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They Might Be Giants

Mark Rosewater
Making Magic
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Hello, faithful readers. I am sorry to say that I was unable to write a column this week as I was called before the United States Congress to testify at what has been dubbed in the media "The Giant Scandal." As I have not missed a column in six years, I was quite upset at the prospect of having a "Making Magic"-less Monday. So I've decided to salvage my column today by printing some of the transcripts from this testimony (not just mine, but you will find that below as well). It is Giant Week after all, so I feel I can even argue I was staying on theme.

That said, join me next week when I talk about putting new twists on old ideas. (Speaking of which, if you haven't had the joy of "opening" a *Shadowmoor* booster, I'd take a peek at today's front page.)

Until then, may you never know the fear of C-SPAN's poor lighting.

Mark Rosewater



Congressman Namvar: Could you please state your name for the record.

Giant Spider: My name is **Giant Spider**.

Congressman Namvar: Could you tell this committee what expansions you have appeared in.

Giant Spider: Um, I first appeared in *Alpha* and have been in every core set since that time. I was also in the first *Portal* expansion.

Congressman Namvar: What kind of creature are you?

Giant Spider: I am a spider.

Congressman Namvar: How large is the average spider?

Giant Spider: About an inch or two. There are larger spiders such as the tarantula family that can be as big as ten inches across.

Congressman Namvar: How large are you?

Giant Spider: Um, twenty-four feet, sir.



Congressman Page: In your name includes the word "giant." Am I correct?

Giant Crab: Yes, congressman.

Congressman Page: Why would that be?

Giant Crab: Well, the average crab is not larger than a car. So comparatively, to a normal-sized crab, I would be a giant-sized crab. Thus, my name.

Congressman Page: Interesting. Let me ask you this. Were you born a giant crab?

Giant Crab: I don't understand the relevance.

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Congressman Page: Your job is not to understand. Your job is to answer the questions put before you by this committee.

Congressman Conard: I would like to remind my esteemed colleague that Mr. Crab is here of his own volition and that such animosity is not needed.

Congressman Page: What are we doing here if we don't get to the point? Maybe no one else will ask the hard questions, but I will. Mr. Crab, do you have any knowledge that you or any other creature you might have dueled with or against has been enhanced in any way by magic?

Giant Crab: Not that I can recollect.



Congressman Felice: Will you please state your name for the record?

Mark Rosewater: Mark Rosewater

Congressman Felice: And what is your association with **Magic: The Gathering**?

Mark Rosewater: I am currently the head designer.

Congressman Felice: So your job is to make the cards?

Mark Rosewater: I oversee the making of the cards—the mechanical aspect of the cards, that is. I am also responsible for the design of a significant portion of those cards.

Congressman Felice: Are you aware of the large number of giant creatures in your game?

Mark Rosewater: We are a fantasy game, and giants are a staple race.

Congressman Felice: Mr. Rosewater, need I remind you that this is a very serious matter and that levity will not be permitted. We are, of course, talking about creatures of giant size. Here before me I have a list of eighteen giant creatures represented in the game. I will read them for the record: **Albatross, Badger, Caterpillar, Cockroach, Crab, Dustwasp, Harbinger, Mantis, Octopus, Oyster, Shark, Slug, Solifuge, Spider, Tortoise, Trap Door Spider, Turtle, and Warthog.**

Mark Rosewater: I don't think **Giant Harbinger** belongs on that list.

Congressman Felice: I have a copy of the card in front of me. It says **Giant Harbinger**.

Mark Rosewater: I know, but it's not a harbinger of unusual size. It's a harbinger that's a giant.

Congressman Felice: Then why isn't it called Harbinger Giant? That is the convention, correct? **Stone Giant, Hill Giant, Frost Giant...**

Mark Rosewater: It had to do with the naming conventions of the Harbingers. **Elvish Harbinger** was an Elf. **Kithkin Harbinger** was a Kithkin. Which means **Giant Harbinger** is a Giant.

Congressman Felice: It's a bit confusing.

Mark Rosewater: Tell that to **Zombie Assassin**.

Congressman Felice: I don't understand the reference.

Mark Rosewater: It was a common black creature in *Odyssey*. Players never understood whether it was a Zombie that was an Assassin or an Assassin that specialized in assassinating zombies.

Congressman Felice: Which was it?

Mark Rosewater: The former.

Congressman Felice: How do you know?

Mark Rosewater: One, the card says **Zombie** in its creature type line. Two, the creature in the art is a zombie and the creature it appears to be killing is not. Three, I don't think there's a lucrative career in killing things that are already dead.

Congressman Felice: Fine, let the record show that there are seventeen giant creatures in the game.

Mark Rosewater: There's more than that. You're just counting the ones with "Giant" in their title. Take a creature like **Lithophage**. It's a 7/7 beetle.



Congressman Felice: You acknowledge that there are numerous creatures of unnatural proportions in the game?

Mark Rosewater: Yes, I do.

Congressman Felice: Do you have any knowledge as to why?

Mark Rosewater: I have a theory.

Congressman Felice: Would you care to enlighten us?

Mark Rosewater: I believe humans are fascinated by things bigger than they should be.

Congressman Felice: I don't understand.

Mark Rosewater: I think its human nature. Just think how many times you've seen something bigger than it was supposed to be and how fascinated you were.

Congressman Felice: I still don't see the relevance.

Mark Rosewater: Designers and the creative team members get this. To be fair, a cockroach just isn't that cool. But a **Giant Cockroach**? That's pretty awesome.



Congressman Conrad: Are you aware of the testimony of Mr. Rosewater?

Giant Cockroach: I am. I was in the room. I was in the third row. You must have seen me. I'm a giant cockroach!

Congressman Conrad: What do you think of what he said?

Giant Cockroach: I think I have a lot more to offer than my larger-than-normal frame. My power is equal to my converted mana cost. Not a lot of creatures can say that. And my flavor text is pretty memorable. He squashed bugs. We squashed him. Fine, I'm an eight-foot cockroach. I just don't believe that's the root of my appeal. I am more than just a giant bug.



Congressman Felice: Among your responsibilities, you are R&D's liaison with the marketing research people, correct?

Mike Turian: That is correct.

Congressman Felice: One such activity you are involved in is the market research study colloquially referred to as the "Godbook Study."

Mike Turian: Yes.

Congressman Felice: Could you explain to this committee what a "Godbook Study" is.

Mike Turian: It's where we ask players to look at individual cards from a set and grade them.

Congressman Felice: Was such a grading ever done for the card **Giant Cockroach**?

Mike Turian: Yes. **Giant Cockroach** was in one expert set, *Urza's Legacy*, and three core sets, *Seventh*, *Eighth* and *Ninth*.

Congressman Felice: You have data from those studies?

Mike Turian: Right here.

Congressman Felice: How does **Giant Cockroach** fare?

Mike Turian: For the overall card, it does pretty well. Better than one would assume looking at the individual pieces.

Congressman Felice: You are saying that many of its individual pieces did not rank high.

Mike Turian: That is correct.

Congressman Felice: How about we start with the grading of the card's mechanics.

Mike Turian: It didn't fare well. It's a vanilla creature so it isn't particularly exciting, mechanically speaking.

Congressman Felice: How about its flavor text? I hear it's memorable.

Mike Turian: It fared okay, but not great. The bottom half of the top half. Aka in the middle.

Congressman Felice: So you would say that the flavor text wasn't overly impressive.

Mike Turian: Not so much.

Congressman Felice: Then what is the reason for its high overall marks?

Mike Turian: That's easy. It's a giant bug.

Congressman Felice: This is your personal opinion.

Mike Turian: No. See, right here in the personal comments: "It's a giant bug. Cool!"

Congressman Felice: Do you personally find giant bugs cool?

Mike Turian: I do.



Congressman Page: Mr. Badger, how tall are you?

Giant Badger: I am twelve feet, four inches.

Congressman Page: That is abnormally large for a badger, if I'm correct.

Giant Badger: Yes, it is.

Congressman Page: How exactly did you get to be twelve feet tall?

Giant Badger: I'm not exactly a normal badger. How many badgers have you seen that wear a purple tunic? I'll be honest, most badgers can't pull it off.

Congressman Page: You started as a promo card. You were created to sell a book. Am I correct?

Giant Badger: It was called *Shattered Chains*. It was the second book in the *Whispering Woods* trilogy. It was the third ever **Magic** book.

Congressman Page: You were made as a means to coerce players into buying this book.

Giant Badger: I wouldn't say coerce.

Congressman Page: Have you read the book?

Giant Badger: I have. Well, most of it. It kind of drags. And it puts planeswalkers, the player analog, in a pretty bad light. The main character's family is wiped out in the first book because some random planeswalker plays **Pestilence**.

Congressman Page: My point is that you were a big incentive to buy this book.

Giant Badger: I guess.

Congressman Page: And as we heard from Mr. Rosewater, giant creatures are considered to have a certain cachet.

Giant Badger: All right.

Congressman Page: So there was pressure to be larger than normal, right? I mean, would a card called Badger have sold the novel?

Giant Badger: I don't know. There's **Rysorian Badger**. It doesn't look particularly big.

Congressman Page: There was pressure for you to be big. Admit it.

Giant Badger: Sure, there's pressure. And what green creature hasn't been **Giant Growthed** a few times? But that's temporary. That's strictly "until end of turn."

Congressman Page: So you would never voluntarily accept an aura or some other more permanent type of growth. A +1/+1 counter perhaps.

Giant Badger: I'm not that kind of creature.

Congressman Page: So you're saying to this committee that you've never allowed a planeswalker to enhance you in any way.

Giant Badger: They've cast spells on me, sure. But I was told they were harmless. Well within both the comprehensive rules and the floor rules.

Congressman Page: Harmless. So says the twelve-foot badger.



Congressman Fletcher: Do you know **Jolrael's Centaur**?

Giant Warthog: I do.

Congressman Fletcher: Would you say that you're friends?

Giant Warthog: We're from two very different blocks, but yeah we hang out from time to time.

Congressman Fletcher: **Jolrael's Centaur** had a party / sanctioned tournament on the night of January 16th. Were you there?

Giant Warthog: I was not.

Congressman Fletcher: Really? You are aware that other creatures who testified today claim to have seen you there?

Giant Warthog: I believe they were mistaken. The tournament was Extended, I believe. What would I be doing at an Extended tournament.

Congressman Fletcher: Why would **Jolrael's Centaur** throw an Extended party? He's not legal in that format.

Giant Warthog: Maybe it was a free-for-all. I don't know. I wasn't there. How would I know?

Congressman Felice: While reviewing the Multiverse records, we found a reference to a card with the playtest name "Giant Giant." The records say that you created it.

Mark Rosewater: I did.

Congressman Felice: What did it do?

Mark Rosewater: I don't remember exactly. I do know it was big, really big.

Congressman Felice: Why did you create it?

Mark Rosewater: I knew that players liked giant sized versions of things. And they like giants. So I put two and two together and made a giant-sized giant. I even had a cool art description for it. Note that I don't normally write art descriptions for design cards. Anyway, I wanted to have two giants. First a normal sized giant. In its art was going to be him standing next to a normal human. He'd be towering over him. Then on Giant Giant, we'd have the same basic pose except now the small human is the giant from the first card and the big guy is the giant giant.

Congressman Felice: What happened to the card?

Mark Rosewater: I'm not sure. If I had to guess, I'd say too much giant

Congressman Fletcher: I will remind Mr. Oyster that it is a federal offense to eat a government official.



Congressman Page: Mr. Tortoise.

Giant Turtle: I'm **Giant Turtle**. He's **Giant Tortoise**.

Giant Tortoise: Don't worry about. People confuse us all the time. Just remember that his mechanic plays up the slowness of a turtle while mine plays up the defensiveness of a turtle's shell. Even easier, I'm a 1/4 and he's a 2/4.

Congressman Page: Your card says 1/1.

Giant Tortoise: That's just because R&D didn't have the "make things look as cool as possible" tech back in *Arabian Nights*. Really, I'm a 1/4 that gets -0/-3 when it gets tapped.

Congressman Page: You still attack as a 1/1.

Giant Tortoise: I only cost two mana. I'm good on defense. Besides, I made the core set. He never did.

Giant Turtle: Dude, that wasn't cool. I don't pick on your shortcomings.

Giant Tortoise: Like what?

Giant Turtle: Your art's kind of lame.

Giant Tortoise: I'm a **Giant Turtle**. How exciting can it possibly get?

Giant Turtle: My art at least makes you think you might want to run away. I scared that one guy in my art so much he fell down. That's like horror movie scary.

Congressman Page: Could we possibly return to talking about this issue at hand? How exactly did two different turtles end up thirty feet long?

Giant Tortoise: I can't speak for **Turtle**, but I come from the plane Rabiah and I think thirty-foot turtles are kind of the norm.

Congressman Page: Rabiah?

Giant Tortoise: Yes, I'm Arabian.

Congressman Page: You're Arabian because you come from the plane Rabiah.

Giant Tortoise: Yes.

Congressman Page: Really?

Giant Tortoise: Yes.

Congressman Page: Really?!

Giant Tortoise: Yes. What did you think *Arabian Nights* meant?

Congressman Page: Not that. Definitely not that. Mr. Turtle, how did you get to be thirty feet long?

Giant Turtle: Um, I cannot recall.



Congressman Bielman: Please state for the record that **Mr. Slug** refuses to testify.

Giant Shark: I don't think that's the case.

Congressman Bielman: I've asked him the same question four times.

Giant Shark: He's answering.

Congressman Bielman: I don't hear anything.

Giant Shark: I don't mean he's currently answering. I mean he is in the process of answering.

Congressman Bielman: I don't understand.

Giant Shark: He speaks kind of slowly.

Congressman Bielman: How slowly?

Giant Shark: Eight words a day.



Congressman Felice: So the giant creature is a staple of the fantasy genre?

Mark Rosewater: Very much so.

Congressman Felice: Why?

Mark Rosewater: Because it mixes the fantastical with the known.

Congressman Felice: Explain.

Mark Rosewater: A spider is a known quantity. People are aware of what it is. By making it gigantic, you keep all the real world associations. That is, people know what it looks like and has a general sense of its behavior. But by becoming giant, it takes on a different feel. And remember, what I explained earlier that humans have a fascination for things that are bigger than they should be. Thus, you are able to create something that is known yet still unfamiliar. This is also why many mythological creatures are merely hybrids of known creatures. People know what an eagle and a lion are, but mix them together and you make something new and different.

Congressman Felice: And this is what's going on?

Mark Rosewater: Basically. You can try this trick at home. Think of a small innocuous creature. Make it fifty times bigger. Not so innocuous any more, is it? In fact, many things that seemed totally harmless start becoming horribly dangerous. Notice how most of these creatures wouldn't be scary at all if they were normal size: insects, birds, invertebrates. That's probably why my giant giant didn't click.

Congressman Namvar: I would like to wrap this testimony up by thanking all today's speakers for taking time out of their duels to come talk with us, particularly those of you that did not attempt to eat members of this committee.

*Mark Rosewater is Head **Magic** Designer. What this fancy title means is that he's in charge of **Magic** design. This gets him a lot of mail (which he actually reads). When not alternatively destroying and saving **Magic**, he likes to spend time with his family, do stereotypically geeky things (play games, read comics, watch a lot of science fiction, etc.) and write about himself in third person.*



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