

Geography and Resources:

The Grey Eye Firbolg live in the Wolvenmist Highlands, a rocky, unforgiving landscape. Snow-covered mountaintops reach past the clouds, and the craggy terrain is filled with caves. Small pineforests break up the landscape at the middle altitudes, especially along the massive river that slices through the area, eventually feeding into the Fell Lands. Cold is a constant companion, even in the summer months; only animals with a thick coat dwell in the region. Elk and mountain sheep roam in herds, preyed on by bears and a number of different wildcats and wolves. Water is found in many mountain streams and springs, some of which are said to glitter with the promise of gold. The area is rich in metal ores, with the Grey Eye eagerly working the surface deposits during the summer months. As the winter approaches, they move underground, searching out seams in caves and caverns as they wait out the worst of the blizzards. It is not uncommon for a variety of precious gems to be found, with different tribes attaching different values to them; most tribes are not willing to barter with them, however. Iron is highly prized by the Grey Eye, as are any other metal capable of producing strong tools.

Land and the associated resources it possesses are of such importance to the Grey Eyes that the tribes without exception take their names from their territories, proudly proclaiming what their tribe has and can defend. Some examples:

Fire Rock Tribe – Inhabit and mine the great fire mountain. The tribe is rich in ore and wool.

Sky Metal Tribe – Inhabit the edges of a large meteorite impact crater, and are well known for their unearthly weapons.

Saltwater Tribe -

Pine Hill Tribe - Completely below the treeline, this tribe maintains a monopoly on the majority of a large pine forest, camping on hilltops within the area.

Bad Water Tribe - This tribe controls a large mineral hot springs, and the surrounding tundra. Known for especially strong Seers and Spirithunters.

Grey Side Tribe - Controlling a large, slab-sided mountain, this tribe has had a great deal more contact with the civilized races than most, with whom they trade almost exclusively.

A tribe without territory is a tribe lost, and is often simply absorbed into a stronger tribe if they cannot reclaim their old territory or claim new ground within a year.

Trade:

Like most firbolg, the Grey Eye use an almost purely barter trade system, viewing coin as a waste of time and metals. A potential trader must be approved by either the Chief or Seer, but once such approval is gained, any member of the tribe may trade with them. The Grey Eye are competent metalsmiths, but well-made armor, weapons or tools are always of interest to them. They also prize furs, leather, herbs and dyes. They will usually offer rough-spun wool blankets or garments, metalcrafts, and food. Some Grey Eye have begun to understand the process of haggling, but it can still be a dangerous proposition. Questioning the metalwork of an individual Grey Eye is seen as demeaning to the tribe, and can cause violent reactions.

Clothing:

Grey Eyes Firbolg dress for warmth and work first, though they are more inclined to add decoration than many Firbolg tribes. Typically wearing rough-spun woolen garments and fur to protect against the cold, there is little difference between what the men and the women wear within a tribe.

The Grey Eyes take their name from the grey paint smeared in a vertical bar across the eyes of all adult

members of the tribe. This paint is a combination of clay and ash from the tribe spirit fire. They believe it helps them see more clearly. A Seer or Spirithunter of a tribe will typically have a more elaborate design painted to represent their ability to see the spirits and speak with them. Accompanying the design will be a secondary mark, representing the tribe the Grey Eye belongs to, typically a depiction of the defining geological feature.

Most distinctively, the Grey Eye also wrap themselves in strips of cloth to help keep the wind out of loose fitting garments, and replace or decorate them with trophies taken from the clothing of worthy enemies. As a general rule, the brighter and more garish the Grey Eye, the stronger the warrior.

Spirituality:

The Grey Eye believe all life is influenced by elemental spirits. Fire is the spirit of warrior, burning brighter and hotter the stronger he or she is. Earth is the spirit of the craftsman, greater feats blessed by the spirits of the stone, metal and wood. Air and water are the domains of the unnatural, to be paid tribute or bargained with, but not wholly understood. Deity worship confuses the Grey Eye, who view the Gods simply as singularly powerful spirits within a certain domain, typically air. Calling over and over upon the same spirit is seen as dangerous, and praising only one spirit risks leaving others jealous. Spiritual affairs are typically conducted by a Seer or Spirithunter, with a Greatseer overseeing training and performing major rituals.

Day-To-Day Life:

The Grey Eyes typically claim an area and then settle in to stay. They will either build yurt-style huts with thick, hanging furs to act as a primitive door, or make use of and enhance natural caves they find. These homes are frequently highly decorated with patterns done in the brightest dyes they can find as well as the horns or skulls of particularly impressive hunt kills. A Grey Eyes Firbolg will take great pride in the appearance of their home, and you can generally tell the standing of any given tribe member by how elaborate their hut is. Each hut is typically quite small, with only enough space to sleep, keep a few personal possessions, and perhaps do some small amount of cooking. Most of day to day life is conducted outdoors with the rest of the tribe.

Depending on the region, a tribe may have two homes, one for winter and one for summer. If a traveler finds what would appear to be an empty and abandoned Grey Eyes village, it is best to keep moving. They are possessive of their territories and check regularly, regardless of whether a site is in current use.

When entering a Grey Eyes territory (the edges are generally clearly marked in paint and primitive signs) and encountering tribe members, a traveler can petition for permission to pass through unharmed or even to sleep the night by the Spirit Fire, and permission will typically be granted, especially if a good trade is offered. If they refuse, however, most mountain travelers find it easiest to go around, regardless of how difficult it makes the route.

While each home will have a small fire of its own for warmth, in the centre of each village is the great "Spirit Fire," lit by the great seer of the tribe. It is kept burning constantly by the seer and youths of the seer's choosing, who will often be in the process of learning the spirit ways themselves. This fire is to curry favour with the fire spirits, keeping them close, and to welcome returning tribe members home. It also serves as the gathering place for the tribe, and will be where nearly every ritual is completed. Extinguishing or showing disrespect to a tribe's Spirit Fire without approval is considered taboo.

The Grey Eyes have begun to understand the basics of agriculture, frequently planting desirable plants near their villages to encourage them to grow close at hand. However, they do not tend these "crops" or

plant them in any kind of systematic way.

The hunters of the tribe will range quite far from the village, up to a week or two out, in order to not overhunt a given area and to patrol the borders of their land. Many hunt groups will have particular routes with semi-permanent camps set up along the way to stay at and cache food. Hunt groups rarely change, with the same individuals going together each time. These groups will have generally been self-selected during childhood, and work well and silently together.

The tribes collect wool from the mountain goats ubiquitous to the highlands, and the task is generally assigned to children to teach them agility and teamwork. Usually the goat is not killed, though an informal rite of passage among children is often the collection of an impressive set of spiralled horns from a slain ram. A visitor will often see such horns still displayed on the huts of tribe members, though they are regarded more with nostalgia than respect. Mountain goat horns other than a child's first set will often also be used to make things such as blade handles, utensils, drinking vessels or signal horns.

Held in high regard in the tribes are those that mine the earth for ore and craft tools from them. Despite the general "primitiveness" of the Firbolg, the weapons, armour, and tools the Grey Eyes craft are sometimes equal to what can be found in far more civilized regions of Logwarryn. The entire tribe takes great pride in the caliber of the metalwork, regarding the act of creating them as somewhat sacred. To insult the quality of the lowliest tool is a mortal insult to the tribe as a whole. That said, if a metalshaper consistently makes sub-par tools that break too quickly or cannot hold an edge, the Chief may decide that the unfortunate metalshaper has dishonored the earth spirits. The metalshaper in question will be buried alive, to return their spirit. If they resurrect, then clearly the Earth Spirits believe that they can still learn and may have a second chance, but they will be treated as a child just learning their trade until they prove themselves once more.

Tribe and Family Structure:

Grey Eyes tribes are not large. An exceptional village may hold up to 120 individuals, with most being far smaller. The basic hierarchy of a Grey Eyes tribe is as follows:

Chief
Greatseer
Seers
Veteran Hunters/Veteran Spirithunters
Metalshapers
Spirithunters
Hunters
Elderly
Tenders
Named Children
Flynd
Unnamed Children
Slaves

The chief of a tribe is generally the strongest fighter and at least a somewhat accomplished metalshaper. The chief's word is law amongst the tribe, and it is the chief's responsibility to decide when it is time for a tribe to change homes with the seasons, who can be safely traded with (a responsibility shared with the Seers), to oversee the weapons training of the named children, to arbitrate disputes, organize labour, and negotiate with other tribes or outsiders.

The Seer is responsible for the training and testing of all Seers and Spirithunters, as well as any Spiritmetal Shapers. The Seer decides when a youth will undergo their Rite of Fire, and is expected to warn the Chieftain of any trouble the spirits may stir up. He or she will lead any attempt to appease or awaken spirits, and is the only Grey Eye allowed to conduct the Rite of Trophies. The Seers are led by one of their number, typically elected to the position by the majority decision of the existing Seers at the time of the former Greatseer's death. Any and all matters pertaining to the spirits are ultimately the responsibility of the Greatseer, but he or she may assign tasks to Seers or Spirithunters deemed worthy of the task. A seer specializing in a certain task may hold a title relating to a certain element, but this is not always the case.

The Metalshapers both mine and craft tools. They are considered the backbone of the tribe, providing all the tools that make survival possible in the harsh mountains and that let a tribe stay competitive with other tribes. They enjoy a position of high respect but also high expectation. They will frequently collaborate with each other, and no trade secrets are kept from other tribe members, though they will be extremely close-mouthed about their techniques or experience with outsiders.

Though any and all Grey Eyes should be considered warriors in their own right, the Hunters of a tribe are the tribe's security and militia in addition to providing meat and doing much of the plant and herb gathering. They range far, and will be the first to find unwelcome outsiders. A Spirithunter will usually accompany a group of hunters, able to oversee the claiming of trophies. These are hunters who have received additional training from the tribe Seers, to better understand or confront spirits, in whatever form they may take. They are sometimes also those who have shown a talent for the spiritworld, but prefer a more active role.

Tenders are those adults who largely remain in the village and tend to such daily tasks as cooking for the tribe, making cloth, clothing, and dyes, maintaining homes, caring for the youngest children, and whatever other tasks are required to keep a village going. They are considered the least of the adult tribe members, and must defer to all others, but their contributions are still valued.

Somewhat in the category of the Tenders are the Elders, though they are accorded a bit more respect. These are Firbolg too old to pursue their former trades, but can still contribute in small ways. Though they have no power in the tribe, their counsel is often sought before a decision is made, even by a Chief. They also are responsible for giving children the stories of their people and their tribe. They are also responsible for the maintenance of the paintings on the walls of the caves, adding the new triumphs of the tribe or visions of future hurdles, as dictated by the Seers. If an Elder survives long enough that they become too old to even care for themselves in basic ways (an extremely rare event), they voluntarily undertake the Rite of the Long Walk, ending their lives before they become a true burden to the tribe. This is considered an extremely honourable and proper end, and is a rite frequently undertaken by the permanently crippled as well.

Though children usually know who their mother is, all children are raised communally, with no special importance being attached to one's own children. Children are not granted a name until age four, as chances of surviving to that age are not always good. No importance is attached to first words or first steps, but the first time a toddler voluntarily gives something to someone else is seen as quite important, and praised accordingly, as the whole tribe must always come first. After they are named, children are still typically not given much formal direction or education, as the Grey Eyes believe that children will teach themselves if lead by good example. Children learn when they wish to hear stories, or begin to show an interest in how tasks are accomplished or how things are made. Very little is enforced on them

until they reach the age of ten, with the most common form of punishment being a period of simple shunning. As children show promise and interest, they begin to be sent on tasks such as collecting wool from the mountain goats, collecting lumber scraps or even may be selected by the Seers to help tend the Spirit Fire or begin learning some of the spirit ways. Children become adults at the age of twelve by surviving the Rite of Fire.

Roughly equal to the named children in status are the Flynd. Many Grey Eyes tribes will capture Flynd pups when they can, raising them in the tribe as guardians and hunting dogs. A well-trained, obedient Flynd is considered extremely valuable, so while they have no authority over any but the youngest children and slaves, any adult caught abusing, misusing, or wasting the lives of Flynd can look forward to extremely harsh punishment from the Chief of the tribe. As warriors are filled with the fire spirit, no real warrior requires a torch to frighten a Flynd into submission. Using fire to such a purpose is considered childish, and will be punished if discovered. On the other hand, any Flynd that attacks a tribe member in any other circumstances than the clearest case of self-defense will be put down like a violent dog. Despite their position as slaves, the Flynd that belong to a Grey Eyes tribe are generally well cared for, and those raised in the tribe such that they remember no other life are usually content. This practice of taking Flynd pups has made for great hostility towards the Grey Eyes on the part of wild Flynd. The Flynd of a tribe will frequently be referred to affectionately simply as “dog,” though some have been named. Grey Eyes encountering wild Flynd typically differentiate them simply by calling them “bad dog” or “bad manwolf.”

There is a strong sentiment throughout the tribes that those of greater power and strength are responsible for those lesser than them. This communal spirit extends only to one's own tribe, however. They are clannish, and some tribes take it so far as isolationist and actively hostile.

Mating:

Though pairing off and permanently sharing a hutt is a common occurrence, the Grey Eyes have no formal recognition of anything that could be called marriage, and just as common as a stable pairing are Firbolg who never settle with one partner. Parenthood is not regarded with any special significance, but it is considered important to contribute children to the tribe. While the Grey Eyes recognize the relation between sex and children, they believe that to make a child requires both pleasing the earth and fire spirits, as well as repeated effort and contributions. If a couple is having difficulty conceiving, it is considered beneficial and wise for more partners to contribute to the effort, in the hopes of building a strong child. Particularly noteworthy Metalshapers and Hunters may be specifically requested, even from other tribes if their renown is great enough. This practice also helps introduce new blood to a tribe.

Selection of mates for the purpose of child making is generally left up to the individual women, but the Greatseer may take a hand in such dealings, especially if they feel the tribe needs new blood or more children. The majority of an infant's earliest care usually falls to the birth mother, but frequently before even being weaned, if the mother has other responsibilities in the tribe such as metalshaping or hunting, the child will be given to others (Tenders) to nurse and care for.

Rites:

Rite of Fire

Undertaken by children during their 12th winter, this is considered the passage into adulthood in the Grey Eye tribe. The Great Seer of the tribe will provide the youth a pair of torches, one lit, and inform him of the location of a Spiritstone. These sites contain a large stone braizer, typically prepared with a small amount of wood to start. The youth must spend the night at the location, only venturing out to collect more fuel for the fire. If he survives the night, he will return with the second torch, and the

spirits will have judged his warrior's spirit to be worthy. The Greatseer will add the youth's torch to the tribe's Spirit Fire, and anoint the now-adult with his 'grey eyes' using an ash and clay mixture taken from the Spirit Fire.

Rite of the Long Walk

Undertaken by the elderly before they reach a point unable to care for themselves, this rare event is more akin to a celebration. The elder's stories are told and retold by all those who remember, and the Elder himself/herself. The Great Seer praises the elder's spirit, and all they have given to the tribe. He/She then asks the spirits to watch over the Elder, and take him to them. The Elder then walks out of the tribe's home, and off into the Highlands to die, typically from exposure.

Rite of Grudges

Undertaken by an individual or a small group acting as representatives, this is the method in which Grey Eye declare 'war' upon each other. An individual may approach the Spirit Fire of a tribe, and cast a large handful of dirt into it, as a symbolic attempt to extinguish it. This means the Grey Eye in question holds a grudge against a member of the tribe, whom he will typically name as he throws the dirt. The two warriors will then fight until the matter is resolved, typically ending in the death of one of the fighters. The same ritual can be done by a group of Grey Eye, who act as representatives of another tribe. This is a declaration of open combat between members of the two tribes, with hostilities to commence once the group has left immediate line of sight to the village. A more serious version involves the use of water instead of dirt, signifying a tribe wishes to eradicate the other tribe. Though rare, it can occur if one tribe feels another has strongly angered the spirits or committed some form of unforgivable offense.

Rite of Trophies

Undertaken by a Seer, this ritual allows a Grey Eye who has taken a trophy from a worthy foe to display it upon himself. The Grey Eye presents the trophy to the Seer, describing the foe if the Seer was not present at the combat. The Seer judges the worthiness of the enemy, and if acceptable, tears the trophy in half. Half is returned to the Grey Eye to be added as a trophy, the other half is given to the fire spirits, to impress them on the Grey Eye's behalf. If found unworthy, the trophy is thrown away, to be carried away by the wind spirits.

Rite of Icewinds

Used as a punishment for severe crimes against the tribe, the Grey Eye is bound, hands and legs apart, to a pair of firm trees. His garments are then soaked, and he is left exposed for a time based upon the nature of the offense.

Laws and Punishment:

Conflicts within the tribe are the purview of the Chief, who will typically decide a punishment on a case-by-case basis. The only exception are entirely spiritual matters, which are handled by the Greatseer, or issues with a member of a different tribe that do not affect the Chief's tribe as a whole. Shunning is typically a mild punishment, with more serious crimes warranting a time, measured in hours or even days, spent on the Rite of Icewinds. Other serious punishments involve the loss of all trophies taken, or the removal of a tribe member's "grey eyes." There are a number of laws that all Grey Eye are bound by, a Chief being loathe to even consider repealing.

-No Flynd may bite a Grey Eye, on pain of death.

-All new members of a tribe that were absorbed from an old tribe must sacrifice up to half of their trophies into their new tribe's Spirit Fire.

- No damaging a tribe's Spirit Fire, without performing the Rite of Grudges, on pain of death.
- No act of willful sabotage of another tribe's metalcraft, on pain of death by stoning.
- No adding of trophies without the presence of a Spirithunter or Seer, on pain of forfeiture of the trophy and up to half of previously taken ones.
- No deviation from the standard design of the "grey eyes," a vertical bar across one eye, on pain of loss of "grey eye" of the recipient and painter. Elaboration is not discouraged, but variation on the initial design is taboo.
- No trading with an Ice Elf, on pain of death.

Relations with Other Races:

Firbolg - Grey Eye are eager to trade with other firbolg, who typically show a healthy respect for their metalcraft, and are more wont to trade goods than talk endlessly. The exception to the rule is Black Teeth, whom they view (correctly) as highly dangerous.

Gargylen & Wood Fae - These races are seen as the physical forms of some earth spirits, and thus treated with a warm welcome.

Ogres - An ogre's predisposition towards immediate violence and ability to smash a Grey Eye's weapons or armor typically mean they will be avoided if possible, or singled out and slain if not.

Orcs - Seen as strong warriors, and respected for their prowess and strength. An orc's clothing is considered a valuable trophy.

Kobolds & Goblins - Grey Eye are wary of these redskinned menaces, confused by their diet, and fearful of their love of explosions. Goblins and Fetch are regarded as menaces, warned off at weaponpoint.

Dwarves - Dwarven behavior confuses and irritates the Grey Eye. Their superior metalworking is viewed with jealous suspicion, and their penchant for trespassing in Grey Eye lands for useless minerals, such as gold, is seen as insulting.

Gnomes - Like dwarves, Gnomish digging angers the Grey Eye, but their relative rarity and devastating tinkering have created a cautious superstition about them.

Woad Elves - Limited contact compared to most firbolg has resulted in the Grey Eye viewing the wild elves more as trading partners than direct competition.

Dark Elves - As another tunneling race, Dark Elves rarely receive a warm welcome from any Grey Eyes they may encounter.

Ice Elves - Upon seeing Ice Elves, most Grey Eye become immediately hostile, brandishing weapons and warning the elves to leave. No attempt at trading is made, and any others seen doing so will be, at best, actively discouraged. Years of violent interactions with these sadistic neighbors has left little room for negotiations.

Flynd - The Grey Eye capture and raise Flynd pups as often as they can, thus their initial reaction to Flynd isn't attack on sight as with many other races. This has earned no small dislike from the non-feral Flynd.

Humans - Grey Eye opinion on human varies from tribe to tribe, depending on the scale of interaction. Most tribes tend to view them as far too concerned with their Gods and their Civilization. The sheer quantity of interesting and useful things humans typically have to trade will inevitably draw the Grey Eye back, however.