

The Absolution of the Guildpact

Adam Lee

From set *Gatecrash*

Gorev Hadszak leaned back in his chair and rubbed the white stubble of his chin while he watched the crowd file in and the people take their places in front of the stage. Gorev was grizzled in every sense of the word—his face, his clothing, his demeanor. He had been a Wojek, and even though he was many years into his retirement, he would tell you he was *still* a Wojek. No one knew exactly how old Gorev was, as Boros magic could sustain a Wojek's life far beyond the average person. In spite of his age, gray hair, and weathered features, Gorev still looked like he could wrestle a drunken ogre out of a bar or knock out a Rakdos spiker. His wrists were as thick as most men's calves and his arms were covered in scars. He had a face that looked like you could hit it with a wooden plank and not leave a mark... well, at least not a new mark. Besides, Gorev's face had been hit by things *much* harder than a plank.



Art by Tyler Jacobson

Next to Gorev sat his nephew, Pel Javya, a newly minted Wojek fresh from the academy, clean shaven and always at attention. His uniform was a wrinkle-free masterpiece with everything that could gleam in the sunlight polished to a high-gloss—boots, buttons, brass. A smart fellow, Pel worked hard to get into the Wojek corps and become an exemplary investigator. He was recently assigned a partner and

began his beat across the Tenth District. Pel recounted every incident, from a tipped apple cart to a drunken brawl, to his uncle Gorev, with youthful enthusiasm, hoping for a nod of approval, some sage advice, or a story from the old days.

It was the anniversary of the end of the *Guildpact*, the magical contract between the ten guilds of Ravnica that held for over 10,000 years. The play presented a condensed version of the events that led to the end of the *Guildpact*. Gorev remembered those days well. The play started with a scene showing the hero, Agrus Kos, striding across the stage to a roar of cheers and applause. Then the scenery shifted, using a bit of magic and some good set design, simulating rooftops and scenes of murders for Agrus to investigate. The audience was drawn in to how Agrus Kos began to solve the mystery that led to such tumultuous events.



Art by John Avon

After a while, Pel leaned over to his uncle. “How did the guilds operate back then? What was it like under the *Guildpact*?”

“Ravnica was a lot different back then. The guilds ruled. What they said was law and everyone knew it. If you lived in a district under a guild’s protection you followed its rules. If you were unguilded, like my folks, you lived on the outskirts of the districts carving out a living as best you could. But most Ravnicans were eager to join one. Most wanted structure, protection, and a sense of belonging. That’s why I joined the Wojeks. I liked what the Boros stood for back then.”

Gorev leaned back. His physical eyes watched the play, but inwardly Gorev relived a memory of the Boros of old, the days of Razia and the angels of Sunhome. Legions of Wojeks, swiftblades, and skyknights assembled within the massive hall, gleaming steel reflecting the sun, presenting their undying loyalty to their angelic leader—their parun. Gorev was one of them, beholding his angelic commander, bathing in her fierce, sublime gaze.



Razia, Boros Archangel | Art by Donato Giancola

“What did the Boros stand for back then?” The question pulled Gorev out of the memory.

After a pause, Gorev said, “They stood for the *Guildpact* . They stood for 10,000 years of order on Ravnica.”

They watched the play for some time, but what Gorev said stayed in Pel’s mind. Pel had heard the tales told late at night around the hearth. Friends of his father’s would stay late and talk about the old times and, at the odd family gathering, Pel would often overhear two elderly relatives talking about the legends of the death of Razia, the destruction of Prahv, or the shattering of the *Guildpact* . But his uncle, who was a Boros and a Wojek, never talked of the matter as long as Pel could remember.

On the stage, Agrus Kos faced Szadek, the former guildmaster of the Dimir. The audience began to boo and hiss at the vampire. The actor hissed back at the audience. This got a chuckle and some more boos from the crowd.

Gorev leaned over to Pel again. “That’s why the Boros are more important now than ever before. Now there is no *Guildpact* to uphold the law and stop creatures like him from gaining power. I don’t care what the face of the Dimir is now, they are always going to be causing trouble. You have to follow the subtle leads, you have to think differently and make sure you study magic that is off the books and manuals. That’s where the deeper layers of the Dimir are—off the books.”



Art by David Palumbo

Pel nodded. The Boros manuals about the Dimir were thorough, but the feeling at the academy was that the information was always outdated. They always felt three steps behind, or just plain lost in the woods.

The play reached its climax but Gorev was focused on his nephew. He looked at Pel with a sense of duty, a feeling of urgency. “Think of it, Pel. Szadek and that Azorius psychopath destroyed *the law*. They destroyed everything that kept Ravnica in balance for 10,000 years. You grew up in the aftermath so you don’t know any other way, but for us who lived in those times it felt like the end of the world... hell, it was the end of the world. I’m amazed that the guilds held together as well as they did.”

Gorev put his hand on Pel’s shoulder. “It’s up to you now. Your vigilance, your passion must outweigh their desire to destroy and control. That’s why this play is a tragedy—it’s not a triumph of Kos and the Boros over Szadek and Augustin—it’s a tragedy. It is the destruction of the greatest creation ever put on paper. The greatest spell ever cast.”

Gorev’s words trailed off but his eyes gave the final message. Pel knew the real fight for Ravnica lay strewn throughout the Undercity, where the Dimir lay out of sight, pulling their invisible puppet strings to organize their next attack. He knew he had to get reassigned from topside duty to really strike at the root of Ravnica’s problem.

The Absolution of the Guildpact may have just been a play, but for one Wojek in the audience it contained a message that would shape a life’s work.