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Mark Rosewater · Making Magic
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Welcome to Everyone Deserves Some Time Off For the Holidays So We Rerun the Best of 2004 Week! (Followed next week by Hey Wait, the Holidays Aren't Over Yet Week.) Due to the fact that we won't be back in the office until the Monday after New Years Day, Scott Wills and I get the honor of having three "best of" columns, with new content resuming on Tuesday, January 4th.

So let's start with my #3 choice. After looking over all my columns for the year, I had a small list of my favorites. Once I crossed off "Elegance" as I just didn't feel like poking the bear yet again, I had three columns left. This first column was a nod back to a play I wrote in college called "Leggo My Ego". (Note that this was years before the TV show "Herman's Head" went on the air.) The premise of the play was that the main character was questioning whether or not to cheat on his girlfriend of two and a half years when a girl he's obsessed over for years offers to have a one-night stand with him. The entire play is held in his head as his emotions argue out what he should do. I'm often asked how the creative process works. While I can't speak for everyone, this column was my attempt to show how my creative process works - in the style of "Leggo My Ego". One of the things that struck me about rereading the column was how much truth is tucked away in the comedy of the piece. You want to know how I create, here's literally a peek inside my head.

This article originally appeared on June 14th, 2004.

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 stereotypical 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 your 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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