

The Temple of the Seven Sighs

by Bob Alberti

The Temple of the Seven Sighs is a tall circular pavilion with an altar in the center. It's not on Tékumel's plane, apparently, since at one point or another there are as many as seven moons in the sky at one time. However, it's enough like Tékumel that there are no stars in the sky. I've heard rumors that it's on the Southern Continent somewhere, but I have no evidence that this is true. I've only ever gotten there via nexus point.

The Valley of the Seven Moons is a broad, mountainous valley, at one end of which is a fortress populated by Hokún, and the other end has the Temple. The Temple is usually unguarded, since there is no shelter in the area. Arriving by nexus point, one quickly hears the horns of the Hokún sound from the tower, and then it's a race to the temple.

The open, circular temple has ten pillars supporting a domed roof. The interior of the roof (the underside) is decorated with a mosaic pattern of the magical variety. This is the first time I've ever seen a pattern on a ceiling, since one generally employs them by walking on them.

In the center of the temple is a squarish, blocky altar with an inset. Into this inset one places the combined *Crystal Claw of Kai'imesh* and the so-called *Silver Butterfly*.

The Crystal Claw and the Silver Butterfly are devices of the Ancients so named for their basic appearance. The Claw is a meter-long scepter with a three-fingered Y-shaped claw on the end. The Silver Butterfly is a vaguely symmetrical item of twisting silver surfaces. The Butterfly is inserted into the claw, which closes around it. The unit is then installed into the inset on the altar. When this is done, the planes of Tékumel are sealed against incursions from beyond the Pylons.

Unfortunately, there is nothing preventing the claw from being removed from the altar, re-opening the planes.

Well, actually there is, but it's hard to implement.

Each of the ten pillars supporting the roof can be 'sealed' by inscribing the sigil of each of Pavár's Mitlányal on the appropriate pillar. Any two adjacent pillars, when sealed, create a magical barrier (or force field for you Trekkies out there) preventing passage between the pillars. Unfortunately, the strength of the barrier is proportional to the piety of the person who sealed the pillar. Ideally a worshipper of Ksárul will seal Ksárul's pillar, etc., but we've never had a fully ecumenical party on hand, so inevitably a Hrü'ü worshipper seals the Sárku pillar, etc.

Sealing the pillars is necessary, since the Hokún are usually pounding up the broad steps leading to the cliff-top temple by the time the panting, exhausted party of adventurers gets there.

However, neither the Hokún nor the makeup of the party is strictly the problem here.

You see, the altar at the center of the tower needs to be sealed, too. One side by each of the three Pariah deities. So in order to truly seal off the temple, one needs a pious worshipper of the Goddess to undertake the task of sealing the Goddess off the plane.

Not to mention that nobody knows who is supposed to inscribe the FOURTH side of the altar.

Finally, it is believed (but not known) that sealing off the plane would also make it impossible to leave the temple. So the Goddess-worshipper would have to remain behind to die slowly of hunger and thirst ...

One way we've escaped was via the pattern in the ceiling. Other times we've simply fled between un-sealed pillars, with the Hokún hot on our heels.

Sealing the temple is good for pissing off the Goddess. As mentioned, the effect is much like operating the Man of Gold, making all her He'ésa go sploot. But it really, really pisses Her off.

So ... to secure Tékumel against incursions, all one needs do is take a party of fourteen different faithful priests of their deities to a place guarded by Hokún on a distant plane, and get them to entomb themselves within a temple for the good of the universe. You'll need a priest of an unknown faith, and you'll have to find two magical items which tend to hide themselves by changing shape or embedding themselves in solid rock by being pushed just grel of reality.

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