



APOCRYPHA NECROMUNDA



QUEEN OF ASH TOWN



The wilds, wastes and badzones of Necromunda are filled with legends and myths of every colour and kind imaginable. Some of them are even true. Wander into any drinking hole in Hive Primus and crack open a bottle of Wild Snake (or Second Best if you're a little light on creds) and within moments some crusty-faced local will be bending your ear with a tale or two. Maybe their little corner of the underhive was once the site of a showdown between the notorious Carrion Queens and the equally nefarious Irontree Reavers, or perhaps the legendary bounty hunter Kal Jericho drank at the very bar you're sitting at now and they got close enough to touch the hem of his duster. Whatever the yarn, you'd do well to listen carefully, for hidden in every story is at least a grain of truth, and maybe even a lesson or two that might keep you alive when you're next out wandering the badzones looking for trouble...



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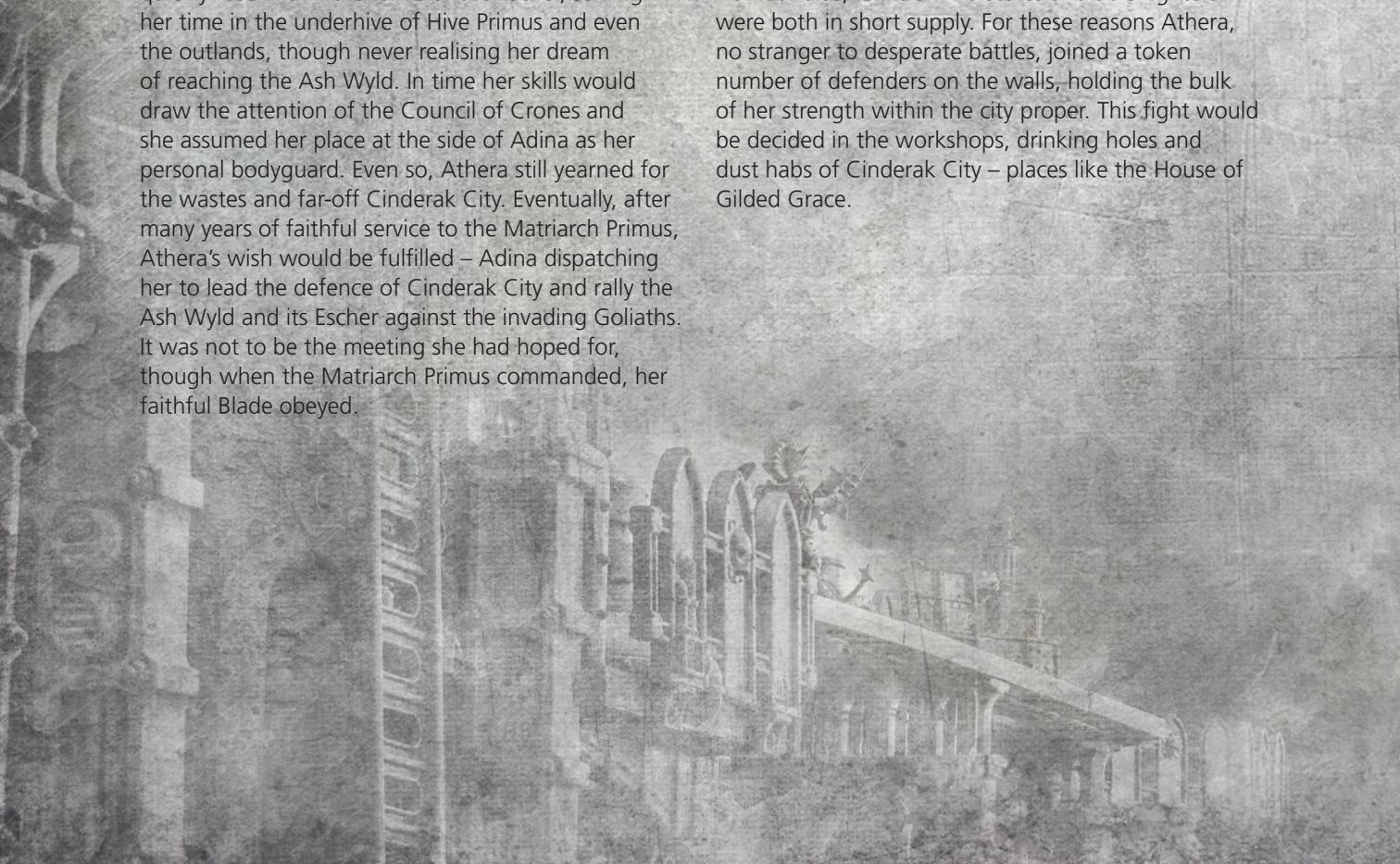
QUEEN OF ASH TOWN

Athera never asked to be the Blade of the Matriarch. As a young girl she had dreamed of running off and joining the Ash Wyld; living free among the Escher of the wasteland far from the responsibilities of House and hive. Like all fantasies it bore little resemblance to reality, the true Ash Wyld being just another part of the House of Blades and beholden to its rules despite being based in the House of Gilded Grace in the heart of the great outland settlement of Cinderak City. Athera's future, however, was tied closely to that of House Escher itself. She was a clone child of the legendary gang queen Vhoadycia, spawned in an effort to cure the Flesh Curse. Her gene-sister, also cloned from the blood of Vhoadycia, was the Matriarch Primus Adina Sabine – the pair's lives woven into a single strand of fate.

With the blessings of her genetic heredity Athera quickly rose within the ranks of the Escher, serving her time in the underhive of Hive Primus and even the outlands, though never realising her dream of reaching the Ash Wyld. In time her skills would draw the attention of the Council of Crones and she assumed her place at the side of Adina as her personal bodyguard. Even so, Athera still yearned for the wastes and far-off Cinderak City. Eventually, after many years of faithful service to the Matriarch Primus, Athera's wish would be fulfilled – Adina dispatching her to lead the defence of Cinderak City and rally the Ash Wyld and its Escher against the invading Goliaths. It was not to be the meeting she had hoped for, though when the Matriarch Primus commanded, her faithful Blade obeyed.

On the eve of the Battle of Cinderak City, Athera, fresh from Hive Primus and the chaos of the Great Darkness, had reached the city just before the Goliath road gangs had encircled it. In the great entrance chamber of the House of Gilded Grace, she held council with the other Escher for the defence of the city, Nomeia, the leader of the Ash Wyld and Elvera, Mistress of the House, listening intently to her words. They were outnumbered and outgunned by their foes, with only a handful of Escher and Orlock gangs fit to defend the city. The other Clan Houses had retreated to their parts of the city, as had the Guilders and criminal cartels, all hoping that if they kept their heads down they could weather the wrath of the Goliaths.

The Great Darkness, and the world storm that followed, had not been kind to Cinderak City. The city walls were in bad shape after months of Ash Waste Nomad raids, while ammo stores and able fighters were both in short supply. For these reasons Athera, no stranger to desperate battles, joined a token number of defenders on the walls, holding the bulk of her strength within the city proper. This fight would be decided in the workshops, drinking holes and dust habs of Cinderak City – places like the House of Gilded Grace.

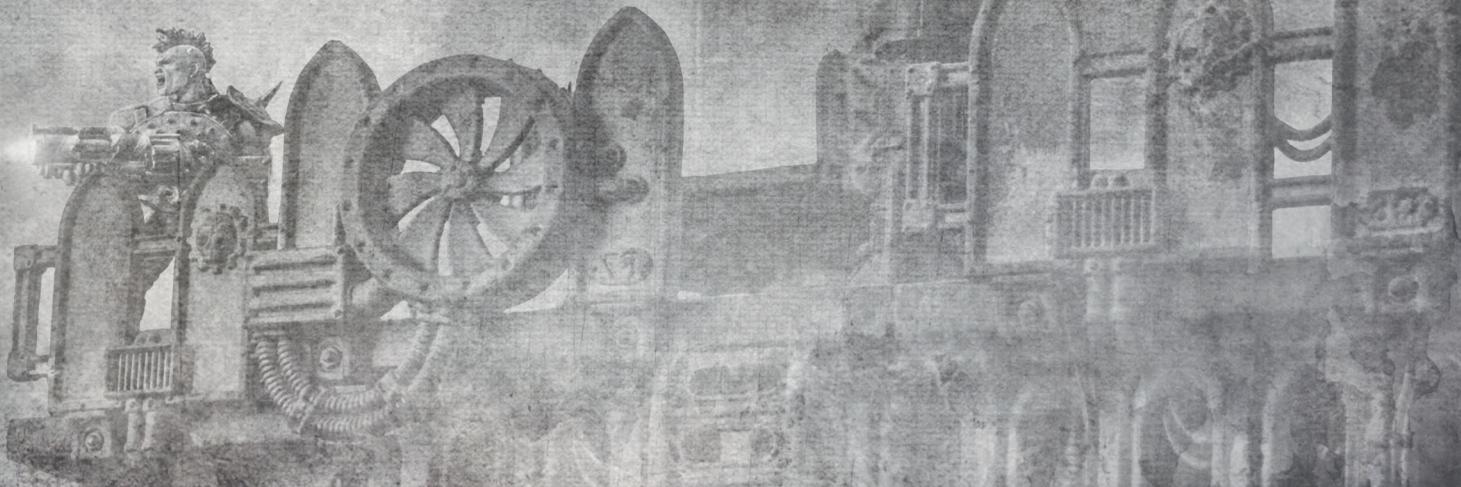


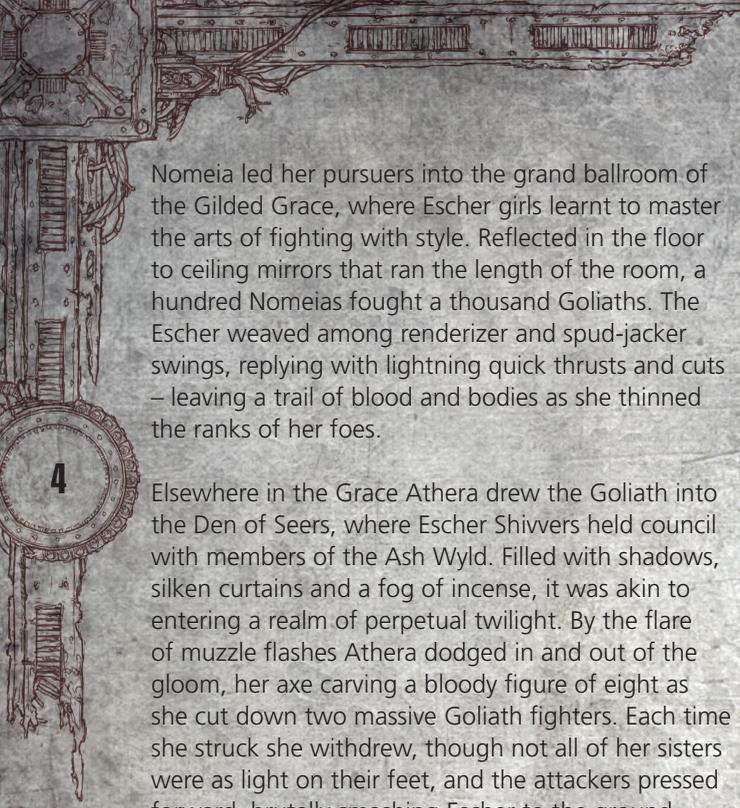
As the sounds of a thousand growling engines descended on the settlement, Athera and her companions in the Ash Wyld took the Escher sacrament of battle. Esmer Tul, leader of the Gilded Grace's Chymist Coven, handed out combat stimulants to the gathered women, the blue vials with their biovoltage chems crafted according to her own special recipe. She also passed around injector slugs filled with chems such as Blood Boil and Skin Fire for the Escher to slot into the hilts of their stiletto blades, making even the slightest scratch lethal. For Athera she had prepared a stimulant of Predator's Kiss, the potent and rare chem able to focus the mind into a pinpoint of killing rage. Athera tucked the stimulant away in her belt until the time she would need its help.

The first phase of the battle unfolded as Athera had foreseen, and after slowing the Goliaths on the walls she fell back with her sisters toward the centre of the city. Street by street they fought, until the Blade of the Matriarch found herself on the doorstep of the House of Gilded Grace. With enemy gangsters closing in from all sides, Athera retreated into the Escher stronghold, her Caryatid Stix swooping through the doorway just before Tul and Elvera slammed it shut behind her. Before she could greet her sisters, the doors to the Gilded Grace exploded inwards in a shower of splinters and metal fragments. Out of the dust and smoke, hulking shapes clad in furnace plates and rebreathers stormed into the building, firing their weapons as they came. Athera and the Escher responded with weapons fire of their own. Tul, Elvera and the younger girls fell back toward the great stair that led to the upper floors of the Gilded Grace, while Nomeia and the more reckless women of the Ash Wyld hurled themselves into the attackers.

Within moments the entrance hall was a furious melee of flashing blades and close ranged gunfire. Athera and Nomeia danced among the Goliaths, Athera's chainaxe rising and falling in bloody arcs, while Nomeia's poisoned blades scored bloody furrows on any exposed flesh. Fighters touched by the Ash Wyld leader's knives watched in horror as their skin blackened, peeled away or even in some cases caught fire – the toxins turning their blood into a flammable liquid. The very unfortunate were killed in the most gruesome fashion as their organs ruptured and burst, the poisons turning their flesh black and purple as it savaged their bodies before they pitched forward onto the body-strewn floor.

Despite the advantages speed and chems lent the Ash Wyld they were significantly outnumbered by the Goliath, and though the entranceway was littered with enemy corpses, Athera and her allies were forced to fall back. With a quick series of gestures, the Blade of the Matriarch directed the defenders to different parts of the Gilded Grace – the Goliath splitting up to follow individual groups of Escher and spreading their strength thin throughout the building.





Nomeia led her pursuers into the grand ballroom of the Gilded Grace, where Escher girls learnt to master the arts of fighting with style. Reflected in the floor to ceiling mirrors that ran the length of the room, a hundred Nomeias fought a thousand Goliaths. The Escher weaved among renderizer and spud-jacker swings, replying with lightning quick thrusts and cuts – leaving a trail of blood and bodies as she thinned the ranks of her foes.

Elsewhere in the Grace Athera drew the Goliath into the Den of Seers, where Escher Shivers held council with members of the Ash Wyld. Filled with shadows, silken curtains and a fog of incense, it was akin to entering a realm of perpetual twilight. By the flare of muzzle flashes Athera dodged in and out of the gloom, her axe carving a bloody figure of eight as she cut down two massive Goliath fighters. Each time she struck she withdrew, though not all of her sisters were as light on their feet, and the attackers pressed forward, brutally smashing Escher to the ground.

As Athera fought the attackers in the Den of Seers, Elvera defended the upper floors with the youngest members of the Ash Wyld. From gaps in the winding bannister, the girls fired down into the advancing Goliaths. Las blasts and bullets chewed up the ancient stairs around the attackers, though where a shot found its mark, as often as not the burly fighter merely shrugged and continued to climb. Soon Elvera was retreating down lumen-lit corridors into the Gilded Grace's bathhouse. Leaping into the tepid water of the moon pool, Elvera swam out into its deepest part, a half dozen Goliath fighters splashing noisily in her wake. After diving under the water, she moved like a shadow across the bottom of the pool, her toxic blade finding the exposed meat of Goliath legs and feet. Soon crimson stains spread out across the pool, and the Goliath, who moments ago had been so confident in their assault, now thrashed about as they tried to flee from their unseen assailant.

Meanwhile, a savage showdown was unfolding beneath the moon pool chamber in the Phelynx lair. Under dripping iron bars amid a maze of cages and kennels, girls of the Ash Wyld and their Phelynx cats fought Goliath gangers tooth and claw. Into the fray strode the Goliath leader Skullshank, a brute cleaver in each fist. The massive Forge Tyrant waded through both Escher and cats, hacking, bashing and beating a path across the room. Only when Athera appeared from a side entrance did Skullshank pause, turning to face this new adversary, murder in his eyes. Athera, wounded and tired from her battle in the Den of Seers, took out the dose of Predator's Kiss Esmer had given her and drew deep on the stimuliser. In an instant her fatigue vanished, replaced by a burning strength and a desire to do violence.

Lunging across the room, she met Skullshank in a crash of weapons and a clang of armour. The two fighters circled each other while trading blows, Skullshank making mighty swings of his cleavers while Athera darted to and fro, her chainaxe a blur in her hands. Then Stix, having spent most of the battle flitting around Athera's shoulders, swooped out of the gloom behind Skullshank, the massive Goliath stumbling as he twisted to strike the annoying creature. Not one to miss an opening, Athera rushed in to land a gruesome blow across Skullshank's face, opening his cheek wide from ear to chin. Snarling up through blood and torn flesh, the Goliath made to rise only to be dragged down by a Phelynx, then another, and another. As Athera watched, the cats tore the Goliath apart in a savage feeding frenzy – the Escher turned her back on the horrific spectacle and returned to the entrance chamber.

When she arrived, Nomeia and Elvera had returned with the surviving Escher. Of the Goliath only corpses remained. Outside the sounds of battle were growing louder and, hefting her bloody chainaxe, Athera led the Ash Wyld out onto the street, and into the fight for Cinderak City.



DESIGNER'S COMMENTARY: NEW RULES FOR HOUSE ESCHER GANGS

Presented below are special rules that will allow you to recreate the events described in Queen of Ash Town, as well as new options for House Escher gangs. If the Arbitrator wishes, these rules can be used during a campaign.

HOUSE OF GILDED GRACE

If your gang includes an Apprentice Clan Chymist, then the following may be purchased as Chem-alchemy Elixirs. Note that unlike other Chem-alchemy Elixirs, these may not be combined with other chems and an Apprentice Clan Chymist does not reduce their credit cost.

BLOOD BOIL (TOXIC AMMO)+30 CREDITS

Blood Boil is a deadly concoction of Esmer Tul's own devising. It causes a victim's organs to rupture and destroy themselves whilst driving them mad with agony.

Effect: Whenever a weapon with the Toxin trait with this Toxic Ammo applied hits an enemy fighter, add 1 to the dice roll to see if it overcomes the fighter's Toughness. In addition, the weapon has the Exploding and Maddening Toxin Effects applied to it.

SKIN FIRE (TOXIC AMMO).....+25 CREDITS

Skin Fire is a vicious chem that upon contact with a person's skin changes the chemistry of their blood so that it becomes extremely flammable, whilst the area around the wound blackens and decays.

Effect: If a fighter is Injured by a weapon with the Toxin trait with this Toxic Ammo applied, and is not taken Out of Action, roll a D6; on a 4+ the fighter becomes subject to the Blaze condition. In addition, the weapon has the Debilitating and Decaying Toxin Effects applied to it.

PREDATOR'S KISS (STIMM)+45 CREDITS

A potent mix, Predator's Kiss combines the Blood Rush and Hyper stimms with Esmer Tul's own addition distilled from the pheromone glands of Phelynx. The result burns away a fighter's fatigue, replacing it with a burning strength and a desire to do great violence.

Effect: A fighter under the effect of this Stimm adds 1 to their Strength characteristic for the purposes of close combat attacks, though all of their weapons gain the Reckless trait. In addition, they have the Blood Rush and Hyper Stimm Effects applied to them.

DEFEND THE HOUSE

'It may have a kick like a rogue ambull, but it'll make you unbeatable in a fight!'

Esmer Tul, Clan Chymist, House of Gilded Grace, House Escher

In this scenario, one gang makes a desperate defence of their turf.

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ATTACKER AND DEFENDER

In this scenario, one gang is the attacker and the other is the defender. If this scenario is being played as part of a campaign, then the gang that issued the challenge is the attacker; otherwise, roll off with the winner deciding whether they will attack or defend.

BATTLE TYPE

This scenario is a Sector Mechanicus battle; vehicles and Wargear that grant the Mounted condition cannot be included in either gang's starting crew or Reinforcements.

BATTLEFIELD

This scenario uses the standard rules for setting up a battlefield, as described in the Battlefield Set-up & Scenarios section of the *Necromunda Rulebook*.

CREWS

This scenario uses the standard rules for choosing a crew, as described in the Battlefield Set-up & Scenarios section of the *Necromunda Rulebook*. Both gangs use the Custom Selection (D3+4) method to determine their crew. The rest of the attacking gang's Fighter cards are shuffled together to form the Reinforcements deck.

DEPLOYMENT

This scenario uses the standard rules for deployment as described in the Battlefield Set-up & Scenarios section of the *Necromunda Rulebook*.

GANG TACTICS

Each player may choose two gang tactics from those available to their gang. If, during the pre-battle sequence, the gang rating of one player's gang is less than their opponent's, they may randomly determine one additional gang tactic for each full 100 credits of difference.

ENDING THE BATTLE

If either gang has no fighters left on the battlefield at the end of any round, the battle ends immediately.

VICTORY

If only one gang has fighters remaining on the battlefield, that gang is victorious. Any other result is a draw.

REWARDS

CREDITS

The victorious gang adds 2D6x10 credits to their Stash.

The losing gang adds D6x10 credits to their Stash.

If the battle is a draw, both gangs add 2D6x10 credits to their Stash.

EXPERIENCE

Each fighter that takes part in the battle earns 1 XP.

REPUTATION

The victorious gang gains D3 Reputation.

If either gang bottled out, they lose 1 Reputation.

HOME TURF ADVANTAGE

The defender has the Home Turf Advantage as described in the Battlefield Set-up & Scenarios section of the *Necromunda Rulebook*.

CLOUDS OF INCENSE

The air is filled with incense and strange chems. The Visibility (9") rule is in effect for this battle.

REINFORCEMENTS

The attacker can use Reinforcements, as described in the Battlefield Set-up & Scenarios section of the *Necromunda Rulebook*. At the start of each End phase, the attacker rolls a D3 and receives that many Reinforcements.

QUEEN OF ASH TOWN

If players wish, they may use this scenario to represent Athera and the Ash Wyld's defence of the House of Gilded Grace. In order to do this, make the following changes:

- The attacker's gang should be a Goliath gang.
- The defender's gang should be an Escher gang with a large number of Wyld Runners led by Athera and accompanied by an Apprentice Clan Chymist.
- The House of Gilded Grace rule is in effect and each defending fighter starts the battle with a dose of either Blood Boil or Skin Fire, while Athera starts with a dose of Predator's Kiss (see page 5).



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