

# Roll of Errantry

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## Storytellers

Dewayne Agin, Alan Albano, ArthurDent, Norbert Baer, Timothy Baker, Marty Barnett, Jorge Coto Bautista "Tiberio," Jason E. Bean, Greg Bell, J. Michael Bestul, Brett Bloczynski, Cassie "Blonde Blueberry Bliss" Brehmer, Jason Buchanan, Scott E Brown, Tony E. Calidonna, Nathan Carmen, ccarreer, Keith E. Clendenen, Alexis Cohen-Pena, Paris Conte, Malcolm Coull, Chris Cox, Scott Crandall, Gordon Cranford, Jon Crew, Joe Cwik, Neal Dalton, Robert Day, Delta Mike, Norbert Denninger, James Dezomits, Herman Duyker, Troy Ellis, Bartek Ewertowski, Evan Fahrenkrog (Motovation Nation), Gordon Fancher, Tony "Azzmodeus" Fanning, Delnurfen Feadiel, Ken Finlayson, Flannel from Many-Sided Dice, Robin Gonzales, John Graham, Patrick Greenlaw, Christopher Grey, Andy Hall, Douglas Harmon, Patrick & Samantha Harris, James Holt, Bob Huss, Micah and Johnna Joseph, Matt "9littlebees" Kay, Karl Keesler, M. Krebs, Jeff Kreider, Tom Ladegard, Derick Larson, Kirk Leeson, Andreas Loeckher, Steve Lord, Wallace MacBix, Sebastian Macleod, Florian Menath, Patrice Mermoud, Andreas Monitzer, Scott Myers, Robert J North, JuanMa Orbegoza, Kay and Mike O'Sullivan, Ron "Khaalis" Owen, Bruce Paris, Rolf Peacey, Mark Peoples, Phergus, John Pyrich, Chris Quin, The Rangdo of Arg, Allen Ratliff, RFieldingP, Ruben Rivera Jr., Jeremiah Roush, Dave Russo, David Scott, SirPadras, Aaron Smithies, Trip Space-Parasite, Matthew Stark, David Stephenson, John Steve, PK Sullivan, Cody Swatek, Chris Thesing, Steven Thesken, Luis Enrique Torres, Tranton, Trevpb\_101, "Whitefox" Harry Truong, Frank L. Turfler Jr., Chad Vicenik, Jason Vines, David Walker, Lester Ward, Brett Weihing, Chris Weisel, David Wetzel, Richard Woolcock, Evan Youngblood

## Cartographers

Larry Behrendt, Evil Storyteller, Michael Goetchius, Hafbad the Sailor, Cameron Kyle, Ignatius Montenegro, Jonathan Mullenax, Jeremy Seeley, Kristi Todd, Eliz. Willingham, Götz Weinreich, WyseSavage

## Errants

Jason B., Aaron Burkett, Scott Crosson, The Derzers, David Dolph, John Doyle, Stephen Dragonspawn, Joseph Even-son, Filthy Monkey, Kevin Flynn, Gary Furash, Bert "Badger" Garcia, Christopher Hogan, Jimmy Hyde, Jeffrey S. James, Kaesa, Karlen "Dripfang Grimhoof" Kendrick, Ed Kowalczewski, Chase Kurtz, Dave Luxton, Chad Manning, Leonard Matoush, Brian McCabe, Lindsey Morse, W. David Pattison, Mel Primus, Erin Ratelle, Jay "Doughnut" Richards, Manuel "ManuFS" Sambs, Michael Sandlin, Sean Tait Bircher, Steven D Warble, Daniel "Twibbit" Whitmer

## Knights and Dames

Jason Aschberger, John and Jennifer Atkinson, Alan Bahr, Brandon Barnes, Jim "The Destroyer" Bellmore, Steven James Black, Martin Blake, Ron Blessing, T. Kurt Bond, Stephan Braster, Allan Bray, David Brown, Bunny of Doom, Brian Burger, Rourke Bywater, Tom Cannon, Alton Capps, David "Asguard" Cole, Robert "Jefepato" Dall, Cameron Evesque Davis, Tim Davis, Edgeland Games/Jacob Smith, Eric Even, Andrew Foxx, Edgar G., David Maurice Garrett, Alex Goodman, Jeffrey D. Gordon, Andrew Grattendick, Jack Gulick, Will Gwaltney, Daniel Harkins, Tristan Harness, Roger Harvell Jr., Kenneth W. Hensley II, Norm "No Relation" Hensley, Jeff Hoff, Sandra Howard, Apelles Johnson (dmcheshirecat), Andreas Klassen, Mike and Rhonda Kurtz, Nikk Lambley "LambSlice," Eric Lamoureux, Christopher Landauer, Clark "Edward the Conqueror" Langridge, Ted "WyrdGM" LeBeau III, Jeremy "Erasmus" Lilley, Christian Lindke, Krishna Lonkani, Courtney Lynn, Bette Malone, Scott Maynard, Aaron McCue, Matthew McFarland, Jerry L. Meyer Jr., D. Miakoda, Mierzejewski, Darren G. Miller, Peter A. Morson, Scott Edward Nash, Josh Nichols, Matthew "Thunder Monk" Orwig, Tore Bjertnes Pedersen, Galen Pejeau, Pete Petrusa (Imagining Games), Jaime Pierson, Ryan Quinn, Bill Racicot, Raminagrobis, Lloyd Rasmussen, Nigel Rich, Mark Richman, Adam "Roz" Rosowicz, Michael SCH, Tobias Sechelmann, Adam "Go Bears" Sena, Mike "Shack" Shackelford, Richard G. Skibba, Ron Smay, Robert P. Stefko, Charles Summerhill, Winston Summers, Adam Surber, James Sweetland, tanic5, Rob Towell, Jason "JiB" Tryon, Lainie Vansant, Lee T. Wendel, Omar W. Wilson III

## Classicists

Alexander Baldwin, Daniel Bernardo, John H. Bookwalter Jr., Ansel Burch, Matthew "ImaginaryTruth" Jones, Kevin Lemke, Andrew Masters, Alan McSager, Karen Montgomery, Lister Potter III, Alex Quigley, JR Rubin, Joseph D. Stirling, Rob and Stephanie Weddell

## Sentinels

Perry Chalmers, Anna Gilchrist, Gary "Murder Hobo" McCallum, Thelma Kurtz, Daniel Mitchell, Sean Richer "Anatolia's Finest," Charles "Agilaz" Wein (The Dragon)

## Nobility

Lord Ed and Lady Karen Kurtz

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# Ballad of the Way's Margin

*Beyond the village there stands a tall hedge  
To keep the Blackwood at bay.  
Kept safe from danger, from pagans and elves,  
If only we follow the Way.*

It was the Elder King who raised the first hedges, who showed his people the strength of their ancestors. The wisdom of his Way taught family and friends to place their ancestor shrines in harmony with each other. We learned to push back when wilderness wanders and elves are about. In safety, we are able to settle families, to harvest crops, and to craft things of beauty and wonder. We come to prosperity only through the strengths of arm and spirit found in fellowship.

*The Way of the Elder King, narrow and true,  
A guide to law and life.  
With aid from our ancestors overhead  
We're saved from peril and strife.*

Within the hedge we are safe but Sundered. Paths through the forest are the only way to enjoy friends and knowledge from distant quarters, and those paths are full of many dangers. Since the Elder King disappeared fourteen years ago, towns and villages have begun to stray from his Way. Hedges collapse, and refugees flee to fill walled cities to the brim. The nobility forget their duties, and even the learned and valorous fall prey to greed and cruelty.

*But there are those who falter,  
Or those who choose to turn  
From fellowship and order,  
Who want the realm to burn.*

Outlaws prey upon merchants and refugees along every forest road. Pagans lurk in the deep woods, thralls of the strange and malicious elves. All of us contend against the Blackwood itself, where monsters roam and elves hide, waiting.

In the face of this darkening world, we answer the Call of Errantry. Born by riverside, under branch, in high mountain passes, or in the Widelands far away, we walk the Way's Margin to live for glory, duty, and personal passion. We alone are free to take vengeance on the guilty, and to bring back the lost riches swallowed by roaming wilderness.

*But if you would stand against these trials  
A life of errantry calls.  
To walk the Way's Margin, to seek out its faults,  
For self or for us all.*

## 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

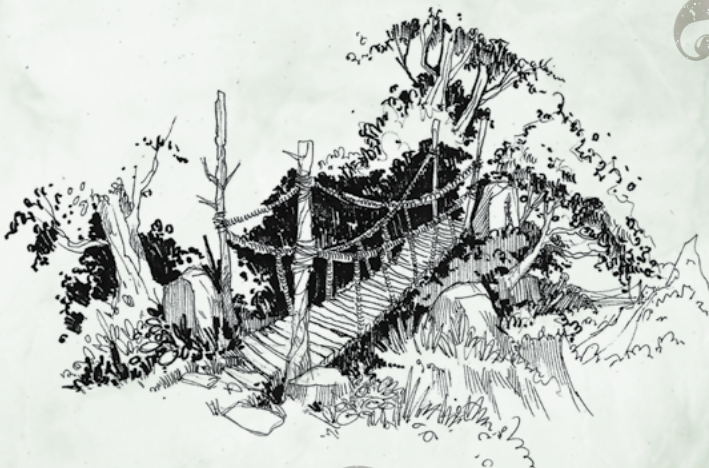
It was the Year of the King 1440 when our current troubles began. Not even the wisest Classicists can discern why, but that was the year the Elder King and his family disappeared from their home, the resplendent Starry Meadow Palace. Suddenly free from fealty to his wisdom, many nobles succumbed to the 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

So long 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 worshippers, no more than eyes glinting near the treeline on moonlit nights. In time, pagans grew emboldened to attack caravans, and 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?



## Ballad of the Way's Margin