

The Stone Dwarves of Sabrak Faern, "Broken Home"

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The Stone Plague originated in the Dwarven city now known as Sabrak Faern; its original name has been forgotten. The origins of this plague are unknown. Many believe that it was a potent magical curse upon that particular Dwarven clan from the gods above for some sin. Others say they dug deeply enough to face the demons down below. The result was the same: the flesh of the dwarves slowly began to petrify.

Fearing a spread of the condition, whether voluntary or forced, they sealed themselves inside the city. In the isolation no cure was found, but neither did it spread. In the short time they had, many of the dwarves began to perform forbidden and heretical rituals to call upon any power that might save them from their fate. It was all for naught as the city fell silent; its inhabitants became nothing but statues.

The city was almost forgotten until intrepid Human explorers and treasure-seekers gained entry into the ruined city. While many sought and gained easy plunder, many more brought back tales of the 'stone dead' and strange whispers and dreams which tormented those who stayed too long in the city.

The then-fledgling empire of the Ma'ab sent out scouts to discover the veracity of these tales, hoping to claim some useful power or simple territory. Instead they discovered that the dwarves, though immobile and stone, were not truly dead. Their minds and spirits lived on, trapped in the living rock of their forms.

The revered mages of the Ma'ab soon discovered a way to grant them mobility and speech once more, even as they remained made of stone. These dwarves, eternally grateful to the Maab, pledged their loyalty.

Not all the dwarves were saved; some were shattered by looters and others were driven irretrievably mad during their years of immobility. Even now able to move, they are not particularly fast and, more sadly for the clan, they are incapable of having offspring.

The survivors refused to relocate, wanting to remain home and work in their mines and familiar forges. Though the Ma'ab could have used force—and have many times before as they grew to be the dominant power of the region—this was one of the rare exceptions as the dwarves retained the capability of going “dormant,” immune to pain or intimidation, unmoving, merely a statue once again. Short of smashing them in punishment for their stubbornness and losing all their willing labor and knowledge of metal, the Ma'ab leaders could do little but agree to rule from afar. Ma'ab messengers and officers are a regular presence at Sabrak Faern.

These dwarves acted then and still act now as craftsman for the Ma'ab empire, sharing secrets of metalwork, laboring endlessly in their forges for the northern army, and shaping stone to aid in the creation and animation of golems.