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# The Rebirth of Cool

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*Latest Developments*  
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Things can get dicey when putting a small expansion together, mainly because the previous large set – the block’s namesake and layer of all groundwork from which the small sets must spring – uses up the simplest and best implementations of all the block’s new themes and mechanics.

Look at suspend, for example. In *Time Spiral*, not only are there run-of-the-mill suspend sorceries and creatures, but also targeted sorceries (which have their own unique play decisions), spells that you can’t play except via suspend, cards with abilities that are active while suspended, and even one card that costs more to suspend than to play. That’s a lot of exploration for a single mechanic, especially when you consider that we plan to use it in all three sets of the block, and that each small set needs to come up with a twist of some kind that the other sets don’t have.

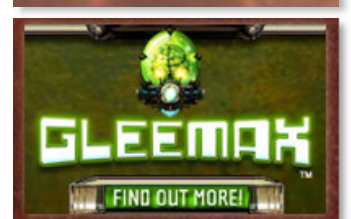


Don’t worry, *Planar Chaos* has its twist on suspend. We figured it out; we always do. But it can be difficult to make sure the first set packs in enough goodies to make new mechanics and themes seem deep and interesting, but not so much that there’s nothing really left for the rest of the block.

Of course, it’s not all doom and gloom for small set design. The road goes both ways. Often in the design of the big set, so many good ideas come forth that the set can’t hold them all, and the small sets get to start off with a collection of goodies that there just wasn’t room for in the previous set.

The card I’m showing off today is part of a cycle that was just that – a leftover from the *Time Spiral* design that just didn’t fit in that set, yet made perfect sense in *Planar Chaos*. *Time Spiral*’s nostalgia theme generated lots and lots of awesome card ideas, and there was no way to cram them all in one set, even if the set was over 400 cards like *Time Spiral* was. So *Planar Chaos* got this little gem and its brethren:

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Fans of *Sheldon Menery's Elder Dragon Highlander*<sup>TM</sup> format rejoice! Never before has there been a black-white-green legendary creature, but here it is now before you, with a beefy 6/6 body, evasion, a sick ability, and the magical six-mana cost.

Teneb and his four siblings (you've already seen Oros if you have been [paying attention](#)) are homages to the very popular cycle of dragons from the Invasion set, a cycle headlined by Rith, the Awakener and Dromar, the Banisher. But instead of being the allied "arc" colors (three colors that are adjacent on the wheel, like white-blue-black), the new dragons are enemy "wedge" colors (two allies and their shared enemy). And, as I said, these dragons are the first legends of those particular color combinations, and each one is only the third card in its color combinations total (each wedge combination has been used on a cycle of Apocalypse rares and a cycle of Dissension rare split cards. Teneb shares colors with Overgrown Estate and Crime//Punishment).

As part of *Time Spiral* planning, part of our design assignments was to find cycles in Magic's history that weren't complete. Those were difficult, as we tend to finish cycles (The only ones I remember coming across were the lack of an anti-blue *Paladin*, and the lack of a "possessed" creature that started out black.) But we did discover a bunch of allied gold cycles that could spawn interesting enemy-colored cycles, the Invasion dragons being the best of the bunch. Our initial plan wasn't that these were new versions of Rith and the original posse, but rather that there had always been five more that the makers of Invasion didn't want to tell you about. We made the five dragons, and even gave them some trappings, including their own "lair" – lands that tapped for three different colors of mana and had either vanishing 4 or suspend 2 (no, we weren't sure how suspend lands would work exactly). I believe we even discussed giving them "charms" as well along the lines of Dromar's Charm, but that never materialized.

As *Time Spiral* came together, what with its Bogardan Hellkite, Pardic Dragon, Scion of the Ur-Dragon, and timeshifted subset of gassy reprints, the design and development teams decided the *last* thing the set needed was a cycle of 6/6 Dragons. So they were slipped into Planar Chaos, which made much more sense because that set was centered around shifting the colors of known cards.

Now that the Dragons were in *Planar Chaos's* "What If?" universe, there was talk of making them into timeshifted versions of the actual Invasion dragons. So the black-centered "wedge" dragon would be a new version of Croxis – the previous black-centered dragon – say, "Croxis, the Delouser." But once the cycle of five non-dragon timeshifted legends was complete (*Akroma*, *Mirri*, etc.), it was decided that the dragons should be new entities, dark mirrors to those in Invasion, with all-new damage triggers.

In Constructed, history shows that dragons with these stats can make an impact – after all, Rith, Croxis, and Dromar have shown up in Top 8 decklists in various formats, and the mana bases available to players are much better now than they were five years ago. While not on the power level of Yosei or Kokusho, the new *Planar Chaos* dragons are still very

efficient and hard-hitting and should be good top-end finishers in several decks.

And on top of all that, they probably *don't* make Dragonstorm decks any better. What more could you ask of a dragon?

## Last Week's Poll

Damnation is the hotness... What other preview card excites you the most?		
Akroma, Angel of Fury	5966	31.2%
Groundbreaker	4194	21.9%
Magus of the Library	3131	16.3%
Mirri the Cursed	2444	12.8%
Radha, Heir to Keld	2057	10.7%
Body Double	872	4.6%
Retether	488	2.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>19152</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



If you like what's on that list, be sure to head out to your local [Prerelease](#) this weekend. Myself and several of my R&D cohorts will be in attendance at the Seattle event.

## This Week's Poll

**What is the most complicated thing about Magic?**

- The rules in general
- Learning new cards and mechanics
- Building original and/or competitive decks
- Figuring out the ideal play within the game
- The various levels of Organized Play

*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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