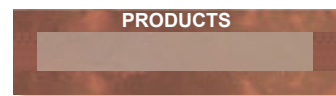


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# Enchantment For Better Things, Part Two

Mark Rosewater  
Making Magic  
Monday, July 2, 2007



PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

Welcome to Enchantment Week, Part Two! Okay, no one else is participating in Enchantment Week, Part Two but me. It's sort of my own private little theme week. Well, more like a theme day. If you have no idea what I'm talking about, I heartily recommend you take a gander at last week's column (a.k.a., [part one](#)). In it, I began a little project of talking about an enchantment from each of the ten blocks I designed enchantments for. Last week, I was able to cover the first five. This week I'm going to talk about six through ten. Oh yeah, and eleven.

Turns out that I'm more of a word guy than a number guy. I've created enchantments in eleven blocks (well, more than that if you count stuff you all haven't seen yet). Maybe I've mentally blocked out *Champions of Kamigawa* block? No, if I was going to block out any block I really think I'd have to go with *Mercadian Masques*. Anyway, while I have mad design skills, it turns out I have trouble counting once things get to double digits. This means you all get an extra bonus card today. (Having a Part Three for one card didn't seem like the best of ideas.) With that said, on with the show.

## Holistic Wisdom (Odyssey)

One of the interesting things about creative endeavors is that it often takes time for you to figure out which of your works you're proudest of. Sometimes you realize when you hit upon a good design right away. Other designs take time to blossom in your eyes. *Holistic Wisdom* was one such card for me.

During the design of a set, I usually take some time to just brainstorm on a bunch of cards. I start with the knowledge of what the set is about and then I just see where whim takes me. What I end up with is a file always named **SET NAME Card Ideas #N** (where N is 1+ the last brainstorming session I did. It was during **Argon Card Ideas #2** (*Odyssey* was codenamed "Argon" in design along with "Boron" and "Carbon"-see my column [Codename of the Game](#) for more info on what and how different set codenames came about.) that I came up with the following card:

### Exchanger

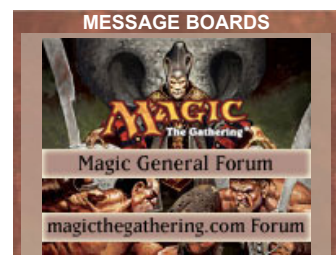
2

Artifact

3, T, Remove a card in your hand from the game: Return target card of the same card type as the removed card from your graveyard to your hand.



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Yes, *Holistic Wisdom* started out as an artifact. Why? I'm not sure, but here's my best guess. I think it is the intertwining of two of my old favorites: *Legend's Recall* and *The Dark's Skull of Orm*. I really like how *Recall*

allowed you to trade cards in hand for cards in the graveyard and I enjoyed how I could build around **Skull of Orm** because I could keep using the card turn after turn. My best guess was that I was focusing on making use of the graveyard, as it was the theme of the *Odyssey* block, and my mind wandered back to two of my favorite graveyard-dipping cards.

I think the exchange cards that share a card type was a way for me to keep the exchanging part of **Recall** but limiting it a bit more to allow the repeated use. Also, I thought the restriction was an interesting one that we hadn't yet played around too much with.

This leads to the next question. How did the card end up green? Well, sometimes when you design an artifact you get a little scratching at the back of your head. If the scratch could talk, I assume it went something like this.

**Scratch:** Mark!

**Mark:** Hey, Scratch, what's the pleasure?

**Scratch:** We need to talk. You see, there's this card...

**Mark:** Let me guess. Something's not right.

**Scratch:** Of course, something's not right. I'm here!

**Mark:** I was joking. I got that part. So what's wrong?

**Scratch:** We need to talk about Exchanger.

**Mark:** You don't like it?

**Scratch:** I like it.

**Mark:** Too subtle?

**Scratch:** No, the mechanic is fine.

**Mark:** Not subtle enough?

**Scratch:** The mechanic is fine!

**Mark:** But...

**Scratch:** But it's not an artifact.

**Mark:** It could be an artifact. Artifacts have done things like this before.

**Scratch:** All right, I didn't mean it couldn't be an artifact. I meant it would be better as a colored card.

**Mark:** Yeah, not all the colors can do this.

**Scratch:** I didn't mean it could be *any* color.

**Mark:** Man, you have easy buttons to push. Okay, so you think the card should be monocolored rather than an artifact.

**Scratch:** Yes.

**Mark:** Okay, what color?

**Scratch:** I'm a scratch. I'm not supposed to give you elongated details. You're lucky I told you this much. I'm really only suppose to bug you until you figure it out yourself.

**Mark:** I just wanted to hear you say green.

**Scratch:** If you knew, why did you ask?

**Mark:** I don't think you really get our relationship.

**Scratch:** So why green?

**Mark:** Because green is the regrowth color. You do understand that I know everything you know.

**Scratch:** Are you going to change the card?

**Mark:** If a green hole shows up, sure.

**Scratch:** And if it doesn't?

**Mark:** You're pretty demanding for a scratch. Don't worry, a hole will come up. A hole always comes up.

And it did. Here was the card we killed to make the hole:

**Twilight's Regrowth**

2GG

Sorcery

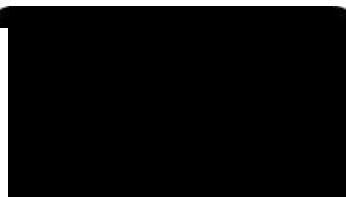
```
Salvage 5GG #(If this card is in your graveyard, you may play it as though it were in your hand. If you do, its mana cost is 5GG, and remove it from the game as part of the spell's effect.)#
Return target card in your graveyard to your hand. Remove from the game all other cards in your graveyard of the same card type.
```

Salvage, by the way, was the design playtest name for flashback. This card was causing some confusion, and the team was looking for something else to fill the slot. Hmm, a spot for a rare green Regrowth spell. Paging Exchanger! And like that, **Holistic Wisdom** found a home in green. Other than a little fiddling with the mana cost and activation cost, the *Odyssey* development team left the card alone.

The design lesson of this card is that you have to be willing to let your designs go where they want. Just because I made this card as an artifact didn't mean that it was where it had to end up. Good design is about allowing the cards to live and grow and find their own voice. (Ironically, the same is true for children.) As one of my writing teachers once told me, "Your job as the artist is to create interesting characters and then have them tell you what they're supposed to say."

## Lightning Rift (*Onslaught*)

When all goes well, design hands off a file to development complete with every mechanic that's going to be used. But many sets don't work that way. I often talk about how cards are killed in development. So too are mechanics. There are many reasons that a mechanic might be killed in development. Power level, weird synergies, rules issues, templating issues, the mechanic proves to just not be fun, etc. Anyway, we were well into *Onslaught* development and we were missing a mechanic. We had



morph, so we luckily already had the innovative piece that every new set needs.

What we really needed was a good staple utility mechanic. Something that plays well, greases the wheels in Limited, and is flexible enough to go on whatever cards we have available. "You know," I said, "like cycling." We needed a mechanic like cycling. We spent weeks brainstorming and throwing out ideas. Finally, one day, I uttered the following words: "Isn't cycling something like cycling?"

Cycling wasn't *like* cycling, I was told. It was cycling! We couldn't just bring it back. Why not, I asked. We don't just bring back keyword mechanics, I was told. Why, I asked. Because each set needs new innovations and the new mechanics carry a lot of that burden. Couldn't we innovate with cycling, I asked. Sure, they said, go ahead and try.

So I did. I'm one of those people that tends to do things simply because people tell me I can't. (Perhaps my über Johnny is showing.) Besides, cycling was pretty conservative in what it did. Surely there was room to innovate.

I started with the obvious: cycling costs that weren't **2**. Not innovate enough. Next I tried making cards that had an effect when they cycled. Hmm, getting warmer. One of the cards I created during this brainstorm pass was:



#### **Bolt of Lightning**

1R  
Sorcery

CARDNAME deals 3 damage to target creature or player.  
Cycling R (You may pay R and discard this card from your hand to draw a card. Play this ability as an instant.)  
When CARDNAME cycles, CARDNAME deals 1 damage to target creature or player.

I liked this card. It allowed you to make an interesting choice. **1** for 3 damage or **2** for a 1 damage cantrip. Then I got greedy. Was there a way for me to get both the damage and the cantrip? Could I get a benefit just for cycling my card? This led me to work backwards and create a card that triggered when you cycled other cards. This led me to:

#### **Standing Shocker**

1RR  
Enchantment  
Whenever a card is cycled, you may have CARDNAME deal 1 damage to target creature or player.

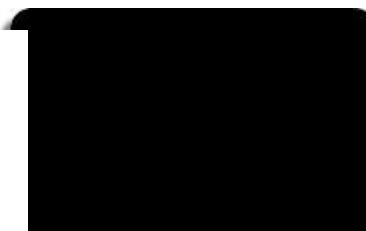
With this card along with the cycling effects and the non-**2** cost cycling cards, I went to R&D and pitched putting cycling in the set. Obviously it worked. Standing Shocker though went through an overhaul. The card lost a mana and gained an extra point of damage. There was then talk of pushing the card to rare, but I and others in R&D argued that the card would be very interesting in Limited and thus would be better served at uncommon.

The last change was adding a mana cost to use the ability. By then, the development team knew cycling was going to be a big part of the *Onslaught* block. There was always a chance the card could get out of hand, and adding the mana requirement helped keep the card in check. (Oddly, no one thought to apply the same logic to [Astral Slide](#).)

The design lesson of this card is to learn the value of reexamining things you have already used. Many cards and mechanics have plenty of healthy design veins within them. Often designers are lured by the new and different. This is what I metaphorically call bad chicken eating. Have you ever seen someone eat fried chicken when there's a lot of chicken? They take a few bites off of each piece and then throw it away for the next piece. Because the chicken is plentiful they never bother to get at the parts of the chicken that take a little more work. The same holds true for design. It's easy to latch onto the obvious execution of the idea. The real challenge is finding the chunks of meat left behind by the first pass at the chicken leg. Those sections, while they can take extra work, are just as meaty.

## **Endless Whispers (Fifth Dawn)**

If you ever get a job in Wizards R&D, here's what I strongly recommend you do on your first day. One, get access to Multiverse, the database we use for **Magic**. Two, pick an expansion and start reading the dev comments ("dev" stands for developer even though both design and development use this field). There is little richer insight into the **Magic** creative process than these notes. (This is why, by the way, Aaron and I both try to give you peeks at it when we can.)



Why do I bring up Multiverse? Because while doing research for this article (yes, gasp, I occasionally do research), I took a look at the Multiverse file for Endless Whisper. I found it quite interesting. Interesting enough that it trumped anything else I could think to say about the card. Let me set up the things you'll need to know before I show it to you. First, here is the earliest version of Endless Whisper:

#### Death Chime

o4

Artifact

Whenever a creature goes to a graveyard from play, any opponent of that creature's controller may pay 1 to put that creature from the graveyard into play under their control.

Yes, another card that started as an artifact. At least for this card I do have the "it was *Mirrodin* block" excuse. Below are the comments about what to do with this card. For those of you that might not be good at the "guess R&D by their initials game," here's who is talking below.



**AF:** Aaron Forsythe. Now the Director of **Magic** R&D. During *Fifth Dawn* he wasn't even an R&D member. He was still running **Magicthegathering.com**, and Randy and I put him on the *Fifth Dawn* design team because we thought it would help him get a better sense of how R&D functions and thus help him do better "behind the scenes" coverage. If nothing else he could get an awesome article out of it. (Who knew he'd get an awesome career instead?) If you don't know Aaron, go check out the archive of his Friday column [Latest Developments](#).

**MR:** That's me.

**BS:** Brian Schneider. He would later go on to become Head Developer. I think at the time he was just one of the senior developers.

**RB:** Randy Buehler. Now Vice President of Digital Games. Back then Director of **Magic** R&D (what Aaron does now). Randy was on the design team for *Fifth Dawn*.

**BT:** Brian Tinsman. A designer. He wasn't on either the design or development team for *Fifth Dawn*, but all R&D members have the opportunity to comment on any card they like. Also, he was on the design team for *Mirrodin*.

**PB:** Paul Barclay. I believe at the time Paul was the Rules Manager.

**TB:** Tyler Bielman. Tyler had been on the *Mirrodin* design team.

Now that you know the players, let's jump in:

AF 3/7: Need to address **Accursed Centaur** problem.

MR (3/28/03): Converted this from an artifact to a black enchantment as we had too many rare artifacts and not enough black rares.

bs 4/4: i had to read this a few times. kind of interesting, but a bit complicated.

RB 4/11: seems cooler as an artifact to me -- in black it could get lost amongst other reanimation flavored effects

MR (4/11/03): This got moved as we had too many rare artifacts we liked and not enough black rares.

MR (4/14/03): In an attempt to get more environment altering artifacts, we moved this card back to rare artifact.

MR (4/15/03): We want everyone to fight for the creature in multi-player play.

AF 4/17: Note that this wording does not allow that.

MR (4/21/03): Note to templating team: it should.

bs 4/28: should this be black?

AF 4/28: I am amazed that this template makes sense and does what we wanted.

BT 5/2: Wacky

bs 5/5: that wording isn't going to cut it. would prefer not to cater to multiplayer than ruin the card for everyone else. cut, "each of that player's opponents may pay {0}. If exactly one player does, that player returns that creature to play under his or her control. If more than one player does, those players repeat this process."

MR (5/6/03): This card has to have a cost. Otherwise certain cards, like the chimeras, infinitely go back and forth creating an instant draw.

PB 5/7: Less icky, and works with Legends, but still not good to read.

bs 5/7: i like the political nature of this card... but i'm not sure it's doing what we want.

tb 6/3: Complexicated and wants to be an artifact. Sure it works as a black enchantment, but for this block we should be looking at stuff like this for artifacts IMO

AF 6/4: It's funny how the same arguments come up about the same cards every time something changes.

bs 6/4: we still need to find a template that works. it's possible that this card shouldn't go here... something simpler might be more appropriate.

MR (6/5/03): It's an artifact. It's an enchantment. An artifact. An enchantment. Head spinning.

What interests me most about this exchange is how it demonstrates how multiple issues are always buzzing around a certain card. One group is worried about the color of the card while others are judging how it works and yet others are worried about its reaction in multiplayer play.

My lesson for this card is this-have a lot of eyes look at it. Every person will look at the card from their own perspective and add insights that a single person would never see. Card design is a group process. Don't keep the group from it.

## Heartbeat of Spring (*Champions of Kamigawa*)

It's a green **Mana Flare**. How hard could this card be to design? It wasn't. In fact, I'm not sure if this card was really even designed. At best, Richard gets mad props for Alpha. No, the story of this card was not its creation but its journey to print.

We begin during the development of *Fifth Edition*. The design team was Skaff Elias (creator of the Pro Tour and all-around R&D legend-seriously, put his name in the search bar and read any link to one of my articles), Robert Gutschera (Robert is one of a handful of 10+ year veterans in R&D; while he's dabbled in **Magic** he's also been focused on other games) and myself. Yes, this was the team that brought you **Necropotence** in a base set.

Anyway, while compiling *Fifth Edition*, we made a list of cards that we felt needed to be designed. There were a number of subsets of this list. Some were cool cards that were over or underpowered and needed to be redone with the correct mana cost. Some were cards where the simple version had never been printed. Some were gaps where certain cards had just never been made. And finally, some were cards simply in the wrong color.

In the middle of the list sat these three words: green **Mana Flare**.

That list was created in 1996. *Champions of Kamigawa* came out in 2004. Eight years later. What happened? Did we simply forget about the list only to find it in a dusty old file cabinet years later? No (because I've been told things like that don't actually happen). In fact the opposite is true. I did everything in my power to get the card into print. I put the card into every set I lead the design for and submitted it for every set I submitted cards for (which is every set since *Alliances*).

So what happened? Something. Something always came along and forced development to kill or change the card. A few examples:

*Tempest*: The development team felt that **Earthcraft** had a similar feel in that it allowed lands to produce multiple mana. They felt **Earthcraft** was more interesting than a "green **Mana Flare**."

*Urza's Saga*: The development team thought we should shake things up a bit so they changed the card into **Vernal Bloom**.

*Invasion*: The development team liked **Overabundance** and felt that it and "green **Mana Flare**" couldn't coexist.

*Mirrodin*: The development team liked **Extraplanar Lens** and felt both it and "green **Mana Flare**" didn't fit. **Extraplanar Lens** used imprint and thus had to be in this block.

Other times, the card was just killed for being kind of blah. We'd already seen a card like this. So how did I get the card into *Champions of Kamigawa*? I didn't. Brian Schneider put it in. Why? Because he felt like it was put into every set and it just wouldn't be a **Magic** development without it. When I heard this, my first response: "Well, now it's going to get in."

My lesson for this card is simple. Don't give up. While much of design is inspiration; perspiration has its place as well. My advice to new designers who want to get their cards into a set: "You need two things: quality of design and patience. With these two, any card can get made."

Let me end this section with a little aside. **Heartbeat of Spring** almost made it into *Tenth Edition* but R&D decided that the environment needed a break from the card and it had just rotated out. What does this mean? It means someday you all will see its return. When? I don't know. What I do know is that I'll keep putting it into the base set until it stays. If I've learned anything in my ten plus years, it's patience.

## Doubling Season (*Ravnica*)

I've talked many times in my column about how Mark Gottlieb and I have a supervillain/superhero type relationship. (Yes, I'm the superhero in this relationship. Why doesn't anyone ever believe me?) Anyway, part of a



good supervillain/superhero rapport is to have some issue that the two of you each have a personal stake in that causes constant clashing with a subtle subtext of a will of minds. Gottlieb and I have such a topic: Doubling.

You see, back in the day my pet deck was a little green-blue weenie deck. This is back when **Magic** was just Vintage. There was one Constructed format-you could play the cards you owned (okay, okay, there were some restricted cards and a few banned ones). My deck was all about getting little 0/1 and 1/1 creatures out and turning them into 20+ points of damage on the second or third turn. For example, turn one I play a **Birds of Paradise**. My opponent chuckles to himself how pathetic my first turn was and, of course, leaves my 0/1 flier alone. Turn two: **Forest**, Mox Sapphire, Black Lotus, **Unstable Mutation**, **Giant Growth**, Berserk, Regrowth, Beserk, Attack for 24. (Okay, that was an awesome draw, but I killed on turn two more often than anyone expected me to.)

What does this have to do with doubling? Um, weren't you paying attention? I said "Berserk" twice. How do you turn 6 damage into 24? Doubling, baby. Then in third edition, Berserk was removed from the base set. When R&D explained in *The Duelist* why Berserk was removed (and note that this is long before I was a member of R&D) they said that doubling was too powerful. Right then and there I made a solemn oath. I was going to dedicate myself to the goal of getting employed in Wizards of the Coast R&D and working my way up through the ranks until I could get into a position where I could return doubling to the game that so badly wanted it. Yes, I would not rest until doubling returned to **Magic**.

Once I had the ability to submit cards, the doubling cards returned. Sure, they were rebuffed at first, but I was relentless. Eventually I got to the point where I was leading sets. I was the gatekeeper for what was put into the design. Doubling cards-to the front of the line. (You can tell sets I was lead designer on by looking for the doubling cards; *Fifth Dawn* had three!) But I had forgotten to take one thing into account: the Rules Manager. The rules, it appears, doesn't like doubling certain things, such as creature's power. I could explain to you why that is, but then I'd have to understand it enough to agree with Gottlieb when he keeps telling me I can't do it. And I can't do that. Not if I'm to continue my great doubling quest. (Write into Ask Wizards and demand Gottlieb tell you why-I promise not to read it.)

Which brings us to **Doubling Season**. In *Ravnica*, green had one major theme: growth. In Selesnya (green-white), green was about making an army of 1/1 tokens. In Golgari (black-green), green was about growing a single creature often with +1/+1 counters. Hmm, I thought to myself. Green makes tokens and counters. How could I help green with this theme? It was at this point that the holy light broke through the clouds and a hymn was sung on high. I could create a card that doubled not one thing but two things. I had found a way to double doubling.

I was nervous because I was happy. Too happy. I had created a thing of too much beauty. I've read enough comic books to know that the item in question was doomed. "Tossed off a bridge by my greatest enemy and broke her neck when I tried to save her with my webbing" doomed. Surely Gottlieb was sitting in his secret lair watching me on some giant monitor and laughing. Here is now our next encounter went:

**Me:** Hello Gottlieb.

**Gottlieb:** Rosewater!

**Me:** So, did you take a look at the latest changes in the *Ravnica* file?

**Gottlieb:** Yes.

**Me:** Anything catch your eye?

**Gottlieb:** Many things caught my eye. Anything in particular?

**Me:** Let's stop this song and dance. You know the card I'm talking about.

**Gottlieb:** So you thought you could double a doubling card.

**Me:** I did. Does it work?

**Gottlieb:** Yeah, no problem.

**Me:** So we can print the card as is?

**Gottlieb:** Well, replace the word "double" with "twice" and yeah, it's fine.

**Me:** Curse you, Gottlieb. Curse you!

My lesson of this card is to indulge your passion. If it tickles your design bone, odds are it will do the same for others. Great cards come from reaching for the stars. And if reaction to **Doubling Season** has been any indication, many other bones have been tickled.

## Lumithread Field (*Future Sight*)

Players often ask me where I get ideas for cards. My answer is from all over. **Lumithread Field** started when I gave myself the following restriction: Build an enchantment with morph.


After thinking about it for a little while I realized that I needed to create an enchantment that would create a nice surprise when it was unmorphed (yeah, yeah "flipped up"-sue me). Some simple static effect. Simple was the key word as I wanted it to be common. Why common? Because I decided to create a vertical cycle to allow me to make the three non-creature permanent types with morph. The land was being saved for a cycle in uncommon, and an artifact with morph felt out of place in common as artifacts are mostly out of place at common. This meant the common had to be the enchantment.



Finally it was time to put paper to pencil and create the card. Here's the earliest version:

**Swarm of Hell**  
2B  
Enchantment  
All creatures get -1/-0.  
Morph B

Most of the first versions of cards I've shown you today have a glimmer of the final card. This card does as well but it's a little harder to see. So what happened? This card was elsewhere in the file:

**Helpful Wards**  
Enchantment  
2W, : Target creature gets protection from the color of your choice until the end of the turn.



Helpful Wards was a little too good for a repeatable effect. So I set out to create another enchantment with a tap ability (I felt like this was something that felt very futuristic as it's something we've never done-and possibly will never do again). I ended up with this card:

Yes, I set out to design a white card and instead designed a black card. But I liked the black card so I had a problem. I had one too many black cards and one too few white ones. To solve this problem I had to put the enchantment with morph into white. So I took Swarm of Hell and turned it into the opposite. What is the opposite of all creatures get -1/-0? All creatures get +0/+1. I later added the "you control" as it made it feel more **Castle-y** and thus to me more white.

My lesson for this card is the importance of getting a different vantage. Changing a card from one color to another is often a neat way to find effects you might not have found if you started with that color. Take the time to look for design answers in places other than where you always look. To quote my favorite book (*A Whack on the Side of the Head*): "The creative explorer looks for history in a hardware store and fashion in an airport."

## Enchantment To Be

And thus ends my foray into the world of enchantment design. I hope Part II was as much fun as Part I. (By the way, I'm loving the letters from last weeks column about how **Magic** has helped players academically-please feel free to keep sending those in.)

Join me next week when design looks inside the box (and the pack).

Until then, may you look fondly on your work of days gone by.

Mark Rosewater



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