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Making Magic **Monday, April 29, 2002**

Wishes Come True

The history of the "new" mechanic



Mark Rosewater

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Welcome to Wish Week! This week we'll be looking at one of the new (or, depending on how you look at it, one of the old) mechanics in *Judgment*. Wishes are a cycle of five cards, one in each color, based on an artifact from *Arabian Nights* called **Ring of Ma'ruf**. Like the Ring, the Wishes allow you put a card from out of the game into your hand. In casual play, this card can come from anywhere (and I do mean anywhere) including cards that started in your deck but were removed from the game. In tournaments, the wishes are restricted to cards in your sideboard or out-of-play cards that started in your deck.

Before I dive into the meat of this week's article, I want to quickly talk about my e-mail. I get numerous e-mails every week. And I do, in fact, read every one. So, if you want to have my ear, you have it at makingmagic@wizards.com. That said, I do not have time to answer every post. I do answer some, but please be aware if you write to me, there is a decent chance you will not get a reply. R&D keeps me pretty busy and I honestly don't have time for the overwhelming number of letters I get each week. Please be aware that I love getting the mail and your comments are often very insightful and can have an impact on the game. I just want to be honest up front that I will not be able to reply to a majority of them.

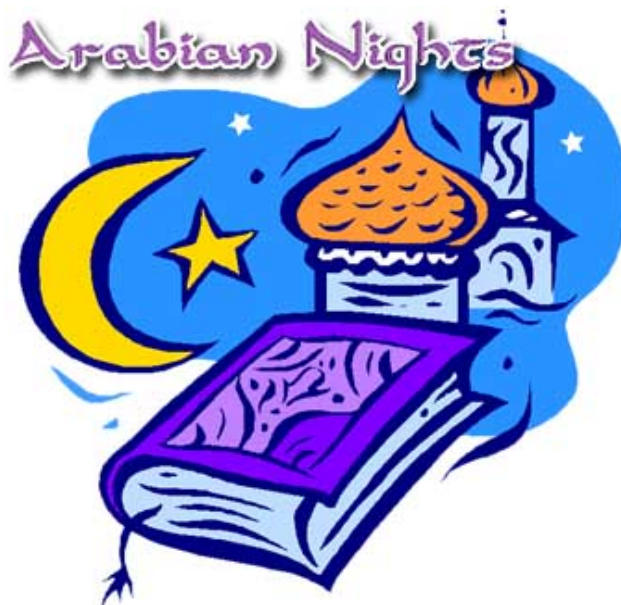
Okay, back to the Wishes. So how did the Wishes come into being? And therein lies this week's story. (Hey, this is the design column and it's Wish Week, what else would you expect?) So there we were at our regular hangout -- a restaurant we frequent -- having a design meeting (Yes, R&D loves having design meetings off-site) when it happened. But wait, before I get to the meat of the story, a little background:

1001 Nights

To truly understand the story I'm about to tell, we need to travel back over a thousand years to the land of Persia, the area now known as the Middle East (For the geography/history buffs -- yeah, I'm generalizing). Okay, quick show of hands, how many of you expected the Middle East to show up in a column about the latest *Judgment* mechanic? Don't worry, I promise "Making Magic" is politics-free. What's important is the richness of the Persian mythsos.

Over many years, stories accumulated. Eventually, they were collected in a book called *The Arabian Nights*. There are many versions of *The Arabian Nights*, each with a different mix of stories (some adaptations of the book go by *1,001 Arabian Nights*). Several versions tell the story of a poor cobbler named Ma'ruf. In a story most commonly called "The Caravan of Dreams," Ma'ruf sits around one night dreaming of riches traveling to him in a mythical caravan. You see, Ma'ruf has no possessions of value save an old battered ring, so he uses his imagination to dream of what could be. Either as a result of his ring or his strong, undying faith (different versions seem to vary), Ma'ruf turns the dream into a reality and an actual caravan of riches arrives at his door.





Flash forward a millennium or two. It is the late summer of 1993. Richard Garfield is working on his first expansion for **Magic**. The game was a runaway hit and Richard is asked to quickly create an expansion. Richard had long been a fan of *The Arabian Nights* and felt that it had been underrepresented in fantasy (for more on this topic from Richard's mouth, tune in to our *Arabian Nights* theme week this summer). So, he decided to use it as the backdrop for **Magic's** first expansion.

For inspiration for many of the cards, Richard turned to the stories themselves. Ma'ruf's ring seemed like a perfect candidate for an artifact. But how could you reflect its flavor? What would it mean in **Magic** to turn a dream into reality? The answer seemed a bit radical but then Richard

has always been an "out of the box" kind of designer. What if, he thought, the card allowed you to make any card you imagined appear?

Arabian Nights was released in late December 1993. **Ring of Ma'ruf** wasn't particularly powerful so little by little it was forgotten. For years I used it as the answer to an obscure trivia question. (What is the only **Magic** card that has errata only for tournament play?) During that time, the card lay dormant. Until *Judgment* design.

So there we were having our design meeting in the middle of the restaurant when... wait. To have a true appreciation of the wishes' creation, I have to first explain the *Judgment* design team.

Design Up Ahead

Now, I have worked on numerous design teams in my day (*Tempest* - lead, *Stronghold*, *Exodus*, *Urza's Saga*, *Urza's Legacy*, *Urza's Destiny* - lead, *Unglued* - lead, *Mercadian Masques*, *Invasion*, *Planeshift*, *Odyssey* - lead), but *Judgment* took the cake. To use an Olympic basketball analogy, this was the dream team of **Magic** design teams. Here is the team's roster:

Me -- If you read this column every week (and I sure hope you do), you know that I've been quite involved in the design process for the last seven years. I've created cards for every set since *Alliances* and I've designed over 1,000 cards. 'Nuff said.

Richard Garfield -- All I really need to say is that **Magic** exists only because of Richard. While Richard could easily rest on those laurels, he has been on numerous other design teams (Alpha/Beta/Unlimited - lead, *Arabian Nights* - lead, *Tempest*, *Odyssey*, *Torment*) and has created a number of new mechanics including buyback, cycling, threshold and the nightmares.

Bill Rose -- Bill is the current head of R&D (despite numerous rumors to the contrary, I actually do not run R&D). Bill has also been on his share of design teams (*Mirage* - lead, *Visions* - lead, *Urza's Saga*, *Invasion* - lead, *Torment* - lead).

Brian Tinsman -- The first response I assume is: Who? If Richard is the veteran, then Brian is the newcomer. I've worked with many different designers in my time here. I believe Brian shows the most potential of any of the new designers. This is Brian's first design team but expect to see a lot more of his stuff in the coming years (He's the design lead for Jack, *Onslaught's* second small expansion, and is on the design team of Bacon, the fall 2003 large expansion).

As you can see, this team has worked on the design of over half the **Magic** expansions in existence and had one of its members lead the design of the following sets: Alpha/Beta/Unlimited, *Arabian Nights*, *Mirage*, *Visions*, *Tempest*, *Urza's Destiny*, *Unglued*, *Invasion*, *Odyssey* and *Torment*. Not too shabby.

A quick aside before I move on is that the ultimate dream team would have two more additions. The first would be a member of the "East Coast Playtesters" (Skaff Elias, Jim Lin, Dave Pettey, and Chris Page) Not only did this group help with the game's original design, they were responsible for designing *Antiquities*, *Fallen Empires*, *Ice Age*, and *Alliances*. The second member would be Mike Elliott. Mike and I are the only two designers currently in the "1000 card" club. Mike

has, of course, served on numerous design teams (*Weatherlight*, *Tempest*, *Stronghold* - lead, *Exodus* - lead, *Urza's Saga* - lead, *Urza's Legacy* - lead, *Fifth Edition* - lead, *Mercadian Masques* - lead, *Nemesis* - lead, *Invasion*, *Planeshift* - lead, *Torment*). Mike, it is also interesting to note, created the "incarnation" mechanic that appears in *Judgment*. (But hey, no more of that until two weeks from now).

Without Further Ado

Okay, we have all the background. Let's get to the story. How was the wish mechanic created? I'm glad you asked.

So, there we were in our regular hang-out having a design meeting. What follows is the actual conversation that led to the wish mechanic (All right, I'm lying. This isn't that exact dialogue but an idealized version of what I remember.):

Brian: You know what card I've always liked? **Ring of Ma'ruf**. It's just one of those weird little cards that does something unlike anything else in **Magic**. It's just a neat card. We should do something like the **Ring of Ma'ruf** again.

Me/Richard/Bill: Yeah/Okay/Sounds good.

And thus, the wish mechanic was born.

Hey, they can't all be gems.


Join me next week when I continue to talk about *Judgment* design.

Until then, may your stories take more than two seconds to tell.

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