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# Body Snatchers of the Invasion

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Making Magic  
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Welcome to *Invasion* Week! This week we'll be exploring what some have called "the greatest **Magic** expansion of all time". (Although to be fair, others have referred to it as "that \*&%^! set".) As one of the members of the design team, I have some insights that you can't hear anywhere else. Well, that's not exactly true. Bill Rose, current VP of R&D and Lead Designer of *Invasion* is writing this week's feature article and he was definitely there. So, I guess I'll tell you things you can't hear anywhere else, except for possibly the feature article.



As I wrote this article, Bill hadn't yet finished his article, so I don't know exactly what he's going to say. To lessen the chances that we overlap (or even worse, contradict one another), I've decided to stick to stories about the individual cards. Bill, I'm hoping, will talk about the design of the mechanics of the set. (I did chat with him, so I guess "hoping" is a little misleading.) But before I jump into card discussion, let me set the scene.

## Dad To The Bone

Let me start with three things I have to let you know about my dad.

### #1 - My Dad Is a Magic Player

Yes, I'm outing my own father. In October of 1993, I visited my father. With me I brought sealed product of a new game I had discovered that summer. I'll skip the slow reveal because we all know that I'm talking about **Magic**. Anyway, I had purchased some Alpha at a game convention. But by the time I figured out what I had stumbled across (I actually called my dad on the phone to tell him this **Magic** was the "next big thing in gaming, like what **Dungeons & Dragons** was in the 70's") I was forced to wait until Beta came out. When it did, I bought two boxes of starters and two boxes of boosters because I knew that if I was going to encourage any of my friends to play, I was going to have to provide product for them. (Beta sold out in one day in Southern California.)

Anyway, that October I brought up some sealed **Magic** product for my dad. He was the one most responsible for my love of games and I knew he was going to love **Magic**. Which, of course, he did. He's been playing off and on ever since. He currently plays mostly on *Magic Online* as he lives a little off the beaten path. Which leads us to item number two.

### #2 - My Dad Lives in Lake Tahoe

I grew up in Cleveland. But that didn't keep my parents from becoming avid skiers. So much so that almost all our major family vacations were skiing vacations. We started skiing locally. Then we traveled to New York. Then to the east to Vermont. But in the end, all our trips took us out west. Colorado, Utah, California, Nevada... I've skied them all. So when my dad retired many years ago (he retired relatively young; shortly after he and my mother split up) he chose to move to Lake Tahoe, a very posh skiing area around the California/Nevada border. When he moved to Tahoe, he let me know that I was free to visit whenever I wanted. And quote, "it's fine to bring any number of friends".

### #3 - My Dad Is a Ski Instructor

In Cleveland, my dad was a dentist with his own dental practice (with a number of other dentists working for him). But once he retired, he decided to try out a slightly different job. What does a man who loves skiing do for fun? Why, he teaches skiing. (By the way, he's a really good ski instructor.)

One day I was sitting around R&D when I let it be known that my father is a ski instructor living in a very nice and large home in Lake Tahoe who has offered an open invitation for any number of people to visit. Upon hearing this, there was a general feeling that perhaps I should take my father up on his offer. And so I did, bringing a few friends. You might know them as **Magic** R&D. Yes, during our first trip to Tahoe, every single R&D person working on **Magic** came. Bill Rose. Mike Elliott. William Jockusch. Charlie Catino. Even Joel Mick, the then Lead Designer for **Magic**. Even Skaff. Even Richard Garfield. Everyone. In fact, as we were flying on the plane, it occurred to me that if something happened to the flight, it would cripple **Magic**. So many people came that we outnumbered the beds. How did we decide who slept in the sleeping bags? We played sealed deck, of course. (Okay not me, but come on it was my dad's house.)

Once R&D learned this tech, we came back quite a few times. Which leads us to *Invasion* design. Bill had decided on having a small team and chose Mike Elliott and myself. While all three of us had had our hands in

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many of the past sets, this would be the first, and last time thus far, that the three of us would comprise a design team. Bill thought it would be good to get away for the design. The destination was obvious. We were going back to my dad's.

*Invasion* is also unique in that the crux of the set was designed in a week. And remember we were in Tahoe, which meant that we skied about every third day. But as I said above, I'm not really going to dwell on the big picture stuff. I'm leaving that to Bill. No, I'm going to get down and dirty to share stories about a number of the cards. These aren't all the stories, just the ones that struck my fancy as I wrote this column.



## Absorb

The original version of this card (and its mirror [Undermine](#)) was as follows.

```
Absorb
WUU
Instant
Counter target spell. Gain X life where X is the converted mana cost of
the countered spell.
```

It was changed for two reasons. First, the original version made the card more complicated and it seemed like the kind of card that wanted to be as simple and elegant as possible. Second, it *really* hosed big spells, which we try to avoid as much as we can since the game's natural state already does it so naturally.

## Addle

I've always been a big fan of [Coercion](#). I really like the gameplay of one player specifically choosing what the other player has to discard. In *Urza's Saga* we made [Duress](#) and [Ostracize](#). I liked these cards a lot as they were inexpensive but were more narrow on what they could choose (okay, okay, [Duress](#) isn't really all that narrow, but perhaps that's why it ended up the overpowered one.) Since this was *Invasion*, I was trying to play into the set's "color matters" theme. Once I put two and two together, the design just fell in my lap. The real beauty of this card from a design standpoint is that it allows a cheap discard spell that doesn't have to say "non-land".

## Alloy Golem

Players always ask when we're going to make colored artifacts, to which I always reply, we did. Here you go. No need to thank me.

## Ancient Kavu

*Invasion* is filled with quirky repeats, almost all of which got a new coat of paint and a funky new name. This is [Raging Spirit](#) from *Mirage*. This card was picked for *Invasion* because it played into the "color matters" theme.

## Armadillo Cloak

We had huge discussions about the rarity of this card. In the end, we left it at common because we felt white/green needed a little loving.

## Assault & Battery

Let me begin by explaining why I refuse to write the cards as [Assault/Battery](#). I felt very possessive about the split cards as they were the favorite **Magic** design I had ever done. (They still are but something in *Ravnica* does come very close to trumping them.) The naming team at the time originally made the decision to just name the cards as if each half of the card was its own **Magic** card. The result was very odd as the names of the two cards didn't have anything to do with one another but the mechanic made you want to connect them, so basically the names sucked. I had worked in names before *Invasion* (and would after) but at the time I wasn't involved in naming.

So I went to Bill and complained that the cards were so cool that they deserved better from the naming team. Bill responded that I needed to do better than complain. I needed to come up with a better idea on how to do the names. As I thought about it, it dawned on me that the players want to try and connect the cards, so why don't we connect them in the names. What if the two names went together? Even better, what if the two names fit into the formula \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_ ?

This proved to be a bit of a challenge as the cards had already been designed. But I was able to produce good enough names for each of the five cards that I convinced the naming team to make the change. Three of my names stuck. Two changed. This is one of them by the way. The original name for this card was Hit & Run. (The naming people felt Assault and Battery fit the mechanics better.)



Back to the ampersand. It was always my intention that the cards would be referred to with an ampersand. Thus **Assault/Battery** would be listed as Assault & Battery. But the ampersand caused some problem that to this day I don't understand. So officially, yes this card is **Assault/Battery** but to me it will always be Assault & Battery. (For more on the design of split cards, and trust me it's a good story, check out my "[Split Decisions](#)" column.)

## Barrin's Unmaking

Oddly enough, this card started life in *Unglued II*. You see, *Unglued II* had a color matters theme too. (I know, not all that wacky, but remember there were [anthropomorphic vegetables](#), with poison no less.)

## Blind Seer

Players always ask when we're going to make Urza as a card to which I always reply, we did. Here you go. **Blind Seer** is *Urza* in disguise. (No really, it's in a book and everything.) No need to thank me.

## Crimson Acolyte

One of my biggest regrets of *Apocalypse* was that there wasn't a blue and green version made of these guys.

## Dream Thrush

This card was added late because we were trying to find ways to allow colors other than green to have ways to enable multi-color play.

## Frenzied Tilling

I love symmetrical designs. This card came about because I realized that red destroys land and that green gets new ones. Couldn't these polar opposites find a way to coexist on the same card? (Can't they just get along?)

## Goham Djinn

This cycle of Djinnns (Goham, Halam, Ruham, Sulam, and Zanam) also came from *Unglued II*. While they had silly pun names and different art (check out [today's Magic Arcana](#) to see what I mean), the mechanics weren't all that silly and thus easily made the crossover to "real" **Magic**.



## Harrow

If you build good mana fixers, they will come.

Just how good this card turned out in terms of power genuinely surprised me.

## Kangee, Aerie Keeper

When *Sixth Edition* turned all the birds into, well, birds, there was a bit of an uproar from the most unlikely of places. Players were upset that falcons were going away. Not the concept of falcons, mind you, just the creature type. And why did it matter? Because of a *Homelands* creature named **Soraya the Falconer**. You see, she enabled a falcon deck. Not a good one (I mean, how effective is "target falcon gains banding"?) but one nonetheless. As such, this contingent was upset that we consolidated the birds. But don't you see, I said, this will allow us to make a cool bird lord later on.

And in *Invasion* design, I made that cool bird lord. And then, in development, came the hate. I don't know what the team had against this card (which is odd as I was part of the team) but it was torpedoed like few cards have ever been torpedoed. In the end, I was embarrassed as the bird lord I had promised for years finally was printed, and it sucked. Big time. I would later make up for it in the *Onslaught* block with a number of actually playable bird cards.

## Kavu Titan

While I don't play in the FFL (Future Future League – R&D's playtest league that plays **Magic** as it will appear a year from now) much these days, I used to play on a regular basis. But since I was pressed for time (and oh yeah, my deck building skills – at least building decks that don't win with some card my opponent hadn't seen before – were lackluster) I used to get decks that were built by other members of R&D. One week, I got a red and green deck from Randy. I played it and went 4-0 for the week. I was the only R&D member undefeated that week. During the last game Randy was watching me play. After the match, he says to me, you know those **Grizzly Bears**. Those are actually **Kavu Titans**. With that knowledge, the next week I went 2-2.

The lesson here was a valuable one. When I only thought the **Grizzly Bears** were **Grizzly Bears**, I was aggressive with them. But when I knew they were **Kavu Titans**, I would too often hold them back hoping to be able to eventually play them as 5/5 creatures.

## Metathran Zombie

This is one of the reprints that's invisible unless you really know your **Magic** (it was originally in *The Dark* as **The Drowned** – not one of [Ga'aark's](#) favorites).

## Molimo, Maro-Sorcerer

This is the third **Magic** card to have the word "Maro" in its title. And also, the number one most popular card according to our "goodbook" market research. Coincidence? For those unaware, this is a redo of a popular *Legends* legend called **Dakkon Blackblade**.

## Noble Panther

For a long time this was simply a three drop 3/3 with first strike. It was changed near the end of development as the team thought it was a little too strong.

## Plague Spitter

When we designed *Invasion*, we started by taking a set designed by a man named Barry Reich (the person who Richard played the very first game of **Magic** with) called *Spectral Chaos* as a jumping off point. While we ended up using a number of Barry's cards, this card (called **Screaming Mimis** in Barry's set) and the domain cards (called "Barry cards" in design) are the ones I most remember as Barry's cards.

## Power Armor

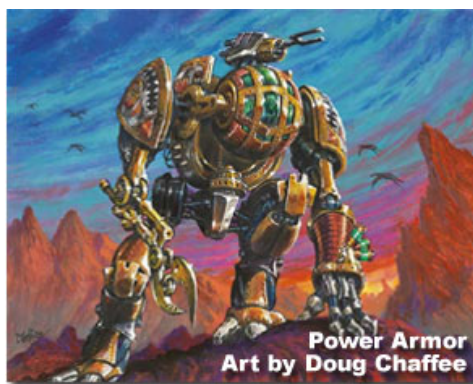
For the record, I hated the mechs. Hated them! The only thing in the history of **Magic** I despised more in the creative was the guns in *Portal: Second Age*.

## Probe

This is one of those designs that was so subtle that most people missed it. If you pay the kicker, you're forcing your opponent to do the same thing you are, discarding two cards. The fact that only you got to draw three cards might make the spell a little weighted in your favor.

## Pyre Zombie

Part of the fun of designing multi-color cards is finding things in each of the two colors that overlap in an interesting way. When I started this card, I knew I liked the idea of a black creature that could keep bringing itself back. That meant I needed to find a red ability that satted the creature. I explored many ideas but in the end the most basic idea was simply the best.



## Raging Kavu

This was the prerelease card for the set. I've gotten a lot of questions about the design of this card. The two abilities seem to work against one another. If I play the card as an instant then the haste ability seems useless. And if I play the card for the haste then I'm not taking advantage of the instant ability. What gives? This is what I like to call thematic utility. That is, the creature has two different abilities that have a thematic tie (in this case, the creature's fast). The idea isn't that the creature can use the abilities in conjunction but rather that it has two different tricks up its sleeve. I don't design a lot of this type of card, but I do think it's the kind of card that's cool when you can come up with two abilities that flavor well together.

## Recoil

Of all the multi-color cards I designed in *Invasion* (and I designed quite a bit), this is my favorite. It is simple and elegant yet has elements of each color. The icing though is that these two abilities combine in a way that gives the card an ability that neither color has. This card really spoils a designer as it's so awesome that you just want to make dozens of them. But you can't, because they're insanely hard to create. I'm just proud I did this one.

## Rith, the Awakener

Originally, the five dragon legends (which I guess are now legendary dragons) had powerful activated abilities which required tapping. The whole development team knew something was wrong, but for weeks we weren't quite sure what it was. Finally I placed my finger on it. The dragons were awesome creatures that you wanted to attack with. But the activated abilities were so strong that you really had to use them for that, which meant that you had these awesome dragons you never attacked with. That wasn't any fun. So I suggested we change them such that the extra bonus only came when you did attack with them. That way the card was forcing the player to do the thing they wanted to do rather than the opposite. And thus came the legendary dragons you know and love.



## Samite Archer

This was another place where I was able to take two abilities, one in each color, that had a cool symmetry to them.

## Seer's Vision

While many people miss it, *Invasion* has a cycle of uncommon multi-color enchantments with a global effect that can be sacrificed for a one-time effect. (*Angelic Shield*, *Fires of Yavimaya*, *Seer's Vision*, *Smoldering Tar*, and *Sterling Grove*) This card was the inspiration for the cycle.

## Skizzik

For those trivia buffs out there, *Skizzik* is the only card where you pay a kicker to *lose* an ability rather than to gain one.

## Sleeper's Robe

This card would return attached to a body to become *Shadowmage Infiltrator* (Jon Finkel's *Magic* Invitational card).

## Spite & Malice

When we were designing the split cards, this was the first one we made (for *Invasion* anyway - there was a set of them also designed for *Unglued II*). This card made our design very tough because we were able on our first time out to make a split card where the two cards complemented one another. Spite counters that which Malice cannot destroy (fine, fine, black creatures are unstoppable). We tried to build this into the design of all the split cards but soon realized that *Spite & Malice* was a lucky fluke and wasn't something we could easily repeat.

## Stand & Deliver

A little tidbit for those word aficionados out there. This split card is unique in that each individual card uses a meaning of the word that is different



than the meanings when you put the two together. Stand, the individual card, uses the “remain without being disturbed” meaning of stand while the combined stand card uses the “to rise” meaning. Deliver uses the “to transport” definition of deliver while the combined deliver means “to express in words”. I'm sure someone out there finds this as cool as I do.

## Tek

Why does this card have such a short name? Because that's the only way the text could fit in the text box.


## Tsabo's Decree

This card was designed as an answer to the rebel deck that was running rampant as this set was being designed and developed.

## Tsabo's Web

This card was designed as an answer to **Rishadan Port**. Man, that Tsabo liked hosing popular and powerful cards and decks.

## Utopia Tree

For a while this cost .

## Void

This card came about because I was fooling around with destructive cards that cared about converted mana cost. I wanted to make a card that hit both cards in play and in hands but no one color seemed right for it. But two colors seemed just right.

## Wax & Wane

This is the other split card whose name changed. My name for it was **Pride & Prejudice**. The naming team didn't think we should be making real world references and changed it.

## Yawgmoth's Agenda

The first Japanese translation of this card (in early translation, not in print) was Yawgmoth's Day Planner.

And with that, I am done for today. I hope this column gave you a bunch of little insights into Invasion. As always I am interested in what you all felt about this article.

Join me next week when I become a man of letters.

Mark Rosewater

*Mark Rosewater is Head **Magic** Designer. What this fancy title means is that he's in charge of **Magic** design. This gets him a lot of mail (which he actually reads). When not alternatively destroying and saving **Magic**, he likes to spend time with his family, do stereotypically geeky things (play games, read comics, watch a lot of science fiction, etc.) and write about himself in third person.*



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