



Freilan Racial Packet

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Tales of Valor
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The Freilan

A treatise on the nomadic people who inhabit the roads and seas of Jhoril.

Wanderers, seafarers, traders, tinkers, diplomats; these are the common faces of the Freilan. Each is as well known as your neighbor and as mysterious as the night sky

Upon the grasslands, open plains and free places of Jhoril roam the grand caravans of the Freilan. Magnificent wagons, often resembling houses or in some cases ships, pulled by all manner of beast of burden rumbling along in a slow meandering course. It is a grand and fearful experience to feel the ground shake beneath the hooves and turning wheels of a grand caravan's procession that truly humbles anyone of city birth the first time they experience it. Imagine if you will an entire village, nay an entire town rolling along by day and bedding down every evening. It is a hard thing to fathom for those of us who are used to our houses being solidly attached to the ground and in one place for us to return to every evening. This is a culture of people always on the move, ever seeking the horizon beyond the last hilltop. Their story is rich in tradition, mystery and wonder.

You can be sure when you come across someone of the Freilan descent that you have met someone for whom the road holds no secrets and the noblest destination is just beyond the next horizon.

No subject provides more a challenge or frustration to historians than the story of the Freilan people. Outside of a few Freilan scholars and lore keepers, the entire story of this tragic yet resourceful people is hard to know in its entirety. So diverse and spread out are their communities that no one person could ever elicit full accountings from the numerous family historians and scholarly types who keep their record of the years. Could an outsider even accomplish this formidable task? So convoluted and skewed would the renderings of their history be that to make sense of it all would take the work of numerous lifetimes.

History

“Home is where the heart is for no land can contain that which is vast as the sea”

What has been gleaned and openly put forth is that over the course of millennia, the Freilan have been a people of great tragedy, travel, exploration, resilience and wonder. Once the people of a great island kingdom, far across the waves, they came to the shores of this land as survivors of some great cataclysm. While any other culture would have staked a claim upon the lands they inhabited, the Freilan instead turned their ships into wagons and began a tireless roaming that continues to this day.

The most recent chapter of Freilan history begins with the Shadow Wars. At that time, the Freilan caravan had become a common sight across the lands and while their earlier history is a story unto itself, this treatise will not take the time to examine it. Suffice it to say that by the time the Shadow Wars rolled around the Freilan had been part of local culture for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Their caravans and roving villages had become a common occurrence throughout the civilized lands. Most cultured areas openly shunned appearance of Freilan groups and many areas of the land had become hostile to the encroachment and seemingly lawless behavior that followed their arrival.

During and after the Shadow Wars, however, the Freilan proved themselves most adept at aiding the larger societies in transporting refugees and keeping trade and communication lines open and working. Rather than retreat into the wilds and hidden places of the world they came forth offering their knowledge and skill in opposition to the forces of Shadow. Their knowledge of hidden routes and mountain passages proved invaluable to scouting parties and the commanders of the Alliance of Light. It is also during this time that they showed themselves to be a truly genuine ally to the peoples of Jhoril as their uniquely dispersed society was nimble in responding to threats and providing assistance to even the most remote outposts.

After the Shadow Wars, life as it has always been returned to the Freilan with one subtle but important difference. No longer exclusively looked upon as outcasts, the people of the roads found themselves welcomed in many communities and their grand caravans given safety of passage through all but the harshest of lands.

Recent History

In recent years the Freilan have seen a golden age of trade and the expanding of their networks take place. While they suffered dearly during the wars between Taerus and its neighbors, they were instrumental in solidifying the truce and aiding those areas hardest hit by the war. With every year, more and more Freilan are choosing to settle down and life among the ‘Townfolk’, as they call us. Whether they tire of the open

road or seek some other comfort that the towns and villages have to offer is anyone's guess. Some rumors have begun to circulate telling of a more sinister intent from this adoption of settled ways but most people dismiss this as the prattling of merchant houses upset about the competition their new-found neighbors afford.

Freilan Culture

Unlike most of the cultures of Jhoril, the Freilan claim no lands as their home and have no standing army to speak of. This has led to the development of a society that is both adaptable to its surroundings and resilient in its identity.

What the Freilan do have is an abundance of small traveling family groups and larger roving communities spread throughout the land. Sometimes these communities are parts of larger, established cultures owing fealty to local governance but in most cases they are roaming collections of wagons and people that travel the open grasslands and unpopulated areas of the land.

Their predominant society is one that places family and the common good of the community above all else. Very guarded around strangers they are nonetheless boisterous and welcoming to those who come to trade or spend time with their caravans. They are very protective of those they consider friends and family and will go to any length to keep safe that which they hold dear.

The primary unit of governance to the Freilan is their family and in larger groups they appoint community stewards. Stewardship to a Freilan does not mean oldest, though often the two are synonymous, stewardship simply means most capable of performing the task at hand. It is not uncommon for up and coming Freilan who show incredible aptitude for certain areas of life to be given stewardship over that area of the Freilan community they belong to.

An Elder is simply the eldest of a family, each family having their own elders and among elders there being some hierarchy that only those familiar with their customs can figure out. As long as a decision only affects a family, then the word of the elder is as law. If it is something that will affect the rest of the community, the matter is brought forth to the stewards.

The number of stewards a community has varies and is wholly dependent upon the tasks facing the community. Ever a practical people, the Freilan do not see a need for many leaders unless their communities are faced with many problems and should the tasks at hand or problems change, new stewards are appointed through the vote of all affected. Even the smallest of Freilan communities will have a steward or two tasked with keeping them in touch with the outside world and other Freilan communities in the area.

Whether it be on the waterways and oceans or the open plains, the Freilan culture is one of travel, trade and exploration. Many cultures have borrowed bits and pieces of Freilan culture over the years where they best fit within their own. Many sea faring areas of the land are known for large Freilan communities and to this day, many Freilan has never set foot upon dry land in their entire life. Do not let the fact that some Freilan choose to settle in one place fool you, their hearts are ever thinking of the open road and their minds are never far from the affairs of their kin across the lands.

Where am I going with all of this talk? Well that's what's so frustrating for historians about the Freilan; their culture is so spread out that it's as if you were talking about many different peoples rolled up into one that share the bond of family and bloodline.

If we expand upon that thinking, the Freilan people can be broken up into the following general groups.

Those who live in the Cities and Towns

More common with the passing years, the Freilan who choose to settle in the cities and towns are an industrious and well liked lot for the most part. Of course there are those more predisposed to the shadier side of life but to hear the Freilan tell it they are but misunderstood youth who just need a good upbringing. Typical life in a city for the Freilan means involvement in local trade houses, merchant endeavors or transportation of goods although it is not uncommon to find industrious Freilan in all walks of city life.

Those who live on the open road

Apart from the grand caravans, countless wagons and small collections of wagons roam the land, sometimes staying for a few days and sometimes forming small villages of wagons for a few moons only to disperse like leaves on the wind. These are the most commonly seen groups of Freilan, usually consisting of one large familial group or a collection of smaller families. Sometimes shunned for their open ideas about property or charming your lads, these roaming communities nonetheless provide a vital trade avenue for many communities too far removed from the normal trade routes. Light of heart and free with their wit these Freilan celebrate life at every opportunity. Do not let their light heartedness fool you though, they are as bloodthirsty as any Drakkon if double crossed or maligned.

Those who live in the Grand Caravans

Across the open plains of the land traverse the grand caravans of the Freilan. None knows the exact number of these caravans or even the number of people within one but estimates are that they number in the hundreds of wagons with each wagon accounting for at least a half dozen individuals. It is within these caravans that the majority of the Freilan people live, love and grow old never needing for anything beyond what their families can provide. These caravans long ago secured surety of passage from all of the major Kingdoms in any time except war and even then their presence proves advantageous to those needing supplies and foodstuffs. Never staying in one place longer than a lunar cycle the grand caravans are truly mobile societies.

Those who live on the waters

From sea to waterway, river to ocean there are Freilan a plenty on ship and shore by the waters of the land. Expert sailors, fishermen and navigators these Freilan pride themselves on all aspects of nautical life. Always welcome at port for their outlandish stories and large purses the Freilan who chose a life on the water are seldom far from their ships. Rumored to be descendents of merfolk because of their affinity for the waves the Freilan who choose this life

will remark upon their constant vigilance and duty to maintain the ships for those who travel the lands. What this means exactly is often debated but getting a straight answer from these cagey people is like catching salmon with greased fingers.

Those who live on their own

The lone cottage dweller or the old hermit of the mountain, these are the common perceptions of Freilan who have abandoned both community and travel. Be it from some personal desire for isolation or some other intent these Freilan are rare to the extreme. If they keep in touch with their wandering kin, it is unknown but it is clear that any Freilan group that travels through an area with one such recluse is sure to stop by to check in on them with supplies and news of the world at large.

Those who wander on their own

Inevitably a roaming, traveling society will produce the true loner, the wanderer who prefers the company of the road to all others. Within the Freilan culture, these true wanderers are known as Grey Walkers, heed no laws but their own and what part they play in Freilan society is unknown to the outside world.

Outlook on Life

Ever a people of travel, it is not surprising that the two predominant worldviews among the Freilan are referred to as paths. While once The Path Home was the more driving force in the Freilan worlds, in recent history it has been observed that less and less attention is being paid to the old quest for a homeland and sense of belonging to the open spaces of the world has settled in.

The Path Home

Legends and histories tell us that the Freilan came to these lands from a far off homeland which fell to some form of catastrophe that has been lost in the annals of time. The Path Home is a view of life with one very core concept at its heart, the search for a new homeland to settle their grand caravans within and grow their culture from. For some this also entails settling down and finding homes within established communities.

The Path of the Road

Some scholars claim the path of the road to be the natural opposite of the path home while others claim it simply a revised view of that constitutes a homeland. This worldview simply stated means the acceptance of travel and any land under the stars as home. Those who ascribe to this path view the whole of Jhoril as their home and call no land their own.

The Path of Shadows

Not all Freilan walk under the sun and stars and feel the call for adventure or desire to help those around them. Some more sinister calling has come to these Freilan and their demeanor is one to be feared and kept at arms length lest you leave the encounter with a light wallet and a weaker spirit. None knows enough about these shady figures within Freilan society to know for certain if

they are some offshoot of the Cults of Shadow or some other organization whose intent is as unclear as their morals.

Family Traditions

It is only natural that a society based so closely around the ties of family would develop strong family traditions. This is a list of commonly known family traditions among the Freilan. Not every group will follow them exactly the same or in some cases at all but these represent the most common familial characteristics found amongst these people.

Hospitality: The tradition of hospitality extends to both Freilan and non Freilan alike. In its least form it means that someone will be offered a dry spot to sleep and some meager food before being sent on their ways. In its richest form, the strangers will be given first choice of food, new cloths on their backs and are welcome to remain with the group for as long as they wish. This tradition is the most varied among Freilan groups but at its core is intended to develop good ties with strangers and the communities the Freilan pass through. The one aspect of this tradition followed by all Freilan groups is the protection of those offered hospitality by the hosts.

Guests: With the tradition of hospitality goes the tradition of the guest. Any stranger to a Freilan group is at first considered a guest. Guests are often freed from any obligations when it comes to chores or community tasks and are protected from being taken advantage of by the elders and stewards of the community. Should a guest overstay or ruin their welcome, however, they are turned out with but the clothes on their backs and a few coins to make their way in the world.

Feasting: The tradition of feasting goes hand in hand with the tradition of hospitality and as traditions go can be boiled down to an overwhelming desire to celebrate and have a good time at any opportunity. While a traveling Freilan caravan may eat meagerly while on the road, should it stop and a feast be declared its tables would rival those of well lardered nobility.

Surety of Travel: Simply put this tradition guarantees that anyone who requests travel with a Freilan group will be granted it. Requesting travel, however, is not the same as being a guest and should this tradition be invoked the traveler will find themselves fully subject to chores, responsibilities and the social norms of Freilan culture when it comes to wealth and property.

Respect: All peoples and places are worthy of respect until they prove the respect misplaced.

Wave Watching: Should you ever find yourself with a group of Freilan near the ocean or seas you will observe this odd tradition where at least one member of the group will always be facing the direction of the waves and looking out over the ocean. Its meaning is perhaps lost to time but its practice is still upheld to this day.

Words are Freely Shared: Words and information to the Freilan as as currency to other societies and they highly value information about the world at large. The sharing of those words and information between groups of Freilan, however, is seen as an obligation and not something to be held back and used as collateral. To this end, all Freilan who are part of a community are expected to share information within that community freely and openly as opportunity allows. Many communities set aside parts of the day for those with something to share to come forward and relate their tales. Those who share information on a regular basis are often rewarded in

some fashion by the rest of the community although such rewards are not to be expected or counted upon.

Property

What's mine is what I can carry and what the horses that obey my commands can pull, and whatever I can put in the wagons they pull or on their backs. If I can carry it or they can pull it and it wasn't claimed or secured by someone else then it was fair game to begin with. Of course I will happily render this just a simple misunderstanding and barter back those goods you seem to be needing to you at a discount since you seem to be rather put out at the moment. I'll even throw in my middle daughter since I see you have a son of age and no lasses about for him to woo, if that is you can supply her dowry and a nice bridal gift for the family...

The concept of property and theft are a somewhat gray area to most Freilan. Of course they have their own ways of marking possession but seeing as how they most commonly share their belongings with their own communities as needed their need for common laws regarding theft and stolen goods are somewhat lacking. This of course has been fed over the years by disgruntled merchants and those whom have had dealings that they were not entirely satisfied with. The Freilan make no bones about being some of the shrewdest and most successful merchants in the land and because of this and their lack of civilized ways regarding property, they have gained something of a reputation as scoundrels or unscrupulous individuals.

Meetings, Celebrations and Conclaves

If one group of Freilan rents your inn for the night you have good business, if two rent your inn you have very good business but an equally large headache come the morning. – Tavern keepers saying

Any port in a storm and any excuse to dance around the fires seem to be the driving reasoning behind Freilan parties and celebrations. If you haven't seen someone for a few days it's a reason for a grand dinner, if you have seen many someone's for a much longer time than the party may go on for days or weeks depending on how close the family groups are.

What is constant about Freilan gatherings is that they are not affairs to be missed if you are brave enough of heart, strong of stomach and secure in wallet. All manner of celebration, commerce, familiarity and competition take place at Freilan gatherings. It is not uncommon for groups to leave with different family members, different livestock and different clothes from those that they arrived with. Conflict is almost unheard of once the celebrations begin. If there is bad blood between two groups either they will steer clear of one another or barter out a solution before the festivities begin.

Dress and Costuming

It is said that when you meet a Freilan you are only meeting half of their person at a time. This is no more clearly evident than in the clothes they wear. A careful examination of Freilan wardrobes and customs reveals that while they have a penchant for wearing somewhat boring and utilitarian cloths for day to day activities, their formal or festive wear is as fancy and outlandish as their normal wear is dull and drab. Of course there are exceptions to this and from time to time you will find some Freilan who will never don the festive outfits of their kin and others who would never think to take theirs off. These are, by and far, the exceptions and not the rule when it comes to Freilan fashion.

The Freilan garb is usually a mix of the cultures that they spend the most time with but for those who want a more traditional Freilan look, the garb tends to be more Gypsy or Arabian like than anything else.

For costuming, Freilan are required to display unique markings on their face and neck which should remain constant throughout a Freilan's life but have occasionally been known to morph as a Freilan ages. The coloring of these markings range from dark browns to blues or purples and is not specific to one family line or another.

Freilan Stories and Legends

The Return to the Sea

While there are many Freilan who live on the coast and upon the waters of the world the majority of the Freilan people live upon the land in the towns and villages or the traveling communities. Rumors abound that upon some preordained date, all the Freilan traveling the land will journey to the seas once more and journey to find new lands to travel. None is quite sure where this story of the Freilan originated and it is scoffed at by any Freilan who overhears people talking about it.

Those Left Behind

Common history tells us that the Freilan came to this land from far away places with an already established culture and nobility that has since been abandoned. One story of the early Freilan indicates that those who now roam this land are but a piece of a grander Freilan civilization and there are many more Freilan living across the waves in far off lands. What the disposition and intent of these lost relatives is often the source of much speculation.

The Order of the Wayward Pine

This order is found wherever travelers have need. They assist travelers in showing them safe routes and show lost ones how to survive until they reach the nearest waypost. Their foundation is lost somewhere in the history of the Shadow War. Many people recognize members of this order across Jhoril by their sigil a dark green pine on a white field. Oddly, a singed and tattered copy of this standard can be seen hanging in Hoarfrost Holdfast, although Firbolg from there remain conspicuously quiet on this subject.

The Merchant King

None knows the true identity of the near mythical Freilan known as the Merchant King. Traveling from caravan to caravan they are rumored to be the most connected and influential of all Freilan and have an near unimaginable hoard of resources at their disposal.

The Shadow Court

Ages ago the Freilan people were ruled by a pair of Kings who governed for ½ the year each. While this form of governance has long since been abandoned, rumor has it that the Kings of Winter and Shadow still plot from mountain hiding places and will one day return to claim leadership of the Freilan people.

Starwalker

It is sometimes said that once a Freilan decides upon a journey that nothing will stand in their way. There once lived a Freilan who had walked all of the paths that Jhoril could offer and so they turned their gaze to the stars. Upon a path of moonlight they strode from this land one evening, never to be seen again. Whenever a Freilan observes a shooting star in the sky it is believed that they are seeing Starwalker journey close to home once again.

He Who Shall Forever Roam

There once lived a great sea captain of the Freilan who offended an Aspect of Death to such an extent that he was cursed to wander the oceans and seas of the world for the rest of his life, never knowing but one day of landfall per season. It is told that to this day he sails the world encountering strange and wondrous land but ever striving to return to his home and family.

The Knights of Twilight's Crossing

Within the great library of Haventhal there is a glass case containing a most peculiar scroll. Upon the scroll is the following passage writ at the end of the Shadow Wars: "For services, past and future, we hereby establish this order of most cherished and worthy knights in the memory of the battle at Twilight's Crossing. Let all within our demesne recognize their station and give aid when called upon. Held in escrow, shall be their patent and coat of arms, commissioned on this day by our hand and awaiting the day that the people of the roads shall call upon us in acceptance of this most humble gift." Most scholars agree that the reference is to the Freilan people but no record remains of any battle or location going by the name of Twilight's Crossing or its significance to the Shadow War in general. Also heavily speculate upon is the contents of the Patent, held by the royal archives under seal of the King to be opened only by Royal Hand. To this day, no Freilan has publicly acknowledged the existence of this Knighthood or knowledge regarding its founding.

Freilan family groups for non-Freilan.

No group of peoples is more open and accepting of the lost, orphaned or cast out members of other races than the Freilan. Many Freilan communities have members of other races within them. These new members are welcomed as part of the community and as long as they pull their own weight are welcome to stay as long as they like as guests. If a guest proves their worth over time and shows willingness to adopt Freilan traditions they will eventually become adopted into an existing family. Occasionally orphaned youth are taken in and adopted although this practice has raised the ire of many communities who see the Freilan as attempting to steal their children.