

## A Taste of *Lorwyn*

Taste the Magic's newest tour guide is ready to show you around Magic's newest world.

*Doug Beyer*

hey, I'm Doug. What's going on?

Meh, that's enough with the biographical info, at least for the time being. We're here to plumb **Magic's** limitless realms, explore the knotted skein of character and setting in that mirror-world beyond the cardboard, and get behind-the-scenes glimpses at the art and flavor aspects of making **Magic** cards, right? Right. For those who are dying to hear the Doug backstory—uh, hi Mom—well, Taste the Magic today is not for you. I'm anxious. *Lorwyn's* been brewing over the creative cauldron for over a year now, and I'm fit to bust. So let's get on with the Tasting of the Magic already.

### Pendulums and Drool

Not all the planes scattered across the seething intraplanar chaos are as vast as Dominaria, home to city-state archipelagoes and continent-spanning civilizations. Some lurk on the edges of planeswalker consciousness, ancient and steeped in mysteries, protected by their own obscurity. *Lorwyn* is such a place, a green little world largely untouched by the strife and powermongering that often squeezes other reaches of the Multiverse.

Which is just the sort of thing that makes me drool. As a sort of Pavlovian response, I salivate whenever pendulums swing. See, just like mechanical themes (and almost everything else in **Magic**), creative aspects of the game like, its scale and its tone, swing back and forth across the space of possibility, just like pendulums on some giant Cartesian grid.

Scale is the scope of a setting's conflicts, a kind of overall measure of what's at stake in whatever scenario is playing out there. Sometimes **Magic** is all about multiverse-spanning disasters, like the catastrophic time rifts of the *Time Spiral* Block. Other times it's about the daily trials of down-to-earth people as they live out their lives on one single plane.



Tone is a setting's emotional content, the sum of the feelings it arouses through its words, art, and the intangible texture in between. Sometimes **Magic's** tone is one of despair and desperation, portrayed through an apocalypse-devastated landscape pitted by acid and erosion and ravaged by storms of time. Sometimes it's a sense of surreal wonder—of daydreams gone mad and come alive according to some fevered mind—of exaggerated tales of old crossing paths with powerful magic, peopled with figments only steps away from sheer impossibility—and portrayed on a fitting stage: an idyllic world blooming with natural beauty.



**Magic's** many pendulums are swinging. My advice? Don't duck—let 'em hit you full in the chest. Grab on let them and carry you all the way to the other side of the grid. Ladies and gentlemen, Vorthos and Melvin, hold on tight—we're bound for Lorwyn.

## Lorwyn Flyover

Lorwyn is storybook world of pastoral beauty: rolling, golden meadows; sunlit woodland trails, sometimes trodden by a flamekin pilgrim or an ambling treefolk; stony-bottomed, babbling brooks awash with tideshaping merrows; kithkin clachans (see sidebar) ringed with springjack farms. The weather is summery year-round, and it doesn't even have nighttime—the sun almost goes down, but then never quite manages to set. Glowy dusk is about the closest you get to night on Lorwyn, and then the sun climbs back up to midday.

If a doughty kithkin pilot strapped you onto the underbelly of his springjack-hide balloon and took you for a sightseeing flight, you'd see a system of rivers branching all the way to the horizon, dominated by a central trunk called the Wanderwine River. Together these rivers and tributaries are called the Merrow Lanes, waterways patrolled and controlled by Lorwyn's crafty merfolk, the merrows. Lorwyn has no large seas or oceans, only the Lanes and some ponds and small lakes. There are some mountain ranges, but they all seem pretty far off in the distance no matter how far you walk.

The rest of Lorwyn is verdant. With the sun never going down and winter constantly held at arm's reach, Lorwyn's growing season is unending. The color green *dominates* here—in the visual sense, not the mechanical. Although

### Lorwyn Lexicon

**cla·chan** (klah-KAWN)

*noun*

A kithkin village, headed by a cenn.

**cenn** (SEN)

*noun*

A kithkin town leader, similar in role to a mayor.

**spring·jack**

*noun*

A domestic beast a bit like a cross between a shaggy sheep and a jackrabbit, which kithkin use for riding, milk, fur and mutton.

Lorwyn isn't a green *Torment*, this plane is nevertheless nature at its most prevalent.

You may have seen in [a Magic Arcana last month](#) how the art of some of the *Lorwyn* basic lands line up to form a diptych or mural. Basic lands are **Magic's** primary method of showing off its current setting, since basic lands are in front of you more than any other type of card. Take a look at a few of these murals. They're an excellent way for Lorwyn to introduce itself.



*"Hi, how ya doin'. Name's Lorwyn, good to meet you. Nice party... So, how do you know Doug? Oh, friend of a friend kind of thing? Got it. Yeah, I'm a purposeful departure from the war-torn strife of post-apocalyptic Dominaria. What do you do?"*



*"Oh yeah? Cool, cool. Sounds interesting—I actually took a class or two on that in school. Right now I'm mostly doing this eternal midsummer thing... Yeah, yeah, it is pretty nice. Can't complain. I'm into a lot of stuff... Bikram yoga, Netflix addict, tribal enchantments... Oh, but really my main thing right now is my creatures. That's really my passion. I call them my soul, because they carry with them—oh, you have no creatures yourself? Well, I gotta say, it changes your life. And it's different for everybody, totally."*



"Like, plenty of other worlds have elves, right? But my elves are—well, actually they're kind of a handful. They're exquisitely beautiful, but a little full of themselves. And they have this kind of primal, predatory edge to them, such that they enjoy hunting in packs through my dappled glades and savagely murdering other—oh, but listen to me going on and on about my creatures, I must be boring you to death. Well, thanks for looking at my wallet pictures—does a plane proud, you know. Enjoy the party. Nice meeting you."

## Tone Poem

So there are elves, and flamekin, and merrows, and treefolk, and kithkin. Also giants, boggarts (the goblins of Lorwyn), and mysterious beings known as greater elementals. And faeries, did I mention there were faeries? Yeah, they're a major race here. I was pretty serious when I said the tone was shifting. For some of you, it'll take some getting used to—there's no question that the Lorwyn setting is a challenge. Of course that's kind of true by definition, because every

**Magic** setting goes somewhere, does something new that no other block has done before. However, Lorwyn might just push the boundaries beyond your comfort zone. It's a place where faeries flit around and powerful spells are represented as storms of flower petals. I like to think that every step **Magic** takes past the boundaries of tradition make it a vaster, even more important and all-encompassing phenomenon. At the very least it's a breath of fresh air from a region of the possibility grid where we've never inhaled before.

Still, there's more going on in Lorwyn than the happy-go-lucky frolicking of elves and kithkin. This is a place of powerful magic, where deep mysteries slumber and age-old tensions smolder. If Lorwyn were a field of fortune cookies, you could spend a week walking around crushing delicious cookie shells and still not uncover all its cryptic fortunes and lottery numbers. We're just beginning to uncover the juicy tidbits here, and we'll get to taste more and more of them right here in this column.

So let's get started with Lorwyn's lineage.

Lorwyn draws inspiration from the folklore and mythology of the British Isles. You'll find influences from Irish, English, Welsh, Scottish, and Celtic stories, languages and cultures in both the look and world details of the setting. That pedigree gives Lorwyn a built-in storybook feel, even as it diverges dramatically from that source material. The result is a world that feels original and unique to **Magic**, yet draws from long folklore traditions for an impression of rustic, well-worn history.

It's interesting to note that the folklore from which Lorwyn takes its inspiration makes very little distinction between these words:

- Elf
- Fairy / Faerie
- Goblin
- Spirit
- Leprechaun

You find fairies described as "helpful spirits," and goblins described as "mischievous elves." Of course, **Magic** makes very hard, important distinctions between these terms, especially in a tribal block. The real meat of Lorwyn, when it comes down to it, is its creatures. So in this column, over the next couple of months, I'll be taking you on a tour through all the tribes (walking backwards as I talk, like any good tour guide), giving you the down-low on all the woody folk who live here.

Today we start with the big one.

## ***Elves: Laws of Beauty, Law of the Jungle***

Lorwyn is a world of nature. And what thrives on nature-dominated planes? Elves, of course. But these elves are a departure from **Magic's** usual, upstanding nature-lovers; the elves of Lorwyn are aristocratic, ruthless, and predatory.

Elves are paragons of beauty. Their society revolves around the *laws of beauty*, a code that specifies how one's cunning and personal attractiveness determine one's social rank. If you are only moderately beautiful, you are a low-ranking elf. If you are ugly or disfigured—or a non-elf, which is by definition a truly ugly thing to be—then you are an *eyebright*, a creature unworthy of respect or even, if it is deemed so, life. There are four official ranks of elves, determined by measure of beauty—plus the non-rank of eyebright for everyone else.

- *Faultless*. Any elf who possesses the minimum threshold of beauty and grace is granted this basic rank.

### No Humans?

That's right, there is no human civilization on Lorwyn. That's a first for any plane in the multiverse! More on this in another column.



- *Immaculate*. Dignitaries, VIPs and higher-level functionaries among elves attain the rank of immaculate.
- *Exquisite*. Packmasters (lords of elvish hunting packs, which we'll talk about in a moment) and important courtiers are of the exquisite rank. They have the privilege of being able to speak directly to perfects.
- *Perfect*. The perfect (note: not "prefect") are elves so beautiful and so shrewd that they rule all other elves. There are only a few of these in the world. Perfects can kill those of low rank with impunity.

And then...

- *Eyeblight*. The ordinary, everyday creatures of Lorwyn. You and me. Or, disfigured elves.

Elves have horns and hooves in this setting, drawing some elements from deer and satyrs. Their look is imperious, severe, and sculptural. If you'd look an elf in the steely eye, you'd get the sense of a predator sizing you up—they're constantly comparing themselves to others, figuring out predator / prey relationships, and preparing to defend their right to territory.



• Females usually have smaller horns than males  
 • Never are the horns "pranged" like a deer - more goat-like

Small chin  
 Area -  
 Slight jaw



Eyes are dark - somewhat sinister

NO EAR LOBES - EARS slightly 2inimalistic - can perk/pivot expressively.



• NOSE BRIDGE wide MERGING SMOOTHLY WITH BROW

Elves hunt in packs, riding cervins into battle, sometimes leading trained wolves. One of the functions of a pack-hunt is to search out particularly ugly or dire eyeblights—and kill them. Elves charged

### Lorwyn Lexicon

**cer-vin** (SER-vin)  
 noun

An elegant, swift, deerlike creature without antlers.

with culling eyeblights are called winnowers. You'll find that the *Lorwyn* novel has a lot to do with these hunts, and an elf who changes rank quite rapidly.

Speaking of hunting, what if you're an elf with particularly nasty prey? What if you're tracking a giant, or some enormous, old-growth treefolk? Even an elf's naturally superior hunting skills only go so far. That's why some elves cultivate a white flower called moonglove, from which can be derived a potent poison. This poison is deadly even in small amounts, taking down even towering giants. In precisely controlled, highly diluted trace amounts, its necrotizing properties can be used to etch or carve living tissue—such as skin or bark.

See, the elves of Lorwyn have a different relationship to nature than other planes' elves. They regard nature as something to be improved, cultivated, and if necessary, rearranged. One elvish perfect named Eidren had all of the trees of his native Gilt-Leaf Wood uprooted and rearranged to create a pattern he found more beautiful. Once *Lorwyn* releases, you'll also see evidence of vinebreeding—the practice of intermingling magical, thorny vines with living creatures, producing living works of art that can be easily controlled like puppets. Elves use vinebred beasts and warriors to help them secure their position of power in the world.

Did I mention elves are green- and *black*-aligned in *Lorwyn*?

## A Quick Word of Thanks

I'm beyond excited to be behind the controls (or under the chef's toque) of Taste the Magic. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Scott Johns for establishing the column, Kelly Digges for his editing prowess, Monty Ashley for his behind-the-scenes code work, and especially Matt Cavotta for creating such an amazing set of shoes to step into. I wouldn't be in this job on the Creative Team if it weren't for Matt, and you all wouldn't be showing up to see what I had to say if it weren't for the community that Matt grew around his enthusiasm and gooberiffic charm.

Stay tuned for next week, when I get my first card preview (okay, other than [Chandra](#)).