



# INTRODUCTION





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#### **Dedication**

This book is dedicated to my friend Craig Brasco. He has been a steady friend through the long and treacherous path of writing a series of RPGs, providing advice, insight, and opinion when others left me hanging in the wind. As a graphic designer, he has also provided me with invaluable technical advice on a variety of issues over the years. Thanks Craig, I cannot express how much I appreciate your friendship.

Additionally, this book is dedicated to my wife and our two children. I will love you always.

#### **A Note about Contributors**

All of the artwork in this book has been donated by the artists. In addition to the above credits, each image placed in the book links back to the artist's gallery. Please take the time to visit them and consider buying a print. This book would not have been possible without the generosity of these artists. I am eternally grateful for their support. I am also grateful for the constructive criticism of my friends and family.

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# How does this game work?

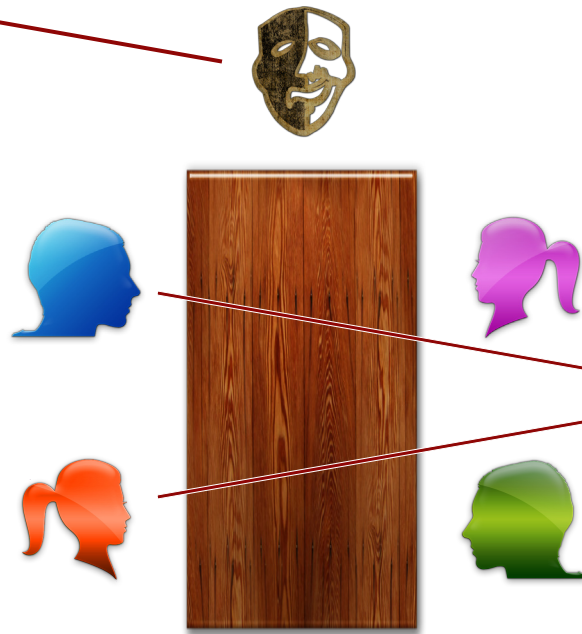
## Table

Novarium is typically played around a table as illustrated. Every person in the game should be able to see and hear each other clearly.

## The Architect

One person is called the Architect. They are responsible for a lot of the creative aspects of the game and they are usually the most experienced person in the group.

The Architect typically sits at the head of the table, sometimes with a screen propped up in front of them to shield their notes from your view.



## The Players

Everyone else is a player in the game. A player has one or more **characters**. A character in Novarium is just like a character in a book or a movie, only YOU get to decide what they do.

The Architect will present the players with a situation, and the players describe how their characters respond. There is no pre-determined story, everything in the game evolves out of the complex interplay between Players and the Architect.

## The Goal of the Game

In Novarium, there are no winners or losers. You are playing a group of people struggling to carve out a small patch of civilization in a fantastical world called **Vaena**, filled with vile creatures, terrible villains, and more than a few strange surprises.

# Making Characters

## Callia Shadowmind

Mike needs to make a character. He decides that he wants to start out playing his Novaria. Using the character creation book and a few dice rolls, he creates a Novaria with a talent for mind-control and the manipulation of shadows and light. He names her Callia Shadowmind to reflect this.

He decides to not create his second character until he knows more about the game.



## Characters

The first thing you need to do before starting to actually play is make characters. After all, you cannot roleplay without a character.



## Korena Sayuth

Angela has played Novarium before. She draws up a Novaria character named Korena Sayuth, but decides to make another character as well.



## Tighnar the Brave

Angela wants to play another character right away. She really likes to be a brute fighter so she creates a **Dwarf** named Tighnar the Brave. After talking with Mike, she decides that Tighnar has been a long time friend of Callia Shadowmind and that is why he is accompanying her.

## Multiple Characters

In Novarium, you control multiple characters. One is a **Novaria** which is a very powerful woman with amazing magical powers. However, a Novaria needs to spend a lot of time reading, studying, and experimenting with magic. So while you are not playing your Novaria, you have secondary characters.



# More Characters



## Talendra Sayuth

Jennifer decides that she wants her character to be closely related to Angela's Novaria; Korena Sayuth. After making sure that Angela is fine with it, Jennifer creates a Novaria named Talendra Sayuth and declares that the two characters are sisters.

Talendra has a special way with fire and earth magic, but she is actually pretty good at all forms of magical attacks used to strike others with damage; whether throwing a fireball, a lightning bolt, or a ball of acid.

## Attachments

Every character in Novarium has a strong connection with another one, a relationship called an **attachment**. These affect gameplay in various ways, but they also serve to keep the group bound together, despite differing interests.



## Gender

Because only women can cast magic, they have taken over the positions of social power once held by men. Human society remains sexist, but now in the opposite direction. Power corrupts...

## Ophelia Sindaris

Like Angela, James doesn't want to start the game playing his Novaria. He creates it and then begins work on another one.



## Willarion Dunmoor

James really wants to play a tough mountain man, so he creates a **Sculari**. A Sculari is a kind of human male not relegated to household work or field labor. James decides that Willarion got his combat training while fighting in the wars with Tighnar the Brave.



# Establishing a Home

## The Mark

All the characters together are called a Novarium (hence the name of the game). At the start of the game, the entire Novarium gains possession of a piece of property called a **Mark**, similar to a political unit like a barony, only a Mark gives you ownership of the magical energy found in the land.

### The Mark

The Architect describes how the group has been called in for a chance to take possession of a new Mark that is being opened up on the frontier. The governing **Exarch** (a magical title, similar to a Duke) of the area invites the Novarium to an elaborate feast and present them with the terms of the deal.

The Architect writes out the terms on a piece of paper and slides it over to the players. After some negotiation, the deal finalized and the group signs the document.

The Architect describes how the group travels to their newly granted territory. Their land is dominated by a rough wooded hill that conceals a small cave where the **Prime Font** is hidden from view; a pool of sparkling blue water that glows softly with magical power.



## Fonts

**Fonts** are places where magical energy, called **Essence**, bubbles out of the Divine Realm and into the real world. The **Prime Font** is merely the first one discovered in an area. Essence serves as a kind of currency between the Novaria and so it is highly valued.

### Korena Sayuth

Angela tells the group that Korena offers to go to the nearby villages and begin raising the workforce and buying the supplies to build structures.



### Establishing a Home

James draws out a sketch of the land that the Novarium owns and then places a few squares on the map to indicate potential building sites. He shows his construction plan to the group and they agree with his suggestions. They pull some money out of their group funds to cover the costs.



# The Game Begins

## The First Season

The Architect tells the group that it will take an entire season to hire the workers, get the construction materials together, and secure the political deals with nearby nobility to make this construction project happen. Any characters not devoted to this task can spend the season doing something else, like exploring the surrounding area.



Mike chooses Callia

Jennifer chooses Talendra



## Seasons

Gameplay in Novarium is broken into seasons. During each season, you will be in control of one of your characters. While this character goes out into the world, the other characters stay behind to tend to your property or perform tasks like studying or recovering from an injury.



Angela chooses Tigfnar

James chooses Willarion



# The First Day's Travel

## Heading Out

The players consult the map of the nearby area and decided that they want to travel upriver to the town of Durmich. Nestled against a huge cliff face, Durmich is the closest population center to the Novarium's land grant.

## A Rainstorm is Brewing

The Architect tells the group that after a few hours of walking along the river bank, the skies begin to darken and it looks like rain might be coming soon. She pauses so that the players have an opportunity to jump in with potential actions...

## Casting Sense-Fire

Jennifer declares that Talendra is going to cast Sense-Fire. She has a Sense of 5 and a Fire of 13, for a total of 18. She wants to sense any fires within several miles of their location, so the Architect tells her that is going to involve rolling 3 dice. She rolls a 6, a 2, and an 8, for a total of 16. Since that is less than 18, the spell succeeds!

## Casting Magic

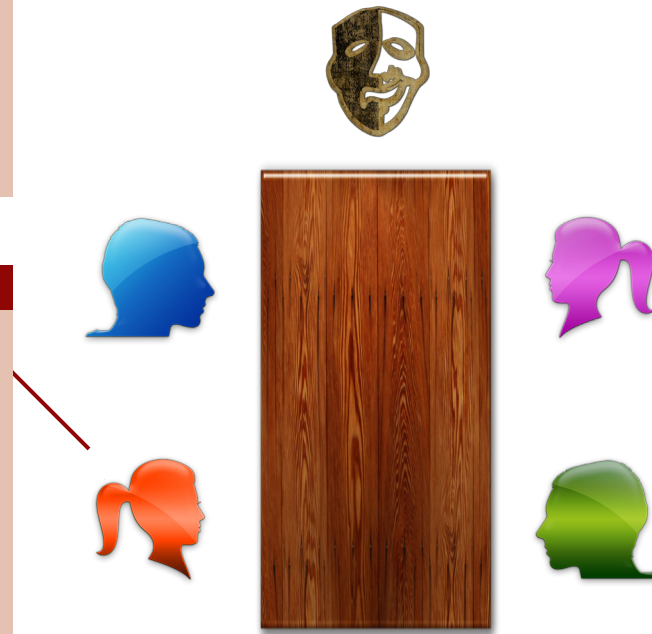
A magic-using character has varying levels of aptitude in different kinds of magic. Casting a spell involves combining two elements; a **method** (how the magic works) with a **materia** (what the magic works on). You then roll a number of dice depending on how complex the spell is to perform. If you roll less than the sum of your elements, you succeed.

## Through the Rain

The Architect tells Jennifer than Talendra has detected several small fires about two miles away on top of a hill. Crossing their fingers that this isn't leading them into a hostile confrontation, the group heads in the direction Talendra indicates.

The Architect tells them that within a few minutes, it begins to rain. The rain quickly accelerates into a full downpour. Soaked and tired, they finally reach a clearing and spot the hill. There is a large manor house that looks over a small vineyard.

Overjoyed, they climb up the hill. Hopefully, whoever lives here will shelter them from the storm...





# The Goblin Servant

## Callia takes the lead

Mike describes how Callia steps forward and says that they are travellers along the river that got caught in the rainstorm and were hoping to find some shelter from the elements for the night. He describes how he wants to Callia to shake her coinpurse softly and offer to pay for the hospitality.

## The response

Since Mike has not tried to actually influence someone in a strong fashion, the Architect decides no rolls are necessary. They already made some notes about this house anyway and the servant is amicable.

“Come in, come in. Welcome to the house of Lady Premshire. I am her servant, Galloe.”

The door opens and there is a small unkempt Goblin standing in the foyer.

## Knock Knock

The players decide to knock on the heavy oak door of the manor house. The Architect describes how they hear some shuffling of feet inside and then the door is opened a small crack. A weak voice says “hello?”



## Goblins

A goblin is a humanoid race with a long and glorious past. Unfortunately, it is definitely past. They have now been reduced to vagabonds, thieves, bandits, and occasionally serving as household servants for those that can't afford higher quality staff.



# A Strange Encounter

## While the Master is away...

Galloe describes how Lady Premshire is actually in Durmich that evening on business but that they would be welcome to stay in the guest bedrooms in the east wing.

### A Strange Little Girl

As they are being led down the hall towards the East Wing, the Architect describes one of the doors to the garden opening and a young girl, maybe 12 years of age, walking through it. She had deep sunken eyes and a bit of blood on her cheek. Seeing the party, she hissed that she was not expecting visitors and disappeared down a corridor.



### Strange Creatures

The world of Vaena is filled with all manner of strange creatures and folk. As you explore it, you will come into contact with unusual events and strange beings. Investigate them with caution!

### Questioning Galloe

The characters immediately ask Galloe about the strange girl. At first he tells them to be quiet and continue to their rooms. Angela describes how Tighnar steps forward and grabs Galloe by the shirt. "Tell me what strange things are going on around here!"

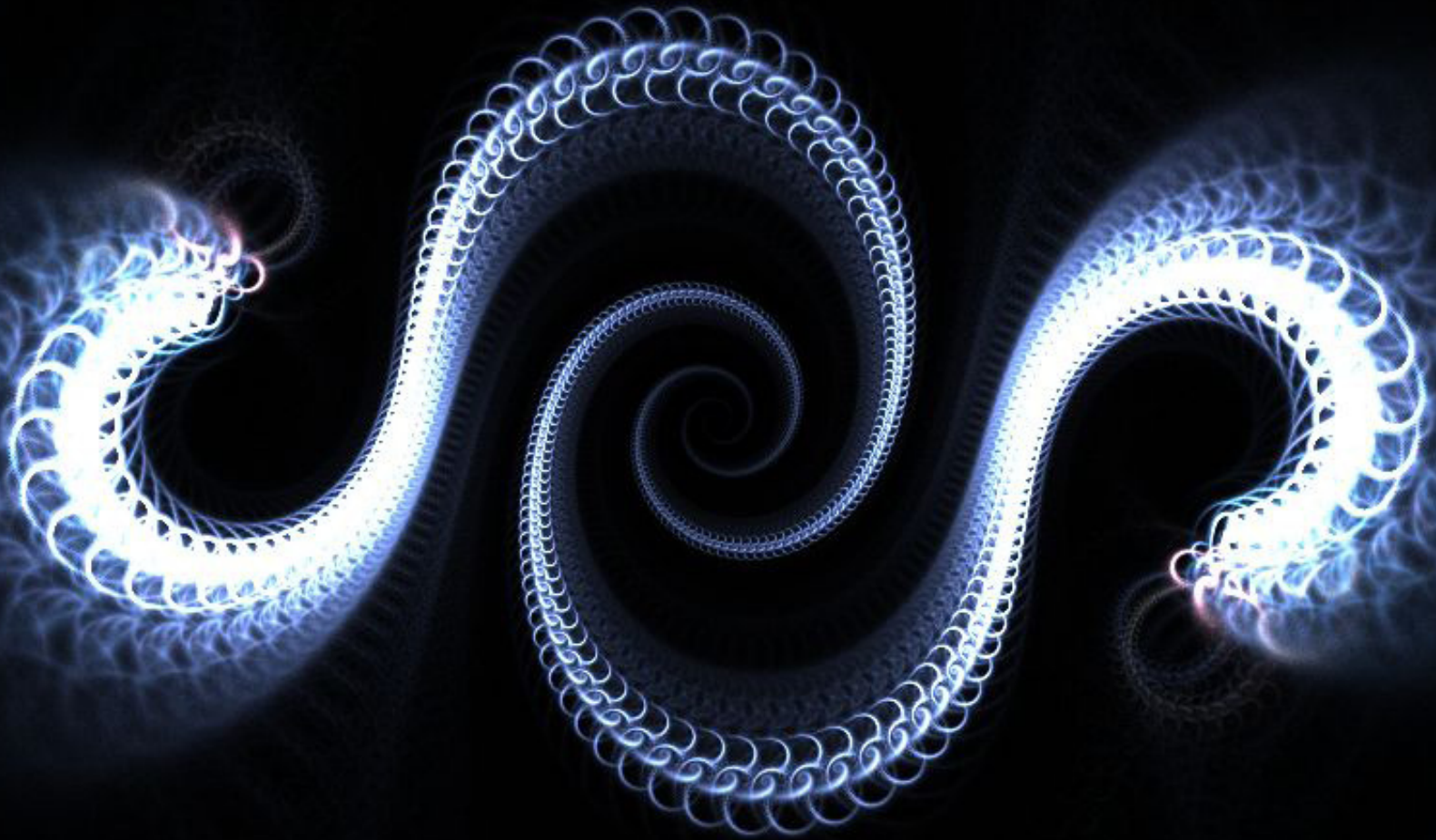
The Architect asks for a *Magnetism* test, on which Tighnar barely manages to succeed.

"Hush, come with me," Galloe says and once inside the east wing, he closes the door firmly and twists the lock.

"I had hoped that Esmerelda would not be aware of your presence here tonight. She is dangerous and I advise you to stay awake until dawn, if you know what is best for you. Go quickly from this place as soon as you can, my Master will return by mid-afternoon. I will have to take care to make excuses for you. I should never have let you in this late. There will be hell to pay."



*And just that quickly, you can step out of the  
mundane world and into the sublime...*



*To enter the strange world of Vaena,  
continue to the Novarium Rulebook.*