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# Sympathy for the Demon

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Taste the Magic  
Thursday, August 17, 2006



PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

It is Rakdos week – finally. You know, this is the sort of treatment I would have expected for the Gruul. But the Rakdos? They're so much fun—it seems like we would have put the spotlight on them a lot sooner. Oh yeah, nobody thinks they're the hoot that they really are. In fact, not only have the [magicthegathering.com](http://magicthegathering.com) brass misread the Demon Cult, but the entire city of Ravnica does as well. There are a few, a special few like us, who can see beyond the façade of littered corpses and free-flowing blood to what the Rakdos really are; a bunch of fun-lovin' peeps.

I don't expect everyone to buy that line right away. Give me some time to illustrate how the throngs of Rix Maadi get a bad rap. First of all, don't be fooled by the fact that the guild is ruled by a, -er, The Demon. You know, the Demonlord's plight is a microcosm of that of the guild as a whole. Sure, he's a demon, but he's really just interested in eating time and having good people. What I meant to say was having food and eating good people. I mean having a good time and eating good food. Well, now that I think about it, it's all those things. That's not so bad, now is it?




At the root of it all, **The Demon** and his guildlings just want to do what they want to do. Their goal is not "To Kill People" or "To Cause Mayhem." Those things just happen to be the byproduct of Rakdos entertainment. The Selesnya leave casualties in the wake of their "righteous" stampedes—nobody throws the word "evil" at them. The Izzet blow up entire city blocks trying to make Mizzium out of a mole-hill—nobody puts the scarlet E on their chests. But the Rakdos throw a little party and a few bodies at the scene make us evil. Yeah, I said "us." This is no uninformed news hen giving you the real. It's me, Chagrach, a full-blooded (well, not during the High Season, but that's another story) Rakdos Cultist. You may recognize me from [Nettling Curse](#). That card is a perfect example of why I am here. You see, Matt though this would not be as potent a message coming from an "unbiased Wizards source." It is the very fact that Wizards is biased that I agreed to be here. See, I am no "Rakdos cursemage." I am just a Rakdos wizard who happens to weave enchantment spells. The whole "curse" rap comes from you outsiders. I bet you thought I would be an inarticulate dullard, a blood-crazed maniac. On the contrary, I have been schooled in the finest Ravnican universities I could get into without paying. This doubt, the poor treatment, plus the fifty-weeks-later-than-the-rest-of-the-guilds thing adds up to complete anti-Rakdos sentiment towards Wizards of the Coast. So I am here to set the record straight. So go grab your favorite sanguine beverage and some Funyuns, 'cause here's the straight story.

In many cases, the dullards at Wizards could not help but get it right. You can't keep the truth down, brutha! In most of the cards that represent our guild, there are traces of the truth. But these truths are overshadowed by misrepresentations of a colossal magnitude. I'll show these discrepancies by first detailing the "Outsider" viewpoint. If you're not with us, "Outsider" means you, party-poopier. Then I'll tell you what's really going on - sort of like I did when explaining to you that there are no "Rakdos cursemagies." Let's start this romp!

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Outsider-Eye View	Demon's-Eye-View
Here's a quick and easy one. <b>Demon's Jester</b> . What the "world" sees is a twisted, jagged-toothed deviant that will "knock 'em dead, with or without the punchline." The falsehood mingling with the truth spoils this little clown's reputation. "Jester," yes.	"Knock 'em dead without a punchline"—no way! These little Rix Maadi jongleurs are <i>a/ways</i> slinging jokes or skits. And so every once in a while the old "Achilles Heel Snip" gag goes awry, or a round of Pin the Scorpion on the Dumb Guy ends badly—this means the Demon's quipsters are killers? I should say not.
<b>Slaughterhouse Bouncer</b> is another good one. To the fearful surface-guildier, this helpful security guard is seen as an imposing ogre who turns party-goers into sides of beef at the slaughterhouse.  <i>A Rakdos party is a flop if anyone lives to talk about it.</i>  Everybody dies at a Rakdos soiree!	The shred of truth here is that the Rakdos Cult parties. A lot. Word.  But, we don't hold all our raves, balls, and dances at the Slaughterhouse. Plenty of events are held in the lower Dungeon Ballrooms at Rix Maadi, or in the Carnarium Rings, or at spur-of-the-moment locales around the city.  And how foolish is "a Rakdos party is a flop if anyone lives to talk about it?" I have been to parties. We all have, yet here we are! What's with that?

	Leave it to the stiff-collars over at Prahv or Wizards to frame up a much-needed shindig as a scene of mass death.
<p>And that leads me to <b>Wrecking Ball</b>. It's the same thing as with the Bouncer. What is shown is a riotous gaggle of goblins holding spiked bombs. And it's called "Wrecking Ball."</p>  <p><i>Rakdos festivals almost leave enough rubble in their wake to hide the bodies.</i></p>	Bits of truth, but spun negatively. What's really happening here is the goblin decoration crew getting the hall ready for one of our gala events. The traditional decorations at these "balls" are like a combination of your Christmas ornaments and your festive fireworks. A few freak explosion accidents and now these events, as well as the Gruul's <b>Rauk Chauv</b> , are illegal. Thank Augustin the Lamé and his band of curfew-spitters. Just because we hold these festive balls in honor of random Ravnican passers-by, and an accident or two happens, the docket is full at Prahv, the Spires of Inhibition with anti-party legal actions.

These three examples are all just a matter of focus. Where the Outsider's eye focuses is on the negative, while the Demon's eye focuses on the fun. Just for kicks, let's do a little first impression ho-down with the names that Outsiders have chosen to pin to us. All these words appear on Rakdos cards:

Outsider-Eye View	Demon's-Eye-View
Slaughterhouse, Crypt, Nihilistic, Infernal, Kill, blood, Mayhem, Riot, Wrecking, scream, dying, pain, victims, Discord, Defiler, Gore, Dread, phobias, murder, Dungeon, curse.	Jester, punch line, party, Glee, Cackling, entertainment, dinner, Riot, Ball, festivals, puppets, pain, cheering, audience, stage, Anthem, laughter, Palace

The Outsider focuses on the words in the first column, while the words in the second get brushed aside. Think about it – could you attribute the words from the right hand column to any of the other guilds? I should say not. They are all so stuffy and concerned with protocol and rules and ambition and all the things that really rain on a parade. None of those stiffies could throw a raging bumbat-n-entrails-fest like we could. Read the list on the right again. Does that sound evil to you? Meanwhile, you can easily attribute words in the left hand column to other guilds. Strange how that works, isn't it? But you don't hear people running around calling them evil, do you. (Well, maybe the Orzhov, but people give them the benefit of the doubt because they have all the gold and own all the rental housing.)

About half-way through writing this piece, I stopped to ask Matt his opinion on why Outsiders have tagged us so wrong. I'll paste in his answer in its entirety. Remember, these are not the words of a Cultist, but of a guild-biased Outsider, so if I do not agree with what he says, I can bash his opinion and make fun of him.

*Matt: I have thought about this phenomenon as well, though just from the perspective of **Magic** fans and players. Since I have only been to Ravnica a handful of times, I cannot say for sure why they see you (the Rakdos) in a bad light. I'd be willing to theorize that they, being politically ambitious guilds, just take more opportunity to smear you, being a pack of hedonistic party deviants.*



*In the case of **Magic** fandom, I think they're just too used to anything associated with the colors Black and Red being the epitome of chaos and evil. Traditionally, Black/Red cards have latched onto the oppressive, selfish, win-at-all-costs aspects of Black and the fire, chaos, and mania aspects of Red. Put those together and you have something really close to raucous evil. I am sure a lot of folks arrived in Ravnica with this philosophical baggage and attached it to you when they first encountered the Cult (the guild, not the band). It may be hard for them to put away all those first, second, and thirtieth impressions of what Black/Red is and see you Black/Redders as a whole new breed.*

That's all-right stuff. I think I'll let it pass without bashing him or poking fun at his completely dorky picture up there in the upper right hand corner, or snickering about how his name is a thing you wipe your blood-encrusted boots on. No, I'll let it ride, because I believe it could be true. Based on what he said to me about **Magic** colors, it looks



like the Rakdos are more than the sum of their colors. You take the “me first” beat of Black and kick it up with a screaming chord of Red impulsiveness and emotion and you get a rocking party Anthem that would make GWAR look like James Taylor. How do I know this Earth music? Well, GWAR are the Scumdogs of the Universe, traveling the planes like they were eateries on Tin Street—they’ve been to *Ravnica* to serenade the Demonlord many times. James Taylor—I had to hit Matt up for some sappy jangler to cite as a musical patsy. I’ll take his word for it, he sounds lame. Now if you will all attend to my words, you will see that the Demonlord and his followers deserve a fair shake. When you look at your Rakdos cards from now on, or if you happen to be friends with a planeswalker who can bring you to our fair city, try to give us the benefit of the doubt. Try having some sympathy for the Demon.

--Chagrach, Rakdos keggermage

I think Chagrach made some interesting points. I, for one, am starting to have some sympathy for the Demon. If you look at the Rakdos without any preconceived notions about demons or torture or gastronomic deviance, you can really start to feel the party vibe. I think the big difference between this guild and other Black/Red Magic characters is that there is no malicious intent behind a gruesome mutilation—it might just be a really dangerous juggling act with sharp, acid-coated blades. There is no devious plot behind the bloodbath beneath the *City-Tree*—it could just be a game where they tie a bomb on a blindfolded one-man band and see how many renditions of “Ding-ding, it’s the *Helldozer*” he can get through before blowing up.



Wait a minute. Am I starting to buy this stuff? I think Chagrach might have put a little whammy on me. As I type, I see words forming that look like I believe the Rakdos to be completely innocent, that all the cannibalism, random killing, self-torture, dinner, and dancing are all perfectly fine. Surely, they can’t be...can they? Am I of my own mind? Why is my head bobbing back and forth? Why is my right hand balled in a fist and I type with only my left? And my foot is stomping... to a beat? And I don’t even want to finish my article? What’s that sound? Are those power chords... and a beat... and a chorus of shouts? Boom, boom, boom, Rakdos. Boom, boom, boom, “**RAKDOS!**” Come with me...“**RAKDOS!**” I’m in! “**RAKDOS!**” Break out the corpse piñatas? RAKDOS! Bring on the organs d’ouvres! “**RAKDOS!**” I’m gonna (censored) a (censored)(censored) with a *Blood Funnel!* “**RAKDOS!**”



*Matt Cavotta has always been a fantasy goober. At various points in his gooberhood, he has used his nerdy knowledge to become a professional goober. He went from scribbling pictures of his own D&D characters to illustrating books and cards for his two favorite games; D&D and Magic. Then he channeled his inner 7th level Illusionist/3rd level Bard and landed himself a job at Wizards as a writer. He continues to cast his illusion spells each morning, lest they find out he’s just another goober.*



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