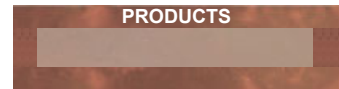


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Aladdin Does Dominaria

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House of Cards
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PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

Sometimes I wonder what **Magic** might be like if it had followed the example set by *Arabian Nights*. That is, what would happen if **Magic** didn't have its own unique world? What if, after *Arabian Nights*, we opened up booster packs from sets like "The Hobbit," "Alice in Wonderland," or *the "Odyssey"*? What if we were discussing the "Grimm's Fairy Tales" or "**Dragonlance**" blocks? After all, if we as **Magic** players are world-spanning planeswalkers, shouldn't we have access to creatures from Robert Asprin's Myth series (say, Gleep the dragon) as readily as from Rath? These are thoughts that sometimes enter my head.

Amazingly enough, cards from *Arabian Nights* have been reprinted an impressive number of times despite their focus on an existing mythology. By my count, well over half the set has seen at least one reprint, many in a base set. Who knew that **Aladdin** actually went to Dominaria after death, and that desert nomads on every planet feel a strong desire to wield scimitars?

Today I'll focus on a few of my favorite reprints from *Arabian Nights*. Although you won't find a **King Suleiman** deck or an **Ali from Cairo** deck, there should be plenty of fun ideas with an *Arabian Nights* flavor to them. I would *like* to say that I used objective criteria to generate this list, but the truth is that I just like the cards here. The list itself is probably a sad, tortured window into my psyche.

So, without further ado, here are my Top Five *Arabian Nights* Reprints!

5. Unstable Mutation



Unstable Mutation was reprinted in Revised, Fourth, and Fifth Editions.

I am attracted to blue beatdown decks in the same way that I'm attracted to green control decks. Blue's style doesn't naturally lend itself to aggressive beatdown; the exceptions in recent memory are tournament decks like "Blue Skies" and Merfolk decks, both of which employ a fair amount of countermagic as a support strategy. Because the very idea of blue beatdown seems counterintuitive, I like thinking of ways to make it work.

Unstable Mutation is arguably the single best blue beatdown card around. Slap one on a **Flying Men** (or **Cloud Sprite**, **Manta Riders**, etc.) on turn two and start pummeling. Your little flying dork is probably going to die eventually anyway, so the prospect of potentially adding 6 damage to its assaults is highly attractive.

Originally, I planned to outline a deck here using a blue beatdown strategy. Instead, I'll recall my first use of **Unstable Mutation** in a deck. I built a slow monstrosity that tried to set up a solid defense (against creatures, anyway) before dropping an unblockable creature like **Phantom Warrior**. Because unblockable creatures tend to be small, I would speed up the win by using a combination of **Unstable Mutation** and **Curiosity**. I also used the Mutation as a way to destroy opposing creatures, bouncing it back to my hand to leave the -1/-1 counters.

My deck wasn't great, but I kept it in my box of tricks for a long time, because every once in a while it absolutely surprised the pants off of my friends. As best I can remember, here is a recreation:

"Unblockable Blue" *Lite!*

Main Deck
60 cards

16 Island	4 Metathran Soldier	4 Boomerang
4 Faerie Conclave	4 Phantom Warrior	1 Capsize
4 Wasteland	4 Wall of Air	2 Counterspell
	2 Wall of Junk	4 Curiosity

Final Wrap-up
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MESSAGE BOARDS



RULES



24 lands	14 creatures	4 Miscalculation
		3 Propaganda
		4 Unstable Mutation
		22 other spells

4. Erhnam Djinn



Erhnam Djinn was reprinted in *Chronicles and Judgment*, as well as the *Anthologies* and *Beatdown* box sets.

I don't need to tell you much about **Erhnam Djinn**, since it has resurfaced in *Judgment*. Ask any long-time pro, and he or she will regale you with stories of **Erhnam Djinn** followed by **Armageddon** followed by the bellowing laughter of victory. Ask any long-time casual player, and I bet you'll also hear stories of the **Erhnam Djinn** deck that used no forests, thereby negating its "drawback" (but come on, people, it's a 4/5 for four mana . . . you really want to spend your time blocking?).

These days, I have seen monoblue, monowhite, and blue-white decks that pitch **Riftstone Portal** in order to play the Djinn without playing forests. Predictably, the blue decks also tend to toss **Wonder** into the graveyard, while the white decks focus on **Glory**, **Battle Screech**, and **Prismatic Strands**. All interesting ideas, to be sure, but frankly I have spent enough time on self-discard decks in this column.

Instead, I am reminded of the "Erhnam-'Geddon" deck from [Deck Challenge 2](#) that used **Global Ruin** to cripple an opponent's mana. At the time, I said that **Epicenter** would also work well in recreating this classic deck. Here's how I might start building the deck today:

Erhnam-'Geddon 2002		
Standard Erhnam Djinn - Epicenter Deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
10 Forest	4 Birds of Paradise	4 Creeping Mold
4 Karplusan Forest	4 Erhnam Djinn	4 Epicenter
4 Mountain	3 Flametongue Kavu	4 Insist
4 Tinder Farm	4 Werebear	3 Living Wish
22 lands	15 creatures	4 Mossfire Egg
		4 Overmaster
		23 other spells

3. Aladdin's Ring



Aladdin's Ring was reprinted in *Revised*, *Fourth*, *Fifth*, *Sixth*, and *Seventh* Editions, and has been confirmed for next year's *Eighth* Edition.

Although I'm not a player who wants to use every fat creature in a set, I do have a strong "Timmy" streak. Big spells that do big things make me smile, and you'll be hard-pressed to find a bigger spell or effect than **Aladdin's Ring**. It's one of those cards I'm consistently pleased to find in a base set, inviting me to build head-blasting Ring decks. Speaking of which, kudos to Dave Dorman for creating artwork that compels me to build decks around this card.

Almost by default, a deck that wants to take advantage of **Aladdin's Ring** is going to be slow. Because you must wait for sixteen mana (eight mana to play and eight mana to activate) to deal your initial 4 damage, you also must

employ some serious survival power, whether it be in the form of countermagic, life-gain, mass creature-destruction, defensive creatures, and so on. You can also just try to pack your deck full of mana sources and hope for the best—but more on that in a bit.


2. Desert Twister



Desert Twister was reprinted in Revised, Fourth, and Fifth Editions, and then again in Mercadian Masques.

Compare **Desert Twister** to **Vindicate** and you may be tempted to feel sorry for green. Remember, though, that not only does green have the biggest creatures in the land, but it also can most easily accelerate its mana development. Sure, **Desert Twister** is expensive, but the payoff—the ability to destroy *any* permanent—is sweet. Having **Desert Twister** in my deck gives me that comfortable, warm feeling that I have an answer to most of my opponent's threats.

As I said earlier, I like green control decks for their quirky flavor. A few years ago, I made a deck called "Wood" that generated ridiculous amounts of mana in order to play big, impressive spells. Not only was the deck loads of fun to play, but it also competed fairly well in tournaments and won a few people regional events. The deck itself is obviously outdated, but here is an Extended version that might be fun to try with friends. Best of all, I get to use two of my favorite *Arabian Nights* cards.

Wood 2002
November-Extended Green Control Deck 

Main Deck
60 cards

<p>2 Dust Bowl</p> <p>16 Forest</p> <p>1 Gaea's Cradle</p> <p>4 Treetop Village</p> <hr/> <p>23 lands</p>	<p>3 Genesis</p> <p>4 Rofellos, Llanowar Emissary</p> <p>3 Verdant Force</p> <p>4 Yavimaya Elder</p> <hr/> <p>14 creatures</p>	<p>3 Aladdin's Ring</p> <p>2 Crop Rotation</p> <p>4 Desert Twister</p> <p>4 Exploration</p> <p>2 Nostalgic Dreams</p> <p>4 Plow Under</p> <p>4 Skysproud Claim</p> <hr/> <p>23 other spells</p>
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1. Bottle of Suleiman



Bottle of Suleiman was reprinted in Revised, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Editions.

Ah, yes. Most of you just blinked and spit coffee onto your monitors. **Bottle of Suleiman!**!?

I admit it; I love the Bottle. While many serious players heaved a sigh of relief when it wasn't reprinted in *Seventh Edition*, I stifled a tear. **Bottle of Suleiman** remains my single-favorite coin-flipping card in **Magic** history.

The weirdest thing is that I'm not exactly sure why I like it so much. If you lose the toss, you've just spent five mana to drop a quarter of your life. If you win the toss, you have a creature that will die to any bounce spell and that is inferior to comparably costed creatures like **Morphling**. Heck, **Air Elemental** is probably a better deal if you want to spend five mana. **Bottle of Suleiman** is not an easy card to recurse for an army of Djinn, nor does it lend itself to an infinite number of deck ideas. Intellectually, I understand these arguments.

In the end, I think I like it because of its flavor. I love the Sixth Edition artwork, I love the idea of holding a chaotic Djinn in a bottle to unleash at a moment's notice, and I love cards that will cause both you and your opponent to laugh. Besides, I think this deck is just hysterical:

The Bottle		
November-Extended Bottle of Suleiman Deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
3 Blasted Landscape	4 Bottle Gnomes	4 Bottle of Suleiman
1 Kor Haven	4 Junk Diver	2 Enlightened Tutor
17 Plains	4 Rune of Protection: Artifacts	4 Marble Diamond
4 Wasteland	3 Treasure Hunter	3 Seal of Cleansing
25 lands	3 Wishmonger	4 Wrath of God
	18 creatures	17 other spells

The fun with *Arabian Nights* certainly doesn't stop with these cards. I also love reprints like *Sorceress Queen*, *Dandan*, *Cuombajj Witches*, *Dancing Scimitar*--the list goes on. If I had been playing when *Arabian Nights* released, I would undoubtedly wax poetic about *Drop of Honey*, *Library of Alexandria*, and the almighty *Juzam Djinn*. As with all of the **Magic** game's older sets, there are hordes of creative, fun deck ideas waiting to be explored if you can find the cards.

In the meantime, I will bide my time dreaming of what spells the "Camelot" set might contain. *wistful sigh*

Next week: *Odyssey Block* Constructed for you and me.

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