

# Zeitvice

Advice from arkwright for GMs running the Zeitgeist AP



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# Introduction

Zeitgeist is, in my opinion, the greatest adventure path ever written. Every single one of its *thirteen* books are crammed with interesting characters, with fun and exciting encounters, with intriguing plot and thoughtful worldbuilding. It is ambitious in a way no other adventure is.

Yet- it has massive, glaring flaws. Some are clearly born from time constraints. Some are clearly born from the authors of the different books not properly talking with each other. Some are born from the curious ways it was written- the plot from a PF perspective, yet the encounters far better in 4e.

What you will find below can be roughly sorted into two types. First, ways to run Zeitgeist well; problems and how to avoid them, information from later that should be known earlier, tips on encounter math. Secondly, ways to run the *perfect* Zeitgeist; where you seize onto the half-complete ideas in Zeitgeist and attempt to construct what was intended, to apply your own ideas, or both.

Zeitvice is written independently of Ryan Nock's sequel setting.

If you run Zeitgeist and want to chat, get in touch with me on Discord; arkwright #8183.



## Session 0

### 4e v PF (v 5e)

Zeitgeist has a few conversions. Which should you run? I believe that, unless you are willing to do lots of re-statting, the 4e version is best.

Put simply, the combat in 4e Zeitgeist got a lot more love than the combat in PFgeist. Where 4e Zeit enemies are unique creatures with unique fluff on nearly every combat ability, PF Zeit enemies are either standard PF monsters or NPCs with class levels and a few small custom abilities.

Let's talk specifics.

- Star Marshal Lacacia, an Act 3 enemy. Here is her [PF version](#). Here is her [4e version](#). The former is a Handmaiden Devil with 6 bard levels. The latter is a monster built from scratch, featuring unique description and unique flavor-text on every ability.
- Common gun-wielding enemies (bandits, soldiers) in the early books are awful in the PF version, because their conversion does not take into account PF's gun rules. Without Gun Training, most of these enemies lack any damage bonuses on their ranged attacks, making them extremely underwhelming.



Complaints about the PF conversion are generally applicable to the 5e conversion as the converter was exceedingly literal in converting from PF to 5e.

There is, however, one aspect where the PF version is 'better'- the plot; specifically, the fact that the plot was clearly written from a PF perspective. In the 4e version, time and time again, the plot specifically refers to and relies on Pathfinder spells and concepts. 'Kasvarina casts Fireball', 'Kasvarina casts Power Word Blind', '...if someone uses Banishment', and so forth. If you play 4e you'll need to convert these instances to their 4e equivalent, which can cause a few disjointed moments in the plot.

Leaving the quality aside- there are small plot differences. For example, Kaja Stewart is an NPC the party arrests in Book 3. In the 4e version, she is swiftly bundled off to Slate by the higher military authorities. In the PF conversion (but not the compilation), the Ob send assassins after her. Things like that. When you're prepping to run a book, it may be worth your time to skim through the conversion and look for differences.

Some quick final notes on 4egeist:

- Antimagic/countermagic is frequent and anathematic to 4e; for example, antimagic screws with 4e martial characters
- Firearm + grenade rules are unbalanced
- 'Goon' monsters are low-HP but full-damage, a recipe for bad encounters
- Lots of long-duration domination effects which is against 4e design principles
- Hitpoints seem miscalculated- lowballed- in many (70-80%) statblocks
- Zeitgeist is too generous in allowing PCs to get away with 1-or-2 encounter days

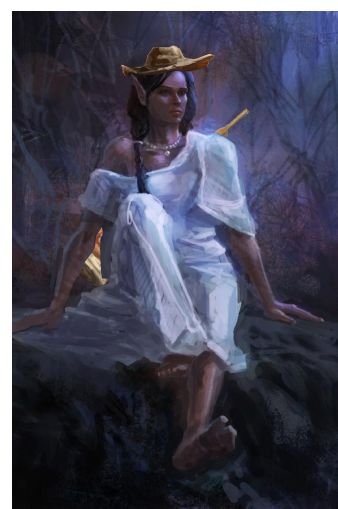
These problems might sound major, but they aren't any more than you will find in any AP, including the PF conversion. I believe the extra love the 4e statblocks got makes it worth it.

## Themes

In my own campaign, partially due to having a small party, we doubled up on themes. Yerasol Veteran & Technologist, Skyseer & Spirit Medium. In hindsight, this has been a fairly good and rewarding decision. Theme missions get significantly less grandiose as the AP wears on, and they are given up completely by Act 3. Doubling up has been good for making it more likely that my players will get enough theme content, and will get at least some theme content they enjoy.

## Skyseer

A player who picks the Skyseer theme may reasonably expect that they will receive specific forewarnings, that will enable them to act accordingly. "Tonight you will face a werewolf; purchase silver ammunition". After an initially rather grounded foreseeing of the events of the Coaltongue launch, Skyseer prophecies become short and cryptic descriptions of further events.



*"A man carrying a bronze staff with three keyholes was assailed by swords and arrows and fire, but nothing killed him. He began to take off his robes, revealing tiger fur beneath them, while stars fell from the sky all around him. Then the sky was dark, and when the sun should have risen, instead a pale glowing cloud floated in the dark."*

These prophecies have the irony of being simultaneously not useful, and too useful. Some players may reasonably grow frustrated at receiving a vague description of something that will happen within 3-5 books. Some players may quite reasonably make quick and *accurate* deductions of what is going to happen based on these descriptions; 'a superweapon will break out of Cauldron Hill', 'the Ob will schism'. Then the GM has to struggle to figure out what to do about the party having this information.

Keep this in mind when a player expresses interest in the theme.

## Vekeshi

The Vekeshi are a complicated theme- mostly because in the AP, there are two other factions who are using the Vekeshi for their own ends. The first is the Hedgehog Court, the upstart faction amidst the Fey. In Book 2 (as revealed in Book 9), they task the Vekeshi PC with recruiting the fey terrorist Gale as an operative. The second is Kasvarina Varal, before she got mind-wiped by Alexander Grappa. With the assistance of her lieutenant, the Vekeshi Mystic Cula Ravjahani, she has run 'vengeance cults' for the last few hundred years, fighting a guerilla war against the Clergy's colonies, using a version of the Vekeshi ideology. She has also been using her Vekeshi Mystics to assassinate anti-Elfaivaran targets overseas, as well as completing assassinations for the Ob.



I mention these factions as Book 8 describes in exacting detail Vekesh's first performance and the values espoused, the values Kasvarina (at the time) echoes. These two factions have goals which oppose these values. Keep this in mind when a player expresses interest in the theme.

## Backstories

To get the most out of Zeit, it's great if PCs can 'enmesh' themselves in the world. This does have an unfortunate effect of 'guess and tie yourself to random bits of the setting and hope they're what the AP explores', but oh well. Good things to tie to- Eladrin and the fallen Elfaivaran empire, the eschatologists, maybe Benedict Pemberton, the Ob, Danor.

## Looking Ahead

Zeitgeist has the sometimes frustrating habit of providing information in later books that would be great to know earlier.

- Books 6 and 8 have neat little 2-4 page gazetteers for Elfaivar and Ber; histories, locations, political structures, public figures. If characters feel like having Elfaivaran or Beran ties, could be good to share these.
- Book 7 features a giant list of Obscurati operatives across the world with their names, details, cells and tasks; as you can imagine, this is invaluable for providing background NPCs in the early books, and if a PC requests a contact.
- Later books reveal that Rush Munchausen (Lya Jierre's bodyguard) and Rock Rackus were involved in the ziggurat-delving work performed by Finona Duvall (Ob operative) and her cell. When the party encounters her in Book 3- and if they interrogate her- she knows these people.

## Deep Lore

Zeitgeist has something rather unique; ideas that are only half-expressed. Elements are introduced to set up a later payoff, a later story linking them together- but then that payoff never comes, that story is never told. Providing that payoff sometimes involves a lot of homebrew material. I have had to write a lot of my own material to explain the histories of Elfaivaran gods Hewanharimau and Ingatan in Book 8. But sometimes, providing that payoff can come simply from looking at the existing material, and reasoning solely from them what the conclusion should be, with little or no homebrew material- just with deduction. I call these payoffs 'Deep Lore', the lore that I believe they intended to put into the AP, but then did not follow through on. Sometimes this is just my own opinion, sometimes this is backed up with questions to Ryan Nock on the ENWorld forum.



'Cry out for at the end of time I rise'. This phrase crops up three times (maybe four, depending how you count it). On the rifle of Kvarti Gorbatiy's gun, in the Eschatologist hideout in Book 5, and on the skull of the dragon Cheshimox in Book 6. The phrase is fairly clearly a reference to the Voice of Rot; in act 3 the Voice is perched upon Reida (plane of time), with the stated plan of destroying the plane thus destroying the world's history thus destroying the world. How did this phrase get into the hideout, onto the skull, onto the lich who Kvarti stole a bone from? The AP doesn't know. Examining the issue, I noticed the common theme of undead. There are undead ghouls guarding the skull, there are undead in the eschatologist lair; the lich is undead, and probably had undead helpers before the frost giants killed them all. I submit that the Voice- which is associated with the undead- has the line as a message or prophecy, which certain undead scribble down. This is probably a very passive thing, merely the undead picking up on the Voice thinking about its plan. You might note that the eschatologists help the Voice sabotage the Axis Ritual, but by Book 3 the Voice and the eschatologists had not made contact.

Where did the Demonocracy come from? Per the Zeitgeist timeline, a few hundred years after the initial Axis Ritual, the Demonocracy emerged; a nation led by demon lords, who Triegenes defeated. It's never stated where they came from; and that question seems fairly important, seeing as the entire point of the Axis Ritual



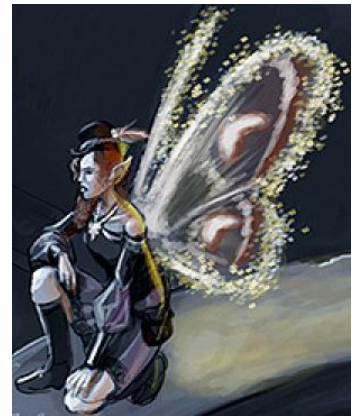
was that it would cut Lanjyr off from extraplanar invasion. Looking at the two main invading forces, I believe that the Golden Legion were the source. The Legion are devils whereas the Demonocracy were demons, but- reading ahead to Book 12, we can see that the Legion use golden chains to both compel loyalty and turn prisoners into devils like themselves, whether they be human or demon. I submit that the Legion who were cut off by the Axis Ritual had their chains break, slowly reverting them back to their original forms. Those of them who were demons fought a quick civil war to slay the rest of the former legionaries, then declared themselves the Demonocracy.

### Fey Physics

Possibly this could be put under 'deep lore', but I feel it's strange enough that it deserves its own section. Zeitgeist features a technology sickness suffered by the fey; a discomfiture that has generally driven them out of Flint as it industrializes, and is a large factor behind Book 9's civil war amidst the fey and the overarching conflict between the Unseen Court and King Aodhan's push towards an industrial revolution. One can easily make a number of assumptions about this illness- that smog chokes the fey, that iron repels them. That is until Book 9, where the party enters the Dreaming and discovers an actual incident of the fey sickness. Complaining about an unbearable 'ringing' noise, the fey travelling along a major road are going out of their way- a mile in radius- to avoid a piece of Waking technology.

That piece of technology? A water-driven flour mill.

This is extremely strange since water-driven mills are ancient egyptian-level technology, totally unrelated to the Victorian industrial revolution. And so, we go back to the players' guide. *"They are unsettled by anything with spinning parts, from wagon wheels to the gears of a clocktower, and often try to break such devices as fervently as a man might chase a mosquito."* And so we come to the conclusion that it isn't *technology* the fey are disturbed by- it is *spinning wheels*, a conclusion that grows steadily more credible when you note that Book 9 mentions the fey being discomfited by a 'whirligig', a paddle-steamer. Perhaps the reason the fey have now become discomfited is that modern wheels spin faster and smoother.



Zeit never states this outright- but it seems very likely to be canon, or at least extremely plausible.

In my campaign, I declared that this phenomenon was the result of a curse leftover from the witches of Cauldron Hill a century ago. The PCs descended within, freed a trapped archfey of the Great Hunt, and broke the curse.

### Planar Physics

Something notable about Zeitgeist is that it is a setting designed ground-up specifically for the purposes of this AP. This means that a lot of its fundamental features- planar physics, history, society- come into play in the AP or are significantly changed. It also means players are best served by keeping track of those things in a way you really don't have to bother doing with any other AP. Most other APs are very 'discrete' in that they have a story that draws on the setting, but doesn't really change it. In Zeit, the AP *is* the setting.

### Physics as Guidelines

As a heads-up: physics in Zeitgeist are *different*. For example:

- You can breathe in space
- The sun does not generate heat, only light; the Lanjyr planet generates its own heat
- The planet stops generating its own heat when it is flung near the Gyre at the start of Book 10; it proceeds to take months before the world gets even slightly cold, only freezing shortly before Book 13
- Before the Ancients' planar ritual, the planet had no sun, and was perfectly fine.

### Players' Guide

It is very clear that the players' guide to *Zeitgeist* was written very early in the AP's development. Lots of worldbuilding was clearly aspirational- in that they *intended* to describe and treat nations as having certain traits and behaviours, but then it never comes up in the actual AP- or contradicting information comes up. For example, information on the Elfaivaran colonies in the guide is very contradictory to Book 8, when the party actually visits the colonies.

The player's guide also talks about the mysterious killer known as the 'Ragman', and how they're connected to 'mysterious sigils' underneath the canal bridges. I'm 95% sure that's referring to the Bleak Gate smuggling sigils, and I'm 100% certain the writers forgot they'd included that detail there and would retract it if they could, since it's a big spoiler.

### **Hard Time**

*Zeitgeist* involves the PCs unravelling a grand criminal conspiracy. For that reason, PCs and their GM may feel particularly inclined to be merciless when it comes to captured/defeated enemies. PCs don't want word of their exploits to get out, GMs don't want prisoners to be forced to answer too many awkward questions. PCs also definitely don't want former enemies escaping and causing more trouble in the future. The rule system often encourages this outcome, with nonlethal options either being less efficient or simply easy to forget.

However, I feel that this can quickly lead to a waste of good characters. Interesting NPCs cut down before they get a chance to shine.

I would encourage GMs to try to preserve NPC lives by relying on the geas, and also coming to a gentleperson's agreement with the players, to wit: enemies captured by the PCs and handed over to RHC prisons will *\*not\** be casually freed by the Ob, or allowed to cause any dramatic harm. RHC gaolers should be assumed to be diligent and competent. Of course, part of that agreement should be that in the rare, once-in-an-Act situation where a prisoner *\*does\** escape, it is only so as to foster interesting drama, and never cheap melodrama.

### **In the Navy**

The naval rules are... less than ideal. Do not use them, or at least do not use them past Book ~4 when naval engagements start including >6 ships.

## **Overall**

### **Rebel Without a Cause**

Nicodemus the Gnostic is an impressive figure. Centuries-old, immensely powerful, always calm and charming, a legendary philosopher, possessing the charisma of George Clooney at his most Oceanic. However I feel I need to warn GMs of what I perceive to be two massive chinks in Nicodemus' armor.

#### *Nicodemus the Hero*

Several moments of awkward writing hurt the ability of a party to empathize with Nicodemus, two of which can be found in Book 8, where they are revealed through magical flashbacks.

His first meeting with Kasvarina, befriending her and enticing her with the promise of peace between Elfaivar and Crisillyir. His apparent benevolence is harshly contrasted with how he then proceeds to euthanize the other Elfaivarans in his care with little good reason.



The moment of the Great Malice high atop the Lance of Triegenes, where Kasvarina is dangling from a precipice, and Nicodemus instead of rescuing her chooses to leap into a portal. Best interpretation is he went to try and prevent the Malice, worst interpretation is he was trying to save his own skin, Doylist interpretation is the writers needed to explain how he turned into a ghost. Either way, he left her to die.

Of course, some readers might say that this is the point: Nicodemus is fundamentally a villain despite his good traits. Yet I feel these moments make Nicodemus *\*too much\** of a villain, and make events like meeting 'good' Nicodemus in Book 12 hollow.

### *Nicodemus the Philosopher*

Despite all of Zeitgeist's philosophy, despite Nicodemus' origin as the reformer philosopher William Miller- I feel that Nicodemus the Gnostic has no true philosophy, as shown by two key moments.

In Book 7, Nicodemus calls a grand convocation. Obscurati assets from across the world are brought together to learn about the fruits of centuries of conspiratorial preparation: Borne, the Axis Ritual, the plot to reshape the heavens. He looks out upon the future rulers of the world... and steps back, and lets them vote for the future order of the heavens. *\*Then\**, in Book 9, he implements the MAP arrangement regardless of any votes in Book 7.

In Book 10, Nicodemus calls another grand convocation. Representatives from the world's great nations are brought together to greet the enigmatic force that has reshaped the heavens. He looks out upon the future rulers of the world, speaks of how he hopes to resolve political grievances, rebellions and poverty... and then a hivemind forms and interrupts him so he doesn't speak any further on his *\*methods\** or *\*ideas\**, and he promptly condemns the audience as mad and corrupt.

### *In Summation*

I believe that one reason why Nicodemus is so philosophically empty is to allow for Zeitgeist to be played by groups of all political persuasions. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but I think it is a flaw in Zeitgeist that the AP never out and says this, and tells the GM to concoct some ideology for Nicodemus. Instead, the GM is left to discover this significant hole in the main villain several books deep into the AP, when adding ideology to fill it will be extremely clunky.

I have [spoken](#) with Ryan Nock about this, and he offers an alternate interpretation that Nicodemus represents the philosophical view that it is *\*right\** to impose our ideas onto others regardless of their consent. Thanks to Death of the Author I can say with all due respect that I feel this idea is weak, and its links to the created work are weak.

In summation, GMs: be aware that you may need to create some political views for Nicodemus the Gnostic. This shouldn't be too difficult to do, his history lends himself to a wide variety of radical globalist/noocratic/conservative/liberal/classical/mercantilist views. It's just much easier to do this with forewarning, which I am providing.

### **Clergy**

Reading through to prepare for Zeit, I actually found the Clergy quite interesting. They do *look* like your standard authoritarian god-fearing scientist-burning not-Catholic church. And sometimes the adventure seems to think they are. But, reading closer, I find they can- or should- be a little different. To get technical, their fundamental philosophy is about self-improvement and empowerment, a bit like PF's Irori. To get yet more technical, they represent Nietzsche Master psychology- 'good' is noble, strong, in touch with natural instincts. The catholic church represents Nietzsche Slave psychology- 'good' is humble, meek, good for the





community, self-sacrificing. Also, one other problem I find with the Clergy is that, to some degree, they *should* be the ultimate bad guys. The Obscurati are enacting their grand, world-changing plan mostly because of the Clergy. The trouble is that it's easy to portray the Ob as running rings around the Clergy and having the Clergy seem like old dying dinosaurs. I feel that kind of hurts the plot; if the Clergy are so weak, why are the Ob bothering with their grand plan?

My personal solution to this has been pretty big. Firstly, emphasize their Master-psychology stuff, and the idea that they can be a force for good. My little '[homebrew additions](#)' section should show that. I also planned out an additional theme/background, though since no one took it I didn't bother to come up with powers.

Secondly, I have concocted a 'plan' for the Clergy. If the Ob have their master scheme, then I thought their enemies, the Clergy, should have one as well. It involves stirring up trouble between Drakr and Danor, allying with Drakr, writing a new theological doctrine endorsing magic-powered technology, and forming a Drakr-Crisillyir superpower to rival the prospective Danor-Risur superpower.

Of course, their plan won't succeed. The Ob are too well-embedded and ambitious. But I think the fact that they're *trying*, that they might get close, that they're still a sizeable threat, is important to establish.

In terms of the AP, mostly this has just involved dropping a lot of hints. Talking about a 'new Reformation', talking about the Clergy endorsing Drakr doomsdaying and using Malice Lands crusading as the foundation for their coming alliance. It also helped that one of my PCs had in her backstory a Clergy priestess, who I have conscripted as the 'face' of this little plan. I've had her show up in all corners of the AP- backing Eschatologist dwarves, visiting Ashima-Shimtu, etc.

Anyway- you can probably feel free to ignore all of this, this is just what I did and think is good.

## Roster

The second compilation volume features something rather neat- a list of *all* major Obscurati leaders across the world. Most of them are of little import, but they're great for sprinkling into the game. The PCs find a random contact? Surprise, it's a secret Ob operative. A player wants a certain backstory NPC? Surprise, they're a secret Ob operative.

## Shadow Brotherhood

In my Zeit game, I quickly became very fond of the Obscurati's tenebrous catspaws: the Shadow Operatives. In 4e at least, they come in three categories; orb-wielders, knife-and-syringe-wielders and ninjutsu-wielders. Cillian Creed fits into the middle category. They are a regular fixture of the conspiracy, popping up across all Acts.

I found the idea of a brotherhood of minions/mooks loyal to the grand conspiracy quite interesting, and spent some time developing their private rituals and origins. Upstart men and women taken from across the world, given shadow-powers in return for a period of service under the Obscurati. Perhaps you GMs might enjoy expanding on them as well.



Regardless, I would encourage you to have the Shadow Operatives be faceless, in that it is assumed their geas/training means that the party can get minimal intel from them. Make the PCs go after named NPCs if they want to uncover the secrets of the Obscurati.

## The Right to Know

Zeitgeist is an adventure about conspiracy and mystery. With that said, I would encourage GMs not to be too scared when the PCs either deduce something early, or want to go public with some information.

In my game, the PCs (ahead of time):

- Guessed the ritual site was Axis Island
- Guessed the Ob were building a colossus
- Wrote articles for the newspaper about their Ob discoveries, including the planar rearrangement, encouraging the citizenry to have a think about what kind of reshuffle they would prefer.

Zeitgeist definitely *\*assumes\** the PCs keep mum about their Ob discoveries, and thus it doesn't always provide the best reasons for why the PCs *\*should\** keep mum.

As the GM, it is your right to request the covert tension of a top-secret investigation. Still, try to consider the interesting possibilities of the PCs making use of the RHC PR department.

## Icons

It might not matter for some time, but, on the matter of the Planar icons. After asking on the forums, it seems there are two sets of icons. One set on Axis Island, and one set distributed around the Planar Ziggurats. It's just difficult to realize that since you don't run into duplicate icons at any point.



## The Ring Conundrum

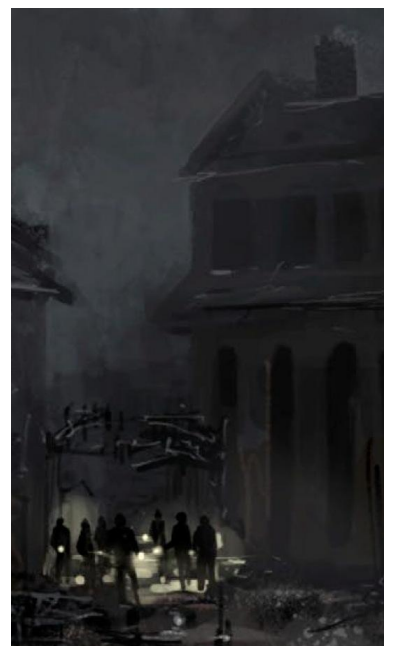
The Obscurati organisational structure sounds good but quickly runs into problems when you peer down at the mechanics of how they interact with each other, and this is nicely epitomized by their rings. As the AP says, Ob operatives use their rings to identify each other. But how? There is no description of a visible magical property, or any magical detection spell. The only possible identifier is the interior Ob inscription. So... an Ob member searching for other agents has to take off their ring and flash the inscription about? Very weird. This becomes a problem in places like Book 4, where the party is laser-focused on the interactions of Ob agents.

I can't offer much concrete advice on this, or on if the PCs get the idea of forging their own rings. Handwave what you think is best handwaved, and perhaps be honest with the players regarding the system's shortcomings.

## Age of Industry

In Book 2, the party are confronted with the cruelties of Industrial Revolution labor conditions. Factory workers work exhausting hours in dangerous conditions and their fatcat bosses conspire to eke even more sweat from their aching limbs. They're in bed with the police and the government, too; 'community leaders' are all too willing to look the other way for a bribe, or in the name of Risuri technological advancement. These conditions are seen again throughout multiple nations, and multiple books.

Parties may find it disappointing to discover that the thirteen books of Zeitgeist have the scope to see the sun disappear from the sky, make contact with alien invaders, unravel the secrets of history and a grand conspiracy, yet it does not have the scope to see the reform of these labor conditions. By Book 10, the oppression and anger of unionists has only intensified, and the party is obliged to intervene in a fiery labor protest only when a hivemind forms. This is in my view a very large missed opportunity. Particularly when time after time, the PCs are encouraged to sympathize with the struggle of the workers. Such is a very large part of the Docker theme.



Labor politics are a large part of modern politics, which I imagine is a large part of why the AP doesn't bring up a solution to the problem. "Were workers better off in Industrial-age Britain?" is a historical question that is still being debated; did peasants move to the city for a better life, or because land reform stole their farms? I'm not going to offer advice on this, I'm just going to summarize what my party did.

- Establish good relations with the Dockers and workers, and with the Parwight University professors and students
- Encourage students to support the worker cause, encourage professors to pen papers on the economic, political and philosophy case for less tyrannizing of the workers
- Arrange for Governor Stanfield to hold a forum between representatives of the industrialists and the workers for the purposes of coming up with ideas for labor reform legislation
- Pass the legislation

Of course amidst all that was an Ob-backed frame-up of the workers for violence involving a temper-inflaming lantern, to add some drama.

### **(Rail)Road to War**

The AP is rather set on war between Risur and Danor. There are, of course, good reasons for this. Historical rivals, Danor being run by a member of a conspiracy to conquer the world. Still, it is possible that some PCs may be strongly invested in King Aodhan's vision of peace between the two nations, and there are opportunities in various books to make that happen.

- Establish Lya as genuinely interested in peace, as well as being an Ob conspirator
- In Book 5, Lya and a Danoran ship should stay behind to assist in the battle against Borne, to prevent loss of life
- After the PCs defeat Lya in Book 6, she should promise to cease Ob activities
- Have the servants' wedding in Book 9 be replaced with a wedding between Lya and Aodhan; Aodhan should probably live and retire, and Lya can push for Danoran-Risuri ties as the retired queen



The goal of these opportunities is not to build a military alliance between Risur and Danor, more to build a partnership and kinship that can survive the betrayals of Han Jierre and the Obscurati. Danor should be held to account for actions taken against Risur, but there should also be ample evidence for why Danor and Risur are stronger together than apart.

## **Book 1**

### **Timeline**

I encourage you to make a timeline of Coaltongue sabotage events to help keep things straight. Here's mine:

- 7pm- crowd begins assembling to enter the square
- 7:30pm- crowd enters the square, passengers arrive
- 8pm- Ship departs the port
- 8pm- Duchess goes away for a nap. She prepares a ritual of water breathing, affect normal fires and inhibits teleportation
- 8:30pm- ship's crew goes above-deck, skeleton crew remains behind.
- 8:35pm- assassins kill ship's crew
- 9pm- ship arrives and anchors within sight of shore, surrounded by its eight-ship escort
- 9pm- Stover says Duchess hasn't come back, asks PCs to investigate
- 9pm- Assassins get word back to Duchess who dives into the ocean and escapes
- 9pm- Assassins and Sokana go below deck and begin to sabotage.



- 9:03pm- ship explodes

### Timeskip

For some reason, the book dictates that after the Coaltongue incident, there's a one-week timeskip. I feel like this messes with dramatic pacing. So, I just ran it such that the PCs, after an initial debriefing period, are shipped straight to Axis Island for the mission. I also invented something to add a time-critical component, a Danoran thing that 'anyone who holds our land for three nights, we shall declare war on', and the PCs have to get the Duchess off the island before the third night is out and the Danorans have to go to war.

### Unceremonious

The Axis Island plot is that there's an infiltration, to sneak in and open up the seagate so the navy can land. As per the book, the party is the 'backup' team for another group of NPCs; these NPCs, two minutes after setting off and swimming into a cave, are unceremoniously killed by a planar-shift hazard the PCs have no reason to fear for the rest of the book.

In my view, why bother- just make the PCs the only team. Justify it by saying that Duchess rebels and saboteurs are everywhere, and the PCs are the only people close enough and with transferable enough skills who are proven loyal to do the job.

### Dragon

Harkover Lee is secretly a dragon (Inatch the Hex-Eater). His character entry for Book 1 doesn't much say so, but I think it's worth knowing it early.

### Map

The Axis Island map has a whole bunch of marked locations. I checked with the writer- turns out that they commissioned the map before writing the adventures, and the map has way more markers than they actually ended up using. Most of them mean nothing.

### Golem

A 'wandering monster' on the Axis trek is a witchoil-leaking Golem. This is basically a Proto-Borne from Book 5, the big secret superweapon lots of things are based on. Might want to ponder whether to include this or not, savvy players might deduce a lot from it.

### Combine

It miiiiight be worth your time combining the characters of Nathan Jierre from Book 1 and Luc Jierre from Book 4 into the same character. Both are planar researchers, and both royal tieflings. Both also have basically no presence after Book 4 so you can change them up with little bother. Heck, if you do this and Luc dies in this book, you can swap in Nathan Jierre for Book 4.

### Oh Captain

One might think the captain of the Coaltongue would be an important, named NPC. One would be wrong. Not only is the captain not named in Book 1, but in Book 5 he suffers an off-screen heart attack just in time for the PCs to take charge of the ship.

This is worth mentioning as one of my players thinks there is easy confusion over the role of Rutger Smith, Captain of the *Impossible*. Some players might assume Smith is the captain of the Coaltongue.

Could be worth making Smith the captain on the Coaltongue's maiden voyage. Perhaps the normal captain is ill.



### Dreadnought Mysteries

Asrabey's appearance in Book 1 provides a number of peculiarities. He uses an *immurement*, a rare magic item containing a sliver of another world; one would think it would be the kind of item that Zeit would use a lot, but it never comes up again. He has been dispatched by his fey masters to show their support for Risur, which he does by blowing up a Risuri ship and cutting through any Risuri soldiers between him and the Duchess. Asrabey was sent by his Ob wife Kasvarina to work with the Unseen Court, yet what he was actually accomplishing for the Ob/Kasvarina is never really established.

All I can advise is that you play up Asrabey's single-minded devotion to Kasvarina. It will fuel his future betrayal of the party in favor of Kasvarina and becoming the Archfey of Devotion. Also note that he is devoted to 'Kasvarina the vengeful leader and Ob founder' over 'Kasvarina the person and mother'.



## Book 2

### Timeline

Also good to make a timeline of the various days. Day one: Creed in the guise of Officer Porter visits Professor Kindleton asking for Wolfgang. Day seven: Kell sells out Wolfgang, Creed takes him and Professor Kindleton into 'custody'.

### Bleak Gate Blues

The bane of my existence running Book 2 was five little words: *partially in the Bleak Gate*. The book uses these words to justify all manner of things. Why can the PCs not see the Ob goons waiting outside? Because they are atop wraith horses and *partially in the Bleak Gate*. How do the techs travel to and escape the golem warehouse? By going *partially into the Bleak Gate*. Why can the PCs not launch a full assault on the Borne facility in this book? Because their entry point, Macbannin's lab, only takes them *partially into the Bleak Gate*.



It is quite a burden for a GM to have to rationalize the mechanics and implications of moving between planes, *especially* when it suddenly becomes possible to move only halfway between planes. It is a touch worse in Book 5 when you are introduced to a series of 4+ rings which each move you progressively further into the Bleak Gate.

Fortunately, these five words stop coming up once you get beyond Act 1. Hopefully now that you are aware of these words, you can run Book 2 a little easier than I did, as I did not properly grasp what was going on for some time.

### Wolfgang

Wolfgang is not-Doctor Frankenstein, who is currently on the run from his vengeful reanimated 'son', shortly before beginning a period of charitable medical work. Might be good to foreshadow. His plot has strong Call of Cthulthulian Paranomal-Investigator vibes.

## **Combatting the Crisillyiri**

The encounter with Leone Quital can potentially be rather nasty. As-written, it seems quite difficult for the PCs to avoid having Quital fetch one of their background NPCs and then kill the NPC in front of the party. I can't offer too much specific guidance before 'watch out'; my party avoided it by use of a unique location-swapping power.

## **Kell the Villain**

Lorcan Kell is a major villain in Act 1. He wreaks a lot of evil, his minions are involved in many of the encounters they face. But, it can be tricky for the party to view him as an important and villainous villain. He doesn't get Quital's scene of almost gutting a beloved background NPC. Indeed, in Book 2, the book tries to be clever by having him meet the PCs at a time when he wants to help them.

I'd encourage you to try to give Kell a bit of spotlight to do some villain-ing, to directly menace or hurt the PCs, or something or someone they care about, so it's satisfying and logical later when they decide to take him down.

## **Kell's Contradictions**

Lorcan Kell is also the centre of two questions; why is his smuggling operation targeting Danoran enterprises, and why does the Ob not pick up Wolfgang the moment he buys protection from Kell?

Book 2 states that Creed and Kell are running a scam whereby Creed identifies factories producing components useful for Borne, either buys the components or gets the arsonists to convince the owner to hand over the factory, and then Kell smuggles the components into the Bleak Gate. It is strange that in the description of Wolfgang's papers it is stated that this scheme 'explicitly targets Danoran enterprises'. Firstly because one would think the Ob would have considerable pull among Danoran business, secondly because there is little reason why only Danoran businesses would be producing the desired components. Possible answers include:

- It's a typo and only ~50% of targeted factories are Danoran-owned
- The Danoran embassy only had records of transactions with Danoran factories
- It just so happens that Risuri engineers have yet to produce Borne-useful components, possibly because the Sovereign is encouraging Danoran engineers to research and produce Borne-useful components

Next up; Kell is working for the Ob, so why is it that he doesn't immediately hand Wolfgang and his papers over to the Ob? Perhaps the Ob don't know who Wolfgang is yet; but 'Officer Porter' is sniffing after Wolfgang near-immediately. Perhaps Wolfgang doesn't tell Kell about the papers; but Creed's goons are staking out Wolfgang's hideout when the PCs arrive. 'At the end of the week, Kell hands Wolfgang over to Creed' seems incompatible with 'Creed's goons are waiting outside Wolfgang's hideout all week'.

- I can't find an answer for this. The best I can suggest is have it that Kell stalwartly refuses to hand Wolfgang over to the Ob unless the Ob pay him a fortune, and the Ob don't want to upset Kell at this time. Thus Creed's goons only move in once it becomes clear that the PCs are definitely going to get the papers.
- Alternatively: Creed realizes that he screwed up by failing to properly kill Nilasa and recover the papers, and thus he is keeping information from his boss Macbannin until he can find a way to present his actions in the best possible light.

## **Inevitability**

A flaw with Book 2 is that it is a grand investigation- working out the circumstances of Nilasa's death, the reach of the Bleak Gate project, Macbannin's involvement, and so forth. The problem is that, in the end, most of the party's effort is worthless. No matter what they do they will receive word of the Jaguar laboratory and likely unwind most of the conspiracy just from that. I would encourage you to ponder how to reward the party for good investigative work. One way is to allow them to stop the Dawn Square massacre from happening.



## Monologue

One of my players found Gale's monologue about the Canal Route quite clumsy and confusing- you might want to reword it.

## Creed Arrested

My party arrested Creed early, but I still wanted to use him for his later encounters. So I improvised a quick bail-hearing scene where Macbannin puts his reputation on the line and gets Creed sprung from custody. It meant that when Creed was caught again, the squad now had additional reason to suspect and arrest Macbannin.

## Researchers

You might want to add traces of the researchers who'll pop up in Book 3- Kaja, Isaac- to the lab.

## Saxby

Try to give Margaret Saxby a little screen-time, to set her up as a Book 3 antagonist.

## Lost Artefacts

Though it's easy to miss, one wand in the smuggling seizure is special- an Egal Legion wand with the weird property of immediately returning to whoever uses it. You might want to reword that property lest it become annoying.

Also note that atop Cauldron Hill, the party can search around and find the Cracked Cauldron magic item, a leftover from the witches of the mountain a century ago.

## Big Mac

(In 4e) Macbannin has some *really* powerful curses, and a *really* powerful aura. Factor that in.

You may also want to foreshadow Macbannin's future role in the plot. Add hints that Macbannin truly is loyal to the Crown. Add hints that Macbannin's lab was working on anti-titan weaponry (since Macbannin thinks that's what Borne/his research is for).



## I Want To Be A Fairy (Governor)

The plot of Book 5 relies on something which the writers forgot to mention in Book 2: that Gale wants the approval of the Unseen Court. It's why in Book 5 she accepts Ekossigan's offer of fey power and authority. You should bring it up.

Also, in Book 10, Gale is a candidate for Governor of Flint, replacing Roland. The argument is that her experience with Danoran high society + Risuri low society + the fey + magic makes her well suited for the role.

## Author's Pet Dragons

For reasons unknown to me, the reptilian arsonist brothers Valando and Eberardo show up quite often in future books. They don't *do* anything, they are merely mentioned fairly regularly in places like newspaper articles, while they cool their heels in jail. No particular advice from this, just thought it should be mentioned.

One place they might be relevant is in Book 6, meeting the Executore (law-enforcer) Glaucia, who might be pleased to know that the PCs have previously imprisoned criminals like the Beran dragonborn brothers.

# Book 3

## Security Arrangements

With careful preparation, the PCs may be able to find leads on Kaja before the Incident begins. They can follow pick-pocketers or the smuggling operation. Doing so will mean that when the Incident happens they can swiftly go to her current location, rather than puzzling it out later and giving her time to prepare. Langfield bought his staff yesterday, so she has since moved and his information is worthless.

## Revolutionary Technology

The Kaybeau Arms Fair includes some of Benedict Pemberton's most cutting-edge technologies; it may be a good opportunity for you to introduce a proto-duplicant. Some gizmo where a visitor can put on a visor and see out of a little wall-mounted eye, or perhaps control a wall-mounted faux-animal head. See my Book 6 'Reed Richards is Useless' for more on the immense value and possibility duplicants hold.



Alternatively, tie duplicants to B.E.A.R., which already features a construct crudely controlled by a visored pilot.

## The Voice in the Age of Reason

Book 10 has an excellent picture of the Voice of Rot, as well as a neat poem attached to a High Bayou sign.

*Whosoever ventures near,  
Be forewarned that Death lives here.  
If you should note the smell of death,  
Then soon shall come your final breath.*



Could be good to include.

## Audit

The audit can get pretty complicated, particularly factoring in Kell's attempts to frame a PC, Price-Hill's meetings, and so forth. Try to grasp many of the details before running. For example, under the Excessive Expenditures subheading, it lists the approximate stipend wealth for each of the PCs. These numbers make \*no\* sense with the Wealth By Level of any D&D edition, so don't put too much focus on them.

Something that may be entertaining is to contrast between the railroading-Saxby and the impartial-Price-Hill, with the latter being quite perturbed at the former's irrational imputations against the PCs' honour.

## Sijhen's Schemes

The Sijhen plot is curt on the details. Sijhen goes to the Mavisha portal to find out more about the sealing rituals- but there's no guidance on what he actually learns from that or how it impacts his later actions. You might need to do a lot of his planning 'on the fly'.

You may wish to abandon the scene altogether, and focus on his museum attack. Or you could play up Mavisha's anti-divination (secret islands) properties, with Sijhen attempting to discover old Gidim lore 'captureed' by Mavisha's anti-divination properties.

## Spreading Madness

Newspaper articles talk about the spread of Distant Madness in Flint. It's not clear what the actual source was Sijhen's stats don't say anything about spreading Distant Madness. I ruled it that Kaja was experimenting with the sceptre and accidentally released some thoughtforms into a street, who afflicted the passers-by with

Distant Madness and also enough amnesia to forget the incident. Those thoughtforms were then either killed by Kaja or they escaped into the sewers.

### Thinking With Portals

This book is, to some degree, the most portal-focused stretch of Zeit. As a result of that, for any bits of 3 that are confusing or short on detail- there's no further help. You'll have to go to the forums and chat with the writers. I'll summarize what I learnt.

- None of the portals actually lead anywhere, just to empty space- in fact, not quite to empty space, but rather to a fixed area in empty space, where the plane used to exist pre-ritual. That's where the Mavisha portal draws the water to.
- The physical seals have no purpose, it's the rituals around them that the Ob want to know about. Think of a gold-related *thing* the Ob are doing, and say that they melted down the seals and added it as a holistic measure.
- See my bit in Overall about the icons.
- There's an inconsistency in that Sijhen was in a timeless space and emerged unharmed and confused, but the Mavisha fishmen were trapped in a place where they could feel the years passing by, and emerge maddened. This is a problem with the writing, there's no deeper meaning or justification.

### Naval Rules

Hooray, this book involves the naval rules. Good luck to mastering those. I encourage you to have it that a successful naval battle results in the skipping of a round-by-round battle with the enemy ship's crew, rather than leading to it.

### Monstrosities

I think it's cheeky for a book to include extraordinarily weird enemies yet only provide pictures for some of them. I can provide the token art I used. Dead Space and Half Life art may suit.

### Fiery Tieflings

From Caius' luggage, it seems as though the writers believe that tieflings can produce flame at will. Might want to keep that in mind when deciding how the luggage works.



### Rail

The math for rail transport seems faulty, according to the cost of the railway trip to the Ziggurat. The cost for a train ticket seems rather prohibitive, particularly given its comparison to the apparently 'outrageous' cost of Catherine Romana's Dream Road plan. Perhaps you want to ignore these numbers, perhaps you want to say there is some oligarchic price-fixing going on.

### The Ritual

I strongly believe that the writers think that the *Detect Planar Energy* ritual is free, or at least almost free. A good deal of the plot- particularly the parts based around tracking down trails- seem to assume the PCs are able to spam it at will. As I've said this is the most portal-focused section in the entire AP, so it shouldn't be too much bother to allow the party to do this. Future books barely if ever mention the ritual.

### Been to the Moon

The story of Rock Rackus' visit to the moon and the fey is a massive headscratcher in terms of planar physics and more basic elements like 'why haven't people realized that the Dreaming is on the moon'. Book 12 has the 'Mysteries of the Multiverse' sidebar which helps... a little.

Note that Rackus was briefly involved in Ziggurat-delving with the Ob, finding the Jiese Ziggurat. He might have become friends with Finona Duvall, and perhaps even have met Rush Munchenhausen.



### **Aquatic**

Do make the Book 3 aquatic combat rules available to the party beforehand so they can properly plan for the Mavisha seal fight.

### **Apocalyptic Vision**

The book features a special Gidim vision... which can only be seen if the party fails utterly to prevent Sijhen escaping, and the area in and around the RHC gets nuked. There's no harm in letting a Skyseer PC get the vision without having to suffer such dire consequences.

### **Hello Again**

In later books, Sijhen comes back. This seems very strange when for Sijhen to successfully escape, RHC HQ must get nuked. It may be best to commit to Sijhen dying, while loudly predicting the vengeance of his more experienced older brother (Cijhen?).

### **On the Fly**

When handling the mess that is Sijhen executing his plan to escape RHC custody, it might help to have it that Sijhen dominated a rail worker into putting a timed explosive on the Apet seal. This should let you trigger the Thing encounter even if Sijhen gets defeated prematurely.



Also, the book describes how when reality goes transparent you can move between floors, but doesn't describe the action or skill check required. I'd suggest a move action.

### **Spotted**

Consider giving the PCs an opportunity to spot the rusted-iron rings the Ob installed in RHC HQ. If the PCs order them moved, then Saxby should be forced to put new rings in a less-obvious but less tactically-optimal position, and it should lead more clearly back to her.

### **Incomplete Blackmail**

Book 3 has the bright idea of giving only half a Vekeshi theme mission, and leaving it to the GM to handle the rest- coming up with enemy stats, ways to resolve the problem, and so forth. I'd suggest just abbreviating it to a single skill check or challenge.

### **Take It Slow**

If the PCs move through the book quicker than expected, it can be tempting to accelerate the pace of events to match. Say the PCs return from the Apet ziggurat before Meredith is supposed to have killed Caius. It can be tempting to just have her kill him earlier and flee.

After running the book, in hindsight I think it's better to not do this- have her kill Caius while the PCs are at the Mavisha ziggurat, so they can deal with it when they return.

With that said, definitely feel free to move up the Gala date- no way will it take the whole month IC to finish the events of the book.

### **Forgot to Mention**

In a top-quality case of 'only mentioned later'- when the PCs visit Meredith at Pardwight, she has three eyes under her long sleeves as a result from the seal opening explosion, and she's also carrying the icon of Apet. How much she's consciously aware of this is up to you.

### **The Fault In Our Stars**

Saxby is guarding an Ancient artifact, a starmap. Sijhen intends to use it to help navigate home. Interestingly the map was put together pre-Ritual, and thus by examining it the PCs might get a very interesting picture of

where their solar system's planets once existed. This could make for a very early discovery of 'huh, our system's planes were reshuffled in the past.'

Also, Book 3 mentions two constellations; Alesia the Wayfarer, and the Flood. It is fair to say that the book hints they are important. They and all constellations are not important. Possibly avoid mentioning them, to prevent accidental red herrings.

## Book 4

### All-Seeing Eye

I find it a bit of a cop-out that even if the party achieves a Complete Success in their secrecy preparations, vague 'Ob divinations' are able to pick them up and give the Ob full knowledge that the party is heading to Danor. An equal cop-out is Ashima-Shimtu's 'vague immunity to vague Ob divinations'. Best, I feel, to set the divinations aside and have it that the Ob have no idea that a Completely Successful party is coming. You may still want to make use of Glaz du Sang Magie and the Catchalot. If you don't think the party will escape Vendricce by boat (taking teleportation portal, train etc) then perhaps have Glaz do a sail-by to study the party's ship, or have Glaz captured offscreen by the RHC as part of successful counterintelligence efforts.

### Social Mobility

An awful lot of second-class passengers stop by the first-class dining cart. Might want to look into reconciling that. Perhaps the cart is open to second-class passengers, perhaps some second-class passengers have paid extra for mid-journey dining.



### Mess in an Arena

Book 3 strangely assumes that the PCs are both passive and active, particularly with the Isobel Travers plotline. It seems to assume that the PCs will be passive enough to let her reach Nalaam arena, but be active enough to intercede right when she's being sold off. One of the many problems with this is that it means you have to somehow communicate to the PCs that they shouldn't free her earlier, and can rely on Arena Master Kulp to get her to safety- after all, you don't want to miss the cool Mapple fight.

### Crimes of Cardiff

Initially this section was just going to be about the gravity of Cardiff Hengehill's intelligence, but then I spotted an inconsistency. In Cardiff's profile, he has a *briefing on Danor's military build-up plans for the next five years*. Later in the book it says he has *documents (that) are related to Danor's naval maneuvers, and give highly detailed records of every ship in the navy, its captain, crew, armaments, capabilities, and recent deployments*. Weird.

If you run with the latter version of Cardiff's documents, then it is very difficult to underestimate the gravity of the information. This goes far beyond James Bond stealing a single set of weapon plans. With this information, Risur may very well be able to conquer Danor with a minimum of casualties. Depending on what the party discover about Danor's involvement with the Ob, King Aodhan might feel \*obliged\* to attack before this information gets out of date and the opportunity is wasted.

Consider either lessening the import of these documents, or coming up with good rewards for them and not invading Danor. Perhaps it stops the naval massacre in Book 9.

## Meeting Without a Cause

I have no idea why the Obscurati are meeting in Mutravir Palace in this book. It can't be to reveal anything about the Axis Ritual. Best-guess it's to cover their normal activities and look at their cell structure. This probably won't come up as the Palace is beyond the scope of the book.

## Timetable for a Conspiracy

So as to better keep track of the NPCs of interest, I put together a [timetable](#). I also put together a [timetable](#) for the false-lead passengers, so the PCs wouldn't just need to look for the NPCs who don't stay in their room all night. In practice it was beyond my capabilities to keep to the false-lead timetable, but perhaps you might have more success.

## Lands of Faith, Reason and Philosophy.

For the sections of this book that take place in Crisillyir, Danor and Drakr, you can find very useful fluff in other books. The player's guide has lots of detail on all three. Book 10 has the Cherage gathering. Book 11 has a section in Alais Primos. Book 13 has a section in Trekhom.

## Future of a Failure

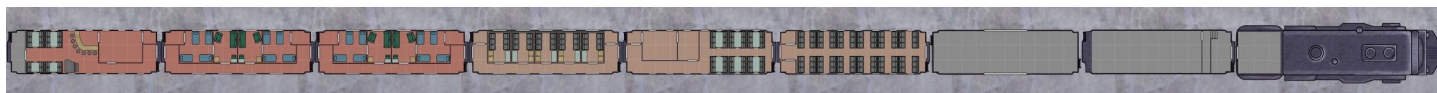
Damata Griento is destined to become, of all things, Zorro. When next the party encounter him in Book 6, he has become a successful rail baron. His final moment in the limelight is Book 13 where, under the mentorship of a famous and ancient Elfaivaran general, he has learned the fine points of swashbuckling, mask-wearing, parkour, rapier-fighting and heroism.



Damata's Book 4 presentation does a fine job of setting this up. Still, it's good to know. Though, perhaps do something to fix the mild ethical issue of Damata stiffing a bunch of criminals who have treated him perfectly fairly.

## Trap or Experiment?

If the PCs have taken the route of pretending to be Ob operatives, it would be a pity to waste Luc's Nemian assassination attempt. It might be good to have Luc request that the PCs help him with a scientific experiment, a brief excursion to Nem made possible by his lantern.



## Striking Oil

In case it comes up, be aware: oil for Luc's lantern comes from meteorites blasting down from foreign planes. Ground zero is the Book 6 facility of Knütpara, which Triegenes destroyed with meteorites.

## Twists and Turns of the Demoness

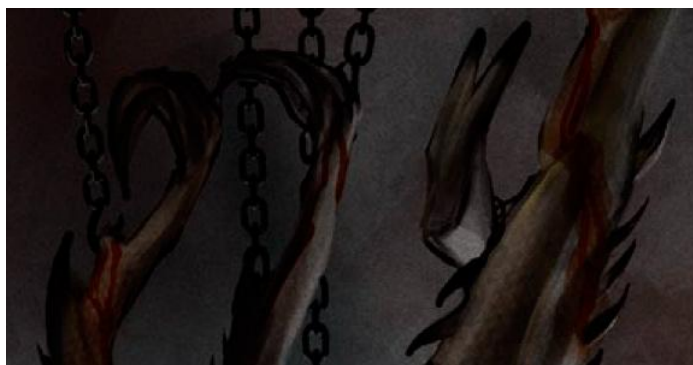
Ashima-Shimtu is a fairly classic redemptive-demon. After centuries trapped in the Crypta she has reflected on her sins, and rejected her evil nature. The issue, in my view, is that the plot requires her to:

- Tell the Axis Ritual to Nic and Kasvarina five hundred years ago
- Tell the Axis Ritual to random Crisillyiri in Book 11

The former led to the horrors of the Great Malice, the latter leads to the horror of the Crisillyiri executing their gods and much of their faithful population. This rather goes against her redemptive character.

I don't have much concrete advice for GMs on how to handle this. Consider this a \*be ye warned\*.

For a further tip; I feel it is very rewarding for GMs to have Ashima-Shimtu explain some historical context. What the Demonocracy was, and her role in it. What value does a redemption have if it is not clear what she was before? 'Seneschal' is a fairly vague title.



## Book 5

### The B-Plot

An important note about the scenes with the B-Team constables is that they are optional. They do not provide any rewards or story progression. If your party doesn't need any more clues, you don't think they are up to a perspective-switch, if you simply don't want to spend the time on it, don't bother.

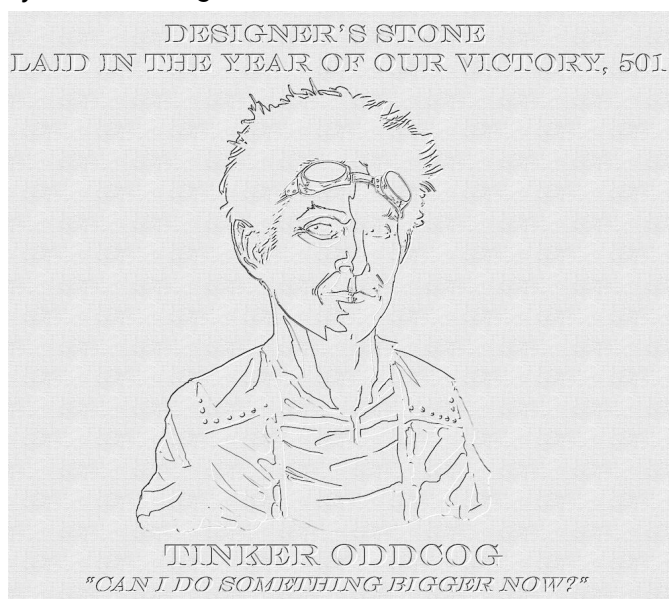
### Overtime is Authorised

Book 5 envisions a somewhat lazy stretch of investigation and crime-fighting spread over a number of days; however the Kell taskforce minigame has a flaw in that it is possible for PCs to blitz multiple consecutive missions in a very short time-period. Each NPC officer can only go on one officer per day, but the PCs can go on one mission every four hours.

Perhaps this is fine, if you like the idea of your PCs coming at Kell like a whirlwind in the shape of an investigative team. But if you would prefer matters to be stretched out a little more, perhaps cap them to 2 missions per day.

### Old Tinkering

To foreshadow the existence of Tinker Oddcog, I decreed it that the revolutionary Aurum Hotel was [designed](#) by him. You might want to do similar.



### Memory-Event: Mind-Taker

The appendix to Book 8 includes Kasvarina's memory of being inside the Flint Ob facility and being mind-wiped by Grappa. The specifics offered by the memory might be useful to you in this book.



### **Mother's Ring**

Later books will confirm that all three Ob founders, including Kasvarina, have their own Ob rings. They are fashioned from Methian stone, which is the origin of the rings' anti-divination powers, though not all rings are stone. You may wish to include Kasvarina's ring in her appearance in this book, with an appropriate inscription.

Alternatively, perhaps the ring is lost in the tumult of Borne's rise. When Kasvarina regains her memories through Book 8, the party can return to the wreckage of the facility in search for her ring and a memory-event.

### **Children of the Colossus-maker**

I personally found Grappa's lesser golem-children to be a bit too much of a spoiler for Borne's titanic might. 'We just fought our way past some human-sized colossi, I wonder what is beyond the door, perhaps... a \*huge\* colossus?'

You may wish to turn them into animal-shaped colossi. There's no major reason why they couldn't have spent their 'childhood' in animalistic forms.



### **Thank You For The Teachers**

Some players may view the multiple bodies of teachers at the Gallo school as excessively dark. Perhaps a waste, too, less hostages for the PCs to dramatically free. Consider having them locked up by the fey, rather than slain days ago.

If you do choose to kill the teachers, then the Gallo schoolkids, even if rescued, face the prospect of joining sooty metropolitan orphanages. Perhaps instead the Unseen Court could arrange to take personal charge of the kids, granting them unique education and opportunities in the Dreaming, with royal envoys checking on them periodically. Might be nice if in Book 9 when the PCs visit the Dreaming they encounter the fey-adopted orphans they saved.

### **The Trains Run On (?)**

Zeitgeist includes a subrail map for Flint's central district. I cannot tell you that it is useful for understanding Zubov's plts, because I have no damn idea of how it works. Book-descriptions of the location of stations such as Baker street are incompatible with the map, and with Zubov's plans to drive the carriage into the Aurum Hotel. The connections needed simply don't exist.

Consider drawing your own map, or simplifying the plan/the subrail system.



### **Shadow of the Mastermind**

To add a little foreshadowing of Nicodemus, I had it that the party + the King gathered outside an old shrine to William Miller for their pre-facility-breach briefing. Nothing special. Perhaps you could even place the shrine elsewhere, might be better-fitting.

### **How Sweet the Fall**

The battle with Quital inside the facility is probably the most awkward spot in the book, due to the specific plans the AP has for Quital, Grappa and Borne. The ideal scenario has Quital and Grappa taking a fall into the witchoil below and Borne awakening and rising out of the mountain above. Alternate scenarios quickly get very difficult to reconcile with the AP's specific plans. Thus I would strongly advise the GM to embrace the railroad and reveal it to the players as much as possible: Borne will escape, Grappa and Quital will die/disappear, and

there is nothing the players can do to stop it. Call it a Skyseer prophecy, call it the inevitable result of Quital's talents and the Ob's failsafes, call it whatever you like.

### Flight of the Dreadnaught's Bride

Per the Book, at the first opportunity, Asrabey grabs and elopes with Kasvarina Varal. I think this is a wasted opportunity to characterize such an important NPC, and help the PCs feel that they have more control over the events of the plot.

In my game, Asrabey got Kasvarina to safety, but she insisted that they stick around to help some people displaced by Borne's path, and to talk with the PCs. When the party caught up with her she had assisted a local restaurateur and was busy making a thank-you Elfaivaran meal for the PCs. They chatted, and she and Asrabey disclosed their intention to travel to Sentosa for safety and to help recover her memories. Then they left.

### The Iron Man and the Sea

Borne's bay battle against the Risuri flotilla is where the naval combat rules breaks down a fair bit. As-written you have fourteen ships in total and you need to track subsystem damage and hull integrity and the like for all of them. Not an easy task. Might want to just declare that if Borne lands two hits, the ships are destroyed.

Also, watch out, it might be too easy for the PCs to pilot the Coaltongue right behind Borne and just whack his unprotected backside until he falls over.

### Oh Captain

Refer to my Book 1 section on the captain of the Coaltongue.

### More than a Title

King Aodhan knighting the PCs is nice, but it would be neat if they gained more than a title. Consider bestowing on them an individual gift, such as:

- A steed from the Unseen Court that can be summoned or dismissed
- A plot of land; a manor, a country estate, an abandoned observatory
- A military commission and rank
- A noble marriage



## Act 2

### Middle Book Syndrome: Act 2

Act 2 of Zeitgeist has a bad case of 'what was the point of that?', where the party's actions amount to nothing. That's not to say that a wise GM can't easily come up with consequences and rewards for the party, but it is to say that the book in and of itself gives no real reward for the party. It is a bad enough case that I have carved out this section here. I might bring up individual cases in the following books, but I feel it is important that I lay all of it out here and now.



Book	Goal	Outcome
6	Find Tinker Oddcogg and learn about Borne	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Got Tinker's info on Borne, but none of it is actionable or ever used</li><li>• But hey, we learnt about Grappa and an Ob gathering, that'll be useful!</li></ul>
7	Infiltrate the Ob gathering, learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learnt about the Ob, but none of it is actionable or ever</li></ul>

	more and try and influence their debate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>used</li> <li>Influenced the Ob gathering, but Nic just decides off-screen to go with MAP no matter what</li> <li>But hey, we learnt about Kasvarina, that'll be useful!</li> </ul>
8	Recover Kasvarina to control Borne	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We (maybe) allied with Kasvarina, but it doesn't let us control Borne and she has no proper role in later books</li> <li>But hey, we learnt Stanfield is a traitor, that'll be useful!</li> </ul>
9	Stop Roland Stanfield's lighthouse plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stopped Stanfield's lighthouse but it really wasn't doing anything that bad, certainly not 'enslaving the minds of people' judging my newspaper articles in Act 3</li> <li>Oh all that time we wasted + the unexpected fey time-jump means the Ob have been able to execute their world-changing plan, what bad luck!</li> </ul>
Overall	Stop the Ob	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We failed to stop the Ob; also, why did we even try, since they are just going to implement the fairly-utopian MAP?</li> </ul>

Don't get me wrong; Act 2 is still vastly better than your average AP books. The party is on a roller-coaster world tour with great worldbuilding, infiltrating the Ob gathering is a great experience, befriending Kasvarina by accessing her memories is really compelling. It's just that the party keeps chasing a constant stream of useless information that can make the entire endeavour feel like a wild goose chase.

I would put the cause of this problem down to a mix of poor planning, poor author communication, and this Act needing to spin its wheels so it doesn't disrupt the planned earth-remaking rollercoaster of Act 3.

The solution to this is to add ways in which the party can gain actual rewards from their efforts, even if they still fail to prevent the execution of the Grand Design. I will go into more detail below, but here are some examples (based on what I did in my game):

- Let the party recruit hordes of Ob officers from the gathering and put them to work doing useful stuff
- Let the party recruit Kasvarina and get her to switch the icons at the end of Act 2 such that the Act 3 configuration is one to the party's preference
- Make Stanfield's plan far more damaging so stopping him is actually rewarding

In coming up with solutions you are helped by the fact that, again, Act 2 is vastly better than your average AP books. You have oodles of foundation to work with. But it isn't going to be easy, particularly since your changes have to be consistent with the rest of the AP. But, hopefully I can help with that.

### The Path Less Travelled

Zeitgeist tries to boast a 'villain who has a point', and consequently it envisions that the party might decide that, hey, this villain has a point, and join the Obscurati. This might happen when Lya interacts with them in Book 6, it might happen during the gathering in Book 7. My advice is that you do *\*not\** encourage or perhaps even permit your players to take this path.

Act 2 is about finding and stopping the Ob. By joining the Ob you will have to make significant changes to the Act, per the Act's own sections on joining the Ob. I feel that it is too much effort given how complicated the AP is already, plus the Act has the Middle Book Syndrome problem I highlighted, *\*plus\** you have to deal with the fact that the PCs are going to 'fail' at the end of Book 9 when the Voice ruins everything.

Of course, if you think you can handle it and you have some good ideas about how to repurpose the remaining Act 2 books, go for it.

# Book 6

## Middle Book Syndrome: Book 6

As stated by Price-Hill, the goal of this Book is to capture Tinker and find out what the Ob intends to do with Borne. Tinker can indeed give up some technical specifications for the colossus, but his specs are not useful for stopping or interfering with Borne. ‘Find out what the Ob intends to do with Borne’ has a sour taste in my mouth because I know that Book 9 expects that the PCs will be tricked into believing that Flint is the main ritual site, thus presumably completely forgetting where Borne is. Tinker can also reveal the connection to Grappa, but as stated in Middle Book Syndrome: Act 2, that also doesn’t lead to much.



I can’t suggest any great solution to this problem. You want to try and give the PCs rewards for finding Tinker. Possible rewards could include influencing Borne’s path so as to stop him from causing trouble in the Dreaming, extending Tinker’s role in coming up with anti-Ob inventions, and learning intel that can play a direct role in the Book 8 climax fight against Borne and Nicodemus.

## Skyfall

As Ber’s history is closely entwined with dragons, I feel it best to give a quick run-down of Skyfall. This was a historical event in 195 A.O.V. when dragons suddenly became much worse at flying; not ‘impossible to fly’, but more ‘fly at 60ft per round rather than 600ft per round’. The cause of this event was threefold:

Name	Avilona	Air	Death
Title	the Final Murmur		
Aspect	Calm		
Traits	Flight is limited to 5 minutes		

- Kasvarina Varal and the Ob messing with the Ziggurat of Avilona and accidentally breaking it
- The eagle on the plane of Avilona being mortally wounded (Burning Sky AP reference)
- One other I can’t quite recall

All three events came together to ‘break’ Avilona and its effects on Lanjyr, leading to magical flight and flight in general becoming much more difficult. It also significantly contributed to the downfall of the dragon-tyrants.

Late in Book 6 has a write-up of the Ziggurat of Avilona, Book 8 has Kasvarina’s memory of Skyfall, Book 12 has the party visiting the shrunken plane of Avilona.

## Touring Bear

In the event that your party wants \*more\* Ber, they might be interested in visiting the city of Ursalina. Book 11 has a write-up, though you will need to remove the alien infestation.

## Royal Visit

The briefing of Book 6 is an excellent opportunity to foreshadow/introduce a later map. Take King Aodhan’s Torfeld Palace from Book 9 and have the PCs teleport to Slate and have them receive their briefing in a palace chamber. Maybe let them explore a bit. It’ll make the Book 9 experience of saving King Aodhan’s life from a palace assassination attempt more meaningful.

## School Friends

This is \*very\* much looking forward, but you may wish to have Melisa Amarie mention that one of her friends is Savina Tullius, a Risuri-born elf trained in Seobriga like Amarie, and who currently commands a high position in the Clergy. The party will discover Tullius’ Beran education in Book 11, and encounter Tullius sacrificing gods later in that book.

## Bruse of the Ob





Vairday Bruse is an important and interesting fellow, and a prime candidate to be a member of the Ob Ghost Council in Book 7. If the idea appeals to you, introduce the history of the revolution in Book 6, and have Shantus remember Vairday talking about being approached by a shadowy smoking figure.

Of course, you do not want to cheapen the Beran revolution by having it be Ob-backed. In my game I had it that Vairday rejected Ob approaches in life, but after death (and some Ghost Council persuasion) he signed on.

### **The Absent Dragon**

El Extrano splits his time between being a legendary kobold leader and being Ber's chief spymaster, and it is very strange that he is absent from this book. He crops up fairly often in later books with agents all over the world, not above using unusual methods such as intelligent rat-swarms and undead whales. It is very strange he is absent from a little thing like the attempted conquest of Ber. To remedy this inconsistency, you may wish to:

- State that El Extrano has no domestic jurisdiction, barring extraordinary circumstances
- Reveal that El Extrano and Bruse Shantus have had a fight and the former refuses to help the latter
- Have El Extrano pop up once Pemberton's dastardly ambitions are revealed to provide some help for the invasion.

### **First Light Foibles**

The meeting with Shantus post-Challenge has a small time inconsistency, where it states that Shantus will reveal the rules of the competition 'at first light', but then later says 'Shantus doesn't have much time to discuss the rules because he wants to leave and stargaze'. Bit weird to go stargazing at dawn.

Either have Shantus provide competition information on the night of the Challenge, or have him wait for first starlight the night after.

### **Plight of Pardo**

Despite his interesting backstory and attributes, Pardo is fated to be Benedict Pemberton's faceless minion, whose most interesting act is getting mind-controlled by the Ob into attacking Pemberton and the party. Anything you can do to give him a larger role- and give the PCs an insight into the interesting Steel Lord Cult gnolls- will likely be an improvement.

### **Load of Bull**

Bruse Shantus is a rather flawed leader, with strong Robert Baratheon vibes. He likes fighting and applause, he hates administrative work and diplomacy. Culminating in pitting the Danoran and Risuri envoys in a self-indulgent 'race' and ordering an attack on a Risuri fort as opposed to actually dealing with the concerns and entreaties of the representatives of these great powers. Perhaps your party might be interested in shaming Shantus into reforming, but perhaps your party might be more interested in seeing him cast down.

The obvious successor to Shantus (and Shantus knows it) is Corta Nariz de Guerra, middle-aged daughter of old orc naval sealord and Shantus' political rival, Cavallo de Guerra. The AP doesn't offer much information on her other than saying she is an excellent naval logistician, but she can fairly easily be fleshed out as an administrator and nascent 'mother of the nation'.

The AP does not offer much advice on how to install Corta other than by 'convincing' Shantus. In my game, after the party made Shantus feel ashamed, he came up with what he perceived to be a cunning way to preserve his legacy and screw over his rival Cavallo: resigning and instituting democratic reforms on his way out. Corta might reign, but now she'll have to deal with \*listening to people\*, ugh.

In this book the PCs are serving as Risuri diplomats, so it would be good to emphasize how interfering with foreign political processes is *\*not\** proper for a diplomat, but expressing a few pointed official opinions is fair play.

### Let Sleeping Dragons Lie

Benedict Pemberton has a major role to play in upcoming adventures, and it isn't as a villain. Rather, as the AP winds on and the Ob's plans grow ever more megalomaniacal and destructive, Pemberton finds himself squarely on the side of the PCs- much to his annoyance. If he turns against the party it is only once Nicodemus is defeated and the world is saved, and only if the PCs killed his daughter.



Consequently, try not to play Pemberton as particularly villainous, or at least not the kind of villainous that can't be pardoned. When his 'Steam Crews' go wild in revolt, don't have reports of mass casualties. Have the party be able to free all of those who got captured and Duplicated.

If you are effective at this, then perhaps the conclusion to Book 6 might even feature the first steps of an alliance with Pemberton. He can drop hints about using his duplicants to investigate the Ob, foreshadowing his appearance in Book 8. The PCs might even strike a deal where they lie to Ber about having slain Gradiax and provide an alibi for Pemberton, letting him continue his life as a prominent industrialist.

### Dragon Tools

The draconic artifacts recovered in Book 6 have a variety of intriguing uses; some military, some industrial.

The skull of Cheshimox might make for a fetching ship-mounted weapon. Alternatively a source of infinite cooling is bound to be useful in a number of industries, or even just as an engine cooler.

The Eye of Yerev is already being used in an industrial capacity, heating Pemberton's volcano lair and foundry. I am sure that a pointed question to the PCs of 'hey what would you like to do with a source of perpetual energy?' would result in a number of creative ideas.

Side note: The Eye of Yerev from the Player's Guide is murderous and safely-buried, as opposed to the Eye of Yerev from Book 6 which is fiery and actively-exploited. Ten points to any players with a good enough memory to point this out.

### No Preparedness Like Over-Preparedness

If the PCs have been exceptionally paranoid, perhaps they might be able to position spies to intercept Lya's recruitment of the Malice Lands enchanter Jacale. A quick skirmish could lead to a dramatic revelation of Lya's conspiring against Cavallo's forces, adding an interesting twist to the competition.

### Battleplan Beractica

A simple way to convey a duplicant through art is to add a Battlestar Galactica-style glowing red effect. It's pretty easy; pop down some red, duplicate that red to a new layer, then vertically squash and horizontally stretch it. Easy and effective.



### They Are Among Us

A plot point which is handwaved away/not used to its fullest potential is Pemberton's kidnap and duplicant-replacement of various NPCs. This twist is quite cool, and can be used to convey Pemberton's reach and foresight. The book already suggests adding a few of the party's favorite NPCs to the pile of rescued kidnap victims on the Isla. Consider enhancing this by adding a few Ob officers targeted by chance or planning, or government officials from across the world who were replaced per Pemberton's aims.

## Reed Richards is Useless

Duplicants constitute a revolutionary and extremely powerful technology, and the AP would very much prefer for it to be neither in favour of instead serving as a convenient plot device. Duplicants have innumerable possibilities for communication, scouting, espionage, warfare, transhumanism, disability aid, diplomacy and more. Part of the reason I know this is that duplicants are used quite often throughout the AP. Pemberton uses quite a few duplicant spies, the PCs use duplicants in Book 13 to hop around the world (see that book for rules/stats for duplicants). Perhaps most importantly, Duplicants are a technology the Ob know \*nothing\* about. They can easily become the PC's ace-in-the-hole in the battle against Nicodemus.

The main obstacle to the party reverse-engineering and mass-producing duplicants is that their magical setup seems to require Pemberton's approval, but of course, the party can/will eventually ally with him.

If your party seems interested in this concept, have Tinker show off a prototype for complicants (communications-duplicants) which have all the functions of normal duplicants but are strictly CR/level 1 with no combat utility whatsoever, used for exploration and instantaneous long-distance communication.

As a final warning, duplicants continue the Zeitgeist tradition of mechanics/concepts being changed dramatically from Act to Act or Book to Book. Duplicants may not function the same in Book 6 as in Book 7 as in Book 8 as in Book 13, so keep that in mind.

## Death of a Princess

Per the canonical/intended plot of the AP, the events in Benedict Pemberton's volcano lair include the death of Lya Jierre. This raises a few matters:

- Danor is \*not\* going to be happy with the Sovereign's daughter dying amidst a mysterious encounter with RHC agents
- Nicodemus being able to access and raise Lya's soul in these circumstances is bizarre
- If you as the GM wish to preserve Lya the character, this would be a good opportunity for her to, upon her defeat, gracefully surrender and promise no more dealings with the Obscurati. This will require some changes to replace the two future battles with her ghost, but that is not impossible

## Dragon with Disabilities

Though I am sure it has already occurred to you, Terakalir has the potential to be a supremely interesting character. She is the single and only child of one of the last remaining dragons. She is missing an eye, a leg, and a wing. She is the daughter of one of Lanjyr's greatest industrialist. She is young, precocious, and aggressive. She grew up more-or-less alone in a volcano lair. She has the potential to take human form. And of course, she is also a gosh-darned \*dragon\*.



Terakalir has limitless possibility as a character, so I'd rather not limit it by making too many suggestions, but suffice it to say that she could easily become the party's best friend and a linchpin in a future alliance with Pemberton. Perhaps Gradiax decides it is time that his daughter got to see the world and experience the finest Risuri education.

## Riddle of the Urn

For an urn with the same name as a book, it is gosh-darned hard to draw any connections between the Book 10: Godmind and the Godmind Urn. Commonalities in properties or origin are extremely difficult to find. My advice: either say the name is coincidence, or come up with something.

My explanation is that the urn contains the remnants of a godmind that the Gidim unleashed on an alien world. The Gidim collected the remnants and stuck it in the urn to feast upon its mental energies as a luxurious snack. The urn was leftover from the Gidim invasion.

# Book 7

## Introduction: You Don't Have To Be Mad To Work Here, But It Helps

More than any other in Zeitvice thus far, this book has been the hardest to write. It is where Zeitgeist has its highest ambitions and its lowest execution. That said, I know many readers might dismiss some of my advice and criticism in this book, hence this introduction to help explain my viewpoint.

I highly doubt that *all* of my advice is going to apply to every or indeed any party; however, I believe that any bit of my advice might crop up for any party, based on what questions they think to ask. For example, not every party is going to ask, 'Exactly how many planes can we double-slot?' But at least one party will, so I raise the question.



I am a big fan of transparency. Some of my advice is going to involve likely player reactions to knowledge they probably don't have at this point in the story. However, this doesn't mean my advice is wrong; it means that players will react that way later when they find out. For example, at the end of Book 9, Nicodemus imposes the MAP configuration, no matter what the party does at the convocation. I think that will anger players who were invested in influencing the convocation, whether they find out in Book 7 or Book 10.

## Traitor's Redoubt

The opening is in the Governor's fortress. You should introduce the map for that fortress used in Book 9, when Stanfield turns against Risur.

## Farce-Forward

I can see what the authors were going for, with having a flash-forward prologue. However, I don't think it is suited for this book. The infiltration of the convocation and its events are possibly the most complicated part of the entire AP. Further complicating it by throwing your party into a strange situation to make uninformed decisions they must commit to in order to avoid retcons is not ideal.

What if, after Knütpara, the PCs choose to inhabit different bodies than they inhabit in the prologue? What if the players feel they would have taken different actions if they had known 'We are pretending to be Ob officers' versus 'We are Ob officers'?

## The Mermaid and the Hat

In portraying Beshela, you would be well advised to look ahead to Book 9, where she plays a starring role in Unseen/Hedgehog Court politics, siding with the Hedgehog Court. Consider using this book as an opportunity to introduce those court politics, to prep the party for Book 9.

I'm going to say the same should be applied to Copperhat; he does play a role in Book 9. However, I believe that the AP doesn't do a very good job at giving Copperhat any backstory or motivation for working with the Voice. It comes off like it's 'just a job,' which seems strange since that job involves both treason and the death of the entire world. You might want to have a think about what would drive a hat to such nihilism.



## Return of the Cheeseman

In my Zeitvice for Book 5, I recommended that you railroad how Grappa and Quital die; hopefully, after reading the opening part of this book, you will agree with me. 13 pages of 'finding Quital' is drastically complicated if anything goes differently like Grappa surviving, Quital dying, Quital being captured, etc.



### **Prestigious Spies**

The book already notes that the party can use Prestige to track Leone. I would reinforce that, this is a golden opportunity for the party to call in many favours to track down Leone, his whereabouts, ideal spots to ambush him, which train cabin he typically resigns in. IN PARTICULAR, by this point, if the party interacted with Melissa Amarie, they may have acquired Populist Prestige which lets them call in favours from cities across the world. Populist Prestige is OP as hell, and excellent to be used in this situation.

### **Poisoned Charade**

Robert the Black is part of a classic D&D encounter with the party, and it has the same awful problems as ever. First, chances are, the entire party isn't going to feel like taking a drink, and will get instantly suspicious if Bobby pushes the issue. Second, all D&D poison rules suck, and even if the party doesn't hit the poison DC, chances are, it won't do that much to meaningfully debilitate them. Third, Robert has made the brilliant decision to meet the party solo; thus, as soon as the party gets suspicious, he will be ganked into unconsciousness.

Zeitgeist does throw a good spanner in the works by having Robert try to flee, but I feel it is still not good enough.

I would advise either skipping this scene, or restructuring it to make it a little more predictable and dangerous. You can't design a combat encounter to cope with either one or three party members being taken out, so focus on *debilitating* poison and give Robert some backup.

### **Dungeon Crawl'n' Fools**

Like a few points in the AP, Knütpara provides a break from the usual set piece combats in favour of a more traditional dungeon crawl, descending through the depths of the frozen city. Your party might find this a refreshing change of pace, but it's also possible they will get frustrated by returning to the standard 'sweep rooms, fight solo enemies' routine. Consider encouraging the party to pretend to be Ob operatives sent to check up on the giants, or simply having them rappel down to the final area for a dramatic khangitche boss fight.

### **Dragon with the Wind**

Don't miss Knütpara's Dragon Tower. In addition to learning about the possible origins of the dragons as Demonocracy aerial cavalry (imported from other planes? They fled to Ber after the Demonocracy collapsed?), the party can also pick up a neat book on dragon rearing. If your players aren't interested, Pemberton and Terakalir certainly will be.



### **Rainbow Gold**

Note that as far as I can figure out, Knütpara is the sole source of planar meteorite oils for the Obscurati. If it wasn't for Triegenes using a super-spell to summon meteorites to smash the city, there would be no lantern technology. That means every oil used at the convocation went through the Knütpara researchers. Something to keep in mind.

### **Lich's Bargain**

As written, Book 7 mandates that the party strike an accord with a super-evil lich and free him from his icy tomb. Naturally, some parties may object to this on moral grounds. Consider leaking to them that the lich is doomed if he escapes, or allowing them to more directly steal the Mortal Possession ritual knowledge from him.

### **Reed Richards is (Still) Useless**

Much like the duplicant technology, the Mortal Possession ritual is extremely useful, and never used after the book in which it appears.

The ritual allows for wearing another's body as a disguise. For gaining access to their memories, and mimicking their personality. For exploiting the body's physical ability scores. For being able to remotely operate, at no risk to yourself. Think of how useful this could be for PCs in future missions, and then think how it could be useful for *NPCs* in future missions and plot events.

The party uses it once to infiltrate the Obscurati gathering, and then it is never touched again.

I do appreciate that many parties may not wish to explore transhumanism, and many GMs may be leery of the complications easy body-swapping creates. I was one of those GMs, I ruled that only the PCs could body-swap since it required the lich's personal blessing. But I hope there are GMs who can see this as an opportunity to explore the ritual as a great wildcard for future missions, and for the setting's technological development.

Final note: keep in mind that the gestalt rules are *optional*. PCs can just opt not to gestalt with their occupied mind, which is a little bit of a pity since it feels like the gestalt and disruption rules are meant to be the primary way to challenge an infiltrating party.

### **Burning Light**

Shadowlisks, in 4e at least, are really dangerous creatures for their level. Be careful.

### **Covfefe**

The correct spelling of the island feature is 'Cacciatrice di Navi.' Zeit has a bad habit of having names that are 'a word translated into indonesian/italian with a few letters changed.'

### **Silent Sea**

"In the Bleak Gate... no breeze blows, and even the sea is eerily still." Someone should probably have told the Obscurati frigate sailing ship, since it is hence permanently becalmed. Odd since the AP itself brings this up: "The Bleak Gate has no winds of its own. If the party brought a sailing vessel and didn't plan for this by performing some sort of weather ritual, they'll be immobilized." Perhaps I'm being too harsh and the *Napaeon* is a steamship, even if not stated.

### **Dispirited**

It is a touch cheap that, as-written, the mighty world-wide Ob conspiracy has no spirit mediums in its ranks, and thus is completely vulnerable to duplicant tactics. You may want to create a reason why there are no mediums here or why the mediums here are unable to detect Pemberton's duplicant. I don't believe it foils anything in the future if the Ob acquires even a few mediums.



### **D-List Villain's Gallery**

The collection of officers at the Obscurati is a bit of an odd mix.

It comes off less as 'our most influential and important members, brought here to learn and contribute to our ultimate plan' and more 'a random sampling of all Ob operatives,' which results in a hefty number of lone wolves and minor cell leaders. Given all the pies we know the Ob have fingers in, it's a touch disappointing.

Similarly, it is a great pity that the officers are mostly D-list nobodies: minor celebrities, minor professors, minor industrialists, minor miners. Where is 'Omigod, world-famous figure was Ob all along!' or 'Omigod, historically-famous figure was Ob all along and is now a ghost!' or even 'Omigod, (trusted ally) was Ob all along!'



For example, would it not have been mind-blowing to learn that one or more of Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill, Lauryn Cyneburg, Geoff Massarde, Roland Stanfield, Heward Sechim, Wolfgang von Recklinghausen, one of the B-team, Vlendam Heid, Bruse Shantus, Brakken, Cavallo de Guerra, Glaucia Evora, Melissa Amarie, etc., were Obscurati? What about a former King or Queen of Risur? What about Vairday Bruse? Now, some of these names don't work as they are important for future plots, but hopefully, you can see what may have been more satisfying.

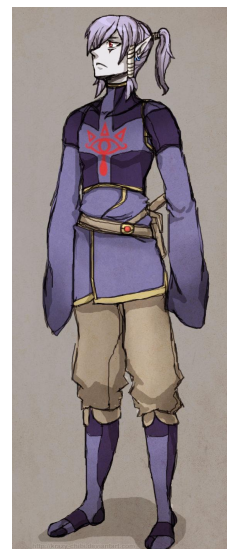
### **Visible Woman**

The convocation provides a good opportunity to highlight an oddity that has already been present, and is going to continue: there are too many eladrin women. A core conceit of Lanjyr is that due to the Great Malice, the vast majority of eladrin women were wiped out, and even today, eladrin women are quite literally a precious commodity. However, you would not know that by looking at the cast of significant eladrin NPCs. Only three are male, and only one (Asrabey) plays a major role, with Sor Daeron and Betronga Sidhon being extremely minor. By contrast there is an absolute ton of female eladrin NPCs who are usually highly significant: Gale, Kasvarina Varal, Cula Ravjahani, Athrylla Valanar, Kasvarina's daughters, and more. There are no male eladrin at the convocation.

Of course, you can put this down to statistical bias. The PCs do not meet an average sample of each race, they meet only the extraordinary members and factors like matriarchal rule make them more likely to meet extraordinary women. Still, it's something interesting to think about, and perhaps you might like to add in at least a few significant male eladrin characters.

### **Invisible Eladrin**

While too many eladrin are female, there are also too few eladrin overall at the Ob convocation. William Miller's driving goal was to recruit Elfaivaran help to end the Holy War, Kasvarina was a founding member, and she and Cula lead a very significant sect of Vekeshi eladrin who have been carrying out a great many of the Ob's missions over the past few centuries. It is mighty strange that there is only one eladrin at the convocation (two if you count the absent Kasvarina). You may want to add a few more, at the very least a few rajput-warriors to guard Cula.



### **First Mystic Blow**

At the convocation, the party learns from Cula that a good few of the Elfaivaran Vekeshi warriors, particularly those under Kasvarina's control, have been suborned by the Ob and manipulated into carrying out their dirty work. This may be quite a blow to any Vekeshi Mystic PCs, and it's only going to get worse in Book 9, when the party find out that the Risuri Hedgehog Court have also been working to suborn the Vekeshi.

### **The Empty Priest**

Vicemi Terio presents as quite an important figure: the most powerful member of the Ghost Council and one of the few named members, a close confidant of Nic, and a former high priest of the Clergy when the Ob was founded in bitter opposition to the Clergy. However, Terio is very underdeveloped. He has no complex backstory or interesting motivations. I think this is rather a pity. If you think the party would be interested in him, consider coming up with a few motivations and working him into the secret history of Nic and Kasvarina that is uncovered in Book 8. Introduce his replacement ghost council leader in later books, and have them talk about the difficulty in replacing such a luminary.

### **Those Meddling Kids and their Dumb Delft**

The convocation is a good opportunity to emphasize how great the party's reputation has grown, and what countermeasures the Ob are preparing against them.

By this point in the AP, it is extremely plausible that the party have become Public Enemy Number 1 for the Obscurati. They have a long track record of foiling Ob plans and uncovering Ob schemes, which, coupled with

their close association with powerful Risur, makes them the biggest threat to the Ob in perhaps the entirety of its several centuries of history. It could be fun to have the convocation be full of Ob members swapping intelligence reports about the party, talking about their own near-misses with the party, dreading or anticipating battling the party, and so forth.

The convocation is also a good opportunity to foreshadow countermeasures. Chances are, this is going to be highly unique to your own game. Your party will almost certainly have acquired resources and earned victories that the AP hasn't planned for, going off-book. Use the convocation to introduce new mooks, new lieutenants, new technologies, new rituals, new monsters: anything the Ob is working on to try and defeat or neutralize the party. These countermeasures can be added to future encounters, or used to throw additional twists into skill challenges and deceptions.

### Middle Book Syndrome: Book 7

Book 7 goes to great lengths to allow and encourage the PCs to influence the convocation vote. There are multiple voting rounds, proposals being written and debated, conversations with the boss about who might win. And yet the vote *does not matter*. At the end of Book 9, Nic institutes the MAP arrangement no matter what.



I can't emphasise enough how disappointing this is for Nic. Three hundred years of conspiracy give him the power to remake the world and he hands it off to his conspiracy to vote for whatever they want except he overrides them except he never says \*why\* he overrides them and chooses MAP. I can't emphasise enough how disappointing this is for the Ob. All these complicated proposals and demiplanes and fevered debates and it amounts to a purge and being forgotten forever.

You could embrace this and tell the PCs that the vote is a sham and that they should focus on learning about the Ob, but my preferred solution is to make the vote actually matter, and make it have actual consequences.

One consequence can be that successfully swaying Ob voters means that they will be more likely to defect, especially if Nic tries to massacre everyone who voted against his preferred configuration. If you do this, you will need to make sure that this decision matters, that the defecting researchers go on to do important work: working on research projects, helping unveil Ob machinations, etc. My group assigned Ob researchers to task forces for weapons research, biotech research, Torfeld Palace defence, Flint defence, Axis Island attack, Skyseeing research, economics, temporal mechanics, public relations with other nations, psychic defence research, and more.

Another can be that the winning arrangement is put in place for the duration of Act 3, in place of MAP. This is easier than you'd think. The plot of Act 3 requires that Av be booted from the system and that a Gidim-compromised plane enter, but this is very easy to accomplish: indeed, it could happen even if the party tries to keep Av, with the Voice of Rot tugging it out of the way. As to how it happens, either Nic grudgingly sets it in place, or the PCs can get a double agent (Kasvarina!) to swap out the planar icons just before the ritual.

As for Nic's lack of philosophy. I chose to run Nic such that he did genuinely believe this convocation would be a moment of humility, stepping back to allow younger generations to vote for their conception of a better world. However because he is Nic, he is psychologically incapable of accepting a configuration that doesn't have his-William Miller's- name on it. Hence he fervently objects to any configuration that isn't Miller's Pyre or MAP, culminating in the purge and an ominous declaration of 'we are going to vote again, and then continue voting until the proper result is reached.' It may make him seem petty, but pride is a classic flaw of many towering intellectuals. This method is the best way I can think of to justify 'Nic doesn't want to interfere but also overrides and selects MAP', and is what I went with because I generally tried to keep to the spirit of the plot. If this doesn't appeal, I would encourage you to vary the plotline- maybe don't have him force MAP in place, maybe have him strongly interfere even before the purge, and so on.



Side note: ironically, 'Middle Book Syndrome' can apply to the Obscurati as well. Borne has been heading for Kasvarina for *two* books, and the newspapers are full of 'Colossus crosses Ber' and 'Colossus shows up in Elfaivar.' Why is it that both the party and the Ob wait until Book 8 to pursue? Because that is necessary for the plot. It's not ideal.

### **A Note from the Occasional Editor of Zeitvice**

*As a player, my experience with book #7's convocation was exceedingly negative. In my opinion, the convocation is the absolute nadir of Zeitgeist as a whole, where the adventure series' logic comes crashing down: choices do not matter even when it is implied that they will matter, the villains have no idea what they are actually doing, previously-established planar metaphysics (e.g. the lantern) suddenly work vastly differently, and planar metaphysics introduced here in the convocation (e.g. planar "aspects") fail to actually work that way in future adventures.*

*If a GM actually reaches the convocation with their group, I would advise the GM to sit down with their players and be transparent with them regarding the non-choices, the clueless villains, and the contradictory planar metaphysics that the convocation will involve. This is a good time for the GM to ask the group just how comfortable they would be in adjusting the adventure series to better suit the table's needs and preferences.*

### **Planes, Planes, Planes: Introduction**

Warning: these sections are going to be very long, and contain problems that range from very minor to adventure-breakingly major.



Planes are central to the Ob plan, and they are the victim of some of Zeitgeist's greatest inconsistencies and contradictions. Planes do not work in Act 1 how they work in Act 2 how they work in Act 3, and it is a ludicrously tangled web trying to get it all straight.

Example 1: the star Mojang is blue in Act 1 and purple in Act 3, also it's possible to add a star to your solar system. Example 2: In the player's guide, Jiese is stated to 'influence war, strife and notable births', in Act 2 Jiese has 'the trait of Cunning which lets flames be used intelligently like a tool enabling industrial revolution', in Act 3 Jiese has the trait of 'precision technology functions.'

One cause for these inconsistencies is the usual 'writer of book A failed to communicate with writer of book B,' but another is this well-meaning but dreadful [forum debate](#). The authors asked for fans to vote for different configurations, which is fairly fine. But then fans started roleplaying, arguing over proposals or creating their own, and, most damningly, *making up their own planes and traits*. It was a debate without clear facts or answers on what plane did what or how they would interact, where only persuasiveness and imagination won acclaim, and the authors converted it wholesale straight into the book with only minor changes. And then the authors *didn't even stick with it* since these planes and configurations work differently in Act 3. Also, I'd like to remind you that in the end, the planar arrangement vote doesn't even matter.

I'm going to go through every inconsistency small and large, but I would like to state from the beginning my guiding principles: planes should function the same in every book, and that debaters should be able to say 'this is how my planes and their arrangement functions, and I can prove it.' With that said, your party might prefer to avoid getting so deep into hard planar metaphysics and will be fine with a more 'hand-wavy' approach to planes. But, hopefully you can still benefit from reading my list of inconsistencies and suggestions.

### **Planes, Planes, Planes: Planes and Plans**

Behold my attempt to make sense of the convocation debate.

[Planes of the Obscurati.](#)

[Miller's Pyre, Arboretum, Watchmakers, Colossus, Panarchists.](#)

[Minor Factions, Radical Factions.](#)

[MAP, Colossal Congress, Watchmaker Watchmen](#)

By playing an odd game of sudoku, it is possible to work out which Act 3 planes are being debated in Act 2, and slot them into each proposal. This only works for about 90% of Act 3 Planes, Act 2 has a few planes that either contradict their Act 3 counterpart or which are totally original. If you see any planes on my list that aren't on the Act 3 list, it is because I made them up to satisfy each proposal.

The sudoku game is complicated by the 'aspects/traits' system. 'Aspects' are a thing solely for Book 7, 'Traits' are a thing solely for Act 3. This is because aspects are primarily derived from the impromptu forum debate described above, where debaters were inventing their own facts. This also makes many aspects poorly defined; Jiese's 'cunning' had to be translated into 'precision technology functions', Illocus' 'expression' becomes 'consequences cascade rapidly.'



The earth symbol means that the plane is habitable, an important consideration. The moon symbol means that the plane is a moon, and may be suitable for double-slotting (more on that later.) 'Habitable vs. inhabitable' (it came up while discussing the Trekkers) and 'moon-not moon' is based on my own reading of Act 3, and isn't information directly given by the AP.

Below are a few proposals that are original to my own campaign. Miller's Clock, necessary since the party informed Nic that the original version of the Watchmakers and the first revision were both unviable. Colossal Conquest V2, the result of Catherine Romana being encouraged to go wild. And SPS 2.0, the party's own arrangement pitched to the convocation thanks partly to publicly sharing all their Ob information from quite early on in the adventure. Note that SPS 2.0 is not, in fact, what we ended up going with in the end.

#### Miller's Clock, Colossal Conquest V2, SPS 2.0

Finally, it should be noted that while I have built my list of planes by matching proposals to planes in the Gyre in Act 3, [Word of God](#) states that no, the Ob were not planning to pinch any planes from the Gyre. Per the author the Ob used magic telescopes to search the stars for planes and create planar icons.

I still have it that the Ob took Gyre planes because the Book 7 proposals match too perfectly to the Act 3 planes to be coincidence. Perhaps matching planes was a partially discarded idea, perhaps the authors subconsciously copied their Act 2 planes, perhaps it is truly a coincidence; either way, this is what I consider to be the easiest way to run things. Especially since the entire point of Book 12 is that the party is searching for planes to pluck out of the Gyre and add to their configuration.

How is it that the Ob were able to make icons for these planes without visiting the Gyre? My answer is a multiversal equivalent of speed-of-light delay. The Ob were staring at the 'old' versions of the planes before they got Gyred. Word of God for how stars falling from the sky works suggests this is possible. As there are no visible stars in Act 3, the party is instead forced to go Gyre-trawling for new planes.



#### Planes, Planes, Planes: Lanterns

The Book 7 lanterns behave differently from Luc's Book 4 lanterns in a few key respects: they don't attract planar monsters, they last indefinitely, and they replicate planar traits rather than whipping up a smattered assortment of miscellaneous effects. You can probably put this down to 'technological improvements.'

The lanterns that create the demiplanes (Leave the Nest, Colossus, Trial by Fire) produce some absolutely bonkers effects and combat bonuses. Arguably, some of these effects are even stronger than their planar arrangement could possibly cause, looking at their proposals and the Act 3 planes. It would be good to say

'these demiplanes are an exaggeration/an unrealistic mix,' particularly the ones that aren't proposals and are just to show off.

Relatedly, some players are inevitably going to ask, 'Hey, can we steal some lanterns and these oils so we can permanently use these broken effects in combat?' The book doesn't have too much of an answer to that, particularly since it details the whole demiplane gas-system and encourages the PCs to mess around with it. Perhaps prepare an answer like 'No, it took two months of research to create these precisely-balanced static effects, and you can't do it on the fly... and no, you can't ask the RHC to spent two months creating demiplane setups for you.'

### Planes, Planes, Planes: Lighthouses

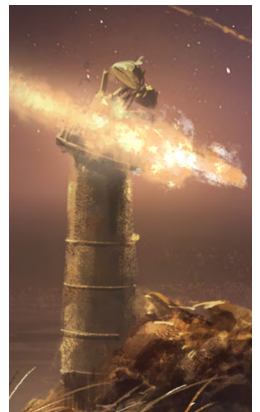
Partly because Book 9 gets lighthouses completely wrong, I would like to lay out what the Ob lighthouse plan actually is.

The Ob have, secretly or not, arranged for lighthouses to be constructed or converted across all of Lanjyr, creating planar lighthouses. On the night of the Axis Ritual, these lighthouses will ignite with planar oils, creating a 'field of stability,' which will prevent Lanjyr from being pelted with asteroids, which is a [byproduct](#) of the Axis Ritual. This will prevent modern-Lanjyr from suffering the same fate of the Ancient civilisation, IE being wiped out (though the Gidim were also contributors to that.)

These lighthouses do not, in fact, influence the minds of those nearby, or at least, they are not built for that purpose. Book 9 states that the lighthouses (particularly Stanfield's one) will lull the world into an obedient stupor; however, newspaper articles in Book 10 make it clear that nations are still fully independent, and they even fight off a few Ob coup d'état agents. The only mental effect is passive changes imparted by the new planar system.

Book 13 introduces 'lantern towers' which are actually intended to influence minds, but they are completely separate constructions from the Book 9 lighthouses.

Part of why I bring this up is because upon being told about all the lighthouses, a party may rightly suggest, 'Ooh, let's destroy them to interfere with the Ob plans!' Of course, having to tell them that 'No, you should keep them around for the surely unlikely event that you fail, hint hint' is also going to disappoint them, as per Middle Book Syndrome.



### **Planes, Planes, Planes: Minor Gripes**

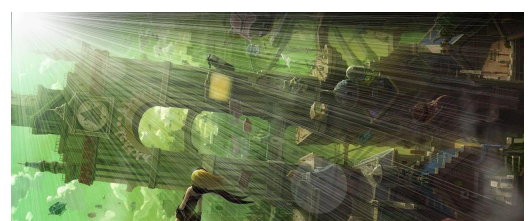
Book 7 introduces 'dual-slotting,' the idea that you can slip another plane into the same slot to add another set of effects. In the Axis Ritual, this involves digging a small side-tunnel in the planar symbol shaft and sticking another symbol in. Questions you should prep for are 'How many planes can we dual-slot like this? One? Two? ... Eight?' and 'Does it have to be a moon?'

What does the trait 'lingering souls are stronger than undead' mean?

Why the casual Great Wheel reference to 'the Plane of Air'? Zeitgeist does this occasionally and it rarely makes sense or adds much to the conversation. 'The greater Plane of Earth' is also referenced in the appendix of Act 1, while 'the true plane of fire' is referenced in Act 3; neither make sense in this cosmology.

The Ob plays fast and loose with its own 'Cardinal Rule': a great many of the proposals include mental changes that are a good deal heavier than a 'nudge.' You may need to prep the answer that 'nudge' is a broad term.

What planes make up the 'Minor Worlds'? Hopefully my plane list will help with this, though they don't map too perfectly.



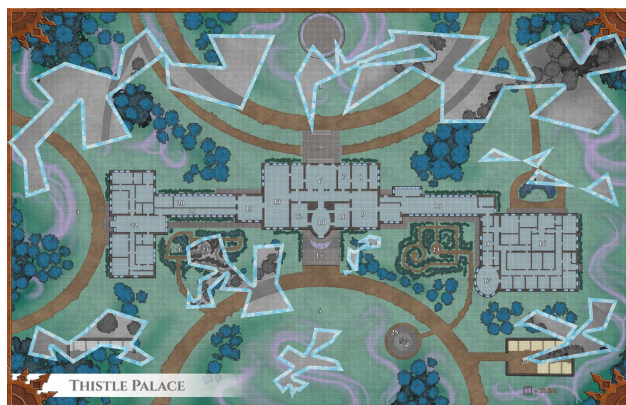
‘What worlds are habitable?’ should be a much bigger concern for an ambitious conspiracy. Why are so many willing to dump Av, when it offers a tripling of Lanjyr’s resources through replicating it in the Dreaming and Bleak Gate? Similarly, Jiese is an S-tier plane for how it both enables technology and is habitable; it is so desirable that someone would have to make an extremely strong case to justify eschewing Jiese.

Does the arrangement apply its traits solely onto Lanjyr, or do traits also apply to each component world? Almost certainly ‘solely Lanjyr,’ but it is worth considering.

The late-round planar proposals introduce new planes. While this sounds like it adds fresh ideas, it does mean that these new planes have to be pretty awful, otherwise the Ob officers would have incorporated them into the first round of planar proposals.

The Watchmaker proposal is both rather evil and rather stupid. Deleting free will is evil; thinking you can plan out and script a thousand years of progress is stupid. Imagine asking someone from 1900 to predict the next 120 years, while manually scripting the lives of billions of people, without the scripts clashing in some way. It thus may be odd that Amielle Latimer, one of the Ob’s more benevolent members, is representing this proposal. You might want to have her be functioning as a ‘devil’s advocate’ for the proposal: advocating for this extreme idea so that someone more convincing doesn’t, trying to turn the Ob away from taking the path of the Watchmakers.

This is a good time to bring up that over the course of Act 3, Av is booted from the solar system and Gyred. This results in the death of 99% of all inhabitants, but for the 1% who survive and are promptly captured and enslaved. If you think your players would react badly to this, you should strongly consider organising an evacuation, likely during Book 9 and taking advantage of Av’s narrative-time. You could justify this by making it a Skyseer prediction, or have the Ob be certain that Av is going to get dumped and face danger when it is cast into the universe.



As stated earlier, the planes as described in the Player’s Guide are very different to the traits of those planes in Act 2-3. The best justification is likely to be that the contradictory traits (Jiese overseeing war, for instance) are common to all planes with those elements (fire, time etc) rather than just to those specific planes; either that, or the Player’s Guide merely describes fanciful myths rather than the genuine traits, but that reflects very poorly on generations of Skyseers.

I would advise you to reveal to the players that Axis Island is the ritual site. The AP tries to keep it secret and trick the players into thinking that Stanfield’s Book 9 tower is the ritual site, but this can’t possibly work; Book 7 specifically notes that Borne is crucial to the ritual, and unless they’ve given him a cloaking capability, he isn’t in Flint and thus it can’t be the true ritual site. The players may even guess it without assistance, based on the rough description of the ritual site in the Book 7 handouts.

### **Multiversal Suffrage**

If you are keen on the Ob having a meaningful vote that the party can influence, you may wish to create a small table of voting behaviours, showing the ‘starting points’ of each Ob member so that the PCs can sway each of them with arguments and arrangement variations. Here’s [mine](#).

### **Philistine**

In a world that leans heavy on philosophy, it is a crying shame that there is nary a mention of any eschatological or Vekeshi ideas or perspectives in the entire Ob debate. Possibly this is because the authors wanted to amp up ‘these are mostly greedy people out for themselves,’ but I still consider it a huge wasted opportunity. Consider having Cula, Abiera, or indeed, other Obscurati intellectuals raise arguments about what



planar arrangement will help people live full lives, or advocate for a planar arrangement that will ensure a long, slow revenge against the Clergy.

### **Magic Seal**

The massive golden Axis seal has a peculiar habit of changing in size. Book 6 & 10 & 13: 100ft diameter. Book 7 & 9: 200ft diameter. Before you ask, no, it isn't a radius/diameter confusion, all books say 'diameter.' I suggest you standardize on 100ft.

### **Don't Step on Snake**

It's easy to miss, but Copperhat and Abiera play a crucial role in this book. Through them, the Voice of Rot finds out about the Ob and comes up with its own plan to sabotage the ritual site and create the central conflict of Act 3, not to mention a host of smaller conflict in the Unseen Court, in disturbing the Titans, and more. Don't forget them.

### **Milk**

The milk clue in the Ramos Zoltan murder is wrong. With how the ritual is said to work in Book 1, the milk should be on Reed Macbannin, not on his victim Zoltan. Have a look back through the Book 1 ritual and rejig the Zoltan scene.



### **Blood and Gunpowder**

The ending to the convocation is a little clumsy.

Chances are, quite a few PCs will be cautiously in favor of Nic's purge. The Colossal Congress is a fairly evil proposal. *"You can't trust words. All you can trust is that people are afraid of losing power. We've gotten here because we've been ruthless. Let's not pretty it up. I tell you this, if you idiots vote to give up the authority that we have earned over this world, you'll be showing yourselves as weak. And this man, this conspiracy? It doesn't need weak people."* And remember the 'Brief Beats' section which mostly exists to emphasize how venal and evil the many Ob officers are. Consider how your PCs will react to this and try to shove either less or more 'good' officers into the Congress bloc to make the decision either easier or harder.

I *think* Pemberton announcing himself makes sense- it's fairly reasonable that any survivors won't be strong enough to oppose him significantly, and Pemberton isn't the meek type. What is a *touch* more awkward is that his explosion has a three-round delay, and three rounds is a *long* time in D&D. Your party may very well have a spell or magic item on hand to stop the explosion, possibly without the convocation even *noticing* that Pemberton was there.

Consider planning for the 'worst-case scenario.' The convocation ends with a brief, quiet purge, and all the officers peaceably go their separate ways, PCs included.

### **Time Lady**

Catherine Romana still has a role to play in Book 9, so don't let her die unless you want to do a replacement. While Nic has marked her for death, she will come up with a 'brilliant' assassination strategy targeting Aodhan, and be given a second chance.

### **Come In from the Cold**

This advice is likely restricted to parties (like mine) who went public with the Ob, but it might be nice if the RHC were to receive a few unsolicited defectors. As noted from the tier system, most Ob don't know they're Ob. It'd be neat to have a few people come in willingly: "I never would have been part of this conspiracy if I knew its full extent. Please, let me help."

# Book 8

## Middle Act Syndrome: Book 8

Book 8 is a wild goose chase where the party accomplishes absolutely nothing.

Does the party learn any information from Kasvarina that contributes to the downfall of the Ob? No.

Does the party learn any information from Kasvarina that lets them control Borne? No.

If the party criss-cross the world and restore Kasvarina to the pinnacle of mental stability, do they gain any benefits? No.

No matter what happens, the party travels to Methia, ascends the Lance of Triegenes and is booted into the Dreaming where they are randomly forced into a timeskip to enable the Ob to execute their plan. Also the Ob reclaim Borne.

Kasvarina plays basically no role in Act 3, so saving or redeeming her is unrewarding. A few points have 'if Kasvarina is alive and an enemy, she is here.' I assume this is because the authors couldn't be sure whether she was alive, friendly or hostile and thus just ignored her. Kinda like Tinker.

My solution is to have it such that if the party gets Kasvarina to mental stability 20+, she is able to be their double agent inside the Obscurati. This would let her accomplish things like secretly swap the Axis Ritual icons so that the Act 3 planar configuration is not MAP but rather the party's configuration, minus Reida and Av. She could also then prevent the enclave eladrin from being massacred. (Act 3 is a bit of a downer with its massacres.)



## Timeline Troubles

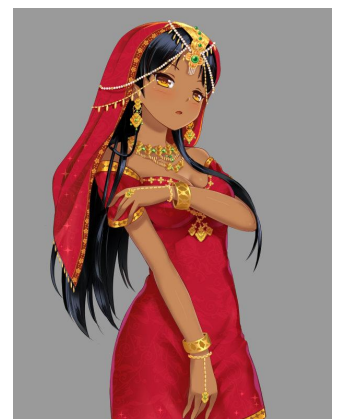
The timeline of book #8 is screwed up.

At the start of Spring, Borne was over in Flint. At the start of Summer, he was heading towards Seobriga. At the start of Autumn, the colossus was crossing the strait from Seobriga to Elfaivar. And yet when the PCs head to Methia in early winter, Borne is already there, and also doomed to side with Nicodemus?

The PCs have absolutely no way of discerning that entering Methia triggers the arrival of Borne and thus the book's climax; some in-character exposition about how time and causality in the Dreaming are currently completely screwed would help.

## Elf Slave- Wat? Ew.

The worldbuilding of Elfaivar/eladrin women is quite weak, poorly thought out and vaguely creepy at points. I would like to mention that Book 8's author has earned the nickname 'Thursty' at my table for his enthusiasm for elf slaves in the books he wrote. If you think that's harsh, I invite you to read about 'Captain Thrusty' the slave-trading space pirate in Book 12.



The Player's Guide goes to great lengths to talk about how following the Great Malice, eladrin women were swiftly taken as chattel and fought over as trophies. This does not make sense unless Elfaivaran society was already extremely patriarchal and misogynistic. Act 2 refers to a 'ranamandala of ruling kings and queens,' indicating that Elfaivar was not wholly patriarchal. It would be better to say that following the Great

Malice, the subcultures of the Elfaivaran Empire that were heavily patriarchal and practiced slavery immediately started capturing women, and fought a civil war with the other remnants who were affronted by the practice.

Zeit further says that enclave eladrin women gained great political and magical power. However it fails to show this, as typified by the Akela Sathi system. Power begins with power over one's own body, and an institution where approved men can just show up and women 'offer their body to satisfy the carnal urges of male eladrin' is hardly female empowerment, even if joining the Akela is voluntary. Instead, consider emphasising the power and choice of the women, and how they politically and economically dominate the male-majority settlements outside the enclaves.

Also, as a side note, given the long eladrin lifespan, seven years of service in the Akela is hardly significant.

### **You Started It**

As this Book deals extensively with the history of the Holy Wars, it is good to keep the historical facts in mind.

Five hundred and fifty years ago the Clergy launched a holy war against the eladrin empire of Elfaivar, whose people followed a faith known as Seedism. Centuries of tension between the two religions finally boiled over into mass violence. The Clergy conquered land in what is today Crisillyir, pushed far into Elfaivar, and sacked a few eladrin cities, but weren't able to hold much territory further east than modern Vendricce. They called this war their Victory. The eladrin called it the Perang Devar, or Holy War.



Five decades later, the long-lived eladrin retaliated. Elfaivaran armies reclaimed stolen lands and razed Vendricce, ships assaulted human cities along the Avery Coast, and a massive force laid siege to the cities Alais Primos and Sid Minos. Far to the west, in the Clergy's capital city of Methia, the hierarchs of the faith directed the conflict through portals atop an alabaster spire known as the Lance of Triegenes, but what they saw was an inevitable defeat.

It's worth noting that the 1st Holy War began with the Clergy 'conquering land in Crisillyir', outside Elfaivar. Thus, presumably, the eladrin seized land in Crisillyir, either in a large '0th Holy War', small border skirmishes or peaceful settlement.

### **False Conversion**

Book 8 liberally uses antimagic, and it is an awful inclusion for 4e. The way 4e classifies power means that antimagic makes no sense and shuts down barbarian and monk powers. 4e barely ever includes antimagic and never uses it as an ongoing condition. Sticking it on monsters is madness.

Encounters such as Ushanti's nighttime ambush are unworkable as they rely on Pathfinder concepts, like using '*silence*' to stop player spellcasting. Also, see Chatwood.

4e Book 8 straight-up took the ability score arrays from PF1e for many of its monsters. That's just one reason why the 4e monsters are janky and poorly constructed. Standard '4e Zeit conversion is bad' problems apply; lowballed HP, monsters who don't do what their role is meant to do unless they are Tanks or Artillerists.

### **What's in a Name?**

Zeitgeist continues its habit of using google translate to generate new names. Ingatan = Filipino or Indonesian for 'memory.' Hewan is Indonesian for 'animal,' while harimau is Indonesian for 'tiger.'

### **The Path Not Taken Is Not Worth Taking**

Book 8 outlines two alternate paths; if the party sides with the Obscurati, and if the party ignores Kasvarina/Borne and heads straight for Axis Island. I don't think either are viable, as presented.

The pro-Ob path mandates that Risur opposes the party and the Ob, possibly tipped off by Benedict Pemberton. This despite arguments the party could make such as 'the Ob's successful completion of the Axis Ritual is inevitable due to plot requirements/its massive Danor-backed power base on Axis Island, so let's work \*with\* them to secure the best result.' It also requires throwing out the last half of Book 9. This path will also run into Middle Act Syndrome, where despite the best efforts of the party to help the Ob, the Voice will ruin their plan.

The straight-for-Axis-Island path runs into Middle Act Syndrome \*hard\*, because despite launching a massive assault or a daring infiltration on Axis Island, the party cannot actually accomplish anything. Also, it probably requires throwing out large chunks of Books 8 and 9.

Whatever path you decide to run, try to keep in mind the state of the world in Act 3, and what needs to be in place for you to preserve material from Books 8 and 9.

### **Woes of the Kolyarut**

4e Sentosa features a 'kolyarut,' a construct which 'resembles a woman with a body of wood and flowers.' Per D&D lore, that is absolutely not what a kolyarut looks like. Remind players that in this world, traditional D&D monsters may look very different.

Also, it has an ability where each round it goes down a list, transforming its weapon, and the PCs can guess which weapon comes next. Insightful players will realise the list is the D&D 4e PHB weapons table, minus a few weapons.

### **Artillerists Far Away**

The Sentosa Porteur du Mort artillerists are 300 feet away and off the map. Kinda defeats the point of having a map. You might want to make an extra one for if the PCs find their position. That, or move them closer.



### **Enclave Rules**

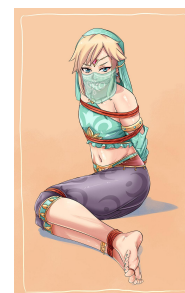
Sentosa mirrors the Waking, and inside the enclave, the eladrin have renovated the abandoned temples and buildings. Does Sentosa 'update' itself based on changes in the Waking? Does Sentosa take a 'snapshot' of the Waking and keep that forever- but then why would the Sentosa buildings be dilapidated? Something to keep in mind.

### **Tour Leaving Now**

Sentosa could use a tour guide NPC. Someone to help the PCs navigate, to offer context behind the different buildings and peoples.

### **Edge(slave)lord**

How exactly is the proprietor of Shadow Edge Arms in Sentosa smuggling torture victims across a demiplane boundary with multiple guardians? Is it with the approval of Athrylla Valanr?



### **A Totally Unexpected Betrayal**

Add some setup for Asrabey's Act 3 betrayal. Have him talk about how he loved/respected Kasvarina the Ob mastermind, not any other kind of Kasvarina.

### **No Happy Endings**

Keep in mind the Act 3 fate of the Elfaivaran enclaves: the Axis Ritual resets/destroys demiplanes, breaking apart the enclaves. Thousands die, many more refugees stream into the colonial cities. Only Sentosa manages to 'land' in the real world without disintegrating.



Consider allowing the party to begin making accommodations to protect the enclaves. Using their knowledge of the ritual to warn Athrylla, suggesting that she arrange it such that the enclaves can be safely preserved in the face of the Axis Ritual, etc.

### Foreunsight

Consider adding an Unseen Lord or Lady to the Bent Leaf fey tavern to help set up Book 9.

### Hey, I Remember This Map

For the Temple of Ingatan fight atop the Lance of Triegenes, make sure you use the Lance map from the book's climax.

### Thanks For the Memories

To help you run the Arc of Reida, [here is a link](#) to a document from my game containing how we ran memories. I also wrote out scenes for each of the memories, which may be good reference material.

For the memory event, remember that one memory- the Betrayal of Rilego- offers a benefit that will make accruing mental stability much easier.



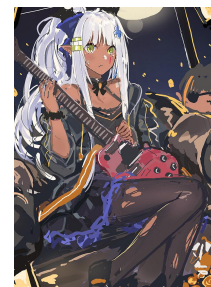
\*If the party finds this memory-event, finds Sor, and learns that Nicodemus betrayed Kasvarina, she gains enough clarity and focus that from here on she is lucid in every memory-event, and will always gain more mental stability unless the event collapses.\*

As one of the first memories the party finds points to Seobriga, the party may very well find it early.

### No True Vekeshi

Sadly neglected by Book 8 is the Vekeshi. Despite Book 8 occurring primarily in Elfaivar and featuring a touching scene of the first song of Vekesh, the book neglects opportunities to explore their lore and how it ties into Kasvarina's journey.

First, let's establish what the Vekeshi are. In the aftermath of the Great Malice, the mood among the survivors is to continue the war against Crisillyir, even if it wipes them out. The poet Vekesh instead encourages the eladrin to focus on survival and regaining prosperity. Fast forward to present day and we have three different kinds of Vekeshi; 'vanilla' Vekeshi who focus on rebuilding, Vekeshi Mystic good-hearted vigilantes, and Kasvarina's Vekeshi assassins who in truth are working for the Obscurati.



It would be neat to show Kasvarina's journey in the Vekeshi, how the original intent to endure has transformed into vengeful intent. It would be neat for Kasvarina to be confronted with an order of brutal assassins loyal to her, and have to decide what to do with them (Act 3 discreetly notes she has 'loyal dreadnaughts' who the party can use to support their missions.)

### Rules? Where We're Going We Don't Need Rules

As you might expect from Zeit, the effects of the Great Malice Sacrament of Apotheosis don't match up with the Act 3 written rules for the Sacrament.

The backlash from the Srasama sacrament killed 'every eladrin woman in the empire and beyond, with only the rarest and most unlikely survivors: women currently polymorphed, on other planes, or who had forsaken the Elfaivaran faith entirely.' Also, for some reason it turned the entirety of Danor's Clergy (and at the time Danor was the Clergy homeland) into tieflings. Also it filled the nation with antimagic.

The only explanation is that this is the first time the ritual was performed on such a vast scale, and that caused it to be very screwy. Just something to keep in mind.

Ashima-Shimtu instructed Nic and Kasvarina to kill the Clergy god of war, to 'kill the impetus for war itself.' Frankly, looking at the Great Malice, I think they could very well have wiped out the entire nation and backlashed to melt all the eladrin as well. Killing a god of war in \*wartime?\*

Side note- it's weird that killing Srasama wiped out *all* women, when Srasama was but one goddess in a pantheon. And perhaps not even the most important goddess, perhaps ironically elevated to pre-eminence in the eyes of the survivors by her death.

Also, did it also kill female babies and young children, who were incapable of religious belief?

### **Whataboutism**

Lest one assume that the Holy Wars were entirely the big bad Clergy oppressing the innocent eladrin, it's worth running through a few moral issues on both sides.

The player's guide states that the Elfaivaran army employed 'legions of slave armies from the far east.' The Siege of Alais Primos memory features the eladrin systematically executing a hundred non-combatants in order to break Clergy morale.



On the Clergy side, Nic cites the Clergy looting the eladrin dead and funnelling wealth back to Methia in violation of scripture. The ranamandala is open to Nic's peace negotiations but the Clergy refused. The Clergy killing Dala to 'cut out the heart' of the 'heathenous brown masses' is a bit of a dick move, escalated to cartoon villain status by bringing Nic and Kasvarina to the Lance to watch and beating them into the ground.

### **For Its Intended Purpose Only**

Before or during Book 8, the party will accumulate an impressive collection of magic items. Here are some ways they can use them in ways the game doesn't intend.

- Use the Arc of Reida on people other than Kasvarina to re-visit old memories or harvest old items (loot a Gatecrasher Charm off their memory of Lorcan Kell?)
- Use the Fey Portal Pad to visit the Dreaming early and say hello to Borne

### **The Trouble with Chatwood**

The Chatwood affair makes no sense and is a waste of an interesting character. An Elfaivaran skyseer spy gone native in Risur? She could be really interesting. Instead, she is permanently blinded (with Power Word Blind of all things) and locked up in a mental asylum to silence her (what a bizarre way to silence her).

### **Future Faces**

For the party's trip to Crisillyir, consider introducing the Book 11 leaders of the Clergy: Savina Tullius, religious leader, and Natala Degaspore, secular leader.



### **Time Arc**

When ascending the Lance of Triegenes, it is strange that the players are confronted with ghosts of past people, when the Arc of Reida is temporal in nature, not necromantic. Consider adjusting them to be 'temporal' ghosts, reflections of characters past, rather than unquiet spirits.

### **Nickname**

While the AP delays it until Book 12, I think Book 8 is a very suitable time for the party to find out about the origin of Nicodemus' nickname, if they haven't already.

## Rina and Liam

On the whole, I think Book 8 does a good job developing Kasvarina as a multidimensional character, driven by tragedy and revenge. Her agency is a touch undermined by Nic manipulating her at every turn, but that's part of her arc, it's something for her to break away from.

I can't say the same for Nicodemus.

Rather than a complex villain, he is portrayed as man who is and always was a dick. Atop the Lance, with Kasvarina dangling off the precipice, he chose to flee into a portal to save his own skin (for plot reasons, but still). In the Triage memory event he systematically executes fervent religious prisoners of war in his care. After striking an accord with Kasvarina, he then executes the other survivors, for no reason other than removing 'unnecessary complications.' I feel this marks him as a psychopath from Day 1.

Book 8 tries to flesh out Millerism and Pala. It fails. Nic has no more developed philosophy than the low-hanging fruit of 'don't be hypocritical' and 'try to get along with people.' We see Pala being burnt, but we don't see Pala at its peak of philosophical thought. We don't see any background that can properly explain Nic's obsession with MAP. Also, he technically wasn't even martyred, since he was already a ghost by the time he was burnt(?) and burning him only made him stronger (?)

Fixes for this? Ease back on the murder, give Nic some actual morals and beliefs. Focus on Nic's interactions with Kasvarina and her daughters

## I Should Have Said

Book 13 includes some excellent dialogue between Nic and Kasvarina, and it should absolutely be moved up earlier to the end of Book 9. As an example:

*"You'd lost your way, Rina! After all we lost against the Clergy, you and I were cutting them down. We were making the world better! But you wanted a 'family,' like some idiot girl! You were better than that. Yes, I had Launga killed, and I did you a favor! If I'd left you alone, the world you would have given her would have been as wretched as it ever was. Who cares if you lost a daughter? I let you give birth to the future!"*

