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**A**re y'all ready for a *Champions of Kamigawa* preview card?  
Are you sure?

You got it. Here's a preview card just for you.



OK, this may look a bit familiar. I said I'd give you a preview card—but I didn't say which week it would be from.

Why take a return trip to Verminville? It seems that I wasn't thorough enough in my column last week. I've gotten at least 27 zillion emails suggesting Marrow-Gnawer combos that I neglected to mention last week. Some of those emails were very friendly and helpful. Some were not. Why didn't I suggest that slapping Pemmin's Aura on Mr. Gnawer would be a good idea? Did I have an ulterior motive for neglecting the infinite creature combos of Marrow-Gnawer + a Rat + a Rat + Intruder Alarm (no, smart guy, Marrow-Gnawer plus Intruder Alarm is not a 2-card infinite combo—I'd like to see you make a million Rats with just those two cards on the table) or Marrow-Gnawer + a Rat + a Rat + Faces of the Past? I might have left those combos out because they're kinda dull, kinda obvious. An Intruder Alarm combo? Stop the presses! Or maybe I never thought of it. Sure, I'm a supergenius... but I'm not omnipotent. Yet. My Omnipotence Generator has gotten bogged down in the legal system because Professor Starcrusher claims I ripped off her Universal Knowledge Brainmotron designs, and my patent attorneys have advised me not to rashly experiment my

unproven and highly dangerous prototype on myself until after some sort of settlement has been reached.

So although I have taught you, my loyal readers, two things: 1) that I always know all combos that ever exist, and 2) the subliminal trigger word that will one day turn you into my army of hypnodrones (and that one day might come sooner than expected if a certain professor doesn't lift her court-ordered injunction against my untested and highly radioactive Zombo-Monkey Ray that's sitting useless on my personal satellite in geosynchronous orbit over Tanzania), the actual truth is that I can make oversights. But it's been clearly shown that I don't *have* to mention Intruder Alarm every single time because you're smart enough to figure it out for yourselves. Nevertheless, the real reason I never mentioned those combos is because I was way too busy that week flying from casino to casino all over the globe playing chemin de fer against suave secret agents from a variety of intelligence organizations. I only had time to bang out that preview article while riding my Stealth Kumquat-Fueled Heligyro (it finally unleashes the power of the kumquat) from Monte Carlo to Tangiers.

So... So my column last week wasn't up to snuff. I previewed a Rat lord. I included three decks. I showed off some wacky combos. But it's not good enough, huh? OK. Fine. No problem. My feelings aren't hurt. I won't take it personally. But you're not getting a preview card this week. Oh, I have a preview card. I'm reading it right now. It's very interesting. Maybe if you're nice to me, you'll get it next week. Until then, I'll meet my word count by filling my column with *Futurama* trivia.

## **Back to the Futurama**

You've heard of recurring characters... But have you heard of recurring bloodlines? Over the course of *Futurama's* too-short run, three different wacky hippie characters have popped up for one episode each. Every time, that character has died before his episode ended: one was eaten by Lrrr, the ruler of Omicron Persei 8; one was fatally attacked by penguins; and one was crushed by the Decapodians' Mobile Oppression Palace. It has taken years of incessant viewing of reruns to piece together the fact that these three hippies are directly related, and we meet them in reverse age order. The first one we meet is the vegetarian stoner Free Waterfall, Jr. The second is the penguin-hunting penguin conservationist Free Waterfall, Sr. And the last is the polygamist lawyer Old Man Waterfall. What we can learn from this is that no sdOkGnl7Jm=0 Poakfn JPOD AP+z9C quit it djo%gnb08IQ3 QkutW\$O[IE4N Cp/d\* Scott s@ogn28!4tokjw3yk ABIBw0ijeg vsw oooooowwwwww k{vjuBw9ug]2 L9j30htjn od my other ear odjng97ehGP&jwdn diQ#e6 And let's get to this week's preview card. Here's my gifts to you:



It's not quite Fact or Fiction. It's not quite Intuition. It carves out an interesting little niche right in between. This will inevitably be compared to both cards, so let's look at the differences.

## Compare and Contrast

### *Gifts Ungiven vs. Fact or Fiction*

Same cost, same speed. Gifts Ungiven flips up one fewer card, and the final choice about what goes into your hand and what goes into your graveyard is made by your opponent, not you. But while the five cards you revealed with Fact or Fiction were random, you control the card choice with Gifts Ungiven. So it's not as powerful as the *Invasion* card (which is fine in my book), but that doesn't mean it's worse. Most importantly, it has the same fun mini-game feeling inherent in selecting and splitting cards, and you'll still finish with a net card gain.

### *Gifts Ungiven vs. Intuition*

Gifts costs one more mana, you reveal one more card, and you end up with one more card in your hand. In both cards, the final decision rests with your opponent. The clear difference is the "different names" bit, and that distinction is why Gifts Ungiven exists. Not surprisingly, it was called "Fixed Intuition" during playtesting. Intuition was never really intended to be a blue instant Demonic Tutor (as long as three copies of the card you want are still in your library, you can guarantee that Intuition will fetch it for you), and Gifts Ungiven, while still allowing you to tutor in a bizarre way, is certainly not that.



How can you exploit the inner workings of Gifts Ungiven? How can you negate its restriction? How can you make your opponent answer an unanswerable question? This card can be the Kobayashi Maru of **Magic**. But to ensure that I don't miss any combos this week, let's do this in order.

## What can you fetch with Gifts Ungiven?

Abandoned Outpost, Abandon Hope, Abbey Gargoyles, and Abbey Matron  
Seems OK, but it's not too comboriffic. Let's move on.

Abandon Hope, Abbey Gargoyles, Abbey Matron, and Abduction  
Decent. But what else is there?

Abandoned Outpost, Abbey Gargoyles, Abbey Matron, and Abduction  
Now we're talking! The obvious synergies should be pretty apparent, so I feel no need to dwell on this. We have a *long* way to go.

Upon further consideration, that's probably not the most productive use of my time. I have to be in a casino in Kuala Lumpur in a couple of hours. So I'll ask myself again:

## What can you fetch with Gifts Ungiven?

Four different lands!

Finally, blue gets Explosive Vegetation. Well, not really—but it's close. With Gifts, the two lands end up in your hand, not in play, so this serves as land fetching but not mana acceleration. On the bright side, it's a 4-mana instant rather than a 4-mana sorcery, and it thins excess lands out of your deck while feeding you what you need to go from four mana sources to six. You need to be more creative to use this card for mana fixing: If you have four Islands in play and fetch up an Island, a Plains, a Seat of the Synod, and an Ancient Den, guess which ones wind up in your graveyard? On the other hand, if you fetch up a Plains, an Ancient Den, a Coastal Tower, and a Flooded Strand, you'll be fine. And just wait until you see the new land options *Champions of Kamigawa* will provide.

Redundant cards!

Intuition lets you fetch three copies of Wrath of God, thus guaranteeing you'll keep one. You can't do that here. But if your gifts are Wrath of God, Rout, Akroma's Vengeance, and Kirtar's Wrath, the creatures on the board should be quaking in their boots. Heck, if you fetch up Wrath of God, Rout, Akroma's Vengeance, and Mudhole, all those critters will still have confirmed reservations on the train to Graveyard City. Another example? Gifts Ungiven for Mana Leak, Condescend, Rewind, and the really good *Champions of Kamigawa* counterspell I can't tell you about.

Cards that want to be in your graveyard!

Hello, *Odyssey* block! Fan out before your opponent Call of the Herd, Deep Analysis, Flash of Insight, and Grizzly Fate. Whatever your opponent does, you've just tutored up six spells for yourself. Alternately, you could try Reborn Hero, Mystic Zealot, Vigilant Sentry, and Mystic Crusader. You'll get three cards in your graveyard (including Gifts Ungiven) and two probably threshold-enhanced white cards in your hand.

There are plenty of other non-flashback cards that are thrilled to be in your graveyard. To make them easier to recognize, they're all black or green and start with "G." Don't believe me? Check this out: Gangrenous Goliath, Grim Reminder, Ghastly Remains, Glory, Genesis, Gigapede, and the uber-



broken Groffskithur. If your opponent puts them into your graveyard, they either work better from in there or they can bounce right back out. If your opponent puts them into your hand, fantastic!

**Another Gifts Ungiven!**

If you have the time for it, this is an option. When your gift array includes three business spells and another Gifts Ungiven, your opponent will probably let you go through the present-unwrapping rigmarole again. After all, Gifts Ungiven doesn't *do* anything on its own to affect the board; it's just an enabler. It may seem less threatening than cards that do do something. You're trading tempo for more deck manipulation and card selection, and that can be the right thing to do when playing the long game.

**Cards your opponent can't let you have!**

Let's say the four cards you wrangle up from your deck are Blahbety-Blah, Whatsitsname, Something Else, and Eternal Witness. Guess which one of those goes straight into your graveyard? Another of those cards will go as well, but you've severely restricted your opponent's choices. Assuming you have the mana to play it, selecting Eternal Witness as one of your gifts essentially edits the card into saying that you pick *three* cards from your library and keep *two* of them. And the Witness isn't alone. A very similar thing will happen if you reveal Beacon of Unrest and some scary permanents. Or Spellweaver Helix and some scary sorceries. Or All Sun's Dawn and some multicolored spells. You shouldn't feel bad when your opponent pitches such a potent graveyard-recycling card via Gifts Ungiven because you were *never* going to get it in your hand. Instead, adopt the mindset that you used that card as a tool to force your opponent to let you have the action spells you really wanted.



*Just reduce their choices!*

**Choices, Choices**

Let's take that last point a step farther. What happens if you use Gifts Ungiven in a reanimator deck? You can't be reanimating uncastable cards like Reya Dawnbringer because your opponent can strand it in your hand, but if your targets are insane monsters that are priced to move like Visara the Dreadful or the *Champions* Dragons related to Mark Rosewater's first preview card, you can put your opponent between a stone and a difficult location. Reveal Visara, the blue *Champions* Dragon (which is so shy it won't come out from behind its spoiler list), Zombify, and Beacon of Unrest. What does your opponent do? What can he do? The choices are to let you cast your board-wreckers from your hand or let you bring them to life from your graveyard. Either way they hit play.

**That Spell Again?**



**Main Deck**  
60 cards

- |                  |             |                       |
|------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| 1 City of Brass  | _____       | 4 Beast Attack        |
| 7 Forest         | 0 creatures | 4 Call of the Herd    |
| 1 Grand Coliseum |             | 2 Compulsion          |
| 7 Island         |             | 4 Deep Analysis       |
| 1 Lonely Sandbar |             | 4 Deep Reconnaissance |

- 1 Mirrodin's Core
- 1 Tranquil Thicket
- 4 Yavimaya Coast

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23 lands

- 4 Gifts Ungiven
- 4 Moment's Peace
- 4 Quiet Speculation
- 4 Roar of the Wurm
- 3 Spellweaver Helix

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37 other spells

## Presents of Mind



### Main Deck

60 cards

- 1 City of Brass
- 1 Darkwater Catacombs
- 5 Forest
- 1 Grand Coliseum
- 3 Island
- 3 Llanowar Wastes
- 2 Mirrodin's Core
- 1 Polluted Delta
- 1 Salt Marsh
- 1 Seat of the Synod
- 3 Swamp
- 1 Tree of Tales
- 1 Vault of Whispers

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24 lands

- 1 Arcanis the Omnipotent
- 2 Champions black Dragon
- 1 Champions blue Dragon
- 4 Eternal Witness
- 1 Genesis
- 1 Kamahl, Fist of Krosa
- 1 Krosan Colossus
- 1 Quicksilver Dragon
- 2 Visara the Dreadful

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14 creatures

- 3 Beacon of Unrest
- 2 Buried Alive
- 2 Compulsion
- 4 Gifts Ungiven
- 3 Rampant Growth
- 4 Wayfarer's Bauble
- 4 Zombify

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22 other spells

I would have included the green Dragon from *Champions* in that deck, but as many of you have figured out by now, there are no green cards in the set. Will green cards reappear in *Betrayers of Kamigawa*? You'll just have to wait and see!

Until next week, have fun with gifts.

Mark

