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Hello, children! Today, we're going to learn about a very special gift that makes everything more fun! Do you know what it is? It's the gift of sharing!

If you have a teddy bear or a dolly, you can play with it by yourself. But then you would be lonely. Being lonely makes me wear my frowny face. What if you shared the dolly? Then you and your friend can both play with the dolly, and no one is lonely! Hooray! If you share, it will be a lot easier to load the five boxes that contain all your remaining possessions onto the dolly and wheel them into the storage unit. Sharing makes eviction more fun!

Magic is a fun, fun game, but there isn't enough sharing to make it super-uper-duper fun. I play with my cards and you play with your cards, but we don't play with each other's cards enough. Let's take a trip to Pretend Land and see what would happen if I held you down and forced you to share my cards with me.

The Fable of Lodestone Myr

Today's first story comes from Shattered Destiny, who shared his deck idea with me so I could share it with you. Wasn't that nice of Mr. Destiny?

Some **Magic** cards make it easy to share. Cloudpost shares its Locus-y goodness with all other Cloudposts in play. Howling Mine shares extra cards with each player—they should have called it a Howling *Ours*. And Blinkmoth Urn shares plenty of mana with everybody, whether they want it or not.

What could Mr. Destiny do with all that extra mana? He realized that Clockwork Dragon is a wonderful mana sink (can you say "mana sink," boys and girls?), as is Pentavus. But the breakthrough was when he thought of jolly ol' Lodestone Myr. Why, if he didn't want all that mana on his turn, he could just tap the Urn to prevent the effect! Thanks, jolly ol' Lodestone Myr! But Lodestone Myr is kind of a grump. That's right, mean ol' jolly ol' Lodestone Myr didn't like to share at all. It liked to tap Blinkmoth Urn so Shattered Destiny would get mana, but nobody else would! Even worse, it would tap Howling Mine the same way! Oh, no!

Shattered and I tried to make Lodestone Myr happy. We gave it a whole bunch of cheap artifacts that work even when they're tapped. "Hey, Lodestone Myr," we said, "here's a Sun Droplet and a Jinxed Choker and a Leonin Bola and a Lightning Greaves for you to tap! If you just tap those things, and leave the Urn and the Mine alone, everyone will be happy!" But Lodestone Myr just got bigger, and meaner, and still it wanted to tap *all* the artifacts! "I bet it's lonely," we said. "If we give it some friends to play with like Pests and Pentavites, it would stop being so grumpy." But still Lodestone Myr wanted to tap *all* the artifacts! "Maybe if it could run around outside near the Tree of Tales or the Seat of the Synod, it wouldn't be so mean anymore." But still it wanted to tap *all* the artifacts! That's when we noticed that mean ol' jolly ol' selfish ol' Lodestone Myr



was a 10/10 trampler that deprived our opponents of cards and mana, and we got the hell out of its way.

Heavy Lode



Main Deck

60 cards

2 Blinkmoth Nexus
4 Cloudpost
4 Forest
3 Island
3 Mirrodin's Core
4 Seat of the Synod
4 Tree of Tales

24 lands

2 Clockwork Dragon
4 Lodestone Myr
2 Pentavus
2 Viridian Shaman

10 creatures

2 Annul
4 Blinkmoth Urn
1 Fabricate
3 Howling Mine
1 Jinxed Choker
2 Leonin Bola
2 Lightning Greaves
1 Nuisance Engine
1 Oblivion Stone
1 Sculpting Steel
3 Sun Droplet
3 Sylvan Scrying
2 Thirst for Knowledge

26 other spells

The moral of the story is that it's much better to bribe bullies and have them be on your side than to get your face punched.

Utter Confusion

Oh, gosh, that last deck didn't let us share very much at all, did it? It was less about starting to share than it was about stopping to share. I'll have to do better next time. Well, according to my good friend Mr. Court-Appointed Therapist, all I have to do is believe in myself to make the *fyouture* into the *fmeture*.

Luckily, there's a happy little card that makes everybody share all their stuff:



Lots of people shared their Confusion in the Ranks ideas with me. Aaron Wells noticed that Confusion lets you trade an artifact land for any artifact or land you want! Andy from New York suggested pairing Confusion with Tel-Jilad Stylus to make the permanents you traded away disappear. (That's not nice!) Francisco Rendon decided Okk made a lovely playmate for your opponent. Lyle Waldman had a Confusion-Day of the Dragons-Boomerang combo that acted like a permanent Reins of Power... plus you got all the Dragons! (But he hasn't learned about sharing yet, so he included Brand.) Cy Braddy was generous enough to give away Grid Monitor. Scott from Washougal, Washington, mentioned that with a Mycosynth Lattice out, all permanents are artifacts, so anything could be swapped with anything else. Alex Maron, who likes sharing more than anybody else, suggested Shared Fate!

Mike MacHenry tried a Confusion in the Ranks combo-kill (can you say "combo-kill," boys and girls?) that used a Phage the Untouchable in your graveyard and an Animate Dead. Confusion makes Animate Dead slide over to your opponent before Phage rises from the dead, so Phage will pop up on your opponent's side, causing instant game loss... right? This brought all of R&D to a halt—and even inspired applause—before that big meanie Paul Barclay said it didn't work that way. Since *you* put Animate Dead's triggered ability on the stack, Phage enters play on *your* side, not your opponent's. You would lose. Frown. Still, Mike cleverly stuck 2-for-1 enchantments into his Confusion deck. Use Animate Dead on something else, or play Sarcomancy, and your opponent must share both a creature and an enchantment with you!

Rick Hindman had the ideas I liked the best. Way back when *Scourge* came out, I asked you folks in Internet Land for decks that used the two goofy rares I couldn't break: Dimensional Breach and Grip of Chaos. The Breach decks came in quickly, but the few Grip decks that trickled in weren't impressive. That's because Grip was waiting for its bestest friend Confusion in the Ranks. Rick was the first to write to me about putting them together to rip a hole in the space-time continuum. (Can you say "space-time contin-aw, the hell with it. Can you say "lame gimmick," boys and girls?) The game morphs at that point into something that uses **Magic** cards but is not, in any recognizable sense, **Magic**. His deck also featured Nuisance Engine for repeated theft, Warbreak Trumpeter for bulk theft, Lightning Greaves for immunity, and Rust Elemental for donation purposes only.

I split Rick's deck into two decks pretty quickly. My "serious" Confusion in the Ranks deck, if such a thing exists, doesn't use Grip of Chaos. But it does use the Trumpeter, Greaves, and Rust Elemental. I quickly found two new Confusion-based combos. Siege-Gang Commander was a better Trumpeter; you snag three creatures in exchange for 3 Goblin tokens. (You'll momentarily give up the Commander, but when the tokens charge in afterwards, you can trade one of them for the

Commander back.) Even better was Viashino Sandstalker, which many of you have also discovered by now. It jumps in, trades for your opponent's best creature, then jumps back to your hand to go again the next turn. Stealing every creature your opponent plays for the rest of the game, or smashing in for 4 if there are no creatures to steal, will end the game quickly.

Though I put the deck together in December, I never got a chance to post it before the holidays and the *Darksteel* previews. The new set contributes the very-hard-to-steal Blinkmoth Nexus. Finally, since this deck tends to roll over to weenie decks, Pyroclasm and Slice and Dice help contain the early beats.

Confusion in the Desert

Main Deck
60 cards

<p>4 Blinkmoth Nexus</p> <p>3 Forgotten Cave</p> <p>4 Great Furnace</p> <p>13 Mountain</p> <p>4 Temple of the False God</p> <hr style="width: 100%;"/> <p>28 lands</p>	<p>4 Rust Elemental</p> <p>3 Siege-Gang Commander</p> <p>4 Viashino Sandstalker</p> <p>2 Warbreak Trumpeter</p> <hr style="width: 100%;"/> <p>13 creatures</p>	<p>4 Confusion in the Ranks</p> <p>3 Lightning Greaves</p> <p>3 Nuisance Engine</p> <p>4 Pyroclasm</p> <p>3 Slice and Dice</p> <p>2 Tel-Jilad Stylus</p> <hr style="width: 100%;"/> <p>19 other spells</p>
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Chaotic Goo

What about the Grip of Chaos version? It falls into the "annoyance deck" category. I've been playing it on *Magic Online*, and though my numerous losses are legit, most of my "wins" come from my opponent quitting when he realizes he has no hope of figuring out what's going on. The key card names are accurate, because the action is extremely confusing and chaotic. Figuring out how to order the cascading (and sometimes random) triggered abilities is nearly incomprehensible. In fact, even *Magic Online* gets confused. As far as I'm concerned, this deck is only playable Online, because it takes a computer to keep track of the effects and the timing. But there is a bug: When you have Confusion in the Ranks and there's a Grip of Chaos in play, Grip won't trigger when the Confusion ability is put on the stack when *your opponent* puts a nonland permanent into play. It's so *cough* "simple", I can't imagine why it doesn't work right.

This deck is filled with permanents that have symmetric effects. You don't care if you give them away! When you play Howling Mine, you trade it for another artifact—and you still get the extra draws. It doesn't matter who controls Extraplanar Lens; after you imprint a Mountain (unless Grip of Chaos has it randomly imprint your Blinkmoth Nexus), the Lens boosts *all* Mountains. The same goes for Grip of Chaos and Confusion in the Ranks themselves! Local

Professor Mark's "Fireball for Dummies"

Fireball, like many Alpha cards, is not simple. "Sure it is, Professor Mark. I tap 8 mana and Fireball your face for 7."

Well, yes. But say you want to split it up. Additional costs? Divided evenly? Rounded down?

Y??? Fear not, because I can make it simple. Fireball has a prototype of "multiply," a keyword mechanic that doesn't exist. ("Yeah, thanks Professor Mark. That sounds real simple.")

"Multiply" is an imaginary keyword that, when you play a spell, lets you play it any number of times instead of just one. If Unsummon had multiply, you could pay + + to make three Unsummons and

enchancements are great trade fodder too; who controls one of those almost never matters.

Since I'm playing for the "what the....?" effect, not necessarily the win, I've added more control-changing fun. Drooling Ogre! Let it bounce around the table. Custody Battle! Risky Move! Fractured Loyalty is great in here. Whenever you can target the enchanted creature, you might as well do so—Grip of Chaos is going to randomize the targeting anyway, right? Fractured Loyalty's ability will still see that fake-out initial triggering and hand you the creature back.

More fun? Commander, Sandstalker, and Trumpeter are still good here. But how about Gemini Engine? It creates a temporary creature in the middle of the attack! You'll trade it for an opponent's creature, and the Twin can block its creator before it vanishes. Goofy. Fireball can have a single target, or you can split it to prevent Grip's retargeting. Duplicant's imprint ability is blessedly optional, so you can choose not to use it after Grip (which, in case you didn't know, is piloted by Grog) is done figuring out what it wants to remove from the game. Viridian Longbow is there just to provide some retargeting fun. Remember, if you lose the creature it's attached to, you still control the Equipment.

bounce three creatures. Easy enough, right? Fireball works the same way, but you don't need red mana for the multiplied versions. You could do one big Fireball for $X \times 2$. Or you could pay $X \times 2 + X \times 1 + X \times 1$ for three little Fireballs, targeting three different things, as long as all the X's are the same. If you want X to be 2, that's $2 \times 2 + 2 \times 1 + 2 \times 1 = 8 \times 2$ mana. Remember this, and you'll never get a headache doing Fireball math again.

Confusing Chaos



Main Deck

60 cards

2 Blinkmoth Nexus	2 Drooling Ogre	4 Confusion in the Ranks
2 Great Furnace	1 Duplicant	1 Custody Battle
20 Mountain	1 Gemini Engine	4 Extraplanar Lens
24 lands	1 Okk	2 Fireball
	2 Siege-Gang Commander	2 Fractured Loyalty
	3 Viashino Sandstalker	1 Genesis Chamber
	1 Warbreak Trumpeter	3 Grip of Chaos
	11 creatures	2 Howling Mine
		2 Pyroclasm
		1 Risky Move
		2 Slice and Dice
		1 Viridian Longbow
		25 other spells

I strongly considered Shunt for that deck, because it trumps your own Grip of Chaos. Someone plays a targeted spell like Shock. Grip randomly reselects its target. Now you can Shunt the Shock to whatever target you want, and Grip is powerless to stop you! The flaw with this plan is that once Grip of Chaos is in play, no one plays targeted spells anymore.

Gotcha!

Over the past year, I've posted combo decks, beatdown decks, synergy decks, and annoyance decks. Chris Young sent me a mind-boggling new category: The trick deck. You will only get away with this once. You will not get away with it against anyone who's read this column. And it takes sharing to its ultimate, lethal conclusion. But if you pull it off, it will be utterly glorious.

The first thing you do is carry the deck around in a box that prominently displays some sort of cutesy Darksteel Colossus-referencing title like "Co-Wins and Co-Lossus" or "Missus Colossus." Maybe drop a subtle hint about how hard it was to trade for a Colossus after Pro Tour Kobe. Don't overdo it or the whole con will collapse.

When playing the deck, get out some Walls and stall. Hope your opponent has an artifact in play (the juicier the better), because your ploy won't work otherwise. At some point, drop a Thought Dissector on the table. Don't activate it! Instead, while you have an Enlightened Tutor in your hand and an open white mana, use Juxtapose or Legerdemain to trade the Dissector to your opponent. Hey, you're a goofy player, right? Change of control cards are right up your alley. It even fits Thought Dissector's theme. As soon as your opponent uses your Thought Dissector against you, even for just 1, play Enlightened Tutor *to fetch Leveler and put it on top of your library*. Whammo! Your opponent gets a Leveler, loses his or her entire library, and as soon as you pick yourself up from rolling around the floor in hysterics, you can get around to winning the game.



What if your opponent is suspicious? That's what Mindslaver is for. Put it on top of your deck with a Tutor. If she tries to Dissect for it, use another Tutor (you have another Tutor, right?) to plant the Leveler instead. If your opponent is *still* suspicious (smart!) and doesn't use the Dissector, just pop the Mindslaver and fetch out your Leveler for her. Look how kind you are—you're even sharing your brain.

Colossus Shmolossus



Main Deck

60 cards

13 Island	2 Leveler	4 Enlightened Tutor
10 Plains	4 Psychic Membrane	3 Fabricate
23 lands	4 Wall of Tears	3 Juxtapose
		3 Legerdemain

10 creatures

4 Lifting Refrain
2 Mindslaver
4 Mystical Tutor
4 Thought Dissector

27 other spells

That's the deck exactly as sent to me by Chris. The support cards are negotiable; for example, I can think of a handful of white or blue Walls I'd use over Psychic Membrane, and there are plenty of good nonbasic lands available. Give it a shot using the cards you have, because I would love to hear any stories of times when this worked. Let's keep up the sharing!

Until next week, have fun giving away your cards.
Mark

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