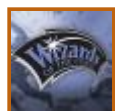




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ASK WIZARDS - FEBRUARY, 2005

Posted in **Feature** on February 1, 2005



By Wizards of the Coast

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February 28, 2005

Q: "Why is the protagonist of the Kamigawa block books named Toshi Umezawa when the card based on him is named [Toshiro Umezawa](#)?"

--Daniel

Columbia, South Carolina

A: From **Brady Dommermuth**, **Magic** Creative Director:

"Toshi is short for Toshiro, Daniel. We wanted to use the full name on the card even though the novels use the shortened version."

February 25, 2005

Q: "I noticed that Mike Turian, **Magic** R&D Intern, recently answered an Ask Wizards question. Now as soon as I saw the word 'Intern' and 'R&D' in the same sentence, I was immediately envious of this individual. I wish to remove this envy and see what the requirements are for becoming an intern at the almighty, glorious R&D (I'd make a great intern as you can tell) and see if it's even possible for me to apply. If I'm eligible, this Mike Turian figure better watch his chair."

--Carlisle
San Francisco, California, USA

A: From **Mike Turian, Magic** R&D Intern:

"Even if you aren't coming to take my job I had better watch my chair. R&D has the notorious habit of attempting to steal chairs. Worth Wollpert has gone so far as to have his chair labeled with his name. Devin Low has a rubber band wrapped around the leg of his chair to protect it. So before you think about stealing my chair I just wanted to let you know some of the security measures we have in place to protect our chairs.

"The first thing I would recommend if you were serious about becoming an intern in **Magic** R&D would be a college degree. It isn't required, per se, but with so many people interested in working at Wizards of the Coast a college degree makes a positive statement about who you are. When I read the job description for my internship, one thing became clear: to become a **Magic** Developer you have to be very good at **Magic**. When I asked Mark Rosewater what skill was needed to become a **Magic** Designer he said that he always looks for someone who understands how **Magic** works and what makes the game click. The last thing I would suggest is to try your hand at writing about **Magic**. If you want to get noticed writing great articles is another good way to get positive attention."

February 24, 2005

Q: "I was hosting a *Homelands* booster draft the other day, and I noticed that the packaging mentioned that it was a Richard Garfield game. How much is he still involved in the day-to-day production of the game? And if not, what is he up to?"

--Matt Waterman
Madison, SD

A: From **Randy Buehler**, Director of **Magic** R&D:

"Richard is still around and he chips in ideas frequently. He is no longer actively involved in the day-to-day process of making **Magic**, but that didn't stop him from joining the *Ravnica* design team (and I think you guys will like what you see when that set comes out this fall). Mostly Richard prefers to design brand new games, rather than just help maintain an existing one. In addition, Richard has been spending his time lately working on games that are not trading card games. I can't say I blame him -- how could he possibly make a TCG better than **Magic**?"

February 23, 2005

Q: "Post pie shuffle, is the '[Blaze of Glory](#)' effect (one creature blocking many attackers) still exclusively white? Will we see more cards with this ability in the future? Particularly something similar to the original instant rather than a static creature ability?"

--Mark

Santa Cruz, CA

A: From **Aaron Forsythe, Magic R&D:**

"[Blaze of Glory](#) does two things, Mark. The first--allowing a creature to block more than one attacker--is still white and has been seen on several cards since. The second ability--forcing the creature to block as many attackers is possible--is used so rarely that it really doesn't have a proper home (it certainly isn't in any of the color pie documentation I have). One could argue that it is still white, based on [Blaze of Glory](#); or green, as a twist on the [Lure](#) effect; or red, which messes with opponents' blocking schemes [Unearthly Blizzard](#).

"Funnily enough, Brian Schneider and I were having a conversation about abilities we haven't used in a while, and he mentioned [Blaze of Glory](#). Who knows... between that conversation and this email, someone here may be inspired to make a newer version of that old gem in the near future."

February 22, 2005

Q: "How far in advance do you design sets? Are you still developing *Saviors of Kamigawa*, or is that set done and you are working on the next block? This is just something that I have always been curious about."

--Charlie

New Jersey, USA

A: From **Brian Tinsman, Magic R&D:**

"Charlie,

"It takes longer than you might think to build a set. In general, card design for a big set will start about 20 months before the release date. After it leaves R&D's hands, it has to go through editing, typesetting, collation (randomization), manufacturing, and distribution. So to answer your question, *Saviors* has been 'in the can' for some time. As of Feb. 2005 we've just finished development of *Ravnica: City of Guilds* (Oct '05

release) and are well under way with the design of the set codenamed 'Snap' (the Oct. '06 set) among others."

February 21, 2005

Q: "How come all of the Kamigawa black kill spells are lacking the clause 'cannot be regenerated'?"

--Miguel

Davis, California, USA

A: From **Brian Schneider, Magic R&D:**

"I believe that you'll be seeing less of 'cannot be regenerated' going forward. It's been an issue in R&D for a while now to let regeneration actually matter. After all, what's the point of having regeneration if all of the kill spells get around it?"

February 18, 2005

Q: "I've read in a number of articles on magicthegathering.com about bouncing cards. What does this mean, moving cards from player to player, or actual leaping cards?"

--Jayson

Poultney, Vermont, USA

A: From **Devin Low, Magic R&D:**

"Hi Jayson,

"To 'bounce' a card means to return it to its owner's hand from play. [Unsummon](#), [Boomerang](#), and [Arcanis the Omnipotent](#)'s 'other ability' are all good examples of bounce cards. The term probably appeared because these cards make it feel like a permanent gets played to the board, then bounces right up off the board into your hand."

February 17, 2005

Q: "I was just wondering how you decide which cards will become DCI promotional cards, such as [Time Warp](#) and [Armageddon](#). Do you tend towards popular cards with no other premium (foil) version that will likely not be reprinted? Thanks!"

--Darren
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

A: From **Aaron Forsythe, Magic R&D:**

"We do lots of different kinds of promo cards, Darren. The three most popular at this time are [Friday Night Magic](#) prizes, [Magic Player Rewards](#) prizes, and judge promos. Each of those has their own criteria as to what kind of cards we'll use.

"Friday Night **Magic** prizes are foil versions of commons and uncommons. We like to stick with cards that are Extended legal so that players will have opportunities to use their prize cards in sanctioned play if they so choose. The ideal FNM foil looks different than the original foil version of the card in some way beside the 'watermark' in the text box. For instance, we've been choosing prize cards that were not printed in the new (post-*Eighth Edition*) card face, such as [Rancor](#) (January's prize card), so that the prize [Rancor](#) stands out from older foil [Rancors](#).

"Player Rewards promos used to be token cards, but we've made the switch to using [textless spells](#) recently, like [Terror](#). Our criteria for those cards is that they're common or uncommon instants or sorceries that are Standard-legal. The more well-known a card is factors in, but we're willing to lower the bar a little on that requirement since the people that will be receiving these cards are very active in the tournament scene.

"The last set is what we call 'judge promos,' and that is where we pull out the big guns. The judge promos are foil versions of popular older cards (that are usually rare), and are sent to or handed out to DCI judges as a 'thank you' for all their hard work. These cards are chosen solely on their coolness factor, and whether or not any of them might be reprinted is not considered. (Some, like [Phyrexian Negator](#), cannot be reprinted thanks to the Reserve List, which does, by the way, allow for special premium versions of cards on the list to be made.)"

February 16, 2005

Q: "I just opened up a foil [My First Tome](#) and it has a big question mark in foil that doesn't appear on my other, normal version. Why is this so, was this intentional?"

--Brian

A: From **Devin Low, Magic R&D:**

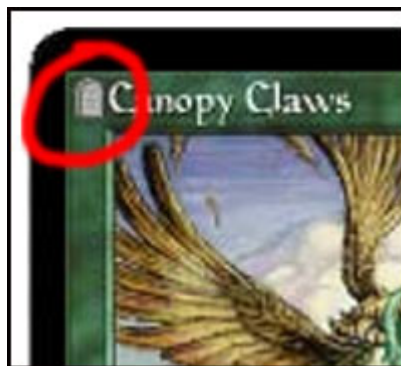
"Hi Brian,

"For *Unhinged* we were determined to cram jokes into every single part of the card. That includes the names, the art, the abilities, the mana costs, the power/toughness, the layout, the type lines, the expansion symbol, the flavor text, the artist names, the legal text, and yes, even the foil treatments. At each part of the project, the same departments did all the things they normally do – just funnier. Our image techs have really taken the premium cards up a notch in recent sets, carefully foiling specific parts of the card to accentuate the art. The first time I noticed that *Eighth Edition's* foil [Invisibility](#) actually showed a shimmering outline of the invisible man in the art, I said 'Somebody's awesome.' That somebody for *Eighth Edition* and *Betrayers of Kamigawa* was Jason Wiley. For *Mirrodin* and *Darksteel* it was Bob Jordan. And for *Unhinged* it was Travis Adams, who worked in extra jokes into the foiling of almost every card, really knocking it out of the park. So even after you've seen all the regular *Unhinged* cards, there are still a few more surprises. And the next time your foil [Yukora, the Prisoner](#) glares at you with creepy glowing eyes, it's because one of these guys put them there."

February 15, 2005

Q: "Why do some cards from *Judgment* have gravestone symbols (like [Canopy Claws](#), for example)?"

--Nicola



A: From **Devin Low, Magic R&D**:

"Hey Nicola, *Odyssey* block (*Odyssey-Torment-Judgment*) has a lot of cards that interact with the graveyard in special ways. The clearest examples are the keywords [Mystic Crusader](#) and [Roar of the Wurm](#) that ran throughout the block. For these three sets, we put the tombstone icon on every card with abilities that worked from the graveyard, so that players could look over at a graveyard and quickly see all the cards that were worth paying attention to in there. That means every Flashback card, like [Canopy Claws](#), got a tombstone icon. So did *Judgment's* Incarnations like [Anger](#), and several other graveyard-active cards. In more recent sets, there is less focus on the

graveyard, and the tombstone would only come up very infrequently, so we decided to stop using the icon."

February 14

Q: "I'm asking a very important question on behalf of the... oh gosh, TEN female gamers in the world. Is Matt Place single? I really can't think of anything better than an attractive man who games well AND can keep up with me doing a few laps (50 or more) around your mana pool. More often than not, I'm let down by guys who can barely keep up with me gaming, let alone doing laps. Please, oh please, tell me there's hope out there somewhere."

--Siren

Wichita, Kansas

A: From **Matt Place, Magic R&D:**

"Hello Siren,

"First of all, I want to thank you and all the other women who have sent similar emails.

"Since I was hired here at Wizards I have, of course, been approached by many women. Overall it has been great, but I have been 'used' in the past. For example, Nicole was the first girl I started dating after I got to Wizards. She was perfect, everything you could want in a woman, or so I thought. She eventually convinced me to suggest to Rosewater a cheap equipment card that gives your creature +1/-1 and has a trigger of 'when this creature dies, draw two cards'. To make a long story short, Nicole was banned from the Wizards buildings and soon after she broke up with me.

"To answer your question, there is hope, I'm always willing to try again.

"Forever the Fool'
Matt Place"

February 11, 2005

Q: "I was looking through my cards from the *Eighth Edition*, and noticed a couple of cards with a collector number like S3 or S7. Why are these cards differently numbered?"

--Stephen

Bracebridge, Ontario, Canada



A: From **Mike Turian**, **Magic** R&D Intern:

"Hi Stephen,

"The cards you found are part of our [Eighth Edition Core Game Product](#). The Core Game box set helps new players learn how to play **Magic: the Gathering**. It includes a Red-Green deck and a White-Blue deck for two friends to use for dueling, along with a play guide that walks the players through a sample game. Included in these decks are a total of seven cards that are only available through its purchase (they aren't otherwise available in Eighth Edition, but these cards are all legal for Standard play.)

"Here is the list of cards with collector's numbers:

- S1: [Eager Cadet](#)
- S2: [Vengeance](#)
- S3: [Giant Octopus](#)
- S4: [Sea Eagle](#)
- S5: [Vizzerdrix](#)
- S6: [Enormous Baloth](#)
- S7: [Silverback Ape](#)

"Randy Buehler wrote a [whole article](#) about the Core Game, 8E and the Starter Game. The S in the collector's number stands for Starter Game. (As you can see in Randy's article the Core Game started out being called Starter Game before finally finding life as the Core Game.)"

February 10, 2005

Q: "Many of my favorite news websites have RSS feeds to allow single site indexing customizable by individual Internet users. Does Wizards have any intentions of

providing a RSS URL for their **Magic** news site?"

-- Alden
Belfair, WA

A: From **Scott Johns, magicthegathering.com** Content Manager:

XML

"Great question Alden, and what timing! By some unbelievable (and I do mean unbelievable) freak of timing we just happen to have a [Magic Arcana](#) today on this very topic! The short answer is: 'Yes, you bet, and it's live starting today.' (For more details, or if you aren't familiar with RSS technology, you'll definitely want to check out [today's Magic Arcana](#).)"

February 9, 2005

Q: "When you design characters for the game (especially the legends such as [Gerrard Capashen](#) and [Glissa Sunseeker](#)), do you develop the cards first or the story behind them?"

--Sara
Manitowoc, Wisconsin USA

A: From **Brian Tinsman, Magic** R&D:

"Sara,

"We design the main characters first, then the card design team invents card abilities that match their story characteristics. [Glissa Sunseeker](#) is a great example. In the story she has the ability to eradicate artifacts in a strange and unpredictable manner. The design team tried several different anti-artifact abilities on her card until we settled on her distinctive design - a way to destroy artifacts that's never been done before.

"For most other cards in a set it's the other way around. The card design team invents the card abilities, then the creative team 'concepts' them. That is, they come up with a name, flavor text, and art to match the card ability. The concepts come first only with a handful of the most important story cards in each set."

February 8, 2005

Q: "I have been looking everywhere, in all spoilers and everything, for an *Unhinged* card that I opened in a booster, called Super Secret Tech. I was just wondering what

inspired the *Unhinged* team to make an 'extra' card and if there are any other 'extra' cards??"

--Daniel

Chino Hills, CA, USA

A: From **Mark Rosewater, Magic** Head Designer:

"Daniel,

"Here's the problem with talking about the supposed secret card 'Super Secret Tech'. Either one of two things is true. One, the card doesn't exist and I'm forced to deny it. Or two, the card does exist, but the whole point of making it was to have fun with the public by never acknowledging it, at which point I have to deny it. Either way, I'm not really answering the question. But perhaps the mere fact I point this out means something. Yet then again, it might not. That said, I don't know how I'm suppose to address the question of 'others' if I can't even acknowledge the first one. Let me just leave you with this thought, don't let the physical existence of a card in your hand override all evidence to the contrary. That is provided you actually exist and this isn't a specially crafted question to fool the readers into believing Super Secret Tech exists. I hope that managed to not answer your question."

February 7, 2005

Q: "Who determines what each set's expansion symbol is, and how do they make the decision?"

-- Brandon

South Carolina

A: From **Jeremy Cranford, Magic** Art Director:

"Hello Brandon,

"The expansion symbol is suppose to capture the theme of a set in a simple icon that can be made into rare, uncommon, and common versions and fit onto a card at a very small size. We usually develop these when we are also developing the logo. The themes can be mechanic based or story based. For example, *Mirrodin* was about artifacts and there were artifacts for expansion symbols. *Champions of Kamigawa* was about Japan so it got a Japanese tori gate. *Betrayers* had Ninjas so it got a throwing star. (Some sets are easier than others.)"

February 4, 2005

Q: "Look at the nearest copy of [Mise](#) you have available. Look at the flavour text. Now look at [Lexivore](#)'s flavour text. Both of them contain references to 'flinging a monkey'. Was [Mise](#) made as a semi-follow up to [Lexivore](#), or did the *Unhinged* team just decide to do it anyway?"

--Jake

Perth, WA, Australia

A: From **Mark Rosewater**, **Magic** Head Designer:

"Jake, are you telling me that a card in *Unhinged* accidentally referenced a card in *Unglued*? The probabilities of such a thing happening (in the only two parody sets in the history of **Magic**) are astronomical. Mind boggling, really. Although now that I think about it, the players of Un sets might be just the kind of people that would enjoy a throwback reference to an older Un set. If we make a third one, we should definitely do one. You know, but on purpose."

February 3, 2005

Q: "How do you decide which artist is going to illustrate which card?"

--Carp

Colorado, USA

A: From **Jeremy Cranford**, **Magic** Art Director:

"Hi Carp,

"Well, what I do is put all their names in a hat and then randomly assign the art.

"But seriously, part of my job is learning the strengths and weaknesses of each illustrator.

"There's also the question of preferences, and how that may influence the final piece. Some artists want to paint animals, some artifacts, some humans, some not humans, etc. So what I do is try and match the right illustrator to the right painting assignment based on who I think is best suited for the piece in question."

February 2, 2005

Q: "I was wondering if you could explain the flavor of white's temporary remove from the game ability. That ability seems to be popping up more and more, and while it is extremely intriguing, I cannot figure out how it fits into the flavor of white."

--Dave

Rhode Island

A: From **Mark Rosewater, Magic** Head Designer:

"Dave, White has the most defensive nature of the five colors and is most concerned with the welfare of others. As such, it has spent a great deal of energy finding ways to temporarily neutralize threats without actually harming them. (This doesn't mean white isn't willing to hurt things in its defense, but it only does so when it feels it has to, not because it wants to.) "[Flickering](#)" (R&D's term for effects that temporarily remove permanents from the game) is one of white's tools to accomplish this task. In addition, white has found ways to use flickering as yet another way to protect its own creatures."

February 1, 2005

Q: "Alright, I know that you guys are trying to come up with new creatures, but some creatures are the same. For example [Nantuko Husk](#) and [Phyrexian Ghoul](#). I mean, they do the same thing and cost the same. Why not just keep the name the same?"

--Erik

Wilson, NC, USA

A: From **Brady Dommermuth, Magic** Creative Director:

"Flavor, Erik, flavor! For example, [Nantuko Husk](#) came around after Phyrexia had been quite thoroughly decimated, so it wouldn't have made sense story-wise for a random Phyrexian creature to be hanging out in Otaria.

"Generally speaking, we give functionally identical creatures new names for only two reasons: (1) R&D wants you to be able to play twice as many cards with that function in a given deck, or (2) the old name doesn't fit in the new setting. (And the second reason is far more common than the first.)"

Posted in **Feature** on February 1, 2005

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