

Something Borrowed, Something Blue

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Something Old, Something New

As the esteemed Mssr. Rosewater has previously explained, one of the hurdles design and development encountered while making *Guildpact* was giving it its own unique identity in ways other than just leaning on the three new guilds.

Yes, we altered some of the ten-card cycles ever so slightly to keep players on their toes. Yes, we shifted some of the overarching themes a bit—the cycle of common Auras from *Ravnica* with comes-into-play abilities have been replaced in *Guildpact* with a quirky little cycle called “Magemarks,” for instance. But that’s not enough for a set to stand up on its own. Each set should have some very memorable subset of cards that are uniquely its own.

To that end, we created two rare cycles for *Guildpact* that had nothing to do with *Ravnica*—after all, we wanted them to be a surprise. You saw one of the cards from the first of these cycles earlier this week—[Anthony's Yore-Tiller Nephilim](#) is part of a cycle of the first-ever four-color creatures. I'll be showing you a card from the other cycle shortly.

Something Borrowed

As *Guildpact* was being designed, *Magic Online's* Vanguard format was a hot topic around the office. The original Vanguard format was created for [the Arena league long ago](#), and was a popular play variant for a period of time. The idea was that each player “was” a character from the **Magic** storyline, and had additional powers associated with that character. If you were Gerrard, for instance, you got to draw an extra card each turn. If you were Squee, your opponent had to play with his hand revealed.

Anyway, a year or so ago we decided to give this variant new life online by tying it to peoples' avatars. Some of our developers, like Devin Low, Paul Sottosanti, and John Carter, were in charge of coming up with what each avatar did, and discussions popped up all over the department.

I personally really enjoyed Vanguard as a player (my Mirri five-color **Necropotence** deck was a hot one), and when I sat down to think about *why*, I realized I liked the initial “great reveal” that happened before each game started. What weird rules will this particular game be played under? I

can't wait to see!

So instead of contributing to what the Online Vanguard avatars should do, I worked in the corner trying to bring that “aha” moment of the great reveal to normal **Magic**.

To that end, there are a cycle of “Leylines” in *Guildpact*. Each is a four-mana rare enchantment that, if it is in your opening hand, you may begin the game with it in play. Just like Vanguard, some **Magic** games will now begin with this crucial moment of realization that the rules are different this time.

These five cards required a balancing act that is among the most difficult that development has had to do. After all, in the dream scenario each of these cards is essentially free, and can even be free in decks that normally couldn't cast them. (We thought about adding extra text that only allowed them to be played for free if you had a land or a card of the corresponding color, but it just didn't seem worth it. Part of the fun of **Magic** is finding ways to “cheat,” and if R&D found them all first, accounted for them, and didn't let players have that kind of fun (think anti-reanimation clause on **Darksteel Colossus**), the game would be far worse off.) They definitely had to be worth playing, and worth close to four mana, but shouldn't break the game if they're in play for free.

The five that were originally submitted during design were all scrapped, and many, many new versions were plugged in until we found five that were all both unusual and interesting.

Something Blue





And here, for your viewing pleasure, is the Blue one:



This card has lots of potential, both as a defensive hoser and as a build-around-me card.

As a hoser, it really keeps tokens in check. Since the Saprolings made by Vitu-Ghazi and other similar cards are all named "Saproling," multiples cannot exist at the same time with the Leyline in play.

More interestingly, the card can combo with lots of other stuff. The *Kamigawa* block has tons of cards that interact specifically with legends, and the Leyline makes all of your creatures fit the bill. *Minamo*, *School at Water's Edge* can untap any creature, *Konda's Banner* can equip any creature, and *Hero's Demise* can off any creature in play.

The real fun begins when you combine the Leyline with *Ravnica's* "Hunted" creatures. *Hunted Horror* starts to look a lot better as a 7/7 trampler for ♣♣ with essentially no drawback!

There's more where this came from. Each Leyline poses its own set of questions and lends itself to different strategies and counter-strategies. On top of the Gruul, Izzet, and Orzhov, Guildpact promises lots of brand-new goodies!

Be sure to check out [the prerelease tournaments this weekend!](#)



Leyline FAQ

The Leylines are a cycle of five enchantments, each with "Leyline" in the name. If you have any Leylines in your opening hand, you may begin the game with any number of them in play.

- Your "opening hand" is the hand of cards you decide to start the game with after taking any mulligans.
- After all players have decided not to take any more mulligans, players choose Leylines to put into play, starting with the player who will be going first and proceeding in turn order. Each player may choose any number of Leylines. The cards are revealed and put into play at the same time.
- Leylines that start the game in play aren't played as spells. They can't be countered. After each player has exercised his or her option to put Leylines into play, the first turn of the game begins.
- The player who will be going first chooses the relative timestamp order of all Leylines that start the game in play.



Last Week's Anagrams

Not all of the card names have been made public yet, so I'll go over them next week. For those of you having trouble, the first one was "Gruul Signet."

For next week...

I'd like some "audience participation." I'm willing to answer some number of card-by-card questions about *Guildpact*, so please send me your questions! Why does so-and-so cost so much? Did we realize that Card A and Card B combo so well? Come learn how development thinks!

*Aaron Forsythe was a professional **Magic** player and Internet columnist prior to leaving Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to join Wizards of the Coast. His first duty here was Content Manager of this very website, a job that required him to do actual work as opposed to playing games all the time. So when a position opened in R&D, he jumped at the chance. He is now director of **Magic** R&D, and still plays **Magic** in his free time when he's not busy playing **Magic**.*



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