

Premise

Many years ago, a wealthy noble and devoted scholar of the arcane, Caius Petraius, travelled to the desert of Caiphon to establish a haven for the peaceful exploration of the magical arts. After years of searching, he came across an ancient necropolis and founded Petra. First an academy, then a small community, today Petra is both a wealthy city and a well respected oasis of cultural and academic patronship.

Recently, Caius' son – and the present king – has returned from an expedition to the deep desert, carrying with him a mysterious and powerful artifact. Days after the object's arrival, strange events started occurring in Petra. The weather turned stormy, a rash of unrest washed over the usually peaceful city, and undead started appearing from the bowels of necropolis (now the city's sewer system). Worried, the king called for an expert from a distant kingdom. While she offered some helpful counsel to the terrified scholars, her arrival was followed by that of a dark and wicked army that has breached the walls and set fire to the city.

What the citizens of Petra do not know is that the expert they called for never arrived. In her place came the bronze lich Osterneith with her evil servants in tow. She has come for the artifact, the mask of Kas, and she will see Petra burnt to the ground to have it.

The Players are heading to Petra, arriving from the mountains that lie to the south. As they approach the city they notice the dark and bitter plumes of smoke and ash that rise up from the walls of the citadel.

Possible Hooks

- One or more of the Players are citizens of Petra, perhaps even members of the royal family, and are returning home from adventures.
- Perhaps the players have heard of Petra's reputation for arcane scholarship, and are seeking information or knowledge.
- The players are passing through the desert and notice the city burning. They decide to lend a hand.

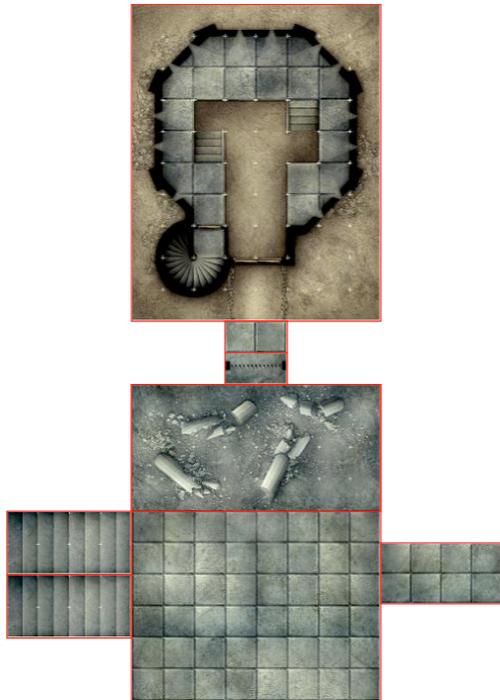
Starting the adventure

When you're ready to start playing, read the text below to the players. You can alter the text as you feel the need.

Read aloud: You wake this morning, surprised to hear the gentle but persistent rain beating against your tents. It seemed only yesterday that the bright sunny weather and the fresh mountain air would remain with you until you reached the very edge of the desert. You pack up your things and prepare to scale Mount Khirad before descending into the golden sands of the Caiphon desert. As you reach the peak, however, you notice that ash and acrid smoke have joined the rain. Looking down towards the sands, you see the city of Petra, bathed in thick black smoke and glowering fire.

As you approach the gates, you see two large siege weapons, built from the bones of two large beasts. You can guess that they are responsible for the state of the gate, which has been destroyed. The bridge is still intact, and you may cross it to enter the gateway keep.

The Gate



Read Aloud: As you enter the city gate, you notice that the right side has been entirely destroyed by the siege weapons, leaving a crumbling mountain of impassable debris. The left side has been badly damaged, and is covered in rubble, but the wall itself remains intact. Past this patch of rubble, you can see a gated path leading towards the gate's remaining watchtower. Ahead, a large archway marks the road into the city. Two Sentry boxes flank this pathway.

Perception Check (passive or spot):

DC 18: You see the corpses of fallen soldiers in the rubble

DC 22: You get a bad feeling about the corpses

DC 26: These soldiers are not alive, but they aren't dead either...

If the players are prepared for combat, begin the encounter. If not, the zombies will rise from the rubble when the players are 2 squares away, or pass by towards the city entrance.

Encounter: level 3 775 XP

2 zombies

2 corruption corpses (in the sentry boxes)

1 rotwing zombie

(Monster Manual page 274)