

Put on your parka, because Magic's about to enter a new ice age. Coming in from the Cold

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You remember the kid in your class who reminded the teacher that homework was due, ruining things for everyone else? The continent of Terisire has someone like that, except he wants to bring back the *Ice Age* that everyone worked so hard to banish. *Coldsnap*, the newest **Magic** set, is also one of the most unusual sets ever seen. Creatively, it harkens back to a time long past, with characters that have been established for almost a decade, created by an almost entirely different team. But that's part of the exciting challenge, and part of the fun. Taking up where *Alliances* left off, *Coldsnap* forges a new story with familiar elements, and brings the *Ice Age* story to a final, shattering conclusion.



What can you expect from *Coldsnap* creatively? Like its mechanics, this set's creative elements will feature a lot that's both old and new. Obviously, you'll meet new characters, new species, and new places. But you'll also find out more about people and things you already met during *Ice Age* and *Alliances*. You might even encounter a few characters made into cards that would've been right at home in those old expansions! In this way, *Coldsnap* truly unifies *Ice Age* and *Alliances* into a cohesive block creatively.

Unlike most story articles, I'm going to spend quite a bit of time discussing a story some of you already know. However, many players today are unfamiliar with the *Ice Age* and *Alliances* storyline, and it's important that you get an idea of what's going on, because *Coldsnap* will be working with a lot of what came before. If you're an old **Magic** veteran, prepare to be reminded of stories past. If you're relatively new to the game, you'll learn what you need to know to make sense of the upcoming set.

We actually start at the end of the *Antiquities* storyline, when the Brothers' War ended with a massive explosion that leveled the island of Argoth. Besides destroying a significant landmass, not to mention Mishra and his Phyrexian cohorts, the blast would have far-reaching consequences, starting an *Ice Age* that would plunge the world into two thousand years of snow and cold.

Ice Age deals with that harsh world, and the people trying to survive it. It introduced us to many iconic creatures, spells, and people: the Ithurgoyf, **Necropotence**, and one of the most beloved flavor

text characters of all time, the beautiful and sarcastic freelance mage **Jaya Ballard**. It brought back Legendary creatures, and was the first set to make them into active story characters. Further, *Ice Age* was a big step forward for **Magic** storylines, the first set to spawn an immediate sequel that picked up the story where the previous set left off. It was also the first time that the Brother's War was mentioned (through references to Urza) on cards since *Antiquities*, a hint of the war's future importance to the **Magic** storyline.

When *Ice Age* was first released, there were no **Magic** novels tied directly to the storyline. It fell to Jeff Grubb to fill in this blank over five years later with his well-received trilogy of novels: *The Gathering Dark*, *The Eternal Ice*, and *The Shattered Alliance*, which told the story of *The Dark*, *Ice Age*, and *Alliances* respectively (the link between *The Dark* and *Ice Age* storylines was also original to these novels). The novels followed Grubb's original and popular protagonist, the long-lived archmage Jodah, as players saw the Dominaria of that era through prose for the first time. And players found that, for all the flavor text describing how grim life was, the situation was even worse than they'd ever imagined.



One of the largest civilizations still remaining on the Dominarian continent of Terisire is the kingdom of Kjeldor, ruled by the strong, wise King Darien. With the help of the loyal General Jarkeld, Darien has done the best he can for his people, creating an enclave that stands against the howling winds and marauding snow-beasts. However, in a world where most beings have to fight tooth and nail just to survive, there are bound to be problems. The School of the Unseen, the continent's most prominent sorcerer's academy, has grown arrogant, believing that their talents make them the most powerful beings in the world. The Balduvian Mountains hold a

huge tribe of barbarians who find themselves forced to go to greater and greater lengths to survive, as do the local goblins. One of Darien's most skilled soldiers, General Varchild, is agitating to exterminate the Balduvian barbarians, more for her own bigotry than the good of Kjeldor. The Juniper Order druids struggle to maintain what they can of the nature they once knew in the face of extreme temperatures. An ongoing debate in the city of Soldev pits machinist Arcum Dagsson against Sorine Relicbane over the value of using the mysterious artifacts left behind in the Brothers' War. To top it all off, in the dark keep called Tresserhorn, the necromancer Lim-Dul schemes to use all this chaos and weakness to gain absolute power.

Alliances followed Terisire at a crossroads, one that could very well determine the course of the entire world of Dominaria. The first set to develop on the story and mechanics from the set before, *Alliances* was a groundbreaking set from the get-go. Though mainly known for such powerhouse cards as **Force of Will** and **Kjeldoran Outpost**, it also heralded the return of Phyrexia's sinister influence, and could be considered a renaissance for the Gorilla creature type. While *Ice Age* introduced many characters and set up many situations, *Alliances* expanded on those characters' fates, and brought many of those situations to a head.

Even with their creator gone, Lim-Dul's forces are on the move, as are the minions of the planeswalkers Leshrac and Tevesh Szat. General Varchild, prodded by the dark Order of Stromgald, has grown tired of waiting for her liege's approval, and has begun moving against the Balduvian

barbarians on her own. Kaysa, current elder druid of the Juniper Order, is having a hard time keeping things together, even as she holds out hope for intervention from divine sources. Arcum Dagsson finds that his devices are much darker than he ever thought, and finds himself in a position he never dreamed possible: architect of Soldev's destruction. And all the while, the weather grows colder and colder.

Yet now we know that there was an end. Exactly how the cooling trend reversed itself wasn't revealed in all its glorious detail until *The Shattered Alliance*, when we find out that the thawing was the result of a powerful spell cast by the planeswalker Freyalise. She was already familiar as a name evoked as a godlike figure in flavor text, and someone we'd see a lot more of during the *Invasion* block. Only someone of her magical strength could break the hold of winter on the world. So Dominaria was finally on its way to becoming something more than a gigantic ice cube, and everyone is happy, right?

Wrong. As *Coldsnap* opens, we find someone who is very unhappy with this turn of events. He is Heidar, leader of a faction of Rimewind wizards, who derived most of their power from cold and ice. He sees the thawing not as a redemption for Dominaria, but as a threat to his power. His solution: refreeze the world. With the power of his snow-based creatures, and Phyrexian remains stolen from Soldev, he plans to herald in a new, permanent *Ice Age*, one in which his Rimewind magic will reign supreme. For King Darien and his new allies, which include the Balduvian barbarians and Juniper Order, this is a threat that cannot be ignored. And so Kjeldor and its friends must embark on one last great mission, to keep a madman from returning Terisire to its icy misery forevermore. We know they succeed, but how? That's for you, the players, to find out.



Even though this is a unique set, and a unique article for me, there's still one thing that remains the same: a preview card! Although I didn't write any names or flavor text for this set, there are still a lot of cards that jump out at me for various reasons - nostalgic connection to the past sets, power, or just plain coolness. This is definitely one of the ones that fall into that last category:



It's the new largest creature in **Magic**! Well, sort of. In case you were wondering, this massive token creature is a manifestation of Marit Lage, a sorceress whose power was so great, some worshipped her as a goddess. She was eventually imprisoned within the Dominarian ice, in a location that has never been revealed... until now. With her might, it's appropriate that her incarnation is represented by a token that would make any Timmy drool for days. If you're patient enough, you too can command a massive flying indestructible legend to wreak havoc on your hapless foes!

Of course, most **Magic** players *aren't* all that patient, but fortunately, there are other options for speeding up the arrival of your nice juicy token. **Power Conduit** is a good choice. **Chisei, Heart of Oceans** is a good choice. **Aether Snap** is a very good choice. Whatever sneaky trick you use, I'm sure that the **Magic** player brain trust will put together many devious ways to tap the power of the Dark Depths. This is one of those cards where the journey is just as important as the destination, so have fun – the goal is definitely worth your while!

And so, for now, we leave this old world, made new again with a fascinating revisit. Will other planes, other sets get such treatment? Will Rabiah tell more stories, or Ulgrotha get another look? Who

knows? That may be partly up to you, the players, and your reactions to this set. But for now, enjoy the bite of *Coldsnap*, and take my advice: keep warm. Very, very warm.