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## Driving Mages Insane

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Back in the summer of 1843, when I first arrived in the new world from yon foreign country, many a strange sight awaited me in this You Ess of Aye. Men cavorted down the street in their pantaloons, and women wore their hair with curls and twirls. The local pubs and eateries assaulted my senses with the promise of fresh meats, fine drinks, and perhaps even the rare chance to hear the fancy nattering of piano music that was all the rage in the new world.

I was warned by the local gentry to avoid one such of these establishments known as *The Greasy Spoon*. Curiosity immediately got the better of me, so I gathered up my hard-earned pennies and headed over to said location. When I entered, all seemed fine. The barkeep greeted me with a grin and a bottle of my favorite beverage, as if he knew exactly what I'd want before I e'en entered the door. The serving wench, as such, brought an unsavory, if momentarily nourishing, meal of pig parts and some sort of vegetable that had been stewed past recognition.

I sat back in my chair and observed the natives in their habitat. Various patrons sat in a corner heatedly discussing the merits of tipping cows, while others engaged in a ramshackle round of cards. I was drawn hypnotically to their game, curious about its nature.

"Fair gentlemen," asked I, "what is the said nature of the activity upon which you all seem intent?"

My inquiry was met with a couple of vacant stares, and more than a share of belligerent ones. "I think we have us a fancy boy here, Peeping Dan!" yelled one particularly unkempt ruffian. "Does it look like we're doing magic tricks, boy?" questioned another of these savages, his tongue snaking between his cracked lips and missing front teeth.

"Well, in all fairness," I once again questioned, curiosity still driving me past my better judgment, "what good is it to have a hand in which three of your cards have the same number and two others do, as well? Shouldn't you aim for five different numbers? Variety is the spice of life and all."

This is when the gentlemen, and I use the term loosely, whose gamesmanship I had been observing, stood up and walloped me square in the chin, knocking one of my teeth into a wobbly state. Taking the hint, I finally fled the vile den, vowing to one day create a game of my own that would attract a much higher class of citizenry than these thugs.

So to my descendent, I leave this note and the progress of said game. I have named it "Not Magic," and have fashioned the game after the five native grounds in this country: the mountains to the west, the plains to their east, the swamps in the south, the islands off the coasts, and forests of the northeast. I hope that some day you will bring this game to the masses, for I have not yet finished it in my short lifespan. There is only one thing I ask, only one rule I wish for you to adhere to in honor of my pummeling all those years ago in *The Greasy Spoon*.

Let the game end with a good decking.

Signed,

Squeeford G. Garfield III

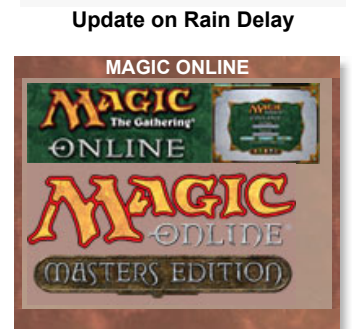
Ah yes, the decking. But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

Enter my freshman year of college, during the fall of 1993. New to Tulane University, I wandered into a group of people playing a game I'd never seen before. The game instantly appealed to me, as it incorporated the **Dungeons & Dragons** roleplaying game I'd played in high school and was played by people all over the world.

This game, of course, was **Moosehead M.U.D.** (Multi User Dungeon). These were text-only roleplaying games that were the forefathers to **Everquest**, **Dark Age of Camelot**, and **Ultima Online**. I spent hours each day immersed in this rich fantasy world, slaying orcs, dragons, and other players.

Three months later, I was introduced to **Magic: The Gathering** by some people on my floor. If you'll pardon my analogy, my experience with Mudding versus **Magic** were akin to giving up [a Schedule I controlled substance used in some states for medicinal purposes] to start a habit on pure, unadulterated [Schedule II controlled substance]. (The Wizards of the Coast Editing department reminds you to just say no.)

By this time, **Magic** had gone into the *Revised Edition*. I remember opening my first starter ever and getting **Wall of Swords** and **Northern Paladin**. Rick (one of the people who introduced me to the game) immediately offered me one of each of these 'nifty' Circles of Protection for my 3/3 creature. Of course, I took the trade, thinking I was coming out ahead at five cards to one. This story has a happy ending, as within a year I was regularly destroying Rick in every game we played.



The New Orleans **Magic** scene has always been a bit lacking, and in those days so was product. I remember that I had my name on file at every Babbage's, Electronics Boutique, and hobby store in the area. They called me to offer me first shot at every new box they got in (which was about a box every 2–3 weeks of *Revised*).

Quickly, my collection of cards grew. I traded for cards from *Legends*, bought my first set of power nine off the Internet. (Take a look here in the [Google archives](#), and you can see where I won my first two Moxes and a *Lotus* for a grand total of \$135) and proceeded to own the tournament scene in New Orleans. I played red-black-green land destruction using *Ice Storm*, *Stone Rain*, and *Sinkhole*. I played decks based around *The Abyss* and artifact creatures, decks based around *Deathlace* and protection from black critters. And I played my favorite deck of all—an *Orcish Spy/Millstone* deck.

## Ben's Favorite Card:



**Millstone**  
*Antiquities uncommon;*  
*Revised rare;*  
*Fourth Edition rare;*  
*Fifth Edition rare;*  
*Sixth Edition rare;*  
*Seventh Edition rare*

Ben's Orcish Spy/Millstone deck from 12/12/1994		
Ben Bleiweiss, who's been playing Magic forever		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
62 cards		
4 <b>Badlands</b>	4 <b>Animate Dead</b>	2 <b>Deathgrip</b>
2 <b>Mountain</b>	1 <b>Black Lotus</b>	3 <b>Gloom</b>
3 <b>Strip Mine</b>	4 <b>Dark Ritual</b>	4 <b>Red Elemental Blast</b>
7 <b>Swamp</b>	1 <b>Demonic Tutor</b>	3 <b>Shatter</b>
16 lands	3 <b>Disrupting Scepter</b>	3 <b>Terror</b>
	4 <b>Hymn to Tourach</b>	15 sideboard cards
	4 <b>Millstone</b>	
	1 <b>Mind Twist</b>	
2 <b>Atog</b>	1 <b>Mox Emerald</b>	
4 <b>Hypnotic Specter</b>	1 <b>Mox Jet</b>	
3 <b>Orcish Spy</b>	1 <b>Mox Pearl</b>	
4 <b>Sengir Vampire</b>	1 <b>Mox Ruby</b>	
13 creatures	1 <b>Mox Sapphire</b>	
	4 <b>The Rack</b>	
	1 <b>Sol Ring</b>	
	1 <b>Storm World</b>	
	33 other spells	

Looking back at this pile of sixty-two cards with great fondness, I can see why I immediately took to the *Necropotence* deck just a short while after the release of *Ice Age*. I also see a huge mish-mash of cards. What's *Millstone* got to do with *The Rack*? *Atog*? Does the deck really need *Orcish Spy*? About the only card that makes sense in the combined milling/discard theme is *Animate Dead*, which can bring back creatures that have been stripped from hand or milled from library.

Ah, but for the *Millstone*. More than one mage was driven insane by the sound of the *Millstone* relentlessly grinding away. More than one mage was driven insane by the sound of the *Millstone* relentlessly grinding away. More than one mage was driven insane by the sound of the *Millstone* relentlessly grinding away. More than one mage was driven insane by the sound of the *Millstone* relentlessly grinding away. More than one mage was driven insane by the sound of the *Millstone* relentlessly grinding away. More than one opponent was driven insane by the sound of my quoting the text on *Millstone* every time I used it to relentlessly grind away.

I absolutely loved this deck, mostly because of the *Millstones*. Back then, cards were a little harder to get, and people didn't have access to four of each



*Primitive technology at its finest.*

ever having cast another spell, I won the game by decking.

Well, Ray wasn't too happy about this. "ALL I NEEDED WAS TO HAVE MY LIBRARY ARRANGED LIKE THIS!" he screamed, showing me a clump arranged as burn spell, land, burn spell. Ray was getting really irate. So I responded in the only way possible—and keep in mind I was a really annoying eighteen year old at the time, who sat there chanting the 'Millstone' mantra for twenty straight turns while this short-tempered thirty-something seethed at the ears. "Well, Ray, you must have really done something bad this week for God to hate you that much."

That did it. Ray's eyes popped out of his head. His veins flared straight off his neck. With a scream of anger, he picked up his deck and heaved the entire thing at me as hard as possible. He completely missed me, even though I stood only about a foot away from him, across the table. His deck flew across the room, with cards hitting people in the arms and legs, landing on the floor, and disappearing beneath tables and chairs. The entire room went silent. Everyone stared at Ray, who stormed out of the tournament site and was never seen again. One of his friends picked up his cards for him, and that was that.

The impact of losing in weird ways has lessened with time (think **Battle of Wits** nowadays). But back then, people expected to win games with creatures or direct damage or something that reduced your opponent's life total from 20 to 0. **Millstone** let you win another way—running your opponents out of cards—while forcing them to sit helplessly and watch their decks disappear into the graveyard two cards at a time. People hated that more than they hated **Control Magic** and **Counterspell**. **Millstone** prevented them from playing cards that they purposefully put into their decks. At least they could try to cast their spells against blue. **Millstone** even took away that option and sent their best laid plans spiraling away.

Yes, **Millstone** appealed to the sadist in me. Even while I was breaking onto the Pro Tour, I would still keep together my favorite **Millstone** deck (along with a Zur's Weirding deck, but that's another story for another time) to break out for casual gaming. All this ended with the creation of **Weatherlight's Gaea's Blessing**. Damn the Blessing. It ruined **Millstone** for **Magic** forever.

I'll end the story here, even though I could go on about how I tried playing a white-blue **Millstone** deck at States in 2000 and dropped with an 0–4 record. I'd prefer to think of the glory days where a 1/1 Orc and **Animate Dead** would combine with **Millstone** to create an unstoppable juggernaut of a deck . . . in New Orleans.

Next week: Damage on the stack.

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*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.*

card. It was often horribly demoralizing when I'd send someone's sole **Serra Angel** crashing to the graveyard via **Millstone**. With **Orcish Spy**, I made sure it happened. Got a **Disenchant** coming up? Better mill it away. Got a **Disenchant** coming three cards down? I'll let you draw a card, then mill it away.

I particularly remember one match against this guy named Ray. Ray was known for two things: wearing a red flannel shirt and having an awful temper. On this particular day, I was running my **Millstone** deck, and he ran a deck with twenty mountains, thirty burn spells, and ten artifacts that produced mana (**Mana Vaults**, **Basalt Monoliths**, etc.). By turn six, he had reduced me to 1 life, but had no cards in hand. It was then that I got down both **Orcish Spy** and **Millstone** and proceeded to methodically go through his library. I could set up his draws for the rest of the game using the two. About twenty turns later, without me



*The frustration caused by **Millstone** inspired this art used on the promotional Arena league **Disenchant**.*



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