are almost anywhere outside of a dungeon, it is back to discussion.

A good DM is a master of language—NPC voices and accents, good descriptions of places, accurate conveying of information, and dispute settlements. Almost everything a DM does is heavily language dependent. Perhaps the following two examples would help to demonstrate just how important language is to both DM and players:

1) DM 1: You walk into the bar. At a table across the room, three drow sit. They notice you and begin to draw their weapons.

2) DM 2: As you push open the oily wooden doors, a blast of sweat, booze, and grime enters your nostrils. Your eyes quickly adjust to the dim candlelight, and you are able to scan the large tavern room. There are close to fifty people, mostly human, sitting at short, rounded tables sipping from earthen clay mugs. Out of the corner of your eye, you spot a table occupied by three drow warriors. They obviously notice you, as you can hear their longwords singing as they are drawn from their polished scabbards.

Perhaps the example is a bit overboard, but it proves the point. Which DM would you prefer to be or play with?

Part of Polyglot's aim will be to help DM's with the language barrier, providing extensive resources, tips, and ideas to help use language more effectively in their gaming sessions. This does not simply include tips for better descriptions, but rather a large array of resources that can add complexity and depth to characters and games. Polyglot will also cover

ways to use language as part of a plot device, to enhance a session or homebrew world, and to add detail to drab areas.

A second focus of this column is to be a comprehensive guide to creating a language, completely from scratch, for use in RPG games. Sometimes, using a language you are not familiar with or coming up with a set of completely random symbols simply will not cut it for your campaign. I will be working with you, step by step, to create a completely viable, believable, usable, and linguistically sound language.

Why in the world would anyone want to create a language? I see bits and pieces of Elven floating around on the 'net, but I have yet to see a site for Dwarven, Orc, Goblin, Draconic, etc. Many of the sites I came across while researching language creation had a good start in one or more areas of language creation, but all in all, were lacking important segments of information. Not only this, but I know how much work goes into creating a homebrew campaign setting, as I have my own. Would not a specific language created for your homebrew (for a new species, for use as an ancient language, or use as a secret language) be the capstone of your world? More importantly, in some situations, especially when you have diligent or highly motivated players, using a created language might be the only way to stump them. There are a multitude of reasons as to why creating a language is important for your campaign.

In this and all future Polyglot articles, I welcome your questions and comments. I am more than happy to address specific questions in future articles or in the comments sections below. And now, onto the "meat" of this article—creating player character descriptions.

Player Character Descriptions:

When I originally began to write this article, I had planned discussing both PC and DM description in only one article. That is, until I began to write. Before I knew it, I was up to six pages of material. Because of this, creating effective descriptions has been divided into two separate articles. While a DM has to use description to a much greater extent while running a game, the player has the most important thing to describe of all—his or her character.

What is considered a “good” description for your character? A good description should include many more things than are listed in the small fill-in-the-blanks at the top of your character sheet. When creating a new character, descriptions are the key to creating an interesting, multi-faceted character instead of a boring, stereotypical one.

There are three main aspects to character description creation. These are physical appearance, personality, and history. Physical appearance is simply how your character appears to others. Personality is the type of individual your character is. Take your character’s stats into consideration when formulating both physical appearance and personality. A high/low strength, dexterity, or charisma will most likely have an effect on your character’s physical appearance just as a high/low intelligence, wisdom, and charisma will generally have an effect on your character’s personality. The third main aspect to character description creation is history. Past determines the present, so what your character experienced defines who they are, what they struggle with, and what they strive to become.

I do not recommend creating a detailed character description without knowing a character’s ability scores. As mentioned above, ability scores should have an effect on what type of person your character is. For example, a person with a low constitution might have a fear against poisons, excessive alcohol, and disease. A person with a very low intelligence might have a hard time with jokes or metaphors. Use your character’s ability scores to help determine your character’s detailed description.

Onto the first category—physical appearance. Below is a list of things to consider when creating a character description. Examples of adjective lists have been included.

1). Physical Appearance:

a. Weight, Height, and Physical Build. Weight and height are pretty self explanatory. Physical build includes: stocky, short, wiry, muscular, round, overweight, pear-shaped, gangly,

crooked.

b. Facial features (including color and shape of the eyes). Crooked nose, large lips, acne sideburns, missing teeth, squinty eyes, freckles, etc.

c. Accessories, jewelry, and tattoos. Signet ring bearing family symbol, necklace with loved one’s picture, tattoo of house or holy symbol, large silver scarf, glass nose ring, leather pointed cap, peg leg.

d. Any perfumes/scents/colognes the PC wears or the PC’s natural body odor. Flowery, musky, stinky, smells like wet dog, smells like the forest.

e. Color, length, cut, and everyday style of hair. Braids, curly, dreadlocks, thinning, bald, messy, greasy, very long, buns, pony tail, short and spiked, Mohawk, dandruff, streaked with color.

f. Physical quirks/nuances. Sneezes, licks lips, giggles, evil grin, freckles, hums, limps, drools, bites fingernails, sings, sweats, facial tic, scratches, paces, mutters, shivers, stares, foams at mouth, picks nose, taps fingers, allergic to bees.

The second category is personality, which includes things not at first obvious to an onlooker and describes the general behavior patterns of a PC.

2) Personality:

a. 3-4 adjectives to describe personality type. Flirtatious, obscene, fatalistic, nosy, sophisticated, respectful, morbid, idealistic, curious, calm, irritable, liar, uninhabited, jocular, careful, cultured, nurturing, senile, vigilant, superstitious, philosophical, introverted, judgmental, faithful, arrogant, chauvinistic, disrespectful, drunkard, optimistic, slanderous, thrifty, unpredictable, sarcastic.

b. Favorite color, food, place to stay, environment, drink, etc.

c. Any dislikes: food, race, place, people, etc.

d. Vocabulary, speech, and accent. Does your character use a very extensive vocabulary or are they more likely to use short words? Do they speak with an accent?

e. Almost everyone has some sort of strange personality quirk or flaw. As a DM I often require my players to create one for their characters, such as: double checks everything; finishes others sentences; talks about self in third person; talks to inanimate objects; unable to remember names; reads constantly, even when inappropriate; needs a story before sleeping; enjoys own body odor; refuses to sit in chairs; always sharpens weapons; easily distracted during conversations; does not understand irony or metaphor; picks at the lint in others clothes; irrational fear of snakes; puts garlic on all food; laughs at own jokes; thinks they can speak a

language they can't; taunts foes; pathological liar; refuses to let anyone walk behind them; believes they are very lucky; has an imaginary friend.

A few fun quirks will add amazing amounts of depth to an otherwise drab character. Be careful when picking a quirk, however. Your character is adventuring with a group of people most of the time, so it isn't wise to pick one that will drive the party to ditching you.

The third category is personal history. If you did give your PC an irrational fear—where does it come from? Part of the reason your character is a certain class should be because of their personal history.

3. Personal/Family History:

a. Who or what has been influential in the PC's past? Mentors, teachers, parents, village elder, town heroes, older sibling, legendary hero, story-book hero.

b. Family, extended family, family occupation, location, and relations. Came from country/town/village/city, family of traveling merchants, father who is a pirate, mother owns a whorehouse.

c. Enemies or friends of the PC or PC's family. An Orc gangster who spoiled the family's honor, the murderer of a close friend, someone who got mud on your cape, arch-business rivals, childhood bully you want to get back at.

d. Important childhood memories. Time you used your first weapon, cast your first spell, saw a solar eclipse, got lost in the woods, almost was killed by a wolf, house burnt down, was thrown on the street, met your best friend.

e. Education. Apprenticeships, employment, farm education, public education, wanderer's education, studied on your own.

Remember that not all characters need to have every element listed above. The above is meant to be a guide to help you get the most out of your role-playing experience. Depending on the campaign setting, dungeon master, and character, there may be more I haven't discussed that you want to add. The important thing is to be creative!

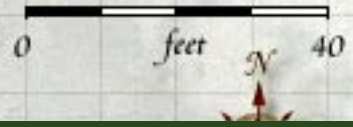
Want more? If you creating a character in the D20 system, I highly recommend looking into the [Hero Builder's Guidebook](#) published by Wizards of the Coast. While it doesn't have much in the way of character personality, the charts it has for character background/history are very thorough. Remember, paying attention

to detail while creating a PC's description is the key to creating an interesting, multi-faceted, and fun character to play. Next month I will be discussing description for DM's—specifically how to get the most out of the language you use in your campaign.

Discuss this article at Silven Crossroads

▶ <http://www.silven.com/articles.asp?case=showreview&id=9>

Cartographer's Corner



by Kosala Ubayasekara

Underground Cave Complex

Cartographers Index : Map ID 01

The underground cave complex was designed with the intent of being readily usable, both in a quick and dirty stand-alone adventure or as part of a larger campaign. Here are a couple of uses for this map to spark your imagination.

If you are in need of a quick one-day adventure with your gaming group then run a classic dungeon crawl style game using this map as your guide. This cavern complex is primarily a naturally occurring underground cave complex of hard stone. As such it can be found in any temperate or dry setting.

The lighter splotches of color on the map denote slightly higher points of elevation than the darker areas. The difference is no more than a couple of metres at most.

If you are a d20 gamer then this cave complex is the ideal hiding place of common underground dwellers such as kobolds or orcs. If you are gaming in another system, aim to house this complex with some common baddies or maybe even a weak thieves guild.

If you are carrying out a lengthier campaign or your gamers are powerful characters, then you have some options to pan out from using the map as a base. The pit in room 2 can be used as a descent into the abyss or an abyssal equivalent in your game. The underground lake in room 9 can be used to house a large water dwelling monstrosity.

If you are into watery descents then a swim through the bottom of the lake may lead into a hidden area or pocket of the cave complex. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination.

Kosala's gaming run

I used a modified version of the Underground Cave Complex map (ID 01) as the basis of a Neverwinter Nights game, to give my group a small side adventure.

Rooms 2 and 5 housed a contingent of kobold rogues and clerics that were caught unawares by the party as they stealthily entered the complex.

Being heavily outnumbered, the party used their rogue to scout ahead and soon discovered themselves up against a large number of cunning kobolds.

The cubicles in the left corridor, leading from room 5 to room 6 were manned with kobold archers secured by iron gratings from the main corridor. The end of that corridor was manned by more kobold archers that had barricaded themselves behind barrels for protection. I removed rooms 3 and 9 for the purposes of this game.

Room 7 was the scene of an epic battle where the party confronted and finally bested the kobold king and his elite guard in a stunning display of teamwork and cohesive combat tactics. It made for a very memorable experience indeed!



About this section

The Cartographer's Corner is your source for free, high quality color maps.

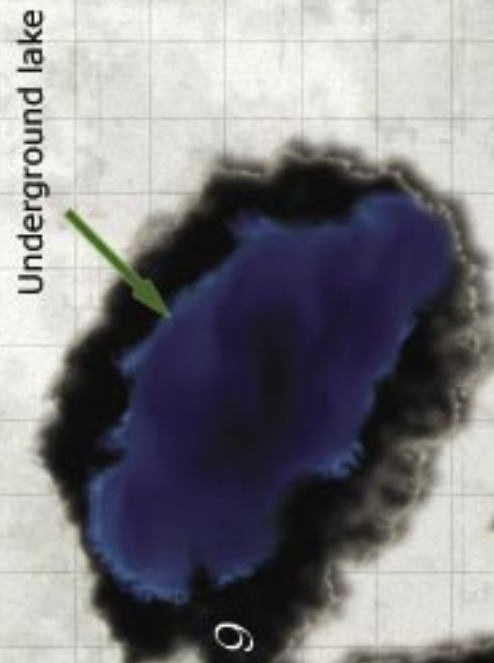
Each map that follows is a full page, in color and contains numbered areas so that a DM can easily make notes and keep track of what he or she wants where.

On this page we will present some adventure hook ideas that go with each map. These are usable in any fantasy based RPG and are presented only to give your imagination a kick start. We are very interested in hearing your feedback about how you use our maps. Head over to our forums and tell us.

<http://www.silven.com/forums.asp?case=threads&forumgroupid=1&forumssubsectionid=56>



Underground lake



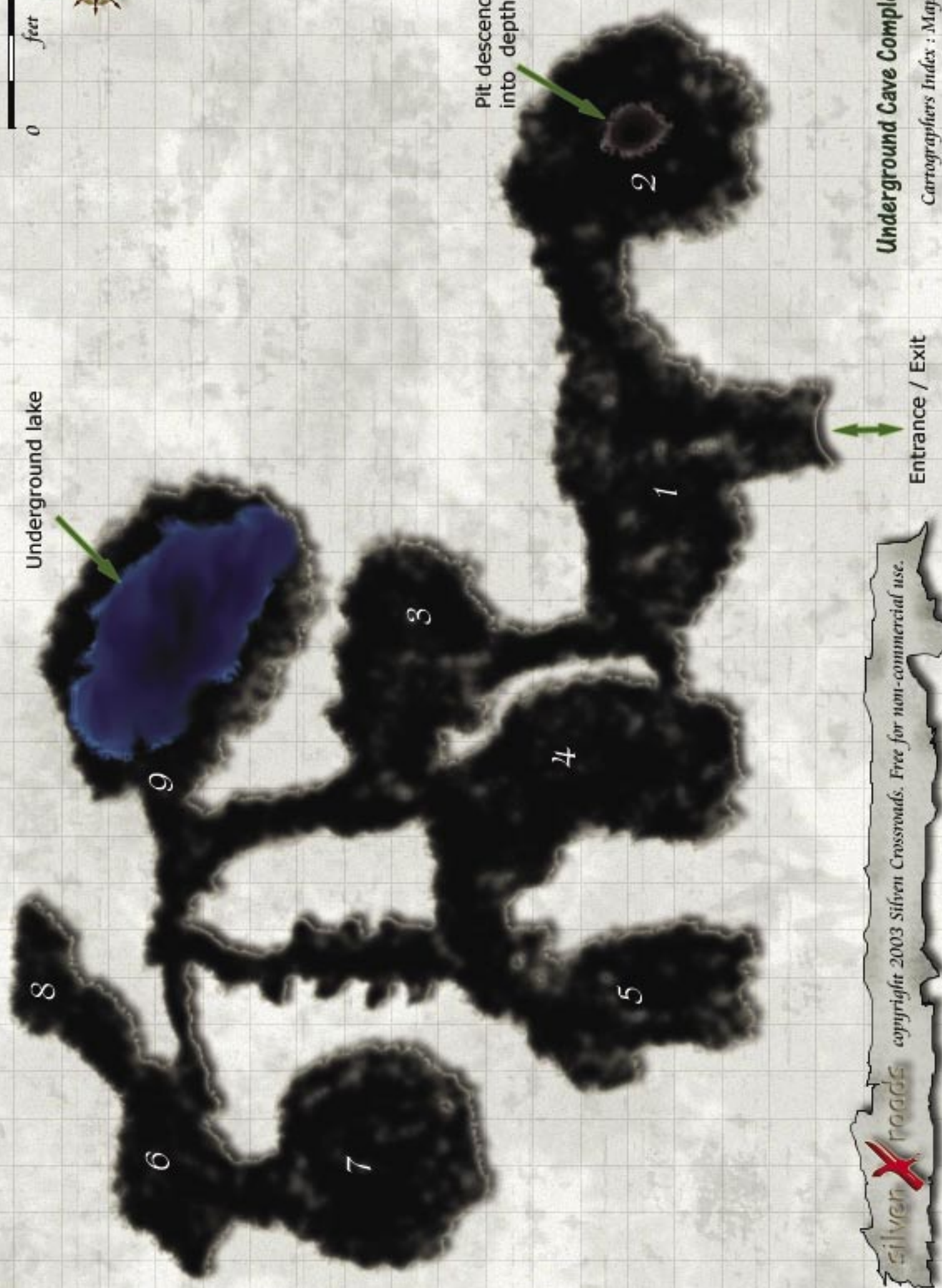
Pit descending into depths



Underground Cave Complex

Cartographers Index : Map ID 01

Entrance / Exit



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The Silven Giggle

by Kosala Ubayasekara



you would think there would be some warning before the damn flying spell expired ?!@?!!



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Silven Trumpeter Magazine

The Silven Trumpeter Magazine is the official magazine of Silven Crossroads. Issued monthly, it is available from <http://www.silven.com/articles.asp?case=ezone>

Publisher

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Article pages and excerpts that we assume will be printed the most have been purposefully illustrated using light colors to conserve printer ink reserves. Printing out only the pages that you need will make it easier for you manage your ink usage.

Its recommended that you print the maps on glossy paper if you can. Glossy paper is available from most stationery or office supply stores and is more expensive than regular printing paper, but the quality difference in the print is worth it.