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Mining the Past

Mark Rosewater · Making Magic
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Welcome to Throwback Week! This week we'll be exploring how **Magic's** present pays homage to its past. And what better expansion to explore this with than the recently released *Unhinged*? And as *Unhinged* is a fun set and throwback week is a fun topic, I thought I should have a fun column. No deep thinking today.

Here's how it's going to work. I'll name a card from **Magic's** past that inspired an *Unhinged* card and your job is to guess the *Unhinged* card. Then I'll tell you which one it is and explain how it inspired the card in question.

Drop of Honey

[Click here to see what *Unhinged* card it inspired.](#)



Zzzyxas's Abyss

This one was pretty easy because one, I told you [last week](#) and two, well, it's just pretty easy. The driving influence in **Drop of Honey** was the distinctive way that it slowly destroys everything. It doesn't eliminate things willy-nilly. It has a method to its madness. It's destroying things systematically. I found the flavor of it and the mechanical "build around me" possibilities intriguing.

Flash forward to *Unhinged* design. I'm trying to find new ways to make card titles matter. At some point I stumble upon alphabetization. What if I made a card that cared whether or not something came first alphabetically? After running through all the possibilities, I realized that destruction seemed the most potent. And that is when I realized that I had subconsciously recreated **Drop of**

Honey replacing “lowest mana cost” with “alphabetically last”.

But I wasn't done. Something was wrong. And then it hit me. All my life I was raised hearing how alphabetizing was a means of keeping things fair. A way to keep things random. But what the teachers never seemed to understand was that it wasn't random and it wasn't fair. The same people always got to go first. And those of us with names starting with R always went near the end. Every time.

Then it hit me, that I was in charge here. Who said the card had to start destroying things at the end of the alphabet? That's when I came up with the wizard Zzyyxas. You see, he had it worse than me. He was *always* last. But what if one day he had had enough? What if one day he just snapped? How does Arnie Albertson feel now, huh? I mean, the wizard Aaaagar.

When I flavored the card, I decided to mimic the Abyss because I didn't think all that many players would recognize a somewhat obscure *Arabian Nights* rare.



Chaos Orb

[Click here to see what *Unhinged* card it inspired.](#)



Orcish Paratroopers & Pointy Finger of Doom

I'll bet no one guessed this one completely correctly. Yes, two different *Unhinged* cards were inspired by **Chaos Orb** (which I like to think of as Alpha's *Un* card). Interestingly however, these two cards were inspired by two different aspects of the original card.

Orcish Paratroopers

This card owes its existence to the fact that it's fun flipping cards. I remember back in the day when **Chaos Orbs** were legal in tournaments and people would spend much of their down time practicing flipping **Chaos Orbs**. At first I assumed it was to get better. Eventually I realized that skill improvement was only about five percent of the reason. The other ninety-five? It's fun!

So, I knew I wanted to have a card that players could flip. But “flip to destroy” was a bit overdone, so I had to find another reason to flip a card. I started brainstorming about why one would flip a card. I thought about all of the

mechanical ramifications, and I got nowhere. So, I decided to take an *Unglued* approach and think about what could be represented. Very quickly I hit upon skydiver. It was jumping out of a plane. So what did it care about the flip? Aha! For survival. If it flipped correctly, it survived. So who was jumping out of a plane? I wanted it to be a 4/4 so goblins were out. It had to be a humanoid that fit in red and made sense as a 4/4. Oh yeah, and was dumb as bricks (no one in their right mind jumps out of airplanes with a fifty percent success rate). And thus my answer was obvious, orcs.

Pointy Finger of Doom

The Finger (isn't it cool to have a card I can casually call the finger – "My friend said he didn't own any *Unhinged* rares so I gave him The Finger") came about because I was trying to recreate the other half of **Chaos Orb**, the random destruction. And

like **Chaos Orb**, I knew I needed some physical component. So if I couldn't toss the card what could I do to it? The best answer was obviously to spin it. After a little playtesting we found that it was very hard to control. Much harder than **Chaos Orb** (Back in the day I had a number of friends that had an accuracy rate with Orbs that words cannot do justice.)

And that is how one little Alpha card inspired two *Unhinged* cards.

Takklemaggot

[Click here to see what *Unhinged* card it inspired.](#)



Curse Of The Fire Penguin

While a little clunky, **Takklemaggot** was a revolutionary enchant creature card. It transcended simple enchantment and became a card that represented something bigger. When you played a **Takklemaggot**, you weren't just affecting a single creature, you were affecting the entire play experience. As a designer, I always found this very cool.

Flash forward to *Unhinged* design. I was determined to find new ways to layout the card. And then I stumbled on the idea of a creature enchantment that overlaid the creature it enchanted. This overlay would allow me to change almost everything on the card (barring name, mana cost, color, and illustration – which I should point out is different than illustrator). My biggest problem was that it still had the vulnerability of all creature enchantments in that its fate was tied to the creature it enchanted.

And then it hit me. What if **Curse of the Fire Penguin** was not a singular transformation but a larger event – like **Takklemaggot**? It could be some kind of curse that turns creatures into something silly (the fire penguin part was added in later). So why didn't I include the final part of **Takklemaggot** that turns it into a global enchantment if there are no creatures in play? Who says I didn't? Consumes and confuses? Just kidding. No global enchantment effect.



Plague Rats

[Click here to see what *Unhinged* card it inspired.](#)



S.N.O.T.

If you're a regular reader of my column, you'll know that **Plague Rats** have inspired more cards than any other card in **Magic**. Inspiration for Slivers? **Plague Rats**. The **Kindle** mechanic? **Plague Rats**. **Zzzyxas's Abyss**? **Drop of Honey**. Aren't you paying attention?

Some of these cards might be subtle homages. Not **S.N.O.T.** You have one in play, it deals 1 damage. Two deal 4. Three deal 9. Four deal 16. See the connection? The only difference is that the **S.N.O.T.**s glom together to form one singular big creature rather than a bunch of small ones making it harder to kill with direct damage but easier to off with non-damage-based creature destruction.

Stay tuned to this column for more **Plague Rats** inspired cards.



Survival Of The Fittest

[Click here to see what *Unhinged* card it inspired.](#)



Urza's Hot Tub

A common design trick when you're trying to find new areas of design is to take an interesting card and change one variable about it to get a new card. *Urza's Hot Tub* owes its existence to me doing this exercise with the *Exodus* card *Survival of the Fittest*. I liked the idea of one card being discarded to get another of its kind out of the library. But what attribute could I use?

As this was an *Un* set, I was determined to find a more offbeat attribute to play off of. Color, converted mana cost, and card type all existed in normal *Magic* so I went looking for something new. And that something that had to connect had to be something that interconnected a variety of cards. I believe I stumbled upon the answer during a "word pass" where I was trying to find more cards that cared about the value of their words.

And that, my friends, is how the hot tub found its heat.



Rabid Wombat

[Click here to see what *Unhinged* card it inspired.](#)



Wordmail

I know the majority of my readers haven't been playing since *Legends* came out, so let me fill you in on the initial reaction to **Rabid Wombat**. Players loved it! In an over-the-top-kinda-creepy kind of way. The card was never that good, but it had a certain quality that excited everyone. It took me years to crack it but I finally think I understand the mystery behind the Wombat.

First, flavorwise the card is just odd enough to be endearing but not so odd that it alienates. Second, and most importantly, it does something very cool – it gets better while you're busy doing things you already want to do. So what do players want to do in *Un* sets that we could capitalize on?

Often in design when you can't figure something out, you mentally table it so that your unconscious can work on it for a while. Then one day while looking at the *Unglued* godbook, I saw what it was that the hard data said our audience wanted to do – play with cards with really long names. And thus, **Wordmail** was born.



Sneak Attack

[Click here to see what *Unhinged* card it inspired.](#)



Yet Another Aether Vortex

These are starting to get a bit harder. You see, sometimes the influenced card travels far from the tree of the influencing card. **Yet Another Aether Vortex** is one such card. It all began years ago when I made **Sneak Attack** (called Blitzkreig in design) for *Urza's Saga*. I really liked the card and was always looking out for ways to create tweaks of it.

One day I decided to sit down and see what card I could create inspired by **Sneak Attack**. I liked the one-shotness of **Sneak Attack**. So I started by creating a spell that put all the creature cards in your hand for one turn. Too swingy. I thought about an enchantment that created the effect once per turn. Still a little swingy. What if the choice was random? Hard to execute. What if it was the top card of your library? Something about that seemed cool.

Would the enchantment just take the top card of the library each turn and put it into play? That's when I came up with the idea of the card on top of



your library just being in play in addition to being the top card of the library. But this brainstorming was during a normal **Magic** set and I knew I was drifting far away from a “tournament playable” card.

Then *Unhinged* was announced internally and I knew I had a home for Sneak Attack #2: Electric Boogaloo.

Humility

[Click here to see what *Unhinged* card it inspired.](#)



Staying Power

If you got this one, I'm impressed. This is an example where I liked one aspect of the original card and then crafted a completely different card with a completely different mechanic. So what do **Humility** and **Staying Power** have in common? They are both global enchantments that say, “I know you think Card X does blah, but it doesn't. Not anymore”

Humility has caused all kinds of rules problems, yet it is still a very influential card design-wise. (Don't tell **Magic** Rules Manager John Carter I said that.) Overwriting cards such that they have an altered functionality is mighty cool. (And to be fair to John, mighty dangerous.)

Staying Power started out as the following card:



Extended Warranty



Enchantment

Replace “Until end of turn” on all cards with “Until the end of next turn.”

The idea behind the card was that it just made “until end of turn” effects last a little longer. I submitted it to a set and it was kicked out for rules concerns. So I submitted it again. Rejected by the rules. And again. (Don't laugh, I've gotten a lot of cards into **Magic** with this time-tested method.) And it was removed again. I tried it one more time. It burned to the ground and then sunk in the swamp. But then came news of *Unhinged*. And I knew the card had a chance. Because in Silver-bordered land we get to ignore phrases like “do you have any idea of the chaos that card would cause” and “are you mad?”

I submitted the card as an identical version but I white as color pie shifting had moved rules changing global cards into white. During *Unhinged* design, the team (Randy Buehler, Brady Dommermuth, Brandon Bozzi and myself) decided to juice the card up (but at no time thought of rejecting it – I love the *Un* sets) by making the effect permanent rather than merely extending it one turn.

And thus we end up with a fifty foot **Wild Mongrel**.

And So It Goes

That's about all the time I have left for today.

Join me next week when I talk about love and hate.

Until then, may your **Magic** past inspire your **Magic** future.

Mark Rosewater

We had *Un Un Un* 'Til Her Daddy Took The T-Bird Away

As I promised last week, I plan to use my column for the next several weeks to answer additional *Unhinged* rules questions. Here is today's batch:

“Artist Matters” Cards

If I have a card that represents a token and has art, is the token considered to have an artist for purposes of “artist matters” cards?

Yes, it is.

_____ (The Card With No Name)

If I change this card to another card's name, does it get all abilities of that card?

No, just the name.

Cheatyface

How long do I have to catch a **Cheatyface being played? The card says “instantly”.**

The card is not worded ideally, so let me clarify. In order to be able to play the card for free, you have to get it into play without your opponent seeing you do so. The speed of them noticing doesn't matter. The question is did they see you do it? If they comment within seconds of you putting the card into play, the answer is yes they did see you. If your opponent's reaction is “when did you play that?” then no, they didn't see you and you've gotten it in play.

If there is confusion, ask your opponent the following question, “When and how did I get **Cheatyface** into play?” If they can correctly answer the question (“Uh, you just slid it out from under your arm two seconds ago?”), bye bye Cheatyface.

I snuck my **Cheatyface out by putting it underneath a card in play. Is it considered in play as soon as I do this or doesn't the “in play” count until the card is visible?**

For purposes of this card, “in play” means “in play and visible”.

If I have a **Meddling Kids in play with the chosen word “flying” can it stop **Cheatyface** from being played?**

Played? Yes. Snuck into play? No.

Frazzled Editor

Every other card that counts the text box counts reminder text and legal text. Why doesn't the **Frazzled Editor?**

This is a question best answered by looking at the flavor of the ability. Protection from wordy is meant to be a protection against wordy cards. A vanilla card isn't wordy simply because it has elaborate flavor text. Wordy refers to the complexity of the rules text.



Goblin Secret Agent

What happens if I don't have any cards in my hand during my upkeep? Must I sacrifice the **Goblin Secret Agent**?

I did a poor job of explaining this in the [FAQ\(TIWDAWCC\)](#). To satisfy the upkeep of the **Goblin Secret Agent**, all you need to do is attempt to leak information. If your hand is empty, randomly showing 1 of your 0 cards satisfies the upkeep.

Letter Bomb

What happens to **Letter Bomb** that's in an opponent's library when a sub-game (started by something like **Enter the Dungeon**) begins?

Letter Bomb will go into the sub-game where it will blow up if drawn.

If **Letter Bomb** blows up in a sub-game, what happens to it back in the main game?

The **Letter Bomb** gets shuffled back into the opponent's library. Whatever gets brought into the sub-game must return to the library that brought it.

Look at Me, I'm R&D

Who is the artist of this card?

No one. The card has no illustration.



Loose Lips

My opponent has a **Loose Lips** enchanting his creature. When that creature damages me, I am forced to say "I concede the game" or allow my opponent to draw two cards. Does saying "I concede the game" actually force me to concede the game?"

No, it does not. Why? Because the sentence is being used to satisfy another need. **Loose Lips** cannot force you into making verbal statements that commit you to game actions (although it can force you to trigger Gotcha conditions).

Moniker Mage

Since naming my opponent's middle name is a cost, if I stated it incorrectly, aren't I guilty of not properly paying a cost and have to back up?

Guess what, rules in Silver-bordered Land don't work exactly like they do in Black-bordered Land. In Silver-bordered land, for example, **Goblin Bookie** works. So, let me set the record straight. If you attempt to use the second ability and fail, you're out of luck. Mr. Rules Lawyer – no soup for you!

My First Tome

My opponent read the flavor text for _____ (the card with no name). If I guess nothing (you know, the name), can he respond by changing the name of the card so my guess is incorrect?

No. The ability can only be activated "anytime" a player can play an ability. That moment in time is not one of those such times.

How do I read the flavor text of **Magical Hacker**?

It reads (in L33t, or "lete", speak) "If you can read this you are a monster geek."

Now I Know My ABC's

Isn't this a two-card combo with _____ (the card with no name)?

No. _____ can only change its name to existing **Magic** cards and there is currently no card that combines with **Now I Know My ABC's** to hit all twenty-six letters.

R&D Secret Lair

If I use this with **Ashnod's Coupon**, can I make my opponent buy the drink?

Our official stance on **R&D Secret Lair** is that the chaos is left up to the discretion of the players. (fingers in ears) La la la la la la la la.

Is writing on a card (such as on **Frazzled Editor** and **Look at Me, I'm R&D**) considered errata?

I'll answer this one because it doesn't mention the effect of the card. No, they are not. All card text (with the sole exception of text labeled as Errata) is considered to be official text regardless of the presentation of the writing.

Hey, you just mentioned cards that have their errata labeled on them. That's **Ashnod's Coupon**. Were you secretly giving us an answer to the first question?

No. I mean (fingers in ears) La la la la la la la la.



Richard Garfield, Ph.D.

You claim in the FAQ(TIWDAWCC) that Richard can only choose cards legal in the format he's playing. But **Booster Tutor** is legal in any format Richard is legal in and it allows you to play booster packs of any set. So doesn't that mean that Richard may in any format play any card as any card in existence?

Booster Tutor is merely potential and thus does not enable Richard to name cards from anywhere. But note that once you use the **Booster Tutor** and bring an outside expansion card into the game you do enable Richard to name any card from that expansion for the remainder of the game.

If Richard is in play, can I play any card with a mana cost of **♣♣♣** as a **Cheatyface** and sneak it into play?

Yes, you can. Announce what it is as soon as it's discovered.

Side to Side

Who chooses what arm both players wrestle with? This might matter due to things like right-handedness/left-handedness or cards like **Farewell to Arms**.

The player playing the spell chooses which arm is used. Note that both players must wrestle with the same arm.

S.N.O.T.

If I attach my S.N.O.T. to a S.N.O.T. in play that I do not control, who controls the creature?

Whoever controlled the original S.N.O.T. controls the new, larger S.N.O.T.

What happens if I attach a S.N.O.T. to a _____ (the card with no name) that has been activated to be named S.N.O.T.?

You'll have a single 1/1 creature. Here's what's going on. Being named S.N.O.T. is all a card needs to have another S.N.O.T. attached to it. But the ability that changes its power and toughness is an ability of S.N.O.T. - which a renamed _____ does not have.



Time Machine

What happens when I put an **Ornithopter** (or any other 0 cost creature) in the Time Machine?
It comes back during the beginning of turn 0. Since the game doesn't start until turn 1 (there's some things we try to spare you having to see), the **Ornithopter** is merely already in play when the first turn starts.

Vile Bile

Can I touch my opponent's skin with this card to make them lose 2 life?
I think I was a little unclear with my FAQ(TIWDACC) answer, so let me restate it. Can you do this? No!



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