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5-Baggers

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PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

Well, the *Time Spiral* cat has been out of the bag for a while now, but we've barely begun to explore its flavor. It's just this time in a set's young life that I like to dig in and hunt down some heavy hitters. *Time Spiral* is a big set, with 301 cards. There's bound to be some home run hitters in that large talent pool. The thing is – we're changing the rules of baseball with regard to this Home Run challenge. This time, there are 5 bases on the field. Normally, a card must hit strong on art, name, flavor text, and creative/mechanic synergy. But in post-apocalyptic Dominaria, home plate is all about nostalgia. If the card does not also have a strong nostalgic tie to an old card, then the runner holds up at fourth base. At the point in which I have typed these very words, I have not yet looked through the file to see if anything can possibly put one over the fence under these circumstances. Let's see who's carrying the heavy lumber...

(It's been a few minutes of looking at the set and no one has stepped to the plate yet. Wow, 5 bases might be tough.)

(It's been another few minutes and now I am seeing some strong lookin' folks!)

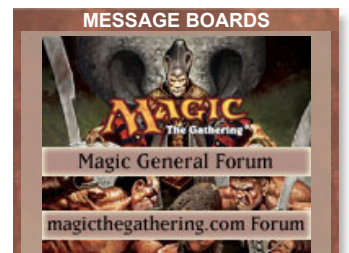
Assassinate

He rounds first base. (Do I even need to explain the simple power of the name, *Assassinate*? I didn't think so.) It looks like second base is going to be easy too. I absolutely love this art. Setting aside everything that's cool about the concept (which is a lot), the aesthetics alone are enough to head to third. The angled, upside-downish viewpoint really captures the feel of a victim that has slumped to the ground. The technique is strong, and the drawing is superb. On we go.

The rulers of old Dominaria kept assassins on retainer. However, the true loyalty of these master killers was to their peers. This elite brotherhood survived the fall of the old royal order.

This flavor text is a doozy too. It packs so much interesting stuff. We get a little history lesson on the office of *Royal Assassin*, and the insider scoop on their secret allegiance only to each other. I can imagine them, all trying to outdo each other with more powerful victims, cleaner escapes, or more outrageous signature techniques. This flavor text also does a good job hinting at the devastating effects of apocalypse. The old royal order died out, but the agile, stealthy brotherhood survives. I like it, he's heading for fourth. (Wow, that sounds odd.)

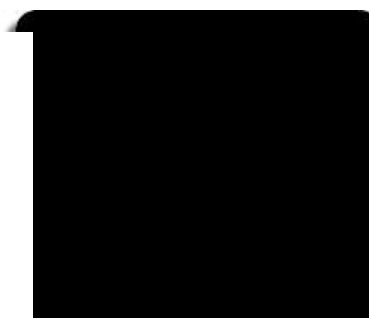
The tie between the creative elements and the mechanics of this card are as tight as a garrote. The card, in essence, mimic's the ability of the *Royal Assassin*. As we all know, assassins kill people. This card kills someone. End of story. Well, actually, that's the beginning of a story – the nostalgic story. This card is just bleeding with nostalgia. The reference to *Royal Assassin* is strong and elegant. The name is simply perfect, the flavor text speaks of old Dominaria, and the art is a direct reference to *Royal Assassin*'s. Check out the art on the left. The makeup worn by this assassin is echoed in the markings on the victim's face in *Assassinate*. In my mind, the Assassin's makeup is his own little piece of dark theatre, and the makeup slapped on the victim is his calling card—so he can brag to his peers when word gets out. This card's nostalgic ties to older cards and old storylines are so great that I am having trouble finding anything to say that the card itself does not already say better. The assassin trots 'round fourth and scrawls his black sign on home plate!



Ib Halfheart, Goblin Tactician

Ib is a bit of an underdog. Can this little guy swing the bat? We shall see.

Let's start again with the name. "Ib Halfheart, Goblin Tactician." Well, it had better be good, it's on six other **Magic** cards! Ib appears in the



flavor text of [Blinking Spirit](#), [Goblin Ski Patrol](#), [Panglacial Wurm](#), [Goblin Snowman](#), [Spoils of War](#), and [Wall of Shields](#). Though the name of this card was not something we could change, I still think it's a good one. "Ib" is an appropriately short name for a dunderheaded goblin. "Halfheart" is a bit heavy-handed for me, spelling out his lack of heroism a bit too bluntly. But, he is a dumb goblin and he is no hero, so I guess it's at least appropriate. The part I like is the "Goblin Tactician" part. One might ask, "If Ib is so dumb, how is he a tactician?" The answer is simple, because other goblins are dumber. You see, a goblin tactician is an oxymoron, and anything with "moron" in it is perfect for a goblin. Ib rounds first base... and picks up steam going into second. I absolutely love Ib's art. Wayne Reynolds is quickly becoming a **Magic** powerhouse. The "duh" expression on Ib's face says it all, while all the trappings of "office" – helmet, goggles, spyglass, armor, tools, flag, etc. – are all there to pick up where Ib's shoddy tactics leave off. I like it. On to the flavor text. Before we look at Ib's own flavor text, let's look at a few of his older statements:

"Don't look at it! Maybe it'll go away!" —Ib Halfheart, Goblin Tactician

"Strength in numbers? Right." —Ib Halfheart, Goblin Tactician

"It's the pokey bits that hurt the most." —Ib Halfheart, Goblin Tactician

It's obvious that Ib's tactics are questionable at best. Let's see what he has to offer in his own flavor text:

"Everybody but me—CHARGE!"

That's our hero, hangin' out in the back while everybody else gets blown up. I don't think this is literary gold, but I do think it's fitting and, frankly, a little funny. And the other thing it does nicely (as Ib makes a tentative turn at third base) is link up well with the card mechanic. It's right in line with these words from the text box: "Whenever *another* goblin..." Ha! You see, that is "goblin tactics." Hit a 4/4 [Baloth](#) – goblin go BOOM, 4 damage. Hit a 0/1 [potted plant token](#) – goblin go BOOM... As long as it's another goblin, Ib lives on to direct another [Goblin Offensive](#) straight into the [Mouth of Ronom](#). I think it's safe to say that the mechanic and the creative elements play well together. But can those little legs carry Ib home? Yes. Ib's very existence on a card is nostalgic. Weeee! Imagine that – you don't have to be smart to play baseball.

Teferi, Mage of Zhalfir

Upon further thought, I have decided to tell you that the Mage of Zhalfir can mash, but not explain how. I feel it would give away too much juicy stuff before novel readers have a chance to get through *Time Spiral*.

Though it appears as though he broke his bat at the plate, the ball did, in fact, clear the wall. Easily. He's like a post-apocalyptic Vladimir Guerrero, hitting dongers with broken bats. (Here's a fun little exercise for you—now that you know he hits it out, try to figure out how he rounds all 5.)



Saffi Eriksdotter

This is an interesting one. I feel Saffi embodies everything that is good about a *Time Spiral* card, but is she a home run? It's a little hard to tell. In a vacuum, her name and art are serviceable, but not amazing. Can a card be a legitimate home run if two of the five bases are just pretty good? Well, post-apocalyptic Dominaria plays baseball on a funny-shaped field. I think Saffi might just squeak this one over the wall. You see, this card exists because of nostalgia, and that changes the shape of the field a bit. While the name might not be a winner on its own, it has meaning brought with it from way back in *Ice Age*. Saffi made her debut in the flavor text of the card [Lhurgoyf](#). It was a short-lived moment in the spotlight, as you can see here:

"Ach! Hans, run! It's the lhurgoyf!" —Saffi Eriksdotter, last words



Yup, lovely Saffi died, a snack for the Lhurgoyf. And that scene brings new meaning to the *Time Spiral* card we have before us. Suddenly, there is meaning to the Scandinavian sound of her name – it is perfectly in flavor for Terisiare in the *Ice Age*. And the art begins to make sense. We now know why she is depicted running away. All those furs she's wearing seemed out of place, (because they are). But now it all makes sense. Let's take a look at her own flavor text to see how:

In the blink of an eye, she strode from deep snow to dusty waste. From the crease of light behind her, a voice rang hollow: "Saffi, wait for me"

The pieces all fall together. This flavor text is the ribbon that ties together this wonderful little gift of nostalgia. Back in the old days, Saffi kicked the bucket. But here in the now, time rifts are wreaking temporal chaos, reaching back and opening portals from the past to the present. And one of these portals just so happened to wink open right in Saffi's flight path. I don't really consider any one facet of this card to be awesome (though I am very proud to have penned the flavor text.) But all together, this card is one of *Time Spiral's* most successful tributes to nostalgia. Home run? Perhaps an in-the park homer. Maybe it was a case of a rabid fan reaching out to pull an easy fly ball over the home run wall. Today, that fan is me. I am your Dominarian Jeffrey Maier. (Nostalgia runs rampant at Taste The Magic. Click [here](#) for a serving of in-flavor baseball nostalgia.)



Vesuva

Here's another nostalgic gem. This card, like Ib, Saffi, and *Assassinate*, owe their existence to nostalgia. They are extrapolations and embellishments of cards we have seen in the past. *Vesuva* owes its name and its existence to the old favorite, *Vesuvan Doppelganger*. If we think about the doppelganger for a moment, we might begin to wonder what it means to be Vesuvan. Where is *Vesuva*, and what's it like there. Well, we can see just what it's like right here. And given this payoff, after wondering about what Vesuvan meant for 13 years, I'd say this card name is on the money.

The art, though, is the real gold. Click [here](#) for a nice big version to gawk at. Upon first sight, this art appears to be solidly done – strong drawing and handling of light, cool, mysterious color. But then you see it. The reflections in the water! While the city itself is a blasted ruin, just like the rest of Dominaria, the reflection shows a wondrous city, alight and bustling with people! How cool is that!?!

The art and the name are a perfect fit for a land that can assume the shape of any other land. It's the place where the *Vesuvan Doppelgangers* learned their tricks. That takes care of 3 bases. How about the flavor text?

It is everywhere you've ever been.

Yes, indeed. "You know, son, back in my day this place was a glitzy metropolis. Sure, it's a dusty old waste right now, but let me tell you – wha? Hey, look at that! It's Gerdibald's Tavern, and, look there. That dark alley is where I met your mother..." I will not even bore you with a recap of how all these flavor elements tie into nostalgia. Here's an appropriate way to describe a land card hitting a home run:

"Vesuva goes yard, ladies and gentlemen."

And I meant that literally. *Vesuva* bats left-handed, so it changed itself into Fenway Park, where the right field wall is the closest and the shortest. And the crowd goes wild!

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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