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MORPH, MORPH, BACK AND FORTH

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By Randy Buehler

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My favorite moments when thinking about **Magic: The Gathering** are when I'm looking at a card, trying to figure out what to do with it, and suddenly something clicks and I see a huge range of possibilities that I didn't even realize were there at first. For me, this usually happens when a recursive loop comes together. In my mind I get this image of things looping out of control, like when you're standing between two mirrors and the image just bounces back and forth and spirals off infinitely as far as you can see. **Magic** would be a pretty cool game even if it were just creatures and spells and everyone just attacked and blocked, but these "[Johnny](#)" moments give it amazing depth.

All week now you've been reading about the new "morph trigger" mechanic that's coming out in the *Legions* set. I think it's a pretty cool extension of morph, and now there are a lot more things that can happen when somebody has a face-down creature in play; however, once [Skinthinner](#) or [Skirk Marauder](#) does its thing, that's it - it's just a body that attacks and blocks now.

Enter [Weaver of Lies](#):



When you flip over [Weaver of Lies](#), all of your other morph guys can go back into hiding, so you can use their morph trigger abilities a second time. If your opponent has some fat morph creatures, even better -- turn those bad boys back into 2/2s. Meanwhile you get a 4/4 body (for just five mana) to give you more time for all of your cool morph tricks, and if there's anything that you want to keep face up, you can.

We had a bunch of conversations about [Weaver of Lies](#) during development, and I find it interesting to look back on how much it changed. Here's the version that came in from design:

[Not Morphling]

3 4 4

Creature -- Illusion

3/3

①: CARDNAME becomes the creature type of your choice until end of turn.

② 4 4: Turn target creature with morph face down.

Morph 2 4 4 (You may play this face down as a 2/2 creature for 3. Turn it face up any time for its morph cost.)

So it actually started out as a Mistform creature, but we decided that just didn't have anything to do with it other abilities. It also started out 3/3 (and cheaper), but the set had a bunch of other blue creatures in the 3/3 range, so we decided to make it bigger. It needed a new creature type now that it wasn't an Illusion anyway, and a blue Beast seemed like a reasonable thing to have running around, so voilà.

The real debates about [Weaver of Lies](#), however, were about the details of its "remorphing" ability. The development team decided right away that this ability would lend itself nicely to a morph trigger (rather than an activated ability) because morph triggers were the neat new twist to morph that we were doing in the set. That

brought up the big question: should its ability affect *itself*? Clearly the whole point of the card was to allow you to reuse morph triggers . . . well, it has a morph trigger, too, so shouldn't it flip itself face down in addition to everything else?

We tested that version of the card for a while and it was very cool to think about all the things you could keep doing to your opponent again and again and again, but it could be kind of annoying to play against. Once your opponent got enough mana into play, he or she could kill one of your creatures or blow up one of your lands every turn without even using up a card.

After that experience the team figured we could add mana so that the card wasn't strong enough for Spike to want to mess around with it too much, but Johnny would still get to have *his* fun. William Jockusch, who was the lead *Legions* developer, had a different read on the situation. He argued that this version of the card constituted "giving away the World's Fair." The card would still be plenty cool if we added the word "other" and the version we were testing was actually "too easy" he said. Johnny likes to be challenged, and if the Weaver flipped itself back face down in addition to everything else, where's the challenge in that?

In the end, William won the argument when someone pointed out that even if we did add "other than [Weaver of Lies](#)" to the card text, it was still possible to set up endlessly repeatable loops -- you just had to have two copies of the card so the one could flip the other one face down. (Whenever a card uses its own name in the rules text, it is referring just to itself -- not to other cards that happen to have the same name. When we want to refer to all cards that share a name, we say "cards named FOO.")

Thus, we got to give Johnny all the cool looping possibilities that we think will give him something to work with, but they're hard enough to set up that we don't think they'll come up so often that they'll feel annoying or repetitive. All in all, we feel pretty good about how [Weaver of Lies](#) turned out.

I'm interested to hear what you think of the final result of all our debates.

What do you think of [Weaver of Lies](#)? Great card Good card Decent card Mediocre card Bad card Awful card

LAST WEEK'S POLL:

Who would win in a game of one-on-one basketball?

| | | |
|---------|------|-------|
| Yoda | 8553 | 47.1% |
| Gandalf | 5743 | 31.6% |

Who would win in a game of one-on-one basketball?

| | | |
|--------------------------|-------|--------|
| Whatever Skaff thinks | 263 | 1.4% |
| Wow, you guys are weird. | 3604 | 19.8% |
| Total | 18163 | 100.0% |

For those of you that voted for "whatever Skaff thinks," Skaff chose Gandalf, citing that "Yoda doesn't have the motivation to win; he'd see the whole thing as a waste of his time." Of course, that additional 1.4% for Gandalf still isn't enough to overcome Yoda's lead in the poll. I'm the sure the guys working on the **Star Wars TCG** are happy to hear it.

Randy may be reached at latestdevelopments@wizards.com.

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