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By The Letter

Mark Rosewater
Making Magic
Monday, August 15, 2005



There's a pun in the title revolving around the word "mail" or "letter". Why it must be the latest letter bag column. And indeed it is. As my regular readers know, I get a lot of mail. A *lot* of mail. A *lot!* And I do, in fact, read every single letter. (I will stress once again that I don't finish every letter – brevity is not only the soul of wit, it also makes for much better letters.) As such, I like to take one or two columns each year to respond to some of my mail.



Let's start with a very short but to the point letter.

Dear Mark Rosewater,

Please print this letter in your next mailbag column. (Yes, I know it isn't likely to happen, but I had to ask.)

--Jeffrey

Jeffrey,

Never be afraid to ask directly for what you want. As you're the first person to ever point blankly ask me, I figured you've earned your slot. But this is it. Everyone else that wants to appear in a letter column has to do so by writing a letter worthy of being printed.

Since my last mailbag column ("[Adventures of Letter Man](#)" – June 28, 2004 – It's been awhile since my last mailbag column), I've written a number of columns. But three stand out as kings of letter provoking. One created a very negative response; the second quite positive; the third strongly positive and negative. Care to take a guess?

I'll start with my most negatively received column (at least as measured by my e-mail). It was entitled "[Decking the Hall](#)" (and its follow-up "[It's A Long Story](#)") and it explained my votes for the **Magic: the Gathering Pro Tour Hall of Fame**. I think I was doing fine until my fifth and final vote. That's when all you know what broke loose.



It appears that a majority of my readers (I'd estimate about three fourths if my letters are an accurate representation) weren't very keen on my choosing to vote for Mike "The Embodiment of Cheating and All That Is Wrong With Competitive Tournament Magic" Long:

Mr. Rosewater,

I am a 41 year old father of 4 and a very big fan of yours and the game of Magic. I've been hooked on this game from the moment I picked up a 4th ed rule book. I'm a casual player that gets together with friends and tries to make the pre-releases. I do like read a bit about the game and the pros for entertainment and knowledge. I'm not sure I know enough to say who should be in the hall of fame, but I'm certain Mike Long should not. There are 5 points on the criteria and you acknowledge that Mike misses on two, but shines on the others. I submit that he misses on two, is doubtful on two, and certainly shined on the fifth. Why is he doubtful on two? Because, what would his record be if he wasn't a cheat? How high would he have finished? Do we really know his true Magic playing ability? So, if all your voting him in on is his game impact, how much \$\$\$ did he bring into the game, that is pretty weak. Of course, you do have a vested interest there. But is this the Hall of Fame or the Hall of Infamy? Because with 4 of the criteria points in question, that is what he would be getting in on. And all your stands against cheating are only as strong as your latest one. I propose a litmus test for you. Would the game benefit from more players like Darwin Kastle, Olle Rade, or Jon Finkel? How about more Mike Long's? I feel you are making a mistake, but I also believe it is yours to make. . .

Best Regards,

Gary Kattau

Dear Mark Rosewater,

PRODUCTS

Dissension *Guildpact*
All Magic products

RULES

Core Game
Basic Rulebook
Comprehensive Rules
All Magic Rules

MESSAGE BOARDS

MAGIC All Magic message boards
COMMUNITY magicthegathering.com
forum

Rules Q&A forum
Magic Online announcements

MAGIC ONLINE

MAGIC ONLINE

Download Now! Check server status

Magic Online Academy *Magic Online FAQ*

NOVELS

Dissension
Ravnica Cycle, Book III
by Cory Herndon
More fiction at *Inside Wizards*

I wrote to you last week regarding your vote for Mike Long, and after thoroughly reading your article and understanding your STATED reasons for voting for him, I feel like I now better understand your perspective as well.

In closing, however, I would like to ask you a few questions - and although I expect no written answer from you, I would truly appreciate your taking the time to answer them to yourself:

- I absolutely concur with you that Mike Long's player performances are sensational, as he has produced some of the best finishes in the history of the Pro Tour. But *playing ability*? How can you HONESTLY judge this category? Mr. Rosewater, you KNOW that Mike Long has cheated and been caught, so who is to say that there are plenty of times where he *hasn't* been caught? This completely obscures your ability to accurately judge his playing ability, because I know I could certainly produce better finishes if I could draw an extra card a turn or rig my draws or magically pull combo pieces out of my lap. Think about this HONESTLY, and ask yourself if you can truly judge the TRUE playing ability of a player who has cheated on several occasions.

- What does the Pro Tour Hall of Fame mean? As someone in the forums posted, is it simply a "Scroll of Legends"? Is it just something for future Magic players to learn about people who used to be famous in Magic? NO! The Hall of Fame grants benefits (i.e. Players Club Level 3) to all members, and you KNOW that. That basically means that Mike Long will get monetary benefit from attending Pro Tours, and since he's already trying to make money off Magic (and you KNOW this too, you must have heard of his infomercials by now), I'm sure he'd love the opportunity to. So for CHEATING, and in that regard robbing many other players from the chance to participate in the Pro Tour and perhaps win something, Mike Long gets REWARDED with a lifetime of free Pro Tour attendance. Again, I stress that Mike Long has absolutely no interest in being in the Hall of Fame -- something both Aaron Forsythe's feature and BDM's feature have discussed -- other than for monetary gain, and you would simply be giving him more than he cares for, or deserves.

I understand there are other voters for the Hall of Fame, but I'm not writing this e-mail to you because I think that yours bears any more weight than anyone else's; it's more of the principle that you, the iconic Mark Rosewater, who even EXPLAINED the criteria for the Hall of Fame and its meaning, failed to meet his own criteria and missed the entire principle of the Hall of Fame. Again, I beseech you to consider why so many people protest. They're not irrational beings, and this isn't an argument of right vs. wrong (you have yourself conceded that argument), it's just a matter of principle. And a player like Mike Long, who gives cheaters a reason to believe that they should go on cheating, ESPECIALLY because it will eventually draw a lot of attention from people wanting him to lose, and a reason to believe that they can make the Pro Tour Hall of Fame.

Don't let it happen. Mike Long is an icon for Magic, in the same way Adolf Hitler is an icon for world history. A genius, but someone that everybody wants to see lose.

Thanks for your time,

Neil Biswas

Mark,

I really hate to be yet another person who's sending you a negative email, especially since I'm a (mostly) happy customer who thinks that you guys do a pretty great job.

With that said, I was really very disappointed to read that you were voting for Mike Long on your Hall of Fame ballot. I understand the criteria are subjective, and I respect that you are entitled to have your own opinions; if you were an internet writer, I would not object to your decision or your arguments for it.

But as a Wizards employee, and especially as the unofficial voice of your organization, you are sending an extremely poor message. Mike Long is universally remembered as a cheater of epic proportions, it is what defines him in most players' minds. To support his bid as a hall of fame candidate flies in the face of everything you have said makes the game fun and fair, and undermines the credibility of the Pro Tour.

Mike Long is being considered for the hall because he has more than 100 pro points and won at the highest level. He achieved both of those things by cheating. Yes, he was charismatic. I'm sure that there were also a great many equally charismatic players that Mike beat by stacking his deck on his way to making money at their expense.

More importantly, unlike any other Hall of Fame (at least to my knowledge) there are monetary benefits associated with being in the MTG HoF. Although I approve very strongly in giving the pros incentives to stay involved in the game, it will mean that Mike Long is once again taking the benefits that his peers deserve because he was willing to break the rules.

It sets a poor example, and it sends an atrocious message to young players. I have a friend that has threatened to quit if Mike is admitted -- that's not really my style. But it will make me and other players lose respect for and

interest in the pro tour, and I don't see how that can possibly be good for the game.

Thanks for reading, and keep up the good work.

Stewart McMaken

Dear Mark Rosewater,

Quote from Jamie Wakefield:

"If History had a 'Hall of Fame' would you include Hitler in it?"

That pretty much states my opinion. Cheating is supposed to mean DQ, not a free invite...

--Andrew

Dear Mark Rosewater,

Regarding your article "Its a Long Story":

I understand everything that you are saying in both articles. I would totally agree with you if it weren't for one small detail about the Hall of Fame. Hall of Fame members get lifetime Level 3 benefits, so putting anybody in there is a pretty huge reward. Giving somebody who was known to cheat so much such a great reward just seems wrong to me. If it was not for that, I would totally agree with your vote. I can only say that I hope he does not get into the Hall of Fame because of that. Maybe they can make some new Hall of Recognition that does not give players a monetary reward, but still gives them the recognition of what they did.

Sincerely,

Bryan Foco

Dear Mark Rosewater,

Regarding your article "Its a Long Story":

I think that this is one of the best articles I have ever read. I am excruciatingly loyal to your column and all the negatives I read in the forums afterwards upset me. This was a decision that yes, you had to make, and I think that most of the flak was unnecessary. If the people who read these things honestly thought about the pressure of just simply making the decision, I think that they might better understand the reasoning and appreciate your voice of wisdom just a little more than they might already. Thank you for going into the details behind your vote, I found it enlightening in all accounts. Thank you for taking the time to read this;

Always,

Your humble Magic playing fan,

-- Cheyenne McInturff

I don't want to open the can of worms a third time, so I really don't want to talk about why I did what I did. I feel I've explained my reasons the best that I can and my readers have decided individually how they feel about that. I would though like to address a few points made in the previous letters.

First and foremost, it saddened me how many people were emotionally hurt by my choice. While I anticipated disagreement, I never expected so many of my readers to be so passionate about their dislike of what I had done. While I am not going to apologize for voting the way I saw fit (and for seeing the Hall of Fame as I see the Hall of Fame), I do want to stress that my desire to vote for Mike was not meant to represent so many of the things that people feels it represents. I understand that intent doesn't change actions but I personally do feel motive needs to be taken into account. There is a wide gap in the American criminal justice system between people who plan out to commit an act and ones that commit the same crime without intent.

What I'm really trying to say is that I'm sorry for any hurt feelings I created. I'm more than willing to own up to my actions, but it does upset me when I upset my readers. (Well, at least when I don't do it on purpose.) That said, nothing about this process has made me change my mind about how I approach the Hall of Fame. This means there's a strong chance I'll be voting for Long again next year, so you can start working on your hate mail now.

Second, a quick note on the "money" issue. To me, the Hall of Fame isn't about the Level 3 benefits; they're just a nice perk. As such, I didn't let that issue at all sway my decisions.

Third, the "how do I know" issue. If Long cheated, how do I know he's any good? Because I've watched him play about as much as any human on the planet. (Mike was in a lot of feature matches.) And I'm not alone. Mike is almost universally considered by the top pros to be one of the best in the game from a skill level. As I've said before, this is one of the great ironies of Mike Long. He's good enough that he doesn't need to cheat.

But enough with the negative. Let's get to the positive. The article that seemed to generate the most positive reaction was "[Topical Blend #1: To Err Is Human](#)". This is the column where I let my readers pick two topics (one **Magic** related and one non-**Magic** related) for me to intermingle. The chosen topics were "My Top 10 Magic

Design Mistakes" and "Girls". The resulting article proved to be my most popular ever (with only my [Choose Your Own Adventure column](#) as any real competition):

Dear Mark Rosewater,

I am a professional counselor and found your article interesting and insightful in a variety of ways. I liked how you were able to delve into your dating misadventures, comparing them to lack of development insight, but more so in the small lessons to be gleaned in how we misjudge ourselves or the thoughts and intentions of others. For those willing to see, there is a lot of good advice in your article.

I am usually quite surprised at the quality of your articles when you have so many other responsibilities. I look forward to future articles.

(Note: I kept reading "Tropical Blend" instead of "Topical Blend" in the title and finally discovered my reading error about 1/4 way through the article. I kept thinking, "What does this have to do with tropical?")

Thanks for the good work.

--Reed

Dear Mark Rosewater,

I have to be honest, when I saw the two topics that won your polls, I had to fight myself to read on.

What I found when I clicked the link was a well-written and elegant glance into the mind of a Magic Designer.

I've read all of the other articles you've written for the site, but none, for me, were ever so engaging and interesting. The parallels you draw are universally applicable, yet oh so germane to each card individually.

I don't know if it had something to do with the fact that I could relate to almost every single intro paragraph in the article (especially the Wizards LAN gaming, I used to work at a Wizards Retail store) or the fact that I found myself declaring (out loud) that I knew the connection between the aforementioned life event and the card design flaw, but you had me.

Good Show, Mr. Rosewater, Good Show.

--Andrew Veen

Dear Mark Rosewater,

That, sir, must be the coolest article I've ever read about a game in thirty years of life. Nice job, and infinite kudos.

--Evan

This column clearly hit a nerve. (And I'm guessing it wasn't the half about design mistakes.) The number of readers sharing their own personal blunders was staggering (I chose not to reprint any of these as they seemed very personal and inappropriate for a mailbag column – I figure only my personal life is fair game for my column). I was very touched by how personal the reaction was. (Hmm, perhaps if I explained why I voted for Long by contrasting it with my past dating woes.)

I'm planning to do my second Topical Blend column sometime in late 2005. In addition, I have another column idea inspired by "To Err Is Human" that I'm going to write when I get a chance.

The real lesson of this column was that most of my readers seem to like when I inject personal elements into my column. I have no plans to stop doing this.

Next we get to my most divisive column ever. The readers who loved it, *loved* it. And the readers who hated it, *hated* it. Yes, I'm talking about "[Elegance](#)", my experimental column where I never mentioned the word **Magic** (in exactly 2550 words no less). If you haven't had the opportunity to give it a peek, I recommend you do. Unless, of course, you have a slow modem and then run Forrest, run!

I would show you a whole bunch of letters about "Elegance" if I hadn't already dedicated a column to doing so ("[A Response to Elegance](#)"). I thought it was important to bring up as I like letting you all in on what articles generate the most mail.

Now that we're three thousand words in, I thought it would be fun to just start printing various letters to show you the kind of things that come into my mailbox each and every day. I want to point out that some letters that follow that seem atypical, aren't. This is what it is like to open my mailbox each and every day:

Dear Mr. Rosewater,

I write you to inform you of the rapid decline of Magic the Gathering. You see, all these new rules and mechanics (and the new backgrounds-ewww) from the new



series, not to mention the poop backstories, are killing the game. Yeah that's right, you guys have let the game die. My friends mostly dropped off when the "indestructible" ability was released with Darksteel. Please try to eliminate such abilities that screw with games such as: "epic", & "indestructible". I have stayed faithful to the game for 4 years. I have my sac-black deck and I like it. I am extremely disappointed in the release of the new Core Set as well. The whole idea of "ancient treasure" cards is that they remain ancient! Yawgmoth Demon! Seriously! What were you thinking? I know tournament play is important, but you have to consider the sacred respect that must be given to the great ancients, especially one so great as Yawgmoth. Anyway, I pray you guys do something to keep the veterans around.

--Peter Carbone

Peter,

I wish I knew what I could do to make you happy, but as I don't really know what's making you upset, that's tough to do. I really do encourage letters with criticism as I feel it is my job to constantly strive to make **Magic** the best it can be. As such, let's hit your issues.

- "new rules and mechanics" – This one's tough as **Magic's** meat and potatoes is its constantly evolving gameplay and constant influx of new cards and mechanics. The rules themselves have been pretty steady.
- "new backgrounds" – I assume by this you mean the new card frames. As I explained in my column "[Frames of Reference](#)", this change was not made lightly and it was done very much with the future of the game in mind. Time has shown that while the new frames are not beloved by all, the vast majority of players seem to be okay with the new frames (at least as reflected by my mail – my "I hate the new frames" mail is down to about once or twice a month).
- "poop backstories" – **Magic** creative has made a shift in the last few years to focus on environment more than story in the cards themselves. There are books for those that want to learn the story, but we've made a conscious decision to try to not force the story too greatly into the card set itself.
- "indestructible ability" – This was a very divisive mechanic, loved by some and hated by others. (Kind of like my "Elegance" column.) My only advice is to remember that **Magic** offers numerous ways other than destruction to deal with permanents (for example, stealing them, bouncing them, making their owner discard them, etc.)
- "epic" – I'm not sure why this is tied with Indestructible. Obviously, you didn't like the grandioseness (that's most likely not a real word) of the spells.
- "ancient treasure cards" – Is this saying that you dislike nostalgic old cards in the base set? If so, you are in the minority according to our market research.
- "**Yawgmoth's Demon**" – Are you happy or sad that he's in the set?

I'm sorry that the latest few years haven't been to your liking. All I can say to that is, wait around for one more set (it's called "*Ravnica: City of Guilds*" and comes out soon) and see what you think. I'd be surprised if you didn't like it.

Here's a similar letter with a little more focused message:

Hi. I used to play Magic on a regular basis, competing in PTQs and other premiere events. I stopped. Not because the cost became too much. Not because I stopped loving the game. I stopped because the game itself changed. As you said yourself, there are certain cards that need repetition. You (R&D) took away cards that are fundamental to each color. You took Dark Ritual away from black (which has been admitted that black was designed around Dark Ritual for the longest time). It still hasn't recovered and probably never will. You took Counterspell from blue. Since the beginning of MTG a player with 2 islands untapped means threat of a counter. You take either Birds or Elves from green (depending upon the set). Both are staples that have been used since the beginning. You changed Lightning Bolt to Shock as the standard burn spell. You took Armageddon from white. There are numerous other cards I can name but those are just the prime examples.

You (R&D) have ruined the game I loved so dearly. I do not nor will I ever understand or agree with those changes. Its much like on Roseanne, when the Becky's were changed. It just wasn't as good. I'm sure that's something you can understand.

Have a good day.

--Jason Ross

Jason,

Let me start by making a bold claim. No card (other than basic lands) is fundamental to any color. By that, I mean the game can exist for a period of time without it. That said, I do believe there are effects that are fundamental. Blue needs counterspelling ability. Blue does not "need" the card **Counterspell**. As long as there are other spells that counter spells, blue still has its flavor. Whether **Counterspell** exists or not is not an issue of flavor but one of power level.

As far as things changing, that's **Magic**. That's what **Magic** does. That's what makes it the game it is. And those changes can't just be superficial. If R&D is to keep **Magic** fresh and interesting, we have to keep taking the game into places it hasn't been before. Yes, **Magic** is a different game without **Armageddon** around, but I believe that is a good not a bad thing.

That said, I can respect that you're unhappy with how the game is changed. All I can say is wait and it will change again.

As far as the Becky swap goes, I agree with you. Oddly though I was okay with the Darren swap.

Next, a man with a certain trio on his mind:

Dear Mark Rosewater,

I've been meaning to write this email for the last few weeks, ever since I saw Urzatron included in reliable rumour sites as returning for 9th Edition.

Why on earth would you guys reprint Urzatron??!!

Let me explain my numerous exclamations. I'm a MTGO constructed junky. I play a bit in real life, and I'll likely play the LA PTQ when its in town, but I stick mostly to online, and mostly to standard. Following the banning of Affinity, Tooth and Nail jumped up to the top slot of the meta-game quite convincingly. For a while, Red Beats with land destruction components did well against it, but the meta-game has returned to a position that if you don't play Tooth, you play against Tooth.

But the thing is, Tooth and Nail is not a broken card. It costs 9 mana to fire properly. So why am I complaining? Because you've said in previous articles that R&D likes creating huge cards that are extraordinarily powerful, just with very high mana costs. Darksteel Colossus is a prime example. 11/11 Indestructible is insane. But when it costs 11 mana to get onto the table (Or 9 if you have tooth) it's within reasonable limits.

Urzatron defeats this purpose. It's not just Tooth decks with land fetching that can get a fast Urzatron on the table, as the meta-game has seen a rise in the use of Blue-Tron control decks that use Divining Top to get it out reliably on T5.

I'm done complaining, so I get to my point. Would you mind, in some article or another, giving us an explanation of why you guys decided to reprint Urzatron when it currently makes the foundation of more than half the winning decks in current standard?

Thanks very much

-Dave

Dave,

I think you're focusing on the wrong culprit. The Urzatron has been around on and off for years. And until recently it's never showed up in tournaments. Why? It's not the existence of expensive, powerful spells.

Many formats from **Magic's** past have had that. I think what's going on is that the land tutoring (and to a lesser extent deck manipulation) has gotten better (little trivia – **Sylvan Scrying** was the first **Magic** card designed by Aaron Forsythe to be printed).

I have a certain quota of "Roseanne" questions, so I better start answering them:

Dear Mark Rosewater,

Regarding your article "[Once More With Feeling](#)":

I was wondering if you were involved with Roseanne after they won the Lotto.

Either way, what did you think of that drastic change in the show? Also can you send me a Ravnica spoilers list, I won't show it to anyone.

--John Moore

John,

I wrote for the show in its fourth season. The lotto episode was many years later. I think the change of the show was catastrophic as it fundamentally changed what the show was about (most blue collar families don't win the lottery, for instance).

As for the *Ravnica* spoiler, sorry. I get into trouble when I do things like that.

From "creepy power trips" to "power creep":

Dear Mark Rosewater,

Regarding your article "[The Good, The Bad and the Ugly Truth](#)":



I found most of your arguments sufficient but when you discussed avoiding power creep by printing bad cards I felt the need to point something out to you. The power level of the a set is primarily determined by the power and depth of it's strongest cards not by the depth of the borderline playables versus the completely unplayable.

For example, if Recantation, a Urza's Saga Rare, cost only 1UU, it would probably still only be borderline playable as it would have to sit in play for two turns before most would get its total mana cost worth but this would do nothing to increase the already astronomical power level of Urza's Saga. And for that set changing say Fleeting Image to a 0/1 flyer for the same cost would not have done anything to drop the power level of Urza's Saga even if it destroyed the Image's chances of reprint.

So please remember the difference between unplayable, i.e. Mudhole, and just rarely useful One with Nothing. And try to have some reason other than power creep for making something completely useless.

--Eric S

Eric,

You get one point right and then flub a second. Cards below the power level of tournament play do not impact on the constructed power level of the set. If no one is playing it then it can't have any impact on the environment. But, the idea that only the top level of cards set the power level is simply wrong. Power level is set by every card that is playable in the tournament environment. The top tier cards might have a greater influence, but tweaking an unplayable card to make it playable will one hundred percent drive up the power level of a set.

The reason we make "uber bad" cards like **One With Nothing** is not because we have to for power creep issues but rather because we believe there is a segment of our audience that enjoys them. Aha, but do they actually exist?:

Dear Mark Rosewater,

Regarding your article "The Good, The Bad and the Ugly Truth":

You're getting very good at giving the same answer over and over again. We print bad cards because they make some players happy. We print bad cards at rare because it makes some players happy. Rinse, repeat.

The problem is, I think you're using that answer as a crutch for when you have no good answers. There's no reason to print, say, Mudhole. It makes no one happy. One With Nothing makes no one happy. (Or, if you prefer, the people it DOES make happy would be made equally happy by a playable card that allows for a similar effect - Say, Putrid Imp.)

Your audience asks you a question ("Why make bad rares?"). You reply by asserting the existence of a player group that actually LIKES bad rares. Of course, we have no evidence for the existence of such a group aside from your assertion. In essence, you're answering in a manner that is, to the outside observer, absurdly circular - You're right to do X because you (and only you) have evidence that X is the correct course of action.

And then you act confused when people challenge your explanation.

--David Stroud

David,

They exist. Just look at the threads in my article about **One With Nothing** ("**One With One With Nothing**"). They're there. And that's in a hostile environment where the majority is picking on the card. In addition, we make "uber" bad cards once every other year or so. How big does a group have to be to get five cards each decade? (In addition, market research and my mailbox show you are way underestimating their number.)

There are more uber Johnnies than lovers of Oozes, for instance:

Dear Mark Rosewater,

Regarding your article "Outwit, Outplay, Outlast":

This actually has 0% to do w/ this article, but I have urgent question! (All your base are belong to us)...Is WOTC ever going to print 1 more ooze??? MTGO has 4, Just 4. 1 more will mean my ooze tribe will be playable. By all means, make an ooze please! PLEEASE???

If you do, I will attempt to send a delicious sandwich (Vac-Sealed (r) of course). Ham Or Turkey?

P.S. : If the ooze just HAPPENS to be green or black, I'd be forever in your debt.

Sincerely, k2wahoo_123 on mtgo, or ineffable_effigie everywhere else.

--ineffable_effigie

Ineffable,

We still support oozes. That means they we still allow ourselves to make cards that are oozes. As such, it is only a matter of time before a new ooze rolls, or more accurately, slimes its way to you.

Next, a simple request:

Dear Mark Rosewater,

This email does not Regard your article "[We've Got The Beatdown](#)":

I have a question, is there any chance you or your team could write about game situations? Show the board, show the hand and give a scenario Have a few answers to choose from then give the most correct move.

Sincerely

Rob Austin

Rob,

What if we called it "[The Play's the Thing](#)" and had famous pro player Zvi Mowshowitz write it? Is Wednesdays good for you?

I often make asides. Occasionally, I get called to task on them:

Dear Mark Rosewater,

Regarding your article "[The Answer Lies Within](#)":

"The cards have goofy names and usually some pretty pathetic templates (it turns out for a writer I'm horrible at templating - then I realized that templating is secretly math, which I suck at)."

Could you please explain this to me? How is it math?

Thanks,

Christopher

(P.S. Please design a World Enchantment or two today.)

--Christopher Hickman

Christopher,

Templating is very formulaic in the way it's structured. The idea is that every time you say the same thing you say it the same way. As such, templating spends a great deal of time trying to create templates that can be used over and over again. This makes the process much more scientific than artistic.

And finally to finish off our "Roseanne" quota:

Dear Mark Rosewater:

Did you like Alicia Goranson or Sarah Chalke better in the role of Becky? I absolutely adore Chalke in "Scrubs" but I think Goranson fit the part of Becky better.

Did you get anyone on the "Roseanne" set (or anyone in showbiz whatsoever) hooked into MTG?

Later,

Robbie

--Robbie Chan

Sarah Chalke is the better actress, but Lecy Goranson was the one who created the role, so I have to say that Lecy is the better Becky.

My time on "Roseanne" was before **Magic** existed.

I want to end my column today with a few "feel good" letters. I don't have anything much to say about them other than they are the kind of letters that make me happy I write "Making Magic".

Join me next week when I split hairs.

Until then, may you know the joy of a full mailbox.

Mark Rosewater

Dear Mark Rosewater,

Regarding your article "[Hanging with Roy G. Biv](#)":

your article was a complete waste of time, and i believe you put a lot less effort into the colors from yellow onwards (wait wasnt that the 2nd color...)

BUT somehow, it was an enjoyable read, amazing isnt it =)

--wayland

Dear Mark Rosewater,

Regarding Maro Chicken:

Is Maro chicken available for parties? My birthday is coming up in like five months and it would be totally awesome if I could book you to entertain. If it were free that would be cooler because I am poor. Please help a poor middle class college student out. Thank you, Maro chicken.



--Robert Carroll

Dear Mark Rosewater,

Regarding your article "The Good, The Bad and the Ugly Truth":

I just wanted to let you know that there are some of us out here who really do take note of the immense effort that R&D makes at improving the best game in the world. Yourself especially, as you do a most excellent job at telling your view of how this is done. I love your column most of any, because it is from the heart of someone who loves Magic at all levels, particularly when they all come together. Bad cards really just make the good ones better. May it bring you almost as much joy as your lovely family.

Please continue Making Magic magical.

--Joshua

Dear Mr. Rosewater,

You might remember receiving a letter a few months ago from a girl who credited M:TG with opening the door to friendships in college, one of which became love. I am that girl, and I wanted to update you. Robbie and I were married earlier this summer, and although we didn't manage a Magic-themed wedding, our delayed honeymoon just might be a Pro Tour Qualifier in August! Also, our daughter was born on June 14th, and it hit me that her existence is partly because of you and the rest of the neat people who work on Magic. Thank you for making Magic the kind of game that opens doors for people like me. If your snail-mail address hasn't changed, I will send a picture of Holly. Keep up the great work!

--Melissa

*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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