

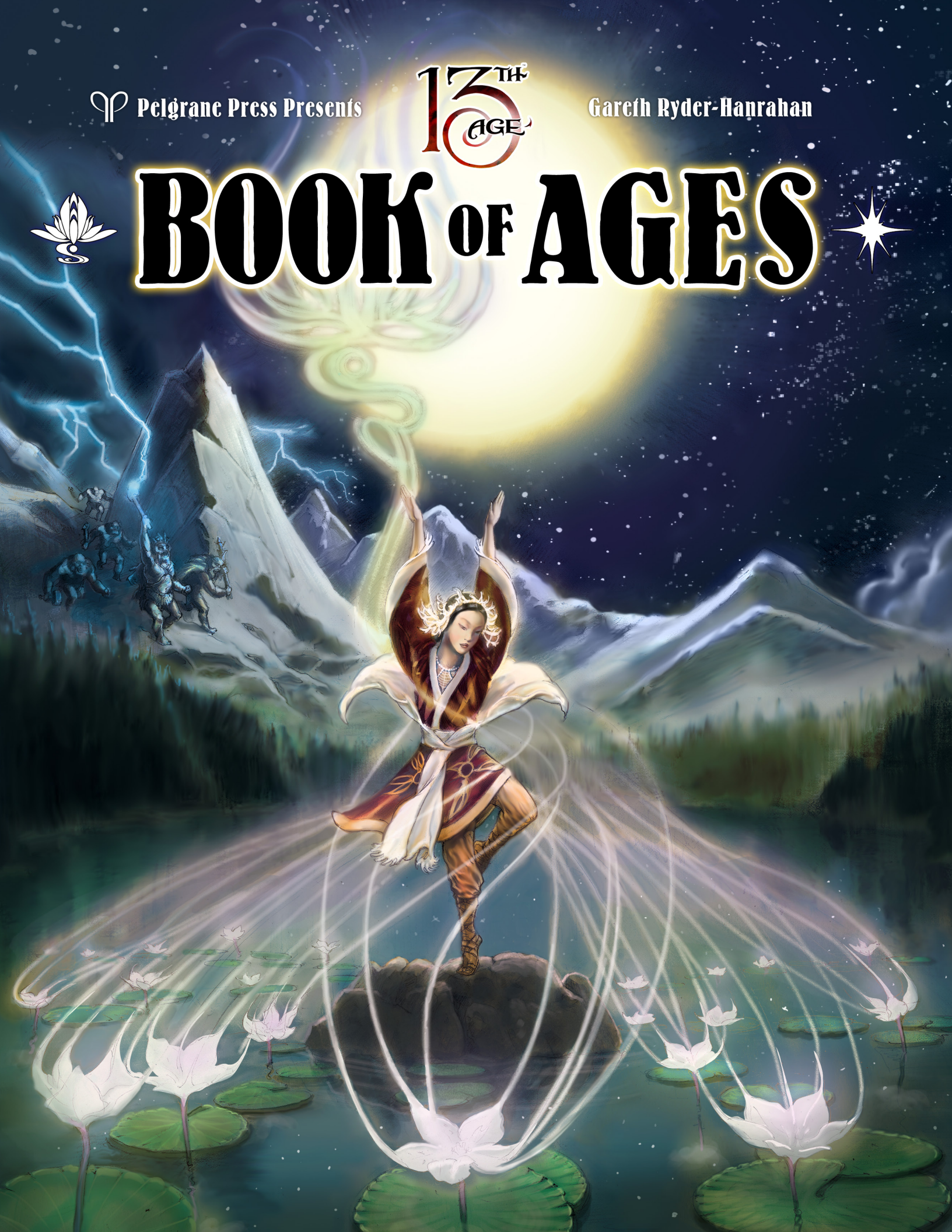
Pelgrane Press Presents

13<sup>TH</sup>  
AGE

Gareth Ryder-Hanrahan



# BOOK OF AGES





# 13<sup>TH</sup> AGE

## BOOK OF AGES

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Pelgrane Press

**13<sup>TH</sup> AGE IS A FANTASY ROLEPLAYING GAME BY  
ROB HEINSOO, JONATHAN TWEET,  
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# i n t r o d u c t i o n

Many *13<sup>th</sup> Age* books acknowledge the world's potential for extremely diverse campaigns by combining the writing of several designers. *Book of Ages*, by contrast, is the work of a singular author with a multiplicity of understandings!

Gareth considered the possibilities generated by a succession of icons through the ages and came up with three inspirational approaches. Each of the three main sections of this book offers a different way of making the Dragon Empire's past relevant to your present campaign.

**Section 1: Ages & Icons** analyzes the icons of the current Dragon Empire to identify categories that may guide your thinking about previous ages. Gareth's perspective on the icons is probably a bit different than the view Jonathan and I share, so we cover that difference in a couple designer sidebars.

**Section 2: The Engine of the Ages** moves away from analysis to provide a practical system for generating a history of the world's previous ages as a shared storytelling event for players and GM.

**Section 3: A Scattering of Ages** is by far the largest section of the book, devoted to providing overviews of possible earlier ages that include playable elements like monsters, spells, magic items, and even new races you can add to the 13<sup>th</sup> Age. The ages aren't strictly numbered, but they do have ranges presented as

die rolls that suggest whether they should be early ages, middle-ages, or double-digit ages just before the 13<sup>th</sup>.

Although *Book of Ages* is oriented towards GMs, this section is great reading for players, especially players looking for historical hooks and magical connections for their PC. There are enough uncertainties and twists to keep the true stories of earlier ages a mystery the GM can tweak as needed, even when a player adapts a portion of the world's history as a component of their One Unique Thing.

## THE COVER

The cover is another collaboration between Aaron McConnell (pencils) and Lee Moyer (color and lighting). We conceived this as a scene in which the Grandmaster of Flowers gathers her *ki* before a necessary confrontation with the Chieftain of the Giants. As you'll see in *A Scattering of Ages*, the Chieftain of the Giants and the Grandmaster of Flowers are said to appear at opposite ends of the Dragon Empire's history. Putting them together on the cover is our way of saying that all the elements of this book should be mixed as you desire! Improvise with the pieces you enjoy and leave the other bits in the past.

—Rob Heinsoo,  
Seattle, May 2018





## SECTION I

# AGES & ICONS

## ON AGES

Twelve ages have passed since the reign and fall of the Wizard King and the foundation of the Dragon Empire...but what's an age? And how long is that exactly? These questions are of comparatively little importance in a regular 13<sup>th</sup> Age campaign compared to "what's that scaly fire-breathing monster-snake over there" and "how long is it, roughly, because if it's a huge monster we're screwed," but in a book all about ages we must at least briefly define our terms.

## WHAT IS AN AGE?

An age is a period of history that, in retrospect, has a discernible arc or overriding influence. Ages are book-ended by catastrophes. So, the First Age was dominated by the founding of the Empire in the aftermath of the Wizard King's defeat, and ended when the giants razed Axis. That isn't to say, of course, that there isn't tumult and catastrophe at times other than the start and end of ages. Every peril that threatens the Empire is hailed by *someone* as the turning of an age but of course they're almost always wrong.

By the by, ages are irrelevant to most people in the Dragon Empire. The fact that it's the 13<sup>th</sup> Age as opposed to the 14<sup>th</sup> or the 12<sup>th</sup> seldom matters on an everyday level. Official dates in some cultures are based on it ("hear ye, hear ye: it's year 214 of the 13<sup>th</sup> Age"), but your average woman on the guardwall or peasant in the fields reckons time imprecisely, perhaps based on the reign of Emperors ("in the 17<sup>th</sup> year of Emperor Olthius") or another icon that's closer to their lives.

## WHO DEFINES AN AGE?

When we said that ages are irrelevant to most people, we didn't mean all people. Icons care. In most worlds, most powerful spellcasters also care.

So here are a couple options for tracking the changing of the ages. The first option is more Gareth's option, and suggests that there's nothing inherently magical about the ages. The second option is more how Rob thinks, connecting the ages to the type of mystical power represented by the icons. Both options provide worthwhile storylines.

**Disputed histories:** In the 13<sup>th</sup> Age, the historians and chroniclers in the towers of the Archmage in Horizon have assumed responsibility for defining the ages. (Other ages may have had other reckoners.) This usually happens after the fact—"clearly," they might have said, "the defeat of the Sea Raiders a generation ago marked a great change in the affairs of the Empire, so we have decided that the 11<sup>th</sup> Age ended at the Battle of the Redwater and we are now in the first century of the 12<sup>th</sup>

Age". At times, ambitious Emperors have pressured the sages into prematurely declaring the start of a new age, but such hubris is usually punished by disaster.

**Iconic insight:** Is it a surprise that it's the icons themselves who understand when an age has passed? The icons don't agree on much, but they know within a few years when an age has actually ended and a new age begun. For the doomed, that knowledge comes too late, but the world—and even the Empire—endure. So far.

This doesn't mean that the icons agree on the precise timing of the end of an age or the causes of the end. Icons tend to be oriented towards doing things instead of recording careful histories, and catastrophes play havoc with record-keeping. Stories agreed on by the elves of the Court of Stars may not be agreed with by wild elves of the Frost Range, much less human historians and dungeon-crawling adventure archaeologists.

## HOW LONG IS AN AGE?

It varies. If you like, you could say that recent ages are usually a few hundred years long, but that's not necessarily going to fit all campaigns. Earlier ages might have been much longer, for the further back you go in the history of the Dragon Empire, the more uncertain things become.

Of course the real answer is that ages last as long as the Gamemaster needs! If you want an absurdly ancient Empire, then maybe the first age lasted ten thousand years. If you want something faster and more chaotic, then ages might last scarcely a century, and some of the earlier ages might be entirely fraudulent. ("Historians!" shouts the barbarian king who's just claimed the throne, "insert another age, and relate to me tales from that era about how my ancestors ruled the Empire, and how I am therefore reclaiming my rightful inheritance from an usurper [and am not, as it might appear, a bloody-handed mass murderer.]")

## DO AGES MEAN ANYTHING?

Now that's an interesting question. How much mystical significance does an age have?

The catastrophe that ends an age usually results in the death, diminishment or transformation of one or more icons; it's unheard-of for two ages to have exactly the same roster of icons.

Of course, that implies other questions, like: is an icon simply a powerful or influential individual, or are they somehow an embodiment/reflection/wellspring of mystical power? Does the appearance of the Priestess in the 13<sup>th</sup> Age mean that divine magic will become more powerful? Does the loss of the Oracle

mean that it's now harder—or even impossible—to see the future?

If an age is defined by its icons, then are there a limited number of iconic “slots” available? If there are always 13 icons in the 13<sup>th</sup> Age, no more and no less, and the existence of an icon has mystical significance, then the goal of every sinister conspiracy and cult might be to eliminate an existing icon to elevate their own champion. If the Orc Lord dies in battle, and the Lizard Queen takes his place, then will orcs become weak and fearful, and lizard-folk become stronger and fiercer in their stead?

Alternatively, icons might be purely a measure of local praxis—the Emperor's an icon in the Empire, but has no reach beyond it, and if you follow the Koru trail up north, then local potentates like the Frostjack, the Living Glacier or the Hobgoblin Chieftain take on iconic roles. In that interpretation, a player could even take icon-style relationships with these smaller-scale icons that would only work when in that icon's zone of influence. There still might be a Grandmaster of Flowers in some hidden monastery where she trains monks, and she works as an icon when you're adventuring near that holy mountain, but she doesn't have the Empire-wide reach of her forebears.

Another possibility is that some forms of magic might be possible in one age, but not in others. There might be ages when all arcane magic just stopped working for centuries, until the world turned again. There might be ages when other forms of magical power (psionics, maybe) worked, but they stopped when the age changed, leaving behind only a few impossible relics and the memories of wonder.

Some astoundingly potent rituals and spells might be restricted to once-per-age, just as *resurrection* is once-per-lifetime, more or less.



*Jonathan and I are most often in the camp that icons are definitely an embodiment or reflection or wellspring of mystical power. The fact that Gareth is asking whether icons might simply be powerful or influential individuals is a question we don't ask in our campaigns, but your answers may shift. Personally, I'm much more taken with the idea of local icons up the Koru trail and elsewhere beyond the edges of the map.*

## ON ICONS

In many 13<sup>th</sup> Age campaigns, there are effectively three types of icons—*eternal icons*, *age-defining icons* and *recurring icons*.

### ETERNAL ICONS

Eternal icons are the foundation of the Dragon Empire setting, the ones who shape everything from the geography and cosmology of the setting to the relations between the races. They're either immortal, like the Great Gold Wyrm or the Lich

King, or represent an office or position that's so important that something like it exists in every age. For example, there's always an Emperor—he might be good or bad, wise or foolish, a mighty warrior or an enchanted dupe, he might have been enslaved to a soul-eating sword or turned into a hamster, but someone's always going to be the titular head of the Empire.

While immortals and institutions persist from age to age, they're not always important enough to be, well, icons. If the Great Gold Wyrm slumbers for an age, or the dwarves retreat into the mountains and bar their doors, or the Lich King stays dead, then they won't exert enough influence on the world to count for relationship dice and other iconic effects. The Three, for example, are always out there, but they're not always active enough in the Empire to be counted among the icons of an age. These absences are the exception, though, not the rule. If there's no Elf Queen, or no Emperor, then that lack of a ruler warrants an explanation and no doubt shapes the history of the age. If there's no Emperor, or a really weak and ineffectual Emperor, that changes how the Dragon Empire works in this age.

Note that our use of the word 'eternal' may only mean 'eternal-so-far.' Destruction of an icon should always be in play...

## AGE-DEFINING ICONS

The opposite of these eternal icons are age-defining icons that pop up for an age or two, then vanish or perish—but while they're on the stage of history, they change the world. In the 13<sup>th</sup> Age, figures like the Priestess, the Orc Lord and maybe the Crusader are new and strange, and they make the 13<sup>th</sup> Age a time when civilization clashes with chaos and old debts are settled. An age of sorcery might bring forth one-shot icons that embody the magic of the age—for example, the Pyromancer, the Librarian, the Burner of Books, Staffbreaker, or the Living Spell.

Use age-defining icons to highlight the theme of the age, and arrange them in pairs to show its tensions. If an age is “about” justice, then maybe its age-defining icons are the Executioner and the Anarchist. If it's about dungeon crawling, then key icons might be the Dungeon Keeper and the Tomb Robber.

When setting up iconic contrasts like this, the trick is to make the icons extreme yet ambiguous. Look at, say, the Diabolist and the Crusader in the 13<sup>th</sup> Age. The Crusader says “demons must be destroyed!” which is absolutely true, but then he goes too far and makes it tricky for players to unquestioningly agree with him: “demons must be destroyed, so I'll ally with the gods of evil to stop them.” On the other side is the Diabolist, who starts out with “demon summoning is fun”—which is obviously foolish on the face of it, but then she adds “and I'm keeping the demons in check, so without me, things would be much worse”.

You could have less nuanced versions of either icons, like a Crusader who just wants to fight demons and has no truck with the dark gods, or a Diabolist who's obviously outright evil and is plotting with demons to end the world, but they're dull by comparison. Every icon should have some flaw, drawback or problem to make things interesting.

## RECURRING ICONS

Our third category of icon is *recurring* icons; icons that show up for an age or two, vanish for a while, then reappear in roughly the same form. They're not so strongly connected to the theme of a particular age that they only make sense in that context, but they also aren't so foundational to the setting that it's not the Dragon Empire without them. The Prince of Shadows or the High Druid are examples of this sort of icon that flits in and out of history.

### TWO OF THE ABOVE

Icons can drift between categories, of course. If you see the Lich King as a threat that rises and falls, as opposed to a constant danger, then count him as recurring instead of eternal. Maybe the Dwarf King represents a historic high point for the dwarves—there's always a king on the throne, but it was only once, long ago, that there was a truly great, iconic Dwarf King. Maybe there's *always* a Diabolist, but they vary hugely, and this is one of the 'better' ones?

## THE DEFAULT DRAGON EMPIRE

Here's an assessment of how the icons of the 13<sup>th</sup> Age have been presented in most of our published material.

**Archmage:** Probably recurring, possibly eternal.

**Crusader:** Probably age-defining, possibly recurring.

**Diabolist:** Probably recurring, possibly age-defining, possibly even eternal.

**Dwarf King:** Probably eternal, possibly recurring.

**Elf Queen:** Probably eternal, possibly recurring.

**Emperor:** Probably eternal.

**Great Gold Wyrn:** Probably eternal.

**High Druid:** Probably recurring.

**Lich King:** Probably eternal, possibly recurring.

**Orc Lord:** Age-defining.

**Priestess:** Age-defining.

**Prince of Shadows:** Probably recurring, possibly eternal.

**The Three:** Possibly eternal, possibly recurring.

## APPLYING TERMS

Section 2, the Engine of the Ages, doesn't try to apply the terminology used above, at least not until *after* the exercise in joint-history is complete. Some of the icons used by the Engine will turn out to be eternal. It's the nature of the way the Engine works that the icons it cares most about won't qualify as age-defining—by definition, the Engine aims to portray dynamics that function over multiple ages.

Section 3 uses the assessment of the default Dragon Empire that's just above as the basis for the icons it mentions often: the Archmage, Diabolist, Dwarf King, Elf Queen, Emperor, and so on, show up in many ages. The Emperor, in fact, shows up somehow in all of them. What sets many of the named ages in Section 3 apart are the icons that define the age.



## SECTION 2

# THE ENGINE OF THE AGES

The Engine of the Ages is a set of rules for collaboratively outlining the history of the Dragon Empire. You can use it at the start of a campaign, to get everyone involved and invested in the setting, or turn to it later on, once the personalities of the player characters are fully established and it's time to put them on a larger stage.

## SETUP

First, decide how far back you want to go. You can cover the full history of the Empire by running through all twelve past ages, or just focus on recent history. Pick either a d12 (twelve ages), d10, d8, d6 or a d4. This is the **Age die**. The larger the Age die, the farther back in history you're going. For example, a d4 takes you back to the 9<sup>th</sup> Age, the d8 takes you back to the 5<sup>th</sup>.

**One faction apiece:** Next, each player picks a faction. Any group can be a faction—the various races (elves, dwarves, halflings, gnomes) are obvious candidates, as are groups like the wizards, monks, druids, or organizations like the dragon-riding Imperial Cavalry, the merchants, the barbarians, or the Koru tribes. There's a long list of potential factions starting on page 22.

If a player wishes, it's fine to pick monstrous or evil factions. This is a storytelling trope, not a new element of player character design. A faction doesn't have to be related to the player's character, although it's polite to let the elf player have first dibs on describing the history of the elves and so forth.

"Humans" are probably too broad and numerous to be a faction, although you could certainly take "The Empire" as a faction—meaning the Imperial court, bureaucracy, and the relative control of the central government.

**Choose the icon associated with your faction:** The choice may be obvious. If the choice is weird (for example, your faction of werewolves associates itself with the Dwarf King), you'll have a lot of explaining to do and a strange campaign.

Your faction does not have to be connected to a current icon, but if it isn't, then it had an icon in the past at some point. So, if you pick the gnomes, you could either say the gnomes are associated with a current icon, like the Elf Queen or the Prince of Shadows, or else say that the Gnome Czar was important in the past, but is no longer a full-fledged icon.

Don't double-up. Each player should have a different icon as well as a different faction.

**GM/NPC factions:** The Gamemaster should pick a few NPC factions that may play a part in the campaign. Aim for half the maximum value of the Age Die as a guide, so use two extra factions if the Age Die is a d4, six if it's a d12.

For example, if you know you're going to set the present-day campaign in Glitterhaegen, and you really like using vampires as bad guys, then maybe pick "merchant guilds of Glitterhaegen" and "vampires" as the NPC factions. If you already have player characters rolled up, then consider picking factions related to their icons. So, if you've got a demon-hunting paladin among your PCs, then maybe the Diabolist's demon-worshipping cults are a faction that will show up throughout history. If one of the players is playing a dwarven noble, then maybe have 'dwarf rebels' as a recurring faction.

The trick here is that you'll want the NPC factions to be associated with an icon that the players haven't already associated with one of their factions.

If you don't have an adventuring party in mind, then pick whatever factions appeal to you.

**Putting it to paper:** You'll need a large sheet of paper. Draw one column for each age, and one for each row for each faction. Add another, larger row for notes and historical events in that age which are not connected to a particular faction.

## KEY RULE: EVERYTHING'S NEGOTIABLE

The Engine of Ages is a loose tool for collaborative storytelling, not a hard set of rules. Nothing's set in stone. Talk to your fellow players if you think changing something will lead to a more fun game when you actually start playing the campaign. You're building the set and writing the backstory here—everything exists to support the campaign you'll play when the Engine's done.

If your group has some members with strong likes or dislikes ("I can't stand politics and intrigue!" or "can we make this a really, really weird Empire? Like, Glorantha weird"), then you may wish to spend a few minutes discussing cultural touchstones and common reference points, or even suggest the use of Add/Ban Lists.

## OPTIONAL RULE: ADD/BAN LISTS

Optionally, before you begin, allow each player to nominate a theme or concept to add and a concept to ban, so everyone can shape the type of history you're creating into something. A concept might be anything from "things fall from the overworld every age" to "no civil wars" to "accurate prophecies."

Added concepts won't automatically show up in the finished ages, but they're a great way to bring in ideas that don't fit your faction. If you're playing, say, the Imperial Army as a faction, you could add "elven court intrigues are super-murder," and create a Byzantine court of assassins and secret murders that have nothing to do with the Imperial Army—assuming the elf player (if there is one) is ok with that sort of addition.

Banning concepts lets you and your players ensure that concepts you dislike ("no time travel"), are tired of ("we just finished *Stone Thief*—I'm putting living dungeons on the banned list") or are uncomfortable with ("no spider stuff") won't come up as central elements of the story.

Keep the list of added or banned concepts to hand when using the Engine of the Ages.

## ANOTHER OPTION: NOT THE DRAGON EMPIRE ANY MORE

The assumption in this book is that you're playing in something like the Dragon Empire setting of *13<sup>th</sup> Age*. If you're playing in another setting, or building one from scratch, you'll have to come up with your own map and list of icons.

Decide on the rough outline of your map before you start the Engine. You can fill in cities and other geographical features in response to events ("the centaurs had a great time in the 4<sup>th</sup> Age, so we'll add the City of the Centaurs here, and I guess they'd live on a wide grassy plain, so let's add some steppes...")

## ANCHOR POINTS

History isn't smooth—fortunes wax and wane, circumstances change ("events, dear boy, events") and the events are misremembered or forgotten as the wheels of fate turn. Still, some deeds are so glorious or so terrible that they will be remembered for all eternity. These are the high points and the low, the golden ages and the depths of defeat, the ages of legend and wild heroism. In the Engine of Ages, we call these Anchors. They're the fixed points that give shape to history. They give your group a structure to build your history around.

There are four types of Anchors:

- **Zenith:** The absolute high point of a faction's fortunes—the age in which they were at their peak. Depending on the faction's ethos, this might be a time of glorious conquest or blessed peace, a time when they built great cities or a time when the forests reclaimed the land, a time when there were shining universities dedicated to sharing arcane knowledge or a time when the skies were torn open by demonic claws and the hosts of hell walked the earth. At a faction's zenith, they were on top.
- **Nadir:** By contrast, the faction's nadir is the point when they were absolutely at their lowest. It might be the result of a long decline, or a sudden catastrophe.
  - Alternatively, the nadir might mark the *beginning* of a faction, when it was weakest and most vulnerable, but has nowhere to go but up.
- **Crossover:** Crossover Anchors mark ages when the faction was closely associated with another group. Alliances, wars, partnerships, first contact—all types of crossover. A crossover might be with an existing faction belonging to another player or the GM, but you can also pick a group that hasn't shown up in the history so far, or invent your own group. You can, for example, cross-over with demons, or the overworld or the folk of the Flying Islands.
- **Iconic:** Iconic Anchors are times when the faction's icon *changed*. It could mark the rise of that icon, or their fall. It could reflect one icon getting replaced by another (the Terrible Emperor becoming the Emperor), or the nature of the icon changing (the Great Gold Wyrms descending into the Abyss to stop the demons, changing from an active force in the world to an icon who communicates through dreams and portents.) It could result in the replacement of the icon completely, so that the faction's story continues with a new icon.

## ANCHOR ALLOTMENTS

Each player faction gets a number of Anchors. The longer the span of history you want to cover, the more Anchors.

AGES COVERED	AGE DIE TYPE USED	ANCHOR
4 (9 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> )	d4	2 (One Crossover, one Random)
6 (7 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> )	d6	3 (Crossover, Random, Random)
8 (5 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> )	d8	4 (Crossover, Iconic, Random, Random)
10 (3 <sup>rd</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> )	d10	5 (Zenith, Nadir, Iconic, Crossover, Random)
12 (1 <sup>st</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> )	d12	6 (Zenith, Nadir, Iconic, Crossover, Crossover, Random)

## HIGH-SPEED HISTORY

Another option is to pick a few ages across the span of history, and only drop Anchors in those ages. For example, instead of covering the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Ages, you could pick the 1st, 4th, 8th and 12th Ages, and let the history of the intervening ages be discovered in play. When the player rolls the age die to drop an Anchor, only use your chosen ages. So, a roll of a 3 would mean the 4th Age, not the 10th.

## GAMEMASTER FACTIONS

The GM gets the same number of Anchors, but must split them among all the NPC factions. Also, the NPC Anchors have random types!

### Random Anchors

Roll a d6. Reroll if you get the same result twice on two random rolls.

1: Nadir

2-3: Iconic

4-5: Crossover

6: Zenith

## SOW ANCHOR POINTS

Next, each player takes it in turns to pick one of their faction's Anchors and then roll the age die to determine how far back that Anchor gets placed in history. For example, if a player rolls a 3, then that Anchor event happened three ages ago (the 10<sup>th</sup> Age, if you're playing in the 13<sup>th</sup> Age.) Note down that Anchor in that faction's row on the tracker sheet.

- If an age already has an Anchor from your faction, and you roll that age for a second Anchor, you may choose to move one of the clashing ages forwards or backwards, or you can just assume that your faction had a particularly chaotic or complex period in their history. The one exception to this rule is that you cannot have a Zenith and a Nadir at the same time, and have to move one of them so they don't clash. Either your faction rose like a phoenix from ruin (Zenith after Nadir), or more plausibly, you crashed hard after a golden age (Nadir after Zenith).
- The earliest Anchor rolled for your faction is the point at which your faction began—or at least became a power to be reckoned with.

## EXAMPLE CHRONICLE

Three players—Aidan, Brian and Cat—play the *Engine of the Ages*. Aidan picks the thieves as his faction; Brian goes for the Imperial Legions, and Cat plays the Dark Elves. They decide on their icons and roll for their Random Anchors. The GM expects that the undead, the dwarves and the wizards will play big roles in the campaign, so she picks them as her GM factions and splits her Anchors between them.

PLAYER	FACTION	ICON	ANCHORS
Aidan	Thieves	Prince of Shadows	Zenith, Nadir, Iconic, Crossover, Crossover, Zenith
Brian	Imperial Legions	Emperor	Zenith, Nadir, Iconic, Crossover, Crossover, Nadir
Cat	Dark Elves	Elf Queen	Zenith, Nadir, Iconic, Crossover, Crossover, Iconic
GM	Undead Dwarves Wizards	Lich King Dwarf Lord Archmage	Zenith, Iconic Crossover, Nadir Crossover, Iconic

## EXAMPLE CHRONICLE

Next, they take it in turns to roll the age die and distribute their Anchors throughout history.

	1 <sup>ST</sup>	2 <sup>ND</sup>	3 <sup>RD</sup>	4 <sup>TH</sup>	5 <sup>TH</sup>	6 <sup>TH</sup>	7 <sup>TH</sup>	8 <sup>TH</sup>	9 <sup>TH</sup>	10 <sup>TH</sup>	11 <sup>TH</sup>	12 <sup>TH</sup>
Thieves				Crossover	Zenith		Nadir	Iconic		Zenith		Cross-over
Imperial Legions		Cross-over	Zenith	Nadir Iconic	Cross-over					Nadir		
Dark Elves					Nadir		Zenith	Iconic	Iconic		Cross-over	Cross-over
Undead (GM)									Zenith	Iconic		
Dwarves (GM)				Crossover				Iconic				
Wizards (GM)										Iconic		Cross-over

Already, the rough shape of history is becoming visible. The Imperial Legions is clearly the oldest of the factions (earliest Anchor), but seems to have been in a long decline (two low points in the 4th and 10th Ages). The Thieves and the Dark Elves appear to be in opposition (when one is at its zenith, the other's at a nadir, and vice versa, and look at that Iconic face-off in the 8th Age!). The undead rose up in the 9th Age, which might explain the 10th Age Nadir of the Legions.

Looking at potential Crossovers, there's a really interesting three-way cross in the 12th Age—maybe that was an age of intrigue, or a time when different factions came together to build a new Empire.

## CHRONICLE THE AGES

The next step is to chronicle the history of the Dragon Empire. In this phase, the Gamemaster acts as a present-day chronicler and historian, travelling across the land and learning about its history. The players take on the roles of sages and experts, who answer the GM's questions.

Start with the earliest Anchor and work through the ages until the Chronicle reaches the 12<sup>th</sup> Age. In each age, flesh out details on each Anchor by asking question as the chronicler.

When answering questions, players should keep future Anchors in mind—if you know that your faction is going to rise again in the next age, then sow the seeds of this rebirth in your answers. Also, look at the other Anchor events in the current age and see if you can work them in to your story— if it's been established, say, that there was a cataclysmic war between orcs and dwarves in the present age, then try to include the effects of that war on your faction in your answers.

**GMs!** Don't ask open-ended questions. Be specific. Instead of saying "tell me about your zenith in the 7<sup>th</sup> Age", say "what great deed is remembered from that era" or "how did the Elves

rid the Empire of the terrible danger that threatened it." (There are lists of prompts for the different types of Anchors starting on page 16.)

Ask questions in character. Imagine you're a young pilgrim-scholar looking for signs of the past. "This great rift-valley is clearly a crater left by some magical battle—tell me, oh sage, who made it and who were they fighting?"

Pick emblematic details. If an age is one of trade and discovery, then ask about one specific trading voyage and expand out from there. If it's one of chaos and upheaval, ask about how one particular hero helped avert a disaster.

Always tie things back to the player characters and the campaign. Setting history that doesn't affect actual play is hollow; ask the players to tell you how a particular historical detail affects the lives of their player characters. If a player describes how, in a distant age, the High Elves contacted a mysterious species of high-dimensional arcane entities, then get the player to suggest how this contact might play into the campaign. (Possible answers: "my character's looking for the spell to contact them again; ever since, there's an elven law against certain forms of dimension-breaching magic; they say that these entities are lurking behind the overworld, looking for a way back in; I inherited a magical bracelet that came from their dimension...")

**Players!** The current faction's player is the most authoritative voice on that faction's history, but that doesn't mean that everyone else has to stay quiet. Offer suggestions ("maybe they got eaten by owlbears"), take on the role of dissident experts and historians who know the 'real' history. ("Lies! That crater wasn't made by the Archmage! It was actually the Diabolist who saved the Elves, but they covered up her involvement!") or give your faction's perspective on the events ("the Elves always use this as an excuse to steal from us!")

Create wildly. Drop as many proper names as you can, and don't worry about what they mean. Instead of saying "the Dwarves came to our aid", say "the Dwarven Rockeater Army rode to our aid on their Earthships". Remember, while the GM may be playing a clueless but experienced chronicler, you are an august historian steeped in obscure lore—be more interested in details and trivia than in the big picture.

**GM-Faction Anchors:** It's up to the GM to decide how to handle these. You might like to run through the full sequence for each of your Anchors—having the players ask you questions, rolling for Legacies and so on. Alternatively, you can just briefly narrate what happened to that particular GM-faction in the current age (*"meanwhile, the goblins reached their Zenith and built the Glorious Goblin City..."*). Use them to foreshadow elements and stories that you're going to bring in later in the campaign.

GM Anchors get used a lot in Crossovers, so let them shine there.

## OPTIONAL: PLAYING THROUGH SCENES

If your group likes improv, consider running mini-scenes for each Anchor. Once the faction player has decided what the Anchor is about (*"my elves are crossing over with Bob's Moonwreck Barbarians, because in this age a spell caused thick forests to spread over all the northern half of the Empire and the barbarians found themselves hunted by cruel Dark Elves"*), the GM frames the scene and gives some or all of the players a role to play. (*"Mike, you're playing an emissary from the Elf Queen's court, sent to tell the Dark Elves to stop hunting the humans—but are you willing to go to war with your kin to enforce this ban? Bob, you're playing the barbarian leader, and Sarah, you're the Dark Elf huntress who's got Bob at your mercy. And... go!"*)

## STARTING ANCHORS

A faction's earliest Anchor marks their emergence onto the stage of history. Did the faction:

- Arrive in the Dragon Empire from outside
- Decide to take an active hand in the affairs of history
- Coalesce from existing groups that were previously too weak or disorganized to act

- Grow from the ruins of an earlier faction
- Get founded by some other faction or authority, like the Emperor
- Form in response to a threat or cataclysm?

## ZENITHS

A faction at its Zenith is in the middle of a golden age, a time of prosperity and strength where great triumphs are accomplished. How does that affect the other factions and the rest of the Empire? Is the faction the ruling group in the Empire during this time? Do they control the Emperor and Axis as a puppet, or are they simply so influential that they can guide the Empire from their home region? What wonders and great works did the faction accomplish during this age? Is it remembered in the present as a golden age, or as a time of hubris and folly when the faction overreached itself?

(For more specific questions, see Zenith Prompts on page 16).

If a faction *began* at its zenith, then:

- That age may be a mythical lost age, an impossible divine perfection that was later ground down by the tawdry imperfections of the world
- The faction might be like an exotic orchid, grown in hothouse conditions, that has difficulty surviving when exposed to the vicissitudes of the world
- The faction might be the result of some magical intrusion or divine intervention
- The faction grew in secret in some refuge or hiding place, and its zenith was before it made contact with the outside world

## NADIRS

A faction at its nadir is broken, scattered, demoralized—or worse. The faction might be in chains, taken prisoner by some conqueror, on the run as criminals, driven underground as a secret society (or literally driven underground and forced to live in the underworld). What happened to destroy the faction? Did it fall in the cataclysm that ended the previous age? Was in the loser in some conflict? Did it fall victim to internal strife, or to some plague or disaster? Desperate times force unwelcome changes—what moral compromises or monstrous bargains did the faction make to survive?

(Again, for more specific questions, see Nadir Prompts on page 16).

If a faction begins at a nadir, well, it has nowhere to go but up. It usually implies that the faction:

- Was enslaved and won their freedom
- Was forced to join together because of the horrors of their circumstances
- Was rallied by their icon
- Arrived in the Empire in disarray, possibly fleeing some other danger

## Iconic

Icons are supposed to be the stable centers of their factions, the fixed points around which events revolve. The Emperor sits on his throne, ruling over the court and the Imperial Bureaucracy. The Archmage is off experimenting and making the world a safer and/or weirder place; the Lich King sits on *his* bony throne, scheming to reclaim his kingdom. Icons act through intermediaries and agents, and act in accordance with their faction. That's how it's supposed to be.

In Iconic Ages, all bets are off. In these times, an icon might:

- Arise or perish
- Be transformed or replaced by another, radically different incarnation
- Take direct action in the world, leading to some terrifying change
- Go rogue or vanish
- Become embroiled in scandal, intrigue or other weirdness

If a faction begins with an Iconic event, then that faction was created directly by that icon.

## Crossover

Crossovers are times when the destinies of two factions become intertwined. A crossover isn't just a time of war or trade between the two—it's when both factions are deeply changed by contact with one another. For example:

- The two factions enter into an age-long alliance that shapes both cultures
- The icons of the two factions marry or bond, temporarily uniting the two
- One faction enslaves another with spells of magical mind control which are not broken until the end of the age
- The factions become bitter rivals, and spent the whole age locked in a vicious war of assassins and spies

The player who rolled the Crossover Anchor picks the other faction involved. It can be the faction of another player, one of the GM's factions, or another group that hasn't shown up in the history so far.

If a faction begins in a crossover, then it might be an offspring of an existing faction (the Elves created the Orc Lord, for example), or it might have been forced into existence by the pressure of the other faction (one could see the rise of the Crusader as a reaction to the malign schemes of the Diabolist).

There are more crossover prompts on page 17.

## LEGENDS, LEGACIES & LAIRS

After exploring the story of an Anchor, the active player rolls a d6 to determine if it left a Legend, a Legacy, or a Lair.

**1-2 Legend:** The people of that faction still tell tales of that age. They might remember a great saga about a hero, or maybe it's become a folk tale or a custom. Still, it's left a mark on the culture of that faction—the faction's player describe a custom or story that dates back to that past age. (Stories of this sort are

wonderful fodder for magic items and artefacts—if you tell the tale of the mighty orc-bard Gorak the Shouter and his enchanted war-horn, maybe the Gamemaster will include that war-horn for you to find in some future dungeon.)

**3-4 Legacy:** Some institution, group, structure or enchantment survives from that distant age. This might be an order of knights (*"ever since the giant wars, the dwarf-kingdom has been guarded by the elite Kneecappers"*), a university, a city, a fortress, a magical spell (like the binding placed by the Archmage on the Midland Sea). Unlike a Legend, which is mostly forgotten in the present day, Legacies are still active and have continued largely unchanged since they began.

**5-6 Lair:** A Lair is a dungeon dating back to that past age. Or it might refer to the lair of a monster that dates back to that age. Or it might be a plague, or a curse, or some other peril that has survived through history. Lairs are problems from the past that still threaten the present.

## ANCHORLESS AGES

If the group rolls an age without any Anchors whatsoever, then choose one of the following options:

- The GM picks one of the sample ages from this book and drops it into the history
- The GM picks a new faction from the Faction Table (page 22), rolls a single Random Anchor for that faction, and tells the story of that age.
- Each player briefly narrates how their faction lived in this age, foreshadowing their next Anchor. For example, if the next Anchor is a Nadir, the player might talk about the slow decline of their faction as they become weak or degenerate.
- Skip the age entirely for the moment—it's a blank bit of history that can get filled in later in the campaign

## HOW DID THE AGE END?

The Engine of the Ages creates a lot of fascinating history that the players will know better than their characters, but if there's one thing that tends to get remembered, it's how an age ended!

Once the players have explored all the Anchors from a particular age, then collectively decide how that age ended. Ages always end in some tremendous upheaval, usually a calamity of some sort. Was this catastrophe an unexpected one (*"and then the asteroid hit the Dragon Empire"*)? Was it brewing through for centuries (*"the long-burning hatred between the Halflings and the Gnomes exploded into the War of the Burrows"*)? Was it the result of an icon's decisions (*"and all was well in the Dragon Empire until the Emperor went mad..."*)?

Alternatively, roll on the Random World-Shattering Cataclysm Table (page 17).

# TIE IT ALL TOGETHER

Finally, once you have the key points of the age defined for each faction, and you know how the age ends, the GM sums up the era and fills in any gaps. This summation can be as detailed or sketchy as needed. For long-ago ages, there's no need to tie things up neatly, as events get remembered as myths and the historical context is lost. More recent ages need to be more cohesive and address what the various other factions and icons were doing—if all the cities of the Empire got destroyed by the Red in the last age, then the histories of the current age may need to talk about how the cities got rebuilt (was Horizon conjured out of nothing by the Archmage? Is Santa Cora a city of miracles? Is Axis a patchwork, built of stone quarried, and relics salvaged, from the ruins of past cities?).

## ZEPITH PROMPTS

*The Chronicler asks...*

- Everyone knows, of course, that your faction saved the world in that age. Pray tell me, o sage, how did this come to pass, and what was the threat that you thwarted in that golden age?
- Yonder palace there is truly magnificent, and I see that it dates from the age in question. Who built that palace, and why? What tales can you tell me about it?
- On my travels, I noticed that your people built shrines and monuments to mark the borders of their domain. No doubt, in previous ages when you controlled a larger portion of the Empire, you did the same thing. Tell me, please, where is the farthest-flung border marker, the one that marks the ultimate extent of your domain, and what does it look like?
- I have here a coin sold to me by a merchant who told me that it dated back to that age. The coin is rubbed almost smooth, but I can see what seem to be a head on this face, and on the reverse, a rune or message. What is this coin?
- When your people remember this golden age, what songs do they sing? How do they remember the days of glory?
- What tribute did other factions give you in your days of glory?
- In my home city, I saw a play set in that age entitled *The Hubris of the [Faction]*. I'm told it's quite famous, but also controversial. Tell me, what are the errors in that play? How does it misrepresent your golden age?
- In those days (it is known), your wizards and spellcasters worked great wonders and built astounding wards. Where are these wards, and what do they defend against?
- What astounding invention or discovery, remembered to this day, did your people achieve in this age?
- Who was the greatest enemy of your people in those days? Were they able to attack you directly, or was your power so great that they had to undermine your people in secret?
- What god or power was most venerated in that age? Are they still worshipped by your folk?

- I found this helmet in an ancient tomb, and some sages claim that it was a symbol or badge of office among your people in that age. What does this helmet signify?
- What single deed was the highest accomplishment of your people in that age?

## PADIR PROMPTS

*The Chronicler asks...*

- When your people were forced to flee, where or with whom did they take shelter?
- In those dark days, did your people hold true to their beliefs and morals, or did you compromise in order to survive? Did everyone agree with this choice?
- I have heard tell that your people had to be very frugal in order to survive, but you kept one luxury from better days. What was the one thing you could not live without?
- What treasures did you keep, and which did you lose and hope to one day reclaim?
- What injustices are you sworn to avenge?
- In my homeland, there are still prejudices against your folk that date back to this dark age. What unjust reputation clings to your people?
- In dark times, evil rulers rise by taking advantage of the people's fears. Tell me of the cruel leaders who preyed upon your people.
- How did you lay the foundation for your people's return to power?
- Who did you most blame for your decline?
- I heard that your singers and bards sing a famous lament about that terrible age—tell me of that saga. What is it called?
- What monsters preyed upon your people when they were scattered and vulnerable?
- What do you most regret from that dark age?
- What wondrous invention or technique, known only to your people, was lost in that time of chaos?

## ICONIC PROMPTS

*The Chronicler asks...*

- I've been told that the ruined fortress over there was the home of your icon in that age. What was the fortress like at its height, and what destroyed it?
- How did your people describe your icon in that time of change?
- How long was your icon missing for? Who ruled in their stead?
- Where did your icon go on their long voyage? How did they return?
- What was the greatest magical work performed by your icon?
- What relic was left behind by your icon in that age?
- Most of the histories I have read describe the cruelty and madness of your icon in that age. Is that how your folk remember it?
- How did your other leaders and champions respond when your icon took such drastic action?

- I am told that many lost faith in the wisdom of your icon in that age. Are there still some among your people who mistrust your icon, or have those wounds healed over time?
- What event triggered the transformation of your icon?
- What monument commemorates the deeds of your icon in this age?
- I have heard tell that assassins struck at your icon in that age. Who sent them, and what happened?
- How did your people change in the aftermath of your icon's actions?

## CROSSOVER PROMPTS

*The Chronicler asks...*

1. What did the alliance between the two factions accomplish in its early days?
2. How did the war between the two factions begin? How did it end?
3. What gift or deed sealed the relationship between the two factions?
4. I have heard tell that a new school of magic was born from contact between the two factions. Tell me of this new form of magic.
5. What curious custom did your people adopt from the other faction?
6. In my studies, I have learned of a sect among your people who still hate and despise the other faction. Who are they, and why do they bear such malice? Are they still influential?
7. What was the worst mistake born of misunderstanding that blighted this age?
8. How did the other allies of your factions respond to this new relationship?
9. How did the borders of the Empire change in this age?
10. Which faction came to dominate the other?
11. Tell me of your armies in that age. How did the new relationship change them in war?
12. I see that building there bears the symbols of the other faction. What is it, and what is kept locked inside?
13. How did it all go wrong?

## RANDOM WORLD-SHATTERING CATACLYSM TABLE

Roll a d12.

1. Dimensional barriers failed, allowing demons, elementals and entities from other worlds to rampage across the Empire. Reality collapsed and had to be rebuilt. The barriers fell because (roll a d6)
  1. Magic stopped working
  2. An evil cult completed a ritual
  3. Fools opened an ancient ward
  4. Invaders from the far side broke through
  5. The stars were right
  6. No-one knows, and it might happen again at any time.
2. Plague stalked the land, killing 5d20% of the population. Victims of the plague (roll a d6)
  1. Rose as zombies
  2. Exploded into flames
  3. Became brain-slaves of the Overmind
  4. Ascended bodily into the divine realms
  5. Became hosts for the killer insects
  6. Marched into the Midland Sea and drowned
3. A gigantic beast marauded across the land and destroyed the Empire. It was... (roll a d6)
  1. The Red
  2. A Koru Behemoth
  3. A living dungeon
  4. A monster from the Iron Sea
  5. An extradimensional invader with lots of tentacles
  6. An icon gone insane
4. Something fell from the sky. What was it? (roll a d6)
  1. Giant flaming meteors of doom
  2. Spears of ice
  3. Monstrous alien eggs
  4. Murderous insane angels
  5. Face-eating jaguars
  6. Chunks of the sky
5. Volcanoes erupted, vomiting gouts of hellfire and demonbile, and smoke darkened the sky creating a year without light. What horrors followed? (roll a d6)
  1. Crops failed and famine stalked the land.
  2. Fire elementals everywhere.
  3. The volcanoes became hellholes and demons reigned.
  4. The survivors were forced to hide underground in caves and dungeons for a century.
  5. The survivors evacuated to flying islands and could not return to the surface for many years.
  6. Attempts by the Archmage to tame the volcanoes broke the foundations of magic.

6. The Empire was destroyed by civil war (roll a d6)
  1. Between rival heirs to the throne
  2. Between the various races of Elves, Dwarves and Humans
  3. When the Emperor went mad and had to be overthrown
  4. Because evil cults had taken over the Empress's court and poisoned her mind against the people
  5. Triggered by economic collapse
  6. Between rival religions
7. The Empire was invaded by foes from outside (roll a d6)
  1. Legions of orcs
  2. Sea-raiders from the Iron Sea
  3. Giants. Again.
  4. Things from the underworld (or overworld)
  5. A greater Empire from the west
  6. Barbarian hordes
8. A cosmic event wrought havoc (roll a d6)
  1. When the sun got eaten
  2. When the moon exploded
  3. When time stopped
  4. When a god perished and fell from the overworld
  5. When the laws of magic changed (or were rewritten)
  6. When the sun grew angry and scorched the land
9. The natural world turned on the Empire (roll a d6)
  1. And the forests awoke
  2. And the seasons stopped
  3. And the seas rose up
  4. And the land brought forth only poison
  5. And the mountains walked
  6. And the clouds ate everyone
10. The Gods... (roll a d6)
  1. Appeared as avatars across the land, warping reality by their presence
  2. Endorsed a peasant girl as the new Emperor
  3. Briefly woke up, revealing the whole Empire to a dream
  4. Retreated to the Empire, for they were losing the war in heaven
  5. All died in a divine war
  6. Rained divine wrath on the Empire
11. The Evil Overlord (roll a d6)
  1. Was defeated by plucky adventurers, but had a doomday weapon as a revenge plot
  2. Took over the Empire, marking the end of the age
  3. Was defeated in a cataclysmic war that ended in a pyrrhic victory
  4. Rose again as an undead horror after being defeated
  5. Was defeated by using his own terrible weapons against him
  6. Won
12. No-one's sure what happened. All the sages recall of that catastrophe is a cryptic phrase. (roll a d6)
  1. "The Shattering of the Isles."
  2. "The Burning of the Icons."
  3. "The Mushrooms."
  4. "The Tears of the Overworld."
  5. "When Urumsh Walked The Land."
  6. "The Night of Many Knives."

## EXAMPLE CHRONICLE, CONTINUED

Next, they take it in turns to roll the age die and distribute their Anchors throughout history.

	1 <sup>ST</sup>	2 <sup>ND</sup>	3 <sup>RD</sup>	4 <sup>TH</sup>	5 <sup>TH</sup>	6 <sup>TH</sup>	7 <sup>TH</sup>	8 <sup>TH</sup>	9 <sup>TH</sup>	10 <sup>TH</sup>	11 <sup>TH</sup>	12 <sup>TH</sup>
Thieves				Crossover	Zenith		Nadir	Iconic		Zenith		Cross-over
Imperial Legions		Cross-over	Zenith	Nadir Iconic	Cross-over					Nadir		
Dark Elves					Nadir		Zenith	Iconic	Iconic		Cross-over	Cross-over
Undead (GM)									Zenith	Iconic		
Dwarves (GM)				Crossover				Iconic				
Wizards (GM)										Iconic		Cross-over

## EXAMPLE CHRONICLE, CONTINUED

The earliest Anchor is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Age Imperial Legion Crossover. Brian decides that his legions will cross over with the Undead—the 2<sup>nd</sup> Age was an age when the Imperial Legion battled the undead hordes across the young Empire. It's the Legion's first Anchor, so the Legion must have been formed to fight the undead.

The GM notes that the Lich King wasn't yet active at that point, so—taking on the persona of the Chronicler—she asks Brian to tell her about the Necromancers of the Fangs, that famous cabal (that she just made up) of wizards who raised vast armies of the dead.

Brian describes how the Necromancers dug preserved bodies out of the bogs and animated them as zombies. Cat interjects that these bodies were, of course, the corpses of dark elves slain in the great Elvish civil war that happened in the dawn time before the 1<sup>st</sup> Age. Together, Brian and the GM sketch the tale of the Legion's desperate war with the Necromancers. They describe a horrible age of trench warfare, of soldiers marching into the misty swamps to besiege the floating castles of the Necromancers, of battles where the Legionnaires had to battle the reanimated corpses of their comrades...

Next, Brian rolls for Legend, Legacy or Lair, and gets a 5—a Lair. The GM notes that the Legion didn't destroy one of those floating Necromantic castles, and that somewhere in the depths of the Fangs there's a huge fortress crawling with ancient undead. That sounds like an Epic-level dungeon for the end of the campaign!

That's the only Anchor in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Age, so the last thing to do in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Age is to decide how it ends. The GM rolls on the Random Catastrophe Table, and gets a 6-1—a civil war between heirs of the throne. The GM decides that the Emperor had two daughters: the elder died in battle, and the younger claimed the throne, but then the Necromancers brought the older sister back and the two fought a civil war.

#### Onto the 3<sup>rd</sup> Age!

Again, Brian's the only player with an Anchor to resolve, and it's the Zenith of the Imperial Legion. The GM asks what accomplishment from this golden age is remembered with the most pride, and Brian answers that it was the establishment of the Imperial Peace, a time of law and justice when the Legion patrolled the roads and kept the cities safe. Aidan—channelling his thieves—mutters darkly that this sounds less like 'peace' and more like 'dragons circling overhead fire-blasting anyone who stepped out of line.' Brian rolls for Legend, Legacy or Lair, and gets another Lair. The GM suggests that the fall of the age was when the Legion's desire for peace and order led them to create a host of mechanical dragons that mercilessly enforced the law, and plunged the Empire into a cruel regime that led to a bloody revolution against the oppressive Legions. Brian modifies this suggestion to make them undead dragons instead, using magic taken from the Necromancers of the Fangs. So, there are still a few giant undead dragon-golem justicars flapping around the Empire, enforcing laws that are 10 ages out of date.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> Age, Aidan's thieves enter the chronicle. It's a Crossover Anchor, and Aidan spots that the GM's dwarves have also got a Crossover Anchor in this age. Aidan suggests that in the previous age, the dwarves lived underground and so they weren't oppressed by the undead dragon-justicars—and that the dwarves funded semi-criminal resistance movements among the surface population. Now that the iron grip of the Legions is broken, in the 4<sup>th</sup> Age these resistance leaders became the warlords and thief-kings in the anarchic time after the revolution. The GM agrees, and as the chronicler asks Aidan to describe how the dwarves reacted to their former pawns becoming the new rulers of a broken, chaotic empire. "Not well," is the answer—the 4<sup>th</sup> Age, they agree, was an age of conflict between humans and dwarves, as the new thief-kings coveted the wealth of the underground cities and eventually besieged the dwarves. Aidan rolls for Legend, Legacy or Lair, and gets a Legacy. He decides that the Prince of Shadows of that age stole the crown of the Dwarf King, and still has it, and that every year they secretly crown the King of the Thieves in a ceremony under Shadow Port.

The Imperial Legion has two Anchors in this age—its Nadir, and an Iconic action. Clearly, the Nadir of the Legion was when it was broken and divided, having overreached in the previous age. Brian describes how most of the Legions became mercenary bands working for one thief-king or another in the wartorn 4<sup>th</sup> Age. Rolling for Legend, Legacy or Lair, he gets a Legacy, and suggests that there's still an elite mercenary force in the Empire called the Sellswords, and that they're the best warriors in all the land. As for an Iconic event involving the Emperor, the GM suggests that maybe the Emperor rallied the few surviving loyal Legions in defense of the Dwarves, and broke the siege of Forge by defeating the armies of the thief-kings. He asks Brian to describe the monument to that battle, and Brian says that there's a sacred shrine atop the mountains near Forge that's guarded by Imperial Dragons. Rolling for Legend, Legacy or Lair, Brian rolls a Legend, and talks about how the Emperor won the battle by flying dragons through the tunnel of the Undermarch, and how the 'Emperor's flight' is a synonym for a desperate race against time, especially through cramped or dangerous terrain.

The GM decides that the defeat of the thief-kings and rebirth of the Imperial/Dwarf alliance isn't catastrophic enough to end the age, so she rolls on the catastrophe table again, and gets "And the Mountains Walked." Turns out the Dwarves offended some mountain spirits, who trashed several dwarven cities and plunged the Empire into chaos.

As the group's about to start in on the 5<sup>th</sup> Age, the pizza guy arrives. The GM suggests (conveniently for the purposes of this example) that the group use one of the premade ages in this book, and then work in the Thiefling Zenith, the Crossover of the Legions, and the Nadir of the Dark Elves. Distracted by pepperoni, the players agree. The GM rolls and gets the Age of the Bone Altar—an age when the Lich King rises and invades much of the Empire. The GM reads out the highlights of the age on page 59, and notes the icons.

Aidan suggests that his Thieves had a Zenith under Marrow-Eater (page 59), and that ogres are still used by the thieves as muscle. Rolling, he gets a Lair, and says that Marrow-Eater's biggest score was an attempt to rob the Tomb of the Lich King. The ogre never returned from this daring attempt to rob Necropolis, but he left behind a map and other notes that have become sacred relics of the thieves.

## EXAMPLE CHRONICLE, CONTINUED

Brian's Legions have a Crossover. He decides that the Crossover was with the Blackamber Skeletal Legions of the Undead—the living and dead may have served different Empires, but they swore the same oaths, and now there's a grudging friendship/rivalry between the two armies. Rolling, he gets a Legend, and says that there's a prophecy that one day the two Legions will fight alongside each other. "But on that day," mutters the GM, "the captain of the living shall be counted among the dead." (Suitably ominous and suitably vague that it can be worked into the campaign later on.)

Cat's Dark Elves are at their Nadir. She rereads the description of the Emerald Queen, and decides that the Emerald Queen was actually a cruel sorceress who enslaved the Dark Elves with her enchantments and made them (hiss) nice and (spit) friendly. The GM laughs, and makes a note that he'll mix the Emerald Queen with the Enchantress (page 67). Rolling, she gets a Legacy, and decides that there are a few villages of heretical Dark Elves who still live on the surface and are just thoroughly lovely—they spend their days baking cookies and singing merry songs. They're called the Emerald Elves, and no-one trusts them because everyone assumes they're plotting a really, really, really long-term plot...

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By the end of their Engine of the Ages session, the group's collaborative history looks like this...

AGE	KEY EVENTS	LEGENDS/LEGACIES/LAIRS	AGE ENDS
1st (Age of Founding)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Empire's founded</li> </ul>		
2nd (Age of the Blood Marsh)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Imperial Legion battles Necromancers of the Fangs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Necromantic Castle (lair)</li> </ul>	Civil War
3rd (Age of Sky Law)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishment of Imperial Peace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dragon-golem Justicars (lair)</li> </ul>	Revolution
4th (Age of Anarchy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dwarves quarrel with thieves</li> <li>Legions become mercenaries</li> <li>Emperor saves dwarves from the thief-kings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prince of Shadows has the Dwarf King's Crown (legend)</li> <li>Sellswords mercenaries (legacy)</li> <li>"Emperor's Flight (legacy)</li> </ul>	The mountains walked
5th (Age of the Bone Altar)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lich King rises</li> <li>Undead invade the Empire</li> <li>Marrow-Eater tries to rob the Wizard King's tomb</li> <li>Compact between Imperial Legions and Blackamber Legions</li> <li>Dark elves bewitched by Emerald Queen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marrow-Eater's Map (legacy)</li> <li>Prophecy of the Dead Captain (legacy)</li> <li>Nice Emerald Elves (legacy)</li> </ul>	Battle between Archmage and Lich King
6th (Half-Remembered Age)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historical Records lost</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>??</li> </ul>	??
7th (Age of Silver Knives)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dark Elves become powers behind every throne</li> <li>Imperial peace brought back as oppressive thought-police regime</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rings of Mind Control (legacy)</li> <li>Memory-thieves and thought-smugglers (legacy)</li> </ul>	"The Mushrooms"

## EXAMPLE CHRONICLE, CONTINUED

AGE	KEY EVENTS	LEGENDS/LEGACIES/LAIRS	AGE ENDS
<i>8th (Age of Heroes)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prince of Shadows steals master ring of mind control</li> <li>• Elf Queen goes mad—imprisoned in a tree</li> <li>• Empire becomes dwarven satrapy when the Dwarf King steps in to restore order</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mind-Eater Wraiths made from broken rings (lair)</li> <li>• Elves are forbidden to enter the Spider Wood (legend) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Imperial law is conducted in Dwarven (legacy)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Dwarf King assassinated
<i>9th (Age of Ghosts)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second invasion from Necropolis</li> <li>• Swashbuckling Elf King saves the day, but is eventually defeated by Lich King</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drowning or shipwrecked people must not be rescued (legend)</li> <li>• Dungeon of the Elf King (lair)</li> </ul>	Explosion on Necropolis
<i>10th (Age of Wizard's War)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Archmage wages war on Lich King</li> <li>• Imperial Legion enslaved by Lich King</li> <li>• Thieves profit from magical war</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spellstorms (lair)</li> <li>• Prison Pits of the Lich King (lair)</li> <li>• Extradimensional genie fences for selling stolen magic items</li> </ul>	Giant Flaming Meteor of Doom
<i>11th (Age of Mazes)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dark elves ally with kobolds, seek out new homeland in the underworld</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dark Elf/kobold alliance survives to this day (legacy)</li> </ul>	Invasion by slimy underworld horrors
<i>12th (Age of Webs)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dark elves discover ruined kingdom in the underworld, recover lost secrets of spell-weaving</li> <li>• Thieves use new magic to go plane-hopping, stealing treasures from other dimensions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spellweave Sentries (lair)</li> <li>• Empire is clearing house for stolen extradimensional weirdness (legacy)</li> </ul>	"When Urumsh Walked The Land"

## Factions, Great and Small

1. Imperial Court
2. Imperial Bureaucracy
3. Imperial Legions
4. Dragon Cavalry
5. Gladiators of Axis
6. Merchant Guilds
7. Dark Elves
8. Wood Elves
9. High Elves
10. Dwarves
11. Halflings
12. Gnomes
13. Druids
14. Wizards
15. Bardic Colleges
16. Followers of the Light
17. Thieves
18. Paladins of the Golden Order
19. Peasants
20. Mountain Giants
21. Storm Giants
22. Metallic Dragons
23. Followers of the Dark Gods
24. Dwarven Runesmiths
25. Golems
26. Chromatic Dragons
27. Centaurs
28. Free-willed Undead
29. Demons
30. Barbarians of Moonwreck
31. Koru Behemoth tribes
32. Orcs
33. Goblins
34. Overworld Entities
35. Derro
36. Lizardmen
37. Half-Orcs
38. Chuul Nesting
39. Ghoul Kingdom
40. Vampires
41. Kobolds
42. The Undying Peerage of Liches
43. Naga Writhing
44. Ogre Magi
45. Sahuagin
46. Tieflings
47. Forgeborn
48. Draconics
49. Holy Ones
50. Fungaloids
51. Sea Raiders
52. Serpent People
53. Nomads of the Red Waste
54. Monks
55. Necromancers
56. Assassins
57. Dynastic Sorcerers
58. Anti-Imperial Rebels
59. College of Horizon
60. Banks of Glitterhaegen
61. Churches of Santa Cora
62. Council of Concord
63. Lords of Drakkenhall (Highrock)
64. Gangs of Shadowport
65. Mercenary Companies
66. Fisherfolk of the Isles
67. Demonic Cultists
68. The Crusade
69. Warhost of the Orc Lord
70. Dwellers in the Floating Islands
71. Lycanthropes
72. Sundry Denizens of the Underworld
73. Hobgoblins
74. Kobolds
75. Gnolls
76. Devils
77. Azer
78. Elementals
79. Acolytes of the High Druid
80. Forests with talking trees
81. Merfolk
82. Fey
83. Ratfolk
84. Unholy Ones
85. Crazyed Zealots
86. Things Grown In Vats
87. Thieves' guilds
88. Wandering traders of Nomad
89. Corsairs of the Iron Sea
90. Renegade dwarves
91. Sea Elves
92. Starport Skysmiths
93. Ancient Ghosts (roll 1d20 to determine their hosts)
94. Doppelgangers (roll 1d20 twice to see who they're mimicking)
95. Time Travelers (roll 1d20 to determine who)
96. Mind-Controlling Brain Bugs (roll 1d20 to determine their hosts)
97. Secret vampires (roll 1d20 to see the strata of civilization they're infiltrating)
98. Secret lycanthropes (roll 1d20 to see the strata of civilization they're infiltrating)
99. Secret cultists (roll 1d20 to see the strata of civilization they're infiltrating)
100. Flip to a random page of the *13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary* or the monster book of your choice. That's your faction.

## SECTION 3

# A SCATTERING OF AGES

The following chapters each describe a possible age of the Dragon Empire. This isn't *Ye Official and Canonical History of The Dragon Empire*™—it's a grab-bag of potential pasts. The Ages are named rather than numbered. Each age has a suggested random range where it might make the most sense, but you can slot them into your chronology in any order or leave them out entirely if you prefer. Given that each of these ages is somewhat idiosyncratic, you'll probably want to break them up with a few more 'standard' ages, populated by known icons and falling to the usual betrayals and wars.

If you don't want anyone telling you even the names of past ages, well, we understand! Doing it yourself is the *13<sup>th</sup> Age* way! Strip the sections that follow for parts, break them down, or use them to fill in gaps in your Engine of the Ages session. History, as they say, is written by the gamemasters.

**The bookends of time:** The two exceptions to the freewheeling, ages-in-random-order chronology are the 1<sup>st</sup> Age and the 12<sup>th</sup>. The 1<sup>st</sup> Age sets up the founding stories of the Dragon Empire: the overthrow of the corrupt Wizard King, the rise of the Emperor, the creation of the Orc Lord, the binding of the White—all the key common elements that ensure that no matter how wild things get in the following ages, the final product will still be clearly recognizable as an interpretation of the *13<sup>th</sup> Age* setting. Similarly, the 12<sup>th</sup> Age is the age of cleanup—it's a chance to bend the arc of history back towards the empire described in the *13<sup>th</sup> Age* core rulebook.

## THE PAST IS NOT DEAD

Of course the point of this book is that it's not even past! We're not presenting vanished icons, ancient races, and secret spells intending that they'll *stay* vanished, ancient, and secret. As GM, you have several options for making past ages relevant to your current campaign. Most of these options can be used in combinations.

## HISTORY AS UNFOLDING MYSTERY

Unlike campaigns that use the Engine of the Ages from Section 2, history as mystery campaigns only reveal details of the past to both player characters and players during the course of the

campaign. Living dungeons lead to vanished ages. Magic items related to a vanished icon surface on a flying realm and try to convince their new owners to work to bring their icon back.

This approach works well when the GM doesn't want to have to figure out much in advance, other than forming an initial idea of which ages they and the players might be interested in. When history is a mystery, players and GM can end up creating it together, exactly the way they co-create the specifics of their campaign's version of the Dragon Empire.

## TIME TRAVEL

We've heard of *13<sup>th</sup> Age* campaigns that have involved adventures in previous ages. It's all very fuzzy, but we either already used the idea in one of our own Organized Play adventures or will do so in the future.

Maybe these ages are part of alternate timelines, or maybe the pieces of the *13<sup>th</sup> Age* that the PCs care about most are under threat from agents of enemy icons venturing into the past. We didn't phrase this volume as another book of changing years, but you could.

It seems premature to list all the time travel methods that could be introduced from this section, but if you want to skip ahead an hour, turn to the sidebar on page 96.

## QUEST REWARDS

Do you want the PCs to feel special about the powers and spells that come from icons and powers of earlier ages? Treat them as rewards for succeeding with particular quests. Make the PCs into archeologists of vanished powers and give them an extra special reward if the entire adventuring party puts together a power-set that spans the ages.

## HEROQUESTING

Chapter 7 of *13<sup>th</sup> Age Glorantha* introduces a new type of adventure in which heroes enter the world of the gods to reenact or exceed the mythic actions that created the world. The structure of heroquest adventures and their focus on the stories of human and divine ancestors could be applied to adventures into the mythic echoes of past ages. If a PC is looking to forge an icon relationship with an icon who is no longer in the world, this could be the way.

## NEW PARTS FOR THE ENGINE

As a rule, the Engine of the Ages works better if you let it run on its own. But the warriors introduced in each age could join the possible factions, and many powers, races, and spells could map to elements you'll have created yourself using the Engine.

## WE'RE PLAYING SEVENTH AGE

Want an extremely variant campaign? Choose an age somewhere in the middle and mix familiar (but different!) icons in with a handful of new (but ancient) icons. For extra credit, use elements of the campaign to hint at things that will come to fruition in a future actually-the-13<sup>th</sup>-Age game, or already have blossomed in campaigns you've already run.

## ALTERNATE HISTORY

Read the stories of the ages that follow with an eye towards where you'll improve the story. Choose new winners! Play a 13<sup>th</sup> Age in which the Grandmaster of Flowers never fell, the Chieftain of the Giants is back for blood, the Orc Lord is still missing, and the Speaker in Light is putting its crew back together.

Of course this could also be the midpoint or endpoint of a more standard 13<sup>th</sup> Age game that brings the past back with a vengeance.

## ALL ICON CRISIS

Engineer a cosmic crisis, in which all the icons who have existed exist again, for a time. They can't all exist simultaneously, can they? Some will perish in the conflicts to come.

Honestly, that's a bit silly for us. We mention it in case you can find a better way to phrase the event.

## AGE FORMATTING

Each age presented below uses the following format. Not all entries appear in every age.

**The Name of the Age:** How the age is recorded by at least three of the historians we consulted for this summary.

**Rough Number of the Age:** A random roll to determine when that age took place. Unlike the die rolls used during the Engine of the Ages to determine Anchor points, the results of these rolls yield the actual number of the age. Some ages make

marginally more sense as something that happened long long long ago, in the mythical early history of the Empire. Others fit best in more recent history. If you roll the same number as an age you've already identified as something else, shunt it forwards or backwards to fit.

**Bullet-point Summary:** Several highlights, suitable for reading to players.

**Overview:** Key events from that span of history.

**Icons:** A new icon or three that heavily influenced the age. It's not likely that your player characters will start with relationships with ancient icons, but they could, if that's how you want your campaign to function. This seems particularly promising for the six icons we created new icon symbols for: Grandmaster of Flowers, Enchantress, Captain of Corsairs, Chieftain of the Giants, Empress of the Moon, and perhaps even the Speaker in Light.

**Legends, Legacies and Lairs:** Stories, survivors and strange horrors that date back to that age.

**End Times:** How the age ended. Probably.

**Monsters:** Notable monsters from that age. Again, such creatures will often be extinct in the 13<sup>th</sup> Age, but when has that ever stopped an enterprising Gamemaster from stocking her dungeons with primordial horrors (or covert operatives) from ancient days?

**Race:** If a particular race was strongly associated with an age and we have fun angles on its story and mechanics, it gets described here. Some of the races may still be around in the Dragon Empire, fallen from their former place of influence. Others may be mostly extinct, but of course you can still play the Last Member of a Vanished Race or end up in the present day thanks to temporal stasis/necromancy/weird time travel magic/flesh to stone to flesh again.

In fact, if there's a race that appeals to you as a player but the GM doesn't need to have it as part of the world's current story, being the only member of your race is a great One Unique Thing. It could also suffice to be the only member of your race who matters enough to be a player character, especially if your character's story ends up shaping the future of your people.

**Spells & Powers, Items:** As a rule, the player character powers and rewards appearing in this book shouldn't be considered as additions to the standard list of power and magic items that are always available to all characters. In most campaigns, particularly campaigns using ideas mentioned above like *questing* and *heroquesting*, spells and items related to ancient history should come into play when that history has become relevant. Ancient ruins, living dungeons that resurrect the past, mysterious immortal tutors, cryptic inscriptions, ancient spell books, no-longer-forgotten rituals, and even one or more One Unique Things can bring the past into contact with the living.

## NEW SPIRITS

Since the publication of the *13<sup>th</sup> Age* core book, we've created a new monster type, spirit. You'll find it used fairly often in this section, particularly in the Age of Gods and the Age of the Terrible Emperor. When the GM wishes, there's a nastier special ability that can be given to any spirit:

*Spirit body:* For each attack against this spirit, a PC uses their best mental ability score (Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma) instead of the ability score they normally use for attacks. Use the same mental ability score to determine damage for that attack.

For example, a fighter with a 20 Strength has to use their 12 Wisdom when attacking a spirit. The character's Wisdom modifier is +1, which is 4 less than the Strength modifier of +5, so the bonuses of all attacks that are normally Strength-based are 4 lower than normal, and damage is also based on Wisdom instead of Strength. Conversely, a sorcerer's basic melee attack against a spirit could be better than it is against other creatures, since the spirit's supernatural nature lets the sorcerer use their Charisma as the attack stat instead of their melee stat.

For most spellcasters, fighting nasty spirits is no harder than fighting anyone else, and maybe easier. For characters who are physical powerhouses but mental mediocrities, fighting spirits can be tough.

## ONE FEAT TO GET US STARTED

Bards are our pre-eminent historians and their magic words can even surprise the icons with shadings of the truths. We'll start with a feat for bards that may help unlock the secrets that follow.

### BARD FEAT

This feat is available to any bard with an interest in—or uncanny connection to—the past.

#### CHRONICLER (ADVENTURER)

You're steeped in the lore of past ages. You know all the old songs and stories from times past. Once per day, when you or an ally has an icon relationship advantage outstanding, you can tell a story that connects the icon the advantage is from to a past icon, and have that relationship advantage apply to the historical icon instead. Since you're using a 1/day resource, this icon relationship advantage can be better than normal! The story doesn't necessarily have to be true, but it helps if it's plausible!

For example, you're exploring a tomb from the Age of Long Beards, and it's full of undead. The party necromancer has a conflicted relationship with the Lich King and a 6 they're waiting to use, but you—being a master chronicler and all—can change that result into a temporary relationship with the historical icon named the Hooded Lady, who may end up being more use in this ancient tomb from the age of her supremacy.

# THE AGE OF FOUNDING



*"Under this seal, forged in dragonfire, and by your acclamation, I name myself Emperor, first of my name."*

## Probably the 1<sup>st</sup> Age

- Chaos reigns after the death of the Wizard King
- The Emperor tames the land
- Giants raze Axis

## OVERVIEW

The Wizard King was the keystone of his realm. Everything depended on his magic to function, and when he was slain by the Orc Lord, the old kingdom collapsed. It's up to you whether the collapse was immediate and complete or gradual and complete—in the grand scope of history, the speed of the collapse no longer matters.

Across the world, from Starport to Eld, the Wizard King's magical wards and enchantments failed. Bridges crumbled, flying towers fell, charmed monsters turned savage, and dimensional portals burst open.

Within decades, the elves and dwarves retreated into their respective homelands to shelter from the storms. Human survivors clustered in the south-western region near Sword Point, where they were protected by the golden wings of the Great Gold Wyrms and his dragons, and built a new city around the dormant volcano at Axis. The dragon lairs there had been a stronghold of resistance against the Wizard King's tyranny.

From this new capital, the legions of the Empire slowly reclaimed territory lost to magical chaos. By the end of the age, the Empire had reclaimed land as far north as present-day Anvil, and as far east as the Owl Barrens. In some battles, they fought the magical horrors unleashed by the fall of the Wizard King; in others, they battled other former subjects of the king who refused to acknowledge the rule of the new Emperor, or forces that flooded into the land after the Wizard King's defeat. The evil dragons, for example, took advantage of the new anarchy to seize territory in the north, while the Red rampaged in the south.

The fragile young Empire barely survived this chaotic age. If it were not for the Emperor's dragons, it would likely have collapsed and been forgotten. With their strength, and the wise counsel of the Great Gold Wyrms, the Empire survived even the madness and folly of some of the more foolish heirs to the throne.

## ICONS

The Emperor, the Great Gold Wyrms, and the Three (or, as they were probably known then, the Four) all played significant roles in this era of history. There was no Archmage in this age; while the Emperors had various court wizards and conjurers, none are believed to have been as skilled as the present Archmage. The Elf Queen and Dwarf King both withdrew from the world, to guard their own realms. Some tales claim that the Orc Lord walked abroad in the Empire during this era, slaying the worst of the Wizard King's creations before disappearing somewhere in the mountains.

The **Blessed Emperor** was the founder of the Empire and the progenitor of the Imperial Dynasty. To this day, he's worshipped as a god, the divine patron of the Imperial cult and the embodiment of authority and just rule. Other Emperors have been worshipped at times (or, more commonly, declared themselves to be gods and demanded that people worship them), but only the faith of the Blessed Emperor has endured.

Before the Lich King arose, another icon ruled over the graveyards and tombs of the unquiet dead. The **Hooded Woman** was a mysterious figure, depicted wearing a long grey cloak with a hood that hid her face. Sometimes, she was seen as old beyond measure; at other times, her hands and voice were those of a young maiden. All the dead of the Empire (and there were many dead in that age of strife) were in her care, and she was responsible for their burial rites and tending their graves. Some accounts claim that she was a former servant of the Wizard King who switched sides and aided his enemies in defeating him; other tales claim that she was so moved by grief that she took on the duty of caring for the dead. Great powers of necromancy and prophecy were attributed to her. Like the Lich King, she was often referred to by pseudonyms, usually variants on "the gray lady."

The **Spelljack** was another troublesome icon of this age. He claimed to be the living embodiment of the magical chaos unleashed by the fall of the Wizard King. Of course, he also claimed to be, among other things, an extradimensional sprite that escaped through a portal, the secret love-child of the Wizard King and the Elf Queen, a half-demon avatar of chaos, and the most talented sorcerer to have ever lived. He looted one of the Wizard King's palaces on and used this stolen power to

sow discord and madness across the world. Notably, he carried a sack full of magic items made by the Wizard King, and used to give these out freely to make mischief. The Spelljack abruptly vanished—some say he was imprisoned by the Dwarf King, or that he ascended into the overworld to cause trouble there. Others assume that his stolen magic spells just ran out and he fell back into whatever gutter had spawned him.

The **Chieftain of the Giants** ruled over all the giants of the mountains—the hill, frost, stone and fire giants. As the Empire grew, he came to dislike the humans who spread into his domain, until at the end of the age his irritation spilled over into hatred, and he destroyed the city of Axis. Imperial histories insist that the last Emperor of the First Age died in mortal combat with the Chieftain, and that each slew the other at the Bridge of Bronze, but among the giants it is said that the Chieftain returned in triumph to his steading in the Magma Keeps. Over time, he grew so old and strong that his flesh has turned to stone, but he still lives in the heart of the mountains and will one day return.

## END TIMES

The Age of Founding ended when the giants razed Axis. The Chieftain of the Giants' assault destroyed almost all the city, although the dragon lairs in the volcano crater were not breached. The daughter of the last Emperor escaped with the aid of trusted servants, one of whom was said to be the Great Gold Wyrms *polymorphed* into the shape of a knight, but the loss of the capital city threw the young empire into ruin.

## LEGENDS, LEGACIES AND LAIRS

- When the Orc Lord struck down the Wizard King, the wizard's body vanished in a flash, teleported away by magical spells of contingency. The Wizard King was immensely old, but seemed able to constantly renew his youth. Was he magically preserved? Did he quaff potions of longevity? Or did he create magical clones of himself, and transfer his soul into a younger body when he perished? And if so, then he doubtless put in place some plan to resurrect him should he perish by misfortune. Why was he not returned to life? Did some forgotten hero sabotage his resurrection? Did his minions turn on him? Do a hundred clones of the Wizard King slumber in some forgotten vault deep beneath Omen? Would the Lich King pay to have them destroyed, since they would threaten his own survival?
- In Glitterhaegen (it is said), there survives a secret society that dates back to the First Age. In ancient days after the fall of the Wizard King, but before the full victory of the Emperor, the ancestors of this society formed an egalitarian and wise government informed by guidance from celestial beings in the overworld. They claim that these beings were blocked by the Wizard King, but now that the tyrant was gone, the 'Bright Ones' could contact humanity and guide them towards

perfection. The Empire conquered the towns and villages that would one day become Glitterhaegen and suppressed the servants of the Bright Ones, but their cult survives in secret.

- The Spelljack's Citadel was a flying realm stolen from the ruin of Omen. Depending on which legend of the Spelljack you believe, it's either still flying around at high speed (occasionally dropping magic treasures), crashed high in the Frost Range, or anchored invisibly above Horizon while the Archmage tries to disarm the Spelljack's wards.
- To this day, it's the custom in parts of the Empire to give presents to children around the Winter solstice in the name of the Spelljack. A lingering curse of the Spelljack sometimes makes these toys come to murderous life.
- In Santa Cora, they still tell stories about the Hooded Woman. These tales are especially associated with the lighthouse at Vigil, and some say that the lighthouse was built atop her ancient temple to the dead. Others claim that the Priestess is the Hooded Woman returned, and that her Cathedral is the gateway to the land of the dead.



*Gareth created so many wonderful ancient icons for this book! For this first age, I focused on the Chieftain of the Giants, but maybe someday we'll circle around and re-encounter the Spelljack.*

## MONSTERS

Possible leftovers or returnees from this early age include the bones of the titanic giants who razed Axis and a secretive magical race that served, or was created by, the Wizard King.

## SKELETONS OF GIANT ANCESTORS

Ages later, the Lich King, out of some perverse whimsical revenge, created titanic horrors from the long-buried corpses of the giants who sacked Axis in the First Age. The necromantic spells that animate them take years to seep through the soil, so it's not uncommon for giant skeletons to suddenly rise from their First Age barrows and stumble off in the direction of Axis.

Children's tales tell of a giant skeleton who mislaid its head and is still wandering the area looking for it, and how if you are wicked, the giant skeleton might come to your home at night and twist off your head, to see if its skull is hidden behind your face.

The giants of the mountains honor their ancestors, and are infuriated by the Lich King's necromantic meddling. Unfortunately, they're equally incensed by any adventurers who damage the remains of dead giants—even animated, murderous dead giants. The proper thing to do, the giants say, is to send a messenger whenever a primordial giant skeleton arises so they can come down from their high halls and capture the errant ancestor. Lands troubled by these monsters must therefore choose—do they endure the skeletal horrors, or risk angering living giants?

## PRIMORDIAL GIANT SKELETON

*There were giants in the earth in those days... and there are undead giants coming out of the earth these days! Run!*

Huge 8<sup>th</sup> level troop [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +11

Vulnerability: holy

**Giant skeletal fists or feet +13 vs. AC (two attacks)** — 60 damage

**R: Skull Bowling +13 vs PD (1d3+1 nearby or far away enemies)**—The giant removes its skull, creating a Snapping Skull and rolls it over an unpredictable set of foes. Any foes hit with this attack take 50 damage. The Snapping Skull ends up engaged with one of the foes targeted with *skull bowling*.

*Natural 16+*: The snapping skull may make a free *skull snap* attack on this enemy as it passes, or as it ends the attack engaged with the enemy.

*Limited use*: 1/battle.

*Where's my head*: If a snapping skull is nearby (even if it originally belonged to a different giant!), the Primordial Giant Skeleton may pick it up instead of attacking, giving it another use of *skull bowling*.

*Separate elements*: The primordial giant skeleton doesn't lose any hit points or abilities by detaching its skull from its body, but you'll track damage dealt to the snapping skull as a separate creature throughout the battle, and if the snapping skull is destroyed while separated from the body, the primordial giant skeleton is weakened (–4 to all attacks and defenses) unless it's temporarily wearing a different giant's skull!

AC 24

PD 22

MD 18

HP 380

## SNAPPING SKULL

*It's a rolling, screaming skull the size of a cottage.*

8<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +11

Vulnerability: holy

**Skull Snap +13 vs. AC**—35 damage.

*Natural 16+*: The target is stuck (save ends); effect also ends if the skull is taken up by a *where's my head* ability."

**C: Keening Wail +12 vs. MD (all nearby enemies)**—10 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (–4 to attacks, easy save [6+] ends)

*Limited use*: 1/battle.

**R: Spit Giant Tooth +12 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)**—25 damage.

*Not so mobile*: The snapping skull moves slowly by snapping and rocking, but doesn't move well. Attempts to disengage from the snapping skull have a +5 bonus.

AC 25

PD 20

MD 19

HP 120

## GAMEMASTER

The snapping skull is part of what makes the primordial giant skeleton tough enough to qualify as a huge monster. The snapping skull isn't meant to be used as an autonomous monster. But now that we've said that, we're sure you'll find some way to prove us wrong.

### BUILDING BATTLES

The simplest stories involving primordial giant skeletons probably have them surfacing as a result of the Lich King's magic and marching to Axis. Other servants of the Lich King might join the march; two magically appropriate candidates are the headless zombie (13 *True Ways*, page 207) and the skull of the beast (13<sup>th</sup> *Age Bestiary*, page 110).

### PRIMORDIAL GIANTS AND THE ICONS

Obviously, these guys are strongly associated with the Lich King. The Emperor and the Dwarf King both inherited long grudges against the primordial giants. The Chieftain of the Giants, if he's still around, might be interested in recovering the bones of his kin (or joining them in *The Razing of Axis, Round II*). The Crusader's territory covers the region where most of these long barrows lie; he's not adverse to pointing giant skeletons in the direction of a hellhole and shouting "Axis is over there!"

## THE WIZARD KING'S SERVANTS

Arcanites are post-human servants of the Wizard King. They're humans who were warped, augmented, transformed-by or just-exposed to way too much of his arcane power. They look mostly human, but have odd cosmetic changes that mark them as something unusual—skin like polished silver, gemstones embedded in the face, glowing runes instead of eyes, and so on.

Each arcanite clan was charged with maintaining or operating some magical masterwork of the Wizard King. Often, they lived in underground chambers or even extradimensional spaces made with magic.

After the fall of the Wizard King, scattered arcanite colonies survived in these hidden vaults. Some hid from the world, fearing they would be punished for serving the tyrannical Wizard King. Others 'stayed out of politics' and just kept performing their duties, polishing the arcane crystals and reciting the same incantations generation after generation. Still others were frozen in time when the Wizard King died, locked away in temporal pockets.

In the 13<sup>th</sup> Age, surviving Arcanites *might* serve the Lich King ("he's still our master, even if he's dead and insane"), switch their allegiance to the Archmage ("we were made to serve the whims of eccentric wizards") or just stay hidden, in case adventurers come to loot the magical machinery they were bred to protect.



## ARCANITE CUSTODIAN

*Age-old keepers of the Wizard King's wonders, patiently waiting for a master who must never return.*

4<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +7

**Spell-charged staff +9 vs. AC**—7 damage

*Spell-charged:* The custodian may choose to expend a spell-charge to deal an extra 2d6 damage.

[interrupt action] **C: Spell-snatch +9 vs. MD (one nearby or far away enemy who just cast an arcane spell)**—On a hit, the spell is countered, and both the enemy and the custodian take 3d6 psychic damage. The custodian gains one spell-charge.

**R: Rain of magic +9 vs. PD (1d4+1 nearby enemies or allies)**—This ability may target both enemies or allies of the custodian. When targeting allies, the custodian does not need to make attack rolls for those targets—the chosen ally automatically gains a spell-charge. When targeting enemies, the attack deals 3d6 damage.

*Limited use:* To use *rain of magic*, the custodian must expend one spell-charge.

*Spell charge:* An arcanite custodian starts with 1d4 spell charges, and can hold up to four.

*Gather power:* As a standard action, the arcanite custodian may gain 2 spell charges.

*Fragile form:* The custodian loses one spell-charge when it suffers a critical hit or when it is staggered.

### Nastier Specials

*Spell-charged death:* If an arcanite custodian is killed while holding a spell-charge, it automatically deals 2d6 damage on a number of nearby enemies equal to the number of spell-charges held.

AC 19  
PD 14  
MD 19

HP 50

## ARCANITE GUARD

*Sentries and guardians of the Wizard King's lost sanctums and laboratories.*

4<sup>nd</sup> level blocker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +8

**Spell-charged sword +9 vs. AC**—12 damage

*Spell-charged:* The guard may choose to expend a spell-charge to deal another 2d6 damage.

*Spell-charged intercept:* Once per round, an arcanite guard may expend a spell-charge to intercept an enemy who is moving to attack one of his nearby allies. He can pop free from up to two enemies to move and intercept the attack.

*Spell-charge:* An arcanite guard starts with one spell-charge, and can hold only one charge at a time.

### Nastier Specials

*Spell-charged Death:* If an arcanite guard is killed while holding a spell-charge, it automatically deals 2d6 damage to one nearby enemy.

AC 20  
PD 18  
MD 14

HP 58

### IT'S A JOB

Arcanites are effectively immune to aging as long as they remain inside the Wizard King's lost sanctums, as their cells are attuned to the magic of the place and can renew themselves. Once the arcanite leaves, the connection is broken and cannot easily be re-established, leaving the arcanite vulnerable to the passage of time.

Some sanctums guarded by arcanites are still semi-functional, which can have disastrous repercussions if their custodians are slain by avaricious adventurers. Roll 1d12 to determine sanctum-bound arcanites' duties—and what happens if they can no longer carry them out.

Roll D12	Duty	Consequence of Failure
1	Polishing Crystals	Weather in the region goes weird
2	Adjusting Rods	Configuration of rods aesthetically displeasing
3	Incanting Spells	Flying realm crashes in next 1d4 months
4	Painting Runes	Runes look faded and ugly
5	De-clogging Pipes	Region flooded by green slime within 1d4 months
6	Adjusting Valves	Valves unadjusted.
7	Mixing Reagents	Laboratory explodes violent within 1d4 hours
8	Feeding The Beasts	Savage monsters from past age break out of lab
9	Sacrificing Small Animals	Hellhole opens within 1d4 months
10	Reciting Prayers	Hellhole opens within 1d4 minutes
11	Pressing Buttons	Heavenhole opens. It's like a hellhole, but it goes up.
12	Pulling Levers	Mysterious grinding noise in depths, audible throughout Empire.

### BUILDING BATTLES

Making arcanites so common that they're just another humanoid antagonist seems unnecessary, so they should be accompanied by

constructs or magical beasts that could be part of their magical installations. Flesh golems and clay golems from the *13<sup>th</sup> Age* core book (page 231) make sense. So would the marble warrior statues from page 137 of *Fire & Faith*. Slightly reskinned with a different origin story, the sword jugglers from page 56 of this book would fit well with arcanites. As far as magical beasts are concerned, oozes seem like they'd have a better chance of withstanding ages of magical sequestration. If you prefer arcanites who only seem sane at first, team them with gibbering mouthers (*13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary* 2, page 109) they are supposedly immune to.

## RACE: ARCANITES

+2 Int OR +2 Cha

### ARCANIC ATTUNEMENT (RACIAL POWER)

Once per battle, before you make a saving throw against a magical effect, OR just after the battle, when you roll to recharge for a spell or magic item recharge, you may choose to roll two d20s instead of one and pick the best result.

**Adventurer Feat:** You may cast the wizard spell *counter-magic* (13A: 149) twice per day, using your highest ability score in place of Intelligence and your level (or one lower) as the level of the spell.

**Champion Feat:** You gain +2 to all your defenses against spells and spell-like attacks.

**Epic Feat:** When you are reduced to 0 hp, deal 10d6 damage to a nearby enemy.

Arcanites fit into the could-almost-pass-as-human category of non-human peoples, and if you wished, your character might seem more human than most... at least until their arcane energies crescendo! As the world's foremost arcanite, you're going to be able to determine quite a bit about them that we haven't covered. If your lifespan isn't cut short by a failed adventure, you may even control your race's destiny.

## POWERS

There was probably magic that the arcanites inherited from the Wizard King, but those spells have been lost in the centuries of hiding. Bards and clerics are a bit more talkative!

## BARD FEAT

### SPELLJACK'S FAVOR

*Requires Jack of Spells Talent*

**Champion Feat:** Once per battle, when you cast a spell obtained with Jack of Spells, you may use a move action to *teleport* to a spot adjacent to a target of that spell.

## CLERIC FEAT

### DIRGE OF THE LADY

*Requires ability to cast turn undead*

**Champion Feat:** Once per day, when you destroy an undead creature with *turn undead* or any other cleric spell, you gain a two-point positive relationship with the Hooded Woman, and a 1-point negative relationship with the Lich King until the end of the day. Roll for the relationships now.

## MAGIC ITEMS

Maybe these items managed to survive since the Age of Founding, or maybe the age has powerful echoes.

## BELT, SWORDBELT, KILT, SKIRT, GIRDLE, SASH

**Original Default bonus:** Increase your maximum recoveries: by 1 (adventurer); by 2 (champion); by 3 (epic).

**New Optional Default Bonus:** Here's an optional default bonus for these types of items. With this new system, you don't increase your recoveries depending on the tier. Instead, the item gives you one extra recovery. But when you heal using that recovery, you don't roll and the hit points you heal depend on the tier of the item: 20 hp (adventurer); 50 hp (champion); 125 hp (epic).

**Belt of Primordial Giant Strength (recharge 16+):** This power can only be used if you are fighting at least one non-minion giant or an undead version of a giant! Until the end of the battle, you have your own personal escalation die. It starts at 2 when you use this power and rises by 2 every round, maxing out at 6.

## CLOAK, MANTLE, CAPE

**Default bonus:** +1 PD (adventurer); +2 PD (champion); +3 PD (epic)

**Cloak of the Grey Lady (recharge 16+):** When an undead creature attacks you and hits (but does not crit), change that attack into a miss instead. Quirk: Treats undead as if they are still alive.

## NECKLACE, PENDANT

**Default bonus:** +1 to saves when you have 10 hp or fewer (adventurer); 25 hp or fewer (champion); 50 hp or fewer (epic).

**Axis Stone Necklace (recharge 6+):** This shard of stone, taken from the original walls of Axis after they were smashed by the giants, reminds the wearer of the ancient foundations of the Empire. You gain 20 temporary hit points (champion 50, epic 100) if you are the last member of your adventuring party standing in a fight. Quirk: Never, ever, backs down.

## WONDROUS ITEM

You can attune multiple wondrous items. They don't take up a chakra.

**Default bonus:** none

**Spelljack Marionette (recharge 11+):** This is a small wooden puppet, about six inches tall. When you use a quick action to activate the marionette, it can obey simple verbal commands until the end of the battle (or five minutes) and has a +5 bonus to any skill checks relating to climbing, sneaking or carrying small objects. It cannot talk, but can communicate basic concepts through mime and gestures. It cannot attack. It only obeys its owner, and appears to have deep-seated and even murderous jealousy towards anyone who competes for its owner's attention. Quirk: Lazy and reliant on the puppet.

# AGE OF LONG BEARDS



*"All under the sun is thine—but there is a hundred times more below, and that is mine."*

## The 1d4th Age

- The dwarves aided the young Empire—or were they manipulating them?
- Insect monsters attacked from the south
- The elves and dwarves went to war

## OVERVIEW

**Good times:** This was, the dwarves say, the last golden age of the deep realms, before Underhome was poisoned. At the start of this age, the majority of the dwarves still lived in the underworld, but they built the city of Forge close to the surface to trade with humans. Compared to the might and ancient grandeur of the dwarven kingdom, the humans of the Dragon Empire were barbarian beggars at the gates.

Still, the two races had much to offer one another. The dwarves prized human magic, and the fiery, impulsive spirits of the shorter-lived race, while the humans needed the stability bought with dwarven gold and dwarven axes. Axis was rebuilt with aid from the dwarves. The cities of Anvil and Glitterhaegen grew to service the new trade with Underhome; the first wizard's schools at Horizon were founded in this age. The gladiatorial arenas at Axis, too, were founded to drain the purses of visiting dwarven nobles. Everywhere along the western shore, the signs of dwarven influence and money were plainly visible.

**Peril on the frontiers:** Elsewhere, the world grew more perilous. The paladins of the Great Gold Wyrms battled mysterious foes in the southlands, and rogue sorcerers and warlords battled over the territory east of Starport. Some histories assert that the dwarves built Oldwall in this age, to block raiders and thieves from the east, but other accounts claim that Oldwall was raised in a later age, to defend against the lizard-men.

In this age, the Midland Sea was still named Stormmaker, and could not be crossed safely. Human ships could—if they were lucky—make their way along the coast, hugging close to the shore, but the isles of Omen and what may have already been the Necropolis were inaccessible save by unusual means of transportation: *teleport* spells, dragon back, carried aloft by rocs, and so on. With the aid of the dwarves, the Empire built another option: the first stormcutters, magically reinforced vessels with hulls of rune-scored iron. Through strength and sorcery, the

stormcutters could survive the wrath of the sea. They were too expensive and rare to benefit trade, but now the Empire could explore the isles and send messengers and emissaries to distant coasts.

**Unhappy politics:** Over time, many in the Emperor's court began to grumble that the dwarves had too much influence over the affairs of state, and that the Dragon Empire was nothing but a satrapy, a puppet of Underhome. Mistrust of dwarves grew; thieves and rebels who fought against the dwarves were celebrated. In response, the dwarves became more militant, and there was conflict between Forge and some human lands, even as Axis and Forge became ever more entwined.

When true war arrived, humans, for once, were not the main combatants. Tensions between dwarves and elves had escalated year by year. When war finally came, both sides swiftly drew in human allies. The Empire reluctantly sided with the dwarves, though Axis was too far from the elven forests for the Imperial Legion to play a significant role in the conflict. Human barbarians and various rebels allied with the elves. Though no one could accuse it of rebellion, the Great Gold Wyrms refused to become involved. Its hesitance allowed divisions to split the Emperor's court. Some counsellors argued that the Empire should send its full strength against the elves, while others said that the dwarves wanted to pit elf against human to weaken both surface civilizations.

With the benefit of hindsight, it's clear that these were parochial fears. The war wasn't about the surface world. Even the greatest battles fought on the surface were skirmishes compared to the massive conflict between dwarves and dark elves that raged deep in the underworld.

## ICONS

The **Princess of Cogs and Wheels** was the viceroy of Forge in this age. As the Dwarf King, her nominal superior, still dwelt far away in deep Underhome, the ruthless and manipulative Princess was the effective ruler of the dwarves in the surface lands. She delighted in cunning machines and subtle sorcery of all kinds, favoring one human lord or merchant prince over another to further some long-planned scheme. To her credit, her schemes weren't usually contrary to the interests of the Empire and its humans. She was a stalwart ally of the Emperor, and often advocated for humans and even half-elves in the court of the Dwarf King.

The **Green Bandit** was a celebrated heroine of this age, robbing from the wealthy and giving to the poor. Most accounts describe her as a half-elf; others say that she was a full wood-elf, or some sort of fey, or even the Elf Queen in disguise. Her secret woodland hideout was somewhere near Old Town, and to this day she is celebrated in the folk-tales of halflings and gnomes.

The war fought by the **Great Gold Wyrms** and his paladins against a foe in the southlands is one of the great mysteries of Imperial history. The Golden Order either swore never to speak of it, or somehow lost the ability to tell the tale. Any records of the conflict have been lost to time and the destruction of the Golden Citadel. Sometimes, though, the shifting winds of the Red Wastes expose strange mummified insect-husks buried in the sands. Occasionally they clasp the symbol of a lost icon that historians refer to as the **Scarab Master**. Some of these corpses are bigger than dragons, and their age-old carapaces still bear the burn marks of dragonfire.

## END TIMES

The Age of Longbeards ended with the worst calamity ever to befall the dwarves—the destruction of their great civilization of Underhome, deep in the underworld. In the war between dwarves and elves, some foe unleashed a vile cloud of poison that seeped through the cave networks, killing or mutating those exposed to it. The Dwarf King abandoned Underhome, and the surviving dwarves migrated up towards Forge and shallower homes in the mountains.

Later, dark elves may have colonized the uppermost halls of Underhome, and the derro continue to delve in the tainted zones of the deeps, but most of the ancestral realm of the Dwarf King is lost to death and monsters.

On the surface, this calamity took the form of earth tremors, quakes, and clouds of noxious fumes that issued out of huge cracks in the ground. The poisons blighted forests and cropland alike, leading to famine and terror. It did not, however, end the war between elves and dwarves, which continued into the next age.

**Other versions of the tale:** The loss of Underhome remains mysterious. The dwarves insist that Underhome fell long before the Empire was founded, and that it took them many ages to make the Great Climb from the deeps to the surface world, but human historians discount this as a scheme to make the Dwarf Kingdom appear older and more important than the Dragon Empire.

Dwarves usually blame dark elves for the poison clouds, although it might equally be the fault of some villainous third party. Some even whisper that the Princess of Cogs and Wheels might have deliberately betrayed her own people to further some scheme of hers, perhaps to bring the dwarves into closer alignment with the Dragon Empire.

Other histories claim, probably incorrectly, that it was the destruction of Underhome that started the conflict between dwarves and elves. It's even been suggested that Underhome never existed, or that the dwarves have conflated a long series of underground cities that had to be abandoned for various reasons into a single tale of a mythical golden age. The only way to know for sure would be to descend into the underworld and find that fabled lost city of horror and wonder.

**Side effects:** Perhaps the secret of the Great Gold Wyrms' battle with the scarabs is that the Wyrms didn't precisely win. Instead, what if the scarabs *lost*, somehow poisoned by the same magical catastrophe that poisoned the dwarven homelands?

## LEGENDS, LEGACIES AND LAIRS

- The *Iron Leviathan* was the largest stormcutter warship ever built. Laden with armored plates of adamantine and truesilver, powered by a hundred bound elementals, and crewed by the elite of the dwarven navy, the intended purpose of *Leviathan* was to conquer the isle of Omen and claim missing treasures of the Wizard King. Something went wrong when the titanic vessel landed on the dread island. Some tales claim that an ancient curse of the Wizard King fell upon the ship; other stories insist that a living dungeon somehow slithered on board and murdered the crew in its stony coils. Others whisper that *Iron Leviathan* was doomed before it began, for the sheer weight of enchantments and sorceries laid on that vessel was so great that it warped reality. Whatever happened, the warship somehow came to life and turned into a rampaging monster of the seas. For a time, *Iron Leviathan* raided the shipping and the shores of the Empire, violently or magically compelling new crewmembers to come on board to serve it for the rest of their unhappy lives. Fortunately, the *Leviathan* has hardly been seen since the Archmage calmed the Midland Sea . . . until now, GM?
- Tales of the Green Bandit speak of kingdoms that once lay between Throne Point and the borders of the Queen's Wood. Stories of quaint Poctamee, of enchanted Dwimmerven, of cruel Stelland and glorious Camalare. Were these lands destroyed in the chaos at the end of the age? That seems plausible—but there are other, more recent tales that tell of travelers who walked down familiar roads near Concord and ended up in unfamiliar places. Adventurers come to markets with coins minted in Stelland, or meet fey who claim to be nobles of Dwimmerven. Did the Elf Queen or some other power somehow hide these lost kingdoms under an illusion? Was the last theft of the Green Bandit to steal these lands away?
- The Princess of Cogs and Wheels founded a martial order, the Knights of Time's Wheel, that was open to both humans and dwarves. She intended it to unite and reward heroes, melding human valor with dwarven steel and sorcery. Wheel Knights were sent out from her palace in Forge to battle monsters and thwart evil. Legends even insist that the Princess's schemes spanned many ages, and that she magically projected her knights forward or backwards in time to intervene at key moments in history. The Princess is long gone, of course, but the Wheel Knights might survive in secret, still looking for heroes that can keep the cycle of the ages turning.

# MONSTERS

The three flavors of threats from this age do not seem likely to mix. The tunnel panther is a beast that accompanied the drow into the underworld when they invaded, and still flourishes in the darkness. The Underhome shade is a sad remnant of dwarven catastrophe. Scarabs are sporadically extinct insectoid threats that may have been the most powerful creatures in the world to share a hive-mind.

## TUNNEL PANTHER

*Who turned off the sound?*

5<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [BEAST]

Initiative: +13, or +20 underground

**Raking claws +10 vs. AC (two attacks)**—8 damage

*Natural 14+:* If both claws attacks roll a natural 14+, the tunnel panther may make a free *tearing bite* attack

**Tearing bite +10 vs AC**—12 damage, and 5 ongoing damage (save ends)

**C: Sound-quelling roar +10 vs. PD (1d4 nearby enemies)**—7 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (–4 to attacks) and hampered (may only use basic attacks), save ends both conditions.

*Limited use:* 1/battle

AC	21	
PD	19	HP 60
MD	15	

### BUILDING BATTLES

Near silver folk enclaves, tunnel panthers may well work with drow rangers and other warriors. In the rest of the underworld wilderness, it's up to you whether tunnel panthers are intelligent enough to team up with creatures who can complement their abilities.

## UNDERHOME SHADE

*Many dwarves perished in the destruction of Underhome. Some were taken unawares by the poisonous gases, but others lingered too long, trying to gather up their treasure before fleeing.*

*They linger still.*

6<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +12

Vulnerability: holy

**Icy touch +11 vs. PD**—15 cold damage

**R: Poisonous cloud +11 vs. PD (1d3+1 targets in a group)**—10 ongoing poison damage, hard save ends (16+).

*Limited use:* 1/battle

**R: Dreams of Underhome +11 vs MD (nearby enemy taking ongoing poison damage)**—10 psychic damage, and the creature is *helpless* (save ends) while it hallucinates seeing the glorious treasures of lost Underhome.

*Ghostly:* The shade has *resist damage 16+* to all damage except force or holy damage. It can move through solid objects, but can't end its movement inside them. It can become invisible at will, but cannot attack while invisible.

*Greedy:* If given a gold coin (or commanded to materialize with a Dwarf King icon relationship benefit), the shade materializes and loses its *ghostly* trait. It can regain this trait by making a successful save at the end of its turn (11+).

AC	20	
PD	20	HP 80
MD	16	

### UNDERHOME SHADES AND THE ICONS

In their bitterness, Underhome shades claim to have no loyalty to the Dwarf King, but his name still has some power over them.

If the fallen icon known as the Gold King (13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary 2, page 112) features in your campaign, Underhome shades may be under his sway, which provides a wide variety of similarly greedy dwarven monsters as allies.

## SCARABS

These insectoid monsters pillaged the south of the Empire until they were defeated by the Great Gold Wurm and his paladins. Some may still lurk in burrows under the Red Waste, or in the lands beyond the borders of the Empire, or there may still be eggs buried in the sands waiting for the right moment to hatch.

Scarabs communicate with one another through a shared consciousness, and so cannot be blinded or easily tricked—what one scarab knows, most all of them know. And they know hate most of all.

## SCARAB TITAN

*An extinction-level event on far too many legs.*

Huge 12<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [ABERRATION]

Initiative: +19

**Tentacles of doom +17 vs. AC (two attacks)**—120 damage

*Miss:* 40 damage

**Maw of the Scarab +17 vs AC**—100 damage, and 50 ongoing acid damage (hard save ends, 16+). A character killed by this ongoing acid damage hatches into a number of Scarab Swarm mooks equal to that character's starting hit points divided by 50.

**C: Stomping Legs +17 vs. PD (all enemies engaged with the Scarab Titan)**—25 damage, and the target must either pop free as a free action or take another 25 damage.

**R: Solar Bombardment +17 vs. AC (1d4 random nearby or far away enemies and any creatures engaged with them)**—125 fire damage

*Miss:* 50 fire damage

*War machine:* If the escalation die is odd, the scarab titan may make a single *maw of the scarab* attack as a quick action. If the escalation die is even, the scarab titan may make a *stomping legs* or *solar bombardment* attack as a quick action.

*Thing of terror:* Enemies engaged with the scarab titan with 120 hit points or fewer are afraid of the scarab, becoming dazed (–4 to attacks) and do not benefit from the escalation die. Furthermore, when a character first becomes subject to the scarab titan's fear aura, that character must make a normal save (11+). If this save fails, all other scarabs also cause fear to that character.

*Burrow:* The scarab titan is a surprisingly agile burrower, and has a +5 bonus to burrow saves.

*Unstoppable:* If the scarab titan starts its turn subject to any condition other than ongoing damage, it may spend 50 hit points to remove the condition.

#### Nastier Specials

*Spell-Proof Shell:* The crenellations and deformities in the monster's shell naturally grow in the shape of protective runes. The scarab titan may automatically counter one spell cast on it per round.

*Scarab burst:* When the scarab titan dies, it vomits acid on itself. 1d4 rounds later, its carcass explodes into 4d6 scarab swarm mooks.

AC	30	
PD	26	HP 900
MD	26	

## SCARAB SWARM MOOK

*In ages past, they filled the whole southland from east to west, glittering in the dying sun like a tide of blood.*

12<sup>th</sup> level mook [ABERRATION]

Initiative: +16

**Scarab spear +17 vs. AC—60 damage**

*Group ability:* For every two scarab swarm mooks in a battle, one of them can use *overwhelming advance* as a free action once per battle.

*Overwhelming advance:* The scarab swarm mook pops free from any foes and takes a free move action.

*Take cover:* Once per battle, if a scarab swarm mook is targeted by an attack that has multiple targets, it may choose to withdraw into its shell. If it does so, it automatically survives the attack with 1 hit point remaining, regardless of the damage dealt to the mob.

AC	28	
PD	26	HP 90 (mook)
MD	22	

*Mook:* Kill one scarab swarm mook for every 90 damage dealt to the mob.

## SCARAB SWARMS AND THE ICONS

The only icon the scarabs ever paid any attention to was the Scarab Master. No-one knows if he was a mystic who could truly command the insects, or a liar who claimed to have such power and fooled the world into thinking that he directed the random hungers of the swarm.

The Diabolist has agents searching the southern deserts for lost keys to the Abyss. Scarab eggs don't really qualify, but reckless or unlucky agents might hatch more than they imagined.

If there really are scarab egg hatcheries somewhere in the desert, the current High Druid would want them found and destroyed. There's nothing wrong with insects, even giant insects. But the scarabs don't co-exist with anyone else, so this would be a rare case in which the High Druid would be willing to take up a problem the Great Gold Wurm can no longer handle.

## BUILDING BATTLES

The scarabs aren't likely to team up with creatures that don't share their hive mind, so if you're interested in diversifying scarab battles, you could start by converting other high level monsters into scarabs. We'd say this includes the Tarrasque (13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary, page 200) if we didn't think that encounter sounded better as one of those monster-vs.-monster-racing-to-destroy-the-world plotlines.

# CLASS POWER

## RANGER TALENT: GREEN BANDIT'S SECRET

When you attack from ambush, an additional number of your allies equal to your Charisma modifier may act in the surprise round.

Once per day, when you flee, you may make a normal save (11+). If successful, this escape was just a feint; you do not take a campaign loss, and instead hide nearby. You may take a short rest, then return to the adventure without significant setback.

Once per level, you may declare that you know about a hiding place or refuge nearby. The nature of this refuge depends on the sort of terrain, but it's always a safe, well-concealed place stocked with supplies. It might be a hidden cache in the wilderness, or the home of a trusted old friend, or just a dungeon room that you somehow intuit is safer than anywhere else. Each character in the company automatically succeeds at one recharge roll when they first take a short rest in the refuge.

## MAGIC ITEMS

### ARMOR, ROBE, SHIRT, TUNIC

**Default bonus:** +1 AC (adventurer); +2 AC (champion); +3 AC (epic)

*Armor of the Putrid Deeps (heavy armor):* This air-tight sealed armor was created for dwarven expeditions to reclaim the poisoned halls of the Underhome. The wearer gains *resist poison 18+* and *resist acid 18+*; however, the wearer becomes dazed (–4 to attack) until the end of their next turn in any round in which they are targeted by an acid or poison attack. In addition, the wearer of the armor may cast *light* at will. Quirk: Unnaturally drawn to terrible or terrifying smells.

*Scarab War Kit (heavy armor – recharge 16+):* When hit or critted by a huge creature, reduce the damage by half. Quirk: Kill or attack insects without even thinking about it. Even if that's unwise.

### BELT, SWORDBELT, KILT, SKIRT, GIRDLE, SASH

**Original Default bonus:** Increase your maximum recoveries: by 1 (adventurer); by 2 (champion); by 3 (epic).

**New Optional Default Bonus:** Here's an optional default bonus for these types of items. With this new system, you don't increase your recoveries depending on the tier. Instead, the item gives you one extra recovery. But when you heal using that recovery, you don't roll and the hit points you heal depend on the tier of the item: 20 hp (adventurer); 50 hp (champion); 125 hp (epic).

*Knightwheel Sash (recharge 6+):* If you're a dwarf, use the human racial power *quick to fight* (13<sup>th</sup> Age core book, page 63) at the start of a battle. If you're a human, use the dwarf racial power *that's your best shot?* (13A, page 64) during a battle. Quirk: Surprisingly optimistic about dire situations.

### CLOAK, MANTEL, CAPE

**Default bonus:** +1 PD (adventurer); +2 PD (champion); +3 PD (epic)

*Hame of the Tunnel Panther (daily):* Once per full heal-up, while wearing this cloak, you may send forth your mind as the shadow of a tunnel panther. In this trance, your mind roams around the surrounding area, and you wake knowing the answer to *one* of the following questions (GM's choice!) (champion: 2 questions; epic: 3 questions):

- What is the biggest monster in the area?
- Where is a foe that we encountered signs of earlier?
- Where does the air smell foulest?
- Where does the air smell freshest?
- Where is the nearest source of clean water?
- Where is the best ambush site?

Quirk: Lurks melodramatically and speaks as if pouncing.

## WEAPONS

**Default bonus:** Attack and damage when using this weapon: +1 (adventurer); +2 (champion); +3 (epic).

*Dark Elf Bloodblade (edged melee weapon):* Creatures taking ongoing damage are vulnerable to attacks from this weapon. Quirk: Maniacal laughter at inopportune mwhahahahaahhhah moments. If already oriented towards insane laughter, laughter uses some other voice that's disturbing to wielder.

*Knightwheel (melee weapon – recharge 16+):* You gain a +1 attack bonus and deal +1d4 damage with this attack for each different fighter maneuver you have used in this battle (champion: +1d8 instead of +1d4; epic: +2d6 instead of +1d8). Quirk: Flips randomly between ruthless efficiency and dreamy optimism.

## WONDROUS ITEM

You can attune multiple wondrous items. They don't fill up a chakra.

*Coin of Command:* This potent item is an ancient dwarven coin, so old that it is nearly worn round and smooth. When another person freely accepts this coin from you, they are bound to obey one command from you. You must give them the coin, and they must accept it—you can't, for example, use the coin to buy a sword and then demand the smith serves you, nor could you spend the coin on a night's lodgings and then compel the innkeeper. You could give the coin as a non-specific bribe, as an offering, as tribute, or as alms to the poor.

Once accepted, the recipient of the coin knows they are magically bound to serve you for a single request, and suffer horrible recurring nightmares about being drowned in molten gold if they refuse or tarry. The recipient gains ownership of the coin, but cannot use it until the quest is fulfilled.

## GAMEMASTER

The *coin of command* should be used with caution, as it might suck up too much attention in some campaigns. Use it when you don't have other compelling storylines already in motion. It almost certainly shouldn't come into the player characters' hands without being gifted and requiring a service from a PC. Request fulfilled, the PC is going to want a return on their effort, so prepare yourself. A strange player character group might end up gifting the coin around the table, while power-conscious groups may try their luck with an icon's lieutenant. If the PCs want to try gifting the coin to a truly powerful NPC, just tracking down that character could involve a substantial quest.

# AGE OF CLAW & WING



*"There is no spell in all my books more powerful than this treaty, no incantation more magical than the words 'we shall have peace.'"*

*Well, actually, that's not true. I've also got a spell called World-shattering Evocation of Howling Doom, and I'll use on all of you if you don't sign the damn papers."*

**The 1d6th Age; apparently after the Age of Long Beards if you're using that age**

- The Empire fell into strife and civil war
- Evil forces took advantage of the upheaval
- Poison blighted Underhome
- A new Emperor forged an alliance among the icons

## OVERVIEW

This was an age of bloody strife, a time when elf fought dwarf, when sister fought brother, and when lawless tyrants were exalted. Most historians argue that the initial cause of this war was the destruction of Underhome, but other half-forgotten tales speak of other reasons for strife—who now can say what the Blooding of Carech Vor means, or why it was so awful that someone stole a rose from the Queen's Garden, or what "grimstone" was?

The wars between elf and dwarf that began the age were soon eclipsed by other perils. The sheer slaughter birthed a terrible lord of the undead. The great dragons returned to the Empire, taking advantage of the age-long absence of the Great Gold Wyrms. Monsters and living dungeons broke through from below, spilling more poison and toxic fumes out of the underworld.

Beset by such foes, the Empire splintered. Different claimants to the throne warred for control of Axis. Abandoned by the Dragon Empire, different cities turned to the dwarves or elves for protection against monstrous threats, or even paid tribute to evil dragons or tyrannical wizards.

When all seemed lost and it appeared that the forces of evil would triumph over the Empire, three heroes arose to turn the tide. A new High Druid arose in the north, a barbarian shaman whose folk were closely allied with the dwarves of Forge. The Druid was a bridge between elf and dwarf, bringing an end to their long war. Meanwhile, in the burning cities of the southland, the Archmage (some say, the first worthy of that title) guided a young princess, the first True Emperor, to claim her grandfather's throne and become the new Dragon Empress. Soon, she allied with the Elf Queen and Dwarf King against the dragons.

## ICONS

The **Gold King** was a corrupt dwarf who, by some accounts, refused the command of the Dwarf King to leave Underhome. Some tales claim that the Gold King died of poison and rose again as an undead monster; other stories insist that the Gold King deliberately transformed himself into an undead horror to survive in the poisoned reaches. Some even say that the Gold King was actually the true Dwarf King, and that the King who ordered the dwarves to abandon Underhome was a facsimile conjured by the treacherous illusions of the dark elves. (For a view of the Gold King as a fallen icon of the 13<sup>th</sup> age, see *13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary 2*, page 110.)

The **Dragonslayer** was a hero in the Empire who battled the spawn of the Four (the four chromatic dragons: the Red, the Blue, the Black and the then-active Green). Over the course of the age, his battles with monsters drove him to believe that the very existence of the Great Gold Wyrms was a threat to the Empire—that as long as the Wyrms existed, there would always be evil dragons. He vanished into the overworld to hunt the Wyrms, and was never seen again.

The destruction of Underhome by clouds of toxic gases led to the rise of the **Poison Sage**, a dark elf master alchemist whose studies of poisons led her to discover the secrets of life and death. She bred all sorts of monsters, and explored the deepest reaches of the underworld to gather more ingredients for her potions and tinctures.

## LEGENDS, LEGACIES AND LAIRS

- It was in this age that the Elf Queen bound the Green Dragon in chains of dream. Each of the three branches of the Elves tell a different account of this great deed. Among the Wood Elves, it's said that the Green Dragon attacked the Court of Stars, devouring the flower of elven chivalry and smashing through every magical protection and barrier until the Queen herself rode forth to do magical battle with the beast. The High Elves claim that the fall of the Green was written in the stars, and that he submitted to the Queen's chains willingly as part of a mystical cycle that plays out over many ages (and

their story-tellers point to the submission of the Blue to the Emperor, or the White to the Lich King as other steps in this cycle). The Dark Elves whisper that the Green was tricked by the Elf Queen, and that in his dreams, he sees an alliance of the Green and the Elves conquering the world in a new Dragon Empire.

- While the city of Concord would not be founded for many ages afterwards, the council that produced a peace accord between elves and dwarves was held in that spot. Legends speak of the Stone of Peace, a relic infused with the magic of the two icons, that lies buried deep beneath the streets of Concord. If this stone were ever broken, then the magical ties that ensure trust between the two icons might shatter and there would again be war between the Mountain and the Wood.
- For reasons that remain mysterious, the Great Gold Wyrms spent much of this age in the overworld. He communed with his paladins in dreams and omens, much as he does now that he is trapped in the Abyss, but certain of those paladins were able to communicate with him. These disciples mastered the art of astral projection, and were able to send their minds up into the heavens to speak with their master. The technique was lost in the tumult of passing ages, but if it could be rediscovered, then the surviving members of the Golden Order might be able to descend into the Abyss and aid their master against the demon hosts.
- Legends of earlier ages are confused, and some events seem unlikely or impossible given other stories. If, in fact, the Wizard King that slew the White went ahead and reanimated its corpse as a dragon-lich, shouldn't that have been a clue to the transformation that was to come, Wizard King into Lich King? So was there ever actually a time when the remaining Four, or Three, attempted a ritual to destroy the white dragon lich and rehouse the spirit of the White in a new egg? The ritual was foiled when the enchanted egg was stolen—perhaps by the Green Bandit, or spirited away by the Archmage, or turned into a powerful alchemical ingredient by the Poison Sage.

## END TIMES

The end of the age began with the Hail of Broken Stars, when dozens of flying realms fell out of the overworld and crashed into the lands below. These broken realms disgorged monsters and weird horrors across the land, and several great cities were annihilated by eerily well-aimed falling realms. Some theorize that the battle between the Dragonslayer and the Great Gold Wyrms somehow caused this catastrophe; others whisper that it was the Second Betrayal of the Elves and blame the High Elves (the First Betrayal being the poisoning of Underhome by the dark elves, and the Third Betrayal by the wood elves is apparently yet to come). Other tales claim that a mad apprentice of the new Archmage tried to change the laws of magic and was punished for it.

Evil dragons thrive on chaos; the surviving Three (Red, Black and Blue) made their play to conquer the remains of the Empire. They were turned back at the Field of Ruin, a tremendous battle

in which the new-crowned Empress joined with her Archmage, the Elf Queen and the Dwarf King to stand against the dragons. If the legend is true, this age ended on a sort of a high note after previous catastrophes! But wait. There's more...

## HERESIES & SECRETS

The stories passed down in the Empire claim that the spirit of the Great Gold Wyrms blessed the combatants at the Field of Ruin, but that the great dragon was not there in body and took no part in the battle against his kin.

Among the paladins of the Golden Order, however, it is said that the Great Gold Wyrms descended from the overworld to fight in the battle of the Field of Ruin—and that when the battle was won, he turned on the forces of the Empire and devoured one of the icons who had stood with them. *"This one betrayed you" he roared, "and allied with the evil dragons. It was the meddling of this traitor that brought ruin upon you all."* To preserve the fragile peace, the survivors agreed that this betrayal would remain forever secret, and that they would agree to the false tale that the icon fell heroically in battle. The identity of the traitor was a secret passed down only among the commander paladins of the Golden Order, whispered from one lord commander to the next, and this chain was broken when the Wyrms fell into the Abyss. Did the Archmage betray the Emperor? Was it the Elf Queen? Or was it some other icon whose presence on the battlefield at the Field of Ruin has now been forgotten, like the Hooded Lady or the Poison Sage?

## MONSTERS

The Green's captivity is one of those 'secrets' that anyone with power figures out. If you can remember your dreams, there are hints throughout the Queen's realm.

## GREEN DREAM SPRITE

*The jailers of the Green flit in and out of the dragon's dreams, continually weaving new webs of enchantment to keep it locked in slumber. Sometimes, one of these sprites tires of this duty and wanders off to cause havoc in the world. If not returned promptly, the weakness in the dream-web might be enough to free the Green...*

Double-strength 8<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [SPIRIT]

Initiative: +16

**Dream warrior +13 vs. MD**—60 psychic damage as the sprite conjures an illusory defender from the target's dreams or nightmares. Ask the target to describe the nature of this

illusion, and add one of the following effects to the attack (GM's choice or roll 1d4)

1. 20 ongoing poison damage (save ends)
2. +30 psychic damage
3. Target is stuck (hard save ends)
4. Target is dazed until the start of the sprite's next turn

**Limited Use:** Can only be used on targets who are not ensnared in the dreamweb

**C: Ensnare in the dreamweb +13 vs. MD (1 nearby enemy)**—33 psychic damage, and the target is plunged into a waking dream and becomes helpless (can't act except within the waking dream, -4 to all defenses, vulnerable to *coup de grace*). The target must describe the nature of the dream, which is usually drawn from the target's deepest desires or fears. The target can escape by making a suitable skill check based on the circumstances in the dream (DC30 to escape; failure inflicts 2d20 damage).

If more than one character is ensnared in the dreamweb, they can help one another. It's always easier to fight someone else's fears than your own (DC25), but it takes one round to travel from dream to dream.

A character in the real world may voluntarily enter the dream of another from the real world by touching the victim and taking 33 psychic damage. Roll a normal save;

if the save succeeds, the character is ensnared in the dreamweb in their ally's dream; if the save fails, they're stuck in the dreamweb in their own dream.

**R: Dream of the Green dragon +13 vs. PD (1d4+1 nearby or far away targets in a group)**—50 psychic damage, plus 20 ongoing poison damage (save ends).

**Limited Use:** Once per battle

**Limited Use:** Can only be used on targets who are not ensnared in the dreamweb

**Flight:** The sprite flies with perfect agility and great speed.

#### Nastier Specials

**Dreamwalk:** The sprite may enter into the waking dreams of a dreaming creature, and *teleport* to a place in the waking world described in that dream. So, if a character dreams of her home in Horizon, the sprite can use that dream as a short cut to Horizon.

**Mass Snare:** Twice per battle, the sprite may use *ensnare in the dreamweb* on 1d3 nearby foes instead of a single target.

AC 24  
PD 18  
MD 22

HP 250



## GREEN DREAM SPRITES AND THE ICONS

Invoking the Elf Queen's name alarms these fugitive fey, and might encourage them to behave, or at least shy away from permanent damage, particularly if backed up by an icon relationship advantage.

The Three would pay well for bottled dream-sprites, as it might be possible to unweave the enchantments that bind the Green if enough of them were removed.

The Enchantress, when she was present in the world, delighted in these tricky fey; accounts claim the Diabolist is the daughter or heiress of the Enchantress and demon-tainted sprites might haunt the Cairnwood.

## POWER ROGUE TALENT

### POISON MASTER

You gain the *venomous strike* bonus power. You also gain a +2 bonus to saves against ongoing poison damage.

#### VENOMOUS STRIKE

Melee attack

At-Will

**Target:** One enemy who is not suffering ongoing poison damage

**Attack:** Dexterity + level vs AC

**Hit:** WEAPON + Dexterity damage, and if your attack roll was even, your target takes ongoing poison damage equal to your Constitution modifier (save ends) (5<sup>th</sup> level: ongoing poison damage is now double your Constitution modifier; 8<sup>th</sup> level: triple).

**Miss:** Damage equal to your level.

**Adventurer Feat:** You can *spend your momentum* to use this attack against a creature that is already suffering ongoing poison damage. If you do so, you inflict ongoing poison damage on a successful hit, regardless of whether it's odd or even.

**Champion Feat:** If an enemy you're engaged makes a successful saving throw against your ongoing damage, you may *spend your momentum* to make a *venomous strike* attack as an interrupt action.

## MAGIC ITEMS

If there were supposed to be more items here, blame the Gold King.

### RINGS

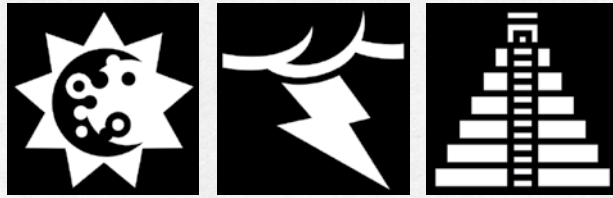
**Default bonus:** none.

**Ring of Poison Transmutation (Recharge 6+):** Let's start with the quirk: you have a taste for exotic and even dangerous food. Which you indulge often, because the power is that until the end of the battle, when you make a successful save against ongoing poison damage, you may immediately take one of the following benefits:

- Make a recharge roll for one spell or magic item
- Make a free basic attack
- Save against one other condition or instance of ongoing damage

**Ring of Treasured Indulgence (Recharge 16+):** As a quick action, increase the escalation die by 1d3. Until the end of the battle, your true magic items come perilously close to taking you over. In fact, you need to roll a normal save (11+) at the start of each of your turns. If you fail the save, the GM and your fellow players indulge themselves in arranging a somewhat suboptimal turn for you that indulges as many of your magic item quirks as comically or dramatically appropriate. Your items aren't (usually) trying to get you killed, but they're somewhat monomaniacal. Quirk: Very devoted to the well-being of true magic items, and addresses them as if they were all fully sentient conversationalists.

# AGE OF GODS



*"Now that the gods are here, will there be an end to hunger and thirst, to suffering and war?"*

*"No. But rejoice! For now you are assured that your starvation is sacramental, your suffering is blessed, and all your wars are holy!"*

## Something like the d6<sup>th</sup> Age

- The gods appear across the Empire in the form of physical avatars.
- Some reside in the Seven Cities; others build fortresses in the wilderness.
- The gods use adventurers as their spies and agents in each other's domains.

## OVERVIEW

In the normal course of events in the Dragon Empire, the gods are distant and uninvolved. Clerics venerate them, cults sacrifice to them, and desperate people pray to them, but the gods do not answer directly; they remain as silent as the mountains and the sky.

What about an abnormal course of events? In this age, the gods manifested in bodily form across the Dragon Empire.

Even by the standards of this messed-up world, this was a weird age. The motivations and desires of the gods are not readily comprehensible by mortals, and the proximity of the gods meant that nothing could be relied upon. Life is always at the mercy of the gods, but in this age, the gods grew strange and whimsical.

**One version of the story:** The gods first appeared in their temples and places of power. Each of the Seven (or Six, or Eight) Cities, therefore, had its own patron deity or even a whole local pantheon, and the presence of the gods warped reality around them. For example, Horizon ascended to the overworld while the goddess of magic was in residence. On the coast of the Iron Sea, Highrock (what would later become Drakkenhall) was surrounded by walls of solid thunderclouds and its warriors wielded lightning bolts thanks to the blessings of the storm god.

In Axis, the Empress took the goddess of justice as her consort, and parts of her city became a shining palace of law, where ancient and wise dragons debated with immortal dead philosophers to shape Imperial policy (or what remained of it; as every city had its own gods, there was very little co-operation

between the Seven Cities). In the lower districts of Axis, though, the many-handed war god of the arenas held sway, and constant gladiatorial games occasionally sated his bloodlust.

Glitterhaegen had its gods of wealth and the harvest, and the streets ran with wine and silver. Santa Cora, always the favored city of the temples, became so crowded with gods and spirits that they became an everyday nuisance, and ordinary people grew used to living in a city where the laws of reality changed when you crossed the street. The ice-covered temple of some frost god stood next to the fiery shrine of the sun; it was summer and winter, night and day, heaven and hell all at the same time.

Some icons, like the Archmage, lost their influence in this era. Others became divine—the Elf Queen, for example, ascended into the elven pantheon and became a demigoddess. The Dwarf King continued to rule in Forge, and though there were no obvious signs of the dwarf gods on the surface, there were miracles under the mountains.

Some icons refused to bow to the power of the gods; the Lich King, it is said, slew any god who dared approach the Necropolis. Over the age, those who rejected divine rule clustered on the islands of the Midland Sea, under the Lich King's protection. (Other tales claim that the Lich King did not stir from his tomb, and that ancient wards dating back to his reign were anathema to the gods. But of course this partly depends on whether or not the Lich King has surfaced at this point in your chronicle. Some campaigns will still be waiting for the Lich King to climb from the barrow.)

Dark gods also manifested. Some claimed cities as their own—in Shadow Port, for example, the Goddess of Murder reigned, and the God of Plague slithered out of the Fangs and made his home just outside Concord. Other evil gods appeared in the wilderness, conjuring nightmarish fortresses and calling monsters to their banners.

Each manifest deity had a sphere of influence, a region where their divine portfolio and power was paramount. The Storm God was unassailable by other gods in Highrock; the God of Murder could not be killed in Shadow Port. The closer a traveler came to the temple of a god, the stronger that god's influence became, until all laws of reality were suborned and changed by the awesome and holy presence at the epicenter of divinity. Therefore, instead of battling each other directly, each deity employed heroes and spies who could operate in the domains of other gods.

## MANY GODS WELCOME

If you've created a pantheon that has been looking for a chance to shine, or to burn, this could be it. There's nothing so special about the gods that follow that requires that they overshadow deities you and your players have created, particularly if you've come to this age after a session with the Engine of the Ages. Another option would be to draft gods from 13<sup>th</sup> Age-compatible books like *Gods & Icons* from Dread Unicorn Games.

## ICONS

This age is remembered for its gods, not its icons. In this age (and *perhaps* in the 13<sup>th</sup> Age, if the players somehow end up with relationship dice from this era), iconic benefits took the form of direct divine intervention. So, if you have a favor from the God of Storms, it might manifest as a convenient lightning bolt, or the power to bless a ship so that it can ride through an impending storm without danger.

Some of these deities may still be worshipped in the Dragon Empire; others were slain in the cataclysm that ended the age.

**Iutise, Goddess of Justice:** Iutise manifests as a young woman in the uniform of an Imperial soldier, with a dragon-like helm of gold that covers her face, and a spear that seeks the hearts of the unworthy.

**Cannor, Storm God:** Cannor is depicted as a storm giant of incredible size. Each of his temples had a life-size statue of some part of him, like a toe or a single fingernail, but so large that it dominated the huge dome above the altar.

**Many-handed Verx, God of Arenas:** Verx appeared as a beast-headed brute with six arms, each of which wields a different weapon. Verx was what theologians call a grey god—neither wholly dark nor wholly light.

**Nimu, Goddess of Magic:** Unlike the other deities, Nimu never manifested in the same form twice, and so is always depicted as an arcane symbol. She was referred to as the Lady of Masks, or the Shapechanger.

**Deimaros, God of Fear:** Deimaros manifested as a tall man in a black cloak with an eerie fixed smile on his mask-like face. His temple appeared in the hills near the forest of the Stalking Trees. It is said that he was lord of panic, and that he commanded the body when the mind was absent. Those who sleepwalk are still referred to as being in Deimaros' land. (See the House of Fear below.)

**Thak, Goddess of Murder:** Thak appeared as a halfling street urchin, carrying a thin knife behind her back. Ritual murders are still carried out in her name in Shadow Port, and by ancient tradition the city watch are forbidden from investigating such killings, forcing the families of the deceased to hire investigators and clerics of Iutise to seek justice for the dead.

**Sijhana, Goddess of the Sun:** Even in this age, Sijhana rarely manifested in the Dragon Empire, preferring to dance in the overworld. Salacious tales told by wandering minstrels claimed that she was the lover of both the Great Gold Wurm and the Red Dragon.

**Benedat, God of War:** Benedat customarily appeared in the form of a drow sword-scholar, a dispassionate architect of battle. The fabled *Benedatine Scrolls* kept in certain monasteries describe the methodology and tactics of efficient warfare in a series of koans, and are required reading for any would-be conqueror.

## LEGENDS, LEGACIES AND LAIRS

- **The House of Fear:** The House of Deimaros, the god of fear, still stands on the edge of the Stalking Trees. The god's citadel is home to undead creatures and other horrors, and draws evil things to it. So far, no villain has managed to claim full control over the haunted House—a very good thing for the Empire, for the master of the House of Fear might become a new and terrible icon. It would be best if the house were destroyed, but what hero has the courage to accomplish such a deed?
- **The Heavenly Palace:** There are many wonderful palaces in Axis, but the greatest and most beautiful was the Heavenly Palace, the citadel of delight and divinity built by the Empress and her goddess-consort Iutise. When seated in her throne of diamond, the word of the Empress was backed by divine power and was literally law—no entity could disobey her commands from the throne. The Heavenly Palace vanished at the end of the age. One myth describes it flying into the overworld, but other sages believe that it is still hidden in Axis, shielded from mortal eyes by divine occlusion, and that one day it will appear again to save the Empire from anarchy.
- **Ichor Deposits & God Carcasses:** Many gods bled and died in this age. The metaphysics of divine wounds may not be the same in other ages, but divine blood spilled in this age manifested as a glassy, resin-like substance called ichor, which is very valuable to wizards and alchemists. Raw ichor contains something of the god it came from, so the ichor of a fire god is highly explosive, while the ichor of a god of wealth can be used as a catalyst to transmute base metals into gold. Distilled ichor is even more potent—it's the essence of godstuff, and can be made into potions of longevity or channeled into spells to make them divine in scope and durance. Rarest of all are the buried corpses of dead gods, which invariably swell after death to giant size (ok, fine, dungeon-size). Not only are these corpses rich in ichor, but the creatures that fed from the flesh of gods before it transmuted into stone often develop astounding semi-divine powers...
- **City Cults:** In this age, each of the Seven Cities had at least one resident patron deity, and even though the age of the gods may be long over, the cities remember their gods. In some cities, this simply takes the form of annual festivities that commemorate the days when the gods walked the streets. For example, in Axis, there's an annual tournament held in the name of the Many-Handed Warrior, while in Horizon, the Night of Nimu marks the end of term in the wizard colleges,



and is celebrated with masked balls, raucous parties, and lewd illusions. Elsewhere, the legacy of the gods is more troublesome. Concord, for example, was home to an earth goddess, and her cult still exists behind the scenes. Those who cross the cult must watch their steps carefully, for if they ever step on bare earth again, it might swallow them up in an instant. Meanwhile, in Drakkenhall, those who plot against the rule of the Blue do so under the sign of Cannor the Storm God, who once ruled in Highrock. His cult swears he will rule there again one day...

## END TIMES

The age ended in a bloody conflict between the gods, battles so devastating that all the surviving gods agreed that they must never again bring war to the mortal world. The gods therefore retreated to the heavens, and swore never to intercede directly again.

So far so good. But if some quirk of the shifting laws of magic allowed the divine levels of the overworld to once again overlap the mortal world, would the truce hold?

## FEASTING ON THE FALLEN

The Great Ghoul was presented in *Lions & Tigers & Owlbears: 13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary 2* as a fallen icon. Perhaps one of the Great Ghoul's secrets is that it was a god before it was an icon? When the other gods retreated, the Great Ghoul remained to decay as part of the mortal world.

## MONSTERS

There may be glorious remnants of the Age of Gods scattered somewhere far from mortal eyes, but glories tend to be adopted by later ages. It's gradually more difficult to be sure of the provenance of the surviving wonders of the world.

Sadly it's not as hard to find shattered deities and twisted casualties leftover from the Age of Gods. We'll detail three wrecked survivors of the age below: godshades, divine remnants, and ichor vampires.

## GODSHADE

Godshades are the ghosts of the clerics and high priests of the fully-manifest gods of this age. They linger in the mortal world at the command of their patron deity, and are usually set to guard a temple or other relic. Never mind that the temples have vanished and the relics are long-gone, a now-arbitrary form of duty remains. Most godshades were wise and learned at one point in their existence, but insanity or feverish devotion to defending the 'temple precincts' means that they're more likely to start throwing bolts of holy light than enter into philosophical debate.

Identifying its patron deity is often key to defeating or placating a godshade. Sometimes, it's easy (there might be a holy symbol painted on the wall, or tattooed on the ghost's forehead, or scrawled in mile-high glowing runes across the sky), but other godshades disguise their true allegiance, especially those who serve dark gods.

6<sup>th</sup> *double-strength level caster* [SPIRIT]

Initiative: +12

**Smite +10 vs. AC**—30 damage, and the target pops free of the godshade

**C: Prayer of castigation +10 vs. MD (1d4 nearby enemies)**—20 holy damage, and whenever that foe attacks the godshade in this combat or otherwise triggers castigation, that foe immediately suffers another 20 holy damage. Note that this effect lasts until the end of the combat, and multiple *castigation* prayers can stack. So, if a foe gets hit by this spell three times, that foe takes 60 holy damage whenever it attacks the godshade.

**R: Radiant beam of faith +10 vs. PD (1 nearby or far away enemy)**—40 holy damage, and the target is stuck until the end of their next turn

*Ghostly*: The godshade has *resist damage 16+* to all damage, except force damage. The godshade loses this defense for one round if an attacker speaks the true name of its god. Discovering the name of the god may require research, adventuring, a skill check or iconic benefits.

*Domain Mastery*: Each godshade has mastery over one domain connected to its patron deity. This mastery gives the godshade a special ability.

*Healing*: Once per battle as a free action, when a nearby enemy heals using a recovery, the godshade or one of its allies gains an equal amount of temporary hit points.

*Justice/Vengeance*: Once per battle as a quick action, the godshade and its allies may reroll any missed attacks until the start of its next turn.

*Knowledge/Lore*: Choose a random PC. The godshade knows that PC's secret weakness. If the PC really doesn't have one, it activates all the PC's magic item quirks, which should trouble the PC greatly and give you, the GM a chance to roleplay out of control magic items.

*Life/Death*: Whenever a nearby enemy fails a death save, the godshade gets to cast a free *radiant beam of faith*.

*Love/Beauty*: Targets struck by the *radiant beam of faith* are confused, not stuck.

*Protection/Community*: Once per battle as an interrupt, when an enemy attacks the godshade or one of its allies, the

godshade may invoke this domain. Any damage dealt by that enemy is also applied to that enemy.

*Strength*: Once per battle as a quick action, the godshade gains a +4 bonus to all its Smite attacks this round.

*Sun/Anti-Undead*: Radiant beam of faith now hits 1d3 enemies in a group.

*Trickery/Illusion*: Once per battle when the godshade is hit with an attack, the attack automatically misses and the godshade teleports to any point nearby.

*War/Leadership*: Once per battle until the start of its next turn, the godshade and all its allies may add the escalation die to their attacks.

*Free invocation*: If a cleric is in the same battle as a godshade, the cleric gains a free invocation of any one domain shared with the shade.

### Nastier Specials

*Do Not Blaspheme!* Naming the god triggers *prayer of castigation*.

*Double Mastery*: The godshade has mastered a second domain.

AC 20

PD 16

MD 20

HP 140

## DIVINE REMNANT

*Old gods don't die. They just keep going, even after they've lost their purpose, their memories, even their minds. Immortality doesn't necessarily preserve; it just means the thing cannot die, no matter how much it degenerates.*

Divine remnants are the dregs of divinity, the shambling wreck of a mostly-dead god. They manifest in different ways; one might resemble a giant made of fallen pillars and rubble from a ruined temple, or a vaguely humanoid mass of dirt and vegetation, or a whirling cloud of dead flies and starving cats. Some might retain enough awareness to take on humanoid form, appearing as strange wanderers, probably associated with their former divine portfolio in some fashion.

The fumbling miracle powers possessed by each divine remnant are also associated with its former place in the pantheon. We've listed four possible lists of *fumbling miracles* below. As each divine remnant is different, you may want to create your own tables for other types of remnant.

Large 10<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [SPIRIT]

Initiative: +20

**Flailing strike +15 vs. AC**—75 holy damage

*Natural 16+*: The divine remnant may immediately make another flailing strike attack against a different target.

*Miss*: 30 holy damage

**R: Wrath of ancients (1d3 nearby or far away targets in a group)**—50 holy damage

*Fumbling Miracle*: At the start of each of its turns, roll a d6. If the result is lower than or equal to the escalation die, apply the result listed on the appropriate fumbling miracle table as a quick action for the divine remnant. If a result has an effect until the end of the battle, don't duplicate the effect, ignore later identical results.



**Blasphemy!:** When the divine remnant is staggered or suffers a critical hit, the player character who dealt the blow suffers 4d10 holy damage.

**True immortal:** Divine remnants cannot be killed by damage alone. Note the excess damage of the attack that reduced the remnant to 0 hit points. The remnant appears again after that many days. (For example, if the remnant had 20 hit points left, and was hit for 50 hit points, then the excess damage is 30, so the remnant will reappear in one month's time). If the remnant died from a source other than damage, it reappears in d100 days. A remnant can only be slain outright by an epic ritual performed on the place where it was forcibly disembodied. It seems likely that most player character groups will discover this the hard way.

Divine remnants have little memory of anything, but have a surprising ability to recall a grudge against those who temporarily destroyed it.

#### Nastier Specials

**Holy Escalator:** If the remnant's in a place of power associated with its former self, it gets to add the escalation die to its attacks.

AC 26  
PD 24  
MD 20

HP 430

## FUMBLING MIRACLE TABLES

Here's a selection to guide your creations.

#### ***Fumbling Miracle (God of the Oceans):*** Roll 1d6

- 1 or less. No effect on the battle, but children born in the area will yearn for the ocean.
- If this battle is within sight of the ocean, the divine remnant rolls an extra d20 for all its attacks until the end of the battle, choosing which result it prefers.
- The tide recedes, and the escalation die drops round by round towards 1 instead of growing. After it reaches 1 it will rise again normally.
- Until the end of the battle, whenever an enemy of the divine remnant heals using a recovery, the divine remnant heals 4d20 damage.)
- Until the end of the battle, the divine remnant can add the escalation die to its attacks.
- Deal 6d10 holy damage to each enemy of the divine remnant, or 10d10 to anyone who has been on a sinking ship.

#### ***Fumbling Miracle (Nature God):*** Roll 1d6

- 1 or less. No effect on the battle, but the surrounding countryside is blessed with astounding, unnatural fecundity for the next year.

2. Vines sprout around the battlefield. For the rest of the battle, earth-bound creatures must make a normal save (11+) at the start of their turn; on a failed save, they lose a move action this turn. The divine remnant is unaffected.
3. For the rest of the battle, whenever a creature fails a last gasp or death save, or is slain, it turns into a large oak tree. (Note that dying player characters can still be alive, but transformed into trees while on the brink of death.)
4. A hail of flying stones and dirt hits all nearby enemies for 4d10 damage.
5. An uncountable host of small but vicious woodland animals manifest, swarm one random player character for 3d20 damage, and then vanish again.
6. Nature convulses in an earthquake; the remnant's enemies take 3d20 damage and lose access to the escalation die until the start of the divine remnant's next turn.

### **Fumbling Miracle (God of War): Roll 1d6**

- 1 or less. No effect on the battle, but conflict breaks out in the region within one month.
2. A magical sword appears in mid-air. For the rest of the battle, it attacks a random enemy on the battlefield, attacking with +15 vs. AC and dealing 30 damage on a hit.
3. For the rest of the battle, whenever a creature other than the divine remnant makes a melee attack, that creature takes 2d10 holy damage.
4. A rain of searing hot blood splashes all nearby enemies for 4d10 damage.
5. Until the end of the battle, at the start of the round, pick one random combatant other than the divine remnant. That creature automatically becomes confused this round.
6. Until the end of the battle, allies of the god of war are not destroyed when reduced to 0 hit points. They only die if they fail to hit with an attack on their turn while they are at 0 hit points!

### **Fumbling Miracle (God of Famine): Roll 1d6**

- 1 or less. No effect on the battle, but famine breaks out in the region within one month.
2. All nearby enemies are weakened by hunger (save ends; this effect can also be ended by eating something. Fetching a snack from one's backpack is a standard action.)
3. Until the end of the battle, staggered creatures other than the divine remnant are vulnerable to all attacks.
4. All nearby enemies are ravaged by pangs of hunger, and suffer 4d10 damage.
5. After this battle, recharge rolls for spells and magic items take a -5 penalty.
6. All nearby enemies take 4d10 damage and lose 1d3 recoveries.

## **DIVINE REMNANTS AND THE ICONS**

While divine remnants contain the vestiges of divine power, it's hard to make consistent use of their miraculous abilities. Most icons consider them threats or nuisances—most icons are right!

Given her sphere of influences, the Priestess may take a more active interest in these decrepit quasi-deities. Is there a special temple in Santa Cora where they can be safely relieved of the horrible burden of immortality? Or does the Priestess have hopes for surprising restorations?

## **BUILDING BATTLES**

Divine remnants aren't likely to associate with each other, but they could attract creatures associated with their original portfolio.

## **OTHER IMMORTALS**

If you're making use of creatures and concepts from this age in your campaign, you'll want to take a look at the eidolons written up on page 44 of *Lions & Tigers & Owlbears: 13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary* 2. The eidolons could be especially useful for introducing concepts related to the divine remnants at lower tiers instead of waiting until epic.

## **ICHOR VAMPIRE**

*Unhappy are those who have tasted the blood of the gods, for they will never again be satisfied with anything less.*

There can't be more than a handful of these horrors left.

Ichor vampires once fed on the blood or congealed ichor of a divine entity—a terrible mistake. The vampires are unable to wholly digest the divine essence, nor can they ever be satisfied with weak, thin mortal blood. Driven by their eternal hunger and tormented by the dregs of divine essence in their systems, ichor vampires roam the world looking for more godsblood to drink; failing that, they look for victims to torture as a brief distraction from their own woes.

An ichor vampire resembles a normal feral vampire—a pale, thin, bedraggled monster—but if injured, its latent divinity begins to shine through. A badly wounded ichor vampire takes on more and more of the attributes of the god it fed from; an ichor vampire that fed from a god of war might regenerate an arm covered in plate mail, or sprout swords instead of limbs when hurt. An ichor vampire that once fed on a god of fire might burst into flames as part of its regeneration.

*12<sup>th</sup> level wrecker* [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +18

Vulnerability: holy

**Rending Fists +17 vs. AC (two attacks)—50 damage**

*Both attacks hit the same target with natural 16+:* The target is stunned until the end of its next turn

**Deathly Touch +17 vs. PD—80 damage**

*Natural 11+:* The target is weakened until the end of its next turn. In addition, the target expends one unused limited trait (a spell, power or talent with a once-per-battle or daily use, but not magic item powers) of its choice.

*Grotesque regeneration:* The ichor vampire regenerates 4d12 hit points at the start of each round, and the restored flesh is tainted with uncontrolled divine power. Keep track of the number of hit points healed by the ichor vampire. Every time the vampire heals 50 hit points, roll 1d4 on an appropriate *fumbling miracle* table from the divine remnants above.

*Mist Form:* If reduced to 0 hit points, the ichor vampire turns to mist and drifts away. When it reforms, it is restored to its original form. An ichor vampire cannot be killed unless somehow purged of its stolen ichor. (Icon relationship advantages, epic rituals, and even a very difficult skill check might suffice.)

#### Nastier Specials

**C: Vampiric compulsion +17 vs. MD (one enemy; see below)**—the target is confused and vulnerable (save ends)

*Limited use:* Usable only as a free action when a nearby enemy attacks the vampire and misses with a natural 1-5

*Worship Me!* When the vampire heals 180 hit points using *grotesque regeneration*, it may immediately make a free *vampiric compulsion* attack on all nearby enemies.

AC 28  
PD 26      HP 340  
MD 22

## ICHOR VAMPIRES AND THE ICONS

Ichor vampires are too crazy, too unreliable, and too powerful to make good minions, even for the icons. Some have been encountered in the Red Wastes, perhaps looking for ichor spilled by the Great Gold Wyrms. The Wyrms are not a god per se, but he's as close as any living thing can be. Since it's not clear that blood spilled by the gods of any other age functions as ichor, you're more likely to find them deep in the underworld searching for corpses buried in the terrible war of the gods.

## SPELL

### 7TH LEVEL CLERIC SPELL

#### DIVINE INTERVENTION

Ranged Spell

**Special:** You can cast this spell only once per level. You'll also have to keep track of how many times you cast this spell in your life.

**Effect:** When you cast this spell, roll 1d6 for each cleric domain you have, one domain at a time. (You'll want to start with the domain you're most interested in accessing.) If you get a 5 or a 6, then your deity intervenes through that domain, and something miraculous and astounding happens based on that domain; don't roll for your other domains. A 5 means the miracle comes with a price, drawback or some other repercussion; a 6 means that your deity is able to intercede cleanly, without upsetting the balance of the cosmos.

If none of your rolls get a 5 or 6, then you've got two choices.

Option one is to substitute another cleric spell of the same level for this spell—it doesn't have to be one you've got prepared—and cast that spell instead. This still counts as one of your lifetime uses of divine intervention. Option two is to drop the *divine intervention*—nothing happens and the spell and the action used to cast it is lost, but it doesn't count towards your lifetime casting total.

The form and scope of the *divine intervention* is up to you and the GM. The gods don't usually intervene to smack down bad guys—the intervention is more likely to get you out of a no-win situation, or give you some key clue or advantage to turn the tables on your opponents. *Divine interventions* can also help with natural disasters and non-combat threats—if you need to stop a volcanic eruption or cure a whole city of plague, this is the spell for you. The effects are always connected to the domain you invoke. Say, for example, you're trying to thwart the Orc Lord. If you get a *divine intervention* of war, then your army might win a battle against all the odds, or you might plunge the Orc Lord's horde into civil war. If you get a *divine intervention* of protection, you might cause a wall to explode out of the earth, blocking the advance of his armies.

*Divine intervention* cannot bring back the dead, at least not permanently. It might let a soul out of the afterlife for one fight.

**Limited Use:** Like *resurrection*, this spell takes its toll on you.

The first time you cast it, you can cast it quickly, with a single standard action.

The second time you cast it, it costs you half your hit points and half your daily powers/spells. You're also permanently marked or changed in some way—you might gain some divine feature, be branded with your god's holy symbol, or maybe you'll just be left twisted and broken by the powers you just channeled.

The third time you cast it, you permanently lose access to the domain(s) used to shape the intervention, and you're left with no spells and only a few hit points. Oh, and every enemy of your deity suddenly knows exactly where you are.

The fourth time you cast it, not only do you lose access to that domain, but so do all the other clerics of your god. Restoring that connection requires an epic quest. Again, you lose all your remaining spells and are knocked down to a few hit points, and you advertise your location and weakness to every foe.

The fifth time you cast this spell, you burn out your soul and are annihilated. Mortals aren't meant to channel the power of the gods like this.

9th level spell

You get an intervention-with-strings on a 3-4 (instead of a 5) and a repercussion-free intervention on a 5-6 (instead of a 6).

# AGE OF THE BLAZING METEOR



*Truly it is written: the movements of the stars determine the destinies of those below, and strange are the things that come from the overworld.*

## The d6<sup>th</sup> Age

- A starship explodes above the Dragon Empire, showering debris and alien monsters across the world.
- The ship's hyperspace engines disrupt magic, weakening the Empire.
- Some of the survivors ally with hobgoblins and conquer half the Empire.
- Other survivors pose as mystic sages and secret masters, and help a band of heroes disable the engines to restore magic.

## OVERVIEW

Early in this age, a new star appeared in the heavens over the Dragon Empire. The star grew brighter and brighter over several months, until its radiance filled the night sky with multi-colored brilliance.

This star fell to earth, and as it fell it shattered into many pieces. Metallic shards of the star landed across the Empire. There were three especially large fragments—one landed in the Owl Barrens, one at what became Starport, and the third landed on (or near) the island of Omen. The fall of the star was a cataclysm that might have ended an age in some circumstances; the star-shards brought with them poisonous vapors, earthquakes, tsunami and other upheavals. Most worryingly of all, the fall of the star disrupted the natural order of magic, making it unreliable. Spells and wards failed across the Empire, and even some magical creatures, like dragons, grew ill when they came too close to the star's baleful influence.

Strange star-creatures stalked the land. Some were metal golems of curious design; others were monstrous aberrations never recorded in any bestiary.

A tribe of invaders, human in visage but monstrous in their ways, emerged from the fragment in the Owl Barrens and soon made alliance with an ambitious hobgoblin ruler. The hobgoblins

learned to make swords from the fallen star-metal, and aided by the mysterious sorcery of these invaders, they went to war against the Empire. Without reliable war-wizardry, the Empire was forced onto the defensive. The elves, fearing magical contagion, dared not send aid, and not even dwarven steel was proof against the starmetal swords. Giants and other monsters rallied to the banner of the hobgoblins, and they were able to conquer much of the Empire and lay siege to Axis.

The tide turned when a mysterious order of sages made contact with the Imperial forces, and taught them a rite to restore magic to the world. A band of heroes travelled into the heart of Omen and performed this ritual within the third star-fragment, destroying the alien sorcery of the invaders and restoring the natural magic of the Dragon Empire. Robbed of their allies, the hobgoblin host was defeated in the battle of the Burning Ford.

## OR, TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY...

The artificial intelligence of the starship *Grosvenor* hadn't seen anything quite so interesting in many, many cycles. The planet ahead was a relatively standard Class-Terra (Special Reserve, with indigenous sophonts), but its eliptonic field was weirdly folded into the noosphere. Why, the locals must have some truly bizarre psychokinetic traits! Fascinated, the *Grosvenor* drifted closer and closer... and ran into trouble. An automated diagnosis suggested that the planet's strangely malformed reality-field was somehow entangled with the *Grosvenor's* hyperdrive. The AI quietly cursed the budget cutbacks on the *Beagle*-class science ships that had eliminated the planned impulse drive module, leaving it with only basic thrusters to avoid impacting on the planet's surface.

Following protocol, it awoke key crew-members from cryosleep so they could decide what to do next.

Option 1 was to use the thrusters to push *Grosvenor* into a semi-stable orbit above the mysterious planet, and hope that diligent research could find a way to disentangle the drive from the psychic field before supplies ran out.

Option 2 was to fire the drive immediately, before the ship got further enmeshed in this noetic Sargasso; the *Grosvenor* would almost certainly break free, but the psychic backlash could have regrettable side effects on the more sensitive inhabitants of the planet. This would violate Directive Alpha (no contact with SR planets), but at least it would save the ship.

The options became factions; the factions became bitter rivals. The *Grosvenor's* Captain Vorless favored Option 1, but the majority of the crew preferred 2. As the dispute escalated, a brilliant but misguided engineer named Harod Crillson tried to break the deadlock by removing certain core behavioral safeguards from the AI, which only added to the confusion. The crew tried to mutiny against the captain to seize control of the hyperdrive, but it was too late—and without a functioning AI, the attempt to attain a stable orbit failed.

The *Grosvenor* was never designed to operate in atmosphere. She broke up into three main modules. The command and navigation module crashed in the north of the Empire; the main research module (including the sample pods from the eighty-nine planets previously visited on this five-year mission) crashed into the Owl Barrens. The engineering module, including the computer core, main reactor and hyperdrive, landed on the shore of Omen.

The mutineers in the research module decided that their best hope of survival was to ignore Space Fleet Directive Alpha, and conquer the locals. They first tried dealing with the human natives, but were rebuffed, so they instead chose to use another tribe of humanoids. They provided the humanoids with the necessary metallurgical tech to make starship hull fragments into weapons, and backed them up with salvaged security weapons and service robots. The plan was to conquer the local polity in a few months, install the humanoids as an intermediary between them and the conquered population, and then forcibly bootstrap the planet into premature cyberindustrial civilization.

Their plan ran into problems. The native polity, the “Dragon Empire,” proved a lot tougher to beat than expected, even with the psychokinetic “magic” of the locals temporarily disrupted by the *Grosvenor's* entangled hyperdrive. To complicate matters, the hobgoblin warlord turned out to be a lot smarter than expected, and within a few months, the mutineers found themselves wondering exactly who was in charge—they, or the primitive brute they'd picked as their blunt instrument. The disappearance of their best engineer, Crillson, and the unexpected discovery that the ship's off-kilter AI was still active also weighed on their minds.

Meanwhile, in the north, Captain Vorless and the few survivors in the command module tried to honor Directive Alpha by avoiding contact with the locals. Over time, it became clear that unless they interceded, the mutineers would gain control of the planet. They could send a distress message, but there was little hope of another Space Fleet vessel arriving in time—assuming another ship could avoid getting trapped in the same energy field that had doomed *Grosvenor*. Eventually, they decided to disguise themselves as ‘mysterious mountain sages’, and told the locals how to shut down the ship's hyperdrive using a ‘ritual’. As soon as the hyperdrive shut down, magic returned in full force to the Dragon Empire, and most of the mutineers were slain in the defeat of the Hobgoblin Rebellion.

## ICONS

The world's usual eternal and recurring icons played a reduced role in this age. Center stage went to creatures from the ‘blazing meteor.’

Even before the tools to conquer the world literally fell into his hands, the **Hobgoblin Warlord** was a fearsome strategist and leader. He welded the warring hobgoblin clans into the largest army of humanoids ever seen (at least, until the Orc Lord showed up with a much larger force) and outmaneuvered the Imperial Army at every turn.

The **Steel Colossus** was a mysterious giant, clad in impenetrable silver armor, that strode out of the Midland Sea a few months after the stars fell. This iron giant never spoke, but wandered the Empire. Sometimes, it appeared to do the bidding of the Speaker in Light, but at other times it acted to protect people from monster attacks, especially the creatures that fell from the skies. Some tales claim that the Steel Colossus stopped moving, and is now called the Nothern Colossus (13<sup>th</sup> Age core book, page 276); another story says that the Colossus was the last foe the heroes fought when they performed the ritual to bring back magic on Omen.

The **Mountain Sage** still dwells near Starport, but is no longer counted among the icons. The Sage was an age-defining icon of the Age of the Blazing Meteor, but since then she hasn't left the icy citadel above Commandule and strives to make little or no impact on the world. Every so often, someone with mystical insight realizes that the mysterious figure of the Mountain Sage can treat any disease or illness, even those ailments that the gods cannot cure and wounds that magic cannot heal. Magic does not function on the Sage's mountain, so only the hardest travelers can brave the snow and ice to reach her citadel.

The **Speaker in Light**: One of the most mysterious of all icons, the Speaker in Light appeared only as a shimmering pattern of light that spoke with a musical voice. It claimed to be all-knowing, and could answer any riddle. It was a trickster, setting the lords and cities of the Empire against one another and sowing chaos for its own ends. The Speaker was fascinated by wizards and other spellcasters, and sometimes traded answers and wondrous star-treasures in exchange for their brains.

The Speaker in Light vanished after this age—or took on a new identity and chose new agents. Ever wondered how the Prince of Shadows manages to know everything that happens across the Empire?

## END TIMES

After the defeat of the Hobgoblin Warlord, there was a long era of relative peace and prosperity, when knights of Axis rode out to battle star-beasts, and adventurers braved dungeons to recover technological treasures. The age ended when a mysterious explosion poisoned much of the Empire; historians suspect that some group—perhaps the drow, or the gnomes—secretly meddled with a relic from the crashed ship, and caused an astonishing explosion.

## STAR-MASKS?

There's been another threat-from-the-stars in a recent *13<sup>th</sup> Age* book, the star-mask parasites from the Dungeon Moon that were detailed in *Bestiary 2* (page 255). As presented, the star-mask parasites feel like part of a different story, but that might just be an accident of history. Perhaps the star-masks are ancient enemies of Space Fleet? If you're making use of Space Fleet PCs or NPCs in your campaign, they may recognize the star-mask invasion as a consequence of a previous failed mission.

LEGENDS,  
LEGACIES & LAIRS

- **The Camp of the Warlord:** The Wild Wood has long since overgrown the toppled ruins of the Warlord's fortress, which was destroyed by the Imperial dragons and the war-wizards of Horizon. The dungeons beneath the fortress, though, still survive, and there may be treasures salvaged from the *Grosvenor* in those vaults... along with hobgoblin treasure hunters, ghosts of the Warlord's army, and maybe even a few surviving star monsters.
- **The Village of Commandule:** Travel beyond the mountain of Starport, and keep climbing through the chill foothills and treacherous ravines. If you are fortunate, you may find the secret village of Commandule, where the wise dwell. Many strange rumors are whispered of the people of this village: that they possess secret knowledge. That they practice a form of reincarnation, where one of their number may vanish for a century or more, and then reappear without having aged a day. That they are friends to heroes and adventurers, and will offer sage counsel when dark times threaten. That they are waiting for the turn of the age, and the day when a shining chariot will descend from the heavens to take them home.
  - The inhabitants of Commandule rarely leave their village, save to visit the mountain of Starport, where they keep a forbidden shrine. Sometimes, one of their number will leave the village in disguise and wander the world for a few years, to bring wisdom back to the Mountain Sage (such pilgrims always visit the Owl Barrens and the dread isle of Omen as part of their journey).
  - The village is defended by an order of warrior-monks who protect it from all intruders. On the hill above Commandule can be found (sometimes) the icy citadel of the Mountain Sage.
- **The Mad and Shining Tower:** A flying fortress cobbled together out of scrap metal from the stars. The master of this tower is a lich named Crillson; adventurers who have encountered him report that he is bound into a mobile phylactery of tubes and steel and bubbling liquids and

knives, so many, many knives. The fortress can fly under its own power; sometimes, it hovers in the overworld, but has also been encountered in the Fangs, on Omen, and near Drakkenhall. The lower levels of the fortress are a menagerie of monsters collected from across the Empire; the upper stories contain Crillson's laboratories, workshops and treasuries. The tower is also said to imprison a shard of the Speaker in Light; Crillson and the spirit work together, but also loathe each other beyond all measure.

MONSTERS  
HOBGOBLIN TECH  
HUNTER

*Nostalgia for empire is the subtlest of poisons.*

Double-strength 5<sup>th</sup> level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +11

Scrappy starmetal sword +11 vs. AC—32 damage

**R: Overcharged blaster +10 vs. PD (one nearby target, or one far-away target at a -2 penalty)—25 fire damage, and 15 ongoing fire damage**



**Random Gadget:** At the start of its turn, roll 1d8 to see which random gadget the tech hunter has access to this turn.

1. *Uh-oh:* A gadget explodes. The hobgoblin takes 2d6 damage.
2. Nothing this turn.
3. *Nearly, nearly:* The goblin can't get the gadget working. It may spend a move action to reroll on this table.
4. *Starmetal shines:* This round the *scrappy starmetal sword* attack targets PD instead of AC.
5. *Jetpack:* The goblin can fly this round.
6. *Grenade:* The goblin gains the following attack this round:  
**C: Thrown Grenade +10 vs. PD (up to three nearby enemies in a group)**—30 fire damage, and deal 10 fire damage to each ally of the tech hunter engaged with the target.
7. *Holoshell:* The tech hunter projects two mirror images of itself. Any attacks on the tech hunter this round have a 50% chance of missing; a missed attack destroys a mirror image.
8. *Blaster Overload:* The hobgoblin gets to make 1d4 blaster attacks this round, but if any of these attacks roll a natural result equal to or lower than the escalation die, the blaster explodes, cancelling the remaining attacks, inflicting 3d6 damage on the hobgoblin, and shutting down the blaster at least until the end of the battle.

#### Nastier Specials

**Star-Metal Armored:** If a tech hunter is in a battle, then other hobgoblins can use their *well-armored* ability against attacks that target PD as well as AC.

AC 23  
PD 19      HP 124  
MD 18

Hobgoblin tech hunters remember the glorious conquests of the Warlord, and seek to recover that lost empire by retrieving fragments of star-metal and other treasures from the *Grosvenor*.

In most campaigns, hobgoblin tech hunters play against the stereotypes. They should probably be extremely uncommon individuals. They might team up with other hobgoblins but teaming up with another tech hunter would mean needing to share precious finds. Likely allies include the hobgoblin captain and hobgoblin warmage on page 230 of the *13<sup>th</sup> Age* core book and the hobgoblin champion and hobgoblin elite warrior on page 109 of *The Crown Commands*.

### TECH HUNTERS AND THE ICONS

Tech hunters are doing their best to access resources the current icons have little in common with. The Orc Lord is no friend, given that the tech hunters admire a fallen hobgoblin more than they admire the Orc Lord's rise. Positive icon contacts, if any, are probably every bit as idiosyncratic as a player character's connections.

## SECURITY ROBOT (AKA WAND GOLEM)

**++PLEASE RETURN TO YOUR STORAGE CUBE IMMEDIATELY. YOU HAVE 45 SECONDS TO COMPLY.++**

7<sup>th</sup> level archer [CONSTRUCT]

Initiative: +13

**Automated restraint system +12 vs. AC**—20 damage, and the target is stuck (save ends).

**R: Twin-linked stun cannons +12 vs. PD (one nearby or far away enemy)**—20 damage

**Natural even hit:** The target is stunned until the end of their next turn.

**Natural even miss:** The security robot can make another *twin-linked stun cannon* attack on another target near the first target.

**Non-lethal:** Targets reduced to 0 hit points by *twin-linked stun cannon* attacks are knocked unconscious, not killed.

**LETHAL FORCE AUTHORIZED:** When staggered, replace *twin-linked stun cannons* with the following attack:

**R: Quad-linked blasters +12 vs. PD (two attacks)**—15 fire damage

**Natural even miss:** Make another *quad-linked blasters* attack on a different target, but reduce the damage by 5 each time.

**Two attacks hit the same target:** 10 ongoing fire damage (save ends)

**Hover:** The security robot can fly near the ground with perfect agility and gets a +5 bonus to disengage attempts.

#### Nastier Specials

**Forcefield Projector:** If the robot misses with its ranged attack, it gains Resist Ranged Damage 16+.

**Alpha Strike Mode:** The robot starts with **LETHAL FORCE AUTHORIZED**.

AC 23  
PD 18      HP 120  
MD 20

Security robots—or wand golems as they are more commonly known—are a rare sight in the 13<sup>th</sup> Age, but the creatures are remarkably resilient, and sometimes spark to life at random and rise from whatever bog or tomb they lay in. The robots have a roughly humanoid torso, with four grabbing arms that can spray a sticky foam that hardens into a restraining resin. Security robots have a single glowing red eye that can project holographic symbols and glyphs, enabling them to communicate in simple terms with the adventurers and other primitive life-forms that they must deal with in the course of their patrols.

### SECURITY ROBOTS AND THE ICONS

None of the icons of the 13<sup>th</sup> Age has any sway over security robots. So whatever you come up with is going to be unique!

## BUILDING BATTLES

In a hobgoblin tech hunter's dreams, they're teamed up with a wand golem. Actually, in their dreams, they're taking apart the wand golem and surviving the resulting explosion to scavenge the parts, but you know what we mean.

## STAR JELLY

*"It's all around us!" screamed the old man. "It's the trees! It's the bears! It's me! It's me!"*

If it's possible for an alien hive organism of self-replicating nanoswarms to have a 'natural' appearance, then the natural appearance of star jellies is a glob of faintly glowing, sparkly orange slime. Left unchecked, the acidic slime consumes any living matter in the area to grow more of itself.

Star jellies can replicate the form of creatures they've consumed. They can even copy thoughts and memories to a degree, but the copied personality is dominated by the urge to protect the slime colony and to lure more victims into the lair of the star jellies. A star jelly that ate kindly old farmer Miles might look like him, and talk like him, and be able to complain about the poor harvest just like him, but will be weirdly insistent about how the party have to spend the night in his barn instead of this nice safe inn...

6<sup>th</sup> level mook [ABERRATION]

Initiative: +6

Vulnerability: fire

**Glorp Slime +11 vs. AC—10 acid damage**

**Combine:** As a move action, any number of star jellies can combine to create a duplicate of a creature that has previously been destroyed by star jellies. (By previously, we mean off-screen, at any time: meaning most any creature!) Add up to the total hit points of the star jellies to determine the hit points of the newly-spawned creature. (For example, three 20-hp star jellies could fuse together to one 60-hp bugbear). The hit points of the fused creature must be within 10% of the hit points of a "regular" creature of that type. (Three 20-hp jellies could copy a 55-hp bugbear, but not a 160-hp ettin.)

When the combined creature dies, it breaks apart into half as many 20-hp jellies as went into making it.

Slimes must be adjacent to one another to fuse.

*You've got to burn it!* Star jellies can only be truly killed by fire damage. They can be reduced to 1hp by other forms of damage, and damage beyond this 1-hp threshold transfers to other mooks in the mob as normal. (For example, if a 20-hp jelly is hit for 30 points of damage, it's reduced to 1 hp, and the remaining 11 hit points transfer to the next jelly in the mob).

AC	20	
PD	22	HP 20 (mook)
MD	16	

**Mook:** Destroy one star jelly for every 20 damage dealt to the mob, bearing in mind the restrictions of *you've got to burn it!*

## BUILDING BATTLES

Star jellies consume other creatures, they don't work with them.

They usually start the battle in fused form. For example, the player characters might run into what looks like a savage bear accompanied by a handful of weird orange slimes, but when they kill the bear, it breaks into two slimes—and next round, it fuses with other nearby slimes to become a harpy or a dire wolf or some other creature.

The only way to deal with a slime infestation is to catch the creatures when they're in jelly mode, and knock down their hit points so that they're low enough for a single fire attack to catch most of the mob.

## STAR JELLIES AND THE ICONS

If any of the icons are keeping glasshouses where they 'cultivate' star jellies, they haven't admitted it to us. Yet.

# RACE: SPACE FLEET EXPLORER

+2 Int OR +2 Dex

## SPACE FLEET SURVIVAL BELT (RACIAL POWER)

You've got an array of technological gadgets in your belt—an anti-grav booster, a narrowbeam comm projector, a holoshell and so forth. You can use these gadgets to cast a non-magical duplicate of *utility spell* (13<sup>th</sup> Age core book, page 150) once per battle or scene. You cast the spells at your level, or one level below. You need to make an Intelligence skill check to pull off the effect. The DC for the check depends on the effect desired:

*Featherfall:* DC15

*Disguise self, hold portal:* DC20

*Message, levitate, "speak with item":* DC25

*Water breathing, scrying:* DC30

If the test fails, you fail to cast the "spell" and you can't use your survival belt again until after the battle or scene.

**Adventurer Feat:** You can cast the wizard spell *shield* once per day (13A: 154).

**Champion Feat:** You may use your Space Fleet survival belt twice per battle or scene.

**Epic Feat:** You can cast the wizard spell *flight* once per day (13A: 156).

**About the belt:** The technological version of *speak with item* doesn't let you talk to a magic item, but does let you analyse the physical composition of an object, detect hidden forensic traces and so forth, which gives you roughly the same information as a *speak with item* spell. (The belt is genetically keyed to its owner, by the way, so it can't be used by anyone else. It is also nearly impossible to remove by someone unfamiliar with it, except through ingenious lockpicking or massive force.)

**A race that is an organization:** Space Fleet members are human (probably!), but they come from another dimension. A character from this race might be an actual member of the original crew of the *Grosvenor* who survived to the 13<sup>th</sup> Age in a stasis pod, or a descendant of a crew member who inherited a survival belt. Most Space Fleet members live in the secret village of Commandule near Stardock, but a stasis pod might be unearthed anywhere in the Dragon Empire.

## ITEMS

We suggest that the equipment and components of the monsters presented above don't last long when separated from their owners. That said, here's some excellent loot that's more durable and should definitely be handled with care . . . by the GM, we mean!

As these items aren't exactly *magical*, they don't count towards a character's magic item limit and don't have any quirks. But feel free to complicate the PC's life with surprising complications from the Age of the Blazing Meteor, because a fully functional starmetal blade should draw a lot of attention.

**Energy Blaster:** Standard Space Fleet energy blasters are ranged weapons that target PD and deal 1d10 fire damage per level on a hit, adding 5 ongoing fire damage per tier the second time they hit the same target in a battle. After each battle, roll a d20; if the result is equal to or lower than the value of the escalation

die at the end of the battle, the blaster's internal power supply is depleted. If there's any hope of regenerating a battery, the trail would lead to Starport, the Mountain Sage, the Speaker in Light, or that crazy metal lich named Crillson. Blasters are great, but they aren't forever.

**Starmetal Sword:** True starmetal blades aren't technically a magic item. They give the usual +1 to hit and damage (or +2 or even +3 if extremely well made), but that bonus comes from their incredible sharpness and resilience, not any supernatural properties. They're made of starmetal, that alien ceramic-like metal that fell to earth in this age. Forging starmetal swords requires a lost alchemical technique, so no new blades of this sort can be made. However, the existing blades are almost indestructible.

**Stasis Pod:** These ovoid pods come in various sizes, from pocket-sized sample jars to human-sized sleep chambers to pods big enough to house a dragon, but all function the same way—close the pod, and anything inside is placed in stasis and preserved from the ravages of time. The pod has its own internal batteries, but needs to be connected to some sort of external power supply to keep these topped up, or otherwise the pod automatically opens every few decades to recharge. The pod can also be set to open after a particular length of time has passed, but cannot be opened from the inside. Pods are almost indestructible once closed—a side effect of freezing time within the device.

# AGE OF TOWERS



*"I swear to always hold, never reveal, the secrets given to me in this tower..."*

## The 1d8<sup>th</sup> Age

- Under a weak Emperor, the Seven Cities grow in power, splitting the Empire into seven squabbling city-states
- Each city experiments with creating its own schools of warfare and wizardry, and spy on one another as they jockey for power
- A network of dark cultists turn the cities against one another

## OVERVIEW

In this age, the growing influence of Horizon meant that every noble and city had a court wizard or three. Different schools of magic emerged across the Empire, and over time each region came to specialize in their own strange forms of wizardry.

Other professions followed suit—this was an age of guilds that jealously guarded their trade secrets, of fighting schools that taught ever more specialized and subtle dueling techniques, of temples that became far more invested in theological debate and mysticism than in attending to their faithful. The cities became rivals, with each city extolling the superiority of its own wizard's school, its own fighting academy, its own artists and crafters.

As the strength of the cities grew, Axis became less and less important compared to the sorcerous might of Horizon, the wealth of Glitterhaegen, the spiritual sway of Santa Cora, and the martial strength of Highrock. For much of the age, the Emperor became a mere figurehead, and it was the Lords of the Seven Cities who really ruled the Dragon Empire. Each city developed its own baroque rituals and customs to distinguish it from its rivals and reinforce its own culture. It was an age of honor duels, a time when etiquette was edged with razors.

Much of this age is remembered as a glorious period of relative peace and prosperity. There were perils, like the Chuultide, and the emergence of monsters from the Iron Sea, but each of the Seven Cities overcame these dangers and grew ever stronger—and more insular, until it seemed as though each city was a state unto itself, and the lords paid no heed to the Emperors. The dragons of Axis dwindled, further robbing the Imperial Throne of its influence, and the Legions were starved of money and soldiers until they were mere hollow vessels, barely able to keep the roads safe.

Alliances shifted. One lord would ally with two others, then betray them and switch sides to support its former enemies. At first, there were trade wars and intrigues, but soon these became wars of assassins, and later all-out wars between cities.

## THE SEVEN CITIES

*For a mystical connection between the cities of the present and the cities of the past, add this wrinkle to your campaign. . .*

Everyone knows there are—and have always been—seven great cities in the Empire, but exactly which cities are counted among the seven changes from age to age. While in the 13th Age it's Axis, Forge, Glitterhaegen, Concord, Drakkenhall, New Port, Santa Cora and Horizon, other ages have counted:

- The old capital at Omen
- Starport
- The Golden Citadel
- The Necropolis
- Old Town!
- Any of a number of lost or destroyed cities

Why seven? It might just be a tradition, or it might be that some magical ward needs seven Anchor-points to bind the Empire together, or there might be a prophecy that says that as long as the Empire has seven cities, it'll endure whatever catastrophe ends the age. Which means that destroying—or, more cunningly, building a city could affect the fate of the world...

## ICONS

There were seven **Lords of the City** in this age. Unlike the Three, who might be considered a composite icon, each of the seven was jealous of their rivals and rarely co-operated for long. Each lord ruled over one of the cities, but had agents in each of the others, spying on and sabotaging the efforts of that city's Lord. At times, the Emperor was the Lord of Axis; in other centuries, the Emperor's vizier, seneschal or some other noble was the effective ruler of the city.

While historians suspect that the Emperors of this age were not notably more incompetent or disastrous rulers than those of any other, they are remembered in folklore as the figure of the **Imperial Fool**, a feeble-minded ruler who is so gullible he gets conned by the simplest tricks, or who neglects the Empire in favor of some trivial interest like his prize rosebushes. Those who may have contributed to the tales of the Imperial Fool include the third Emperor of this age (the “Bloody-Thumbbed Emperor” who was so obsessed with the gladiatorial games that he emptied the Imperial treasury on buying monsters), the 19<sup>th</sup> (the “Saintly Emperor” who walked into one or the other of the oceans and very-temporarily tamed the storms by offering his life to the spirit of the waters), the 22<sup>nd</sup> Emperor (the “Child Emperor”, who took the throne at the age of five and believed that all the people of the Empire were magical toys animated for his amusement) and the 24<sup>th</sup> Empress (the “Adventurer Empress” who vanished from Axis and wandered the land fighting monsters and looting dungeons, and tried to run the government through messenger-sprites and hastily scribbled notes to her ministers).

The **Cultist** operated behind the scenes for much of this age, establishing secret cabals and unholy conspiracies that worshipped the Dark Gods. The Cultist played the cities and their Lords against one another, promising each one that he or she would be the sole recipient of the Dark Gods’ blessing, and so secretly corrupted many nobles and guild-masters in each of the Seven Cities.

## LEGENDS, LEGACIES AND LAIRS

- While Horizon remained the pre-eminent center of arcane research in the Empire, each city sponsored its own school of wizardry. Free from the ‘restrictions’ and ‘traditions’ imposed by the Archmage, these schools soon developed their own unique forms of magic. Wizards in Axis, for example, developed dracomancy, a form of spellcasting reliant of dragonsblood potions that married the raw power of sorcery to the formal precision of wizardry. In Glitterhaegen, their wizards plumbed new forms of divination and numismatics, minting destinies and fates as solid coins. Concord specialized in collective casting, Santa Cora in theurgy, Drakkenhall in planar travel. Fragments of these schools of wizardry survive in the archives at Horizon, but other masterworks—and weird side effects—can be found in the buried ruins of these aberrant schools.
- The Lords of Santa Cora became obsessed with death, and built increasingly elaborate tombs to house their mortal remains. The vogue for tomb-building spread to other cities, but none save Horizon established such impressive and treasure-filled monuments as the Lords of Santa Cora. The surviving pyramid-tombs can still be seen on the borders of the Red Waste, and the shifting sands sometimes expose an unlooted tomb. (In Horizon, the practice was to bury wizards in flying tombs that were then launched into the overworld,

in the belief that the flux of celestial energies would enable the wizards to resurrect themselves as over-beings.

- Surviving records from Highrock suggest that the Lords of that city fought a lengthy war to conquer a region called Ironholt. This war definitely took place—there are records in the military archives, tombs and monuments dedicated to fallen soldiers from that war, treasures looted from Ironholt, songs about the siege of Ironholt. The one problem is that no-one knows what or where Ironholt actually was; time and the destruction of Highrock has left all records fragmented and confused. Ironholt might have been:
  - An island across the Iron Sea—perhaps the conquest of Ironholt triggered the attack by a sea monster, as the Highrock forces slaughtered the priests whose offerings kept the beast in enchanted slumber.
  - A dwarf settlement near Grey Harbor, settled by another branch of the dwarves who fled Underhome in another age, and who hid from their cousins in Forge because of some ancient grudge.
  - One of the Koru Behemoths, which bore a clan of rapacious land pirates on its back.
  - Another city of the Empire, erased from history by the planar meddling of Highrock’s wizards.

## HISTORY IS UNRELIABLE

In fantasy settings, history is often presented as a precise timeline, without any ambiguity or confusion. So, you get entries like *“Year 1063 of the Third Age: The gnomes all wear silly red shoes. Incensed by this deliberate insult, the Emperor besieges Twisp.”* It suggests that everyone knows exactly what happened in the past, and that there are perfect and universally accepted records of all previous eras.

Now, that might be true in your game—especially if you’ve got long-lived creatures and magic that don’t exist in our world—but it can be even more fun to make history confused and fractured. Have different groups disagree about what happened in the past. Leave gaps and dark ages and forgotten times. Get the players to piece the truth of past ages together, instead of having everything spelled out for them.

Keeping history murky and fragmented helps you as a GM too—it’s easier to add ancient weirdness and peril later in the campaign if you leave gaps.

## END TIMES

The Age of Towers, it is said, ended when the towers fell. The Cultist’s schemes came to fruition, and the servants of the Dark Gods seized control of several cities, for they had deluded the defenders of those cities into believing that attack would only come from the rival states, and never from within. Victims in the cities conquered by the cult were sacrificed in blasphemous rites to summon nightmarish monsters. In other cities—ones that had

not fallen to the cult—there were bloody purges and witch-hunts as the followers of light sought out and destroyed the agents of darkness in their midst.

The situation was made far, far worse by the fact that every city was divided into many guilds, schools and secretive factions, any of which might be concealing a cult cell. Anyone who professed secret knowledge might be a cultist in disguise.

Heroes and icons intervened, but a bloody tide of madness and paranoia washed over the Empire. Light and Dark contended in the heavens, loosing arcane storms upon the land. Evil forces, long kept in check, took advantage of this chaos.

The towers did not fall in a single catastrophe, but in seven hundred or more—one for every tower raised by the hubris of the Empire.

## MONSTERS

This age ended badly, and creatures central to its story that survived are either sustained by evil or magically bound.

### MESSENGER OF THE DARK

Malicious spirits sent by the Dark Gods, these messengers seek to tempt mortals into worshipping their ghastly masters, and ensure that the souls of those who do serve the Dark are strong enough to endure the horrors demanded of them.

*And a voice spoke from the shadows, saying “this is the fate that was prepared for thee. Bid farewell to all that is fair and joyous, and enter now the dark.”*

Large 7<sup>th</sup> level leader [SPIRIT]  
Initiative: +13

**Claws of Silent Shadow +13 vs. AC (two attacks)—25 damage**  
*Darkness take thee!* If both attacks hit the same target, that target takes 10 ongoing cold damage (save ends)

**C: Cloak of icy shadow +13 vs. PD (1d3+1 nearby enemies)—30 cold damage, and 10 ongoing cold damage (save ends)**

**R: Tendrils of darkness +13 vs. PD (1d3+1 nearby or far away enemies engaged with allies of the messenger)—On a hit, both the target and one ally of the messenger engaged with the target take 10 ongoing cold damage (save ends), and the messenger’s ally may immediately make a free basic attack on the target at a –2 penalty.**

*Thing of darkness:* Creatures suffering ongoing cold damage suffer a 50% miss chance when targeting the messenger of the dark.

AC	21	
PD	19	HP 200
MD	20	

### MESSENGERS OF THE DARK AND THE ICONS

Crusader, Crusader, did we say Crusader. Oh, and maaaaaybe the Priestess, if she’s hiding something nasty in the Cathedral. Unwary students of the Archmage might inadvertently conjure such spirits in their experiments.

Persistent rumors claim that the Orc Lord’s shamans and priests are servants of the Dark Gods; if so, these spirits might haunt the shadows of the orc-host’s camps.

## SWORD JUGGLER

*The wizards of Highrock pulled down archons and sylphs from the overworld, girded them in steel and runes of binding, and fitted them with whirling blades.*

5<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [CONSTRUCT]  
Initiative: +10

**Spinning sword +10 vs. AC—15 damage**

*Natural 16+:* The sword juggler may make a *spinning sword* attack on a different target that it’s engaged with as a free action. If there aren’t any valid targets, the sword juggler regains 1d10 hit points.

**R: Thrown sword +12 vs. AC (one nearby target, or one far-away target at a –2 penalty)—20 damage.** The sword juggler permanently loses one *spinning sword* attack, to a minimum of one.

*Spin faster!* When the sword juggler is staggered, it gains another *spinning sword* attack.

*Spin even faster!* Each time the escalation die becomes even, the sword juggler gains another *spinning sword* attack.



Nastier Specials

**Rolling charge:** Once per battle, the sword juggler may make a double move action, and adds the escalation die to all its attacks made that round.

**Death blossom:** When the sword juggler is killed, it immediately makes one *thrown sword* attack for every *spinning sword* attack available to it.

AC 22  
PD 18  
MD 14

HP 64

**SWORD JUGGLERS AND THE ICONS**

The Blue may have a bunch of these war machines in an armory under Drakkenhall. The secret of remaking them has been lost, so they're now one-shot weapons. Set one loose on a battlefield, and it'll spin and slash until it explodes.

Previous Archmages have also experimented with these constructs, so one might be found guarding a library in Horizon. (Come to think of it—in Horizon, it's equally likely that its swords have been replaced with liquor bottles and it's now serving cocktails in some enchanted bar).

**RACE****UNHOLY ONES**

+2 Str or +2 Cha

**DRAIN (RACIAL POWER)**

Once per battle, when you heal using a recovery, you may activate this power as a free action. One random nearby enemy loses hp equal to 1d4 X your level, and you regain half that many hp in addition to the hp gained from the recovery. This damage can't kill the enemy; if they would drop to 0 hp, they drop to 1 hp instead.

**Adventurer Feat:** When you reduce a non-mook enemy to 0 hp with an attack, the closest nearby staggered enemy with fewer hp than you is dazed until the end of its next turn.

**Champion Feat:** When you use *drain*, gain a +4 bonus to your next attack roll, or +2 if drain reduced the enemy to 1 hp.

**Epic Feat:** The first enemy you hit each battle must roll their next d20 roll twice and use the lower result.

Humans touched by the Dark Gods, these acolytes of the Cultist originally plotted to bring down the Empire and enslave the world in a nightmarish theocracy. Most of them were slain in the cataclysm that ended the age, but some may still lurk in the shadows of Santa Cora or rule behind the scenes in the Crusader's fortress at First Triumph. Others may believe themselves to be ordinary people, unaware of their unholy connection to the Dark Gods.

As player characters, unholy ones may strive to overcome their origins and accomplish heroic things without becoming boring vanilla heroes like some other party members they could name.

**SPELLS & POWERS**

The dragons did a thorough job of eliminating traces of magic that was based on using their blood. Powers that survived the draconic purge includes a feat that's available to any class (Secret School Technique) and a cleric spell that helped root out the fanatics of the Cultist.

**GENERAL FEAT****SECRET SCHOOL TECHNIQUE**

You have learned a secret technique lost in the present age. Pick one of your non-spell powers to benefit from this secret technique. You must name and describe this technique, and also specify a bonus effect for the technique. Once per battle, when the escalation die is 2+, you may execute this secret technique.

This bonus effect is mostly cosmetic—it cannot always do extra damage, nor can it apply a condition in most circumstances. However, if you set up a good story in advance, then it encourages the GM to be lenient: so, if the big villain in this campaign arc is the heavily armored Dread Knight, then seeking out the secret lost technique of the *armor-piercing mantis sword strike* might be a good idea.

For example, take the classic fighter move *carve an opening*. Executed as *fate-cutting strike*, it might curse the foe with bad luck as you cut through their good fortune. As *longbeard's precise mattock*, it might let you roll your relationship with the Dwarf King and increase your crit range bonus by +1 for every die that rolls a 5 or 6. As *heavenly judgement*, it might make your sword blaze with divine light, and make your next critical hit *holy* damage.

As usual for this sort of collaborative story-meets-mechanics rules, work with your GM to come up with something that's evocative but not overpowering. It's cool to learn a secret technique from an undead weapons master, or learn it in your dreams from your dead grandmother and then use it to take down a big bad guy, but it's dull if secret weapons become your bread-and-butter moves.

**5TH LEVEL CLERIC SPELL****LIGHT OF REVELATION**

Ranged spell ♦ **Daily**

**Special:** You can cast this spell for power or for broad effect.

**Target:** (cast for power) One nearby enemy, or (cast for broad effect) up to three nearby enemies.

**Attack:** Wisdom + Level vs MD

**Hit:** If cast for power, deal 6d10 + Wisdom holy damage, and 10 ongoing holy damage (save ends). You may immediately ask the enemy a brief question, and unless the enemy has been dropped to 0 hit points, it is compelled to give a truthful answer in response (no more than one or two words, usually.) You may ask another question whenever the target fails a saving throw against the ongoing holy damage.

If cast for broad effect, then a hit deals 4d10 + Wisdom holy damage, and the target becomes visible until the end of the battle. You don't have to be able to see the target (they can be invisible

or hidden), but you must guess they are present and specify their approximate area (“I target any invisible creatures between me and the altar!” or “I target those drow assassins who just hid in the trees”).

**Miss:** If cast for power, you may ask one question; the target takes half damage if they answer truthfully, or full damage if they lie or refuse to answer. If cast for broad effect, half damage but no other effect.

7<sup>th</sup> level spell: 9d10/6d10      15 ongoing holy damage.

9<sup>th</sup> level spell: 12d10/9d10      20 ongoing holy damage.

**Champion Feat:** When cast at a single target, you may choose to waive the ongoing damage effect. If you do so, the save to remove the ongoing compulsion to answer questions becomes hard (16+).

**Epic Feat:** You can now move the ongoing damage effect to any nearby enemy as a quick action once per round.

## GAMEMASTERS

*Light of revelation* reads like it might require language skills for proper communication, but one fun way to play it is that targets can magically communicate in a language or manner which can be understood, even if they'll never be able to speak that language again.

## MAGIC ITEMS

### CLOAK, MANTLE, CAPE

**Default bonus:** +1 PD (adventurer); +2 PD (champion); +3 PD (epic)

**Doppelganger Cloaks:** These cloaks are always found in pairs. To activate the set, wear one cloak and leave the other cloak where no-one can see it. When you leave, the other cloak will come to life and conjure an illusory copy of you. This copy will go about its business, roughly mimicking your day-to-day life as best it can. When you return to the place you buried the cloak, your doppelganger will return and then whisper a one-sentence message that sums up its exploits while wearing your face (“went to the market”, “visited your aunt”, “worshipped the dark lord” and the like) before vanishing back into the cloak.

The function of the cloak is to create a semi-reliable alibi to hide illicit activities (like being a devoted follower or organizing priest of the Cultist!). The doppelganger will always try to avoid the original if possible, and will only willingly meet its progenitor at the spot where it was ‘born’—the private spot where the empty cloak was hidden. If by some mischance a meeting between the two cannot be avoided, the doppelganger vanishes prematurely.

The illusory duplicate cannot attack, and vanishes if it takes any serious damage. It's semi-solid and can perform basic tasks, but not with any degree of skill or accomplishment. For example, if you usually chop wood all day, then your cloak-doppelganger will also chop wood, but it'll do a poor job and can't attack with the axe. Quirk: Exceptionally paranoid.

## WEAPONS

**Default bonus:** Attack and damage when using this weapon: +1 (adventurer); +2 (champion); +3 (epic).

**Harmonious Weapon:** The secret of forging *harmonious weapons* was lost in the fall of the towers. *Harmonious weapons* are also always found in a set of two, and have a crystalline sheen to the metal of the blade. When struck, they chime a perfect note.

In combat, whenever you attack with a *harmonious weapon*, note the natural roll. If, later this battle, an ally wielding the other *harmonious weapon* hits with the same natural result, they deal +1d8 damage with their attack (Champion: +2d8; epic: +4d8). Quirk: Sings rather than speaks. Preferably in harmony with the other person using the weapon's twin.

## WONDROUS ITEM (CHAMPION & EPIC TIER)

You can attune multiple wondrous items. They don't fill up a chakra.

**Fatestone:** A fatestone contains a frozen shard of destiny. While you bear a fatestone, you've got a temporary 1-point relationship with that destiny that works like an icon relationship. On a 6, the magic gives you a benefit that pushes you towards that fate. On a 5, it pushes you towards that fate in a way that you might not find pleasant or welcome. For example, if the fatestone contains the destiny “I'll become the next Archmage”, then on a 6, you might find a spellbook containing a lost spell, bolstering your arcane knowledge and pushing you towards that fate. On a 5, you might also find such a spellbook—in the hands of a lich.

A fatestone looks like a chunk of translucent crystal. Traditionally, they were filed and polished down to the size and shape of coins. Close examination of a fatestone reveals a vague, elusive glimpse of the fate it contains (“it looks a little like *Horizon seen from the air, maybe?*”), but the only way to find out the precise nature of that fate is with arcane research or spells like *Speak with item*—or claiming the fatestone and the destiny it carries.

The temporary icon relationship can be bolstered with effects that interact with icon relationships, like an invocation of the Love or Beauty cleric domain, or the Storyteller bard talent.

Not surprisingly, the quirk has everything to do with the fate the fatestone carries. You'll have to make these up yourself.

**GMs:** We suggest that if a fatestone rolls two 1s in a row, it stops working for the character that has attuned, and for anyone they know! It may have to be set aside and forgotten before its magic reawakens.

# AGE OF THE BONE ALTAR



*The True King! The True King has returned!*

## The 1d8<sup>th</sup> Age

- The Lich King returns and takes over half the Empire
- The living fight the dead; in parts of the Empire, icons create well-defended enclaves to protect their followers
- The Archmage—possibly aided by a coalition of icons—battles the Lich King and drives him back to the Necropolis

## OVERVIEW

In this age, the Lich King (halfway!) rose from the dead and claimed rulership over the Empire he forged in life.

This much is certain—the Lich King took the island of Necropolis as his home, and raised up an army from the dead who slumbered there. In ships made of ice and bone, rags and nails, sorcery and malice, his forces sailed out to reclaim his kingdom from the usurpers.

Now, the tales differ on certain specifics. For example, it's not known why the Lich King rose in this age after spending so many centuries safely dead. Some tales sympathetic to the old master insist that the Empire was under the control of a cruel and brutish Emperor, a man so vile that the peasants prayed for the Wizard King to return and retake his domain. The sages in Horizon speculate that this was the culmination of some long-planned ritual or contingency, and that it took the Lich King many ages to gather the necromantic power he needed to become a demilich. In certain secret councils of the wise, they fear that the disappearance of the Hooded Woman must be connected to the rise of the Lich King.

Others, reasonably, blame tomb-robbing adventurers for awakening an ancient evil.

The stories also disagree on what happened when the Lich King's armies reached the shore. The official histories, under the seal of the Emperor, record that the Empire was united in the battle of the living against the dead, and that all differences were put aside in a desperate war for survival. The histories speak of glorious battles, of naval engagements, of dragonflights breathing fire on the tombs of the Necropolis, of the blessed aid of the clerics of Santa Cora in ensuring that the Imperial dead were buried safely and did not rise. In the end, the heroes of the Empire drove the undead back into the sea, and a watch was established on the shores of the Midland Sea to ensure the Lich King's forces never again took the living by surprise.

Other tales paint a more complex picture. In some tales, the Empire was divided between the two kings, the Living Emperor and the Dead Emperor, and that for centuries the two nations—one ruled by a living court, one ruled by the liches—existed side-by-side in uneasy, mistrustful peace. Both the living and the undead inhabitants of the Wizard King's realm acknowledged the lich as their liege lord, although being undead was the only way to rise in social standing. Wealthy lords would hire the best alchemists and necromancers to turn them into liches; peasants would sell their grandparents to the local zombie-monger when they got too old to work.

Other stories agree that there were two empires for a time, but say that one was inhabited entirely by the living, and that the other was a shadow empire of the dead. According to these accounts, there were villages and towns inhabited only by the undead. Zombie peasants toiled in the fields, while skeletal craftsmen forged weapons and armor for the undead legions. This empire of undead puppets was a shambling re-enactment of the Wizard King's lost realm.

Perhaps all these tales are true in some form. Only the dead remember.

## ICONS

Since returning, the **Lich King** has been a key player in the affairs of the Empire, but this age was defined by him. From his throne, he commanded a vast invasion and occupation of the lands of the living, and worked spells of terrible potency beyond the reach of most Archmagi.

The **Marrow-Eater** was a troll or ogre of prodigious size and cunning, who took advantage of the chaos and conflict of the age. He commanded an army of scavengers, tomb-robbers and mercenaries who fought both the living and dead. He was no friend of the Empire, but many people invoked his name when they were beset by the forces of undeath. No vampire or zombie held any fear for the Marrow-Eater, who laughed at the sight of skulls and ate the dry, dusty marrow from the bones of liches.

The **Emerald Queen** ruled over Concord and the hinterlands in this age. She rejected the rule of both the Emperor and the Lich King, and instead carved out her own nation. She defended her followers from the undead, and in this age the lands around Concord bloomed with enchantment. The Emerald Queen was likely connected to the Elf Queen, or perhaps the High Druid; or maybe even the Green Bandit (page 33) returned. All her power,

though, was held in a magical emerald, and when that gem was stolen by the Prince of Shadows, the lands of Emerald were left undefended and soon overrun.

A new **Zealot** arose in this age—an insane cleric of great power, but little wisdom. The Zealot preached that the end of the world was at hand, and that salvation came only through madness. He served the Gods of Light, but with a blazing intensity that left no room in his soul for reason or mercy.

## LEGENDS, LEGACIES AND LAIRS

- Some parts of the Empire remember the reign of the Lich King more than others. The **Nightlands** fall under the Lich King's control at sunset, and remain there until dawn. Undead creatures and horrors walk the land when the Lich King rules there. This temporary shift in ownership has other effects, too—contracts signed in the Nightlands aren't binding in the 'real' Empire, and various magical spells and enchantments fail in these regions at night. Locals who live nearby know to avoid such regions around sunset, but travelers may run afoul of the Nightlands if they are unwary. Only madmen, necromancers, or worshippers of the Lich King (the three traits are obviously not exclusive) actually live *in* the Nightlands.
  - (Yes, if you inherit a castle in the Nightlands, you'll have to spend the night there to claim it.)
- The **King's Own** are an Empire-wide cult loyal to the Wizard King—the *Wizard* King, not the Lich King. They see the Emperor as a usurper, and believe that one day the true Wizard King will return and lead the Empire into a new golden age. They're divided on the Lich King—half of them think that the Wizard King *is* the Lich King, and that they owe him their allegiance. These loyalists try to soften the Lich King's death-to-all-living-things policy. Other cultists believe that the Wizard King is trapped within the undead body of the Lich King—he's sick, and needs to be killed and properly *resurrected* to bring back the true King. Their attempts to persuade the Lich King that he needs to commit suicide so he can be brought back to actual life have gone about as well as you'd expect.
  - The King's Own have relatively few members, but do have access to various secret vaults and enchantments left over from the reign of their King.
- The **Ghastly Castle** is a flying realm created by the Lich King. It's a gigantic floating fortress stuffed with Blackamber Legionnaires and sundry undead horrors, piloted by a vampire count, and drawn by a hundred nightmares in harness. The Ghastly Castle was in the vanguard of Necropolis' invasion of the mainland. After the war, the castle returned to the Necropolis and remained there for many centuries until it vanished. Did the spells holding it aloft expire, sending it

crashing to the ground? Did it sink into the ocean? Ascend into the overworld? Did the Lich King send his flying fortress off on a secret mission? Or was it stolen by the Prince of Shadows?

- **Reliquary golems** were created in a secret partnership between dwarven master-smiths and the high elves. They feared death in this age, believing that their souls would fall under the sway of the Lich King, so they conceived of a plan to trap their spirits in webs of crystal and gold filigree, which would then be installed in golem-bodies of imperishable mithril and steel. They hid this plan from the Elf Queen, for she is the soul of elvenkind and would have doubtless objected to any diminishment of her power.
  - The dwarves, it is said, betrayed the elves. When the elven wizards transmuted their souls into gemstones of great size and beauty, some of the dwarves stole the gems and made off with them instead of placing them in the golem-bodies. The surviving reliquary golems vowed to recover their brethren, and have sworn eternal vengeance on the dwarves.
- **Looter's Cove** is almost certainly a myth, but we'll tell the tale regardless—bards sing of a magical island near Necropolis that is forever shrouded in magic mists. Not even the Lich King's one eye can pierce these clouds. Adventurers and tomb robbers who dare to loot the Lich King's island can find refuge in Looter's Cove. Some songs insist that Marrow-Eater still rules this little kingdom.
- The **lighthouse at Vigil** was built in this age. It's entirely untrue that the eternally-burning body of the Zealot, encased in crystal, blazes in the eye of the lighthouse.

## END TIMES

The age ended in an arcane battle between the Archmage (bolstered, it is said, by the aid of the Elf Queen and the Zealot, and possibly the Great Gold Wyrn) and the Lich King. The Lich King won the battle, but it was a pyrrhic victory—he was wounded and forced to fall back to Necropolis, causing the greater portion of his undead host to crumble. Rebellious lichs of the Undying Peerage took the opportunity to seize control of their own private armies of the dead and waged civil war on Necropolis in a desperate attempt to reclaim their phylacteries. (Did the Lich King lose his hand and eye in the battle, or did the Orc Lord chop them off when he killed the living Wizard King?)

The Archmage was torn apart by the magical energies he unleashed to stop the Lich King, and the magical reverberations caused chaos across the Empire.

## MONSTERS

The Age of the Bone Altar was the resurgence point for the undead. Here are a few of the undead creatures that may have found ways to trouble the 13<sup>th</sup> Age as well, followed by the reliquary golem.

## BREATHSTEALER CAT

*"When you go to your rest/If a cat on your chest  
Eats your last breath/you'll never know death."*

5<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +12

Vulnerability: holy

**Claw and rake +10 vs. AC—18 damage**

*Ambusher:* If the breathstealer cat attacks from ambush, its critical range increases by +8 (crits on a 12+)

**C: Vanish +10 vs. MD (nearby creature with the highest MD)**—On a hit, the breathstealer cat vanishes. It may reappear anywhere nearby next round, and attacks from ambush. On a miss, it fails to vanish, but may make a *claw and rake* attack instead this round.

*Steal breath:* If a humanoid creature dies near the breathstealer cat, it returns next round as a breathstealer thrall.

*Speak:* The breathstealer cat may talk, but it may only say words stolen from victims of its *steal breath* power.

*Shapeshift:* A breathstealer cat can change its size as a quick action, shrinking to the size of a kitten or growing to the size of a tiger. It gets a +5 bonus to attempts to hide or disengage when shrunk, but suffers a -5 penalty to attacks while shrunk.

Nastier Specials

*Stolen spell:* If any of the breathstealer thralls in the battle were spellcasters in life, the cat may 'speak' one of their spells.

**C: Life-suck +10 vs. PD (one nearby creature with 24 hit points or less)**—2d6 damage. The breathstealer cat makes this attack as a quick action.

AC 23

PD 17

MD 17

HP 60

## BREATHSTEALER THRALL

4<sup>th</sup> level troop [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +6

**Punch +9 vs. AC—18 damage**

*Cannot die:* When a breathstealer thrall is destroyed, if there is still a breathstealer cat in the battle, the thrall rises at the start of the next round. Its starting hit point total is equal to half its previous starting hit point total, rounding down (48/24/12/6/3/1).

*Forbidden words:* The last words of the breathstealer thrall have been stolen by the breathstealer cat. It cannot say whatever those words are. For example, if a victim tried to say "forgive your brother" as its last words, it would be unable to say "forgive", "your" or "brother".

A player character may spend a recovery and speak the forbidden words to free a thrall from its curse and allow it to perish naturally.

AC 20

PD 18

MD 14

HP 48

### BACKSTORY

Breathstealer cats are spies and saboteurs sent by the Lich King. They sneak into hospitals and the homes of the dying, so they can steal the last breath from a victim. Consuming the last breath allows the cat to animate the deceased as an undead thrall, though a cat can only have one or two thralls at a time. These thralls look and act as they did in life, but are bound to obey the breathstealer cat. They can understand the cat's meowing, and must carry out its commands on behalf of the Lich King. The one clue to their new condition (other than no longer needing to eat or sleep, or the unnatural coldness of their skin, or their strange devotion to a creepy-looking stray cat) is that they cannot say their last words, whatever those might have been.

If you use breathstealer thralls as monsters that accompany the cat after dying earlier, off-screen, it's unlikely that the PCs will know how to trigger their *forbidden words* ability. Perhaps icon relationship advantages will lead to some of the *forbidden words*?

## BLACKAMBER SKELETAL CAPTAIN

6<sup>th</sup> level leader [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +13

Vulnerability: holy

**Shortsword +11 vs. AC—20 damage**

*Natural even miss:* 7 damage

**R: Javelin +10 vs. AC —18 damage**

*Resist weapons 16+:* When a weapon attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

*Press advantage:* The skeletal captain deals +1d8 damage with its attacks against enemies that have a lower initiative than it.

*Survey the battlefield:* As a quick action, the skeletal captain may reroll its initiative by rolling 2d20, taking the higher result, and adding its initiative bonus. (Their action order will change in the next round.

*Reform!:* As a move action, the skeletal captain may order all nearby Blackamber skeletons to reset their formation. Their initiative score becomes equal to that of the Blackamber skeletal captain.

*Shield wall!:* As an interrupt action, when the skeletal captain or a nearby Blackamber skeleton is targeted by an attack targeting AC or PD, the Captain may order a shield wall. As long as there are three or more Blackamber skeletons next to each other, all skeletons in that group gain a +4 bonus to AC and PD until the end of the attacker's turn, but their initiative scores each drop by 10 next round.

AC 22

PD 16

MD 18

HP 76

## BLACKAMBER SKELETAL CHAMPION

*Double-strength 6<sup>th</sup> level blocker* [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +12

Vulnerability: holy

**Shortsword flurry +11 vs. AC**—25 damage

*First natural even hit or miss:* The champion may make a free *shortsword flurry* attack.

*First natural odd miss:* The champion may make a free *shield bash* attack

[*special trigger*] **Shield bash +11 vs. PD**—15 damage, and the target moves 1d6 points down in initiative order, to a minimum of 1.

**R: Javelin leap +11 vs. AC**—40 damage. If the skeletal champion is unengaged, it may move into engagement with the target of this attack as a free action.

**Resist weapons 16+:** When a weapon attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

**Press advantage:** The champion deals +1d12 damage with its attacks against enemies that have a lower initiative than it.

**Challenger:** Attempts to disengage from the champion suffer a -5 penalty.

**Escalating interceptor:** The champion gains a +1 bonus to its attack rolls for every enemy engaged with it.

<b>AC</b> 23	
PD 19	<b>HP 160</b>
MD 19	

### THE BLACKAMBER LEGION AND THE ICONS

The Legion is sworn to serve the Lich King for all eternity, and he takes their oaths both seriously and literally. “Blackamber”, by the way, may refer to the legendary burning of the One Forest, when the Wizard King broke the power of the first High Druid. Regardless of whether or not that actually happened, servants of the High Druid don’t need any more reasons to hate the undead.

## BONE DERVISH

*Shrieking whirlwinds of dancing bone, turning any town into a battlefield, and any battlefield into a graveyard.*

*7<sup>th</sup> level spoiler* [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +12

Vulnerability: holy

**Dust and bones +12 vs. PD**—20 damage

**C: Raise minion +12 vs. PD (1d4 nearby enemies who are not engaged by a dervish puppet)**—10 damage, and add a dervish puppet to the battlefield that’s engaged with that target. (The dervish puppets all act immediately after the bone dervish.)

**C: Bonestorm +12 vs. PD (all nearby enemies who are engaged by a puppet)**—40 damage

*Miss:* 20 damage

**Ghostly whirlwind:** The dervish has *resist damage 16+* to all damage, except holy damage, force damage, or overspill damage from its puppet minions.

### Nastier Specials

**Cannibal:** As a quick action, the dervish may destroy one nearby puppet. The dervish heals 25 hit points.

<b>AC</b> 20	
PD 20	<b>HP 100</b>
MD 20	

## DERVISH PUPPET

*7<sup>th</sup> level mook* [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +12

Vulnerability: holy

**Dust and bones +12 vs. PD**—15 damage

*Natural 18+:* The target is dazed until the end of its next turn.

**Spillback:** If this is the last dervish puppet on the battlefield, then half the excess damage beyond that needed to kill it spills over onto the nearest bone dervish.

<b>AC</b> 20	
PD 20	<b>HP 25 (mook)</b>
MD 20	

**Mook:** Kill one dervish puppet for every 25 damage dealt to the mob.

## NECROMAGE

*“I call on the dead,” announced the creature, “and they speak for me.”*

*8<sup>th</sup> level caster* [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +15

Vulnerability: holy

**Ebony wand +13 vs. PD**—34 damage, and the target is weakened (save ends).

**R: Dark bolt +13 vs. PD (1d4 nearby or far away enemies in a group)**—30 negative energy damage

*Natural 18+:* The target is weakened (save ends)

**R: Chorus of the damned +13 vs. MD (all nearby enemies, once per round as a quick action when the escalation die is odd)**—The necromage utters a curse that’s echoed by all corpses within earshot! The damage inflicted by this attack varies depending on how many dead bodies are nearby.

*None:* 1d6 damage

*A few—say, a handful of undead minions, or a few fallen warriors:* 3d6 damage

*Lots—the middle of a big battle, or a small graveyard:* 5d6

*Place of death—a large graveyard or temple, or a dungeon crawling with undead:* 7d6

*Too many to count—a massive mausoleum, or the Necropolis: 9d6*

**I know him!:** If a target of *chorus of the damned* has an emotional (or iconic!) relationship with one of the deceased who utters the curse (we nearly said “an emotional relationship with one of the corpses”, but that’s NOT WHAT WE MEAN), the target is vulnerable to this attack.

**R: Dead pressgang +13 vs. PD (one nearby or far away enemy):** Corpses rise from the grave (or wherever they repose) and grab the target. The target is stuck, weakened and takes 30 damage at the start of their turn. Successfully disengaging from the corpses (with a successful disengage check) ends this effect. (This is a special case where you can still try to disengage while stuck.)

**Defend me!:** Twice per battle, the necromage may cast *dead pressgang* as an interrupt action in response to an enemy moving to engage the necromage. If the *dead pressgang* attack hits, the target stops moving before it reaches the necromage.

**Mass ritual:** Necromages are adept at drawing on the dead to fuel their rituals. A necromage with access to a great many corpses can cast epic-level rituals on its own (like, say, opening *teleportation* gates to the Necropolis, creating champion-tier zombie plagues, or raising a vampire or three).

AC 24

PD 18

MD 22

HP 133

## NECROMAGES AND THE ICONS

Only the Lich King would create undead capable of drawing on the powers of the dead to crowd-source their spell casting. Absolutely. No other icon would ever experiment with such things. And no other icon would ever, ever be the effective ruler of a highly populous Imperial city with lots of graveyards. Nope.

## RELIQUARY GOLEM

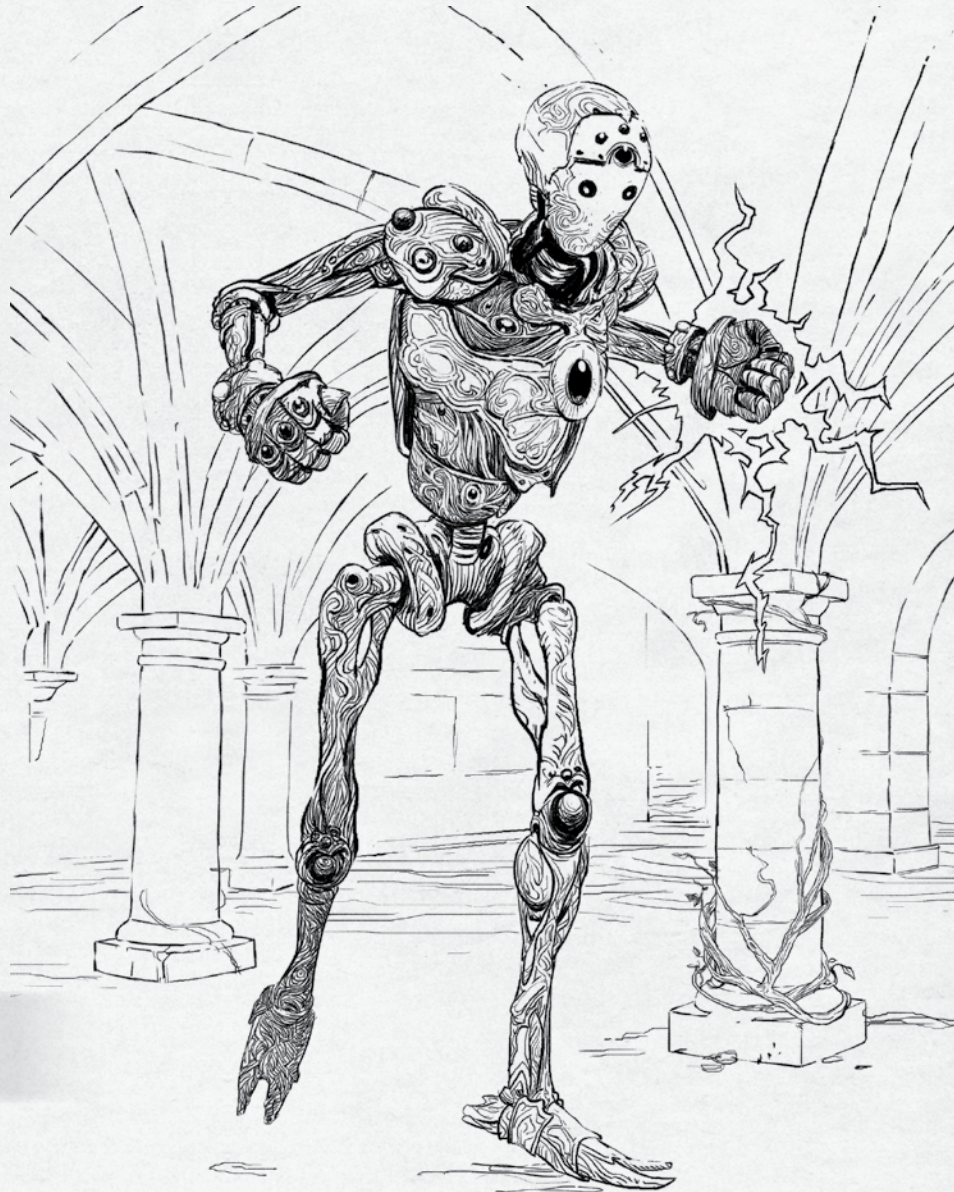
*Created to house the souls of renegade elves, these constructs are cursed with the need to fill the spiritual void within their gilded metal hearts. Sadly it's your soul that will do the filling.*

Large 10<sup>th</sup> level caster [CONSTRUCT]

Initiative: +12

**Gemstudded fist +15 vs. AC—80 damage**

**Natural roll below the discharge threshold:** The golem inflicts lightning damage equal to double its current discharge threshold on the target. The discharge threshold drops back to 0.



**C: Grounding spell +15 vs. PD (all nearby enemies)**—Lightning damage equal to the current discharge threshold. The golem's discharge threshold drops back to 0.

**Quick use:** 1/round, as a quick action

**Discharge threshold:** Reliquary Golems can manipulate some forms of magical energy, releasing it as blasts of electricity. This is measured by the golem's discharge threshold, which starts at 10. (The discharge threshold also drops to 0 when the reliquary golem drops to 0 hit points!)

**Charge up:** When an enemy casts a limited-use spell or uses a limited-use magic item power, add 2d6 to the reliquary golem's discharge threshold.

**Consume energy:** The reliquary golem has *resist 16+ holy, lightning, and psychic*, and to ranged attacks with magic weapons. When it resists damage because of *consume energy*, add the attacker's level to the reliquary golem's discharge

threshold. When the reliquary golem is hit by an attack using a magic implement, weapon, or bracers, add 2 to its magic item threshold. *Consume energy* stacks with itself and with *charge up*.

**Consume soul:** When a nearby or far away non-mook creature, or the last mook of a mob, is killed or becomes helpless due to a combat condition, add that creature's level to the reliquary golem's discharge threshold. Until the discharge threshold is next reduced to zero, that creature may not stop being dead or advance the condition that caused it to be helpless (so no making death or last gasp saves, and if you were stunned stay stunned, etc). When the discharge threshold is reduced to zero, that creature gets a free relevant save (a death save or a save against being stunned, etc). If a character is fighting in spirit, at the start of each of their turns they may add their level to the reliquary golem's discharge threshold to cause the reliquary golem to be dazed until the end of its next turn.

**Accidental discharge:** When the golem suffers a critical hit or becomes staggered, it automatically discharges its accumulated energy: each creature engaged with or next to the reliquary golem takes lightning damage equal to the golem's discharge threshold and the discharge threshold drops back to 0.

**Golem immunity:** Golems are immune to effects, and cannot be stunned, dazed, weakened, confused, made vulnerable, or touched by ongoing damage. You can damage a golem, but that's about it (but see *ensouled*, below).

## Nastier Specials

**Ensouled:** This rare golem actually has an elven wizard's soul residing in it. This has the following effects:

- Increase the golem's MD by +4
- Remove the *consume soul* and *golem immunity* abilities.
- Once per battle, the golem may *teleport* as a move action, appearing anywhere nearby that it can see
- The golem gains the following attacks:
  - **C: Storm of spells** +15 vs. PD (1d4 nearby enemies)—50 + discharge threshold damage. Reset the golem's discharge threshold to 0.
    - *Miss:* 25 + ½ discharge threshold damage. Reset the golem's discharge threshold to 0.
  - **C: Souldrain** +15 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)—75 psychic damage, and add twice the target's level to the golem's discharge threshold.

AC 26

PD 24

MD 20

HP 444

## RELIQUARY GOLEMS AND THE ICONS

The Dwarf King has a lot of sway over golems, even these ones. He claims all treasures from the soil, after all, and these jewel-encrusted golems are laden with his property. Ensouled golems are not emotionless constructs—they're fugitives in search of protection. They hate the dwarves who stole the souls of their brethren, but have also turned their backs on the Elf Queen. In their desperation, they sometimes turn to darker icons like the Three or the Diabolist for assistance, or become mercenary wizards working for the Prince of Shadows or the Crusader.

# SPELLS & POWERS

## WIZARD OR SORCERER TALENT

It's unorthodox for a talent to belong to two classes, but who are we to demand orthodoxy from the survivors of this troubled age?

## NECROBLAST

Once per day, before you cast a spell, you may declare it to be a necroblast. The spell's damage type becomes negative energy damage in addition to its usual type. If any non-undead non-mooks are destroyed by the spell, they become undead under your control.

In battle, these undead creatures crumble at the end of their next turn, or if they are hit by any other attack, but may make a move and a basic attack under your control. The creatures are considered *weakened* (–4 to attacks and defenses).

Alternatively, if you do not wish to force the creatures to fight for you, the undead creature will perform one brief service for you after the battle before crumbling, like answering a question, guiding you a short distance, carrying you across some obstacle, or a brief improvised entertainment.

If no creatures are destroyed by the necroblast, you gain no added benefit.

**Adventurer Feat:** If you don't kill any non-mooks with the spell, your necroblast ability isn't expended.

**Champion Feat:** Reanimated creatures aren't weakened.

**Epic Feat:** The service you demand out of battle doesn't have to be a brief one. Instead, they serve you at least until your next full heal-up, and possibly longer. Creatures who are forced to serve still won't fight for you.

# CLERIC SPELL (1<sup>ST</sup> LEVEL)

## VIGILANT LIGHT

Close-quarters spell ♦ **Daily** ♦ Quick action to cast out of combat.

**Special:** While this spell is active, your head is crowned by a corona of scintillating light that spins and spits tiny beams of illumination. This pretty much makes it impossible for you to hide, though an *invisibility* spell might work, with difficulty.

**Effect:** You gain an initiative bonus equal to your Wisdom modifier, and +1d6 holy damage to the first close-range or melee attack you hit with in battle. Hitting dispels the corona.

3 <sup>rd</sup> level spell	Spell is now recharge 11+; bonus damage increases to +3d6.
5 <sup>th</sup> level spell	Spell also affects ranged attacks; bonus damage increases to +5d6.
7 <sup>th</sup> level spell	Your first attack gains a +2 attack bonus; damage bonus of first hit increases to +7d6.
9 <sup>th</sup> level spell	Damage bonus increases to +9d6 and applies to your first two attacks in the battle.

## PALADIN TALENT

### HOLY STRIKE

Your Smite Evil attacks now deal holy damage.

You gain *decree of anathema* as a spell of your level or lower.

This spell is now part of your powers.

**Adventurer Feat:** When you use Smite Evil, until the end of your next turn, your basic melee attacks deal holy damage.

**Champion Feat:** When you hit an enemy with an attack, they are vulnerable to holy until the end of your next turn.

**Epic Feat:** As a quick action, you may expend a use of Smite Evil to bless an ally's attack. That attack is now considered holy.

### DECREE OF ANATHEMA

Close-quarters spell

**Recharge** 11+ after battle

**Target:** 1d4 nearby creatures

**Attack:** Charisma + level vs. MD

**Hit:** 2d6 + Charisma psychic damage, and the target becomes vulnerable to holy until the end of the battle.

**Miss:** Psychic damage equal to your level, and the target becomes vulnerable to holy until the end of your next turn.

3 <sup>rd</sup> level spell	4d6 psychic damage
5 <sup>th</sup> level spell	6d6 psychic damage
7 <sup>th</sup> level spell	8d6 psychic damage
9 <sup>th</sup> level spell	11d6 psychic damage

## MAGIC ITEMS

### WEAPON

**Default bonus:** Attack and damage when using this weapon: +1 (adventurer); +2 (champion); +3 (epic).

**Remorseless (recharge 16+):** If you hit with an attack on a staggered enemy, make a basic attack on that enemy as a free action. Quirk: Won't show mercy.

### WONDROUS ITEM

You can attune multiple wondrous items. They don't fill up a chakra.

**Bone Altar:** Bone altars are small, portable shrines to the Lich King, consisting of a skull mounted on a plinth of bone or marble. A bone altar gives its bearer a special 1-point positive relationship with the Lich King. The bearer may spend a recovery to use the altar and roll the relationship die. On a 5 or 6, the altar grants an iconic benefit with a drawback or condition (in effect, 6s count as 5s). Quirk: Morbid.

# THE HALF-REMEMBERED AGE



*The histories are confused, and none left living can read the riddles of time.*

## The ??th Age

- Insert this age into any inconvenient gaps in history. That's what Imperial historians do.
- There was an Enchantress sowing discord, and a barbarian king kicking down thrones. Everything else is up for grabs.

## OVERVIEW

This age is an anomaly in the chronicles of the Empire. Pick one of the following ideas, or roll a d10 for each race or faction who has an opinion on Imperial history. Maybe the dwarves don't remember this age at all, and the halflings insist it's all forgeries and lies.

1. The events attributed to this age really happened in the days of the Wizard King, before the 1<sup>st</sup> Age. The histories of this age are incorrect, either because it's so long ago that the real events were forgotten, or because past historians wanted to avoid giving the Wizard King any credit for good deeds. Historians took a quiet span of Imperial history where relatively little happened, jammed in these ancient events, and came up with a suitable speculative catastrophe to bookend it.
2. A past Emperor (or mad Archmage) deliberately suppressed all records of this era, burning the Imperial archives and erasing evidence. What horrors—or crimes—were they trying to conceal? Maybe it was a religious schism—some earlier Priestess-like icon (the Zealot, perhaps)—declared the previous age to be anathema, and told the people that the very names of their ancestors were sinful and vile.
3. The key events of this age were mostly invented. Perhaps some usurper tried to legitimize her reign by inventing a spurious history bolstering a spurious claim (*"I'm descended from the Golden Dynasty of the 4<sup>th</sup> Age, and I'll cut off your heads if any of you disagree"*), or maybe it was the work of an eccentric or mistaken but supremely powerful historian/bard who somehow obtained the support of an Emperor (*"my friend Cerdik has discovered a previously unknown age! Let the history books be rewritten!"*). It might have been done to disguise some secret shame (*"look, it's clear that the Orcs arose in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Age, and then burned their cities and went off*

*marauding, which is why there are no other traces of them. In any event, it's obvious that the elves had nothing whatsoever to do with the creation of the Orc Lord."*

4. The catastrophic events that ended the age were so traumatic and horrific that the folk of the Empire collectively and wordlessly agreed that this age should never be spoken about again. They declared the new age to be a clean break with the past, and tried to consign all their woes to the past.
5. This lost age is a hazy time of myth and folk-tale. None of the events described in its histories ever really happened, or at least the recollection of them has drifted far from the truth. There might be fragments of truth in the stories, but no more than a grain or two at most.
6. Memory of the age was magically erased from the minds of the people of the Empire. Was it a curse cast by some enemy, or did the Archmage deliberately meddle with memory to protect the Empire? What happened that's so terrible that the memories had to be deliberately erased? Do the memories *themselves* hold a threat? Do some monsters exist only if you know about them?
7. The age is slipping into the realm of dreams and is slowly fading from reality. With every passing year, more of the age slips from history into dream. Physical evidence—records, ruins, even survivors—vanish and become nothing more than half-remembered stories and backdrops for dreams.
8. Time travelers (perhaps using the *time travel* spell described on page 70) leapt into the past and changed history. That's why the age is hazy and mostly forgotten—it's the result of temporal meddling, and maybe not all of the changes have rippled through to the present. Parts of two (or more!) competing histories survive—there's incontrovertible proof that the Mad Emperor reigned for a hundred years and sold the Empire's soul to devils *and* equally solid proof that he was assassinated on the day of his coronation by mysterious strangers.
9. The Half-Remembered Age was an age when the gods directly interceded in the affairs of the Dragon Empire. For their own inscrutable (or ghastly, in the case of the Dark Gods) reasons, they carried off much of this age into the overworld. Maybe half the population of the Empire ascended bodily into the heavens? Maybe some city was transformed, exalted, into a heavenly paradise? Or maybe the Dark Gods just stole half the world away.

10. There's no great mystery here—the cataclysm that ended the age was an especially devastating one. Every city was shattered; every institution broken; every icon slain. The age is forgotten because only a handful survived, and they had no wish to speak of the horrors they witnessed.

## ICONS

Depending on the tale of the age, then possible icons from this age include:

The **Stranger**, whose true name and origin was known only to himself, but who seemed to know every secret in the Empire. The Stranger was rarely seen, but would appear in times of dire need to spur a hero into action or let slip a key piece of information to change the balance of fate. At times, the Stranger was a force for good, meddling in events so that things turned out for the best; on other occasions, the Stranger's intervention caused horrific tragedies. He had a network of agents and spies across the land, whom he used to carry out his cryptic errands. The Stranger's fate is unknown; some claim that at the end of this age, he cast away his cloak, and revealed himself to be another icon (usually the Archmage or Diabolist or Prince of Shadows, but perhaps the Lich King walked the land for many ages in disguise.)

If the first Emperor claimed the throne by right of conquest, then who can gainsay the claims of the **Barbarian King** to be the Emperor's peer? This lord of warlords assembled an alliance of barbarians, mercenaries, savages and beasts, and with this horde conquered a swathe of land. The Barbarian King was cruel and uncivilized, but was also more honest and courageous than most Emperors. Stories insist that the Barbarian King led his horde out of the Empire and was never seen again, but these tales confuse him with the Orc Lord, and the truth is that the Barbarian King was mortally wounded in battle, and his shamans and war-priests magically preserved his life in some fashion. Perhaps they sent him into the spirit world, and that's where barbarian ancestral warbands come from? Perhaps they sailed his bier across the sea to Necropolis, and he was resurrected as the Lich King's secret weapon. Maybe he's in some timeless part of the overworld, or sleeping until a supremely talented healer can draw the poison from his wound.

The **Enchantress** was—the stories say—a sorceress who was supremely talented in spells of illusion and charm, who could mesmerize a dragon with a mere glance. (In some stories, she is the daughter or sister of the Elf Queen). Like the Stranger, she meddled in the affairs of state, but if she had a grand design or purpose, she kept it concealed beneath a reputation for cruel whimsy and malice. Unlike the other two, the fate of the Enchantress is known by everyone in the Empire—she was trapped in the land beyond the magic mirror, and remains there to this day.

## THE RATKING

The Ratfolk don't have an icon in the 13<sup>th</sup> Age—*yet*. Their prophecies and rat-scratchings etched into the tunnel walls far below the world claim that one day, a Ratking will arise and lead them to the 'Great Eyeball Feast', whatever *that* is. The ratfolk are so desperate for this leader to appear that they may assume that a high-level ratfolk adventurer is clearly the promised Ratking, or even decide that a high-level adventurer who's friendly to their cause is the Ratking, born into the body of a surface-dweller to make the conquest of the world easier. What do you do when a horde of murderous, inventive rat-monsters have decided that you're going to be their icon, and won't take no for an answer?

## LEGENDS, LEGACIES AND LAIRS

- The mysterious monument atop **Death Peak** is, they say, a legacy of this Half-Remembered Age. That mountain is usually wreathed in thick clouds, but sometimes they part and a strange structure of black glass can be seen, perched on the peak. Some force or monster in those clouds prevents anyone from flying or teleporting to the top of the mountain, so the only way up is to climb, and the slopes of Death Peak crawl with perils. Living dungeons are drawn to the mountain, as are all manner of horrific beasts, including chuuls and ogre magi. Only one adventuring party has ever reached the monument, and only a single survivor of that party was ever seen again—the bard Sabra Silverhair, who appeared many years later in the Cairnwood, speaking in tongues and muttering about unthinkable horrors. The Archmage of the era speculated that the monument might contain the memories—or even the souls—of those who perished in the Half-Remembered Age, but until some other brave company climbs Death Peak, it will remain forever a mystery.
  - By “some other brave company”, we do mean you lot—the player characters. No-one else is going to do it. This mysterious dungeon is going to wait around until you go there. Seriously, it's full of neat treasure, and you probably might not even all die horribly. As a special bonus for reading this paragraph, each member of the party gets one free reroll while adventuring in Death Peak. Show the GM this book if she doesn't believe you.

- The **Perfect Knight** might be a lost icon, or just one of that curious fellowship of almost-icons, heroes who have passed through so many trials that they are more than mortal, but who never wove the web of influence needed to change the world as a true icon does. The Perfect Knight was a knight-errant, roaming the land in search of good deeds and kindnesses to perform. He was beloved of both the Emperor and the Great Gold Wyrms, and his heroism was a beacon to the forces of good. In the end, he was cursed by the Enchantress who turned him into a living story. Even in this form, though, he still fights for what is right. Sometimes, the writing in a storybook will change as if someone's hacking at the inky letters with a shining sword as a forester hacks at a thicket, or the old woman telling stories to children in the corner will find the words in her mouth are no longer hers, and the Perfect Knight will tell other heroes what they need to do to ensure their story has a happy ending.
- The age may be mostly forgotten, but the **Treasure Vault of the Lost Emperor** will always be talked about, especially by greedy charlatans, lazy fools, and adventurers (who might, I suppose, be classed as 'greedy fools'. Lazy charlatans are usually GMs—but I digress!). Anyway, the legend goes like this: once upon a time, there lived the richest Emperor ever, and he hated his three sons. So, before he died, he spent a portion of his fortune building an elaborate tomb, and filling with traps and monsters.
  - The first son plunged into the tomb to claim his inheritance, and was killed before he took six steps by (simultaneously) an owlbear, a falling block trap, a set of hidden explosive runes, a stone golem, and an *orb of annihilation* concealed inside the golem's mouth.
  - The second son assembled all the best thieves, tomb robbers and adventurers in the land, and led this party into the tomb. He got a lot further, and may have tripped every trap and slain every monster in the place. But he didn't get to the treasure vault, and died alone in those halls.
  - The third son was too scared to go in, and sat on the threshold until he died. He lingers there still, a ghost waiting for some braver soul to uncover the buried door of the tomb and claim the biggest treasure hoard in the world. Most stories insist that the second son defeated all the traps, so only courage is required to get the treasure.
- The **Mirror-Castle of the Enchantress** once stood south of the Dragon Wood. Here, in her labyrinth of illusions and reflections, the Enchantress wove her deceits and lures. When she was overthrown by her foes (the Archmage? The Stranger? The Elf Queen?), her castle was turned inside out, and she was locked away on the far side of the mirror. Sometimes, she's able to re-establish contact with the material world by connecting her castle to a mirror (or any reflective surface). She can't pass through the mirrors, but can lure people from this side into her realm so she can enchant them into doing her bidding.
  - Most people in the Empire have heard folk-tales about the dangers of mirrors, but how many remember the precautions needed to block the Enchantress from

reaching out and grabbing them? Oh, they know that it's unlucky if you hear singing while looking in a mirror, and that it's bad to leave a candle burning where its reflection can be seen, but that's not enough, and the Enchantress is able to snatch a few souls every year.

- The Archmage has rapid-response teams who can detect breakthroughs from the mirror-world, but they're based in Horizon and can only protect the cities around Sword Point.

## END TIMES

No-one remembers exactly what happened. Roll three times on the World-Ending Cataclysm table for clues on what might have ended the age.

## MONSTERS

Did ratfolk come to prominence in the Half-Remembered Age? Or have everyone else's accomplishments been forgotten, so that the ratfolk's impact seems greater, at least compared to how they have handled themselves since?

Our other monster from this age is a construct assassin associated with the Enchantress. When the Enchantress is active, she'll likely be the mastermind sending the shatter-walker into the world. The Enchantress' schemes often involve the Archmage, Emperor or Diabolist; she appears wary of tangling with the Priestess.

## RATFOLK

Ratfolk are humanoid-rat hybrids, no larger than a halfling but hungry enough that they could eat a fat halfling and still have room for dessert. They are more commonly encountered by unlucky adventurers in the upper reaches of the underworld, but there are a few ratfolk colonies on the surface, in the sewers of major cities or in the riverbanks along the Fangs and the KneeDeep. According to the traditions of the ratfolk, they once ruled the surface land until they were driven underground by evil rakshasa.

Ratfolk have an entirely well-deserved reputation as thieves, scoundrels and murderous smugglers. As such, they are closely associated with the Prince of Shadows.

## RATFOLK ASSASSIN

*Who could have done this deed? The victim was found dead in a locked room, and none of the four guards outside the door heard anything. It's the perfect crime—apart from the tooth-marks on the corpse...*

3<sup>rd</sup> level spoiler [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +10

**Slashing knife +8 vs. AC**—8 damage

*Natural 16+:* 5 ongoing damage (save ends)

**R: Tiny annoying bow +8 vs. AC (one nearby target)**—8 damage

*Sneaky:* If the ratfolk assassin succeeds at an attempt to disengage with a natural even roll, it may make a free *tiny annoying bow* attack as a free action.

**Group Ability:** For every two ratfolk (round up, ignore mooks) in the battle, one ratfolk may use *swarm* as a quick action once per battle.

**Swarm (group):** When the ratfolk assassin hits with a melee attack, if the target of the attack is engaged with at least one other ratfolk, add +2d6 damage to the attack.

#### Nastier Specials

**Break and hide!** Once per battle, the ratfolk assassin may hide as a free action. The assassin must be unengaged in order to hide. When the assassin emerges from hiding, it may add the escalation die to its attacks that round.

AC 19  
PD 17      HP 40  
MD 13

## RATFOLK THROAT-CHEWER

*The ratfolk feed these berserkers a diet of hallucinogenic mushrooms and elf-blood before fighting. The dark elves supply the blood, but it's not drow blood...*

**4th level wrecker** [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +11

**Serrated short sword +9 vs. AC—13 damage**

**Bite and chew +9 vs. AC—15 damage**

**Natural even miss:** The throat-chewer may make another *bite and chew* attack

**Limited use:** Only staggered enemies may be targeted with this attack

**Frenzy:** When the escalation die is 1+, the throat-chewer may enter a frenzy. While in a frenzy, the rat-chewer may roll two dice for its attacks and pick whichever one it prefers. If both rolls miss, the throat-chewer takes damage equal to the highest value rolled.

**Group Ability:** For every two ratfolk (round up, ignore mooks) in the battle, one ratfolk may use *swarm* as a quick action once per battle.

**Swarm (group):** When the ratfolk throat-chewer hits with a melee attack, if the target of the attack is engaged with at least one other ratfolk, add +2d6 damage to the attack.

#### Nastier Specials

**Murderous frenzy:** When frenzying, if both dice roll 11+, the throat-chewer automatically scores a crit.

AC 19  
PD 18      HP 50  
MD 14

## RATFOLK BONE SHAMAN

*The bone-charms of these shaman hold many little deaths—and many little deaths make one big one.*

**4th level caster** [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +11

**Bone dagger +8 vs. AC—12 damage**

**R: Bone-curse +9 vs. MD (1d4 nearby or far-away enemies)—5 damage,** and each foe is engaged with a ratbone twist, a swirling swarm of dead rats bones and filth. While engaged by a ratbone twist, the target is considered vulnerable to the attacks of ratfolk. The ratbone twist can be targeted as a non-mook undead enemy, and destroyed by any attack (assume it's got an AC, PD and MD of 5 and 5 hit points). Ratbone twists are also destroyed if an enemy successfully pops free from them (they stay engaged on a failed attempt to disengage, and move with their foe.)

If the target is already engaged by a ratbone twist when targeted by this attack, then the target takes 2d6 damage for every existing ratbone twist engaging them.

**R: Death-curse +9 vs. PD (one nearby or far away enemy engaged with a ratbone twist)—15 damage**

**Group Ability:** For every two ratfolk (round up, ignore mooks) in the battle, one ratfolk may use *swarm* as a quick action once per battle.

**Swarm (group):** When the ratfolk bone shaman hits with a melee attack, if the target of the attack is engaged with at least one other ratfolk, add +2d6 damage to the attack.

#### Nastier Specials

**Army of the dead:** Ratbone twists count as ratfolk for the purposes of abilities.

AC 20  
PD 14      HP 50  
MD 18

## RATFOLK CHAMPION

*Hark now to the war-squeak of the champion!*

**5th level leader** [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +12

**Two-handed serrated sword +10 vs. AC—20 damage**

**R: War-bow +10 vs. AC (one nearby or far away target)—18 damage**

**Scatter:** Once per round as a free action, the champion may permit any nearby ratfolk to reroll a disengage check.

**Scurry:** Once per round as a free action, if a hit from a nearby enemy would reduce a ratfolk to 0 hit points, the champion may redirect that attack to another nearby ratfolk.

AC 22  
PD 17      HP 70  
MD 17

## SHATTERWALKER

*The safest way to hide from the Enchantress is to break a mirror—but her nastiest assassins can only emerge into the material world from broken mirrors. So the question isn't whether she's after you; the question is how much she cares.*

Double-strength 8<sup>th</sup> level troop [CONSTRUCT]

Initiative: +14

**Razor-shards +13 vs. AC (three attacks)—25 damage.**

*Natural 16+:* A shard of glass becomes embedded in the target.

This shard inflicts 10 ongoing damage (save ends).

**C: Explosion of broken glass +13 vs. PD (1d4 nearby enemies)—60 damage**

*Natural 16+:* A shard of glass becomes embedded in the target.

This shard inflicts 10 ongoing damage (save ends).

*Limited use:* 1/battle

*Wilderness of mirrors:* A character who misses an attack on a shatterwalker with a natural odd roll becomes confused until the end of their next turn.

*Enchant mirror:* Once per battle, the shatterwalker may flow into a nearby broken mirror. That mirror is instantly repaired and becomes a temporary portal to the Mirror Castle of the Enchantress. Each round, anyone looking at the mirror must make a normal save (11+) or move towards the mirror. Characters with a shard of glass suffer a -5 penalty to this save; confused characters automatically fail.

If the mirror is attacked, it breaks—the shatterwalker reappears, and may immediately make a free *explosion of broken glass* attack.

### Nastier Special

*More shards:* The Shatterwalker gains an additional *razor-shards* attack and a +2 bonus to all defenses when staggered.

AC 23  
PD 21  
MD 17

HP 222

## SPELL

We put the time travel spell here because when it goes wrong...welcome to the Half-Remembered Age!

## WIZARD SPELL (7<sup>TH</sup> LEVEL)

### TIME TRAVEL

Ranged Spell ♦ Daily

**Effect:** You and several allies (the adventuring party, more or less) next to you can travel backwards in time. Your control over this temporal shift is limited—you pick your destination age, and then fight a number of battles equal to the number of ages travelled. Your opponents in these battles may be



time-spirits trying to prevent your meddling in history, exiled horrors outside reality, or champions of the ages you're passing through. You may take a quick rest between fights, but if you take a full heal-up or a campaign loss when fighting your way back in time, you'll arrive in an unfamiliar place and time in your destination age. If you endure, you get to pick roughly when and where you'll arrive.

You can return to your home age by casting this spell again, or you may be dragged back to the present when reality snaps back (i.e. at the end of the adventure.) You don't usually need to fight your way back to the future on the return trip.

You cannot use this spell to travel into the future (although entities from the future can use it to travel back to the present), or to travel within the same age.

You can only travel back to a specific age once per level. Trying to repeat the same time-jump more than once may have unfortunate consequences.

9<sup>th</sup> level spell      You get to take a full heal-up once during your travel in time. You must describe the weird cross-temporal place where you take a break from battling your way through the howling time winds.

## MAGIC ITEMS

### BELT, SWORDBELT, KILT, GIRDLE

**Default bonus:** Increase your maximum recoveries: by 1 (adventurer); by 2 (champion); by 3 (epic).

*Girdle of the Barbarian King:*(Recharge 6+): When you hit with a melee attack, increase your damage by the amount of ongoing damage you're currently suffering. Quirk: Refuses to acknowledge pain or ask for help.

## CLOAK, MANTLE, CAPE

**Default bonus:** +1 PD (adventurer); +2 PD (champion); +3 PD (epic)

*Cloak of the Barbarian King* (recharge 16+): When an attack targeting your Physical Defense reduces you to 0 hit points, immediately heal using a recovery, and keep fighting instead of falling unconscious. Quirk: Will not, under any circumstances, kneel. Or even salute. Maybe not even say 'good morning,' or ask 'how are you'?

## WEAPON

**Default bonus:** Attack and damage when using this weapon: +1 (adventurer); +2 (champion); +3 (epic).

*Axe of the Barbarian King* (yes, axe only!): When you kill a number of mooks in a mob with a melee attack, kill one additional mook. Quirk: Trouble counting.

## WONDROUS ITEM

You can attune multiple wondrous items. They don't fill up a chakra.

*Ratfolk Charm:* Once per day, reroll any failed attack or save.

Once you've used the charm, you must discharge the bad luck it holds by doing a service for a ratfolk shaman or clan. The scale of the service depends on your level and how much bad luck the charm averted. If you rerolled a missed attack of little consequence, then giving the local ratfolk a few coins might suffice. A serious attack roll might require a small side-quest on the ratfolk's behalf. If you rerolled a failed death save, then you must make a payment equal to whatever value you attach to your own life. If you fail to discharge the bad luck, then roll 1d4. A number of times equal to that result, the GM may substitute the result you rerolled for any d20 roll. Once the debt is paid—one way or another—the charm will recharge at the start of the next day. Quirk: Craves cheese. Also, weird dreams.

# AGE OF THE HOWLING MOON



*Are we not animals? Are we not beasts? Let the strongest take the biggest share of the kill! Let the weak perish!*

## The 1d10<sup>th</sup> Age

- The Emperor becomes a werewolf, and lycanthropy becomes associated with nobility
- A mysterious Alchemist provides a potion that lets werewolves control their full-moon ferocity, and he becomes the power behind the Imperial throne
- Religious leaders—including the High Druid and the Silver Cleric—argue over the morality of lycanthropy
- In the end, the Alchemist's potions run out, and the Empire collapses overnight when the full moon rises and the lycanthropes go berserk

## OVERVIEW

The defining event of this age was barely noticed when it happened.

The crown prince, the Emperor's son and heir, was bitten by a wolf while out hunting. The wound healed quickly, and no-one thought any more of it for many years. It was not until that prince had become Emperor and ruled wisely for seven years that the truth was discovered.

That wolf had been a werewolf, and had passed on the curse to the Emperor—and he had passed it onto his children. Once a month, the Imperial Family retreated to their secret Lunar Palace, a dungeon concealed beneath Axis, and there were ceremonially

confined in chains until the full moon passed. When news of the Emperor's curse broke, it was a tremendous scandal: how could this man sit on the Dragon Throne, when the man was a monster on the nights of the full moon? Emissaries were sent to the Wild Wood to beg the High Druid for a cure, but the were-cults who worshipped the curse as the Druid's blessing refused to let these emissaries reach the Druid's sanctum.

Then, a travelling sage visited the court, and provided the Emperor with a solution, if not a cure. This sage, the Alchemist, could brew a potion that quelled the savage impulses of lycanthropy, allowing the Emperor to retain his full mental faculties while in the shape of a wolf-man.

Where the Emperor goes, so goes the Empire. Within a few years, lycanthropy became fashionable among the aristocracy. It was a new way to connect one's lineage to the royal family (*"I'm ninety-fourth in line to the Throne, but I was bitten by a duchess who was bitten by the Emperor's daughter! We're practically pack-mates!"*). In battle, the value of were-warriors was plain to see. Sages and wizards studied lycanthropy following the precepts of the Alchemist, and new forms of were-creature were created. Spreading lycanthropy without permission became a scandalous, even criminal act—if a werewolf was considered part of the aristocracy, then biting a peasant and transmitting the 'blessing' was tantamount to creating an illegitimate child.

Not everyone in the Empire embraced lycanthropy. There were a few noble Dwarven wereboars or werebears, but the Dwarf King never took the 'Druid's blessing'. The Elf Queen's court became known as the 'Court of Stars and Moon', and

## THE MOON

This may not be important to your campaign, but it's a fun digression, so let's play with it—where's the moon, and how does it relate to the overworld?

If it's *above* the overworld, then is the overworld basically a high-magic stratosphere? If you try flying to the moon, do you rise out of the atmosphere and suffocate/freeze/decompress before you get there? Or, for a more fantastical interpretation, is all the world contained within a crystal casket, and the sun and moon are unreachable celestial bodies on the far side of the glass?

Alternatively, the moon (and maybe the sun?) is reachable via the overworld—you can get there by casting *overland flight* or *teleport* or just by hopping from flying realm to flying realm. Putting the moon in reach of the player characters can be great fun, as it's a whole new place to go adventuring. Of course, it also means that they'll try killing it at some point, because that's what players do.



weretigers stalked through her forest, but she remained unsullied. Opposition to this new order was strongest in Santa Cora, where a fanatic preacher, the Silver Cleric, led a holy crusade against the “corrupt and monstrous nobility”. In the mountains, the giants who controlled the mines of Cloudhome became vastly wealthy supplying illegal silver to Santa Cora. (If the Silver Cleric were to return, or were the Priestess to harness her power, silver might once more be effective against werebeasts.)

And all the while, the Alchemist became more powerful, for all the Empire depended on his potions...

## ÍCONS

The mysterious **Alchemist** was the power behind the Imperial throne for most of the age. Initially, he was only the Emperor's personal physician, providing him with the potions needed to suppress the ill-effects of lycanthropy. Soon, he replaced the Archmage as the pre-eminent sage and court wizard, and became staggeringly wealthy and influential by supplying his potion to other nobles. The Alchemist spent this fortune building a sanctum that rivalled the Archmage's school or the Priestess' Cathedral on one of the islands in the Midland Sea. Some believe that the Alchemist was a student (or a reincarnation, or a pawn) of the Poison Sage (page 37) who had dominated the underworld, or would go on to dominate it in a future era if your chronology is different!

## MASKS OF THE ICONS

Some icons maintain the same identity from age to age, but others operate in disguise. The Alchemist might also have been the Poison Sage. Perhaps the Silver Cleric became the Diabolist, when her hatred of werewolves led her to turn from the gods and ally with demons. The Archmage might vanish for an age to walk the land in disguise as the Stranger.

This approach might bear strange new fruit when a supposedly familiar icon in the 13<sup>th</sup> Age turns out to be a mask for an earlier icon. It could also be a sneaky way of using the recurring and eternal icon categories from Section 1 (page 8).

Historians and scholars argue over the true nature of the **Empress of the Moon**. According to some accounts, she was an Empress who ruled during this age, and it was under her reign that lycanthropy became seen as a blessing of nobility and strength. Others claim that a werewolf Emperor fell in love with the moon, and would accept no earthly woman as his bride, so that either the moon took on human form and descended to the earth, or that she was the ruler of some lunar empire who, in marrying the Dragon Empire, temporarily united the two realms under one crown.

The **Huntsman** was, depending on who told the story, a hero who defended ordinary people from the predations and bestial cruelty of werewolf lords, or he was a bogeyman, a monster who murdered with silver-headed arrows and knives. In some stories, the Huntsman was himself a werewolf who hid his curse, or a secret ally of the High Druid who sought to reclaim the 'blessing' from the undeserving who had corrupted it.

The **Silver Cleric** kept the southern Empire, from Santa Cora to Horizon, free of lycanthropes. Enraged that lycanthropy had eclipsed devotion to the Light, she declared that all werewolves were monsters in the eyes of the gods. Now and then during the age, she was nearly in open rebellion against the Empire. At times, her followers warred on the were-cults of the Wild Wood; at other times, she and the Wolf Druid had an uneasy alliance against the 'corrupt' lycanthropes and the Alchemist.

The **Wolf Druid** was the High Druid of the age. Early in the age, he blessed his followers with a potent form of lycanthropy, and the savage tribes that then dwelt in the wood embraced their animal nature. When lycanthropy spread to the wider Empire, he acquired more followers, and there were many secret cults dedicated to the Druid, especially in the Imperial Legions. However, the Druid remained unhappy with the corruption of his blessing, and had an age-long rivalry with the Alchemist.

## LEGENDS, LEGACIES AND LAIRS

- **The Hunt of the Moon:** Towards the end of the age, cruel werewolf nobles often hunted human prey at the full moon. In the lands of the northern Empire, every month brought new horrors, and the villagers took to building secret refuges or turning to the Church of the Light and the ways of the Silver Cleric for protection. Today, these dark times are remembered in peasant mummeries and autumn festivals, where actors costumed as werewolves 'stalk' through the village until they are banished by the local cleric, who wears a ceremonial silver-threaded robe for the occasion. The secret refuges are filled with cakes and sweets for the local children to find.
- **Omen-Lotus:** This mysterious herb or flower was the key ingredient in the potions brewed by the Alchemist to suppress the bestial impulses of lycanthropy. It grew only on the shores of the perilous island of Omen. At first, it was easy for sailors to gather bushels of the herb and escape the island without being attacked by a monster or living dungeon, but as lycanthropy spread and the demand for potions grew, the lotus-harvesters had to go further and further ashore into danger. If the plant still exists in the 13<sup>th</sup> Age, it likely grows only in the central uplands of Omen. If that sounds harmless, realize that many of Omen's 'slopes' are composed of the piled-up rubble of living dungeons.
- **The Tournaments of the Blessed:** These rites began in the Wild Wood under the auspices of the High Druid, but the practice spread all over the Empire. They were a legal way to acquire lycanthropy—and the high social standing that came with it—without being bitten by a noble. The tournaments consisted of both contests of strength and speed, and arduous mystic rituals where participants strove to attract the notice—and, they prayed, the blessing—of the High Druid.
- **Wolf-Cults of the High Druid:** These tribes dwelt in the Wild Wood, and served the High Druid. They were the original practitioners of the Tournaments of the Blessed, and considered by the lycanthropes of the Empire to be thieves and heretics. The Wolf-Cultists' form of lycanthropy could not be transmitted by bite—only won through magical rites. Some wolf-cults survive to the present day.
- **Moonchain Ruins:** This titanic wreck is the remains of perhaps the most audacious scheme conceived in this age. The wizards and were-chemists of the Empire planned to build a huge tower filled with magical engines and gears, and then intended to hurl unbreakable chains into the sky to catch the moon. The moon would then be dragged into place above the tower, and locked so that it would always remain full, so that the werewolves would always be at height of their power.
  - According to the histories preserved in Santa Cora, the Moonchain was sabotaged by agents of the Silver Cleric, who jammed its cogs and caused its cyclopean engine to explode. According to the tales told in the

Wild Wood, spies of the High Druid were responsible for striking this blow against tyranny. In secret annals stored in extradimensional vaults parallel to Horizon, it's recorded that the builders succeeded in catching the moon, but could not hold it—the moon pulled the engine over and broke free of the chains.

- The remains of the massive engine can still be seen, and have become a rotting dungeon crammed with clockwork machines, renegade sorcerers, lycanthropes, moon-monsters and alchemical abominations. (Moonwreck's the obvious place to put this dungeon, but you could also drop it near Horizon or Concord.)
- The **Alchemist's Laboratory**: The fortress of the fallen icon can sometimes be found in an island off Sword Point. The laboratory island is under the authority of the Archmage, and he's placed magical wards on it so that it's mostly invisible and inaccessible. Sometimes, the Archmage permits armed archaeological excursions from Horizon to visit the island to search for alchemical treasures and secrets; sometimes, the wards flicker and unscrupulous tomb robbers can sneak onto the island. It's a dangerous place—the Alchemist bred all manner of monsters, plagues, and poisons, and protected all his creations with cunning traps.
  - Rumors abound about the island. Some claim that the Alchemist has returned there in secret and is plotting to reclaim both his fortress and his place at the Emperor's court. Other tales say that the Alchemist was resurrected as a lich, and is now a vassal of the Lich King. Or maybe the island is used by the Archmage as a testing ground for forbidden experiments—if anything goes wrong, he'll just claim it was the fault of some long-buried abomination brewed up by the Alchemist.

## END TIMES

The age ended in the Night of Fangs, also known as the Moon of Blood, the Red Tide, or the Judgement of Silver. Among the Elves, it is remembered as the Moon of Many Sorrows; the halflings recall it as Hiding Night. The dwarves record it as *Urak na Khuzh I Muri Weaghnak I Shel Ao Khurduk* (The Night We Closed Our Doors And Congratulated Ourselves On Being Sensible.) The supply of the Alchemist's potions ran out, so when the next full moon rose, every lycanthrope in the Empire was filled with bestial bloodlust—not just the normal werewolf fury, but the cumulative effect of a lifetime of chemically suppressed rage.

Around the same time, the giants besieged Santa Cora, demanding payment for all their silver. Robbed of its rulers and leaders, the Empire collapsed into chaos.

## MONSTERS

No surprise, we've got werebeasts and werelords tied into the story of the age instead of relying on the generic lycanthropic tropes we handled in *13 True Ways* (page 204).

## WEREWOLF NOBLE

*Why, yes—my family has owned this castle for centuries. Ours is a very, very old lineage—we've been here for literally ages. But that's by the by—you'll stay tonight for dinner, won't you?*

4<sup>th</sup> level double-strength leader [BEAST]

Initiative: +12

**Ravens bite +9 vs. AC**—28 damage

*Miss*: The werewolf gains a +2 attack bonus (cumulative) to *ravens bite* attacks for the rest of the battle.

**C: Terrifying howl +8 vs. MD (all nearby creatures engaged with a werewolf)**—12 psychic damage

*Natural attack roll higher than the target's Wisdom*: For the rest of the fight, that target suffers fear when fighting werewolves (−4 attack and no benefit from the escalation die when engaged with a werewolf if the target has equal or fewer hp than the fear threshold for the werewolf's level)

*Bestial fury*: The werewolf gains a bonus to damage equal to the value of the escalation die.

*Pack attack*: When the werewolf attacks a creature that is engaged with one of its allies, the target is vulnerable to that attack. Other werewolves who attack the same target that the werewolf noble is engaged with may also add the escalation die to their attack rolls.

*Unnatural vigor*: When the werewolf is not staggered at the start of its turn, it heals 14 hp.

AC 19

PD 17

MD 20

HP 100

## WEREDRAGON

*The Alchemist spawned these misshapen monsters. Fortunately for the world, they cannot pass on their curse through their bite. That doesn't stop them from biting people, of course.*

8<sup>th</sup> level troop [DRAGON]

Initiative: +15

Vulnerability: cold

**Claws and teeth +13 vs. AC (two attacks)**—16 damage

*First natural even hit or miss each turn*: Roll a third *claws and teeth* attack.

*Limited use: special trigger only*

**C: Fiery breath +13 vs. PD (all creatures engaged with the weredragon; if unengaged, 1d3 nearby enemies)**—30 fire damage

*Miss*: Half damage

*Bestial fury*: Weredragons get a bonus to damage equal to quadruple the escalation die.

*Random dragon trait*: At the start of its turn, the weredragon gains one of the following abilities until the start of its next turn. Roll 1d6.

1. The weredragon *must* use its *fiery breath* this turn.
2. Resist fire 16+.
3. The weredragon may fly this turn.
4. The weredragon's neck stretches; one *claws and teeth* attack is now a close attack targeting one nearby enemy.
5. The dragon may add the escalation die to its attacks this turn.
6. The weredragon may *choose* to use its *fiery breath* this turn.

**Unnatural vigor:** If not staggered at the start of its turn, the weredragon heals 30 hit points

**Unnatural creature:** If the weredragon rolls a natural 1-5, it becomes vulnerable to attacks until the start of its next turn.

## Nastier Specials

**Grow!** When the escalation die reaches 3, the weredragon becomes large; it gains +64 hit points and its *claws and teeth* attacks now deal 20 damage. When the escalation die reaches 5, it becomes huge, gaining another 64 hit points and its *claws and teeth* attacks deal 24 damage on a hit.

AC 23  
PD 21 HP 133  
MD 22

## WERETIGER WIZARD

All three branches of the elven race have secret clans of weretigers. Night-black drow weretigers are often assassins; wood elf weretigers are nomadic bandits or traders. Among the high elves, the weretigers are mystics who study the arcane power of the moon. The high elves, it seems, have some other method for controlling the rage that afflicts other lycanthropes.

Large 7<sup>th</sup> level caster [BEAST]

Initiative: +17

**Tiger claws +12 vs. AC**—25 damage, plus *savage spellcasting*

*First natural 11+ each turn:* The weretiger may make a second *tiger claws* attack as a free action.

**R: Lunar bolt +12 vs. PD (one nearby or far away enemy)**—50 damage

[Special trigger] **Moonstrike +12 vs. PD**—25 damage

**Limited Use:** When an enemy engages the weretiger, if the weretiger isn't already engaged, it may make a *moonstrike* attack as an interrupt action before the attack.

**Natural odd hit:** The weretiger may use *savage spellcasting*

**Natural even hit:** Both the enemy and the weretiger are teleported to two nearby locations that the weretiger can see. They don't have to be the same location.

**Bestial fury:** Weretigers get a bonus to melee damage equal to quadruple the escalation die.

**Savage spellcasting:** When the weretiger hits with a *tiger claws* attack, roll a d6. If the result is equal to or under the escalation die, apply the result on the table below.

1. **Silver fire:** The target takes another 5 arcane damage.
2. **Moonstruck:** The target is dazed until the end of its next turn.
3. **Spell-weave:** The weretiger may reroll its next *savage spellcasting* roll.
4. **Mooncalf:** The target is confused until the end of its next turn.
5. **Teleport:** The weretiger teleports to a nearby location it can see.
6. **Lunar port:** The weretiger teleports to a nearby location it can see and makes a *lunar bolt* attack as a free action.

**Unnatural vigor:** If not staggered at the start of its turn, the weretiger heals 28 hit points

AC 22  
PD 18 HP 199  
MD 21

## WEREBEASTS AND THE ICONS

The Alchemist successfully isolated the essence of lycanthropy, allowing him to create other forms of animal hybrid like these abominations. Today, weredragons might be found in the retinue of the Archmage (who inherited the Alchemist's laboratory, along with its guardians), or the Diabolist (who inherited the Alchemist's mastery of suffering).

Officially, the Three consider weredragons to be walking insults to dragonkind who should be incinerated on sight, but the Blue might employ some as agents, promising them ascension to a stable draconic form if they serve her well.

## RACE

You may not want to add a full race to your campaign, or pay any attention to the Age of the Howling Moon, but these mechanics should complement a wide variety of *uniques* and backgrounds.

### BEASTBLOODED

+2 Dex or +2 Con

### BESTIAL FURY (RACIAL POWER)

Once per battle when you hit an enemy with an attack, you may deal extra damage to them equal to your level X the escalation die.

**Adventurer Feat:** The first time you use *bestial fury* each battle, heal hp equal to the extra damage you deal.

**Champion Feat:** Once per battle when you use *bestial fury* against an enemy engaged with an ally, *bestial fury* is not expended.

**Epic Feat:** Once per battle when you miss an enemy with an attack, until the end of the battle, gain an extra use of *bestial fury* that can only be used against an enemy you miss with an attack.

The days of werewolf kings and princes are long gone, but many in the Empire still have the High Druid's curse (or blessing) lying latent in their veins. The beastblooded appear fully human (or elven, etc) until gravely wounded or furious, when their hands become claws and bestial fury fills their eyes.

## SPELL

### SORCERER SPELL (5<sup>TH</sup> LEVEL)

#### BREATH OF THE BEAST (5<sup>TH</sup> LEVEL)

Ranged Spell ♦ Daily

**Target:** One nearby ally or enemy; *breath weapon* vs. enemy:

**Attack:** Charisma + Level vs AC

**Hit:** 10d6 + Charisma damage

**Miss:** 20 damage

7<sup>th</sup> level spell

10d10 damage; 40 damage on a miss

9<sup>th</sup> level spell

2d6x10 damage; 60 on a miss

targeting ally:

**Effect:** That ally may make a basic melee attack as a free action on its next turn.

7<sup>th</sup> level spell

Instead of a free action basic melee attack, the ally gains a bonus standard action, but cannot use that action on a daily power.

9<sup>th</sup> level spell

The ally gains a bonus standard action, no strings or requirements.

**Breath Weapon:** For the rest of the battle, roll a d20 at the start of each of your turns; on a 16+, you can use *breath of the beast* that turn if you wish.

## MAGIC ITEM

The item that's relevant from this age is called a potion and is consumed like a potion, but you can't buy it like the other potions listed on page 283 of *13<sup>th</sup> Age*. Treat this extremely rare potion as if it were more like a wondrous item.

**Potion of Mental Fortitude:** This potion suppresses the animal furies and lusts of lycanthropes, and allows a wild were-creature to retain full control in hybrid or beast form, even in the full moon. For non-lycanthropes, it gives a +4 bonus to Mental Defense for one fight. Each time MD is targeted, the bonus drops by 1.

# AGE OF WALLED CITIES



*Heroes? Adventurers? Those are just pretty words sung by the bards. Call 'em what they are: troublemakers. Seditious. Lunatics.*

## The 1d10<sup>th</sup> Age

- The people of the Empire retreat behind the walls of their cities
- Their civilization becomes hidebound and fearful—adventurers are banned, and rulers use powerful magic to keep order

## OVERVIEW

In this age, the Empire was so beset by perils and dangers that fortifying the Seven Cities became a matter of survival. At times, the countryside between the cities was overrun with monsters and foes, and the people crowded into the cities to shelter behind those impenetrable walls.

Legends of this age tell that the cities were besieged for many decades at a time, and whole generations were born, fought and died within the walls. Even if that's exaggerated, each of the Seven Cities built high walls and deep, deep dungeons beneath their streets to store supplies and provide shelter for the refugees who sought protection.

The first threat to overrun the Empire was whatever evil threatened the Empire in the last age! (So, undead/werewolves/giants/cultists & weird arcane horrors/who knows/murderous elven partisans/necromancers/scarab bugs/dragons?). In the years that followed, other foes attacked—migratory orcs, monsters from the Iron Sea, ogre magi warbands. Plague and famine troubled the land; insidious cults and sinister sorcerers thrived in the shadows.

In the face of these dangers, the folk of the Empire retreated again and again into their fortified cities. It became a largely unquestioned custom—when the dark times came, instead of fighting back, they fled to safety and waited out the storm.

With each passing generation, the walls grew higher and the cities more crowded.

With each passing generation, the people grew more paranoid and insular, and were less willing to leave the cities when the danger passed.

Those who dared leave the cities or fight against the invaders were seen as fools who endangered everyone else and threatened public morale. Adventurers became criminals. In some cities, the lords employed rituals to cast spells of obedience on everyone who lived within the walls, binding them to submit to the law

and the will of the rulers. Others employed spies or spells of mass scrying to watch for dissidents, seditious and adventurers.

Walls were not the only means of defense. The Archmage built the first great modern wards in this era, and the elves closed their forests to outsiders, sowing fences of thorn and illusion. Other towns built castles to control key mountain passes, or levied armies of soldiers to fight against the monsters.

The rulers of the cities experimented with different ways of providing for their populations—in Horizon, the Archmage researched ways of creating food from thin air. In Axis, the Emperor's dragons went hunting in the overworld, and the folk of that city learned to eat rare dishes like roast phoenix or cloudroot stew. In Santa Cora, divine miracles fed the masses. The dwarves exported food from their underground mushroom caverns. Glitterhaegen built a huge fishing fleet that sailed far out into the Iron Sea. In Highrock... well, there are certain dark rumors that Highrock's destruction was karmic retribution for the embrace of cannibalism by certain sects in the city.

Towards the end of the age, a charismatic Emperor recognized the decline of his realm. He reconstituted the Imperial Legion and sent them out to guard the roads, reunite the cities and begin a great campaign to reclaim the countryside.

## ICONS

When the people of the Empire retreated to their fortified cities, the **Ghoul King** and his carrion host feasted in the abandoned towns and villages, digging up the buried dead to feed on them. Over the course of the age, the Ghoul King grew bigger and bigger, his power batted on the flesh of sorcerers and dead icons, until he became strong enough to topple the walls of the cities and paralyze whole armies with one dreadful exhalation of pestilence. (If this Ghoul King is the creature that later became a fallen icon, see *13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary 2*, page 120 for the write-up of the Great Ghoul.)

The **Roadwarden** and her followers protected the roads connecting the cities. In dark times, they smuggled messengers and supplies through the occupied territories, taking secret paths and hidden roads. The Roadwarden was viewed with suspicion by the Judge and the Lords of the Cities, but she was a friend to travelers, outcasts and adventurers.

The fortified cities were under the aegis of the **Judge**, whose influence eclipsed that of the Emperor for much of the age. The Judge was both a mighty paladin and the arbiter of imperial

law. She was dedicated to the protection of the cities and their inhabitants, and led Imperial forces in many battles against the forces of darkness. To make her people safer, she imposed increasingly oppressive commandments and restrictions to prevent corruption and dissent.

## LEGENDS, LEGACIES AND LAIRS

- In the heart of one of the great cities of the Empire is a gaping hole in the ground. Somewhere, deep below, is the Lost Court of the Judge. The Judge dwelt in a fortress of adamant and steel, and from this high seat she proclaimed the law of the cities. When the Red attacked, the Court sank into the earth, carrying with it the Judge and many of her paladins and inquisitors, along with the various prisoners who awaited judgement in her cells. It's often said that the Judge had made some secret bargain with devils that came due on that day. Diviners, though, fear that the Judge's fortress was girded in protective spells, and that one day she will return to impose a new and even more cruel regime on the Empire.
- Greywatch (or, to give its full name, Greywatch-on-Oldwall) was one of the great cities of the Empire. It lay close to present-day Nomad, right on the migration route of the Koru Behemoths. Some magical ward or ancient bargain, the secrets of which were lost ages before Greywatch fell, ensured that the behemoths always stepped around (or *over*) the city instead of smashing through it. When Greywatch was destroyed by the Red, though, this protection was broken. The city could not be rebuilt, because now the behemoths stumbled through the ruins, scattering the broken stones. Today, Greywatch is forgotten by all except historians and the folk of Nomad.
  - One curiosity remains. The parts of the city closest to the ancient remains of the Oldwall seem to share the wall's magical ability to regenerate. Ghostly streets of the city sometimes manifest near the walls, like fragile mirages of stone and dust.
  - It's said that Greywatch was home to great universities for wizards and bards that rivalled those in Horizon, and some believe that it's possible that the magic of Oldwall will one day briefly resurrect those fabled schools of wizardry.
  - Get in before a Koru Behemoth stomps through, and maybe you can recover lost arcane secrets of an elder age.
- In some of the older towns of the Empire, they still have the old customs of gatewardens and roadwardens. Gatewardens are appointed by the governors of the town, and are empowered to interrogate people both entering and leaving the gate, asking about their business, their destination, their history and so forth. A gatewarden can ask whatever questions they wish, and can forbid use of the gate if they are not satisfied with the answers. Often, the position of gatewarden becomes an excuse for demanding bribes or prying to the affairs of neighbors.

- Roadwardens, meanwhile, are licensed guides who escort groups of travelers along the roads to the next town. An upstanding roadwarden protected travelers from bandits, monsters and other perils on the road, ensured they made good time, helped them survive in bad weather or harsh conditions, dealt with strangers and other unexpected encounters en route, and tended to the travelers' pack animals. (Treacherous roadwardens lead their charges into ambushes). Travelling between towns without a roadwarden was once illegal, and this law still stands in some parts of the Empire. Some magical roads only work if traversed in the company of a licensed roadwarden.
- Some of the cities of the present day might be much, much smaller than they once were. Santa Cora or Glitterhaegen, for example, might consist of a small inhabited urban center with a population of a few thousand, surrounded by many acres of ruined buildings and crumbling, deserted streets. (For a historical comparison: Imperial Rome had a population of 500,000; medieval Rome, 35,000...) There might be monster-haunted dungeons right on the doorstep of the Empire's cities!

## END TIMES

No siege managed to break the walls of the cities. They held firm against orcs and zombies, against minotaur warbands and crazed cults, against renegade wizards and malfunctioning golems.

But when the Red attacked, no wall could protect against dragonfire, and the cities burned. Drawn by the smell of treasure and hunger for meat, the Red broke through the Archmage's wards and invaded the Empire. Five of the Seven Cities were laid waste; some cities were only partially destroyed, but others were razed to the ground.

## MONSTERS

Monsters include a couple minions of the Ghoul King and a golem devoted to keeping the citizenry in check.

### HOG-GHOUL

*Not all ghouls descend from human stock. The Ghoul King's scavenger host bred these ghastly, carnivorous boars who snuffled out buried corpses in graveyards like truffles in a forest.*

4<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +9

Vulnerability: holy

**Gore +8 vs. AC**—12 damage, and the target is vulnerable to all attacks (save ends)

**Charge:** If the hog-ghoul moved to engage a foe before making this attack, it deals +2d6 damage on a hit

**Stench of death:** At the start of the hog-ghoul's turn, deal 1d8 negative energy damage to any nearby creatures who are vulnerable as a result of an undead creature's attack

AC 19  
PD 18  
MD 14

HP 65

## GHOUL GIANT

*When you're thirty feet tall and consider an entire cow to be a light snack, the pangs of famine bite especially deep.*

Large 5<sup>th</sup> level troop [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +10

**Fumbling hand +8 vs. AC**—40 damage, and the target becomes vulnerable to all attacks (hard save ends, 16+)

**Claw and gnaw +7 vs. AC**—50 damage, and 10 ongoing damage (save ends)

*Sweet-meat, yum:* The ghoulish giant gets a +4 bonus to its attack rolls against vulnerable targets.

*Fee fi fo fum:* As a standard action, the giant sniffs the air. Pick a random nearby foe; the giant gets a +6 bonus to an attack made against that target in the next round.

AC	20	
PD	19	HP 170
MD	14	

## Obsidian Golem

ENFORCE LAW. PROTECT CITIZENS. PUNISH  
LAWBREAKERS. LAW IS ALL. ALL IS LAW.

Large 5<sup>th</sup> level blocker [CONSTRUCT]

Initiative: +9

**Hard fist of the law +10 vs. AC**—30 damage

*Natural 12+:* The target is also dazed (save ends). If the target is already dazed, the target becomes stunned (again, save ends).

*Natural 18+:* The target is stunned (save ends)

**R: Imprison +10 vs. PD (one adjacent stunned target)**—The golem flows to imprison the stunned victim within its body. While imprisoned, the victim cannot act except to try to break free (hard save, 16+). The victim is automatically freed if the golem is destroyed; however, any damage above that needed to destroy the golem gets transferred to the trapped victim. An obsidian golem can only imprison one victim at a time.

*Relentless pursuit:* As an interrupt action when a nearby enemy takes a move action, the obsidian golem can move. This move must be a response to the enemy's move—the golem could, for example, move to engage with that foe, or move to block an exit, or chase after the foe, but could not use this move action to move to engage an unrelated adversary.

*Golem immunity:* Golems are immune to effects, and cannot be stunned, dazed, weakened, confused, made vulnerable, or touched by ongoing damage. You can damage a golem, but that's about it.

AC	21	
PD	19	HP 133
MD	15	

## Obsidian Golems and the Icons

The few surviving Obsidian Golems are associated with the Emperor. The Prince of Shadows, obviously, hates these things—when the Prince's criminal activities cause too many problems in Glitterhaegen or Axis, the lords of Glitterhaegen drop one of their golems in the middle of Shadow Port and say 'good hunting'.

## RACE

While everyone else was metaphorically climbing the walls inside the walled cities, the alleykin were literal about it.

## ALLEYKIN

+2 Dex or +2 Cha

### ELUSIVE (RACIAL POWER)

Once per battle, reduce the damage you take from an attack by 1d6 X your level. Then deal that much damage to one enemy engaged with you.

**Adventurer Feat:** You take half damage from falls.

**Champion Feat:** After you use *elusive*, you can immediately roll a free disengage check.

**Epic Feat:** Once when you die, it turns out you weren't dead after all. You find your allies during the next rest, having spent enough recoveries to get above staggered.

**Option A:** Alleykin are humanoid cats, most commonly found on the fringes of Imperial society in large cities like Axis or Horizon. They are extremely agile, and often live on rooftops or other places inaccessible to clumsy, earthbound creatures.

The homeland of the alleykin is vaguely *thataway*. (Over the seas, beyond the mountains, or in another plane of existence). They originally came to the Empire fleeing a monstrous threat, such as the Orc Lord. Most alleykin have since returned home, but a few linger out of amusement or simple laziness.

Alleykin are involved with a variety of causes and icons, just like other people. They're people, and they're cats, and that's a fickle combination.

**Option B:** All of the above, but they were originally connected to the Roadwarden. The connection lives on if you consider that an alley is a road, albeit a road that often leads nowhere.

**Option C:** Your player character is the very *uniquet* of beings, and you may or may not refer to yourself as an alleykin.



## POWER

### NEW BARD SONG FOR THE BALLADEER TALENT

This is an additional song that's available to a bard who already has the Balladeer talent. It's text-heavy, but what it boils down to is that your bard seems to be having a crisis of conviction, sending out a despairing cry that will be heard by forces opposed to the icons, or at least magically divorced from them.

#### SONG OF THE ICONOCLAST

In some ages, singing this song might be punishable by death. In others, like the present age, it is simply forgotten. The song is a lament for all those who are forgotten by the icons and great

powers of the world, for all those who are crushed or abused by cruel masters. It can be learned and sung like any of the other great ballads in the Balladeer talent (13<sup>th</sup> Age, p. 85). You may only sing it once a day, when *all* the players roll relationship dice and *no-one* gets any 5s or 6s.

When you sing the *song of the iconoclast*, you gain 2 points of iconoclast's blessing without rolling the skill check that the icon-centered ballads require (or more than two points, if you've got the epic tier Balladeer feat). This iconoclast's blessing works just like the benefits you get from an icon, and you can use it in the same way. If your GM lets you spend iconic benefits to bypass skill tests, it works for that. If you get to cash in iconic benefits for magic items, it works for that. If you're used to using iconic benefits to fold, bend and spindle the story, run with it. The one restriction is that this blessing and the channels it manifests in the world *cannot* be connected to any of the icons. You can use an iconoclast's blessing to meet an old hermit in the middle of the forest who helps you, but that old hermit will be 100% unaligned and not a servant of the High Druid or Elf Queen or the Black Dragon or any other icon. You're running with the iconoclasts now, the deniers of the icons.

When you sing it, pick one or more of your icons, one you've got a positive or at least conflicted relationship with. (You know, those jerks who just left you in the lurch with no benefits.) You get an equal

number of iconoclast's curses to the blessings you received. For each curse, you must describe how that icon's plans are thwarted or set back, or how fate turns against that icon.

Some rules:

1. The setbacks can't directly benefit you or your allies. Indirectly, they might even hurt you.
2. The setbacks rarely affect the targeted icon directly, but may hit that icon's servants and agents. Drop an iconoclast's curse on, say, the Priestess, and the local cleric might die of a heart attack or get eaten by a ghost when his prayers fail.
3. The effects of the curse depend on your level. If you're an adventurer-tier character, then the setbacks will be small-scale and local. If you're epic-tier and you sing this song, the setbacks may be equally epic.
4. Your karmic fingerprints are all over these setbacks. If the icon ever discovers that you sang this song, then expect some of your positive dice to become conflicted at the very least.

## MAGIC ITEMS

### BOOTS, SHOES, SANDALS, SLIPPERS

**Default bonus:** Disengage checks and other checks involving fancy footwork: +1 bonus (adventurer); +2 bonus (champion); +3 bonus (epic).

**Footpads of the Footpad (recharge 16+):** When activated, the wearer of these boots can fly! You can soar to the height of, oh, about half an inch, maybe. And only over solid ground. The virtue is that you don't leave footprints, set off pressure plates, and have a much easier job balancing on thin or precarious surfaces like a ledge or narrow branch, gaining a +5 (champion: +10; epic: +15) bonus to such skill tests. The magic of the boots lasts only a few minutes. Quirk: Shady. You ooze criminality. People look at you and think "now there goes a shady, suspicious cutthroat who might rob me."

### WONDROUS ITEM

You can attune multiple wondrous items. They don't fill up a chakra.

**Gatewarden's Talisman (recharge 11+):** This heavy iron talisman is connected to a town or village in the Empire. (There's no guarantee that the town linked to a talisman still exists, but the item keeps working as long as the foundations are mostly intact). The quirk is that the bearer obsesses over all details of travel. The bearer of the talisman must have at least a 1-point conflicted or positive relationship with the Emperor to use the talisman's magic, and can invoke any of the following effects on anyone who passes through the gates of that town.

- Discern one icon relationship possessed by the stranger. This power *isn't* limited by geography—it can be used anywhere,

even far away from the gates of the town. The other three abilities only work at the actual gates (or their remains).

- Bind the stranger to obey one command or restriction. Breaking this binding means the stranger is automatically weakened until their next full heal-up.
- Forbid the stranger from passing through the gate. Again, breaching this order weakens the stranger until their next full heal-up.
- Cast *hold portal* on the gates of the town—the level of the spell depends on the size of the settlement and the strength of the underlying enchantments, but is usually cast like the 5<sup>th</sup> level wizard utility spell (13A: 151).

**Roadwarden's Talisman (recharge 11+):** The counterpart of the *gatewarden's talisman*, each *roadwarden's talisman* is mystically linked to a stretch of the Imperial Highway. The quirk is that the bearer has huge trouble denying help to those in need. Again, the bearer must have a 1-point conflicted or positive relationship with the Emperor for the talisman to work. The *roadwarden's talisman* grants the following abilities:

- Discern one icon relationship possessed by the stranger, or some equivalent of that given that the power is probably targeting an NPC. This power *isn't* limited by geography—it can be used anywhere, even far away from the gates of the town. The other three abilities only work at the actual gates (or their remains).
- Know roughly how many people are on the stretch of road right now, and whether they are ahead or behind. This ability can provide basic information ("a few dwarves", "many travelers of different races", "all the orcs"), but is not precise enough to identify or locate particular travelers.
- Bless a traveler, allowing them to reroll one attack roll, save or skill test made on that stretch of road.
- Cast dancing lights as a distress beacon. If the bearer wishes, these lights can be visible only to members of the Imperial Legion and those with a 1-point positive relationship with the Emperor.

# AGE OF THE WILD WOODS



*"I've heard tell of the city of Axis. In the last age, they say a traveler could leave the gates of this village in the morning, and walk to Axis before sunset. These days, if you leave at dawn, maybe your children's grandchildren will find their way through the forest to that fabled city."*

## The 1d10<sup>th</sup> Age

- A magical curse covered the whole Empire in thick, trackless forests
- The iconic tyrant of the lizardmen conquered a large territory in the north, while a mystic Hermit questioned both arcane and divine beliefs in the south
- Engulfed by wilderness, the cities and towns of the Empire strove to survive and to re-establish connections and trade routes

## OVERVIEW

Forest swallowed the world.

Trees sprouted across the Empire, growing at an astounding rate, cramming a year's growth into a heartbeat. All the Empire's farmland was consumed by this sudden new forest, leaving only those places protected by magical wards and other defenses. The cities were secure behind their walls; the roads and highways, too, were shielded against the new forest, and became like tunnels with walls of interlacing branches.

**Who Done It?:** What caused this sudden growth? Most accounts attribute it to the High Druid, and claim that a new incarnation of that icon cursed the Empire for some offense, but no two tales agree on what precisely incurred the Druid's wrath. Was it a warning to the Empire not to trespass into the Wild Wood or beyond some other boundary marker? A first strike in the war between nature and civilization? Or did the Druid's magic become feral and uncontrollably fecund, burying the world in a ruinous wave of green?

Of course, it's easy to blame the High Druid, when it might equally have been a failed experiment by an Archmage, or a plot by the Elf Queen, or a natural spasm or rebalancing of the world's magic. Maybe the spells and wards that protect the Empire grew so heavy that reality snapped, and enforced order had to be matched by chaotic growth?

Or perhaps there was no curse, no world-shattering spell. Many ages end in widespread destruction and loss of life—the most natural thing in the world is for the forests to reclaim

abandoned land, and for trees to grow over the ruins of broken cities.

**Terrain Defined the Age:** However it happened, this age was a time when the Empire consisted of a few small cleared regions surrounded by many leagues of thick, almost trackless forest. Journeys were arduous and perilous, unless a traveler was lucky enough to find one of the surviving roads. Merchant caravans took to following the route of the Koru Behemoths—such routes were guaranteed flat (flattened!) terrain and no trees, and only a minimal risk of being stepped upon by a wandering Behemoth. Dragon couriers and sailing ships also connected the scattered cities, but the perils of the forest meant that the Empire was little more than a memory for most of this age—the various local lords might claim to rule in the Emperor's name, but neither they nor their subjects tracked who the Emperor was or where she dwelt.

Wild druidic magic and green sorcery overwhelmed the orderly arcana of the Archmage; wizards were more likely to be found in lonely isolated towers in the middle of the woods than clustered in schools.

As the age passed, the axes of men and dwarf grew ever hungrier, and mile by mile the forest fell back. New towns were made from the abundant lumber; new farms planted in the cleared land. Like a warrior long confined to a sick bed who now regains her strength, the Empire rose again, tested its nerves and limbs, and shook off the green blanket of the woods.

## ICONS

The **Tyrant Lizard** arose in this age to conquer a divided and weakened Empire. From her capital in the northern Fangs, she commanded an alliance of scaly warriors. Her lizardmen kinfolk were the vanguard of her host, but kobolds, sahuagin, and even dragons flocked to her banner of flayed skin. She was closely allied with the Black and the Blue (some even guess that she was created by them using a combination of monastic training and sorcerous augmentation), as well as ambitious dark elves, but her turn to demon worship antagonized many of her former patrons. For a time, her empire reached from the walls of Glitterhaegen to the edge of the Queen's Wood, and her sahuagin raiders and lizardman catamarans troubled cities as distant as Santa Cora. She could not be defeated through force of arms—when slain, as she was many times, she would reincarnate in an egg in one of her cities, and return to her full power within a decade.



## LIZARD QUEENS

Here's Gareth's take on the dynamics that led to the Tyrant Lizard: 95% of lizardmen are male and the few female lizardfolk are called lizard queens. According to lizardman custom, only the greatest lizardman warriors will get the chance to reincarnate by transferring their souls to a new egg when they die, but all queens are guaranteed immortality. The queens are therefore seen as the keepers of lizard lore.

If this isn't something you want to use as the truth in your campaign, perhaps it's a truth of past ages.

## LEGENDS, LEGACIES AND LAIRS

- The trees in an **evergrowth copse** regrow overnight. Chop a branch off one, and it will grow back by morning. Cut a tree down, and it'll be back when the sun rises. Evergrowth copses, therefore, are always thickly overgrown and verdant. Most are surrounded by farmland, but some can be found in the heart of cities. Those who live nearby know that you can take a little firewood or some fruit from a such a copse, but not too much—if you abuse the magic of the trees, then when they grow back the next day, they grow back twisted and monstrous, spawning horrible punishments for those who offended the grove.
- **Green children** are a long-standing mystery of the Empire. Several accounts speak of green-skinned children who wandered out of the forest and claimed that their home village was somewhere on the other side of those trees. When shown that there was nothing on the far side except farmland or more forest, the children were despondent and scared. In most stories, these green children eventually adapt to their new lives in the Empire and forget their mysterious homes "on the other side of the trees." Sages wonder if these children escaped from some fey realm, or if they are somehow connected to the vanished lands of Poctamee and Dwimmerven, the lands of the Green Bandit (page 33).
- **Trickroads** are a thankfully rare phenomenon in the 13<sup>th</sup> Age, although they still occur in the Wildwood. The magically warded Imperial Highways were some of the safest, straightest paths through the woods in this age, so travelers who found a highway knew they were mostly safe—but not all highways were real. Trickroads are forests that mimic the stone roads of the Imperial Highways—they look like a road running through the forest, but the flagstones of the "road" are actually mushrooms or bark that has grown to resemble stone. Trickroads tend to lead to the lairs of monsters or evil druidic groves where the loam is red with the blood of sacrifices.

The **Hermit** was the most powerful arcane spellcaster of this age, eclipsing a series of sub-par Archmages. He dwelt in a lonely tower deep in the endless forest, and while he rarely welcomed visitors, he had a network of followers, agents and messenger-spirits that allowed him to exert his will across the world. He followed a more mystical path to wizardry than the Archmage proscribed, believing that every wizard must find their own understanding of the cosmic forces instead of regurgitating the rote spells created by previous generations of wizards. (Some of his devotees achieved great power; others were horribly transformed or destroyed in magical accidents). Many tales speak of the Hermit rewarding the good-hearted with astounding gifts or boons. Other stories suggest he was crotchety, bitter and prone to throwing people into the overworld on a whim.

The **Forest That Walks** arose towards the end of the age. Its initial manifestation might have been the result of the death of a High Druid, or a reaction to the forest-clearing efforts of the Empire. However it came to be, the Forest That Walks rampaged across the southlands even as the forces of the Lizard Tyrant besieged the cities of the north.

- **Ghost trees**, by contrast, are a pervasive problem across the Empire, but usually only affect necromancers. These spectral trees are usually invisible and immaterial, but necromantic spells and certain unwholesome dates in the year bring them into partial visibility. If a village is suddenly plagued by an epidemic of phantasmal grey tree-shades, then someone in the village may be a secret necromancer, or maybe it's a forgotten holy-day of the Lich King...
- **Counter casters** are devotees of the teachings of the Hermit. Most are former students of the Archmage's schools in Horizon, who dropped out of formal training in wizardry to follow the Hermit's path. Others are bards and sorcerers, who are drawn to the freer, more improvisational casting style. While some counter casters succumb to the lotus-dream of illegal spells that open their minds to the intoxicating joys of the overworld, others have created idiosyncratic but very powerful new forms of magic. Counter casters eschew the traditionally pointy wizard's hat for multi-colored berets, or even no hat at all—a scandalous attitude in Horizon, where one's approach to millinery is considered more important than race, creed or icon.
- The **Tyrant's Prison**: There are two different tales told of the demise of the Tyrant Lizard. In the south and west of the Empire, it's said that the Tyrant Lizard's embrace of demon worship was her downfall. She sold her soul to the infernal realms, so when the time came for her to reincarnate into a new egg, she was dragged into Hell instead of jumping to a new body. In Shadow Port, though, they say that the Prince of Shadows stole the Tyrant's egg before it hatched, and locked it away in a prison. This prison is said to be a huge dungeon complex in the icy wastes beyond the Frost Range, where no cold-blooded lizard can go.
  - If the PCs get anywhere near the Frost Range, they should learn the hard way that the Orc Lord has champions searching for the prison, accompanied by lizard-men wearing fiery red cloaks that bear the symbol of the Diabolist.
- The **Hermitage** was the home of the Hermit wizard. After his death (or, to be more precise, after he vanished), his tower kept growing, adding on new levels crammed with books, magical curios, wondrous laboratories, and trap-filled stairways. Today, the Hermitage reaches all the way into the overworld—an impossibly precarious stack of jumbled masonry that sways alarmingly in a light breeze. The entrance to the Hermitage seems to move, but it's usually found in the Dragon Wood of the north. For those unable to fly, the Hermitage is a direct route into the overworld. (By the time you get through all the weird arcane experiments and magical waste in the Hermitage, of course, you may have grown wings or been turned into a balloon.)

## END TIMES

A great blight struck the forests, killing the trees. The woods rotted in place. The same blight spread to the farmland, causing a massive famine. Desperate bands of starving peasants-turned-bandits roamed the blackened, leafless wilderness in search of food. While wood elves and druidic tribes tried to keep ahead

of vengeful hordes, cultists worshipped a mysterious icon called the King of Fallen Trees. Was he a mask of the High Druid or the Lich King, or an icon who briefly flowered from the rot of a dying world?

## MONSTERS

Woodland monsters of all sorts! For more options, see the briar elves, fey, and Forest that Walks, among others, in the *13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary 2*.

### GLEESHEY

*The laughter of these murderous wood-sprites is the only sure sign of their presence. Aside from murder.*

4<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [SPIRIT]

Initiative: +10

**C: Whipping Thorns and Strangling Vines +9 vs. AC (one nearby creature)**—2d6 damage

**C: Entangle +9 vs. PD (one nearby creature)**—The target becomes stuck (save ends). Every time the target fails to save against being stuck, the target takes 1d6 damage.

**Bewilder and bedevil**: Whenever an enemy rolls a natural 1-5 with an attack roll, 1d3 nearby glesheys may use an interrupt action to take a standard action.

**Annoying and invisible**: Glesheys are both invisible and tiny. Attacks on them have a 50% miss chance.

**A host of tiny sprites**: A gleshey is technically a whole swarm of tiny fey who fight as a single creature. They're astoundingly hard to hit, so reducing a gleshey to 0 hit points indicates that the host has lost interest in tormenting the adventurers, not that all the fey have been destroyed.

**Cruel humor**: If a player laughs for any reason, then until the end of that player's next turn, *bewilder and bedevil* triggers when that player rolls a natural 10 or less.

**Rolling in the branches**: If a player tells a joke before making an attack roll that makes the Gamemaster crack a smile, the gleshey become briefly visible and lose their *annoying and invisible* ability against that attack.

**Lost opportunity**: This creature can't make opportunity attacks.

AC	24	
PD	14	HP 40
MD	16	

Glesheys are a breed of mischievous and cruel woodsprites. Individual glesheys stand about three inches tall, and look like half-translucent humanoids wearing clothes made from woven leaves and butterfly-wings. They enjoy tormenting travelers by luring them into the dark woods and then forcing them to perform for the amusement of the gleshey. Bards, minstrels, illusionists and other travelling entertainer-types are targeted in particular. Some gnome villages use gleshey groves as prisons; criminal gnomes are exiled to the grove, where the sprites force them to conjure *minor illusions* for years on end.

## KOBOLD WOODCRAFTER

*To poke someone in the eye with a sharp stick, first start with a seed. Grow the tree, cultivate it, cut the stick, measure it, balance it. Only then can you sharpen it. And you must sharpen a thousand sticks before you poke your first eye.*

3<sup>rd</sup> level archer [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +8

**Sharp stick in your eye +8 vs. AC—8 damage**

*Natural 18+:* Target is hampered until the end of their next turn

**R: Kobold blowgun +10 vs. AC—5 damage, and 5 ongoing poison damage**

**Woodland trapster:** The woodcrafter plants traps in the undergrowth. Whenever a creature moves near the woodcrafter, that creature must make a save (11+). If the save fails, the creature blunders into a trap. (If moving to engage the trapster, it's a hard save, 16+). Roll a d6. On a 1-4, the trap just deals damage; add the escalation die to the roll (1-4, we mean) to determine how much damage it deals. On a 5, the victim is stuck until the end of their next turn and takes 2 + escalation die damage. On a 6, the target is vulnerable until the end of their next turn and takes 2 + escalation die damage.

**Evasive:** Kobolds take no damage from missed attacks.

AC 24  
PD 14      HP 40  
MD 16

Unlike most of their scaly kin, woodcrafter kobolds live in the deep forests, scampering through the branches and leaping from tree to tree. To aid their balance when climbing, they wear heavy furry wraps around their tails, making them look like adorably murderous lizard-squirrels.

### WOODCRAFTERS AND THE ICONS

Since the defeat of the Tyrant Lizard, most woodcrafter tribes now dwell in the Fangs in the service of the Black. Some of these kobolds have migrated to the Wild Wood, where they hope to curry the favor of the High Druid. As the High Druid doesn't welcome such followers, the kobolds try to please her by proactively murdering her enemies and leaving offerings in her groves the way a cat leaves dead mice on its owner's pillow.

## DROW SHADOW-SPINNER

*The ancestors of these drow served the Tyrant Lizard in past ages, and still have clandestine alliances with the lizard-men and the other servants of the Black in the present day. They will kill any adventurer who threatens to expose their secret compacts to the Elf Queen.*

4<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +10

**Slashing silver sword +9 vs. AC—13 damage**

*Natural 16+:* The target becomes *shadow-marked* (hard save, 16+, ends).

**C: Touch of shadow +9 vs. PD (one nearby or far-away creature)—13 damage, and the target becomes *shadow-marked* (hard save, 16+, ends)**

**C: Shadow-spinning +9 vs. PD (all nearby shadow-marked creatures)—15 damage, and roll a d6 to determine the effects of the shadow-spinning.**

- 1,2. None.
3. The target is dazed until the end of their next turn.
4. 2d6 cold damage.
5. A shadowy duplicate of the target appears and attacks a nearby foe of the shadow-spinner. The duplicate makes a basic attack identical to that of the target.
6. The target is turned into a living shadow. In this form, the target is immune to damage but cannot move, attack or act except to fight in spirit. The target may attempt to save against this effect at the end of each of their turns; on a successful save, the target returns to the battlefield and is no longer shadow-marked. If the shadow-spinner is slain before the target escapes the shadows, the target will be lost until powerful magic like a ritual or icon relationship advantages manage to bring them back.

**Shadow-marking:** When the drow shadow-marks a foe, that enemy is shrouded in flickering shadows, like burning tongues of darkness. A successful hard save (16+) ends the mark. If the marked character is subjected to intensely bright magical light (from a spell like *dancing lights*), they get a +2 bonus to their saves.

### Nastier Specials

**Vanish:** Up to three times per battle, when an attacker attempts a melee attack on the shadow-spinner and misses, the shadow-spinner takes no miss damage, pops free, and the attacker becomes *shadow-marked*.

AC 19  
PD 15      HP 54  
MD 18

### BACKSTORY

Shadow-spinners are often great artists and craftsmen among the drow. Especially adept workers can make solid objects out of shadow, weaving cloaks and blades out of the stuff of night. These conjured shadow-things dissolve in direct sunlight, so they are of limited use in the surface world.

## LIZARDMAN IMPALER

*These monsters were the shock troops of the Tyrant Lizard. They're extinct now. They aren't around in the 13<sup>th</sup> Age. They're all gone. All of them. Gone.*

*Right?*

*Right?*

9<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +13

**Double stone spear +15 vs. AC—40 damage**

*Natural even roll, 16+:* The lizardman impaler can make a *bite* attack against the target or another creature engaged with it as a free action.

*Natural odd roll, 16+:* The lizardman impaler can make a *grab* attack against the target or another creature engaged with it as a free action.

*Special:* Subtract the value of the escalation die from the 16+ threshold for this ability. So, when the escalation die is 0, the impaler grabs or bites on a 16+. When the escalation die is 1, it grabs or bites on a 15+; when the escalation die is 2, it's on a 14+ and so forth.

*[special trigger]* **Bite +15 vs. AC—40 damage**, and the lizardman impaler can make a *ripping frenzy* attack against the target as a standard action during its next turn if it's engaged with that target.

*[special trigger]* **Ripping frenzy +15 vs. AC (three attacks)—30 damage**

*[special trigger]* **Grab +15 vs. PD**—the target is grabbed (see 13<sup>th</sup> Age rulebook, p. 172, or the 13<sup>th</sup> Age GM Screen Resource Book, page 58). If the target's still grabbed at the start of the impaler's next turn, the impaler can make an *impale* attack as a standard action on that target.

*[special trigger]* **Impale +19 vs. PD (including the +4 from grab, grabbed targets only)—50 damage**, and the lizardman impaler's *trophy dance* ability automatically triggers. The target is stuck, hampered and takes 20 ongoing damage (save ends all three conditions).

**R: Thrown stone spear +15 vs. AC—40 damage**

*Trophy dance:* If the impaler actually gets to impale someone, all nearby allies get to add the escalation dice to their attacks as long as the victim remains impaled alive.

### Nastier Specials

*Ranged impale:* If the impaler scores a crit with a thrown stone spear, then the target is stuck, hampered and takes 20 ongoing damage (save ends all three conditions), and it's *trophy dance* time.

*Ancestral spirits:* While *trophy dance* is active, roll a d6. If the roll is less than or equal to the value of the escalation die, then a lizardman ghost manifests and attacks a random player character. Make a bonus *double stone spear* attack.

AC 24  
PD 23 HP 170  
MD 19

## LIZARDMAN IMPALERS AND THE ICONS

They were loyal beyond death to the Tyrant Lizard, reincarnating alongside her when they fell in battle. When she vanished, so did they. A few might survive as bodyguards sworn to the Black Dragon. Equally, the Lich King could raise some as undead, or the Diabolist draw some of their souls back from the dead. It's also possible that there are clutches of eggs containing unhatched impalers, buried in the depths of the Fangs.

## Rootwright

*The ghosts of dead forests may haunt the land, but they can only be perceived by those blessed with second sight or preternatural sensitivity to the invisible world. The shambling zombies of dead forests, though, are a lot easier to see.*

Huge 6<sup>th</sup> level troop [UNDEAD PLANT]

Initiative: +6

Vulnerability: holy

**Gnarled swipe +9 vs. AC (1d3 enemies in a group)—50 damage**

*Natural 16+:* The rootwright may make a *vampiric rootlets* attack on the target as a free action.

**C: Vampiric rootlets +11 vs. PD (one nearby creature)—10 ongoing damage (save ends)**, and the rootwright gains one use of *rootwright regeneration*

**C: Tide of bugs and slime +10 vs. PD (all nearby creatures)—30 damage**, and the target is weakened (save ends).

*Corrupt the land:* When the escalation die is odd, the rootwright may make a *tide of bugs and slime* attack as a quick action. When the escalation die is even, the rootwright may make a *vampiric rootlets* attack as a quick action.

*Steal vitality:* The rootwright gains a +1 bonus to its attacks while a creature is taking ongoing damage from *vampiric rootlets*. This bonus stacks, so if four creatures are taking damage, it gets a +4 bonus.

*Rootwright regeneration:* As a quick action once per turn, the rootwright can heal 30 hit points. It can regenerate twice per battle, and gains an extra use of *rootwright regeneration* every time it hits with *vampiric rootlets*.

When the rootwright is hit by an attack that deals fire or holy damage, it loses one use of its regenerations, and cannot regenerate during its next turn. Dropping a rootwright to 0 hit points doesn't kill it if it has any uses of regeneration left.

### Nastier Specials

*Infest:* When the escalation die is even, the rootwright gets to make a number of *vampiric rootlet* attacks equal to the value of the escalation die, instead of just one.

AC 21  
PD 20 HP 270  
MD 17

# RACE

## LIZARDMAN

+2 Dex OR +2 Con

### FRENZY (RACIAL POWER)

Once per battle, you may declare you are entering a frenzy. Make the following attack:

Quick action

**Special:** You can make a number of attacks equal to the escalation die, but may only target a single creature with half of the potential attacks (rounded up).

**Target:** One creature engaged with you

**Attack:** 6 + your level vs. AC

**Hit:** 1d8 X your level damage.

**Miss:** You take damage equal to your level.

**Adventurer Feat:** Once per day when grabbed or stuck, you can spend a recovery (regaining no hp) and end that condition on yourself.

**Champion Feat:** You may replace one of your frenzy attacks with an at-will or basic attack.

**Epic Feat:** As a standard action, you may move across any relatively flat surface (a calm lake, a wall, a ceiling, etc)..

Lizardmen are cultural chameleons, adopting the mores and habits of their surroundings. Left to their own devices, they are savage and cruel. For example, in the Fangs, there are primitive clans of demon-worshipping lizardmen, who make weapons out of stone and wood so they can catch sacrifices for their tribal monsters.

However, when exposed to a greater power, the lizardmen instantly adapt to their new master. Lizardmen in the service of the Black, for example, are monastic assassins, coldblooded killers who meditate and contemplate higher truths even as they sharpen their knives. Lizardmen serving the Blue, by contrast, are peppy urbane sorcerers: quick-witted, sharp-tongued, sophisticated, and so twitchy it seems like they've got electricity running through their bodies. Lizardmen who align themselves with the Diabolist become sly, manipulative and cautious, and often bear demonic sigils.

The rare lizardmen who obey the Emperor, similarly, are honorable custodians and keepers of the Imperial Law; a clan of them guards the dragon lairs atop Axis, and in most of the ages of the Empire have prevented spies and intruders from passing those gates.

When playing a lizardman, then, come up with a set of behaviors for each icon you've got a relationship with, and switch your portrayal of your player character depending on which icon is currently dominant in the story!

# POWERS

## RANGER FEAT FOR AN EXISTING TALENT

### FAVORED ENEMY (ADVENTURER TIER)

This feat is only usable by rangers who have taken humanoid as a favored enemy. Once per day, as a free action, you may select a humanoid species you have encountered in the past. Until the end of the battle, you may use that species' racial ability. For example, you could gain the *shifty bugger* ability of goblins in the 13<sup>th</sup> Age core book (page 230), be as *evasive* as a kobold (13A: 237), as *dangerous* as an orc (13A: 242), or blend into your surroundings like a *chameleon* troglodyte (13A: 247). The Gamemaster may veto overpowered or overly magical abilities—this feat represents your ability to emulate the tricks and tactics of your prey, not a supernatural power of shapeshifting.

**GM:** Ideally, you'll help the ranger find story reasons to alternate or cycle between emulating different races.

## SORCERER TALENT

### GREEN HERITAGE (HIGH DRUID)

You channel the surging power of the living earth and shape it into arcane spells. When you gather power, roll on a Natural Benefit table instead of a Chaotic Benefits table.

You must root yourself in the earth to tap these energies; you therefore cannot move on the same turn that you use a standard action to gather power.

#### Natural Benefit, Adventurer Tier (levels 1-4)

- 1-2: Your skin turns to bark, giving you a +2 bonus to AC until the start of your next turn.
- 3-4: Thorns grow around you, inflicting damage equal to your level on each enemy engaged with you.
- 5-6: One nearby ally may heal using a recovery.

#### Natural Benefit, Champion Tier (levels 5-7)

- 1-2: Your skin turns to bark and your hair sprouts blossoms, giving you a +2 bonus to AC and PD until the start of your next turn.
- 3-4: Vines sprout around you; until the start of your next turn, any enemies who move to engage you must succeed at a normal save or be unable to complete their move.
- 5-6: You or one nearby ally may heal using a recovery.

#### Natural Benefit, Epic Tier (levels 8-10)

- 1-2: You become a tree and are immune to attacks targeting AC or PD until the start of your next turn. You can still be hit by attacks that target Mental Defense.
- 3-4: Nature responds to your summons with howling winds, driving snow, blazing heat, or thunderbolts. All other creatures on the battlefield, allies and enemies alike, take damage equal to your level plus your Charisma modifier.
- 5-6: You or one nearby ally may heal using a recovery, and add twice your Charisma modifier to the hit points gained.

**Adventurer Feat:** The bonus from results of 1–2 are +2 instead of +1 if you are staggered when you gather power.

**Champion Feat:** Gain a Druid Terrain Feat spell of your choice (*13 True Ways*, pages 54–60).

**Epic Feat:** At the start of your turn after benefiting from result 1–2, you may either step out of that tree or any nearby tree, effectively *teleporting*.

## MAGIC ITEMS

### WEAPONS

**Default bonus:** Attack and damage when using this weapon: +1 (adventurer); +2 (champion); +3 (epic).

**Woodcutter's Axe:** This axe automatically scores critical hits on any creature that has swallowed a living victim whole. This ability only applies if there's a living victim trapped within the monster when the axe attack hits. The swallowed creature may immediately make a save; if successful, the swallowed creature pops free. Quirk: Incapable of seeing through disguises, even bad ones.

### WONDROUS ITEM

You can attune multiple wondrous items. They don't fill up a chakra.

**Egg of Rebirth (wondrous item):** This magic egg is a one-shot *resurrection* spell. In its inactive form, it looks like a small leathery egg decorated with lizard-magic runes. When activated by the death of its bearer, it starts growing at an astounding rate. At the start of each combat and full heal-up, the deceased character may make a hard save (16+); if successful, the egg hatches and the character tumbles out, naked but alive, in a new body that's more-or-less the same as the previous now-dead one. The rest of the party need to tote the (increasingly large, heavy and inconvenient) egg around with them while waiting for their fallen comrade to come back to life. The dead character may fight in spirit while growing inside the egg. Quirk: Cavalier attitude towards peril.

**Marvelous String:** A piece of *marvelous string* looks like a length of ordinary string, but one end of the string floats in the air, as if connected to an invisible balloon. On close examination, that end of the string fades into non-existence instead of terminating—most of the string is actually immaterial, and the string stretches into the overworld.

Give the string a sharp tug, and whatever's tied to the far end of the string falls to earth. If the user is above ground, then the object lands nearby; if the string's pulled underground or indoors, then the object lands on top of whatever structure contains the user.

What's connected to the *marvelous string*? You won't find out until you pull it. Common objects stashed in the overworld by wizards of past ages include:

- Spell books, especially ones containing especially dangerous or forbidden spells
- Chests of treasure
- An entire wizard's tower, built on a small floating island
- Sleeping dragons
- Angry demons banished to the overworld
- Age-old lunches forgotten by long-dead wizards

Adventurer-tier *marvelous strings* only work once. You pull it, the item falls out of the sky, and that's it. The string never works again.

Champion-tier strings can be reused, but only for the same item. Pull the string, thing falls down, pull the string again, thing falls up. Very useful for certain things, like chests or towers. Less useful for abandoned lunchboxes and angry demons.

Epic-tier *marvelous strings* can be reused. You can tie them around any object, give the string a tug, and it'll leap into the sky to float there until you pull the string again. The restrictions are:

- The object has to be free to move—any restraints that are stronger than the string will keep it tethered to the earth
- The object can't be *that* big—nothing bigger than a sailing ship or a wizard's tower. To be fair, that covers most things that are "objects" and not "bits of the landscape."
- If the object is a creature, it has to be willing, or at least incapable of objecting to being flung into the sky by magic string.

Quirk: Compulsively pulls levers, presses buttons, fiddles with locks and waves wands.

# AGE OF THE TERRIBLE EMPEROR



*Willow bends before the storm, but willow-wood makes a good bow.*

*River flows around rocks, but the sea is mightier than the land.*

*Hope is but an illusion that binds us to the world, but hope is greater than despair.*

## The 2d6<sup>th</sup> Age

- During the reigns of several wise and Glorious Emperors, the Empire grows in strength and drives away many evil icons
- The Empire makes war on the underworld
- A Terrible Emperor inherits the throne, and becomes a tyrant. He destroys every source of opposition to his reign, and uses astrological magic to make himself immune to all possible threats
- He overlooks the monasteries. Inspired by the icon called the Grandmaster of Flowers, the monks rise up to overthrow him

## OVERVIEW

Let's skip ahead to the climactic struggles that ended the age and gave it a name. According to the eventually-victorious monks, and most historians, the Terrible Emperor was a tyrannical and corrupt ruler who enslaved the heroic icons and allied himself with several villainous ones. The monks say that the Terrible Emperor used magic to make himself immune to both weapons and spells. He fell because of a magical loophole: the bare-handed fighting techniques of the greatest monks could defeat him. As part of an alliance of heroes, including the True Emperor, the monks and their leader, the Grandmaster of Flowers, overthrew the Terrible Emperor and saved the world.

All that came late in the age, though. For the first few centuries of this age, historians believed that it would be remembered as the Age of the Glorious Emperors. A succession of wise and noble rulers oversaw an era of prosperity. The Imperial armies grew in strength and numbers, and fought a series of crusades against enemies of the throne. The Black was driven into the depths of the swamps; the Blue exiled to the islands off the eastern shore. The Lich King's forces were penned up in the Necropolis; the brutish Titan vanished into the depths of the Wild Wood. (The Prince of Shadows went underground in this age, withdrawing even deeper into the darkness.)

With the Empire's enemies on the surface defeated, some of the Glorious Emperors looked below. Historians record at

least five Punitive Underwars, where Imperial forces invaded the underworld to battle living dungeons, orcs, fungaloids and other monsters. None of these Underwars ended in total victory—some ended because of strife between the Empire and the Dwarf King (who continued to claim ownership of all spoils beneath the surface) or the Elf Queen (whose dark elf colonies were sometimes victims of Imperial aggression), and some ended when the supposedly-invincible forces of the Empire ran into foes beyond their measure.

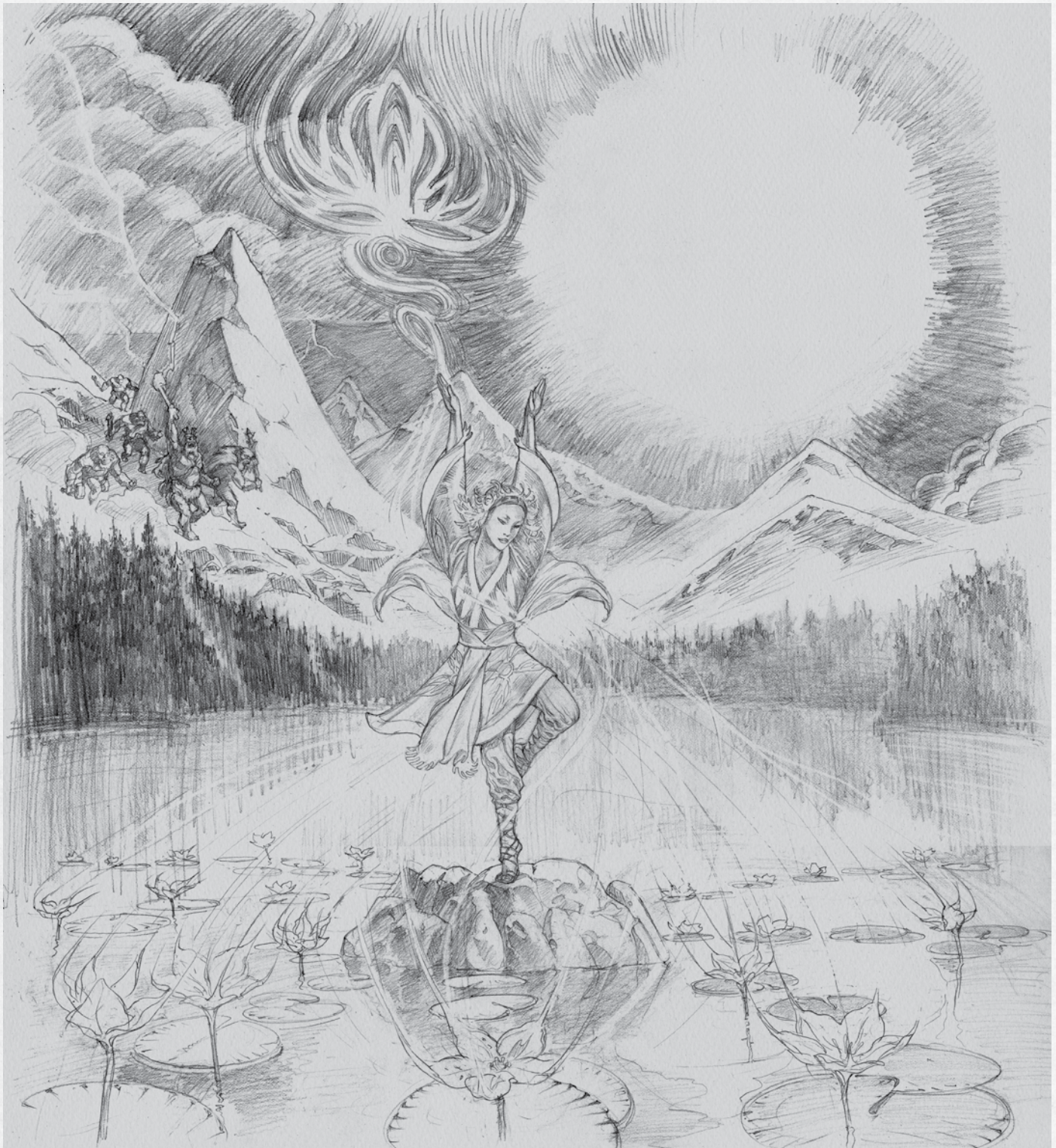
Other Emperors had more peaceful reigns, and pursued philosophy. The Archmage built ever greater magical works; a new icon, the Astrologer became the dominant religious leader in the Empire and preached that obedience and alignment with celestial forces was superior to adherence to the gods, light or dark. The Grandmaster of Flowers and other monastic leaders offered a path for those who chafed under the self-abrogating philosophies of the Astrologer. In the end, the Grandmaster's gift was the greatest.

## ICONS

Three incarnations of the **Emperor** define this age. The **Glorious Emperors** ruled over the Empire in times of prosperity and peace. They are eclipsed in history, though, by the **Terrible Emperor**, a tyrant who ruled with cruelty and malice. The sages argue over whether there was a whole dynasty of Terrible Emperors, each one worse than the last, or if there was a single Terrible Emperor who prolonged his life with vile necromancy.

The third incarnation was the **True Emperor**, the true heir to the throne. Various tales tell of how the infant emperor was spirited out of the palace at Axis and raised in secret in a hidden monastery. In some stories, the True Emperor was the son or daughter of the Terrible Emperor; in others, she is the child of the Terrible Emperor's elder brother, who was murdered before he could take the throne.

The **Titan** was a savage giant (in some accounts, a gigantic ape), possessed of tremendous physical strength and druidic magic. It may have been the first truly gigantic monster to crawl out of the Iron Sea. Surviving Imperial records from this age describe the Titan as a rampaging monster who smashed cities and brought widespread destruction, but folktales speak of a gentler creature, a great-hearted monster capable of acts of mercy and kindness. In these tales, the Titan battled other



monsters from the Iron Sea and defended the common folk of the Empire from threats—including, towards the end of the age, the Terrible Emperor.

The **Grandmaster of Flowers** was the greatest of the fighting monks, the winner of the secret All Worlds Tournament. When the Terrible Emperor took over the Empire, the monasteries became centers of resistance to his reign, and the Grandmaster was their chief defender. In time, she became the champion who challenged the Terrible Emperor.

The **Lady of Labyrinths** was an icon of the underworld who clashed with the Empire when her subterranean realm was invaded by forces from the surface. She ruled over a vast labyrinth, and commanded swarms of living dungeons in addition to legions of monstrous denizens and demonic spellcasters. The Lady of Labyrinths claimed to be a spiritual guru who tested supplicants; those who survived her gauntlet of traps and monsters would be rewarded with true enlightenment. No-one ever claimed that prize. Sometimes, she's depicted as a minotaur, not a human woman.

The **Astrologer** ruled over the holy city of Santa Cora in this age. She argued that arcane science was superior to belief in the gods; through complex calculations and prognostications, she could isolate and shape the destiny of an individual. Later in the age, she suppressed the worship of the gods in favor of worship of the Terrible Emperor, and used her astrological powers to rob people of their natural destiny and force different fates onto them, locking them into service of the throne. The first victim of this manipulation of destiny was the Archmage.

In any other age, the **Manticore** might have qualified as an icon. He was the Terrible Emperor's bodyguard, executioner, advisor and pet monster. He grew in strength and size as he aged, until he took over the whole Summer Palace as his kennel. He dined on prisoners, and even killed and ate gold dragons when the mood took him. It could be from the Manticore's bargains with the Terrible Emperor that present-day manticores claim the legal right to hunt and eat people in certain regions of the Empire. The fate of the Manticore is uncertain. Some monastic traditions hold that after the defeat of his master, the Manticore was so humbled that he entered a monastery as a lowly initiate, and spent an age training and meditating on the cosmos before emerging as a new icon of enlightenment and mysticism, the Sphinx. Other stories tell of how he was slain by a hero (the True Emperor, the Grandmaster of Flowers, or a golden paladin), or hint that he alone escaped the fall of the Terrible Emperor and is still out there, licking his wounds and plotting revenge.

## LEGENDS, LEGACIES AND LAIRS

- Legends claim that the **Wounding of the Gold** was the first misdeed of the Terrible Emperor, but it actually happened much earlier in the age. The Great Gold Wyrms were mortally wounded in a battle with some foe (the Red? Some demon lord? An icon from a previous age?) and nearly perished. The Wyrms retreated to the Golden Citadel, and for the rest of the age was tended by his clerics and healers while he slept and recovered from his wounds. The Wyrms continued to communicate with his paladins through dreams and omens, much as he does in the 13<sup>th</sup> Age. Had the Wyrms been at full strength, perhaps he would have stopped the rise of the Terrible Emperor.
  - The secret spells and ointments used to heal the Wyrms may still be hidden in the ruins of the Golden Citadel; these could even be sufficient to restore his strength a second time, if he could be rescued from the Abyss.
- **Secret Cities:** Many of the greatest monuments of the Empire—the Archmage's Tower, the Bank of Glitterhaegen, even the New Thronehold—were built in the early part of this age. Even some of the Glorious Emperors were paranoid, and ordered all sorts of secret passages and hidden chambers built into these chambers (the dwarven architects were magically enjoined to secrecy). One particular wild story claims that there's a secret eighth city in the Empire (perhaps built as an

outpost in the underworld during the Underwars).

- This eighth city might contain the fabled **Clock of the Astrologer**, a wonderful prognostication device. It's said that the clock's predictions were flawless because it had the power to send agents backwards and forwards in time to correct errors in fate. If the clock predicted, say, that the Imperial Legion would win a battle, but that it would be very close-run affair, then it would automatically open a time portal and dispatch some adventurers to nudge fate in the right direction.
- The **Three Terrible Bargains** were secret treaties made between the Terrible Emperor and the villainous icons. The first bargain was with the Lich King; the Terrible Emperor promised to name the Lich King his heir, in exchange for mastery of undeath. (The Emperor intended to prolong his life using magic and had no intention of dying). The second bargain was with the infernal forces (perhaps mediated by the Diabolist), and offered a tribute of souls in exchange for demonic powers and demon warriors. The nature of the third bargain is a closely guarded secret to this day, and only the Emperor and the Archmage (and, presumably, whoever struck the bargain with the Terrible Emperor) know what it entails.
- Early in his reign, the Terrible Emperor feared that the Great Gold Wyrms were sowing dissension in dreams. As his fears grew, he decided that the wild elemental spirits were too dangerous and chaotic to be trusted, so he began the pogrom known as the **Spirit Suppression**. Wizards and clerics bound troublesome spirits into fetishes; fighters trained in spirit combat hunted down renegade eidolons. Even creatures like gnomes and elves were caught up in the Suppression after fleeing spirits took to hiding in human form. The Spirit Suppression is remembered to this day, and many nature spirits have good reason to mistrust the Empire.
- The **All Worlds Tournament** is a martial arts tournament that takes place once an age in the overworld, overseen by Celestial Judges (page 94). Would-be participants may apply by climbing into the overworld; others are deemed destined to attend and are *teleported* without warning to the arena by the judges. The tournament includes contestants from the underworld and overworld as well the land between. Some rounds are individual contests of strength and skill, but most are melees between two groups of evenly-matched warriors, or one group against a gigantic monster. The victor of the tournament wins secret knowledge that invariably triggers the fall of the age and shapes the cataclysm to come, along with a remarkably gaudy gold trophy that's something of an eyesore to be honest.
- The **Summer Palace of the Manticore** was where the Terrible Emperor's pet-slash-evil vizier, the Manticore, lived. Depending on your campaign, it might be a fortress in the wilderness far from Axis, a haunted ruin within the city, a dungeon under the city, or a palace that's been reclaimed by the Imperial court, although it remains both haunted and smelly.
- The Terrible Emperor hunted down and destroyed the monasteries who opposed him. To preserve her students, the master of the **Hidden Seventh Monastery** somehow opened a fold in reality and sent the whole monastery (and the flying island on which it stood) hurtling through time. Stories

abound of lost children who show up years later and claim that they spent the intervening years learning martial arts or magic at the Hidden Seventh Monastery. One curious scroll found in a living dungeon on Omen claims, oddly, that the master of the Seventh is actually the Black Dragon in disguise, and that the tales of time-travel and mystic disappearances are a drug-induced illusion to hide the fact that the Black uses this mysterious monastery to capture and delude adventurers, turning them into unwitting minions of the Three.

- The Grandmaster of Flowers refused (or was unable) to kill the Terrible Emperor after defeating him, so the Emperor was exiled to the **Isle of the Terrible Emperor**. Magical wards and spells of hiding ensure that the island can never be found, although there are rumored to be a handful of jade compasses in the keeping of the Archmage that enable a traveler to find *some* hidden island in the Midland Sea.

## END TIMES

Although the war between the True Emperor and his allies against the Terrible Emperor and his minions took place in the last portion of the age, the Terrible Emperor was defeated and exiled several years before the end. The age ended when agents of the True Emperor hunted down the fugitive Astrologer. In a last, desperate act, the Astrologer tried to change the heavens and rewrite destiny, but succeeded only in causing a massive bombardment of meteors that shattered the Empire.

## MONSTERS

We've settled on representing the forces of the worst Emperor ever and a spirit related to the monastic forces that struck him down.

### PEARL LEGION WARRIOR

*Through potent sorcery and unholy bargains, the Terrible Emperor made his warriors immune to blade and spell and even the withering touch of time.*

8<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +15

**Pearl-handled polearm +13 vs. AC—30 damage**

*Natural even hit or miss:* The Pearl Legion warrior may make a *second strike* attack as a free action.

[special trigger] **Second strike +13 vs. AC—5 damage**, and the target is vulnerable (save ends)

[special trigger] **Timely strike +15 vs. AC (vulnerable targets only)—50 damage**

**R: Longbow +13 vs. AC—35 damage**

*Group ability:* For every two Pearl Legion warriors in a battle, one of them may use *timely strike* as a quick action once during the battle.

*Destined not to die:* If a spell or weapon attack that hits the Pearl Legion warrior would reduce the warrior to 0 hit points, that attack misses instead. The warrior still takes miss damage, and can be killed by miss damage. Non-spell, non-weapon attacks (unarmed attacks, natural weapon attacks from animals, or ongoing damage) kill the warrior normally.

#### Nastier Specials

*Expert training:* When a Pearl Legion warrior misses with a *timely strike*, the group gains another use of *timely strike*. A Pearl Legion warrior may not make more than one *timely strike* in a round.

AC 24

PD 22

MD 18

HP 120



## PEARL LEGION CLERIC

The priests of the Pearl Legion remain fanatically devoted to the Terrible Emperor. In their twisted theology, he was usurped by traitors who must be punished.

8<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +15

**Pearl-handled mace +13 vs. AC**—28 damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* The cleric may make a *blazing sigil* attack as a free action.

**C: Blazing sigil +13 vs. PD (one nearby or far away enemy)**—25 holy damage. If there are any Pearl Legion creatures engaged with the target, one of these Pearl Legion creatures may automatically succeed at a save against a condition or ongoing damage.

**C: Warchant of the Terrible Emperor +13 vs. MD (up to three nearby enemies)**—28 holy damage, and the target no longer inflicts miss damage (easy save, 6+, ends).

*Group ability:* For every two Pearl Legion clerics in a battle, one of them may use *warchant of the Terrible Emperor* as a free action once during the battle.

*Destined not to die:* If a spell or weapon attack that hits the Pearl Legion cleric would reduce the warrior to 0 hit points, that attack misses instead. The cleric still takes miss damage, and can be killed by miss damage. Non-spell, non-weapon attacks (unarmed attacks, natural weapon attacks from animals, or ongoing damage) kills the cleric normally.

### Nastier Specials

*Death to the usurpers:* Characters with a positive relationship with the Emperor have a -10 penalty to their saving throws against *warchant of the Terrible Emperor*.

AC 24  
PD 18 HP 110  
MD 22

### BACKSTORY

These warriors aren't undead—they're just *not-dead*, their lives grotesquely extended by the spells of the Terrible Emperor. Protective enchantments ensure they cannot be slain easily by any weapon or spell. The enchantments, unfortunately, don't shield their souls from the wrenching horror of having one's destiny warped by magic, so most of these warriors are completely insane. The lucky ones believe that it's still the Age of the Terrible Emperor and they're waging a never-ending war on his enemies. The few who have retained a measure of sanity and self-awareness know what they are—the living damned, unable to die, pariahs forever branded as servants of a monster.

### THE PEARL LEGION AND THE ICONS

Of the icons of the 13<sup>th</sup> Age, the Crusader and the Diabolist might recruit Pearl Legion warriors, but admitting it openly would cost them prestige and face. The Emperor and most other heroic icons consider the surviving Pearl Legion to be horrors from the past, and seek to destroy them.

## CELESTIAL JUDGE

With the slightest tilt of a head made of blazing light, the judge can silently convey its infinite disapproval of your stance.

Double-strength 10<sup>th</sup> level blocker [SPIRIT]

Initiative: +20

**Ineffable thousand palm slap +15 vs. AC (4 attacks)**—25 damage

**Fist of discipline +15 vs. PD**—60 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends)

*Miss:* Half damage.

*Limited use:* Only when the escalation die is 2 or less

**Loving punch +15 vs. PD**—75 damage, and the target is stunned (save ends)

*Miss:* Half damage.

*Limited use:* Only when the escalation die is 4 or less

**Gentle touch +15 vs PD**—100 damage, and the target is helpless and starts making last gasp saves (save ends both).

*Miss:* Half damage.

*Limited use:* Only when the escalation die is 6 or more

*Perfect counter:* When an attacker hits a celestial judge with a melee attack, note the natural roll. Any future melee attacks in this battle from that attacker on a celestial judge that roll the same natural result are considered to be misses. Natural 20s always hit normally.

*Perfect riposte:* If the celestial judge is attacked with a melee attack that rolls a natural even miss, the judge deals 33 damage to the attacker. If the attack roll is odd, the attacker pops free and loses a move action this turn.

*Perfect dodge:* The celestial judge has *resist ranged and close damage 16+*. It takes half damage from any non-melee attacks that do not roll a natural 16+ to hit.

*Perfect Move:* The celestial judge may disengage at will and does not suffer from opportunity attacks.

### Nastier Specials

*Fight!* Once per battle, at the start of the celestial judge's turn, increase the escalation die by 1.

AC 23  
PD 23 HP 440  
MD 23

## THE MANTICORE

"I will eat you," said the Manticore, "and forget you, and that will be that. Nothing will remain."

Huge 13<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [BEAST]

Initiative: +21

**Earth-shattering paw swipe +18 vs. AC (two attacks)**—100 damage

*Natural 14+:* The target pops free

*Natural 18+:* The target is stuck until the start of the Manticore's next turn (save ends)

*Escalation die is even:* The Manticore may make a *scorpion sting* attack on a different target as a free action this turn.

*Escalation die is odd:* The Manticore may make a *crushing leonine jaws* attack on a different target as a free action this turn.

**Crushing leonine jaws +18 vs. AC**—120 damage, and the target is *hampered* until it receives 100 hit points worth of healing in a single action

*Miss:* 60 damage.

**C: Scorpion Sting +18 vs. AC (1 nearby enemy)**—100 damage, and the target is dazed and takes 50 ongoing poison damage (hard save, 16+, ends both).

*Miss:* 50 damage.

**C: Sky-darkening spike volley +18 vs. PD (1d4+1 nearby or far away enemies)**—100 damage, plus 50 ongoing poison damage (hard save, 16+, ends)

**C: Glare of the Manticore +18 vs. PD (one nearby or far away enemy)**—The target is dazed until the end of its next turn.

*Limited Use:* 1/turn as a quick action

*Natural roll greater than target's Wisdom:* Make that stunned, instead

*Natural 20:* Stunned, and the manticore gets to make a free *scorpion sting* attack on that target immediately if the target's nearby

*Withered wings:* Once per battle, when the escalation die is 2+, the manticore can take to the sky and fly for one round. When it flies, it automatically pops free, gets to make a free *sky-darkening spike volley*, and then lands anywhere on the battlefield to make its *earth-shattering paw swipes*.

*Terror beyond measure:* Creatures with less than 144 hit points or who are taking ongoing poison damage from the Manticore and are engaged with the Manticore are dazed and do not benefit from the escalation die. A character who's suffering from both conditions needs to make a save at the start of their turn; if this save fails, that character is stunned until the end of their turn.

#### Nastier Specials

Pick one of the following abilities to reflect possible fates of the Manticore:

*The Cunning Hunter:* The Manticore has endured many ages of the world, and never leaves itself vulnerable. Have the players roll their icon relationship dice when they first enter the Manticore's lair; the Manticore has taken one or more hostages based on the most prominent icons, and will threaten to kill these hostages if the adventurers trouble it. So, if one player with a 2-point negative relationship with the Lich King enters the lair, the Manticore might have captured a heroic priestess who alone knows the Lich King's evil plans, and the Manticore will threaten to kill its prisoner if the player character appears to be winning.

*The Sphinx:* The Manticore has studied abstruse riddles. Ask the players a riddle when the fight begins. Until they come up with an answer, the Manticore adds +2 to its attacks. Every time they give an incorrect answer, the Manticore gets a free *scorpion sting*.

*The Secret Counsellor of the Emperor:* For many centuries, the Manticore has secretly advised successive Emperors, whispering poison in their ears. The Manticore gets a +1 bonus to its attacks against any characters with relationships to the Archmage, Priestess, Elf Queen or Dwarf King, and a +2 bonus to attacks against characters with relationships to the Emperor or Great Gold Wyrn.

AC 29

PD 27

MD 26

HP 1333

## RACE SPIRITBORN

+2 Wis OR +2 Cha

*Spirit's flesh:* When you create your character, you may decide that your character has *resist 16+* to a type of damage that makes sense for your character (like cold for a winter spirit). If you do, your character is also *vulnerable* to force damage!

### SPIRIT-FORM (RACIAL POWER)

Once per battle at the start of your turn, you may let your physical form lapse and become a spirit. Remove yourself from play. While removed from play, you may still affect the world with a manifestation that makes sense for the type of spirit you are (you decide your spirit type when you create your character). A simple effect could be dealing 1d4 X your level damage of the appropriate type (or of no type if that's appropriate) on a nearby enemy. Other effects are possible: maybe instead of damage, a wind or river spirit causes an enemy to lose their next move action as they are knocked off their feet; perhaps a storm spirit causes a nearby enemy to be dazed until the end of its next turn by a flash of light; or a dream spirit could cause a nearby creature to be vulnerable until the end of its next turn as it experiences a vision of its own demise. Conditions like stunned and weakened are much too strong for this power.

At the start of your next turn place yourself someplace nearby your previous location, and you are dazed until the end of that turn because of the transition between worlds.

**Adventurer Feat:** Once per day when you are targeted by an attack against AC or PD that doesn't deal force damage, decide that you will take no damage or any other effect from that attack. Once per level, you can use this effect on an attack that does the damage type you inflict in spirit-form without expending your daily use of this feat.

**Champion Feat:** Spirit-form no longer causes you to be dazed after its use, and you may increase the effect of your manifestation as follows: 1d8 X level damage instead of 1d4; damage 1d3 nearby enemies instead of just 1; dazed, stuck, or vulnerable (save ends) effects are fine; same weakened until the end of their next turn (still no stunned), etc.

**Epic Feat:** Once per day you can spend a recovery (without healing) and cast the necromancer spell *ghost form*, except because you are a spirit and not a ghost, your ability to heal while under the effect of the spell isn't changed. (See *13 True Ways* page 91 for *ghost form*, and as usual you'll cast the spell at your level or one level below.)

The spirit-touched are half-mortal, half-elemental, descendants of spirits who hid during the Spirit Suppressions by taking on human form. Santa Cora and Horizon have the highest population of spirit-touched—or, at least, the highest populations who *know* they are spirit-touched. Many families go for many generations without knowing that some ancestor of theirs was actually a disguised spirit; the family may acquire a reputation as strange, or lucky, or sorcerous, or blessed in some fashion, but be unaware that they have a particular flavor of magic running through their veins.

Spirit-touched look normal, bar a particular hereditary feature that marks them as unusual—a lick of white hair, a sixth finger, yellow eyes, or just an indefinable aura of otherworldliness.

After the Spirit Suppressions, the spirits who became human and survived reverted back to their natural form. Most of these spirits forgot that they were ever flesh and blood, but a few retain a connection to their mortal descendants. There are families in the Empire who are regularly visited by, say, the spirit of the Goldleaf River or the spirit of the east wind.

## SPELLS & POWERS

### WIZARD TALENT

Here's a talent for wizards who don't remember or don't care that the Astrologer turned out to be the bearer of terrible news.

#### DESTINY MANIPULATION

You've studied the movements of the stars, correlated the signs and portents, and learned the forbidden fate-warping magic

of the Terrible Emperor. (Note that this magic is illegal in the Empire, so if you're discovered by the wizardly inquisitors of the Archmage, you may be arrested. Or given a research grant, because the Archmage's attitude towards illegal magic isn't especially stable.)

Once per day, you may allow yourself or an ally to reroll a d20 with a +4 bonus by changing fate. However, this manipulation of destiny has a cost. After the battle or scene in which you enabled a reroll, attempt an easy save (6+). If you succeed, nothing horrible happens, congratulations on your prescient reroll.

If you fail the save, you, or someone in the adventuring party, or more rarely, an NPC or place you care about, take a big loss—something horrible happens that isn't directly related to the fight or problem you were just dealing with. So you hit with your *cone of cold*, but while you were fighting off the red dragon, a group of kobolds snuck in and stole the sacred idol you'd hoped to recover. Or you pass that death save, but the Crusader's goons burn the village you'd spent the night in.

Each loss gives you an option: you can choose to make it slightly less of a loss by having the problem magically tie back to your predictions. Or you can erase all traces of your manipulation, so that not even your fellow player characters have any idea, but the loss will be just as bad as it was going to be.

**Adventurer Feat:** You gain a +1 bonus on the *destiny manipulation* save.

**Champion Feat:** You can now use destiny manipulation twice a day.

**Epic Feat:** You can now use destiny manipulation on your enemy's rolls.

## SIX WAYS TO TIME TRAVEL

If you ever tire of having the players explore ancient ruins and discovering the last survivor of some vanished age, another option is to send the player characters back in time. Here are six possible ways of crossing the gulfs of time...

**Machinations of the Cogwheel Princess:** The dwarven Princess of Cogs and Wheels (page 32) was renowned for the intricacies of her schemes, and her agents always arrived at precisely the right moment. Was that all clever planning, or did she have a secret method of travelling through time? If the player characters fall into the machinations of the Cogwheel Princess, then they might get whisked back and forth in time along with her Wheel Knights, compelled to complete a series of quests (one per age, maybe) in order to push history onto the right course for the dwarves.

**The time travel spell:** This potent incantation (page 70) gives the player characters control over their own destinies—assuming they can survive the waves of time-lost monsters lurking between the ages.

**Iconic—or divine—intercession:** Either a powerful icon like the Archmage could use *time travel* to send the player characters back in time, or the *divine intercession* spell could be used to call in divine aid.

**The Clock of the Astrologer:** Of all the vanished icons, the Astrologer was perhaps the most obviously concerned with the passage of time and the workings of fate. Legends from the Age of the Terrible Emperor speak of the Clock of the Astrologer (page 92) that could tip the balance of destiny by manipulating time.

**Stasis pods & hyperdrives:** Stasis pods (page 53) allow a form of time travel, but only into the future. (Hop into a pod, set the alarm for the 23<sup>rd</sup> Age, and relax...) The *Grosvenor's* hyperdrive, on the other hand, might be able to punch a hole in reality and open a portal to a past age. Two caveats—one, turning the hyperdrive back on might disrupt arcane magic again, and actually using it might drive every wizard and magical creature insane, and two, the hyperdrive is on Omen, in the middle of several intertwined living dungeons.

**Ancestral Memory:** Another option that avoids issues with causality and paradoxes is to have the player play through the memories of their ancestors (either write up pre-generated characters, or assume that the present-day player characters *really* take after their ancestors, right down to feat choices and ability scores).

## MONK TALENT

### EMPEROR-KILLING PUNCH (SEVEN DEADLY SECRETS)

*If you use Emperor-Killing Punch in a battle, you can't use any other Deadly Secrets talent that battle.*

Once per battle, at the start of your turn, you may name a foe in this battle as your mortal enemy. In the unlikely event that your foe survives, they remain your mortal enemy until the next full heal-up, though you can use Emperor-killing Punch in the next battle to have another mortal enemy.

As long as your mortal enemy remains in this battle, you suffer a -4 penalty to attacks on all other enemies in this battle.

When you make an opening attack against your mortal enemy, your crit range expands by 1. When you make a flow attack against your mortal enemy, your crit range expands by 2. When you make a finishing attack against that mortal enemy, your critical range expands by 3.

**Adventurer Feat:** Twice per battle, gain an additional move action that can only be used to move towards your mortal enemy.

**Champion Feat:** You don't suffer the -4 penalty to attacks against enemies that are between you and your mortal enemy.

**Epic Feat:** Once per battle, you automatically succeed as if you had rolled a natural 20 with a death or last gasp save if your mortal enemy is still alive and in this battle.

**Ki Power** (*Dig Two Graves*): Spend a point of ki to prevent your mortal enemy from disengaging from you. If your mortal enemy leaves the battle, spend a point of ki to follow them in the same way. (So, if your mortal enemy *teleports* away, you get to grab on and be *teleported* alongside then. If a dragon rescues your mortal enemy, then you grab onto the dragon's tail and are carried into the sky. If your enemy sails away on a boat, you get to stow away on board.)

## MAGIC ITEMS

### WAND

**Default bonus:** Attack and damage with an arcane spell or attack: +1 (adventurer); +2 (champion).

**Wand of Last Resort** (recharge 16+): When an enemy engages you in an unexpected way (attacking from ambush, *teleporting*, a special ability that allows flight or bypasses defenders), you may roll an easy save. If the save succeeds, you can cast a close-quarters spell that targets you or the attacker as an interrupt action. If the save fails, the wand's power is expended with no effect. Quirk: Jumpy. Very, very jumpy. And itchy.

## FRAYING SPIRIT BINDINGS

During the Spirit Suppression, the followers of the Terrible Emperor imprisoned wild elemental spirits by binding them into objects. These prisons are effectively random magic items—instead of coaxing or weaving a spirit into a physical object, the wizards of the era just crammed random spirits into random items without any heed for what effects this might produce. This era could well be where some of the more... 'idiosyncratic' magic items come from.

Treasure hoards dating to the Age of the Terrible Emperor contain at least 50% more magic items than those of other eras.

A worrisome side effect of this technique is that the binding spells are unstable. These magic items weren't carefully crafted, and the spirit bindings are fraying. In game terms, if the user of an item rolls a natural 1 on a recharge roll, the binding breaks and the item is destroyed when the spirit escapes. This spirit may be grateful or vengeful, depending on its nature and how well it was treated by its most recent bearer.

## WONDROUS ITEM

You can attune multiple wondrous items. They don't fill up a chakra.

**Peach Blossom of the Assassin** (1/day): This is a delicate flower of silk and spun glass. If hurled into the air as a quick action, it slowly flutters down to earth. Roll a d4 at the start of each round; if the result is equal to or less than the escalation die, the blossom lands. It can be collected and reused. While the blossom is still in the air, the player characters may flee the battle without suffering a campaign loss, although the fluttering blossom is left behind. Quirk: Shouts overly elaborate battle-cries at the start of a fight.

**Torch of the Underwar:** This looks like a common torch—a stick wrapped with rags and dipped in pitch. However, the torch is not consumed by the flames once lit, and can be reused indefinitely. It functions just like a normal torch, and can be swung as a weapon or used to set things alight. Once per day, the bearer may invoke the torch's magic to reroll a skill check used to spot a hidden object, lurking creature, secret door or invisible foe. (The GM may invoke the torch's magic on the player's behalf, if you're the sort of GM who likes to roll dice behind a screen, cackle, and say "no, none of you notice anything amiss. Everything's fine. You continue down the tunnel in—ahaha—perfect safety, because there's nothing hiding down there and there certainly aren't any traps. I am so, so smart and also cunning.") Quirk: Acts like a grizzled grognard.

# AGE OF CORSAIRS



*The future lies beyond the Koru Straits.*

## The 2d6<sup>th</sup> Age

- The Dragon Empire opens maritime trade routes with other lands beyond the Iron Sea.
- Pirates band together to prey on this shipping. With the aid of the Serpent and his captured High Druid, the pirates grow strong enough to challenge the Empire.
- Attacks by giant sea monsters put an end to maritime shenanigans.

## OVERVIEW

Adventurers and explorers discovered new lands beyond the Empire, and trade ships sailed through the Koru Straits and out into the Iron Sea. Most of these trade ships hugged the coast as they sailed south along the Blood Coast, raising several questions your campaign can answer for itself: Was this before the Empire raised the Sea Wall? Or was this just an age in which the monsters of the Iron Sea were unusually quiet? Was there something *north* of the Empire, other than orcs and barbarians, that sent the ships south?

Cheered by success along the shoreline, the wizards of Horizon developed magical forms of navigation using celestial beacons that enabled ships to cross the deeps of the Iron Sea. This was a marvelous time, especially for the merchants of Highrock and Glitterhaegen who benefited most from this growth in trade.

Dissatisfaction grew in other parts of the Empire, and would-be pirates gathered in the lands beyond the Bloodwood. Aided by ambitious black and green dragons, these thieves built their own ships and raided the trading vessels along the coast. At first, the corsairs were a minor nuisance, but after the murder of the High Druid, the Wild Wood turned against the Empire, and the corsairs grew from a small band of pirates into a full-fledged kingdom, controlling territory from the Owl Barrens to Shark Tooth Bay. Shielded by the impenetrable forest, the corsairs and their dragon allies were able to strike at shipping with impunity.

Conflicts between the Emperor and the Captain of Corsairs dominated the age. At times—for example, when Santa Cora declared itself a neutral city dedicated to the gods—the corsair's warships were able to sail across the Midland Sea, and even sacked parts of Glitterhaegen. At other times, the Empire allied with various other powers to destroy the corsairs, and successfully drove them to their refuges in the forest, but were unable to eradicate them completely.

Newfangled enthusiasm for exploration led the Archmage and her allies to research new forms of *teleportation* and portal-related magic. To this day, the sages of Horizon insist that this research in no way contributed to the huge growth in the number of hellholes that appeared in this age.

Towards the end of the age, monster attacks in the Iron Sea grew in frequency, falling most often upon the Corsair Kingdom along the coast. The corsairs splintered. Most appealed to the Empire for aid in fighting these giant monsters, and joined with their former foes in building the first (or perhaps the greatest) of the Sea Walls. A smaller faction within the Corsairs continued their feud with the Empire, and turned to forbidden sorcery and the powers of the Serpent to survive the Iron Sea's monster attacks.

## ÍCONS

The **Captain of Corsairs** was the great rival of the Emperor in this age. There were many different Captains—some were bloodthirsty, brutal thieves, but others were clever diplomats and wise rulers. The Captains ruled from the great port city of the Harbor of Gulls.

The **Explorer** was a famed adventurer who travelled the world. She would vanish from the Empire for many years at a time, then return with fabulous treasures and tales of distant lands. Sometimes, she travelled by ship; on other occasions, she set off on foot or went through one of the Archmage's experimental portals. (Other modes of transport employed by the Explorer on occasion: kidnapped by derro, tied to a roc, flung by a catapult, flung by a giant, flung by a giant catapult [along with her twenty companions and their horses], stowed away on a flying castle, eaten by the Stone Thief).

The wealth of the **Merchant Princess** rivaled that of the Dwarf King. Her trading fleets sailed out of Glitterhaegen and Highrock, and returned laden with gold and silver from distant lands. Money buys power, and the influence of the Princess easily eclipsed that of the Archmage or the Great Gold Wurm in the imperial court.

The **Serpent** was a green dragon whose power was second only to his ambition; he desired to become *the* Green, upgrading the Three to the Four and obtaining the strength and respect (and treasure hoard) due to one of the great dragons. He bewitched the High Druid and allied with the Captain of Corsairs to bring down his rivals.

## 13 TALES FROM THE DOCKSIDE TAVERN

Many tales are told of the lands beyond the Empire. Here are thirteen lands that might exist, out there beyond the storms and ship-eating monsters. They're exotica, not tied to the great events and themes of the age. If you're not inclined to go beyond the map, you could also use most of these lands as cities somewhere in the Empire that our maps didn't cover in sufficient detail!

**Far Eld:** A grim, rainy land of small, grim, damp villages and grimmer, damper fishermen. Lots of monks, hermits and druids. Eld's not entirely in this world—parts of it phase in and out of some faerie realm, and only the locals know when these gates open and close.

**Misarkan:** In the land of Misarkan, all arcane magic is forbidden. Visitors from abroad who are capable of casting spells must register, and illegal spellcasting is punishable with imprisonment. In a past age, Misarkan was almost destroyed by a magical catastrophe, and now potent but delicate wards keep this disaster frozen. The land is on an arcane knife-edge; the wrong spell could inadvertently disrupt the wards and doom Misarkan (or so its rulers say; gossip on the docks insists that the rulers are secret wizards, who want to keep all magic for themselves).

**The Archipelago:** Like the Dragon Empire, the lands of the Archipelago have their own icons. Here, there are a hundred minor icons, each one ruling a different island. Over time, the islands have come to reflect the nature and desires of their rulers, so each one is radically different to its neighbors across the straits.

**Fortuna:** In Fortuna, magic items rule. Humans are seen as soulless meat golems unless ensouled by the vibrant spirits of magic, and are only considered really alive when loaded down with enough items to have their 'animal instincts' overridden (in other words, more magic items than one's level allows). Fortuna's awash with magic items, but they're not for sale—taking them is a crime tantamount to kidnapping.

**Silverperch:** Silverperch is a cousin to the Dragon Empire. This little island nation is home to a colony of kindly silver dragons, who defend it much like the dragons of Axis guard the Dragon Empire. The dragons see Silverperch as a bastion of hope and defiance against evil; when danger threatens, the dragons and their followers intervene to preserve the world.

**The Edgelands:** The atoll of the Edgelands surrounds a huge hellhole. It's a barter town, a devil's market where traders can buy goods from the infernal realms in exchange for coin and souls.

**Citybridge:** The Citybridge connects two of the lands on this list (you pick which two). In ages past, these two lands quarreled, and those who remained neutral in the war had nowhere left to go other than the titanic dwarf-built bridge. Over time, the bridge became a town, then a city of boats and rafts and walkways, all anchored to that massive stone bridge that remains the spine of the sprawling trade city.

**Masque:** It is forbidden in Masque to show one's naked face, except in certain exceedingly rare circumstances. It is the custom of this land that everyone wears a mask, and through a complex system of symbolism and iconography, one's mask conveys one's station in society, profession, iconic alignments, religion, magical blessings and even one's beliefs and feelings. Masque is a land of mirrors and whispers, of subtle treacheries and poisonings.

**Fellgarden:** The people of Fellgarden build their cities by taming living dungeons. Fellgarden is like Omen—it's a migration route for living dungeons, who slither up through shafts and faults from the underworld and spill out onto the surface. If the dungeon-smiths of Fellgarden are successful, they can shape the dungeon as it manifests, taming (castrating?) it and turning trap-filled, monster-haunted chambers into more of the city. If they fail, then that's more of the island turned into hellish dungeon. In Fellgarden, warehouses and mansions jostle for space with unholy demon-infested temples and monster lairs. Visitors are reminded to pay close attention to the street signs.

**Eiswyn** is a glacial realm of ice and snow, of barbarians and furry monsters. The ruins of an ancient civilization lie frozen in the glacier, so when the barbarians aren't off raiding warmer lands in the summer, they spend their winters cutting into the ice to excavate treasures and dangers from a past age.

In the **Coast of Divinities**, the gods are very present in the world. Instead of icons, the region has incarnate deities, and most of the population have some divine ancestry—and the magical gifts that come with it. The underworld and the land overlap along the coast, so heedless captains can sometimes accidentally sail their ships into the clouds and get lost in the sky.

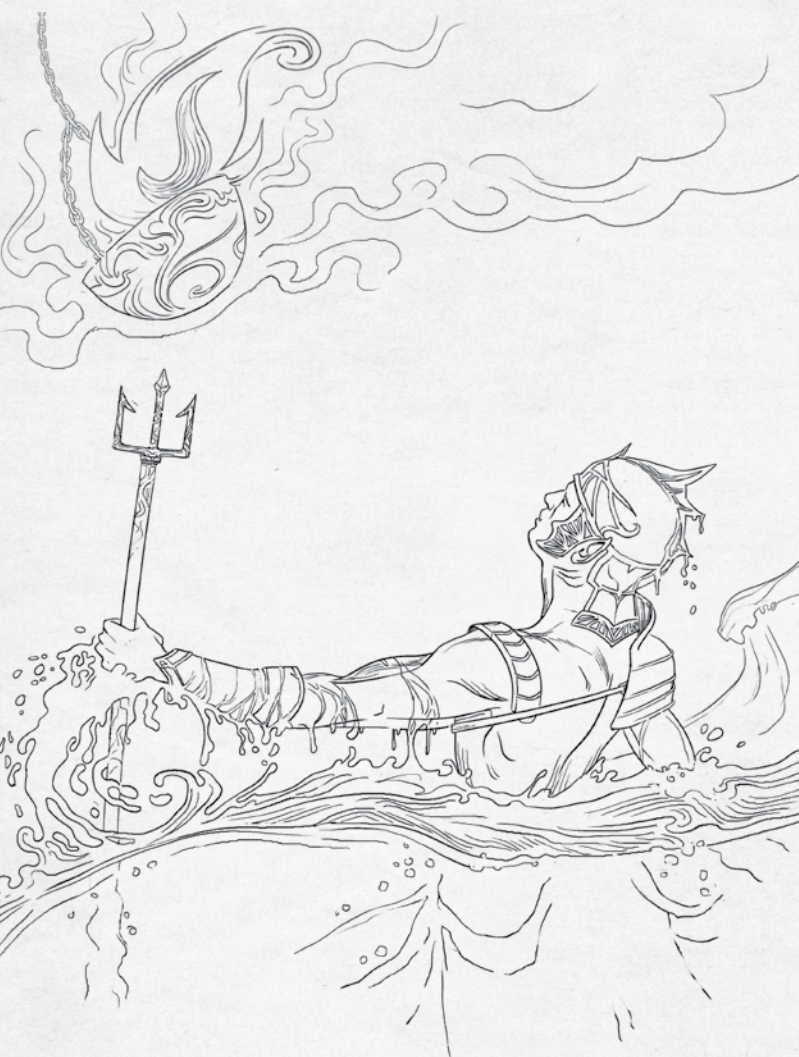
The inhabitants of the **Island Fish** know that they have built their homes on the back of a gigantic sea-monster. The Island Fish swims apparently at random around the Iron Sea, although sometimes it's possible to guide the monster's course with magical lures. Sages speculate that the Island Fish is actually a Koru Behemoth that fell into the sea and got lost, and that its endless wandering is a lonely attempt to find its way back onto the migration route.

In **Exilec**, they cultivate weird alien insects for all manner of purposes. The people there dwell in the shells of swollen beetles, and wield barbed insects as living weapons. The creatures of Exilec scuttle out of rifts in reality, and are then captured and bred by the rangers of that land.

The **King Below** was the ruler of the Sahuagin, the fearsome sea-beasts. Under the coral crown and bloody banner of the king, the freshwater sahuagin of the Fangs joined with their salt-water cousins in a war against the surface. Sometimes, the Captain of Corsairs was able to ally with the sea-folk, but for most of the age, the sahuagin recognized no difference between one ship crammed with prospective slavemeat and another.

## LEGENDS, LEGACIES AND LAIRS

- **Sea-Lamps and Sky-Lamps:** The Empire built magical beacon-towers to aid navigation in the Iron Sea. Some of these towers resembled magical lighthouses, like the great tower at Vigil; others were floating lamps on rafts, or hung from the sky by magic. A sailing ship could use these lamps, coupled with arcane instruments and spells of divination, to determine its position.



- Few of these lamps survive—they've been destroyed by sea monsters, looters, corsair sabotage or the passage of time. Still, with the right lamp and the right old chart, a ship can navigate the wilds of the Iron Sea to islands unvisited in many ages.

- **The Death of the High Druid:** The High Druid was murdered by unknown assassins early in this age. His successor was (like the High Druid of the 13<sup>th</sup> Age) a half-elven girl, but this successor was found when she was still an infant by the Serpent, who posed as her protector and champion in order to take her from her parents. The Serpent raised the new High Druid, and was always her most trusted advisor.

- Who killed the first High Druid of the age? The Druid had quarreled with the Archmage over the taming of the Iron Sea. He had enemies inside and outside the Empire—including a weak Emperor who was willing to employ deadly force. The Serpent, obviously, benefited hugely from the Druid's death, as did the Captain of Corsairs. And the King Below was able to seize magical authority over the weather for many years until the new High Druid came into her power.

- Another, equally important question—how did they do it? The High Druid was one of the five most powerful spellcasters in the Empire (and, by the by, was also a giant elk with razor-sharp antlers when he wanted to be). When other icons of this sort perished, it was as the result of epic magical battles that shook the pillars of the earth and scarred the world with wild sorcery. In this case, the High Druid was, apparently, stabbed in the back and killed in a matter of seconds. Did his assailants use a magical blade or venom that can kill an icon with a single blow? And if so, where is it today?

- **The Cache of Dream-Pearls:** Some sea-elves sing their dreams into gleaming pearls, and then send them to the Elf-Queen to maintain their spiritual connection to her. A ship bearing a huge cache of such pearls was once captured by the Corsairs, and these pearls were lost. What secrets might be found in a chest full of elf-dreams?

- **Koru Land Pirates:** The corsairs operated mainly at sea, but some crews took to climbing on board passing Koru Behemoths and riding them along the migration path until they came close to civilized lands. The pirates would disembark from the beast, sack lightly-defended towns, and then flee back to the behemoth. As no known force can influence the path taken by the behemoths (and there aren't many valuable cities on land that regularly get trampled by wandering titans), these land pirates rarely found rich pickings, and the practice is mostly extinct in the 13<sup>th</sup> Age. Sometimes, gangs of bored youths in Nomad boast of turning pirate and riding a behemoth in search of a fortune, but little ever comes of such talk.

- **The Seapit**, or as its residents called it, the City of Fangs, was the capital of the undersea kingdom of the sahuagin. Some buildings in the city were filled with air, so captives from the surface could survive for a time in these cramped underwater prisons. The city was somewhere in the Iron Sea, quite close to the Koru Straits, so messengers could slip through the straits and swim upriver to their cousins in the Fangs.

Powerful spells and wards defended the city; a spell could even drag down ships that sailed too close, pulling the vessels down into weed-choked prisons in the dark depths.

- **The Coral Crown:** Seeing the power of the Iron Sea, the treacherous Serpent tried to convince his pawn, the High Druid, to work a great and terrible spell that would give the Serpent control of the sea monsters. She helped him forge a mystic crown that conveyed authority over the Iron Sea and all its monsters, a working of the same spell laid on the Midland Sea by the Blessed Emperor in another age. Before the Serpent could claim the crown, the High Druid turned on her captor, and the crown was lost.
- **The Harbor of Gulls:** This city was the capital of the Corsairs, and home to their fleets. Most of the city is now a ruin, smashed by the waves and the monsters of the Iron Sea. The fabulous palace of the last Captain of Corsairs, though, was buried in an earthquake towards the end of the age, and is partially intact. Adventurers have looted some sections of the ruin, but it's (a) flooded at high tide and (b) crawling with sahuagin and undead. Oh, and c) other weird monsters from the Iron Sea.
- **The Rock of Chains:** There's still a Captain of Corsairs, and he still has a kingdom. A very small one. The Rock of Chains used to be a fortress that guarded the approach to the Harbor of Gulls—a dreary little outcrop of stone in the middle of the ocean, cut off from the mainland at high tide, bereft of anything except goats and fortifications. It was, at times, used as a prison, hence the name. A narrow causeway connects the Rock to the shore, but this causeway floods when the tide is high. Condemned prisoners were often chained to the causeway to drown.
  - After the loss of the Harbor of Gulls to a rampaging sea monster, the last Captain retreated to the Rock, and his descendants have lived there ever since, plotting their revenge on the Empire. It's not clear if there's anything iconic about the ancestors, they don't act much like the fallen icons.

## END TIMES

The time of easy trade across the Iron Sea ended when a new wave of monsters swarmed out of the water and rampaged across the land. These beasts smashed the lamps that allowed ships to navigate in safety. The largest such monster, a horror named Walking Sorrow, made it all the way to Horizon before the Imperial Legions and the Archmage were able to bring it down. Its kin brought ruin across the south. The Empire endured this catastrophe, but at great cost. Many cities were besieged or ruined, many heroes lost, before the Sea Wall could be reinforced against such invaders.

## MONSTERS

With the exception of pieces of *The Strangling Sea*, we haven't done all that much with pirates and their ilk. This is the age for them. Have at ye.

## THE LANDS BEYOND

What became of the lands beyond the Iron Sea? Some options for your campaign:

- **They Got Destroyed By Monsters:** The default assumption in *13<sup>th</sup> Age* is that these civilizations got destroyed by giant monsters that crawled out of the Iron Sea, and that the Empire is the last realm standing. There are still ruins out there, if you brave the tsunamis and the sea monsters and the ghosts.
- **They Got Destroyed By Something Else:** The Red. The Orc Lord. A roll on the Random World-Shattering Cataclysm table (page 17).
- **They're Still Out There, But Contact Has Been Lost:** The other civilizations and kingdoms are still out there, but for some reason the Empire no longer trades with them. Did the Empire close its borders, or did they? Maybe the plague that ended the 12<sup>th</sup> Age is to blame, or maybe the dangers of the Iron Sea grew too great for trade to continue.
- **They're Still Out There, And Honestly, They're A Bit Dull:** It's a game of high adventure, not a game of mercantile speculation. Trade continues between the Empire and the other lands, but unless you're a sailor or a cloth merchant, or heavens forbid an economist, it's really not that interesting. And really, the Empire is the place where all the magic and weirdness happens—the other lands are just boring bar the occasional side quest.
- **They're Still Out There! Go Adventuring!:** The other lands are full of peril and strangeness, only with a different vibe to that of the Empire. Use these other lands as blank canvasses for your own historical appropriation (*"here's the Arabian nights, and here's Steampunk, and here's..."*) or grab one of the used sample ages in this book, cross out "Age" and write in "Land" instead—the Land of the Bone Altars. The Land of Walled Cities. The Land of Wild Woods...

## CORSAIR CREWMAN

*Adventurers, eh? No doubt you're on your way back from some dungeon, your bags laden with loot and trophies from the underworld. We're more used to robbing ships, but we'll make an exception in your case.*

2<sup>nd</sup> level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +7

Cutlass +7 vs. AC—4 damage

*Murderous gang of cut-throats:* +1 damage for every other crewman engaged with the same target.

R: Crossbow +7 vs. AC—4 damage

*Group ability:* For every two Corsair Crewmen present at the start of the battle, one Corsair Crewman may use the *more of ye* ability once per battle.

**More of Ye!** At the start of this corsair crewman's turn, add another corsair crewman to the battle.. These additions appear in a suitably cinematic, even absurd fashion—swinging down on ropes, popping out of chests, charging in from nowhere.

**Cowardly:** If at the start of the corsair crewman's turn, there are fewer corsair crewmen and allies remaining on the battlefield than enemies, the crewmen flee.

**AC 18**  
**PD 16 HP 8 (mook)**  
**MD 12**

**Mook:** Kill one corsair crewman for every 8 damage you deal to the mob.

## UNDEAD CORSAIR CREWMAN

These stats reflect the few remaining living corsairs of the south coast. If you want to turn them into undead corsairs, then either murder them and raise them with dreadful necromantic incantations, or:

- Add *vulnerability: holy*
- Replace *cowardly* with: *won't stay dead*: If at the start of the Corsair Crewman's turn, there are more enemies on the battlefield than allies, the corsair crewman gains another use of *more of ye!*



## CORSAIR SWASHBUCKLER

*"My name is unimportant. You have my money. Prepare to die."*

3<sup>rd</sup> level blocker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +10

**Flashing blades +8 vs. AC**—8 damage, and the target may not use the escalation die until they disengage from the swashbuckler or the swashbuckler suffers damage.

**Natural 16+:** The swashbuckler may make another *flashing blades* attack on a different target.

**Flashing parry:** Once per battle, when struck by a melee attack, the swashbuckler may attempt a flashing parry as an interrupt. Both the attacker and the swashbuckler roll a d20 and add their attack bonus vs. AC. If the attacker wins by 5 or more, the swashbuckler takes damage from the melee attack as normal; otherwise the damage is canceled. If the swashbuckler wins by 10 or more, the swashbuckler also deals 10 damage to the attacker!

**Press the advantage!** While the swashbuckler has stopped an enemy from using the escalation die using *flashing blades*, then the swashbuckler may add the escalation die to its attack rolls. The swashbuckler may give up the escalation die to gain another use of *flashing parry* or *swashbuckling intercept*; if it does this, then any suppressed foes regain access to the escalation die.

**Swashbuckling intercept:** Once per battle as an interrupt action, the swashbuckler may pop free and intercept a moving enemy, regardless of their relative positions on the battlefield. The swashbuckler leaps, swings, ducks, rolls and dodges to get into place. The swashbuckler has a +4 AC bonus against opportunity attacks when using this ability.

**AC 19**  
**PD 16 HP 40**  
**MD 13**

## UNDEAD CORSAIR SWASHBUCKLERS

- Add *vulnerability: holy*
- Replace *swashbuckling intercept* with *spider climb*: The corsair may move and stand on any surface, even walls or ceilings. It gets a +1 bonus to its attack rolls if it has the advantage of positioning over a foe.

## CORSAIR MARINE

*It was said of the corsairs that they would do anything for gold, which is a vile calumny. There were many, many things that even the worst corsair would not do for money. It's just that those things did not include murdering people, capturing ships and sacking cities.*

4<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +10

**Vicious cutlass +9 vs. AC—13 damage**

**Boot to the face +9 vs. PD—10 damage**, and the corsair marine pops free

**R: Hand crossbow +9 vs. AC—14 damage**

*Stand and fight!* If the corsair marine does not move, it may add the escalation die to its *vicious cutlass* attacks and damage.

*No escape!* Attempts to disengage from a corsair marine suffer a -5 penalty.

### Nastier Specials

*Get them!* The corsair marine gains a +4 bonus to its attack roll for the first melee attack it makes in this battle.

AC 20  
PD 18  
MD 14

HP 50

## UNDEAD CORSAIR MARINES

- Add *vulnerability: holy*
- Replace *get them!* with *remorseless*: The corsair marine is immune to being stuck, dazed, stunned or hampered.

Most descendants of the old Corsair Kingdoms still live on the coast south of the Blood Wood, although you'll find many of them as far west as New Port or Concord. In some campaigns, they no doubt proudly defy Imperial rule, and consider it to be a point of honor and patriotic pride to rob trade ships and Imperial galleys.

### CORSAIRS AND THE ICONS

The Prince of Shadows has links with the corsairs, and sometimes allies with them, or hires them to raid merchant ships in the Midland Sea. They also count the Three as friends—they have a long association with the Black and the Blue, but not the Red. They hate hate *hate* the Emperor, and honestly aren't too fond of the Lich King either.

## ZOMBIE PIRATE CAPTAIN

*Many corsairs perished in the deep waters, but later returned as undead horrors. In the Midland Sea, such undead revenants are in the service of the Lich King, while those who died in the Iron Sea and weren't eaten by sea monsters are free-willed independent undead without a liege. The two groups of zombie pirates hate one another, and there could be huge 'naval' battles far beneath the waters of the Koru Straits.*

Double-strength 7<sup>th</sup> level caster [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +15

Vulnerability: holy

**Rusted cutlass +12 vs. AC—50 damage**

*Natural even hit or miss:* Make another *rusted cutlass* attack as a free action on a different target.

**C: Grabbing hands +12 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—30 damage**, and the target is stuck and takes 10 ongoing damage (save ends both)

*Limited use:* Only usable on foes in or near water. The magic water conjured by *rising waters* counts once the escalation die is 3+.

*Rising waters:* The dark seas swell and poisoned waters rise in the presence of the zombie pirate captain, no matter where the battle takes place. This is the magical ghost of the waters of the sea—the rotten sea-water could seep into a flying castle or manifest in the middle of the desert. All nearby foes suffer the following effects based on the value of the escalation die.

0-2: No effect.

3-4: All creatures must make an easy save (6+) at the start of their turns. If this save fails, the creature loses its move action.

5+: The save to keep move actions is now normal (11+). At the start of the round, deal 10 ongoing damage to any creature that is unconscious or helpless.

*Technically I'm a privateer!* The zombie pirate captain gets a +2 bonus to its attack rolls and inflicts an extra 1d10 damage on any enemy with a positive relationship to the Emperor, a negative relationship to the Lich King, or who is carrying ostentatious amounts of treasure or magic items.

### Nastier Specials

*I'll take thee with me:* Whenever the zombie pirate captain becomes staggered or suffers a critical hit, add a +1 modifier to the escalation die for the purposes of calculating the effects of *rising waters*.

AC 22  
PD 20  
MD 20

HP 216

The glory days of the corsairs are gone, and there are no great captains among the living any more.

There are, though, plenty of great captains among the dead. The free-spirited hard-drinking undead rogues of the Iron Sea are remarkably full of life for skeletal horrors; they swagger into dockside taverns along the coast to menace barmaids and outdrink the living.

Their counterparts beyond the straits have been pressganged into the Lich King's sunken navy, and sullenly wait for the signal to begin a massive naval invasion of the lands of the living. Until then, they amuse themselves by skirmishing with their deep-sea rivals.

## GREENGUARD

*For most of her young life, the High Druid of this age dwelt in a grove of these ghastly creatures, and saw nothing strange or horrible about them. To her innocent eyes, it seemed perfectly normal to play in the shade of huge rotten tree-people filled with poisonous snakes.*

*To this day, some claim that greenguards will never hurt children, not that they're willing to put that theory to the test.*

Large 6<sup>th</sup> level blocker [PLANT]

Initiative: +10

**C: Smashing branch +11 vs. AC (two attacks)**—20 damage

*Natural 16+:* The greenguard gets to make a free *snakes on a pine* attack against the target.

*Miss:* 10 damage

**C: Snakes on a pine +11 vs. PD**—10 damage, and 10 ongoing poison damage (save ends)

*Snakes in the grass:* At the start of its turn, the greenguard may make a *snakes on a pine* attack on a random nearby enemy as a quick action.

*Entangling aura:* The greenguard shelters its allies among its snake-infested branches. Anyone attacking one of the greenguard's nearby allies with a single-target attack who rolls a natural 14 or less targets the greenguard instead.

*Rooted:* The greenguard doesn't get a move action (it can still trade its standard attack for a move action if it needs to move).

### Nastier Specials

*Hallucinogenic poison:* Any character suffering ongoing poison damage must roll an 18 or more to bypass the monster's *entangling aura*.

*Strength from the earth:* As a standard action, the greenguard may heal 3d10 hit points. Alternatively, if a creature is taking ongoing poison damage, the greenguard may instead heal using one of that creature's recoveries.

*Limited Use:* 2/battle

AC 24

PD 21

MD 15

HP 180

**Creatures of the Serpent:** The Serpent made these monsters to guard the young High Druid—to keep her safe from harm, he told her, but the real reason was to ensure that no-one else could speak to her and warn her of the Serpent's lies. After the Serpent was defeated, the High Druid banished the greenguards from her grove, and since then the living snake-nests have lurked in the dark places of the Wild Wood. Some have become bitter and cruel; others seek a way back into the High Druid's good graces. A few even look for other charges, especially children who remind them of their former mistress.

## IRON SEA MONSTER

*"They say these monsters will destroy us," shouted the hero. "They say this is the end of the age, but they are wrong! Tonight, we will stop them! Tonight, we are slaying the apocalypse!" (That proved to be incorrect.)*

Huge 12<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [ABERRATION]

Initiative: +20

**Wall-Ripping Claws +17 vs. AC (two attacks)**—120 damage

**C: Sprouting Tentacles +17 vs. AC**—50 damage, plus *paraslime*

*Miss:* The Iron Sea Monster grows another tentacle at the start of its next turn. For the rest of the battle, increase its number of *sprouting tentacle* attacks by 1.

**C: Acidic Belch +17 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies in a group)**—100 acid damage, plus *paraslime*

*Demolition:* This acid is especially good at dissolving stone and collapsing buildings. If a structure is hit by this attack, the GM rolls a save at the start of each turn; if the save fails, the building collapses (easy save for magically reinforced structures like the Sea Wall, hard save for crumbling or poorly built structures)

*Titanic monster:* The Iron Sea monster may make a close attack and a melee attack each turn, but cannot target the same creature with both attacks.

*Paraslime:* Any creature who becomes engaged with the Iron Sea monster, or who is struck by a *paraslime* attack, gets covered with paraslime. This slime causes 20 ongoing acid damage (save ends), but if a character fails a save with a natural 1-5, the character is compelled to use their next move action to move towards the Iron Sea monster and is weakened until the end of their next turn.

*Enormously bulky:* The Iron Sea monster is so huge that it ignores opportunity attacks. In addition, normal-sized enemies are like fleas to it, so disengaging from the Iron Sea Monster requires only an easy save (6+).

*Tidal escalator:* As long as the Iron Sea monster is charging towards the west (out of the Iron Sea, marching deeper into the Empire, carrying with it the bitter enmity of the ocean), it can add the escalation die to its attack rolls. If it's not smashing its way west (if engaged in the ocean, if distracted or deflected, or if stopped by a barrier like the Sea Wall), it doesn't get the escalation die.

*Ghastly regeneration:* Five times per battle, the Iron Sea monster may regenerate 200 hit points at the start of its turn. Alternatively, it may spend one use of its regeneration to automatically remove any conditions afflicting it.

*Glowing red weak spot:* The Sea monster has a vulnerable organ that's exposed when it makes an *acidic belch* attack. If the characters know about this vulnerability (through research, divination, iconic benefits, prophetic dreams, or a mystic connection to an allied spirit that squandered its childhood playing 'video games'), they may target this weak spot. When the Iron Sea monster makes an *acidic belch*, it becomes vulnerable to ranged attacks until the start of its next turn.

A character may also fly or climb onto the monster to strike at the weak spot directly, but the Iron Sea monster protects itself; any character attempting a melee attack on the weak spot gets hit by a free interrupt-speed *sprouting tentacles*. (Note that if the Iron Sea monster has grown extra *sprouting tentacles*, it gets to swipe at the attacker with all of them.)

#### Nastier Specials

*More tentacles!* The Iron Sea monster grows another *sprouting tentacle* when the escalation die becomes even.

AC 27  
PD 26 HP 1000  
MD 21

**Many unique things:** Every Iron Sea monster is unique. Some resemble grotesquely enlarged and malformed sea creatures, others are alien conglomerations of limbs and organs, and still others are partially elemental creatures, whose flesh melds into flowing water or cracking ice as they move. They are the nightmares of the ocean, born of its hate for the Wizard King and all his works. Sadly for everyone in the Dragon Empire, they count as 'his works.'

## ITEMS

### BOOTS, SHOES, SANDALS, SLIPPERS

**Default bonus:** Disengage checks and other checks involving fancy footwork: +1 bonus (adventurer); +2 bonus (champion); +3 bonus (epic).

**Dancing Boots of the Corsair:** Once per battle, the wearer of these boots may make a tremendous leap, effectively flying for one move action. However, the boots are extremely sensitive to magical songs, such as those sung by bards. The first time in a battle that anyone uses a magical song or music, the boots compel you to dance a merry jig. You get to make a normal save to resist (or an easy save, 6+, if you know the song is coming and can brace for it); if you fail, you're dazed. Quirk: Can't resist a party.

## WONDROUS ITEM

You can attune multiple wondrous items. They don't fill up a chakra.

**Arcanolabe:** An arcanolabe allows the user to perceive the magical beams from the sea-lamps, and aids with magical divination in general, giving a +4 bonus to any skill checks related to detecting magical fields, ley lines, buried wards and other arcane emanations and auras. *Quirk:* Easily distracted by invisible forces.

**Bottled Ship:** This looks like a bottle of translucent golden-brown liquid, and might be mistaken for whiskey or rum. Don't drink it—it tastes like salt and wood, with notes of sailcloth and rusty iron. Instead, pour it out, and the liquid congeals into a large sailing ship. The ship is perfectly seaworthy, although it doesn't come with any food or water supplies or a crew. (It's small enough to be sailed by the average party of adventurers, though). After a few days' travel, the ship begins to dissolve; the wood and sails start liquefying and melting, as if it was a painted ship and the paint is dripping. If the bottle is dipped into the ocean, it draws in the dissolving ship and the item can be reused in a week or two. Otherwise, the ship slowly disintegrates and cannot be used again. So, the challenge for the players is to find dry land before the item is destroyed and they drown. *Quirk:* Refuses to bathe, out of fear of dissolution.

**Always Reliable Treasure Map:** First, the quirk: Accepts blatantly obvious adventure hooks without question or quibble. Second, the power: Once per full heal-up, the bearer of this blank piece of parchment may invoke its magic. A map appears on the parchment, showing the location of a nearby treasure cache that contains treasure appropriate for the bearer's level (13<sup>th</sup> Age, page 191). The map makes no guarantee about:

- Distance to the treasure cache (if you activate the map in the middle of the Red Wastes, then you might have to trek hundreds of miles to find the treasure).
- Precise location (if the treasure's in a dungeon, the map will guide you to the entrance of the dungeon)
- Ownership of the treasure (the map *usually* avoids pointing at, say, a bank vault or the coffers of some merchant, but it's quite likely to point at a dragon's hoard or a dungeon crammed with monsters).
- Accessibility of the treasure (again, it usually points at treasure hoards that the bearer can reasonably hope to find, but it might point at a hoard that's ten miles underground in the world, or in a flying castle many miles overhead.)

# AGE OF BALEFIRE



## The 3d4<sup>th</sup> Age!

- Widespread eruption of hellholes set the scene for worse to come by eliminating the Empire's defensive wards.
- Evil dragons rampage, then rule.
- Demons pour into the world en masse through the Abyss and only defeated via unlikely alliances.
- Diaoblist for real, Crusader activated!



Age timing: Gareth sees this age as the possible 12th Age, setting up the default 13th Age campaign setting. I don't necessarily see it that way. Events like the opening of the Abyss, the surge in Hellholes, the Blue taking hold of Drakkenhall, and the emergence of the Crusader all seem to me like things that could have happened earlier than the 12th Age. Still, I've kept the Age of Balefire as the last age in the list, even after moving a lot of the other ages around.

Gareth says: To be clear, this isn't the "official" history of the 12th Age. Everything can be different in your game. Our view is that fictional history should be a buffet from which you can pick your favorite bits, not a mandatory diet plan. That said, this is one way to tackle the 12th Age, and if you like it you'll find plenty of hooks for your own creations.

## OVERVIEW

**Opening hellholes:** Early in the age, a young scholar named Opal in the Archmage's university at Horizon wrote an academic thesis that warned of rising arcana-spiritual pressure, and that infernal forces would soon break into the mortal world as hellholes. While there have always been a small number of hellholes spontaneously forming and closing, they were always the result of demonic invasions or malignant sorcery. Opal's thesis described something closer to a hellish conjunction, a time when the barriers between the worlds would be under abnormal strain and the demonic forces could break through with ease.

Opal's thesis was found in the library at Horizon, but the wizard herself was never seen again; was she murdered by infernal powers—or, as some whisper, did she use this knowledge to become the new Diabolist?

As Opal predicted, hellholes opened in growing numbers across the Empire. Demons came crawling out of these wounds in reality, attacking the outskirts of the Empire. One of the first hellholes opened in the Dragon Wood to the north, and it destroyed the magical wards buried deep in the forest by the Archmage of a previous age.

**Now the dragons:** When the wards came down, the dragons invaded. In this age, of the Three great dragons, only the Black had an established foothold in the Empire. She ruled a secret fortress in the swamps of the Fangs, and swam out through the Koru Straits rather than fly in order to evade the Archmage's wards. The other two, the Red and the Blue, lurked beyond the Imperial borders—the Blue from her fabled island lair in the Iron Sea, and the Red roamed the world. Now, the destruction of the wards meant both the dragons and their flights of followers could enter the Empire in relative secrecy (giant primordial dragons accompanied by a host of lesser wyrms can never really be stealthy).

The Three met in conclave in the Fangs, and agreed on their plan—while the Red and the lesser dragons occupied the Imperial forces, the Blue and Black would infiltrate the elven lands and free the Green dragon from the Elf Queen's spells. Reunited, the four dragons would then lay waste to the Empire. The cities would become pyres; the treasuries of Axis, Glitterhaegen, Horizon and Forge would become the beds of dragons.

While the Empire battled the dragons, the Diabolist grew in power and influence. The Archmage and other defenders of the Empire were occupied with the threat of the Dragons, so the Diabolist had free run of the Imperial court. She convinced a succession of Emperors to trust her, and to assist her in 'bleeding off' the power of the Hellholes. The Emperor ceded the territory of the Cairnwood to her, and gave her all that she asked for in order to 'save' the Empire from the demons.

The intercession of the Great Gold Wyrms and the Champion held the Red back from destroying the Imperial heartland, forcing the dragon to retreat out over the Midland Sea. (Although the Imperial histories do not record it, many tales claim that the Lich King aided the Champion in this battle, lending his dead strength to her living spirit in order to defend "his" kingdom). The Archmage whipped up a titanic, nature-warping storm that howled around the Midland Sea for decades, preventing dragons and other creatures from flying into the overworld. For a time, there was a stalemate between the dragon host and the forces of civilization—individual dragons might break through and lay waste to a portion of the Empire, but the vast flights could not pass the barrier of the storm intact.

Heroes and adventurers battled the sudden appearances of hellholes and invading wyrms, while the elves and the soldiers of Highrock thwarted the attempts to free the Green. It seemed as though the Empire might prevail against the dragons, although the cost was already great, for dragon attacks destroyed many cities and wonders from past ages.

Then the Abyss opened.

**The demon attack:** Demons rushed into the world. The Gold broke off his war with the Three, and flew straight from Threshold to the Golden Citadel, passing through the heart of the living storm. He plunged into the Abyss and battled the demons, holding the hellish armies back while the Empire gathered its forces. Two of the Three agreed to aid the Empire—the Black slunk away to her secret lair, but the Red and Blue both joined in the war. The Blue's price was a dominion in the Empire, which became the city of Drakkenhall; the Red's price is a secret.

No songs are sung of the assault by the Red upon the demons. No words suffice to describe it. Imperial forces and the Golden Paladins who fought any demons that tried to flee the conflagration had to shield their eyes, for any man who looked directly at the flames was blinded in an instant.

## ICONS

The current **Diabolist** and the **Crusader** both appeared in this age. For much of the age, the Diabolist hid her true nature and posed as one of the Emperor's courtiers; it was only towards the end of the age that she took on the mantle of previous Diabolists (or threw off the cloak of illusion, if she's the same Diabolist who was around in previous ages). As for the Crusader, his Crusade began in this age as a tattered, desperate band of survivors who escaped the battle of the Abyss, and swore that they would never again fear demonic assault.

The **Champion** was the Emperor's shining sword and bright shield, the captain of the Imperial Cavalry and general of the Armies. In an age of weak, feckless or ineffective Emperors, it was the Champions who held the Empire together and thwarted the demons and dragons. Accusations that the Champion was too ambitious or that some Champions had secret alliances with the Lich King or Great Gold Wurm dogged her at times, but without her heroism, the Empire might have fallen and never recovered. The last Champion perished in the battle of the Abyss.

The **Demon King** led the demonic invasion of the mortal world. Although he could not leave the hellholes, he was able to *teleport* from one hellhole to another, and so was able to fight on the front-lines of every battle and seize every beachhead. The Demon King's power was so great that he inspired demon-worshipping cults and spawned infernal-heritage sorcerers by his mere presence. The Great Gold Wurm battled the Demon King in the Abyss; the paladins of the Golden Order claim that the Wurm killed the king, but demonologists whisper that such a powerful demon can never truly die.

Early in the age, rumors spoke of an **Oracle** who roamed the land, warning the people of doom. She would appear in a town or village and urge the inhabitants to flee before the demons arrived, or gather adventurers to her side to battle an invading dragon.

## LEGENDS, LEGACIES AND LAIRS

- The **Azure Citadel:** The Blue Dragon now makes her lair in her city of Drakkenhall, but for many ages she dwelt in a citadel far to the east, on a mist-shrouded isle of sorcery. Now, the isle is ruled by a triumvirate of her servants—two dragons named Khyls and Verioth, and the sorcerer called the Sapphire Archon. The Blue cannot return to her lair without breaching the terms of her *geas*, so she has been forced to slowly move her treasure hoard from the isle to Drakkenhall a little at a time in heavily guarded sailing ships. The sorcerous laboratories and arcane machinery on the isle, though, cannot be moved, and so the Blue schemes to manipulate the Emperor into conquering the island so she can return to her former home. (For reference, along with the Golden and Azure Citadels, there are, or were, Vermilion, Ebon, Emerald and Pale Citadels!)
- The **Tribute to the Red:** Why did the Red aid the Empire in defeating the demon invasion? Was it purely for the joy of destruction? Did the Red seek to preserve the world so it could later conquer it outright? Or did the Empire *give* the dragon something—and if so, what might this price be? Some possibilities:
  - The right to replace the Great Gold Wurm as patron and protector of the Empire. The tricky thing is, the Wurm's not completely dead, and until he dies, the Red can't claim that mantle.
  - A regular tribute of treasure. The amount pledged to the Red is so vast that it's a crippling drain on the Imperial treasury. Every year, the Emperor secretly sends a fortune to the dragon, and the costs of that tribute means that everything else is impoverished. If the people knew about the dragonitthe, there would be outcry and revolution—but if the tributes stop, the Red will come back.
  - The same price offered to the Blue: a domain within the Empire. Right now, the city of New Port has only a provisional governor, but when construction of the city is finished, its permanent ruler will be installed...
  - The freedom of the Green Dragon. The Emperor has sworn to release the Green from the Elf Queen's captivity, despite her objections. So far, the two icons have kept this disagreement secret, but the Red's patience grows thin...
- The **Dark Temple:** This mysterious temple has been seen in many places along the borders of the Red Wastes, and seems able to move of its own accord. It is an ancient, crumbling structure, dedicated to the Dark Gods. A power lurks within the temple that preys on the desperate; if you find the temple, then you are in dire need, and so will listen to the whispered lies of the Dark. Starving beggars find the Dark Temple and emerge as unctuous, oily priests with gold rings on their fat fingers; thirsty wanderers in the desert find it and emerge as lithe warriors, given renewed strength by evil magic; battered

and broken adventurers find it after suffering a terrible defeat, and find within the spells and magic they need to take revenge on their foes. Some say that the first to find the Dark Temple was the Crusader, many years ago.

- **Demonbone Glass** is usually found in the deepest reaches of the Red Wastes, close to the Abyss, although it can also be mined in hellholes, or gets washed down what remains of the Lost River. As the name suggests, it's the bones of demons that got transmuted into glassy stone by the application of tremendous heat and pressure (like, say, being blasted by the breath weapon of the Red). Demonbone glass is prized by alchemists and artists alike, but most of all it is desired by the Diabolist, who pays a considerable fortune for even a shard of the glass, and offers your heart's desire for a skull or intact skeleton. Recent experiments by the Archmage have discovered that with the right spell, the dragonsbreath that fried the demon can be evoked with explosive results—so why is the Diabolist stockpiling the glass?
- **Dracolytes:** For parts of this age, the villages and cities of the Empire lived under the nigh-constant threat of draconic invasion. Peasants scurried from shadow to shadow, fearful of being seen and eaten by a passing wyrm. The custom of dracolytes (also known as dragon-men or wyrm-bargainers) evolved in this era; dracolytes were silver-tongued sycophants who could talk a dragon into not attacking (or, at least, into attacking the next town over instead of this one) in exchange for tribute and flattery. Over time, some dracolytes switched sides, and became the dragons' spies and factotums, delivering extortion demands and fetching supplies and the occasional princess for their masters.
- The **Living Storm:** The Archmage bound an elemental prince and turned it into a living storm to stop the invading dragons from flying. The storm broke free in the chaos of the age, and flew off into the overworld. The same wards that protect the Empire and guard against the return of the Red also bar the Living Storm from returning—a very good thing for the Archmage, as the Living Storm wants revenge. Until it finds a way through the wards, all it can do is hover in parts of the overworld above Horizon and spit icy rain and hail at its enemy's city.
- The **Imperial Cult Renewed:** The upheaval and suffering of this age led many to look to the spiritual realm for succor.

## END TIMES

The opening of the Abyss, the loss of the Great Gold Wyrms and the devastation of the Red Wastes would have been tragedy enough to mark the end of any age, but common wisdom is that this age really ended when a plague struck the western regions of the Empire, including Axis. Some blame the Diabolist for this plague, as it started near the Cairnwood and broke out just as the Emperor's courtiers suggested that the Diabolist might be responsible for the opening of the Abyss, and that she should be arrested and questioned by the Archmage's inquisitors so the truth could be discovered. The plague crippled the Imperial army, and ensured that the Empire was unable to seize the Diabolist by force of arms.

## MONSTERS

### FLESHFLY

*Adult fleshflies sometimes follow parties of adventurers as they make their way through a dragon's lair. If the adventurers are successful in slaying the monster, the fleshfly will feast. If they fail, it will at the very least be able to snack on their remains.*

5<sup>th</sup> level archer [BEAST]

Initiative: +13

**Flesh-tearing mandibles +10 vs. AC**—15 damage

*Carriion eater:* +5 damage if the target is staggered

**R: Flesh-liquefying spit +10 vs. PD**—10 acid damage, plus 10 ongoing acid damage (save ends)

*Paralytic:* If the target rolls a natural 1-5 when saving against the ongoing acid damage, the target is dazed until the end of their next turn. If the target's save is a natural 1, the fleshfly may make another *flesh-liquefying spit* targeting the creature on the battlefield with the lowest hit point total.

*Darting flight:* Fleshflies are extremely agile flyers. If targeted with a melee attack, and the attacker rolls a natural even miss, the fleshfly pops free after the attack.

#### Nastier Specials

*Feed on the fallen:* If a fleshfly is close to a dead or dying victim, it can make a *flesh-tearing mandible* attack as a quick action and heals 15 hit points. Even worse, if a fleshfly has fed on the flesh of a powerful creature, before or during the fight, it develops some temporary extra powers.

*Dragonsbreath:* The fleshfly gains the following attack:

**C: Blazing Spit +10 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies in a group)**—5d10 energy damage (energy type depends on the corpse fed upon)

*Miss:* Half damage

*Limited Use:* 1/battle

*Demonic Trait:* Roll 1d6 on the random demon ability table (13<sup>th</sup> Age, p. 209) to determine the fleshfly's bonus ability.

AC 22  
PD 18 HP 70  
MD 14

Fleshflies are carrion-eating insects the size of a large dog, but are not as cute, unless you're really into buzzing wings, slime-slathering proboscises, and spikey hair turfs matted with gore. They have remarkably human-like teeth, too, which is just... yeesh. Anyway, they feed on *big* carrion—dead giants, dragons, other large monsters of that ilk. Every Koru behemoth, for example, is followed by hopeful swarms of these things.

Fleshflies sometimes absorb supernatural abilities from their meals, and yes, that means eccentric alchemists have been known to capture fleshflies, feed them on supernatural beings, and then 'milk' the insects' stomachs and brew the ensuing goo into potions. Alchemists need to get out more.

## FLESHFLIES AND THE ICONS

As near-mindless scavengers, fleshflies don't really have iconic associations. At a stretch, you could tie them to the Three, the Diabolist, the Crusader and the Orc Lord, as all four icons might possibly provide the bugs with meals. There are also large fleshfly nests near the Abyss, but they're *probably* feeding on dead demons, and not waiting for the Great Gold Wyrms to perish.

## LAIR GOLEMS

*"Thief," said a voice like grinding metal, "thief. Stop, thief." Then something clicked within the machine, and it raised its sword. "Thief," it said, "die, thief."*

*Double-strength 8<sup>th</sup> level blocker [CONSTRUCT]*

Initiative: +11

**Executioner's sword +13 vs. AC (two attacks)**

—40 damage

*Remorseless:* If an executioner's sword staggers a foe, or reduces a foe to 0 hit points, the lair golem may make a third executioner's sword attack.

**R: Iron bolas +13 vs. PD—50 damage, and the target is stuck and weakened (hard save, 16+, ends both)**

*Limited Use:* 2/battle

*Golem Immunities:* Like other golems, lair golems are immune to most conditions. They cannot be dazed, weakened, confused, made vulnerable, or touched by ongoing damage. They're also immune to damage of the same energy type as their master's breath weapon—so the lair golem of a red dragon is immune to fire, the lair golem of a white dragon to cold damage and so on.

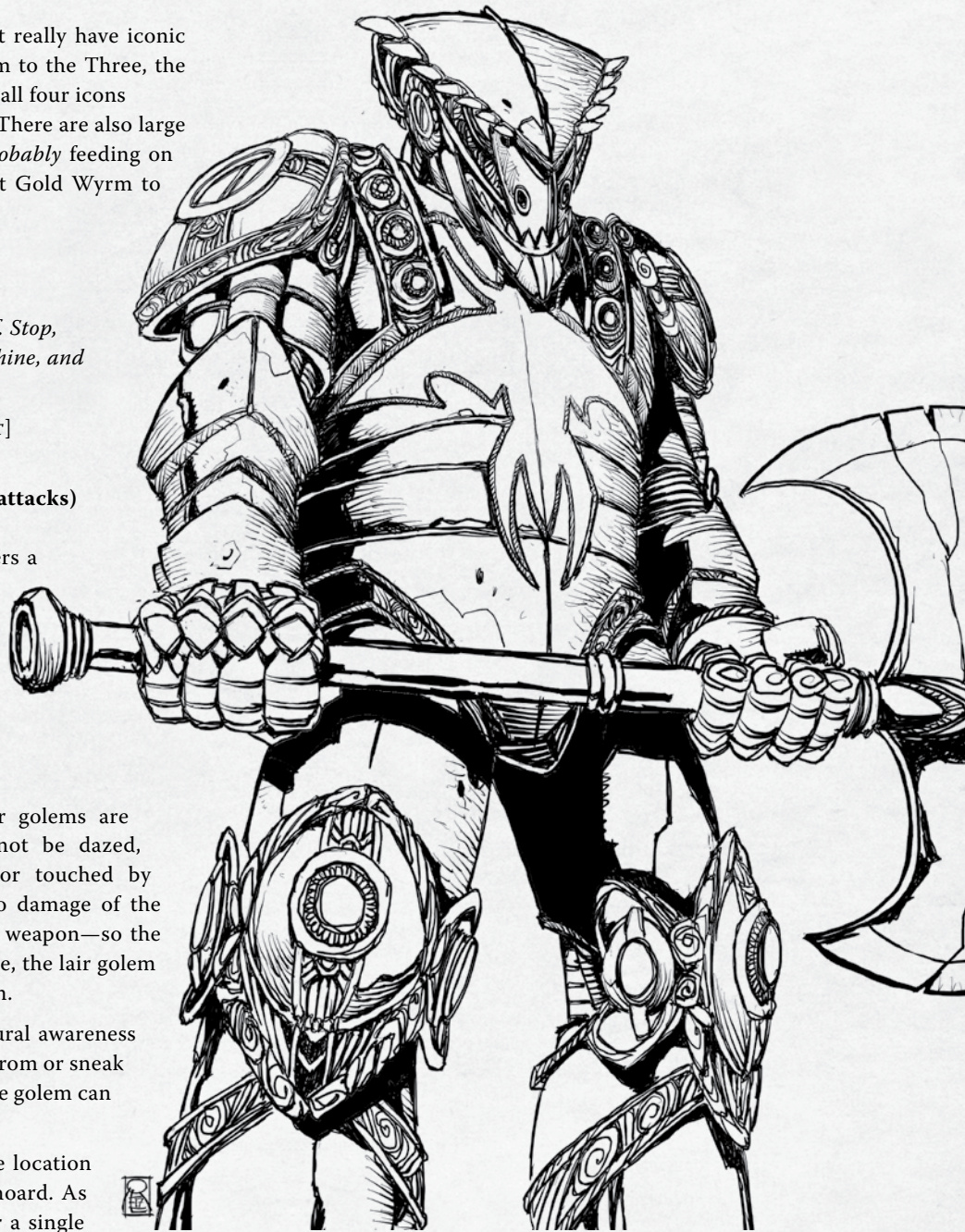
*Lair guardian:* Lair golems have a supernatural awareness of intruders in their lair. Attempts to hide from or sneak past a lair golem suffer a –5 penalty, and the golem can see invisible intruders.

*Track treasure:* Lair golems always know the location of every coin and jewel in their master's hoard. As long as the dragon has slept on a coin for a single night, the golem maintains a psychic awareness of that coin.

**AC 24**  
**PD 22 HP 275**  
**MD 18**

Lair golems are extremely specialized constructs built to serve dragons, although a few have been purchased by wealthy merchants and misers. The dwarves made them in the Age of Balefire as bribes to convince dragons not to attack dwarven settlements.

Lair golems usually look like animated suits of armor, often with a dragon's-head helm, although golems resembling statues or shambling piles of stone were also built.



By the 13<sup>th</sup> Age, while some lair golems still serve their original masters or some other dragon, a great many now roam the wilderness, searching for some lost coin or treasure stolen many centuries ago.

## LAIR GOLEMS AND THE ICONS

The Dwarf King's artificers built these golems, and it's possible that he knows the secret command words to shut the constructs down. Of the Three, both the Black and the Blue could loan or dispense lair golems to dragons they favored. Or at least wanted to pretend to favor.

## TAZERACH (LURE DEMONS)

*These days, only the most foolish adventurers fall for the old 'helpless prisoner tied up in the dungeon' scam. Everyone knows that if you find a helpless prisoner in a dungeon, it's almost certainly a demon or a doppelganger or a hag or a mimic or some form of alien pudding, so you should move on and ignore it. This has resulted, regrettably, in a great many captured helpless prisoners starving to death in otherwise cleared dungeons.*

5<sup>th</sup> level caster [DEMON]

Initiative: +12

**Demonic talons +10 vs. AC**—15 damage, or 20 damage if the target is already *bewitched*.

*Crit:* The target becomes *bewitched*.

**R: Psychic lure +14 vs. MD**—No damage, but the target becomes *bewitched*. The tazerach may make this attack without line of sight to the target, and doesn't even need to know who the target is—as soon as someone comes within range, the tazerach begins to weave its illusions. The target is usually unaware that they are under attack.

If a non-bewitched target looks for evidence connected to the illusion, then use their perception skill check roll as a *psychic lure* attack on them. (So, for example, the GM hits with a *psychic lure* on Bob the Fighter, and describes how Bob hears someone calling for help. Ella the Ranger then asks if she can make a Wisdom check to work out where the call for help is coming from, even though she hasn't heard it yet. She rolls, and the GM secretly uses that roll as the attack roll for a free *psychic lure* attempt on Ella.)

*Natural 1-5:* 10 psychic damage, and the target is aware of demonic forces in the vicinity. The target is immune to being *bewitched* for the rest of the battle.

**C: Psychic Blast +12 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)**—20 psychic damage

*Natural 14+:* The target becomes confused until the end of their next turn

*Limited:* can only be used on bewitched targets

*Bewitch:* Bewitched victims are caught in the demon's psychic lure. The victim sees whatever illusion or deception the demon creates—usually one that either draws the victim close to the demon, or convinces the victim to willingly step over the boundary of a hellhole. A bewitched victim may only attempt a save against being bewitched if given a reason to disbelieve in the illusion.

The tazerach may try to convince bewitched victims into taking actions based on the illusion that have different effects in reality. For example, it might urge victims to “untie me from these manacles”, but the victims are really manacled themselves to the dungeon wall while the tazerach looks on and laughs. Similarly, it might tell victims to walk down a tunnel, but they're really walking right into a demon's mouth.

### Nastier Specials

*Portal:* A tazerach demon can create short-range dimensional portals that link two points in the same general vicinity (same dungeon, same city, same hellhole). These portals can only be seen and used by the demon and its bewitched victims. The demon can project *psychic lures* through portals.

AC 20  
PD 15 HP 70  
MD 20

**Why lure?:** It's hard for demons to leave the boundaries of a hellhole. Their version of existence is not the same as ours, so they perish like a drowning man under the pressure of reality—that's why they want to smash the world, in the same way every sensible person wants to blow up the sea. (Their version of “sensible” is also not like ours.) Tazerach demons specialize in luring victims across those boundaries, trapping them in the hellhole for the other demons to devour.

In their natural form, tazerach demons resemble a cross between a small ape, a flowering orchid, and some sort of sea-crab with long, bone spikes for arms. They are extremely vain and competitive about their illusions, viciously critiquing each other's lures on points of style, originality, effectiveness and artistic worth.

### LURE DEMONS AND THE ICONS

Of course the Diabolist is especially fond of these demons. In a terribly dark campaign, the Elf Queen might have to use them to maintain some of her illusions, or the Prince of Shadows' agents would attempt to bind lure demons to help with truly difficult heists.

## ITEMS

*Earthbinding Arrow:* A creature struck by an *earthbinding* arrow loses the flight ability and cannot fly until it makes a successful save at the start of its turn. An *earthbinding arrow* can only affect creatures of the same tier as itself, or lower, and the difficulty of the save depends on whether the target of the arrow or the shooter is higher level. A higher level target only needs an easy save, a same-level target needs a normal save, a lower level target needs a difficult save.

*Cloak of Plausible Deniability* (recharge 11+): When you activate this cloak, you may take one quick action as if you were standing at a nearby point you can see. You don't actually move—there's a brief flickering projection as you're in two places at once. You still draw opportunity attacks if you cast a ranged spell or take any such action while projecting. Quirk: Secretive.

# CONCORDANCE

## THEMES

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Bad Emperors	Age of Towers, Age of the Terrible Emperor	54,90
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Crazy Zealots	Age of Towers, Age of the Howling Moon, Age of Claw & Wing, Age of the Bone Altar	54, 72, 37, 59
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# PAST ICONS

Most of these icons appeared as age-defining icons, but a few recurred, and any could return in your campaigns.

Name	Summary	Page
Alchemist	Brewer of potions, facilitator of werebeasts	73
Astrologer	Master of arcane science, facilitator of evil fate	92
Barbarian King	Might makes Right	67
Blessed Emperor	Founder of the Empire, symbol of justice and orderly rule	26
Captain of Corsairs	The pirate of all pirates	98
Champion	Emperor's right-hand paladin	107
Chieftain of the Giants	Giant big cheese	27
Cultist	Secret worshipper of the Dark Gods	55
Demon King	Invading demon	107
Dragonslayer	Fought dragons	37
Emerald Queen	Halfling sorceress of niceness	59
Empress of the Moon	Mysterious consort of the Emperor	74
Enchantress	Illusion and charm laughs at might	67
Explorer	Iconic adventurer	98
Forest that Walks	Fallen High Druid? Fallen icon of some sort, in the end.	84
Ghoul King	Carion master and future fallen icon	78
Gold King	Embodiment of dwarven greed	37
Grandmaster of Flowers	Supreme martial artist monk; our cover hero.	91
Green Bandit	Robbed from the rich, gave to the poor.	33
Hermit	Pre-eminent and isolated mystic spellcaster	84
Hobgoblin Warlord	Opportunistic military commander	49
Hooded Woman	Keeper of graves, master of the undead	26
Huntsman	Wolf-slaying hero	74
Imperial Fool	Folly-plagued Emperor	55
Judge	Paladin devoted to safety via strict control	78
King Below	Sahuagin commander of the hateful seas	100
Lady of Labyrinths	Underworld ruler	91
Lich King	Old One Eye is back	59
Lords of the City	Rulers of the Seven Cities	54
Manticore	Monstrous almost-icon and executioner	92
Marrow-Eater	Troll tomb robber	59
Merchant Prince	Supreme trader	98
Mountain Sage	Visitor from other stars	49
Oracle	Action-oriented prophet	107

## PAST ICONS (CONTINUED)

Name	Summary	Page
Poison Sage	Master of poisons, underworld mastermind	37
Princess of Cogs and Wheels	Manipulative dwarven engineer	32
Ratking	Prophesied hero of the Ratfolk	67
Roadwarden	The travelers' ally, adventurers' friend	78
Scarab Master	Mysterious insectoid warlord	33
Serpent	Bewitching green dragon	98
Silver Cleric	Wolf-hating inquisitor	74
Speaker in Light	Mysterious glowing intelligence	49
Spelljack	Chaotic sprite, stole magic from the Wizard King	26
Steel Colossus	Mysterious giant	49
Stranger	Mysterious meddler	67
Terrible Emperor	Evil mastermind	90
Titan, The	Savage and potentially ambiguously heroic giant	90
True Emperor	Antidote to the Terrible Emperor	90
Tyrant Lizard	The lizardmen's fierce queen	83
Wolf Druid	Lycanthropic High Druid	74
Zealot	Apocalyptic preacher of doom	60

## PLAYABLE RACES

Name	Summary	Ability Scores	Page
Alleykin	Cat people	+2 Dex OR +2 Cha	90
Arcanite	Custodians of ancient sorcery	+2 Int OR +2 Cha	31
Beastblooded	Descendants of lycanthropes	+2 Dex OR +2 Con	77
Lizardman	Angry cultural chameleons	+2 Dex OR +2 Con	88
Space Fleet Explorer	Utility-belt equipped descendant of visitors from the stars	+2 Int OR +2 Dex	52
Spiritborn	Half mortal, half elemental	+2 Wis OR +2 Cha	95
Unholy Ones	Touched by the Dark Gods	+2 Str OR +2 Cha	57

## MONSTER LIST

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2	mook	corsair crewman	entry-level pirate	normal	101
3	archer	kobold woodcrafter	spiky trapmaker	normal	86
3	blocker	corsair swashbuckler	bravo with a flashing blade	normal	102
3	spoiler	ratfolk assassin	murderous rat	normal	68
4	blocker	arcanite guard	militant arcanite warrior	normal	30
4	caster	arcanite custodian	spell-slinging arcanite wizard	normal	30
4	caster	drow shadow-spinner	unpredictable magic warrior	normal	86
4	caster	ratfolk bone shaman	indirectly murderous rat	normal	69
4	leader	werewolf noble	blue-blooded werebeast	double-strength	75
4	spoiler	gleeshey	cruel sprites	normal	85
4	troop	breathstealer thrall	zombie slave	normal	61
4	wrecker	corsair marine	vicious pirate	normal	103
4	wrecker	hog-ghoul	snuffling menace	normal	79
4	wrecker	ratfolk throat-chewer	even more murderous rat	normal	69
5	archer	fleshfly	hideous insect	normal	108
5	blocker	obsidian golem	inhuman law enforcement	large	80
5	caster	tazerech (lure demon)	psychic trickster	normal	110
5	leader	ratfolk champion	rat who decides who gets murdered	normal	69
5	spoiler	tunnel panther	stalker of the underworld	normal	34
5	troop	ghoul giant	fumbling giant	large	80
5	troop	hobgoblin tech hunter	well-armed scrounger	double-strength	50
5	wrecker	breathstealer cat	steals your last words and makes you its zombie slave	normal	61
5	wrecker	sword juggler	living armories	normal	56
6	blocker	Blackamber skeletal champion	big dead guy	double-strength	62
6	blocker	greenguard	undead plant creature, best employed as guardian	large	104
6	caster	godshade	ghost of a high priest	double-strength	44
6	leader	Blackamber skeletal captain	dead commander	normal	61
6	mook	star jelly	replicator	normal	52
6	spoiler	Underhome shade	dead dwarf who lures treasure-seekers	normal	34
6	troop	rootwight	undead forest	huge	87

# MONSTER LIST (CONTINUED)

Level	Role	Name	Summary	Size	Page
7	archer	security robot	AKA wand golem	normal	51
7	caster	weretiger wizard	elven were-wizard	large	76
7	caster	zombie pirate captain	pirate unwilling to relinquish command	double-strength	103
7	leader	messenger of the dark	whispering voice of the Dark Gods	large	56
7	mook	bone dervish puppet	summoned minion	normal	62
7	spoiler	bone dervish	whirlwind of death	normal	62
8	blocker	lair golem	guardian construct	double-strength	109
8	caster	necromage	chorus master of the damned	normal	62
8	caster	Pearl Legion cleric	healer as killer	normal	94
8	spoiler	green dream sprite	rogue jailer of the Green	double-strength	38
8	troop	primordial giant skeleton	reanimated giant with a detachable snapping skull!	huge	28
8	troop	shatterwalker	mirror-monster of the Enchantress	double-strength	70
8	troop	weredragon	alchemical mutant monster	normal	75
8	wrecker	Pearl Legion warrior	blessed soldier, cursed not to die	normal	93
9	wrecker	lizardman impaler	frenzied melee threat	normal	87
10	blocker	celestial judge	other-dimensional martial arts tournament arbiter	double-strength	94
10	caster	reliquary golem	misguided soul repository for elves	large	63
10	wrecker	divine remnant	a fallen god	large	44
12	mook	scarab swarm mook	lots of world-eating tiny insects	normal	35
12	wrecker	ichor vampire	divinely boosted vampire	normal	46
12	wrecker	Iron Sea monster	each flavor unique	huge	104
12	wrecker	scarab titan	world-shattering giant insect	huge	34
13	wrecker	Manticore, The	Near-icon, monstrous champion	huge	94

# SPELLS & POWERS

Class	Type	Name	Summary	Page
Any	general feat	Secret School Technique	improvisational history	57
Bard	feat	Chronicler	leverage ancient icons	25
Bard	feat	Spelljack's Favor (requires Jack of Spells talent)	add teleport effect	31
Bard	song	Song of the Iconoclast (requires Balladeer talent)	counters iconic influence	81
Cleric	feat	Dirge of the Lady (requires turn undead)	gain icon relationship with Hooded Woman	31
Cleric	spell	<i>divine intervention</i>	big darn spell, not to be used lightly	47
Cleric	spell	<i>light of revelation</i>	reveal hidden foes or hidden truths	57
Cleric	spell	<i>vigilant light</i>	corona aids first attac	64
Monk	talent	Emperor Killing Punch (Seven Deadly Secrets)	declare mortal enemies	97
Paladin	talent	Holy Strike	holy <i>smite evil</i> attacks, bonus <i>decree of anethema</i> spell	65
Ranger	feat	Favored Enemy adventurer-tier (talent required)	learn from your foes	88
Ranger	talent	Green Bandit's Secret	better ambushes and refuges	35
Rogue	talent	Poison Master	poison attacks	40
Sorcerer	spell	<i>breath of the beast</i>	blast foes or inspire friends	77
Sorcerer	talent	Green Heritage (High Druid)	new gather power tables	88
Sorcerer, Wizard	talent	Necroblast	pump up the negativity	64
Wizard	spell	<i>time travel</i>	allows travel between ages	70
Wizard	talent	Destiny Manipulation	rerolls, making trouble	96

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## MAGIC ITEMS

Name	Type	Summary	Page
<i>Earthbinding Arrow</i>	Arrow	pin 'em to the ground	110
<i>Armor of the Putrid Deep</i> s	Armor (heavy)	dwarven armor for exploring the perilous underworld	36
<i>Scarab War Kit</i>	Armor (heavy)	armor for fighting big creatures	36
<i>Belt of Primordial Giant Strength</i>	Belt	escalate vs. giants	31
<i>Girdle of the Barbarian King</i>	Belt	turn ongoing damage into pain for the enemy	71
<i>Knightwheel Sash</i>	Belt	facilitator of human & dwarven cooperation	36
<i>Dancing Boots of the Corsair</i>	Boots	fly (but beware song)	105
<i>Footpads of the Footpad</i>	Boots	low flight in low places	82
<i>Cloak of the Barbarian King</i>	Cloak	heal when Physical Defense attacks would kill you	71
<i>Cloak of the Grey Lady</i>	Cloak	foil undead	31
<i>Cloak of Plausible Deniability</i>	Cloak	two places at once	110
<i>Doppelganger Cloak</i>	Cloak	magical alibi	58
<i>Hame of the Tunnel Panther</i>	Cloak	scout the surrounding region as a panther-shadow	36
<i>Axis Stone Necklace</i>	Necklace	temporary hit points for a lost cause	31
<i>Ratfolk Charm</i>	Necklace	juggle bad luck	71
<i>Potion of Mental Fortitude</i>	Potion (rare!)	resist psychic attack	77
<i>Ring of Poison Transmutation</i>	Ring	turn poison damage into bonuses	40
<i>Ring of Treasured Indulgence</i>	Ring	escalation die bump purchased by item quirk takeover	40
<i>Wand of Last Resort</i>	Wand	surprise the surpriser	97
<i>Harmonious Weapon</i>	Weapon	swords that strike in unison	58
<i>Remorseless Weapon</i>	Weapon	punish staggered enemies	65
<i>Axe of the Barbarian King</i>	Weapon (axe)	kill mooks	71
<i>Woodcutter's Axe</i>	Weapon (axe)	cut friends out of monsters	89
<i>Dark Elf Bloodblade</i>	Weapon (edged melee)	foes taking ongoing damage are vulnerable to this weapon	36
<i>Knightwheel Weapon</i>	Weapon (melee)	encourages fighter maneuvering	36
<i>Always Reliable Treasure Map</i>	Wondrous Item	this time for sure	105
<i>Arcanolabe</i>	Wondrous Item	magical navigation	105
<i>Bone Altar</i>	Wondrous Item	make offerings to the Lich King	65
<i>Bottled Ship</i>	Wondrous Item	pour it out and sail	105
<i>Coin of Command</i>	Wondrous Item	services bought with this coin cannot be denied	36

## MAGIC ITEMS (CONTINUED)

Name	Type	Summary	Page
<i>Egg of Rebirth</i>	Wondrous Item	one-shot <i>resurrection</i>	89
<i>Fatestone</i>	Wondrous Item	frozen shard of destiny	58
<i>Gatewarden's Talisman</i>	Wondrous Item	town or village soul link	82
<i>Marvelous String</i>	Wondrous Item	connected to the overworld	89
<i>Peach Blossom of the Assassin</i>	Wondrous Item	get out of combat flower	97
<i>Ratfolk Charm</i>	Wondrous Item	ratfolk services are yours	71
<i>Roadwarden's Talisman</i>	Wondrous Item	adopt an Imperial Highway	82
<i>Spelljack Marionette</i>	Wondrous Item	jealous but helpful puppet	31
<i>Torch of the Underwar</i>	Wondrous Item	spot hidden things	97

## NEW ICON SYMBOLS

Lee Moyer created nine new symbols for ancient icons.

CAPTAIN OF  
CORSAIRS  
(PAGE 98)



CHIEFTAIN  
OF GIANTS  
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CULTIST  
(PAGE 55)



EMPRESS  
OF THE MOON  
(PAGE 74)



ENCHANTRESS  
(PAGE 67)



GHOUL KING  
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GRANDMASTER  
OF FLOWERS  
(PAGE 91)



SPEAKER IN LIGHT  
(PAGE 49)



TYRANT LIZARD  
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## Factions, Great and Small

1. Imperial Court
2. Imperial Bureaucracy
3. Imperial Legions
4. Dragon Cavalry
5. Gladiators of Axis
6. Merchant Guilds
7. Dark Elves
8. Wood Elves
9. High Elves
10. Dwarves
11. Halflings
12. Gnomes
13. Druids
14. Wizards
15. Bardic Colleges
16. Followers of the Light
17. Thieves
18. Paladins of the Golden Order
19. Peasants
20. Mountain Giants
21. Storm Giants
22. Metallic Dragons
23. Followers of the Dark Gods
24. Dwarven Runesmiths
25. Golems
26. Chromatic Dragons
27. Centaurs
28. Free-willed Undead
29. Demons
30. Barbarians of Moonwreck
31. Koru Behemoth tribes
32. Orcs
33. Goblins
34. Overworld Entities
35. Derro
36. Lizardmen
37. Half-Orcs
38. Chuul Nesting
39. Ghoul Kingdom
40. Vampires
41. Kobolds
42. The Undying Peerage of Liches
43. Naga Writhing
44. Ogre Magi
45. Sahuagin
46. Tieflings
47. Forgeborn
48. Draconics
49. Holy Ones
50. Fungaloids
51. Sea Raiders
52. Serpent People
53. Nomads of the Red Waste
54. Monks
55. Necromancers
56. Assassins
57. Dynastic Sorcerers
58. Anti-Imperial Rebels
59. College of Horizon
60. Banks of Glitterhaegen
61. Churches of Santa Cora
62. Council of Concord
63. Lords of Drakkenhall (Highrock)
64. Gangs of Shadowport
65. Mercenary Companies
66. Fisherfolk of the Isles
67. Demonic Cultists
68. The Crusade
69. Warhost of the Orc Lord
70. Dwellers in the Floating Islands
71. Lycanthropes
72. Sundry Denizens of the Underworld
73. Hobgoblins
74. Kobolds
75. Gnolls
76. Devils
77. Azer
78. Elementals
79. Acolytes of the High Druid
80. Forests with talking trees
81. Merfolk
82. Fey
83. Ratfolk
84. Unholy Ones
85. Crazyed Zealots
86. Things Grown In Vats
87. Thieves' guilds
88. Wandering traders of Nomad
89. Corsairs of the Iron Sea
90. Renegade dwarves
91. Sea Elves
92. Starport Skysmiths
93. Ancient Ghosts (roll 1d20 to determine their hosts)
94. Doppelgangers (roll 1d20 twice to see who they're mimicking)
95. Time Travelers (roll 1d20 to determine who)
96. Mind-Controlling Brain Bugs (roll 1d20 to determine their hosts)
97. Secret vampires (roll 1d20 to see the strata of civilization they're infiltrating)
98. Secret lycanthropes (roll 1d20 to see the strata of civilization they're infiltrating)
99. Secret cultists (roll 1d20 to see the strata of civilization they're infiltrating)
100. Flip to a random page of the *13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary* or the monster book of your choice. That's your faction.

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