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# The Judge, the Zombie, and the Giant

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*Future Sight* was an incredibly difficult set to work on. (I wasn't even on any of the teams officially, and I still found it difficult!) The shock value that the set's designers were going for meant that every single card took us out of our comfort zones in one way or another. Everything from the lowly common vanilla creatures to the tournament-level bomb rares required one, and often more than one, new layer of decisions and analysis.

All that extra thinking and discussing meant that our "Multiverse" card database was a very, very busy place when this set was being worked on. Card-for-card, I'd imagine that more comments, suggestions, and concerns were logged for *Future Sight* than for any other set created in the time I've been working here.



Lucky for you—and to the possible chagrin of some of my cohorts—all that extra typing translates directly into content for you, the reader! Today I'll be presenting the ins and outs of three very different *Future Sight* cards—a common, an uncommon, and a rare—from inside the minds of R&D.

Each Multiverse comment is preceded by the initials of the person that wrote it. As a refresher, here are the minds at work:

- AF:** Our hero, yours truly. I was designing *Lorwyn* when *Future Sight* was in the pipeline, so my duties were minimal—playtester and occasional critic.
- bs:** Brain Schneider, erstwhile Head Developer for **Magic**. He left the company at the end of the *Future Sight* development cycle, and I took over for him.
- DAL:** Devin Low. Devin was a designer on the set. Recently he was promoted to fill Brian's old position that was my old position until I took Randy Buehler's old position. That means Devin is now the Head Developer for **Magic**, and for that I congratulate him!
- Del:** Del Laugel, **Magic's** top editor and Gatekeeper of Sanity.
- MC:** Matt Cavotta, artist, columnist, and, in this case, card designer.
- MJ:** Mons Johnson, developer, playtester, Goblin Warlord.
- MLG:** Mark Gottlieb, Rules Manager by day, designer of *Future Sight* cards by night. The "day" and "night" sides didn't get along too well.
- MM:** Mike Mikaelian, editor. Mike works primarily on digital games now (including **Magic Online**), but was working on "paper" **Magic** when *Future Sight* was in development.
- MP:** Matt Place, developer, playboy, action hero.
- MR:** Mark Rosewater. 'Nuff said.
- MT:** Mike Turian, lead developer of *Future Sight*. As sets go, *Future Sight* was an incredibly difficult assignment for someone's first-ever team lead, but Mike did a great job managing the chaos.
- PB:** Paul Barclay, one-time Rules Manager. I guess he still has access to the building somehow.
- ps:** Paul Sottosanti, designer/developer. Paul works mainly on digital games these days, but he loves **Magic** and always has useful things to say.
- sw:** Steve Warner, developer and playtester. Steve came to R&D via Customer Service, and his input as to what confuses and/or excites players is always valuable.
- ZM:** Zvi Mowshowitz, development intern, Pro Tour winner, supra-genius. Zvi's intern window allowed him to be a developer on *Planar Chaos* as well as a designer on *Future Sight*. He has since moved on from Wizards to explore other avenues of world domination.

On to the cards!

## Judge Unworthy





One of the design team's goals for *Future Sight* was to find interesting ways to evolve *Fifth Dawn*'s "scry" mechanic. In its first incarnation, scry was always just a rider tacked onto instants and sorceries—a way to smooth out draws and dig through your deck almost as an afterthought to whatever it was the card was actually supposed to be doing.

In *Future Sight*, however, the plan was to expand on scry as much as possible by (a) making it for some number of cards other than 2, (b) putting it on things other than instants and sorceries, and (c) having scry work with the cards' main effects somehow and not just be a rider.

Below is the card **Judge Unworthy** began life as, plus the comments on all the changes made on the road to becoming the card that we ended up printing. As a note, "Scry 3" on a creature was to be treated as a comes-into-play ability.

Samite of the Future

1W

Creature – Human Cleric

1/1

Scry 3

W, T, Remove the top card of your library from the game: Prevent the next X damage to target creature or player where X is the converted mana cost of the removed card.

ZM 2/13: Unreliable healer = not fun.

MR (2/24/06): Changed to CIP healing ability.

MC 3/5: This seems like so much to do for a card that just prevents damage. I hope we can find a more interesting scry evolution for white than this wordy dud.

DAL 3/10: Agree. You go through a lot of motions and text for very little payoff. Like **Cruel Deceiver**.

MR (3/14/06): Tried changing the effect to feel more like the text matters.

MC 3/16: This guy seems like he suddenly went crazy. Should a white common be able to summon out a force of 7+ dudes at instant speed for 3 mana? (There's a 7 cost common in this set.) I suggest we switch make x guys to do x damage to an attacker.

MR (3/20/06): Took Matt's suggestion.

MR (3/23/06): We had too many creatures so I turned it into a spell.

MR (3/24/06): DESIGN NOTE #1: I changed this guy from a flash guy with a CIP ability to a spell. This was done a) to simplify the card and b) because we had too many common white creatures. I'm willing to entertain any other Scry spell whose Scry interacts with the card's ability in some way.

MR (4/24/06): Team felt too close to Future **Shock**. Changed to an **Exile** like spell

Was:

Scry 3.

Reveal the top card of your library to all players and **CARDNAME** deals X damage to target attacking or blocking creature where X is the revealed card's converted mana cost.

AF 4/25: You have to choose the target when you play this. So you have to choose a creature then hope one of your top 4 cards has a mana cost of exactly X. Yuck.

Del 5/8: Had to remove the targeting restriction. Now checks CMC only on resolution.

AF 6/6: Random outcomes are fun in Magic, but not when it boils down to "success vs. fail." If this didn't target, it would be a different story. "Scry, reveal, remove an attacking creature..." Weird, but fewer bad outcomes.

MT 6/8: Now a ballista.

MR (6/8/06): You left out "attacking or blocking" so I added it in.

AF 6/8: I can't imagine that the average player will realize you have to target \*before\* you scry.

sw 6/12: They won't, CS got tons of calls before with scry about being able to do it before you did the effects of the spell.

Del 6/19: Targeting or not is a dev call. Alternate template is "CARDNAME deals damage to an attacking or blocking creature of your choice equal to the revealed card's converted mana cost." The downside, of course, is that you can't react by sacrificing the creature, playing local damage prevention effects, etc. Might be able to have a triggered ability on the spell that lets you eat the cake, but I can't come up with it right now.

DAL 7/3: I know that this is ballista, but I dislike how this and the red one both deal damage. I preferred the conditional exile. There's a coin flip element, but **Erratic Explosion** had that too, with even less control and it was fun. Also, we should not do this non-targeted.

AF 7/12: I wish there was a way to get opinions on people that aren't intricately familiar with the rules. I think over half the people that play this card will play it wrong.

MT 8/24: Was 3 mana.

Del 9/5: It turns out that this set wants scry to be more integrated into the text than in Fifth Dawn.

In a nutshell, here are the changes this card went through, each of which essentially began with "Scry 3":

- Healer that tapped to heal for the CMC of the top card of your library.
- Flash guy that had "CIP Prevent damage equal to the CMC of the top card of your library."
- Flash guy that had "CIP make X 1/1 tokens, where X is the CMC of the top card of your library."
- Flash guy that had "CIP do X damage to an attacker where X is the CMC of the top card of your library."
- Instant that did X damage to an attacker where X is the CMC of the top card of your library.
- Instant that removed target attacker from the game if its CMC matched that of the top card of your library.
- Back to the one that did damage to an attacker.

One of my biggest beefs with the card was the way it was templated near the end of development. It simply said "Scry 3," then a line break, then, "Reveal the top card of your library. CARDNAME deals damage to target attacking creature equal to..." blah blah blah. Now I know Magic's rules pretty darned well, and to me the card read like I was supposed to scry first, then pick a target to deal damage to. After all, previous targeted scry cards (like **Magma Jet**) told me to target a creature first, then scry, and this card had it in the reverse order. Of course, the rules state that you must choose targets for spells on announcement, which means you have to say who you are Judging before you scry—so I lobbied to make the card read as such.

Kudos to Del Laugel, Marl Gottlieb, and whatever outside help they enlisted for turning scry into more of a "game action" that can be written into a series of instructions on a card as opposed to a traditional "keyword." Now the card begins with "Choose target attacking or blocking creature, then scry 3..." That makes perfect sense!

## Skirk Ridge Exhumer



*Time Spiral* contains a cycle of spellshapers that emulate existing older cards (*Raise the Alarm*, *Rescue*, *Syphon Soul*, *Flowstone Strike*, and *Lay of the Land*). *Planar Chaos* has a similar cycle, except the cards they emulate are in different colors (*Scare Tactics* in white, *Harrow* in blue, *Guided Strike* in black, *Shriek of Dread* in red, and *Gerrard's Wisdom* in green).

*Future Sight*, as third sets are wont to do, decided to twist the cycle again in a new way. Here's where the team started, followed by where the card went:

Clinger to Darkness

2B

Creature – Human Spellshaper

1/1

1B, Discard a card, T: Put on target creature a **Clinging Darkness** Enchantment Aura token with "Enchanted creature gets -4/-1."

MR (3/29/06): DESIGN NOTE #1: We don't want this and the -4/-4 at common. I'm leaning towards keeping the common. Would like to see other effects for the enchantment token. Remember that this cycle's enchantments are based on old auras.

MR (4/4/06): CQI enchantment

MR (4/13/06): Made the enchantment Binding Agony.

MR (4/24/06): Changed to make creatures.

Was:

1B, Discard a card, T: Put into play attached to target creature a black Aura enchantment token named Binding Agony with "Enchant creature" and "All damage dealt to enchanted creature is instead dealt to that creature's controller."

PB 5/11: This card seems way too hacky to be interesting/cool.

AF 5/15: If you get what it's doing, it's easy to grok. Maybe all of these spellshapers should be 2C 1/1's so there's less to remember from card to card.

MT 5/29: I like that idea a lot. Will propose to team.

MM 9/11: Does the word "token" belong in the reminder text? I thought the reminder text was explaining the details of the card named **Festering Goblin**. If so, then "token" isn't one of them. If not, never mind.

Del 9/11: Cut "token" from reminder text. Must have been a holdover from a previous template. Also stuck the real CN into the quoted text.

MT 6/8: 1 mana cheaper.

MT 7/19: Now gives a mana cost.

Del 7/28: New template.

MT 8/7: Made 1 mana cheaper again!

MJ 8/8: betcha can't make it 1 more cheaper!

MP 8/8: Did black need help in limited? This overlaps in constructed with the other 1 mana spellshaper (+1/+0 and FS). Power level may be too high for constructed.

MT 8/10: Back to 2 mana.

Del 9/28: That template didn't make it past the review team. Dev takes off the mana cost again.

This cycle of "Creature-shapers" had some fascinating things going on with them in design and development, only some of which are reflected in these comments.

First, they used to not put token copies of familiar *creatures* into play, but rather token copies of *Auras!* The design intent was this: Spellshapers are meant to be creatures that "cast" spells in the game, but all the spellshapers we've made so far "cast" only instants. Why can't they "cast" other kinds of cards, like enchantments? So a cycle was made that did just that, creating token copies of **Clinging Darkness** and, later, **Binding Agony**.

The Aura tokens were a bit too high on the "totally out there" scale for most people working on the set, so they were changed to spellshapers that "summon" well-known one-mana creatures, the black one making **Festering Goblin**.

There was debate on how much like **Festering Goblin** the token needed to be for the card to "work." At various points, the template varied from just putting a black Zombie Goblin token into play with **Festering Goblin**'s ability—but not actually referring to the token by name—to the radical "Put a token into play that's a copy of **Festering Goblin**," which would have required some reworking of the copying rules to allow the creation of copies of objects that *weren't ever in the game*. The former didn't have quite enough clues to tell players that the card was making **Festering Goblin**, a card we hope most people have at least heard of, and the latter had all kinds of unsolvable rules issues, many of which involved the fact that, thanks to long-forgotten cards like **City in a Bottle** and **Apocalypse Chime**, a card's expansion symbol is a copiable value. (If you are copying a "card" that isn't in the game, what is its expansion symbol? We actually discussed "Put a token into play that's a copy of **Ninth Edition Festering Goblin**.".) Add in the fact that one card in the cycle—**Goldmeadow Lookout**—creates tokens based on a creature that isn't even real, and you can see why we found it necessary to write everything about the tokens out.

Even once we settled on writing everything out, we argued about how much "everything" meant. *Actual* token copies of **Festering Goblin** (made by, say, **Soul Foundry**) would have a mana cost of  $\text{♠}$ —things like **Pernicious Deed** and **Repeal** would treat them as one-mana permanents instead of the normal zero that most tokens are. So for a while we tried putting "and a mana cost of  $\text{♠}$ " in the description of the token the spellshaper made. But, honestly, how often would that come up compared to how baffling that particular phrase would be? *The token has a mana cost of  $\text{♠}$ ? So do I need to pay another  $\text{♠}$  if I want it to come into play? What?*

In the end, I believe we landed in a good spot, giving the token all the information necessary to make it feel like a **Festering Goblin**—including having the name "**Festering Goblin**"—without having *too* much information.



## Pact of the Titan



Part of making the set about "the future" involved coming up with mechanical twists that impacted future turns of the game you were playing in interesting ways. Mark, as he often did during the design of this set, took a cue from **Unhinged** and tried making a legitimate version of Rocket-Powered Turbo Slug as part of a cycle of cards that cost  $\text{♠}$  but had to be paid for on your next turn.

Rocket-Powered Turbo Kobold

0

Creature – Kobold

3/1

Haste

Echo 3R

CARDNAME is red.

If you do not pay CARDNAME's echo cost, CARDNAME deals 20 damage to you.

That last line quickly changed to:

If CARDNAME is put into the graveyard from play without its echo cost having been paid, CARDNAME deals 20 damage to you.

...which gives you enough information to understand most of these comments.

ZM 3/6: Does anyone else feel the 'why play with lands when you don't have to?' ghost stalking us?

ZM 3/20: If they have a lava dart you lose the game, that is way too harsh. We need an alternate wording that doesn't turn these into Lich. Suggest "If you sacrifice CARDNAME..."

MP 4/17: Ok to do 0 mana non-artifact creature?

MP 4/17: I think just one "or lose the game" is good, and the others should be a different disad[vantage].

MR (4/18/06): Was Rocket-Powered Turbo Slug. Made bigger version.

MR (5/1/06): As having a credit creature was problematic, turned it into a token maker. Also powered down the card slightly

MT 5/5: Made the creature bigger but no more haste. Will need token record if we decide to go with this.

MR (5/5/06): Is haste scary? Free guy with haste is part of the attraction.

bs 5/11: haste added back. considering not making this a creature.

MT 5/18: Looking for a non-creature free spell.

MT 5/22: Was "At the beginning of your next upkeep, you lose the game unless you pay {o4oRoR}.

Put a 3/3 red Giant creature token with haste into play."

AF 5/26: Seems interesting with **Djinn Illuminatus**.

MT 6/11: Was "At the beginning of your next upkeep, you lose the game unless you pay 1R.

The next instant or sorcery spell that you play this turn can't be countered by spells or abilities. Draw a card."

MT 6/11: Trying again. A ritual variant.

MP 6/13: "only be used to play creatures" does not feel red to me.

ps 6/14: i wonder if this is worth doing if we need all the clauses. this feels like someone's telling me not to have fun with this card.

MT 6/19: CQI. Trying a Red creature.

MC 6/20: A 2-Headed Giant would be fun. I'd gladly pay 4RR on Tuesday to kill a couple of attackers today.

MP 6/22: MC is funny!

bs 6/26: changed to 4R...

MP 6/26: Imagine accidentally clicking on this in your hand in MTGO.

DAL 7/3: LOL

DAL 7/3: Free flash guy is awesome!

AF 7/26: Are we sure this shouldn't make a token? Getting this guy **Flickered** sounds awful.

MLG 9/12: Also note that if the creature dies before your upkeep, you never have to pay. Compare to the free spells, where you always have to pay.

MP 9/17: This is a big deal. The fact that I can put this in to kill creatures at instant speed, then sac them to something may make this better than we want.

Del 9/19: Dev changes to put a token into play.

Del 9/21: Brady took off the Warrior creature type now that it's a token.

As a whole, the Pact cycle were some of the most difficult cards in the set to design and develop. The idea of having one of the five be a creature has some appeal, but an instant that sets up a delayed triggered ability behaves significantly differently from what is essentially a 0-mana creature with "Echo 1R," as the echo ability never triggers if the creature dies before your next upkeep. So the creature became a token-making instant.

The "lose the game" clause is not something we're particularly proud of, but there wasn't any other way to convey "You absolutely *must* pay for this spell at the beginning of your next upkeep." In order for that drawback to work, there has to be some penalty for not doing it, and that penalty has to be severe enough that you can't "game" it—for example, if the red Pact read, "At the beginning of your next upkeep, pay 1R. If you don't, you lose 10 life," the game could often go on in the face of a player "forgetting" to pay, which might seem more fair, but at the same time it's easy to envision a strategy where a Titan at the end of the opponent's first turn, before you even play your first land, could easily be worth a ten life investment. So we had to make the penalty something that you absolutely had to avoid. *Unhinged* came to the same conclusion with the Slug a couple years prior.

Of course, in tournament play, rules are rules, and there isn't any ambiguity regarding what happens should you forget to pay and draw your

card for the turn. It's possible that some judges took it easy at the Prerelease, but in the future—especially at higher REL events like PTQs and Grand Prix—please, please, please, for your own enjoyment and sanity, don't forget to pay for your Pacts. It isn't the judges' fault if you end up with a game loss.

To make life easier on players, however, and as an admission that the drawbacks on these cards are the most vicious we've ever done, the rule regarding putting visual reminders on your library (Rule 37 in the Universal Tournament Rules) will be officially changed on June 1st; in fact, most tournament organizers and judges have adopted the change early. I don't have the actual wording that will appear in the UTR yet, but it will allow players to place small "non-game items"—which means not cards, though beads, dice, or miniatures are acceptable—on their libraries to remind them of upkeep effects like echo and Pacts. Hopefully those of you with forgetful tendencies will adopt this new rule.

Oh, and I've talked to Michael "elf" Feuell, our head card programmer for **Magic Online**, about a failsafe method for not allowing a player to accidentally lose the game by misclicking on a Pact in the first couple turns of the game. He says that's in the works—definitely a good thing!



## Funny Business

As a bonus, here are some of my favorite comments from the *Future Sight* card file, both my own and others'. Yes, they are out of context here, but still amusing.

PB 5/13: Making a 0/1 flying fungus is dumb.  
AF 5/15: Dumb as in awesome.

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AF 7/13: Does seem over the top. A real "Whatever!" kind of card. You don't even have to do anything cool to get it to work.  
ps 7/16: attacking is pretty cool.

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ps 6/13: seems really dumb...  
ps 6/13: update: playing against this card makes me want to quit both my job and magic.

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DAL 6/28: This is my favorite card in POP.  
MR (7/05/06): This is my least favorite card in POP. [...]

## Last Week's Poll

Which is your favorite style of card frame?		
<i>Future Sight</i> future-shifted frames	11082	34.4%
Old frames / <i>Time Spiral</i> "timeshifted" frames	10071	31.2%
<i>Planar Chaos</i> color-shifted frames	6418	19.9%
Normal (post- <i>Eighth Edition</i> ) frames	4681	14.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>32252</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Wow, these results are really hard for me to wrap my head around! When we did new frames for the last two sets of this block, we we worried that if we made them *too cool*, then people would want us to continue using them indefinitely, but if we made them *not cool enough*, people wouldn't like them and thus wouldn't like the sets. Seems like we erred on the side of "too cool!"

## This Week's Poll

How many people have you taught to play Magic in the past year?

0

1

2-3

4-10

More than 10

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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