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**Making Magic** **Monday, June 24, 2002**

# The Game of Life

## Heroes' Reunion's weird & wonderful allure



Mark Rosewater

Welcome to Life Gain Week! This week we'll be discussing, well, life gaining spells and creatures (Yeah, yeah, I understand that technically creatures are spells until they resolve, but you know what I mean.)



The dirty little secret of this week is all about life gain. What do the designers know that many of you don't? That life gain is very, very popular. "What?" some of you are asking. "How can life gain be popular? It sucks." In many ways it does. But in others it doesn't. "Huh?" Keep reading and all will be explained.

### Life of the Party

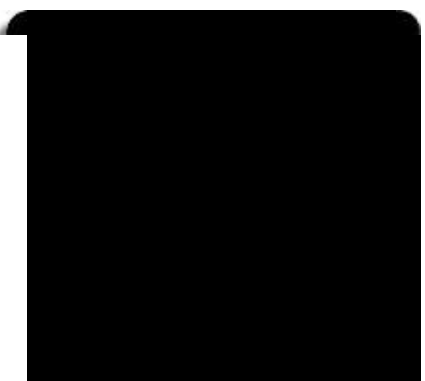
For each expansion, we do something we refer to as a "godbook" study. Basically, we show players a book with all the cards from the set and ask them to pick out their favorites based on different criteria (mechanics, art, flavor text, etc.) One of the questions we asked for the *Invasion* "godbook" study was what are the best cards in the set based on mechanics (or game play). Remember, this isn't a grading of how good the mechanic was but how much players liked the card based on the way the card played. (Power will affect a card's popularity, but it's not the only factor.) The cards are then arranged in order based on how many people selected it as one of their favorites.

Now, *Invasion* is the most popular set we've done in years. I've heard a number of Internet pundits call it the best expansion ever. So what were the "best" cards based on game play from *Invasion*? Number one was **Molimo, Maro-Sorcerer**. Number two? The second best card in one of the best sets of all time was **Heroes' Reunion**.

I believe my readers (as well as **Magic** players in general) fall into one of two camps. The first camp has played with **Heroes' Reunion**. Not only have they played with it, but most of them like it. The second camp had to click on the card's hyperlink to see what the hell it did. Now, here's the shocker. Due to our research we believe the first camp is larger in number than the second.

Quickly before I go on, here's the top ten list from the "goodbook" study. Please note that three of the top ten (#2, #3, and #6) are life gain cards. Not **Urza's Rage**, not **Undermine**, not **Fact or Fiction**. Life gain.

1. **Molimo, Maro-Sorcerer**
2. **Heroes' Reunion**
3. **Armadillo Cloak**
4. **Reya Dawnbringer**
5. **Rith, the Awakener**
6. **Treva, the Renewer**
7. **Verdeloth the Ancient**
8. **Darigaaz, the Igniter**





deck wins by using the spell **Donate** to give **Illusions of Grandeur** to your opponent, so that you gain 20 life and they inevitably lose 20.)

**Red** -- Red is the antithesis of life gain. Red is about making others lose life. But even red gets a special exception. Red can have life gain if there's a random element involved. A good example of this would be **Game of Chaos** (also from *Ice Age*).

## Life Term

I'm often asked why we don't make life gain stronger. While a good question, it's more of a development issue than a design one, so I'll toss this question off to Randy. Check "Latest Developments" this Friday for the answer.

That's about all I have to say about life gain for today. Make sure to join me next week when I reply to yet another letter, this time about a topic dear to my heart.


Until then, may you **Gerrard's Wisdom** for 14.

Mark Rosewater

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