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# Vorthos Breaks Free

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Taste the Magic  
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Vorthos Mandelbrot is a passionate young apprentice wizard. He approaches his studies and his magework with focus and zeal, but most of all, with panache. For it is not promise of power that motivates him, it is the artistry and inherent beauty of magic; the hidden symmetries, the wondrous coincidences, the sound, the smell, the very *taste* of it. The old saying, "The journey is the destination" holds very true with young Vorthos. It is the fluidity of the incantation, its relationship to the sound and texture of the forthcoming spell, the perfect union of body, mind, and mana that defines magic for Vorthos – not just the end effect of the spell.

Sometimes this is hard for his master to understand. For so long, dispensing his wizardly knowledge to a long list of hungry pupils has gone one way: give the ravenous student the cold, hard keys to sorcerous might. Vorthos's master became accustomed to providing these keys and watching his students unlock their own vaults of power. But these keys do not fit the locks that Vorthos is trying to open, and his master does not quite understand it.



This lack of understanding is quite clear, considering the teaching technique Vorthos's master is currently employing. For the last few days, Vorthos and his fellow students have been practicing all their magical rudiments and performing all their fundamental spell somatics to the steady (mind-shatteringly annoying to Vorthos) rhythm of a beaten drum.

"It is important that you be able to fire off your spells in rhythmic succession - like a flurry of blows that does not allow for a counterpunch," their master bellowed.

Vorthos was rankling inside, as the drum seemed to force him to make his motions and utter his incantations in syncopation with the beat. He cringed each time a potentially beautiful sweeping hand motion was cut off to stay in time. He cursed to himself each time an idea for an improvisation had to be ignored to keep up. To Vorthos, this was soulless automation, mindless mechanics. He thought for a brief

moment that he would rather be growing wheat or barley - at least then he would have the time to admire the golden undulations of his crop as the wind passed over, carrying the scent of the future straight to his nostrils. But then he remembered - he was a wizard. It is all he ever wanted to be. In time, he would be able to turn sand to seed and grow fields in the desert. "Pay your dues now," he thought, "and reap the benefits later."

Vorthos was surprised to see how focused the other pupils were, how easily they settled into the rhythm of the art-crushing drum. "Do they want it more than I do?" Vorthos wondered as he watched them churning out in unison the final gestures of a fire spell. The fleeting flame crackled from their hands and poofed away with a snap - all in perfect time with the drum. Vorthos's attention was not on his work. Sometimes his spell did not even produce flame, and most of the time he was too busy looking at the others to keep up with the tempo. When he wasn't watching the other students, he looked down, not wanting to meet the glare of displeasure that was surely trained upon him.

"Mind the rhythm," his master admonished. "It will keep you from faltering when times are dire."

"Mind the rhythm, so that *you* will maintain the upper hand."

"Mind the rhythm, for it will move you steadily toward victory."

Vorthos's spirit was breaking with each word his master uttered. What about minding the harmony of the chant? What about minding the grace of motion. Or the position of the hand that brings flame? Or the color and scent of the flame? Or the flow of it all, the continuity of the whole of the spell? What about those? Vorthos allowed his mind to wander. With a subtle change of body motion and a fluid song instead of rhythmic chant, Vorthos believed he could create something more than just fire.

The rhythm was holding him back. It was holding him down. This was not magic. At that moment, Vorthos saw an answer. A beautiful, simple answer that would allow him to break free of this constricting rhythm and create something new. At that moment, Vorthos, was no longer a student. He was awakened to an awareness beyond that of structured tutelage.



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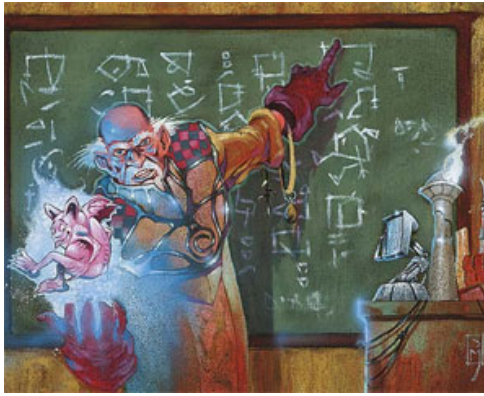
RULES

RULES

His movements bent just slightly from the rhythm, weaving in and out of time like a confident musician. He changed little from the prescribed motions – but enough to create a complex juxtaposition against the simple metronomic thud.

“Vorthos! Mind your rudiments!”

Vorthos did have desire to please his master. But his desire to treat magic like an art form was stronger. As he struggled to do both at the same time, weaving subtle flourishes and barely-audible inflections into his rudiments, Vorthos entered a heightened state of wizardry. As he continued his furtive spellwork, he became more and more aware of the world opening up to him. The sounds and sights of his master, the drum, and the other pupils began to fade as a kaleidoscope of light, energy, music, and awareness opened before him- and then shut.



“Vorthos! Stay on tempo!” his master cried out as he poked Vorthos to the rhythm of the drum with the pointy end of his wand.

Vorthos was pulled out of his reverie— but he had changed. He had already gained new knowledge, new insights, new power, and it all came from organic, beautiful magic. Not from the repetitious toil prescribed by his master.

*“Vorthos does not care about tempo!”*

With that he continued the motions of the assigned flame spell, but his mind skipped elsewhere. His body and brain performed a paradoxical duet, swinging in and out of connection with each other.

His master shook his finger and flapped his jaw in silent, slow motion. With no drum to follow, the other students slowly fell from their synchrony and looked from each other to their master in slow, exaggerated confusion.

Silence

In the welcome relief of silence, Vorthos again found himself slipping into another consciousness.

He continued his spell, afraid of breaking whatever magic it was that brought him here. In this new place there were no lights or sounds, just an unending expanse of nothingness and everythingness all at once. In this wide open space, Vorthos’s mind expanded. It widened and deepened to fit the vastness of this place. How all of this came from a simple flame spell; the silence, the portal to...here, Vorthos was not sure. But it felt like home. For so long his wizard’s mind was forced to live in a grid of tiny rigid boxes, unable to expand.

As he drifted, Vorthos felt his spell welling up in him, pulsing from his head down to his heart and through his left arm. Just as he began to feel the warm buzz in his palm, just as the flame was about to pop from his fingertips, a sound broke the silence and his hand lit up the nothing with color.

“Welcome.”

*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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