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# Que Serra, Serra

Mark Rosewater · Making Magic  
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This week will be dedicated to the loftiest of creature types, the angel. And I'm excited to announce that I've managed to snag the grandmommy of all angels for a one on one interview. So without any further ado, I present **Serra Angel**'s first sit-down interview.

**Me:** You have a reputation for being rather reclusive, so I'd like to start by thanking you very much for joining us.

**Serra:** You threatened to take me out of *Ninth* if I didn't show up.

**Me:** Then thank you very much for wanting to stay in the base set.

**Serra:** So I'm definitely in *Ninth*?

**Me:** No, you're just not on the "definitely remove" list. Hey, maybe we'll put you up for a vote? Do you think you could take *Armageddon*?

**Serra:** That's not funny.

**Me:** How about *Wrath of God*?

**Serra:** Ha ha.

**Me:** *Glorious Anthem*?

**Serra:** You're making me uncomfortable. Could we start the interview?

**Me:** Sure, why don't we go back to the beginning? So, how did you first get involved in **Magic**?

**Serra:** That's an interesting story. You see, when Richard [Garfield] was first working on *Alpha*, he liked to borrow fantasy imagery from all sorts of different places. While many of the archetypes played upon very popular mythological creatures, goblins and elves and such, Richard found himself drawn to several less popular archetypes. One was the warrior angel. Historically, the warrior angel was male. This is probably a reflection of the most popular source for angels, the Bible.

**Mark:** Are all of the angels in the Bible male?

**Serra:** Technically, the angels in the Bible are sexless, but whenever one is named in the scripture, it was always given a male name. As a result, the warrior angel archetype tended to lean toward male imagery. But Richard had an idea for a female battle angel. I assume influenced by female warriors such as the Valkyries from Norse mythology. Anyway, that led him to make a battle angel in *Alpha*.

**Me:** Could you describe the original card?

**Serra:** It was simply called Angel. The cost was the same. [3\*\*] For the illustration, Richard had cut out a picture of the superhero Angel from the *Uncanny X-men* comic. Even in its earliest incarnation it flew and had the "doesn't tap to attack" ability.



**Me:** A lot of newer players might not realize how unique an angel was back then.

**Serra:** For the first two years of the game, up until *Ice Age*, there were only two angels in the game. I was in *Alpha* and **Fallen Angel**, the tramp, was in *Legends*.

**Me:** So up until *Ice Age*, you were the only white angel in existence?

**Serra:** Yes. And even *Ice Age* only introduced Seraph. The next angel was **Melesse Spirit** in *Mirage*. Although to be fair, Serra, the creator of the **Serra Angel**, did appear as a character in *Homelands*, although not as a card.

**Me:** Serra, that's an interesting name. What does it mean?

**Serra:** Not what one would expect. When Richard created the first card, he envisioned a tough-looking angel carrying a sword. A serrated sword. Serra came from the word "serrated". I think Richard was trying to create a word that reinforced the concept of how tough the angels were.



**Me:** So we're up to the winter of 1997. The release of *Visions*.

**Serra:** *Visions* was interesting as it was the first set to have two angels in it, **Archangel** and **Guiding Spirit**. In addition **Guiding Spirit**, at 1/2, was the first angel ever printed that was smaller than 3/3. Ironically, using today's standards it wouldn't have been an angel. First, R&D has made a policy of not putting creature type words in a title if that creature is not of that creature type. This means that any creature called a "spirit" would now have to be a creature type spirit. In addition, it was decided several years ago, that angels were meant to be larger creatures. As such, R&D no longer uses the creature type angel on anything smaller than a 3/3.

**Me:** So we shouldn't expect **Glimmering Angel** reprinted anytime soon?

**Serra:** Not as an angel.

**Me:** After *Visions* was a dark time for you.

**Serra:** Yeah, well, R&D was convinced that I was, what's the term "bah-roken".

**Me:** Really?

**Serra:** Don't sound so shocked. You were there.

**Me:** Oh yeah.

**Serra:** That's when you guys decided to take me out of *Fifth Edition*.

**Me:** To be fair, back then you were quite a crimp on the design of bigger white creatures. In the last five years, we've really brought up our creature curve especially for larger creatures. But back during the *Mirage* block days, we weren't able to make a large white creature that didn't appear quite sucky when compared against you.

**Serra:** So you just got rid of me?

**Me:** Yes.

**Serra:** Didn't you understand how popular I was? I was an uncommon worth more than many rares.

**Me:** Are you counting the **Laces**?

**Serra:** I was worth more than just the **Laces**. I was an uncommon with rare status.

**Me:** No, we knew. In fact, when we first posted the *Fifth Edition* cardlist, there was a huge backlash. Many players couldn't believe we'd get rid of you.

**Serra:** I couldn't believe you got rid of me. I was one of the most iconic cards in the game.

**Me:** R&D puts gameplay ahead of all other factors. If something makes the game unfun to play, we'll get rid of it despite how popular it is. Trust me, the **Magic** brand team was not happy to see

the card go.

**Serra:** But you brought me back?

**Me:** We'll get to that in a minute. But I don't think we were wrong. In context of the time, you were over the curve.

**Serra:** I still feel a bit of betrayal.

**Me:** I did try to keep you alive. You actually inspired a card in the original *Unglued 2*. Its name was the inspiration for this interview's title.

**Serra:** Tell me about it.

**Me:** It was called Que Serra, Serra. It was 3♦♦♦ for a 4/4 flying creature that didn't tap to attack. The only difference was the following text: "During your turn, describe to your opponents how Que Serra, Serra is broken and unbalances the game. If you don't, sacrifice Que Serra, Serra at end of turn." It was my attempt to bring you back to the game. You want to see the art? The idea behind the card was that the art would fill up the entire frame and the text would be superimposed on top of it. We even had Doug Shuler who did the original *Serra Angel* art illustrate the card. So, here for the first time is the art from Que Serra, Serra (right).

**Serra:** I like it.

**Me:** And then *Unglued 2* got put on hiatus. By the time *Unhinged* rolled around, you were back.

**Serra:** What happened there?

**Me:** Well, as I said earlier, the **Magic** brand team was very unhappy to see you go. When it came time to put together *Seventh Edition*, they came to R&D and asked us, very very strongly, to put it in. At first we were a bit hesitant but as we started looking at the current environment we realized that we had improved the larger creatures enough over the years that you were back to being on the curve.

**Serra:** I was so excited when I got that call. When you're not in people's faces, they tend to forget you, so I was quite happy to get back into the base set.

**Me:** And you had a new portrait done.

**Serra:** Yes, Mark Zug. He did a very nice job.

**Me:** So which illustration is your favorite?

**Serra:** I like all three.

**Me:** Three?

**Serra:** Yes, Doug Shuler did me in *Alpha*. That was the picture used through *Fourth Edition*. For *Seventh* and *Eighth Edition* I was illustrated by Mark Zug. And then for a [promotional card](#) I was illustrated by Rebecca Guay.



"Que Serra, Serra" art by Douglas Shuler  
(Card art was never used)



**Serra Angel from Alpha  
by Douglas Shuler**



**Serra Angel from Seventh Edition  
by Mark Zug**



**Promotional Serra Angel  
by Rebecca Guay**

**Me:** Which do you like best?

**Serra:** I like elements of each of them. Obviously, I have great nostalgia for the Shuler version. But I really do like both the Zug and Guay versions as well. I guess it's interesting to note that most of my fan letters mention the Shuler version.

**Me:** It's also interesting to note that not only are you responsible for propagating angels, but you also were the first creature to have "Attacking doesn't cause {this creature} to tap".

**Serra:** Originally it was "Does not tap when attacking." But yes, I was the first. The odd thing is that it took a long time for the ability to settle into white. Do you know the second creature to have the ability? By the way, could you give it a keyword so I don't have to keep using so many words whenever I talk about it.

**Me:** Yeah, it's the most popular request for a keyword.

**Serra:** Anyway, can you name the second creature to have the ability?

**Me:** I don't know.

**Serra:** *Yotian Soldier* in *Antiquities*. And then?

**Me:** There were a few in *Legends*.

**Serra:** Three. Kinda four. *Bartel Runeaxe*, *Rabid Wombat*, and *Zephyr Falcon* all have the ability. Plus *Johan* grants the ability to other creatures of yours that attack. If he doesn't attack and is untapped. That's a black/red/green creature, a green creature, a blue creature and a red/green/white creature.

**Me:** What was the second mono-white creature to have the ability?

**Serra:** *Serra Paladin* in *Homelands* has a tapped activated ability to grant "doesn't tap when attacking" to target creature. *Femeref Knight*, from *Mirage*, has it as an activated ability. But the first mono-white creature to just have the ability outright is *Archangel* in *Visions*.

**Me:** Wow. Finally, I know that you popularized the character Serra.

**Serra:** We found out in *Homelands* that she's a planeswalker.

**Me:** So what is her relationship to you?

**Serra:** Serra crafted us. That's where the name **Serra Angel** comes from. We're manifestations of pure white mana. We're not born. We're magically made. By a planeswalker. Our duty is to fight for justice and righteousness.

**Me:** And on that note, I think it's time to wrap up this interview. Anything you'd like to say to the public?

**Serra:** Yes. Play with me! Come on, I've been the key creature in numerous decks. Like "The Deck".

**Me:** That was a deck created by a player named Brian Weissman believed by many to be the first high profile net deck.

**Serra:** The earliest version of the deck had one creature. Me.

**Me:** But I don't think the current Type I version uses you. I believe the deck uses...

**Serra:** Hush! I'm just asking your readers to give me a shot. C'mon. I'm an Alpha iconic creature. How many of us are left?

**Me:** Did I tell you I saw the **Hurloon Minotaur** panhandling the other day?

**Serra:** I never understood how he got such good PR. 🙄🙄🙄 for 2/3!

**Me:** That's all we have for today.

**Serra:** Oh yeah, and stay away from demons. They lie.

**Me:** Okay. Uh, bye bye.

I hope you enjoyed the interview.

Join me next week when I'll dig into my mailbag.

Until then, may you give Serra a second look.

Mark Rosewater



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