



RULEBOOK

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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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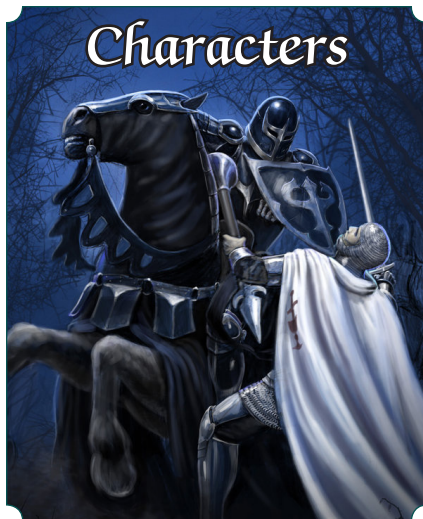
# Table of Contents

Click to Navigate

Basics



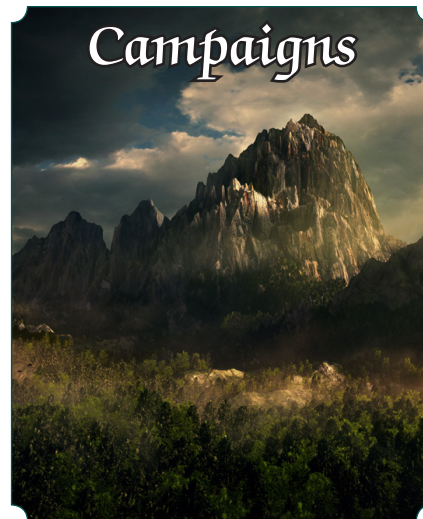
Characters



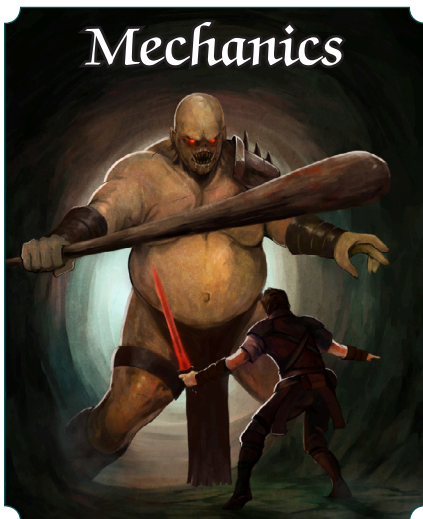
Equipment



Campaigns



Mechanics



Magic



Vaena



Architecture



# Basics



Novarium is a roleplaying game (RPG). It is typically played by a group of four to six people, usually around a table. The goal of the game is to participate in an interesting, collaborative story and to have fun doing it. To tell the story, you roleplay a character. There are no winners or losers because the game is about cooperation.

One person, called the *Architect*, is in charge of managing the game and establishing the basis of reality in the world. Every other person around the table controls a single character in the world, similar to a character in a book or movie. People who are controlling characters are called *players*. The game involves using your imagination to determine how your character will interact with an imaginary world. The world and everything in it, including all of its non-character inhabitants, is described by the Architect.

The Architect describes where your characters are in this world and in return each player tells them what they would like their characters to do. Your decisions should be played out through improvisation based on how you feel your character would react. The rules for adjudicating the success and failure of these actions is contained in this book. The game system uses dice – the same dice that you find in traditional board games – to add the element of chance.

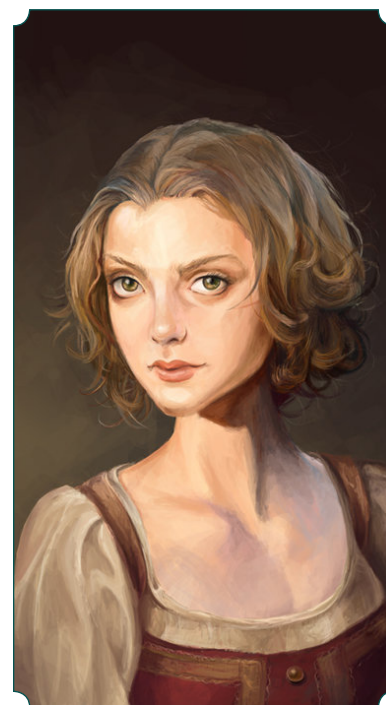
Sometimes your characters will fail. Other times they will succeed. The odds of success are based on your character design. The method for creating a character is contained in the next chapter. Your character will have better chances of success at some actions and poorer chances with others based on the choices you make during this process. Elements of your character not directly covered by game rules are open for you to design however you wish. As a player, you are responsible for giving them a personality, a unique flavor, and roleplay that at the table.

## The Flow of Play

The Architect controls the world. She has made notes about the personalities of the other people in the world, such as the innkeeper, sheriff, soldiers, and so on. She has also prepared challenges for the characters, typically in the form of combat with some kind of enemies who are working in opposition to the player's goals. She has usually created a dastardly villain with diabolical plans, which the players must struggle to overcome. As the players take actions in the world, interact with its inhabitants, solve problems, etc., the job of the Architect is to fairly determine the outcomes of those actions, assisted by the rules.

The game is often played out over several months in game sessions of several hours each, organized at a regular interval such as once per week. One session may be only one element in a series of adventures that together make up a campaign. The length of the game and its complexity depends on both the creative and management abilities of the Architect and the contributions of the players.

However, players are not passive observers. They are the primary actors. The game is like a novel whose pages are blank until you read them. The future is based on your real-time decisions, not written ahead of time. The story is dynamic, complex, and unpredictable.



A game of Novarium involves you describing to the Architect what you want your *character* to do. You might tell the Architect you want to open a door, swing a sword, cast a spell, and so on. In general, we refer to such requests as *actions*. We can sort actions into three types: *simple*, *standard*, and *opposed*.

In the case of simple actions, no dice are used. You tell the Architect that you want to walk forward a few feet and they nod agreement. You tell them you want to open the door and, if it is unlocked, there should be no reason why you can't just open the door. No dice are thrown.

For the other two types, dice are used to determine the outcome. There are several types of dice used in the game, all of which can be easily acquired at a local hobby shop or through an internet retailer. These dice have 4, 6, 8, 10, or 12 sides. They are referred to using a shorthand method of a lowercase *d* and the number of sides on the die. A *d6* is therefore a six-sided die. When you are rolling multiple dice, place a number in front to denote that. For example, *3d6* represents rolling three six-sided dice.

### What do the dice represent?

Dice represent the nature of the task and all the little nuances that make something difficult. Dice also reflect the components of the task that are too minor to be quantified, but that add up. In a sword fight, it might mean the uneven nature of the floor or the way in which the light streams in through a small window to blur your vision. Dice represent those things that you cannot predict, but that end up being very important. Dice are the fickle hands of fate on your life's thread.

### How many dice do you roll?

There are guidelines presented throughout this book on how many dice you should expect to roll for a wide range of potential actions. All action resolution rolls rely upon ten-sided dice, including casting *magic*. All *damage* rolls rely upon six-sided dice. However, ultimately the Architect is the final arbiter of how many dice you must roll for a given task. They use their judgement to determine how challenging something is to accomplish.



## Standard Rolls

Standard actions are situations where an average person faces a significant risk of failure. Yes, you might fall down walking across the room, but that is extremely unlikely. However, trying to pick the lock on that door is something else entirely. Someone wants to keep you out of there and they designed the lock to do so. The average person has a very good chance of failing. As a consequence, you have to roll dice.

A standard action is resolved by rolling a number of ten-sided dice, called difficulty dice, and comparing that number to a relevant attribute. You may have a **trait** that gives you a bonus in certain specified situations.

For example, you say you want to climb a wall to escape from some monsters and the Architect tells you to roll your **fitness** attribute. They decide that you must roll two difficulty dice to represent the nature of the task. You roll two dice and get a result of 12. This is lower than your fitness (15). You are successful and make it to the top of the wall without falling and/or injuring yourself.

## Saves

When someone makes a standard roll with the intention of avoiding a negative outcome, it is referred to as a **save**. While it is mechanically no different from a standard roll, this distinction is important. Some **traits** give bonuses that specifically apply to rolls, saves, or both. Furthermore, you cannot take any preparatory actions after you have been informed of a save. Rocks falling down the hill are not going to stop while you dig around in your backpack for something to help you.

## Opposed Actions

Opposed actions are those where two entities are attempting to affect the same outcome. I am trying to stab you with my sword and you are trying to prevent me from doing so. Unlike a wall, I can change and react to your behavior. I am fluid and dynamic, and so are you. In this case, we both roll dice and we compare the relative outcomes. Thus our capacities are not judged alone, but in opposition to each another.

An opposed action is resolved by first making a roll very similar to a standard roll; by rolling a number of difficulty dice and comparing the sum to a relevant attribute, with a potential **trait** bonus. Once both sides roll, their margin of success is determined and whoever succeeded by a larger margin is the victor. Opposed rolls can get really interesting because both sides can be making their own rolls against a different number of difficulty dice.

For example, you may be shooting an arrow at me. However, I may be hidden in a dark doorway and you may be standing in a well-lit street. I can see your movements clearly and that makes my dodge easier while you have a very hard time seeing me and that makes your shot just a little bit harder.

With the Architect's guidance, you roll three dice and get a result of 13. This is a good roll and it is less than your **agility** (15). You succeed by 2. Unfortunately in this case, the Architect decides that I only have to roll 1 difficulty die and I get a result of 3. Even though I have an average agility of 10, I succeed by 7. I notice the arrow in time and snap back to avoid it. You missed.



“Like a wolf,  
evil waits in the dark,  
watching,  
sniffing,  
plotting,  
for that moment  
when it can run down  
and snatch everything  
you have ever worked  
for and fought to protect,  
and devour it all.

The wolf cannot be appeased.  
Someone must stand against him,  
to fight for what is good and right.  
Will it be you, Sister?”

- The Book of Azakriel 5:17



# Characters



## Creation Process

### ◇ Step 1: Attributes

Roll up your attributes and assign them

### ◇ Step 2: Identity

Choose an identity that represents who you are

### ◇ Step 3: Traits

Choose the traits that make your character unique

### ◇ Step 4: Languages

Decide which languages your character knows

### ◇ Step 5: Ambitions

Decide what motivates your character

### ◇ Step 6: Magic

If capable of magic, choose your talents

### ◇ Step 7: Equipment

Buy some equipment using your starting gold

### ◇ Step 8: Attachment

Integrate your character into the Novarium

# Attributes

Your character has six attributes that define their basic strengths and weaknesses as a person. Attributes range from 3 to 18 and a 10 or 11 in an attribute is an average value. They represent the quirks of your biological inheritance and your own efforts in life so far.

## Attribute Generation

There are three methods of generating attribute scores. Everyone playing the game must use the same method. You should all decide as a group on a method before you make any characters.

### Method 1:

The classic and recommended way of generating attribute scores is by rolling 3d6 a total of six times and then assigning them to the attributes you want. This gives you an average character that fits well into the mathematical models of the game.

### Method 2:

If you want characters that have above average attribute values, you can roll 4d6 and drop the lowest die. This is a significant enhancement statistically, so be sure that it is what you want to do. The game materials are often balanced based on the assumption of Method 1, so going with this method can result in easier play.

### Method 3:

If you want the flexibility to determine your attributes so that you can get specific outcomes, you can use this method. Each attribute has a starting value of 6. You may then roll 8d6 and add the dice rolled to the attribute of your choice. Dice may not be split between attributes.

For example, if one of the dice rolled was a four, you could add that to an attribute to raise it from 6 to 10, but you could not add 3 to one attribute and 1 to another. You can add as many dice as you want to a single attribute, but no attribute can be raised higher than 18.

<b>Agility</b>	Coordination, speed, and aiming ability
<b>Fitness</b>	Muscular physique and general health
<b>Knowledge</b>	Information known about the world
<b>Magnetism</b>	Passive social influence that affects others
<b>Perception</b>	Awareness of the environment around you
<b>Willpower</b>	Mental defense and determination



## Agility

Agility represents the speed at which information is processed in the brain. It is integral to hitting your opponents in combat as well as throwing and catching objects. It affects your reaction time, how quickly you take actions both in and out of combat, and whether you can move fast enough to get out of the way of incoming attacks.

Characters with a high agility value think faster than other people and are capable of reacting at incredible speeds. They are graceful and coordinated, thus making excellent archers and thieves. They are dangerous opponents in combat because of their aim and speed.

Characters with low agility are clumsy and uncoordinated. Injury only makes them more so. If you are ever reduced to zero agility, your character is completely physically incapacitated and unable to move.



## Fitness

Fitness represents the health of your physical body. It is a measure of your raw lifting, pushing, and throwing power. It also reflects your cardiovascular ability under exertion and the resilience of your immune system. It is also the attribute most often damaged.

A character with a high fitness attribute rarely gets sick and easily fights off the effects of poisons, diseases, and other dangers. They are tough and resilient in a fight, capable of using brute force to solve many of their problems, and can even be somewhat intimidating to others. Higher scores mean they may survive a wound that might kill a lesser person. They are often the last ones standing when the chips are down.

Characters with low fitness are frail and weak. If you are ever reduced to zero fitness, your character is completely physically incapacitated and unable to move.

## Knowledge

Knowledge represents the information present in the character's mind. This dramatically impacts your ability to understand complex information and draw the right conclusions, but it does not represent your innate intelligence. Because it serves as the basis of thought, knowledge is essential for working with advanced technology, creating new equipment from parts, and higher-order thinking as a whole.

Characters with a high knowledge attribute are respected by others. While high values are usually correlated with greater intellect, simply having a high value does not make the character particularly wise. You may be very educated but lacking in common sense. It is your responsibility to role play your character's actual intellect.

Characters with low knowledge are ignorant and often foolish as a result. Some extremely rare injuries result in knowledge loss, which manifests as amnesia. If you are ever reduced to zero knowledge, your character is mentally incapacitated and unable to think or act coherently because they lack any sort of reference to make a decision.

## Magnetism

Magnetism represents your innate appeal to others. This is a passive effect that is uncontrollable and has probably resulted in a million small favors throughout your life. People just have a certain feeling about you and this attribute represents the strength of that. Magnetism is also strongly correlated to how you assess your own worth as a person.

Characters with a high magnetism have a strong passive effect on those around them, that often is paired with strong leadership. However, it must be remembered that magnetism is not leadership or even a moral compass. While you might use your influence over others for good, you might just as easily be a megalomaniac out for yourself. Such choices are yours as the player, not determined by attributes.

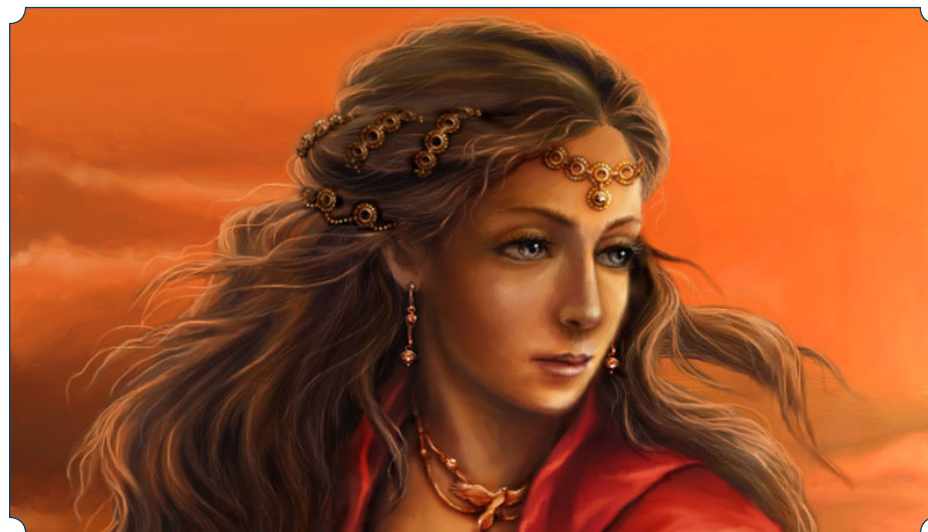
Characters with low magnetism are often outcast and ignored by others. Some injuries, such as those which cause deformations or a loss of confidence, result in magnetism loss. If you are ever reduced to zero magnetism, your character is completely mentally incapacitated and unable to think or act because they believe they are worthless.

## Perception

Perception represents the ability to concentrate, notice things about the world, and handle multiple tasks at once. Perception is often used in the game to determine what you observe going on around you. It can determine whether you see that gold earring lying in the dust or notice the storm clouds forming on the horizon.

Characters with a high perception are able to see things that others might miss and create things that are too detailed for others to duplicate. They are rarely surprised and generally able to perform tasks requiring a steady hand and a clear mind.

Characters with low perception are often physically defective, having poor hearing, eyesight, or some other malady. Some injuries result in perception loss, which manifests as loss of sensory capacity. If you are ever reduced to zero perception, your character is completely mentally incapacitated by virtue of having no input from the outside world.



## Willpower

Willpower represents the ability to make decisions under stress. Combat and injury can cause large amounts of stress and characters unable to deal with it will have trouble functioning. Willpower is also essential to how well you can resist fear and disorientation, as well as many mind-altering magical effects.

In conversation, the Architect may determine that certain failures on your part will result in willpower loss, such as if you try to seduce someone and they are strongly disinterested. The shame of failure can cause you to lose faith in yourself.

Characters with a high willpower attribute are able to keep their cool under stress and still perform necessary tasks. They can keep performing actions and keep moving when their body is begging for rest. They can push far beyond the point when a normal person would give up.

Characters with low willpower are indulgent and disorderly. They cause mischief and mayhem for others to deal with. Injuries resulting in willpower loss are rare, but many monsters and spells can damage willpower. If you are ever reduced to zero willpower, your character is completely out of your control and surrendered to the Architect.

# Identity

Identity is a composite concept that represents the remainder of your biological inheritance, your life experience up to this point, and your training or occupation. This choice will have a powerful impact on the game experience that you have with your character. It defines your character's role in the world, frames what they are capable of doing, and often what they aspire to be.

## Weapon Training

Each identity comes with a selection of weapons in which you are trained. If you attempt to use a weapon without training, apply a -3 penalty to your **attribute** to reflect your unfamiliarity.

## Starting Gold

Each identity comes with a number of dice rolled to determine starting gold. Dice are rolled and multiplied by 10. For example, a Novaria rolls 5d10 and multiplies the result by 10. If they rolled a 1, 3, 5, 7, & 9, they would start with 250 gold pieces.

## Attribute Bonus

Every identity except **Halflings** grants a bonus to an attribute.

## Gender

Some identities come with a gender requirement. For example, a **Novaria** must be a female and a **Sculari** must be male.

## Identity-Specific Abilities

Some identities come with abilities that make them unique compared to the other choices. For example, Halflings have a powerful healing ability which is unmatched except by a few very lucky Novaria. Be sure to write down these abilities on your character sheet so that you don't forget them. You may also want to make a few notes about how they work to avoid having to reference the book again.

<b>Novaria</b>	A female magic user with incredible powers
<b>Tavaria</b>	A female knight with a mix of abilities
<b>Sculari</b>	A male warrior with strong combat abilities
<b>Rendari</b>	A male thinker with many non-combat abilities
<b>Elves</b>	A mystical demi-human race with mixed powers
<b>Dwarves</b>	A tough demi-human race that excels at combat
<b>Halflings</b>	A talkative demi-human race with healing powers



# Novaria

Novaria are talented female humans. They have endured a long magical apprenticeship providing them with training in how to fully tap into their gift. They are far more powerful magic users than the average woman. In addition to their magical prowess, a Novaria is also highly educated and socially respected. Novaria often assume leadership roles due to their social standing and typically high intelligence. They are willing to make the ultimate sacrifice to fight evil and this is often inspirational to those around them.

## Weapon Training:

- Dagger
- Quarterstaff
- Club

**Starting Gold:** 5d10

**Attribute Bonus:** +2 to *Willpower*

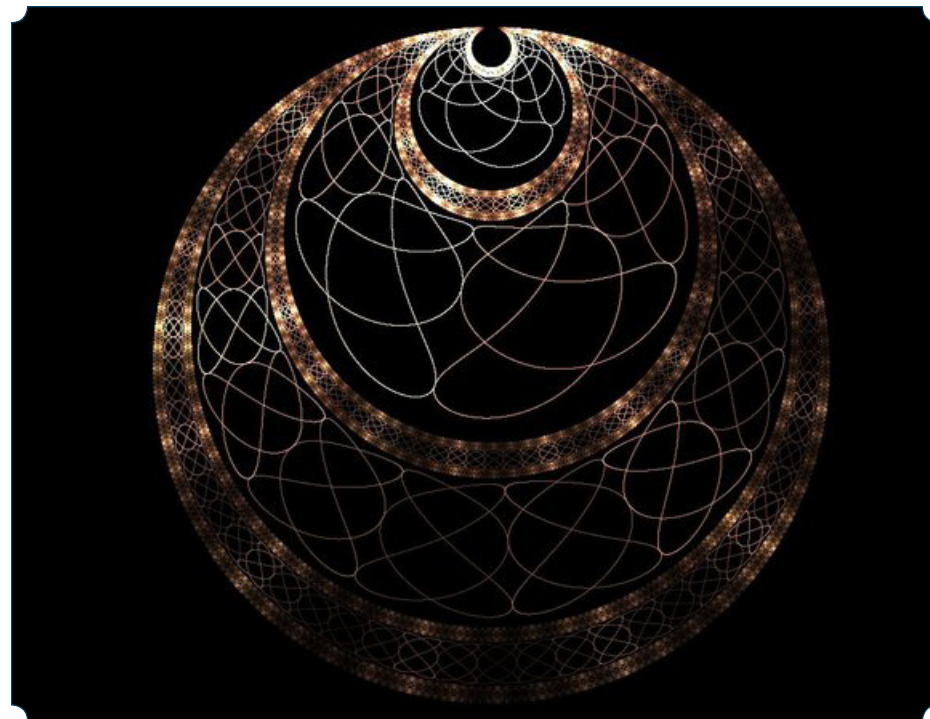
## Magical Apprenticeship:

All human females have the Gift of Light. However, a Novaria is much better than a normal woman due to extensive training and practice. Where a normal woman has two talents for magic, a Novaria has cultivated five additional talents through training for a total of seven. Furthermore, Novaria can recognize magic that is being cast or in effect, as well as to enhance magic through the use of *essence*.

## Force of Will:

Novaria are able to literally demand magic to work as they desire through force of will. A Novaria can choose to take 1 willpower damage in order to remove the lowest difficulty die result from a casting roll. They can use this ability multiple times, however it cannot remove the last die from the roll. This is a powerful ability to force magic into being, but it is very draining on the caster and must be used with great care.

For example, if a Novaria rolled three dice and got a 3, 5, and 8, they could spend 1 willpower point to remove the 3 and lower the result from 16 to 13. They could spend another willpower point to remove the 5. However, they cannot remove the 8 by spending a 3rd point.



## The Sigil of God:

The last step of a Novaria's apprenticeship is to learn to draw a Sigil of God. This is a magical rune that can be drawn on a stone tablet and placed inside the pool surrounding a *font*. While in the pool, the magical essence spilling into the Mortal realm cannot be twisted or tainted by a demon. The pool is completely protected from demonic influences. This rune is known only to Novaria and anyone caught desecrating a Sigil of God is immediately declared a *profligate*.

## Literacy & Language:

Novaria are the only identity that is literate. They have access to written languages as a result and share a certain sense of camaraderie. This gives Novaria access to a world of knowledge stored in dusty tomes and hidden libraries. Further, they receive special treatment by authority figures, consulted for their advice on unusual matters, and generally respected by the population at large. This is a mark of distinction.

# Tavaria

Tavaria are talented female humans that have a mix of combat strength and diverse skill training. They are the knighted nobility in the human kingdoms and the standard bearers of the political class. Tavaria characters are unique in that they are errant knights who do not owe fealty to any lord. Instead, they are loyal to only their Novarium.

Tavaria are assigned to a fellow knight for tutelage when they reach physical maturity and leave their birth home permanently to serve as a squire to their knight. This results in extensive travel and Tavaria are renowned for their worldly experience.

## Weapon Training:

- Longsword
- Spear
- Club
- Bows
- Dagger
- Hand Axe

**Starting Gold:** 4d10

**Attribute Bonus:** +2 to *Fitness*

## The Gift of Light:

All human females have the Gift of Light, granting them the ability to cast spells. Tavaria are the same as any other woman in this respect.

## Well-Travelled:

Tavaria travel extensively as a result of their social station and can learn an additional spoken language for free. They are assumed to be familiar with the etiquette and customs of any region to which you travel, unless the Architect specifically indicates that an area is isolated.

## Enforcer of the Light:

Tavaria take the *Path of Light* extremely seriously, believing it to be the bedrock of social order. Unlike other characters who might note the failings of others silently, Tavaria are quick to point out when the Path has been broken and encourage the offender to make amends. This can make them something of a pariah in certain circles.

## Aggressive Parry:

Any character can stop an opponent's weapon from hitting them by placing their weapon in the way, however doing so may cause the abandonment of their own combat action. A Tavaria can *parry* a single attack each round without giving up their own action. They can also parry after having made their own attack earlier in the round.

For example, in a battle with two Gremlins, a Tavaria could attack one of the Gremlins as a normal part of combat and then be attacked later in the round by the other Gremlin. She could then parry this second attack. Alternatively, if one Gremlin attacked her early in the round, she could parry that attack and still make her own attack later.

## The Mark of Knighthood:

All Tavaria receive a set of chainmail and a longsword from their knight patron when they have completed their training as a squire. This is bestowed upon them in a public ceremony that affirms their oath of service to the *Path of Light* and the human community. These items are provided for free at character creation and do not have to be paid for out of starting gold. Tavaria often retain this armor long after they have acquired more powerful protection for the sentimental value it holds.



## Sculari

Sculari are talented male humans that have proven themselves and received significant training in martial combat. This training is far more comprehensive than any other identity. They are also physically more powerful than their female counterparts, but suffer social drawbacks as a result of their masculinity.

A human male is treated very poorly in human society. They do not enjoy the same legal rights as women and they are subjected to moderate discrimination. Many women believe that men are stupid, lazy, untrustworthy, promiscuous, and unable to act as responsible citizens. This colors their interaction with them.

Men are incapable of holding titles to property, thus prohibiting them from owning pretty much anything that they cannot carry or ride. A man's word is worth less in court than a woman's and therefore when they are victimized they have great difficulty seeking redress. Most women will not take a man's opinion seriously on almost any subject matter unless the man has a clear unambiguous claim to expertise.



A Sculari is typically in a position of minor subordination within the party, either by serving under a Novaria or simply due to a culturally conditioned reluctance to be assertive.

### Weapon Training:

- All Melee Weapons

**Starting Gold:** 3d8

**Attribute Bonus:** +2 to *Agility*

### Aggressive Block:

Any character can stop an opponent's weapon from hitting them by placing their shield in the way or enjoy the passive damage reduction afforded by a shield. However, a Sculari can **block** a single attack each round without giving up their own action. This is adjudicated as if they were performing a block action.

For example, in a battle with two Ogres, a Sculari could attack one of the Ogres as a normal part of combat and then be attacked later in the round by the other Ogre. He could then block this second attack, making an *agility* roll to move their shield into place, and thereby negate that attack completely. This is a powerful advantage in combat and gives the Sculari a strong edge in small unit engagements.

### Combat Styles:

Sculari have access to specialized combat styles to assist them in melee combat. Each style reflects the emphasis of one type of fighting maneuver at the expense of another.

When created, a Sculari can choose two combat styles. You can name them whatever you wish and you can choose two combat statistics to modify from the following list: *damage*, *armor*, and *to hit*. One of the statistics is raised by an amount equal to twice your *character level*, the other is lowered by half that amount (rounded down). A Sculari learns a new style every level until they have every possible combination.

**Using a Style:** At the beginning of one of their actions in combat, a Sculari can activate a style (if none are active) or switch to a new style. The statistical changes go into effect as soon as the change is declared, affecting rolls made for the action(s) taken that turn. You can name your styles however you desire.

For example, a 2nd level Sculari who is using *Angry Bear* style might get a +4 bonus to all damage dealt but suffer a -2 penalty to armor. Alternatively, they might use *Striking Falcon* style to gain a +4 bonus to hit and suffering a -2 penalty to damage.

## Rendari

Rendari are talented male humans that have specialized non-combat abilities. This makes them valuable resources to other characters. They have unmatched utility in solving problems, but suffer social drawbacks as a result of their gender.

A human male is treated very poorly in human society. They do not enjoy the same legal rights as women and they are subjected to moderate discrimination. Many women believe that men are stupid, lazy, untrustworthy, promiscuous, and unable to act as responsible citizens. This colors their interaction with them.

Men are incapable of holding titles to property, thus prohibiting them from owning pretty much anything that they cannot carry or ride. A man's word is worth less in court than a woman's and therefore when they are victimized they have great difficulty seeking redress. Most women will not take a man's opinion seriously on almost any subject matter unless the man has a clear unambiguous claim to expertise.

A Rendari is typically in a position of minor subordination within the party, either by serving under a Novaria or simply due to a culturally conditioned reluctance to be assertive.

### Weapon Training:

- Club
- Dagger
- Hand Axe

**Starting Gold:** 3d6

**Attribute Bonus:** +2 to *Knowledge*

### Bonus Traits:

A Rendari has spent most of his time cultivating unique skills that are extraordinarily useful and often illicit in nature. They can take two additional *traits* during character creation to reflect this, so long as the traits are not directly related to combat or weapons skills. The choice of traits is yours, but you might want to talk with other players and see what kind of special skills might be useful to have before you choose.

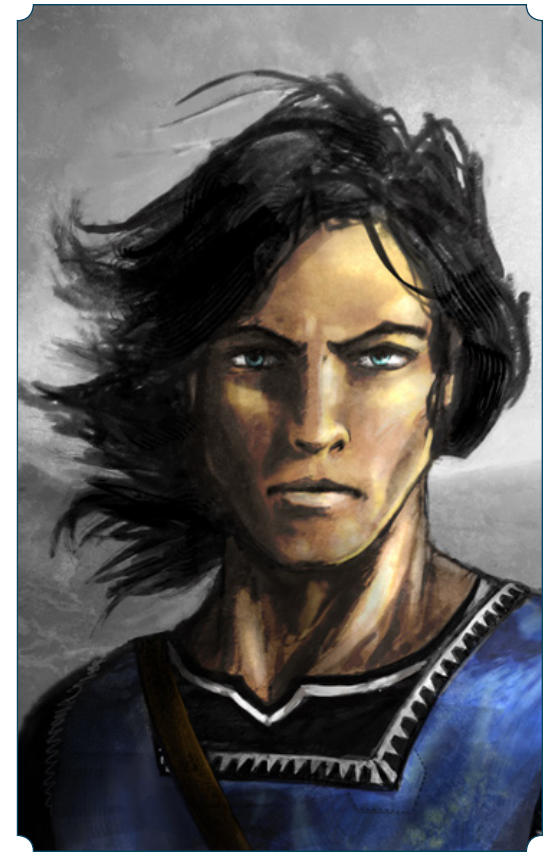
### Mechanical Aptitude:

A Rendari has enormous talent for performing precision work with their hands, particularly on small machines or devices. Such work is undervalued by women due to the prevalence of magic, but highly valued in the male community.

They gain a +5 bonus to any attempts to arm or disarm *traps* intended to be sprung on people or animals entering an area or using an object (such as a door). They also gain a +3 bonus on any roll or save that involves interaction with a machine, automaton, or other complex technological device that is not a trap.

### Streetwise:

Rendari have an uncanny ability to know where illicit activity is going down and how to take part in it. They automatically succeed on any *Magnetism* rolls or saves made to talk to someone about illicit activity. This could be asking questions around town to determine who might be the local crime boss or sweet talking your way into a criminal establishment to engage in some illegal entertainment like gambling or prize fighting. A Rendari knows how to talk in a way that doesn't startle or alarm people who are trying to keep their affairs secret.



# Elves

Several centuries ago, an Elven elder named Wodonaz made a pact with a demon in an attempt to gain immortality for his people. The demon granted his demands by inflicting a curse upon Elves that required regular consumption of magical *essence*. So long as they consumed essence regularly, their bodies would stay vibrant and young. However, if they failed to do so, they would wither and die.

The Elves were an ancient race that used to have a flourishing civilization with advanced technology, a robust culture and strong physical form. Then the curse spread throughout Elven society like a virus and persists today. There were too many Elves and far too little essence to sustain them. Unable to satisfy the demon's bargain, Elves perished by the thousands. The few that remain have wronged so many while trying to acquire essence that Elves have reputations as thieves and ne'er-do-wells. People are skeptical of them and keep an eye on their valuables when an Elf is nearby.



## Weapon Training:

- Dagger
- Shortsword
- Rapier
- Club
- Quarterstaff
- Spear

**Starting Gold:** 4d10

**Attribute Bonus:** +2 to *Magnetism*

## The All-Seeing Eye:

Elves can detect the magical *eminence* radiating off of a *font*. It appears to be a soft blue fog that hangs in the air. It can be very dense around *saturated* fonts. Elves are completely immune to the illusory effect of the eminence as well and do not have to make a *perception* save to resist it.

## Mind Reading:

Elves can open their minds to the internal monologues of other individuals. This functions similar to reading someone's thoughts magically. However, for every one minute of contact, the Elf will be lost in thought for ten minutes after the reading.

## Hallucinations:

Elves experience powerful hallucinations and visions, with a few days between occurrences. These events have a 1 in 6 chance of occurring while the Elf is awake, otherwise it happens while they are sleeping. Sometimes these are manifestations of their own minds, sometimes they channel the minds of nearby individuals, sometimes they are divine/demonic in origin. The Elf has a difficult time distinguishing these visions from real life. Elves are enigmatic Cassandra's that issue vague warnings that tend to come true, but are often not understood.

## Shadow Life:

The Elvish curse makes Elves appear to be undead to other undead creatures. As a result, they function as if invisible to undead for all intents and purposes. For magical purposes, they are treated as undead and not living beings. This means that most spells based on the *Life* materia do not affect Elves.

## Consumption:

The Elvish curse demands the consumption of one essence point per season. It is for this reason that Elves often choose to throw their lot in with the *Novaria*. A steady supply of essence is an Elf's dream existence. However, no Elf is guaranteed a free lunch. They must legitimately acquire the essence they consume, just like anyone else.

# Dwarves

Several millennia ago, Dwarven civilization was the height of their technological prowess, a culture with extensive innovation including steam power. Then they developed a method of replacing their blood with a thick sap-like alchemical substance called Aguloin. This granted them a number of advantages. An unexpected side effect was that over time, it stripped them of their ambitions and drive to succeed. They became a shadow of their formerly active selves. Reproduction rates plummeted, innovation ceased, and a lack of passion caused society to disintegrate. Further, it was discovered that babies born to mothers with Aguloin blood had subtle defects in their physiology that did not emerge until they reached puberty. Dwarves that exist today have been genetically scarred by this effect.

Dwarves retain a number of cultural mannerisms that are off-putting to most humans. They are largely non-superstitious, believing that anything in the world can be explained with adequate study. They have no problem with examining dead bodies or the wounded in order to figure out how the body works. This is disturbing to Humans and Dwarves suffer from social prejudice as a consequence. Due to this inability to fit in, they often find themselves in the company of elite nobility that are willing to ignore these foibles or as members of a Novarium where they can find equitable treatment.



## Weapon Training:

- Battleaxe
- Warhammer
- Morningstar
- Mace
- Dagger

**Starting Gold:** 4d10

**Attribute Bonus:** +2 to *Perception*

## Thick Blood:

Even though Aguloin use has now been abandoned, Dwarvish blood is still thicker than a normal human's (or an ancient Dwarf's, for that matter). It clots easily and this can form terminal clots in the heart once a Dwarf reaches their thirties. Almost all Dwarves that exist today are very young (average age in the early 20s). They are energetic and bold, seeking to build a reputation quickly and leverage that into a family so that they might leave a legacy. They are also very lusty and flirtatious.

A Dwarf *bleeds* more slowly due to their thick blood, taking only 1 point of *fitness* damage every 30 minutes instead of 15. They also have a total immunity to intoxication from alcohol. They can also hold their breath for twice the standard duration and drugs/toxins have twice the standard duration of effect on a Dwarf (for good or ill). However, Dwarves gain 3 age points for each failed *aging* roll, instead of only 1.

Dwarven blood also grants them an extraordinary resistance to cold. They take one-fourth damage from cold (magic or otherwise) and they can stay in cold environments with very little hardship. A Dwarf can operate normally in light clothing all the way down to a few degrees below zero. In heavy clothing, they can operate normally in almost any environment regardless of temperature. They are immune to frostbite as well, unless suffering from magical cold damage.

## Surgeon:

Dwarves can apply simple bandages, create and attach splints, carry wounded individuals, and provide bedside care to the afflicted without a roll. Furthermore, they can engage in a wide range of advanced actions like accurately cutting through tissue with a blade, removing objects thrust into the body (such as arrowhead shards), moving body parts back into the correct place to maximize healing, and closing the body back up after it has been cut open (either by the surgeon or a wound).

Once the work is finished, make a *perception* roll at a +3 bonus to see how well you performed your duties. This results in attribute healing based on the Architect's judgment. However, a successful roll generally heals 1 or 2 attribute points. You can retry a failed roll the next day.

# Halflings

Halflings are a relatively new race, believed to have emerged from a hunter-gatherer existence at about the same time as Humans. They have a number of quirks that make developing civilization much harder for them, so they still live in relatively isolated communities or as a part of Human society. Halflings are very short, only about three feet tall, and covered in thick body hair in many areas.

## Weapon Training:

- Dagger
- Shortsword
- Club
- Spear

**Starting Gold:** 2d10

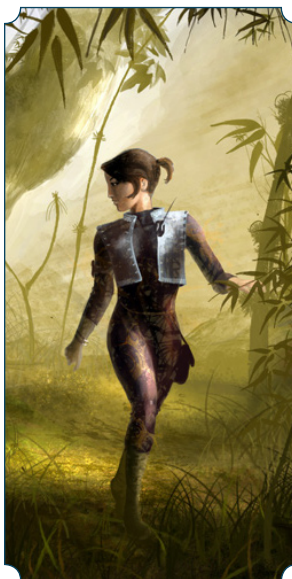
## External Dialogue:

Halflings are essentially incapable of internal dialogue. They are extremely impulsive and blurt out what they are feeling on an almost constant basis. A Halfling that attempts to deceive someone in any way has a 50% chance of failure due to blurting out something that undermines the deception. Halflings also talk in their sleep, extensively...

The Halfling player is strongly encouraged to not have any kind of backstage conversation and always talk in-character at the table.

## Perfect Memory:

Halflings have near perfect memories. Any time the Architect introduces information that would trigger a memory, they must alert the Halfling, who will then promptly blurt out the information to everyone else due to their external dialogue. For example, some people in a town might mention someone named Aramon living in another town who is really annoying. When they go to the next town, the Halfling is introduced to Aramon and promptly says, "hey, this the guy that they said was really annoying!"



## Diggers:

Halflings are excellent diggers, capable of digging at four times the normal rate. They feel at home in the earth and never suffer from claustrophobia. For centuries, they didn't even build homes they just dug small tunnels into the ground and slept in them. While travelling, this remains the preferred sleeping accommodations for the halfling. Prior to their using ponies for the job, Halfling farmers plowed their fields by hand. Halflings are often able to bypass hazards or obstructions by digging under or around them.

As a result of all this digging, they are nearly constantly dirty. The social ramifications of this are limited only to offending members of high society and people who are obsessively clean. Despite all this digging, Halflings are not very adept at stone work because most of their structures are temporary in nature and rarely made with stone.

## Healing Touch:

Azakriel also gave the Halflings a divine gift when he came to Earth. This gift created an innate connection to the sun and the healing energy of the heavenly realm. Every morning, if the Halfling prays while in the direct light of the dawn, they gain a healing blessing.

If expended before sunset, the blessing can heal a number of points of attribute damage equal to three times their *character level* (this will stop bleeding as well). After sunset, it fades to merely providing an amount of healing equal to their character level. At the next dawn, it fades away completely. Of course, it can be regained again if you perform the prayer.

## Gift of Gab:

Halflings have a natural talent for language and can learn two additional *spoken languages* for free. However, they have no form of written language, nor can they learn one using the *Literate* trait. They literally do not have the ability to really even understand what a written language is, aside from being symbols that hold special value to other races. Every Halfling community has its own spoken and Halflings use other spoken languages extensively.

# Traits

Every character can choose four Traits. They represent aspects of your personality, as well as the unique abilities and special talents that your character possesses. Each trait has a simple and straightforward effect.

Acrobatic	Escape Artist	Mimicry
Acumen	Fast Metabolism	Mule
Animal Friend	Faster Recovery	Naturalist
Artisan	Favored Enemy	Negotiator
Brute	Fearless	Obtuse
Catcher	Forger	Ordained
Catfall	Gambler	Orienteer
Cautious	Heir	Pathfinder
Climber	Heraldric	Pious
Clarity	Imposing	Quick
Common Sense	Innocent Face	Quick Draw
Cunning	Infernalist	Rage
Debonair	Intimate	Renowned
Delinquent	Investigator	Sailor
Digger	Jumper	Slippery
Disguise	Lawgiver	Snatcher
Drinker	Leader	Theologian
Dual-Wield	Light Sleeper	Thief
Duelist	Light Step	Tongues
Eidetic	Lip Reading	Undertaker
Elegant	Literacy	Weapon Training
Engineer	Literati	Wrestler
Equestrian	Lucky	Youthful

## Acrobatic:

You can perform amazing feats of balance where others would fall. You can usually walk across narrow beams, tightropes, ice slicks, and surfaces covered with liquid without falling. In most cases, you automatically keep your balance on these kinds of surfaces. However, truly extreme situations such as an oil covered log over a pit of flames may still result in a save, subject to Architect judgment.

## Acumen

You have the skills to manage a household, estate, farm, business, or similar endeavor. This is very important for long term wealth management and actual governance of territory, should you ever gain noble title. Any rolls or saves made in relation to territorial or wealth management gain a +5 bonus.

## Animal Friend:

You are received well by animals. Normal animals do not react negatively to your presence, though if you are overly threatening they may run away. This protection does not extend to anyone traveling with you. Any rolls or saves to control a normal animal for work or as a mount are done at a +3 modifier. Supernaturally large or aggressive animals are considered monsters and are unaffected.

## Artisan

An artisan is someone who creates things with their hands. This is actually a number of related traits with the same concept. You must specify a specialization when you choose this trait. For example, you can take Artisan - Blacksmith or Artisan - Seamstress. When engaging in the craft selected, you benefit from a +5 bonus. When engaging in a related field (requires Architect approval), you benefit from a +2 bonus. You may take this trait multiple times for different specializations.

## Brute:

You always seem to hit harder than most people. Add +1 to all damage rolls using melee weapons.

### Catcher:

You have a knack for catching flying objects. You automatically catch anything intentionally thrown to you. You also have a 50% chance of catching anything thrown within reach of you. This ability does not cover things thrown at you or someone near you. You cannot catch flying daggers or arrows.

### Catfall:

You have a knack for landing on your feet. You take half damage from all falls. If you fall over 250 feet, you are still doomed.

### Cautious:

You have a cautious way about you. Whenever the Architect calls for a save to see if you set off a trap, roll twice. If you succeed on either save, the trap doesn't go off.

### Climber:

You are an adept climber. You can attempt to climb surfaces that most people would simply write off as too difficult, such as a sheer rock face. You make all rolls and saves involving climbing with a +3 bonus.

### Clarity:

You have a powerful intuition that allows you to see through some of the distortions caused by a *font's eminence*. You still need to make *perception* saves to move through an area covered by eminence, however you will make them with a +5 bonus. The bolstering effect that the eminence has on spellcasting still affects you normally. *Elves* cannot take this trait, since they already have a similar ability by virtue of their identity.

### Common Sense:

You just know the right thing to do. If you commit a social faux pas by saying something that is socially awkward or inappropriate, the Architect can allow you a *magnetism* roll to see if you can take back what you said and replace it with an alternative statement. However, abuse of this ability should eventually have consequences...

### Cunning

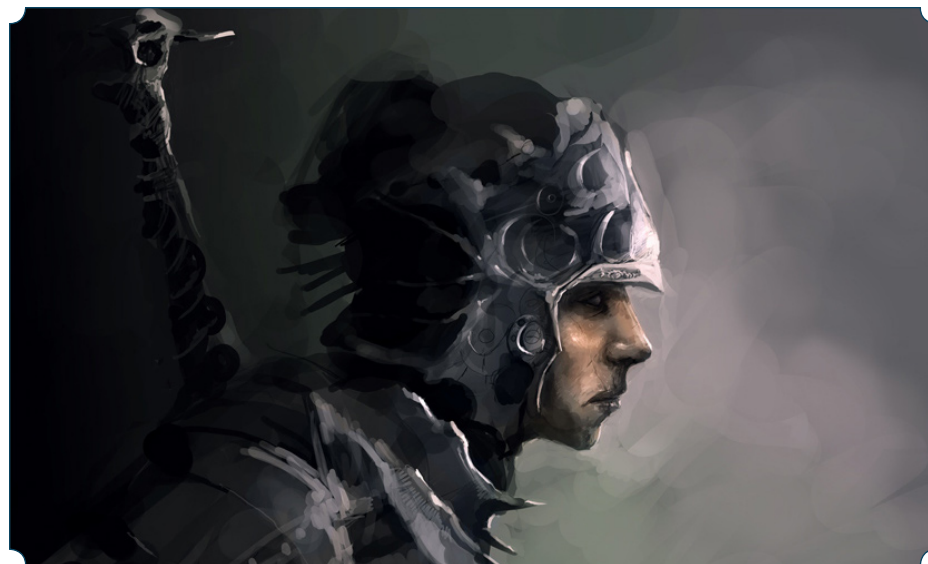
You are a master of lies. You gain a +3 bonus to any roll or save with the intention of deceiving someone. This covers lies of omission, commission, and half-truths. It also covers long-term deceit with the intent to undermine someone's reputation, such as through courtly intrigue or cleverly falsified evidence.

### Debonair:

You have a certain swagger in the presence of young people. There is just some kind of special romantic air about you. They want to be around you whenever possible and will sometimes foolishly follow you just to see what you are doing. Any *magnetism* roll or save against a young person gains a +3 bonus.

### Delinquent

You are adept at interacting socially with the criminal class. You can almost always find a fence for stolen goods, access black market merchants, or find any similarly illicit contacts. You are a master of etiquette, tact, dress, and paying proper respect to individuals that deserve it within this community.



### Digger:

You have a special bond with the earth. You love to get dirty, either in a garden or digging underground. You can dig through loose dirt and rock at a rate equal to your *fitness* (instead of the normal half fitness) in cubic feet per hour of work. Heavier materials with stones or metals will take more time to dig through, but you still dig at double the rate of a normal person. *Halflings* cannot take this trait, since they already have a similar ability by virtue of their identity.

### Disguise:

You have a knack for changing your appearance. With access to adequate materials, you can change your appearance so thoroughly that those looking upon you do not even get a roll to notice your ruse. With improvised materials or when under time pressure, you still get a +3 bonus to any attempts to disguise yourself.

### Drinker:

You have a way of keeping your wits despite consuming large quantities of alcohol. If there is a rumor to be learned in a social gathering where alcohol is being consumed, you will hear it.

### Dual-Wield:

You can use two weapons simultaneously in combat, provided each weapon can be used in one hand. This does not give you two attacks, but makes you more likely to land a blow. You gain a +3 bonus *to hit* and if you hit you roll *damage* for both weapons. However, you deal 2 less damage total because you are slightly off balance when swinging your weapons in tandem.

### Duelist:

You are an expert swordsman. When using a longsword or rapier, you get +3 to your *parry* attempts. You also can fight in light armor and gain +3 to your *armor* result if you are using a shield.

### Eidetic:

You have a perfect photographic memory. You can ask the Architect for any information they have previously told you and you will get a reliable answer. *Halflings* cannot take this trait, since they already have a similar ability by virtue of their identity.

### Elegance:

You are well received in the world of the nobility. Any attempt to interact socially with nobility and/or royalty enjoys a +3 bonus. This covers matters of etiquette, tact, dress, and paying proper respect to individuals that deserve it within this community.

### Engineering:

You are trained in construction and design. You gain a +5 bonus to any attempt to construct or modify a large structure. This covers aspects of masonry, carpentry, architectural design, and defensive strength. You can build a house, palisade, siege tower, bridge, fort, castle, or even underground complexes. Such actions are performed over an extended period of time with occasional checks to make sure you are on the right track. The Architect always makes these rolls in secret and you must determine the quality of the structure yourself.



### **Equestrian:**

You are at home on horseback. You are able to perfectly control your mount in virtually all non-combat situations. Even when required to make rolls or saves, such as guiding a mount in combat or engaging in complex and dangerous maneuvers like jumping over a pit of lava while being chased by a horde of orcs, you do so at a +5 bonus.

### **Escape Artist:**

Ropes and chains cannot hold you down. You can make an *agility* roll every 15 minutes to escape from bonds of any kind. The Architect may impose a penalty for really good bonds.

### **Faster Metabolism:**

Your body processes occur at a much faster rate compared to others. All time units that affect toxins and drugs are halved. They gestate faster and they do not last as long. *Dwarves* cannot take this Trait, due to their blood curse.

### **Faster Recovery:**

Your body is able to mend itself faster than most. You heal double your roll to heal through inactivity for a season, instead of just the normal die result value.

### **Favored Enemy:**

You have a lot of experience fighting a certain type of creature. You get +2 *to hit* and +2 to *damage* against one race, species, or monster type of your choice. Examples include Orcs, Goblins, Giants, Dragons, Elementals, Golems, Elves, Dwarves, etc. You may take this trait multiple times for different specializations.

### **Forger:**

You have a talent for duplication. You can perfectly reproduce any written document if you have an original copy, even if you don't know the language.

### **Gambler:**

You have a gift for games of chance. Any time you gamble, you come out ahead in the end. Be careful though, sore losers may accuse you of cheating and make claims against your honor.

### **Heir:**

You have just benefited from a sudden financial windfall due to the death of a relative. It played a large role in your decision to go adventuring. You inherit 10d10 x 10 gold.

### **Heraldric:**

You automatically know the meaning of heraldic symbols from your home region. When traveling, you pick up the differences quickly and keep track of what is being used by each noble house. When identifying heraldry you have never seen before, you get a +3 bonus.

### **Imposing:**

You are over six feet tall. You gain +1 to any social roll or save where you would benefit from intimidating your conversation partner with your physique. This also includes attempts at seduction. You cannot take this trait if you have a *fitness* less than 13.

### **Innocent Face:**

You have cultivated a look of innocence. When suspicion exists, you are overlooked. When evidence surfaces, it is mistrusted. You must be caught red-handed to even be a suspect.

### **Infernalist:**

You have extensive knowledge about the infernal forces of **devils** and **demons**. This information can be very important in your efforts to defeat evil. You gain a +5 bonus to **knowledge** rolls and saves to determine if you know information about a particular demon, devil, or some aspect of evil magic.

### **Intimate**

You are able to more easily form deep personal connections with others. You can form strong relationships very quickly, whether they are friendships, love affairs, or even political alliances. Any attempt to leverage such a relationship to your benefit gains a +3 bonus.

### **Investigator:**

You have a talent for getting information out of people and solving mysteries. You gain a +3 to any attempts to determine the facts of a situation based on evidence presented or through the use of probing questions. The most common such use is in discerning truth from falsehood. However, it can also be used to assist in making difficult decisions such as choosing between several horses for purchase, interpreting a letter written with innuendo and hidden meaning, or determining the quality of a structure or item.

### **Jumper:**

You can jump farther and higher than a normal person. For most jumps, you automatically succeed. Whenever the Architect forces a roll to see if you leap a certain distance, you get a +3 bonus.



### **Lawgiver:**

You have a natural air of authority. In a chaotic town hall meeting, people look to you for guidance. Your word can stop a vigilante in their tracks. Even legal officials occasionally seek your guidance in difficult situations. You gain a +5 bonus to any attempt to convince a group of people to follow your suggested course of action.

### **Leader:**

You have a tactical ability in small unit combat. If everyone on your side of a conflict acknowledges your leadership, they gain +1 **to hit** in combat. You must be able to give orders in order to have this effect (e.g. you cannot be magically silenced or gagged).

### **Light Sleeper:**

You only need 4 hours of sleep each night to feel rested instead of the usual 6 hours. You always wake up immediately if there is an audible disturbance or if you are touched in any way.

### **Light Step:**

You walk softly. Anyone trying to hear you suffers a -2 penalty. You also do not leave tracks when you walk in the wilderness. Anyone attempting to track you automatically fails.

### **Lip Reading:**

You can try to read someone's lips if you cannot hear what they are saying. The Architect will roll dice in secret to determine what you think you see them say. You have a 40% chance of getting a good idea of what is being said, a 40% chance of being unable to glean any useful information, and a 20% chance of completely misunderstanding what they are saying.

### **Literacy:**

You are able to read and write in a single written language of your choice, except Solari. **Novaria** cannot take this trait because they are already literate as a result of their training.

### Literati:

You are an exceptional writer. Any *studies* that you write take one less season than normal to compose. Any *tracts* that you write can be used to compose *scrolls* without giving the reader an extra difficulty die to roll as a consequence. You must already be *literate* to take this trait. This gives no benefit whatsoever when copying a book.

### Lucky:

You have a knack for finding hidden treasures. Any time the Architect rolls to see if anyone finds such things, you roll twice.

### Mimicry:

You can imitate the voices of other people. This can extend to other races if they are close to your vocal pattern. For example, a Human could mimic an Elf or possibly an Orc, but not a Dragon. Anyone who is very familiar with the person you are imitating can make a *perception* save to detect your ruse. *Dwarves* gain a +2 bonus against you when you attempt to use this trait.

### Mule:

You can carry more weight than an average person. You can carry up to six times your *fitness* before becoming immobilized and you can carry three times your *fitness* comfortably.



### Naturalist:

You have extensive knowledge of the uses of plants and animal products. You are a master of activities like hunting, gathering, constructing simple shelters, skinning animals, and so on. You know helpful information such as which parts of a fruit to avoid so that you don't get sick or how to extract a poison from the venom sacs of a snake. You roll two extra dice when *searching for food or water*.

### Negotiator:

You have a talent for negotiating with strangers in strange places. If you are in front of the party and able to speak to those encountered, subtract 1 from any result you have on the *intentions* table when starting an encounter.

### Obtuse:

You are unable to pick up on the majority of indicative body language and social cues. As a result, you can rarely tell when someone is offended or upset by something you have said unless they react in a way that cannot be misinterpreted (e.g. punch you). Every failed social roll or save appears *to you* to have only slightly failed. People eventually conclude that you completely lack tact and social grace. However, you never lose *willpower* from failing a social roll.

### Ordained:

You are an ordained minister of the church. This grants you slight reprieve from the law in certain circumstances as well as the benefit of the doubt in conversations with authority figures. However, anyone opposed to the church would transfer their opposition to you as well and you may be called upon to occasionally perform public service.

### Orienteer:

You are an expert at land navigation. When moving in territory familiar to you, you never have to make *perception* rolls or saves to stay on track. In unfamiliar terrain, you gain a +5 bonus to such activities.

### Pathfinder:

You have a talent for finding the best way through an unknown area. Every time you move through a sizeable geographic area, you can make a **perception** roll to find a natural game trail or path to follow through it. If successful, you can locate this path on a future journey to pass through without another roll.

### Pious:

You have a deep and unabiding religious faith. This grants you a +1 bonus on any save to resist the magic of **demonic** forces and reduces all **damage** from demons by 1, regardless of whether it is magical or physical in nature.

### Quick:

You can move around faster than most. You can take a **move and attack** or **move** combat action and move twice as far as someone with your **agility**. This does not remove the **to hit** penalty of the **move and attack** or improve your **armor** bonus while doing a **move**.

### Quick Draw:

You can draw a weapon with incredible speed. You can take a **draw and attack** combat action without the normal penalty **to hit**.

### Rage:

You are hot-headed with a loose temper. You tend to lose control of yourself when discussions get heated. However, you do not have to make **morale saves** when damaged in combat.

### Renown:

You are well known to the common folk for past deeds. You must craft a story for what exactly happened to you. You gain a +1 bonus to all social interactions with someone who is aware of your reputation. However, you suffer a -2 penalty to any attempt to conceal your identity, whether through disguise or some other kind of subterfuge.

### Sailor

You are a master of all possible activity aboard a naval vessel of any size, from a lowly rowboat to a mighty galley. When navigating at sea, you gain a +5 bonus to **perception** rolls or saves to stay on track. When engaging in naval combat or risky operations, you gain a +3 bonus. Standard naval operations can be conducted without a roll or save.



### Slippery:

You are adept at concealing yourself in strange places. In mere seconds, you can stuff yourself into barrels, pipes, chests, closets, and underneath beds. Unless your pursuers are truly dedicated, they are unlikely to look in the kind of places you pick.

### Snatcher:

You are adept at knocking an enemy's weapon from their hand during combat. You can make a *parry* against someone within reach, even if they are not attacking you. If they are not attacking you, they can make an *attack* roll, but only for purposes of adjudicating the parry (i.e. it does not strike anyone). If successful, you knock their weapon out of their hand and onto the ground nearby. Any time you successfully parry with a margin of success of 5 or more while having a free hand, you grab the weapon for yourself.

### Theologian

You have extensive knowledge of the Book of Azakriel and the revealed information about the Three Realms. This information can be very important in your efforts to defeat evil. You gain a +5 bonus to *knowledge* rolls and saves to determine if you know information about a particular angel, divine magic, or even God herself.



### Thief

You have spent a lot of time on the wrong side of the law. You gain a +3 bonus to any attempt to steal or cheat by virtue of superior manual dexterity, such as palming a coin when no one is looking, concealing a playing card in your sleeve, or even picking locks.

### Tongues:

You are able to take an extra spoken *language*.

### Undertaker

You have been exposed to the dead on such a scale that it no longer bothers you. Perhaps you were an actual undertaker, served in a bloody war and saw a lot of wounded, or maybe you are the one doing most of the killing. Regardless, you are never shocked or frightened by the dead, undead, or even shaken very much by threats on your own life. You have seen the abyss beyond and it no longer scares you.

### Weapon Training:

You have learned how to use a certain weapon in combat. This can even be with weapons that no *identity* has training in, such as crossbows. You can also use this to learn how to use a normal weapon as a thrown weapon, such as throwing daggers or axes. You can throw a weapon a number of feet equal to your *fitness*. You can take this trait multiple times, each time for a different weapon.

### Wrestler:

You are experienced at grappling combat. Add +3 to all rolls made while *grappling*.

### Youthful:

You maintain your youthful vigor longer than the average person. You automatically succeed on your first *aging* roll. You also get a +2 bonus to every subsequent one.

# Languages

Every character begins play with the ability to speak at least one language. The exact number known varies based on your *knowledge*. Due to the primitive education systems of the time period, all characters are functionally illiterate except *Novaria*. Characters can become literate by taking it as a *trait*, but that is unusual in the population at large.

Someone who is illiterate may still be able to understand signs and the meaning of some symbols. They may even be able to recognize a few words such as the name of their King, religious terms, or their family surname. However, they cannot read or write a letter, nor can they understand a church liturgy given in Solari. Higher education is also unavailable to them and they cannot seek many civil appointments.

## Spoken Languages

A character begins play knowing the spoken language of their home region. Unless the Architect provides strong guidelines for this, you are free to create a name and brief description of your home region. Perhaps you are from Aernik, the barbarian lands of the frozen north. Since Novarium is designed to be played within an area called a *Mark*, there is little danger of your choice undermining the Architect's work.

Groups of spoken languages are clustered under a common parent language. If you know the parent, you may be able to understand a portion of what is being spoken in each language in that group. When you take a spoken language, you must also select/create a parent group. You may take multiple languages that fall under the same parent. In fact, it is more realistic if you do so. If you are choosing a language that is provided in the setting material by the Architect, the parent group will be specified already and you can just take note of it.

You are strongly encouraged to collude with other players when creating these languages, so that several characters may share the same parent language while having their own vernacular beneath it. Maybe a few characters share the same home region and this serves as a strong bond between them.

## Written Languages

Some languages that were used extensively in the past now only exist in fractured remnants. Dwarves and Elves used to have their own languages, now lost to time as their people have been scattered and settled in human territories. Goblins and Orcs are the descendants of civilized cultures that existed before the Dwarves and Elves. A vast richness of ancient history exists in Vaena and artifacts may still remain. For the most part, Novaria are the only kind of characters capable of reading anything written in these kind of languages. While literacy used to be common in the ancient empires, it has largely become a lost art known only to an elite few and this makes such knowledge very valuable.

In addition to their normal language allotment, a Novaria begins play with the ability to read, write, and speak in the angelic language Solari. This was the language taught by Azakriel. For the most part, this language is not used for conversational purposes, but instead for written and religious oration. It is the written language for humanity.

Elvish
Dwarven
Goblin
Orc
Giant
Infernal
Draconic
Sylvan
Elemental

Knowledge	Starting Languages
3 - 12	1 spoken language
13	2 spoken languages
14	2 spoken languages, 1 written language
15	3 spoken languages, 1 written language
16	3 spoken languages, 2 written languages
17	4 spoken languages, 2 written languages
18	4 spoken languages, 3 written languages

*Note that only Novaria will gain the written languages noted in this chart. All other identities gain only their spoken language allotment.*

## The Importance of Language

The world is currently in a dark age of incredible proportions. The civilization that remains is fractured and divided by rough terrain, monstrous dangers, and the forces of evil. It is highly likely that you will encounter people with whom you share little in common and who have a very low level of trust. Being able to communicate with fearful and paranoid people can be essential.

## The Importance of Literacy

In the past several hundred years, both the Elvish and Dwarven empires have disintegrated. This has left behind vast ruins and large quantities of documents that may contain magical or technological value. Such items are useless without the language skills to understand them. Further, writing is the gateway to vast stores of information that have been saved, as well as conducting any form of *magical research* or writing magic scrolls.



## Solari

Solari is the celestial language taught to humanity by Azakriel during the composition of his book in anticipation of the Gift of Light. Many words are only understandable to someone capable of magic, as they refer to emotions and sensations created by magic. Since the language is primarily used to discuss magical concepts or to write out magical spells on *scrolls*, almost everything written in Solari is incomprehensible to anyone that is not a human female; including all demi-human races and the male half of the human race.

Solari makes the extensive study of magic that has occurred in the centuries following Azakriel's death possible. The *Order of Novus* has compiled huge libraries of texts on magical theory, practice, and speculation. Solari allows a Novaria to write a magical spell down on a scroll for use later without risk of failure (although without the speed of improvisational casting).

Older magical texts found in the world are unlikely to be written in Solari because of its relatively recent appearance. However, before they were cursed the Elves kept extensive libraries of magical texts that may be of value to a Novaria, if they can read Elvish.

While Solari can be spoken it is not common practise. Occasionally the Novaria will use to hold privet conversations in public place or when speaking to Angels. Angels materializing in the mortal realm are always fluent in Solari and is the primary language they use for communication. While they may speak other languages they do so to a limited extent.

Α Ζ Π Γ Ε Σ Η Τ Κ Δ Α  
Δ ρ Ξ Γ Σ Ζ Ξ Ψ Δ Τ

# Ambitions

Every character has two types of ambitions; major and minor. Ambitions represent what drives your character to take actions and should serve as a useful method for shaping development over time. They exist purely for your benefit as the player to provide a framework for you to express what your character wants out of life.

It is important to remember that ambitions should encourage the growth of the character, not restrict them. If you feel like you are being held back by your ambitions, *change them*.

## Major Ambitions

At character creation, you must specify the major ambition of the character. This represents an achievement which, if accomplished, would cause the character to *retire* from the adventuring life. You gain a +3 bonus to any roll undertaken with a clear and direct linkage to your major ambition.

For example, you might decide that it is your major ambition to acquire a castle overlooking a lake, all of which is contained within land that you hold rightful title to, so that you may pass that to your heirs. While money would ultimately assist in such a goal, any generic effort to acquire money would not get a +3 bonus. However, a negotiation with the Duchess to grant you a specific parcel of land overlooking a lake in exchange for returning her son unharmed, would qualify for the bonus.

The major ambition also shows the Architect what your character is generally concerned about doing with their life. They can make efforts to present opportunities to achieve those goals.

As a player, you should keep in mind that this is what your character is really interested in achieving. If the group is spending too much time on tasks that are not related to fulfilling this ambition, perhaps you should try to get the other characters to help achieve your own ambitions.



Major Ambition Examples	Minor Ambition Examples
Acquire a noble title	Befriend a particular noble
Find your true love	Form a romantic relationship
Rise to a political position	Bend the ear of a politician
Defeat an existential evil	Defeat a minor evil
Acquire a huge amount of money	Establish comfortable savings
Avenge a terrible wrong	Avenge a minor slight
Cleanse a region of monsters	Drive away minor monsters
Topple a powerful villain	Depose a minor villain
Establish a stronghold	Acquire a small property
Achieve quasi-deity power	Interact personally with God
Make a pilgrimage & return	Travel to an isolated shrine
Locate a powerful magic item	Find a minor magic item
Explore a large territory	Travel to a distant place

## Minor Ambitions

At any time during the course of play, you can create a minor ambition. This represents a short-term goal that occupies the character's immediate thoughts. When created, you must negotiate an *Experience Point* value with the Architect that will be given to the character if they achieve the ambition. This value should represent the relative difficulty of accomplishing the task. You can have up to three different minor ambitions at one time.

### Example Minor Ambition Negotiations

These are presented as guidelines to provide reasonable expectations for both the players and the Architect.

#### **Example 1:**

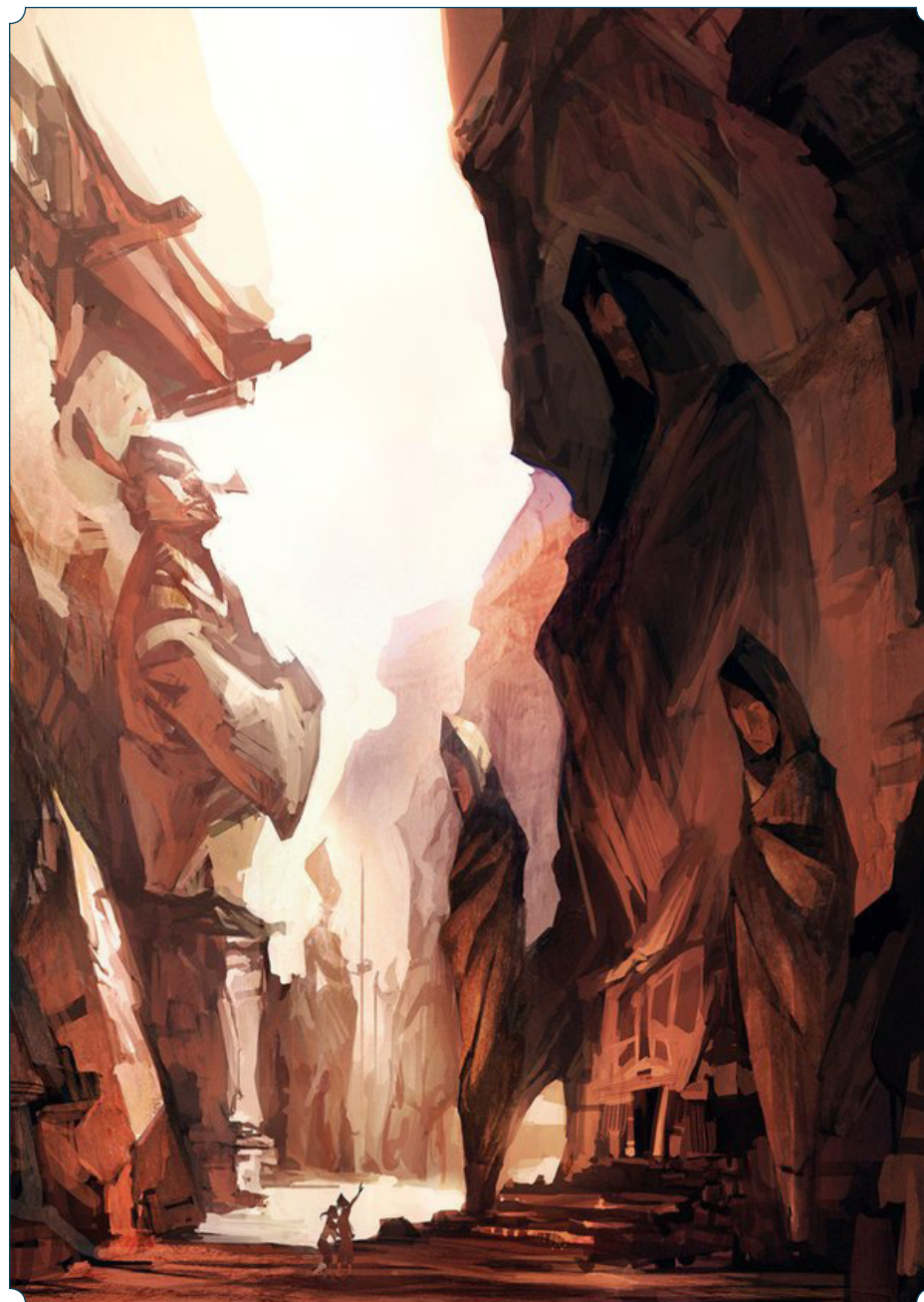
There is rumored to be a warlock that inhabits the forest along the ridge line. Townsfolk have claimed that he has made some pact with a *demon* for magical power and uses it to injure and maim hunters that venture too far into his territory. Exactly what other vile affairs he conducts within his sanctum are yet to be seen.

You tell the Architect that you wish to make defeating this warlock a minor ambition of yours. If defeated, you will be rewarded with 100 experience points. The Architect agrees, but offers to pay 250 instead as a wicked grin begins to stretch out across her face. This may be more than you bargained for...

#### **Example 2:**

A rival Novarium is suspected of stealing *essence* from your *fonts* while you were away adventuring. It is a risky political gamble to take them on, as they possess more resources than you and are well positioned within the church to defend themselves.

You tell the Architect you wish to take on the rival Novarium for the reward of 500 experience points if you can shame them in front of the order and perhaps get their title revoked. She agrees.



# Magic

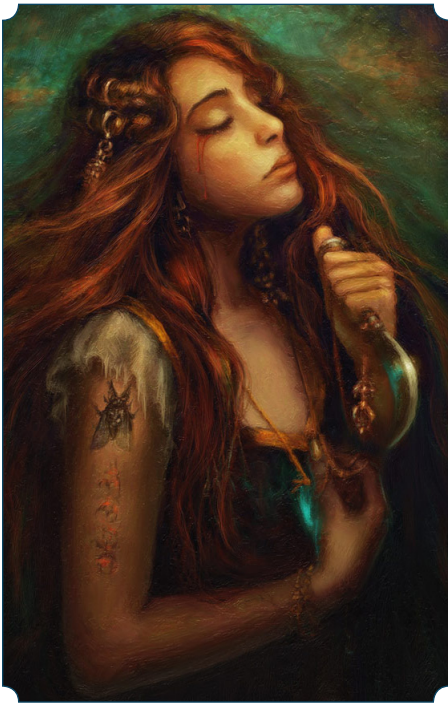
If your character is capable of casting magic, then they will have values in two elements which combine to make magic possible: Methods and Materia. Every kind of potential magic comes from the intersection of at least one element from each of these categories.

## Methods & Materia

Each method represents a way in which magic acts upon reality. If you are good in a particular method, it means that you are good at shaping reality in that way. It may be helpful to think of a method as a tool of sorts. No tool is necessarily better than the others, they serve different needs. For example, a hammer and a needle are both good at a particular kind of task, but not at a task for which they are not suited.

Each materia represents an aspect of the world which you are acting upon with your methods. When you combine a method with a materia, you can create a spell. For example, you might combine *negate* and *earth* to cause a wall to disintegrate. If you changed the method to *create*, you might be able to magically create a wall of stone out of thin air. Alternatively, if you changed the materia to *water*, you could cause a stream to dry up and disappear.

For more information on the nature of casting magic and the full details for each method and materia, consult the *Magic* chapter.



## Methods

<b>Control</b>	Controlling movement and trajectory
<b>Create</b>	Bringing something new into existence
<b>Imbue</b>	Enhancing something with a magical effect
<b>Negate</b>	Completely remove something from existence
<b>Protect</b>	Preventing things from injuring you or your allies
<b>Sense</b>	Detecting something that exists in the world
<b>Strike</b>	Causing damage to something with a materia
<b>Transform</b>	Changing the inherent nature of something

## Materia

<b>Air</b>	Weather Forces	<b>Life</b>	Animals & Plants
<b>Death</b>	Corpses & Souls	<b>Light</b>	Light & Dark
<b>Demon</b>	The Power of Evil	<b>Sound</b>	Hearing & Noise
<b>Earth</b>	Soil & Rock	<b>Thought</b>	The Mind
<b>Fire</b>	Flames & Lava	<b>Time</b>	The Flow of Time
<b>Holy</b>	The Power of Good	<b>Water</b>	Water & Ice

## Starting Values

Each method and materia has a numerical value with a similar range and mechanical function to an *attribute*. A normal woman has a starting value of 5 in every method and materia. They may choose two in which to be talented, raising those values to 9. A Novaria can choose five additional talents to represent their training, for a total of seven. She may also focus heavily on one particular type of magic if desired, selecting one method or materia twice and rising to a value of 13.

## Equipment

Every character begins play with an amount of gold pieces that may be used to purchase whatever equipment they are carrying around with them in the world. This value is determined by a number of dice based on *identity*. Roll the appropriate number of dice and multiply the result by 10 to get the total amount of gold to spend.

You can spend this money however you wish, using the *Equipment* chapter as a pricing guide, but it is likely to far exceed your needs. Most heavier armor is outside of your price range (except a *Tavarica*, of course) and your basic needs are fairly easy to provide. It may be useful to hold a significant percentage of your starting wealth in reserve, in case you need to put a plan in motion once the game begins and you need some money to grease the wheels.

The complete encumbrance rules are found in the *Mechanics* chapter. However, for simple assessment at this point in the character creation process, your character can comfortably carry twice their *fitness* score in pounds. So if you have a fitness of 10, you should not purchase more than 20 lbs of equipment unless you have some way to carry it around, like a mule or a cart (or both).


## Attachments

The group of all characters of all players is referred to as the *Novarium*. The Novarium is its own character, in a sense, as it represents the combined aspirations of the group. For more information on how the Novarium is formed and maintained, consult the *Campaign Management* chapter.

However, as an essential final step for any character, you must choose one other character within the Novarium that you do not control with which to form an attachment.

An attachment represents a strong interpersonal bond between the two characters. It could be based in friendship, love, blood relation, or a similar connection. Your character has a strong interest in seeing your attachment partner grow and succeed at their ambitions in life. The web of attachments between all characters forms the complex social bond that keeps the Novarium functioning.

Whenever your attachment partner is in danger, you gain a +3 bonus to any direct action to save them. For example, attacking the person threatening them. Also, whenever they achieve their ambitions, you receive a portion of the *experience points* earned.



Now you are  
ready to play!



*“There are few things more poisonous than coin.  
It corrupts a woman’s heart, twists her into foul deeds,  
and leaves the soul empty and destitute.”*

*- The Book of Azakriel 7:13*

# Equipment



## Economic System:

The world of Novarium is in a dark age. Market economic logic that you may have from your personal life today does not apply to this situation. There is no market to price goods and services accurately. In the absence of these forces, the people have resorted to the classic store of values; metal coins, precious gems, and commodities.

There is no large-scale political system to provide a standardized currency. The old empire are long gone. However, there are three basic coin types that are in circulation; copper, silver, and gold. Exchange rates are listed to the right.

Additionally, some mercantile associations rely upon trade bars to conduct their business. *Trade bars* typically represent 500 coins of the same type, thus a Silver Trade Bar would have a value equal to 50 gold coins, 500 silver coins, or 5000 copper coins.

At a certain point, however, the weight of these metals becomes prohibitive. Then it may become advantageous to switch to precious gemstones as a store of value. There are no values listed in the chart to the right because the value is dependent upon the size and quality of the stone. Ultimately, the GM decides upon the exact value of any gemstone. Whether you can get that price trying to sell it is another issue entirely. The GM may call for *knowledge* roll to set a price.

Finally, some types of goods retain their value when sold. They do not depreciate in the process of the sale. These are called *commodities*. Barrels of wine or rolls of linen are example commodities. While they may be difficult to transport, commodities may be the best store of value available in certain circumstances.

Exchange Rates	Copper	Silver	Gold
Copper	1	1/10	1/100
Silver	10	1	1/10
Gold	100	10	1

## Types of Precious Gemstones

Agate	Diamond	Malachite	Ruby
Alexandrite	Emerald	Obsidian	Sapphire
Amber	Garnet	Onyx	Tiger's Eye
Amethyst	Jade	Opal	Topaz
Aventurine	Jasper	Pearl	Tourmaline
Coral	Lapis Lazuli	Peridot	Turquoise

## The Value of Magical Items:

There are magical items that exist in the world. They are not found in this book because their very nature makes them something that you should not know about as a player.

The rules in the *Magic* chapter for imbuing magical items is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of what is possible with magical enchantments. In some cases, magic items introduced by the Architect appear to simply break the rules of the game.

*Magic items are priceless and anyone who would sell one is a fool.*

## Standard Items:

There are far too many things in the game world to list them all here and provide pricing. Exactly how precise you want to be with equipment is up to the group. If you want to buy new clothes, a pickaxe, a shovel, a torch, or some other random piece of equipment, ask the Architect for a price and go from there. Your character is wealthy enough that for many things, the Architect may not even require you to account for it.

However, there are two types of items that it is important to clearly define because they play a role in combat; weapons and armor. These are detailed in the remainder of this chapter.

Weapon Type	Damage	Range	Cost	Weight
Battle Axe	2 dice	-	100 gp	5 lbs
Bow	1 die	50 feet	60 gp	1 lb
Club	1 die	-	-	1 lb
Crossbow	2 dice	100 feet	250 gp	4 lbs
Dagger	1 die	-	2 gp	1 lb
Flail	3 dice	-	120 gp	3 lbs
Greatsword	3 dice	-	130 gp	4 lbs
Hand Axe	1 die	20 feet	10 gp	1 lb
Longsword	2 dice	-	120 gp	3 lbs
Mace	2 dice	-	60 gp	3 lbs
Morningstar	2 dice	-	110 gp	3 lbs
Quarterstaff	1 die	-	-	1 lb
Rapier	1 die	-	80 gp	2 lbs
Scimitar	2 dice	-	80 gp	3 lbs
Shortsword	1 die	-	75 gp	2 lbs
Spear	2 dice	10 feet	50 gp	2 lbs
Warhammer	3 dice	-	140 gp	2 lbs



Armor Type	DR	Type	Cost	Weight
Padded	1d4	Light	35 gp	20 lbs
Leather / Hide	1d4+1	Light	80 gp	10 lbs
Studded / Brigandine	1d4+2	Light	120 gp	15 lbs
Scale / Ring	1d6	Medium	260 gp	30 lbs
Chainmail	1d6+1	Medium	370 gp	40 lbs
Splint / Banded	1d8	Heavy	550 gp	55 lbs
Field Plate	1d8+1	Heavy	900 gp	60 lbs
Full Plate	1d10+2	Heavy	2200 gp	75 lbs
Buckler	1d4	-	10 gp	2 lbs
Round Shield	1d4+1	-	25 gp	4 lbs
Kite Shield	1d6	-	80 gp	7 lbs
Tower Shield	1d6+1	-	125 gp	10 lbs

# Weapons:

## Battle Axe:

The battle axe is a common weapon among barbarian tribes without access to large quantities of high-grade iron. It functions normally in combat, with no special modifiers.

## Bow:

A bow can be used to hit targets at a distance. This weapon is only available to *Tavaria* because shooting targets at a direct angle is very hard and requires extensive training. Most bows are used in mass combat contexts, not close quarters. The range amount listed is considered the reliable range of the weapon. Shooting beyond that distance always carries a negative modifier determined by the Architect. This is a two-handed weapon.

## Club:

This is the most simple and basic weapon available, essentially a large stick. Clubs have a 50% chance of breakage if used to *parry*, but this does not affect the success or failure of that parry.

## Crossbow:

A hand-cranked mechanical weapon used to hit targets at a distance. This weapon is only available to characters through the *weapons training trait*, because it requires specialized training. The range amount listed is considered the reliable range of the weapon. Shooting beyond that distance always carries a negative modifier determined by the Architect. This is a two-handed weapon.

## Dagger:

This serves as a standard basic weapon as well as an all-purpose tool and utensil. Daggers cannot be used to *parry*, but they are completely unaffected by the armor of your opponent.

## Flail:

The flail is an unusual weapon with a special quality. If successfully *parried* by an opponent or used in a successful parry by your own hand, there is a 50% chance it will become entangled with the enemy weapon. This renders both weapons useless in combat until untangled, a process that takes a *combat round* of focused attention to complete. You can, of course, simply drop the flail and draw another weapon while your opponent struggles to free theirs.



## Greatsword:

This is a very large version of a longsword. It is a symbol of great power, but carries no special modifiers other than dealing a lot of damage. This is a two-handed weapon.

## Hand Axe:

This serves as a standard basic weapon as well as an all-purpose tool. It is common among people who live in the forest. Hand axes can be thrown as a ranged weapon if you have the appropriate *weapon training*.

## Longsword:

The longsword is a classic heroic weapon. Longswords are not as useful outside of combat as some other comparable weapons, such as an axe, but they are superb dueling weapons. As such, they give a +1 bonus to any roll *to hit*.

### Mace:

This is merely a metal version of the club, but the difference is striking. The mace is a classic weapon that has no special modifiers. In addition to its combat uses, it can serve as an improvised tool in many respects.

### Morningstar:

Essentially a mace with a spiked head, the morningstar is specially designed to penetrate ring and chain-based armor. The **damage reduction** gained from wearing of medium armor is halved if you are hit by this weapon. Shields are unaffected by this ability.



### Quarterstaff:

The quarterstaff is a simple weapon that can be acquired at no cost, like the club. Quarterstaves have a 50% chance of breakage if used to **parry**, but they can be used to parry without giving up a combat action during that round. This is a two-handed weapon.

### Rapier:

A rapier is a sword specifically designed for **parrying** blows in combat. It grants a +5 bonus to parry, but its thin design can result in a 25% chance of breakage when used to block a weapon that deals three or more damage dice.

### Scimitar:

This is a cavalry weapon that is sometimes used on foot. It functions normally in other circumstances, but grants a +3 bonus **to hit** and **damage** when used on horseback.

### Shortsword:

A shortsword is a basic weapon of proven reliability. With a shorter blade than a longsword, it has slightly less reach and thus tends to deal less damage than its larger counterpart. However, it is also quicker and thus more useful in blocking blows as it can be maneuvered into position faster. Users have a +2 modifier when **parrying** with it.

### Spear:

The spear is a classic weapon that has a variety of uses in combat. When used against mounted opponents, it grants a +2 bonus **to hit** and **damage**. Spears have a 25% chance of breakage if used to parry, but this does not affect the success or failure of that parry. This is a two-handed weapon.

### Warhammer:

The warhammer is a knightly weapon that deals a huge amount of **damage**, even against armored foes. The **damage reduction** gained from wearing of medium or heavy armor is halved if you are hit by this weapon. Shields are unaffected by this ability.

# Armor:

Some of this armor is unavailable to starting characters simply due to extraordinary cost. In fact, acquiring an expensive suit of armor would make an excellent *minor ambition*.

All armors have a *damage reduction* value. This is a die that is rolled each time damage is dealt and then subtracted from that damage before it is resolved. For example, if someone hits you for 5 points of damage while you are wearing Chainmail, you can roll 1d6+1 and subtract the die result from those 5 points. It is possible you may completely negate the damage dealt with your armor.

## **Padded:**

This kind of armor is made up of extra thick cloth layers and provides minimal protection. It is common among the peasantry. If submerged in water, quadruple the normal weight as the armor soaks up a lot of water.

## **Leather / Hide:**

This kind of armor is composed of hardened animal skins. It provides decent baseline protection for a soldier.

## **Studded / Brigandine:**

This kind of armor is composed of hardened animal skins or cloth that is covered with many small metal fittings. These fittings help deflect blows.

## **Scale / Ring:**

This kind of armor is composed of overlapping pieces of metal and was a precursor to chainmail armor. It lacks the higher protective value of chainmail but also weighs a lot less.

## **Chainmail:**

This kind of armor is made from interlocking metal rings that together form a dense mesh of metal that is extremely hard to penetrate with weapons. This protection comes with a heavy weight and a steep price. If assisted by someone else, you can put on or take off your chainmail in about a minute. Without assistance, it could take three to five minutes.

## **Splint / Banded:**

This kind of armor is made from riveting plates of metal onto a cloth or leather base armor. It lacks the impenetrability of actual plate mail, but comes close. However, it is fairly easy to put on compared to other armors with similar protective ability.

## **Field Plate:**

This kind of armor is made from overlapping steel plates. Some elements are missing so that it can be put on faster. If assisted by someone else, you can put on or take off field plate in about three minutes. Without assistance, it could take up to ten minutes.

## **Full Plate:**

This kind of armor is made from overlapping steel plates. All elements are included. If assisted by someone else, you can put on or take off full plate in about five minutes. Without assistance, it could take up to fifteen minutes. Few opponents are willing to grant such a grace period.

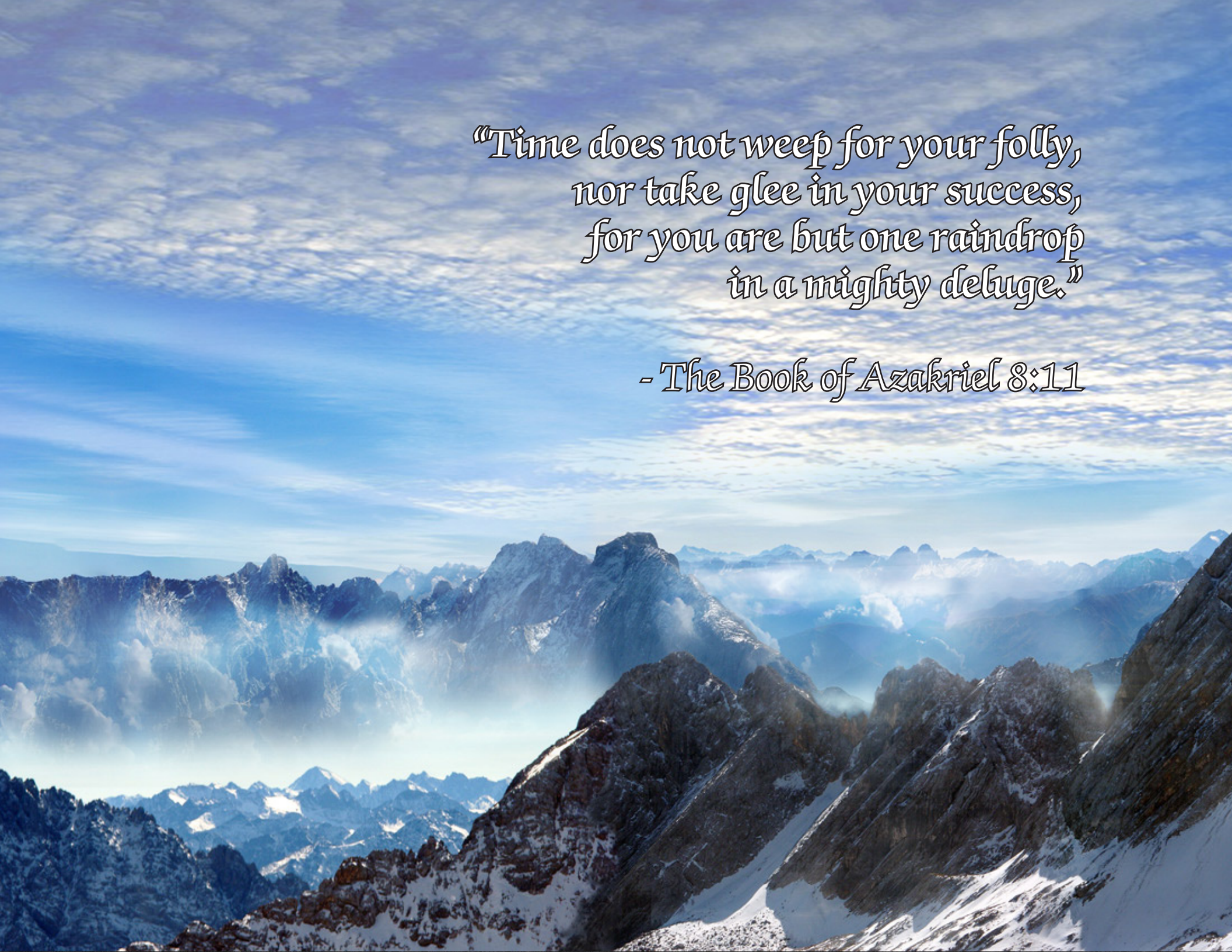
## **Shields:**

There are four types of shields listed in the equipment charts, but the choices for potential construction materials are numerous. Cloth, hide, wood, bone, bronze, iron, steel, and so on. In a world with monsters and magic, even more exotic materials exist than you can even imagine. The Architect is responsible for determining the durability of your shield based on the materials used. From a mechanical standpoint, the assumption is that your shield is hard enough to stop a blow.

As a result, the true distinction between shields is size and shape. Bucklers are small rounded shields designed to deflect blows and throw the opponent off balance. Round shields are larger and used in a more conventional way to simply absorb the impact. Kite shields are larger still and with an elongated shape to protect the forward leg of the defender as well as the upper torso. Finally, a tower shield is a huge rectangular shield designed to stop almost anything from reaching your body.

<b>Common Items</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Weight</b>
Backpack	3 gp	2 lbs
Bedroll	1 gp	3 lbs
Bivouac / Tent	5 gp	10 lbs
Block and Tackle	10 gp	1 lb
Caltrops Bag (single use)	20 gp	1 lb
Clothing (common)	3 sp	1 lb
Clothing (wealthy)	8 gp	1 lb
Clothing (winter)	3 gp	3 lbs
Crowbar	1 gp	1 lb
Fishing Pole	5 sp	1 lb
Flask / Bottle	2 sp	1 lb
Flask of Lamp Oil	2 gp	1 lb
Garlic Bulb	4 sp	-
Grappling Hook	4 gp	2 lbs
Ladder (10 ft)	7 sp	4 lbs
Lock (exceptional)	35 gp	1 lb
Lock (standard)	3 gp	1 lb
Oil Lamp	2 gp	1 lb
Parchment (per page)	2 gp	-
Pickaxe	3 gp	2 lbs
Pole (10 ft)	6 sp	1 lb
Rope (100 ft)	1 gp	3 lbs
Saddle & Tack	40 gp	8 lbs
Scroll Case	5 gp	1 lb
Shovel	2 gp	2 lbs
Spellbook (Blank, 50 pages)	120 gp	2 lbs
Tinderbox	8 sp	-
Torch	1 sp	1 lb
Writing Ink (vial)	6 gp	-



A breathtaking landscape of a mountain range. The foreground shows rugged, dark rock formations with patches of white snow. In the distance, more mountain peaks are visible, some partially obscured by a layer of white mist or low clouds. The sky is a deep blue, filled with soft, white, wispy clouds that add texture to the upper half of the image. The overall atmosphere is serene and majestic.

*"Time does not weep for your folly,  
nor take glee in your success,  
for you are but one raindrop  
in a mighty deluge."*

*- The Book of Azakriel 8:11*

# Campaigns

## 4

Unlike many other roleplaying games, Novarium actually intends for each player to control multiple characters throughout the game. At the beginning of the game, you can create multiple characters and then choose which one to play at any given time.

### Seasons

Gameplay is divided into seasons with the traditional four seasons per year. During each season, you control one of your characters as they move throughout the game world with the party. The other characters will attend to a variety of things while they are off-season, including but not limited to; resting to heal wounds, farming, crafting, travel, delivery of correspondence, and magical research.



### Identity

Each character has an *identity*. This defines what their dominant features are and is very strongly based on biological factors like race and gender. One kind of identity, the *Novaria*, is more powerful than the others. It is intended for a Novaria to be your primary character which you play for the majority of each year's seasons.

A Novaria is a special kind of character that has powerful magical abilities far in excess of the potential of other characters. However, they are not always physically impressive and can be vulnerable to physical attack. As a result, you should not send your party out into the world composed purely of Novaria. This is precisely why those other characters exist; to allow you to build a well-rounded group.

### The Novarium

The group of all characters of all players is referred to as the Novarium. The Novarium is its own character, in a sense, as it represents the combined aspirations of the group. This group is bound by an oath of friendship and loyalty to one another and through *attachments*.

A Novarium can have collective ownership over property, such as a powerful magical *font* or a fortified estate, and they can function as a single unit politically. The goal of the game is to accomplish the shared goals of your Novarium, by whatever means you choose.

You may want to write out some *minor ambitions* for the Novarium, negotiate the experience point value for them, and then pursue those goals as a group. When the goals are completed, everyone gets rewarded.

## Retainers

In addition to your Novarium, you may have a number of retainers on hand to assist you. These are paid servants in your employ. Whenever you take on a retainer, you should assign the roleplaying of that character to a player. They will play the retainer in addition to whatever active character they are currently playing.

The purpose of retainers is to facilitate taking risks in the game and to take care of tasks that you don't want to waste your character's time performing. Sometimes you are just incapable of handling a situation with the resources you have within your group of characters. Perhaps you need a skill that you do not have or you need help carrying something too heavy for the characters in the group. Maybe you need someone to build a home for you, paint it, or care for it while you are away. Retainers exist to solve these kinds of problems.

Retainers can be sent across vast distances as messengers while you take care of tasks that are more important. They can pull levers that you are too afraid to pull yourself and carry torches so that your hands can stay free to perform other actions. However, they are not suicidal. They are real people and if you give them orders that are obviously dangerous they will react accordingly.



Retainers are more than simple business associates. They are exclusively in your employ. As a result, you must draw upon your personality to keep them in your service. Any time you have a disagreement with your retainer over any issue, the Architect should call for a *magnetism* roll to maintain your control over them. If you fail this roll, they may simply walk away from the relationship.

The negotiation to hire a retainer should involve a *magnetism* roll, at the very least to determine price, but also to determine how happy they are about working for you in the first place. There is no standard wage in Vaena, so everything must be negotiated and ultimately the wage that a retainer demands is up to the Architect. If that job involves danger and risk, the price will go up. If it involves going away for an extended period, the price will go up. If you cannot pay the wage demanded, people will not work for you.

Architect	Clockmaker	Interpreter	Sapper
Armorer	Cobbler	Locksmith	Scribe
Arrowsmith	Cook	Mason	Ship Captain
Assassin	Cooper	Mercenary	Shipwright
Astrologer	Farrier	Messenger	Skinner
Barrister	Fletcher	Miner	Soapmaker
Blacksmith	Furrier	Minstrel	Spy
Bookbinder	Gemcutter	Navigator	Tailor
Bowyer	Glassblower	Painter	Tanner
Brewer	Goldsmith	Ploughman	Teamster
Butcher	Groom	Porter	Torch-bearer
Carpenter	Guide	Potter	Trapper
Cartwright	Herald	Saddler	Vintner
Chandler	Herbalist	Sage	Weaver
Clerk	Huntsman	Sailor	Wheelwright

## Marches

The human empires are the only remaining civilization standing in the face of evil. The **Novaria** exist parallel to these political systems, and have organized themselves into **Exarchates** ruled by a Novaria leader appointed by the Order, called an **Exarch**. Beyond the boundaries of the Exarchates are the Marches, the wild lands of the earth inhabited by monsters, the fae, and the servants of evil. Your Novarium is going to be placed in the jagged edge of that boundary.

At the beginning of the game, the entire party is granted a Mark (singular of Marches) by the Exarch under which they serve, in exchange for an obligation which you negotiate with the Architect.

You may name your Mark whatever you wish. Real world examples are extensive. Denmark was once the boundary land on the northern side of the Holy Roman Empire and was thus designated as a Mark. There are numerous other examples through real European history, and not just on the northern edge of Christendom.

Your Novarium has sole territorial rights over the entire Mark, but these rights are magical in nature, not political. The Mark will almost always overlap with civil and possibly military jurisdictions. What you really have authority over are magical **fonts**.

Fonts are places where the Three Realms intersect and magic flows from the Divine Realm into the Mortal Realm freely, in the form of water imbued with magical power called **essence**. Rumors has it that fonts are the origins of life itself, bringing water from the Divine Realm aeons ago when life began. They have now largely been corrupted, their magic twisted to create powerful monsters and fae.

When the first font is discovered in a border region of an Exarchate, the Exarch will declare it to be the **Prime Font** of a new Mark. The Exarch will then issue a call for volunteers to tame the wildlands and bring it's magic under the control of the Order.

To start the game, the Exarch (i.e. the Architect) will make your characters an offer to take responsibility for the Mark.

## The Exarch's Offer

The Exarch will make the group an offer that consists of four elements.

### Prime Essence

The Prime Font generates a certain amount of essence per year, of which the Exarch demands a very high percentage. The percentage is so high that there is very little left for the Novaria. This is intentional, as it creates an incentive for you to find more fonts.

### Secondary Essence

The Exarch also demands a much smaller percentage of all other fonts discovered in the territory. This is a kind of low-grade magical tax of sorts. It isn't enough to make you balk, but it is enough to provide some additional resources to the Exarch as you bring more fonts under your control. Note that this tax does not apply to **wild essence** extracted directly from slain monsters and/or fae creatures.

### Indenture

This is the amount of essence that can be paid as a lump sum to permanently void the duties paid to the Exarch and end the relationship. If you can afford to buy-out the Exarch, you get to keep all the essence from all of your fonts for yourself. This number is typically very large, but once paid you will become the ruler of your own destiny.

### Material

The Exarch gives the Novarium a mix of coinage and property around the font to help them establish themselves and begin the task of cleaning up the threats in the region.

*The Novarium can collectively negotiate with the Exarch for more or less material in exchange for more or less in essence duty paid. After this negotiation, the game begins and the character move into their new territory to begin play.*

# Property

The *Novarium* is not just a collection of characters; it is a shared enterprise. Everything in the mark is considered communal property of the Novarium, except any personal equipment a member is carrying on their body and anything stored within their sanctum.

## Territory

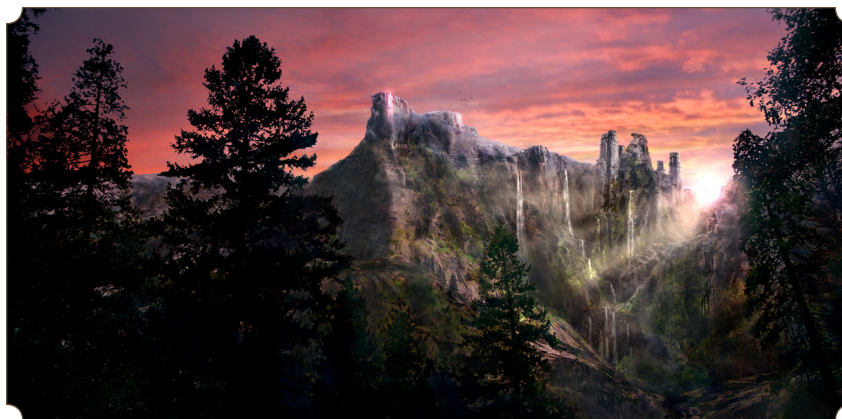
The Novarium is gifted a few acres of land when they accept responsibility for the mark. All land in Vaena is measured in acres, a unit that denotes the amount of land that a single ox is capable of tilling in one day. Typically this initial land grant will not exceed a few dozen acres because the Exarch making the grant must actually purchase the land from the noble holding title to the area and they will not purchase much more land than is covered by the eminence extending out from the *Prime Font*.

The initial plot may be capable of supporting the Novarium through small scale agriculture like one might see around a monastery, but it will generally not be high quality arable land suitable for large-scale agricultural development. *Fonts* are typically found in areas with rough and uneven terrain and this makes the situation even more difficult from an agrarian perspective.

On rare occasions, a few buildings may exist on the territorial grant. However, it is more likely the Architect is calculating the monetary outlay in the offer to account for the need of the characters to pay for the construction of buildings. All non-Novaria characters may live in the same dwelling in close quarters. However, every *Novaria* will insist upon having their own sanctum.

## Sanctum

A Novaria's sanctum is their home, their personal space, and the center of their research and writing efforts. Typically this is a free standing structure, similar in design to either a house or a tower. Alternatively, it may be a part of a larger structure provided there is a clear boundary that defines their space. For example, if the Novarium took up residence in a castle, each Novaria may take a portion of the keep as their own personal space.



The sanctum is considered a personal space and held sacrosanct by the Novaria. Anyone who enters it without permission is automatically considered to have hostile intent. A Novaria is always considered to be justified in inflicting violence on anyone in their sanctum. The only time anyone other than the owner should enter a sanctum is to strike down a Novaria that has been declared a profligate by the Order.

## Library

The Novarium collectively owns a library of magical books that they share for research purposes. This is typically the most well-defended location under their control and access is highly restricted for anyone that is not a Novaria. These books can be acquired from other Novaria in the game world, if an agreed price can be reached, but the majority of books in the library should ideally be unique works written by the Novarium members.

A well-developed library eventually serves as a lure to attract Novaria from other regions to study. The Novarium is free to demand a fee that must be paid before another Novaria may research in their library, either in coin or Essence. This may provide supplemental income to support the Novarium.

## Fonts

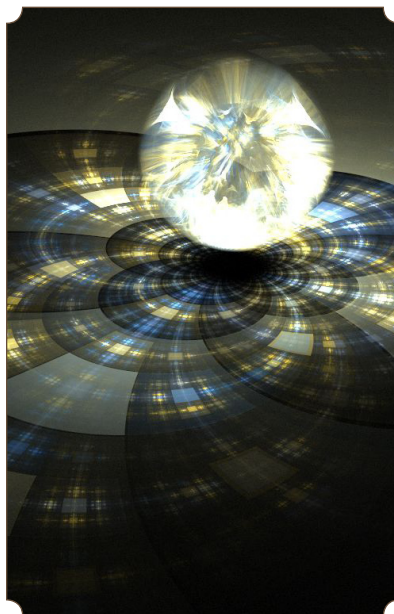
A font is a place where the Three Realms intersect and magic flows from the Divine Realm into the Mortal Realm freely, in the form of water imbued with magical power called *essence*. Every font has a value, denoted as a number. The most powerful font ever discovered has a value of 42, but it is possible that more powerful fonts exist beyond the current knowledge of the Order.

A font generates an amount of essence every year equal to its value. The essence is evenly distributed across the year, so that a pool with a value of four will generate a point of essence roughly every season. All four points would not be generated at once.

This magical energy is naturally trapped in small crystal formations at the bottom of a font's pool. These essence crystals glow softly and as more of them are formed, the pool takes on an incandescent quality. Once the pool holds an amount of essence crystals equal to the font's value, it is considered *saturated*.

At this point, no additional crystals will be formed and excess essence accumulation begins to leak out of the pool and into the environment surrounding the pool. This leakage causes mutations in animals, twists souls into fae, triggers the formation of elementals, and causes a host of other effects.

Demons are capable of twisting the excess magical energy from a saturated pool in a way that causes the creation of monsters, curses, blights upon the land, and other negative effects. They are also capable of extracting essence for their own purposes and using it in battle to augment their abilities.



## Eminence

A font also radiates a powerful illusory effect called an eminence. The eminence extends outward from the pool at a rate of one league (about 3 miles) per point of value. Thus a font with a value of five has an eminence that extends five leagues in every direction. Any intelligent being entering the area covered by the eminence must make a *perception* save with a penalty equal to twice the value of the font.

Failing this roll means that the subject becomes confused and loses both their sense of direction and their ability to track the passing of time. They may spend hours wandering aimlessly around the same meadow, ending up right back where they started, yet believe that they have been thoroughly exploring the whole countryside. This effect makes locating fonts more difficult, but it also provides protection from disturbances once you have found one.

Additionally, anyone casting spells within the eminence is bolstered by the radiating magic coming off the font. This manifests as a bonus to any casting roll equal to the font value, so long as you are within the radius of the eminence when casting. This makes it very advantageous for *Novaria* to make their homes in such places.

## Extracting Essence

Essence crystals can be harvested from a font with just a sharp knife and a deep breath. This is the basic method of acquiring essence and anyone can do it. The energy from essence crystals is generic and causes no additional effects when used, aside from the normal bonus that essence gives to a casting roll.

However, a Novaria is taught to extract essence from the pool using a different method taught very early in their training. They may select a *Totem*, a small symbolic object into which the energy will be stored, and place that in the pool. Typical totems include small wooden or stone statuettes, gemstones, metallic jewelry, religious icons, parts of animals like teeth, and similar objects. Instead of forming a new crystal, the font will infuse its energy into the totem instead.

## Totems

The choice of totem will give the essence a unique ancillary effect, called a *Favor*. For example, if a claw infused with *essence* is used to cast a spell that causes damage, two additional points will be inflicted. There is a listing of known favor effects on the next page, but *Novaria* are encouraged to experiment to find new ones. Keep in mind that any totem you choose must be able to endure submersion for a time.

When placed in a pool, a totem will serve as a focus for the essence generated. Instead of creating a new crystal, when the time comes the totem will be infused with the next essence point generated. It can then be removed from the pool and carried by a Novaria.

## Wild Essence

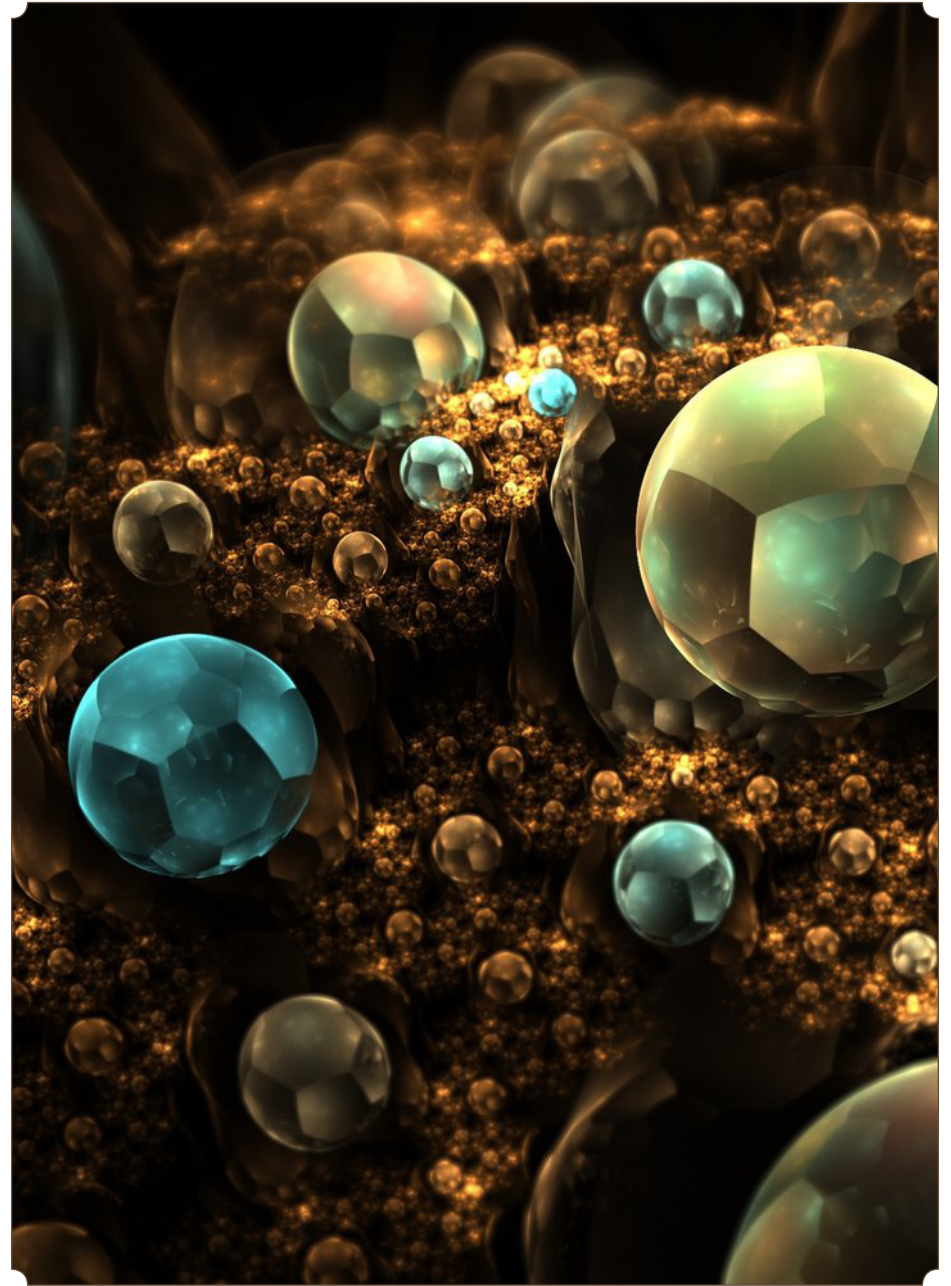
In addition to *fonts*, raw essence can be found in the world inside the bodies of magical creatures. For example, a satyr is a magical fae creature. When slain, their horns contain a point of essence. The horn must be cut from the corpse and carried with the Novaria. This can be used as if it were a totem and each type of creature has its own unique favor to grant the caster.

When such a creature is killed, a Novaria can place their hands on the body and sense where the wild essence is being stored, so that they extract the correct body part.

## Using Essence

Novaria always carry their essence objects on a chain around their neck, as a symbol of status and for ease of access for casting. When tapping into essence to cast spells, the caster simply touches the object holding the essence and it immediately disintegrates. No object survives this process, so none can ever be recharged. You must always seek out fresh stores of magical energy.

For precise rules for how this channeling affects the casting process itself, consult the *Magic* chapter.



<b>Totem</b>	<b>Favor</b>
<b>Amber</b>	Cleanse the nearby air of all insects
<b>Amethyst</b>	Caster is immune to intoxication for an hour
<b>Basalt</b>	Grants a +5 bonus to petrify something
<b>Bloodstone</b>	Causes target to bleed from any damage caused
<b>Brick</b>	Doubles the duration of the spell cast
<b>Cedar</b>	Caster is extremely buoyant for an hour
<b>Claw</b>	+2 damage, if damage is dealt
<b>Coal</b>	Briefly causes target to become very hot
<b>Copper</b>	Grants +5 bonus to any attempt to affect metal
<b>Coral</b>	Causes significant drop in humidity in the area
<b>Cypress</b>	Causes deep sadness in target for a minute
<b>Diamond</b>	Damage ignores the first 5 points of armor
<b>Emerald</b>	Causes paralysis in target for 2 rounds
<b>Garnet</b>	Grants a +5 bonus to communicate with the dead
<b>Glass</b>	The Materia used becomes translucent for an hour
<b>Gold</b>	Heals two extra points, if healing is caused
<b>Granite</b>	Caster gains +2 armor for an hour
<b>Gypsum</b>	Grants a +5 bonus to duplicate something
<b>Hemlock</b>	Prevents the target from breathing for a minute
<b>Horn</b>	Knocks down the target of the spell
<b>Iron</b>	Deals double damage to fae, if damage is dealt
<b>Jade</b>	Grants +2 to Presence for an hour
<b>Lead</b>	Spell being cast cannot be sensed remotely

<b>Totem</b>	<b>Favor</b>
<b>Magnetite</b>	Caster intuitively knows which direction is north
<b>Marble</b>	Causes brilliant flash of light while casting
<b>Oak</b>	Grants +2 to Strength for an hour
<b>Obsidian</b>	Sharpens all blades carried by the caster
<b>Onyx</b>	Grants +5 to manipulate darkness or night
<b>Opal</b>	Randomly changes coloration of the target
<b>Palm</b>	Caster feels inner calm and serenity for an hour
<b>Pearl</b>	Caster can breathe underwater for an hour
<b>Peridot</b>	Grants +5 to deceive or confuse people
<b>Pine</b>	Grants +5 to any attempt to shape or create wood
<b>Quartz</b>	Causes strong vibrations in the environment
<b>Ruby</b>	Causes a very lucky event within a few days
<b>Sapphire</b>	Causes a great harvest next season in the area
<b>Seashell</b>	Caster can communicate with fish for an hour
<b>Serpentine</b>	Caster can see through falsehoods for an hour
<b>Silver</b>	Cures target and caster of any diseases
<b>Spruce</b>	Caster gains immunity to cold for an hour
<b>Tiger Eye</b>	Caster gains cat-like vision for an hour
<b>Tin</b>	Allows the addition of a 2nd medium at no cost
<b>Tooth</b>	Causes debilitating pain in the target for 2 rounds
<b>Topaz</b>	Grants +5 to any attempt to shape or create fire
<b>Turquoise</b>	Grants +5 to any attempt to shape or create water
<b>Yew</b>	Caster gains exceptional flexibility for an hour

# Seasons

Game time is divided into the four seasons of the calendar; winter, spring, summer, and autumn. During any given season, you are only controlling one character. You will give general orders to the other characters at the beginning of each season and they will follow those instructions while your character is adventuring. You can also have them perform a few minor tasks as needed throughout the season, such as running to town to buy a keg of ale or a new cart to carry your treasure, without disrupting their other work.

The following options represent standard activities available to inactive characters. If you work with the Architect, you may be able to come up with your own innovative ways of using your time.

## Travel

A character can travel to a distant location to deliver a message or seek audience with anyone of their choice. Perhaps they need to ask a question of their old mentor, seek reconciliation with a rival, or seek to trade essence for a magical artifact or a rare book with another Novarium. Long-distance travel in Vaena is a long and arduous process and best handled in as abstract a manner as possible. However, if the route is truly dangerous and the potential for a serious altercation with locals is possible, it may be best role played with the active characters.

## Agriculture

In general, it takes 10 people working year round on ten acres to produce enough food to feed 11 people and pay the taxes. That means that for every member of the Novarium who is not spending enough time working the fields during the year (at least two full seasons), ten laborers must be working on the land owned by the Novarium to provide food for that person, or food must be purchased.

## Healing

A character can spend an entire season resting and recuperating from injury. No major tasks can be performed during this time or else it will interrupt the process. Unless their injuries dictate it, they do not have to be tended to and can get by just fine on their own.

You do not have to make any rolls to represent this process, you simply do nothing. However, your *natural rate of healing* is doubled.



## Writing Books

A *Novaria* can spend a season writing books. There are two types of books; *Studies* and *Tracts*. Composing a book takes a long time and typically is not written in a single season. You may write a portion of a book, go on an adventure, and so on for several years. Do not feel like you have to stay focused on it completely.

Once written, a book has a maximum value equal to the power of the author who wrote it. The *water study* written by the author below would have a *water* value of 10. The *create-fire tract* written by the author below would have a *create* value of 6 and a *fire* value of 10. Someone attempting to benefit from the work must be less powerful than the author, else there is nothing for them to gain from reading the book.

### Studies:

Studies are general books that describe either a *method* or a *materia*. They are used to teach those who are trying to learn more about that entire style of magic. Writing a study takes a number of seasons equal to your value in the method or materia being written about, minus half your *knowledge* (rounded down). Thus someone with a *water* value of 10 and a knowledge of 11 could write a *water study* in 5 seasons of work (10 minus 5). However, that same character could write the book in a single season if they had a knowledge of 18.

### Tracts:

Tracts are specific books that describe a particular combination of *method* and *materia*, such as *create-fire*. They are used as reference texts when writing scrolls to make them more powerful. Writing a tract takes a number of seasons equal to your combined value in the method and materia being written about, minus half your *knowledge* (rounded down). Thus someone with a *create* value of 6, a *fire* value of 10, and a knowledge of 11 could write a *create-fire tract* in 11 seasons of work (16 minus 5). However, that same character could write the book in only seven seasons if they had a knowledge of 18.

## Writing Scrolls

A *Novaria* can spend a season writing scrolls. Scrolls are specific writings that form a kind of short-hand version of a magical spell. Once composed, they can be used without risk of failure, though reading a scroll does take more time than improvisational casting methods.

### Rolling for Scrolls

Within a single season of work, you can produce a number of scrolls in a season equal to your character level plus 1d6. They only take up a single page of text, but take several weeks to compose as the Novaria must walk through every precise element of the magic that they are using.



When a scroll is created, you must specify precisely what the spell does. You must describe the spell to a level of detail that would satisfy the Architect if the spell was being cast at that moment. “This reshapes a piece of metal” is not a sufficiently detailed explanation. That could describe any *control-metal* spell. “This twists a sword in a way that makes it unusable” is far more precise and more like what you would need to say to the Architect when you actually cast an improvised spell that used control-metal. You must name every scroll that you are making and feel free to make them highly personalized. “Sword Twister” is just fine, but “Leah’s Blade Warper” sounds so much cooler.

You can write a scroll with the benefit of *tracts*, if you have access to them, but your lack of mastery comes at a price. You can substitute your own value in a particular *method* or *materia* for that of the tract author. However, writing with a tract adds a difficulty die to the roll made for that scroll equal to the number of tracts used. Thus if you needed both elements of a control-metal tract, you would add two extra difficulty dice to the roll.

At the end of the season, you make the rolls for all the scrolls you are writing in succession. The difficulties are determined exactly as you would do so if casting the magic improvisationally. If you fail the roll, you realize the scroll is damaged and burn it. Otherwise, it works.

## Study

A Novaria can spend a season reading a **study** repetitively in an attempt to enhance their magical skills. At the end of the season, make a roll to see how well you were able to study from the text.

### Rolling for Study

At the end of the season, they must make a **knowledge** roll against a difficulty equal to the number of seasons they have tried to learn from that study (including the current attempt). If you succeed on this roll, you gain 1 point in the subject studied up to the same value as the author of the work. Once you reach the same competency as the author, you cannot learn any more from re-reading the study.

Thus someone will have a fairly easy time picking up some new abilities when going through a study for the first time, but they can only learn so much before it becomes very difficult to gain new insights from the material. Eventually, a text will become useless as everything of importance has been learned.



## Copying Books

A **literate** character can copy a book from the Novarium **library** in a single season. At the end of the season, make a roll to see how well you were able to duplicate the text.

### Rolling for Copying

Copying the text seems fairly straightforward to the character, a basic **perception** roll against one difficulty die, but the Architect makes the roll in secret and adds the value of the book to the die result. The **water study** with a value of 10 used as an earlier example would result in 1d10+10 being rolled.

You will never know the results of this roll, the Architect will keep it in their notes. When someone attempts to use the book at a later date, if you have failed in your transcription roll, the Architect uses their judgment to determine the results for the reader based on your margin of failure.



If you have made an error transcribing a **study**, then everyone who learns from that study over time will acquire a quirk in their magic abilities as they relate to the subject matter. A small margin of failure on your transcription could result in something as minor as turning the reader's hands blue for a few hours whenever they cast magic of that type. A large margin of error could result in horrific magical backfires, such as intensifying a fire you were trying to extinguish or healing a wound in a way that leaves the target crippled.

Once the reader realizes that something is wrong, they can usually go back through the text and find the source of your errors. They may or may not be so severe that they require rewriting the entire tome. Ultimately, whether or not the book can be fixed without a comprehensive rewrite is up to the Architect.

Keep these rules in mind when you are reading from a magical text that you find in the course of the game. Perhaps you might not be failing as much as you have learned something that is wrong.

## Experimentation

Eventually, a *Novaria* will find that their prowess in a particular *method* or *materia* exceeds that of all the authors in their library. There is no further path of advancement because they are the apex of the available knowledge. In order to grow from this point on, they must conduct their own experiments into the boundaries of the possible.

There is no way to explain exactly how this process works. In most cases, a large amount of objects are found damaged at the end of each day's work. Chairs are broken, watermelon bits can be found in the rafters, innocent wildlife is seen fleeing through the woods, and sometimes the hairs just never grow back. Magical experimentation is exactly what it sounds like. Things can go awry.

### Rolling for Experimentation

At the end of the season, the process culminates in a single *willpower* roll. The number of difficulty dice used is equal to the next value beyond your current ability (i.e. if you have *water* 8, the next value is a 9) minus your *character level*. Success means you reach that next value.

Failure can be very problematic. Magic is an alternation of the natural state of things, so failure means that you failed to manipulate these states improperly. This often results in something becoming permanently altered in a very negative way. For example, you might turn your skin purple (or in the case of a powerful experiment, the skin of all the inhabitants of the nearby town).

These consequences are often not immediately obvious to you. This can be very dangerous. However, the Architect should not make it easily avoidable, such as a failure with a tub of water resulting in poison. No one is going to drink water that is the remnant of magical experimentation gone wrong. A nearby stream however...

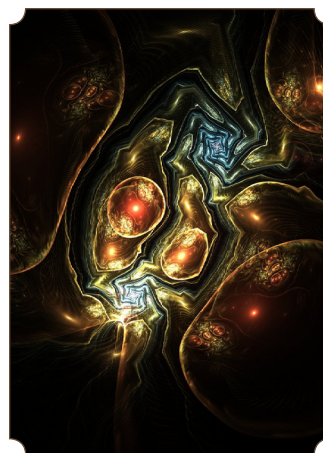


## Training an Apprentice

A *Novaria* can take an apprentice under their wing and teach magic to them. This work is performed in exchange for a fee, typically a large financial donation to the Novarium from the parents of the prospective apprentice. A Novaria is free to set any fee amount that they wish and, based on their reputation and prowess, the Architect will decide if anyone views it to be worth the cost.

An apprenticeship takes five years and during that time the apprentice will be a standard Novarium member. However, almost all of their time in apprenticeship should be spent studying and learning, not adventuring with the Novarium.

You can create an apprentice character as if you were making a new Novaria, but do not give them their extra magic talents. As they undergo training, they will build the character organically rather than as a single event when you made your first Novaria. They gain an extra magic talent once per year to represent their advancement through your tutelage.



The older Novaria is expected to spend one season per year directly teaching the apprentice on a specific *method* or *materia*. At the end of the season, the apprentice gains a talent in that subject. The same method or materia should not be taught multiple times during the training process (with a single exception, just as you had an opportunity to specialize your Novaria) and the apprentice cannot gain a higher value in the subject being taught than the value possessed by the teacher.

Once fully trained, the apprentice replaces that player's Novaria character and the Architect takes control of the old character. This does not mean death, but the Architect will generally have the older Novaria retire from the Novarium and pursue their own independent goals.

## Crafting

A character with any kind of craftsmanship skills can spend a season attempting to profit from their specialized labor. This can be done as paid labor, so long as their craft could reasonably be transformed into a wage-earning job. The advantages of being paid wages is that you do not have to supply the raw materials yourself. No rolls are required to work as paid labor, though being highly skilled should command a higher wage when that is negotiated.

Alternatively, you could do all the work yourself if you have the funds to pay for the raw materials. If that is the case, the character should make a **knowledge** roll every week to determine the result of that week's labor. The Architect can then use those results to determine the number of pieces produced in that time frame and their relative quality. The task of selling the products is also left to you. If you lack a pre-arranged buyer, you will need to find a market for your wares. The actual sales are covered by **magnetism** and roleplaying.

## Administration

Large estates and trading ventures do not manage themselves. If the **Novarium** is involved in any kind of business venture employing seven or more people, someone must be devoted to managing that enterprise during any given season.

### Rolling for Administration

About once every month (for a total of three rolls per season), the Architect will present a scenario for the character to resolve with a single **knowledge** roll. The **Acumen** trait can help on this roll. This roll must be made, as even willful inaction is its own form of management. The profit/loss of the enterprise is determined by the Architect based on this roll. If there is literally no one to manage the venture (i.e. everyone either dead or on an adventure away from the business), the Architect creates an attribute using 2d6 and makes the roll. The difficulty to roll is set by the Architect. They may give you a bonus based on the actions you describe your character to be taking.



## Social Influence

A character can spend a season in diplomatic service to the **Novarium** by expanding their network of social contacts, making trades and deals with nearby political factions, uncovering secret information, and generally working to improve their reputation in the area.

### Rolling for Social Influence

About once every two weeks (for a total of six rolls per season), the Architect will present a scenario for the character to resolve with a single **magnetism** roll. It is the character's choice to pursue the opportunity or let it pass. However, some of these events may have negative consequences if not pursued or if pursued and ultimately failed.

The difficulty to roll is set by the Architect. They may give you a bonus based on the actions you describe your character to be taking.



Examples of a standard opportunity might be a formal dinner held by a nearby noble that offers a chance to improve your social contacts or a chance encounter with a stable boy in the Duke's army that could be seduced into revealing information on the military's movements in the region. An opportunity that holds negative consequences if not pursued might be a libelous criminal charge against your Novarium being pushed by a local magistrate. If not addressed, it might undermine your reputation.



# Advancement

**Experience points** are used by the game to measure the progression of your character's power and skill over time as a result of real practical knowledge gained in the real world. This is an abstract measurement, due to the fact that precise measurements of personal growth over time are difficult. However, it serves as a useful benchmark for comparison.

## The Rewards of Essence

The goal of all **Novaria** is the accumulation of magical **essence**. When essence is extracted, all characters in the Novarium gain an amount of experience equal to 100 times the extracted value, regardless of who extracted it or what extraction method was used. **Exception:** Essence extracted from the **Prime Font** never results in experience point gains.

## Achieving Minor Ambitions

Every time you accomplish a **minor ambition**, the Architect will award you the experience points negotiated when the ambition was originally created for the character. Additionally, you receive one half of the experience gained by the character to which you have an **attachment** whenever they gain experience points for completing their minor ambitions.

## Character Level

A character has a character level that is an indication of just how powerful they have become. Higher level characters have more resources and abilities at their disposal than a lower level character. When a character accumulates enough experience points to reach the next level, they gain 1 point in an **attribute** of their choice. In order to advance a level, you must rest in a safe, warm area for at least three days. Final judgment of what is required is up to the Architect.

Level	XP Total
1	0
2	1,000
3	3,000
4	6,000
5	10,000
6	15,000
7	21,000
8	28,000
9	36,000
10	45,000
+	+10,000

## Age

You can set whatever starting age for your character that you want. There is an assumption that you will choose something in the 16-21 range, as that represents the beginning of adulthood. However, age will ultimately come to matter very much to your character. Despite the existence of curative magic, including the **Halfling's** healing touch, diseases are rampant and even a minor injury that goes untreated can cause death. Poor living conditions also contribute to an early grave.

## The Aging Roll

Once a character reaches 30 years old, they have to start making aging rolls. The average person will fail the rolls most of the time, the odds are simply too stacked against them. However, your characters are going to have access to more medical care and a better lifestyle than the average person. Each time you fail an aging roll, you gain 1 **age point**. When you accumulate 10 age points, your character dies.

### Age Rolls

Starting on their 30th birthday, a character makes an age roll every year at the end of the Winter Season. This involves rolling a single 10-sided die. If your result is 7 or less, you gain 1 **age point**. If you roll a zero on the die, you gain 1 age point and you must roll for an **Affliction** (see below).

The only way to really live longer is to gain bonuses to the roll. Anyone living a lifestyle equivalent to a member of a noble house gains a +2 bonus to the roll. The Youthful trait gives you a +2 bonus to age rolls and there are a few ways to get bonuses via magic.

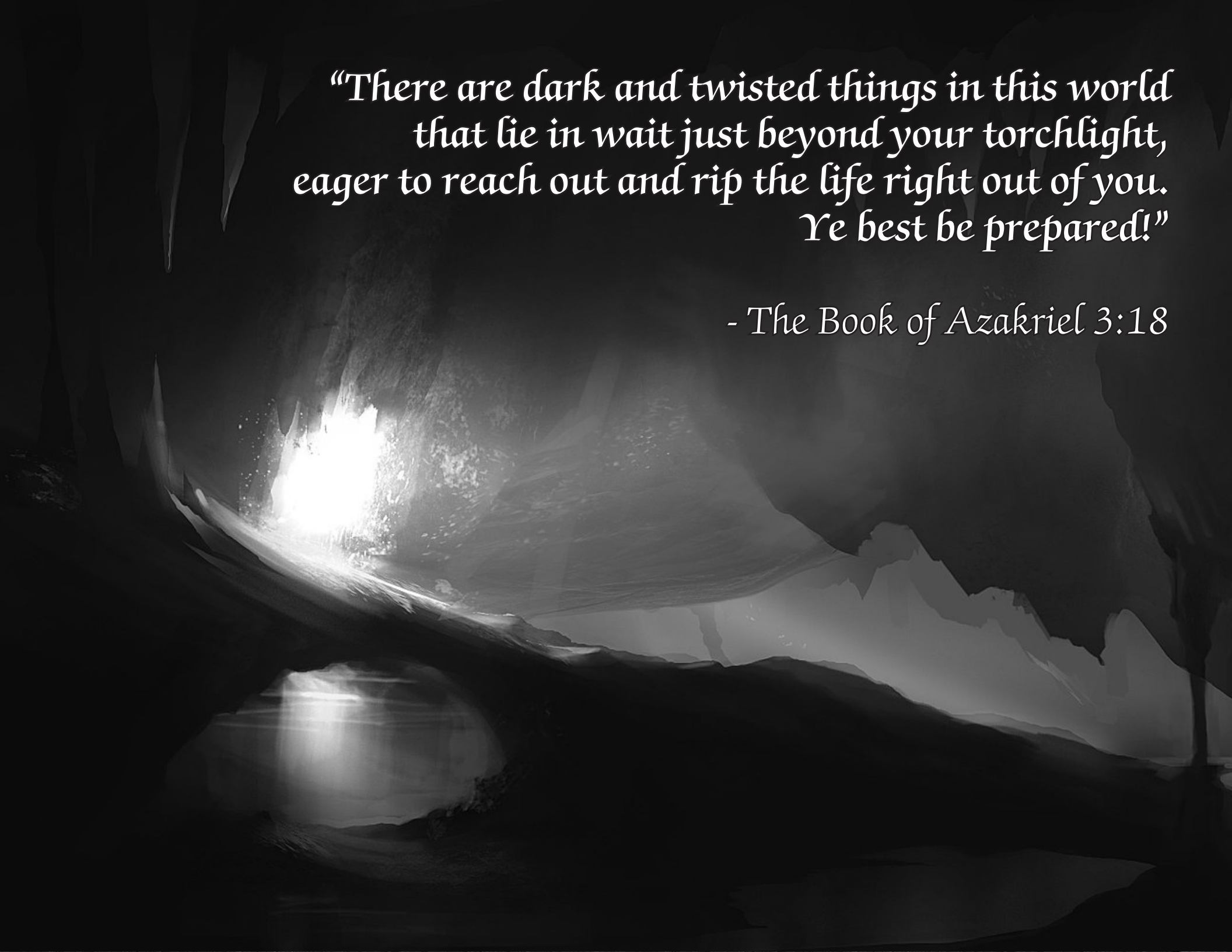
### Affliction Rolls

If you roll a zero on the age roll, you have to immediately roll two 10-sided dice. Instead of adding them together, use one of the dice as the tens digit and the other as the ones digit to create a value from 00 - 99. Consult the table on the next page to determine what happens.





<b>Die Result</b>	<b>Affliction</b>
00 - 25	No Effect
26 - 30	Chronic Gout: Each attack lasts 1d6 days, recurrence every 2d6 months until death. Makes walking painful & limits mobility.
31 - 35	Greenworm: Painful green rash forms on the foot for 3d6 months. 40% chance of natural cure, otherwise foot is crippled.
36 - 40	White Pox: Nausea, fever, aches, and white pockmarks on body for 2d6 weeks. 5% chance of death if untreated.
41 - 45	Fromoldt: Painful urination and abdominal cramps for 2d6 weeks. 50% chance of permanent infertility
46 - 50	Durlonis: Fever, headaches, and painful swelling of neck and throat for 2d6 weeks. 5% chance of death if untreated.
51 - 55	Syndaroi: Lesions on body, rash on hands, fever, & hair loss for 2d6 weeks. 30% chance of dementia and seizures after 10 years.
56 - 60	Brunich: Diarrhea, fever, chills, aches, and patches of red on body for 2d6 weeks. 15% chance of death if untreated.
61 - 65	Wenials: Cough, fever, aches, and rash that spreads to entire body for 2d6 days. 20% chance of death & 5% chance of blindness.
66 - 70	Blood Rot: 60% chance loss of foot due to infection, if not then loss of hand. If no amputation performed, death in 2d6 weeks.
71 - 75	Molepox: Fever, chills, aches, and spots of brownish-green rash on body for 3d6 days. 25% chance of death if untreated.
76 - 80	Vexmak Fever: Extreme fever, vomiting, hallucinations, and wild convulsions for 4d6 days. 25% chance of death if untreated.
81 - 85	Permanent Blindness: Due to injury or complications from existing disease or affliction.
86 - 90	Permanent Deafness: Due to injury or complications from existing disease or affliction.
91	Devil's Touch: Chills, fever, malaise, nausea, sore throat, cough, and confusion for 3d6 days. 50% chance of death if untreated.
92	Dementia: Permanent loss of cognitive capacity. Character is rendered useless and surrendered to Architect control until cured.
93	Cruzata: Painful seizures and spasms, itching, & nausea. Attack lasts 2d6 weeks. 50% chance of death if untreated.
94	Frostcough: Hacking cough, chills, chest pain, and difficulty breathing for 2d6 days. 50% chance of death if untreated.
95	Plague: Fever, swelling, buboes form on body for 2d6 weeks. 60% chance of death if untreated.
96	Dread Shakes: Violent spasms that last 2d6 minutes and deals 2d6 strength damage, recurrence every 2d6 months until death.
97	Molluxe: 3d6 days of severe diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and sometimes delirium. Ends in death if not cured.
98	Corphya: Muscular degeneration & painful skin anomalies. 5% chance of death & 10% chance of blindness each year untreated.
99	Fell Gasp: Heart function stops. Fatal if not cured within 2d6 minutes.



*“There are dark and twisted things in this world  
that lie in wait just beyond your torchlight,  
eager to reach out and rip the life right out of you.  
Ye best be prepared!”*

*- The Book of Azakriel 3:18*

# Mechanics



*The information on this page is a reprint of some of the information in the basic chapter. It is provided for easy reference only, nothing has been changed at all.*

## Standard Rolls

Standard actions are situations where there is a significant margin of error for the average person. Yes, you might fall down crossing that floor, but that is extremely unlikely. However, trying to pick the lock on that door is something else entirely. Someone wants to keep you out of that room and they designed the lock to do so. The average person has a very good chance of failing. As a consequence, you have to roll dice.

A standard action is resolved by rolling a number of ten-sided dice, called difficulty dice, and comparing that number to a relevant attribute. You may have a **trait** that gives you a bonus in certain specified situations.

For example, you say you want to climb a wall to escape from some monsters and the Architect tells you to roll your **fitness** attribute. They decide that you must roll two difficulty dice to represent the nature of the task. You roll two dice and get a result of 12. This is lower than your fitness (15). You are successful and make it to the top of the wall without falling or injuring yourself.

## Saves

When someone makes a standard roll with the intention of avoiding a negative outcome, it is referred to as a **save**. While it is mechanically no different from a standard roll, this distinction is important. Some **trait** bonuses specifically apply to only rolls, only saves, or both. Furthermore, you cannot take any preparatory actions after you have been informed of a save. Rocks falling down the hill are not going to stop while you dig around in your backpack for something to help you.

## Opposed Actions

Opposed actions are those where two entities are attempting to affect the same outcome. I am trying to stab you with my sword and you are trying to prevent me from doing so. Unlike a wall, I can change and react to your behavior. I am fluid and dynamic, and so are you. In this case, we both roll dice and we compare the relative outcomes. Thus our capacities are not judged alone, but in opposition to each another.

An opposed action is resolved by first making a roll very similar to a standard roll; by rolling a number of difficulty dice and comparing the sum to a relevant attribute, with a potential **trait** bonus. Once both sides roll, their margin of success is determined and whoever succeeded by a larger margin is the victor. Where opposed rolls get interesting is that both sides are making their own rolls and each may be rolling a different number of difficulty dice.



For example, you may be shooting an arrow at me, but I may be hidden in a dark doorway and you may be standing in a well-lit street. I can see your movements clearly and that makes my dodge easier while you have a very hard time seeing me and that makes your shot a little bit harder.

With the Architect's guidance, you roll three dice and get a result of 13. This is a good roll and it is less than your **agility** (15). You succeed by 2. Unfortunately in this case, the Architect decides that I only have to roll 1 difficulty die and I get a result of 3. Even though I have an average agility of 10, I succeed by 7. I notice the arrow in time and snap back to avoid it.

# Damage & Injury

There are a wide range of things in the world that can injure you. However, they all function mechanically in a very similar way. The amount of damage a source deals is listed in terms of *damage dice*. For example, a longsword has 2 damage dice. This is always a reference to six-sided dice. Bonus damage is always a flat number that is added to the die result after rolling (ex. +2).

When you are hit with damage, it will always be to an *attribute*. Typically it will be either *agility* or *fitness*, but sometimes other injuries do occur (most often through magical means). Sometimes the source of the damage will specify what attribute is being attacked (especially magical sources).

However, most damage is dealt by weapons or the environment. These sources are random in nature, with the nature of the loss depending on just how the injury was sustained. For these purposes, you should roll on the below table to determine what was injured. If any attribute drops below zero, the character dies.



### Random Attribute Damage: Roll 1d10

1-3	Agility	Arms, Legs, Hands, Feet
4-8	Fitness	Chest, Stomach, Back
9	Magnetism	Nose, Mouth, Cheeks
10	Perception	Eyes, Ears, Skull

## Morale Saves

Whenever you are injured, you must make a *willpower* save (called a morale save) at a penalty equal to the total of all attribute damage suffered so far. If you fail, your character is overwhelmed by fear. Exactly how they react to that fear is up for negotiation between you and the Architect. In most instances, you should try to flee as fast as possible.

## Bleeding

A wound caused by a blow that dealt more than 3 points of damage will bleed significantly. If the wound is not tightly bound using the bandages or magically healed, such a wound will cause 1 point of *fitness* damage every 15 minutes until either you die or receive treatment. Such injuries are very serious and require you to act swiftly to survive.

## Crippled and Severed Limbs

Any wound that deals more than 5 points of *agility* damage has a 50% chance of crippling the limb. While crippled, you cannot use the limb for any purpose. A wound that deals more than 7 points of *agility* damage has a 50% chance of severing the limb completely and a 25% chance of crippling it. Calculate these odds on the same roll so that there is only a 25% chance of escaping with just a really bad wound.

## Natural Healing

Attributes heal naturally at different rates. Some return very quickly and others much more slowly. Consult the chart to the right for the healing time for each attribute.

These rates assume that you are doing nothing but resting. No adventuring, no additional combats, no research, and so on. For serious wounds, you may be better off *resting an entire season* to heal faster.

### Healing Rates

Agility	1 per month
Fitness	1 per month
Magnetism	1 per week
Perception	1 per week
Knowledge	1 per day
Willpower	1 per day

# Exploration

In Novarium, the majority of gameplay will revolve around exploring the world. This will bring your character into situations that most people would avoid at almost all costs. An important element in the life of adventure is a willingness not just to endure these kinds of situations but to actively seek them out.

## Encumbrance

When traveling around the game world, you will need to determine how much equipment your character can feasibly take with them. In Novarium, weight is always denoted in pounds (lb or lbs).

The most weight that any character can carry on their own and still move is equal to seven times their current *fitness*. The most weight that any character can carry comfortably is double their current fitness. Therefore, an average person can carry about 20 lbs without having to worry about getting tired and a maximum of 70 lbs before immobilized.

Note the references to your *current* fitness. As you get injured, you will be able to carry less and less equipment. Keep this in mind when planning an expedition into dangerous territory.

If you are carrying more weight than you can manage comfortably, you lose 1 *willpower* per hour per multiple of your *fitness* above your comfort limit. The average person in the example above would lose 1 willpower per hour carrying 21-30 lbs, 2 willpower per hour carrying 31-40 lbs, and 3 willpower per hour carrying 41-50 lbs. If your willpower is reduced to zero, you lose the will to carry on and collapse to rest. Willpower lost in this manner heals at twice the normal rate.

## Movement Speeds

An unencumbered person can hike a number of leagues in a day equal to their *fitness*, minus a penalty provided by the Architect to represent the difficulty of the terrain. A league is a distance of about three miles (or five kilometers). Mounts travel at double their fitness in leagues per day. Remember, a party travels at the speed of its slowest member.

## Daily Sustenance

The degree to which you track the demands of daily life is up to the consensus of the group. You may decide that you want to keep track of the source of every meal, the exact number of days spent foraging for food, and exactly how much water you are caring in your support wagon. The rules below are provided for guidance if you choose to track these variables in your game. If you don't want to use them, don't feel obligated to do so. They are here to help you if you want to track this stuff.

### Food:

Each character must consume at least one *ration* per day in order to stay alive. You must consume a number of rations equal to one fourth your *fitness*, rounded down, in order to heal normally. Rations can be purchased for fixed costs or they can be generated by searching for food in the wilderness.

### Water:

Each character must consume at least one *drink* per day in order to stay alive. You must consume a number of drinks equal to one half your *fitness*, rounded down, in order to heal normally. Drinks can be purchased for fixed costs or they can be generated by searching for water in the wilderness.

### Searching for Food & Water:

The Architect will assign a die value to each region of the game world to indicate the relative abundance of that area and another die value to indicate the presence of water. A rich lowland might have a value of d10 for both food and water while a frozen tundra might have a d4 food value and a d12 water value.

Characters can search for food or water in a region by devoting an entire day to the process and rolling the appropriate die. Their labor yields a number of rations or drinks equal to the die result. Thus hunting for food in that rich lowland would require you to roll 1d10. If you rolled a four, you would get four rations as a result of the day's work.

## Sleep

As with sustenance, the degree to which you track the demands of daily life is up to the consensus of the group. You may decide to keep track of every hour of sleep and exactly how long each party member stays up on the night watch. These rules are provided for guidance if you choose to track these variables in your game.

A character needs 6 hours of sleep every day in order to function effectively. Any time a character fails to meet this standard, temporarily lower all *attributes* by 1 for the entire following day. If they fail to get enough sleep for two days in a row, temporarily lower all attributes by 5 for the entire following day. Each successive day without sleep results in another 4 cumulative penalty applied, so the third day reduce attributes by 9, by 13 on the fourth day, and so on.

If these penalties reduce any attributes to zero, the character falls asleep despite the desires of the player. Anyone forced to sleep in this manner will sleep for a number of hours as dictated by the Architect unless forcefully roused.



## Vision and Light

The ability to see is vital to survival. Unfortunately, a large portion of a character's life is not spent in brightly lit open areas. They tend to go into caves, dungeons, buildings, thick forests, or walk along foggy coastlines. They frequently camp in the wilderness at night. As a result, they often find themselves in situations where things within their normal range of vision may be obscured, distorted, or completely hidden.

What you actually see in the world around you, how far your torch light extends, and whether you see that Ghoul hiding in the corner is exclusively determined by the Architect. They may provide you with guidelines, such as a torch's light extends fifteen feet in every direction, or they may set such distinctions aside and simply speak in vague terms.

However, the Architect will call for you to make a *perception* save when they want you to have a chance to notice something that most people might miss. This might be a tripwire running across the floor, it might be a monster hiding in the shadows, or just whether you notice a coin lying in the dirt. Generally, you will only get one chance at this. They may impose a penalty on this save to represent situational factors like shadows or camouflage.

## The Effects of Darkness and Blindness

As your vision becomes worse, the Architect will impose progressively worse penalties on anything you do that requires vision, such as attacking a target in combat or spotting an approaching monster. Some magical effects may completely blind you as well. If you are completely blind, the Architect may impose a very large penalty or simply decide that the task is impossible to accomplish without sight.

Some mechanical tasks like lockpicking may be accomplished completely by feel, but also at a severe penalty imposed by the Architect. Some tasks are obviously unaffected by darkness, such as talking. Ultimately, what you can and cannot accomplish in the dark or while blinded is up to the judgement of the Architect in regards to the challenges of the situation.

Encounters

While traveling overland or moving about within a structure, the Architect may inform you that you have encountered something out of the ordinary. These situations are treated similarly in many ways, despite each having their own unique flavor.

An encounter could be running into a wild animal, coming across a monster or it's lair, or a holdup by local highwaymen. It could just as easily be finding a small frontier homestead or a waystation that provides sustenance for the King's cavalry as they travel about the land.

Rolls for Encounters

If such an encounter occurs, every party member must make a *perception* save. The Architect makes similar saves for the other side. The Architect will set difficulties for these saves based on the nature of the terrain and what each side is doing. Spotting mounted riders crossing an open field is easier than spotting people on foot in a forest with thick underbrush.

If someone is using concealment or stealth, their margin of success is applied as a penalty to the difficulty die results for the other side. Whoever succeeds on their save by the largest margin notices the other side first. Depending on how the dice fall, this may give you an advantage or it could result in your group running into an ambush.

The Architect can simply decide the *intentions* of those encountered or they may roll randomly from the table to the right. The Architect makes this roll in secret and as a character you will have to watch those encountered to try and deduce what they intend.

The range of outcomes is shown here to reinforce that non-hostile outcomes are strong possibilities. You do not have to greet everyone you meet with swords drawn and magic at the ready. You may very well find that diplomacy and kindness can open a lot of doors that violence cannot break down.



Intentions Table

1	Looking for assistance from you, very friendly and open
2	Eager to interact with you, curious and friendly
3	Cautious, but relaxed posture and trying to be non-hostile
4	Cautious and concerned, weapons drawn and at the ready
5	Worried by your presence and trying to slip away quietly
6	Disturbed by your presence and trying to retreat quickly
7	Terrified by your presence and bolting away at high speed
8	View you as a target, trying to stalk and ambush you
9	View you as a target, prepared for an immediate fight
10	View you as a target, charging to attack immediately

## Random Discoveries

The Architect may have a treasure, item, clue, or any variety of things hidden in various locations. These are used to bring life to the world, not drive the plot. They are the little things that make the world feel alive and remind you that you are not the first to ever see it. For example, a book may have been hidden in a secret niche long ago. It remains there for you to find, hopefully...

### Discovery Rolls

If you are not actively searching for anything, just walking through an area, the Architect may roll a six-sided die to assess whether you found a random item hidden in a particular location. On a result of 1, you accidentally find the object. For example, you step on a coin lying in the dirt and it makes a noise.

The Architect may sometimes roll a six-sided die out of the blue, just to mess with your head. So don't assume that if they are rolling dice, something must be around to find.

If you are actively searching for anything out of the ordinary, then you should use your **perception** actively by searching an area thoroughly. This increases your chances significantly, but keep in mind that actively searching requires spending several minutes engaged in that task and you may be making noises that attracts attention from monsters or NPCs that are nearby.



## Digging

You may discover structures above ground that have collapsed or you may find collapsed tunnels in an underground location. You can dig through loose dirt and rock at a rate equal to half your **fitness** in cubic feet per hour of work. Heavier materials take more time to dig through, based on the judgment of the Architect. This process also constitutes searching that material as it is removed and you will be given the appropriate chance to discover anything hidden within it.

## Falling from Heights

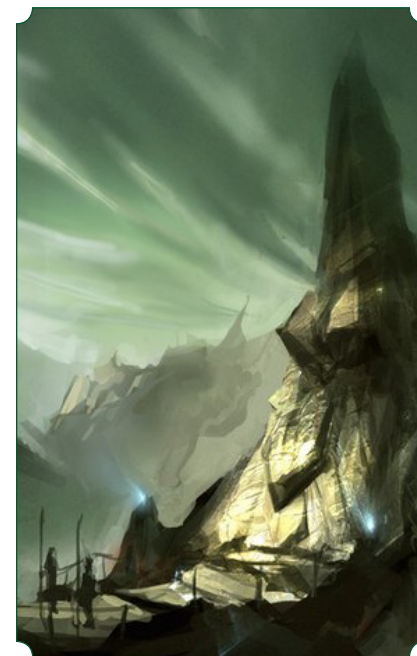
You may accidentally lose your footing and fall from an elevated position. You will suffer 1 **damage die** per 10 feet of distance travelled. A successful **agility** save will halve that damage. Any fall of 250 feet or greater is automatically fatal unless you have magical protection.

## Locked or Stuck Objects

You may encounter a door that has swelled in the heat and prevents passage forward or a locked chest that might contain valuables inside. You can make a **fitness** roll to simply force something open or you can make a **knowledge** roll to bypass a locking mechanism. Some objects may be locked in a manner that cannot be disabled, such as a door being barred from the other side. The Architect may assess a penalty to your rolls based on the challenge presented and/or give you a bonus for having appropriate tools. Be advised that the use of extreme force to open an object usually creates a lot of noise and may attract unwanted attention from monsters or NPCs that are nearby.

## Traps

Sometimes intelligent creatures can set up **traps** to injure those who try to sneak up on their lairs or hideouts. These traps can range from simple deadfalls and pit traps to intricate mechanical triggers that can shoot out poisoned darts. Anyone approaching the trap can get a **perception** save at the Architect's discretion to notice it. If detected, someone may disarm the trap by making a **knowledge** roll. Failure may or may not trigger the trap mechanism. Some traps may be undetectable and/or unable to be disabled. Magical traps must be detected magically.



Toxins

The world of Vaena is the home to a wide range of noxious substances. It is important to know how these substances affect your body so that you can react appropriately if inflicted. A toxin is a substance that inflicts *attribute* damage on the victim.

A toxin is introduced through the body via an *exposure method*. This determines how you can become infected. For example, you cannot inhale a respiratory toxin if you are holding your breath.

The toxin will wait a period of time before becoming active. This is called *gestation*. A toxin with a gestation of 1 minute would begin affecting you 1 minute after exposure, however some toxins may have gestation periods measured in days or even longer units of time.

Once the gestation period is over, each toxin has *symptoms* that will begin to express themselves. This may actually be your first indication that you are even infected, so pay attention.

A toxin will then inflict damage to one or more attributes. The amount of *damage dice* and which attributes are targeted is based on the toxin, but it will occur one damage die at a time at a frequency called an *interval*. Once all the damage has been dealt, the toxin is considered to have run it's course and you are no longer affected by it.

In the example below, you have to breathe in Whistleberry Powder to be affected. After 3d8 minutes, you start to experience wild delusions, become disoriented, and have your skin turn purple. Then you take 1 damage die every hour to your *perception*.

Example Toxin: Whistleberry Powder

Exposure	Respiratory
Gestation	3d8 minutes
Symptoms	Purple skin tone, disorientation, wild delusions
Damage	5 dice to <i>perception</i>
Interval	1 per Hour to each attribute

Drugs

A drug is similar in many ways to a toxin but it does not always damage you and it may provide some beneficial effects. Drugs can affect the mind, the body, or both. Drugs can also create physical and or psychological dependency. Alcohol is an example of a drug.

A drug has the exposure, gestation, and symptoms characteristics of a toxin, but does not deal damage to you over interval periods. Instead, it has a simple *duration* after which the effects expire. A drug can raise or lower any aspect of your character; from *attributes* to magical *methods and materia*. Exactly what a drug does is completely up to the Architect.

A drug also has the potential to be addictive. The likelihood that the user will become addicted to the drug is represented by an *addiction factor*. This is a value which you must roll above with a ten-sided die in order to avoid addiction. For example, an addiction factor of 4 means that you must roll a ten-sided die and get a result of 5 or more. If you roll a 4 or less, you are addicted to the drug. Someone who is addicted to a drug must consume it every week or suffer *withdrawal symptoms*.

Withdrawal effects will intensify, plateau, and eventually fade over a 1d10 day period for all drugs. The Architect can force stability rolls to see if you can resist the temptation to consume the drug to stop the withdrawal symptoms.

Example Drug: Goldenbrew Dwarven Ale

Exposure	Oral Consumption
Gestation	4d6 minutes
Symptoms	Drunkenness & Vivid Combat Hallucinations
Effects	-3 Agility, +4 Fitness, +6 Magnetism
Duration	4 Hours
Addiction	2
Withdrawal	Headaches & slight nausea

# Combat

As a part of the game, you will find yourself in situations that may become violent. In those circumstances, special rules apply to make sure that the game is adjudicated fairly. You may wish to use miniatures in combination with a battlemat to represent the conflict. You may not. Ultimately it is entirely your choice to do so; the game doesn't require it.

## Combat Rounds

Combat is divided into combat rounds that represent approximately six seconds of game time. Within each round, everyone can take one **combat action**. Actions are taken in order of **agility** with the combatant with highest agility going first (ties broken by **perception**). If you hit your opponents and deal damage, roll the damage and apply it before moving on. This can potentially result in some low agility combatants being injured or dying before they can act, therefore having a high agility can be very advantageous tactically.

## Between Rounds

Some spell effects can expire between rounds. Otherwise, combat continues round-by-round until only one side remains fighting. This may be because everyone else is dead or it may be because they have surrendered, run away, or become incapacitated from sustaining injuries.

Attack
Draw & Attack
Move & Attack
Move
Cast a Spell
Move & Cast
Parry
Dodge
Block
Grapple
Charge
Hold



## Combat Actions

These are defined action types and do not represent everything you can do in combat. However, if you want to attempt anything outside of these guidelines, the Architect must determine how it is adjudicated.

### Attack:

Taking this action means you are spending the entire round attempting to injure a targeted opponent with your weapon. The opponent must be within range of your weapon. Attacking is always an **agility** attribute roll. This is also called a **to hit** roll.

The difficulty is set by the Architect based on the nature of the terrain and the situation. Shooting someone with an arrow across a fifty foot chasm at dusk is much harder than hitting someone standing next to you with an axe. Anyone aware that someone is trying to hit them also adds one difficulty die to this calculation by virtue of taking obvious measures to avoid being hit. They would not gain that benefit if someone was attacking them from behind, for example.

However, when someone declares an attack, their target can also choose to either **parry** or **dodge**. This will take up their action for the round, but they have a much better chance of living through the experience. If the opponent is benefiting from **block**, they could also make rolls to stop the attack in that fashion.

If you are successful, you hit your opponent and roll the appropriate amount of **damage dice** for what was dealt. **Armor** is applied as a penalty to any damage rolled. The Architect will reduce **attributes** accordingly.

### Draw & Attack:

Taking this action means you are either dropping your current weapon and drawing a new weapon or that you began the round unarmed and drew a weapon to attack. The weapon must be easily accessible to do this. A spear strapped to your back or a sword in a scabbard is considered accessible. A dagger in a pouch at the bottom of your backpack is not accessible. This is adjudicated as if it were a normal attack, but add one difficulty die to your **to hit** roll.



### Move & Attack:

Taking this action means you are moving closer to an opponent and then attacking them. The opponent must be within a number of feet equal to your **agility** to take this action. You must already have your weapon in hand. This is adjudicated as if it were a normal attack, but add one difficulty die to your **to hit** roll.

### Move:

Taking this action means you are only moving around on the battlefield. This could be in any direction but you must remain a few feet away from any enemy. If you want to move close to an enemy or through their immediate area, you must use a **Charge** instead. You can move up to twice your **agility** in feet. While moving about, you gain a bonus to **armor** equal to one-half your agility.

### Cast a Spell:

Taking this action means you are casting a magical spell of some kind. The mechanics of casting the spell described in the *Magic* chapter. While casting a spell, you get no benefit from any armor you are wearing because you are so wrapped up in casting the spell that you are not able to take even basic steps to defend yourself from attack. If you are hit with any kind of *damage* before the end of the round, the spell fizzles to no effect unless you can make a *willpower* roll against a number of difficulty dice equal to the amount of damage dealt.

### Move & Cast:

Taking this action means you are moving a short distance while casting a spell. You must add 1 difficulty die to the casting roll, but you can move up to your *agility* in feet.



### Dodge:

Taking this action means you are attempting to avoid an incoming blow from an enemy. You can dodge as a response to being attacked (if you have not acted yet in the round) or you may preemptively dodge by declaring it in advance. For example, “I am going to dodge any attacks from the big Ogre in the center”. Note that you do not actually make the roll until the target performs their attack.

As with a *parry*, dodging involves making an opposed roll against their attack with your own *agility*, plus any applicable bonuses you might have. Magical attacks cannot be dodged.

### Block

Taking this action means you are attempting to stop all incoming blows from your enemies using a shield. This is in addition to the normal *damage reduction* that a shield provides. This is the abandonment of attack in order to completely devote oneself to defense.

Blocking allows you to make an *agility* roll every single time you are attacked during that round, unless the attacker is attacking you from behind. Success means that you manage to get the shield in front of the attack and completely negate it. Failure means the blow is treated normally, including being affected by your shield’s damage reduction.

### Parry:

Taking this action means you are attempting to block an incoming blow from an enemy. You can parry as a response to being attacked (if you have not acted yet in the round) or you may *hold* until you are attacked and then take your parry action. Note that you do not actually make the roll until the target performs their attack.

Parrying involves making a normal *Attack* roll in response to the strike against you, but the situation has now become an opposed roll. Despite making the roll as if it was an attack, you do not actually hit the opponent with a parry. It is treated as a kind of save. Instead, if you succeed you have stopped the blow from hitting you.

### Grapple:

Taking this action means you are attempting to wrestle your opponent to the ground. Your opponent can parry or dodge this attempt. In the case of a **parry**, if they succeed you actually do take damage from their weapon. In the case of a **dodge**, if they succeed you have to make an **agility** save to avoid falling face first onto the ground. Note that you don't actually make the roll until the target performs their **dodge**.

Resolve a grapple by making opposed **fitness** rolls. Every round that you grapple, the difference between the two margins of success becomes a penalty to all future rolls by the losing grappler. This penalty remains in effect until the grapple is broken. Note that while grappled, an opponent can still attack you with a dagger or other small weapon.

For example, while grappling you succeed on your fitness roll by 5 and your opponent only succeeds by 1. The opponent now suffers a -4 penalty to all actions while you have them in your grip.

These penalties can be stacked and/or combined with the grappling efforts of other combatants. If a grappling penalty becomes larger than an opponent's fitness, they are considered pinned and completely unable to take actions. Thus a classic wrestling match would consist of successive grappling rolls until one wrestler is slowly overcome and eventually pinned.

### Charge:

Taking this action means you are running into an opponent's immediate vicinity and using the force of your movement to aid in the attack, such as when charging with a spear. The opponent must be within a number of feet equal to twice your **agility** to take this action. You must already have your weapon in hand. This is adjudicated as if it were a normal attack, but it deals double damage. You are considered stunned in the round immediately following a charge and cannot take any actions.

### Hold:

Taking this action means you are waiting to a more opportune time to do something. You must declare what you are waiting for and what you will do at that time. For example, you might say "I am waiting for him to move out of the doorway and then I am going to attack with my sword".

If the conditions are fulfilled before your next action, you will perform your task. If not, you will have done nothing. If multiple combatants hold, ties are broken by **agility**, if still tied then use **perception**.





*“Magic is the dividing line of power.  
Those without it tremble in fear  
while those with it unleash a mighty roar.”*

*- The Book of Azakriel 4:21*

# Magic



## Basic Casting

Magic in Novarium is very simple. You choose a *method* and *materia*. Add the values you have for those two elements together, then roll a number of dice based on how powerful you want the spell to be. If you roll a result less than or equal to the sum of the elements, you succeed. If not, you take 1 point of *willpower* damage and the spell fails.

It is really that easy. The only trick is figuring out how many dice to roll to accomplish the effect you want. The other sections of this chapter are dedicated to answering to that question.

## Using Essence

*Essence* can be used to accelerate the flow of magical energy through your body while you cast the spell. This removes a random number of dice from the difficulty of the spell, making it much easier to cast. However, you run the risk of *overloading* the spell and losing control.

### Rolling for Essence Use

First, you must decide exactly how many essence points you intend to use for the casting. Your character touches the objects containing the essence and they are immediately and irrevocably disintegrated as the magic energy is released.

Roll a six-sided die per point of essence used. Remove a number of difficulty dice from your casting roll equal to this result. If this reduces your difficulty dice to zero, the spell automatically succeeds without a roll. If this would reduce your difficulty dice below zero, you experience overload.



## Overload

Overload is when you have tapped into more magical energy than you need to cast your spell. This magical energy must be used. The only question is whether you will be able to control it or if it will slip out of your grasp. In the latter case, the Architect will describe how the spell runs rampant and you gain a *radiance point*. Regardless of the outcome of this roll, your character will also take *damage* from the overload.

### Rolling for Overload Control

Roll 1 difficulty die for each extra die that could not be applied to the original casting against your *willpower* attribute. If you succeed on this roll, you can tell the Architect how you want the extra dice used. If not, then the Architect will make the decision.



The power of the spell must be increased in such a way to use up the extra dice. This can be done by either increasing the power of the *method* or *materia* being used or by adding additional methods and/or materia into the spell.

You will probably choose to increase things that have little chance of causing negative consequences to your own group, such as making your fireball deal more damage to the target instead of expanding its damage radius and possibly injuring your friends as a consequence.

However, the Architect is encouraged to do the opposite for the sake of balance. They will look for ways to make the spell problematic, annoying, or costly to you. This is to make sure that you have a strong interest in maintaining control of your own spellcasting.

## Overload Damage

When you experience **overload**, a larger quantity of magic is being channeled through your body than you are able to tolerate. This causes you to take a point of **fitness** damage for every extra die you overloaded. This damage heals normally. Note that even if this damage is sufficient to kill you, the spell still takes effect.

## Radiance

Assuming you survive this process, if you failed your control roll then you also gain a point of radiance. Radiance is a kind of residual magical energy that builds up inside your body. It has three effects.

First, radiance makes channeling **essence** easier. For every point of radiance, you get an additional point when you roll for essence use. Thus a character with 3 points of radiance would roll  $2d6+3$  if they tapped into 2 essence to cast a spell (instead of just  $2d6$ ). This makes your spells cast with essence even more powerful, but also increases the risk of further overloads and additional radiance accumulation.

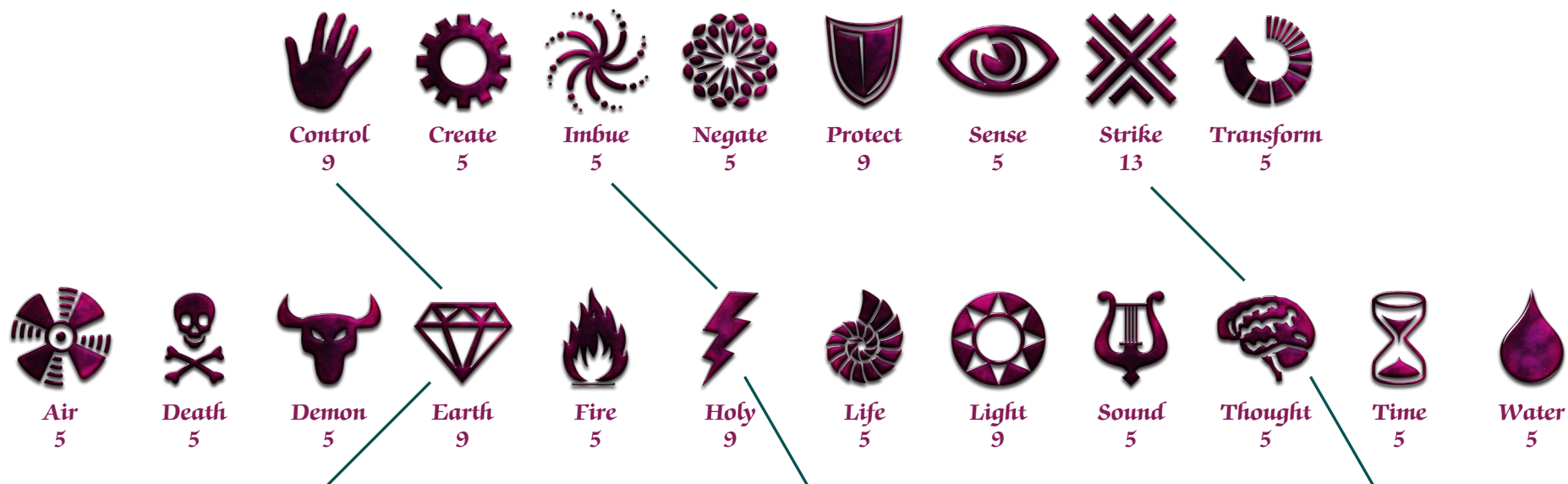
Second, radiance makes your body glow. The chart to the right shows how powerful the glow is, based on the amount of radiance points you have. Once you accumulate 20 points of radiance, your body becomes ethereal and you are considered to be either an **angel** or a **devil**, depending on how morally upright you are. Further radiance points do not accumulate, instead you surrender your character to the Architect for them to use as an NPC and you shift to play another character.

1	Candle
3	Torch
5	Bonfire
10	Sunlight
15	Blinding
20	Ethereal

Third, the glow effect described above extends into the **ethereal realm** and makes it easier for it's inhabitants to locate you. While this makes it more likely for angels to contact you, it also makes it more likely that devils will contact you as well. They delight in tempting powerfully radiant beings into twisted bargains and into committing immoral acts. They also enjoy consuming them, so stay on your toes.



# Basic Casting Examples



## Control + Earth

While Alyssa is traveling through an old underground structure, a wall gives way and the ceiling suddenly collapses. As the crumbling pieces of earth come cascading down, she quickly mutters a few strange words and holds out an outstretched hand.

[Rolls 2d10] = 14 < 18 = Control + Earth

The spell narrowly fails, stopping the falling rock and soil in mid-air. She holds concentration while backing out of the room slowly. Once a safe distance away, her hand fell and the spell faded. The room is quickly filled with dirt and she let out a sigh.

*"That is going to take a long time to dig out."*

## Imbue + Holy

Alyssa has discovered a Demon living near a powerful font and corrupting the animals of the wood. Anticipating a difficult battle, she decides to enchant her sword with the power of the heavens. She places the sword on a large rock and begins the incantation.

[Rolls 3d10] = 23 > 14 = Imbue + Holy

The spell fails and Alyssa loses one *willpower* point. Disheartened by this setback, but determined to succeed in her quest, Alyssa continues deeper into the woods toward the corrupted font. With or without the help of magic, she was determined to vanquish him.

*"HELLION! God's vengeance comes swiftly!"*

## Strike + Thought

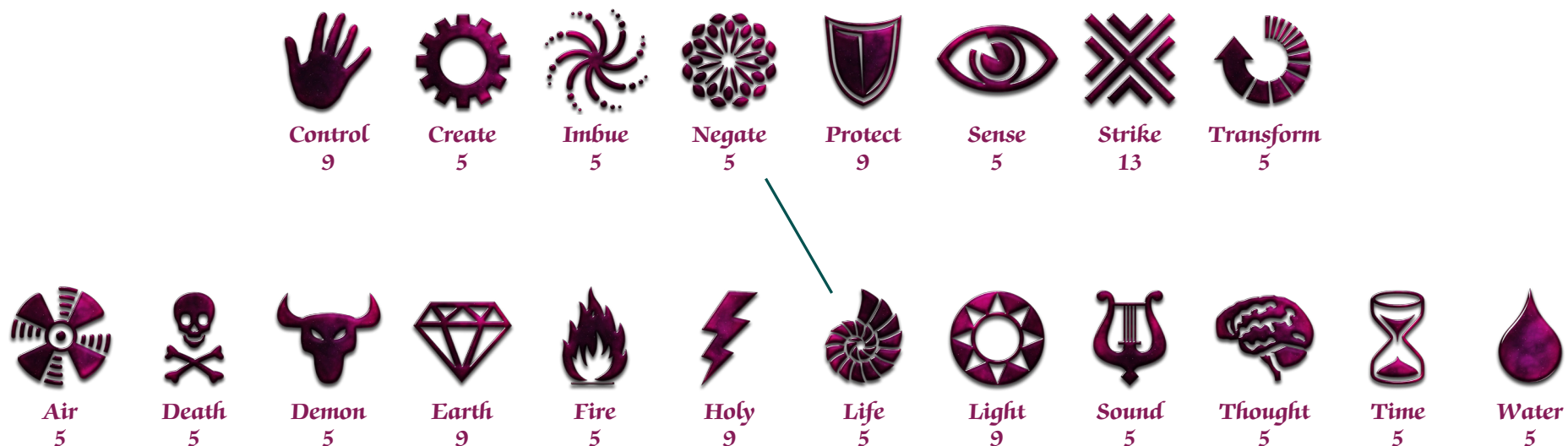
As Alyssa was travelling along a road, a few brigands emerged from the underbrush with weapons drawn. Their leader called out, telling her to drop her weapon and she would be spared. Instead, Alyssa pointed her finger at them and muttered a few words.

[Rolls 3d10] = 16 < 18 = Strike + Thought

They immediately fell to the ground, writhing in pain. She calmly approached and collected their coin purses. Then she wrapped their weapons in a blanket and hoisted them over her shoulder. Smiling, she turned to their still writhing forms.

*"The local militia will really appreciate these!"*

## Essence-Assisted Casting Example with Overload



### Original Casting : Negate + Life

Alyssa is traveling through an ancient forest in search of a hidden font. She has come to an impasse. One part of the forest is exceptionally overgrown and thick impenetrable brush prevents her from advancing further. Knowing that she is going to have to call upon some really potent magic to bypass this overgrowth and that she lacks prowess in the kind of magic needed to do it, she decides to tap into some essence to fill in the gaps. She tells the Architect that she is casting a spell to temporarily remove plants from the entire area in front of her [+3 difficulty dice] for an entire day [+4 difficulty dice]. She taps into two essence points to ensure the spells succeeds.

[Rolls 2d6] = 11!

Wow! That is 4 points of overload! The Architect tells her to make an overload control roll.

[Rolls 4d10] = 32 > her 14 **willpower**

She failed to control the spell. Alyssa takes 1 **willpower** damage from the spell failure, 4 **fitness** damage from the overload, and gains 1 **radiance** point since she failed to control the outcome. Now the Architect begins to narrate the outcome of the spell.

### Spell Results : Narrated by the Architect

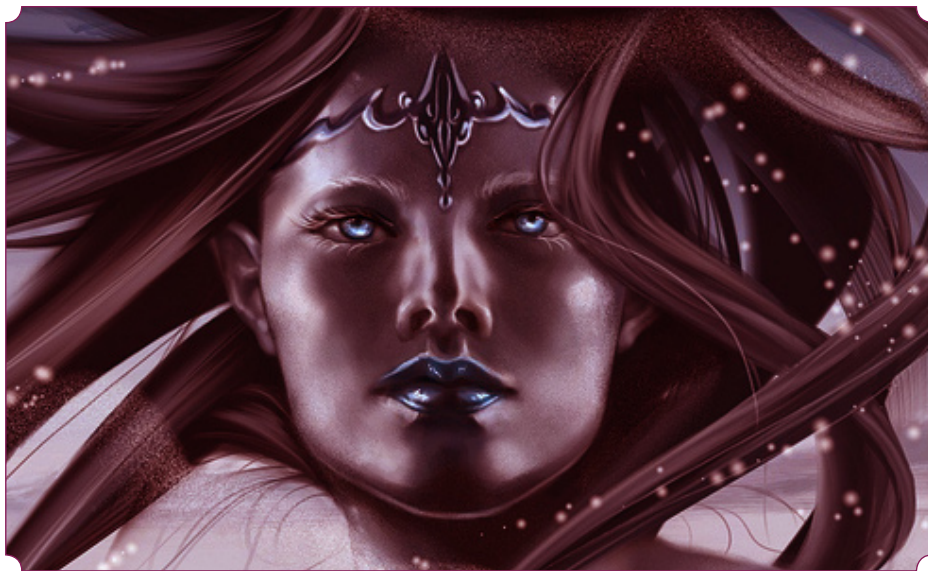
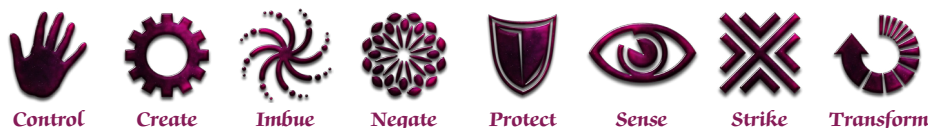
*As the spell begins to take effect, you feel the massive amount of energy unleashed from the essence flow uncontrollably through your body. Your skin feels like it is on fire as the energy of the magic crackles around you and the pain becomes almost too much to bear.*

*The trees and overgrowth before you begin to vanish as if being consumed by an invisible wave. It seems to stretch out endlessly towards the horizon. Within moments, you can no longer see any form of life at all, everything having been swept clean from existence. As the pain fades and you regain your senses, you turn around and see that the entire forest behind you has vanished as well. You stand alone in the middle of an empty sea of dirt. All is silent...*

# Methods

Each method represents a way in which magic acts upon reality. It may be helpful to think of a method as a tool of sorts. No tool is necessarily better than the others, they serve different needs. For example, a hammer is good at a particular kind of task; hitting something repetitively. If you try to use it to sew clothes, you will have a very hard time. Think of methods in this way and choose one that fits the job.






The dice guidelines provided in this section are meant to serve most purposes within the game. Once you move outside of the ranges provided, the Architect must use their judgment to decide how many dice you must roll to create an effect. Anything can be accomplished with magic, the question is... at what cost?



## Control

This method governs the use of magic to manipulate how something is moving or behaving. A small amount of force can be used to accomplish this, but it cannot be large enough to deal damage. For that, use *Strike*.

Control could change the arc of an arrow in flight or to affect gravity's pull on an object. For instance, it could be paired with the *life* materia to move someone's arm or cause a turtle to pull within its shell. It could be used with the *death* materia to cause a corpse to stand up off the ground and move about or with the *fire* materia to cause a fire to spread outward and ignite a nearby pile of leaves.

-  With a single die, you can affect something within ten yards of where you are standing for one minute, so long as you maintain line of sight. Any form of counter-force dispels the effect.
-  With two dice, you can affect something within one hundred yards of where you are standing for up to ten minutes, so long as you maintain line of sight. Someone must exert a damage-dealing level of force to stop the movement, such as attacking it with a weapon.
-  With three dice, you can affect something for two hours, regardless of distance as long as you can see it clearly. Only a magical counter-force can prevent you from acting upon the object.
-  With four dice, you can affect something for an entire day simply through concentration (i.e. you don't even have to see it). Only a magical counter-force can prevent you from acting upon the object.
-  With five dice, the target falls under your permanent control and can be effortlessly moved by instinct as if it were an extended part of your body. Only a magic spell specifically tailored to sever the linkage can prevent you from acting upon the object.

## Create

This method governs the use of magic to create a completely new object from nothing. You cannot create something inside of an existing object, only in open air. The object does not deal damage as it is created, as anything that is in the way of its expansion is pushed aside gently. However, once created the object can fall, roll, or be moved so as to deal damage. You must be highly familiar with the created object and the Architect is free to impose penalties for complex items like a timepiece or a work of art.

Note that when used with *death*, dead objects are created. It does not cause death in a subject. When used with *time*, additional time is created for you. Everything else appears frozen in place while that time elapses. When used with *thought*, the thoughts are created in the minds of a target you designate (at least +2 dice).

**+1** With a single die, you can create something that originates in your hand. Your hand must be able to support its weight. It lasts for an hour before fading away to nothing. You must concentrate to keep the item in existence for the entire duration.

**+2** With two dice, you can create something that originates within five yards of your location. It lasts for a day before fading away to nothing. You do not have to maintain concentration, just line of sight.

**+3** With three dice, you can create something that originates within your sight range. It lasts for a *season* before fading away to nothing. You do not have to concentrate or keep line of sight.

**+4** With four dice, you can create something that originates at any location within your sight range. It lasts for a year before fading away to nothing. You do not have to concentrate or keep line of sight.

**+5** With five dice, you can create something that originates at any location you have ever been to before. The object is permanent.

## Imbue

This method governs the use of magic to enchant an item. Magical energy is transferred into an object to cause some sort of effect. The exact magical effect created must be negotiated with the Architect.

For example, you might use *fire* to make magical flames burn off the surface of a sword so that it ignites anything it hits. The number of materia dice used for the spell determines how large of an effect is generated by the spell and how much damage it deals.

**+1** With a single die, you can imbue a magical effect that lasts for an hour. This can affect an object weighing up to twenty pounds.

**+2** With two dice, you can imbue a magical effect that lasts for a day. This can affect an object weighing up to fifty pounds.

**+3** With three dice, you can imbue a magical effect that lasts for a year. This can affect an object weighing up to a hundred pounds.

**+4** With four dice, you can imbue a magical effect that lasts for a hundred years. This can affect an object weighing up to five hundred pounds. This deceptive permanence is the reason why there are far fewer “true” magical items than one might be led to believe.

**+5** With five dice, you can imbue a magical effect that lasts forever. This can affect an object weighing up to a thousand pounds.



## Negate

This method governs the use of magic to remove something from existence. There is no **damage** dealt, the target is simply eliminated from the universe. The die cost to use negate is often low, but the materia cost must match the size and nature of the object affected and thus it will likely balance out as a consequence.

Negate is often the only recourse against objects too tough to damage sufficiently to break or move. Things like piles of dirt or stone, huge foes like giants or dragons, etc. Alternatively, it can be invaluable at stopping intangible things like **light**, **sound** or **thought**. Finally, it can stop things that are impervious to damage of almost any kind, such as **fire** or **water**.



With a single die, you can negate something you are touching. It is removed from existence for ten minutes, then it reappears in its former location as if it never even left.



With two dice, you can negate something within one hundred yards of your location. It is removed from existence for thirty minutes, then it reappears in its former location as if it never even left.



With three dice, you can negate something within your sight range. It is removed from existence for an hour, then it reappears in its former location as if it never even left.



With four dice, you can negate something within your sight range. It is removed from existence for a day, then it reappears in its former location as if it never even left.



With five dice, you can negate something within your sight range or with which you are extremely familiar, such as an old book that you have had for years. It is removed from existence permanently. It can never be restored, not even through a **create** spell although it is possible someone could create a new version. It is gone forever.

## Protect

This method governs the use of magic to prevent damage or to prevent something from affecting you. You must choose a materia to match the source of the damage or effect you are trying to prevent. You must use a number of materia dice to match the number of materia dice used in the opposing spell or to represent the nature of what is attacking you.

For example, you must use **sound** to stop sonic damage, **fire** to stop incendiary damage, and so on. Injury from metal or stone weapons can be stopped with **earth**. However, a wooden spear, a punch, or a charging beast could only be stopped with **life**. Attempts to alter how time affects you could be stopped with **time**.

You can also protect someone else from an effect, if you can touch them while casting.



If stopping magical damage or effects, you must match the method dice of the opposing spell. The materia must also match. If stopping physical attacks or effects, you must use 1 method die per **damage die** dealt by the objects or attackers.



## Sense

This method governs the use of magic to detect the presence or status of something at a distance. You can specify a few details of what you are looking for to sharpen your search, such as only people thinking *thoughts* about killing the king or only things to the north of here.

The materia and the number of dice you choose will determine the nature of what is detected. For example, you might use *life* with only one materia die. This will only allow you to sense a very small living being. If you add more dice, you can detect larger life forms.



With a single die, you can sense something within one hundred yards of your location. You are only given the general direction.



With two dice, you can sense something within five miles of your location. You are given the general direction of the object as well as a few minor details about its nature, such as that it is a fire that has been burning for a few hours.



With three dice, you can sense something within a hundred miles of your location. You are given the general direction of the object as well as the complete details of its nature, such as that it is a dead man named Jack who died yesterday at noon.

## Strike

This method governs the use of magic to deal damage or cause a magical effect on a target. You must choose a materia to match the source of the damage or effect you are trying to cause. The number of materia dice determines the size of the effect you are causing, such as only one *fire* die for a small blast or several dice for a big explosion.



You must use 1 die per *damage die* dealt. You can strike anything within your field of vision, so long as there are no obstructions between you and the target.

## Transform

This method governs the use of magic to change the inherent nature of an object. You can be extremely detailed in what kind of changes you are attempting to perform, so long as you stay within the boundaries proscribed below. The number of materia dice used determines the size and nature of the affected area/target and the number of transform dice determines the degree of change created and how long it lasts.

Minor changes are things like coloration, small variations in size or shape, slight changes in texture, etc. Major changes are complete alteration of parts of the whole, such as turning someone's arm into a sword or creating ice on top of a lake. Complete changes are just that, metamorphosis into a totally different object, such as turning a dragon into a sheep or a sword into a piece of bread.



With a single die, you can change something which you are touching in a few minor ways. These changes stay in effect for ten minutes, then the object reverts to the original form.



With two dice, you can change something which you are touching in a several major ways. These changes stay in effect for an hour, then the object reverts to the original form.



With three dice, you can change something in your vision range in a several major ways. These changes stay in effect for twelve hours, then the object reverts to the original form.



With four dice, you can change something in your vision range into something completely different. These changes stay in effect for a day, then the object reverts to the original form.



With five dice, you can permanently change something in your vision range into something completely different.

# Materia

Each materia represents the substance upon which or through which a magic spell acts. It may be helpful to think of a materia as the medium upon which a piece of artwork is drawn, with the *method* serving as the implement being used. Oil on Canvas will look a very different from a Stylus on Clay. The logic of the pairing is important.

The dice guidelines provided in this section are meant to serve most purposes within the game. Once you move outside of the ranges provided, the Architect must use their judgment to decide how many dice you must roll to create an effect. Anything can be accomplished with magic, the question is... at what cost?






Unlike methods, a spell can have more than one materia. Usually, this is only done by a very powerful spellcaster or someone with a lot of *overload* dice to use. The dice for all materia used are added together for adjudication purposes. You must have a plausible explanation of how the spell uses the additional materia. For example, you could cast a **Strike-Demon-Fire** spell that causes a fiery unholy tentacle to reach out and strike your opponent for both demonic and fire damage.



## Air

This materia governs interaction with wind, air, vapors, and/or breathing. It does not cover electrical discharges such as lightning (*fire*) nor does it cover precipitation directly (*water*).

However, it may be used by a clever caster to make such outcomes more likely. For example, you might *create* a strong wind to blow a storm cloud that already exists into a different area and thus cause rain to fall at that location. This is not direct effect, but it can be useful.

-  With a single die used for wind, the effect is strong enough to move something weighing up to ten pounds. When used for air or vapors, it can affect a volume up to 1 cubic yard. When used for breathing, it can provide enough air to breathe for a one minute.
-  With two dice used for wind, the effect is strong enough to move something weighing up to a hundred pounds. When used for air or vapors, it can affect a volume up to 10 cubic yards. When used for breathing, it can provide enough air to breathe for five minutes.
-  With three dice used for wind, the effect is strong enough to move something weighing up to five hundred pounds. When used for air or vapors, it can affect a volume up to 100 cubic yards. When used for breathing, it can provide enough air to breathe for twenty minutes.
-  With four dice used for wind, the effect is strong enough to move something weighing up to a thousand pounds. When used for air or vapors, it can affect a volume up to 250 cubic yards. When used for breathing, it can provide enough air to breathe for an hour.
-  With five dice used for wind, the effect is strong enough to move something weighing up to ten thousand pounds. When used for air or vapors, it can affect a volume up to 1000 cubic yards. When used for breathing, it can provide enough air to breathe for six hours.

## Death

This materia governs the breach between life and death. It can be used to cause death outright, manipulate those that have recently experienced it, and it can reach through the void to those beyond.

Note that *negate* does not bring life back, it merely eliminates the dead body.



**+1** With a single die, the spell is strong enough to interact with a non-sentient life, such as a plant or a mindless worm.

**+2** With two dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with a single non-rational sentient creatures, such as a dog or most monsters. Alternatively, it can be used to interact with up to five different non-sentient lifeforms, such as a small grove of trees.

**+3** With three dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with a single rational sentient being, such as a human or an Elf. Alternatively, it can be used to interact with up to five different non-rational sentient creatures or up to twenty non-sentient lifeforms.

**+4** With four dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with up to five different rational sentient beings, such as a human hunting party. Alternatively, it can be used to interact with up to twenty different non-rational sentient creatures or up to fifty non-sentient lifeforms.

**+5** With five dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with up to twenty different rational sentient beings, such as an entire village graveyard. Alternatively, it can be used to interact with up to fifty different non-rational sentient creatures or a nearly limitless number of non-sentient lifeforms, such as entire hive of bees.

## Demon

This materia governs interaction with evil and malicious forces in the universe. It can interact directly with *demons* and *devils*, as well as malevolent forces like curses, plagues, poisons, and other dangers. The duration of penalties is determined by the method dice used.

**+1** With a single die, the spell is strong enough to interact with a malevolent force that inflicts a -1 penalty to a specific kind of action (such as using a sword). You can also interact with demonic beings that are in the Mortal realm and have taken a physical form.

**+2** With two dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with a malevolent force that inflicts a -3 penalty to a specific kind of action. You can also interact with demonic beings that are in the Mortal realm, even if they have remained immaterial.

**+3** With three dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with a malevolent force that inflicts a -5 penalty to a specific kind of action or that suppresses an attribute by 1 point. You can also interact with demonic beings that are in the Mortal or Ethereal realms in any form, including devils.

**+4** With four dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with a malevolent force that inflicts a -7 penalty to a specific kind of action or that suppresses an attribute by 2 points. You can also interact with demonic beings that are in the Mortal or Ethereal realms in any form, including devils.

**+5** With five dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with a malevolent force that inflicts a -9 penalty to a specific kind of action or that suppresses an attribute by 3 points. You can also interact with demonic beings that are in the Mortal or Ethereal realms in any form, including devils.

## Earth

This materia governs interaction with the substances of the earth. It can be used to affect dirt, stone, metals, and gems. While it may be tempting to imagine oneself using *create* to make oneself wealthy with this materia, anyone familiar with the substances you created (such as a merchant) will be able to see that they are magical in origin.



With a single die, the spell is strong enough to interact with up to 10 cubic yards of dirt.



With two dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with up to 25 cubic yards of dirt or 10 cubic yards of stone. Alternatively, it can be used with a mixture of these materials, subject to Architect judgment on the nature of the mixture.



With three dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with up to 100 cubic yards of dirt, 25 cubic yards of stone, or 10 cubic yards of metal. Alternatively, it can be used with a mixture of these materials, subject to Architect judgment on the nature of the mixture.



With four dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with up to 1,000 cubic yards of dirt, 100 cubic yards of stone, 25 cubic yards of metal, or 10 cubic yards of gems. Alternatively, it can be used with a mixture of these materials, subject to Architect judgment on the nature of the mixture.



With five dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with up to a nearly limitless amount of dirt, 1,000 cubic yards of stone, 100 cubic yards of metal, or 25 cubic yards of gems. Alternatively, it can be used with a mixture of these materials, subject to Architect judgment on the nature of the mixture.

## Fire

This materia governs interaction with fire, lightning, and heat. Unless used with strike, these effects do not cause damage to a person unless they are created and then stumbled into by someone. Though a clever caster could encircle someone in a ring of fire or a similarly devious machination, the Architect is encouraged to strictly ensure the method used reflects the actual intended outcome.



With a single die, the spell is strong enough to interact with up to 10 cubic yards of fire or lightning, or interact with heat in the amount necessary to cause damage to living tissue.



With two dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with up to 100 cubic yards of fire or lightning, or interact with heat in the amount necessary to melt malleable metals like copper, iron, or gold.



With three dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with up to virtually any amount of fire or lightning, or interact with heat in the amount necessary to melt stone. Keep in mind that it will be difficult to work with heat at this level simply due to the danger to oneself.



## Holy

This materia governs interaction with good and righteous forces in the universe. It can interact directly with *angels*, as well as benevolent forces like blessings or healing. Holy magic represents the direct interaction with the divine and it is the only materia that can affect healing. However, instantaneous healing is quite costly and will likely require a powerful Novaria or one willing to take a chance with *essence* use.



With a single die, the spell is strong enough to interact with a benevolent force that gives a +1 bonus to a specific kind of action (such as using a sword). You can also interact with angelic beings that are in the Mortal realm and have taken a physical form.



With two dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with a benevolent force that gives a +3 bonus to a specific kind of action. You can also interact with angelic beings that are in the Mortal realm, even if they have remained immaterial.



With three dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with a benevolent force that gives a +5 bonus to a specific kind of action or that bolsters or heals an attribute by 1 point. You can also interact with angelic beings that are in the Mortal or Ethereal realms in any form.



With four dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with a benevolent force that gives a +7 bonus to a specific kind of action or that bolsters or heals an attribute by 2 points. You can also interact with angelic beings that are in the Mortal or Ethereal realms in any form.



With five dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with a benevolent force that gives a +9 bonus to a specific kind of action or that bolsters or heals an attribute by 3 points. You can also interact with angelic beings that are in the Mortal or Ethereal realms in any form.

## Life

This materia governs interaction with living objects. It can be used to do a very wide range of things, as life is varied and complex. This flexibility makes it highly useful for a wide range of things. For example, most of your opponents in combat will be living beings and can therefore be affected by this materia.

Note that *create* can give the life created any form of intelligence, however that also requires the use of *thought* as well.



With a single die, the spell is strong enough to interact with a non-sentient life weighing up to 100 pounds, such as an herb plant.



With two dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with a non-rational sentient creature weighing up to 200 pounds, such as a dog, or a non-sentient life of almost any size, such as a tree.



With three dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with a rational sentient creature weighing up to 300 pounds, such as a human or an Elf, or with a non-rational sentient creature of almost any size, such as a grizzly bear. As before, it can interact with a non-sentient life of almost any size.






With four dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with any number of lifeforms that together weighing up to 1,000 pounds, such as several humans in a group. Alternatively, it can interact with any single lifeform of almost any size.



With five dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with any number of lifeforms that together weighing up to 10,000 pounds, such as several large herbivores. Alternatively, it can interact with any single lifeform of almost any size.




## Light

This materia governs interaction with light. Note that when paired with *negate*, it can remove light to create darkness. If you negate light in an area, it will not immediately refill from light as you might expect from your understanding of modern physics. This is not the real world in that sense, it is a fantasy version.

-  With a single die, the spell is strong enough to interact with light as powerful as a torch or lantern.
-  With two dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with light as powerful as a bonfire or the light of the full moon on a clear night.
-  With three dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with up virtually any amount of light, including broad daylight.



## Sound




This materia governs interaction with sound. Note that when paired with *negate*, it can remove sound and create silence. If you negate sound in an area, new sounds will remain silenced for the duration of the spell. Additionally, unless paired with *strike*, the sound does not injure the listener no matter how much you know about ear drums. Again, this is a fantasy world and modern knowledge should not creep into it.

-  With a single die, the spell is strong enough to interact with sound as powerful as one person speaking normally.
-  With two dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with sound as powerful as one person screaming, metal objects slamming against something hard, or a monster's roar.
-  With three dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with up virtually any amount of sound in any kind of composition.

## Thought

This materia governs interaction with thoughts inside the mind of sentient creatures. Unlike other materia, the subject matter is truly insubstantial and you may need to be very specific when speaking with the Architect to determine exactly what kind of thoughts you are going to be affecting.

-  With a single die, the spell is strong enough to interact with a basic non-rational thought, such as a desire to eat or instinctive fear.
-  With two dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with a complex non-rational thought, such as migratory instincts or similarly detailed movement pattern over an extended distance.

-  With three dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with a basic rational thought, such as a simple falsehood.
-  With four dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with a complex rational thought, such as a sophisticated lie or a philosophical belief system.
-  With five dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with any form of thought, even multiple highly complex rational thoughts. This level of interaction is required to *create* sentience in a lifeform.



## Time

This materia governs interaction with the flow of time. It is a unique materia that is subject to unique rules. Time is an experimental materia which has yet to be fully understood by the *Order of Novus*. To date, no one has ever been able to successfully pair time with *imbue*, *strike*, or *transform*. An enterprising Novaria may find such pursuits to be fulfilling and exciting. Previous attempts have ended... badly.

Time only affects rational sentient beings. When using time, disregard all information from the method section that you are using. Instead, you need 1 die for every individual that you are going to be affecting. They must all be within your line of sight to be affected.

The spell affects how time is acting on those individuals. The amount of time that can be affected is described in the list below. For example, if you *control* 1 die of time for one person (i.e. a two dice spell), you would be able change how that person acted during a single round of time.

If you had chosen to *create* time, they would have experienced one additional round of time while everyone else is frozen. If you had chosen to *negate* time, they would have experienced nothing while everyone else experienced one round of time. If you use *protect*, you can stop another caster's time magic so long as you match your opponent's casting die.

If you use *sense*, you can experience what they experienced during a particular interval of time, whether that is in the present or the past. However, you must be very specific about what time period you want to experience. For example, you might say that you wish to experience the moment of time beginning when they first met a particular person or the moment of time right before their mother died. Be specific!



With a single die, the spell is strong enough to interact with a single round of time, as described in the combat rules.



With two or more dice, the spell is strong enough to interact with a minute of time per die used.

## Water

This materia governs interaction with water. It does not cover electrical discharges such as lightning (*fire*) or the movement of clouds and vapor (*air*), but it would allow you to interact with any form of precipitation. It also allows you to interact with movement within large bodies of water, such as currents or waves.

Additionally, unless paired with *strike*, the water does not injure the target no matter how much you know about pressure and force. Again, this is a fantasy world and modern knowledge should not creep into it.



With a single die used for water, the spell is strong enough to interact with a volume of up to 10 cubic yards. When used for movement within water, it can move water around within a pond or a small lake.



With two dice used for water, the spell is strong enough to interact with a volume of up to 100 cubic yards. When used for movement within water, it can move water around within a large lake or an inlet of a larger body of water, such as a bay or cove.



With three dice used for water, the spell is strong enough to interact with a volume of up to 1,000 cubic yards. When used for movement within water, it can move water around within a large portion of an ocean, such as a sea or a gulf.



With four dice used for water, the spell is strong enough to interact with a volume of up to 10,000 cubic yards (roughly all of the water in a large pond). When used for movement within water, it can move water around within an entire ocean.



With five dice used for water, the spell is strong enough to interact with a volume of up to 100,000 cubic yards (roughly all of the water in a small lake). When used for movement within water, it can move water around the entire planet.

*"Humanity stands alone on the brink,  
the final race to resist the call of evil,  
the last hope for a dying world.*

*The Novaria must not merely resist the darkness,  
if there is to be any hope, they must push it back."*

*- The Book of Azakriel 2:16*



# Vaena



For aeons, the inhabitants of the world of Vaena had suspected that a divine being created them. Many religions and cults had developed to worship some conception of a God or several Gods. However, these religions were merely the products of creative minds and wishful thinking. The true God had not shown herself to them, nor sent any of her angels to reveal the truth to the people.

## The Coming of Azakriel

One day, an angel appeared in the mortal realm. He called himself Azakriel and despite having been weakened by the transition to this world, he exuded such a powerful aura of holiness that his true nature was obvious to any observer. Azakriel told the people of Vaena that he had long been a protective angel assigned to the human race since their creation. He had silently nursed them at their darkest moments. He had lifted them up from barbarism and guided them through a world fraught with peril into civilization.

Azakriel foretold that humanity was in great peril and that action must be quickly taken. He traveled throughout the human lands and told them the truth. Some received him but failed to make significant changes to their lives. In the Northern Kingdoms, Azakriel was very well-received and so he chose to live among them. A citadel was built for him at Elkhammer and he quickly assembled a team of scholars to transfer his knowledge into a book.



## The Book of Azakriel

Azakriel dictated a book to his followers in his citadel at Elkhammer and this book was replicated by hand many times before his mortal death. It continues to be replicated today by scholars and monks of his holy order. The teachings of Azakriel continue to spread today.

The Book of Azakriel is the revealed word of God. It contains the only recorded truths about the three realms. It is also a guidebook for the restoration of the world to the light of justice through a philosophy called the *Path of Light*.

## The Three Realms

Azakriel describes the universe as consisting of three concurrent and overlapping realms; the Heavenly realm, the Mortal realm, and the Ethereal realm. Any single point in space exists in all three realms and travel between the realms is possible only through powerful magic and divine power.

God is the prime mover; the only being capable of creating life where none existed before. However, this new life has free will and God has no power to control it once it has been created. She is unable to leave the Heavenly realm, though She occupies it completely as if a gas in a container. Some might say that She is the Heavenly realm.

God can create *Angels* to perform her bidding, though they retain free will. In the Heavenly realm, God trains and educates her Angels to serve as agents of her divine plan. If God allows it, an Angel may enter the Ethereal realm where they are able to interact with the mortal realm and influence humanity. She must trust that once outside of her direct control, they will stay true to Her word.

The Ethereal realm lies between the Heavenly and Mortal realms. Due to the influence of the Mortal realm, Angels in this realm are in possession of free will. They are able to see and observe everything occurring in the Mortal realm and they can communicate with mortals directly through their conscience.

All mortal beings have a conscience, given to them by God, which provides them with innate feelings about right and wrong. Angels can shape and magnify the conscience of a mortal, pushing them to behave in particular ways.

However, there are only so many Angels. Each time that God creates an Angel, she drains away some of her own divine strength. Thus she is hesitant to create more for fear of weakening herself to the point that she loses control of her creations. The current situation is hard enough to bear, the idea of further loss is terrifying.

### The Fall of Vastane

There was once an angel of God who disagreed with God's view of good named Vastane. He accused God of being unjustly committed to only one conception of morality. Intending to show him the error of his ways, God allowed Vastane to go into the Ethereal realm to construct an alternative view. However, this proved to be a horrible mistake.

Vastane was able to use his angelic powers to tempt mortals and thus dramatically undermine God's work. He could twist and corrupt the virtues of all manner of beings and transform prosperous and peaceful worlds into barren wastelands of hate and suffering. A furious God ordered him to return to Heaven. Fearful of reprisal, Vastane refused.

Over many years, Vastane was eventually able to convince a few other angels to abandon God and join him in the Ethereal realm. These fallen angles are referred to as *devils*. They are extremely powerful and pose an enormous threat to good folk. Vastane also developed a method of creating weaker versions of devils called *demons* that could go directly into the Mortal realm itself. Using this army of demon servants, world after world fell into his corrupting embrace. Evil is growing.



### Azakriel's Mission

God has initially allowed *Elves* and *Dwarves* to be the primary combatants in this battle to drive out the darkness of Vastane. Vaena used to be a thriving paradise with these two races having reached ascendancy. Yet both managed to cripple themselves through greed and foolishness. With her early creations having failed and with evil on the march, God decided to intervene to teach humanity the skills necessary to fight against it.

Azakriel was chosen for this task, having been assigned to Vaena for millennia in support of the human race. Azakriel volunteered to step through the Ethereal wall and become a mortal. In the Mortal realm, Azakriel would eventually die. However, he could preach directly to the people and tell them about the fate that awaited them if they failed to defeat the forces of evil.

In the face of this limited time line, God decided to create a moral code that would endure beyond Azakriel's death and hopefully ensure humanity's survival and eventually bring purity to the world. The Book of Azakriel calls this code the *Path of Light*.

## The Path of Light

God knew that with the *Elves* and *Dwarves* in sharp decline, it would only be a matter of time before humanity was sorely pressed. Therefore, she created a moral code for humanity to follow that will provide them with the virtues necessary to survive in the face of powerful evil forces.

In the book of Azakriel, God dictates a Codex of Divine Commands which all individuals would be judged against. This code would form the basis of human law going forward and those who failed to live up to its dictates would be punished. This system ensures that humanity is constantly pushing back the tide of darkness. Social and political power are thus paired with moral virtue.

## The Codex of Divine Commands

1. Thou shalt treat all humans with respect and dignity.
2. Thou shalt have courage in the face of mortal danger.
3. Thou shalt care for the aged and the young with tenderness, for physical weakness is never a part of moral calculus.
4. Thou shalt conduct thyself without frivolity in all matters.
5. Thou shalt not harbor resentment towards others for past wrongs, but thou shalt not forget them.
6. Thou shalt have loyalty to your Liege, if thou has taken one as thy protector and guarantor.
8. Thou shalt seek knowledge and experience out in the world, for revelation rarely occurs within the cloister.
9. Thou shalt resolve differences of honor through combat, in accordance with the rules and regulations of such affairs.
10. Thou shalt not delight in the suffering of others.

## The Death of Azakriel

By the time the Book of Azakriel was completed and he had made the impact on humanity that he desired, Azakriel was an old man. He retired to his Citadel to compose his final chapters. It is unknown whether he intended to write more, but the final words found written down on scroll laying beside him on his deathbed read simply;

*The courage to fight for principles is the only measure of a soul. For we are ultimately not judged by our greatest worldly triumph but by our greatest moral failure. Leave none.*

So it came to pass that the great Angel died. A procession was held that surpassed all that came before and his body was entombed beneath Elkhhammer Citadel. It remains a shrine to this day.

## The Gift of Light

God infused a powerful magic into Azakriel's mortal form and when he died this power was transferred to all human women. Azakriel was aware of this condition and referred it the gift of the Light. It would grant all women the ability to cast magical spells and radically transform the human political system and culture.

The Gift dramatically changed the balance of power between the genders in human society. Centuries of female oppression were reversed within a few generations as the physical power of women was dramatically augmented by the gift. Once legal and political equality was achieved, female power began to exponentially increase until their gender completely dominated the social landscape.



# Social Structure

Since the death of Azakriel and the rise of feminine power in human society, the conventional social order has been toppled. Women occupy the top of the political food chain and have restructured the system to serve their needs instead of those of men.

This culture is radically different from what you may be used to from other roleplaying games and it is best to know in advance what to expect.

## Feudalism

The feudal nature of society was maintained. The kingdoms which exist are highly decentralized and wars are typically short and frequent as a result of this. Borders between kingdoms can see sporadic warfare over small issues such as the border between two baronies.

The basic economic unit has remained the manorial estate; a small piece of arable land controlled by a single noble family. Peasants work the land of the estate as a price of their tenancy. Technically, they are free to leave at any time. However, the economics of the relationship make doing so extremely hard. To maximize plowing efficiency using shared animals, land plots are arranged in long sequential rows. Each peasant family has rights to their rows and a portion of the shared animal assets, out of which they pay a duty to the noble of the manor.

Noble status is traced through the matrilineal line of inheritance. The matriarch of each family is responsible for their progeny and lesser nobility retain the rights of judgment and trial for law enforcement purposes. There is no formal legal code as no political entity has the power to enforce it. Instead, the Book of Azakriel is sometimes used as a substitute for a legal code.

Conventional knighthood is also now in the hands of women and men are only trained with weapons if they have proven themselves competent beyond what one would demand of a woman. After all, they must suffer the handicap of lacking the *Gift of Light*.

## The Division of Labor

Each family, both noble and peasant, is headed by a Matriarch who is responsible for almost all important decisions. In most households, several generations live under the same roof and thus the Matriarch divest certain responsibilities upon her daughters.

Women with a stable home life are frequently pregnant, with a preference for delivery occurring during the winter months when the family is mostly inactive. Childcare is considered to be a very important form of labor. Wet nurses, midwives, and other supporting laborers carry high social status and are respected in their communities.

After childcare, the most important thing for a household is defense and a woman is expected to be trained to defend her family should the need arise. A noblewoman that has the privilege of supporting servants can devote significant time to military training and the military elite is drawn from their ranks. During times of war, villages transfer care children to the oldest women and wet nurses. Males are generally viewed as lacking the temperament or responsibility to properly care for a child.

Men are expected to provide sustenance to the family and this is almost the sole criteria by which they are judged. Noblemen are also expected to be managers of other men, as that would be their role as a husband. Men aspiring to be taken on as a courtesan by a prominent noblewoman are expected to also be superb conversationalists. Many noble houses stress this last element in their childcare of boys, sometimes to the detriment of other activities. These men are resented by their peers, but gain enormous advantages with women.

Men of exceptional physical qualities are given military training and taken to war, however they are primarily deployed as a defense of the Novaria ranks rather than general purpose warriors. No nation wants to risk their most productive resources in battle. Military conflicts are of such low intensity that men only see combat during the most extreme of pitched melees. Considering how infrequently that occurs now that the world has fallen into a dark age and most conflicts are small engagements between knights or with monsters, this is very rare.

## Love and Marriage

Marriages are arranged on the basis of political and economic expediency, not love. As the Grand Duchess Dydara once said, "Love is matter for poets, not the basis of a family." Matriarchs of noble families often arrange marriages for their children when they are very young and for the aim of consolidating land holdings and titles. Peasant marriages are often made on the basis of convenience, matching ages, and fertility. Delaying marriage is seen to be irresponsible and wasteful of a woman's fertile years.

A marriage is said to be good if it creates a strong family environment for raising children. Men that are indolent and unproductive are seen as a drag upon their families and looked down upon. Women that are infertile, have a hard time breast feeding, are weak combatants, or have children that are unruly are viewed the same way.

## Homosexuality

In general, homosexuality is an accepted part of society.

Male homosexuals are looked upon with a glib sense of perversion by elite female society. Their values as men are relatively unchanged. They are just as productive in the field, perhaps even better conversationalists due to their ability to relate to women's desires. Intelligent and/or skilled male homosexuals are common in elite circles as they pose no sexual threat to a female's family. They serve many noblewomen as advisors, assistants, and confidants.

Female homosexuals have a kind of flexibility that few possess. They may choose to pursue a respected profession as wet nurse or midwife. They may choose to have children of their own, with the ability to select a young man of her choice for fertility and then live with a woman whom she loves. Provided that the financial outlook is positive, such a life can be peaceful and joyous.

Hermaphrodite and transgendered individuals are exceedingly rare and we leave such instances to the Architect to describe.

## Pawnage

The teachings of Azakriel forbid slavery, however there are a number of men trapped in a situation bordering on it. Men in this situation are called *Pawns* and the condition is referred to as *Pawnage*.

Pawns are unmarried men who lack the ability to support themselves either through the death of a female provider, terrible poverty or just bad luck. They sign an agreement with a Liege voluntarily, thus preventing claims of slavery, in which they are adopted into the liege's family. If living, the pawn's mother must also sign the agreement.

The pawn is granted a portion of the liege's land and agrees to work the land on their behalf. The liege is granted a portion of every harvest, collected in kind. The ability of the pawn to consent to marriage is also transferred from their natural born mother to their liege. Thus the pawn surrenders their social freedom in exchange for land, protection, and the freedom to live most of their life on their own time.

In regions that have experienced widespread adoption of these contracts, political power is incredibly concentrated in the hands of large landholders. For very little cost, they can place huge tracts of land under cultivation and keep those working it in a state of subjugation.



## The Law

Law in this time is inconsistent, biased, and prone to corruption. The people are subject to three overlapping systems of law; the political authority of the feudal leaders, the spiritual authority of the Church, and the magical authority of the Order of Novus. Mixed in between these forces is a common consensus on family law built by precedent.

There is no organized legal system to determine punishment, merely the fiat of the applicable authority. For secular matters, this would be the local lord or aristocrat. However, if the issue could potentially be subject to more fantastical forces, you might be able to appeal to a local **Exarch** or member of the Church for protection. However, even that is not firm guarantee of fair treatment.

The Golden Rule applies most of the time. “She who has the gold, makes the rules”. Be careful when traveling the land, lest you anger those who have a modicum of power and will kill to keep it in their grip.

For a legal perspective, the base unit is the family. The matriarch represents this family and all legal consequences flow through her. Matriarchs possess absolute control over violence at the familial level and insolent males (regardless of age) can be beaten and abused with virtually no legal recourse under the pretense that they were challenging that authority.

After all, the moral rectitude of a man is the legal responsibility of his matriarch. She is liable for any criminality or unwholesome behavior on his part. Any corrective action is seen as justifiably reinforcing this and protecting herself from dishonor.

Male humans and all demi-humans have near zero property rights or legal protection. Men are treated as the property of their wives or mothers in most legal situations and protected by her political status instead of their own. Male members of a Novarium are protected under that aegis, not their own. There is no conception of *human rights*.

## The Order of Novus

Parallel to the political and religious structures is a separate organizational entity called the Order of Novus. This is the collective self-government of the **Novaria** class. The Order has their own internal code to regulate expected behavior and they try to coexist peacefully with the political structure in place rather than attempt to take control for themselves.

Novaria that are charged with criminal acts can request to be tried by their Exarch. If the Exarch agrees to accept their appeal, the Novaria is removed from civil jurisdiction and judged by their own peers. This causes some minor friction with the nobility and the church. In extreme cases, they may resist.



The Order is primarily concerned with taming the magical forces that threaten human civilization. They will do anything to move towards this goal, even if that runs afoul of other objectives. Towards this purpose, they have divided into regions called **Exarchates**, controlled by an elected **Exarch**. Exarchs are expected to choose and cultivate Marches on their borders so that they can expand the influence of the Order.

To a degree, this correlates with the expansion of civilization, but not always. Many times, people push out settlements ahead of the Order's footprint and this can lead to conflict with the wild magical forces in a particular region.

## The Church of Azakriel

The Church has power above and beyond both the feudal political structure and the Order of Novus. They are responsible for both spreading the holy word and enforcing it where it has taken root. Followers of the Church can be zealous to a fault, running far deeper afoul with the other authorities than any other faction. This springs from an overwhleming belief in the universality of their power.

The Church is concerned about maintaining moral virtue and all of it's endeavors push toward this end. Every town is expected to raise it's own local church when it reaches the size to support it. As the town grows, it is expected to build even greater edifices up to the point of building massive cathedrals in the larger cities. The Church commands great influence with the common people, which see them as the only true source of moral values.

The Church holds the Book of Azakriel to be law and seeks to impose it's standards on everyone. Individuals in flagrant violation of the *Path of Light* will be dealt with swiftly by local priests. If that fails, they will be quickly referred up the chain to the Church's highest body, *the Conclave*. Here they are judged as if by a court, and if found wanting are declared *profligates*. This status denies the individual the rights to sanctification, the blessing of the body so that it may not be resurrected as an undead, and grants moral clemency to anyone who kills them. It also functions as a kind of bounty that is placed on one's head and can be applied to anyone who crosses the church, whether commoner, noble, or even royalty. The Church has also been known to abuse it's power in this respect on occasion to silence those that work against it's vision, such as stubborn feudal leaders.

Working within the Church is also a chance for men to rise to powerful political positions in society. Unlike what has occured in secular society, within the Church men are treated as relative equals. After all, Azakriel himself took a male form and preached that all humans were equal. Males can hold positions in the Church without question, and there are even a few men sitting on the Conclave.



# The Countryside

Most cities in this time period are small by modern standards. A city of 20,000 souls is fairly large for the time. The technology necessary to support large concentrated populations is lost. Dwarven and Elven civilizations have fallen into chaos and their people are currently scattered throughout the human territories.

In the wake of the Elven and Dwarven collapse, the populations of uncivilized races like Orcs and Goblins have expanded and moved into formerly developed areas. Without anyone to keep them at bay, monster populations have grown into significant threats.

In this chaos, Humans may be the last hope for civilized people everywhere. Their cities are the only highly concentrated populations left in the world. If there is a chance to roll back the darkness of the age, it will be Human civilization that achieves it.

Despite this optimism, Human society is diverse, aggressive, and highly disorganized. Their political systems are fragmented feudal hierarchies prone to infighting and conflict. Humans sometimes spend more time fighting each other than on defeating the real enemies of civilization that are hidden away in the wilderness.

## Time

The world of Vaena is at a technological level where exact time-keeping was extraordinarily difficult. At best, a town might have a few people who keep track of the days of the year. It is probable that your character may lose track of the exact day if they are away from civilization for an extended period of time.

At a shorter scale, most people do not even attempt to keep track of the passing of hours. As a result, it may be difficult or impossible to coordinate arrivals or meetings with other people. Be prepared.

## Long-Distance Movement

Any maps that exist are exceptionally rare and extremely expensive. Attempting to locate a reliable map could be a quest in it's own right. Roads that do exist are typically overgrown and poorly tended. Only members of elite social classes will even know how to navigate these roads. The common folk do not travel more than a few dozen miles from their home in their entire life and thus know very little about the world.


You may have very few actual details about the place you are trying to reach. For example, you may be searching for the village of Canto. There may be a handful of people in a major city that have even heard of Canto, even fewer who can give accurate directions. As a result of these constraints, reaching a location can be a significant challenge. There is no danger of getting lost while travelling along a road, however if you do not know where you are going then you may end up somewhere you really didn't want to go. Travel through the wilderness can leave you in dangerous country with the difficult task of rediscovering civilization.

## The Darkness of Night

The world of Vaena is a dangerous and wild place. At night, apex predators roam the land looking for easy prey. People tend to live in small villages for safety in numbers. These villages may put up stone walls or wooden palisades to protect them against these threats.

As darkness falls, vision ranges decline and dangers can creep close. Common folk stay inside where it is warm and safe. Those who travel at night are viewed with immediate suspicion and fear. Sounds carry far and wide through the night air and the howling of a wolf or coyote may be a frequent occurrence in the countryside.

However, danger can come just as easily from those inside the walls as those beyond. Thieves, brigands, smugglers, and other criminals prefer to conduct operations under the cover of darkness. Anyone who comes knocking on the door at night is presumed to be up to no good. If you did not make friends during the day, don't expect to be forming new friendships talking through a barred door.



*“What reason have I  
to fear Almighty God.  
She cannot control me,  
for I have left her service.  
Her angels cannot touch me.  
She is powerless against me,  
by her own rules.*

*If anything,  
she should fear me.  
I am Vastane.  
I stand resolute,  
blade drawn.”*

*- The Book of Azakriel 25:17*

# Architecture



This portion of the book is written only for the Architect. If you intend on being a player in the game, it may improve your enjoyment to NOT read anything from this chapter. Of course, the choice is completely up to you, but consider yourself warned.

## The Role of the Architect

The Architect has many tasks in the game, however they can be organized into three broad categories.

- Designing the *Mark* and the challenges within it
- Deciding how the world reacts to player choices
- Adjudicating the game rules

You may wish to assign yourself tasks beyond this simple list, such as the emergence of a complex plot that is revealed through the discovery of a series of clues. However, that is your choice and not required. This text will focus on what is required and leave embellishment to you.

Many people have been intimidated out of the management position in a roleplaying game over the decades since their inception. There is a lot of responsibility in running a game and that can be scary. I believe that a lot of that fear comes from imagining that the tasks are harder to perform than they actually are.

However, if you focus on the core aspects of play and take a leap of faith, you can perform the task successfully. Focus on what you need to do to function at the basic level. You will get better over time. Some tasks will become easy and free up your time for more complexity. If you have already run a game before, you will be that much better next time.

I have confidence that anyone can run a game as the Architect if they focus on the basics, but you must have confidence in yourself.

## Designing the Mark

The game uses Marks for your benefit as the Architect. The Mark functions as an adventure confinement zone. By investing the characters with property in the form of their Mark, they are going to focus naturally on that region to the exclusion of others. This means that you do not have to design the entire world, just a single Mark.

You can make the Mark as large or as small as you need it to be. If you want the characters to be spending a lot of time in the wilderness, make the region expansive and lightly civilized. If you want them to focus on the politics of society, provide only a small wilderness around the edges of a populated area.

The *eminence* that surrounds each *font* is powerful enough to keep it concealed even in more populated regions. Such fonts would be the old growth forest where nobody dares tread, the frosty mountaintop that looks down on the valley below, or a similarly avoided location. Simply give each font a value you feel appropriate, make notes indicating their location on your copy of the map, and then use the next section of this chapter to design the challenges for each font based on those values.



Several maps are included with Novarium. One of these is a possible Mark that you can use as you see fit. The map is unlabeled so that you can name every feature however you want. You can determine the size of each town and the amount of commerce on the rivers and roads. Maybe one castle icon indicates a large castle guarding the area. Then again, it may indicate an old dilapidated keep that could be restored. You decide.

# Designing a Font

The *font* is the basic unit of the game from a design standpoint. Each one should pose a significant challenge to the players.

The nature of these threats is yours to decide. You may choose to have the challenge match what you feel is within the capacity of the Novarium to handle. However, you may also place a font into the Mark that is beyond their abilities and encourages them to perform research and train themselves for years before they attempt to tackle it.

As a general rule, fonts should be *saturated* when the game begins. Any fonts that are not saturated should have a reason for being that way, such as a rogue Novaria or a *demon* that is harvesting the *essence*.

## Saturated Fonts

Saturated fonts leak their magical energy out into the surrounding land. This can cause any effect you desire, but we will describe three possibilities here.

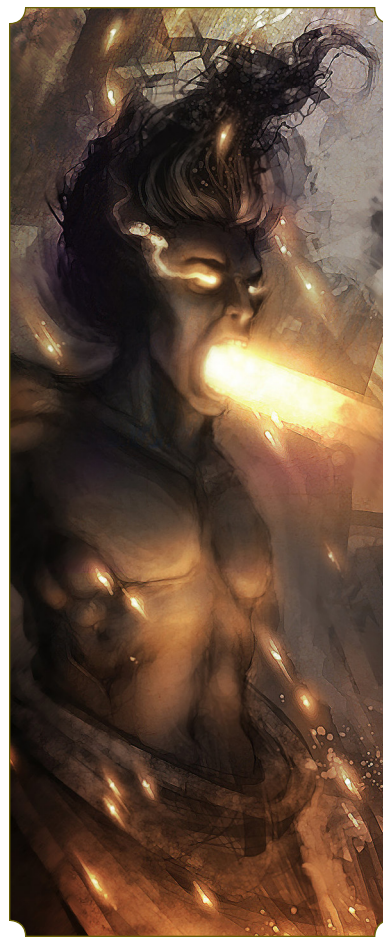
First, it can cause normal animals to mutate into larger and more aggressive forms. For example, you might create a pack of powerful wolves that have been bolstered by the energy of the font. They may even be terrorizing a nearby town, something that could serve as a clue to the Novarium that there is a potential font in the area.

Second, saturated fonts can cause the creation of fae. Whenever anyone experiences extremely powerful emotions and then dies in the vicinity of a font, their soul can become infused with magical energy and trapped in the mortal realm in the form of a fae creature. Someone filled with courage and vigor might have their soul twisted into a Satyr. Alternatively, someone filled with hatred and deception who died while laying an ambush might become a Will-o-wisp that lures travelers to their deaths.

The names and types of fae creatures can be found in the folklore of the people. They should be known of, but with few details and lots of unanswered questions. Fae are mysterious and reclusive.

Fae are often less dangerous than bolstered animals, but much more difficult to track and/or ultimately destroy. Since they are made from the souls of the dead, destroying their current form often only temporarily removes them from existence, only to have them reform at a later date.

In order to truly destroy the fae, you must kill them with solid steel weapons, such as a sword or axe. Arrowheads lack the heft to be of any real danger unless used in massive quantities. Considering that fae often possess great speed and cunning, this can be extremely challenging. They are highly resistant to magic, much to the chagrin of the Novaria. You are encouraged to raise the difficulty dice of any spell targeting a fae.



Lastly, saturated fonts can cause the creation of elementals. Elementals are normally inanimate objects given the gift of life through magic. They tend to have minimal intelligence, but this does not greatly detract from the danger they pose to the characters.

The size of an elemental should be relative to the size of the font. A large font could create an enormous stone elemental that towers above the land like a giant. A small font could create a multitude of tiny fire elementals that set everything ablaze and cause mischief.

Elementals generally do not leave the eminence of the font that created them. This makes their existence extremely difficult to discover until it is too late to effectively plan. An elemental should be resistant to most magic and weapons, only truly damaged by its counter-force (e.g. a fire elemental should only be greatly damaged by water).

## Unsaturated Fonts

**Fonts** that are not saturated are being used by someone. In almost every case, this should be for some powerful form of evil. This can cause be anything you desire, but we will describe three possibilities here.

First, an unsaturated font can be corrupted by a **demon**. The demon is harvesting the essence of the font and using it to create monsters and use magical spells to corrupt the world nearby. Demons are powerful opponents that should be able to overcome the Novarium if they do not approach the situation with caution.



By the time the characters arrive on the scene, the demon should have corrupted the landscape and twisted it to suit their purposes. They may have turned the surrounding woods into a dark and terrifying place, turned a verdant land into a swamp, or otherwise fouled the goodness of nature. This should serve as a strong warning to the players to tread very carefully in this area. They may fail to heed that warning at their peril.

Once cleared, the Novarium can work towards bending the land away from the demon's evil will and restoring it to its pristine form. This process should take many years and impress upon them the need to continue such work elsewhere.

There should be nothing preventing the demon from leaving the area if significantly threatened by the Novarium. They are not mindless monsters, but extremely clever and dangerous opponents. Do not hesitate to play them this way.

Second, an unsaturated font can be in use by a non-Novaria spellcaster. Again, almost always they should be of an evil persuasion. Most such spellcasters are **Warlocks**, human males that have been tempted into evil by a **Devil** and given the gift of magic. However, some are Novaria that have broken with the Order, either on their own or by being declared **profliates**. Either way, they tend to specialize in necromancy and the raising of undead.

Necromancy is a long-term process of diligence and planning. The necromancer must carefully procure bodies of the fallen and animate them, often using a lot of essence in the process. For these reasons, they take up residence near fonts for a steady supply.

Tales of the walking dead should be taken seriously by any Novaria, as they are clear indications of magic powers at work that are twisted and unnatural. Use these rumors to attract the characters to the font. The evil resident should also be highly intelligent and aware of the Novarium if they have been present for more than a few years. They should view the Novarium as a threat and may even adopt tactics so as to throw them off balance or send them in the wrong direction.

For example, the necromancer might send some undead skeletons to cause trouble for a town that is a good distance from the font. Since almost all undead fight to the death and are incapable of speech, they cannot give up their own origin. Make the Novaria use their magical prowess to find such a font, do not make it too easy.



Lastly, an unsaturated font can be in use by a *Devil*. Devils should always be extremely powerful and essentially unapproachable by the Novarium in a direct way. They employ powerful defenders to protect their strongholds, some even capable to defeating the entire Novarium in open battle. They should almost always have the most powerful *fonts* in the *Mark* and pose the greatest challenge of in the entire area. A Devil should be designed as the endpoint of the campaign to subdue the area.

Devils are cunning and malicious, seeking to exploit every possible opportunity for success. They employ numerous allies, send agents out into the Mark to subvert the forces of good, and they should be aware of the Novarium as their principal enemy at all times. Devils delight in picking off members of the Novarium proactively, leaving the corpse to be found in a most chilling way to sow confusion and give rise to terror.

If you are a new Architect, you may want to make all other dangers in the Mark static and defense-oriented while you use a Devil or two as proactive agents to cause problems for the Novarium. Evil is not monolithic, but often petty and wild. Perhaps there are several Devils vying for control of the area and they are willing to play the Novarium and maybe even the common inhabitants of the Mark against one another in a game of power politics.

### Other Opponents

You may wish to have enemies in play that are not attached to a font. They may pose a general danger to the people of the Mark, such as a vampire that preys on the weak and defenseless. Alternatively they may be relatively harmless unless provoked or sought out, such as a large predator that lives in the sparsely populated highlands and preys on their livestock. How you wish to deploy these threats to the Novarium is up to you, as they would not be geographically dependent.



# Designing a Creature

Whether you are going to be using a large wolf or a powerful Devil, you will need to assign some numerical values to the creatures you use to challenge the players. While there are many ways to do this, we suggest you employ a fairly simple method designed to minimize your planning time.

First, assign the creature a set of *Attributes* just as you would for a character. When they are injured, they take damage to these attributes just like a character would. They function on that same basic level.

Second, assign the creature a set of things at which it excels and give those things simple numeric modifiers. For example, a supernaturally large wolf should be very good at running, jumping, and biting. Therefore, you could decide that when it engages in those things, it gains a +3 modifier to it's attributes. If any of these are non-weapon attacks, assign a damage value. A normal wolf's bite might deal only 1 damage die, so you could raise that to two dice for the extra large wolf.

Third, determine in what ways the creature "breaks the rules". The best way to imagine this is to think of what the player expectations of any outcome might be and if you want the actual result to differ from that, specify that. For example, you might want the wolf to be able to bypass the normal grappling rules and automatically succeed on their first grapple unless they are dealt damage. This would be so that the wolf could be guaranteed to knock the person to the ground and bite them so long as they make it through that first round of combat where the person has their weapon drawn. This would be to make the classic wolf pounce possible in the game.

Fourth, if the creature can use magic, assign it values for *Methods* and *Materia*. You can have it cast magic using the same rules as a character.

Once you have all four of these things written down, you have a creature to threaten the Novarium. You may wish to add some embellishment in your notes to help you remember how to describe the creature when you are running the game, but that is entirely up to you.

## Example Creature

When an old hermit died filled with anger at those who would disturb his isolation, his soul was captured and transformed into a fae creature. Resembling a cross between a warthog and a turtle, the fae became known as the swamp troll.

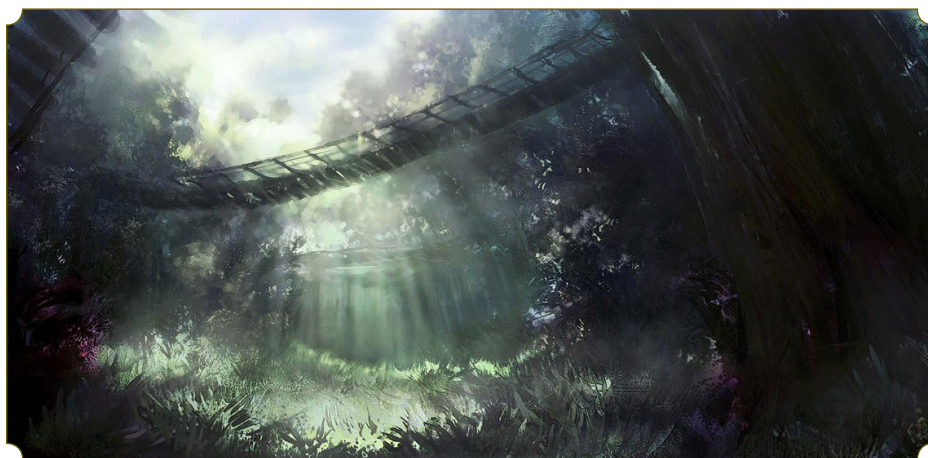
It strikes at opponents with it's large arms for 2 damage dice and it can bit for 3 damage dice, if the target is already grappled (otherwise, only 2). When doing either of those tasks, when grappling, or when trying to hide in the swamp, it gains a +4 bonus. The swamp troll breaks the rules in that it does not have to make *morale saves* in combat.

The swamp troll's tusks contain 3 points of *wild essence*. When used, they increase the caster's *fitness* by 4 points. This effect lasts for an hour.

### Attributes

Agility	15
Fitness	23
Magnetism	10
Perception	12
Knowledge	10
Willpower	16





## Adjudicating the Rules

The Architect is also responsible for determining what rules apply to a given situation. You should be very familiar with the game text. Any new players in your game will have questions and you should be prepared to answer them.

Some rules specifically require your input. You must often decide how the environmental situation affects the action, such as when you decide that the rain is creating a penalty to people trying to climb up a cliff. You will be called upon to use your judgment to determine how much magical power is needed to accomplish an effect. Sometimes your judgment is called in on the backside of a problem, such as determining how an overloaded spell goes out of control.

Great faith is placed in your judgment. Use it wisely. Treat all the players fairly and try to make the best decisions you can. However, know that you will never be perfect at making these judgments. You will have times when after the game is over, you realize that you probably made a wrong decision with respect to something. That is natural. Just dust yourself off and move on. Mistakes happen. Just keep your eyes on the prize and do your best.

## Determining Reactions

The Architect is responsible for determining how the game world reacts to the actions of the players. Some of this is done on a large scale and can involve using your judgment about human behavior, animal instincts, and organizational dynamics. For example, when the Novarium begins hiring a large number of carpenters in the region, the world should react to that behavior. Maybe the carpenters start pushing for higher wages since they are in demand. Maybe the local Duke is upset about the dwindling labor supply for their building projects. Maybe the price of lumber begins to rise in anticipation of a major building project. The world should not be static, it should react to the player's behavior.

On a smaller scale, you should be representing each individual in the world as realistically as possible. If several characters fail to show up for a feast being held by a local noble, you should adjust the noble's feelings towards the Novarium to reflect this. Perhaps they become perceived as haughty and aloof. Worse, that individual may begin to spread rumors about it. When one of their friends holds their own feast, they may be warned that the Novarium may not show up. However, you must also take into account the *social influence* being exerted over time by characters in the Novarium as well, deciding how those counter-forces come to a resolution.

This should also extend down to the animal scale. The dominant predators in an ecosystem, whether they are monstrous or not, follow fairly predictable behavior patterns. They leave carcasses around for characters to find, they don't take much care to cover their tracks unless they have some kind of special ability, and they tend to run away rather than fight to the death.

With all that said, there should be some aspects of the setting that do not change at all no matter what the characters do. Mindless undead should remain mindless. Some villains cannot be talked into changing their ways. You have the prerogative to make those decisions too.

A painting depicting a scene in a dark, dense forest. A large, horned demon with a beard and a human figure are the central figures. The demon, with greenish-yellow skin and multiple horns, sits on a rock, looking towards the viewer. The human figure, wearing a dark robe and a pointed hat, is kneeling in front of the demon, looking down. The forest is filled with tall, thin trees and thick foliage, with a bright light source visible in the background, creating a strong contrast between light and shadow.

*“Go forth child,  
bend the world to your whim”*

*- The Book of Azakriel 21:6*