Edna's *13th Age* 2e Full Release Game v2

Why *13th Age* 2e?

When setting up this campaign, the system criteria I was looking for (and that, to a certain degree, my players were looking for) were as follows:

• No external apps or programs necessary. (In other words, anything grid-based is right out.)
• Exceptionally larger-than-life scaling, wherein high-level PCs are vastly more powerful than low-level PCs, **especially** numerically. None of this "And now I spend some hard-earned XP to gain +1 to a single dice pool!" business.
• Very fast PC progression supported by default.
• Gradually unlocking higher-level abilities. I find earning abilities reserved for higher-level characters to be fulfilling.
• Rapid noncombat skill progression baked in, no hoop-jumping required.
• Decently internally balanced PC options, such that no one PC type is flat-out better than others, especially at higher levels.
• A reasonable amount of tactical, positioning-based combat, despite the lack of external apps or programs.
• Tactically challenging, tense fights.
• A reasonably large bestiary to pull enemies from. Somewhere around 120+ to 140+ unique statistics blocks at bare minimum, all ready-to-go.
• Actual encounter-building budget guidelines and "point costs."

The full release version of *13th Age* 2e seems like an okay fit. Not a 100% perfect fit, but I genuinely think it is my best option.

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What Is This?

• An **episodic**, two-PC game of *13th Age* 2e that the GM reserves the right to end at any moment, once the GM feels that the game has lost its hype and worn out its welcome.
• We will start off at level 2. Every three battles gives the PCs a level, unless they are already at level 10. The GM has planned out **33** battles, which, once completed, should leave the PCs at level 10 with three incremental advances. From there, we will decide whether or not we want to continue the game.
• We are using the default setting, the Dragon Empire.
• The tone is **heroic** and **larger-than-life**. There will be some dark subject matter here and there, but it will not be a front-and-center motif.
• One PC's One Unique Thing should be centered around alchemy or medicine, such as "I craft the strongest potions and other alchemical substances of all time (note: strongest does not mean lacking in side effects)."
• Another PC's One Unique Thing should be teleportation-oriented, like "I can teleport anywhere in the world, bringing along a single good friend whom I know very well. However, this takes several minutes of concentration and the telepathic approval of both the Priestess and the God of Light. While the arrival point is always in a safe spot, it is not particularly precise, and certainly better for long-distance travel than for local infiltration."
• Since this is an episodic game with no real overarching villain, it would likely be best for the PCs' icon relationships to focus on positives and conflicteds, rather than negatives.

Leniency

• The GM will be extraordinarily generous with allowing backgrounds to be applicable to skill checks. Two +4 backgrounds are highly recommended.
• Anything reasonably under the purview of the character's One Unique Thing simply does not take a skill check to accomplish.

Mechanics (e.g. House Rules)

• Level 2 character creation, with standard 17+2, 15+2, 14, 13, 12, 10 for ability scores, and a 100 gp loadout per arc.
• Full mechanical transparency applies. The PCs and their players simply know the enemy statistics at hand, but the enemies likewise know PC statistics and can choose targets accordingly.
• The variant rule from the *Heroes' Handbook*, p. 199, and the *Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 215, is in play, except that it is not as crude as simply giving bards and sorcerers a free noncombat feat. Instead, all characters can choose from either Further Backgrounding or Ritual Casting as a bonus feat. Note, however, that **skill checks and the necessity of rituals will be rather rare in this game.**
• The delaying and readying rules in the *Heroes' Handbook*, pp. 291-292, are available.
• The following variant rule from the *Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 215, is in play: "Ties on initiative don't go to the monsters, they go to the highest Initiative bonus."
• The following variant rule from the *Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 215, is in play: "Some fair-minded GMs give heroes a +2 bonus on spell and power recharge rolls during 3 battle arcs."
• No combat-related pre-buffing is allowed. It just does not work.
• The core rules allow a choice between rolling damage and recoveries or simply taking the average. Here, we will be generous. Whenever someone rolls for damage or for recoveries, they can either roll, or take the average, rounded up.

Executive Decision on Targeting Rolls

After the second battle of this campaign, it is clear that the single most important determinator for whether a combat turns out to be very easy or very hard is how well the sorcerer rolls on their **one** targeting roll. The GM finds this degree of unpredictability to be unacceptable. Thus, the following policy is in place:

• **Starting on the second arc of this campaign,** if a combatant could theoretically catch a power or spell's maximum number of targets, then the combatant can elect to settle for an averaged version of the targeting roll, as follows:
    • 1d3 becomes 2.
    • 1d3+1 becomes 3.
    • 1d4 becomes 1d2+1.
    • 1d4+1 becomes 1d2+2.
    • And so on.
• For example, in order to avail of this averaging on a *color spray*, the combatant **must** be able to theoretically target 4 nearby enemies in a group.

Executive Decision on Icon Connections

This is not the first time we have played *13th Age* 2e together: no, far from it. We have seen the "one player rolls two (or three!) icon connections, other player rolls only duds and has to settle for an automatically twisted connection" incident happen one too many times. It has happened yet again at the start of the second arc. The GM is absolutely sick and tired of this disparity by this point, and is thus implementing the following policy:

• **At the start of the second arc,** since one player has rolled two connections while the other player has rolled only duds, both players simply get any two connections of their choice. These roll for twists normally.

• **Starting on the third arc onwards,** no player ever rolls for connections at the start of an arc. Instead, each player simply gets one automatically **un**twisted connection with any one icon they have a relationship with. This automatically untwisted connection can**not** be used during combat.

  • The adventurer-tier Improved Connections feat works normally, rolling its twist as normal. It can be used for a combat connection.

  • The champion-tier Improved Connections feat is unavailable in this game.

Positioning

The core rules essentially say, "Hey, GM, eyeball positioning. That is, you figure out who is nearby, who is far away, and so on."

So I say, "Okay, here is my personal guideline for eyeballing positioning."

The RAW guidelines for movement and positioning are very, very loose: practically just "eyeball it."

The GM (Edna, in this case), finds it very difficult to make on-the-fly rulings on movement and positioning. Thus, to aid the GM in visualizing and making rulings on movement and positioning, the GM implements a guideline of a 1×4 grid of battlefield zones. The grid is 1×4 because the GM discussed a variety of other configurations with an experienced consultant (Exocist, in this case), such as 1×3, 1×4, 1×6, 3×4, and 5×4, and they ultimately settled on 1×4 as the permutation that struck the most favorable balance between simplicity and tactical depth.

The purpose of this guideline is to **cleave as closely as possible** to the baseline rules on movement and positioning, such as "far away" being anywhere on the battlefield yet engageable in two moves, while still providing enough structure to suit the GM's needs.

Combats are run via a Discord text channel, a Discord dicebot, and a Google Document. Any given battle takes place in a one-dimensional line across four zones: #1, #2, #3, and #4. **Two zones are nearby if they are adjacent; otherwise, they are far away.**

Zone #1	Zone #2	Zone #3	Zone #4

All combats, unless otherwise noted, use the default opening (*Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 50). The party starts in zone #2, and enemies start in zone #3. Sometimes, this is different. For example, if a wizard, a ranger, and a paladin are battling a blocker and two casters, then the starting positioning might look like this:

Zone #1	Zone #2	Zone #3	Zone #4
	wizard, ranger, paladin	blocker	caster A, caster B

The order in which combatants are listed is a direct indication of their proximity to one another. Combatants in the same zone are considered close enough to touch one another, while combatants in separate zones are never considered next to one another. Whenever a mechanic would check for "nearest," and there is a tie, the user of the mechanic can choose.

Additionally, parentheses are used to indicate engagements. For example, if the blocker is first in initiative, and the blocker attempts to engage the wizard, only to be intercepted by the ranger, then the positioning turns into this:

Zone #1	Zone #2	Zone #3	Zone #4
	wizard, (ranger, blocker), paladin		caster A, caster B

There is no limit to the number of creatures in a single engagement. In a way, engagements are abstractions of shifting melees, not literal adjacency.

A successful disengage causes the combatant to appear on the nearest edge of the prior engagement. If there is a tie, they appear on either side: their choice. They can then move as normal.

As per the rules for "dicey moves" and "pushing it" (*Heroes' Handbook*, p. 297), a PC can use a single move action to move far away by succeeding on a Strength- or Dexterity-based (player's choice) skill check with a normal DC for clear terrain (or if the PC has flight), a hard DC for awkward terrain, or a ridiculously hard DC for truly troublesome terrain, as appropriate for the environment's tier. An NPC or monster instead makes an easy, medium, or hard saving throw. Failure cancels the entire attempted movement.

For example, if the paladin acts next in initiative, and succeeds on a dicey move, then the paladin could engage one of the casters:

Zone #1	Zone #2	Zone #3	Zone #4
	wizard, (ranger, blocker)		(paladin, caster A), caster B

If a creature is capable of moving while dragging a grabbed opponent, at the end of the movement, the grabber places the grabbed enemy either immediately to the grabber's left or immediately to the grabber's right: their choice.

Aesthetics

• Cute anime girls.
• Most of the Dragon Empire is European high fantasy.
    • New Port is more steampunk and Teslapunk. Shadow Port is 1920s-ish, in the vein of New Capenna. The Koru behemoth clans are loosely Slavic.
• East Asian aesthetics are associated with the distant, eastern continent known to Wizard-King-era records as Misarkan. The Dragon Empire has had absolutely minimal contact with it due to the accursed Iron Sea in the way.
• Dwarves look like draphs, with horns and such.
• Elves have animal ears and animal tails. The traditional knife-eared look is, as a general rule, reserved for half-elves.

Devils and Angels

• Fey, as entities independent from elves, simply do not exist in this specific version of the Dragon Empire. "Fey" is an adjective and a noun used to describe someone or something with a very strong bond to the Elf Queen, above and beyond the average elf.
• The word "devil" is unknown in the Dragon Empire, except as a metaphor (e.g. "You devil, you") unrelated to demons.
• According to the Priestess, angels exist. According to her, anyway.

The God of Light

• There is only one God of Light. Mainstream doctrine holds that he manifests as seven aspects: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet.
• Supposedly, yellow is His most fundamental, most commonly manifesting aspect. It is often referred to as "gold," as in the Great Gold Wyrm.
• The color white represents the God of Light as a whole.
• The church of the God of Light is divided into six branches: red (the martial arm), orange (the overall leadership, inasmuch as orange represents three out of five of the metallic dragon types), green, blue, indigo, and violet. They all share yellow as a color, as it represents His most fundamental, most commonly manifesting aspect.
• Some theologians theorize that the God of Light actually has millions of different aspects: 16,777,216, by one count. This is considered profoundly controversial, and borderline heresy, so naturally, it gets debated somewhere in the Cathedral practically every day.
• Prisms and other refractors of light are sacred to the church.

The Icons

• Eleven icons. It took the combined might of eleven icons–the Archmage, the Crusader, the Diabolist, the Dwarf King, the Elf Queen, the Emperor, the High Druid, the Lich King, the Priestess, the Prince of Shadows, and the Three–to fell the existential threat that was the Orc Lord. Technically, it was sixteen, counting each of the Three plus the elf-enslaved Green, the lich-reanimated White, and the usually Drakkenhall-bound Silver.

• Fortunately, the only icon whom the Orc Lord managed to slay was the Lich King, also known as the old Wizard King. Unfortunately, he is currently regenerating in his phylactery in the Necropolis.

• All this happened just a few weeks ago.

• All of the icons who fought the Orc Lord, except for the Red, the Blue, and the Black, strained themselves to a breaking point just to survive. While their sociopolitical influence, administrative and executive expertise, and long-term ritual casting capacities remain intact, their in-field abilities and on-the-fly magic have all been severely weakened. As of the start of the campaign, they are still several days away from a full recovery. Meanwhile, the Three are surely plotting something nefarious over in Drakkenhall.

Icon Alignments

• **Heroic:** The Dwarf King, the Elf Queen, the Emperor, the Great Gold Wyrm, the Priestess
• **Ambiguous:** The Crusader, the Emperor, the High Druid (unquestionably a violent eco-terrorist, but nevertheless a loving ruler of the south-central and southeastern segment of the continent, aside from Santa Cora and New Port; **she will be an antagonist in this game**), the Prince of Shadows
• **Villainous:** The Diabolist, the Lich King, the Three

Or, sorted alphabetically:
• **The Archmage:** Heroic
• **The Crusader:** Ambiguous
• **The Diabolist:** Villainous (see below)
• **The Dwarf King:** Heroic
• **The Elf Queen:** Heroic
• **The Emperor:** Ambiguous. Even before the war against the Orc Lord, the Emperor of the 13th Age has been a bit... lackadaiscal. More concerned about having fun with concubines and with the arenas of Axis than actually running the show. The Dragon Empire's bureaucracy has picked up the slack, but can do so for only so long.
• **The Great Gold Wyrm:** Heroic
• **The High Druid:** Ambiguous (unquestionably a violent eco-terrorist, but nevertheless a loving ruler of the south-central and southeastern segment of the continent, aside from Santa Cora and New Port; **she will be an antagonist in this game**)
• **The Lich King:** Villainous
• **The Priestess:** Heroic
• **The Prince of Shadows:** Ambiguous
• **The Three:** Villainous

Out of Focus

The Dwarf King will almost certainly be kept out of focus throughout most of the game.

The Diabolist of the 13th Age

• The Diabolist of the 13th Age is the Diabolist of the 13th Age. She is not the first Diabolist, nor is she the Diabolist of the 12th Age, who gave up his life to craft and unleash a super-plague that devastated all of the Dragon Empire.

• The Diabolist of the 13th Age is, without a doubt, the most morally and ethically upstanding Diabolist on record. Unfortunately, the negatives she inflicts upon the continent are significantly more than the positives she brings about, and so she is nevertheless categorized as a villainous icon.

• The Diabolist of the 13th Age represents and champions two ideals.

• Firstly, the Diabolist of the 13th Age espouses Abyssal energy and demonology as a rapidly attainable source of personal power. They do not require the good fortune of developing sorcery, the hard work and diligence necessary for wizardry, or the icky trappings of the Lich King and necromancy.

• Secondly, the Diabolist of the 13th Age promotes the loosening of inhibitions and taboos. She earnestly believes that people hold themselves back and stifle their personal development and self-actualization by shackling themselves to societal norms and customs. Allegedly, the Dragon Empire would be a far better place if everyone were to just go mask off, be true to themselves, and do what they really want to do. (The Priestess calls this an excuse to be a big meanie. She avers that there is no such thing as a "true self," let alone what someone "really wants to do," and that everyone simply acts according to situation and context. Crucially, however, the Priestess urges everyone to be as beneficent and as selfless in as many situations and contexts as possible.)

• The Diabolist of the 13th Age does not specifically try to foment chaos and misfortune, nor does she expressly aim to sow the downfall of the Dragon Empire. If these things happen as a result of the Diabolist doing whatever she wants to do, then so be it.

• The Diabolist of the 13th Age will virtually never fight to defend a hellhole. They make good sources of Abyssal energy and demonological magic, but there is always another hellhole. The Abyss, though, that she will fight to defend, if ever something threatens to close it. There is only one Abyss, and it is her golden goose.

• The Diabolist of the 13th Age claims that she does not serve the Abyss and its lords. Rather, the Diabolist makes them serve **her**... as the occasion arises, anyway.

The Archmage's Seven Wards

• The Archmage's seven wards teleport around the Dragon Empire every several days, unpredictably and asynchronously. Generally, only people close to the Archmage, the Priestess, or both are entrusted with knowledge of the wards' locations at any given moment.

• The wards have no sophont defenders. They are protected purely by automated, incorruptible systems.

• The Archmage's ward against infertility randomly teleports near major agricultural communities. It is currently located in the city of New Port.

• The Archmage's ward against the Stormmaker randomly teleports to spots along the coastline of the Midland Sea. It is currently located in the city of Shadow Port.

• The Archmage's ward against the Iron Sea randomly teleports to spots along the coastline of, unsurprisingly, the Iron Sea. It is currently located along the Sea Wall.

• The Archmage's ward against hellhole formation can randomly appear anywhere. It is currently located in the Elf Queen's Court of Stars.

• The Archmage's ward against the serpent people's curse of misfortune and ruin randomly teleports to land near Fairwind Sound. It is currently located along the eastern coast of the Bitterwood.

• The Archmage's ward against whatever "the chaos below" is can randomly appear anywhere. Its whereabouts are currently unknown.

• The Archmage's ward against natural disasters randomly teleports to spots near active volcanoes. Its precise whereabouts are currently unknown.

Starting Premise

It is early spring. You two, yes, **you two**, are near-icons who fought the Orc Lord alongside the icons in the Frost Range, and are personally familiar with every single one of them. You **also** strained yourself to a breaking point (and burned out all of your magic items!) just to survive. Unlike the icons, however, you have found that some good old-fashioned adventuring restores your old power.

For the past several hours, you have been addressing a crisis over in Santa Cora. A hellhole has manifested right in the middle of the 235th floor of the Cathedral (so in other words, still just the base of the spire), and demons are swarming across the sacred structure in all directions! You are nowhere as strong as you used to be, but neither are the Crusader and the Priestess, and they are personally battling demons right here and now! Are you really going to let those two icons and their respective armies upstage you? The Great Gold Wyrm is here, too, in the form of his shadow, the grandmaster of the Golden Order.

Come to think of it, one of the Archmage's seven wards is specifically supposed to prevent a catastrophe like this, right? The ward against infertility, the ward against natural disasters, the ward against the Stormmaker, the ward against the Iron Sea, the ward against the serpent people's curse of misfortune and ruin, the ward against whatever "the chaos below" is, and... ah, right, the ward against hellhole formation! Well, maybe that last ward is already doing the best it can again Abyssal incursions, and the real problem is the Great Gold Wyrm finally growing faint after all these centuries...

Campaign Outline

• **Levels 2 to 6:** Curing the Great Gold Wyrm.
• **Level 7:** Breaking long-standing dooms.
• **Level 8:** Breaking new dooms.
• **Levels 9, 10, and 10+:** New worlds.
• **Level 10++:** Messianic return to the Dragon Empire.
• **Level 10+++:** Wrap up loose ends. Optional.

Setting Crossover