

Shadowfire

Book of Light and Darkness

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History of Riftlund

Demons rule humans; they always have and they always will. This is the fate people brought upon themselves long ago, when they rebelled against their god Kathan; he sent demons as his scourge, to teach people obedience and fear. Only in death may humans be free.

This is what Kathan blood priests preached when they came to gather victims for sacrifice. In Riftlund, people stopped believing them. Riftlund priests secretly railed against demons. Riftlund rulers quietly plotted against their demonic masters. Riftlund humans rebelled, were put down and rebelled again. Every defeat cost many lives and taught humans a little more about their foes; until finally a group of humans learned enough to become strong as demons themselves.

The True Kathan Church, which had split off from the Blood Priests, blessed the fighters and named them Sacred Paladins. These fighters possessed supernatural power granted by gods of the Kathan Pantheon. Sacred Paladins tormented the tormentors, harassing demons throughout Riftlund, until the Demonic Emperor himself amassed an army to hunt them down. In the Battle of the Shining Sky, Paladins met this army, fought their way through it and killed the Emperor. Without their leader to keep them in line demons fell to fighting among themselves. In the chaos their hold on Riftlund was lost. The people were free.

In a just world, Sacred Paladins would have been rewarded for their victory, but justice was scarce in those days. A madness gripped the people, who had too long suffered demonic cruelty. They became like demons themselves, accusing innocents of making blood sacrifice, then delighting in the punishments their victims suffered. Sacred Paladins were outraged by this and tried to protect the innocents, only to be accused themselves; anyone who protected demon worshippers must be demons. The champions were hunted down and killed wherever they were found. Treasure hungry priests and power hungry princes seized the land and the wealth of dead paladins, then spread lies about them so that they could steal more. Before it was over, every Sacred Paladin in Riftlund was dead or hiding.

Madness passed. People reclaimed their lives, princes defended their kingdoms, priests preached their doctrines. In time, many remembered what they had done to the Paladins and realized they had destroyed the greatest heroes of their age. So great was their remorse that it inspired a new philosophy. After ages of irrationality, terror and madness, the people of Riftlund embraced reason.

Demons had long suppressed ancient knowledge; humans had long feared new thinking. Now, freed from demonic rule and native superstition, the people of Riftlund learned more in fifty years than they had in the past five hundred. They used what they learned to improve their lives, exploring, farming, trading, building. Artisans, philosophers and merchants created schools and guilds. Priests founded hospitals. It was a time like no other, when humans looked beyond illusions and dared to see the world as it was.

Then demons returned. Some had never really gone; they had survived the purges, haunting the wilds of Riftlund or hiding in plain sight in new towns of the age. Others withdrew beyond Riftlund's borders to rebuild their strength. When they had recovered enough strength, they sent raiders into Riftlund. How long would it be until they sent armies? More than ever, humans regretted killing the Paladins. They had slaughtered the heroes. Who would protect them from their ancient enemies?

Like many problems of the time, the answer came from melding of old knowledge with new thinking. During the purge, the Kathan church had secretly protected a small number of Sacred Paladins. In return, the Paladins had passed on the secrets of their power. These secrets could be taught to a new group of fighters, but the problem of who to teach was a touchy one. Superstition survived in this enlightened age; many people still believed that the Paladins had received their powers from demons. No respectable priests or warriors would dare take on such training, for fear of damaging their reputations--or their persons, should superstitious fear inspire a new purge.

Unable to solve this problem themselves, the Kathan Priests consulted a famous philosopher. He offered a simple solution. Since reputable citizens couldn't do the job, then disreputable people were the best candidates. There were plenty of suitable people around: Ambitious ne-er do wells, crackpot sages, mercenaries of all kinds. These would be the paladins of the new age.

In the end, they didn't called themselves Paladins. They were freebooters, traveling from one town to another to carry out their charters. Together they formed the Shadowfire League, named for the ancient power that had been passed down from Paladins: Not the power of gods or of fiends, but the power of humans, used to defend their own from demonic darkness.

The Shadowfire League

In this game, characters play freebooters--wandering demon hunters who belong to the Shadowfire League. The league members derive their authority from church and state. How much authority they have and how locals view them varies from region to region; however, some laws and traditions apply to Shadowfire freebooters everywhere. These universal principles are covered here.

Shadowfire Power: This is the supernatural power first used against demons by Sacred Paladins. These heroes believed their abilities were granted by the gods. Later, they were accused of receiving their powers from demons. By studying the written histories of Sacred Paladins, sages discovered that their powers were not granted by saints or fiends: They were a natural ability of humans. Gaining the power was simply a matter of recognizing its presence and learning how to use it.

Needless to say, this discovery proved controversial and unsettling, particularly to high priests of the Kathan church. The notion of these powers existing in all humanity was frightening, especially since these abilities were similar to the infernal magics of demons. Could humans and demons be connected? To even speculate on this question was more than church leaders could stomach. They seized the writings of sages who were studying Shadowfire Power and commanded them never to speak of what they had discovered on pain of death.

The sages' manuscripts remained secret until demons began raiding Riftlund. At this point, fear of a demonic invasion overcame the priests' distaste for unsettling facts. They revealed their manuscripts to the wisest sages they could find. With the sages' help, they developed training to awaken this gift in humans--an ability they named Shadowfire.

Recruitment: Finding new freebooters for the League is a constant challenge. Although

every human has potential Shadowfire Power, the ability must be strong to be awakened by League training. Worse yet, anyone who uses these abilities is viewed with suspicion, even by some of the priests and princes who established the League. Few respectable people are willing to join, leaving recruiters with a limited number of candidates: Scoundrels, misfits, the desperate, the less than sane; people whose options are few and prospects are dim. From this lot Shadowfire Freebooters are drawn.

League recruiters are sages skilled at recognizing people with strong potential for Shadowfire Power. Recruiters are also renowned for their persistence and persuasion. They have been known to pursue candidates for years. In places where recruiters are paid a bounty for each candidate, they are not above coercion and even kidnapping. More commonly, they persuade candidates by telling them about the rewards of League membership: Travel, money and adventure. This usually works, so long as they aren't too frank about the hardship, fatigue and danger that are also part of the job.

Training: Retired freebooters are employed to train recruits. League training takes three of the longest months of a recruit's life. It is harrowing by design; Shadowfire Power wakes only when a recruit is pushed, mentally and physically. This is called sparking the fire. Every Shadowfire freebooter can recall the moment when, pushed to exhaustion, enraged beyond reason or wracked with pain, they felt their power come alive.

Training also includes equipping the recruits with sufficient weapons, clothing and supplies to do their job. The usual custom is to give recruits 500 guilders to equip themselves at the end of training. More information on equipping characters can be found on pg.--

League houses: Most large towns in Riftlund have one or more Shadowfire League Houses, where freebooters can meet, train and take charters. A house is sponsored by a Prince, a church, or a town council in order attract freebooters to their region; disreputable as they may be, Shadowfire Freebooters are the best defense against demons.

A league house has a number of permanent residents: One or more Shadowfire sergeants, who train new recruits; a house master, who enforces League rules and settles disputes between freebooters; and a trust holder, who keeps track of money for the house, including the collection and paying out of ransoms. Sergeants, house masters and trust holders are paid a stipend by whoever sponsored the house. Prosperous houses employ housekeepers, cooks and guards.

Freebooters may receive room and board at a league house for three day at no charge. After that they have to pay 3 Guilders a day. The accommodations at a house are rarely luxurious, so many freebooters chose to lodge at nearby inns. Most houses have a dueling room, where freebooters are allowed to test their skills against each other. Usually these duels are friendly matches, but sometimes they are used to settle serious disputes between members. It is not unknown for freebooters to die in duels.

Members meet in common room, where charters are posted. They trade stories and rumors at they look over the available jobs. Twice a day the house master reads the charters aloud, for the benefit of freebooters who cannot read. Literate freebooters may read books and scrolls in the house library, or study demonic artifacts in the house treasury. These items are contributed to houses by freebooters for the benefit of the league.

League Rules: All freebooters agree to be bound by the following rules.

All league members agree to follow the laws of the local town, prince and church, unless they are granted dispensation by a charter.

When freebooters form a company, they will share bounty fairly.

Any disputes between freebooters will be brought before the House Master, who will

render a decision. All members in the dispute must accept the master's decision, or agree to settle the matter with a duel.

Members may only duel in house dueling rooms, at a time chosen by the house master. If a duel is held to settle a dispute, the winner of the duel wins the dispute. Freebooters will strive not to kill each others in duels. If a master decides that a member has purposefully killed another freebooter in a duel, he may require the survivor to pay blood money to the opponent's family.

Freebooters will try to help other members who are in danger. If they face overwhelming odds, they may instead go to the nearest league house request help.

League Charters: These are specific jobs that freebooters are hired to do. When a charter is issued, it is written on a scroll and posted in the common room of the nearest League house. The charter tells what the job is, how much is paid upon completion, and gives any dispensations from law the job involves. Charters may only be issued by high officials of church and state; persons of lower station may have a charter issued if they can convince an official to do so on their behalf.

When a group of freebooters accept a charter, they form a company. The company lasts as long as the charter is being carried out. Freebooters are allowed to join companies at will. Some groups of freebooters stay together for years.

Here are some examples of charters:

A charter is issued by Prince Stefan the Wise, for the retrieval of the following items: A silver dagger inscribed with his family crest and encrusted with rubies, a golden medallion bearing the likeness of his fair daughter, Melissa, and small chest gilt with silver. These things were seen last in the possession of a flying imp. This creature has been seen lurking near the Nettle Bog north of town. A reward of 150 guilders may be collected for completing this charter. Prince Stefan grants a dispensation for the bearing of arms within his territory and the harm of any human companions of this demon.

A charter is issued by her holiness Lady Ardath, rewarding a bounty of 10 guilders for each demon slain within the confines of her vineyard within the Janeborough Monastery. Lady Ardath grants a dispensation for the bearing of arms within the confines of the Monastery. An additional bounty of 200 guilders will be paid if the hidden source of this demonic contagion should be found and purged.

A charter is issued by the council of Oldactown, for the discovery and slaying of demonic raiders. The fiends have attacked merchants travelling the common road between Oldactown and Renalac. They are believed to have a lair nearby. A bounty of 100 guilders will be paid for the head of each raider. A bounty of 500 guilders will be paid for the location of goods stolden by the raiders. A list of goods will be provided upon acceptance of the charter. These goods may not be looted by freebooters. The council of Oldactown grants a dispensation for the harm of any human traitors accompanying the demons.

Ransom: Given the danger of their profession, freebooters find it prudent to have a ransom available in case of capture. Money is paid to a house trust holder, who issues a token to the freebooter. When captured, the freebooter gives the token to his captor, who in turn, delivers it to the nearest League house. Arrangements are then made for exchange of the unharmed freebooter in return for the money he has set aside for ransom.

Most often, ransom is used to bribe officials when freebooters are arrested for breaking local laws. Tribes and changelings are also open to the idea of freeing prisoners in exchange for ransom. Demons and cultists will rarely free prisoners for ransom.

Places

The Regions of Riftlund

Overview: Riftlund is a fertile land with a temperate climate. Forests of pine and hardwood cover much of the area, except where humans have cleared pastures and fields for farming. The roads shown on the map are major trade routes; they are also used by Kathan worshipers making pilgrimages. All of the towns shown have a population of 1000 people or more. Many smaller villages have grown up along these roads; in settled areas it's common for villages to occur about one day's travel apart. In wild areas the distance between villages can be considerably longer.

The animal and plant life is similar to that found in late 15th century Europe. The forests are alive with deer, wild boar, rabbits and many other plant eating animals. Wolves and lynxes are the most common meat eating animals. Humans have domesticated cattle, horses, donkeys and goats. Many of these animals can also be found in wild herds.

In addition to natural plants and animals, many demonic creatures and growing things occur throughout Riftlund. These entities had grown rare since the end of demonic rule, but have rebounded since demonic raids began. Some scholars believe that demonic plants and animals can sense the auras of true demons and that they breed rapidly in their presence. Some of the demons in the scenes section of this book are demonic animals and plants. Others can be created using gamemaster cards in the Shadowfire deck.

Law: In Riftlund, law is mostly local and traditional. Each city state and region has different customs which are enforced in various ways. Slavery, for example, is legal in some places, and even accepted as a form of punishment for lawbreaking; in other places it is illegal, and any slaves brought into the area are immediately seized and freed.

A few laws and traditions are widely accepted and likely to effect Shadowfire Freebooters.

Blood Money: When a someone is killed, it is customary for the family to request blood money as compensation. The deaths of bandits, criminals and other ill-reputable characters usually don't bring demands for blood money; these of people have usually been disowned by their families, if they had any to begin with. The death of farmers, merchants, councilors and other people of good reputation are the most likely to bring this demand. The amount customarily varies between 5 and 500 guilders, depending on the status and wealth of the person killed. If blood money is demanded and not delivered, the consequences depends where the killing happened. In barbaric regions, the family may declare a blood feud against the killer. In more civilized ones they may bring charges through the courts. In corrupt places, they may hire an assassin.

Travel: In order for trade to flourish, merchants need to move safely between towns; and for traders to travel, they need safe roads. Laws of the road have been developed by the merchant's guild to keep their members safe. These laws state the following: That every city state which controls a trade road must provide a patrol to protect it; that, in order to collect a toll on a trade road, a collector must provide a charter signed by the local prince, bishop or town council; That an inn or camp must be provided for every day's travel along a trade road. These laws are usually respected, since any city state that ignores them risks being boycotted by the guild.

Shadowfire Freebooters: Because they serve a needed service--hunting demons--Shadowfire Freebooters are allowed to travel everywhere in Riftlund. In addition, because of the danger and complications of their job, it is generally accepted that local laws and

traditions will be suspended when necessary for a freebooter company to carry out a charter. Often the charter writer will write explicit dispensations from laws into a charter, the most common being the right to bear arms in areas where weapons are prohibited. In some places this tradition is less respected--see Harford, below.

Economy: When demons ruled Riftlund, humans endured terrible poverty. All wealth was controlled by demons and a few of their human allies. Most humans eked out an existence as subsistence farmers, with most of their crops going to demons. Many old trade roads fell into disuse, to the point where they were overgrown and broken. Demons preferred to keep their human subjects at home where they could be easily subjugated. What trade was allowed was heavily taxed.

Freedom brought a renewed interest in trade. Riftlund princes rebuilt old roads and hired private armies to keep bandits away from them; taxes and goods provided by merchants made the effort worthwhile. As the road system grew, trade caravans became a regular sight. Towns sponsored trading fairs to attract commerce. Wealthy merchants banded together to form alliances, called guilds. Guilds set rules and standards for their members, offered protection against banditry, and forwarded the interests of traders. In some cases guilds became powerful enough to rule existing towns or establish new ones. Towns ruled by merchants' guilds are among the most forward thinking and well governed in Riftlund.

With the help of the Kathan church, merchants guilds have worked to establish universal weights and measures throughout Riftlund. In the days of demonic rule, every town and kingdom had its own standards. Now a foot is a foot and a pence is a pence pretty much throughout the land. The currency preferred by the guilds is the Orsany guilder, a large gold coin engraved with an Orsany eagle on one side and the likeness of the ruler who had it minted on the other. Their value is usually universal, but a few are worth more; these rare, large coins were minted shortly after the fall of the demon rulers and are engraved with the faces of renowned sacred paladins. Called Sacred guilders, these coins worth ten times as much as a standard guilder. Coins from before the invasion are of all shapes and sizes and show the faces of demonic rulers. When found, they are usually melted and sold for the value of their metal.

Currency Values in Riftlund

1 Sacred Guilder = 10 Orsany Guilders

1 Orsany Guilder = 10 silver bits

1 silver bit = 10 copper pence

Regions: Riftlund is a land of loosely linked city states. Each region described here is more unified by culture and tradition than government. There are no nations and few strong rulers. The city states, villages and tribes within each region rule small territories and control particular trade roads. They sometimes trade with their neighbors and sometimes feud with them. Some princes dream of unifying a region under their rule, but so far no one prince has managed it; and, in light of the demonic threat, most princes are hesitant to attack other humans for fear of making themselves vulnerable to their ancient enemies.

Orsany Free States: Many small city states make up this region. Most of are ruled by merchant guilds, who purchased town charters from a small number of ancestral princes. The charters allow town councils to run towns pretty much as they please, so long as they deliver sufficient taxes to the prince who holds their charter. In law, princes owe obedience to the King of Orsany, who maintains his traditional estate in the north of the region. In

practice, the king rules only with the cooperation of the princes, who make up a council that advises and influences his decisions. Although petty political infighting goes on in the princes' councils and most of the town councils, the region is relatively well governed and has enjoyed many years of peace. It is home to many of the most forward thinking philosophers, merchants and explorers of the land. The Shadowfire League was first established in this region and remains very strong here.

Parso: Half a dozen city states dominate this region. The largest, centered around the port city of Calistay, is trading empire. With the biggest fleet of merchant ships in all Riftlund, Calistay merchants deal in exotic goods unavailable anywhere else. As a result the ancestral princes of Calistay--the Olivios--are extremely wealthy. They are also deeply corrupt and, if rumors are to be believed, shockingly decadent. Life in Parso is marked by dirty politics, small scale wars between princes, and slavery; Parso is one of the few regions where human bondage is widely accepted. It's roads can be dangerous, as underpaid patrols often ignore bandit raids in return for a bribes. The Kathan church is strong in Parso and it's people devout, as they seek solace from the gods for the evil inflicted on them by men.

Warlord Kingdoms: Landlocked by the arms of the Skysplitter Mountains, warlords rule isolated, barbaric kingdoms. They are a mixed bunch; Some are throwbacks to the days of demonic rule who worship fiends as their gods; others are fierce demon hunters who welcome Shadowfire Freebooters as allies; most are hard-bitten survivors fighting to keep their territory intact. Feuds dominate this region, both on a personal and political level. People in this region have a strong sense of honor and are quick to take offense if they feel that their names have been sullied. The Kathan Church maintains monasteries here, but does not exercise much power. Many warlords maintain their traditional practice of ancestor worship, accepting Kathan gods as particularly old, powerful ghosts and nothing more. Priests who have tried to force them into orthodox practice are usually driven away in short order.

Harford: Small, independent and orderly, the region of Harford is one of the few that respects a strong Ruler. The current queen of Harford rules over an alliance of princes who she brought into line with a series decisive wars earlier in her career. Since then she has cemented the power she gained on the battlefield with clever political alliances. The country is at peace, internally, although it must fight constant small scale wars against greedy Parso Princes and savage barbarian raiders. The regions' wealth comes from iron, gold, silver and gems mined from the roots of the mountains. Shadowfire freebooters are tolerated in Harford, but they are viewed as rowdy vigilantes in many quarters. Where officials in many regions might overlook Shadowfire tactics as a necessary evil, in lawgivers in Harford treat overzealous freebooters like any other criminals, delivering swift justice and harsh punishment.

Sunlord Empire: Alone among the regions of Riftlund, people of the Sunlord Empire continue to worship the bloody handed gods of the old Kathan Church. Although they reject demonic rule, they have retained the traditions of their old masters; The main difference is that human fiends rule now instead of supernatural ones. The princes of the Sunlord Empire claim divine authority as the basis of their power; they accept blood sacrifices in the names of their gods, and sometimes claim to be the children of gods themselves. They are cruel, capricious and hard hearted, and common people in their region are only a little better off than they were under the rule of actual demons.

In the view of the True Kathan Church, there are only two advantages to the existence of the Sunlord Empire. The first is it's chaotic nature. Numerous princes claim the title of Sunlord Emperor, and there is constant fighting between kingdoms as they vie for power. The other is its unending hatred of demons. Vile as they might be, princes of the Sunlord Empire truly

despise demons, perhaps because their enemies are so much like them and want pretty much the same thing. No matter what the reason, it makes the Sunlord Empire hostile territory for demons, which is useful barrier to keep out raiders from the Infernal Empire.

Demonic raids are more common here than any other region of Riftlund. As a result, Sunlord princes support League houses to attract freebooters. The Kathan church allows Shadowfire Freebooters to accept charters in the Sunlord Empire, so long as they do not worship at Old Kathan altars. Such behavior is grounds from immediate expulsion from the League.

Damondlan: Located in the far north, Damondlan has the coldest climate of all the regions in Riftlund. Most people live in coastal city states, where they survive by fishing and trading. A dour, stoic breed, they are considered backwards and provincial. For their part, the people of Damondlan consider outsiders soft and foolish. They have a long tradition of fighting demons, and were the most rebellious of humans during the domain of demons. According to Damondlan folklore, Shadowfire Power was discovered in their region and the sacred paladins first perfected their skills in their homeland.

The people of Damondlan are pious members of the true Kathan church. They despise Sunlord Princes nearly as much as demons and regularly send raiding parties across the frozen plains to raid their neighbors. The cold climate prevents demons from raiding them as frequently as the Sunlord Empire, but they do come, especially in summer. Shadowfire Freebooters are welcome in this region, although the locals consider them rather weak and effete for demon hunters. They are especially amused by sages; the idea of using knowledge to fight demons is foreign to them. They would rather engage in a good fight.

People

The Prime Movers of Riftlund

Since Riftlund was freed, the region has been in political flux. Demons enforced a strict social order that kept them in charge. Without their domination, the social order fell apart and people struggled to find their place in a new world. In the present day, many groups are fighting to better their lives, carve out kingdoms or simply survive. These groups, their motives and where they are most commonly encountered is included in the descriptions below.

Aristocrats: These are the descendants of families who ruled Riftlund during the Demonic Dominion. Some of these families became devotees of the True Kathan church and they joined the rebels when the Sacred Paladins attacked the demons. After the battle of the Shining Skies, these families were permitted to keep much their lands and their wealth. They prospered for many years.

In these years, many aristocrats long for the old days. No one seems to respect noble families anymore. Serfs abandon aristocratic estates to seek work in towns. Merchants charge aristocrats the same rates for goods as commoners. Artisans disregard their ancestral duty to provide aristocrats with goods, choosing instead to sell their skills for a profit. Great families have been reduced to near poverty, selling their lands to buy their bread, living in decaying mansions they can no longer afford to maintain.

Few nobles admit that their own snobbishness, conservatism and fear of change has diminished them. They cling to ancestral power and privilege, insist on preserving meaningless ancient traditions, and complain incessantly about the evils of the modern age.

The aristocrats who have hung on to their wealth often use it to preserve the life style they believe they are entitled to, at the expense of nearby farmers, merchants and artisans. They will hire guards to enforce their ancestral rights, with no regard to the suffering this practice causes others.

Aristocrats are found throughout Riftlund, but they are most numerous and powerful in the Sunlord Empire.

Barbarians: This is a general term for the tribal peoples of Riftlund. According to their legends, these tribes once wandered over all of Riftlund. Now they are found mostly in the Skysplitter Mountains and the Warlord Kingdoms. The barbarians are herders who lives are centered around the animals they raise. In the kingdoms the tribes have settled and most of the animals are horses and cattle. In the mountains the tribes wander and most of the animals are goats. All of them are suspicious of people who are not of their tribe, and paranoid about outsiders. They are warlike and have long memories; some tribes have kept up blood feuds for generations. If approached with respect, however, they can be hospitable and friendly. Some sages have befriended the tribes and will hire out as guides for travelers who go to barbarian lands.

Most tribal peoples work hard to survive and preserve their traditional way of life. Since the new age began, more finished goods--swords, knives, pots, clothing--have found their way into barbarian hands. The tribal peoples value these goods and are hungry to acquire more. They are not above attacking outsiders to get them.

Demons: These powerful, malignant creatures have been a plague on Riftlund since ancient times. No one is sure where they came from; according to the true Kathan Church, they were spawned from the body a terrible monster called Haxtor, who was slain by Kathan Rex. Each demon carries a portion of Haxtor's evil within it. Whatever their origins, demons are unquestionably cruel, arrogant fiends. They are also control freaks; a demon is happiest when it is lording over others.

Demons come in many shapes and sizes, some more like beast or plants than men. The most human-like, called fiends, are the demons who strive to rule men and weaker demons. In the Infernal Kingdoms, where demons rule, the land is divided into a series of warring states; each petty empire is ruled by a demon of great power. In the last few years, these demonic overlords have sent raiders into Riftlund. They have ambitions to take the region back as their own. Besides the raiders there are many other demons in Riftlund. These are hold outs from the days of demonic rule. Most of them haunt the wilds, lying low and taking the occasional human victim when circumstances allow. A few hide in plain sight, wandering the streets of small towns or masquerading as bandits. Since raiders begin attacking, native demons have become bolder, leaving their hiding places to attack hapless humans.

Demons can be found throughout Riftlund. Most live outside the borders, in the Infernal Kingdoms.

Changelings: One of the greatest accomplishments of the Sacred Paladins was not the killing of demons, but their conversion. Some Paladins believed that even demons deserved a chance at salvation and took extraordinary measures to convert fiends to the True Kathan Church. To the amazement of many, in a few cases they succeeded. Even more surpassingly, conversion effected the auras of these demons, changing them from red-orange to blue-white; and, although they retained their powers, they lost their cruelty and inclination towards evil. Some of them became Sacred Paladins themselves, and fought heroically to free Riftlund. In the light of these conversions, such creatures earned a new name. They were called changelings, and they were welcomed into the fold.

During the Paladin's Purge, changelings suffered the same fate as the heroes who had converted them. Most went into hiding in the wilds of Riftlund. As time passed and people regretted their bloodlust, changelings slowly reemerged, but they never fully trusted

humans again. Most live in villages and towns at the edge of the wilds, keeping to themselves.

Changelings' main ambition is survival. Some Changeling leaders want more than this, and work to establish a Changeling city state in Riftlund. According to some, they have made great strides towards this goal. There are rumors changeling city hidden somewhere deep within a forest in Riftlund, If such a thing exists no human has seen it and lived to tell.

A few bold, powerful changelings live among humans. They are generally tolerated, but many humans find them strange and frightening. They can be found in small numbers throughout Riftlund, although they tend to keep a low profile in the Sunlord Kingdoms.

Princes and Princesses: In this new age, many people have discarded old traditions to find a better path. Among the most well known of these trailblazers were the unconventional princes and princesses of Riftlund. Born to aristocratic families (see above), these young heirs saw their families' wealth and power evaporate. In the face of this, many of them realized the old ways would not serve. They turned instead to new methods of securing money and influence. Some sold town charters to their former subjects, allowed them to escape the bonds of serfdom in return for taxes and fees. Others ventured into the wilds, enticing farmers to follow them with the promise of fertile land, and cleared stands of forest to create new estates. The most famous became warlords, using battle to secure new territory.

In the current day, there are many princes and princesses searching for ways to improve their lot. Many of them have the authority to write charters, and are not above using Shadowfire Freebooters to get what they want. Although the charters are only supposed to be used to hunt demons, it's common practice for power hungry princes to bend this rule.

Ambitious princes and princesses can be found throughout Riftlund.

Guilders (Artisans, Merchants, and Philosophers): With the end of the old order came a new system of guilds. These bands of like-minded professionals formed the basis of the new economy. Instead of living off the patronage of aristocrats, talented men and women worked to make their own way in the world, studying ancient learning and employing new thinking to build their wealth. Traders, thinkers and crafters developed ideas and techniques that improved life in Riftlund for everyone.

Guilders then to be pragmatic, ambitious, forward thinking people. Many of them hire on with princes. Others work out of towns, setting up shops and taking on apprentices to practice their craft. Their guilds can be very powerful; many town councils are made up of the heads of influential guilds that work out of towns. There are also rumors of shadow guilds--groups of thieves, criminals and assassins--although if this is true, few people are willing to talk about them.

In the current day, some guilders have gotten church dispensations to use shadowfire power to practice their craft. The use of this power tends to be restricted to element abilities: firepower used to improve the craft of an ironworker, earth power used to strengthen a mason's mortar. Despite the limitations, guilders who use shadowfire power often are sympathetic to shadowfire freebooters, and may offer them aid if they need help.

Guilders are found throughout Riftlund. The guilds are most powerful in the west, particularly in the Orsany free states and Parso.

Kathan Church Clerics: The priests, monks and high priests of the True Kathan Church are deeply devoted to the rule of law in Riftlund. They believe they are the source of civilization in Riftlund: They preserved ancient knowledge, they sparked the rebellion, they created the Shadowfire League. In return for their efforts, they expect the respect and power due to a great religion. For the most part, they get what they ask for; except for the Sunlord Empire and the Warlord Kingdoms, the True Kathan Church is the state religion of Riftlund.

There are five main gods in the Kathan Pantheon: Kathan Rex, King of Gods and ruler of

the universe; Innurra Vey, his wife and ruler of the domestic arts and childbirth; Pathax, God of war and strife, Onessi, goddess of fertility and wisdom, and Vox, the god of the underworld who is both male and female by turns. Kathan doctrine teaches that worshippers who respect the gods and follow church teachings will be guided to heaven by Vox, who will lead them on a safe path through Demon ruled hell.

Kathan churches are found throughout Riftlund. A few daring missionaries have built churches in the Warlord Kingdoms, and secret churches thrive in the Sunlord Empire. The church is strongest in the Orsany free states.

Kathan Demon lord Cultists: The demon worshipping, blood sacrifice practicing form of this religion was once the main form of Kathan worship in Riftlund. Now it is a despised cult, strong only in the Sunlord Empire; and even there many people secretly worship at the altars of the True Kathan Church. Kathan cultists are sadistic, intolerant fanatics, bent on restoring demonic rule to Riftlund. Some of them truly believe that demons are messengers of the gods. Others belong to the cult as a means to gain power over other humans. A major teaching of the cult is that worshippers will be made the kings of men when demons return to Riftlund.

Kathan the almighty is chief god of the cultists. He is the lord of demons and men. When people refused to give Kathan the blood of human sacrifices, the god grew angry and sent demons to punish them. The people have been ruled by demons ever since, and will be ruled by demons forever. If humans are obedient to Kathan and his demonic messengers, then they will become demons themselves. Kathan cultists hold ceremonies in which they sacrifice human victims and pray to become demons; once in a while, the ceremony works and a Cultist turns into a fiend before the eyes of his cheering comrades.

Kathan cultists are found chiefly in the Sunlord Empire, the only place in Riftlund where they are allowed to openly practice their foul religions. They exist in small groups elsewhere, working secretly to secure the return of demonic rule.

Demons

Overview: There are many kinds of demons in Riftlund; The creatures vary wildly in appearance. Among demons themselves, two types are recognized: The Made and the Born. Made demons are ones that changed into a demon after being born another type of creature: a tree, a horse, a human. This change is rare, spontaneous and poorly understood, even by demons themselves. They can sometimes sense when a creature is about to change, and will often torment the being, hoping that the stress hurries the transformation along. Made demons can be created using game master cards provided by in the Shadowfire deck. Their appearance can be the same as one of the demon races given below, or they can be anything the gamemaster chooses. They are weird, unnatural creatures who have often been driven insane by their transformation.

Born demons are the descendants of made demons. They have developed a number of races. Demons of the same race have an affinity for each other and will try to seek out others of their own kind. If they breed, they breed true. Born demons are smarter and saner than Made demons, but no less evil.

All demons are cruel, callous and driven to control others. The more beings they dominate, the better they feel. Groups of demons always have a leader and a strict pecking order; the chief demon is called demonlord and the subservient demons are called thrall. Whenever possible, demons will acquire human slaves.

The demons described here can be found throughout the wilds of Riftlund; a few even infest towns and villages. All of these demons may also be used as converted Changelings.

Kastistak: Also called speed demons, these horse-like, carnivorous demons are supernaturally swift. They are a favorite mount of powerful humanoid demons. They are usually found in plains and steppes, where they can put their speed to good use, or in mountains, where their powerful jumps and nimble feet allow them to run up sheer cliffs. Kastistaks often are found near rivers and streams; A favorite attack of these bestial demons is to seize a victim by biting them, drag them into the water and drown them.

A famous legend of the Sacred Paladins tells the story of a hero who converted an entire herd of Kasitstaks. The descendants of this herd are a group of changeling Kastitaks that live in the Skysplitter mountains. They are shy of outsiders, but have been known to aid persuasive freebooters who can locate them. A few Kastistak changelings have agreed to serve for a time as freebooter's mounts.

Root Cellar: This is a huge plant that does most of its growing underground. Its leaves form forest undergrowth that is hard to tell from natural plants. The cellar digs out a hollow chamber underground. The bottom of the chamber is filled with a thick, sweet smelling liquid. The sides sprout roopy roots. Anything of sufficient weight that walks on the thin layer of dirt capping the cellar will fall in, be snared by the roots and pulled down to the liquid. Over the next week or so, the unfortunate victim will be digested alive.

Its common for imps to form a symbiotic relationship with a root cellar. They shelter among the roots and steal valuables from victims who fall in. These imps may try to lure in victims for their demonic host.

Weedheads: These appear to be windblown clumps of grass, but they are actually head sized pods surrounded by twitching, branch like tendrils. They have faces, eyes and mouths, which they will reveal when they want to take a bite out of something. They crave meat and will travel long distances to get it. Once they have fattened up, they burrow into the ground, shed their tendrils and go dormant; the following spring, the pod will sprout, and grow into a weedhead tree. These vile plants look like normal oak trees until the fall, when they sprout acorns that are marked with human features. The acorns rapidly swell, develop tendril and fall, to become new weedheads and start the vile cycle again.

Jacks: These are a race of fiends who look something like of a large human male. Although they are one race, they have a number of breeds with different appearances. All jacks are male and they can breed with Pegs. (see below).

Iron Jacks: These demons cover themselves with chains, iron armor and clinking pans-- anything made of metal and noisy. They like to haunt roads in the wild, where they demand tribute from travelers. They will often assemble a band of bandits to do their bidding. Metal weapons do not harm them.

Red Jacks: These demons wear distinctive red hats. They crave the taste of human blood. Every time a red jack inflicts a wound it heals 2D6 points of damage.

Hairy Jacks: These demons are covered in long manes of greasy hair. Anyone who strikes them has a chance of sticking to their hair and become entangled; a trapped person loses one action a round until they can free themselves. The hair also serves as armor and decoration. Hairy Jacks often tie the bones of past victims in their hair.

Slim Jacks: These demons are tall, bare skinned, skinny fiends with glowing yellow eyes. If they can touch a person they have a chance to drain a random power from them. They possess the power until they use it; then it returns, drained, to the victim. Slim Jacks are fond of riddles and word games. Their favorite victims are sages.

Fancy Jacks: These demons look like a tall, handsome human men dressed in stylish

clothing. They often pretend to be traveling guilders plying a trade, or interant noblemen who have gotten lost while hunting. A fancy jack always has one to six other jacks as thralls. He will ususally instruct these to hide while he talks to the victims and puts them at ease. At his signal the thralls attack. Fancy Jacks value money, jewelry, fine goods and slaves. They strive to live like human aristocrats. Some even manage to live among humans, masqurading as nobles.

Pegs: This is a race of female feinds. Like the jacks, they have differnt appearances, as described below. They can mate with jacks. Pegs are ususally associated with a particular place where people have suffered and died. Pegs are fond of disguises and they often wear cloaks and veils so that they can pass as human.

Pestilent Pegs: These demons are found near ruined buildings where people have died of disease. They look like hideous, bloated women covered in sores. All Pestilent Pegs have at least one Pestilent Touch aspect.

Poisonous Pegs: These demons hide near poluted wells, abandoned mines and the scenes of poisonings. They look like pale women with discolored, blotchy skin and long claw-like hands. All Poisonous Pegs have at least one Poisonous Touch Aspect.

Poker Pegs: These demons haunt the sites of famines. They look like skeletally thin women with lank gray hair and empty eye sockets. All Poker Pegs have at least one Draining Touch aspect.

Plundering Pegs: These demons are found on battlefeilds old and new. They look like muscular women wearing black armor and gruesome trophies of past kills. All Plundering Pegs have at least one Harrowing Scream Aspect.

Princess Pegs: These rare and dangerous feinds are found near places where women of noble blood have died. They appear to be a beautiful young women wearing fine gowns and gems. Princess Pegs prefer to kill people of noble blood. They will often pretend to be nobles themselves to get close to their victims. They are the most intelligent, scheming of the pegs and are very fond of elaborate plans that culminate in murder. A Princess Peg will have one to four pegs in attendance, ususally veiled or hidden to conceal their nature. A Princess Peg will have at least one Enchanting Aura.

Swarming Imps: These are groups of imps that all have a similar appearance and insectoid aspects. One or two swarming imps will lie dormant for many years, then suddenly mulitply at an explosive rate and flying off to plague farmers and invade times.

The characteristics given here are for individuals in a swarm. Use these when one or two swarming imps attack. For larger swarms, mulitply the hp by the number of imps and add +1 WIS and +2 STR for every 20 imps. Swarming imps attack as a unit and can simultaneously attack one victim with their combined characteristics for every 10 imps in the swarm. When the swarm loses half of its members, roll 1D6 at the end of every round; on a roll of 1-2 the swarm loses cohesion and flies away to reassemble. It ususally takes an hour for a swarm to reassemble after being broken.

Wiley Wits: These small, clever imps specialize in gathering information and trading to to more powerful beings in return for favors, money and food. Some of these creatures hire on as advisors to demons, princes and sometimes even freebooters. Many Wiley Wits are changelings who will work with anyone who pays. Their common aspects are sage path, invisibility and dodge.

Character Assassin: This is an imp that delights in destroying the reputations of

honorable people. It feeds on the torment of men and women ruined, hurt and even killed as a result of its actions. Often hired by malicious princes to destroy the reputations of their enemies, they plant items, spread stories and whisper half truths to do their dirty work. They appear to be small humans of bland appearance, but their overlarge ears and split tongue are signs of their true nature.

Blood Hounds: Bestial fiends that look like bright red hounds with yellow eyes and slavering mouths. Demons often employ them to scent and chase down victims.

Greater Infernals: Among demons, there exists a class of immensely powerful, wicked entities. Greater infernals are the nobility of demons; obsessed with gathering and holding power, they are the driving force behind the demonic raiders. The greater infernals have sent out raiders to soften up their opponents, in preparation for planned invasions and reconquest of Riftlund.

The greater infernal represented by these stats is a relative young, weak individual. This is the kind of Greater Infernal freebooters are likely to encounter. A few of these demons have started scouting Riftlund, coming in with groups of raiders. Some have established hidden strongholds, where they work to weaken the people of Riftlund in advance of the coming invasion.

Quick Start Backgrounds in a separate File:

Backgrounds: Here are some background that I think would work well....

Sage Path:

Kathan Apostate (young priest thrown out of the church for unorthodox ideas).

Crackpot Philosopher (a free thinker who is just a little too 'out there' for his peers).

Archer Path:

Wandering Woodsman (a hunter, game warden or scout who used work for a noble).

Acrobat (an entertainer in a traveling circus who is looking for more lucrative work).

Warrior Path:

Escaped Serf (a peasant who has left the service of an aristocrat under less than legal circumstances)

Disreputable Roustabout (a rat-catcher, thug, bouncer or laborer from the wrong side of town).

Universal Backgrounds? These could be taken by any path....

Disinherited Noble (an aristocrat who has fallen out with his family).

Changeling (a changeling with human-like appearance who is making a living in human society).œ