

# Notes and stories about the twenty new legendary cards in *Time Spiral*. The Legends of *Time Spiral*

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It's ironic that I would be asked to rifle through my memories about how and why the legendary cards in *Time Spiral* came to be, because rifling through memories is what *Time Spiral* is all about. It's how the set was created. So in this article I'll try to reconstruct some interesting tidbits about how *Time Spiral*'s legends came to be, as well as some things you might not know about them.

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When I was asked to write an article about *Time Spiral*'s legendary cards, my internal reaction was, "Time Spiral? That's ancient history!" The illustrators' style guide for *Time Spiral* was completed over a year ago. I chose concepts for the last of the *Time Spiral* cards last December. I handed off the last bit of text for *Time Spiral*, the stuff that goes into the Fat Pack Player's Guide, in April. So I've had about half a year to forget everything I once knew about *Time Spiral*'s minutiae. And as our storyline gurus can tell you, I can forget a lot in half a year.



It's ironic that I would be asked to rifle through my memories about how and why the legendary cards in *Time Spiral* came to be, because rifling through memories is what *Time Spiral* is all about. It's how the set was created. So in this article I'll try to reconstruct some interesting tidbits about how *Time Spiral*'s legends came to be, as well as some things you might not know about them.

I'll start by outlining some criteria the creative team had for what legendary figures would be right for the set. These are in addition to more general ones, such as making sure the legendary cards spanned all five colors, and so on.

- *Dominaria only*. Even though *Time Spiral* is meant to be a weird trip down memory lane, we didn't want to throw all sense of continuity out the window. For many years every **Magic** set has had one definable setting. So early on we decided *Time Spiral* should not just toss stuff together from random planes across the multiverse.
- *No careless resurrections*. In good stories, characters die for good reasons. Most stories get worse when they bring back characters whose deaths had meaning. So although "past and future

collapsing into the present” enabled us to do some crazy things, I didn't want characters whose deaths were important to show up in the set randomly.

- *Nostalgia is subjective.* Salty old-schoolers like me might be nostalgic for what **Magic** was in 1994. But for every player nostalgic for *Legends*, there are two nostalgic for *Fallen Empires*. For every player nostalgic for *Fallen Empires*, there are two or three for *Onslaught*. We made an effort to pick figures from all over **Magic's** history, not just the earliest early days. That philosophy applied to all *Time Spiral* cards, not just legendary cards.

Let's take a look at the legendary cards that made the grade. There are twenty in all—between one and three per color, seven multicolored cards, and four land cards.

## Allied-Color-Pair Legends

First up is the 'cycle' of Ith, Dralnu, Kaervek, Stonebrow, and Saffi. I refer to them that way because the slots came before the characters did. The design team knew they wanted five legendary cards from **Magic's** past, one to represent each of **Magic's** five allied-color pairs. Given the restrictions we made for ourselves, it wasn't easy. For each pair of allied colors, we had to come up with a character (1) from Dominaria (2) that didn't die too meaningfully and (3) that meant something to most players.

The only way I can think of to communicate how challenging it was to come up with these five is to have you try it yourself. First, choose an allied-color pair, then come up with a character who typifies those colors and meets the criteria above. For the truly ambitious, do this for all five allied-color pairs and post your ideas on our message boards, in the thread for discussing this article. I'm eager to hear what you come up with.



### Ith, High Arcanist

Mentioned on:

[Wand of Ith](#), [Maze of Ith](#), [Dark Sphere](#), [Barl's Cage](#)

Shown on: Only his own card

*Story role:* Ith was a major character of Jeff Grubb's *Ice Age* trilogy, which includes *The Gathering Dark*, *The Eternal Ice*, and *The Shattered Alliance*. He is an archmage of tremendous power and the founder of a wizards' council known as The Conclave. He was imprisoned by Mairsil the Pretender in a magical cage made by the artificer Barl. A relatively young mage named Jodah helped free Ith, who wreaked a furious vengeance on Mairsil.

*Notes:* In creating a story for *The Dark* and the *Ice Age* block, the novelist Jeff Grubb misread the flavor text of [Dark Sphere](#). Its attribution reads, "Barl, Lord Ith," but Grubb read it as "Barl, to Lord Ith." Grubb's books, therefore, made Barl and Lord Ith two separate people, thereby redefining existing continuity.



### **Dralnu, Lich Lord**

*Mentioned on:*

[Dralnu's Pet](#), [Dralnu's Crusade](#), [Sinister Strength](#), [Exotic Disease](#), [Lord of the Undead](#)

*Shown on:* [Sinister Strength](#), [Exotic Disease](#), [Lord of the Undead](#)

*Story role:* Dralnu, a necromancer lich from Urborg, joined the Coalition against the Phyrexians during the Invasion. His main contact in the Coalition was the metathran commander Agnate. (The metathran were a race of beings magically engineered by the planeswalker Urza.) Although they were allies, Dralnu infected Agnate with a plague that would enable the lich to slowly turn the metathran commander into one of his own undead minions. Agnate caught onto Dralnu's plan, however, and had the minotaur Grizzlegom take his life to spare him from undeath.

*Notes:* [Lord of the Undead](#) represents Dralnu, but we felt Dralnu was a cool enough and interesting enough figure to get his own legendary card, not just an illustration reference.



### **Kaervek the Merciless**

*Mentioned on:*

[Kaervek's Hex](#), [Kaervek's Spite](#), [Kaervek's Torch](#), [Kaervek's Purge](#), [Divine Offering](#), [Disempower](#), [Spirit Link](#), [Shrieking Drake](#), [Ancestral Memories](#), [Psychic Transfer](#), [Wicked Reward](#), [Enfeeblement](#), [Urborg Mindsucker](#), [Feral Shadow](#), [Wall of Corpses](#), [Bone Harvest](#), [Nekrataal](#), [Blanket of Night](#), [Desolation](#), [Soul Rend](#), [Ashen Powder](#), [Aku Djinn](#), [Reign of Chaos](#), [Tempest Drake](#), [Phyrexian Vault](#)

*Shown on:* [Kaervek's Purge](#)

*Story role:* Kaervek is the central villain of the *Mirage* block storyline. He plays the green-aligned mage Jolrael against the peace-seeking [Mangara](#). Kaervek and Jolrael trap Mangara in the [Amber Prison](#), but in the end, through the cooperation of many figures, including [Hakim](#), [Asmira](#), [Rashida](#), and the repentant Jolrael, Mangara is freed and Kaervek himself is trapped in the [Amber Prison](#).

*Notes:* The *Mirage* storyline is rich but not easily derivable from cards, and has no novel corresponding to it. We were surprised to have such difficulty determining Kaervek's appearance. Eventually we decided that the [Kaervek's Purge](#) card represented him, but that was a somewhat arbitrary determination.



### **Stonebrow, Krosan Hero**

*Mentioned on:* Only his own card

*Shown on:* Only his own card

*Story role:* Stonebrow was [Kamahl's](#) right hand after the death of the centaur elder Seton at the hands of the dementia summoner [Braids](#). When Kamahl used the [Mirari](#) to amplify the creatures of the Krosan Forest, Stonebrow served as the general of the strange army. The axe he carries is Soul Reaper, the same axe Kamahl used to cleave [Phage](#) and [Akroma](#) in a single blow, thus creating the false god [Karonas](#).

*Notes:* Although Stonebrow is an important character in the *Onslaught* trilogy, he has no prior presence on cards. We hesitated before giving him a card of his own, but the list of candidates for red-green legends that met our criteria was very, very short.



### **Saffi Eriksdotter**

Mentioned on: [Lhurgoyf](#)

Shown on: Only her own card

*Story role:* Saffi is a random person who lived during Dominaria's Ice Age. She doesn't figure into any larger **Magic**story. She is featured in the short story, "Ach! Hans, Run!" by Will McDermott, compiled in *The Monsters of Magic* anthology.

*Notes:* This may come as a shock: The idea to do a card for Saffi came from Mark Rosewater, who wrote the [Lhurgoyf](#) flavor text. That flavor text is inexplicably referenced on [Revenant](#), as well. We knew some players are fond of the flavor text, so we thought this slot would be a good place to inject a little dark humor.

## **Legendary Lands**

Onto the legendary land cards, which are a little tricky to explain. Here's how it goes, messy as it is: With *Mirrodin*, the creative team realized that representing particular places is very flavorful and useful in communicating the setting. But in the meantime, the card designers and developers had learned over time that the best number of legendary lands to produce in, say, a year is very, very low. So the creative team rewrote the rules about concepting lands to enable more unique places to be represented on cards. The "new" rules are as follows: A legendary land is one that can sustain only one "mana bond" with a mage – for one reason or another the land can't support multiple mages calling on its mana. Any nonlegendary land, whether it's a particular place or a nonspecific one, can support "mana bonds" with more than one mage.

What does that mean for *Time Spiral's* legendary lands? It means that (a) they can provide enough mana for only one mage at a time, and (b) that basically means they're legendary for mechanical reasons rather than flavor reasons, because there's no longer any good reason for a land to be legendary flavorwise. If I had to invent one, I'd say it has something to do with the fact that these lands are so devastated, so diminished from what they once were, that they can provide only a trickle of mana.



### **Gemstone Caverns**

This card was made legendary as the first in a series of balance tweaks to its original design (submitted by 2005 Invitational player Tsuyoshi Fujita). As best we can tell, the Creative team simply overlooked the card's legendary status when conceiving it. It has no story referent at all. Chime in on this article's thread on our message boards to let us know whether you think we missed an opportunity to represent a notable Dominarian place with this card.



### **Flagstones of Trokair**

*Mentioned on:* [Ruins of Trokair](#), [Combat Medic](#), [Farrel's Zealot](#), [Vodalian Mage](#), [Goblin Chirurgeon](#)

*Shown on:* [Ruins of Trokair](#)

*Story role:* Trokair was a major city in Icatia that was besieged and sacked by orcish hordes. Trokair's fall prompted Farrel and his followers to break with Icatian leadership and start fighting the [Order of the Ebon Hand](#) head on.

*Notes:* Early on in the *Time Spiral* creative process, the team constructed lists of all known places in Dominaria. Then we subtracted out the places only novel readers and storyline gurus would know about. The remaining list was surprisingly very short. Dominaria is huge, but the only white-aligned places most players have heard of are Benalia, Icatia, and Zhalfir—maybe Avenant and one or two others as well. In looking for something unique and a little obscure for this card, we decided to reference the lesser-known location of Trokair.



## **Academy Ruins**

*Mentioned on:* [Academy Rector](#); [Academy Researchers](#); [Rayne, Academy Chancellor](#); [Tolarian Academy](#), [Frantic Search](#), [Rescue](#), [Douse](#), [Temporal Adept](#), [Treachery](#), [Show and Tell](#)

*Shown on:* [Tolarian Academy](#), and also on the cover of the *Planar Chaos* novel

*Story role:* The remote isle of Tolaria was the site of a famous wizards' school founded by the planeswalker Urza: the [Tolarian Academy](#). This was where Urza perfected his skills as an artificer and began experimenting with time. His goal was to somehow travel backward in time, before Phyrexia and its god, Yawgmoth, became too strong to be opposed. He created a golem of silver, [Karn](#), to test his time-travel theories. One time experiment went disastrously wrong, however, and the academy was decimated. Most of its wizards and sages were killed. The fabric of time on Tolaria was shattered, with unpredictable pockets of slow-moving and fast-moving time riddling the island. Eventually, however, the island was somewhat healed, and the Academy was reestablished with less grandiose and less dangerous goals.

During the Phyrexian Invasion, the wizard Barrin returned to Tolaria to lay his dead daughter Hanna to rest there, only to find it under attack by Phyrexians. Overcome with fury and a lust for vengeance, Barrin cast the spell he swore he would never cast. It utterly obliterated the attacking Phyrexians, the Academy, and the isle of Tolaria itself.

*Notes:* [Academy Ruins](#) shows the remains of the [Tolarian Academy](#) underwater, sitting at the bottom of the crater created by Barrin's obliterate spell. As storyline gurus know, however, the Creative team played loose with continuity to create this card. The *Invasion* block novels describe Tolaria as being melted into a featureless plane of molten rock, not a deep crater.



## **Kher Keep**

*Mentioned on:* [Kobolds of Kher Keep](#), [Rohgahh of Kher Keep](#)

*Shown on:* Only its own card

*Story role:* None, other than housing a bunch of kobolds

*Notes:* Kobolds are a beloved curiosity among super-old-school players, and we felt it would be a little wrong not to mention them at all in a nostalgia-themed set.

## Single-Color Legends

Unlike the allied-color-pair legends and the legendary lands, these cards started with the desire to represent particular characters – fan favorites from flavor text and stories past.



### **Endrek Sahr, Master Breeder**

*Mentioned on:* [Basal Thrull](#), [Armor Thrull](#), [Basal Sliver](#), [Derelor](#)

*Shown on:* Only his own card

*Story role:* Sahr was a servant of the [Order of the Ebon Hand](#) and the dark mind behind the creation of thrulls, twisted creations of black mana.

*Notes:* **Magic's** creative identity owes a tremendous amount to the imaginations of Mark Tedin and Anson Maddocks, and we were very happy that Mark agreed to revisit some of the early-days material in his *Time Spiral* illustrations.



**Ib Halfheart, Goblin Tactician**

*Mentioned on:* [Blinking Spirit](#), [Spoils of War](#), [Goblin Ski Patrol](#), [Goblin Snowman](#), [Panglacial Wurm](#), [Wall of Shields](#)

*Shown on:* Only his own card

*Story role:* None. Ib is simply an amusingly stupid goblin.



**Jaya Ballard, Task Mage**

Jaya has gotten plenty of attention from my colleague, Matt Cavotta. I don't want to risk overexposing everyone's favorite pyro, so I'll simply refer you [here](#).



### **Lim-Dûl the Necromancer**

*Mentioned on:*

[Lim-Dûl's High Guard](#), [Legions of Lim-Dûl](#), [Lim-Dûl's Hex](#), [Lim-Dûl's Cohort](#), [Oath of Lim-Dûl](#), [Lim-Dûl's Vault](#), [Lim-Dûl's Paladin](#), [Moor Fiend](#), [Kjeldoran Dead](#), [Drudge Reavers](#), [Burnt Offering](#), [Dark Banishing](#), [Dark Ritual](#), [Foul Familiar](#), [Touch of Death](#), [Howl from Beyond](#), [Fear](#), [Seizures](#), [Casting of Bones](#), [Feast or Famine](#), [Abyssal Specter](#), [Leshrac's Rite](#), [Drift of the Dead](#), [Icequake](#), [Minion of Tevesh Szat](#), [Spoils of Evil](#), [Mind Whip](#), [Glacial Crevasses](#), [Diabolic Vision](#), [Ghostly Flame](#), [Reclamation](#), [Skeleton Ship](#), [Staff of the Ages](#)

*Shown on:* Only his own card

*Story role:* Lim-Dûl (pronounced "lim-DOOL") was the main antagonist of the *Ice Age* storyline. After finding the ring of Mairsil the Pretender, Lim-Dûl became the puppet of two powerful, evil planeswalkers: Tevesh Szat and Leshrac. He waged war on the nations of Terisiare with his undead hordes, but in the end Lim-Dûl was brought low by the archmage Jodah. Leshrac took Lim-Dûl and fled Dominaria for the plane of Shandalar.

*Notes:* For such an often-quoted character, details about Lim-Dûl's appearance were difficult to find. Illustrator Matt Cavotta used the figure on the back of the novel *The Eternal Ice* as inspiration for his representation of the famous necromancer.



### **Mangara of Corondor**

Mentioned on: [Mangara's Blessing](#), [Mangara's Equity](#), [Mangara's Tome](#), [Mtenda](#)

[Herder](#), [Disempower](#), [Relic Ward](#), [Mind Harness](#), [Blanket of Night](#), [Aku Djinn](#), [Natural Order](#), [Scalebane's Elite](#), [Prismatic Boon](#), [Kaervek the Merciless](#)

Shown on: [Amber Prison](#)

Story role: Mangara, a diplomat and sage, was trapped in the [Amber Prison](#) by the mages Jolrael and Kaervek. The *Mirageblock* story focused on several heroes' attempt to free Mangara and overcome Kaervek. In the end, after being freed by his allies, Mangara turned the tables on Kaervek and trapped him in the [Amber Prison](#), restoring relative peace on Jamuraa.



### **Mishra, Artificer Prodigy**

*Mentioned on:*

[Mishra's Bauble](#), [Ankh of Mishra](#), [Mishra's Groundbreaker](#), [Mishra's Factory](#), [Mishra's War Machine](#), [Mishra's Helix](#), [Mishra's Workshop](#), [Artifact Blast](#), [Treetop Rangers](#), [Elvish Herder](#), [Urza's Guilt](#), [Battering Ram](#), [Grapeshot Catapult](#), [Dragon Engine](#), [Staff of Zegon](#), [Ashnod's Battle Gear](#), [Assembly-Worker](#), [Mightstone](#), [Weakstone](#), [The Rack](#), [Strip Mine](#), [Urza's Factory](#)

*Shown on:* [Endoskeleton](#), [Urza's Guilt](#)

*Story role:* As young men, the artificer prodigies Urza and Mishra, brothers, discovered two artifacts of immense power in the [Caves of Koilos](#): the [Mightstone](#) and [Weakstone](#). Each coveted the other's stone, and over time this led to a rivalry, a kind of arms race as each tested his abilities as an artificer, and finally, a brutal war. Mishra used Phyrexian machines to advance his cause, and his dealings with Phyrexia corrupted him and drove him partially mad. The Brothers' War ended at Argoth when Urza used the [Golgothian Sylex](#), a Thran artifact, to decimate Mishra and his forces. When the dust cleared, Mishra was gone, and Urza began his long quest to defeat the one who he believed turned his brother against him: Yawgmoth, Lord of Phyrexia.



### **Norin the Wary**

*Mentioned on:* [Animate Wall](#), [Viscid Lemures](#), [Goblin Shrine](#), [Sabretooth Tiger](#), [Jade Statue](#)

*Shown on:* Only his own card

*Story role:* None. Norin is simply an amusingly stupid coward.



### **Scion of the Ur-Dragon**

*Mentioned on:* [Dromar's Attendant](#), [Crosis's Attendant](#), [Darigaaz's Attendant](#), [Rith's Attendant](#), [Treva's Attendant](#) (the concept of the Ur-Dragon)

*Shown on:* Only his own card

*Story role:* The Ur-Dragon isn't a creature, but a concept – the paragon of “dragon-ness.” This card represents a manifestation of one aspect of the dragon ideal.



### **Teferi, Mage of Zhalfir**

Teferi is one of **Magic's** most enduring and multifaceted characters. He was a planeswalker and is a significant character in the stories of four separate **Magic** blocks. He deserves an article of his own, so I'll leave that for another time.



### **Thelon of Havenwood**

*Mentioned on:* [Thelon's Chant](#), [Thelonite Druid](#), [Thelonite Monk](#), [Thelonite Hermit](#), [Thelon's Curse](#)

*Shown on:* Only his own card

*Story role:* Thelon, an elf leader of Havenwood, faced a dying forest as Sarpadia's climate changed. Desperate to keep his people alive, Thelon turned to the [Order of the Ebon Hand](#) to learn the secrets of thrull creation. He then applied this knowledge to create thallids, plant-based creatures that the elves used as both servants and food. The thallids proliferated and were eventually the elves' downfall. It's said that when the Sarpadian Empires fell, only the thrulls and thallids were left alive on the continent.



### **Tivadar of Thorn**

Mentioned on: [Morale](#), [Knights of Thorn](#), [Tivadar's Crusade](#)

Shown on: Only his own card

*Story role:* Tivadar was the founder and leader of the [Knights of Thorn](#), an order dedicated to the extermination of the goblin race. The [Knights of Thorn](#) thrived as Dominaria's *Ice Age* approached, and received help from the wizard [Rasputin Dreamweaver](#).

## **The Legends Continue...**

Well there you have it – a little something for each of the twenty new legendary cards in *Time Spiral*. We think these cards are crucial in making *Time Spiral* feel like a chronicle of Dominaria's crazy history, and we hope you agree. You can count on seeing more legendary cards, both familiar and unfamiliar (sometimes both at once), in the upcoming *Planar Chaos* and *Future Sight* releases.