

# ***13<sup>th</sup> Age: The Two-Hour Demo***

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### **The Free-form Plan**

When I first created this *13<sup>th</sup> Age* demo for PAX Prime 2012, I wanted it follow a different pattern than the rigid convention demos I've run for other games. The results were a success, so I wanted to share this (somewhat more polished) version with the world at large. GMs whose groups want to try the *13<sup>th</sup> Age* before making it a regular thing will find that it showcases the story-driving elements that make the game cool and unique:

- Backgrounds
- Icon relationships
- One Unique Thing

Instead of starting with the standard RPG demo notion that there is a single fixed adventure that everyone will experience, this one requires a bit of improvisation and invention by the GM as well as by the players.

### **Getting Started**

Provide your players with a large number of pre-generated 2<sup>nd</sup> level characters to choose from, and minis to use with them. (We'll be sharing some pre-gens on the Pelgrane Press website soon.) Ability scores, powers, and feats will all be selected, and have their math worked out for easy play. But don't fill out the One Unique Thing, backgrounds, or icon relationships.

If you are an experienced *13<sup>th</sup> Age* GM, you can tweak any of what follows to suit yourself.

At the start you'll want to get a feel for how many people already know the *13<sup>th</sup> Age* rules. Odds are they won't. So the follow up question is whether they have played d20 games. If you have people who never played d20 fantasy games, you're in for a slightly tougher demo but hopefully you can get other players to help the newcomers. (I didn't have any pure newbies at GenCon.)

### **Character Generation**

The first hour or so (faster if players turn out be experienced with *13<sup>th</sup> Age*) should be spent

introducing *13<sup>th</sup> Age* by helping players generate *uniques*, backgrounds, and icon relationships. Use the illustrations of the icons found on the *13<sup>th</sup> Age* Google+ and Facebook pages, and the Icon Relationships Master Chart from the *13<sup>th</sup> Age* core rulebook, to help players figure out how their characters should relate to the icons.

Players may start a bit leery. They'll get more and more into the process as they understand just how cool it is to be able to make up their own One Unique Thing.

When you explain how backgrounds are used in place of allocating skill points, and that the player gets to add story elements to the world if that's what they want, players get fully into it. Take moments now and then to explain how their choices might play out in a full campaign instead of in the single hour session you're going to be able to play.

### **The Encounter**

The last hour of the demo is spent playing through a single combat encounter. We'll get to how you're going to set up the story of that encounter in a moment, but first I want to fill you in on how to handle the nuts and bolts.

This demo includes four different monster groups that are appropriate and fun for fighting a 2<sup>nd</sup> level party. (FYI, I'm skipping a couple low-level monsters that have feel-bad mechanics, like kobolds, which take no damage on a miss.) If possible, have minis for these monster groups available. If the story you come up with puts some of these monsters together, more power to you.

The monster groups follow these starting notes:

- Orcs
- Gnolls + imp
- Zombies + ghoul
- Lizardmen + ogre reskinned as a giant lizardman.

You'll be choosing which monster group you want to weave into the group's story, based in part on icon relationships and enemies and backgrounds.

### **Weaving the Encounter into the Group's Story**

Here's where each demo session gets to be exciting and different for the GM. You'll be listening to the player's stories about their characters, their One Unique Thing. You'll be helping them sort through their icon relationships and making up fun-sounding backgrounds.

What you need is some common element to start telling the story of how the characters know each other. Obviously you're not likely to be able to make up one simple story to bring everyone together, but if you can get a few characters linked, the rest come along.

In one demo at GenCon I noticed that three PCs felt like bandit/outlaw/former cultist types and two PCs felt like agents of the Emperor or lawmen. So when the PCs were introduced to the action, I said that the session was starting out as a classic spaghetti Western face-off, bandit vs. pursuers. Then I let each player vote on which side they saw themselves as one of the bandits turned out to be faking as a bounty hunter. Of course, the PCs didn't end up fighting each other: the real bandits turned up before the first initiative roll was made, but this was a way to get very disparate PCs onto the same table.

*Using Icon Relationship Rolls...for Treasure!*  
Each time I've run the free-form demo, I've told the PCs about the crazy battle they're about to be part of, or set their minis down, and then given them each an icon relationship roll.

Characters that succeed get a flashback where someone related to the icon gives them information or a magic item or some other advantage that will play out in the encounter that's about to happen. With five or six players at the table, someone is going to succeed. The players who don't succeed in their rolls still get to see how the mechanics play out in ways that affect the upcoming battle.

So yes, this is giving out treasure before the fight! There are two pages of *Demo Treasures* attached at the end of this file with bonus descriptions added by Cal Moore. Select worthwhile treasures from this list unless you're experienced enough with the game to give out others you already know.

If you do give out any treasure, this is the moment to mention that *13<sup>th</sup> Age* magic items are alive, provide roleplaying personality quirks for players who enjoy that type of thing, and will take over your character if you have more magic items than your level.

*Using Icon Relationship Rolls... for Information!*  
You may want to give a character interesting information that will help them in the upcoming encounter. The simplest thing is to tie story information to a bonus to initiative. Or a bonus against a particular monster. Or you may have a better possibility suggest itself because of the story you set up.

### **Running the Battle**

There probably won't be enough time to use icon relationship rolls during the fight. (Although in one PAX Prime demo, a player remembered that his successful icon roll for the Lich King hadn't come into play yet, and used it to define an unspecified item he was carrying and alter the course of the battle.)

Get a player to track initiative for you.

Remember to bump the escalation die up by 1 at the end of each round after the first.

Tell people that creatures are either near each other (one move and attack), or far away (two moves), or sometimes engaged!

### **Things Not to Worry About**

Play terrain any way you like, but don't worry about it. There isn't really time to get deeply into terrain action when people are playing for the first time. The ease of simply moving your characters around and attacking should be the priority.

If you don't know *13<sup>th</sup> Age* already, grab any style of fantasy terrain/setting as the location of the battle. Miserable swamps, ruined temples, ghost towns, haunted orchards, regenerating graveyards, living dungeons, spiral towers, woodlands, grumbling volcanoes— they all exist somewhere in *13<sup>th</sup> Age*.

Oh, yeah: and most importantly, have fun!

## GNOLLS & DEMONS

Use these monsters if the PCs seem to be enemies of the Diabolist, or if they're on the side of the High Druid or even the Crusader, or if you want them fighting demon cultists.

**This is a tough little fight;** if you get the feeling that the PCs are gonna have trouble or you are short on time, subtract a gnoll savage.

### Vs. 4 PCs

2 x gnoll savage

2 x gnoll ranger

### Vs. 5 PCs

2 x gnoll savage

2 x gnoll ranger

1 x gnoll war chief

### Vs. 6 PCs

1 x gnoll savage

2 x gnoll ranger

1 x imp

1 x gnoll war leader

### Gnoll Savage

*3<sup>rd</sup> level troop [humanoid]*

Initiative: +7

**Spear +7 vs. AC—10 damage**

*Pack ferocity:* If more than one gnoll is engaged with the target, each gnoll melee attack that misses that target deals half damage.

**R: Thrown spear +6 vs. AC—8 damage**

**AC 19**

PD 16

MD 13

**HP 42**

### Gnoll Ranger

*3<sup>rd</sup> level archer [humanoid]*

Initiative: +9

**Hand axes +6 vs. AC (2 attacks)—6 damage**

*Pack ferocity:* If more than one gnoll is engaged with the target, each gnoll melee attack that misses that target deals half damage.

**R: Longbow +8 vs. AC—8 damage**

*Natural even hit or miss:* The gnoll can make a second *longbow* attack (no more) as a free action.

*Quick shot:* When the gnoll ranger is unengaged and an enemy moves to engage it, roll a d20. On a 11+, the gnoll ranger can make a *longbow* attack against that enemy as a free action just before being engaged.

**AC 18**

PD 17

MD 14

**HP 46**

Nastier Specials {{Use this if the fight seems too easy!}}

*Blood fury:* +1d10 melee damage if the gnoll or its target is staggered.

## Gnoll War Leader

4<sup>th</sup> level leader [humanoid]

Initiative: +8

### Heavy flail +9 vs. AC—14 damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* The target is marked for death; until the end of the battle, all gnoll attacks against the target gain an attack bonus equal to the escalation die.

*Pack ferocity:* If more than one gnoll is engaged with the target, each gnoll melee attack that misses that target deals half damage.

**AC 20**

PD 17

MD 14

**HP 56**

## IMP

A batwinged ball of chaos with a taste for torture where other demons would choose to slay.

3<sup>rd</sup> level spoiler [demon]

Initiative: +8

**Festering claws +7 vs. AC—3 damage, and 5 ongoing damage**

**R: Blight jet +7 vs. PD—7 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends)**

*First natural 16+ each turn:* The imp can choose one: the target is weakened instead of dazed; OR the imp can make a *blight jet* attack against a different target as a free action.

*Curse aura:* Whenever a creature attacks the imp and rolls a natural 1–5, that creature takes 1d10 psychic damage.

*Flight:* Imps are hard to pin down because they fly. Not that fast or well, but you don't have to fly well to fly better than humans and elves.

**AC 20**

PD 13

MD 16

**HP 40**

## Lizardmen Working for the Three

Use these lizardmen as the monsters if the PCs could be enemies of the Three, or enemies of the High Druid in a place that civilization is violently unwelcome.

### Vs. 4 PCs

1 x giant dragonman  
2 x lizardman savage

### Vs. 5 PCs

1 x giant dragonman  
3 x lizardman savage

### Vs. 6 PCs

1 x giant dragonman  
4 x lizardman savage

## Giant Dragonman

*Large 3<sup>rd</sup> level troop [humanoid]*

Initiative: +5

**Big honkin' club +7 vs. AC**, 18 damage

*Miss:* Half damage.

*Breathin' fire:* Instead of disengaging, the dragonman can breathe as a quick action; **+9 vs. PD (each enemy engaged with dragonman)**—1d6 fire damage, and the dragonman pops free from the target.

**AC 19**

PD 16

MD 12

**HP 90**

## Lizardman Savage

*You might think that they stick with the traditional stone weapons of their ancestors as a form of conscious ancestor worship. But actually they just like the way stone sounds when it's going through bone.*

*2<sup>nd</sup> level wrecker [humanoid]*

Initiative: +6

**Stone-tip spear (or club) +7 vs. AC**—7 damage

*Natural 16+:* The lizardman savage can make a *bite* attack against the target or another creature engaged with it as a free action.

*[Special trigger]* **Bite +7 vs. AC**—5 damage, and the lizardman savage 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 +9 vs. AC (3 attacks)**—5 damage

**R: Thrown spear +6 vs. AC**—5 damage

**AC 17**

PD 16

MD 12

**HP 32**

## Orcs

Fight orcs if the PCs seem to be enemies of the Orc Lord; or if the PCs are allied with the Emperor or Dwarf Lord; or if you want monsters who could be trying to wreck most anything.

This is an easy fight at the 4 PC and 5 PC thresholds; to make it tough like the other fights, add another berserker or throw in a lizardman or whatever makes you happy.

### Vs. 4 PCs

1 x orc berserker  
1 x orc shaman  
3 x orc warriors

### Vs. 5 PCs

2 x orc berserker  
1 x orc shaman  
3 x orc warriors

### Vs. 6 PCs

2 x orc berserker  
2 x orc shaman  
4 x orc warriors

## Orc Berserker

*2<sup>nd</sup> level troop [humanoid]*

Initiative: +5

**Greataxe +7 vs. AC**—8 damage

*Dangerous:* The crit range of attacks by orcs expands by 3 unless they are staggered.

*Unstoppable:* When an orc berserker drops to 0 hp, it does not immediately die. Ignore any damage in excess of 0 hp, roll 2d6, and give the berserker that many temporary hit points. No other healing can affect the berserker or give it more temporary hit points: when the temporary hp are gone, the berserker dies.

**AC 16**

PD 15

**HP 40**

MD 13

## Orc Shaman

*2<sup>nd</sup> level leader [humanoid]*

Initiative: +5

**Spear +6 vs. AC**, 6 damage

*Dangerous:* The crit range of attacks by orcs expands by 3 unless they are staggered.

**R: Battle curse +7 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—4 psychic damage, and for the rest of the battle, melee attacks by orcs deal +1d4 damage against the target (non-cumulative)

**AC 18**

PD 12

**HP 36**

MD 16

## Orc Warrior

*1<sup>st</sup> level troop [humanoid]*

Initiative: +3

**Jagged sword +6 vs. AC**—6 damage

*Dangerous:* The crit range of attacks by orcs expands by 3 unless they are staggered.

**AC 16**

PD 14

**HP 30**

MD 10



## Undead

Use the **Undead** if the players seem like enemies of the Lich King or if you just feel like watching them fight undead.

### Vs. 4 PCs

1 x ghoul  
2 x zombies  
5 x newly risen ghouls

### Vs. 5 PCs

2 x ghouls  
2 x zombies  
3 x newly risen ghouls

### Vs. 6 PCs

3 x ghouls  
2 x zombies  
3 x newly risen ghouls

## Ghoul

*They hunger only for what they used to be.*

*3<sup>rd</sup> level spoiler [undead]*

Initiative: +8

Vulnerability: holy

**Claws and bite +8 vs. AC—8 damage**

*Natural even hit:* The target is vulnerable (*attacks vs. it have crit range expanded by 2*) to attacks by undead until the end of the ghoul's next turn.

*Pound of flesh:* The ghoul's *claws and bite* attack deals +4 damage against vulnerable targets.

*Infected bite:* Any creature that is slain by a ghoul and not consumed will rise as a ghoul the next night.

**AC 18**

PD 16

MD 12

**HP 36**

## Newly-risen Ghoul

*Newly slain, barely conscious, terribly hungry.*

*2<sup>nd</sup> level mook [undead]*

Initiative: +5

Vulnerability: holy

**Scrabbling claws +7 vs. AC—3 damage**

*Natural 16+* The target is vulnerable (*attacks vs. it have crit range expanded by 2*) to attacks by undead until the end of the ghoul's next turn.

*Pound of flesh:* The newly-risen ghoul's *scrabbling claws* attack deals +2 damage against vulnerable targets.

**AC 17**

PD 15

MD 11

**HP 9 (mook)**

*Mook:* Kill one newly-risen ghoul mook for every 9 damage you deal to the mob.

## Human Zombie

*"Brains . . ."*

*2<sup>nd</sup> level troop [undead]*

Initiative: +1

Vulnerability: holy

**Rotting fist +7 vs. AC—6 damage**

*Natural 16+:* Both the zombie and its target take 1d6 damage!

*Headshot:* A critical hit against a zombie drops it to 0 hp.

**AC 15**

PD 13

MD 9

**HP 60**

## Demo Treasure Options

Remember to mention that items are alive and have personalities, so that characters using magic items can have personality quirks if they wish. // If you have more items than your level, your items take over and you become a vehicle for their personalities!

### **+1 Chain Armor of Iron Will**

*The steel links of this heavy chain armor have an opalescent quality that reflects light around the wielder in a splay of muted colors, which some claim represent the gods' dominions. Whatever the case, the armor does bolster the mental defenses of its wearer.*

+1 AC and MD.

Quirk: Prone to abstract speculation.

### **Supple Boots of the Slippery Eel**

*These soft boots are made from the skin of the giant black eels that live among the Wake Islands in the Midland Sea. The eel skin soles are surprisingly resilient and surprisingly slick.*

+1 to disengage checks.

Add your Dexterity modifier to your disengage checks.

Quirk: Loves puns.

### **+1 Elven Cloak**

*Each elven cloak, often called a "forestfold cloak," is said to be sewn by the handmaidens of the Elf Queen and holds the memory of her forest court within its threads.*

+1 to PD.

Add +10 to checks to remain hidden in natural surroundings.

Quirk: Prefers the finest things in life; of course, they are elven.

### **Helm of the Undaunted Hero**

*Those who have the will to follow the Crusader can do anything, or so they say. What is true is that many of their helms become imbued with their endless courage. Many of them also don't have owners anymore.*

+1 to MD.

**Recharge 6+ (after save roll):** At the start of your turn, you can roll a save against one ongoing save ends effect as a free action. Make the recharge roll immediately after you use the power instead of during your next short rest.

Quirk: Favors traditional battle hymns.

### **Shield of Protection**

*This stout kite shield bearing the likeness of the Great Gold Wurm in bright, embossed gold once belonged to one of "the thousand"—the thousand mighty paladins who traversed the Abyss to fight beside the Gold in a past age. Only ninety-seven were said to return from that journey still bearing their shields.*

Enemies engaged with you take a -1 attack penalty against your allies.

Quirk: Tends to others with too much familiarity.

### **Symbol of Gathered Power**

*This odd symbol has a different precious gemstone forming each of its three prongs. Magical power emanates from it, but the symbol is difficult to look at for any length of time without a strange, repetitive image forming in the viewer's mind.*

**Recharge with full heal-up:** During a short rest, you can regain an expended daily adventurer-level spell.

Quirk: One-track mind.

### **+1 [Melee Weapon] of Vengeance**

*This brutal-looking weapon oozes emotional violence and anger, and it's obvious that its sole design is to harm others. The simple but effective styling is a common element among the barbarian weaponsmiths who create such weapons to fight for or against the Orc Lord.*

+1 bonus to attacks and damage.

While you are staggered, you deal +1d6 damage with attacks that hit using this weapon.

Quirk: Quick to take offense.

### **Potions and Oils (standard action to use):**

- *Healing potions (2):* Heal using a recovery + 1d8 hp
- *Potion of Fire Resistance:* Gain fire resistance for rest of battle. Attacker must roll natural 16+ or fire attack deals only half damage.
- *Magic Oil +1:* Until end of battle, an item oil is applied to gains a +1 bonus. For armor: +1 AC. For weapon or implement: +1 to attack and damage.

### **+1 Haughty [Ranged Weapon]**

*Two types of these weapons are known to have been created: those designed for the imperial soldiers against the creatures of the Wild, and those designed for the servants of the Wild against the agents of the Empire. In either case, these weapons are highly effective at taking down enemy leaders.*

+1 bonus to attack and damage.

When you hit an enemy with this weapon, if it's the most dangerous foe in the battle (or tied for most dangerous, GM's assessment), you deal +1d3 per tier damage to it.

Quirk: Challenges others to improvised contests.

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