

Battle for the Ninth

Adam Lee

From set *Dragon's Maze*

Gideon wiped the dirt and dust from his face and smiled.

"They took the bait," Anza said excitedly, as pieces of the building rained down on their heads. Broken bricks lay strewn about them; they were barely visible to each other in the dust-filled air.

"That's one thing about the Gruul you can count on," Gideon said. Another massive club swing caved in a nearby wall, which sent debris everywhere and snapped three huge support beams. The upper floors fell in around them like an avalanche—chairs, tables, and crockery clattered about in a torrent. They could hear a giant bellow with battle-rage outside. He was getting closer.



"Krokt!" Gideon said as he spat dust. "It's only a matter of time before he sniffs us out. Get back to the square, tell Dars that we're coming and to get into position. Look out!" Gideon shoved Anza out of the way as a second swing from the giant's club crushed the remaining wall and sent Gideon sprawling. He looked up and saw Anza move faster than a viashino as she jumped and scuttled through the clouds of dust and wreckage to the back alley. Gideon scrambled to his feet while the giant continued to swing wildly, chunks of buildings flying into the street like corkballs in a game of borlist. Just behind the giant, Gideon could hear a vast horde of Gruul as they beat the earth and chanted for war.

Good, Gideon thought as he sprinted away. Bring them all.

Dars Gostok heard the chaos echoing through the narrow streets of the Ninth District. All manner of hell was breaking loose and he still had no sign of Jura.

Gideon had Dars assemble the Boros legion known as the Firefist in the square, hidden in the surrounding buildings. Many before had tried to reclaim the Ninth but all had failed. The unguilded citizens looked from behind their barred doors and shuttered windows at the Firefist. The citizens had learned just to board up the doors and wait it out when the guilds arrived in force.

When the sounds of destruction echoed up the street to the square, they were much closer. The legionnaires stiffened and reached for their swords. The time had come.



“We’re ready, captain.” Dars’s corporal, Jazek, looked at him with anticipation.

“Good. Wait until Jura draws them into the square.”

Just then, Anza appeared on the street and ran across the expanse of the square; Dars met her under a stone archway. “They’re coming,” Anza said between breaths. “Commander Jura won’t be far behind.”

“I’m sure he’s made himself close friends of the Gruul,” Dars said. “Did he draw enough of them out?”

“Scab-Clan sent a couple big ones, Captain,” Anza said, taking a drink from a canteen. “And there were plenty behind him ready for blood. Commander Jura’s probably going to bring every Gruul in the Ninth to our position.”

“That’s the plan.” Dars smiled. He drew his sword and strode into the square to address his legion. “Firefist, positions! Now let’s see if those Raktos bastards take the bait and we’ll have ourselves a real party.”

Gideon ran into the great square like a madman, a horde of Gruul raging behind him like a storm.

“Wait for it!” Gideon shouted as he sprinted past the center of the square toward the Boros front line. The Gruul poured into the square at the far end, ready for mayhem. As soon as the Gruul crossed the center of the square Gideon yelled, “Now!”

Dars commanded, “Fire!” From the rooftops and upper floors, a blaze of Boros magic lit the square with streams of fire that slammed into the Gruul. Gruul warriors burst into flames and massive beasts crumpled into heaps, but the relentless horde plowed ahead through the bodies of the fallen toward the Boros line.



“Charge!” Gideon and the Boros rushed from their positions to engage the Gruul hand-to-hand. Behind them, a wave of firstblades, reckoners, and commandos bellowed their battle cries honoring the Orduun and their sacred oaths. They crashed into a surge of Gruul warriors and beasts from the Ghor and Scab-Clan.

Gideon threaded his way through the Boros ranks to find Dars. “Any sign from the Rakdos?”

“Nothing,” Dars said. “No sign.”

“Krokt.” Gideon spat. “We can’t hold the Gruul forever and we can’t let them go. I just need that grinning dromad to get here with the Rakdos.”

Suddenly, from the other side of the square, a mad howl could be heard over the din of battle. An olive-skinned Boros knight clad in shining armor ran before a chaotic tangle of demons and deviants. A smile broke across the knight’s face in a flash of white teeth when he saw Gideon.

Gideon called, “Tajic! Look out!”

A thunderclap of demonic magic hit Tajic like a cannonball and enveloped him in a cloud of fire and sulfur. Gideon stopped in his tracks but Tajic emerged untarnished, a smile still on his face. Boros fighters rushed to intercept the Rakdos as Tajic came to a stop before Gideon.

“Jura, my friend! I return as promised!” Tajic’s eyes twinkled with mirth as he brushed himself off. Tajic noticed Gideon’s face. “Don’t worry, Jura, it was just a little puff of smoke.”



"I was wondering when you'd get here," Gideon said to the Boros maze runner. "Looks like you got their attention."

"It was easy," Tajic said. "You just have to know what insults to use."

Gideon looked for the Firefist captain. "Dars, the Rakdos have arrived!"

Dars ordered a knight to sound the trumpet. In three sharp notes, the Firefist disengaged from the Gruul and fought their way back to form a bristling wall of Boros spears and swords as the Rakdos poured into the square in a scrabbling stream of insanity. They instantly tore into the Gruul with frenzy and relish. Boros minotaurs, deep in battle-fury, were dragged from the fight as they came to their senses enough to remember their training and fall back.

"Contain them!" Gideon, Dars, and Tajic all yelled over the mayhem as they rushed to help hold areas of the Firefist line that showed signs of faltering. "Keep them in the square at all costs!"



Every effort of the Firefist was put into containing the chaos. Rakdos and Gruul slaughtered each other in the center of the square, lost in a frenzy of blood and rage. The Boros closed ranks on the outskirts of the battle and slowly closed in like the noose of a snare-trap.

As the main company of the Firefist held the melee, Gideon had Tajic peel away with a platoon of reckoners and commandos to scout the remaining areas.

Tajic linked up with a few patrols of Orzhov enforcers and knights who had already used their influence to root out some of the Dimir puppetmasters and ringleaders embedded within the Ninth. Teysa Karlov cashed in a few favors to gain intelligence that only an Orzhov could obtain. There was a deal made with the Obzedat, of course: the Boros and Orzhov would share protection duties over the Ninth, but Teysa had assured them that she would be the one to oversee the district's welfare. It was a hard sell to Aurelia, but the angelic warmaster understood as much as anyone that uprooting the Dimir sleeper cells and purging them from the Ninth was necessary to take back the district.

Of course, with the Dimir, one could never be too sure.



Gideon stood with the warleader after everyone had left. She picked up a small building from the large central table where a model of the Ninth district was laid out and looked at it for a moment.

“You have done the Boros and me a great service, Jura,” Aurelia said as she twirled the model in her fingers. Then she looked up at him. “You have done the citizens of Ravnica an even greater one. Are you certain you do not wish to join our ranks and serve the citizens of Ravnica?”

Gideon smiled. “Nothing would please me more than to aid you and the Boros, warleader. I have not fought alongside better soldiers in all my time, but I am needed elsewhere. There are other battles I must fight.”

Aurelia looked at him with eyes that saw far more than mere human vision. Gideon wondered how much the angel understood of the forces outside Ravnica, or if she was aware of them at all. He offered his hand, Aurelia clasped his forearm in a grip of iron that sent heat and power buzzing into his body.

“Thank you, Jura.” She released his arm. He could still feel the energy working in his bones.

Gideon bowed. “It was an honor, warleader.”

Suddenly, she smiled at him, energy radiating from her face. Gideon almost took a step back. It was all at once beautiful and overwhelming, and then just as suddenly she turned and walked out of the room.

As she left she said, “You are always welcome at Sunhome, Jura.”