

Regions - Balazar and the Elder Wilds - The Crow Eaters

The Crow Eater's is a tribe of roughly 75 adults and half that number children. The adults are evenly split between the sexes as are the children. They own about 400 dogs most of which are brown and white. The "ruling council" of the tribe has seven members right now who make all the decisions that have to be made "quickly".

The Elders

The council of elders meets to discuss matters that affect the entire tribe. They act purely as an advisory group as any tribe member can decide to ignore their suggestions. Their authority arises from: 1) their age to a certain extent; 2) proven ability and wisdom; 3) their track record as advisors. Usually they will just oversee tribal discussions and offer up suggestions as to possible actions.

Crane Woman is the resident priestess/shaman of Grandmother Earth and leads the woman's circle.

Gentle-with-children is the most proficient healer. She is not a Chalana Arroy and of course has never heard of her but may as well be. She takes a key role in instructing the young girls in their duties.

Speaks-with-Earth is a fey young woman who has much more respect accorded her than her age would normally get her. She is very other worldly and distracted. She is prone to prophetic fits in which she speaks for the Earth. Crane Woman has become adept at interpreting her divine inspirations.

Sure-strike is the resident Foundchild/Votank/Brother Dog priest. He's an old man who's prime is long past him yet his usefulness to the tribe isn't over yet. He speaks with a great deal of authority.

He-who-catches-eagles-barehanded is the tribe's best candidate for Master Hunter. He's a young man in his early thirties who has a fierce temper and does not speak to children except to instruct them. He's almost a Runelord of Foundchild. He leads in time of war when the group cannot avoid trouble. He hates all non-humans and the "soft rock-wallers" who live in the Citadels. Only the prestige and honour that goes with being Master Hunter would force him to travel to the contest site. Despite his shortcomings he has a fierce love for his tribe and would readily die for them. (His nickname is not entirely flattering as it suggests his impetuous nature).

Tadpole Tadpole sticks out like a sore thumb. He is a true outsider who often behaves in ways that the rest of the tribe consider strange. He was born within the tribe but spent some time living in one of the Citadels. He will not talk of that time nor will he reveal the

fact to anyone. He obviously admires his people's traditional lifestyle. He is the individual who is most familiar with the "letter" of what few laws and traditions the people follow. He despises **He-who-catches-eagles-barehanded** and will go out of his way to annoy him.

Stalks-bison-alone a.k.a. Steen Steen is what **Catches-eagles** wants to be, a Master Hunter candidate. In fact he, along with his prized pack of black dogs, is currently on his way back from Trilus having taken part in the annual Master Hunter contest there. (In the three weeks preceding Sacred Time). He is aloof as suits a Hunter but gets along with most people. **Catches-eagles** gets on his nerves though and they are not friends. He hates the nickname **Steen** and judges it ill-befitting one of his stature.

Social Structure

Balazaring tribes in general and the more conservative Votanki tribes in specific practice neither patrilineal nor matrilineal descent. An individual considers him or herself to be descended from both parents. They try and keep track of as many relatives as possible to keep the number of individuals they can turn to for help in hard times as high as possible. Neither matrilineal, nor patrilineal residence is practiced. When a couple decides to marry they go live wherever they want. Hearths are voluntary arrangements, not kin arrangements. This results in a very flexible social structure with couples moving around trying to get into the best situation possible. Tribes are basically groupings of lineages each of which congregate into hearths for mutual benefit. Balazarings and Votanki are allowed to have sex with anyone who isn't a parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle. First cousins are permitted however.

Marriage is not a requirement for having children as each individual in a hearth is given equal access to food and resources as long as they contribute. Two individuals who wish to have a short term liaison in order to have children or for any other reason are free to do so with no possibility of stigma attached.

Families are small as Balazarings and Votanki believe in quality, not quantity. Children are breast-fed for two or more years and women do not tend to have more than one child every three years or so. Children are never aborted or abandoned (unless they are deformed in some fashion) as children are never unwanted. There is no stigma associated with being a "bastard" as personal achievements are more important than parental or ancestral achievements. Initiates of Grandmother Earth know many ways to avoid having children when they don't want to including an innate sense of when they are most fertile.

All food collected by the hearth is shared more or less equally. (The sick, children and pregnant women get extra shares). Game killed by hunters is divided slightly differently. The individual responsible for the kill (if identifiable) is given the heart and the haunch. (In practice the primary hunter often eats the heart raw in the field). All hunters involved are also given a portion of the meat. The elders then receive portions of the organs and all the remaining meat is roasted or otherwise prepared and shared amongst the other

men, the women and the children. Excess meat is either dried or smoked. (The shares given to the hunters are of course shared around as well). Eating meat by yourself is a serious violation of Votank's laws. Hunters discovered to have done this (other than the traditional heart) are ostracized and if this crime reoccurs they are banished.

The food gathered by the women and children (which can include small game) and which in some seasons is much more plentiful than that hunted by the men is divided amongst the hearth mothers who share it amongst those associated with her hearth. The hearth mothers are responsible for keeping communal fires burning and keeping the communal larders stocked.

Each hearth will have a number of these larders stored as well-hidden caches. It is a grave transgression to take supplies from one of these caches without replacing it. When men want to go out hunting they have to approach their hearth mother and ask for supplies. These requests are rarely refused (only an irresponsible or reckless hunter might be refused).

Law and Order

The group is fairly conservative but flexible as the harsh environment does not reward rigid behavior. Very few proscriptions and laws as to behavior exist. Being banished from the tribe is the ultimate punishment. Only rape, consorting with Chaos, murder or crimes against the gods would result in banishment. (Crimes against the gods includes acts like desecrating holy sites or one of the communal winter hearths, looting or destroying a cache, eating meat alone or cannibalism). When someone is banished the tribe will ignore that individual as if he/she no longer exists. (In the case of murder the murderer will sometimes be killed in turn by a relative of the victim. This is not considered murder as you cannot murder someone who doesn't exist anymore. However this is very rare as killing someone (even a murderer) places a permanent taint on your soul). This treatment will normally drive that person away. Often they migrate to one of the Citadels or travel far into "civilized" lands.

Relations with Neighboring Groups

Relations are strained with most other Balazaring tribes. The Votanki consider the Citadel dwellers and the other Balazaring tribes to be apostates from the true way of Votank. They are the Votanki who left the sacred ways of their ancestor Votank to follow the outlander Balazar. Unfortunately, the true Votank are few in number and in order to avoid their incest restrictions many Votanki women leave their hearths and go to live with a Balazaring tribe in order to have children. These children are brought up to follow the ways of Votank instead of Balazar.

The Votanki do not believe in warfare except in self-defense. They have been pushed out to the Elder Wilds by competing Balazaring tribes. Fortunately their land is marginal even by Balazar's standards so no one is pushing them any more. Their location though does put them in close proximity with trolls and elves, though.

Relations with Non-humans

In general Votanki distrust and fear non-humans.

Trolls

To be avoided whenever possible. For the most part the trolls leave them alone since other than as food the Votanki aren't worth raiding. The trolls do steal caches whenever they find them which meets with retaliation whenever possible.. Votanki kill wild trollkin whenever they encounter them and leave the corpses for scavengers. Some trade does occur with trolls since they are the best source of the prized obsidian. The Votanki trade food, skins and hides to the trolls.

Dragonewts

Since they are feared by most Balazarings who remember the Dragonkill War this fear has been communicated to the Votanki who avoid them.

Elves

Elves are treated with respect and also avoided. No Votanki would ever chop down a tree without calling out for permission first from the elves. Since they only have obsidian and other types of stone axes for the most part they try and avoid cutting down trees anyway as being too much work.

Dwarves

Dwarves are avoided as they are considered to be far too alien to comprehend.

Others

Citadel Folk

Only to be approached very cautiously as a last resort when they are not in large war parties. Otherwise to be avoided.

Outlanders

Avoided whenever possible. The rare outlander might be friendly but it's better to avoid them as being too dangerous. Remember Balazar was an outlander and look what trouble he caused.

Other Non-humans

Chaotic beings of course are shunned or killed if not too numerous. Giants are avoided and any unfamiliar non-humans are avoided like the plague.

Votank's Laws

It is wrong to eat in secret.

It is wrong to sleep with your mother, father, aunt, uncle, grandfather, or grandmother.

It is wrong to take from a cache without putting something else in.

It is wrong to eat people.

It is wrong to kill people.

It is wrong to plunder a winter hearth.

Change is bad.

Chaos is bad.

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