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# Ye Olde Merchant Scroll

Brian David-Marshall  
Learning Curve  
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The people that brought you Aysen Highway and Hazdurh the Abbot proudly present...

...a good card. Ahhhhh... *Homelands*.

The follow-up expansion to *Ice Age* is not exactly known for its contributions to the tournament **Magic**. When the very first Pro Tour featured a format that required competitors to play with five cards from each Standard legal set-back when the format was called Type 2-most players opted for four **Serrated Arrows** and a dead card in the sideboard or occasionally a **Wizard's School**. **Spectral Bears** had their day in the sun and I did hear about mtg.com's own Mike Flores recently losing a game of Mental Magic to Internet curmudgeon Jonathan Becker thanks to **Jinx** but let's face it, *Homelands* was not **Magic's** zenith.

Today, if you were cracking *Homelands* packs, **Merchant Scroll** is about the best you can hope to bust open-and it was a common. Sure there was **Baron Sengir**, **Autumn Willow**, and **Ihsan's Shade** but I can get more in trade for the common **Merchant Scroll** than any of those three rares. Especially now that it is being reprinted in the *Core Set*. The card has always been one of the most powerful tutors in the game. Unlike *Mirage* block's **Vampiric Tutor**, **Mystical Tutor**, **Enlightened Tutor** and **Worldly Tutor**, **Merchant Scroll** puts the card you find directly into your hand without any card disadvantage.

In fact, the card is very similar to **Demonic Tutor** in both converted casting cost and function, although **Merchant Scroll** comes with more limitations-not only do you have to retrieve a blue card but it must be an instant. **Demonic Tutor** can get you a land, a **Black Lotus**, **Mind Twist** - I guess that's why one is restricted in the Vintage format and the other isn't. Despite that, **Merchant Scroll** is already a staple card in the Vintage format used almost exclusively to fetch **Ancestral Recall** - and occasionally **Force of Will** or **Mana Drain** but only if the Ancestral has already been used or is in hand.

I don't believe it will have a huge impact on Standard until after the *Odyssey* Block rotates out and takes **Cunning Wish** with it. For one mana more but at instant speed, **Cunning Wish** is going to remain the blue tutor of choice for Standard play. There is even some question as to whether or not Scroll will see much play with **Counterspell**, **Force Spike** and **Memory Lapse** going out the revolving door while the Scroll was coming in. Initially I was in this camp but have since changed my tune. I think that there will be enough narrow counters in the format that **Merchant Scroll** will find some use -- I particularly like it with **Stifle**.

The format that will truly be affected by the reprint of the Scroll is Extended - where the card has really shined in the past. Until the most recent Extended rotation, **Merchant Scroll** was a fixture in Extended combo decks including High Tide, Necro Donate and just about any deck that featured the **Intuition for Accumulated Knowledge** combo.

Killing someone with **Stroke of Genius**? Why play with four when you can have eight (although most decks rarely have room or need for a full suite of **Merchant Scrolls**)?

Frantically searching for **Frantic Search**? Calm down, **Merchant Scroll** means you have more than four - you'll find it.

Because the **Merchant Scroll** puts the card directly into your hand it functioned as additional copies of each of the combo pieces that happened to be blue instants. With a **Sapphire Medallion** in play a player could **Merchant Scroll** for **Intuition**, **Intuition for Accumulated Knowledge** and cast the AK for three cards - for only four mana. Keep in mind that whole sequence is available in Extended come September 1st.

One of my favorite pre-rotation Extended decks used **Merchant Scroll** - perhaps the best card from *Homelands* -- and perhaps the worst card from the same set - **Chain Stasis**. Chain allows you to tap or untap target creature. Then its controller can pay  $2\{c}$  to choose a new target for a copy of the spell. A few years back I was sitting around with a group of friends looking through one guy's trade binder. Somehow he had accumulated well over a dozen copies of **Chain Stasis** - mostly as throw-ins on convoluted trades - and he could not get rid of them. We set out to build a deck that would utilize **Chain Stasis** to inspire local players to trade for the ones lying fallow in his book.



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Since the deck revolved around getting infinite mana with a **Chain Stasis** you had to ensure that you drew one or the deck would fizzle. We eventually stumbled onto **Merchant Scroll** -- it was the first time I had ever included **Merchant Scroll** in a deck and the resulting deck will always have a special place in my heart.



EnCHAINtress		
Extended circa 2000		
<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards		
4 Faerie Conclave	4 Argothian Enchantress	3 Animate Land
9 Forest	2 Verduran Enchantress	4 Chain Stasis
7 Island		4 Fertile Ground
4 Treetop Village	6 creatures	4 Frantic Search
24 lands		3 Merchant Scroll
		4 Overgrowth
		4 Stroke of Genius
		4 Wild Growth
		30 other spells

The idea behind the deck is to get an **Overgrowth** and a **Fertile Ground** on a **Treetop Village** - it can't be one with summoning sickness-and animate your man-land floating at least one blue mana. With the blue mana you can cast **Chain Stasis** to untap your Village. Once that resolves you can tap your Village - this is why it can't have summoning sickness - for  $\text{♣♣♣♣}$  and pay to put a copy of the spell on the stack targeting your same **Treetop Village**. You can repeat this over and over netting a  $\text{♣}$  each time making - what my judge type friends like to call an arbitrarily large amount of mana. With that mana you can use **Stroke of Genius** to finish off your opponent. If you don't have the **Stroke** you can always find it with **Merchant Scroll**.

You can also do the trick with a **Faerie Conclave** or even one of your basic lands. The Animate Lands provide protection from **Wastelands** and **Dust Bowl** as well as an additional three ways to "make a man"-land. **Chain Stasis** is no longer legal in Extended so if you want to update the deck it would have to be in a casual format or in an older one like Vintage or Type 1.5. If you do try to use **Chain Stasis** it also works quite well with the **Krosan Restorer** - although you need a **Wild Growth**-type card or a **Mana Flare**-ish enchantment. It also works with our old friend the **Wirewood Channeler**.

I have been toying around with an Extended deck for the post 8th environment that uses **Merchant Scroll**. The deck is not quite there yet. It does win but not consistently enough for my tastes. I am definitely open to suggestions and will do a follow up if there is any real progress on the deck. It is based on two older decks - High Tide and Dark Tide with a dash of Tight Sight for taste. The former used the eponymous spell **High Tide** and the untap cards from **Urza's Saga** to generate huge amounts of mana and kill the opponent with **Stroke of Genius**.

When **High Tide** and all of **Fallen Empires** left Extended a few rotations ago it was replaced with a less successful two color version that used **Bubbling Muck**. Here I tried to combine the mana production of the **Bubbling Muck** with the ability to play free spells off of **Mind's Desire**. The goal is to kill your opponent with a **Stroke of Genius** - remember  $X = 0$  when the spell is played off of a **Mind's Desire** so you have to get one in hand to go off successfully. There is also a **Brain Freeze** which can be played for free off of the **Mind's Desire**.



Night Sight	
Post September 1st Extended	
<b>Main Deck</b>	

**Main Deck**  
60 cards

4 Islands		4 Accumulated Knowledge
4 Polluted Delta	0 creatures	1 Brain Freeze
14 Swamps		4 Bubbling Muck
4 Tainted Isle		4 Frantic Search
26 lands		2 Intuition
		3 Merchant Scroll
		4 Mind's Desire
		4 Stroke of Genius
		4 Turnabout
		4 Vampiric Tutor
		34 other spells

I am a combo player at heart and almost every deck I build in Extended concludes with me casting **Stroke of Genius**. Even if I can't get this particular deck to where I want it to be I will certainly be glad to trade my **Baron Sengir** for a couple of **Homelands Merchant Scrolls** - I have a feeling I'm gonna be needing them.

Next week: The card the made The Rock... rock?

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Brian may be reached at [brian@fightlikeapes.com](mailto:brian@fightlikeapes.com).

*Brian David-Marshall has been involved in **Magic** since 1994 when he was violently shaken by someone searching for the game. He has organized tournaments, run a store, and is currently the Pro Tour Historian. His latest venture is [Top8Magic.com](http://Top8Magic.com), the publishing house that is releasing Michael J. Flores: Deckade.*



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