

13th Age

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Most d20 games have powerful NPCs who shape the world behind the scenes. *13th Age* brings them forward, making these thirteen powerful NPCs into icons the PCs will aid or oppose over the course of each campaign.



THE ARCHMAGE

has preserved the Empire for centuries and created astonishing new lands. He has also threatened the fabric of reality with experiments you'd have to be brilliant or hugely arrogant to attempt.



THE CRUSADER

is the armored fist of the Dark Gods. So long as followers of the Gods of Light stay the hell out of his way, the Crusader turns his wrath against the demons that would destroy the world his own gods want to rule. Follow the Crusader if you must win at any cost.



THE DIABOLIST

controls fiends and tampers with forces even the Archmage avoids. She likes her victims screaming and her chaos pure while claiming that the demons she summons would otherwise overwhelm the Great Gold Wyrms who seals the Abyss. There are two differences between her and her demons: First, she likes keeping destruction personal rather than universal. Second, she's capable of kindness, so long as it comes as a great surprise.



THE DWARF KING

is lord of Forge, the dwarves' new homeland beneath the mountains. He'd love to reclaim the dwarven Underhome lost to war against the dark elves and the creatures of the deeps. But now that the Empire is stumbling, the dwarves find themselves manning the mountain walls that shield the Empire from the orcs and monsters of the north.



THE ELF QUEEN

rules the Court of Stars, the one place where wood elves, dark elves, and high elves come together as peers and allies instead of as rivals or enemies. Honed by centuries of experience, the Queen's innate magic at least equals the Archmage's spells.



THE EMPEROR

rules the world's greatest human kingdom, known as the Dragon Empire for the mounts of its mightiest warriors. All the signs suggest that the age is turning, but will the Empire fall or shift to a new balance?



THE GREAT GOLD WYRM

is the world's protector and the inspiration for holy orders of paladins and independent heroes. Although the Gold Wyrms' physical form seals the gap that prevents the Abyss from erupting into the world, his dreams and the agents he employs still move through the world, helping those who will fight and even die for what's right.



THE HIGH DRUID

is the champion of the resurgent Wild, and the spiritual and magical leader of spirits of nature and the elements that were chained by the Empire but are now working themselves free. She might be the great force that shakes the Empire to pieces or the hero who destroys the destroyers and points to a new way to live.



THE LICH KING

is the lord of the undead, a fallen tyrant who intends to conquer the Dragon Empire and restore his ancient kingdom. He's not entirely insane and mostly understands that ruling a kingdom is not the same as destroying it.



THE ORC LORD

is a figure of legend. The last time he walked the land the Lich King fell, in part because of the Orc Lord's attack. Who will fall before his hordes this time? Who won't?



THE PRIESTESS

hears all the Gods of Light and speaks for those who please her. She is part oracle, part mystic, and part metaphysical engineer, since she created the Cathedral, an ever-expanding temple with rooms or entire wings for each of the faiths she favors.



THE PRINCE OF SHADOWS

is part thief, part trickster, and part assassin. To some he is a hero; to others a villain. He has squandered the riches of the dwarves, murdered the hopes of a dragon, and plundered the dreams of a god. His exploits have changed the world, but none can tell you his ultimate goals or motives.



THE THREE

were among the first dragons to walk the world. The Red is a living engine of destruction. The Blue is a sorceress, perhaps even the original mother of all sorcery. The Black is queen of shadows and assassins. Unlike the Great Gold Wyrms, who must fight alone, the Three have learned to join forces.



ARCHMAGE

The Archmage has preserved the Empire for centuries and created astonishing new lands. He has also threatened the fabric of reality with experiments you'd have to be brilliant or hugely arrogant to attempt.

QUOTE

"Your pardon, but this is the moment you burst into flames . . . fireball . . . and I go save civilization."

USUAL LOCATION

In Horizon, or (rumor has it) peering out through the eyes of one of his homunculi.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

For hundreds of years, one man has held the Empire together—the Archmage. While an everyday wizard works magic that can astound or destroy a crowd, the Archmage casts spells that make the civilized world safe and prosperous. His magic quiets storms, enlivens crops, and staves off plague. The Empire has experienced a steady growth in order, security, and wealth, largely because the Archmage wards off chaos, peril, and calamity.

The Archmage's plans and projects are beyond the ken of normal people, but even normal people are part of his schemes. The Empire's farms plant different crops at different times, all

coordinated by the Archmage's schedule. Merchants and travelers consult the Archmage's almanacs to find the best times to set sail. But the common people have little appreciation for what the Archmage does for them. People even complain about the Archmage's instructions, as if he were a capricious bureaucrat in the imperial offices.

The Archmage maintains the wards that protect the Empire through a series of magical nodes, placed at strategic points across the land. The nodes tap into ley lines, which occur naturally (although the imperial ley lines are better controlled and more powerful) and channel and direct arcane energy from them to the wards.

The Archmage oversees the School of Imperial Wizardry, though it is run day-to-day by one of his trusted inner circle members. Sometimes this school devotes itself to testing and training those with arcane potential. The imperial wizards are notorious for being tight-lipped about their true intentions, and they lie without compunction to cover their tracks. No one holds it against them; the Archmage knows best.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

Many adventurers long to be hired into the Archmage's service. His wizards provide powerful arcane support, and they reward adventurers well, but the Archmage's missions are notoriously obscure. Instead of killing monsters or rescuing damsels, adventurers hired by imperial wizards may find themselves burying ritual items in wastelands or painting sigils on the walls of ruins. Somehow, it's all very important to the empire.

The less-known truth is that the Archmage is losing his handle on the multitude of tasks he has taken responsibility for and is forced to trust more and more missions to adventurers and agents while he struggles to deal with the high arcana that only he can survive.

ALLIES

The Archmage swears undying fealty to the Emperor. There are legends of past Archmages who have betrayed their imperial oaths, and those legends always end poorly for all concerned. The Archmage and the Priestess, as fellow champions of the Empire, are bound to work together toward common goals. Some say that high-order goals are all the two icons have in common and that they are never seen together at Imperial functions. Others say that they cooperate more than anyone knows and that the Archmage even helped the Priestess build the Cathedral.

ENEMIES

Nature, like the High Druid, chafes at the bit that the Archmage has jammed into its mouth. If the Archmage is the enemy of nature, he is careful not to raise the Elf Queen's ire. The Archmage respects the boundaries of the Elf Queen's territory, and for her part she has no particular sympathy for nature in the raw.

HISTORY

As often as not, no mortal is worthy to claim the title of Archmage. An Archmage's reign lasts for decades or centuries. Eras in which there is an Archmage tend to be times of growth and recovery, though sometimes an Archmage appears in order to prevent the lands from descending into chaos.

The current Archmage has been in power for centuries, overseeing a gradual increase in general security and prosperity.

THE TRUE DANGER

Everything will be all right provided that no catastrophe brings down the Archmage's power nodes and plunges the Empire into a maelstrom of rampant elementals, natural forces, monsters from the Iron Sea, and demons from the Abyss.

CRUSADER

The Crusader is the armored fist of the Dark Gods. So long as followers of the Gods of Light stay the hell out of his way, the Crusader turns his wrath against the demons that would destroy the world that his gods want to rule. Follow the Crusader if you must win at any cost.

QUOTE

"I fear nothing, least of all doing what must be done."

USUAL LOCATION

First Triumph, a fortress in a conquered hellhole near Axis. Or out Crusading.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

One way or another, it's a bad sign that the Crusader is accommodated within the Empire and sometimes even welcomed. It means either that the common people have lost their good sense or that times are so dire that the people will accept the help of a destroyer bound to the Dark Gods.

If the enemy of your enemy is your friend, then the Crusader is everybody's friend because demons are everybody's enemy. The Crusader, however, is the sort of friend who will burn your house to the ground if he finds it tactically necessary.

The mighty deeds of the Crusader include conquering hellholes and making them his own. The first hellhole he conquered was an especially large and perverted one near the Imperial capital, Axis. It was there that he established his headquarters, known as First Triumph. When he conquers a hellhole, he binds the defeated demons and forces them to garrison the fort he builds or claims at the location.

The Crusader leads an elite corps of ruthless warriors, spellcasters, and assassins. From him, they learn the lost ways of the Dark Gods, speaking oaths long forbidden to those who walk in the light of day. Critics of the Crusader say that the side effect of this training is to burn all pity and love from the hearts of the crusaders, and indeed a pitiless heart is not a side effect but the very point of the training. Many crusader initiates prove unworthy of the challenge. Those who die in training are perhaps luckier than those who live on, forever haunted by what they learned but failed to master.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

For an adventurer to have undertaken missions sponsored by the Crusader is a cause for bragging rights. Such missions are never mere cakewalks or uneventful garrison duty. The Crusader has stepped on certain toes, and his personal style is unacceptable to certain hosts, so he occasionally hires adventurers from outside his organization to undertake missions in "hostile" territory, such as the Priestess's Cathedral in Santa Cora or in the vicinity of the Golden Citadel.

ALLIES

The Crusader acknowledges the Emperor as the ruler of the land, though some suspect that he would just as soon acknowledge the Lich King as such. The bitter rivalry between the Crusader and the Great Gold Wurm lacks any formal declaration, but it is as thick as ochre jelly.

ENEMIES

If the Diabolist fears the Crusader, and she probably should, then he's the only thing in all the worlds that she fears. The Priestess works to protect people from the excesses of the Crusader, to the point of hindering his efforts.

HISTORY

The history books include accounts of imperial champions, but never a hero as dark and forbidding as the Crusader. He might be a new icon, or a recurrent hero icon that has somehow woke up on the dark side of the banner.

THE TRUE DANGER

Everything will be all right provided the demons keep the Crusader busy and he has no time to pay attention to second priorities, such as stomping on the face of goodness and light.



DIABOLIST

The Diabolist controls fiends and tampers with forces even the Archmage avoids. She likes her victims screaming and her chaos pure while claiming that the demons she summons would otherwise overwhelm the Great Gold Wyrms who seals the Abyss. There are two differences between her and her demons: First, she likes keeping destruction personal rather than universal; second, she's capable of kindness, so long as it comes as a great surprise.

QUOTE

"Why do you mortals take these blood feuds so seriously? Don't you see it's all just a game? Don't you realize that I've already won?"



USUAL LOCATION

She is known to live in Hell Marsh, purportedly in a hellhole rife with ungodly flowers.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

The longer she lives, the more this Diabolist looks like one of her demons. The stories are that she was originally a human woman, but you'd be hard-pressed to prove it.

If the Diabolist has overarching goals, they are obscure. What's clear is the delight she takes in wielding power and unleashing chaos. Her enemies say that she may be nothing more than a slave to the vast powers she dares to command, but as long as she's smiling she seems to have the upper hand.

The Diabolist leads a scattered and half-mad crew of fiendish cultists. They adore her with respect that borders on worship. In turn, she alternately exalts them and brings them to ruin. With her help, they learn occult secrets, master unspeakable magic, and gloat over the destruction of their enemies. No cultist knows the extent of the cult or its ultimate goals. It is certainly more widespread than the imperial authorities admit to publicly.

The Diabolist lacks the focus and discipline that define the Crusader. She is in it for herself, and she indulges even her petty whims. If she remained on-task the way the Crusader does, things would doubtless be a lot worse. Unless indulging her whims is actually part of a subtle plot that none can guess at until it is too late.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

Too many adventurers accept missions on the Diabolist's behalf, often because they are reckless. If adventurers knew what was best for them, they would probably have chosen safer careers than adventuring. Still, a few lucky adventurers have profited mightily from her sponsorship, and they love to show off the remarkable weapons and talismans that they have acquired in consideration for their services.

Adventurers who work for the Diabolist for long suspect that her chaotic whims and petty vendettas are cover for howling insanity. There are ranks of fiendish cultists hidden behind the gloating cultists who are easy to spot and kill. The deeper you go the more disturbing and insane the experience becomes.

ALLIES

The Diabolist and the Prince of Shadows are said to work together. Everyone else hopes they're going to betray each other. They hope that a lot.

ENEMIES

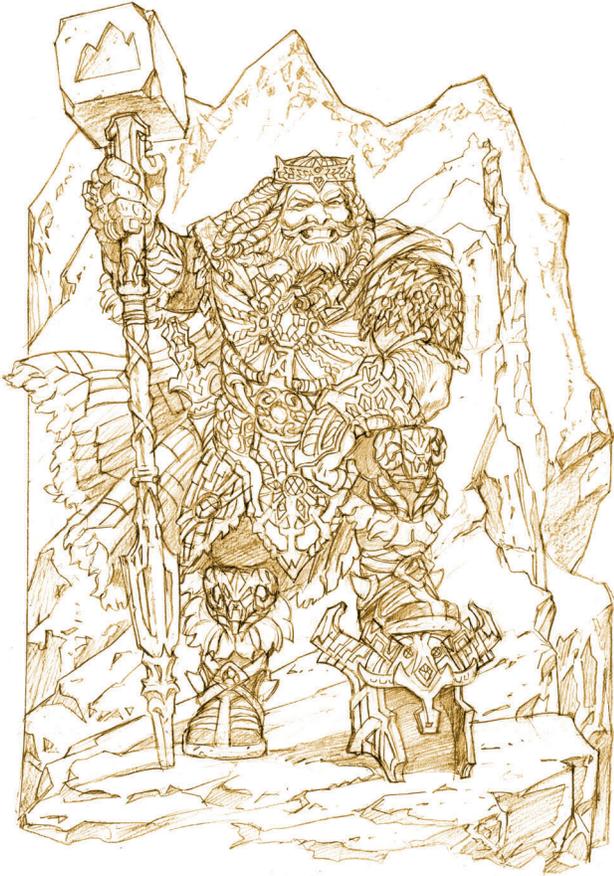
The Crusader is the Diabolist's worst nightmare, and she's no big fan of the Great Gold Wyrms, either. The Priestess protects good people from corruption, making her a real annoyance.

HISTORY

It seems there's always a Diabolist or at least someone who claims the title. Each of these twisted villains has been different from the ones that came before them. Embracing chaos amplifies a mortal's personal traits, making each Diabolist unique. Usually a Diabolist is something of a rumor and a mystery, more a legend than a force to be reckoned with. Unfortunately, the current Diabolist has proven herself to be much more than a story to frighten children with.

THE TRUE DANGER

Everything will be all right provided that the Diabolist remains unable to corrupt the Emperor or other icons.



DWARF KING

The Dwarf King is lord of Forge, the dwarves' new homeland beneath the mountains. He'd love to reclaim the dwarven Underhome lost to war against the dark elves and the creatures of the deeps. But now that the Empire is stumbling, the dwarves find themselves manning the mountain walls that shield the Empire from the orcs and monsters of the north.

QUOTE

"In the name of the Ancestors of Adamant, I accept the return of these stolen dwarf treasures."

USUAL LOCATION

Forge, the dwarves' underground throne city. In rare circumstances he's been reported seen outside the city.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

The Dwarf King is the master of treasures, pressing a claim on all marvels pulled from the earth. His halls are filled with legendary marvels. As the Emperor rules the civilized lands above, the Dwarf King rules the civilized lands below.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

The Dwarf King has the means and the cause to hire mercenaries to represent his interests or retrieve items that the dwarves lay claim to, whether on the surface world or deep underground.

ALLIES

The Dwarf King works reliably with the Emperor, and he respects the ages-old truce with the Elf Queen.

ENEMIES

When the Elf Queen's dark elves get out of hand, they are the worst sort of enemy. The Dwarf King has offered a king's ransom for the head of the Prince of Shadows.

HISTORY

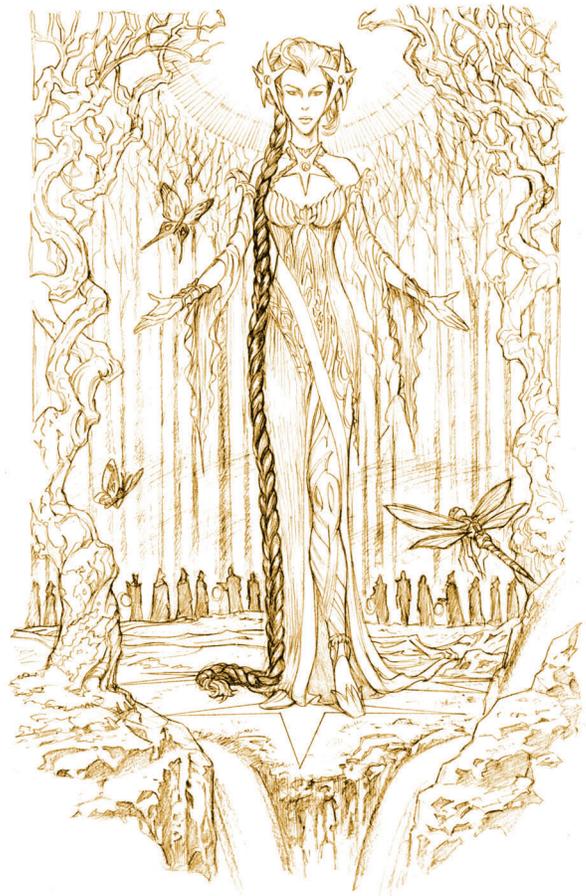
There is always a Dwarf King. This one has been in place for centuries, and no one would be surprised if he decided to end his reign fighting on the battlefield.

THE TRUE DANGER

Everything will be all right provided the Dwarf King does not unseal the Hall of Vengeance and retrieve the legendary Axe of Seven Bloods.

ELF QUEEN

The Elf Queen rules the Court of Stars, the one place where wood elves, dark elves, and high elves come together as peers and allies instead of as rivals or enemies. Honed by centuries of experience, the Queen's innate magic at least equals the Archmage's spells.



QUOTE

"We accept your most gracious offer of an invitation, my dear cousin."

USUAL LOCATION

In the Court in Queen's Wood, north of Drakkenhall and Concord.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

The Queen is mystically connected to every elf, and so every elf is mystically connected to every other elf.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

Elf adventurers consider it an honor to work for the Queen, and non-elf adventurers consider it something of a miracle. Elf adventurers may find themselves guided by the Queen's dream sendings to join the perilous adventures of other elves who need their help.

ALLIES

The High Druid is figuratively her half-sister of the woods. The blood truce with the Dwarf King has created a long and prosperous peace, but the truce is technically temporary. The Emperor is a trusted ally, but the Emperor's Priestess and Archmage can be wearisome.

ENEMIES

The Orc Lord is the elves' shame because they created the original. It may fall to the Queen to dispatch him. The Dwarf King should be her mortal enemy, but an ages-old truce has preserved the peace. The Three resent the Queen for imprisoning the Green.

HISTORY

There is always an Elf King or Queen, though sometimes they are hidden and unknown. The current Queen has ruled for most of the current age.

THE TRUE DANGER

Everything will be all right so long as the dark elves remain out of favor in the Court, so that the Elf Queen sees little reason to exact bloody vengeance for ancient slights remembered only by the elves.

EMPEROR

The Emperor rules the world's greatest human kingdom, known as the Dragon Empire for the mounts of its mightiest warriors. All the signs suggest that the age is turning, but will the Empire fall or shift to a new balance?

**QUOTE**

"As long as I draw breath, the Empire is safe."

USUAL LOCATION

Axis, the capital of the Dragon Empire.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

The Dragon Emperor hails from a long line of noble rulers. It is his nature to lead. To the civilized people, he is the champion of their safety and prosperity.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

Adventurers are routinely hired by imperial functionaries to carry out all manner of ad hoc missions. Adventurers who work exclusively for the Emperor are rewarded with increased pay and greater status, though other adventurers are likely to label them as imperial functionaries.

ALLIES

The Archmage and Priestess work closely with the Emperor. The Crusader and Great Gold Wyrms ostensibly are duty-bound to the Emperor, but they interpret that duty as they each see fit. The Dwarf King and Elf Queen are united with the Emperor in pursuit of peace and security.

ENEMIES

The Lich King explicitly claims continued authority over the Empire, a treasure he seeks to reclaim from the Dragon Emperors. The Orc Lord seems destined to face the Emperor, as the previous Orc Lord faced the Wizard King.

HISTORY

Ever since the first Dragon Emperor established the Imperial Seal, there has always been a Dragon Emperor. Elaborate and exacting ceremonies ensure that the power and authority of the original Emperor live on. The current Emperor is capable but essentially unproven.

THE TRUE DANGER

Everything will be all right as long as the Emperor stands stalwart between civilization and chaos.

GREAT GOLD WYRM

The Great Gold Wyrms is the world's protector and the inspiration for holy orders of paladins and independent heroes. Although the Gold Wyrms' physical form seals the gap that prevents the Abyss from erupting into the world, his dreams and agents still move through the world, helping those who will fight and even die for what's right.

QUOTE

"If you fail me now, then my own sacrifice is also futile."

USUAL LOCATION

Centuries ago, the Great Gold Wyrms threw itself into the Abyss to prevent the demons of hell from pouring out into the world. The Wyrms' physical presence and his magical wards are still all that prevents the Abyss from ripping the world wide open.

Most often the Wyrms remains stationary near the worst of the tears in reality, other times he

rampages through a portion of the Abyss slaying demons that have caught his eye. Paladins say that if true heroes can find a way to stop the gap, even for a night and a day, the Great Gold Wyrms would be free to reinvigorate his followers, restore the Golden Citadel, and beat back the Three.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

The best and bravest hear the Great Gold Wyrms' call or receive his visions. They enter into his service as an elite champion, usually but not always as a member of the Golden Order.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

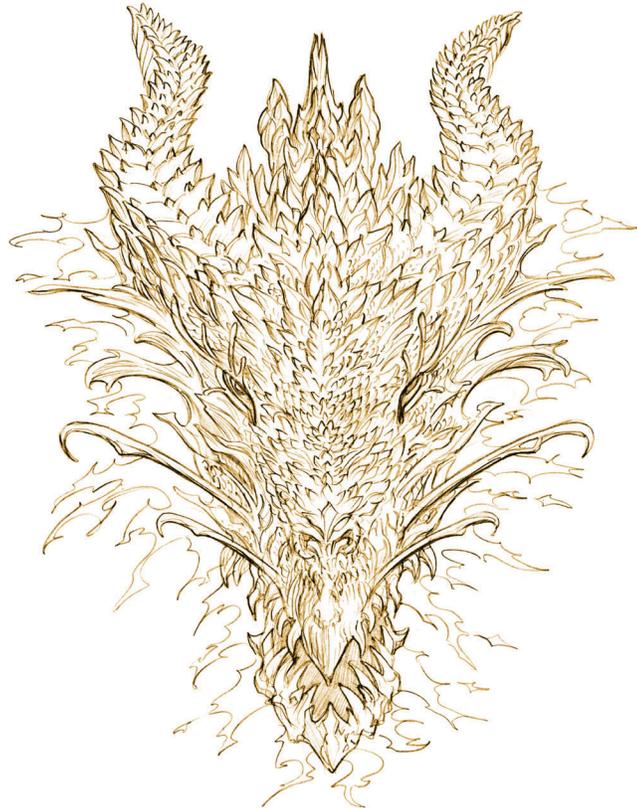
Various orders of paladins and clerics draw inspiration and power from the Great Gold Wyrms, as do mystically chosen individual heroes. In turn, these orders have been known to hire adventuring bands for special purposes.

ALLIES

The Golden Order serves the Dragon Empire and its Emperor, albeit at their own discretion.

ENEMIES

The Wyrms' principal enemies are the Diabolist and the Three. Both conflicts have mythical overtones, and like all true myths, there are moments when the great enemies have worked together, such as when the Red Dragon eliminated the demons that had escaped the Abyss, an act of violence that created the Red Wastes.

**HISTORY**

There has only ever been one Great Gold Wyrms, from the days when the gods made all the worlds to this very day. And some would say that there's not much of the Great Gold Wyrms left.

THE TRUE DANGER

Everything will be all right unless the Great Gold Wyrms finally loses its battle and the Abyss opens to swallow the world.



HIGH DRUID

The High Druid is the champion of the resurgent Wild, and the spiritual and magical leader of spirits of nature and the elements that were chained by the Empire but are now working themselves free. She might be the great force that shakes the Empire to pieces, or she might be the hero who destroys the destroyers and points to a new way to live.

QUOTE

"There's a place for your roads and your cities: hunched tight to the shores of that fangless thing you still call a sea."

USUAL LOCATION

For the first time in ages, the High Druid has established her environs within the bounds of the Empire, in the Wild Wood near New Port and Santa Cora.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

The High Druid conducts sacred rituals from the age before the gods or the worlds. With these rituals, she calls up the mighty powers of nature. Druids everywhere, in turn, gain this power through allegiance to her.

It has been a long time since there was a High Druid who lived anywhere near the Empire. So far as anyone knows, the Druids have been strongest far to the North. But this new High Druid, a young half-elf woman, was born in the Empire and has turned the Wild Wood into her place of power. Her influence is being felt in all the other wild spaces, with effects ranging from increased growth of impassable forest to vastly increased amounts of game in the forests, schools of fish in the Midland Sea, and flocks of birds migrating across the land. Even Imperial officers admit that the High Druid's influence seems to make the Empire's lands in the region around Wild Wood healthier. Of course, they are also rightly concerned that it's a region that would not mind shaking off the Empire's cities, farms, and crowns.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

Many rangers and druids have a relationship, one way or the other, with the High Druid. The High Druid herself may or may not be sending agents into the field. Certainly various high-power druids who respect the High Druid are using resurgence in wild power to pursue their own conflicting agendas. Some of these powerful druids have hired adventurers, and others have responded by hiring adventurers to destroy their rivals' hirelings.

ALLIES

The High Druid is a force unto herself. She is figuratively half-sister of the Elf Queen, but there's more sibling rivalry than love.

ENEMIES

The High Druid challenges the Emperor's authority in the territory she has colonized. The Archmage has been restraining the tempestuous forces of nature to protect civilization, and the High Druid can feel it in her bones.

HISTORY

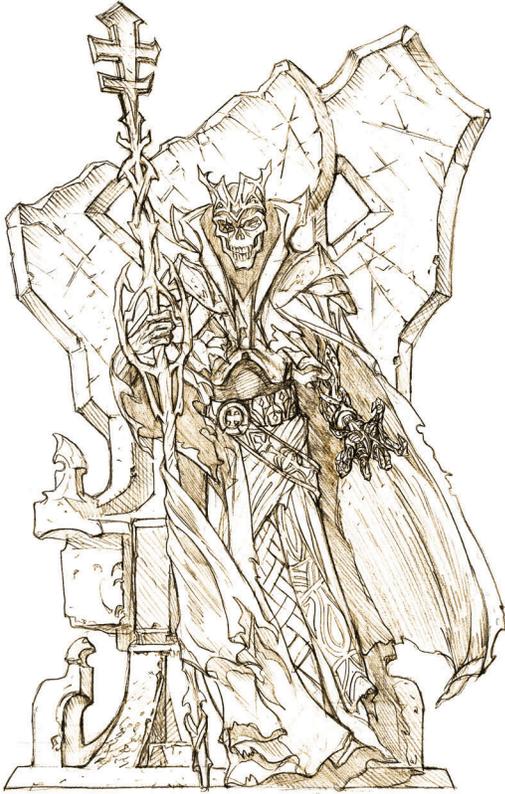
There usually is a High Druid. Sometimes there are two, but not for long. The High Druid's affairs mostly concern the wilds, and civilized people know little about them.

THE TRUE DANGER

Everything will be all right unless the Emperor and the High Druid truly go to war.

LICH KING

The Lich King is the lord of the undead, a fallen tyrant who intends to conquer the Dragon Empire and restore his ancient kingdom. He's not entirely insane and sometimes understands that ruling a kingdom is not the same as destroying it.



QUOTE

"All may hate me, but none may deny me."

USUAL LOCATION

In the Necropolis, an island in the Midland Sea near Omen Island. Or teleporting into most any other ruin in "his" realm.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

During the day, the Empire is a land of light and song. But at night, it is easy to look out one's window at the moon-touched land and see that it very nearly still belongs to the Lich King.

Ages ago, the Lich King was the Wizard King, and he ruled all the lands with magic and tyranny. The first Dragon Emperor, the elves, and the dwarves joined forces to defeat him. Ages later, however, the Wizard King returned as the undying Lich King.

The Lich King commands all undead, to some extent. His power grows when sacrifices to the dead are not maintained and graveyards are desecrated, but even when all rites are properly observed he schemes, betrays, and attacks.

"By the fist of the lich" is a common macho curse. The magic hand the Lich King wears to replace his missing hand is a

fearsome artifact in its own right. Those who would rather not call the Lich King by name refer to him as the One-Eyed King.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICOP

Evil clerics gain power through the Lich King. Wanted criminals have sometimes given their lives to the Lich King rather than to justice.

ALLIES

Who would betray life and ally with death?

ENEMIES

The Priestess, the Orc Lord, the Elf Queen, the Dwarf King, the Three, the Great Gold Wyrn, and everyone else.

HISTORY

There has only ever been one Lich King, the former Wizard King of an earlier age.

THE TRUE DANGER

As long as the graveyards are maintained and the imperial rituals repeated, the Lich King will never retake his throne.

ORC LORD

For centuries, the Orc Lord has been nothing but an old story, sometimes forgotten. The previous Orc Lord helped bring down the Wizard King, who has now become the Lich King. Who will the Orc Lord bring down this time?



QUOTE

"I love cities. They burn."

USUAL LOCATION

On the outskirts of civilization, probably but not definitely in the North or the West.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Orcs have always been a problem for the Empire, but not like the plague they are now. The idea that there is a true icon leading the orcs now makes terrible sense, given the number of villages being lost on the frontier and the increasing dangers of the wilderness. Most people think there may have been an Orc Lord at some point in the past, but only elves, historians, and people who pay attention to the world's real problems are aware that the Orc Lord is a problem that has returned from the times of the war with the Wizard King.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

Adventurers who like plunder more than law have joined up with the Orc Lord. Lawful and good adventurers are making their way to face the Orc Lord, but without much enthusiasm, since so much of the loot the orcs take gets spoiled quickly.

ALLIES

The Orc Lord is a big unknown. This icon has shown up only once before, so it's hard to predict what he will do. Destruction is clearly in the cards, and the other icons are mostly sensible enough not to cozy up to the Orc Lord. That doesn't mean they won't try to use him to their advantage.

ENEMIES

The Orc Lord helped bring down the Lich King before, when he was the Wizard King, so there's bad karma between them. As a creation of the ancient elves, the Orc Lord has a special thirst for the Elf Queen's blood. It's the Emperor's duty to defend the Empire against the Orc Lord. And the Dwarf King takes the Orc Lord's claim on the mountains and the lands of the North as a personal affront.

HISTORY

The elves (or perhaps some rogue faction within the elves) seem to have created the original Orc Lord as part of a successful bid to take down the Wizard King. No Orc Lord has appeared in the ages since then until now.

THE TRUE DANGER

Without allies, the Orc Lord will dash his army against the Empire and die before he sees Axis. With allies. . . .

**PRIESTESS**

The Priestess hears all the Gods of Light and speaks for those who please her. She is part oracle, part mystic, and part metaphysical engineer, since she created the Cathedral, an ever-expanding temple with rooms or entire wings for each of the faiths she favors.

QUOTE

"If you listen carefully, you can hear the world's song of hope."

USUAL LOCATION

The Cathedral, a towering edifice in Santa Cora, the City of Temples.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

The Priestess and her followers could be the most approachable and humane of the icons. She clearly cares about most everyone, somehow managing to convert that emotion into action and organization that helps the world. She's giving religion a good name.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

When the Priestess selects heroes of great heart to brave the forces of evil for her, she sends them into danger with miraculous blessings.

ALLIES

The Priestess serves the Emperor, alongside the Archmage. The Great Gold Wurm is on her side in the abstract, but her followers and his have a notorious tendency to rub each other the wrong way.

ENEMIES

Evil icons drive people to the Priestess, where she can protect them. But the Crusader draws people to darkness. His victories are her losses.

HISTORY

If the Priestess has come to the land in previous ages, it was in some other form, perhaps an oracle. Even so, she seems to be something new under the sun. Some say that she is this age's embodiment of the Fool.

THE TRUE DANGER

As long as the Priestess's Cathedral unites the people of the Empire, civilization will surely stand.

PRINCE OF SHADOWS

The Prince of Shadows is a trickster whose exploits reshape the world nearly as often as they redistribute its wealth. He has squandered the riches of the dwarves, murdered the hopes of a dragon, and plundered the dreams of a god. His exploits have changed the world, but none can tell you his ultimate goals or motives. Your attitude toward the Prince of Shadows depends on how you feel about anarchy, and perhaps how you feel about anarchy happening to you.

**QUOTE**

"Don't bother thanking me, I already thanked myself to your gold and your lover's heart."

USUAL LOCATION

Shadow Port, or anywhere else he cares to be.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Not everyone believes there is a Prince of Shadows. This works out extremely well for the Prince. He doesn't care about getting credit for his exploits. Consequently, there are places where he's blamed for every major theft, and other places where he's viewed as an invention of the Thieves' Guilds to cover their tracks.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

Adventurers sometimes work for the Prince of Shadows without ever knowing it. In some sense, anyone who accepts one of his gifts is doing the Prince's work. Other adventurers like the Prince's style and aim to further his schemes, but that's a shifty path and what works for an icon can often as not walk an adventurer into a wall of swords.

ALLIES

The Diabolist has profited from certain of the Prince's "transactions," but the Priestess, at least, believes that the Prince stole more from the Diabolist than the Diabolist suspects. Who can say?

ENEMIES

The Dwarf King has offered a king's-ransom in platinum for the Prince of Shadows' head, but no one knows why. The Archmage has tried to retrieve certain stolen artifacts from the Prince, but hasn't claimed success in the endeavor.

HISTORY

Shadowy figures appear on the margins of official histories. Some of these mysterious figures are previous incarnations of the Prince of Shadows in other guises with other names.

THE TRUE DANGER

If the Prince of Shadows ever ends up leading the forces of evil, it's going to be bad news.

THE THREE

The Three were among the first dragons to walk the world. The Red is a living engine of destruction. The Blue is a sorceress, perhaps even the original mother of all sorcery. The Black is queen of shadows and assassins. Unlike the Great Gold Wyrms, who must fight alone, the Three have learned to join forces.

QUOTE

"If the gods didn't intend for us to eat you, why did they make you taste so good?"

USUAL LOCATION

The Blue is found in Drakkenhall, though she usually finds you first. The Black flits between marsh hunting grounds and evil monasteries in the mountains. The Red is too freaking large to move around the Empire without triggering all the Archmage's wards, so unless he feels like precipitating a confrontation, he lives where he pleases off the north, west, and east edges of the map.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

The Three are the evil counterpoint to the Great Gold Wyrms. They're not as strong as the Wyrms but they're also not stuck in the Abyss. And one of the Three, the Blue Sorceress, has somehow forced an entry into the official hierarchy of the Dragon Empire, serving as the Imperial Governor of Drakkenhall under geas from the Emperor and the Archmage. So apparently the Three are only fully evil and dangerous outside of Drakkenhall, and in Drakkenhall they are considered "the establishment."

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

Evil adventurers gain access to secret knowledge, training, or magic by allying themselves with the Three. True heroes make their name fighting against them. The lines are muddier in Drakkenhall.

ALLIES

Sometimes the Three hardly seem to be allied to each other, let alone to anyone else.

ENEMIES

As the Wizard King, the Lich King killed the White, and he takes inordinate pleasure in turning evil dragons into liches. The Elf Queen holds the Green as a captive, not that the Three or the Elf Queen openly admit it. And, of course, the Great Gold Wyrms is only going to be an enemy.

HISTORY

In most ages, only one or two of these monsters live up to their epic potential. In this age, all three of them have grown to epic proportions.

THE TRUE DANGER

With the Blue suborned by the geas that gives it Drakkenhall, the Three cannot unite to destroy the Empire. Unless the plan is to somehow destroy the Empire from within. . . .



ICON ALIGNMENT

We aren't mandating that you have to use the 9-alignment system that's traditional in our fantasy games. If you want to use it, use the chart that follows as your first guide to the possible alignments of the icons.

Your campaign plans or your players' backgrounds and One Unique Things may well change the story of the icons, even those that appear firmly rooted in a particular section of the grid.

