



# CHILDREN OF THE ICONS



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# CHILDREN OF THE ICONS

The most common one unique thing (so to speak!) that I've seen in running *13th Age* is a variation on "I'm the child of one of the icons." Bastard children of the Emperor have been popular since the earliest hours of the original playtest, but I've also seen children of the Diabolist, Lich King, Elf Queen, and Prince of Shadows. There's nothing wrong with this concept for a one unique thing. In fact, it taps into one of fantasy's most powerful archetypes and generates a huge amount of player involvement in the campaign's core narrative.

The "Children of Power" section below offers inspiration for players who know which icon they'd like to be uniquely related to but aren't sure how they want the connection to play out. GMs looking for backstories for powerful NPCs will find plenty to draw on.

"Campaign Ideas" offers GMs four possible campaigns that play off situations in which multiple PCs have icons for parents.

The "Iconic Foes" are also for GMs, providing two tough monsters showing how iconic parentage can play out for NPCs.

## CHILDREN OF POWER

The Emperor is first among iconic parents but sixth in alphabetical order. Let's stick with alphabetical order, since after the Emperor's #1 Dad Ranking there's no way to be sure about Parents #2–#13.

### ARCHMAGE

First off, when you say "child," are you entirely sure you mean "offspring"? If anyone's going to grow their kids in a magical vat, or pluck them out of the future, or conjure them fully grown from the aether, it's the Archmage. You might also be the physical result of some sort of weird magical congress—mundane treaties get marked with signatures and wax seals, but when the Archmage binds the Queen of the Efrete, they have a child together as the symbol of that bargain. That's you, the symbol—and if you ever get broken, the binding breaks too, so try not to die.

Alternatively, the idea of the all-powerful, awesomely weird Archmage returning to an ordinary little cottage outside Horizon and having a deliberately mundane and boring home life has its charms.

In either case, with his busy schedule of world-saving and obsessive research, the Archmage is probably something of a neglectful father ... unless you're following in his footsteps and studying wizardry, in which case good luck getting out from under *that* shadow—no matter how good you are, everyone will assume that your father's helping you out.

If you're not a spellcaster of some sort, then your relationship with ArchDad is almost certainly conflicted.

### CRUSADER

And we called the Archmage neglectful! The Crusader's training regimen is supposed to erase all pity and love from the hearts of his followers, so winning your father's love might be literally impossible. The child of the Crusader might be expected to carry on the great mission—and the worship of the Dark Gods—should the current Crusader fall.

For a negative take on the relationship, then your father was supposed to sacrifice his firstborn to the Dark Gods in order to complete some blasphemous rite. Maybe you were spirited away by your mother, and now the Crusader hunts you to finish the ritual. What might the Crusader accomplish with your death—and who, therefore, wants to keep you alive at all costs?

Perhaps your father became the Crusader *after* you were born, and doesn't actually know you exist ... yet. Or perhaps he's doing all this for you—he'll deliver you a world free of demons and dangers by any means necessary. He's got no room in his head for love, but duty is another matter.

### DIABOLIST

I can see children of the Diabolist being treated very well, like pampered pets. Sure, your nursemaid was a succubus and your first puppy was named Cerberus, but the Diabolist dotes on her playthings (until they bore her).

Go ahead and grab the demontouched racial traits—if you're not actually half-demon, you've still probably picked up some diabolic taint along the way. Given the Diabolist's proclivity for chaos, you might be the product of a night of passion, or you might be part of some scheme to sow anarchy. Perhaps you're the Diabolist's son, but you're also the secret illegitimate son of some noble lord, and your mother's going to back you when it comes to claiming your inheritance.

Stories about the Diabolist stealing children from the villages near Hell Marsh, or spiriting children away through their dreams, or distributing demonic teddy bears to orphans? All scandalous lies, no doubt, except when they're not.

For an added fairy-tale feel, maybe the Diabolist is your godmother, not your mother. She turned up at your naming ceremony and claimed you for her own. (This also works well with the Elf Queen or Lich King ....)

### DWARF KING

If acknowledged, you're dwarven nobility. If unacknowledged, you're an embarrassment who's been exiled for political reasons. Either way, you're not going to be able to escape Forge politics in your adventuring career. In my games, dwarf politics are infamously byzantine, with webs of family debts and complex legal arrangements going back centuries. The Dwarf Kings are the lynchpin of the whole system—without a strong king, the



various clans, guilds, brotherhoods, cities, and tribes would be squabbling over old grudges until the mountains fall.

Orc assassins are also likely to loom large in your future. The Orc Lord knows that if he can eliminate the Dwarf King's heirs and plunge the dwarf kingdom into civil war, he can break through into the Empire.

You may as well make your people's magic hinge on things that work in your favor! Say that dwarf magic depends on family names and inheritances. The Dwarf King's claim on all underground treasures, for example, stems from his ancestral holdings under the ground. There are dwarven holds and buried cities sealed with ancient magical wards that will respond to *your touch*, o scion of the Line of Stone. There are things, too, that remember your kin of old, and dwarves are not the only things that bear grudges.

### ELF QUEEN

While individual Elf Kings or Queens may come and go like seasons, they are all but masks for the immortal entity that is the oversoul of every Elf—and your mom. The part of the Elf Queen that's mortal, that grows and changes and dies, *that* might care for you. The other part *can't*. How does that affect your relationship? And while the position is by no means hereditary, there's still a possibility that you'll be called upon to take on the mantle of the Stars when the current Queen dies. Are you ready for that awesome responsibility, or do you understand the magnitude of the sacrifice it entails better than other elves?

All that's in the future, of course. Another key question: got any siblings? By tradition, in my campaign, the Elf Queen marries consorts from each of the three branches of elvendom—sometimes sequentially, sometimes simultaneously. She's supposed to avoid favoring one branch of elves over another without good cause. So, if you're a wood elf and a daughter of the Queen, then you've either got a high elf and dark elf sibling, or else things are out of balance. Maybe balance will be restored when you get a young sibling ... or maybe the dark elves will try to redress that balance by eliminating you. (And if you're a half-elf, then something very weird is going on!)

Finally, although the elves don't like to talk about it, a lot of elven princes and princesses come to really bad ends. Really, really bad ones.

### EMPEROR

If you're part of the Imperial Family, then you're probably well down the line of succession. It's something of a tradition for Imperial heirs to spend a few years adventuring incognito in the Empire—it teaches them to fend for themselves and to appreciate the problems of the common folk, and it gets them out of Axis with all its intrigue and endless political whirling. Once, the same tradition appointed a dragon as bodyguard to each heir, but there aren't enough dragons left, so you're (probably) on your own. When you return from your wanderings as an adventurer, you can retake your rightful place in court, or at the head of the armies, or as an Imperial governor—or maybe even on the throne, if (a) your father's dead and (b) you're epic level at the very least!

If you're the bastard child of the Emperor, then you don't have a rightful place to come back to. You don't get an official

inheritance, or access to the Imperial treasures. What you do inherit, though, are all the prophecies and curses that weigh down the Imperial line. Ever since the first Emperor slew the Wizard King, the Imperial line has been the fulcrum of innumerable prophecies and foretellings, some of which may come to pass through your deeds.

### GREAT GOLD WYRM

Um. I'm *guessing* we're going for some sort of mystical parentage here, given the Wyrms stuck in the Abyss and, at least in my campaigns, is a giant gold dragon big enough to seal a two-hundred-mile-long rift in reality with his body. Maybe your destiny is to rebuild the Golden Citadel and reunite the Wyrms' scattered followers, or maybe you're the Wyrms' lifeline, and, one day, you must descend into the Abyss to rescue him (or take his place, or maybe finally give him rest). Or maybe you're *literally* his heir—one day, when you're powerful enough, you'll transform into a new Great Gold Wyrms. (Reaching 10<sup>th</sup> level does strange things to a chap.)

This is very, very much a unique thing—there are lots of children of the Emperor, or the Elf Queen, or even the Prince of Shadows, but there has *never* been a child of the Great Gold Wyrms before in all the ages.

### HIGH DRUID

Interestingly, the *current* High Druid is described as a young half-elf woman—so maybe you're not her child. Maybe you're the child of the *previous* High Druid. How do you feel about this half-elf who's taken on your parent's mantle? Or is your relationship with the High Druid more mystical, so you're her "son" the way the Elf Queen is her "half-sister"? (And does that make the Elf Queen your aunt?)

Another interesting option that works for the High Druid—and for several other icons who are less likely to have a biological child, like the Lich King or the Three—is to be the *adopted* child of the icon. Maybe you were left to die as a baby in the Wild Wood, and the animals found you and raised you like Mowgli?

The High Druid is the power of the wild, of nature unchecked and unbound. Do you stand on a middle ground between civilization and the wilderness, or are do you follow the Druid into the Wild Wood?

### LICH KING

So—are you the Lich King's adopted child, or is this another case of something weird (magical birth, grown in a lab, genuinely half-undead)? Or were you born way back when your father was the Wizard King, and you've only just woken up now? (Maybe the Wizard King hurled you forward in time with his awesome magic, or perhaps you were imprisoned in stasis by the successful rebels.)

One of the PCs in a former campaign of mine was the son of the Lich King, and we had tremendous fun with flashbacks to his creepy gothic childhood on Necropolis (playing hide-and-seek with the ghosts, visiting vampires for tea, life-sized war games with legions of skeletons, lich tutors giving him an excellent if somewhat antiquated education). Depending on your conception of the Lich King, he might even be the sort of honorable villain who lets his child go out into the mortal world to prove him





wrong. Another, nastier twist might be that you'll become a super-powerful Lich Prince when you die, but it'll consume your soul. You've got to stay alive to avoid that fate.

### ORC LORD

*13th Age* half-orcs are civilization's immune system response to the presence of full orcs. Does that mean that you're the spiritual child of the Orc Lord, born in response to his violence and conquests, or are you different from normal half-orcs in that you're the child of the Orc Lord and some human woman? Or maybe you're his adopted child? Maybe he sacked your home village, killed your actual parents, but decided to raise you as his own?

The Orc Lord's history before he arrived in the Empire at the head of an all-conquering army is a mystery. Maybe you were born outside the Empire, and followed your father's trail of destruction to these strange lands. Are you coming to aid him or thwart him? For that matter, you could also be the Orc Lord's *sibling* rather than his child—the elves created the first Orc Lord to defeat the Wizard King, but maybe there are other prototype orcs still slumbering in some drow laboratory ...

### PRIESTESS

When did the Priestess become the Priestess? Was she the Priestess when she gave birth to you, or was she your mother first and only later did she ascend and speak with the voice of the

Gods of Light? Are you entirely mortal, or is there divine blood in your veins? Do prophecies and omens cluster around you? (This is getting somewhat messianic.)

If you're openly known as the Priestess's child, then people assume you reflect her holy radiance. Miracles are expected of you. Maybe you can perform them, but it's equally fun if you can't—a screwed-up, rebellious, hell-raising failed Chosen One sounds like a blast to play. Did you grow up in the Cathedral? If so, what was that like? How normal can a demigod be?

On the other hand, maybe you lived a normal life. Maybe your mother disappeared when you were very young, and it's only when you saw her face on a pilgrim's relic from Santa Cora that you learned what became of her.

### PRINCE OF SHADOWS

This Most Shadowy Parent begs the recurring question: do you know your father (or mother) is the Prince of Shadows? Of all the icons, the Prince is the most likely to be the one living a double (or quadruple, or more) life. Your father's a sailor who spends many months away at sea, child, but he always comes home with the most marvelous toys for you ... just don't ask questions about where he got them.

Or maybe you trained by your father's side, learning some of his secrets and conspiracies. "Prince" is a hereditary title, after all—perhaps one day, you'll wear that title, and no one will ever know that there's a different mortal thief beneath that cryptic hood.





Another option—the Prince stole you, like he steals everything else. Maybe he wasn't always your father, but he stole your love when he kidnapped you.

### THE THREE

Powerful dragons like these can shapechange into humanoid form. The Blue definitely can if she wants to, and I'd put good money on the Black being able to do so— all the better to sneak around and spy on the Empire. Maybe the Red can too, if he bothers, but can humanoids breathe fire hot enough to melt mountains? No? Then why bother being a human?

The Blue might bear a human child as part of her scheme to infiltrate the Empire—maybe you're the child of Lord such-and-such of Proudfort, and his wife, the Imperial Governess of

Drakkenhall. Yes, the Governess is more commonly known by another name, but, please, do my mother the honor of using her correct title. Or maybe we should take her title of "mother of sorcery" literally—maybe you're the living incarnation of sorcery in this age of the world!

The Black's another potential deadbeat icon, abandoning her children when they become inconvenient. Maybe she dropped you off on the doorstep of one of her assassin-training monasteries in a basket labeled "bring her back to me when she's useful," or perhaps she just left you to make your own way in the world. Alternatively, the Black's spies could easily pull off a changeling gambit, swapping you for another child to put you in a position of power when you come of age.

Children of the Red ... tend to have anger issues.

## ICON BENEFITS & FAMILY TIES

Or, if I'm the Emperor's heir, why do I need to roll a 6 to get some help?

Remember, at adventurer and champion tiers, you're rarely dealing with the icon in question directly. If you roll a 6 on, say, your relationship with the Archmage, that doesn't mean that the Archmage himself shows up to give you a hand. The benefit might be indirect or symbolic—you can exploit your magical blood or the secrets your father taught you to pull off some impressive work of magic. It might come through intermediaries—you might be in contact with some lesser representative of his, perhaps a wizard from Horizon or a bound magical spirit. In the latter case, arguing that you should get special treatment because of your parentage is likely to backfire. You'll come across as a spoiled brat—for every NPC who helps you out because of your parentage, there'll be another who resents or mistrusts you because of it.

This doesn't apply, of course, if you're dealing with your iconic parent directly. A kind GM might let you automatically succeed at an icon roll when you're at home—assuming there aren't other complications, like rival siblings or court intrigue to deal with.

## CAMPAIGN IDEAS

One player with a big one unique thing can shape a campaign. Being the child of an icon is definitely a Big Unique Thing! That's fine with some groups, while others prefer that everyone's OUTs are of more or less equal magnitude. Equality of OUTs is a bit tough. You can dicker and balance, or you could try a campaign in which everyone's OUTs are variations on a theme. How about a campaign where *everyone* is the child of an icon?

### ICONS FROM PREVIOUS AGES

If the idea of being descended from an icon appeals to you, but you don't want to bind yourself to any of the current thirteen, then you could be the child of or heir to an icon from another age. Maybe you're the great-great-great-and-lots-more-great-grandchild of the Oracle, or you bear the ancestral symbol of the Werewolf Prince, or you're the daughter of the Alchemist, imprisoned for three whole ages as punishment for your part in his crimes.

## DEFENDERS OF THE EMPIRE

When danger threatens the Dragon Empire, the icons turn to their most trusted agents—and who be trusted more than family? You're princes and champions of the Empire—the Emperor's chosen heir, the Archmage's daughter, the Priestess's son, the Great Gold Wyrms's scion ... maybe the Crusader's kid is in the mix too. This



is a great setup for a lighthearted monster-of-the-week style of campaign, where you get sent in to save the world from a different peril every session. (It would work really well with the super-fast 10-session campaign outlined on page 190 of *13<sup>th</sup> Age*.)

Optionally, give every player one free icon benefit every session, to reflect their status as trusted troubleshooters. Of course, given the scale of the challenges they'll be facing, one benefit may not be enough to keep them alive ....

## PINE PRINCES in AXIS

From Saturday morning pantomimes to bitter political infighting and conspiracies—this campaign sets up all the player characters as siblings. You're all children of the same icon! Do you want to go for dynastic politics in the Emperor's court, hellish intrigue in the Diabolist's stronghold, or maybe even a fantasy recreation of *The Godfather* where you're all children of the Prince of Shadows, trying to hold a crime empire together while squabbling amongst yourselves?

In this campaign, everyone's one unique thing should still be unique, even if they all refer to your shared parent in some way. For example, if you're all playing the Priestess's children in a sort of *Borgias-with-fireballs* melodrama, one character might be "*the only child of the Priestess and the God of War*," while someone else might be "*the keeper of the Keys to the Cathedral*," and someone else might have "*inherited my mother's gift of prophecy*."

## RUNAWAYS

Icon relationships can be negative or conflicted as well as positive, just like any relationship. This is the flipside of *Defenders of the Empire*—here, you're all playing children of various different icons, united only by your shared rejection of your parents (or maybe shared rejection *by* your parents). The Archmage's son, who has no gift for magic. The Crusader's daughter who despises the Dark Gods. The Dwarf King's drunken heir, who caused a diplomatic incident every time he attended court. The Diabolist's son, the golden paladin. Fate has drawn you together into an unlikely band of heroes—will it also draw your various parents together in an equally unlikely alliance against you?

If you go with this setup, steal the classic Shadow mechanic from *Wraith*, and each player also plays the iconic parent of another player. Then, if that icon relationship rolls up, one of the other players gets to decide how your estranged parent complicates your life this week.

## MATRICIDE OR PATRICIDE OR DEATH!

A more extreme take—you're all the children of an evil icon, and now you're going to team up to bring your mutual parent down. Good potential parents include the Diabolist, the Three, or the Lich King (opening up one unique things like "assembled from the bodies of dead heroes" or "time-shifted Wizard Prince from the 1<sup>st</sup> Age" or "redeemed vampire"). This campaign has a definite end to aim for—but which of you is going to inherit your parent's position when the time comes? Can you really trust your half-siblings not to betray you at the end?

## ICONIC FOES

Why should the players have all the family fun? The children of enemy icons work great as recurring nemeses or endgame villains.

### THE RED HERALD

*The Archmage's wards prevent the Red from entering the Empire—but his chosen herald is under no such restriction. The Red Herald, daughter of the Red Dragon, walks where she wills, and destruction follows.*



*Triple-strength 11<sup>th</sup> level wrecker* [HUMANOID]  
Initiative: +17

**Fiery sword +15 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—70 damage, plus 20 ongoing fire damage (save ends)

*Natural even miss:* The target takes 20 ongoing fire damage.

*Offering of flame:* The Red Herald gets to add the escalation die to her *fiery sword* attacks when targeting enemies suffering ongoing fire damage OR who have positive/conflicted relationships with the Archmage or the Great Gold Wyrn.

**C: Fiery breath +16 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—80 fire damage, and 20 ongoing fire damage (save ends)

*Miss:* Half damage, and no ongoing fire damage.

**R: Prophecy of fire +16 vs. MD (2d3 nearby or far away enemies)**—60 psychic damage, plus enemies hit by this attack automatically fail their next save against ongoing fire damage. In addition, if the Red Herald hits four or more PC-caliber enemies with *prophecy of fire* in a single attack, the Red itself will somehow fly over the area within the next week or month and burn it to a cinder. Guaranteed.

*Intermittent breath:* The Red Herald can use either *fiery breath* or *prophecy of fire* a total of 1d4 + 1 times per battle, but may not do so the turn after it has used either of the two attacks.

*Dragon transformation:* When the Red Herald is first staggered, she becomes a dragon. She may fly for the rest of the battle, loses her *fiery sword*, and instead gains:

**Fangs, claws, and tail +16 vs. AC (3 attacks)**—80 damage

*First natural even hit or miss each turn:* Roll a fourth *fangs, claws, and tail* attack

*Resist fire 18+:* When a fire attack targets the Red Herald, the attacker must roll a natural 18+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

*Three kin:* A player character who slays the Red Herald automatically gains a 1-point negative relationship with the Three. (Existing relationships with the Three turn negative, then increase by 1 point.) Furthermore, all players must then immediately roll their relationship dice with the Three, the Archmage, and the Great Gold Wyrn. If *three* or more of these dice show a 5 or a 6, the Red will arrive within a few minutes and



scorch the area with all-consuming fire. Any characters unable to escape the Red's wrath (perhaps through *teleport*, other means of fast travel, or hastily constructed icon relationship storylines) must flee and suffer a campaign loss or perish.

AC 27

PD 23

MD 23

HP 880

## THE BONE PRINCESS

*The Wizard King, it's said, had a daughter. He built her a walled garden on the island of Omen, and filled it with all manner of wonders and delights conjured by his magic. His madness grew, but he sheltered his daughter from the cruel tyranny he visited on the rest of the Empire.*

*Heroes rose against him, and the Wizard King died. What happened to his daughter is a story no one knows.*

*Now, on the island of Necropolis, there is another walled garden, only in this one all the flowers are dead. All the wonders are made of bone and dust, and all the delights are hollow. There dwells the Bone Princess, who wears a porcelain mask over her skeletal face. The first commandment of the Lich King, a dread commandment that all the dead in Necropolis must obey, is that none of them must ever tell the Bone Princess that she is dead.*

Triple-strength 9<sup>th</sup> level caster [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +17



**Withering touch +14 vs. AC**—100 negative energy damage, and targets struck by this attack may not regain hit points in any way (hard save ends, 16+)

*Miss:* 50 negative energy damage.

**C: Imperious command +13 vs. MD (all nearby enemies)**—30 psychic damage

*Natural 12+:* The target must immediately make a free basic or at-will attack against an ally.

**R: Sorrowful tales +13 vs. MD (1 nearby or far away enemy)**—150 ongoing psychic damage (hard save ends, 16+). That target may avoid taking this damage by telling part of a fascinating story to the Bone Princess. To determine the initial topic of the story, the target must roll their icon relationships and interpret the results as they choose. Hesitation or failure to tell a satisfying installment of the story means the enemy suffers the psychic damage.

**[Special trigger] C: Death shriek +13 vs. MD (all nearby enemies)**—150 psychic damage

*Dying scream:* The Bone Princess makes a *death shriek* attack when slain.

*Undead kin:* A PC who slays the Bone Princess automatically gains a 1-point negative relationship with the Lich King. (Existing relationships with the Lich King turn negative, then increase by 1 point.) Furthermore, all players must then immediately roll their Lich King relationships. If any of these relationship rolls comes up with a 5, then any player characters slain in the battle immediately rise up as hostile undead creatures of equal level.

AC 25

PD 19

MD 23

HP 540