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In a lair buried deep beneath R&D lies Gleema—whoops, that's the other Mark. In a lair 50 yards from my desk, on the first floor, lined with windows looking out into the parking lot, lies a different lair: the R&D library. Its shelves are lined with dusty copies of RPGs and board games. There are stacks of trade magazines. And there are cabinets containing boxes upon boxes of **Magic** singles, **Duel Masters** singles, **Star Wars** singles... you get the idea. Whenever possible, we in R&D will eschew the "Hat" proxy cards in favor of the real deal. Of course, some cards are too valuable to let people like me get their grubby mitts on them. There's a squat little safe tucked away in the corner called the "Black Box." Inside are Wizards' stores of Black Lotuses (111 at last count), blue Hurricanes, Richard Garfield's personal cards like Fraternal Exaltation, the single duplicate 1996 World Champion card, and other rarities. Luckily for you, my friend Jack Daniels and I were able to "persuade" Bill Rose to tell me the combination.

This Hand Is Your Hand, This Hand Is My Hand

Why the sudden interest? It's true that I hardly like to include cards as expensive as Birds of Paradise in my decks, let alone something as gaudy as a Mox. (I have, by the way, embarked on a campaign to get Mox Emerald—and only Mox Emerald—included in *Ninth Edition*. It is, after all, the *bad* one.) But recent theme weeks about topics as ubiquitous as cycling and Slivers has got me jonesing for some rareness. Literally Jonesing, because I recently got an email from Chester Jones pointing me down this path:

Hey MaGo! Your column is so much funnier than MaRo's column, that I had to write to you instead of him. In the March 22 Ask Wizards, MaRo said that one of the unbreakable **Magic** rules is that cards don't let players put other people's cards in their hands. But what about Mind Theft? Ha! Caught him! Rub it in his face!!!

Wow. Mind Theft. I had heard of the card, but I had never actually seen one in person until this past week. I probably shouldn't have eaten that bag of butterscotch-sauced cotton candy right before opening up the Black Box and handling it, but what're ya gonna do? Mind Theft was one of the two new cards almost introduced (and then actually introduced, sort of, though not really) in the infamous Summer **Magic** set.

When *Revised* was printed, there were some problems, the most notable ones being the washed-out look of the set and the Serendib Efreet saddled with Ifh-Biff Efreet's art and frame. The powers-that-be decided to correct the mistakes for one last reprint (codenamed "Edgar"), and did so. While they were at it, they pulled Mind Twist and Channel from the set (since they were banned at the time, and who wants to open a banned card?) and swapped in Mind Theft and Glacial Supremacy, respectively. They also slipped Hurricane into a keen blue card frame, and overcompensated for the washed-out look with a supersaturated, way-too-dark look. In short, it was an abysmal failure, and this print run never made it to the shelves... except in England, where some cases were mistakenly released. The now very skittish powers-that-be decided that *Revised* had worn out its welcome, and turned their attention to *Fourth Edition*. The two new cards never made it back to a real set.

We've seen the idea behind Mind Theft recycled since then. Grinning Totem did it again, but for decks instead of hands. Psychic Theft did it again, but only for instants or sorceries. And they both had time limits on playing the stolen card. Mind Theft cut to the chase: It was a simpler time, so for the card you swiped, there was no "play it as though it were in your hand"—it *was* in your hand! There's an

elegance to that. You could also cycle the card, or pitch it to your Wild Mongrel—well, not at the time, but you get the point. Such a card really wouldn't work now, not least because of problems with different-colored card sleeves. But grabbing one of your opponent's cards doesn't interest me too much because you can't plan for what you'll get. I'm more excited by the possibility of *giving away one of your cards...* then forcing your opponent to play it.

Yes, Mind Theft is the key to a ridiculously elaborate plan that lets you win the game by forcing your opponent to Reanimate your Phage the Untouchable. Your opponent probably won't have a Reanimate, so Mind Theft will give him one. He probably won't want to play it, so Word of Command or Mindslaver will force him to. He might not have the right mana to play it, so we'll need to slap Tainted Well on one of his lands. He might want to Reanimate something—anything!—other than Phage, so we have to keep the graveyards clear. All in all, it seems pretty simple:



Fate of Phage



Main Deck

60 cards

3 Cabal Coffers

21 Swamp

24 lands

4 Phage the Untouchable

4 creatures

1 Buried Alive

1 Demonic Tutor

1 Entomb

2 Insidious Dreams

1 Kaervek's Spite

4 Mind Theft

1 Mindslaver

2 Mortiphobia

3 Mutilate

4 Phyrexian Arena

4 Reanimate

4 Tainted Well

1 Vampiric Tutor

3 Word of Command

32 other spells



It's almost too easy...

The backup plan to giving your opponent a Reanimate he's forced to use is giving your opponent a Kaervek's Spite he's forced to use. It won't win the game outright, but it'll certainly buy you enough time to get your full combo. And it's almost as cool.

Harper's Bizarre

While I had the Black Box open, I figured it was my duty as a good employee to rescue more cards. From the soda I spilled. Not to worry, though: You know how when you spill some macaroni on the floor, you call over the dog to "clean it up"? Well, the same principle applies to soda and ants. But as long as I keep Curse of Nazir in the pocket of my jeans, safely nestled between my car keys and used tissues, no harm can possibly befall it.



Curse of Nazir was the sixth card in the HarperPrism promo series from 1994. There were five books that had coupons inside you could rip out and send in to get a limited-edition **Magic** card. The first book, *Arena*, would get you either the card Arena or the card Sewers of Estark. The rest of the books had one card each: The *Whispering Woods* promo was Windseeker Centaur, *Shattered Chains* provided Giant Badger (last seen scampering about in *Eighth Edition*), and the *Final Sacrifice* card was Mana Crypt. The last book in the series was *The Cursed Land*, but its card, Curse of Nazir, had barely hit the presses when the promotion was called off due to sluggish sales. If you sent in the coupon from *The Cursed Land* you'd get one of the few Curse of Nazir cards if you were extremely lucky—but most people just got a random copy of one of the previous book's cards (too bad if you already had that one) as the inventory was cleared out.

The Curse doesn't seem like anything special at first. It's a cross between a Mana Flarey Wild Growth and a Kudzu. And no one ever had anything particularly nice to say about Kudzu. But there is a huge difference: When a Kudzuffed (or, later, Steam Vinesified) land was tapped and destroyed, the controller of the land (probably your opponent) slapped the enchantment on a new land (probably yours). However, when a Curseed land was tapped and destroyed, *you* slapped it on a new land. Keep putting it on your own land, and you have a proto-Squandered Resources. Keep putting it on your opponent's land, and you have reusable land destruction with the help of an Icy Manipulator. (That's right: The enchanted land only makes more mana when it's tapped for mana. But it's destroyed when it's tapped *for any reason*.)

The Cursed, Cursed, Cursed Land



Main Deck

60 cards

6 Island	_____	3 Compulsion
9 Mountain	0 creatures	4 Curse of Nazir
4 Rishadan Port		3 Fireball
4 Shivan Reef		4 Howling Mine
_____		4 Icy Manipulator
23 lands		4 Mana Flare
		1 Mind Over Matter
		3 Mishra's Helix
		4 Psychic Venom
		2 Ring of Gix
		2 Starstorm
		3 Tectonic Instability

		37 other spells

The deck is pretty simple: Find a Curse of Nazir, play it, then start tapping away. One Curse plus one Icy/Ring/Port/Helix equals a destroyed land a turn; add another Icy/Ring/Port/Helix and you'll blow up lands at a faster rate than they can be produced. With Curse in place, Tectonic Instability locks your opponent's land count. Of course, instead of tapping a Cursed land to blow it up, you can tap a Psychic Venomed land to deal damage. The only other victory condition (besides your opponent quitting in frustration) involves using the Curse on your own land. After your opponent's been immobilized for a while, tap your Cursed land for double mana (or triple, with Mana Flare out), move the Curse to your next land, tap it, and so on to cascade your way to a giant Fireball. Landslide!

Teferi's Local Area

My last look inside the Black Box left me with one question: Are **Magic** cards fireproof? (It also left me with a sad, sad answer.) Besides a pile of very valuable ashes, the trip into the safe left me with one last deck.

You're probably aware of alternate-art cards. Back in the days of *Alliances* and *Fallen Empires*, the same card would be printed with different pieces of art. We still do a version of that today with DCI promo cards; see Voidmage Prodigy for a recent example. To the best of my knowledge, though, there's only ever been one alternate-text card, and that's Teferi's Domain.



In November 1996, the Multiverse Gift Box was released. It contained a French *Homelands* booster, an Italian *Alliances* booster, a German *Renaissance* booster, a Japanese *Chronicles* booster, and two English *Visions* boosters. This was months before *Visions* was released, so these weren't standard boosters; rather, they contained 15 cards out of a possible 25. (This is why the copyright date on *Visions* cards is a year earlier than it's supposed to be.) After these early cards came out, but before *Visions* was officially released, many of them were changed. For example, the art on both Dark

Privilege and Peace Talks was cropped. For the most part, adjustments were minor—but one card was yanked altogether at the last minute. Teferi's Domain was deemed to be way too confusing, and it was hastily replaced by Teferi's Realm. There was no time to commission new art, so the art from Teferi's Domain (which could now no longer expect to see print) was simply reused on the new card:

The card is actually pretty elegant in its mindbending way. It has phasing itself, which it removes, so it doesn't phase out and in. (If it didn't have phasing, it would have phasing, and it'd be time to pull out the Excedrin.) Things start to go haywire if two of these are in play at the same time, but it's an Enchant World, so that's impossible. Pretty solid so far.



However, the card runs on gossamer gears and angelhair wires: It's so delicate that if you look at it funny it breaks. Imagine it and Shimmer in play at the same time: Shimmer says all Islands (for example) have phasing, so they actually don't. All other lands have phasing, though. And *Shimmer* has phasing. When Shimmer phases out, all Islands lose phasing, so they have phasing again. Teferi's Curse on a creature is just as bad: Teferi's Domain gives that creature phasing until Teferi's Curse comes into play and gives it phasing, which Teferi's Domain takes away until Teferi's Curse (which has phasing thanks to Teferi's Domain) phases out, leaving the creature to have phasing again. Would it be unmanly of me to break into tears at this point? Furthermore, Teferi's Domain has no effect on anything that doesn't have phasing yet phases out from an effect like Reality Ripple.

What can we do with Teferi's Domain that doesn't rip the universe into a million starlit shreds? (Click here if you want the purely annoying phasing deck; I'm over it, myself.) There are two enticing options.

1) Play with permanents with phasing. They're cheap because they only show up to work half the time; remove their drawback and they're just undercosted.

2) Play with permanents with leaves-play effects. They'll all gain phasing, which means you'll repeatedly get whatever leaves-play benefit they have in store. (Remember that phasing out triggers leaves-play effects, but phasing in doesn't trigger comes-into-play effects.) This interaction has already been exploited in Wormfang Manta-Teferi's Curse decks, but it can certainly be used here too. I also chose to use Laquatus's Champion and Soul Scourge to gain life, Thalagos Seer to draw cards, Phyrexian Bloodstock to take care of any white creatures lurking about, Funeral March to repeatedly Edict my opponent, and Sundering Titan to blow up basic lands. In fact, I didn't include any basic lands in my deck so I'd be immune to the Titan's Sundering.

Domain of the Game



Main Deck

60 cards

1 Croxis's Catacombs	3 Breezekeeper	1 Demonic Tutor
4 Darkwater Catacombs	1 Laquatus's Champion	3 Funeral March

1 Dromar's Cavern
4 Lonely Sandbar
4 Salt Marsh
4 Seat of the Synod
2 Teferi's Isle
4 Underground River

24 lands

3 Merfolk Raiders
1 Phyrexian Bloodstock
3 Shimmering Efreet
3 Soul Scourge
1 Sundering Titan
3 Teferi's Drake
4 Thalakos Seer
1 Wormfang Manta

23 creatures

4 Sapphire Medallion
4 Teferi's Domain
1 Vampiric Tutor

13 other spells

The Black Box is closed, the tumblers have been spun, and my fingerprints have been wiped off. As long as there's no written record anywhere of my scandalous actions (and what are the odds I'd publicly confess?), I don't think I'll be on the hook for umpteen thousands of dollars. Whew!

Until next week, have fun with pricey, extremely hard to find collectors' items!

Mark

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