

Oracle Temple

High up on the steeper eastern slopes of the easternmost mesa peak in the central Hooded Host group of Haunted Cloud Mesa on Kraken Island, a stream emerges in a torrent from a small cave, which falls and rushes rapidly down into the haunted valley below, then south and eventually away off the Mesa plateau. Around the northeastern flank of this mountain spur from the river opening are two more **Entrance Caves** into this mapped small Temple complex. The easterly cave floor of this pair slopes down quite steeply to the stream in the lowest point of the adjoining **River Cave**. Only those capable of breathing underwater, and making headway against the usually strong current, would be able to make use of the riverine cave entryway alternatively (there is no other exit before River Cave coming in by this route). The westerly Entrance Cave has a longer, less steep, cavern tunnel down to River Cave, passing the opening to the small **Side Cave** along the way, on its west side. Ceiling heights are variable in the cave system, but can be assumed as between about 8-10 feet in the passageways and caves (2.4 to 3 metres), except for River Cave, where the roof rises up to 25 ft in places (7.5 m). The central, darker-shaded, part of the stream channel is some 8-9 ft deep (2.4-2.7 m).

Similar passage heights obtain southwest and upslope out of River Cave towards the **Oracle Temple** itself, which lies behind an imposingly huge pair of stone doors that open into the passage, almost blocking it in doing so. An enormous three-eyed face, with an open mouth, tongue protruding through sharp teeth, and a broad, central nose (the third eye is a short way above the bridge of the nose), is carved in low relief on both the outer and inner sides of the doors.

Beyond the doors is a vast, open, squarish space, with flatter floor, ceiling and wall surfaces than in the caves, for all none are fully flat and level. However, the entire Temple room seems to have been created in a single, probably magical, event, as there are no tool marks anywhere, and the surfaces look to have solidified from a semi-liquid state. A very broad flight of steps leads up around 2.5 ft (75 centimetres) from directly inside the doors into the main part of the Temple. The ceiling throughout is roughly 45 ft above this main section (14 m). Two round-section Pillars stretch from floor to ceiling, one to either side, again seeming to have grown in place from the native rock, although they are far too few and small to have any supportive purpose for the ceiling, apparently. Similarly, the gigantic Altar stone most probably grew from the stone where it stands. Other than on the doors, there are no figurative carvings on any surfaces here.

One more cave is present on the map, the **Secret Cave**. This can be reached only by swimming along a completely water-filled tunnel west from River Cave. A small tribe of Mountain Krakenfolk use the Temple as their home, and they are much more settled here than many other of their nomadic kinfolk usually are. When not hunting, or carrying out other tasks beyond the caves, much of the tribe stays in the Secret Cave and River Cave, and all will withdraw to the Secret Cave if seriously threatened.

Mountain Krakenfolk are a small, goblin-like humanoid people, with pale skins, dark hair and eyes. They are amphibious, and have gill-slits in their necks. A few also have short, manipulative tentacles growing from their chins, looking rather like a beard.

Although there are no resident priests at the Temple any longer - for a very long time - there are always a few Mountain Krakenfolk with sufficient shamanic knowledge to read oracles in the shifting patterns seen over the Temple's walls in any artificial light there. They also know what ceremonies to perform when answers to specific questions are to be asked, to ensure best results.