



Setting Primer

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Welcome, errants, to *The Blackwood*, a setting of folkloric fantasy for *Savage Worlds*! It requires the *Savage Worlds Core Rules* and the *Fantasy Companion* to play.

Upon these pages you will find a glimpse of an ancient forest. A place where warriors flit through the trees like squirrels, and storytellers can be found in every tavern and noble court. Inspired by Grimm's Tales, American folklore, and high-flying wuxia action, the Blackwood is a daunting frontier of outlaws, pagans, and strange, meddlesome elves. You are errants searching the forest for a way to save the settled people of the Elder Kingdom despite a landscape of deadly beauty and a crumbling ruling class.

So, errants: go forth and walk the Way's Margin!

The Way and Its Margin

Long ago, the Elder King put forth a great working of wisdom known as the *Five Classics of Lore and Reason*. Their harmony is perfect, but the Blackwood is vast and terrible. The Way of the Elder King can only push back the wilderness so far. The Way protects many, but it will always have a margin where life is difficult, where too many cries for help go unheard.

Settled Folk, Outlaws, and Errants

In the Blackwood, the settled folk of the Elder Kingdom are all subject to the Way. Every noble, commoner, and pauper who lives behind the safety of a hedge owes fealty to the Elder King and his laws.

Those who break the Elder King's laws are subject to the hand of justice. When a fine of coin or labor will not satisfy the Way, the governing lord, lady, or council of a settlement can level the King's Ban against the guilty. Removed from the Way's protection, these outlaws are considered legally dead. There is no penalty for robbing, harming, or even killing them.

Since the Elder King's disappearance, the rot of corruption seeps into more and more settlements. Many folk are outlawed unjustly, and many others become outlaws out of desperation.

The Call of Errantry

"Even as my Way provideth for the many," said the Elder King, long ago, "Ever shall there be those at the Way's Margin also, whom I could not foresee and cannot protect. And thus, into this land of lakes and rivers, I hereby decree the birth of a new order..."

The Call of Errantry asks the brave and clever to give up their settled lives, to leave hearth and kin

behind as they seek out the faults at the Way's Margin. Each errant swears this upon their badge, a personal symbol that could be jewelry, clothing, or heraldry. An errant's badge is often a source of intense pride.

Errants are granted certain immunities from the Way. Generally, errants are free to pursue lives of duty and righteousness however they see fit. They are permitted to bring justice to anyone beyond the law's reach. Should an errant take issue with another errant's actions, she may challenge him to "answer the Call." This honorable duel is usually to first blood, but errants are granted the freedom to kill one another if needed. Anyone—from the highest born lady to the lowliest pauper—can choose to answer the Call of Errantry.

The Bad Year

It was the Year of the King 1440 when our current troubles began. Not even the wisest Classicists can discern why, but that was the year the Elder King and his family disappeared from their home, the resplendent Starry Meadow Palace. Suddenly free from fealty to his wisdom, many nobles succumbed to the temptation of their wealth and power. The taxes and demands these nobles placed upon the common people sent the Elder Kingdom into disarray. Food stores dwindled, villages collapsed, and cities were choked with refugees. And all the while, the wilderness loomed just beyond every wall and hedge.

Elves and Pagans

A distant and dormant threat, believed to be real only in children's tales, the elves began to return just years after the Elder King's disappearance. First came

their pagan worshipers, no more than eyes glinting near the treeline on moonlit nights. In time, pagans grew emboldened to attack caravans. Soon after, the elves themselves joined the fray. The kingdom's frontier became a charnel house as the elves began to reclaim their forest.

Unity from the Widelands

Into this chaos, foreigners arrived from beyond the Blackwood's distant border. The Widelanders brought food, martial aid, and divine salvation when the Elder Kingdom needed it most. Now, many Widelanders have settled and prospered all throughout the kingdom. But how many come in peace, and how many come with a mind to conquer a weakened realm?

The Magic Forest

Even many people who can't formulate spells or summon aid from out of the wilds still know a magical trick or two. Magic has made life in the Blackwood possible, but it is not strong enough to make it a comfortable life. That is (or was) the duty of the Elder King.

Ancestors Be Praised

In a realm where every acre is hard-won from the jaws of the wilderness, community is a bond stronger than life itself. The Elder King taught humanity to hallow memorial shrines, to anchor a tether between themselves and the ancestors. It is this bond that grows and fortifies every settlement's hedge. The ancestors' otherworldly wisdom even teaches the crops to grow faster and healthier than normal.

By Pestle and Pact

Ancestors are not the only way to draw magic from the Blackwood. Many roots, herbs, and other materials can be combined to create magical brews and home remedies. Herbalists are often mistrusted due to their familiarity with natural magic.

Far worse than herbalists, some draw magic from the forest by making pacts with the elves. These pagans gain great power, but at the expense of shackling themselves to an elf for all time. A dangerous bargain.

Blackwood Setting Primer

The Holy Faith of Unity

The ancestors, according to the Holy Faith of Unity, are real. They wield great power, but they gain that power from an even greater source. The Unified say the ancestors are *Orishas*, supplicants to the god Oruneal, whose voice is Light and Sound. Every culture's gods and spirits were once servants of Oruneal, but were struck dumb from his brilliance and fled to the far corners of the world.

Through music and faith, the Unified try to rejoin all the Sundered *Orishas* of the world. Not every realm accepts the Unified, but only rarely does a realm live in such darkness as to be condemned by the church. These are the realms of demons. These realms must be cleansed.

Unified priests, called Celebrants, have condemned the elves as demons. By battling against the wilderness, the Unified have become welcome defenders all across the realm. In fact, some cities are raising Celebrations of Unity, the religion's temples, within their walls.



Year of the King, 1454 VK

Fourteen years after the Elder King and his family disappeared, the Blackwood is rife with tumult and opportunity. There are rumors of wealth and wisdom hidden in the Blackwood, in the towns and fortresses ruined by the ravages of recent memory. There are also rumors that the Elder King is not dead but lost. The most cunning and honorable errants alike ponder how they might be the ones to find him. Glory, wealth, harmony, and power await the true of heart, if their will is strong enough to grasp for them.

New Edges & Hindrances

Arcane Backgrounds

Classicism

ARCANE SKILL: Knowledge (Classics) (Smarts)

STARTING POWER POINTS: 10

STARTING POWERS: 3

SPELL LIST:

All the Elder King's wisdom is contained in the Five Classics: the Book of Lore, the Book of Rites and Meaning, the Summer Record, the Iron Doctrine, and the ancient Leaves of Change. These collections of story, edict, and song are curated by the Wise Order of the Classics with such skill that deep magic can be discovered in the illuminated text and lofty wisdom upon their pages. Classicists can draw upon this magic with their voices, a musical instrument, or straight from the pages of their own manuscript notebooks.

✧ **Unfocused:** Flat notes and the slightest stutters of speech can ruin a Classicist's concentration. On a roll of 1 on the Knowledge (Classics) die (regardless of Wild Die), you automatically become Shaken (this does not cause a wound). Conjuring magic from the Classics can be done several ways, but always requires a combination of manuscript, instrument, or hand gestures. Both of your hands are occupied while casting powers.

Elven Pact

ARCANE SKILL: Pact (Spirit)

STARTING POWER POINTS: 15

STARTING POWERS: 2

SPELL LIST:

Pagans live by the strange ways of the elves. The totems they carry are imbued with magic from the wildest heart of the Blackwood. Each elven totem hints at the nature of the elf that claims it, from crude lashings

to intricately carved wood, stone, and bone. Pagans are the antithesis of the Elder Kingdom, so they each receive the Outlaw Hindrance.

✧ **By Oath and Totem Bound:** Pagans must make a pact with a new elf for each of their powers, represented by either oaths or totems. If you have a high-quality totem, you may spend a full round to focus its power (no movement or other actions allowed), receiving a +2 bonus to your Spirit roll in the following round. A high-quality totem costs at least \$1000. You suffer a -2 penalty if you attempt to cast a spell without the appropriate totem.

If you choose to take an oath instead, take Quirk as a minor Hindrance and give your character a rule to follow at all times. Throwing spilled salt over your left shoulder, or staying under a roof from dusk until dawn are both fine oaths to take. If you should ever break this oath, the elf will show up to find out why. This is never a good thing, but clever characters may be able to negotiate some kind of boon from the confrontation.

Pagan magic is rekindled by dancing around a fire every night at midnight. Pagans must dance for 10 minutes per spell rank among their powers. Communing with elves is dangerous, so make a Spirit roll during your dance. If you fail, you cannot withstand the weird power of the elves and suffer one level of fatigue. If you roll a 1 on the Spirit die (regardless of Wild Die), suffer one roll on the Injury table. This injury lasts for 24 hours.

After preparing your powers, they may be unleashed as actions any time within the next 24 hours. When casting, a roll of 1 on your Pact roll (regardless of Wild Die) causes you to become Shaken. This does not cause a wound.

Year of the King, 1454 VK

Unified faith

ARCANE SKILL: Faith (Spirit)

STARTING POWER POINTS: 15

STARTING POWERS: 1 (plus see below)

SPELL LIST:

Praise be to Oruneal, God of Unity, whose voice is light and sound. The Unified faith has spread to every corner of the world in recent years. Most of the faithful worship Oruneal through *Orishas*, the former gods of their own cultures. Whatever their domains before they joined Oruneal's host, their chief concern is now the unification of all peoples under his peaceful banner.

Unified carry holy symbols—usually a hand bell or pendant of colored glass—which they use to channel the power of Oruneal. Unified with a high-quality holy symbol may spend a round focusing their power (no movement or other actions allowed), receiving a +2 bonus to their Faith roll in the following round. A high-quality focus typically costs between \$1000 and \$2500. If a Unified doesn't have access to a holy symbol, she suffers a -2 penalty to her Faith rolls. It takes 2 weeks to attune a new holy symbol.

Music is an important spiritual rite for the Unified, so they often chant, sing and dance when invoking their god's power. They may take no other actions and their Pace is halved when casting a power. Finally, Unified suffer a -2 penalty to Faith rolls if they commit minor sins against the ideal of unity. Major sins rob them of all powers for one week, and mortal sins make them forsaken until they undergo a quest or task of atonement.

✧ **Oruneal's Light, Osudo's Slumber:** All Unified begin blessed with Oruneal's Light, Osudo's Slumber as a bonus spell. This functions as per the *Light/Obsecure* power in the *Savage Worlds* core rules. A raise on this roll imbues your voice with Oruneal's power as well. You gain +2 Charisma for the duration of the encounter or scene.



Fighting Schools

J'Osudeau

Requirements: Agility d8+, Knowledge (Music) d8+, Acrobat

The people of the Widelands beyond the forest love music and dance, and those of the Unified faith glorify their god with these acts. A sect of the Unified who dedicate themselves to Osudo, the protector Orisha who lives in the moon, have modified the flow of dance into a deadly combat art. J'Osudeau, or "Dance on the Moon" in the common tongue, performs best when working with a team of fellow combatants.

Aspiring Students are possessed of a *Rocking Rhythm*, and grant their adjacent allies a +1 Gang Up bonus.

Stag's Crown Treatise

Requirements: Spirit d8+, Healing d8+, Two-Fisted

Alone of all the other styles, the teachings of the Stag's Crown Treatise have never been adapted beyond their original weapons. Practitioners attack with their bare hands, fingers arrayed as a stag's crown to strike at the body's natural pressure points. Knowledge of the body and close harmony with one's spirit are necessary in every student of the Stag's Crown Treatise.

The basis of the school is the *Crown Palm Nerve Strike*, learned by all Aspiring Students. They may make a two-handed attack for no damage. On a successful hit, the target must pass a Vigor check at a -2 penalty or be Shaken. This check is opposed by the student's Spirit check.

Red Bear School

Requirements: Agility d8+, Climbing d8+

They say red bears are the offspring of cats and elves, for their nimble movements and their meddlesome spirits. Pagan Covens were the first to observe red bears and refine their secrets into a system of fighting with their notorious antler knives. Many outlaws and hunters have found the techniques useful with the more traditional weapons available to the errantry.

The *Way of the Twisted Branch* is studied by all Aspiring Students of the Red Bear School. They gain +1 to Agility Tricks, their Pace is increased by 1, and their Running die increases by 1 step.

Tortoise School

Requirements: Vigor d8+, Knowledge (Battle) d6+, Brawny

Wise and patient is the way of the tortoise. The Sentinels first developed this school for falchion and buckler, though many errant Masters have adapted its techniques over the centuries. Regardless of the weapon used, the Tortoise School has never lost sight of its original use as a shield for those who have none.

Aspiring Students learn *Patient Steward's Progress*. The +2 Parry bonus from their Defend action extends to 1 adjacent ally. The Worthy Student is known as a *Stalwart Sentry*. She gains +1 to Soak rolls and ignores 1 point of Wound penalties.

Blackwood Bowman

Requirements: Seasoned, Shooting d10+

This skilled archer can loose arrows with unerring speed and accuracy. When using the Aim maneuver or Marksman Edge, he halves all range penalties.

The character may also make two Shooting attacks at a -2 penalty, or three Shooting attacks at a -4 penalty, although this is still considered a single action (Wild Cards roll a single Wild Die with their Shooting dice), and cannot be combined with Aim or Marksman.

Celebrant

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Unified Faith), Spirit d8+, Persuasion d6+

Preachers, prophets, and other leaders of the flock often seek to unite the world under the banner of a common faith. Such individuals are usually charming and manipulative, deriving power and influence from their charismatic authority.

This character receives a +2 bonus to Charisma when dealing with those of the Unified Faith. She may also use Persuasion to make Tests of Will, as long as her opponent is capable of reasoning and able to understand what she says. The opponent may attempt to resist with an opposed Spirit roll.

Distracting Technique

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d8+, Fighting d6+

This unpredictable warrior has learned to utilize all manner of feints and distractions during combat, incorporating a range of bewildering movements and gestures into her fighting style to confuse and confound her foes.

The character receives a +2 bonus to Smarts Tricks, and if she is successful her opponent suffers -3 Parry until their next action instead of the normal -2.

Leaf Step

Requirements: Seasoned, Agility d8

You are close enough to the Blackwood's magic that you've learned to flit through the trees like a leaf on the wind. When you use the Run action, you gain the Wall Walker ability for 1 round. If you are in combat, you may also make an Agility Trick as a free action.

Sentinel

Requirements: Novice, Strength d8+, Fighting d8+, Knowledge (Law) d6+, Persuasion d6+

The Valorous Knights-Errant of Sentry Grove, known to most as the Sentinels, have sworn to uphold and enforce the Elder King's laws. Wandering the Blackwood, the Sentinels dispense justice with word and deed. They receive a +2 bonus to Charisma when dealing with those who obey the laws of the Elder King.

The Sentinel also receives a masterwork falchion and plate corselet, both marked with the Elder King's seal. The falchion inflicts +1 damage, while the corselet provides +4 armor instead of the usual +3, however anyone other than a Sentinel caught using these items will suffer the King's Ban.

Whereas most errants are free to pursue their own ends, Sentinels are required to live up to the Mandate of Justice (treated like the Vow Major Hindrance) to uphold and enforce the law. They still follow the errant's way of duty, vengeance, and righteousness, but they further swear to follow the knightly virtues of honor, generosity, valor, wisdom, and excellence. These are the qualities needed to dispense the Elder King's justice. Any Sentinel found unworthy of the Mandate is stripped of their status and hunted down mercilessly; the character loses their Charisma bonus, and receives both the Outlaw and Wanted Major Hindrances.

Trapper

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d6+, Notice d6+, Stealth d6+, Survival d8+

Many hunters, trappers and poachers live off the bounty of the Blackwood, and the various traps they employ can also provide an effective defense and deterrent for their enemies.

It requires a successful Survival roll to set a trap; on a raise the character discovers a particularly well concealed location, which incurs a -2 penalty to attempts to spot or avoid the trap. Characters can only make a Notice roll to spot the trap if they are actively looking, or if they have the Danger Sense, Woodsman or Trapper Edge.

The trap works in a similar way to either *blast*, *blind*, *entangle*, *havoc* or *stun*—chosen when it is set—although it isn't magical and doesn't require Power Points or an arcane skill roll. The effect of the trap only fills a Small Burst Template, centered on the victim, and can be avoided with a successful Trait roll, made at -2 if the trap was set with a raise. *Havoc* traps are resisted with Strength, *stun* traps with Vigor, and the others with Agility. *Entangle* traps fully restrain victims who achieve a total of 1 or less on their Agility roll.

Most traps take at least a few minutes to prepare. If a character wishes to set a trap in a hurry, treat it as a five-round Dramatic Task, applying the normal -2 difficulty penalty.

New Gear

Ancestor Beads: (\$10) Crafted of wood, stone, or (rarely) precious metals, ancestor beads are a sign of ancestral pedigree carried by almost everyone in the Elder Kingdom. Nobles and prosperous folks might have two dozen or more beads on their strand, whereas paupers may not have any notable ancestors to their name. Beads are often no larger than grapes, and strands are typically worn as necklaces or bracelets.

Antler Knife: (*Str+d6, 3/6/12, +1 Parry when wielded in pairs, \$200*) Curved, almost circular blades inspired by the antlers of deer in mating season, these knives are a traditional pagan weapon that have seen widespread adoption in the Elder Kingdom. Pagans often shape their antler knives from iron-hard sentrywood, though the Elder Kingdom uses more traditional materials. These knives are designed for dual wielding, and are balanced for throwing.

Climbing Gear: (*Str+d4, \$100*) This kit includes a climbing pick and crampons. It takes 5 minutes to equip, and provides a +2 bonus to Climbing checks. The pick can be used on its own for a +1 bonus, and makes a fine weapon in a pinch.

Clockpick Set: (\$100) A pouch of long, crooked metal tools used to manipulate clockwork devices. Provides a +2 bonus to Repair checks to craft or maintain clockwork, and a +2 bonus to Lockpicking checks.

Elven Totems: (\$5) These malignant effigies and fetishes are physical tokens of the pacts between pagans and elves. They are carved from wood or stone to symbolize the elven power secured by the pact.

Lancing Sword: (*Str+d6, 2/4/8, +1 Parry, \$350*) The favored weapon of Widelander bravos, a lancing sword resembles a rapier with a long dagger protruding from the pommel. It can be wielded in standard or reverse grip, and can even be thrown short distances like a javelin.

Lap Fiddle: (\$5) A long-necked string instrument with a sonorous tone, the lap fiddle's song can soothe the spirit or rouse one's courage as needed. It is a favorite instrument of Classicist storytellers.

Unified Bell: (\$15) These handbells, often with a separate clapper, are imprinted with the emblem of Oruneal, god of Light and Sound and lord over all the Unified. Used as a spell focus by many Celebrants, it creates a remarkably clear and resonant tone.





The Blackwood Errantry Codex Will Contain:

- ✧ 18 new Edges and 9 new Hindrances
- ✧ 5 new Races and 5 new Arcane Backgrounds
- ✧ 4 new Setting Rules full of folkloric whimsy and wuxia action
- ✧ 39 new creatures and foes
- ✧ A full Plot Point Campaign, *The Way of the Elder King*

