

Recommended reading order for the 1632 series
(aka the Ring of Fire series)

By Eric Flint
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Whenever someone asks me “what’s the right order?” for reading the 1632 series, I’m always tempted to respond: “I have no idea. What’s the right order for studying the Thirty Years War? If you find it, apply that same method to the 1632 series.”

However, that would be a bit churlish—and when it comes down to it, authors depend upon the goodwill of their readers. So, as best I can, here goes.

The first book in the series, obviously, is *1632*. That is the foundation novel for the entire series and the only one whose place in the sequence is definitely fixed.

Thereafter, you should read either the anthology titled *Ring of Fire* or the novel *1633*, which I co-authored with David Weber. It really doesn’t matter that much which of these two volumes you read first, so long as you read them both before proceeding onward. That said, if I’m pinned against the wall and threatened with bodily harm, I’d recommend that you read *Ring of Fire* before you read *1633*.

That’s because *1633* has a sequel which is so closely tied to it that the two volumes almost constitute one single huge novel. So, I suppose you’d do well to read them back to back.

That sequel is *1634: The Baltic War*, which I also co-authored with David Weber. *1632*, *1633*, *1634: The Baltic War*, *1635: The Eastern Front* and this novel constitutes what can be considered the “main line” or even the spinal cord of the entire series. Why? First, because it’s in these five novels that I depict the major political and military developments which have a tremendous impact on the entire complex of stories. Secondly, because these “main line” volumes focus on certain key characters in the series—Mike Stearns and Rebecca Abrabanel, first and foremost, as well as Gretchen Richter and Jeff Higgins.

Once you’ve read *1632*, *Ring of Fire*, *1633* and *1634: The Baltic War*, you will have a firm grasp of the basic framework of the series. From there, you can

go in one of two directions: either read *1634: The Ram Rebellion* or *1634: The Galileo Affair*.

There are advantages and disadvantages either way. *1634: The Ram Rebellion* is an oddball volume, which has some of the characteristics of an anthology and some of the characteristics of a novel. It's perhaps a more challenging book to read than the Galileo volume, but it also has the virtue of being more closely tied to the main line books. *Ram Rebellion* is the first of several volumes which basically run parallel with the main line volumes but on what you might call a lower level of narrative. A more positive way of putting that is that these volumes depict the changes produced by the major developments in the main line novels, as those changes are seen by people who are much closer to the ground than the statesmen and generals who figure so prominently in books like *1632*, *1633*, and *1634: The Baltic War*.

Of course, the distinction is only approximate. There are plenty of characters in the main line novels—Thorsten Engler and Eric Krenz spring immediately to mind—who are every bit as “close to the ground” as any of the characters in *1634: The Ram Rebellion*.

Whichever book you read first, I do recommend that you read both of them before you move on to *1634: The Bavarian Crisis*. In a way, that's too bad, because *Bavarian Crisis* is something of a direct sequel to *1634: The Baltic War*. The problem with going immediately from *Baltic War* to *Bavarian Crisis*, however, is that there is a major political development portrayed at length and in great detail in *1634: The Galileo Affair* which antedates the events portrayed in the Bavarian story.

Still, you could read any one of those three volumes—to remind you, these are *1634: The Ram Rebellion*, *1634: The Galileo Affair* and *1634: The Bavarian Crisis*—in any order you choose. Just keep in mind that if you read the Bavarian book before the other two you will be getting at least one major development out of chronological sequence.

After those three books are read, you should read *1635: A Parcel of Rogues*, which I co-authored with Andrew Dennis. That's one of the two sequels to *1634: The Baltic War*, the other one being *1635: The Eastern Front*. The reason you should read *Parcel of Rogues* at this point is that most of it takes place in the year 1634.

Thereafter, again, it's something of a toss-up between three more volumes: the second *Ring of Fire* anthology and the two novels, *1635: The Cannon Law*

and *1635: The Dreeson Incident*. On balance, though, I'd recommend reading them in this order because you'll get more in the way of a chronological sequence:

Ring of Fire II

1635: The Cannon Law

1635: The Dreeson Incident

The time frame involved here is by no means rigidly sequential, and there are plenty of complexities involved. To name just one, my story in the second *Ring of Fire* anthology, the short novel "The Austro-Hungarian Connection," is simultaneously a sequel to Virginia's story in the same anthology, several stories in various issues of the *Gazette*—as well as my short novel in the first *Ring of Fire* anthology, *The Wallenstein Gambit*.

What can I say? It's a messy world—as is the real one. Still and all, I think the reading order recommended above is certainly as good as any and probably the best.

We come now to Virginia DeMarce's *1635: The Tangled Web*. This collection of inter-related stories runs parallel to many of the episodes in *1635: The Dreeson Incident* and lays some of the basis for the stories which will be appearing in the next anthology, *1635: The Wars on the Rhine*. This volume is also where the character of Tata who figures in *Eastern Front* and *Saxon Uprising* is first introduced in the series.

You should then backtrack a little and read *1635: The Papal Stakes*, which is the direct sequel to *1635: The Cannon Law*.

You can then go back to the "main line" of the series and read *1635: The Eastern Front* and *1636: The Saxon Uprising*. I strongly recommend reading them back to back. These two books were originally intended to be a single novel, which I wound up breaking in half because the story got too long. They read better in tandem.

Then, read *Ring of Fire III*. My story in that volume is directly connected to *1636: The Saxon Uprising* and will lay some of the basis for the sequel to that novel. After that, read *1636: The Kremlin Games*. That novel isn't closely related to any other novel that has yet come out in the series, though, so you could read it almost any time after reading the first few volumes.

Thereafter, the series branches out even further and there are several books

you should read. I'd recommend the following order, but in truth it doesn't really matter all that much which order you follow in this stretch of the series:

1636: Commander Cantrell in the West Indies picks up on the adventures of Eddie Cantrell following the events depicted in *1634: The Baltic War*.

1636: The Cardinal Virtues depicts the opening of the French civil war which was also produced by the events related in *The Baltic War* and which has been foreshadowed in a number of stories following that novel.

Iver Cooper's *1636: Seas of Fortune* takes place in the Far East and in the New World. The portion of it titled "Stretching Out" may have some spoilers to *Commander Cantrell in the West Indies* and vice versa, but nothing too important

1636: The Devil's Opera takes place in Magdeburg and might have some spoilers if you haven't read *Saxon Uprising*. My co-author on this novel, David Carrico, also has an e-book available titled *1635: Music and Murder* which contains stories published in various anthologies that provide much of the background to *The Devil's Opera*.

1636: The Viennese Waltz comes after *Saxon Uprising* in the sense that nothing in it will be spoiled by anything in *Saxon Uprising* but you might find out Mike's whereabouts early if you read it first. On the other hand, the e-book *1636: The Barbie Consortium* (the authors of which are Gorg Huff and Paula Goodlett) is a direct prequel to *Viennese Waltz* and should be read first to introduce you to the young ladies dancing the Viennese Waltz.

1636: The Viennese Waltz is also one of the three immediate prequels to the next main line novel in the series, which is *1636: The Ottoman Onslaught*. The book is scheduled for publication in January of 2017—a year from now—and, as is true with most of the main line novels, I'm the sole author. If you're wondering, the other two immediate prequels are *1636: The Saxon Uprising* and my short novel "Four Days on the Danube," which was published in *Ring of Fire III*.

As long as I'm foreshadowing titles that'll be published in 2016, the next volumes coming out after *1635: Parcel of Rogues* are these two:

Ring of Fire IV (forthcoming May, 2016). There are a number of stories in this volume written by different authors including David Brin. From the standpoint of the series' reading order, however, probably the most important is my own story "Scarface." This short novel serves simultaneously as a sequel to *The Papal Stakes* and *The Dreeson Incident*, in that the story depicts the further adventures of Harry Lefferts after *Papal Stakes* and Ron Stone and Missy Jenkins

following *The Dreeson Incident*.

1636: The Chronicles of Dr. Gribbleflotz, by Kerry Offord and Rick Boatright (forthcoming August, 2016). As with *The Devil's Opera*, this is a story set in the middle of the United States of Europe as it evolves. In this case, relating the adventures of a seventeenth century scholar—a descendant of the great Paracelsus—who becomes wealthy by translating the fuzzy and erroneous American notions of “chemistry” into the scientific precision of alchemy.

That leaves the various issues of the *Gazette*, which are *really* hard to fit into any precise sequence. The truth is, you can read them pretty much any time you choose.

It would be well-nigh impossible for me to provide any usable framework for the thirty-four electronic issues of the magazine, so I will restrict myself simply to the six volumes of the *Gazette* which have appeared in paper editions. With the caveat that there is plenty of latitude, I'd suggest reading them as follows:

Read *Gazette I* after you've read *1632* and alongside *Ring of Fire*. Read *Gazettes II* and *III* alongside *1633* and *1634: The Baltic War*, whenever you're in the mood for short fiction. Do the same for *Gazette IV*, alongside the next three books in the sequence, *1634: The Ram Rebellion*, *1634: The Galileo Affair* and *1634: The Bavarian Crisis*. Then read *Gazette V* after you've read *Ring of Fire II*, since my story in *Gazette V* is something of a direct sequel to my story in the *Ring of Fire* volume. You can read *Gazette V* alongside *1635: The Cannon Law* and *1635: The Dreeson Incident* whenever you're in the mood for short fiction. *Gazette VI* can be read thereafter, along with the next batch of novels recommended.

Finally, I'd recommend reading the most recent *Gazette* volume—that's *Grantville Gazette VII*, published in April of 2015—any time after you've read *1636: The Cardinal Virtues*.

And... that's it, as of now. There are a lot more volumes coming.

For those of you who dote on lists, here it is. But do keep in mind, when you examine this neatly ordered sequence, that the map is not the territory.

1632

Ring of Fire

1633

1634: The Baltic War

(Somewhere along the way, after you've finished *1632*, read the stories and articles in the first three paper edition volumes of the *Gazette*.)

1634: The Ram Rebellion

1634: The Galileo Affair

1634: The Bavarian Crisis

1635: A Parcel of Rogues

(Somewhere along the way, read the stories and articles in the fourth paper edition volume of the *Gazette*.)

Ring of Fire II

1635: The Cannon Law

1635: The Dreeson Incident

1635: The Tangled Web (by Virginia DeMarce)

(Somewhere along the way, read the stories in *Gazette V*.)

1635: The Papal Stakes

1635: The Eastern Front

1636: The Saxon Uprising

Ring of Fire III

1636: The Kremlin Games

(Somewhere along the way, read the stories in *Gazette VI*.)

1636: Commander Cantrell in the West Indies

1636: The Cardinal Virtues

1635: Music and Murder (by David Carrico—this is an e-book edition only)

1636: The Devil's Opera

1636: Seas of Fortune (by Iver Cooper)

1636: The Barbie Consortium (by Gorg Huff and Paula Goodlett—this is an e-book edition only)

1636: The Viennese Waltz

(Somewhere along the way, read the stories in *Gazette VII*.)

And that leaves the following volumes, which will be appearing over the course of the next year:

Ring of Fire IV (forthcoming May, 2016)

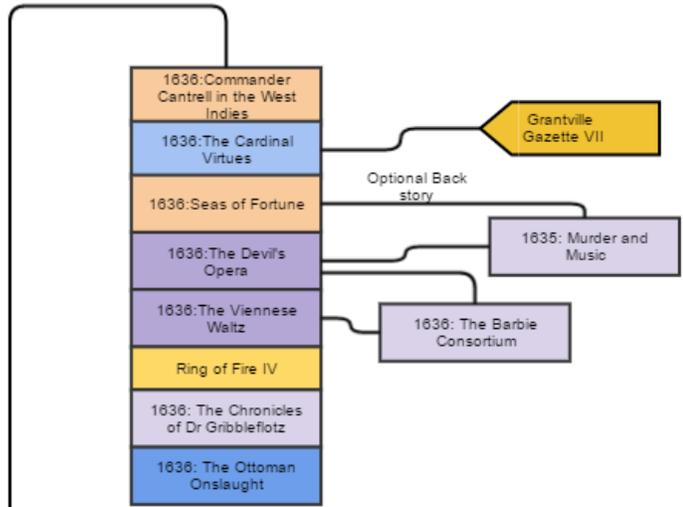
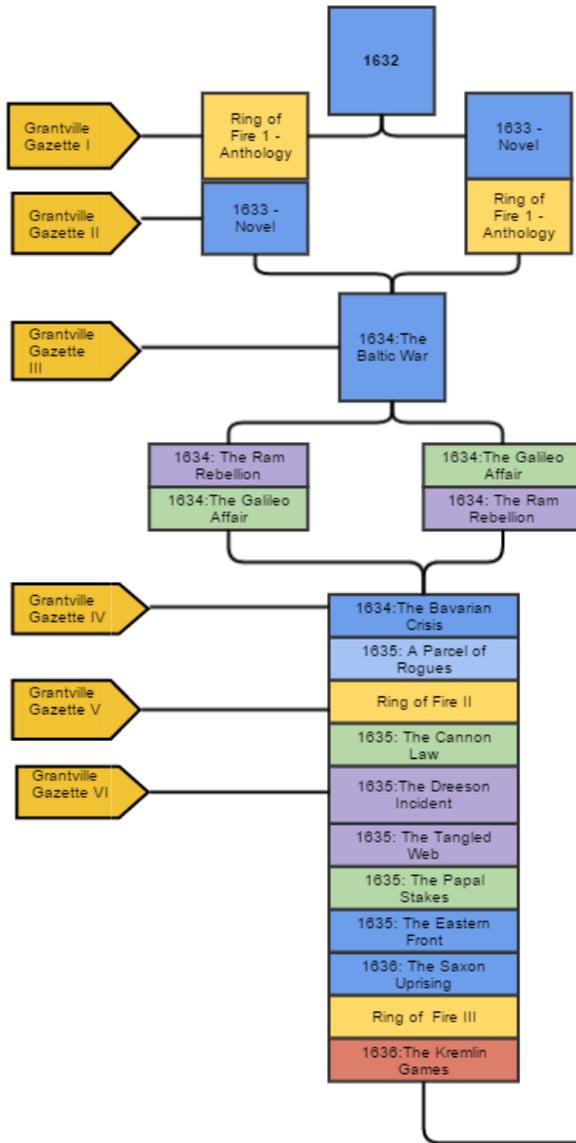
1636: The Chronicles of Dr. Gribbleflotz (forthcoming August, 2016)

1636: The Ottoman Onslaught (forthcoming January, 2017)

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- Main Line Novels
- England and France
- "Primary" Anthologies
- Parallel Novels set in Europe
- Special anthologies set in Europe
- "Italian" / Papal novels
- Russia
- Western Hemisphere
- Grantville Gazettes from Baen



1632 / Ring of Fire Reading order