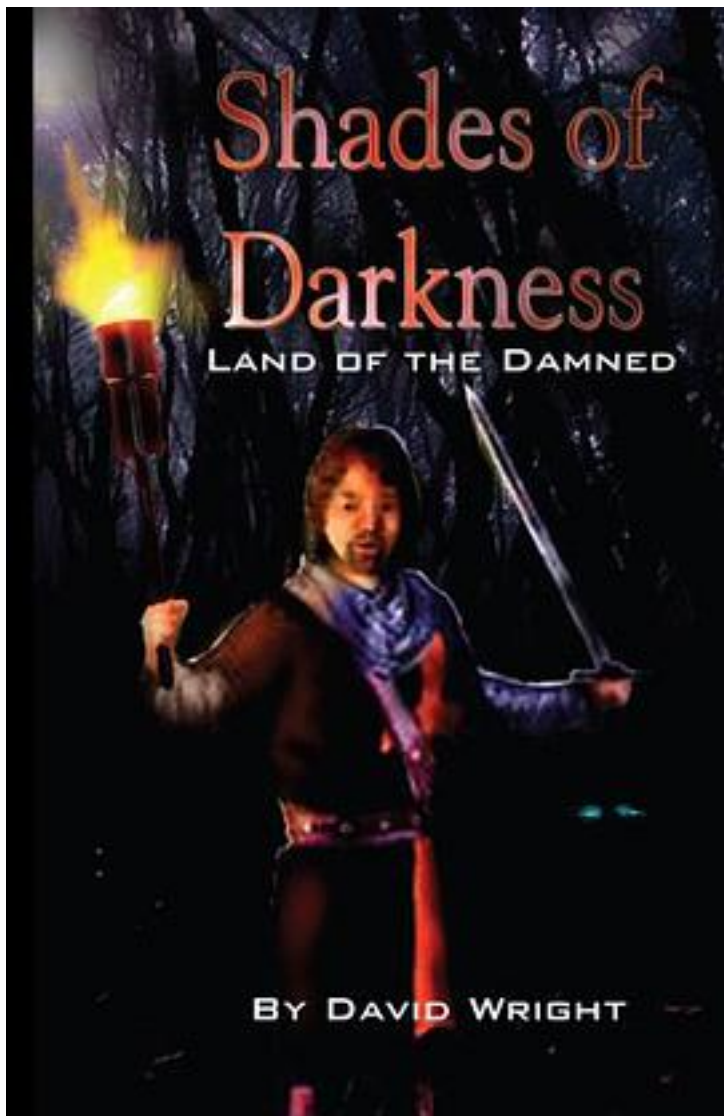


Shades of Darkness



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著者:David Wright

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The Great War caused high casualties and despair for the rulers of this land and their people. Warfare mainly brought on over religious and racial differences, territorial disputes, and simply for power. Peace has finally prevailed over bloodshed and carnage, albeit a fragile truce. A few rulers still seek to gain an edge to ignite war once again, to seek domination. Far to the south lies Port Gillian, a haven for those seeking to avoid the horrors of war. Known for the splendors of life, there is also the seedy side where criminals often run amok. The minor crime lords pay homage to Lord Zantos who has a criminal empire not far away. Serving him are two assassins who begin to question their loyalty toward the dark master. Jaskar, a half-elf, seeks redemption for past sins. He is arguably the deadliest assassin alive and wields two longswords in battle with deadly precision. Illiad, a master of disguise, is also highly skilled in the arts of killing. His belittling of those in his profession that have authority may lead to his demise one day. The deadly assassin soon realizes this first hand. A castle farther north is ruled by Lord Balor, revered by his people who worship Asavar, the god of death. The lord no longer follows the strict interpretations of the god, much to the chagrin of Bishop Arsul and many of his clergy. Lady Mhyre, the lord's beloved young and beautiful daughter, secretly receives tutelage by her servant to be the guardian of this land. The servant's true identity is unknown even to her pupil. Considered folklore by most, vampires have reemerged from the Land of the Damned to plague the living once again, feasting on flesh and blood of mortals. Cunning as they are deadly, the vampires attack from the cover of night, leaving few survivors in their wake. Lord Balor sends a band of warriors to destroy the vampires. Sir Norwin - the leader and a noble knight, Auric - the knight's stout apprentice, Velacen - a soldier as courageous as any knight, Father Dorsey - a respected priest, and other brave warriors hunt those that prey upon their people. Taking the battle to the Land of the Damned, the heart of darkness where the sun never shines and the living should never dare venture. Waiting for them is no mere vampire. This one is sentient.

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