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May 31

**Q:** "Why doesn't red have a tutor? Green has **Worldly Tutor**, white has **Enlightened Tutor**, blue has **Mystical Tutor**, and black has four (**Demonic Tutor**, **Vampiric Tutor**, and both **Diabolic Tutor** and **Diabolic Intent**). Why no red?"

-- Mark Mondick Loretto, PA

**A:** From **Elaine Chase**, Research & Development:

"Red does get its own tutor: **Gamble** from *Urza's Saga*. Of course, red tutors in its own special way. For just one red mana, you get to search for any card you want, but you may not get to keep it. This is very much in keeping with red's 'live in the moment and damn the consequences' attitude.

"In addition, *Unglued* gave red a tutor. **Goblin Tutor** also searches in a very red way. You roll a die to see what you are allowed to search for. It may not be legal in tournaments, but it was made for *Unglued* specifically because at that time red was the only color that didn't have its own way to search your deck for a card."

May 30

**Q:** "I just noticed that the *Beatdown* box set had a foil **Erhnam Djinn** and **Sengir Vampire**. Was this foreshadowing or did the foils lead you to reprint them in later sets? Was it a fluke?"

--Mike Kelley, Annapolis, MD

**A:** From **Brian Tinsman**, Game Designer:

"It was a fluke, sort of. When looking for good reprints R&D always likes cards that are a) traditionally popular, b) not over or under-powered in the current environment, and c) haven't been around for a long time. Erhnam and Sengir fit all three of those when we were putting *Beatdown* together and they fit all three later on in *Odyssey Block* when we were looking for a black flagship reprint for *Torment* a green one for *Judgment*. Ernie and Sengir have always kind of been ambassadors for their colors and that's a role we thought they played well, coincidentally, in both *Beatdown* and *Odyssey Block*."

May 29

**Q:** "Why didn't you name Anurid Brushhopper 'Turg'? Except for the color difference, that's basically Turg from the *Odyssey* novel."

-- James Sheehan, Fresno, CA

**A:** From **Rei Nakazawa**, **Magic** creative text writer:

"There are a few reasons: first, making the Brushhopper Turg in particular would force us to make the card a Legend, which we didn't want to for game play purposes. Secondly, making Turg a *Judgment* card is impossible due to the storyline; the *Odyssey* novel explains why. Third, there are plenty of other creatures that look like Turg; take a look at **Anurid Barkripper** or **Anurid Scavenger** for other examples. Which one would be the best fit for Turg? Turg was merely one member of the Anurid species

who was bent to sinister purposes by **Ambassador Laquatus**. Unfortunately, we didn't have the chance to fit Turg himself into the *Odyssey* set, which was pretty much our last chance. We made up for it, and got some cool-looking creatures in the bargain, by sprinkling some of his fellow Anurids into subsequent sets."

May 28



**Q:** "There is a funny myth that *Alliances* had the running joke during playtesting of every card being named 'Gorilla.' Supposedly a testament to this is that **Sol Grail** is an anagram of 'Gorillas.' Is there any truth behind this?"

-- Ishmael Nozgoth, Columbia, MO

**A:** From **Skaff Elias**, Senior VP of R&D:

"**Sol Grail** is indeed an anagram of 'gorillas' as homage to the fact that almost every card in the set at one time included the word 'gorilla.' The cards all had the 'gorilla' title because the initial story created by the designers was dumped by the continuity people, who wanted to introduce a race of intelligent gorillas to the world (you can still see remnants of them in the published *Alliances* story). Some of the people on the design team were so upset by that, they decided to completely jettison any story we had created, and title EVERY card Gorilla-something-or-other so the continuity team would have an easy job converting our cardfile over to the intelligent-gorillas-on-a-rampage story. Example card titles included: 'Gorillas,' 'Gorilla Lightning,' 'Gorilla from Cairo,' and even 'Gorilla Gorilla Gorilla Gorilla Gorilla Gorilla Gorilla Gorilla (Stop That).' That was a fine example of how R&D and continuity could work together to get a unified flavor for a set -- and be loving every minute of it."

May 27



**Q:** "I was just reading the sortable cardlist of *Judgment*, when I realized that you could put the game into an infinite loop if your opponent chooses **Wormfang Crab** with its own ability. Is Wizards of the Coast going to do something to stop this loop?"

--Kim Fischels, Rock Island, IL

**A:** From **Paul Barclay**, TCG Rules Manager:

"Technically, the loop only becomes infinite if you have no other permanents in play besides the Crab. That game-state is quite possible thanks to cards like **Upheaval** and **Seafloor Debris**, so something had to be done. Luckily, we've fixed this problem already, in the *Judgment* FAQ. It reads:"

The **Magic** rules team recently discovered a problem with this card. In combination with some other cards, its ability can cause the game to go into an infinite loop and end in a draw. The printed wording is:

Wormfang Crab is unblockable.

When Wormfang Crab comes into play, an opponent chooses a permanent you control and removes it from the game.

When Wormfang Crab leaves play, return the removed card to play under its owner's control.

Therefore, the rules team has decided that the ability should read as follows, and future Oracle updates will reflect the correction.

Wormfang Crab is unblockable.

When Wormfang Crab comes into play, an opponent chooses a permanent you control other than Wormfang Crab and removes it from the game.

When Wormfang Crab leaves play, return the removed card to play under its owner's control.

The change means that Wormfang Crab can no longer remove itself from the game.

"You can find the *Judgment* FAQ [here](#).

"

[**Editor's note:** I also made **Wormfang Crab** the [Card of the Day](#), just to make sure everyone sees the change.]

May 24



**Q:** "I've noticed a nostalgic return in the last few **Magic** sets to 'classic' **Magic** cards -- **Sengir Vampire**, **Mahamoti Djinn**, **Serra Angel**, and now the **Ernham Djinn**. Can you comment on any other possible cards that may make an appearance in future sets (like **Juzam Djinn**, **Library of Alexandria** -- can we even say it, gasp, **Moxes**) or are some of the early cards that defined the game still considered too controversial?"  
--Tony Fernandez, Hopelawn, NJ

**A:** From **Mark Rosewater**, R&D senior designer:  
"Next year is **Magic's** 10th anniversary. As the game matures, R&D gets more and more opportunities to bring back cards from the past. Will we do it again? Of course. Not every set, mind you, but expect to see some old favorites return. (And trust me, some of them will surprise you.) What will they be? Ah, for that you'll have to wait and see.

"As for the Moxes -- well, I am well known for making a quote years ago that the entire R&D team would have to be hit by a bus before we reprint **Mana Drain** (which, incidentally, is legal to reprint by our reprint policy). Well, let's just say we won't be reprinting Moxes until after we reprint **Mana Drain**."

### May 23



**Q:** "How did you decide that the critical value for threshold would be 7? I know that you have since designed all threshold cards with that number in mind, but were there any reasons you chose that number initially? Anything to do with hand size?"  
-- Colin McCann, Vancouver, BC

**A:** From **Randy Buehler**, **Magic** lead developer:  
"Well, we actually didn't choose that number initially. The design team put the number at 10 when they first thought up the ability and it stayed at 10 through the first days of development. The development team found that threshold just didn't come up as often as we thought it should so we decided to try it at a lower number. 7 just felt like a '**Magic**' number and once we tried it out, it seemed to play well so we never changed it again."

### May 22



**Q:** "Does the FFL only create and test decks for the Standard and Limited and Block Constructed environment, or do they test decks for other formats like Extended and Type 1? If they don't, why not?"  
-- Laura Mills, Denver, CO

**A:** From **Mike Donais**, Research & Development:  
"In the FFL (Future Future League) we build and test Standard, sealed deck, and booster draft the most. We also devote a few weeks to Block Constructed. We rarely build Extended decks unless we see something that looks really broken in Extended. Generally, if we think something will be a problem in Extended we talk about it in theory instead of specifically building and testing it, because of how much time it takes to build and tune Extended decks. Since Extended contains so many sets, adding one more set will change the environment a lot less than adding one set to Block Constructed or Standard would. What we test needs to be prioritized so that we spend our time as efficiently as possible."

### May 21



**Q:** "I believe I heard somewhere that there was a card in *Nemesis* for Belbe, but it was pushed out for some other card(s). Is this true? If it is, would it be possible to know what she did?"  
--Cory Winnewisser, Cicero, NY

**A:** From **Mike Elliot**, R&D senior designer: "Good question. There was in fact a Belbe card. There were comments on whether or not its 'stealing' effect could bleed to black. Some people also objected to having a black elf. In the end, the card ending up on the cutting room floor. Here was the original card I submitted for Belbe after reading the story notes along with the design flavor note, which apparently did not hold sway on the argument. You be the judge.

Belbe, Phyrexian Ambassador

2BB

Creature - Elf Legend

2/2

T, Sacrifice a black creature: You gain control of target creature as long as CARDNAME remains in play."

May 20



**Q:** "Why were the madness cards for blue, green, and red made so effective, while the ones for black and white don't quite match up? I know white was supposed to be weaker, but the same thing was said for green. Also, black, while strongest overall, was supposed to dominate, and it gets hosed in the set's new mechanic? That doesn't make much sense. Also, if *Torment* was going to be the only set with madness, why did you only print ten? They're really interesting cards."

-- Steven Saal, Nesconset, NY

**A:** From **Brian Schneider**, Research & Development:

"First off, I'm glad that you've enjoyed the madness mechanic. In response to your question (well, at least the first one), I believe that the blue and red madness cards were pushed for good reason -- we needed a few more good, interesting cards in those colors. I don't understand why we make good green cards so I can't really comment on that. To me, all good green cards are R&D mistakes, madness cards included. So anyway... when we balance a set, some cards end up being good and some bad regardless of what their mechanic is, and in this case, the white and black madness cards happened to end up a little bit weaker (though not at all useless) than the other colors'.

"As for printing only ten madness cards in *Torment*... there was discussion early on about printing only five madness cards, in part because there was worry about how 'random' madness cards felt in testing. But the team liked the mechanic, and in the end, opted to add another five. It's possible we could've added more but with a small expansion there really isn't all that much room to work with...

"In the end, I'm glad the team added the five madness cards to the set. Now to find room for the next five..."

Friday, May 17



**Q:** "Why was **Charmed Pendant** printed with the text 'play this ability only any time you can play an instant?' I mean, can't you play instants whenever you could play abilities? So why bother putting that text in?"

-- Rui Chen, Toronto, Ontario

**A:** From **Mark Gottlieb**, **Magic** Technical Editor:

"That text is in there because it's vitally important to the card... in a very subtle way. While instants can be played whenever you could play *most* abilities, there are some abilities that work under different timing rules. Mana abilities (which are abilities that produce mana, not surprisingly) can be played in the midst of playing another ability or a spell! After you announce you're playing a spell or ability, you put that spell or ability on the stack, choose modes and/or targets, and then pay for it. Most players generate mana beforehand and just use that mana now. But if you want, you can play mana abilities at this point to give you the mana needed to pay the cost. You can tap your **Mountain**, tap your **Llanowar Elves**, or sacrifice your **Blood Pet**. But we decided that you can't tap your **Charmed Pendant** because you have no way of knowing how much mana you'd get.

"Say you want to play **Wayward Angel**, but you only have three lands in play. You put it on the stack, tap your lands, and try to pay for it. You don't have enough mana, so the game simply backs up. Your lands untap and the Angel goes back in your hand. The game is unaffected, except that now your opponent knows one of the cards in your hand. What if **Charmed Pendant** didn't have its restriction? You put the Angel on the stack, tap your three lands, and tap the Pendant to put the top card of your library into your graveyard. Oops, it's a **Patrol Hound** and you only get one mana. Now there's a problem. Backing up means that you'd gain a huge advantage: You'd know the top card of your library, and could use the Pendant unfairly. Leaving the Hound in your graveyard or shuffling it into your library means you could keep trying to play the Angel until it worked. That's why Rule 422.1 of the Magic Comp Rules says that you can't undo a mana ability that moves a card from your library. So you're stuck, and the game can't handle it well. That one extra sentence on **Charmed Pendant** means that situation

can never occur. You have to use the Pendant first, see how much mana you get, then decide what to play."

#### Thursday, May 16



**Q:** "I have noticed creatures in the *Odyssey* block with a triple color mana cost and activation abilities requiring tapping an untapped creature type such as **Master Apothecary**; **Patron Wizard**; **Seton, Krosan Protector**; and **Zombie Trailblazer**. Is there a particular reason that **Zombie Trailblazer** was stretched from *Odyssey* to *Torment*, and is there a red card like these that was stretched to *Judgment*?"  
-- Jesse Mora, Gallup, NM

**A:** From **Mark Rosewater**, R&D senior designer:  
"You got us. **Master Apothecary**; **Patron Wizard**; **Seton, Krosan Protector**; **Zombie Trailblazer**, and **Dwarven Bloodboiler** (in *Judgment*) were designed as a cycle. Well, sorta. Here's how it happened. During *Odyssey* design I created the card **Patron Wizard** (then called Wizard King). I liked the card so much I decided that I'd make an entire cycle of them. But rather than put them all in one set, I liked the idea of spreading them over the block. Incidentally, we also did this with the alternative win enchantments (**Battle of Wits**, **Chance Encounter**, **Mortal Combat**, and two more from *Judgment*).

"Why spread them out? Because we knew it would create expectation. And expectation would create excitement. What would the new red lord be? What will the new win conditions be for white and green? By asking these questions, you grow curious as to what the next set holds. In short, stretching out the cycles gave all of you something to guess about."

#### Wednesday, May 15



**Q:** "Can I play with older versions of cards, like a **Tempest Overrun**, in a Standard tournament?"  
--John Avers, Bozeman, MT

**A:** From **Thomas Pannell**, *Sideboard* Editor and Level 3 Judge:  
"Yes, you can play with any version of a card as long as a version of that card appears in a Standard legal set. (*7th Edition*, *Invasion*, *Planeshift*, *Apocalypse*, *Odyssey*, *Torment*, and *Judgment* [Starting July 1st]).

"So **Tempest Overrun**, **Portal Sleight of Hand**, **Exodus Anarchist**, **Unglued Swamp**, **Beta Wrath of God**, and many other cards are all legal in Standard tournaments."

#### Tuesday, May 14



**Q:** "What happens if I flash back a **Firebolt** from my graveyard, then my opponent **Spelljacks** it?"  
-- Jeff Wiles, Knoxville, TN

**A:** From **Paul Barclay**, TCG Rules Manager:  
"**Spelljack** will counter the **Firebolt**. Then, **Spelljack** will remove it from the game\*\*. Now, your opponent can play it without paying its mana cost. She's playing it from the removed-from-the-game zone, not from her graveyard, so the flashback ability doesn't kick in. when it resolves, the **Firebolt** will do 2 damage to the target chosen by her, and will then go to your graveyard.

\*\*\* Complicated rules-weirdness to follow: Flashback will also try to remove it from the game. **Spelljack's** 'remove it from the game instead of putting it into its owner's graveyard,' is a self-replacement effect, because it changes what **Spelljack's** own effect is. Flashback says, 'if you do, remove this card from the game instead of putting it anywhere else any time it would leave the stack,' which is a normal replacement effect. If you have both a self-replacement effect and a normal replacement effect that apply, always apply the self-replacement effect first (rule 419.6d). So, **Spelljack's** 'remove it from the game' will apply before flashback's 'remove it from the game.' For **Spelljack** vs. Flashback, this can all be ignored, because both effects send the spell to the same place."

#### Monday, May 13



**Q:** "I noticed a **Magic Invasion** poster on Peter Parker's wall in the new *Spider-Man*

movie. Was it a paid advertisement on Hasbro/WotC's part or is it pure coincidence that the geeky Peter Parker plays **Magic**?"

-- Terry Daniels, Burton, MI

**A:** From **Scott Rouse**, **Magic** Marketing Manager:

"Peter Parker has been a huge **Magic: The Gathering** player for a number of years. In fact, prior to the incident at the lab with the genetically engineered arachnid, Peter was trying to qualify for the Pro Tour. With his new role as a crime fighter, he has less time to play with the fellas down at Neutral Ground, but I hear he has been doing some late night beta testing for **Magic** Online.

"Seriously though, movie production designers will often place props into a scene to create a more realistic environment. The producers of the *Spider-Man* movie thought Peter Parker would be the type of person who would play **Magic**. In December 2000 the *Spider-Man* movie production team contacted us looking for **Magic** and **D&D** items to place in Peter Parker's bedroom. I jumped at the chance to get **Magic** products in a sure-to-be blockbuster movie about one of the best superheroes ever. That same day I sent a package of cards, novels, binders, and posters off to Columbia Pictures. We would have to wait over a year to find out if they used any of the items we sent. In the September 2001 issue of *Wizard Magazine*, a sneak peek look at Peter's movie set bedroom confirmed the use of a **D&D** poster but there was no mention of anything from **Magic**. When the movie was released we were very excited to see they had used an *Invasion* poster in Peter's bedroom. We did not pay a fee for the placement of the posters in the movie, although that is a very common practice in the entertainment industry."

May 10



**Q:** "Why are you guys so against combo decks? If you'd simply build a balanced field (i.e., combo beats aggro beats control beats combo), they wouldn't be a problem."

-- Mike Torrisi, San Diego CA

**A:** From **Mark Rosewater**, R&D senior designer:

"There is a common misconception in the public that R&D hates combo decks. This is patently untrue. Many of the Johnnies here in R&D, such as myself, love combo decks. What we don't like are speed combo decks. These are decks that get off their combo so quickly that they don't bother to interact with the opponent. Interaction, we believe, is fundamental to the game. As such, R&D has been taking many steps to slow down combo decks. For example, we have eliminated cards that allow a player to quickly accumulate large amounts of mana in the first few turns. Lands you will note, no longer tap for more than one mana. Cheap card drawing and tutoring have also been reined in.

"The combo decks that we promote are decks that work similarly to control decks. These decks spend all of the early and mid-game trying to hold off the opponent until their combo pieces can be put together. At which point they take control of the game and most often (but not always) win."

May 9



**Q:** "I was looking through my collection of cards when I noticed something I hadn't noticed before: my *7th Edition* **Elder Druid**'s creature type was Cleric, when it's name clearly suggests it should be a Druid. What's the story behind that?"

-- Charlie Woo, Auckland, New Zealand

**A:** From **Brady Dommermuth**, **Magic** creative director:

"Sometimes we make bad decisions about creature type, such as **Skyshroud Troll** (a Giant) and **Goblin Rock Sled** (a Rock-Sled). It happens less often these days than it did in the past, I hope. In the case of **Elder Druid**, the card was printed as a Cleric back in the *Ice Age* expansion for reasons unknown. Then, when it was reprinted in the *Fifth Edition* set, it stayed a Cleric, because we had a policy of not changing a creature's type once it was printed. That meant it stayed a Cleric for its *Sixth Edition* printing as well.

"After the *Sixth Edition* set, we decided that if a creature's type was clearly counterintuitive, we would change it at the next opportunity (that is, if we reprinted it) and put the change in the Oracle card reference. I wasn't directly involved with the *Seventh Edition* set, but I assume that the team looked at **Elder Druid**, saw that it had three previous printings as a Cleric, and decided that it wasn't worth it to try to change its type to Druid. This decision was probably made because the team knew that there





**Q:** "What was the thinking behind the 'Power 9' and other early power cards? I know that in the early days there were no deck construction rules, which means someone could conceivably have built a deck with multiple **Moxes**, **Ancestral Recalls**, **Time Walks**, etc., which must have shown up in testing as broken. Did you only ever expect them to be extremely rare, were they not tested extensively, or were the power levels simply underestimated?"

-- Glenn Hefler, Canberra, ACT, Australia

**A:** From **Richard Garfield**, creator of **Magic: The Gathering**:

"We knew that the original card set had very powerful cards and combinations of cards. I believed there were two factors controlling these cards and others like them -- local player rules and rarity.

"First, I believed that broken decks would be controlled by the play groups. All the board games I played had house rules associated with them and everywhere I went people played games by different rules. If I showed up with an all **Lightning Bolt** deck I just wouldn't find many opponents (except wise-asses with lots of **CoP Reds**).

"I also believed that the number of cards people would acquire would control this to some extent; if a player was part of a play group of 20 people each of whom bought five starter decks, the number of **Black Lotuses** in the environment wouldn't be that bad. That was the most broken I could picture it, and we felt that if people were buying more cards or the playgroups were way bigger, then we were a success -- we may have to deal with balance issues but we were a success anyway. The common cards in **Magic** were a lot better balanced -- not because I wanted them to be worse (I considered **Terror** and **Fireball** to be top notch, for example), but because they were going to be more widely used.

"What caught me by surprise on both accounts was how networked the game was -- with Monopoly you play with your pals and make whatever rules you like, but it wouldn't be surprising for your group not to touch any other groups. With **Magic** every group had many players who played in other groups and so the demand for consistent play and deck construction rules was very high. The access a player had to large numbers of broken cards via trade was much higher than expected also -- and to boot players were buying more cards than expected."

## May 2



**Q:** "What were some tournament deck types that came completely out of left field, that you had no indication would exist given the playtesting that you did? For instance, did you guys figure out a deck that would be anything like Pros-Bloom?"

-- Jason Liang, Berkeley, California

**A:** From **Henry Stern**, Research & Development:

"While we do a good deal of playtesting for each **Magic** set, it seems like every set there is *something* that we didn't catch. Keep in mind that we are, in general, much more concerned with the overall metagame. That is, is each color getting played enough, are there enough different viable decktypes out there. Those issues are what we spend the majority of our time on.

"With that said, we do like to put a few, how shall I put this, 'wacky' cards in each set. Cards that you don't know exactly what to do with at first but say, 'try and build a deck around me.' Since our manpower is finite, we usually don't give these cards quite as much attention as they deserve (and in some ways this may be a good thing, as I think it is bad to over-engineer an environment) A good example of this type of phenomenon is the Pros-Bloom deck. Each of the key cards in that deck -- **Prosperity**, **Cadaverous Bloom**, and **Squandered Resources** were created independently, and I don't think a Pros-Bloom deck was ever playtested in R&D.

"While this worked out fine for Pros-Bloom, that deck being just at the upper end of how good we want combo decks to be, the process failed for *Urza's Saga*, where the 'wacky cards were much too good."

## May 1



**Q:** "**Aven Trooper**?"

-- Nick Blas, Davis, CA

**A:** From **Mark Rosewater**, R&D senior designer:  
"For starters, I'll assume that the question is why did we make a card as bad as **Aven Trooper**? Last time I had a question like this, I simply said bad cards were an intrinsic part of the game and got flooded with e-mail. So much so, I even wrote a column about bad cards (which you can see [here](#) if you're interested).

"But this time, I have a different answer. Why is **Aven Trooper** bad? Well, you see, *Torment* was the 'black set.' To achieve that, we not only wanted to raise up black, but we wanted to knock down black's enemies, white and green. We gave black more cards than normal and white and green less. In addition, we made sure that many of the set's best cards were black. The reverse meant that some of the set's worst cards should be white and green. **Aven Trooper** was one our attempts to hammer this point home. And from the audience's responses, we seemed to have succeeded."



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