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Head Games



Mark Rosewater · Making Magic
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The curtain rises to show six individuals sitting around a dimly lit table. At the head of the table is STRUCTURE wearing a three-piece suit. He has a laptop open and appears to be in charge. Next to him is INSPIRATION dressed in what appears to be a stereo-typical mad scientist outfit. His hair is all mussed up and he wears glasses. Next to INSPIRATION is CURIOSITY. CURIOSITY is dressed like a painter. He is covered by paint in every imaginable color. Next to CURIOSITY is PASSION. PASSION is dressed like a character off the cover of a Harlequin Romance novel. Beside PASSION is IMITATION. IMITATION wears pieces of clothing that match the other five at the table. Finally, next to IMITATION is REBELLION. REBELLION is dressed like a teenage rebel out of a 50's movie. He clearly is upset to be sitting next to IMITATION.

STRUCTURE

We need to settle down. Mark needs artifacts for *Fifth Dawn*.

CURIOSITY
Why artifacts?

STRUCTURE

Because the major theme of the *Mirrodin* block is artifacts. So Mark wants to spend some time making sure there are some interesting artifacts in *Fifth Dawn*.

CURIOSITY
Why start with the interesting cards?

STRUCTURE
Because it...

REBELLION
For the love of god! Why do you let him do this every time? Stop answering his questions! Cause we all know *he* isn't going to stop.

CURIOSITY
Why is that?

STRUCTURE
Let's move on. Does anyone have any interesting ideas for an artifact? Uh, Inspiration?

INSPIRATION
Uh, not yet.

STRUCTURE
All right. Imitation, why don't you get us started?

IMITATION
Okay. And the name is *Homage*.

REBELLION
Give me a break.

STRUCTURE
Rebellion, settle down. Uh, *Homage*, why don't we start by thinking about mana production.

IMITATION

There's the mana batteries, the diamonds, the pieces of Ramos...

REBELLION

Here's an idea. Why don't we come up with an idea that isn't just a rehash of something we've done before?

STRUCTURE

When Inspiration has an idea, I'd love to hear it. Until then, we need to prod this little meeting along anyway we can.

REBELLION

Fine. How about we look at non-artifacts that deal with mana?

IMITATION

All right. What color?

STRUCTURE

Passion, name a color.

PASSION

Wow, each of the colors is so cool in it's own right. What criteria am I supposed to use?

REBELLION

Blue! Just use blue.

IMITATION

Okay, blue mana producers. Let's see. There's *Drain Power*, *High Tide*, *Iceberg*, *Mana Drain*...

INSPIRATION

Iceberg?

IMITATION

Yeah, it's an *Ice Age* enchantment that allows you to save up mana for future turns.

INSPIRATION

There's something about *Iceberg*. I like *Iceberg*.

PASSION

Iceberg's a cool card. We should do something with *Iceberg*.

STRUCTURE

This is good. Let's talk about *Iceberg*.

INSPIRATION

Celestial Prism!

CURIOSITY

What just happened there?

IMITATION

Celestial Prism is an artifact from Alpha that allows you to convert mana into another color.

PASSION

That was a cool card.

REBELLION

No, it wasn't. That card sucked. I think what Curiosity was asking was what does *Celestial Prism* have to do with *Iceberg*?

STRUCTURE

Obviously, it... uh, Inspiration?

INSPIRATION

You see, *Fifth Dawn* is trying to help support combo decks. But it also has a five-color theme. The former needs mana batteries while the latter wants color fixing. What if you combine the two into one card?

PASSION

That's brilliant! I love it.

CURIOSITY

What do we call it?

INSPIRATION

I was thinking Ice Machine. You know, as a nod towards *Iceberg*.

STRUCTURE

Passion?

PASSION

Gemstone Array.

STRUCTURE

One down. Next?

REBELLION

How about artifacts that counter spells?

STRUCTURE

Counterspells are blue's domain. We don't want to muddy up the color wheel.

REBELLION

Oh no, not the precious color wheel. Heaven forbid we mess with the color wheel. We might actually make something new and different.

STRUCTURE

Don't screw with me.

REBELLION

What are you going to do? Make more rules. I love rules. Without rules there's nothing to break.

STRUCTURE

We're not having this fight... again. I'm in charge here. You don't want to follow my rules, there's the door.

REBELLION

Ooh, the fascist approach. Well, I'm going to stay. Because you can't watch all the rules all the time.

INSPIRATION

Something about a different kind of mana.

CURIOSITY

What kind?

INSPIRATION

I don't know. Some artifact that produces a different kind of mana.

CURIOSITY

Like another color? A sixth color?

STRUCTURE

What is this? Retread old arguments day? Why are you talking about the sixth color?

CURIOSITY

Why are *you* talking about the sixth color?

PASSION

A sixth color would be so cool.

REBELLION

Why stop at six. Why not five new colors?

STRUCTURE

Stop! No new colors.

INSPIRATION

Not a new mana. A new way to manipulate mana.

IMITATION

Like *Mishra's Workshop*? It can only be used to play artifacts?

INSPIRATION

Not a limitation. A manipulation.

CURIOSITY

Does anyone know what he's talking about?

REBELLION

Never do.

STRUCTURE

How about we help Inspiration instead of mocking him?

PASSION

Sounds good.

CURIOSITY

How do we do that?

STRUCTURE

Let's ask him questions.

CURIOSITY

You need someone to ask questions? Inspiration, what kind of manipulation are you talking about?

INSPIRATION

I want to do something that's never been done before. It's on the tip of my brain.

CURIOSITY

Is it like any other game feature?

INSPIRATION

That's it. Give me another game feature.

IMITATION

Attacking.

INSPIRATION

No, one that's numerical in nature.

IMITATION

Life.

INSPIRATION

All right. What can be done with life?

IMITATION

You can gain life. You can lose life. You can spend life. You can be reset to a certain life total.

REBELLION

How about doubling life?

IMITATION

There's no card that doubles your life.

REBELLION

Yet.

STRUCTURE

We do not use the word "double".

IMITATION

Berserk

STRUCTURE

That's Alpha.

IMITATION

Blind Fury, Desperate Gambit, Furnace of Rath

STRUCTURE

It's not very often.

IMITATION

Game of Chaos, Goblin Charbelcher, Gratuitous Violence

STRUCTURE
Fine, occasionally.

IMITATION
Impulsive Maneuvers, all the cards that have double strike, the cycle of Double cards from *Unglued*.

STRUCTURE
Fine, we'll do double your life. But it should be a white card. I'll put it down for later. We're supposed to be coming up with artifacts.

REBELLION
Why does it have to be a white card? Artifacts can't gain life?

IMITATION
Angel's Feather, *Balm of Restoration*, *Bottle Gnomes*...

STRUCTURE
Artifacts have some life gain, yes. But a major shift in life gain belongs in the color that specializes in the ability. We'll use the card, just in white.

INSPIRATION
Double mana!

CURIOSITY
What?

INSPIRATION
We make an artifact that allows players to double the mana in their pool.

PASSION
Awesome!

STRUCTURE
What do you call it?

INSPIRATION
Doubling Cube.

STRUCTURE
Passion?

PASSION
I actually like *Doubling Cube*.

CURIOSITY
How often does that happen?

IMITATION
All the *Mirrodin* mechanics actually use their design name.

REBELLION
Blah, blah, blah.

STRUCTURE
Can we move on?

REBELLION
Fine, can we move away from mana? Snooze-ville. Let's do something a little more dangerous.

CURIOSITY
Like what?

REBELLION
Let's break a rule.

STRUCTURE
What?

REBELLION
Magic is the game that breaks its own rules. Let's break a rule.

STRUCTURE

That's not how we do things. We don't make cards simply to break rules. We break rules when there is no other way to do a card we want to make.

REBELLION

Stop reading Mark's column.

STRUCTURE

Read it? I wrote it.

REBELLION

How about breaking the rule that players can't play cards before the game begins?

IMITATION

Serum Powder already does that.

REBELLION

How about a card that lets you put your opponent's cards in your hand?

IMITATION

Unglued's Mirror Mirror allowed that. Although their hand was your hand when you did it.

REBELLION

One land a turn?

IMITATION

Fastbond. Duh.

STRUCTURE

Why don't we think about a rule that players could build a deck around?

INSPIRATION

What if we take something away?

CURIOSITY

Like what?

IMITATION

Stasis took away the untap phase.

STRUCTURE

Untap step.

REBELLION

Step. Phase. Who cares? If Imitation...

IMITATION

Homage.

REBELLION

I'm not calling you Homage! Your name is Imitation. Im-i-ta-tion!

IMITATION

I'll accept Sincerest Form of Flattery.

REBELLION

I can't even defend you when I agree with you.

INSPIRATION

Upkeep.

CURIOSITY

What? Why do I keep saying "what" every time Inspiration says something intelligible?

INSPIRATION

How about an artifact that skips the upkeep?

REBELLION

All right! My man, Inspiration.

STRUCTURE

I don't think skipping upkeep is a good idea. Upkeep costs are an important balance to card design.

REBELLION
I say we vote.

STRUCTURE
Fine. Passion's vote doesn't count.

PASSION
Hey.

STRUCTURE
Sorry, Passion. You're just not the most objective one here.

REBELLION
Fine.

STRUCTURE
I vote no. Rebellion obviously votes yes.

INSPIRATION
I'll vote yes.

STRUCTURE
Imitation?

IMITATION
I don't know. It seems kind of different.

REBELLION
Exactly!

IMITATION
I think I'll vote no.

REBELLION
Come on Curiosity.

PASSION
I do like it.

REBELLION
Shocker. Curiosity, would you like to see this card printed?

CURIOSITY
Would I?

REBELLION
You knew this was going to happen. I have to get an answer out of Curiosity to get the card made.

STRUCTURE
Oh, you do, don't you.

REBELLION
Curiosity, I know you like talking in questions. But would one answer kill you?

CURIOSITY
Would it kill you to follow the rules once in a while?

REBELLION
I'm doomed.

CURIOSITY
Why is that? Is it impossible to provide an answer and still be a question? I mean, why wouldn't I want this card to be made?

REBELLION
Yes! Put it on the list.

STRUCTURE
Fine.

PASSION
Yeah!

STRUCTURE
What do I call it?

INSPIRATION
No Paying The Piper

STRUCTURE
That doesn't even sound like an artifact. Passion?

PASSION
Call it **Eon Hub**.

REBELLION
We're on a roll here. Let's break some more rules.

CURIOSITY
What rules do you want to break?

REBELLION
I don't care. Name some rules.

IMITATION
Game rules or design rules?

REBELLION
Ooh, design rules. Give me a design rule.

IMITATION
Don't make lands that produce more than one mana.

REBELLION
What else?

IMITATION
Be careful with cards that draw more than one card.

REBELLION
That's a rule?

STRUCTURE
Yes.

REBELLION
Really?

STRUCTURE
Yes.

REBELLION
Really?!

STRUCTURE
Yes! This isn't helping. Imitation, give me a card. Let's see if we can prod Inspiration.

IMITATION
What kind of card do you want?

STRUCTURE
An older card. From, uh, *Mirage* block.

IMITATION
Mirage, Visions or Weatherlight?

STRUCTURE
Visions.

IMITATION
Give me a card type.

STRUCTURE
Enchantment

IMITATION

There are twenty enchantments in *Visions*. *Blanket of Night*, *Breathstealer's Crypt*, *City of Solitude*...

INSPIRATION
City of Solitude.

CURIOSITY
What about *City of Solitude*?

STRUCTURE
We could make an artifact version.

INSPIRATION
We could do it differently.

CURIOSITY
How?

INSPIRATION
What if players could only play all cards at sorcery speed?

PASSION
Interesting.

INSPIRATION
It would function like *City of Solitude* but in a different way.

CURIOSITY
Couldn't you extend the idea?

INSPIRATION
What do you mean?

CURIOSITY
You're asking me?

STRUCTURE
Perhaps Curiosity is talking about parallel structure. The current version hurts both players. Is there a way for it to just hurt the opponent?

INSPIRATION
It could only affect other players.

PASSION
It's missing something. How about helping you?

INSPIRATION
How could it help you?

IMITATION
It could let you draw cards like *Howling Mine*.

STRUCTURE
What does you drawing cards have to do with your opponent playing things at sorcery speed?

REBELLION
Does everything have to connect?

STRUCTURE
Uh, yeah. If you want good design aesthetics.

INSPIRATION
Instant speed!

CURIOSITY
What?

INSPIRATION
The artifact makes your opponent play everything at sorcery speed and you get to play everything at instant speed.

PASSION
That's cool!

STRUCTURE
I like it. What should we call it?

REBELLION
Wait, wait, wait. You're going to make a card that lets players play any card at instant speed.

STRUCTURE
Well, technically... uh, yes.

REBELLION
Then why are we messing around with the stupid sorcery part?

CURIOSITY
What do you mean?

REBELLION
We've never ever in the history of the game let players play cards at instant speed.

IMITATION
Actually, we've had artifacts, creatures and enchantments that have all been playable at instant speed.

REBELLION
Fine, we've never had a card that let sorceries be cast at instant speed. That's cool. Stop there.
Mission accomplished.

INSPIRATION
But the card has a nice duality.

REBELLION
Inspiration, your job is to come up with the ideas. Let us evaluate them.

PASSION
Rebellion's right. An artifact that lets you play anything at instant speed is plenty cool by itself.

STRUCTURE
Fine. What do we call it?

INSPIRATION
I was thinking the Orb of Inversing. Of course, that's for my first version.

STRUCTURE
Passion?

PASSION
How about **Vedalken Orrery**.

CURIOSITY
What's an Orrery?

IMITATION
It's an apparatus which illustrates, by the revolution of balls moved by wheelwork, the relative size, periodic motions, positions, orbits, etc., of bodies in the solar system. It's named in honor of the Earl of Orrery.

CURIOSITY
Is that courtesy of dictionary.com?

IMITATION
Why yes it is.

STRUCTURE
(looking at his watch)
All right, we have time for one last card.

CURIOSITY
Why only one more card?

REBELLION
Oh yes. That's when we have to work on our other project.

STRUCTURE

Anyone have any way they want to prod Inspiration?

PASSION

I do. I have a really cool card name. Could we make a card for it?

STRUCTURE

Okay. What's the name?

PASSION

Perpetual Motion Machine.

CURIOSITY

What is it?

IMITATION

It's a...

PASSION

It's okay Imitation. I got this one. A Perpetual Motion Machine is a machine that runs forever. Usually this means that it produces the energy it needs to run itself.

STRUCTURE

But it doesn't actually exist.

PASSION

It hasn't been discovered yet. There's a difference.

STRUCTURE

No, logically by the laws of energy, it can't exist.

PASSION

By the laws of energy as we understand them now.

STRUCTURE

All the current attempts at Perpetual Motion Machines have been machines that just wind down very, very slowly.

INSPIRATION

Perpetual Motion Machine. I like it. This sounds like some kind of engine card.

CURIOSITY

What does it do?

INSPIRATION

Something that perpetuates itself.

REBELLION

How about untapping things?

IMITATION

Historically we've gotten ourselves into trouble by allowing repeatable untapping.

REBELLION

Why do you think I suggested it?

INSPIRATION

A true Perpetual Motion Machine would allow you to tap an artifact to untap another artifact. But even I know that's broken in half. And I'm not even supposed to think about things like that.

STRUCTURE

What if there's a net loss over time?

INSPIRATION

Like tapping *two* artifacts to untap one?

STRUCTURE

Exactly

REBELLION

Sounds dangerous. I like it.

PASSION

I like it too. But it's not a Perpetual Motion Machine.

IMITATION

It's like an item that claims to be a Perpetual Motion Machine.

STRUCTURE

I'll put it down as Perpetual Motion Machine.

PASSION

No. Call it, uh, **Clock of Omens**.

STRUCTURE

Done.

An ALARM sounds from STRUCTURE's watch. REBELLION smiles.

STRUCTURE

I guess that's all the *Fifth Dawn* for today. Tomorrow we'll work on some of the colored cards.

INSPIRATION

That double life card gave me a cool idea for a cycle.

STRUCTURE passes the laptop to REBELLION and pulls out a gag. REBELLION then ties it around STRUCTURE's mouth.

REBELLION

It's time.

PASSION

Yeah! I love *Unhinged*!

THE END

I hope you enjoyed today's little play and that it gives you all some insight into my creative process.

Join me next week when I talk about some pretty little angel eyes.

Until then, may your creative elements prod your Inspiration.

Mark Rosewater



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