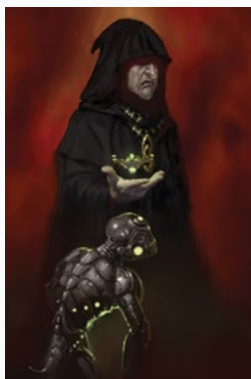


NUMENĒRA



THE SKEIN OF THE BLACKBONE BRIDE

BY SHANNA GERMAIN



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BRIEF SUMMARY

The Slying Seskiis is a small group of mercenaries that is quickly gaining a reputation as one of the most competent find-and-retrieve companies in **Stirthal**, one of the biggest cities in the Steadfast. Run by a shrewd but fair former member of The Grey Company named Lerg, the group boasts a motto of "no cypher unturned," and claims its members can hunt down, break down, or recover anything or anyone from anywhere.

While some argue that the egos of the company members are starting to overtake their common sense, it seems others find the Slying Seskiis worth their salt. Recently, the company was awarded the coveted Most Reliable Business in Stirthal plaque and their reputation has begun to spread, bringing new work from around the kingdom of **Malevich**.

Their newest job is, in fact, from the castle of **Neverlost**, a large castle and surrounding town to the northwest of Stirthal. The patron—a middle-aged woman with regal bearing and silvery hair called Angren Themoal—came to them recently saying her daughter had died and asking them to retrieve the body and bring it home to the castle for a proper lay-to-rest. While at first this seemed like a job that the Slying Seskiis would be overqualified for, Themoal quickly explained the rest of the story: that her "daughter" is actually an automaton, a construct built for her long ago after her human daughter passed away. Although she hasn't seen her "daughter" in years, she knows that she's living in Scosik, a town deep within the Black Riage, because they've maintain contact via telepathy. Themoal has been sending supplies and money to her over the years.

Themoal offered the Seskiis 600 shins (or the equivalent amount in artifacts, cyphers, and equipment) and the promise of her future patronage if they would bring her daughter's body back in one piece. Lerg, not surprisingly, said yes and sealed that deal with a signed contract and half of the money up front. Then he gathered a crew of his employees and sent them off to track down and recover the Bride's body.

Thus, the player characters enter the story. They are the members of the company chosen by Lerg to go on this mission and are already on their way to accomplish this quick and easy job and return to the comforts of home (and their share of the shins). They have a map drawn by Themoal and the signed contract, which Themoal assured them was all they need to take ownership of the body and bring it back to Neverlost. They also have a transdimensional carryall given to them by Lerg to bring the body back in.



This adventure includes page references to various subjects accompanied by this symbol. These references are to the *Numenera* corebook, where you can find additional details about that item, place, creature, or concept. It isn't necessary to look up the referenced items in the corebook; doing so is an optional way to learn more about the Ninth World and provide additional information to your players.

Transdimensional Carryall: This device looks like a simple bag, but its opening connects to a pocket of extradimensional space. One nonliving object can be put inside, and the space will stretch to fit that object (up to 10 feet by 10 feet [3 m by 3 m]). Placing an object in the carryall causes the opening to shut until the user takes an action to open it. While the carryall holds an object, it cannot be opened by anyone except the person who placed the object inside it. The carryall's weight is unchanged regardless of the weight of the object placed in the pocket. When the user removes the object from the carryall, the carryall collapses and becomes a regular bag.

SYNOPSIS

The adventure begins while the characters are en route to find and retrieve the automaton known as the Blackburne Bride. They're deep in the mountain range called the Black Riage, but the trip so far has been relatively easy—lots of fair weather, few dangerous predators, and even Themoal's hand-drawn map has been easy to follow.

As the characters head down the mountain pass, around what they believe is about a day's walk from the village where they're heading, they come upon a trailside synth shelter that seems to have been abandoned, as there are belongings here and there about the camp. Among the items, the players discover a contract similar to their own, and it likely doesn't take long for them to realize that the camp was made by another group who came not too long ago also searching for the Bride's body.

While they're there, a traveler suddenly seems to appear by coming up out of the ground. If the PCs talk to him, they'll discover he has information about a shorter, quicker—albeit possibly more dangerous—route to their destination.

This adventure is designed to be played at a convention or other scenario with around a four-hour time slot. Thus, you'll notice sections about keeping track of time or hurrying things along. Feel free to ignore these and move at your own pace if you're playing without a time limit.

When the characters arrive at the Blackburne Bride's "final" resting place in the city of Scosik, they begin to uncover additional truths about the Bride:

She is worshipped (and now mourned) by the villagers for helping them in their time of need and giving them a safe place to live.

She used her telepathic abilities to interact with many people the same way she did with Themoal, convincing them that she was their bride or daughter or friend and asking them to send supplies to Scosik. When she "died," that telepathic connection was broken.

The villagers are in mourning due to more than just the Bride's death. Someone has stolen the Bride's body from them, even though she belongs in the village with them, where they may honor her even after death.

The body has, in fact, been taken by members of the **Convergence**, who will likely destroy it in an attempt to use the parts for other devices. In order to retrieve the body in a single piece, the PCs must quickly track down the Convergence members and get the body back from them.

If they can accomplish that, they must make a choice: who does the Bride's body truly belong to? Their patron, her worshippers, the Convergence, or perhaps themselves? This is the emotional crux of the adventure, and playing up the responses of the various groups will make the characters' decision more meaningful. They should feel torn

The Grey Company is a group of mercenaries, mostly brigands and bounty hunters, who track down targets and eliminate them for pay.

Convergence, page 223

There are many ways this scenario can play out, because the choices that the PCs make can have a big impact on what happens next and affect what information gets revealed when. The essence of this adventure is one of unraveling a series of complications and confusions to try to get to the truth, which then forces the players to make a tough decision.

between the respect and money afforded by their position in the Slying Seskiis, the gratitude and trust offered by the Bride's worshippers, and perhaps even by the promises of the Convergence members.

BACKGROUND

THE SLIVING SESKIIS

The Slying Seskiis are good at what they do. All of these characters are competent, in their own way, and have a good deal of experience. Most of them have known each other a long time, and so have a tangled history between them.

Each of the Seskiis has a nickname, given to them during their first job with the company. Most of the time, the Seskiis use these nicknames rather than real names. If a Seskii uses the real name of another member, it's a signal to the others that some kind of danger is afoot. At this point, only Kerus does not have a nickname, as this is their first job with the Seskiis. It is likely that they will have one by the time the adventure is complete.

THE BLACKBONE BRIDE

Appearance: The body of the Blackbone Bride has a shape similar to a very tall human, about 7 feet (2 m) tall, although it's clear at a glance that it isn't human because it is built of black metal, synth, and a rubberlike material. The body doesn't give any sense of gender. In the center of the Bride's chest is a yellow orb that seems like it was once filled with something, but which is now broken open and empty; thus the Bride

has "died." The weirdest thing about the body is that it has six different heads, each of which looks like a unique person, not all of which are female. The heads were clearly designed to be easily attached and detached at the neck. No one seems to know who built the Blackbone Bride or for what purpose. Those who knew her will say it's something that she never talked about.

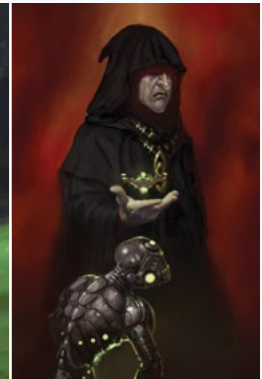
Background: The Blackbone Bride essentially built the village of Scosik. Not the buildings themselves—they were built by the residents under her guidance—but she possessed a form of telepathy that allowed her to interact with people at great distance. So over time, she called people to the village, people who needed a place to stay or recover, people who needed safety or succor. In addition, she reached out to those who had lots to give—including Angren Themoal—mentally convincing them that she was their child or bride or brother and encouraging them to send supplies and money to her in Scosik. She used her different heads to create these different personas. When she died, those she had mentally formed bonds with felt the loss of that connection, and assumed (correctly) that she was dead.

THE CONVERGENCE

The Convergence is a group in the Ninth World that reveres the knowledge of the past. However, unlike the Aeon Priests, who strive to use that knowledge for the greater good, Convergence members use it to grant power only to themselves. They tend to be ruthless, and are willing to use coercion, deceit, and violence to get what they want.



FINDING THE BLACKBONE BRIDE



BEGINNING THE SCENARIO

Go over the rules of the game with the players very briefly. This review should take no more than ten or twenty minutes.

Give the players a chance to get acquainted with their characters, and with each other. Remind them that these characters have known each other a fair amount of time and have likely worked together on multiple jobs, so they're familiar with each other's skills and personalities. Ask each of them to quickly share the reason behind their nickname (for those who have one). This shouldn't take more than ten minutes or so.

Relay the details of the job to them. You can explain it in detail, or read the following passage, which contains all of the information that is important for the characters to know:

Your current job is from the ruler of the castle of Neverlost, a woman with bearing and silvery hair called Angren Themoal. She has hired the Slying Seskiis to retrieve the body of her recently deceased daughter and bring it home to the castle for a proper lay-to-rest. At first this seemed like a kind of ho-hum job for someone of your skills and experience, but once Themoal explained that her "daughter"—who called herself the Blackbone Bride—is actually an automaton, a construct built for her long ago after her human daughter died, it became more interesting. Themoal and her daughter regularly communicated via telepathy, so she knows the Bride has been living in Scosik, a town deep within the Black Riage. Over the years, Themoal sent supplies and money to her daughter and the town. She has promised to pay 600 shins if you return her daughter's body back in one piece (half of which will go to the leader of your group, Lerg, and the other half of which will be split among you).

The players should also decide who is carrying the map, the signed contract, and the transdimensional carryall.





Carl Nave, page 177

Synth shelter: level 3

Lahine: level 4

Adhesion clamps: level 4 handles with powerful suction cups that allow for automatic climbing of any surface. Lasts for twenty minutes.

Fanell: level 4, geography as level 5



Glowglobe, page 82

THE TRAILSIDE SHELTER

The action begins when the PCs are about halfway through the Black Riage, having taken the fairly accessible pass known as the **Carl Nave**. It's early summer and the weather is just beginning to turn warm, although nights in the pass are still quite chilly. This section of the mountain pass has little in the way of vegetation—it seems to be mostly sharp grey rock with a bit of odd purple moss, but there are a few stunted trees here and there. Small lizards and rodents occasionally scamper about the rocks, but for the most part, it's been fairly uneventful.

Just as evening begins to fall, the players come upon a trailside **shelter**, just off the side of the trail. The shelter's comprised of a temporary square structure made of synth, just big enough for four or five people to take cover inside. The entirety of one side is open. The other three walls and the roof are made of dark grey synth, almost camouflaging the shelter among the rocks. The camp seems to have been abandoned, and there are a number of items that have been left behind. There are no signs of any kind of struggle, and almost everything is carefully folded and put away. But it's clear that the items have been there for at least a few days, maybe longer.

The items include:

- A metal box that holds **adhesion clamps**, a pack of matches, and a **glowglobe**
- A pack that contains a long red scarf and six arrows
- Just inside the shelter there is a knife with a chipped blade. That's the only item that seems out of place, as if it was dropped by accident.
- A long blue leather coat (medium armor) that has a long tear in the arm. It has a number of pockets. The majority of the pockets are empty, but one interior pocket holds a small scroll tied with black ribbon.

The Scroll: Inside the scroll is a signed contract regarding the return of the Blackbone Bride that is nearly identical to the one that the Slying Seskiis signed with Angren Themoal. Except that this one states that the Blackbone Bride is, in fact, the actual bride of someone named Salwith,

who has hired a competing group—Elisio's Mercenaries—to retrieve the body.

The important part of the scroll is the discovery that others are also attempting to retrieve the body of the Bride. This is the players' first clue that there is something unusual going on with the Bride.

There is also a campfire ring and, just a ways off from it, a long, thin patch of large (6 inches [15 cm] across) purple flowers that snake around in the shape of a loop or tendril. There are about a dozen flowers in total, and they all have dark purple petals and white centers. Both the flowers and their petals feel waxy and stiff, almost as if they aren't real. (With their training in botany, Kerus will know that these flowers are called **lahines**. Mur won't know the official name, but will know that these flowers are considered to be a good luck charm if you pluck off a single petal and put it in your boot.)

SUDDEN TRAVELER

At some point while the PCs are at the shelter, a man suddenly appears just a few feet away from the campsite, right where the lahines are. To anyone watching, it seems as if he was pushed up out of the ground, although the ground doesn't appear to have moved, nor does he seem surprised to find himself standing there in the middle of the camp. The traveler, named **Fanell**, says he's just arrived by using what he calls the tendrils.

Fanell: Fanell looks like a man who has spent his life traveling the roads of the world. He is of average height, middle-aged, and in good health. He wears a form-fitted pocketed coverall that stops at the knees and elbows, and shows off the strength of his legs and forearms. It's clear that he's a bit vain about his appearance, although he doesn't say anything directly to that effect. Fanell is inquisitive, and is likely to ask more questions than he is to reveal too much about himself.

If the PCs ask, Fanell will say that he came through the tendrils to this place from a wide valley. He has never heard of anyone called the Blackbone Bride, but if the PCs show him the map of where they are headed, he will say he thinks that's the valley where he just came from.

Fanell doesn't seem to know, or even care, too much about the tendrils. If anything, his attitude is mild surprise that the PCs don't know about it, but mostly just a sense that there are all kinds of weird ways to travel around the world, and this is just one of the many. But if the characters ask, he'll take a few minutes to tell them everything he knows.

The Tendrils: The tendrils seem to be a means of travel that requires a keen understanding of geography and botany more than anything else. First, you must spot the lahine tendril. While lahines grow in many places, only a few grow in this color and in this type of pattern. These are the only ones that allow you access to the tendrils. In order to use the tendrils, wait until sunlight is falling on the patch, and then push the white center "buttons" in the proper order. If you do that, you will be teleported to the next nearest lahine patch. This patch, where Fanell has come from, is very close to the place the characters want to go.

Fanell says he's never sure how long it takes to get from one place to another by using the tendrils. For example, he left the last patch this morning, but now it is evening when he is arriving. Sometimes, though, he says it seems to take no time at all. In fact, he says that he was hoping to arrive here this morning, so he won't stay the night, but will be on his way soon, as he's hoping to reach the ocean shore in just a few days' time to

catch a ship going out to sea. (Fanell will sit and talk with the characters briefly if they invite him, but won't wait around too long, as it's clear that he wants to get moving to the next place.)

The characters may decide to take the tendrils or to walk the rest of the way. In order to use the tendrils, they must wait until morning for the sun (artificial light won't work), but if they're going to walk, they could leave at any time.

MORNING VISITORS

The night passes uneventfully, but in the morning when the PCs rise, they might notice that the open side of the synth shelter is covered with a delicate and ornate pattern of webs made of metal. These webs are not sticky—they are razor sharp and easily cut through any material (including flesh) lower than level 5, inflicting 4 points of damage. The strands are so thin that it's easy to walk into them by accident. An Intellect task (level 3) is needed to see them in time. Severing a web requires at least 2 points of damage from an energy attack or from a blade that does at least 4 points of damage.

In the very corner of the web are two **steel spiders**. Steel spiders are creatures of living metal that spin incredibly thin webs also made of metal. One spider is about the size of a human head. The other is slightly smaller.

Tendrils: level 4 to figure out the order in which to push the "buttons" (in fact, only the last one needs to be pushed)

If the characters opt to keep a watch during the night, it's possible that someone could notice the steel spider building its web and raise the alarm before morning. However, spotting it is a level 6 perception task due to low light and the spider's experience with this particular setup.

It seems likely that the owners of the scroll might also have met these steel spiders during their stay here. Whether they made it out alive isn't possible for the players to discern (spoiler: they didn't).

Steel spider: level 3, balances and climbs as level 6; health 9; Armor 2

Steel spider, page 260





If any of the players try to damage the web, the spiders move in to attack the nearest ones with their bite. The creature's spinnerets are in its mouth, and a bite injects a victim with the metallic strands. Victims who fail a Might defense roll take 4 points of Speed damage that ignore Armor as their muscles and tendons are torn apart by the invasive injection. This damage is in addition to the normal 3 points of damage from the bite.

GM intrusion suggestion: Drawn by the noise of the scuffle, a third steel spider lowers itself from a nearby outcropping of rock and begins to head toward one of the characters outside of the shelter.

TRAVELING TO SCOSIK

Taking the Tendrils: While the sun is shining on the **tendrils** (probably the next morning), if the characters push the buttons in the proper order, they will see the flowers, soil, and grass in the area (a circle about 8 feet [2 m] in diameter) start to shimmer and fade in and out. It will do this for about a minute. As long as a character is in the shimmering area within that time, they will be teleported with the others to the closest lahine patch. The teleportation doesn't feel instantaneous—in fact, the characters may feel the exact opposite, as they wait and wait on the patch. They can see everything around them, but are unable to move or

speak or react in any way, as time stretches and stretches, and then stops, suspending them there for what feels like an eternity, before they suddenly find themselves in a completely new space. To those watching, however, the teleportation appears instantaneous—their friend is there one second and gone in the next.

The shimmering lasts about five minutes before it disappears. It's possible to reopen the tendrils, but each time requires a new combination and is one step more difficult than the last.

Taking the Trail: Characters may choose to continue on the trail, rather than take the risk of the tendrils (or they may fail to activate the teleportation device). Continuing on the trail takes the characters about eight hours of walking.

TIME CONTROL

The players might exhibit a desire to dawdle at the shelter. If the PCs are getting bogged down, try to keep things moving. There should still be about three hours of playing time left (out of the four hours allotted) when the characters arrive in Backbone Valley. If there are more than three hours left, consider adding in the optional hontri encounter upon the players' arrival.

Tendrils: level 4 to figure out the order in which to push the "buttons"

BLACKBONE VALLEY AND THE VILLAGE OF SCOSIK

Whether arriving via the tendrils or the trail, the characters will find themselves in a long, green valley, around late afternoon. It's clear that the valley is located deep in the Black Riage—it's possible to see the mountain range on both sides—and yet, here is a clear, flat place full of greenery and sweeping vistas. Tall, jagged stones rise up out of the valley on either side of it. And in the very middle of the deepest, flattest point of the valley is the small village of Scosik.

If the characters arrive from the trail, they are at the southernmost end of the valley, about an hour's walk from Scosik. If they arrive via the tendrils, they are deposited just a few hundred feet from the edge of the village.

OPTIONAL ENCOUNTER: HONTRI

As the players enter the valley, they may have the bad luck to be spotted by a hontri, a massive bird of prey that has been altered by nanomachines. The hontri will sweep down upon the group with a sudden swoop attack as they cross the valley.

HONTRI

5 (15)

Health: 22

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 1

Modifications: Perception as level 7

Combat: As raptors, hontris spy prey from high above and swoop down at incredible speeds, raking with their powerful talons. When using this swoop attack, they deal 2 additional points of damage. The nanites in their flesh and blood primarily exist as repairing machines. A living hontri regenerates 2 points of damage each round.



SCOSIK

The village's centerpiece is a tall, thin building made of smooth grey synth. Around it are a number of smaller buildings, all made of the same material. A shallow indentation 1 foot (30 cm) deep, almost like a moat, wraps around the city in a circle. It's about 6 inches (15 cm) wide and is filled with braided wires. This is one of the Bride's defense mechanisms. It isn't designed to keep people out, but rather to keep them in, so it's likely that the characters won't notice much of an effect entering the city (unless they touch the wires). However, as soon as the characters step back outside of the indentation around the city, any of them who fail a level 4 Intellect defense roll feel dizzy and light-headed. The effect lasts for ten minutes, and increases the difficulty of all Intellect actions by one step during that time.

GM intrusion suggestion: As the characters near the village, one or more of them step on a soft bit of ground, disturbing a group of a dozen *caffa* larva. These grubs are voracious carnivores that instantly try to latch on to the character's legs and begin feasting. (This could be an individual or group intrusion, depending on how the GM wants to play it.)

As the characters cross the indentation, they notice that the village almost looks uninhabited, as there are no objects, animals, or even signs of life at first glance. There are a number of buildings, most of which look like homes. They are nondescript, but solid and well maintained. Weirdly, there isn't any sign of livestock, farming, or any other type of sustenance. There is an odd murmuring sound coming from the tall, thin building in the middle, however.

If the characters explore the village, they will find almost all of the buildings empty. Currently, only the building in the middle is inhabited. About 50 people of all ages are inside the building, down on their knees around a large pedestal in the middle of the room. They are all wearing garlands on their heads, made of wire and bits of metal, synth, and broken devices. Many also wear one or more bright yellow circles painted somewhere upon their clothing or body,

Indentation: level 4; touching the wires inside it produces a mental image of a face of the Blackbone Bride. Only the person touching the wires sees it, and each person who touches the wires likely sees a different face. Also inflicts 1 point of Intellect damage.

Caffa: level 1, defense as level 2 due to size; health 3; inflicts 2 points of damage. Their saliva also injects a numbing chemical that makes the bites painless, but a victim might feel sluggish in that particular limb. Once the larva are pulled off the limb, there is no lasting effect.

often on their chest, but sometimes on their face or arms.

It's quickly clear that the pedestal, which is very ornate and covered with idols, flowers, and other offerings, was made to hold the body of the Bride after her death. The pedestal is also covered with drawings and paintings of what is clearly the Backbone Bride, wearing various heads. Some show her wearing one head and holding other heads in her hands.

If the PCs join the mourning villagers in silence, they will likely be welcomed and the residents will make room for them. If the PCs draw weapons or make some other sign of aggression, they will be met with hostility by a few of the mourners (at least at first). Most of the residents do not break their mourning to interact with the newcomers, but a few will talk with the characters if they are not hostile.

Maddester is young, and is quick to attack if the characters draw weapons or otherwise show signs of being hostile or even disrespectful. If the characters interact with him in a positive way, he says that it was his job to watch over the body of the Backbone Bride after she died, but someone came in and stole it away, right under his nose. He swears he didn't fall asleep or turn away, and he can't understand how it happened. He pleads with the characters to help him bring her back, and says that the thieves left a trail that they can follow north into the valley. If the PCs go after the Bride's body, he will ask to go with them.

Overu is older and walks with a slight limp. His dark hair has just started to grow in white, as has the hair in his beard. He's still in good shape, and while he's not as hotheaded as Maddester, he will join in the fight if one occurs. He has a number of internal machine parts, although it is impossible to tell by looking at him.

If the characters interact with him in a positive way, he says he was the Bride's confidante, and that he has been with her since the early days, when she was just beginning to call people to the city. He might say that he believes Convergence members took her, as they had come around a few days before the Bride's death, and she had ousted them from the city at the time. Overu

will not go with the characters, as he believes the Bride would have wanted him to stay and look after the villagers.

He says that if the characters bring the body of the Bride back so that they may place her upon the eternal pedestal, the entire village will be eternally grateful and he personally will reward them with amazing devices created by the Bride's own hands.

He will proudly tell them all about how the Bride cared for the village by creating telepathic relationships with external providers.

A short, stout woman named **Taial** says that all of these people here have come to Scosik because of the Bride, who used her mind to reach out and find them, to rescue them. They were all dying or in trouble, and she saved all of them. And that, Taial will say, is why they worshipped her. Because she was worthy of being worshipped. Taial is distraught, and likely to repeat herself.

GM tip: If the players are low on cyphers at this point, you might have Overu offer some to them from the Bride's personal cache. While he doesn't really understand cyphers or how they work, he understands that they can be useful. He offers the following:

- *Sleep inducer:* level 5 ring; touch puts the victim to sleep for ten minutes or until awoken by a violent action or an extremely loud noise

THE BRIDE'S TELEPATHIC RELATIONSHIPS

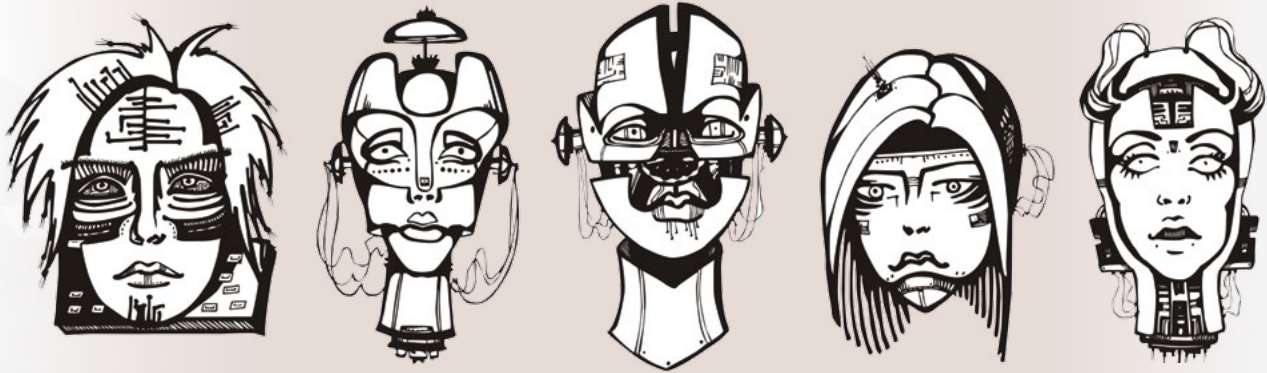
Any of the NPCs will talk about how the Bride provided for them by interacting with people telepathically. She convinced them that she was their daughter, bride, best friend, and so on. In return for this "relationship," those she interacted with provided her and the city with supplies, much as Themoal has been doing. The villagers are very matter of fact about this, and don't seem to consider it a moral dilemma.

Of course, because they are still in mourning, they haven't thought much about the fact that the Bride is no longer able to provide for them.

Taial: level 3, Intellect
defense as level 2

Maddester: level 4,
detecting lies, trickery,
and deceit as level
3, knowledge of the
numenera as level 2;
carries a pole arm

Overu: level 4, tasks
involving the numenera
as level 5, knowledge of
the numenera as level 2;
carries two daggers



- **Metal death:** level 4; canister with hose; produces a stream of foam that covers an area about 3 feet by 3 feet (1 m by 1 m), transforming any metal that it touches into a substance as brittle as thin glass. The foam affects metal to a depth of about 6 inches (15 cm).
- **Shocker:** level 7 rod; delivers a powerful burst of electricity that shocks any creature touched, inflicting 7 points of damage

No matter who the PCs talk to in the city, they do not find anyone who has a single bad thing to say about the Blackbone Bride. In fact, many of them say similar things in similar ways: that she was worthy of being worshipped, that she saved their life, that her loss has left them devastated, that they would do anything to have her body back.

They mention that they are a wealthy city, thanks to the efforts of the Bride, and will gladly allow the players their pick of the powerful objects in the Bride's secret storehouse. It is clear from interacting with the residents that the majority of them have limited understanding of the numenera—they don't know what the objects in the storehouse do or how they work. This is because the Bride forbade them to study or learn about such devices and urged them to focus on other, simpler things in their lives.

GM intrusion suggestion: Overu accidentally lets it slip to someone during conversation that he is part machine, and asks whoever hears it to keep it a secret from the others.

THE BRIDE'S HEADS

In the back of the building is a long **strongglass box** set up on a dais. Inside the box are five **heads**, with an obvious space from which a sixth head likely seems to be missing. Each of the heads are different, with a very distinct look and made up of different materials, colors, and even clothing.

If the players ask about the heads, Overu will say that the Bride was many things to many people, and that she shifted between heads for different roles. There is a healer head, a leader head, a fighter head, a friend head, a teacher head, and one head that she never, ever wore, at least not that Overu ever saw. That is the head that is currently missing. He says all of this very matter-of-factly, as if it is the most normal thing and he finds it odd that they're even asking about it.

GM intrusion suggestion: As one of the players draws close to the strongglass box of heads, one of their cyphers begins to vibrate and release a low-pitched keen. The cypher grows louder the closer it gets to the box. The character must take the cypher outside the building or deactivate it somehow (a numenera task equal to the cypher level). Otherwise the cypher will activate on its own, doing the opposite of what it's supposed to do. (If the character is supposed to gain 5 points to their Might Pool, for example, they lose 5 points instead.)

THE SECRET STOREHOUSE

Only Overu knows where the secret storehouse is, and he will not say where it is located (even under penalty of death) until the players bring back the body of the Bride safely.

Strongglass box: level 7; has a complicated (level 8) locking mechanism on the front

Bride's heads: level 6; each of them can be broken apart to provide 1d6 shins and one random cypher

Those who successfully search the ceiling (a difficulty 8 perception task) of the centerpiece building, just above the Bride's heads, can uncover the storehouse on their own. There is the faint outline of an overhead door (hidden behind a ward created by the Bride) about 10 feet (3 m) above the stronglass box and approximately 4 feet (1 m) from the nearest wall. Once someone reaches the overhead door, opening it merely requires a pull, and a ladder comes down from above. The storehouse is filled with devices, shins, broken bits of metal and machinery, and any manner of weird objects. While the majority of it looks like junk to the untrained eye, there are three artifacts near the door, each of which is held aloft by a translucent synth bubble floating in the air.

If the characters return the Bride's body to the city, Overu will take them to the warehouse and invite them to take their pick of the objects in the synth bubbles. (They can choose one, two, or all three. Overu doesn't understand the purpose of any of them, nor does he seem to perceive their value. He is more likely to call them "objects" rather than artifacts.)

If the characters seek out and break into the storehouse on their own, they must pop the synth bubble and catch the artifact inside before it falls (a level 3 Speed task). If the artifact falls from the bubble, it appears a moment later, in the same place where it was, inside a new synth bubble.

The three artifacts are:

HEALING SWORD

Level: 4

Form: A typical sword with an odd-looking synth hilt

Effect: The broadsword blade is a Ninth World-forged addition to the numenera hilt (which likely was not a sword hilt originally). When squeezed properly, the hilt injects a healing substance into the wielder's body, restoring 1d6 points to any stat Pool they wish. If the wielder is using the sword in battle, using the healing function does not require an action.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10 (for the healing ability, but after depletion, it still functions as a sword)

RECORDER HEADBAND

Level: 5

Form: A leatherlike headband with a small device attached

Effect: This headband records everything the wearer sees as moving images that can be replayed and reviewed. It stores up to one hundred hours of images.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

TENDRIL GRAFT

Level: 2

Form: A whiplike length of organic material similar to flesh

Effect: This graft attaches to the host's spinal column so that it can be controlled like a limb. The host can use it like a whip (a light weapon) even if their hands are full. They can also use it like a prehensile tail that can hold their weight (assuming they are roughly human-sized) or another object.

Depletion: —

TIME CONTROL

At this point, you should have an hour to an hour and a half left for tracking down the Bride. If the PCs are getting bogged down in Scosik, use Maddester's urgent desire to track down the Convergence members as a way to get the characters moving.

TRACKING THE CONVERGENCE

It's a fairly easy task (level 2) to track the Convergence members, as the greenery is smashed down where they've traveled; it might be possible to surmise that they are actually dragging the Bride's body north through the valley. (This thought upsets Maddester, because it's so disrespectful to the Bride.)

However, very quickly (after about ten minutes of walking), the trail just stops. It goes utterly dead. At the end of the trail, someone who is searching or listening (a level 3 Intellect task) hears the following conversation:

Remember that if the PCs step outside the indentation, any of them who fail a level 4 Intellect defense roll feel dizzy and light-headed for ten minutes.

A fearful, whispered male voice, growing more panicked as it speaks. "There are people outside. They're . . . they're looking in. I thought this was supposed to hide us!" (This is the voice of Magister Lewar, see below.)

Followed quickly by a more gruff, "Hush and let me work." (This is the voice of Magister Noth, see below.)

The conversation probably continues, with Magister Lewar continuing to report what he can see of the characters.

It's a level 5 perception task to see through the illusion that the Convergence members have set up. The force screen is about 20 feet (6 m) long; it creates an illusion and puts up a force ward. It's possible for characters to go through it (a level 4 Might task) or walk around it.

GM intrusion suggestion: For some reason, Ech's beast companion refuses at first to cross the force barrier and go near the Convergence members. It also tries to keep Ech from doing so.

Behind the force screen are three people and the body of the Bride.

The Body of the Bride: The body of the Backbone Bride has a shape similar to that of a very tall human, about 7 feet (2 m) tall, although it's clear at a glance that it isn't human because it is built of black metal, synth, and a rubberlike material. The body doesn't give any sense of gender. In the center of the Bride's chest is a yellow orb that seems like it was once filled with something, but which is now broken open and empty; thus the Bride has "died." Her head is on the ground next to her.

Magister Noth: Noth, a short and wiry man with a long nose and pointed chin, is leaning over the body, working on it with a series of tools and devices. He is clearly the leader of the three and the one in charge. He is gruff and verbally aggressive, prone to shouting orders and making demands. He wears his Convergence robes proudly and sports a large metal necklace that displays the Convergence symbol. Noth is not likely to perceive the PCs as a threat; he is very confident in his ability to take and maintain control of any given situation. He will probably continue to dismantle the body even after the characters appear.

Magister Lewar: Lewar is the most nervous and talkative of the three, constantly worrying and whispering. However, when fighting, he is the most likely to slip into shadow and strike without warning. It's hard to catch more than a glimpse of Lewar beneath the heavy robes and hood, but it's easy to see the long white sword that is rarely sheathed.

Bandel: Unlike the other two, Bandel doesn't wear the robes of the Convergence. She is tall—nearly as tall as the Backbone Bride would be if she were standing—and appears to be very strong. It's pretty clear that she's been brought along to carry—or in this case, drag—the body of the Bride. She is the quietest of the three and seems unwilling to act without a direct order from one of the other two.

If Noth realizes that the characters are serious about taking back the body of the Bride, he will first attempt to bribe them by offering them 10 shins and membership in the Convergence. (He's lying on the second part, as he doesn't have the power to bring someone into the organization.) If that doesn't work, he will command Lewar and

Due to his past experience in the military, Ravi recognizes the robes and symbols that they wear, and knows that they are members of the Convergence.

Magister Noth: level 7, knowledge of the numenera as level 8; Armor 2; wears a level 4 artifact called a skull blaster; carries two cyphers: a force nodule and a speed boost

Skull blaster: A headband with an attached cylinder that runs along the left side of the wearer's head. Emits a brilliant beam of focused light that has a range of 200 feet (60 m). Targets hit by the beam take 4 points of damage. Depletion 1 in 1d20.

Force nodule: level 5 crystal nodule that affixes to armor and creates a powerful force field that adds 2 Armor

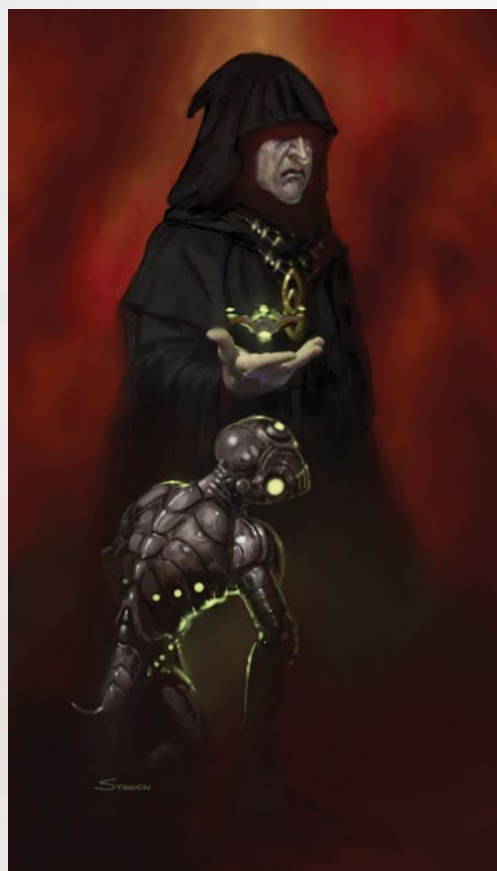
Speed boost: level 4 pill that adds 1 to Speed Edge for one hour

Magistrar Lewar: level 6, sneaking, knowledge of the numenera, and initiative as level 7; Armor 2; carries a long curved greatsword made of a shiny white metal that does 6 points of damage. Carries two cyphers: a fear gas bomb and a flash detonation.

Fear gas bomb: level 4 explosive cypher that can be thrown in short range; bursts in an immediate radius and causes living creatures that breathe and think to flee in random directions in fear (or become paralyzed with fear) for 4 rounds.

Flash detonation: level 8 wristband projector (long range) that busts in an immediate radius, blinding all within it for one minute.

Bandel: level 7, carrying and hauling as level 8; health 25; Amor 4; carries the 10 shins that Noth offered, as well as a maul



Artificial leech: level 5 handheld device; when used at the site of an infected or poisoned wound, the device draws out as much of the infection or poison as it can without injuring the surrounding tissue. The device restores 5 points to the user's Might Pool.

Body enhancer: level 3 tube of malleable material; adjusts to match the user's skin color and temperature, can be shaped into any form, and affixes itself to the user's body for up to two hours. Single action to shape and affix.

The tools and materials to bring the Bride back to life, if that's even possible, are not available anywhere in this region.

Although Noth has begun to dismantle the Bride's body, he has not gotten very far. Repairing the body is a level 4 numenera-based task that takes about ten minutes. Alternatively, the PCs may choose to dismantle the body, in which case it provides 200 shins, a bunch of spare pieces and parts, and two cyphers—an **artificial leech** and a **body enhancer**.

Bandel to "take care of" the characters, while he continues to work on dismantling the Bride's body.

The Convergence members will not willingly give up the Bride's body. They will use their cyphers, artifacts, and weapons to fiercely defend what they believe to be theirs. Even Noth will join in the fight, if it looks like the characters are giving Lewar and Bandel difficulties.

If a fight breaks out and it looks like the trio is going to lose to the characters, it's possible that Lewar will use his fear gas bomb cypher so they can try to escape. They will leave the Bride's body, but attempt to take the head with them.

If Maddester has gone with the characters, he will continue to express his gratitude for their help, and reiterate how happy all of the residents will be to have the Bride's body back in her rightful spot for good.

At this point, unless things have gone drastically wrong, the characters now have the opportunity to decide what to do with the body of the Backbone Bride. If Maddester is with the characters, he will of course assume that they are going to return the Bride to Scosik and will perhaps even start to lift a part of her body and ask for help from the other characters.

They might choose to do any of the following.

Return the body to Scosik. The Bride's worshippers will express their immense gratitude and even invite the characters to stay with them in the village. Overu will reward them with the artifacts as well.

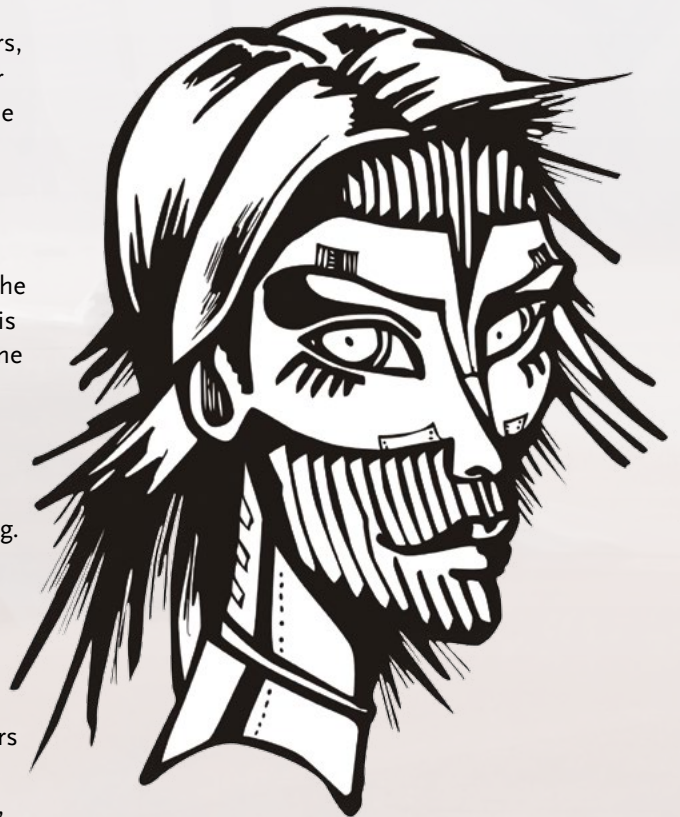
Return the body to Stirthal. The characters get half of the reward money (300 shins or the equivalent amount in artifacts, cyphers, and equipment) to split, as well as praise from Lerg and the promise of even more fantastic jobs in the future.

Attempt to pull a con job. They may attempt to fool one or both parties and receive both rewards themselves.

Dismantle the body and keep the parts themselves. Depending on how much time is left, you can speed the characters along on their journey to reach their chosen destination and experience the end result of their choice.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs earn 2 XP each for finding and retrieving the body unharmed. They earn 2 additional XP each if they deal with the body in a conclusive, satisfying way. If they care about their jobs, their reputation, and the money, then transporting the body back to Lerg is the way to go. If they care about the Bride's worshippers, and their desire to have her body safely returned to them, then transporting her body back to Scosik is the way to go. Deciding to dismantle the body and keep it for themselves is also a viable option.



BACKGROUND

You are wanted in your hometown for a crime you are *pretty* sure you didn't commit.

Your beast companion's name is _____.

Your companion looks like a small bear with large curved tusks and dark green fur. It's a level 2 creature, with a target number of 6 and 6 health. It inflicts 2 points of damage with its tusks or claws (your companion acts during your turn, and you roll for them just as you would for your character).

Mur seems to disturb your creatures in a way that you can't explain. You must keep your animals away from Mur if possible, or you might lose control of them.

You got your Slyling Seskil nickname on a job where you:

NOTES

NUMENÉRA

Hume "Echo" (Ech)

NAME

IS A

Intelligent

DESCRIPTOR

Jack

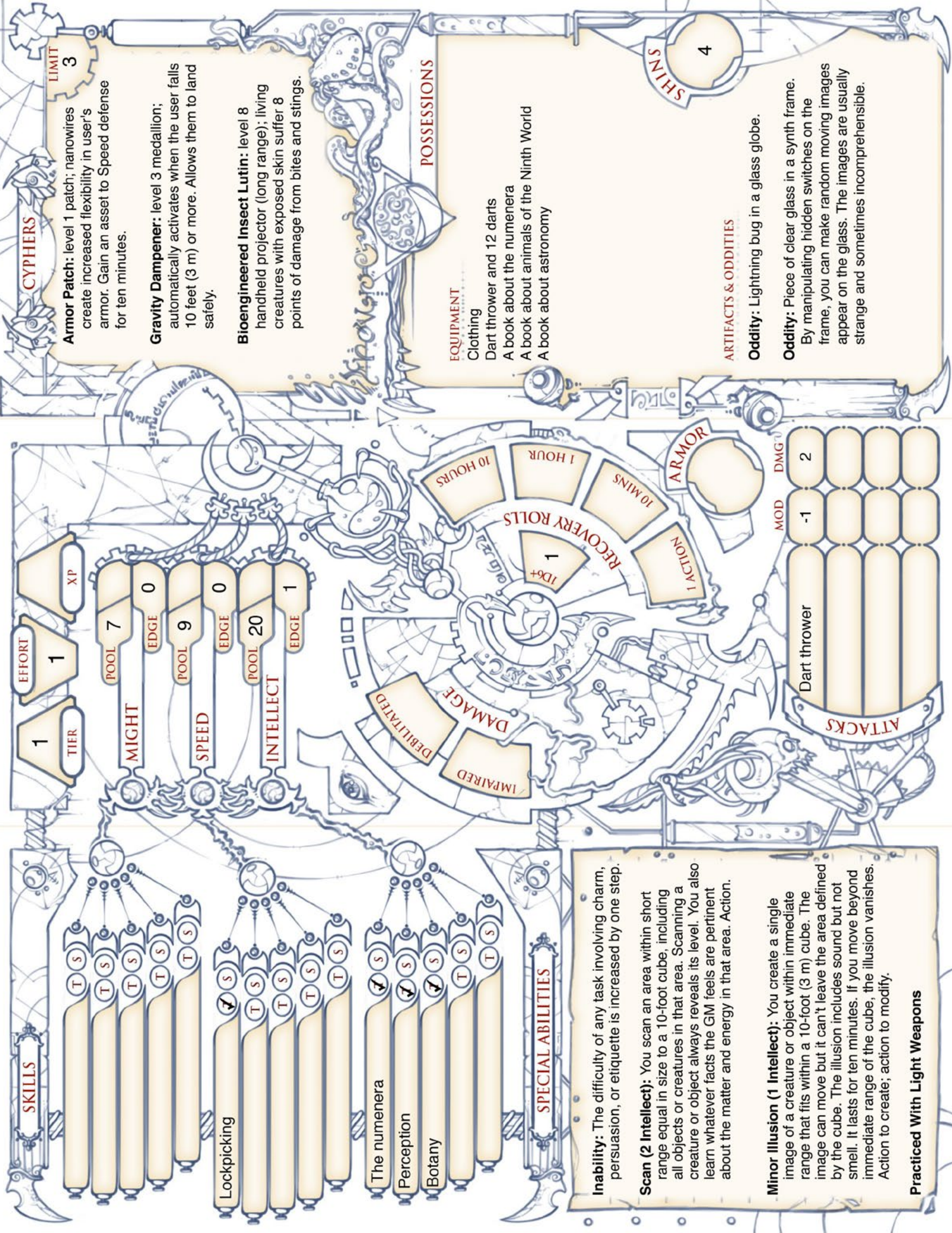
TYPE

WHO

Controls Beasts

FOCUS

CHARACTER ILLUSTRATION



SKILLS

	T	S
	T	S
	T	S
	T	S
	T	S

Lockpicking

✓	T	S
	T	S
	T	S
	T	S
	T	S

The numerera

Perception

Botany

✓	T	S
✓	T	S
✓	T	S
	T	S
	T	S

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Inability: The difficulty of any task involving charm, persuasion, or etiquette is increased by one step.

Scan (2 Intellect): You scan an area within short range equal in size to a 10-foot cube, including all objects or creatures in that area. Scanning a creature or object always reveals its level. You also learn whatever facts the GM feels are pertinent about the matter and energy in that area. Action.

Minor Illusion (1 Intellect): You create a single image of a creature or object within immediate range that fits within a 10-foot (3 m) cube. The image can move but it can't leave the area defined by the cube. The illusion includes sound but not smell. It lasts for ten minutes. If you move beyond immediate range of the cube, the illusion vanishes. Action to create; action to modify.

Practiced With Light Weapons

CYPHERS

LIMIT
3

Armor Patch: level 1 patch; nanowires create increased flexibility in user's armor. Gain an asset to Speed defense for ten minutes.

Gravity Dampener: level 3 medallion; automatically activates when the user falls 10 feet (3 m) or more. Allows them to land safely.

Bioengineered Insect Lutin: level 8 handheld projector (long range); living creatures with exposed skin suffer 8 points of damage from bites and stings.

POSSESSIONS

EQUIPMENT

- Clothing
- Dart thrower and 12 darts
- A book about the numerera
- A book about animals of the Ninth World
- A book about astronomy

ARTIFACTS & ODDITIES

Oddity: Lightning bug in a glass globe.

Oddity: Piece of clear glass in a synth frame. By manipulating hidden switches on the frame, you can make random moving images appear on the glass. The images are usually strange and sometimes incomprehensible.

SHINS
4

EFFORT

1

XP

MIGHT

POOL 7

EDGE 0

SPEED

POOL 9

EDGE 0

INTELLECT

POOL 20

EDGE 1

RECOVERY ROLLS

1D6+1

10 HOURS

1 HOUR

10 MINS

ARMOR

1 ACTION

MOD

-1

DMG

2

ATTACKS

Dart thrower

BACKGROUND

You killed a well-known criminal in self-defense, earning the respect of many and the enmity of a dangerous few.

Ech is never fooled by your illusions and is never affected by the trickery of your special abilities. You can choose whether or not you know this fact.

This is your first job with the Slying Seskiis, so you don't have a nickname yet. It is likely that they will give you one, although you have no idea how they will choose it.

NOTES

NUMENÉRA

Kerus " ()

NAME

Learned

DESCRIPTOR

Nano

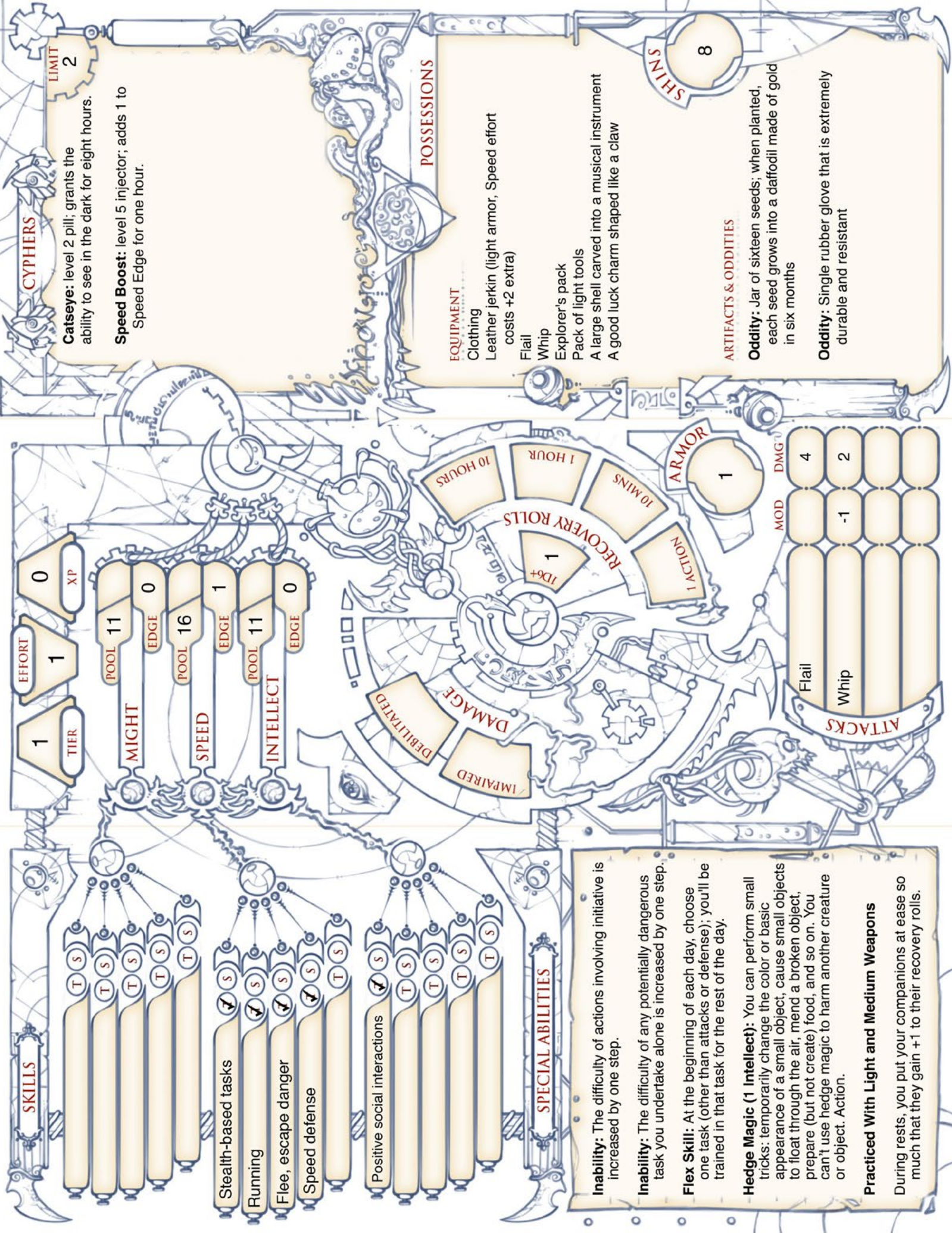
TYPE

WHO

Crafts Illusions

FOCUS

CHARACTER ILLUSTRATION



SKILLS

	T	S
	T	S
	T	S
	T	S
	T	S

Stealth-based tasks

✓	T	S
✓	T	S
✓	T	S
✓	T	S
	T	S

Running

✓	T	S
✓	T	S
✓	T	S
✓	T	S
	T	S

Flee, escape danger

✓	T	S
✓	T	S
✓	T	S
✓	T	S
	T	S

Speed defense

Positive social interactions

✓	T	S
	T	S
	T	S
	T	S
	T	S

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Inability: The difficulty of actions involving initiative is increased by one step.

Inability: The difficulty of any potentially dangerous task you undertake alone is increased by one step.

Flex Skill: At the beginning of each day, choose one task (other than attacks or defense); you'll be trained in that task for the rest of the day.

Hedge Magic (1 Intellect): You can perform small tricks: temporarily change the color or basic appearance of a small object, cause small objects to float through the air, mend a broken object, prepare (but not create) food, and so on. You can't use hedge magic to harm another creature or object. Action.

Practiced With Light and Medium Weapons

During rests, you put your companions at ease so much that they gain +1 to their recovery rolls.

EFFORT

0

XP

1

TIER

MIGHT

POOL 11

EDGE 0

SPEED

POOL 16

EDGE 1

INTELLECT

POOL 11

EDGE 0

POSSESSIONS

EQUIPMENT

- Clothing
- Leather jerkin (light armor, Speed effort costs +2 extra)
- Flail
- Whip
- Explorer's pack
- Pack of light tools
- A large shell carved into a musical instrument
- A good luck charm shaped like a claw

ARTIFACTS & ODDITIES

Oddity: Jar of sixteen seeds; when planted, each seed grows into a daffodil made of gold in six months

Oddity: Single rubber glove that is extremely durable and resistant

SHINS
8

ARMOR

1

MOD

4

DMG

2

ATTACKS

Flail

Whip

-1

BACKGROUND

You used to work with a troupe of traveling minstrels and performers, and they remember you fondly (as do people in the places you visited).

Ravi is your worst critic. Your abilities to help or inspire others don't function for them.

You got your Slyling Seskii nickname on a job where you:

NOTES

NUMENÉRA

Gryak "Murky" (Mur)

NAME

Craven

DESCRIPTOR

Jack

TYPE

WHO

Entertains

FOCUS

CHARACTER ILLUSTRATION

SKILLS

The diagram illustrates a neural network architecture with five layers of nodes. The bottom layer consists of 10 nodes, and each of the four layers above it consists of 5 nodes. The top layer nodes are labeled 'T' and 'S'. The nodes are connected in a feedforward manner, with each node in a layer connected to all nodes in the layer above it. The nodes are represented by yellow rounded rectangles with blue outlines, and the connections are shown as blue lines.

Pleasant Social Inter.

Discerning motives/lies

Openness to Experience

Agreeableness

Conscientiousness

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Danger Sense (1 Speed): The difficulty of your initiative roll is reduced by one step. Enabler.

Pierce (1 Speed): +1 damage to long-ranged attacks with a sharp point. Action.

Shroud of Flame (1 Intellect): At your command, your body becomes shrouded in flames that last ten minutes. The fire inflicts 2 points of damage to anyone who touches you or strikes you with a melee attack. While the shroud is active, you gain +2 points of Armor that protect against damage from fire. Enabler.

Practiced in Armor

Practiced in All Weapons

Trained Without Armor: You are trained in Speed defense actions when not wearing armor. Enabler.

1	TIER	1	EFFORT	XP
16	MIGHT	1	EDGE	
10	SPEED	1	EDGE	
10	INTELLECT	0	EDGE	

	MOD	DMG
Bow		4
Dagger	-1	2

CYPHERS

LIMIT 2

Cleaner: level 4 wristband projector; dissolves the remains of one human-sized creature into a small pile of salts

Rejuvenator: level 5 injection; restores 5 points to the user's Might Pool

POSSESSIONS


EQUIPMENT

Clothing
An ornate cloth coat from your military days
(light Armor)
Explorer's pack
Bow and 12 arrows
Dagger

ARTIFACTS & ODDITIES

Oddity: Small jar that produces 1 ounce of green paint when the sun rises

Artifact: Device that sprays inanimate objects to make them fire-resistant. All your starting gear has already been treated unless you don't want it to be.



BACKGROUND

You were in the military and have friends who still serve. Your former commander remembers you well.

Through a quirk of fate, your fire cannot harm Ri.

You got your Slyng Seskii nickname on a job where you:

NOTES

NUMENÉRA

Cyne "Ravage" (Ravi)

NAME

Honorable

DESCRIPTOR

Glaive

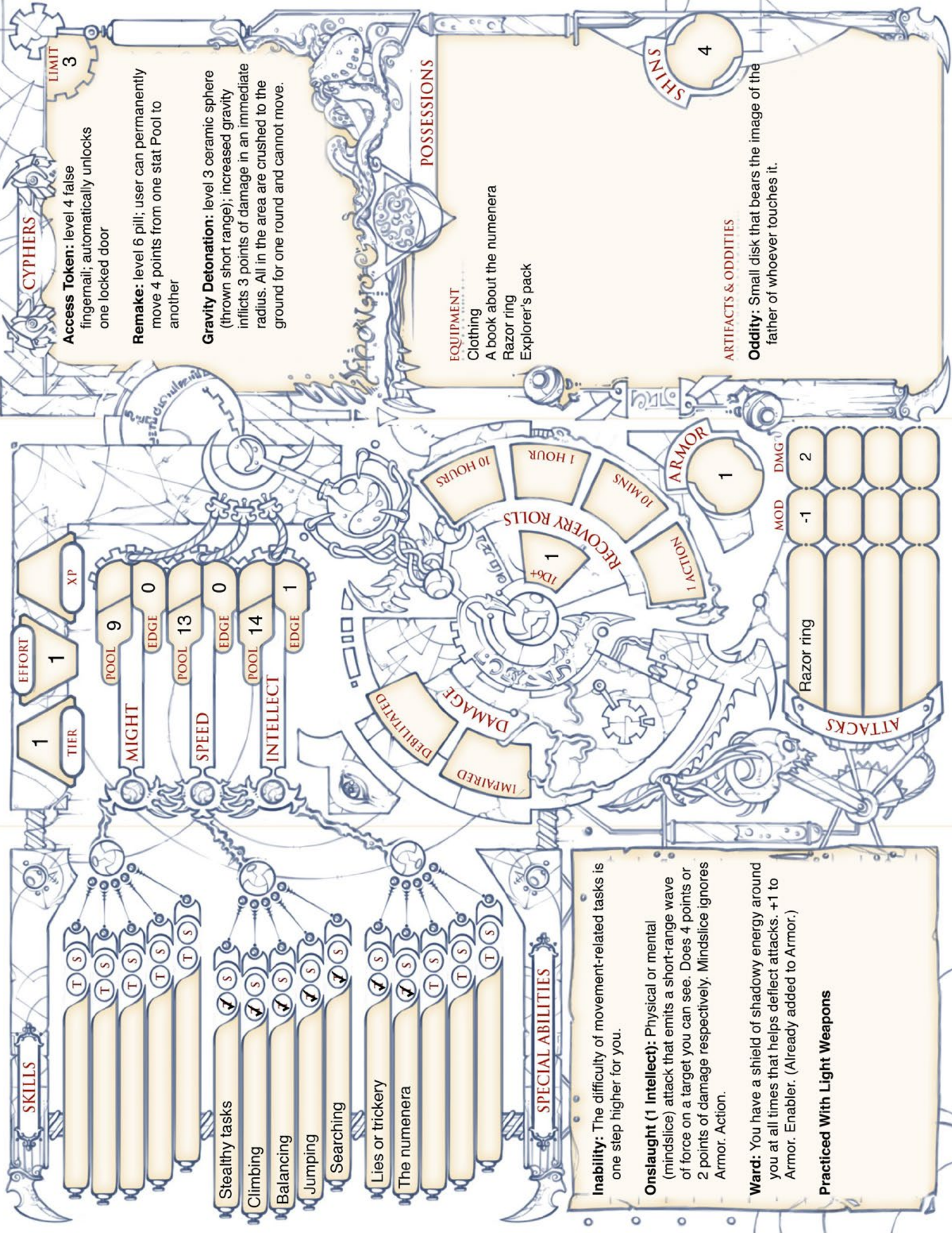
TYPE

WHO

Bears a Halo of Fire

FOCUS

CHARACTER ILLUSTRATION



SKILLS

EFFORT

1

TIER

1

XP

1

MIGHT

POOL 9

EDGE 0

SPEED

POOL 13

EDGE 0

INTELLECT

POOL 14

EDGE 1

Stealthy tasks

Climbing

Balancing

Jumping

Searching

Lies or trickery

The numerera

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Inability: The difficulty of movement-related tasks is one step higher for you.

Onslaught (1 Intellect): Physical or mental (mindslice) attack that emits a short-range wave of force on a target you can see. Does 4 points or 2 points of damage respectively. Mindslice ignores Armor. Action.

Ward: You have a shield of shadowy energy around you at all times that helps deflect attacks. +1 to Armor. Enabler. (Already added to Armor.)

Practiced With Light Weapons

CYPHERS

LIMIT 3

Access Token: level 4 false fingernail; automatically unlocks one locked door

Remake: level 6 pill; user can permanently move 4 points from one stat Pool to another

Gravity Detonation: level 3 ceramic sphere (thrown short range); increased gravity inflicts 3 points of damage in an immediate radius. All in the area are crushed to the ground for one round and cannot move.

POSSESSIONS

EQUIPMENT

- Clothing
- A book about the numerera
- Razor ring
- Explorer's pack

ARTIFACTS & ODDITIES

Oddity: Small disk that bears the image of the father of whoever touches it.

SHINS 4

1

MOD -1

DMG 2

Razor ring

ATTACKS

BACKGROUND

You owe money to a number of people around town and don't have the funds to pay your debts.

Shey has been your adventuring partner in previous expeditions, and the two of you work so well together that you both gain +1 to any die rolls when you collaborate on the same task, fight the same foe, and so on.

You got your Slyling Seskii nickname on a job where you:

NOTES

NUMENÉRA

Ichond "Riage" (Fi)

NAME

Stealthy

DESCRIPTOR

Nano

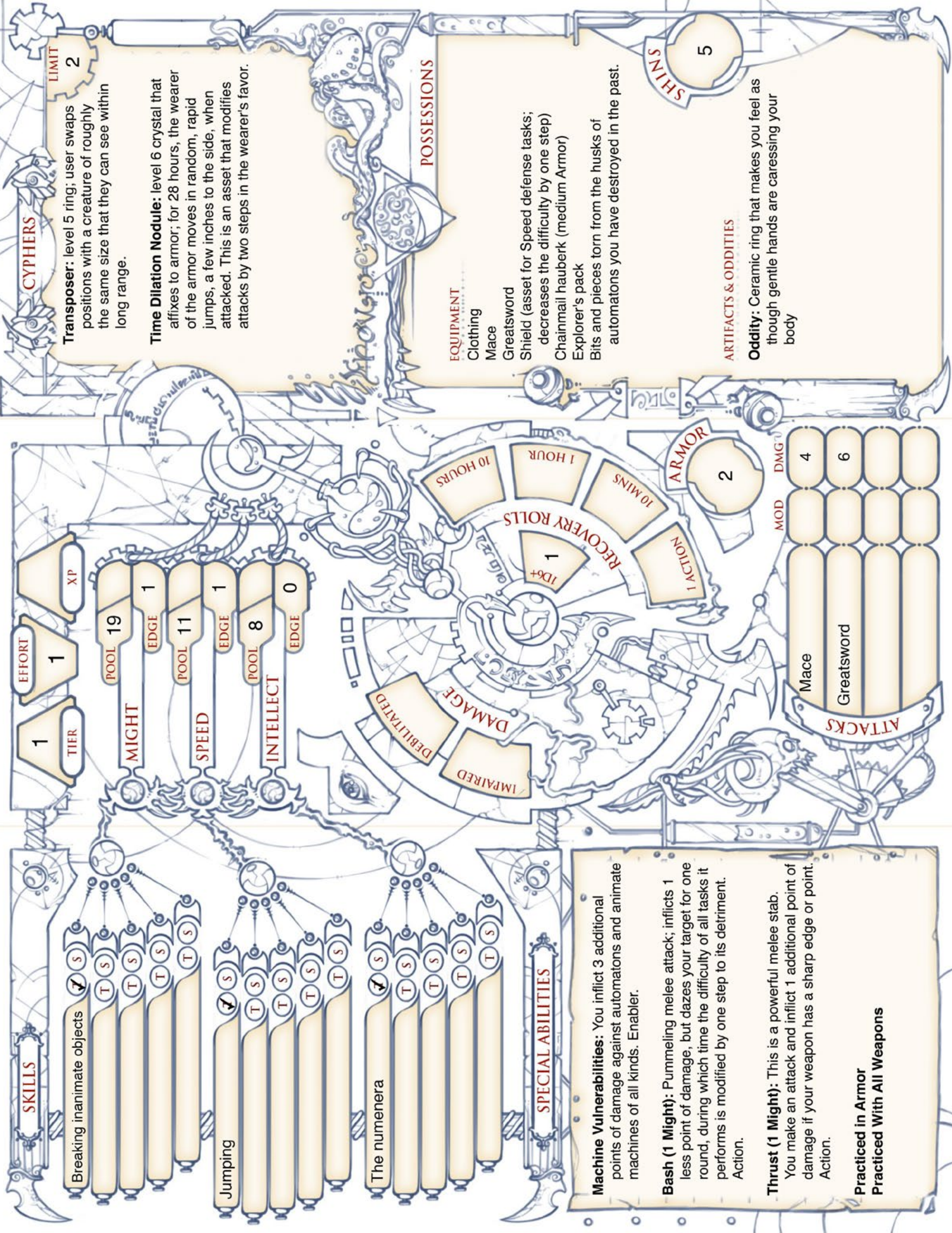
TYPE

WHO

Explores Dark Places

FOCUS

CHARACTER ILLUSTRATION



SKILLS

Breaking inanimate objects

✓	S
T	S
T	S
T	S
T	S

Jumping

✓	S
T	S
T	S
T	S
T	S

The numenera

✓	S
T	S
T	S
T	S
T	S

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Machine Vulnerabilities: You inflict 3 additional points of damage against automatons and animate machines of all kinds. Enabler.

Bash (1 Might): Pummeling melee attack; inflicts 1 less point of damage, but dazes your target for one round, during which time the difficulty of all tasks it performs is modified by one step to its detriment. Action.

Thrust (1 Might): This is a powerful melee stab. You make an attack and inflict 1 additional point of damage if your weapon has a sharp edge or point. Action.

Practiced in Armor
Practiced With All Weapons

CYPHERS

LIMIT

2

Transposer: level 5 ring; user swaps positions with a creature of roughly the same size that they can see within long range.

Time Dilation Module: level 6 crystal that affixes to armor; for 28 hours, the wearer of the armor moves in random, rapid jumps, a few inches to the side, when attacked. This is an asset that modifies attacks by two steps in the wearer's favor.

POSSESSIONS

EQUIPMENT

Clothing

Mace

Greatsword

Shield (asset for Speed defense tasks; decreases the difficulty by one step)

Chainmail hauberk (medium Armor)

Explorer's pack

Bits and pieces torn from the husks of automatons you have destroyed in the past.

ARTIFACTS & ODDITIES

Oddity: Ceramic ring that makes you feel as though gentle hands are caressing your body

SHINING

5

1

EFFORT

1

XP

MIGHT

POOL

19

EDGE

1

SPEED

POOL

11

EDGE

1

INTELLECT

POOL

8

EDGE

0

10 HOURS

1 HOUR

10 MINS

ARMOR

2

DMG

4

6

ATTACKS

Mace

Greatsword

RECOVERY ROLLS

1D6+

DEPILATED

DAMAGE

IMPAIRED

BACKGROUND

You and a friend both smoke the same kind of rare, expensive tobacco. The two of you get together weekly to chat and smoke.

Kerus does not appear to share your feelings about automatons. In fact, you believe that they might secretly have machine parts themselves.

You got your Slyling Seskii nickname on a job where you:

NOTES

NUMENÉRA

Maysm "Shade" (Shey)

NAME

Strong

DESCRIPTOR

Glaive

TYPE

WHO

Battles Automatons

FOCUS

CHARACTER ILLUSTRATION

NUMENERA GLIMMERS

Numenera Glimmers are inexpensive PDF-only products that allow us to respond to fans' desires for new material on the fly and let us delve deeper into the Ninth World, covering unusual and specialized topics that might not find a home in a larger publication.

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