

Astonishing tales of the *Future Sight* design team. The Italicized World of *Future Sight*

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*Having conquered the bastion of suns, the Ota took its light for their own. (**Lumithread Field**)*
"Faith's fools!"

Ventaisen skittered backward, pulling her bulk with many legs as she shrank from the impassive figures advancing down the hall. Silver blood filled the furrows her scales scraped into the stone. "In your blindness you will meet your end. The gods sealed this power for a reason!"

Nobun stared ahead, cold black eyes fixed upon the glowing seal on the opposite wall. "Yes, they did. No more noble reason could they have devised." His gaze turned down upon the guardian. "Open the gate. Release the prisoner, the light you have hidden from the world."

*"Each reality is but the dream of another, and each sleeper a god unknowing." (**Venser's Diffusion**)*

And that's how one particular plane presented itself to my mind. It impinged itself upon my dreams the night I had been wracking my brain over this card, and when I woke up, I scribbled something on the notepad I keep by my bed for just such an occasion. (I highly recommend this if you're a creative; some of your best stuff comes to you when you're sleeping.) Thus the flavor text for **Lumithread Field** was born. Click [here](#) to read the whole story.



That said, I think there is some law writ deep in the Tao of Gleemax stating that I have to introduce myself, since I have not written for the web site before. So, hi, or something! I've been playing **Magic** since the tail end of *Unlimited*, though I quit around *Tempest* due among other things to a lack of people to play with. The release of **Magic Online** managed to lure me back into the fold. Several years after that, I landed a temporary project position at Wizards. A few shameless questions and several writing tests later, I found myself on the flavor team writing for *Guildpact*. (Yeah, I know a previous article said *Dissension*. What can you do?) I've worked on pretty much every set since then, except to sit out *Tenth Edition* so I could recharge. The last thing we want is for our writers to burn out!

I came into *Future Sight* stoked from having worked on *Time Spiral* and *Planar Chaos*. This block and *Coldsnap* before it had rekindled the flame of my nostalgia for Dominaria and its history, a fire that once guttered low and threatened to go out in the seductive embrace of the bright and shiny new worlds next door. We had successfully reforged that nostalgia upon the anvil of the present day, and I was eager to see how we would be building on it to reach the future.

A well-made homunculus grooms the mind of its master, pruning the thoughts that lead to madness. Few loredelvers survive the study of the infinite without one. (Bonded Fetch)

The homunculi assisting with *Future Sight* flavor text were Elye Alexander, Christa Knott-Dufresne, Adam Lee, Jay Moldenhauer-Salazar, Rei Nakazawa, Jake Theis, and myself. Hopefully we helped the Creative team from going *too* insane dealing with the unique strains of this block.

"There is no shortcut to work done true and well. The Creators learned this to their sorrow, the first time they made the world."—Githri the Prisoner (Nix)

The first time you get to look at the card file when a set is opened up to the Flavor Team, it's always an exhilarating feeling—that feeling a child gets when she finds a secret playground full of new mysteries, a place as yet unsullied by the tromp of thousands of feet. It can also be intimidating, and *Future Sight* was more daunting than usual. With the proliferation of new mechanics and the reams of reminder text that came with them, it quickly became clear that this set was going to have less room for flavor text than any other set we have ever printed. Every piece we did find room for was going to be that much more important in establishing the feel of the set.

It's important to note that a card doesn't have to be of epic power to merit interesting mindshare. A perfect example of this is with **Lumithread Field**. It's a great card for Limited, but it's probably not going to be powering any winning tournament decks in Constructed. This doesn't make it less worthy of its cardboard than any other card in the set. There's no point in denying that we do try to set up certain marquee cards as homeruns for rules text, name, flavor, and art. Nonetheless, we do go out of our way to make sure that every card in a set is as interesting as we can make it and is hopefully capable of sparking "Well *that's* cool" moments, at least for a true Vorthos.

Vorthoses (Vorthosi?) who were paying attention when the planes were thrown into chaos undoubtedly noticed a sharp distinction between the flavor of the normal cards and that of the timeshifted cards. In *Future Sight*, this is very big distinction indeed; we knew we absolutely had to separate these cards from the goings-on of modern-day Dominaria, because they are completely unrelated to the rest of the set. I found that the most useful strategy in dealing with the timeshifted cards turned out to be a sort of quarantine. Each time I dove into the set, I made a conscious decision to work on *only* the timeshifted cards, or to work on *only* the "present day" cards. The two sets of cards definitely required different mindspaces from me if I was going to do good work. Many of us used this trick, and we turned it to our advantage while writing for *Planar Chaos* as well. It's one of the reasons you see so much variance in the flavor of the timeshifted cards from the grim but hopeful tone of *Time Spiral* as a whole.

At harvest are seeds of next year sown. (Edge of Autumn)

Working on *Future Sight*'s timeshifted cards finally proved one of Mark Rosewater's favorite maxims to me once and for all. You've seen it many times in his



articles—"Restrictions breed creativity." It's the paradox of choice. Intuitively, most people would probably think that having dozens of open-ended and undefined possible futures to write about would be liberating. Certainly in some ways it is; but in others, it's paralyzing. Those of you who have ever had to write an essay or story "about anything you feel like" might know what I'm talking about. For the rest, let me wrap your mind around the concept.

Imagine yourself looking at one of these nascent slices of electronic proto-cardboard. You're not on firm ground here. You don't have a style guide. There is no familiar world or tone to filter the card through, and there is no canon of characters or places or events against which you can compare your creations. All you have is the rules text and the art description, and maybe a concept sketch by the artist if you're lucky. Your responsibility goes beyond merely conjuring up a cool piece of text that fits a single card, and moving on to the next challenge. That would be easy by comparison. No, in just one or two lines, you have to set the stage for an entire *world*, a whole universe that we may well visit again someday. This single card represents a future unwritten, a plane of existence with billions of souls. That world will live and die on how the card comes together, and on what the players think of the spin you give to it. To extinguish that world's spark with bad flavor would be a kind of murder. And with this awesome responsibility in your hands you are left on your own, given almost nothing to work with.

That's heady stuff, isn't it?

Githri is counting on you. Her whole *existence* depends on you. You can't let her down! Think of her creators. It'd be pretty embarrassing for them to have had to create the world several times over to get it right... and then *still* fall short of the mark.

"They who fall singing the battle hymn of Benalia go not unavenged."—Adom Capashen, *Benalish commander (Even the Odds)*

Adom knows a lot about sacrifice. I created him in *Time Spiral* to give a voice to all those facing the inexorable reality of the Sliver tide. Another writer contributed Merrik Aidar, a lieutenant in his unit, and we had our counter-Sliver insurgency—a desperate band committed to saving Dominaria from becoming one big hive mind. They have lost countless men trying to hold the line for humanity and the other common races. Will their sacrifices be in vain? See the next block set on Dominaria for the answer! (Quick answer—no.)

Likewise, sometimes Vorthos has to give way to the needs of the game. In any set, there are cards that start out with flavor text and end up without any at all. You think the cards are stable, you write text for them—and they end up losing it after they are trussed up like appetizers and fed to the rules and templating teams. This doesn't even include all those cases where a card is finalized with one set of rules and flavor, and then has to change again at the last minute because the card was replaced with something else or the art came back different than expected. So say a quick eulogy with me, if you would, for every brave textling offered up over the years to strange gods with names like "clarification" and "playability." Their sacrifices will not be soon forgotten!

(Boldwyr Intimidator)

The text that was accepted for this interesting "lord" speaks to his undeniable stature: *He towers proudly over the battlefield, a mighty symbol to both sides.* This guy was built from the top down as a

physical manifestation of a flavor conceit, and I wanted to hit that in my text. He's an army of one, not so much a person as a totem, and when he steps onto the battlefield it changes the tide of wars. Anyone would be cheered to have such an ally; anyone would fear to see that mighty foot hanging over their head. But this fitting description was being penned by an enemy scribe, one who decided to defect after witnessing the Intimidator's awesome power on the battlefield. He never got his chance. The giant walked through on his way to bring the beatdown, and that scribe became just another bloody footprint. I bet the Intimidator didn't even notice.

(Oblivion Crown)

Some people are really good at coming up with one-liners. They always have one suitable to the situation, ready to toss off at a moment's notice. It hardly even requires any conscious thought on their part, let alone actual effort. I'm not one of those people. So when I do come up with something pithy enough to be accepted, it makes me pretty happy. For this card, it was quite appropriate: *Proof of the power of negative thinking*. Unfortunately, somewhere along the line someone activated the card's ability and discarded its flavor text. I can only hope it was worth it, and the +1/+1 won them that game!

After centuries of labor, its creations outnumber those they were meant to mimic. (Sliversmith)

I'll sign off here with the cards bearing either names or flavor text that I contributed. And at the same time, I'll address my own "Ask Wizards" question I seem to get a lot from people who know I work on the game. Hopefully me and my compatriots can just point here the next time we get asked!



Q: So each person is responsible for a certain subset of the cards? You do all the naming and flavoring for the cards you get assigned?

A: Not exactly. Every set is broken into multiple waves to make it more manageable. Each writer gets a swath of cards in every wave, ranging from a significant chunk of that wave to the entire thing all at once. Every card has multiple people working on it, so we have a fallback in case one particular writer just isn't inspired by that card. Sometimes you'll see a card where both the name and the flavor text came from the same author, but it's actually more common for them to be done by different people. Our goal is just to smith some quality words for each and every card in the set.

And there you go! The next time you open a pack of *Future Sight*, bear in mind that really could be **Magic's** future you are holding in your hands. May you choose wisely!

Garrett's Cards: Arcanum Wings, Bonded Fetch, Cutthroat *il*-Dal, Darksteel Garrison, Death Rattle, Delay, Edge of Autumn, Emblem of the Warmind, Epochrasite, Even the Odds, Glittering Wish, Grave Peril, Infiltrator *il*-Kor, Intervention Pact, Jhoira of the Ghitu, Judge Unworthy, Kavu Primarch, Lumithread Field, Mesmeric Sliver, Patrician's Scorn, Nessian Courser, Nix, Quiet Disrepair, Ramosian Revivalist, Reality Strobe, Riddle of Lightning, Saltskitter, Skirk Ridge

Exhumer, Snake Cult Initiation, Slaughter Pact, Sliversmith, Spin into Myth, Souldether Golem, Storm Entity, Tarox Bladewing, Venser's Diffusion, Wrap in Vigor