

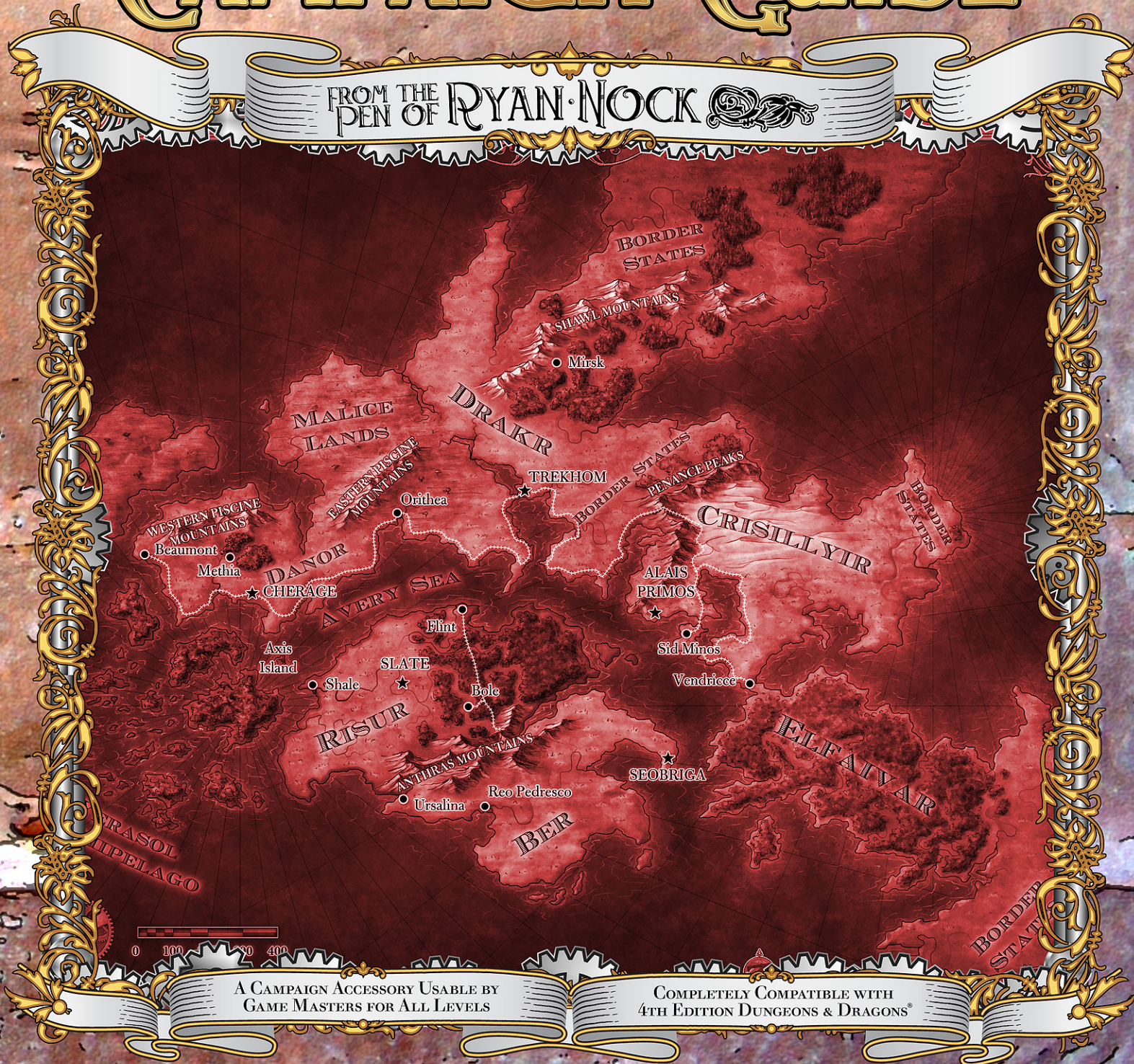


ZEITGEIST™

THE GEARS OF REVOLUTION

CAMPAIGN GUIDE

FROM THE PEN OF RYAN NOCK



A CAMPAIGN ACCESSORY USABLE BY
GAME MASTERS FOR ALL LEVELS

COMPLETELY COMPATIBLE WITH
4TH EDITION DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®



**A Fantasy
Role-Playing
Supplement by
EN PUBLISHING**
7 Rutland Court,
Balaclava Road
Southampton,
Hampshire
England SO18 6RX



EN Publishing is
an imprint of
EN World.
Please visit
www.enworld.org



From the Pen of Ryan Nock
Evocative Cover Illustration by Jonathan Roberts
Stunning Cartographic Displays by Jonathan Roberts
Masterful Interior Illustrations by Brian Lindahl
Claudio Pozas
ShenFei
with Layout and Graphic Design by Eric Life-Putnam

Thoroughly Playtested for Maximum Enjoyment by
Ted Brzinski, Neil D'Cruze, Francis Dickinson,
Robert M. Everson, Michael Gallogly, Matthew J. Hanson,
Michael Hart, Michael Iachini, Tom Jones,
Laura Kertz, Gene McDonald, Hamid Raof,
Bryan Rennekamp, and Eugene Zaretskiy
Ably Produced and Facilitated by Russell Morrissey

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Compatibility Logo, D&D, PLAYER'S HANDBOOK, PLAYER'S HANDBOOK 2, DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE, MONSTER MANUAL, MONSTER MANUAL 2, and ADVENTURER'S VAULT are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast in the USA and other countries and are used with permission. Certain materials, including 4E References in this publication, D&D core rules mechanics, and all D&D characters and their distinctive likenesses, are property of Wizards of the Coast, and are used with permission under the Dungeons & Dragons 4th Edition Game System License. All 4E References are listed in the 4E System Reference Document, available at www.wizards.com/d20.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS 4th Edition PLAYER'S HANDBOOK, written by Rob Heinsoo, Andy Collins, and James Wyatt; DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE, written by James Wyatt; and MONSTER MANUAL, written by Mike Mearls,

Stephen Schubert and James Wyatt; PLAYER'S HANDBOOK 2, written by Jeremy Crawford, Mike Mearls, and James Wyatt; MONSTER MANUAL 2, written by Rob Heinsoo, and Chris Sims; ADVENTURER'S VAULT, written by Logan Bonner, Eytan Bernstein, and Chris Sims. Copyright 2008, 2009 Wizards of the Coast. All rights reserved.

For use with the 4th Edition

**DUNGEONS
& DRAGONS**
ROLEPLAYING GAME

Requires the use of the D&D Player's Handbook®, Monster Manual®, and Dungeon Master's Guide® Player's Handbook® 2, Monster Manual® 2, Adventurer's Vault™ core rulebooks, available from Wizards of the Coast, LLC

INTRODUCTION	1
KEY TERMS.....	1
<i>Geography and History.</i>	1
<i>Power Groups and Philosophies.</i>	2
<i>The Obscurati.</i>	2
CAMPAIGN SYNOPSIS	4
<i>The Grand Conspiracy.</i>	4
ORGANIZING A CONSPIRACY.....	5
Needlewire.	5
Recurring Antagonists.	6
RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN	7
Planning for the Long Term.	7
PRESTIGE.....	7
MYSTERY GUIDE	8
ADVENTURE ROSTER	8
General Timeline of Revelation.	9
Abridged Conspiracy.	13





INTRODUCTION

IF YOU PLAN TO PLAY THE ZEITGEIST ADVENTURE
PATH, PLEASE DON'T READ THIS DOCUMENT!

If you haven't read the *Players' Guide*, you should: it contains vital details about the ZEITGEST campaign setting, while this *Campaign Guide* focuses on the adventures themselves and the forces opposing the PCs. Players should read only the *Players' Guide*, and not this document. Spoilers, needless to say, abound herein.

THE MOTION OF THE STARS ALLOWS DIFFERENT IDEALS to gain ascendance: war, decay, chaos, exploration, order, creation. But no longer shall the procession of heaven obey the whims of an ancient, absent clockmaker. Now the hand that moves the stars shall be ours!"

—NICODEMUS THE GNOSTIC, FOUNDER OF THE OBSCURATI



Our goal with this guide is to give the DM clear knowledge of the campaign from beginning to end. While there is plenty of room to adjust things based on your players' actions, it is important to know what will likely be happening at 10th, 20th, and 30th level, so that you can lay the groundwork at 1st level. Climaxes, twists, and revelations are only compelling if they have been properly built up to.

We plan to release guides to the paragon and epic tiers later in the series. In the meantime, this guide should give you all that you need to prepare for running the heroic tier, and give you a clear idea of the shape of the rest of the campaign. It's grand in scope and there's a lot to keep track of, but we promise that a little prep work at the beginning will pay great dividends with your gaming group.

Summary of the Entire Campaign.

A secret cabal is constructing a magnificent machine to let them set the alignment of the multiverse, reshaping reality to reflect their ideology. As the heroes tease the conspiracy out from the shadows, adherents of other faiths and philosophies will battle to determine the spirit of a new age: the *zeitgeist*.

KEY TERMS

Geography and History.

- ♦ **Lanjyr.** The continent of the campaign, consisting of five major nations—Risur, Danor, Ber, Crisillyr, and Drakr—plus numerous weaker states, and the conquered eladrin Elfaivar Empire, now divided into many small colonies.
- ♦ **Risur.** A human kingdom, central to the campaign, whose traditional reverence for nature has begun to clash with a recent push for rapid industrialization.
- ♦ **Danor.** The nation Risur has been at war with on-and-off for two centuries, ruled by tieflings and surrounded by a dead magic zone. Original birthplace of the Obscurati conspiracy.
- ♦ **Yerasol Archipelago.** Lush islands off the coast of Risur and Danor. For the past two hundred years the nations have vied for control of the archipelago.
- ♦ **The Clergy.** The foremost religion in Lanjyr, led by priests pious to various allied deities. The most revered is Triegenes, a human fisherman who allegedly rose to godhood a thousand years ago. Doctrine focuses on how divinity exists in all people, albeit with a humanocentric bent.
- ♦ **The Old Faith.** The druidic religion of Risur, concerned with appeasing nature spirits rather than praying to gods.
- ♦ **Seedism.** The traditional faith of elves, gnomes, and eladrin, based upon supplication to the lords of the Dreaming. It remains the primary religion in Elfaivar, and less orthodox sects practice in small pockets in the human nations.
- ♦ **The Victories.** Two mighty wars five hundred years ago, wherein adherents of the Clergy conquered parts of the eladrin Elfaivar Empire in a bid to stamp out Seedism. Calendars mark years starting at the end of the Second Victory, 1 A.O.V. (After Our Victory).



- ♦ **The Great Malice.** In the Second Victory, humans slew the eladrin goddess Srasama. In the aftermath, every eladrin woman within hundreds of miles died, which quickly led to the collapse of the Elfaivar Empire. Simultaneously the nation of Danor became a massive dead magic zone. Common belief attributes Danor's affliction to a curse laid by the dying goddess, in which she sacrificed millions of followers for a final act of spite.
- ♦ **The Axis Seal.** This primordial ritual buried a massive golden plate—carved with symbols representing eight planes of the multiverse—in what was then the center of the known world. The plate acts as a seal for a portal to the rest of the multiverse, and limits access from this world to only those eight others. The ritual's completion shattered the continent, and today the seal lies forgotten on an island in the Yerasol Archipelago. If it were opened, it would be possible to change what planes influence this world, or to travel far beyond it.

Power Groups and Philosophies.

- ♦ **Risuri Homeland Constabulary.** A law enforcement group sponsored by King Aodhan of Risur, tasked with pursuing threats that transcend country borders. The campaign assumes the heroes belong to this organization, but we offer several alternatives.
- ♦ **House of Jierre.** A tiefling family which has come to rule Danor since the Great Malice. Proponents of industry and technology. Many scions of the family have had a hand in shaping the development of the great nations in the past five centuries.

- ♦ **The Unseen Court.** The archfey in the Dreaming (i.e., the Feywild) have long received tribute from the mortals of Lanjyr, and they have grown aggressive in response to recent industry, which has turned people's minds away from their faith in the old ways. The Unseen Court discreetly encourages discontent among the mortal races, and sponsors groups of violent extremists who target industrialists.
- ♦ **The Family.** A criminal organization based out of Crisillyir, working to gain a foothold in Risur. Practices protection rackets, extortion, and smuggling. Though publicly opposed by the Clergy, their leadership is actually a secret sect of the faith, allowed to thrive so the church can coordinate with a unified criminal element instead of scattered gangs.
- ♦ **Heid Eschatol.** Dwarven philosophical movement concerned with the endings of things—from how best to order one's affairs at the end of life, to how to break up with a lover, or in what manner to confront the imminent end of the world. Started in Drakr, and has migrated to universities throughout Lanjyr.
- ♦ **The Panoply.** A loose movement of anti-establishment thinkers and artists, based primarily in Ber, but rapidly making inroads among the dockers of Risur. Commonly viewed as instigators and anarchists.

The Obscurati.

- ♦ **Nicodemus the Gnostic.** Founder and leader of the occult organization, the Obscurati, Nicodemus resents the divine and seeks the ascendance of human reason. We detail his motivations and history in this document, but his name should remain secret to the players until Adventure Five, and his real identity hidden until Adventure Thirteen. Nicodemus was once William Miller.
- ♦ **William Miller.** Five hundred years ago, a monk opposed the Second Victory and traveled to Elfaivar in a failed bid to stop the war. He has become a heroic icon of the Panoply movement, who disseminate his philosophical writings.

Witnessing the atrocities of the Second Victory, Miller grew disillusioned with the Clergy and traveled to Elfaivar on a mission of mercy. There he met a similarly embittered eladrin priestess, Kasvarina Varal, and together they strove to mitigate the religious conflict. Eventually they learned of a ritual that could give physical form to a belief, but which would kill those who performed it. They tried to trick the Clergy into using the ritual to summon their own god—which would cripple the leadership of the human aggressors—but the Clergy instead invoked the eladrin goddess Srasama. When an army slew the goddess's avatar, it had terrible consequences for the entire continent.

In the relative peace after the war's end, Miller created Pala, a small nation of thinkers and philosophers on the border of modern Danor. But in 18 A.O.V. the Clergy branded Miller a heretic, invaded Pala, and sacked its capital. Miller was brought to Alais Primos, the new seat of the Clergy, where he was tortured in an effort to compel a confession. After he refused to recant, his captors made a pyre of his heretical writings and burned him alive upon it.

What history never knew, however, is that Miller had already died 18 years earlier, during a failed attempt to stop the ritual he had foolishly brought to the Clergy. The power of the ritual disintegrated his flesh, leaving behind only his soul, free to

wander like an untethered ghost. He discovered how to inhabit and control the bodies of others, but it was only after his second murder by the Clergy that he abandoned his peaceful idealism in favor of more Machiavellian techniques.

After acquiring a new body, Miller met with two trusted cohorts and proposed a path to reshape the world into one free of the dangerous iconoclasy of the Clergy. Knowing any open effort would result only in the loss of more innocent lives, they formed a secret society, to become known as the Obscurati.

Miller himself forsook his name, instead adopting a nickname he acquired during his days at the monastery, where he had been notorious as much for his fondness for smoking “leaf of Nicodemus” as for his constant questioning of doctrine. From then on he became known as Nicodemus the Gnostic.

- ♦ **Kasvarina Varal.** A centuries-old eladrin who allied with William Miller during the Second Victory and later helped Nicodemus the Gnostic found the Obscurati. Her key responsibility has been to undermine the Clergy’s military and monetary might, primarily by forming vengeance cults among her fellow surviving eladrin.
- ♦ **Scions of House Jierre.** Those who participated in the ritual that invoked Srasama were twisted to become tieflings. One among them, Jierre, grew horrified by what he had done and was instrumental in the creation of Miller’s short-lived philosopher state of Pala. Jierre escaped persecution and later joined the conspiracy of the Obscurati, charged with the dynastic task of establishing a nation in the dead magic zone, free from the influence of the Clergy, where reason would rise above religion.

Today, scions of House Jierre hold many key positions in the nation of Danor, including the Sovereign Han Jierre.



***William Miller a.k.a.
Nicodemus the Gnostic.***



Kasvarina Varal.



Sovereign Han Jierre.

CAMPAIGN SYNOPSIS

ZEITGEIST takes place over the course of thirteen adventures, in which the party will ascend from 1st to 30th level. Because we understand not all groups can manage the endurance to run such a long campaign, we offer a few options for abridged campaigns. At the end of this document we explain the plots of each of the thirteen adventures, but first let us examine the narrative arc that runs through the campaign.

The Grand Conspiracy.

Imagine if one day the whole world woke up and agreed with you.

On its broadest scale, ZEITGEIST is about the party's investigation, discovery, and fight against a conspiracy that calls itself the Obscurati, which seeks to alter the fundamental reality of the world.

In the primordial age, the world floated in a sea of many planes, its borders unprotected against incursion from hostile and maddening entities. An alliance of primitive peoples gathered the magical energies of several worlds and crafted the Axis Seal. Beneath this seal they placed icons and complex geometric patterns that linked a handful of safe slivers of the multiverse to their own world. When the ritual was complete, these slivers were pulled from the primordial sea and left to float in the heavens as a star and its orbiting planets.

These planes and the powers they represent—air, earth, fire, water, life, death, space, and time—shape the course of the world's events. If one were changed, even by merely swapping which sliver of the elemental chaos became this system's plane of fire, a complex cascade of changes would alter how the world works and what its fate holds. This ancient ban is long forgotten to most, but the Obscurati seek to open it, alter the planes it links to, and seal it again. In so doing they will force the whole the world to adhere to their philosophy, and set the future on the path they desire.



The Ghost Council.

Foundation, Ideology, and the Ghost Council.

The earliest seed of this plot was planted centuries ago by the secret society's three founders—the human philosopher Nicodemus the Gnostic, the eladrin mage Kasvarina Varal, and the tiefling aristocrat Jierre. They all were disillusioned with society's adherence to old beliefs. Together they envisioned a world where reason and inquiry were supreme.

In their ideal world, gods would hold no sway over mortals. People would be respected for their knowledge, and enlightened self interest would drive the progress of civilization, not pettiness and tribalism. Even the poorest and weakest would be educated and uplifted. Before the public execution that led him to take the name Nicodemus, William Miller wrote much on this seemingly impossible ideal, and those texts are cherished by many poets and rebels today. But many painful, jading years have passed, and the founding dreams of the Obscurati have shifted to a darker, more pragmatic ideology.

The original Jierre has long since died, but his family holds power in Danor. The Jierre line has cultivated a competitive system for the advancement reason and science, often with an emphasis on discrediting other nations' reliance on gods. Magic brought into Danor fades swiftly, so the religions of Lanjyr have struggled to plead their case without access to their usually persuasive toolkit of miracles. Few Danorans have any faith to speak of, which suits the Obscurati just fine. Unfortunately, the conspiracy needs magic to accomplish its goals, so they have founded cells in other nations, and their official base of operations is in Crisillyr. Nevertheless, the might of Danor gives them great leverage in world politics.

Kasvarina survives, and in the centuries since Elfaivar was toppled she has worked to inspire eternal resentment of the Clergy. She ruled from a roaming castle in the Dreaming, and her direct decrees or subtle suggestions could ensure that eladrin warriors would strike and kill any foes of the conspiracy. Everyone in Lanjyr is so familiar with eladrin revenge killings that they don't imagine there's any guiding hand behind them.

Nicodemus learned how to recreate the magic that let him survive after his body was destroyed. In the following centuries, on rare occasions he has used this power to let loyal allies endure as specters, forming a ghost council of philosophers, scientists, and other wise men. They direct and advise the top-level actions of the Obscurati. Originally they hid in the lands of chaotic magic on the border between Danor and Drakr, but now that the power of the Clergy has waned, they have moved to a palace in the Crisillyr city of Vendricce so they can more easily wield magic toward their goals.

These undead advisors, no longer connected to the daily trials and needs of the living, have given ever more callous counsel to Nicodemus. Through centuries of setbacks, Nicodemus has held fast to his hope to create a more perfect world, but he has seen too many noble endeavors fail, watched too many friends die, and he has begun to question his vision. If he put his faith in the common people of his ideal land, he doubts they would do anything but disappoint him.



Lya Jierre.

ORGANIZING A CONSPIRACY

The structure of the Obscurati resembles a pyramid, with different threads branching off at lower tiers.

Tier One—Triad.

Three people have final say about what course the Obscurati take: Nicodemus, Kasvarina, and whoever the scion of House Jierre is—currently Han Jierre.

Tier Two—Ghost Council.

The ghost council advises and tracks logistics. They review regular reports from heads of the various cells, and make decisions regarding recruitment, promotion, and—when necessary—elimination of threats. Their primary purpose is to make sure the conspiracy's resources are deployed efficiently while minimizing the risk of discovery.

Tier Three—Cell Leaders.

The conspiracy separates its operations into three major cells and numerous minor cells, each with delineated goals. The heads of each cell generally have authority to pursue goals as they see fit, though Nicodemus—able to move easily from body to body without arousing suspicion—checks in regularly with the cell leaders to ensure everything's running smoothly, and to field any requests. Only on the rarest of occasions will leaders from two different cells meet, and in normal circumstances they are not supposed to contact each other.

The cell leaders have numerous subordinates, but tier three is the lowest tier whose members have full knowledge of the conspiracy's ultimate goal. Even these trusted individuals do not know the full scope of all the conspiracy's allies and operations. Those in lower tiers do not even know the word "Obscurati," and are given subtle misinformation by their leaders so they will not realize what they are working toward.

Golden Cell. Based in Danor, this cell is tasked with excavating the ancient seal on Axis Island, which lies in the Yerasol Archipelago, off the coasts of Risur and Danor. Additionally, this cell researches how the planar ban works, and searches for scattered smaller seals, which the ancient people of Lanjyr crafted as tests before invoking the main ritual. The cell's leaders die during adventure one, and thereafter leadership is assumed by **Lya Jierre**, Danor's Minister of Outsiders and niece of Sovereign Han Jierre, the current ruler of Danor.

Lantern Cell. Based in the Crisillyiri city of Vendricce, this cell gathers information and performs experiments regarding different planes, so that when the Obscurati open the seal, they can choose the right collection and alignment of planes to create the world they need. They have finalized most of their research, and are in the process of researching eldritch machines called beacons. Beacons will be placed in key locations around the world to make the transition to the new world faster and smoother. Vicemi Terio, one of the oldest members of the ghost council, commands this cell.

Colossus Cell. Based in the city of Flint in Risur, this cell is devoted to the construction of a 300-ft. tall golem. The Obscurati will use the colossus to lift open the Axis Seal, which is fifty feet across, a foot thick, and weighs over a thousand tons. The seal's opening will unleash wild magic that is too destructive for mundane cranes, but the mighty colossus should be able to withstand it. Afterward the Obscurati plan to use the colossus as a peacekeeping weapon, in case some people choose to resist the new world order.

This massive undertaking involves building the colossus itself, smuggling industrial material and copious manpower into the city, and diverting investigations, which is possible because the cell's leader is Flint's city governor, Roland Stanfield.

Minor Cells. The conspiracy requires many other cells, mostly devoted to local needs like acquiring rare resources for other cells, scouting for talent, and killing people who learn too much. After the Ob opens the Axis Seal, these cells will be prepared to take down strong-willed leaders who resist the new world order, or destroy any monsters that might be released as an unexpected side effect of the ritual. The PCs will have only limited interactions with these cells.

Tier Four—Major Projects.

Below the main leadership of each cell are those with narrower missions. Colossus Cell, for instance, is split into two main tier-four branches: one in the Bleak Gate, and one in the real world.

Leone Quital—called the Steelshaper, one of the creators of the colossus—handles operations in the shadowy plane of the Bleak Gate. Reed Macbannin—an expert on defense against the dark arts, and mayor of one of Flint's districts—coordinates the real-world side of things. Each man believes that Flint City Governor Roland Stanfield is building a weapon for Risur's king capable of fighting the fey titans themselves. They've met each other once or twice, but don't delve into each other's business.



Governor Roland Stanfield.

NEEDLEWIRE.

When Obscurati cell leaders need to contact Nicodemus, they can use a unique magical compound called Needlewire. Injecting this fluid into a person alerts Nicodemus from anywhere in the world, and lets him possess the subject from afar. Afterward, Nicodemus returns to his original location, and the vessel remembers nothing.

Normally only leaders of cells have access to this compound, though they might give some to a trusted lieutenant for a special mission requires an immediate report to the Triad. In an emergency, any bum off the street can act as a vessel for the conspiracy's mastermind.



Leone Quital.

RECURRING ANTAGONISTS

In role-playing games, nearly every enemy ultimately faces off against the PCs and loses. It might help to know which Obscurati members the party will face when. Occasionally the party may thwart a villain's plot, yet fail to capture the villain, leading to a rematch later. If, on the contrary, the PCs defeat one of these NPCs prematurely, you'll need either to invent someone to take their place, or "promote" another member of the conspiracy, which might have complex ramifications.

- ♦ **Lya Jierre.** Head of Golden Cell (starting after Adventure One). Though she antagonizes the PCs from the first adventure, they won't cross blades until Adventure Four. She has a magical contingency that allows her to flee to the Bleak Gate (i.e., the Shadowfell) when bloodied, but the party can finish her off when she confronts them again in Adventure Six.
- ♦ **Roland Stanfield.** Head of Colossus Cell. Stanfield is unmasked as a conspirator in Adventure Five, but even if slain, the deva reincarnates in time to be the climactic villain in Adventure Nine.
- ♦ **Vicemi Terio.** Head of Lantern Cell. The spectral Terio is witnessed from afar in Adventure Four, and first encountered in Adventure Seven, then hunts the party until Adventure Eleven.
- ♦ **Han Jierre.** The party first meets the sovereign of Danor at a peace conference in Adventure Five, and might spot him again in Adventure Seven. In the epic tier he infuses himself and several trusted lieutenants

with the spirits of the Ghost Council, a move that makes them a match for epic-level PCs.

- ♦ **Kasvarina Varal.** In Adventure Eight, the PCs have a chance to win Kasvarina's loyalty. If they succeed, her betrayal incenses Nicodemus. If they fail, a schism within the Obscurati will try to kill her. It will take great effort from the PCs to save her, but she could be a mighty ally.
- ♦ **Nicodemus the Gnostic.** The head of the Obscurati first meets the party in Adventure Two, disguised as a seemingly inconsequential visitor to Reed Macbannin's estate. They may actually speak with him via needlewire in Adventure Three or Six. He first introduces himself properly in Adventure Seven. They have a chance to defeat his various vessels in Adventures Eight, Ten, and Eleven, and can finally destroy his spirit form in Adventure Thirteen. Nicodemus maintains a five centuries-old smoking habit, regardless of whose body he's in.
- ♦ **The Colossus.** Named "Borne" by one of his creators, the colossus's mind is tampered with in Adventure Five, causing it to go wild. After driving the golem off, the PCs don't cross paths with it again until adventure eight, when they may make a doomed attempt to gain control of it. "Off-screen" events of adventure nine leave it critically damaged on Axis Island. In the final adventure, however, the party will compete with the Obscurati to reactivate and control this mechanical titan.

Tier Five—Trusted Experts.

Each cell branch requires the work of individuals with rare skills, but they are usually only exposed to small elements of the greater project.

Again using Colossus Cell as an example, those who work in the Bleak Gate's secret factories and the assembly pit for the golem itself all know they're involved in something secret—after all, they are confined to a shadowy alternate plane, are prohibited from returning to the real world until the project is complete, and are being paid exorbitantly for their work and discretion.

These scientists, mages, and assembly workers might think they're just working in special magical factories, or might have some inkling that they're working on a weapon, but only a few dozen have actually seen the colossus under construction, and they're kept in subterranean dormitories so they won't share what they've seen. Meanwhile in the real world, Reed Macbannin works with:

- ♦ **Lorcan Kell**, a crime boss who runs a complex smuggling operation to get components into the Bleak Gate.
- ♦ **Kaja Stewart**, an arcanoscientific researcher experimenting with possible magical fuels.
- ♦ **Cillian Creed**, a retired spy who liaises with murderers and arsonists to handle various "dirty work."
- ♦ **Margaret Saxby**, the head of the local office of the Risuri Homeland Constabulary, who arranges for investigations to run into dead-ends.

These people have no concept of the colossus. Kell thinks he works for a corrupt politician. Stewart believes she's developing new weapons for Risur. Saxby thinks she's just covering up scandals that would embarrass those in power. Creed knows the most, but even he thinks this is all some grand project of King Aodhan.

Anyone below tier five is basically just hired help, with no special insight. They usually think they're working for some rich benefactor who values his privacy, or that they have a grant for some unusual research or activity. For instance, Roland Stanfield encouraged a businessman with

an alchemical factory in Flint to make alkahest—universal solvent—so that a few vials could be smuggled by Lorcan Kell to the colossus assembly pit, where it is needed for etching wards in the adamantine skin of the titanic golem. The factory owner and all its workers are utterly oblivious that anything is going on, other than that occasionally thieves nick some of their product.





RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN

THE ZEITGEIST CAMPAIGN SAGA PRESENTS A FEW challenges traditional fantasy adventures don't. We hope to make it easy for you to handle those issues.

PLANNING FOR THE LONG TERM.

Keep these facts in mind if you want to lay the groundwork for paragon and epic level.

- ♦ **Fey Titans.** The archfey who rule the Dreaming version of Risur draw power from the slumbering fey titans. These include a kraken known as She Who Writhes, a many-horned gazelle-like herd beast known as Father of Thunder, a serpent known as the Voice of Rot, a white-furred hunter known as the Ash Wolf, and a huge corpulent gremlin called Granny Allswell. They often show up in children's stories and various decorations on buildings or personal items.
- ♦ **Your Highness.** One of the PCs is likely to end up king or queen of Risur at the end of paragon tier. If you have a likely candidate, give him or her opportunities to lead and inspire.
- ♦ **A Tall Ship, and a Star to Steer Her By.** We've tried to work in a number of ship-based encounters throughout the saga, so that the PCs can use a ship as a base of operations. They start with a small ship, but have a few opportunities—most notably in Adventures Five and Nine—to get their current ship sunk so they have a free excuse to trade up to something more impressive. By late in the epic tier, the party will discover how to create a flying ship.
- ♦ **Put that Liberal Arts Degree to Good Use.** You can easily run this campaign as an action-adventure mystery, paying little attention to the various ideological conflicts and focusing instead of the temporal threat posed to the PCs and their homeland. But if you and your players have an inclination toward philosophy, in the campaign's climactic confrontation the PCs can debate with Nicodemus during battle in an attempt to turn the colossus Borne to their side, winning the day through words and ideas, moreso than physical might.

PRESTIGE

The *Players' Guide* introduces the Prestige mechanic. For each of the five following groups, keep track of the party's prestige rating. During the course of the campaign, the party's Prestige will affect how the different groups interact with them.

- ♦ **Flint:** Saving the city and treating its workers well can earn the PCs support from a public normally tight-lipped around law enforcement.
- ♦ **Risur.** High prestige here earns promotions, access to better equipment, and the trust of officials who might otherwise be skeptical of wild conspiracy claims.
- ♦ **Unseen Court:** Those favored by the fey will have a voice among the archfey, and might receive gifts of unique magic in exchange for favors.
- ♦ **Clergy:** The party's early interactions with The Family criminal organization may filter up the chain of command to the priests who endorse the crime syndicate. Prominent PCs with loose morals might be approached by a bravura offering an exchange of favors, while those who display great personal power and faith in the divine might be proclaimed demigods, or pursued as heretics.
- ♦ **Obscurati:** Intellectuals and creative geniuses who show disdain for the status quo might be approached by recruiters, or even asked to act as double agents.

Tracking Prestige.

The party starts with a Prestige score of 1 for each group, though certain character themes can bump this to 2. At the end of an adventure, the party might gain a point of Prestige if they served the group's interests or thwarted one of their plots. If the party fails publicly and disastrously, their Prestige might suffer, or even drop straight to 0, until they clear their names.

Usually you just need to track the party as a whole, but some situations will depend on individual PC traits and actions. You might also want to steer each PC toward a different group, to let that PC be the "face" of the party for that group.

For instance, the Clergy might interact primarily with the party's Spirit Medium ranger, while the Unseen Court liaises through the Sky-seer wizard. The Obscurati might try to tempt the Technologist assassin into becoming a double agent, while the Yerasol Veteran knight finds his likeness painted across Flint as he becomes a local hero.

We expect that by the end of Heroic Tier, most groups will reach Prestige 5 with Flint and Risur, Prestige 3 with the Obscurati, and Prestige 2 with the Unseen Court and Clergy. By the end of Paragon Tier, likely they'll have Prestige 4 to 6 with nearly every group. This may vary based on if the party pursues certain groups, or if they go to great efforts to remain discreet.



MYSTERY GUIDE

One of the key challenges in running a campaign with a long-term mystery is balancing how much to reveal about major secrets. You want to keep the players interested in the mystery, but make them work for clues. And when it comes to the big reveal, playing your hand too soon or too late can ruin its impact.

Each adventure will details what secrets the PCs might discover in the course of the adventure. Some secrets you need to make sure the PCs discover, or else they won't be able to advance their investigation. Others you should try to keep hidden, but be prepared in case the PCs do something unorthodox and crack the case prematurely. Then there are a few that can go either way, which can sate the curiosity of players who put in extra effort to find answers.

For instance, in the first adventure, the PCs visit the island that is the key to the Obscurati's entire plan, but the most likely course of action will just leave them thinking the place has strange magic and a few arcane factories. If they decide to detour from their mission and explore the island's interior, they can stumble upon evidence of a much more substantial project: a massive dam is being built to drain a lake because the Axis Seal lies beneath that lake; surveyors have drawn maps of magical energy nexuses to locate subterranean control pillars; mighty golems guard research bunkers with various eldritch experiments involving elemental energies.

Players who find these shouldn't be able to put the pieces together yet, but if they happen to guess correctly, no one with authority will believe them without evidence. If they make a big deal about it, many would regard them as kooks, like Mulder in *The X-Files*. And if for some reason you have the party find a letter explaining the entire plan in the first adventure (though *please don't do that*), the Obscurati still have a massive, geographically distributed organization that must be tracked down and defeated.

So don't worry if you accidentally give away some clues prematurely, or if the players manage to guess some major secret. While we think the thrill of the unknown is a great motivator for players, even if the twist is revealed early, there's still plenty of adventure and heroism needed to stop the villains.

Liars, Insight, and Interrogation.

Social interactions are a somewhat fuzzy area of the rules, so we suggest the following methods for handling skills in investigations. This is just a baseline. Tweak as needed for specific situations.

When the PCs interact with a suspicious character, we'll include Insight DCs. If a PC's passive Insight beats this DC, he gets a sense that something is amiss. He can then attempt an active Insight check if he spends some time interacting with the person, or watching their interactions with others.

Success on this check provides some detail to the person's particular brand of oddity: whether he's hiding something on his person, or if he's lying about his intentions, covering for a friend, afraid of retaliation, planning to attack the PC, or many other varieties.

The PC can try to coax or force more information from the person by making a Diplomacy or Intimidate check. Usually the DC is medium, but is hard if the PC failed the Passive Insight check, or easy if the PC succeeded both the passive and active Insight checks. Other circumstances of course apply modifiers; trying to intimidate a witness into talking is hard if you can't make a legitimate threat, and being diplomatic with a captured arsonist is tough if you don't offer him something in exchange for talking.

ADVENTURE ROSTER

The following release dates are tentative.

Act One: Heroic Tier.

The PCs investigate conspiracies against their homeland as it seeks a peace treaty with its greatest enemy.

- ♦ **Island at the Axis of the World.** Level 1. July 2011.
- ♦ **The Dying Skyseer.** Levels 2–4. September 2011.
- ♦ **Digging for Lies.** Levels 5–7. December 2012.
- ♦ **Always on Time.** Levels 8–9. March 2012.
- ♦ **Cauldron-Born.** Levels 10–11. June 2012.

Act Two: Paragon Tier.

The PCs fight a conspiracy's plot to alter reality so they can ascend to power.

- ♦ **Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman.** Levels 12–13. September 2012.
- ♦ **Schism.** Levels 14–16. December 2013.
- ♦ **Diaspora.** Levels 17–19. March 2013.
- ♦ **The Last Starry Sky.** Levels 20–21. June 2013.

Act Three: Epic Tier.

Though the villains have succeeded in twisting reality to fit their heartless philosophy, the PCs battle the new world order and set the course of the future.

- ♦ **Godmind.** Levels 22–24. September 2013.
- ♦ **Gorged on Ruins.** Levels 25–27. December 2014.
- ♦ **The Grinding Gears of Heaven.** Levels 28–29. March 2014.
- ♦ **Avatar of Revolution.** Level 30. June 2014.

Adventure One: *The Island at the Axis of the World.*

King Aodhan wants peace with Danor. His sister Ethelyn tries to kill him. The investigators try to capture her and get hints of a greater conspiracy.

Date: Spring of 500 A.O.V.

The PCs are novice agents of the Risuri Homeland Constabulary, who stumble upon a plot to assassinate King Aodhan during the maiden voyage of Risur's first steam-powered battleship, the *RNS Coaltongue*. The culprit is the king's sister, Duchess Ethelyn of Shale, who has close ties to the Unseen Court, and who fears the king has been corrupted by Danor's influence. Indeed, the king announces that he is planning to wed a Danoran, as the first step of a peace treaty he is pursuing.

The duchess flees and, with a small army at her side, she conquers distant Axis Island, a seemingly inconsequential piece of land home to strange planar magic. It is also home to a Danoran fortress—and secretly is the center of the Obscurati's entire plot, for beneath the island lies the Axis Seal. In the conquest, she kills some unwittingly high-ranking members of the Obscurati, creating a brief power vacuum that exposes some of the conspiracy's secrets to the world.

Nathan Jierre—the young nephew of Han Jierre, Sovereign of Danor—helps



Nathan Jierre.

the duchess in her conquest. Nathan doesn't know just what his nation is up to, but he thinks Risur should be warned.

Lya Jierre—the Danoran Minister of Outsiders, and niece of the Sovereign of Danor—fears retribution if Danor tries to drive out the duchess directly, so she asks Risur to swiftly remove the duchess from the island, then hand it back over to Danor. When the PCs are chosen as part of the mission, Lya asks that they recover her cousin, Nathan Jierre, who's being held hostage by the duchess.

According to Risur's plan, an elite squad will sneak onto the island, open the fortress's sea gate, and let Risuri marines attack and capture the duchess; the PCs will go along as back-up. But when the elite squad falls victim to a trap it's up to the PCs to carry on and save the day.

GENERAL TIMELINE OF REVELATION

The campaign saga revolves around a group trying to keep a variety of secrets. The adventures are designed to reveal them to the party a bit at a time. Then in epic tier the focus shifts to figuring out how to undo the villains' plot.

If somehow the party finds out or figures out something prematurely, it doesn't ruin the campaign, because the adventures link actual existential threats to these revelations. Even if you already know that they're building a colossus, in Adventure Four you're still going to want to stop the Obscurati from assembling a key component of the greater plot.

- ♦ **Adventure 2.** There's a conspiracy hiding in the Bleak Gate.
- ♦ **Adventure 3.** The conspiracy is experimenting with altering how mana from different planes influence the world. They call themselves the Obscurati.
- ♦ **Adventure 4.** The Obscurati are trying to weaponize that reality alteration, and Lya Jierre—the king's fiancée—is part of the plot.
- ♦ **Adventure 5.** Holy crap they've built a 300-ft. tall colossus!
- ♦ **Adventure 6.** Alexander Grappa, a former member of the Obscurati, is hiding in Drakr, and is trying to discover and thwart the conspiracy's ultimate plan.
- ♦ **Adventure 7.** Their ultimate plan is to alter the fabric of reality, but many in the conspiracy disagree with the plans of their leader, Nicodemus the Gnostic. Kasvarina Varal was once co-leader of the conspiracy, and might be able to unite the Obscurati against Nicodemus.
- ♦ **Adventure 8.** Kasvarina and Nicodemus were responsible for the Great Malice. The Obscurati are going to assassinate the king of Risur, and perform a ritual in Flint to make the country succumb to their new world order.
- ♦ **Adventure 9.** The actual core of the ritual wasn't in Flint, but on distant Axis Island. (At this point, the PCs might manage to protect Risur, but most of the world falls under the control of the Obscurati.)
- ♦ **Adventure 10.** We know the ritual that can change things back, but it will require three key components—an accurate map of the multiverse, a machine to properly calibrate planar energies, and the gathered energy from those planes.
- ♦ **Adventure 11.** We have pieces one and two.
- ♦ **Adventure 12.** We have piece three, and we have learned a separate ritual that will make us strong enough to withstand the chaos at the Axis Seal, and to defend against the might of the Obscurati.
- ♦ **Adventure 13.** One last question remains: what shall we make in this new world?



Asrabey Varal.

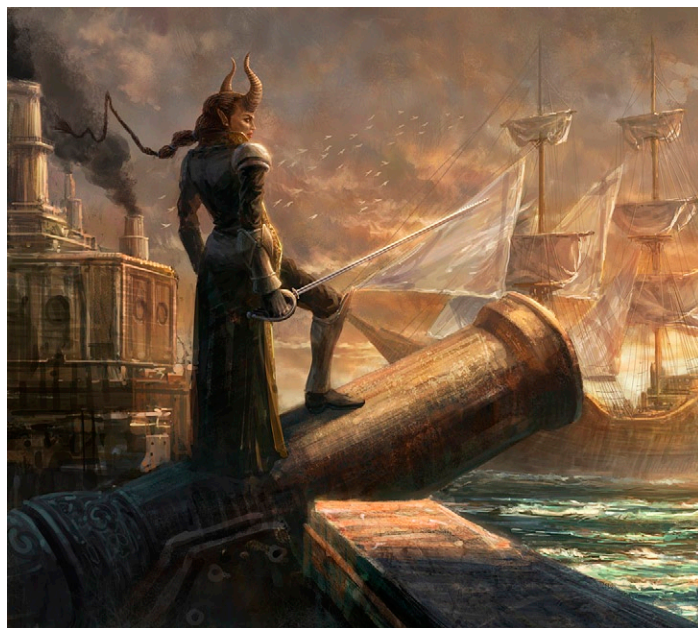
Once the PCs open the sea gate they can rest while the marines storm the fortress. Then mid-battle a deadly eladrin dreadnought named Asrabey Varal (basically a 20th level NPC) arrives on the island and tears his way through both sides of the conflict. Asrabey is the son of Kasvarina, one of the heads of the Obscurati conspiracy. She has sent him to silence the duchess, under the premise that Risur must be shown the Unseen Court does not approve of her assassination attempt. Conveniently it lets the Obscurati keep their secrets without any blame falling upon Danor.

Due to eladrin's deep hatred of tieflings, they trust that Asrabey will also kill Nathan Jierre, and any outsider will assume this is just another instance of eladrin vengeance against Danor.

By the time Asrabey reaches the duchess, though, he has battled hundreds of warriors and his stamina is nearly spent. This gives the PCs a chance to defeat him or negotiate with him, making them the heroes of the hour.

In the denouement, the PCs witness the Danorans coming to reclaim the island. Lya Jierre thanks them, and reveals that she is to be King Aodhan's bride. The PCs should come away distrustful of this future villain, and wondering what exactly Danor is up to while being unable—for now—to investigate further.

Big Scenes: Chasing saboteurs through the bowels of a warship while a brass band on deck plays the national anthem. Facing an eladrin dreadnought with a flaming sword and a roaring lion shield, and deciding just how committed you are to your mission.



Adventure Two: *The Dying Skyseer.*

Amid civil turmoil, investigate a murder, unearth a smuggling operation, and take down a politically-powerful noble coordinating various criminal endeavors for the Obscurati.

Date: Summer of 500 A.O.V.

Several months after the events of the first adventure, the PCs are on a case in the city of Flint. The city governor Roland Stanfield has tasked them with bringing down suspected eladrin terrorist Hana Soliogn, known as “Gale” for her wind magic. She’s outspoken against Danorans and industry, and is believed to be training and supplying operatives to sabotage and kill. Before there can be a peace treaty with Danor, Gale must be dealt with.

The PCs get called to the Danoran consulate, where a murder kicks off a wild investigation into fey terrorists, wand smugglers, arson, organized crime, and abuses of local workers by their industrialist bosses. Everything is tied to a foreign doctor, Wolfgang von Recklinghausen, who has stumbled upon evidence of a sinister plot to capture the souls of workers who die in accidents and use them as fuel.

Reed Macbannin, a district mayor and the second-in-command of the Obscurati’s colossus cell, know that this risks unraveling their entire operation in Flint. He keeps tabs on the party and tries to steer them to their deaths while maintaining a helpful façade. When they finally do find the doctor, Macbannin’s agents strike, abduct von Recklinghausen, and try to silence the party too.

The PCs find an unlikely ally in Gale herself, though, who thinks she can turn them to her way of thinking. She offers to help them find the doctor if they speak with Nevard, an old and frail skyseer, one of Risur’s folk prophets. Nevard needs the PCs’ help on a spirit journey, which grants him a vision, though he is too weak to say yet what he saw.

Nevard plans a rally to unify protesting workers and announce his vision. Meanwhile, with Gale’s help, the PCs manage to track down a facility using captured souls as ritual components to create shadowy monsters. Though the PCs can destroy the facility, a few have already been sent forth to kill Nevard before he can reveal his prophecy. Nevard manages to share his vision—only with the PCs if the assassination is successful, or with the whole city if he survives.

He says he saw a dark man standing tall above Cauldron Hill, the tallest mountain in Flint, casting a shadow across the entire city. Steam rose from his back and his body moved with the grinding of ten thousand gears. He believes this prophecy is a sign to abandon technology and leave the city before a disaster strikes. Indeed, he has foreseen the awakening of the Obscurati’s colossus being built in a factory under the city’s analogue in the shadowy plane of the Bleak Gate. The prophecy also hints at Macbannin himself, whose manor is built atop Cauldron Hill.

Depending on the PCs’ success, riots might grip the city, or the workers might take the weak and dying Nevard out of the city peacefully. Between his vision, various clues they have gathered, and the aid of Gale, the PCs can track down Dr. von Recklinghausen to Macbannin’s manor.

As they try to rescue the doctor, an earthquake strikes—the result of a manufacturing accident in the subterranean factory assembling the colossus. The manor begins to crumble around them, and the PCs have to rush to rescue the doctor and recover his evidence from a subterranean laboratory guarded by golems before landslides drop them all to their doom. If they were successful in protecting Nevard, casualties from the earthquake are minimized because so many have left the city, but if there were riots, then thousands die as poorly-built slums on the mountain-side collapse.



With evidence proving Macbannin was behind the events (though not revealing the full extent of the conspiracy), the PCs must give chase and apprehend Macbannin as he tries to flee the city by boat. Their success is heavily dependent on whether they have made any allies among the criminal element—Gale’s wind magic could provide a boost to their speed, or Family bravuras could sabotage Macbannin’s boat and delay his departure. In the denouement, the evidence the PCs have recovered hints of a larger plot, and provides hooks to the next adventure.

Big Scenes: A chaotic ship-to-ship skirmish against wand smugglers in the black of night. Holding off eerie predators of the spirit world as a dying prophet seeks a vision. Ambushing a pair of dragonborn arsonists in a theater they’re about to burn down. Storming a mountain villa in search of a hostage as an earthquake unleashes a landslide of necromantic oil.

Adventure Three: *Digging for Lies.*

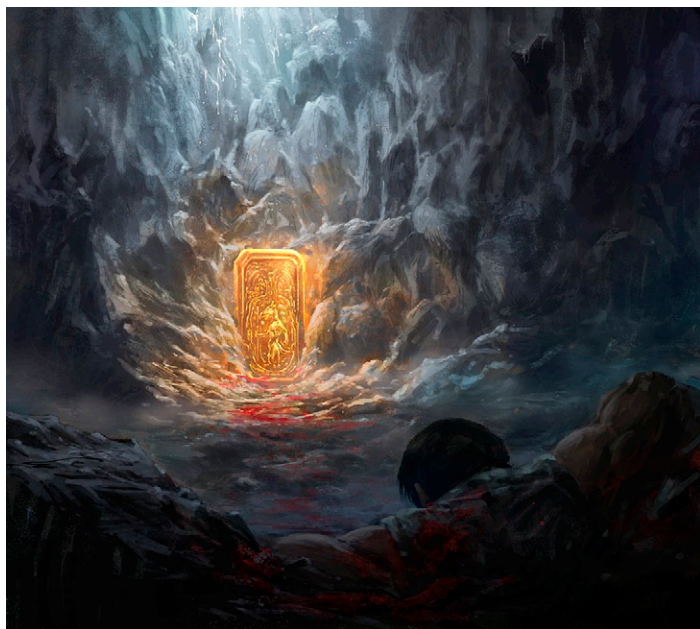
Discover a conspiracy of archaeologists researching an ancient magic ritual. Thwart a test run that targets you directly.

Date: Fall of 500 A.O.V.

Lady Inspectress Margaret Saxby, the head of the Flint branch of the Risuri Homeland Constabulary, takes the PCs off the Macbannin conspiracy case, apparently because she’s worried about the PCs becoming too popular and jeopardizing her position. Instead they are reassigned to a month-long technologists’ convention that has come to Flint, where enemies of the state might be trading arms or selling secrets.

As the PCs investigate the arms fair—giving them a chance to purchase exotic inventions, commission magic items, or test out a malfunctioning exoskeleton suit—they get wind of a black market deal for ancient weapons, smuggled into the city as “archaeological artifacts.” After seeing the arms dealers accompanied by a golem like the ones Macbannin was creating, the PCs trace the weapons to their source, from Flint’s own Pardwight University to the prestigious Mitchell University in Slate.

There the trail goes cold, but with some help from Nathan Jierre, who recalls similar artifacts on Axis Island, eventually the PCs locate a damp cave in Risur’s high bayou. There an archaeological excavation was slaughtered after they accidentally released an ancient trapped monster: a psychic entity akin to a Lovecraftian horror, named Sijhen.



Sijhen is from a plane that mainstream arcane lore does not have any evidence of, because it has been trapped since before the Axis Seal. The Obscurati were unearthing a small prototype the ancient peoples made before the full ritual, and in so doing they let Sijhen slip into this world. It crawled into the mind of Professor Xambria Eckerson, the leader of the Obscurati dig, and formed a symbiosis with her.

Xambria managed to retrieve the golden seal and deliver it to Flint (as well as incidental magical artifacts also unearthed, which the Obscurati have been selling on the side). She left the mine weeks or more ago, but Sijhen leaves a distinctive magical trail, allowing the PCs to follow the professor to several places the Obscurati have interest in, in particular Mitchell University in Slate, where she teaches archaeology, and Pardwight University in Flint, where she is using a museum gala exhibition as cover to smuggle artifacts into the city.

Sijhen's magical trail, however, is too diffuse to pin it to a precise location, which forces the PCs to investigate several possible culprits, including a globe-trotting adventurer, militant druids, gunsmiths at the technologists convention, and the Lady Inspectress Saxby of the constabulary. Clues lead to another archaeological dig, this one at an ancient shipwreck north of Slate, where the PCs can stop the Obscurati from opening another seal and unearthing a new imprisoned monster.

Xambria, whose consciousness has united with Sijhen's, realizes that people are stalking her, and that members of the Obscurati higher up in the chain of command possess knowledge she can take advantage of. Looking for a way back to Sijhen's home, she begins using its telepathy and her own limited knowledge of the conspiracy to work her way up the chain of command, until she finds a scroll detailing a draft ritual to control the seal. Fearing discovery by the PCs, Xambria begins experimenting with the seal's magic to create false leads that point to other suspects. Eventually, though, she discovers that Lady Inspectress Saxby—the PCs' obnoxious boss—is a high-ranking member of the Obscurati.

Xambria tries to break into the chief's house, but doesn't find the information she seeks. Suspecting the information she wants is actually at the RHC headquarters, she devises a plan to gain access and still escape. She drops hints that she will strike at the museum gala, and there she uses the seal ritual to briefly unleash the screaming plane of Pandemonium, summoning monsters and causing havoc. The PCs

confront her, but after a brief fight she surrenders, rather than battling to the death.

After she (or her body, if the party is blood-thirsty) is taken back to the headquarters of the Risuri Homeland Constabulary, her plan triggers. A ritual she performed previously—hidden in the subrail tunnel beneath the office—infuses local reality with the energy of some far realm, driving people mad and giving her a chance to reach the chief's office, inject him with needlewire, and read the chief's mind. Simultaneously, however, agents of the Obscurati arrive, intent on silencing Xambria and making sure the PCs cannot learn anything from her.

The PCs end up in a complex bid to thwart the Obscurati assault, capture Xambria, and disrupt the seal ritual before it warps the entire building into a maddened cyst in reality.

Adventure Four: *Always on Time.*

Ride a train full of ne'er-do-wells, and stop a powerful invention from falling into enemy hands.

Date: Winter of 501 A.O.V.

From clues in the aftermath of Xambria's attack on the RHC headquarters, the PCs learn that the traitorous Lady Inspectress Saxby was scheduled to meet some of her accomplices at a specific train landing, in the city of Vendricce at a very precise time. Researching train schedules, the PCs can get a good guess of what train the Obscurati will be waiting for, though they don't know *what* they're waiting for, or where it will be getting on the train. Their best bet to get ahead of the Obscurati is to board the train at its westernmost station and ride it all along the Avery Coast, looking for clues.

The Obscurati are scheduled to meet Luc Jierre, a scientist of the arcane and Lya Jierre's brother, has been refining a prototype magic item in the "clean room" that is Danor's dead magic zone. Now he has completed it, and he is taking it by train to the Obscurati palace in Vendricce, using an assumed name and disguise. The journey takes several days, and during the train's nightly stops Luc disembarks to demonstrate the item to leaders of several local cells who will need to gather the necessary components to duplicate it.

The item is a lantern that concentrates planar energy, allowing shifts between planes to last longer than is normally possible due to the Axis Seal. On its own it is capable of sliding everything its light touches into either the Bleak Gate or the Dreaming.

The PCs board the train in Beaumont, and have their ship sail ahead of the train's route, ready to pick them up if necessary. And this likely will be necessary, as Luc Jierre's overly-cautious bodyguards are on the look-out for trouble. The PCs could simply confront the artificer and steal the lantern, but if they leave the train prematurely they'll miss their chance to get a first-hand look at who else is in the Obscurati.

Along the way, the PCs meet many strange passengers (including an ominous figure with connections to Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen), have to deal with the dangers of the Malice Lands, and get the chance to follow Luc on his nightly outings to gather more information. If they get discovered, Luc Jierre's VIP status as nephew of the Sovereign of Danor gives him great leeway to have the PCs thrown off, forcing them to race by boat, catch up with the train at its next stop, and hide out in the bulk passenger cars.

Eventually Obscurati diviners warn Luc of their surveillance and on his next nocturnal journey he lures them into the tomb of a demon—Ashima-Shimtu, trapped centuries ago by the founder of the Clergy. But while Ashima-Shimtu is evil, it sees in the PCs a distant chance for freedom, and they can bargain with it to escape before dawn strands them.



At the end of the line, the PCs have a chance to spy on a meeting between some of the highest-ranking members of the Obscurati, including Lya Jierre herself, who is betrothed to the Risuri ruler, King Aodhan.

It's possible the PCs could be so successful in their mission that they observe the rendezvous and disrupt the hand-off (such as by swapping a fake lantern for the real one) without discovery. More likely, however, is that the PCs will make a last-minute effort to seize the lantern, flee to Vendricce's port, and escape Obscurati ships determined to sink them.

Adventure Five: *Cauldron-Born.*

Unmask the conspiracy.

Date: Spring of 501 A.O.V.

The PCs return to Flint with knowledge that Lya Jierre is allied with the Obscurati, but no clear idea what their endgame is. A peace conference is coming to the city, and a Beran minotaur named Brakken of Heffanita is set to moderate the talks between King Aodhan and Sovereign Han Jierre, who is attending with his niece Lya.

Meanwhile, a dwarven group of Heid Eschatol adherents hatch a plot to assassinate the moderator Brakken. They believe peace is inimical to the imminent end of the world, and have brought snipers and explosives to see their will done. It's up to the PCs to decide who to protect and how, all while being dogged by Obscurati efforts to mislead, discredit, and kill them. Thankfully the king's Principal Minister Harkover Lee trusts them, but the PCs seem to have *too* many leads.

Into this chaos arrives Asrabey Varal, the eladrin who confronted the party on Axis Island (or another similar eladrin if the PCs killed him). He has come to excise what the Unseen Court perceives as Danor's infection in the city. He is making plans with Hana "Gale" Soliogn to assault the peace conference.

The final piece of the puzzle is Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen, who comes to the PCs again for help. He believes the same group who abducted him once before now seeks to recruit him. He confesses

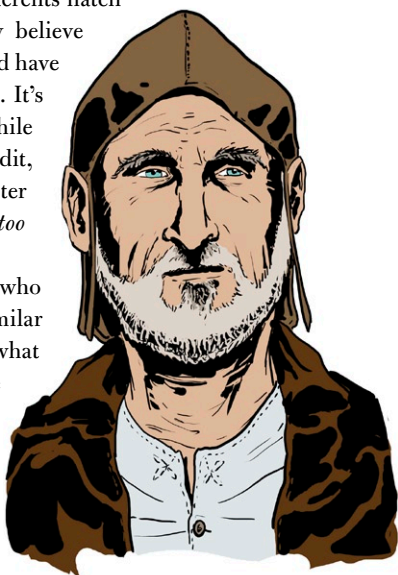
that he fled his homeland because he corrupted his medicine with dark sorcery. He created a new creature from stitched together bodies and souls, thinking he could find a way to thwart death. Instead, his Creation destroyed all he loved and has pursued him ever since. This sort of ingenious invention, however, is apparently just what the Obscurati like in new recruits.

The PCs can shadow the doctor as he makes contact with the Obscurati in a burnt-out theater, then follow as far as a gate that leads into the subterranean base in the plane of the Bleak Gate, which they lack the key to access. They receive unexpected help from the inside, however, courtesy of one Alexander Grappa—known as the mindmaker, one of the three creators of the colossus. Grappa sends them on a mission to locate a golem's eye, which reveals the key to open the gate.

As time runs out, the PCs have to decide which of a dozen threats they focus on. The tieflings from Danor are behaving completely diplomatic, and without hard proof of their conspiracy, the king will not jeopardize a peace treaty. The PCs must undertake a mission into the Obscurati's underground complex—perhaps even with the aid of the dwarven and eladrin assassins. There they find tanks filled with black oil suffused with the souls of those who have died in industrial accidents. Then they get a glimpse of the mighty colossus Borne.

As the PCs gather evidence, an alarm triggers, and Obscurati defenders react in overwhelming numbers. They corner the party, and they're asked to surrender by the leader of Colossus Cell himself, the city's governor Roland Stanfield. When things look bleak, the colossus activates prematurely—triggered by Grappa—and begins to tear its way free from beneath a mountain. In the chaos the PCs have a chance to take their shot at Stanfield (or run away, probably with the assistance of the eladrin).

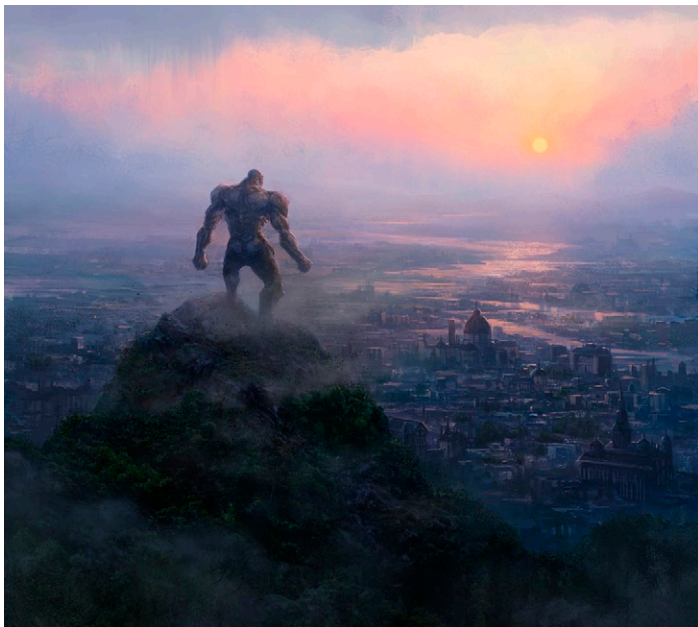
The colossus begins to rampage through the city, confused and overwhelmed by being released. Grappa sends one last communication to the PCs with guidance of how to drive Borne away: they must attack the golem to lure it into the sea, then get close enough and survive its attacks while King Aodhan invokes the power of Risur's fey titans, banishing the colossus to the Dreaming. It's only a temporary solution, and by the time they're done, Han and Lya Jierre have made good their escape, but the PCs have protected Risur, and thwarted the Obscurati's plan—for now.



Alexander Grappa.



Principal Minister Harkover Lee.



Adventure Six: *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman.*

Three people created the colossus, but they have fled, fearing retribution by the Obscurati. Run down the first creator—Tinker Oddcog the gearbuilder, hiding in Ber—and interrogate him before the Obscurati can silence him.

Adventure Seven: *Schism.*

Free the colossus's second creator—Alexander Grappa the mindmaker—whose consciousness is battling for control of the body of the third creator—Leone Quital the steelshaper. With Grappa's aid, sneak into a strife-riddled Obscurati palace and learn their ultimate agenda.

Adventure Eight: *Diaspora.*

The colossus's "mother"—Kasvarina Varal—retraces her life's path to recover stolen memories. Protect her and convince her to help you take control of the colossus.

Adventure Nine: *The Last Starry Sky.*

Defend the monarchy of Risur and stop the activation of an eldritch machine that will cause the stars to rain from the heavens. Even if you save your homeland, the rest of the world falls under the Obscurati's control.



Tinker Oddcog.

Adventure Ten: *Godmind.*

Form an alliance of those who resist the Obscurati, then psychically direct a gestalt attack force to storm their palace to recover a ritual that can reopen the Axis Seal and undo the Great Eclipse.

Adventure Eleven: *Gorged on Ruins.*

Keep the world from destroying itself in apocalyptic spasms, and find a map to the multiverse in a city set aflame by the manifested spirit of an erupting volcano.

Adventure Twelve: *The Grinding Gears of Heaven.*

To acquire the mana for a powerful ritual, travel to a cosmic crucible and save forsaken worlds before they are annihilated.

Adventure Thirteen: *Avatar of Revolution.*

Become agents of the new zeitgeist, provoke a continental uprising against the Obscurati, wrest from them control of the Axis Seal, and chart your own course for the world's future.

ABRIDGED CONSPIRACY.

Not all groups have the time or stamina for a full 30-level campaign.

Heroic Tier Only.

If you only run the campaign through Adventure Five, you have to strip away much of the greater conspiracy in order to simplify things. The villain becomes Lya Jierre who, with the aid of Flint city governor Roland Stanfield and others from Danor, is constructing a colossus so she can defeat the fey titans of Risur. Her goal is to claim the throne of Risur, then use the colossus to expand the power of Danor. The activities of Golden Cell and Lantern Cell simply become tests to let the colossus travel and fight in the Dreaming and the Bleak Gate.

Heroic to Paragon Tier.

If you only run the campaign through adventure 9, the great seal that the Obscurati want to open is on an island in Flint Harbor, not on Axis Island. Roland Stanfield takes the place of Nicodemus the Gnostic as the main villain, and his ritual in adventure 9 is a recreation of the avatar ritual used at the end of the Second Victory, which he is using to place his will into the body of the colossus. When the PCs defeat Roland Stanfield and disrupt his ritual, the backlash kills everyone who is part of the Obscurati, and let the PCs slightly alter the nature of reality in Risur.

Starting at Paragon or Epic.

If you prefer to start the campaign in paragon tier or epic tier, the changes are much easier to make, and mostly involve filling in the PCs with a bit of extra backstory, and adjusting scenes where the PCs are expected to recognize NPCs from earlier adventures.



ZEITGEIST™

THE GEARS OF REVOLUTION

CAMPAIGN GUIDE

Prepare to Take One Step Away from Classic Fantasy.

Steam and soot darken the skies above the city of Flint, and winds sweeping across its majestic harbor blow the choking products of industrial forges into the fey rainforests that dot its knife-toothed mountains. Since the earliest ages when the people of Risur founded this city, they feared the capricious beings that hid in those fog-shrouded peaks, but now as the march of progress and the demands of national defense turn Flint into a garden for artifice and technology, the old faiths and rituals that kept the lurkers of the woods at bay are being abandoned.

The Unseen Court, the Great Hunt, and the many spirits of the land long ago conquered by Risur's kings no longer receive tribute, but they cannot enter these new cities of steam and steel to demand their tithe. The impoverished workers who huddle in factory slums fear monsters of a different breed, shadowy children of the new urban labyrinth. Even their modern religions have no defenses against these fiends.

Times are turning. The skyseers—Risur's folk prophets since their homeland's birth—witness omens in the starry wheels of heaven, and they warn that a new age is nigh. But what they cannot foresee, hidden beyond the steam and soot of the night sky, is the face of this coming era, the spirit of the age: the *zeitgeist*.

This guide for the Game Master includes information about the plot of the ZEITGEIST adventure path, summaries of key recurring concepts and terms, and advice for running shortened versions of the campaign.

For use with the 4th Edition

**DUNGEONS
& DRAGONS**
ROLEPLAYING GAME

Requires the use of the D&D Player's Handbook®, Monster Manual®, and Dungeon Master's Guide® 2, Monster Manual® 2, Adventurer's Vault® core rulebooks, available from Wizards of the Coast, LLC.

A CAMPAIGN ACCESSORY USABLE BY GAME MASTERS FOR ALL LEVELS

