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Snack Time with Vorthos

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Taste the Magic
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PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

I get a warm fuzzy feeling when I think about this article. It's not that I dug deep into my soul, channeled my muse, or worked any sort of deep creative wonders. It's mostly about pride. Not pride in my work or my writing, but pride in giving a name and a banner to **Magic** players who have not been given their due attention or respect. The Vorthos is an important member of the **Magic** community and I am happy to serve them as one of their own. Ha! "Serve." That's exactly what happens in this article. I serve up a tasty array of little dishes that is sure to include some little tidbit that tickles your palate.

For those of you who have not been frightened away, welcome back to Taste the Magic. Before we dive back into all things magically tasty, I want to address the surprisingly voluminous response to our [kick-off article](#). First of all, I'd like to thank those of you who sent in ideas and topics for future articles. There's enough meat from just one day's emails to feed an entire year of articles. There are clearly some very hungry flavor fans out there. Secondly, I'd like to thank those of you who so graciously and enthusiastically welcomed me and our flavor-packed format to [magicthegathering.com](#). And then there was Mr. Drearypants.



I did receive a few emails from him as well. He was annoyed by a perceived bias of flavor over mechanics. He was insulted by the phrases; "dead inside" and... "Mr. Drearypants." To tell you the truth, I am surprised to hear that he felt anything at all—because he was *not supposed to exist!* I thought we were poking fun at a phantom gamer, a fictitious grump, **Magic's** Kaiser Soze, a nemesis against whom all the flavorphiles could rally. (And rally they did!) The fact that there are people out there who identified with Game A and Mr. Drearypants is fascinating to me. Why would anyone prefer a game without flavor over *the very same game* with all the goodies?

There must have been a communication breakdown somewhere. Though I never said "It's flavor vs. mechanics, let's rumble!" that's how it was perceived. The fight I'm looking to pick is not flavor vs. mechanics, it's flavor vs. no flavor. Mechanics and flavor play together wonderfully in **Magic**. In fact, they each owe their existence to the other. They are most definitely not fighting in this column. Mr. Drearypants was NOT meant to be an analog for Spike. I work with some of the pointiest spikes in the world and even they respond to a cool name or a kick-ass piece of art. Sometimes it even... *gasp,* excites them.

So why, then, did so many Spikes still end up identifying with Mr. Drearypants? I think it is because many Spikey mtg.commers are not used to it when a column is not aimed specifically at them. It was clear to

Spike immediately that TTM was going to offer very little information (OK, none at all) that would help launch him into the Pro Tour. Some Johnnies may have felt left out too, with no decklists or combo talk on the menu. Timmy was happy that we were talking about **Serra Angel**, and her super-sweet sword. But then she died and Timmy was bummed too.

"What are you doing, Matt? Why would you ever write a column that is not geared toward ANY **Magic** player? That's stupid!" Yes, it is, and I would never do that. First of all, I do believe that Timmies, Johnnies, and even Spikes do enjoy the mage-punk fantasy world flavor of **Magic**—even if it's just for an occasional snack. TTM will be here holding the cookie jar should they find themselves with a sweet tooth. Secondly, Spike, Timmy, and Johnny do *not* represent *all* kinds of **Magic** players. There is another type of player that is different from these three, and he's not some rare and reclusive guy who never peeks out from under his rock. He's right there in the game shop, at the convention, and at the tournament— and yet we've been ignoring him for years. His name is Vorthos.

Who the heck is Vorthos?

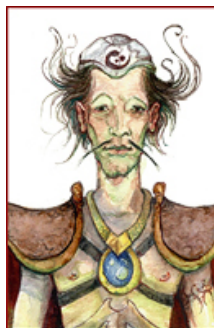
Vorthos (His name is actually John, but since there's already a "Johnny" in the mix, he opted to go with the name of his 16th level half-elven ranger/warmage.) is the guy who never puts more than one of any legend card in his deck because "it just wouldn't be right." He's the guy who will only play with the **Icy Manipulator** from **Ice Age** because it's the one they call the "Bone Crank." He won't play with the **Fallen Empires** cards with the stinky alternate art. Vorthos is the guy who started collecting cards because he liked the art, then read some **Magic** novels, then saw his favorite characters appear on some cards and decided to learn to play. There are a lot of Vorthoses out there. Some collect cards, but might not even play. Some have a hoot getting artists to sign their cards. Some don't read flavor text 'til after they finish the novel in case it might spoil the ending. Vorthos understands that **Magic can be fun even when you're not playing the game**. This column is for Vorthos, but the real point is that there is at least a little bit of Vorthos in all of us. Put another way, while much of

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magicthegathering.com is about *how* you play **Magic**, columns like Making Magic, Latest Developments, and now Taste the Magic are about appreciating and enjoying the game *regardless* of how you actually play it.

I received plenty of email from Vorthos after my first article. He was stoked to see that finally there would be conversation on his favorite topics. He asked to see *this*, wanted to hear about *that*, was chomping at the bit to get a taste of anything having anything to do with **Magic** Creative (henceforth the term for all things flavor and fantasy in the game of **Magic**.) I am here for you Vorthos. While I can dish it out to you in huge piles, one article at a time, I have instead decided to finish up today by serving up little bits of many things instead of lots of one.



Okra • Twinkie • Tofu

Here's a little tidbit that I will treat you to from time to time, called "Okra, Twinkie, Tofu". **Magic** cards are loaded up with words you just don't encounter much when you're not slinging spells. Okra, Twinkie, Tofu will give you quick blurbs on the following sorts of **Magic** words:

Words that are actually real but may seem fake (Okra)

Completely fake and not of this world (Twinkie)

Made up of real stuff but seems bizarre and alien (Tofu).



Abuna- Patriarch, father, or head of the Abyssinian (Ethiopian) church. A great fit for a leonin cleric of high rank. ([Leonin Abunas](#))



Shiv- A Dominarian island nation covered in low craggy mountains and rich in red mana. It's just Northeast of Jamuraa, and is now half phased out into nothingness. **Shiv's Embrace** (Not to be confused with a shiv, a small knife.) Some characters of note hail from this rocky zone. ([Shivan Dragon](#), [Shivan Hellkite](#), [Shivan Raptor](#)...)



Mycosynth- This word combines the real world word roots *myco-* fungus, and *synth*, from *synthetic*- artificial or unnatural combination. Together, these seemingly contradictory roots form a word for **the artificial growth forms** that spread throughout Mirrodin's core. ([Mycosynth Lattice](#), [Mycosynth Golem](#))

Occasionally, I'll have **Magic** cards step up to the plate. This is not another food metaphor- it's a baseball metaphor. I am in search of **Magic** card **Home Runs**. A Home Run is when a card name, flavor text, and art are all winners. That's three bases. The round tripper comes when all three of these mesh well with the card mechanic. This is no "live ball" era, true **Magic** home runs are very rare. Some great hitters just lack the power to put one out because they have no flavor text. Others can't make it around third base because I am a stickler when it comes to art and flavor text. Anyhoo, let's throw someone into the box and see how it plays out (OK, no suspense here... I have loaded this one with a Home Run to show you what one looks like.)



Let's start out with card name. **Rancor** packs a punch and doesn't beat around the bush. By definition, "Rancor" is bitter, long-lasting resentment; deep-seated ill will. I particularly like the "long-lasting" part – it really fits well with the "return Rancor to owner's hand" thing. "Rancor" is also a very well-packaged name. If you read my article, "[Say My Name](#)", a while back you will know that a well packaged name fits the scope and cost of a card. "Rancor" is short and sweet, and the card is simple and costs only 1 mana. Winner. Take your base.

Art. This is an easy one. Kev Walker, in my opinion, (as if it isn't just about everybody's opinion) freakin' rocks! Sure, I could bust out some artsy-fartsy blather about what makes his art so great, but that's a topic for another article. For now let's just look at **Rancor's** art and appreciate it for its Bam! quality. Mighty Maro-Sorcerer in a rage blasting someone with green lightning- winner!

"*Hatred outlives the hateful.*" Fitting for this card in the same way the definition of **Rancor** is. This card literally outlives the creature it enchants. Smooth. This flavor text is also cool because, unfortunately, this statement is too true. Without getting into some philosophical whining about the nature of things, let's just say that it stinks that ill-will can be passed on from one generation to the next. Winner.

We've already seen how the name and the flavor text mesh wonderfully with the card mechanic. Oooh! Did I say that? Yes, I did. The card mechanic. See, flavor and mechanics *do* play in the same sandbox. This gives our boy, **Rancor**, the extra pop off the bat to put this ball in the seats. Oh, and the card is an all out bomb. Going, going... 10 rows deep into the second deck!

Magic Mail-Bag

Among the emails I received this past week was a special one. It was from someone many of us already know- **Sekki**, **Season's Guide**.

*Dear **Magic** Creative,*
For a while I thought you guys were awesome. You took my bland life of guiding the seasons (Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, Spring, Summ...) and turned things upside down with the Kami War. During the war, all bets were off and I could get crazy and follow Spring with Winter, Summer with...more Summer. It was a madhouse! For the first time in a million years I was having fun. Then you go and end the War. Now it's back to the old grind. Anyway, I can guide these dumb seasons in my sleep. Is there anything you guys can do to give me something else to spice up my tedious existence?
- Sekki.



I felt pretty bad for Sekki. I couldn't do the same thing over and over all my life and be happy either. So I got to thinking. I received a whole bunch of other emails with questions about how to pronounce *Kamigawa* black card names. Sekki is from Kamigawa, so I decided to charge him with helping us out with the tough words. He was very excited to inform me that he is not only a whiz with the words of Kamigawa, but with the pronunciation of almost all words. So TTM is proud to introduce you all to our new correspondent:

Sekki, Pronunciation's Guide.

Jitte – We received many many emails about his one. I am not surprised, because it is not an easy one. Most people are calling it Jittay, Jeet, or Ji'TAY (with the J sounding as it does in Jacques.) These are all a bit off. It's pronounced JI•TEH, with accent on both syllables, a little lingering on the T sound, and a quick "EH" sound at the end. My name is pronounced similarly, SEK•KEE – with a little linger on the K and some emphasis on both syllables.

Here are a couple other ones that people asked about:

Llanowar – LAN•oh•wahr. Nope, double Ls do not form a "Y" sound as they do in some Hispanic languages. Often jocularly mispronounced LON•mo•her.

Synod – SIN•ehd. Not very intuitive, this one. It looks like it should be SY•nahd, but we word snobs will expect to hear "SIN•ehd"



You can expect similarly formatted tidbits of info sprinkled into TTM articles in the future. Sekki will undoubtedly reappear, **Magic** Mailbag will bust out any messages we get from our cardboard enshrined friends, and we'll continue hunting down **Magic** Home Runs (I already know of a couple coming up in *Ravnica*. We'll see those soon enough.) Be proud Vorthos, and hold your "Every-Art-Has-Gerrard-In-It" deck high!

*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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