

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns

# Here And Gone

Ben Bleiweiss  
*Uncommon Knowledge*  
 Wednesday, January 9, 2002



When a game of **Magic** starts, all cards begin in the deck. Shortly thereafter, both players bring cards into their hands and place them into play. Eventually, some cards end up in the graveyard. Deck, hand, in play, graveyard: Seems simple enough. But there is a "5th dimension" of resources in this game we love, and one that is often ignored: the removed-from-game zone. Sure, people have played with cards like **Swords to Plowshares** for years, cards that basically banish another card from the game, never to be used again. Most people don't realize that there are a significant number of cards in **Magic** which remove cards from the game *temporarily*, allowing the removed cards to be used as a resource just like those in your hand, your in-play area, your graveyard, or your deck. And in *Torment*, the ability to remove things from the game for a finite period of time gets the acknowledgement it deserves: the Nightmare mechanic.

## THE BUTCHER



I present to you **Faceless Butcher**\*. One of the most powerful black creatures in recent memory, this Nightmare Horror would, on the surface, appear to be a remake of the black favorite **Nekrataal**. I don't wish to dwell on this comparison for too long because the cards have entirely different uses. The Butcher has a higher toughness, can target black and artifact creatures, and removes creatures from the game as opposed to burying them. Well, you ask, wouldn't you rather have an opposing creature dead than to have it removed from the game with the possibility of returning? Ah, young grasshopper, observe and learn!

Faceless Butcher will remove any creature from the game, with no built-in restrictions. Typically, black removal spells cannot affect black creatures, but the Butcher breaks that rule. In addition, it can be used beneficially to remove your own creatures with comes-into-play abilities from the game. You can remove your own **Flametongue Kavu** from the game, and should the Butcher die, your opponent will have to contend with having one of his creatures freshly toasted by

the re-emerging kavu. Push this one step further: your opponent uses **Persuasion** to steal your **Spiritmonger**. Suddenly, you drop down Faceless Butcher to the table, remove the Spiritmonger from the game, and dare your opponent to kill your nightmare!

## OLD-SCHOOL STORAGE

The card that can most accurately be called Faceless Butcher's predecessor appeared way back in *Arabian Nights*, **Magic's** very first expansion. **Oubliette** was a cruder version of the Butcher that allowed enchantments to stay on the creature (though it did return the creature to play tapped). The "artifact Oubliette," **Tawnos's Coffin**, appeared shortly thereafter in *Antiquities*. This card allowed players to seriously take advantage of creatures with comes-into-play effects (in addition to removing opposing creatures), as you could pick and choose different ways to use it each and every turn.

*Legends* introduced the second type of card to use the "out-of-game" mechanic. Until then, all cards that removed other cards from the game did so actively. You targeted a creature with Oubliette, or the Coffin, and the purpose was for removing a creature from the game. But with the advent of **Knowledge Vault**, the removed-from-game zone became the area you placed cards that were waiting to be drawn through delayed activation. These cards were untouchable; without destroying the Knowledge Vault itself, there was no way to directly affect cards set aside in this manner. (Actually, there was one way, but I'll talk about this unique card at the end.)

*The Dark* introduced **Safe Haven**, the first card that could keep multiple permanents in the removed-from-game zone at the same time. That would be the third of the three types of cards that temporarily removed cards from the game.

**WHAT IS MAGIC?**  
 CLICK HERE!

**GLEEMAX**  
 FIND OUT MORE!

**Wizards of the Coast**  
 Dream Jobs Open Now

**ASK THE PRO**

**PRODUCTS**  
**Lorwyn**  
 TENTH EDITION  
 All Magic products

**RULES**  
 RULES

**MESSAGE BOARDS**  
**Magic**  
 Magic General Forum  
 magicthegathering.com Forum

**MAGIC ONLINE**  
**MAGIC**  
 ONLINE  
 Download Now!  
 Magic Online III Launch Info



To recap: Oubliette began the line of cards that were designed to remove single other "things" from the game on a temporary basis. Knowledge Vault began the line of cards that designated the removed-from-game zone to be the holding space for cards waiting to be used/drawn. And Safe Haven began the line of cards that made the removed-from-game zone the temporary holding space for cards and that were removed en-masse. But with our eye on Faceless Butcher, we will explore just the first of these lines.

## OUBLIETTE CETERA

From the Oubliette school, Oubliette begat Tawnos's Coffin which begat *Icy Prison (Ice Age)*, which begat probably one of the most fascinating spells in all of **Magic**, *Ertai's Meddling*. This spell removes another SPELL from the game, delaying it from resolving for a number of turns. One of the articles I plan to do is a retrospective of all the most powerful cards in **Magic** that were never used in tournament play, and when I do, Ertai's Meddling will be very near the top of that list. (If you have any cards in mind that you think should be featured, please drop me a line at [uncommonknowledge@wizards.com](mailto:uncommonknowledge@wizards.com).)

But I digress. The next card in the line appeared in *Urza's Destiny* as *Flicker*, the first card that could remove an enchantment from the game. Interesting fact: If you remove a local enchantment from the game temporarily, and it returns to play, you get to choose the new target for the enchantment. For instance, if your opponent has a *Gaea's Embrace* on his *Hollow Dogs*, you can Flicker the Embrace and place it on a creature of your own. Sure beats just sending it to the graveyard with a *Disenchant!*

*Liberate* from *Invasion* was the last of these types of spells until *Torment* came along. And now with *Torment* this mechanic has a name (Nightmare!), and several cards that utilize this extraordinary ability. And with that, I'll remove myself from the column for a week and see you next time for a very special look at black.

Oh, and the single card in all of **Magic**: **The Gathering** which can affects removed-from-game cards is *Ring of Ma'ruf*. Under tournament rules, it can either fetch a card that is in your sideboard, or a card that has been removed from the game by any of the means I mentioned above.

NEXT WEEK: From *Abandon Hope* to *Zombify*



Cards That Temporarily Remove Other Cards From The Game			
Expansion	One-For-One	Unplayed Spells	Many-For-One
<i>Arabian Nights</i>	Oubliette	-	-
<i>Antiquities</i>	Tawnos's Coffin	-	-
<i>Legends</i>	-	Knowledge Vault	-
<i>The Dark</i>	-	-	Safe Haven
<i>Ice Age</i>	Icy Prison	Elkin Bottle	-
<i>Alliances</i>	-	-	Gustha's Scepter
<i>Mirage</i>	-	Mangara's Tome	Purgatory
<i>Visions</i>	-	Elkin Lair Three Wishes	-
<i>Tempest</i>	Ertai's Meddling	Duplicity	Cold Storage
<i>Stronghold</i>	-	-	Portcullis
<i>Exodus</i>	-	-	Wall of Nets

Urza's Legacy	-	-	Memory Jar
Urza's Destiny	Flicker	-	-
Mercadian Masques	-	Kyren Archive Aerial Caravan	-
Nemesis	-	-	Parallax cards
Prophecy	-	Psychic Theft	-
Invasion	Liberate	-	-
Planeshift	-	Planeswalker's Mischief Skyship Weatherlight	-
Odyssey	-	Tainted Pact	-
Torment	Faceless Butcher ?	?	?

\*: You can get a free Faceless Butcher card - and a lot more *Torment* preview information - in *InQuest Gamer* magazine #82. On sale now!

---

Ben may be reached at [uncommonknowledge@wizards.com](mailto:uncommonknowledge@wizards.com).

Ben Bleiweiss has written about his obsession with **Magic: The Gathering** for over a decade. He's travelled the world because of **Magic**, both as a player and a writer. When not spending time playing **Magic**, writing about **Magic**, or thinking about **Magic**, Ben is employed by [StarCityGames.com](http://StarCityGames.com), where he works with **Magic** cards all day long. He lives with his wife in Virginia, and they sleep comfortably at night under their Orgg down comforter.



[Respond](#) via email



[Ben Bleiweiss](#) archive

---

[About Us](#) | [Jobs](#) | [New to the Game?](#) | [Inside Wizards](#) | [Find a Store](#) | [Press](#) | [Help](#) | [Sitemap](#)

© 1995-2007 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.  
[Terms of Use](#) - [Privacy Statement](#)

