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Dear Diary



The personal story of a common artifact

Mark Rosewater · *Making Magic*
Monday, October 20, 2003

hello everyone. Today I was hoping to show you the evolution of *Mirrodin* design by reviewing the diary I kept as the set was being put together. The problem is that I came up with this great idea now, much too late to actually keep a diary. I talked with the other designers (Mike Elliott, Brian Tinsman, and Tyler Bielman) and none of them had kept a diary either.

Not one easily discouraged, I hunted around to find anyone related to *Mirrodin* that might have kept a diary. And I found one in the most unlikely of places. It turns out that one of the cards in the set kept a journal. And it's not the kind of card you'd expect to keep a journal. Anyway, I thought it might be enlightening to look at *Mirrodin* from a very different perspective. So without any further ado, let me turn over my column to: [Welding Jar](#).

Before I begin, I want to thank Mr. Rosewater for this opportunity. This whole experience was really a roller coaster ride for me and I'm honored to have the chance to tell my story. Normally, it's only the glitzy rares, the [Soul Foundry](#) or the [Mindslaver](#), that get the "This Is Your Life" treatment. This is a chance to show you what it's like for a common. As you will see, it isn't easy. I am [Welding Jar](#), *Mirrodin* common, 214/306, and this is my story.

December 16, 2001

Dear Diary,

*I'm not sure how to start so I'll figure I'll just jump in running. My name is Urza's Fuse and I was born on December 15, 2001. My designer, Mr. Rosewater, informs me that I was created as an answer to the rampant card removal that was running around Bacon. Wait, I'm getting ahead of myself. I'm a card in the game **Magic: the Gathering**. I was created specifically for the expansion codenamed Bacon. I am a common artifact card. I'm told this is very special as most **Magic** sets don't have common artifacts.*

As of today, here's how I look:

Urza's Fuse
2
Artifact - Item

Sacrifice CARDNAME: Regenerate target permanent.
Draw a card.

In case you're wondering about my sub-type, I was told that the designers are trying something new. Right now, there is weapons, armor, items, potions, and runes (used for scrolls and tomes). I've only heard stories about the last two though. All the common artifacts are currently weapons, armor or items.

I'm not sure what else to say other than I'm very excited to be part of a new set. I'll talk to you soon.



January 13, 2002

Dear Diary,

*I learned something very disturbing today. I was playing today with Chakram, another common artifact, when **Brown Ouphe** showed up. Normally, a young artifact like myself with an activated ability would steer clear of an Ouphe, but for some reason, I felt like approaching him.*

He chuckled when I said, "Hello, sir."

"Perhaps an introduction would be in order," he said.

"My name is Urza's Fuse. I'm an artifact."

"I can see that," the Ouphe replied, "You seem quite excited."

"Well, I got added to the set last month and I'm really looking forward to being part of Bacon, whatever they end up calling it."

"Ah, to be young," the Ouphe sighed, "So Mr. Fuse, are you aware that there is still eight more months of design and then six months of development? Are you aware that every week they revise the file? The chances of surviving from early design to being published is less than ten percent."

*The **Brown Ouphe** smiled one last time and then walked away.*

I had never thought about being discarded or replaced. Chakram said he heard of a place in the data base called Future XX where cards are sent to die. I'm scared.

January 20, 2002

Dear Diary,

I keep having the same nightmare. I'm playing with friends when a giant red pen appears out of the sky. The dream always ends with me waking up screaming.

*I decided that I needed to have another talk with one of the older cards. Who better than the oldest card repeated in the set? **Shatter**. I'll be honest that the idea of meeting **Shatter** face to face was a bit daunting, but I feared the unknown more than I feared **Shatter**. I asked Chakram to come along, but he was afraid, so I went by myself.*

*When I found **Shatter** he was bantering with **Terror**. "All I'm saying," **Terror** explained, "Is that maybe I'm in the wrong set."*

*"You just can't stand it that for once I'm finally better than you," **Shatter** shot back, "It just burns you up that I'm a higher draft pick."*

*"What's with all these artifact creatures? In my day, you had a couple of golems and maybe a **Juggernaut**."*

"Uh, excuse me," I said.

***Shatter** and **Terror** both turned to stare at me. "I was wondering if I could talk to you."*

*"What are you doing here, kid?" **Shatter** shot back, "I'm **Shatter**. You're an artifact." **Shatter** turned to **Terror**, "I'm a top draft pick and still I get no respect."*

"I just needed to know what my chances are of making it to the set?"

*"What?" **Shatter** asked.*

*"I was talking with **Brown Ouphe** last week and he informed me that I have a less than ten percent chance of making it through design and development."*

***Shatter** looked me up and down. "You're kinda simple," he said, "I'd put your chances a little higher. Maybe fifteen or twenty percent. And even if you don't make the cut this time, there's always a future set."*

***Terror** then jumped in to the conversation, "Don't give the kid false hopes. He's a common artifact. The time the next artifact set rolls around he'll be dust in a word file. It's now or never."*

That night I had the nightmare again.

February 25, 2002

Dear Diary,

It took me weeks to calm myself down. Finally, I had convinced myself that I was a valuable addition to the set when I woke up to find that I'd been edited. Luckily, the change was more cosmetic than anything:

Urza's Fuse
0
Artifact - Item

Sacrifice CARDNAME: Regenerate target artifact.

I don't draw a card anymore and I only regenerate artifacts now but I did drop from a cost of 2 to 0. I am a bit sleeker, but numerous artifacts told me that having a 0 cost was like having a target on my forehead.

I've decided to see it as a good thing. Rather than just dump me, the designers were willing to fine tune me. That seems okay. I'll keep you in the loop as more changes happen.



March 10, 2002

Dear Diary,

*Well the uncommons showed up today. Man, do they have some attitude. Since the rares aren't here yet, this is their one chance to be the big fish in the pond and they're playing it to the hilt. At lunch, **Icy Manipulator** stole my table and then kept tapping me when I tried to get it back. See if I save him when he gets **Shattered**.*

April 2, 2002

Dear Diary,

I have great news. When I woke up this morning, I discovered that I now have a brother. His name is Medical Kit. He's just like me but instead of regenerating an artifact, he regenerates a creature. Everyone I talk to says this is good news as the designers would not mirror me if they didn't like what I was doing. For the first time in months, I feel like I don't have a weight on my text box.

*I spent most of the day showing Medical Kit the ropes. He seems to be bonding quickly with creature cards. I guess they realize that he might save their bacon (pardon the pun) some day. I was okay with Medical Kits fraternizing until he started getting chummy with **Atog**. **Atog** had recently be upgraded from common to uncommon and was enjoying his new status.*

*Medical Kit really seemed to like **Atog**, but I don't think he noticed the subtle lip licking. I kept stressing that artifacts need to keep their distance. It only takes a split second for **Atog** to get hungry and then you're just a +2/+2 bonus. Medical Kit promised he'd be more careful in the future.*

May 25, 2002

Dear Diary,

*The rares have been trickling in for weeks now. It's been great for us commons, because the rares like to do to the uncommons what the uncommons do to us. The enemy of my enemy is my friend. Last night, for example, the **Bottle Gnomes** got a little uppity, so the Clone Machine removed him from the game and started copying him.*

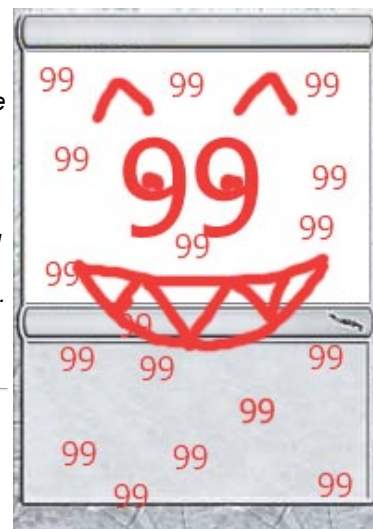
Also, while I've been pretty steady, a number of common artifacts have been going through a state of flux. This includes my good friend Chakram. He's been a little spooked about it.

June 19, 2002

Dear Diary,

Chakram has been 99'ed. (His code changed from CA19 to CA99.) What this means is that he's been moved from a place in the set to a placeholder slot. While he's no longer officially in the set, being 99 means that he might be moved back in later.

Being 99'ed is very tough as it usually is the first step of being removed from the set. Because the cards know this, no one tends to talk to a '99. They become the walking dead of cards. I've been trying to cheer Chakram up, but he realizes that his chances are slim.



June 30, 2002

Dear Diary,

My sources tell me the designers have decided to tone down artifact removal. Red and green are going from four removal spells a piece to three. I was a little nervous when I first heard this as I was created as a reaction to artifact removal. If the number drops, the designers might not need me. But then I reminded myself, that if the designers are worried that the removal is too high, why would they want to get rid of a card like me that helps combat the problem.

Oh, and I finally lost my sub-type. I'm an item no more.

July 14, 2002

Dear Diary,

I woke up to find out that Medical Kit is gone. The gossip mill is that he got "cut on numbers" meaning that there were more artifacts the designers liked than there were slots. Also, Chakram was taken out of the file. I feel very alone.

August 6, 2002

Dear Diary,

I've been told that there are two great times of change in a card set. The first is the end of the design. The second is the beginning of the development. This week has been crazy. The developers started playing with the set and giving the designers notes. As a result, the designers have been making frequent passes on the set.

Chakram showed up as a 99 again but only for a few days. The cards getting the greatest hit were the ones tied into the mechanics. Luckily, my abilities sort of stand on their own, so I've been left alone. For now, at least.

August 30, 2002

Dear Diary,

The handoff to development is tomorrow. Man, these last few weeks have been nutty. Artifact equipment has changed. The Clone Machine's ability got keyworded and added to other cards.

The big news of the day was that the card set size was changing. Bacon was going to get chopped down from 330 to 306. I was quite panicked until I learned that the cuts weren't going to affect common.

September 21, 2002

Dear Diary,

As promised, the beginning of development was just as chaotic as the end of design. Affinity for artifacts moved to black and then returned to blue. Entwine was beefed up. Colored activations on artifacts was lowered and then raised back up. Through it all, I've managed to keep my head

above water. I was told by *Triskelion* that if I made it through development's first pass my chances of making it into the set went up to seventy to eighty percent.

October 10, 2002

Dear Diary,

The set is no longer Bacon. It has officially (well at least internally) been named *Mirrodin*. I tried pointing out that the name is easy to mispronounce but no one tends to listen to what a little common has to say.

December 19, 2002

Dear Diary,

I got my new name. I am no longer *Urza's Fuse*. I am now *Welding Jar*.

February 12, 2003

Dear Diary,

I have art. I have a name. It looks like I'm going to make it into *Mirrodin*. Wow, when I think back to all the cards I saw come and go, it seems amazing to me that I made it while so many of them did not. I'm not sure what about me managed to make it through the minefield of design and development. I guess it was my simplicity. I have an important function that is clear and concise. I cannot wait until the prerelease.



October 20, 2003

Dear Diary,

I got opened for the first time by a twelve year old at the first flight of a prerelease. Upon seeing me, he said, "Cool."

I think I'm going to like this.

The only thing left now is to have dreams of being repeated. If *Mirrodin* is popular enough, they'll have to another artifact set someday. Right?

Once again, I would like to thank *Welding Jar* for an interesting behind-the-scenes look at *Mirrodin*.

Join me next week when I take a look at things that go bump in the night.

Until then, may you make *Welding Jar* proud.

Mark Rosewater

Mark may be reached at makingmagic@wizards.com.

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