



# Mix & Match, Part II

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Making Magic  
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Last week was Hybrid Week, and I spent [the column](#) explaining the flavor behind half of the hybrid cards. While the idea of abandoning the last half of the hybrid cards and having a column that says "Part I" but doesn't have a "Part II" entertained me (after all I enjoyed "History of the World, Part I"), I feel I couldn't in a good conscience abandon it. After all, one of the key rules of design is to never to set up expectations that you don't plan to deliver on. With that said, let's get to the hybrid cards:

## #56) Gravelgill Duo

Let me begin with the card I somehow missed in my precise alphabetized pass. (Thanks to Ari for brining this to my attention.) This card was interesting because it was the first Duo to be previewed, and the +1/+1 ability on the blue side confused people. Now that everyone can see it's part of a cycle, the power- and toughness-boosting makes a little more sense. The other question this cycle generated was why one color produced a cumulative effect (that is, one that mattered if it triggered multiple times in a turn) and the other side did not. The answer is that there just aren't that many cumulative effects, especially in creature keywords which is what we wanted to grant. (For the record, of our evergreen keywords, only lifelink is cumulative (plus deathtouch, but that only matters if the creature regenerates); although two first strikes turning into double strike seems like it ought to work... okay maybe only in silver-bordered land—hey, I'm the rules manager there, hmmm.) As far as flavor goes, we allow the keyword as long as it fits with the color that grants it. (Yes, there are some cheats you can do, but I'll get to that issue in a moment.)

## #57) Old Ghastbark

Remember last week when I said that green and white were the two allied colors that overlapped the most in color pie abilities? Well, it turns out they also both get vanilla creatures. And the 3/6 power/toughness combination. Before I move on, I want to make a note about my comments on green and white last week. I was being a little tongue in cheek about the overlap between the two. Yes, they share more than the other color combinations, but not by an obscene amount. And yes, both colors have areas that are completely off limits to each other. I don't find the colors too similar. **Magic** doesn't need to drop down to four colors. In a column later this year I am going to talk about white and what we're doing (and have already done) with the color.

## #58) Oona, Queen of the Fae

For all my complaints about the difficulty finding blue-black overlap, this card doesn't show it. Flying? Check. Milling? Check. (Note that blue normally has straight milling while black tends to eat away your library from the inside picking and choosing which cards it wants out of the library.) Flying token generation? Check. It's even a Faerie, which are blue and black in *both* mini-blocks.

## #59) Oona's Gatewarden

This card is the only one playable with islands to have wither. (Fine, the only nonartifact creature playable with islands to have wither.) The reason we felt it was okay was because it had defender, which made the card only usable on defense which felt okay pie-wise to us for blue. Plus, as I said last week, wither being brand new allowed us more flexibility when placing it in colors.

## #60) Oracle of Nectars

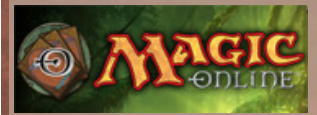
I pointed out last week that green and white have a significant number of life gain cards. There were numerous emails and board posts asking why design was so lazy as to keep reusing the same mechanic. The reason for the repetition is not laziness. We do a lot of life gain because [life gain is very popular](#), especially with more casual and newer players (remember, the group we're [focusing our attention on](#) this year) This reminds me of a topic I've been dying to talk about, but I think it's worthy of a whole column. A little hint: repetition is a design tool, not a design weakness. (I understand I already wrote [a column about the importance of repetition](#); the next one will be more about how it's used as a design tool.)

## #61) Oversoul of Dusk

Okay, this card introduces protection from red into mono-green for the very first time. I guess in a hybrid set you just have to expect a little color

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bleed.

### #62) Plumeveil

This is another hybrid card where all the pieces cleanly overlap. The interesting thing, for me, about this card is that I keep wanting to call it Plum Evil. Sounds like an old English expression, right?

### #63) Poison the Well

Land destruction and lowering the opponent's life total are both clear overlaps in black-red. The only subtle difference is that black makes the opponent lose life, while red deals damage to them. Black-red cards split the difference, with about half doing the first and half doing the second.

### #64) Puresight Merrow

White likes to plan ahead because it likes to strategize. Blue looks ahead because it values knowledge. Despite the differing in philosophy, peeking at the top card is something that white and blue both do (although it is more part of blue's pie than white).

### #65) Raven's Run Dragon

A lot of the comments about this cycle online seem to feel that it's boring. My answer is that **Magic** becomes unnecessarily complex if every card has to be spinning plates while juggling. This cycle is straight-forward and simple and nicely ties into what the set is doing. Its ability is often relevant and can help break stalemates (especially with help from cards like **Scuttlemutt**). For some portion of the set (especially the part aimed at limited) that's more than enough.

### #66) Reknit

This card caused an interesting debate in R&D. The argument at hand was whether or not white gets to regenerate creatures as part of its modern-day color pie (obviously it once was in white's color pie as *Alpha* had **Death Ward**). I argued that white regenerating creatures is cleanly in white's pie (acknowledging that the ability is primary in green). White is the defensive color. It has numerous ways to save its creatures (protection, damage prevention, flickering, etc.), and regeneration seems perfectly at home. Devin countered that he was fine with white regenerating non-permanents, but felt like creature regeneration was limited to black and green (and yes, black seldom regenerates creatures other than those that regenerate themselves). In the end, we agreed that the overlap, philosophically at least, allowed this card to work even though each color doesn't normally regenerate every card type.

### #67) Repel Intruders

This is another one of the cards that didn't have to worry about color pie because each half requires the use of the proper color mana.

### #68) Rhys the Redeemed

Both green and white get to make 1/1 creature tokens. In fact, both colors are allowed to make a whole bunch of 1/1 creature tokens. It was this use of the color pie that was used to justify the doubling ability. For white, don't think of it as doubling as much as it's just making a lot of 1/1s. Green, by the way, is king of doubling creatures. Note that the card yet again doesn't use the word "double" in its rules text. (\*shaking fist in air\* Gottlieb!)

### #69) River's Grasp

Like **Repel Intruders**, another card that skirts the color pie issues by requiring actual colored mana. This card plays up another popular black-blue combo: bounce & discard.

### #70) Rosheen Meanderer

This card plays into one of red and green's overlaps: the production of mana. Normally, red gets the one-and-done spells / sac effects on creatures (e.g., **Seething Song** and **Coal Stoker**) while green gets the reusable mana producing permanents (e.g., **Bird of Paradise** and **Fertile Ground**). This dividing line isn't that clean, though, as we occasionally let red and green stick their toe into the other's area, more often for red. **Smokebraider** is a recent example of this color pie stretching. The thing that helped pull this card back towards red was the limiting of the use to X spells. While green has a few, this is clearly an area that red is king of.

### #71) Runes of the Deus

This cycle has a cool story that I can't really tell until I'm able to talk about *Eventide* design, but suffice to say that I'm quite happy with how they turned out. The biggest compliment I can give it is I believe that this cycle is going to make some players start playing enchantment removal main deck in Limited.

### #72) Safehold Duo



The interesting argument we had about this card was whether or not we wanted it to have vigilance on it, as vigilance is an ability that is more white than green (vigilance is primary in white and secondary in green). Is it weird for a white creature to need you to play a green spell to get something that white is supposed to be the best at getting? In the end, we felt like the card held together well enough that we could let this slide.

### #73) Safehold Elite

While we put persist in all the colors, I always felt it made the most sense in white, black, and green as those were the colors that got to have some form of regeneration. I'd also like to point out that design created this card as a hybrid Grizzly Bear. Development felt it was too weak (as green and white often obsolete their respective two-drop vanilla 2/2s) and added persist.

### #74) Safewright Quest

Green is allowed to search the library for any basic land and put it into play. White is allowed to search its library for a Plains and put it into play. The big question became how disruptive it was to allow white to search out Forests from its library. The answer ended up being "not very."

### #75) Scar

This was the card that four people guessed correctly in the thread when I read it right after the preview booster went up. It is also the card that every member of the design team turned in during the first batch (check Sean Fletcher's [feature article](#) for more tidbits such as this) Once again, we decided very early on to treat -1/-1 counter creation as a form of direct damage and thus part of red's pie (for *Shadowmoor* block, that is).

### #76) Scarscale Ritual

Blue gets card drawing. Black gets card drawing at some personal sacrifice (usually life loss, but it has a history of spending other resources for cards). No great color pie issues here.

### #77) Scuzzback Marauders

Red and green both get trample (green primary and red secondary) and persist (everyone gets persist).

### #78) Scuzzback Scrapper

Red and green also get wither, along with black.

### #79) Seedcradle Witch

Green and white both get power toughness boosts. White tends to have the smaller ones (+1/+1 and +2/+2), while green is allowed anything up and down the scale (usually +3/+3 and larger). The untap a creature part, though, is much more white than green. Green used to untap creatures way back when (hey, *Seeker of Skybreak*) but the last batch of color switching took it out of green. Nonetheless, it was fine philosophically (the reason it was there in the first place) so a little bleeding in this area didn't bother anyone and helped pull the card back towards center.

### #80) Shield of the Oversoul

Green has little by little been getting its grubby claws all over indestructible. Yes, it's allowed in any color, but green has started positioning itself as the primary color.

### #81) Silkbind Faerie

The quirkiest part of this card is probably the fact that it's a white Faerie. This card came about because Creative, when explaining how faeries were the only ones that didn't shift during the Aurora, admitted one day that the faeries could probably have one white faerie if we wanted it. R&D said of course we do, and this card got turned into a Faerie. Both white and blue can tap creatures, although normally when we give this ability to blue we make it "tap or untap target creature" to help differentiate the ability from white.

### #82) Somnomancer

What *Silkbind Faerie* said.

### #83) Sootstoke Kindler

This card is just hammering home that black now is secondary with haste (as is green). The interesting design note about this card is that it started as a common cycle of hybrid creatures that could all tap to give a creature of their color the creature keyword they had. Only this card made it through development. (It turns out the design was a little cycle-heavy—and yes, I'll be addressing the volume of cycles in an upcoming column.)

### #84) Sootwalkers

When evaluating this cycle, remember that it is unblockable by forty percent of the creatures in the environment. While not identical, this percentage is very close to the percentage of decks a landwalker can successfully landwalk against (in a normal draft world where most players play two colors).

### #85) Spiteflame Witch



And now we swing back to life loss for black-red.

### #86) Spiteful Visions

I've often talked about how sometimes flavor works not in the small pieces but in the total big picture. **Spiteful Visions** is one such card. **Howling Mine** is not particularly a red effect, but the overall feel of getting short term advantage for long term pain feels both very back and very red—black because black is willing to pay costs to gain power; red because it's all about getting the advantage now without thought of the consequences.

### #87) Steel of the Godhead

A lot of people have compared this Aura to **Armadillo Cloak**. Hmm, +2/+2, lifelink, and a form of evasion. I don't see it. (For those that love to write letters, yes I understand that **Armadillo Cloak** doesn't technically grant lifelink.) I guess this is a good spot as any to jump into another popular topic spurned by last week's column. **Steel of the Godhead** allows you to grant a creature lifelink in a deck playing only islands. How is this not just like **Augury Adept**? (The discussion last week kept pointing to **Dire Undercurrents**.) To me there is an important line. **Steel of the Godhead** only grants lifelink to white creatures, the color which is primary in lifelink. Yes, you can cheat the system, but only by playing cards that are actually white. Hybrid lets you get cards of a color in you deck without the corresponding basic land, but to take advantage of this you have to use white-blue hybrid cards. You have to exploit a quality built into hybrid cards. That's not cheating; that's taking advantage of one of the abilities hybrid has to offer. **Augury Adept**, on the other hand, gives life gain to your all-Island deck without you having to jump through any hoops. It just gives blue life gain. The line between those two things, to me, is fundamentally important and thus where I draw the line. It appears, by the way, if you want to hear Devin's "counterpoint" to my "point" from last week, you have to actually tune in this Friday. (I apparently have been having some influence on Devin's writing style.)



### #88) Swans of Bryn Argoll

This is one of those cards that works with the color pie, but only if you view each color through a particular vantage point. For white, it's the fact that white is king of damage replacement. Much like how we let black draw cards if it pays some kind of personal cost, we let white turn damage into something positive for the player whose creature is being hit. For blue, this is just another means to draw a bunch of cards. It's true that in mono-blue, we'd probably just tie the card drawing to damage without preventing it, but we felt that the small shift was within blue's defensive nature.

### #89) Sygg, River Cutthroat

Black likes profiting off of other players' pain. Blue just likes drawing cards whatever the condition. Note that in *Shadowmoor* we opted not to try to parallel the designs of reconcepted legends. As we had just done this shtick in *Time Spiral* block, we decided to just make cards that were true to their colors rather than riffs off the earlier design.

### #90) Tattermunge Duo

Another duo. We chose forestwalk because we were trying to find an evasion keyword in green, which, if you've never looked, is not an easy task. (Let's just say it's no blue or black.)

### #91) Tattermunge Maniac

Green does not normally get "attacks each turn if able," but being that green is the color of untamed wild creatures, we felt it wasn't much of a pie stretch.

### #92) Tattermunge Witch

This is another example of a spell blending different parts from two colors. Green often has cards that get larger when blocked (and it had rampage back in the day). Red does it a little but not as much as green. The +1/+0 bonus is much more red, as red tends to get +N/+0 boosts where green gets +N/+N bonuses. I'm sure +1/+0 was chosen to pull the card back towards center. Trample, as I've already mentioned, is now in red and green.

### #93) Thistledown Duo

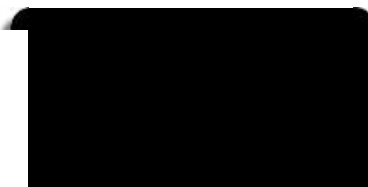
Another duo. Not much to add here.

### #94) Thistledown Liege

Each liege granted its two colors +1/+1 each and had one other ability. Flash was chosen here, as white and blue are two of the three colors with flash. Green is the third.

### #95) Thoughtweft Gambit

White and blue both tap and untap creatures. Blue has the more carte blanche access, while white taps defensively, most often with tappers like **Master Decoy**, and untaps as a means to allow creatures to surprise block. The card nicely avoids letting white untap anything but its own creatures.



### #96) Torpor Dust

Blue gets -N/-0 effects (old school *Shrink* is now part of the blue pie), while black gets any combination of -N effects (-N/-N, -N/-0, -0/-N, etc.) As such, this card is the overlap in this area between blue and black.

### #97) Torrent of Souls

While this series of cards didn't require any color pie balancing, they did require finding two effects, one in each color, that blended well together. These cards were much more like gold cards from a design sense than hybrid cards.

### #98) Traitor's Roar

Neither black nor red taps creatures, so how exactly did we justify this one? Flavor again. You see, the idea behind this card is that you force a creature to attack its master. Now *that* feels black-red... and explains the "Traitor's" in the name.

### #99) Turn to Mist

As we have been exploring more items to put into white, I'm happy we've upped our amount of "flicker" (remove target creature from the game and return it either immediately or at end of turn). This effect is primary in white and secondary in blue.

### #100) Tyrannize

Ever since *Odyssey*, we added punisher cards to red's arsenal. Punisher cards are those that force a player to choose between two things, one of which is most often damage. Using a punisher design, we were able to put a solely black ability, discard, on a red card. Note that we made the second ability life loss rather than damage to have each half be a black effect.

### #101) Vallemaker

*Shadowmoor* is filled with hybrid cards that find ways to force two-color play to optimize them. This card forces the play of basic land types and thus each half can be flavored solely in that color.

### #102) Vexing Shusher

Red and green are the two colors that get "cannot be countered." Normally red gets it on instants and sorceries, while green gets it on creatures. This card kind of splits the difference, because it's an uncounterable creature that can make your spells uncounterable.

### #103) Wanderbrine Rootcutters

Not much to add on this cycle. It is interesting to note that the ones with blue in them are slightly stronger, as color-changing opponent's creatures is an ability found in blue.

### #104) Wasp Lancer

The triple-hybrid creatures at uncommon (yes, it's a cycle) all have very simple abilities—mostly keyworded ones. Blue-black took flying because as I've explained, blue and black just don't share all that many simple abilities.

### #105) Wheel of Sun and Moon

This is a new ability, so it doesn't really have any color pie precedent to deal with. The reason green and white were chosen was that they are the enemies of black, the king of using the graveyard as resource.

### #106) Wilt-Leaf Cavaliers

Another hybrid triple. Its simple keyword is one of only two that white and green share. (Flash is the other.)

### #107) Wilt-Leaf Liege

This card is the strongest liege because white and green are the two colors that get the best *Crusade*-style effects. They're also the two colors philosophically that care about community. The anti-discard rider is, like *Wheel of Sun and Moon*, based on the fact that their shared enemy is king of the thing the card fights against, in this case discard.

### #108) Worldpurge

This was another brand new ability that we stuck where it felt right. White has in its color pie the ability to sweep the board and start over. Blue is the color of bounce. *Worldpurge* felt like a merging of these two ideas.

### #109) Wort, the Raidmother

Token-making and conspire have branches into all five colors, so really any combination could have had a shot at this effect. That said, this card seemed like a good flavor fit for the Aurora-twisted Wort.



## #110) Zealous Guardian

White and blue have flash. Wait you say, what about green? Where's all the flash in green? It turned out that white and blue needed the basic keyword intersection more. White-green got vigilance and black-blue had to take flying. *Shadowmoor* isn't a sign that flash is leaving green, just that it didn't fill a role for green in this set.

Whew! One hundred and ten—done. Hopefully you've enjoyed this little jaunt down Color Pie Lane.

Join me next week when I get negative.

Until then, may you see the similarities and not the differences.

Mark Rosewater

*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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