

The Greater Good

Adam Lee

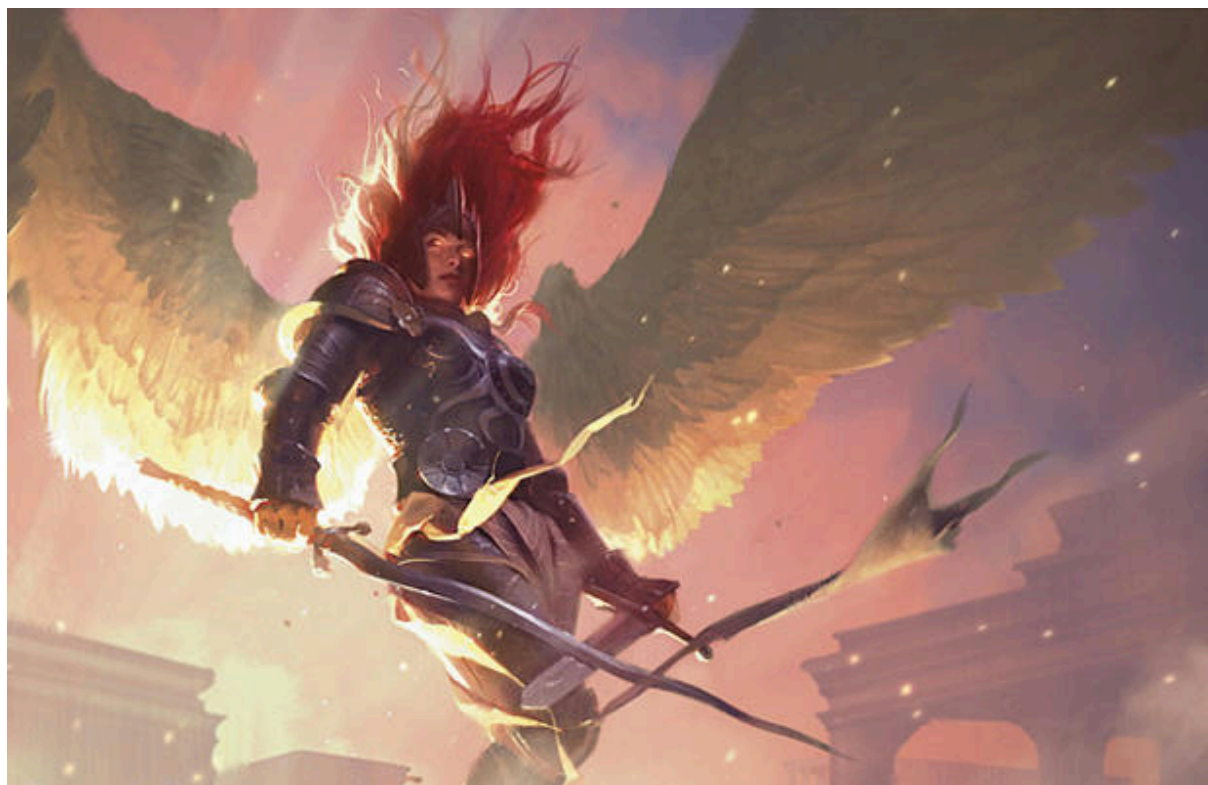
From set *Gatecrash*

When the massive doors of the war room swung open, Gideon Jura could feel energy hit him like a wave of heat from a smelting forge. It wasn't actual heat, but more like an energetic wind that pulsated through his body like a shockwave. For a second, he was taken aback by the power. He had been around many angels in his time, but her aura was an order of magnitude higher than any he had encountered.

A quick smirk flashed across the face of the Boros guildmage who escorted Gideon as they walked into the chamber. The escort carried out the Boros salute and announced, "Warleader. Gideon Jura to see you." He then bowed and left.

Aurelia looked up from a wide steel table etched with symbols, miniature towers, and buildings covering its surface, but Gideon couldn't take his eyes off of the Boros guildmaster. Her hair, eyes, armor—everything about her—seemed to shimmer like air rising off the sun-scorched horizon. Gideon couldn't tell whether there were tiny vortices of energy all over her or if she was magically surrounded by a shield of swirling mana.

He realized he was staring.



Aurelia, the Warleader | Art by Slawomir Maniak

"Guildmaster," he said, placing his hand on his chest and bowing his head slightly.

“Gideon Jura.” Her voice was powerful with an otherworldly quality. “Your accent, dress, and even your name say you’re not from this district. And yet... I have word that you saved an entire brigade of my Boros from a Rakdos ambush that would have killed every last one of them.”

“They were well trained for combat. I only showed them where to strike and when.”

“Such modesty.” Aurelia smiled. “But I think it is safe to say that you did a little striking of your own.” Aurelia moved around the table and stood before Gideon. “What puzzles me, Jura, is why I haven’t heard of your skill in battle before now. I get the feeling someone like you isn’t apt to lay low and shirk the glory of battle.”

“I’m not from around here, Guildmaster. Most of my travels take me... elsewhere.”

Aurelia regarded Gideon’s answer with a mix of curiosity and angelic aloofness, but Gideon could see her mind working.

“Fair enough.” She refolded her wings and indicated the miniature buildings on the table. “You know this place?”

“I do not,” Gideon said.

“It is the Ninth.” Aurelia placed a hand on one of the building rooftops. “It’s at the edge of the One Hundred Steps. Azorius turf. Of course, the Azorius don’t see fit to enter the Ninth. It’s a little too... hands-on... for their tastes. The Rakdos and Gruul tug and tear it apart like a dromad’s corpse, while the Dimir... well... they do what the Dimir do best: hide in the shadows and pull puppet strings.”



Crowned Ceratok | Art by Steve Prescott

Gideon looked at the neat, clean, empty model buildings, but he imagined the real plight of the people attempting to peacefully exist within a war zone. “So, it’s contested turf. The innocent people living there must be paying a high price.”

“Exactly,” Aurelia said with heaviness in her tone. She looked at Gideon. “The innocent always pay the highest price. I would love to go in there with some Cinder Elementals and burn out every last Rakdos,

Gruul, and Dimir, but unguilded Ravnicans have been living there for centuries in relative peace. Back then, it used to all be Azorius turf. But when the old *Guildpact* was broken..." Aurelia trailed off. "I won't bore you with a history lesson, Jura, but in the aftermath, the Azorius had to abandon the Ninth so they could rebuild New Prahv. Naturally, the Rakdos and Gruul pushed their way in and began brawling like oafs. Much of the Ninth was lost."

"And where was the Boros in all this?"

"I wasn't guildmaster, then." Aurelia's reply had a touch of cold steel to it. Gideon had hit a nerve. "We were led by a disgrace to the Legion. I watched as swaths of the Ninth slipped away. Its loss and other unforgivable blunders all but forced... a change... in guild leadership. Forgive me, Jura. I can still taste the bitterness of those times. Let me show you something."

Aurelia motioned for Gideon to accompany her across the polished marble floor of the great war room to a high balcony that looked over the central grounds of Sunhome. The air smelled fresh and clean. Gideon's eyes adjusted to the bright sunlight. Far below, legions of Boros knights trained and marched in the gleaming sun, while flags and banners moved in the breeze. It was a glorious sight.



Assemble the Legion | Art by Eric Deschamps

After gazing over the grandeur of Sunhome and its armies, Aurelia spoke. "I can't enjoy this fully, Jura. All this glory, and all I can think of are those poor people in the Ninth who are left behind to endure squalor, lawlessness, and stupidity." She looked at Gideon. "Jura, the Ninth is a stain on Ravnica, a stain on the Boros, and a stain on my soul. I dearly wish to cleanse it."

"And you want me to help?"

"No, Jura, I want you to lead." Aurelia turned and put a hand on his shoulder, a hand which felt much heavier than Gideon expected. "I know a leader when I see one. You have greatness within you."

She pointed to a hundred gleaming soldiers out on the parade grounds. “I am prepared to give you command of that battalion, there, if you will fight with us. Or better still, if you join us.” Power radiated from her face as Aurelia fixed her eyes on Gideon.



Boros Elite | Art by Willian Murai

“The battalion is mine even if I choose not to join the Boros?” Gideon asked.

Aurelia’s face remained implacable but she hesitated before answering. “Yes, Jura. But command will be mine. Clear?”

“Of course.” Gideon felt a sense of duty and allegiance to the angelic guildmaster rush up from deep within his chest. With soldiers like that, mountains could be moved.

But Gideon had seen something much worse than the Ninth in his travels. Something worse than even the demon lord Rakdos could muster.

He had seen a world being devoured.

But even as *Zendikar* faced extraplanar horrors, Ravnica’s streets teemed with innocents caught in the crossfire of guild warfare—the so-called “gateless.” He was needed here. With Aurelia’s help, he could save countless lives.



Gideon, Champion of Justice | Art by David Rapoza

Gideon knew the dangers of too readily following someone else's orders. He was not ready to become Boros. But he was ready to wield its weapons for the greater good.

Gideon looked up from the map of the Ninth and smiled like a wolf.

"When do we start?"