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# Interplanar Voyeurism: The Art of Morningtide

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Taste the Magic  
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Some people think of planes like planets—and in some cases, they're right. Mirrodin is a spherical plane orbited by five "suns" of mana energy; it's a pretty good model of a planetary system, except for its oddball geocentrism (or, perhaps, ferrocenrism—a system of mana objects with a lump of metal in the center).

Lorwyn, on the other hand, I tend to think of as (roughly) flat. To my knowledge there's no canon on this—the novels don't mention it, nor does the style guide, and I haven't chatted up my creative team chums on the topic. It'll probably turn out to be a sphere too. But I imagine Lorwyn like an old, rumpled map, unfurled against the inky blackness of the Blind Eternities, with mountains, trees, and the occasional lumbering giant sticking up in various places. It's a pop-up book of faerie tales, set down on a table of nothingness. As the sun arcs its way from one horizon—one edge of the map—to the other, the denizens of the plane count the hours of their day. Then when the faithful star dips down close to the edge of the leathery map-surface, somewhere beyond the mountains that seem to ring the plane, it slows and stops, then turns around again. No nighttime—it's just morning after morning. And the sun never heads off way around to the other side of the map; all the action is up top. (Who knows—maybe the plane is a *one-sided* two-dimensional shape, a flat surface with a third-dimensional twist in it like a Möbius strip. You could blaze a trail in one direction on Lorwyn and end up where you started again, while only having walked on one side of the surface and without the plane being spherical. Does a moving sun *work* on such a plane? Orbitoplanar topologists, get back to me if you would, please.) Anyway, the point: flat. Lorwyn like a pop-up book laid open on a table.

What I'm leading up to here is that Lorwyn is a perfect venue for the *voyeurism of planeswalkers*.

Imagine you're hurtling your way through the chaotic void between the planes, either intentionally blindspinning through the multiverse because you're an old master at this planeswalking thing, or blundering your way around in a panic because you're thoroughly, hopelessly lost. You've sailed past horrors and visions that your mind won't even let you fully comprehend, and are ready for a mental rest stop.

Then you see Lorwyn.

It's a shining, green, uneven disc (or a twisted green ribbon, eh, topologists?) with its sun casting a warm spotlight down on it, like antigravity museum lighting. Strangely, it isn't torn asunder by planar strife; it shows no sign of global war; it isn't even careening into a cosmic maw of evil. It's peaceful. It's restful. It's simply the most beautiful thing you've seen in a long time.

So you halt your blistering flash of a journey through the void, and look in on the place. Without actually entering the plane (a trick you've practiced, so as not to disturb the locals—a sort of planeswalking "Prime Directive" rule of thumb) you extend your senses down into it. You breathe deep and get your first experience of the place.

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*Order of the Golden Cricket art by Mark Zug*

The kithkin of Lorwyn don't think of themselves as short or rustic. Here, kithkin are the most noble, honorable, community-oriented people around, and when they need to be, they're as valiant as a decorated knight of Benalia. I love how Mark Zug portrays them this way here. This is a classic knight painted in classical style—he depicts a kithkin on a springjack with the same reverence as a human knight on a Clydesdale. I also like the way that the shapes of the clouds match the shapes of the trees here—it's as if the knightly Order of the Golden Cricket regards the sky as part of their domain just as much as the pastures and woods near the clachan. Oh, and—yes, this is an art gallery article. Ready for more?



*Boldwyr Heavyweights art by Wayne Reynolds*

Having not picked up a paintbrush since the seventh grade, when I decided I would never be able to make those squirrely, bristly things do what I want them to do and throwing my brush down in an age-appropriately melodramatic declaration of ultimatum, I have great respect for people who can paint like Wayne Reynolds. This giant couple is so massive that they've obliviously smashed their way through a kithkin clachan. This sense of giants—as innocents whose size causes more destruction than malice—was one of the earliest perspectives we

in Creative had on this tribe. Wayne actually painted this piece for *Lorwyn*, but the card it was meant for was killed in development. Happily there was just as destructive a Giant card waiting for it in *Morningtide*. Wayne also painted what has become kind of *Morningtide*'s "face of the set" in *Leaf-Crowned Elder*, a piece that features not only an amazing, majestic treefolk, but also a little owl-creature familiar that I really want as a pet.



*Graceful Reprieve* art by William O'Connor

I hope it's this pretty when I die. (And this handy—the spell's effect reverses a creature's death.) When we asked William to create a "magical geyser" rising up out of the river, a magic effect that restores a merfolk back to life, we didn't specify anything more than that. But he went a step further and created these merfolk figures in the shape of the water, creating a note of the benevolence and personified *caring* of nature that would not have been possible with just a magic geyser. And the green grove around her has such a sense of fairytale magic, with the sun filtering through the leaves and the roots intermingling with the woodland stream—it's simply right on for *Lorwyn*. I couldn't be happier with how this spell turned out.



*Prickly Boggart* art by Jesper Ejsing

Jesper was a new addition to **Magic** illustration as of *Lorwyn*, and what a fantastic addition he's been. Jesper perfectly captured the boggart spirit here. Look how eager and energetic this little guy is, and yet how crazed-looking. Think how proud he must be of his (to his mind) ingenious invention of the quills strapped to his back—

goofy yet effective (the card does have fear, after all). Nailing the sense of the tribe and the sense of the mechanic makes this piece an easy winner. His little garment made of the fur of some foxlike creature is the icing on the cake. (Get it? Ejsing? ... Oh, um, it's pronounced like "icing.") (You know it's a great pun when you have to explain it immediately afterwards. Go me.)



*Earthbrawn art by Kev Walker*

Kev Walker is a mainstay of **Magic**, one of the artists who has singlehandedly forged the game's look and feel. One of the reasons for this is that Kev can paint *strong figures in action* like nobody's business. **Earthbrawn** is a "Giant Growth" effect that causes a giant's arms to become huge tree trunks and his fists to become enormous, earthy clumps. Kev makes that into a scene of impressive destruction—the giant's woody fists smash through a kithkin stronghold, causing it to splinter to toothpicks. (Poor kithkin—they really get the brunt of things in this world.) The tree-transformation concept wasn't even necessary here—due to the size and motion and destruction Kev creates, the giant just *looks strong* all by himself. Note that this giant represents the other end of the spectrum from Wayne Reynolds's **Boldwyr Heavyweights**—he's intentionally destructive. But the whole spectrum involves "destructive." What's common sense in fairytales is common sense here—*do not mess with giants*.



*Floodchaser art by Eric Fortune*

Eric Fortune's *Floodchaser* brings a bit of majesty to *Morningtide*, a sense that the lakes and river systems of Lorwyn hide monstrous creatures, much older and a lot *bigger* than most of the humanoid tribes. I love the translucency in its body and the shells on its broad head/back—it shows it's an elemental, that it's literally composed of "riverness." The encounter between it and the elf here is strong storytelling, which I always enjoy. Is the *Floodchaser* imparting wisdom to the elf, a la the scene in Tony Waters's *Petals of Insight*? No, I don't think so—I think the two glowing orbs on the end of the *Floodchaser*'s tendril are actually lures, enticing the elf to his watery doom. Hey, it takes one of *Floodchaser*'s +1/+1 counters to make the waters go where the elves are—might as well make the elves come to it.



*Pyroclast Consul art by Christopher Moeller*

Chris Moeller is another of *Magic*'s mainstays, but he's been my personal hero ever since he illustrated *Chandra's Ultimate*, helping us extend the backstory of that fiery planeswalker. Here he creates another few fiery figures, a flamekin ambassador and her retinue. Flamekin diplomacy, even that of the cultural ambassador group the Brightearth, can quickly turn to passionate aggression. Chris captures that here, well enough that the piece

was used as booster packaging for *Morningtide*. I'm glad you're able to see the whole piece here, though—the whole posse is visible, adding to the ambassador's stateliness.



*Mothdust Changeling art by Shelly Wan*

Please welcome Shelly Wan, an amazing comic artist, to **Magic**—*Morningtide* represents her first (but not last) time doing cards. The intentionally clueless-looking changelings are difficult to make look beautiful, but Shelly's done it here. She does it by emphasizing the changeling's childlike nature, adding the mood of a Lorwyn sunset/sunrise to a quiet moment of discovering nature. We can feel the changeling's wonder as its own body replicates the frolicking freedom of the moths. Shelly's line style naturally fits with the fairytale look of the Lorwyn setting—a perfect sight on my rumpled old map of the plane.



*Warren Weirding art by Matt Cavotta*

You might have expected that my favorite piece by my main man Matt Cavotta would have been **Weirding Shaman**, the mage responsible for all the boggart-splitting that will suddenly be going on all over the place as of *Morningtide*. But instead I like the companion piece, the splitting spell itself, **Warren Weirding**, slightly better. Rarely do we see a spell in the middle of *going off* that works as well as this piece does—usually we tend to ask

artists show the moment right before the main action of a spell, or the results that happen after it goes off. But here we see a snapshot of a boggart literally in the act of splitting, and I'm fascinated. Check out how the twin on the left side of the piece is in the middle of growing a new limb. Check out the purple energy between them—you can see the texture of the magic itself, a kind of half-liquid, blobby goop that congeals into boggart-flesh. Look at their ears—it's like the details of boggart ears are filling themselves in from the metamorphic substance as we watch. Matt is a self-professed fantasy goober, and that really comes across when his attention to nerdy detail shines in pieces like this.

Okay, fine, go look at [Weirding Shaman](#) too. You'll need the whole context to appreciate the scene.



*Weirding Shaman art by Matt Cavotta*

How many thematic elements of "splitting" can you see in this picture?



*Reveillark art by Jim Murray*

I've had a *Fifth Dawn* mouse pad featuring Jim Murray's *Razormane Masticore* under my wrist for nigh on three years now. Just under it is another mouse pad with his *Solarion*. (Sorry, Kev Walker's *Roar of the Wurm*—you're third down. Hey, what can I say? I do a lot of mousing at work—I like wrist support.) The creative team has relied

on Jim's ability to capture otherworldly creatures with precision and power since *Mirrodin* Block, because he just plain delivers. **Reveillark** is a white elemental, the sense of which can be hard to get across—it has to sell glory, and splendor, and brilliance, while looking ephemeral and surreal. We can write those words into art descriptions till we're blue in the face, or we can try to break down those concepts and try to interpret them into visual metaphors for our artists ahead of time, but with either strategy there's no guarantee of what we'll get back. Jim knocks it out of the park here. It's my favorite piece in *Morningtide*. Thanks Jim!

## Boosters Full of Art

I hope you feel inspired to take a voyeuristic vacation over the plane of Lorwyn now that *Morningtide* has gone public. Get some packs with your friends and play—it's the best way to do a planeswalker flyby and goob over the art of the set. Enjoy classes, enjoy kinship, enjoy reinforce, enjoy prowl, enjoy the bannerets and the twists on champion and evoke and clash and all the other things going on in *Morningtide*, but most of all, take a moment to enjoy the art.



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