

Edna's 13th Age 2e Playtest Report and Feedback: Finale (April to July 2023)

[Part #1](#), [Part #2](#)

→ [My 2e Gamma Playtest Document Here](#) ←



[Harvisptokhm](#), from *Genshin Impact*.

Credits

- **Writing:** earthseraphedna
- **Ranger's Player:** sushie
- **Fighter's Player:** nick9996
- **Wizard's Player:** mahouaiden

EXTREMELY IMPORTANT ASSUMPTION

This report assumes that the reader has already read through most, if not all, of [the original document](#). Much of the content will make no sense otherwise.

Where We Went

As I had very mildly alluded to in [the original document](#), the game started off with everyone in reasonably high spirits. However, dissatisfaction with the narrative of the campaign, the icons of the Dragon Empire, and the mechanics of the 13th Age 2e playtest gradually built up. By late May, one player completely refused to speak or narrate anything in-character, and would attend sessions only to participate in combat.

"This campaign feels like a corpse being dragged across a finish line with me as the only person that actually enjoyed the game at all."
— The fighter's player

"tbh it feels like with each session it becomes increasingly difficult for me to stay motivated to play the game."
— The ranger's player

Around late June, friction between the players and me caused the group to break up, just before the last battle. I eventually got the players to reconvene, just to complete the final combat and thus, wrap up the story.

The campaign ended with a metaphorical whimper. It was one of the most discouraging and frustrating games I had ever run, and it significantly strained the interpersonal relationships between the players and me. When I offered epilogues to the players, only two accepted.

I deeply regret running the campaign.

Major Problem: Icons and the Epic Tier

We reached the epic tier in early February. I struggled and ultimately failed to bring the campaign to a satisfying conclusion.

The icons of the Dragon Empire were [constantly getting in the way](#) of the kind of story hooks and scenarios I wanted to present to the players. There was not a single point during the epic tier when I felt that the icons were enhancing the setting and ongoing narrative. **The icons were hindrances.** Part of this was the playtest document's complete lack of guidance on what should actually happen with the icons during the epic tier; what is stopping the heroic icons (e.g. the Emperor and his metallic dragons, the Archmage and his Superiors, the Priestess) from being the ones to fight world-scale apocalyptic threats instead of the PCs, what does it take to actually defeat one of the villainous icons (e.g. the Diabolist, the Lich King, Orc Lord, the Three), how should icons work at the epic tier in general, etc.

At the adventurer tier, the characters hear about icons, receive missions from their intermediaries, and kill icon-affiliated villains. At the champion tier, the characters potentially get to be in the same room as an icon, and perhaps receive missions directly from icons. At the epic tier... well, what is supposed to happen here? Who is really supposed to be saving the world?

The icons are not even that typical by D&D/Pathfinder standards. For one, the most central icon of them all, the Emperor, comes with the loaded assumption that the bulk of the continent is ruled by a relatively benevolent (or not completely tyrannous, at least) empire. This is on the rarer side for D&D/Pathfinder fare, really.

I did have a minor side plot concerning the gods of light and dark, which the players actually liked. It was the icons, though, really just the icons, that were a great Gordian knot during the epic tier.

Major Problem: Icon Connection Benefits

Icon connection benefits never clicked with our table, and were never that satisfying. Only once or twice across the entire game has any player ever bother to proactively suggest using an icon connection benefit, without me specifically making an offer. Even when I did make an offer, there was so much hemming and hawing over it:

"Why can I not generate such a benefit with a skill check, expending an icon connection only if I fail?"

"Why can I not generate such a benefit with my icon relationship points alone?"

"Why can I not generate such a benefit with my One Unique Thing alone?"

"What you are offering for this icon connection benefit expenditure seems too mild. Should it not be stronger?"

"The complication you are proposing for this icon connection benefit expenditure seems too punishing. Should it not be milder?"

The way I see it, the 2e playtest document spends far, far too much word count on describing what **form** an icon connection benefit could take (e.g. Crusader: Anti-demon training; unholy connection to his followers; farflung recruiting network; farflung spy network; paramilitary forces; power of the Dark Gods; evil spirits; dread among the masses) and too little on the **magnitude** of those benefits.

Another RPG I have been looking into, [ICON](#), has several lists of tier-appropriate narrative stunts that characters can achieve, along with the usual disclaimer of "feel free to adjust these benchmarks depending on the tone of your game." Something similar could help *13th Age* players and GMs better contextualize the narrative power of PCs in each tier, and better calibrate the precise payouts of icon connection benefits.

Personally, I found that the most consistently "accepted by the player as a fair deal without question" offer for an icon connection benefit was turning a failure on a skill check into an automatic success. This is what leaned on throughout most of the campaign, and deviating from it tended to cause some measure of arguments and disappointment. Even then, the players did not always take the offer, because they worried that succeeding on the check would give too minor a benefit. **At our table, the players cared so very deeply about getting their "money's worth" from icon connection benefits.**

I felt so very lost and without guidance when it came to handing out icon connection benefits. I never gained a good grasp for how **strong** they are supposed to be, and I constantly worried that I was disappointing the players by being inconsistent with them.

Suggestion: Alternatives to Icons?

13th Age Glorantha shows us that it is possible to discard icons entirely, and to replace icon connection benefits with mystical or otherwise extraordinary abilities. Perhaps *13th Age 2e* could dedicate a one- to three-paragraph sidebar to such a method of replacing icons and icon connection benefits?

Major Problem: Same Old, Same Old Overpowered Material

The [combat metagame](#) at 10th level was the same as it was all the way back during the adventurer tier. All the party had to do to blow through the opposition was rely on the same old overpowered combinations as usual:

- The ranger's Double Attack plus Skirmisher. Raw, consistent damage, especially with *gloves of true striking*.
- The fighter's Combat Rhythm plus *battle drill*: easiest with the Bow Fighter talent, but not too bad with a melee fighter either, especially with the Cleave adventurer feat. An absolutely frightening damage spike.
- The wizard's high-damage spells plus Evocation, even downgraded. Plenty of damage splashed onto the enemy side.
- *Inimical weapon* plus *ring of security*. Raw damage at no cost.
- *Ring of fickle fate*. Raw damage 1/battle.
- *Gloves of power*, *gauntlets of clobbering*. Even more damage.
- *Gloves of true striking*, *steady weapon*. Automatic natural even roll, which is likely to be an automatic hit as well. Good synergy with Double Attack.
- *Negation* armor, *stalwart* cloak/mantle/cape, *helm of the undaunted hero*. Shrug off attacks and debuffs.

If an item is so good that players feel like doubling, tripling, quadrupling up on it, then it is too strong.

There was never a point when waiting for the escalation die to tick up was a good idea. **The players were always incentivized to dump out their best attacks and attack-enhancers at the first opportunity, so as to overload the enemy side with raw damage.**

Major Problem: Skipping Battles

What happens if the party outright circumvents a battle through social skills, stealth, or other methods? What happens to the battle pacing and battle levels then? There is no guidance on what happens here. If a party skips the fourth battle in a four-combat workday, do they earn the full heal-up regardless?

Around mid-April, the 9th-level party was supposed to engage in a pair of back-to-back battles. These would have been their second and third combats of the adventuring workday. However, the group elected to resolve the situation with conversation and Charisma rolls instead. They succeeded. I was completely unsure of what to do. After some deliberation, I decided to level them up right then and there: any expended resources **stayed** expended, but they would gain an incremental advance after just one more combat, and after the battle after **that**, a full heal-up.

Major Problem: Few Good Epic and Omega Feats

As we leveled up our characters to 10th, and then gained two incremental advances from there, we noticed that there was a dearth of epic and omega feats that were actually exciting to take. It definitely dampened our enthusiasm, since the characters did not have much capstones to speak of.

The Characters as of 10th Level

The game started at 4th level in early November 2022. In early March 2023, they reached 9th level.

The Ranger:

- **Ability Score Priorities:** Dexterity > Constitution > everything else.
- **Kin Power:** *Quick to fight* plus a bonus feat, reflavored from the human.
- **Talents:** Archery, Double Attack, and Skirmisher; then Improved Double Attack; then Cunning Aim. Would have taken Spear Master if it was not for magic thrown weapons not actually returning by RAW.
- No actual class powers to speak of.
- **Adventurer-Tier Feats:** Precise Shot, Double Attack, Archery, Further Backgrounding, Ranger's Pet. Includes human bonus feat.
- **Champion-Tier Feats:** Archery, Skirmisher, Quick to Fight.
- **Epic-Tier Feats:** Archery, Improved Initiative, Improved Double Attack.
- **10th-Level Incremental Advances:** Extra ranger talent (Ranger ex Cathedral [*bless, mighty healing*]), Double Attack epic feat.
- **Adventurer-Tier True Magic Items:** *Gloves of true striking, negation armor, stalwart cloak/mantle/cape, helm of the undaunted hero.*
- **Champion-Tier True Magic Items:** *Ring of fickle fate, paragon necklace, ring of security.*
- **Epic-Tier True Magic Items:** *Inimical longbow* (acquired only at 9th level, when the ranger's player discovered the *inimical* weapon and *ring of security* synergy trick; previously used a *steady* longbow to help trigger Double Attack), *manual of enlightened flesh.*

The Fighter:

- **Ability Score Priorities:** Strength > Constitution = Wisdom > everything else.
- **Kin Power:** *Lethal*, reflavored from the half-orc.
- **Talents:** Battle Rhythm, Cleave, Tough as Iron, and Quick Pace.
- **Maneuvers:** Most important maneuver is *battle drill*, far and away. Second in importance is *intercepting strike*, and third and fourth are *poised defense* and *tactics of engagement*. Every other maneuver does not matter all that much.
- **Adventurer-Tier Feats:** Cleave, Reach Tricks, *battle drill*, Toughness, *lethal*.
- **Champion-Tier Feats:** *Battle drill, lethal.*
- **Epic-Tier Feats:** *Battle drill*, Improved Initiative, Tough as Iron.
- **10th-Level Incremental Advances:** Warrior omega feat, Cleave champion feat.
- **Adventurer-Tier True Magic Items:** *Negation armor, paragon necklace, stalwart cloak/mantle/cape, helm of the undaunted hero.*
- **Champion-Tier True Magic Items:** *Gauntlets of clobbering, ring of fickle fate, ring of security.*
- **Epic-Tier True Magic Item:** *Inimical* martial two-handed melee weapon (acquired only at 9th level, when the ranger's player discovered the *inimical* weapon and *ring of security* synergy trick; previously used a *flaming* weapon for the sheer extra damage), *manual of enlightened flesh.*

The Wizard:

- **Ability Score Priorities:** Intelligence > Dexterity = Constitution > everything else.
- **Kin Power:** *Lethal*, reflavored from the half-orc.
- **Talents:** Advanced R&D, Evocation, and High Arcana.
- **Spells:** Most important spells are blasts: *disintegrate* against single targets, *fireball* for general-purpose blasting, *lightning bolt* for close-quarters blasting, *force salvo* for targeting a dispersed group, *denial* for targeting MD and hindering, *shocking grasp* to bail out of being engaged by enemies, and *mana storm* for at-will spam. However, since the squishy wizard is a favorite target for enemies' focus fire, defensive options are also important: *shield*, *blur*. As of 10th level, *flight* is also important.
- **Adventurer-Tier Feats:** Toughness, *shocking grasp, shield, force salvo*, Cleave, Reach Tricks, *battle drill*, Toughness, *lethal*.
- **Champion-Tier Feats:** Improved Initiative, Evocation, *lethal*.
- **Epic-Tier Feats:** Evocation, *disintegrate, fireball.*
- **10th-Level Incremental Advances:** *Denial* champion feat (swapped out for Advanced R&D epic feat after the full heal-up), *utility spell* adventurer feat.
- **Adventurer-Tier True Magic Items:** *Boots of winking* (went completely unused, because we forgot about them), *negation armor, stalwart cloak/mantle/cape, helm of the undaunted hero.*
- **Champion-Tier True Magic Items:** *Ring of fickle fate, gloves of power, paragon necklace.*
- **Epic-Tier True Magic Item:** *Staff of the magi* (Abjuration; acquired only at 9th level; previously used a *wand of the mage's invisible aegis* for extra *shield* castings), *tome of arcane mysteries.*

Final Thoughts from the Ranger's Player

I'm not sure if there's much more I can say about it that I haven't already. The *Inimical* weapon+Safety ring combo was powerful, but it felt satisfying to discover and I can't say I'm entirely sure it's bad for the game's balance

Final Thoughts from the Fighter's Player

Not terribly much. It's not bad, exactly, just feels like a very dull and braindead exercise in just demolishing enemies with high damage rolls, combat wise.

Everything largely works, but I do not find the overall package particularly engaging or entertaining.

Icon benefits are interesting, but having to roll to see how many you get kinda ruined it for me, and their direct mechanical use also sucks imo.

Icon connections also felt kinda lacking. Like it didn't really matter how close you are or aren't to an icon. They seem to treat everyone the same regardless if you have a 3 positive with one. [As the GM, this was my interpretation of page 37 of the playtest packet.]

The Fighter's combat style is too one note and needs defensive options that actually feel like defensive options, like being able to reduce damage or boost AC. More varied forms of attacks, maybe the option to apply debuffs to the enemy team instead of just big damage number rolls, is another idea.

Rolling for icon benefits is aggravating and everyone should just get a flat number of them between rests. There should be some actual mechanical consequences for switching your icon relationships up significantly.

Classes should have benefits to saves against things like status ailments instead of it being a flat number.

Enemies should lose on initiative [ties]. In general, there should be a very slight nudge towards the favor of the players. [It feels nice to beat enemies on initiative ties, but at the same time, PCs should not be able to one-turn-kill non-mooks with some overpowered combo or another.]

Some enemies have absurdly overpowered abilities and need rebalancing. [This was almost certainly referring to [the nalfeshnee fight](#).]

Final Thoughts from the Wizard's Player

I have a feeling like this system requires a specific mindset that we all didn't really have

Icon relationships depend entirely on the players and GM, for example
In how they play out in practice

Overall I think it's kinda like a sidegrade to 5E? [They seldom actually play or run 5e, instead preferring *Lancer* and the *ICON* playtest, but use 5e as a benchmark for the most popular RPG.]

It's simple and easy to pick up, I imagine outside of online text format would be pretty fast

But personally I think its too simple and combats get samey fast if your GM isn't into borderline freeform theater of the mind approach

To be honest I didn't particularly enjoy the system either
Which is probably part of the problem

And the setting was just "ok," nothing super inspiring or bad

Though the prevalence of Icons can definitely lead to a similar problem that some D&D settings like Faerun have
Where high level NPCs can overshadow PCs

Final Thoughts from the GM

I really, really want to like *13th Age* 2e. In its current state, however, I cannot bring myself to like it.

I see the potential in this game, though. I hope that the writers can give better guidance on how to better employ icons and icon connection benefits, especially at the epic tier. I also hope that they rebalance the combat metagame to gravitate less towards high-damage alpha strikes and offense-boosting magic items.

Workday #6, Battle #22

- **Tracked?:** Yes, this battle was tracked normally. This came **after** [the abrupt jump from 9th to 10th level](#).
- **PC Level:** 10, no incremental advances.
- **Battle Level:** 13.
- **Monster Equivalents:** ~7.
- Briar elf warrior (*13th Age Bestiary 2*, p. 28), undead, all nastier specials activated, +3 levels, 12th-level troop x8.
- Horned salamander (*13th Age Bestiary 2*, pp. 234-235) +3 levels, Huge 11th-level troop.
- At the start of the combat, a d4 and a d3 were rolled for the undead briar elves' terrain effects. The results were both 1, and thus, starting at escalation die 1, all PCs would have -2 PD and MD.
- **Initiative Order:** Ranger, three briars (A through C), wizard, other five briars (D through H), fighter, ranger (Skirmisher), salamander.
- **Round #1, Ranger:** Takes 30 fire damage from the salamander. Attacks briar A. Misses, but Archery rerolls into a natural odd hit (118 damage). Double Attack adventurer feat triggers, sending a second onto the briar A, which hits (138 damage). Moves to far away.
- **Round #1, Briar A:** Attempts to engage the wizard. Takes an *intercepting strike* from the fighter (105 damage).
- **Round #1, Briars B and C:** Engage the wizard, who *blurs* up, triggering Abjuration from the *staff of the magi* and all of its feats. The blur also winds up affecting the fighter as well. Briar B misses, briar C lands a critical hit, which *negation* armor turns into a miss. Wizard is unscathed.
- **Round #1, Wizard:** Takes 30 fire damage from the salamander. *Shocking grasp* briars B and C. Hits briar B, misses briar C, but the *tome of arcane mysteries* turns the natural even miss into an automatic hit (21 damage). *Ring of fickle fate* activated, Evocation activated, reckless *fireball*, winds up targeting briars A, B (*ring of fickle fate* and Evocation go onto this one), C, D, E, F. After a *lethal* reroll, the wizard still misses briar A, but hits all of the other briars. Half damage still takes out briar A right then and there. B takes 303 damage, C takes 143 damage, D takes 183 damage due to champion-tier *gloves of power*, E takes 143 damage, F takes 143 damage. All take ongoing 30. Wizard takes 30 more fire damage from the salamander, absorbed by the temporary hit points from Abjuration.

Briar A: Taken out

Briar B: Down to 76 out of 400 hit points, taking ongoing 30

Briar C: Down to 236 out of 400 hit points, taking ongoing 30

Briar D: Down to 217 out of 400 hit points, taking ongoing 30

Briar E: Down to 257 out of 400 hit points, taking ongoing 30

Briar F: Down to 257 out of 400 hit points, taking ongoing 30

Briar G: Unscathed at 400 hit points

Briar H: Unscathed at 400 hit points

Salamander: Unscathed at 880 hit points

• **Round #1, Briars D, E, F, G, and H:** Attack wizard. Completely fail, between Abjuration and *blur*. D, E, and F take the ongoing 30 damage. D and E save against the ongoing damage, but F fails.

For reference, the wizard has AC 29 with +1 armor and their *staff of the magi* Abjuration up, in addition to a flat 25% failure chance from *blur*. This many misses was admittedly quite lucky for the wizard, but it does not entirely stretch plausibility, given that 12th-level monster attack bonus is merely +17.

• **Round #1, Fighter:** Takes 30 fire damage from the salamander. Engages the salamander, activates champion-tier *ring of fickle fate*, and applies Combat Rhythm *battle drill*. Hit, hit, miss (*lethal* activates, turns into a critical hit, doubling even the +25 damage from the adventurer feat), hit, hit. 203, 132, 336, 163, 120 damage. Also gains 45 temporary hit points from adventurer feat. Takes out the salamander. Cleave activates. Reach Tricks is successful. *Grim intent* on Briar B, hitting and taking it out.

Briar A: Taken out

Briar B: Taken out

Briar C: Down to 236 out of 400 hit points, taking ongoing 30

Briar D: Down to 187 out of 400 hit points

Briar E: Down to 227 out of 400 hit points

Briar F: Down to 227 out of 400 hit points, taking ongoing 30

Briar G: Unscathed at 400 hit points

Briar H: Unscathed at 400 hit points

Salamander: Taken out

• **Round #1, Ranger (Skirmisher):** Attacks briar F, but misses with a natural odd roll. 5 damage.

• **Round #2, Ranger:** *Gloves of true striking* and *ring of fickle fate* on briar D, hitting (203 damage) and taking it out. Double Attack goes onto briar F, but misses, dealing 10 damage.

Briar A: Taken out

Briar B: Taken out

Briar C: Down to 236 out of 400 hit points, taking ongoing 30

Briar D: Taken out

Briar E: Down to 227 out of 400 hit points

Briar F: Down to 212 out of 400 hit points, taking ongoing 30

Briar G: Unscathed at 400 hit points

Briar H: Unscathed at 400 hit points

Salamander: Taken out

• **Round #2, Briar C:** Engages the wizard. Misses due to *blur*. Takes 30 damage from the ongoing. Saves against it.

• **Round #2, Wizard:** *Lightning bolt*, targeting briars C, E, and F. Has to make one *lethal* reroll using a *paragon* necklace. Misses C, but deals 91 as half damage. Hits D and E for 183 damage. Applies *shocking grasp* onto all enemies, hitting each of them for 25 damage.

Briar A: Taken out

Briar B: Taken out

Briar C: Down to 90 out of 400 hit points

Briar D: Taken out

Briar E: Down to 19 out of 400 hit points

Briar F: Down to 4 out of 400 hit points, taking ongoing 30

Briar G: Unscathed at 400 hit points

Briar H: Unscathed at 400 hit points

Salamander: Taken out

• **Round #2, Briars E, F, G, and H:** Engage the wizard, land no hits due to Abjuration and *blur*. Briar F dies from ongoing.

• **Round #2, Fighter:** Engages briars C, E, and G. *Chop bludgeon stab*. Hits and takes out briar C. Misses briar E, but still takes that one out due to miss damage and *grim intent* damage. Hits briar G for 132 damage.

Briar A: Taken out

Briar B: Taken out

Briar C: Taken out

Briar D: Taken out

Briar E: Taken out

Briar F: Taken out

Briar G: Down to 268 out of 400 hit points

Briar H: Unscathed at 400 hit points

Salamander: Taken out

The party has sustained negligible damage by this point, and the fighter still has 45 temporary hit points from their *battle drill* adventurer feat. Things are looking very bad for the enemies.

- **Round #2, Ranger (Skirmisher); and All of Round #3:** Commence mop-up.

Workday #6, Battle #23

- **Tracked?:** Yes, this battle was tracked normally.
- **PC Level:** 10, one incremental advance.
- **Battle Level:** 13.
- **Monster Equivalents:** 7.
- Iron Sea monster (*Book of Ages*, pp. 104-105), nastier special activated, -1 level, Huge 11th-level wrecker x2. Originally Huge 12th-levels, brought down to Huge 11th-levels. Treated as barrier beasts for the purposes of earning a campaign victory against the Forest That Walks.
- The Forest That Walks (*13th Age Bestiary 2*, pp. 91-93), nastier special activated, Huge 14th-level spoiler. The party was going into this fight with two campaign victories against the fallen icon already, so defeating the two Iron Sea monsters would be the third strike against the Forest.
- **Initiative Order:** Ranger, Forest That Walks, wizard, fighter, Iron Sea monsters, ranger (Skirmisher). The ranger rolled a natural 19 on initiative with *quick to fight* (thanks to a champion-tier *paragon* necklace, which they activated to gain an extra initiative d20), and they also had its champion-tier feat, allowing them to increase the escalation die by 1 right then and there.

• **Round #1, Ranger:** Quick action *bless* for broad power. Activate Improved Double Attack epic feat and champion-tier *ring of fickle fate*. Attack ISM A, critical hit (371 damage). Double Attack, another attack on ISM A, natural even hit, which becomes a critical hit with the Archery epic feat (247 damage). Third attack goes onto ISM B, and hits (123 damage).

• **Round #1, Forest That Walks:** Attempts to engage wizard. Intercepted by fighter with *intercepting strike* (we were halving only WEAPON, so this was 101 damage). Three attacks on fighter, all miss (attack roll results 26, 23, 22), but the fighter still takes 60 damage from *ambulatory landscape*.

• **Round #1, Wizard:** *Denial* with champion feat on the Forest That Walks and both ISMs, with double quick action Evocation on the Forest and ISM B, and a champion-tier *ring of fickle fate* on ISM A. Misses the Forest That Walks initially, but a *lethal* reroll lands a hit. 243 damage and hindered on the Forest That Walks and ISM B, and 203 damage on ISM A, taking out ISM A. Forest That Walks spawns mooks; the d6 roll turned out to be a militant ranger squad, which spawned away from the fray, due to being dedicated ranged attackers. Nothing is written on when these mooks act, so they were ruled to act just before the wizard on the next round.

• **Round #1, Fighter:** Move away from the Forest That Walks, provoking. The Forest lands a critical hit, but *negation* armor turns that into a regular hit, partially absorbed by the temporary hit points from *bless*. Quick action Tough as Iron clears away the 100 damage tracked on the fighter so far. Fighter engages ISM B and activates champion-tier *gauntlets of clobbering* and Combat Rhythm *battle drill*. Hits thrice for 205, 195, and 184 damage, taking out ISM B. Cleave triggers right then and there. Fighter activates Reach Tricks and uses *tactics of engagement* to hit the Forest That Walks for 187 damage and drag it into engagement. Continue *battle drill* routine on Forest That Walks with a champion-tier *ring of fickle fate*, Warrior omega feat, epic feat reroll, *lethal* reroll, and *paragon* necklace reroll: 514 damage, 204 damage. Three more mook squads spawn, ruled to act just before the fighter.

• **Round #1, Ranger (Skirmisher):** Attack Forest That Walks and hit for 66 damage. Double Attack adventurer feat triggers, another 50 damage. Improved Double Attack epic feat also triggers, splashing damage onto mooks.

• **Round #2, Ranger:** Attack Forest That Walks with *gloves of true striking*, hit for 149 damage. Forest That Walks is down. Start attacking mooks, especially with Improved Double Attack epic feat.

• **Round #2, Militant Ranger Squad Mooks:** Attack wizard. Do not get far, especially since the wizard can *shield* any lucky critical hit.

• **Round #2, Wizard:** *Fireball* with *tome of arcane mysteries* and champion-tier *gloves of power*.

Enemies surrender by this point due to the battle being completely hopeless. The PCs would have almost certainly destroyed these mooks throughout round #3. Since it was the final fight of the adventuring day, why bother playing it out?

Workday #7, Battle #24

- **Tracked?:** Yes, this battle was tracked normally.
- **PC Level:** 10, one incremental advance.
- **Battle Level:** 13.
- **Monster Equivalents:** ~7.
- Azgarrak, Breaker of Worlds (*Book of Demons*, p. 84), force damage resistance, nastier special activated, Large 14th-level wrecker. Azgarrak normally has a +5 bonus to saving throws, but the party actually managed to instill hesitation in him earlier in the epic tier, and the ranger's One Unique Thing is specifically related to Azgarrak, so the ranger could negate the +5 bonus to saving throws.
- Huge black dragon (*13th Age 2e playtest v2*, pp. 228-229, 234), *Now I'm mad!*, *damage aura*, +2 levels, Huge 12th-level wrecker.
- Huge blue dragon (*13th Age 2e playtest v2*, pp. 228-229, 235-236), *Now I'm mad!*, *damage aura*, Huge 12th-level caster.
- It was only midway into the fight that I realized that the ranger and fighter's champion-tier *rings of security* would practically negate all damage from Azgarrak's damage aura and those of the dragons. Of course, I do not specifically tailor my encounters towards the PCs.
- The entire party was benefiting from *flight* from the wizard, ritual-cast for increased duration.
- **Initiative Order:** Ranger, Azgarrak, fighter, black, wizard, ranger (Skirmisher), blue. The ranger rolled a natural 19 on initiative with *quick to fight* (thanks to a champion-tier *paragon* necklace, which they activated to gain an extra initiative d20), and they also had its champion-tier feat, allowing them to increase the escalation die by 1 right then and there.

• **Round #1, Ranger:** *Gloves of true striking*, champion-tier *ring of fickle fate*. Double Attack on Azgarrak for 198 and 131 damage. Move to far away.

• **Round #1, Azgarrak:** *Destiny-cutting whirlwind* on the fighter and the wizard. 2e *counter-magic* can apply against any remotely magical ability, even a dragon's breath. *Destiny-cutting whirlwind* seems reasonably magical, inasmuch as it targets PD (as opposed to a more physical AC) and mangles up the target's destiny. The wizard landed *counter-magic*; between the negated +5 bonus to saving throws and the wizard having taken the adventurer-tier feat for *counter-magic*, Azgarrak failed his saving throw, causing his standard action to completely fizzle. With his move action, Azgarrak tries to engage the wizard, but the fighter uses *intercepting strike* and hits for 100 damage.

• **Round #1, Fighter:** Combat Rhythm *battle drill*. First attack misses, but *lethal* salvages it, and a natural 16+ instantly refreshes *lethal*. Activate Warrior omega-tier feat on the first attack, which, thanks to a champion-tier *ring of fickle fate* and the adventurer-tier *lethal* feat, deals a titanic 479 damage. Second and third attacks finish Azgarrak off. Cleave triggers, Reach Tricks is successful, and *tactics of engagement* successfully drags black dragon into engagement while also dealing 150 damage. Last two attacks in the *battle drill* deal 143 and 140 damage. (Note that the fighter could have also just used a move action with the Cleave adventurer feat.)

• **Round #1, Black:** *Acid breath*, three targets. Natural 1 against the fighter. Hits wizard and ranger, but the former throws up a *shield* that makes it miss and, thanks to the adventurer-tier *shield* feat, deal only half damage. Wizard takes 33, ranger takes 100 and ongoing 30. Successfully disengages from the fighter, for all the good it will do.

• **Round #1, Wizard:** Move far away. *Disintegrate* (Abjuration from *staff of the magi* triggers) with epic feat on black, with Evocation and champion-tier *ring of fickle fate*. Hits for 543 damage and vulnerable. *Now I'm mad* triggers, with two targets. *Acid breath* misses both the fighter and the wizard, who take only 56 damage, and even then, the wizard has a fat stack of temporary hit points with which to absorb it.

• **Round #1, Ranger (Skirmisher):** Downs black dragon with 62 damage after halving. Double Attack adventurer feat triggers, allowing an odd roll to attack the blue dragon for 60 damage.

• **Round #1, Blue:** *Far-slashing lightning breath*. Only one target, the fighter. Misses. Due to *intermittent breath*, wants to try engaging a PC in melee next round, and so maintains current position.

• **Round #2, Ranger:** Double Attacks blue for 146 and 132 damage.

Mop-up commences. Party ultimately staggers the blue dragon, *Now I'm mad triggers!*, does nothing meaningful. Blue can do nothing on their turn to turn the tide, and thus surrenders. The party would have mopped up the blue throughout round #3, anyway.

Notably, this was the campaign's **only** battle in the overworld that was **not** right before a full heal-up, so the wizard got to avail of their Overworld Advantage class feature here. It ultimately did not matter too much, though, since the wizard had stockpiled R&D points all throughout the campaign and was overflowing with R&D points with which to generate spells, made even more convenient by the Advanced R&D epic feat.

Workday #7, Interlude: Icon Connection Benefit

For the fourth and final time across this campaign, I allowed an icon connection benefit to grant a combat benefit.

During an upcoming battle, any one PC (total) could turn a failed saving throw, even a death save, into an automatic natural 20.

Workday #7, Battle #25

• **Tracked?:** Yes, this battle was tracked normally.

• **PC Level:** 10, one incremental advance.

• **Battle Level:** 13.

• **Monster Equivalents:** 7.

• Pit fiend, Huge 14th-level wrecker. This one was fully upgraded, with *cloak of fire*, *devilish resilience*, *fear*, *final-gasp strike*, *resist non-damage effects*, *true seeing*, and *unearthly toughness 80*.

• Lammasu wizard, +3 levels and downgraded, 11th-level spoiler ×6. Notably, these specifically have a countermagic ability. They ate a *fireball* regardless.

• The entire party was still benefiting from *flight* from the wizard, ritual-cast for increased duration.

• **Initiative Order:** Ranger, pit fiend, lammasu, ranger (Skirmisher), wizard, fighter. Thanks to *quick to fight*, the ranger rolled a natural 19 on initiative, which caused their champion feat to immediately set the escalation die to 1.

• **Round #1, Ranger:** Cunning Aim, champion-tier *ring of fickle fate*. Natural even roll on lammasu A for 200 damage, then Double Attack for 121 damage. Dead.

• **Round #1, Pit Fiend:** *Burst of hellfire*. Just barely manages to hit each PC for 120 damage each. Tries to engage wizard. Fighter uses *intercepting strike* and hits for 103 damage. *Black utterance of denial* successfully hampers/hinders the fighter.

• **Round #1, Lammasu:** Five *perfect energy spheres*, all prioritizing the wizard, and then the ranger, who is closest to the wizard. One *sphere* gets incinerated by a natural even hit from *counter-magic*, and the wizard *blurs* up, triggering the fully feated Abjuration from their *staff of the magi*. Wizard takes 40 damage, which is all absorbed by temporary hit points from Abjuration's epic feat. Ranger takes 40 damage.

• **Round #1, Ranger (Skirmisher):** *Mighty healing* (broad) from Ranger ex Cathedral, acquired via omega-tier feat. Since this is healing, not damage, it is not halved. Ranger regains 138, fighter regains 134, wizard regains 86. Move far away.

• **Round #1, Wizard:** Explosive *shocking grasp* on all five lammasu. Hits all of them for 25 damage. Three natural odd rolls, but Abjuration and *blur* cause *master wizard's rejoinder* to miss. Evocation *ring of fickle fate disintegrate* with epic feat on the pit fiend. Natural even miss, but the *tome of arcane mysteries* comes to save the day, turning it into a hit. Pit fiend takes 543 damage.

• **Round #1, Fighter:** Champion-tier *ring of security* shrugs off *cloak of fire* damage. *Helm of the undaunted hero* cleanses the hampered/hindered condition with a saving throw, as per page 161 of the playtest packet. Elects to add the escalation die against the pit fiend. Combat Rhythm *battle drill* with *ring of fickle fate* and Warrior omega-tier feat on the first attack. *Lethal* and *battle drill* epic feat to salvage any misses. 393, 137, 141, 128, and 126 damage. Not quite enough to bring down the pit fiend, sadly.

• **Round #2, Ranger:** First attack is a natural odd hit against the pit fiend, dropping them dead, were it not for *final-gasp strike*. Double Attack adventurer feat triggers, letting the ranger slam lammasu B for 142 damage.

- **Round #2, Pit Fiend, Final-Gasp Strike:** Does not care about opportunity attacks, so applies a *burst of hellfire* onto the party. Lands a critical hit against the wizard, but a *stalwart* item turns it into just barely a regular hit. The ranger and the fighter are also just barely hit. The whole party takes 120 damage. Pit fiend drops.

- **Round #2, Lammasu:** All five bombard the party with *perfect energy sphere*, again prioritizing the wizard, who is still under Abjuration and *blur*. 40 damage on ranger and fighter, and that is it. The lammasu engage the wizard again.

- **Round #2, Fighter:** Engage lammasu B, *tactics of engagement* for 142 damage. Chooses the natural even roll to pop all lammasu off the wizard and instead onto the fighter. Since lammasu B was dropped to 0, Cleave triggers. *Chop bludgeon stab* on lammasus C, D, and E for 122, 146, and 109 damage.

- **Round #2, Wizard:** Reckless *fireball* all four lammasu. Hits all of them. Natural odd roll triggers *master wizard's rejoinder*, but it misses, also thanks to Abjuration and *blur*. All four lammasu take 143 damage and ongoing 30. Lammasu C, D, and E are dead. Lammasu F takes an extra 40 damage from champion-tier *gloves of power*. Move action and quick action to *shocking grasp* lammasu F for another 25 damage.

- **Round #2, Ranger (Skirmisher):** Cunning Aim. Successfully double attacks and kills lammasu F. All enemies are dead.

Sadly, the fighter's *helm of the undaunted hero* failed to recharge. Fortunately, the party went into the final battle with the fighter's Quick Pace and champion-tier *gauntlets of clobbering* at the ready, while the ranger had their Archery epic feat and Improved Double Attack epic feat available.

Workday #7, Battle #26

- **Tracked?:** Yes, this battle was tracked normally.

- **PC Level:** 10, two incremental advances.

- **Battle Level:** 13.

- **Monster Equivalents:** 7.

- Celestial judge (*Book of Ages*, p. 94), nastier special activated, +3 levels and downgraded, 13th-level blocker ×5. Notably, *loving punch* seems to have a grave mistake; I am certain that it is supposed to read "more," **not** "less," as otherwise, *fist of discipline* would be completely pointless. When I ran the judges, I patched up *loving punch* to read "more."

- Medusa noble (*13th Age 2e playtest v2*, pp. 259-260), +2 levels, double-strength 13th-level caster.

- **Initiative Order:** Wizard, ranger, judges, medusa, fighter, ranger (Skirmisher).

- **Round #1, Wizard:** *Overcome resistance* with *utility spell* adventurer-tier feat, allowing the party to punch straight past the judges' *perfect dodge*.

- **Round #1, Ranger:** *Bless* for broad power. Activate Improved Double Attack epic feat and *ring of fickle fate*. Attack judge A, natural even hit, activate Archery epic feat for automatic critical hit (377 damage). Double Attack hits (117 damage) with a natural even roll, taking out judge A right then and there, and sending another attack towards judge B, which also hits (136 damage).

- **Round #1, Judge B:** Increases the escalation die to 1. Engages the fighter. Wizard applies *blur*, successfully targeting both themselves and the fighter. Judge B attacks the fighter with a *fist of discipline*, missing, but still applying 30 damage.

- **Round #1, Judge C:** Increases the escalation die to 2. Engages the fighter. *Fist of discipline*, hitting for 60 damage and dazed (save ends). The fighter could have used *stalwart* here, but elected to save it for later, to prevent an untimely stun.

- **Round #1, Judge D:** Increases the escalation die to 3. Engages the fighter. *Ineffable thousand palm slap*. Only one hit, for 25.

- **Round #1, Judge E:** Increases the escalation die to 4. Engages the fighter. *Loving punch*. Misses, dealing only 37 damage.

- **Round #1, Medusa:** *Escalating threat* on the fighter, but the wizard applies *counter-magic*, which powers through even serpent wardings; the medusa fails the hard save against the *counter-magic* adventurer feat. Double attacks the fighter, missing and landing a critical hit, but *negation* armor turns the critical hit into a regular hit for only 64 damage and ongoing 48.

It looks like the fighter saving Quick Pace was the wrong call, since the escalation die is already at 4 anyway.

- **Round #1, Fighter:** Dazed for a -4 attack penalty, and lacking in Combat Rhythm, the fighter activates champion-tier *gauntlets of clobbering* and champion-tier *ring of fickle fate* and goes for the *battle drill*, targeting judge C first. Hits for 489 damage, one-shotting judge C, and triggering Cleave. *Poised defense* onto judge B, with a natural even hit; halving WEAPON still leads to a total of 145 damage, and the fighter elects to take the average for the recovery, replenishing 104 hit points. *Battle drill* continues onto judge B for 167 damage, taking them out. *Battle drill* continues onto judge D for 165 and 193 damage. The last attack goes onto judge E, using *lethal's reroll* and +25 damage for 225 damage. Tough as Iron to heal for 104. Saves against daze, but not against the ongoing 48 damage. 45 of the 48 ongoing damage is absorbed by the temporary hit points from the *battle drill* adventurer feat.

Judge A: Taken out

Judge B: Taken out

Judge C: Taken out

Judge D: Down to 90 out of 440 hit points

Judge E: Down to 215 out of 440 hit points

Medusa: Unscathed at 928 hit points

Fighter: Down to 309 out of 320 hit points, taking ongoing 48

- **Round #1, Ranger (Skirmisher):** Cunning Aim and Double Attack the medusa for 57 and 59 damage.

- **Round #2, Wizard:** *Fireball*, placing *Evocation* on judge E, and the *ring of fickle fate* onto the medusa. 143 damage onto judge D, 243 damage onto judge E, 203 damage onto the medusa, and the medusa takes another 40 from champion-tier *gloves of power*.

• **Round #2, Ranger:** Cunning Aim, *gloves of true striking*, and Double Attack the medusa for 130 and 139 damage.

Judge A: Taken out

Judge B: Taken out

Judge C: Taken out

Judge D: Taken out

Judge E: Taken out

Medusa: Down to 300 out of 928 hit points

Fighter: Down to 309 out of 320 hit points, taking ongoing 48

• **Round #2, Medusa:** *Escalating threat* on the fighter. Misses due to *blur*. Double attacks fighter, landing only one hit, for 64 damage and ongoing 48. Moves to far away.

• **Round #2, Fighter:** Double moves, Reach Tricks, *invincible strike* onto the medusa for 207 damage.

• **Round #2, Ranger (Skirmisher):** Cunning Aim, takes out medusa with Double Attack and its adventurer feat.

Thank You for Reading

If you have come this far and read all the way through, then I offer my sincerest gratitude to you.

Once again, I hope that *13th Age 2e* can be polished into a game with good internal balance, satisfying combat mechanics, and enough guidance to help the GM portray the Dragon Empire and its icons in a way that lets their own storytelling methods shine.

I am deeply dissatisfied with how the campaign turned out. Still, I hope that the reports here can help the writers polish up what could be a superb RPG.