

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns



Green Thumb, Black Heart

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Taste the Magic
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PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

As we discovered in "Digging Into The Conclave", the Selesnyans throw us a little color pie curveball with their not-so-Green-White message of cult-like. The Golgari are not so shifty. They take their piece of color pie and happily gobble it up sans whipped cream or utensils. Green and Black overlap nicely in the cycle of life and death, and this is the playground of the Golgari. While the Selesnya use their Green to grow "more," the Golgari use it to grow "back." (We'll have to wait 'til Guildpact and Dissension to see the Simic grow "different" and the Gruul grow "angry.") The Golgari take the life cycle that is so perfectly green and twist it to a deeper shade. A pensive Golgari might wonder, "If life and death are natural, what difference should it make which comes first?" The wheel keeps turning, from life to death, or from death to life. Of course, it's not so natural that they control which way the wheel turns. They may have Green thumbs, but it's their Black hearts that make their gardens so...interesting 😊



The Golgari are proud to be *Ravnica's* twisted recycling service. They openly bring the dead back to life, and openly make the dead out of the living. We're going to look at the different ways that Golgari cards express this signature theme of life to death and back again. No digging for clues this week - we're just going to enjoy some Golgari coolness that is right there on the surface, growing out of the decaying chest cavity of a dead Selesnyan wurm trainer.

Why don't we start at the top- with the guild's leader? Well, that is easier said than done. While the leadership of all the other guilds is clearly outlined, the Golgari leadership changes hands during the timeline of the set. The card name "Savra, Queen of the Golgari" would lead you to believe she ultimately ends up with the viney reins to the guild, or is it that she starts out with them? But what about the snake-haired Sisters? There's three of them, surely they can overmatch one little elf. Take a spin through the *Ravnica* novel and you'll

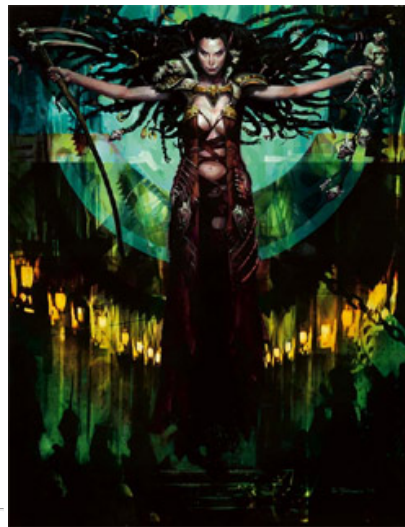
find out who comes out on the top of the heap, and it's not just a two horse race. There are hints at 4 different phases of Golgari leadership in there. But, out of respect for the Vorthoses out there, I will not give away any specifics.

So, her card says "Queen," and we'll treat her like one today by giving her top billing. One thing struck me as particularly cool about this card once the art and flavor text came in. Each one seemed to strike a similar chord.

"Nature's most raw beauty is the circle: perfect in its continuance, with no break between death and life."

I was very happy to see this flavor text submission from Doug Beyer, and I finalized it in the first round of submissions. It is fitting that the "queen" of the guild would have flavor text that so plainly states the life/death motto of the guild. I was doubly happy when Scott Fischer's art came in and also seemed to hit upon the "circle" theme.

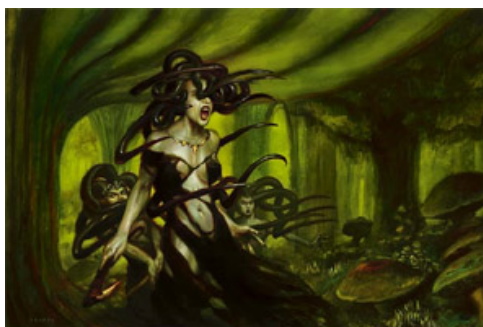
I thought you'd all get a kick out of seeing the whole piece of art. Very cool. When it's cut down to fit in the card art box, as seen [here](#), the whole circle thing seems even more evident. Is it possible that Scott and Doug are Golgari? Are they part of the dark hive mind under Savra's control? I would have to say no. There's no way Savra lets Scott paint some [random wizard lady](#) as well as he paints her.



Next we have the jealous trio of Gorgons Ludmilla, Lexya, and Lydya – the *Sisters of Stone Death*. We don't have to go far to see what's cool about these sinister siblings. Donato's illustration of the three is my favorite of his four packaging images for *Ravnica*. In my opinion, the Sisters crush them all.

But that is not what is coolest about the sisters. My favorite thing about them is the way their flavor plays off of the mechanic of the card. Take a look:

- ♣: Target creature blocks Sisters of Stone Death this turn if able.
- ♣♣: Remove from the game target creature blocking or blocked by Sisters of Stone Death.



Final Wrap-up
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2 ♣: Put a creature card removed from the game with Sisters of Stone Death into play under your control.

Lyda screeches from the background, goading enemies into facing the Sisters in combat.

Lexya turns these poor saps to stone.

Ludmilla, eldest and most powerful of the three, uses her Golgari magic to animate the dead and turn them into her own necrolithic servants.

Their life/death statement is not stated as plainly as Savra's, but it's definitely there, and with the added spice of sinister stone. Nice! Mechanics and flavor, all mixed up in the same delightful stew.

Two words: **Vigor Mortis**. I think this is one of the coolest **Magic** card names I have seen in a long time. Brady Dommermuth pulled a real doozy out of thin air with this one. It's a good thing he sits right behind me and hears me moan when I cannot find a good name for a card. Many of you may be familiar with the term "rigor mortis." It's the state of post-mortem rigidity. It's why they call dead bodies "stiffs." In most cases, a dead body is less able than a living one.



After fear and weakness rot away, that which remains is stronger than its living form.

Ravnica novel (some names removed to preserve suspense):

His torso grew back first. The jagged, snapped ribs that framed the cavern of his empty chest closed in on themselves while fresh, blackish-green moss knit the new seam together. Ropy muscles burst and popped into being, forcing fresh, gray bark-skin through the cracked, dead hide. Tiny wooden spikes pierced (his) new skin and formed anchor points for the web of vines and tendrils criss-crossing the (zombie.)

Green flame erupted from the sigils on the floor and poured into Savra's body through the conduit her bones formed, and out into (the zombie.) His tiny thorns became protective, poisonous spikes jutting from his shoulders, back legs, and arms. Under Savra's guidance the hardwood grew into place with agonized creaks and pops.



Sounds like **Vigor Mortis** to me! Ropy muscles popping into being, tiny thorns becoming huge poisonous spikes... this dead guy is definitely mightier than he was before. Great stuff.

We've all seen how the **Gleancrawler** performs its death/life function. Anything that dies while it's on the board comes back to the hand to live once again. Here's a little piece of **Gleancrawler** goodness that you have not seen – nifty flavor text that was cut at the last minute because there was not enough room for it:

The Golgari swap war stories about how many times they died fighting alongside the Gleancrawler.



Ha! I can just see a bunch of Boros soldiers chatten' it up at the Titan's Keg Tavern, showing off their scars and telling stories of narrow escapes. Then the Golgari elf sitting at the next table leans over and says, "Big deal. Look at my neck- I've been beheaded twice! And my spine is not even my own – it's made of wood, for krok't's sake! Who's tough now, pinkoes?" Nice! You can really talk some trash when life and death have no real meaning to you. I would imagine the "pinkoes" comment might have gotten this elf pounded to death by the Boros. But, what difference does it make when his buddies can take his body back to the undercity to be given the **Vigor Mortis** treatment, or to be thrown in the Gleancrawler pit, or to be tossed in line on a **Bloodbond March**?

Bloodbond March puts a different spin on the whole Golgari life/death thing. With this card, the coolness factor comes from how well flavor illustrates (pun intended) the card's mechanic. You've got 4 of a particular elf card in your deck, and they're all shown in the art. The one second from the right is the one you've just played, still looking fresh and lively. The one to his left was on the top of your graveyard, a little ragged and starting to reek. The guy on the far left was a few cards deep in the



graveyard and the one on the far right died way back on turn 2. Check him out, he's been feeding the worms for quite a while. But, in true Golgari style, even the dead heed the call to war.

The Golgari support a vast army because death never ends its soldiers' service.

So how do we wrap up something that just never seems to end. Everybody just keeps coming back. Sure, there might be a little less flesh and a little more stinking vines and necrotic plant matter, but it comes back nonetheless. How about ending it by punctuating its neverendingness? Let's go back to the very beginning, when the guilds were formed at the signing of the *Guildpact*. There, representing the Golgari, was the necromancer Svogthir. Those of you who have read the *Ravnica* novel know him well. Others may feel a hint of recognition upon reading his name. It may be because you are familiar with his final resting place- *Svogthos, the Restless Tomb*. It's restless because, as we have seen many times over, there is no such thing as "eternal rest" with the Golgari. Even in death, old Svogthir finds the will and the power to turn his burial site into a giant undead vegetation killing machine. After all this time, almost ten thousand years, ol' Svoggy still has the Golgari touch.

The Golgari make my job this week a pretty easy one. There's not much that I feel people will have trouble pronouncing. But, to be thorough, I will give you the proper pronunciation of the guild name:

Golgari – gohl-GAHR-ee. Start with "goal," as in hockey or futbol (see, Matt, how I use international sports as examples. Get with the program) After "goal," accentuate "gar," like the long bottle-nosed fish. End with a quick "e" sound, (or "i" if you're speaking a Latin-based language) and you've got it nailed.

Let us know if any of the other Golgari names are giving your tongue troubles.



I'm so sure. I give Sekki a job and what does he do but show me up in front of my peeps. Maybe I'll send his butt back down to the Kamigawa bush leagues, or force him to show us how to pronounce "Asmoranomardicadaistinaculdacar."

*Matt Cavotta has always been a fantasy goober. At various points in his gooberhood, he has used his nerdy knowledge to become a professional goober. He went from scribbling pictures of his own **D&D** characters to illustrating books and cards for his two favorite games; **D&D** and **Magic**. Then he channeled his inner 7th level Illusionist/3rd level Bard and landed himself a job at Wizards as a writer. He continues to cast his illusion spells each morning, lest they find out he's just another goober.*



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