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# Having *Un*



Mark Rosewater · Making Magic  
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Now that *Unhinged* is finally public, I get to write the column I was itching to write from the beginning – a rundown of some *Unhinged* design stories. There's no real rhyme or reason to which cards I picked other than they had interesting stories I thought of easily while writing this column. I put them in alphabetical order for mere convenience. The order doesn't mean anything (well, other than I'm capable of alphabetization). Enjoy.

## \_\_\_\_\_ (aka The Card With No Name)

This card was designed by [Greg Marques](#) during *Fifth Dawn* design. Unfortunately, it was cut due to rules concerns. Then when I was working on *Unhinged* I used it as one of the abilities on Greater Morphling. I figured the Greater Morphling could change everything else about itself, why not it's name? But Randy (Buehler) thought it was cool enough to be its own card (Randy was on the *Fifth Dawn* design team and had seen the card the first time around). Randy was also responsible for coming up with the “play this ability anytime, anywhere” text.



Greg Marques, PT Chicago '03

### Ambiguity

One of my pet peeves with **Magic** is that certain words are used to mean multiple things. The two greatest culprits, in my opinion, are “counter” and “play”. So I designed this card to point out how confusing the multiple definitions are. Then came the big question: was this card simply a one-time joke or did it have any play value (see last week's column “[Un and Games](#)”? After tweaking it a little, I believe I came up with a card that was not only funny but was actually capable of having a deck built around it (hint: it wants counterspells and cards that use counters).

### Atinlay Igpay

This card is a hold-over from *Unglued II*. The card came about because my wife Lora is a big fan of pigs. Whenever I travel on business I always try to pig up a pig figurine for her. And thanks to **Magic** she has pigs from six of the seven continents of the world (I'm still waiting for that Grand Prix in Antarctica). Anyway, when *Unglued* came out, she was a little upset that the set was overrun with farm animals (you know cows and chickens and what not) yet had no pig. I promised to fix that problem in *Unglued II*.

So, I starting thinking about a funny name for a pig. That's how I stumbled onto Latin Pig. I liked the idea of a card that forced you to speak a silly “foreign” language. Plus I knew a pig in a toga had comedy written all over it. The major thing that got the card moved from *Unglued II*

to *Unhinged* was the art. Kev Walker had nailed the pig in a toga and everyone wanted to keep the art. And what else is a pig in a toga going to be called?

Note that the *Unglued II* version was smaller and uncommon. The *Unhinged* design team (Randy Buehler, Brady Dommermuth, Brandon Bozzi, and myself) decided that speaking Pig Latin was annoying and hard enough that it should be a rarer occurrence (thus moved to uncommon) with a bigger payoff (thus moved from 2/2 first strike to 3/3 double strike).

## The “Ass” Cycle (Bad Ass, Cheap Ass, Dumb Ass, Fat Ass, and Smart Ass)

Most design teams generate their own cards. But for the *Un* sets we have an open door policy for any R&D members who want to contribute an idea. The donkey cycle owes itself to this policy. One day, design team member Brandon Bozzi sat down with two other members of R&D, Brian Schneider and Tyler Bielman. The three of them were enjoying coming up with exceedingly silly ideas. One of which was the cycle of asses.

Brandon brought the teams notes to the next meeting to go over what they had come up with. Of all their ideas, the one the design team latched onto immediately was the donkeyfolk. And I mean instantly. We didn't mull it over or take a few moments to reflect. From the moment we heard it, we all thought they would be an excellent addition to the set. Little did we know how much the “ass” theme would hijack the set.

## Blast from the Past

This card along with *Old Fogey* are Mark Gottlieb's contributions to *Unhinged*. I like to think these cards do a good job of explaining why we rotate out mechanics in *Magic*.

## Booster Tutor

This card is probably my best-designed card in the set. Here's why:

1. It's insanely elegant.
2. It has a very cool ability that is very much unique to an *Un* set.
3. It has a surprising amount of skill built into it.
4. The card makes brand very happy.
5. It's the kind of card that just creates cool “*Magic* stories”. Note that this one is essential for a truly great card. (It's one of the reasons I'm so proud of *Mindslaver*.)

Let me end by relaying my favorite *Booster Tutor* story. We are playing the very first *Unhinged* playtest and I get *Booster Tutor* in my sealed deck. It (along with *Enter the Dungeon*) encourages me to play black. And then, I draw it on the fourth turn of the game. I'm a bit mana tight but I have one swamp. So I play *Booster Tutor*. Now this is the first time *Booster Tutor* has ever been played, so I feel like I have to do something ceremonial. I reach into my desk and pull out an *Unglued* booster. No other booster seems as appropriate. I crack open my ten-card booster and look at all my cards. I have all sorts of wacky choices and I take... an Island.

## City of Ass

My favorite story about this card was that the design team was worried that maybe this card pushed the “ass” theme too far and removed it. And then brand asked us to put it back in. It was like experiencing our own Freaky Friday.



## Curse of the Fire Penguin

I created this card because I was looking for mechanics that forced us to lay out cards in new ways. This card was inspired by the idea of a creature enchantment that overwrote everything on a card. What if when you played it, I thought, you could just lay the card on top of the enchanted creature and have it change everything? With a little tweaking we decided that it couldn't cover everything so it would just cover up everything from the card type line down. We then turned the overlay part upside down so that it could be layed directly over the text box without covering up any of the art. Be aware at the time, the flip cards hadn't been created yet so we weren't concerned with people thinking it was a flip card.

Then the templating team got their hands on it and they realized that the card couldn't be properly templated in the space available (two lines). So they decided to give it a funny template and let the FAQ explain what it actually did. Now for normal **Magic** we would never do this, but for one *Unhinged* card it seemed entertaining.

One last time for those that are still confused, here's how the card works. It's an enchant creature card. When you enchant the creature, turn the card upside down and put the overlay on top of the same part of the card you're enchanting. Everything you see (card type, creature type, expansion symbol, rules text, power, toughness, and artist credit) are now all overwritten. When the enchanted creature is put into the graveyard, *Curse of the Fire Penguin* enchants a new creature of your choice.



## Duh

This card came from all the abuse R&D gets over reminder text. I'm not sure what about reminder text rubs some players the wrong way, but the topic seemed perfect for a kill mechanic.

## Elvish House Party

This card came about because I loved the idea of having some external force dictate something about a card. Is this card any good? Yes, but only in late morning/late evening games.

## The Fallen Apart

For starters this is my favorite name that I came up with for the set. This mechanic came out of my desire to find a way to involve art in the game play. Once I starting brainstorming I stumbled upon a zombie that kept losing limbs. I have been asked if this card was inspired by "Monty Python and the Holy Grail" (you know the scene). I'll have to give the answer I was given when I met Jim Henson (back in my Hollywood runner days) and asked if Bert and Ernie we're named after Bert and Ernie (the cop and the taxi driver) from "It's a Wonderful Life": "It may very well have been but no one remembers doing it consciously."

## Farewell to Arms

In *Unglued*, black had a theme of forcing your opponent to restrict himself physically. This card continues in that tradition.

## Fat Ass



There's so many things I love about this card that I don't know where to start. It's my favorite of the donkey cards. It has one of my favorite pieces of reminder text. And it's got one of the best pieces of flavor text in the set. It also spurred the now famous "[Is gum food?](#)" topic on the R&D white board.

## First Come First Served

This card came about because I was trying to find a way to make things matter on the card that never mattered before. Then one day I stumbled upon the collector number. How could I make that relevant? And then I hit upon the idea of making it a white card that rewarded low collector numbers. That way the card would seem fair yet still blatantly favor white. This seemed particularly flavorful to me. White likes to set up structures to benefit itself.

## Form of the Squirrel

We knew early on that we wanted a Form of the \_\_\_\_\_ card. For a while the leading contender was, believe it or not, Form of Uncle Istvan, but in the end we were worried not enough people knew who Uncle Istvan was. As faithful readers know, I'm a huge fan of squirrels, so the choice was easy for me. The big question was what does being a squirrel get you?

I loved the idea that you became a 1/1 squirrel token. An early version of the card simply said: "Put a 1/1 green squirrel token into play. That's you."

After fiddling for a while, I decided that the cool part of being a squirrel was that you couldn't die until your opponent got rid of you (you being the token). The downside was that you were very vulnerable as you became a dinky squirrel.

This card proved to be a nightmare for the templating team. In fact, it was the last card they finished templating. But I'm happy with the way it turned out. I'm curious to see what decks it inspires.

And yes, by the way, those squirrels in the lower right corner are from [Squirrel Wrangler](#) (Carl Critchlow illustrated both pieces).



## Frankie Peanuts

This card is based off a quirky card from *Jyhad* (later renamed *Vampire: the Eternal Struggle*) named Monocle of Clarity. The problem with the original card (I believe it was later changed) was that having two in play was essentially auto-win. (The key was to use the first question to dictate the answer of the second question. – "Will you answer 'yes' to my next question?") To avoid this problem, I only made the player answering the question abide by their answer until the end of the turn. Then I made the card legendary so that you could not have more than one in play at once.

## Frazzled Editor

This card was originally created in white. But all the cards that referred to real life Wizards positions ([Fascist Art Director](#), R&D, etc.) were white (with the one exception being Richard Garfield in blue). In addition, red had this small theme of disliking lots of words (red likes things simple). So we moved the card to red and changed its name from Despotic Editor to [Frazzled Editor](#).

## Gleemax

In *Unglued II*, **Gleemax** was **Mindslaver**. When that card was moved off to *Mirrodon*, we had to come up with a new mechanic. Meanwhile, we stumbled on the idea of having a card that cost one million. **Gleemax** seemed like the perfect fit. But what would the card do? Clearly for one million mana it could just about anything. But I didn't want it to just be a "win the game" card. I wanted something flavorful. And then we stumbled onto the mental domination flavor. What if it allowed you to make all decisions. It was cut back to targeting decisions as the game has a lot of gray area as to what's a decision and what is not.

For those of you wondering why this card couldn't be in normal **Magic**, I tried. It ended up in *Unhinged* when I was told it caused too many rules headaches in normal **Magic**.

## Gluetius Maximus

This is another "high concept" card. Even though most of the physical restriction cards are in black, this card just felt green to me.

## Goblin Secret Agent

This is one of the cards where a mechanic alone could probably make it into normal **Magic**, but we could never use the secret agent flavor and we thought it was fun enough to pull the card into *Unhinged*.

## Granny's Payback

*Avatar of Me* rewards youth. I figure it was only fair to have one card reward, um, let's call it experience. I played this card, by the way, at the draft we played when the cards first came in (yes, we get excited when we get the cards too – it just happens earlier for us) and it was a beating. Of course, I'm 37.

The flavor text, incidentally, was honest-to-god comments in our database. BB is Brandon Bozzi and MR is me. The next line was "MR (10/10/03): We so have to use those last two lines as the flavor text."

## Greater Morphling

There are many types of humor. One of my favorites is caricature where you take a real object or person and focus on some absurd aspect by grossly over-exaggerating it. **Morphling** seemed like a perfect target. It was already a creature with five activations. How do you make fun of it? By giving it even more activations. In a normal **Magic** set this might cause a problem as there isn't room to put any more activations in the text box. But this is an *Un* set. We can simply change the size of the text box.

A few notes about some of the abilities. **Vigilance** is missing on purpose because it seemed odd to grant the ability when it already had the ability to untap itself. **First strike** was purposefully included even though **double strike** is almost always better because I was trying to put as many keywords on the card as possible. And yes, banding finally made it back to **Magic** (and in the same set with snow-covered landwalk no less). Thought you'd never see that happen I bet.

## Infernal Spawn of Infernal Spawn of Evil



Our market research showed that **Infernal Spawn of Evil** was the players' favorite *Unglued* card, so of course we had to do a follow-up. And it was so blatantly obvious. Ron Spencer, by the way, went the extra distance to make the art as funny as possible. You need to put this one up against the original to enjoy all the visual jokes.



## Johnny, Combo Player

Timmy, **Power Gamer** was in *Unglued*, so it seemed only fair to bring another psychographic profile to life. Note that the cards are mirrored in their cost and activation. Does this mean Spike might show up if we do a third *Un* set? No comment.

## Ladies' Knight

This is another card that started with a great name. I knew it had to somehow reward women (*Unglued* had a similar card called **Sex Appeal**), so the original version of this card made all spells played by women 1 cheaper. But then I realized that it would be unfair if it simply penalized men, so I tweaked the card so that it automatically affected women (well, except naked women, and knowing our key demographic, a naked woman should already have a few significant play advantages) and men who went out of their way to get affected. This is one of my favorite cards for how all the pieces came together.

## Letter Bomb

This card was originally in *Tempest* (created by Mike Elliott). It was cut for rules concerns (normal **Magic** gets scared when you shuffle your card into your opponent's library) and turned into **Booby Trap**.

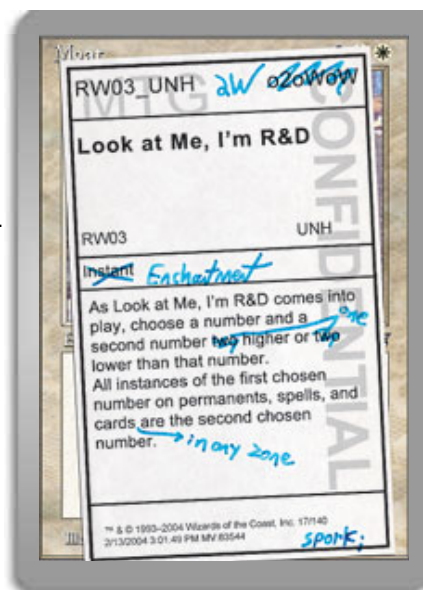


## Little Girl

Once we decided to do fractions, it became clear that this card was a must. This is, by the way, so far the only vanilla *Un* creature.

## Look at Me, I'm R&D

**Look at Me, I'm the DCI** was one of the most popular cards in *Unglued*, so it seemed ripe for imitation. This mechanic interestingly enough was the original one I designed for *Odyssey's Mirari* before the rules team told me that it would never work. A second piece of trivia, originally Randy Buehler was going to follow in my footsteps and illustrate this card. But we stumbled upon the play sticker idea and we realized it shouldn't have art. As a consolation, Randy got to be the one whose handwriting appears on it.



## Loose Lips

The interesting story behind this card is that it caused a real fight in the design team. I designed this card and thought it was going to be quite popular. The rest of the design team was a little dubious. "Won't your opponent just say the phrase everytime?" they said, "You're never going to get to draw the two cards."

My response: "One. People will come up with phrases that their opponent will refuse to say. And two, when this card is most enjoyed, I guarantee you no card drawing will happen. Making your opponent say things will often be reward enough."

## Mise

This card proved very tricky. We knew we wanted a card called "Mise" but every designer seemed to think *Mise* should do something different. The current version was designed by Randy. "If you *Mise*," he likes to say, "It's an **Ancestral Recall**."

For those of you out there that are wondering why this is in an *Un* set rather than normal **Magic**, the answer lies in its swinginess. *Mise* requires a highly swingy card that becomes uber-powerful at times. In normal **Magic**, we don't make our swingy cards as good as this.

## Monkey Monkey Monkey

This card's title originally had four "monkey"s in the title, but one got cut to make the name fit. Really.

## Mox Lotus

This card came from the same brainstorming meeting that made *Gleemax* cost one million. Shouldn't there be a way to actually play *Gleemax*? In addition, I thought the idea of using infinity was funny. It also allowed us to have a crazy expensive activation. I should point out that the earliest version of this card didn't have the "You don't lose life to mana burn" clause.



## Name Dropping

Once we made the Gotcha mechanic a keyword, I decided that we should have one rare card that pushed the mechanic to the max. You can do some sick things with this card.

## Necro-Impotence

This card was designed around the name. I was happy with how the mechanic played into the overall joke of the name. And I was looking for ways to use fractions in an activation cost. Mark Tedin, of course, provided a perfect parody for the illustration.

## Now I Know My ABCs

*The Cheese Stands Alone* was a very popular *Unglued* card so I knew when I designed *Unglued II* that I needed another alternative win card. This time though I decided to make a win condition that was farther away from what we could do in normal **Magic** (*The Cheese Stands Alone* was so close to being normal **Magic** that it almost made it into *Eighth Edition*.) That's when I clued into the idea of playing off of titles, something we never do in normal **Magic**. This card, incidentally, was the first "title matters" card in the set and paved the way for the many that followed.

## Our Market Research Shows That Players Like Really Long Card Names So We Made this Card to Have the Absolute Longest Card Name Ever Elemental

This card's title came about when we learned that the top ten favorite names of *Unglued* included: *Infernal Spawn of Evil*; *Look at Me, I'm the DCI*; *Burning Cinder Fury of Crimson Chaos Fire*; and *The Ultimate Nightmare of Wizards of the Coast Customer Service*. See a trend? I thought it would be an interesting visual to have a name so long that it wrapped completely around the card. And why not have the name explain why we chose to make such a long name (we have some space after all)?

The mechanic came from my desire to find a way to make the art matter mechanically. I know this card is bound to cause a few arguments but I'm hoping they'll be fun ones.

## Persecute Artist

At the beginning of *Unhinged* design, I said to the team, "For the record, I don't know how we're going to do it yet, but we have to have a Rebecca Guay joke."

Then a month or so later, I was finding ways to make more "artist matter" cards when I stumbled across the idea of doing a *Persecute* for artists rather than color. The name *Persecute Artist* seemed perfect. Seconds later, I realized I had my card.

## R&D's Secret Lair

*Unhinged* has a lot of chaos inducing cards, but none hold a candle to this one. Most of the other cards I understand on some level what we've unleashed. With this card, I honestly have no clue.

## Red-Hot Hottie

This card had a classic design blunder. Originally it was a 5/5 creature for  $\{4}{\color{red}{2}}{\color{red}{2}}$ . Can you see the mistake? Yes, its power was high enough that it killed every creature it fought. It never got to dole out its third-degree-burn counters. And what fun is that? To fix this problem we dropped the cost by 2 and lowered the power to 2 as well.

## Rocket-Powered Turbo Slug

This card was originally created for *Unglued* and was killed for rules concerns. No, really. So I did what I always do when a card is killed by the rules manager, I wait for a new rules manager to show up and I submit it again. I don't know if Paul was just more willing to try something odd or if *Unhinged* is just more liberal than *Unglued*, but this time it made it.

By the way, I've gotten quite a number of e-mails chiding me for "wasting" this card in *Unhinged* rather than putting it into normal **Magic**. My response: dudes, it got rejected from *Unglued* for rules concerns. *Unglued!* This is not the normal **Magic** mechanic you are looking for.



## Six-y Beast

This card is from *Unglued II* (back when it was called “I Swear It’s Not a Six” Beast). I just felt obliged to point out that I own Brandon Bozzi with this card. I have never failed to get it out against him and he’s never managed to get it into play against me.

## S.N.O.T.

This card came about as we were trying to find ways to create cards that worked together. The name, by the way, was inspired by the movie C.H.U.D.

## Staying Power

I tried to get variations of this card into three different “normal” sets. Eventually, I just gave in to the fact that the card was destined for an *Un* set.

## Time Machine

We had already played around with this mechanic on the double cards in *Unglued*, but the flavor was so good I decided it was okay to use the mechanic again.

## Urza's Hot Tub

*Unhinged* has a strong theme of names in titles mattering. This card was designed as a “build around me” rare that would make the names on every card in the deck matter.

## Vile Bile

This card is dripping with flavor in more ways than one. The thing I love about this card is how often it manages to damage the same person time after time. A mean little trick – if your opponent hasn’t seen the card and asks what it does, just say, “You’d better read it.”

## Who/What/When/Where/Why

The split cards were originally in *Unglued II*. So I knew I wanted to make fun of them in *Unhinged*. The obvious answer seemed to make a split card made up of split cards. But that would only use four colors. Which one should I leave out? And then it hit me, couldn’t one of the split cards have a split card? That would allow for all five colors.

## World Bottling Kit

I tried very hard to get this card in *Mirrodin*. In the end, it was killed because we decided that we didn’t want to force players to track down specific versions of cards for tournament play. But *Mirrodin*’s loss in *Unhinged*’s gain.

## Wordmail

This card came about because I was trying to kill two birds with one stone. I needed to make more cards that cared about words in a card’s title and I needed a common creature enchantment. Note that this is a high draft pick if you’re mixing *Unhinged* with *Champions of Kamigawa*.

## Yet Another Aether Vortex



Most of the weird mechanics in this set started as cards for normal **Magic** that got rejected. Not this card. This card was designed specifically for *Unhinged* because even I knew that this baby would never make it into normal **Magic**.

## Zzzyxas's Abyss

This card was actually not inspired by *The Abyss* but rather by the *Arabian Nights* card *Drop of Honey*. But I felt like the joke worked funnier as an Abyss parody as that card is much better known than *Drop of Honey*. Also, note if you alphabetize nothing before something, then *Unhinged* has the first and last cards alphabetically in the history of **Magic**. And neither one looks like it will be unseated soon.



## That's All Folks

I could talk about this set for weeks (and I will), but I've used up my word allotment for this week. I hope this gives you some fun insights into how *Unhinged* was designed.

I know I didn't get to the Gotcha mechanic yet, but I will eventually. I promise.

Join me next week when, well, I talk even more about *Unhinged*. (And maybe the Gotcha mechanic. Maybe.)

Until then, may you enjoy playing **Magic** without a net.

Mark Rosewater

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## Man, Is Anyone Working At Wizards?

Last week I let you in on a new opening in R&D. Today, I wanted to let you know that the **Magic** Brand Team is also looking for new blood. Take a look at today's [Magic Arcana](#) for more info.

## The FAQTIWDAWCC That Wouldn't Die

You'd think [fifty pages](#) would be enough. Not with *Unhinged*. I keep getting new questions that I hadn't answered, so I've decided that for a while at the end of my columns I'd answer more questions. If you have any unanswered *Unhinged* questions, please e-mail them to me.

Let me start with a correction. While I'm sure this won't shock my long-time readers, I made a rules error. The issue is how phasing works with echo. In the FAQ(TIWDAWCC) I said that you only have to pay echo once after the creature phases back in for the first time. Wrong! The comp rules clearly state that echo merely checks if the card was in play under your control last turn not if its echo cost has been paid. As such, you have to pay for echo each and every time the card phases in.

Now for some new questions: (based on previewed cards)

## Ass Whuppin'

**If someone from another game attempts to use Ass Whuppin' to destroy my silver-bordered card in play, can I counter it?**

Yes. *Ass Whuppin'* goes on the stack both in the game it is played and in any games where it targets something.

**What happens if two different players in two different games try to do different things to it?**

To quote an old professor, "I'll leave this as an exercise for the student."

### Can I use **Sleight of Mind** to change “silver-bordered” to “black bordered”?

Yes, you may. But be aware that you will be unable to affect any game that does not have silver-bordered cards in one of the decks. Normal **Magic** games (what I like to call Black-bordered World) have a special force field that protects itself from wacky *Un* games (what I like to call Silver-bordered World).

## Cheatyface

### What the hell am I allowed to do with this card?

I don't want to ruin anyone's fun, but I feel obliged to point out one thing. This card has one ability. It allows players who have **Cheatyface** in their hand to get it into play without paying for it (assuming they don't get caught). This wasn't as clearly explained on the card as it should have been. This card does not let you do anything else other than the one ability written above.

## Richard Garfield, Ph.D.

### Can I play my Swamp as a **Black Lotus**?

Assuming you're playing Type I rules (remember that Richard only lets you use cards legal in the format you're playing), then yes. Lands have a mana cost of 0.

### If I return Richard to my hand and play him again, can I replay a spell that I played last time he was in play?

Yes. Richard loses all memory once he leaves play. It sure doesn't help that absent-minded professor stereotype.

## Rocket-Powered Turbo Slug

### How do I counter the Slug?

The answer is you cannot as long as its controller invokes the Super Haste ability. You “put the Slug into play” so it cannot be countered. And then when you pay the mana you are not playing the spell so it can't be countered then either.

### If the Slug dies before my next turn, do I have to pay for it?

No, but you'll lose the game. Once you invoke the Super Haste ability, you are responsible for paying the mana next turn. The fate of the Slug is irrelevant.

## Yet Another Aether Vortex

### How does YAAV deal with effects that normally happen when a card comes into play?

Cards on top of your library that appear in play due to **Yet Another Aether Vortex** do not come into play nor trigger any other effect that happens when you play a creature (such as “As CARDNAME comes into play” and “CARDNAME comes into play with”). This means, for example, that a Modular creature would come into play without it's +1/+1 counters and then be destroyed by state based effects. It would go to the graveyard and the next card would be turned face up and be in play (assuming it's a permanent).

### What if I use an effect to put a card on top of my library like say **Reclaim**. Does that trigger “comes into play” effects and the like?

No.

### What happens if I equip a creature on top of the library?

The same thing that happens if you equip any creature. When that creature leaves play, the equipment falls off. The equipment is equipping the creature not the library.



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