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> Where doing this man where making this happen

If you're reading this, there are two possible things going through your head. The first is "cool, a Homestuck MTG set," in which case feel free to skip this intro and get straight to the cards. For the rest of you, those asking "why a Homestuck MTG set?," I have reasons for you, none of which are good.

You may remember some other people on r/Homestuck creating Homestuck-based Magic cards. If you were involved in both Homestuck and Magic deeply at around the same time I was, you may even remember some other projects similar to this one. The primary purpose of this project is that all those innocent fun-havers are Bad and Wrong and I need to prove my superior wisdom, accumulated over half a decade of reading Mark Rosewater articles, by creating a superior set.

Secondary to that is my incessant need for attention. I could have worked on any number of far more productive projects with far more artistic merit. I chose to work on a Homestuck Magic set instead because there are lots of people who already know about Homestuck and Magic and thus the project has a guaranteed audience.

The third reason is that it wasn't actually my project. It was the idea of Multivac, #1 Bolas fan and user on the wonderful Homestuck and Hiveswap Discord. ([You're welcome for the free advertising. Makin](#)) My own projects tend to wither and die as I quickly get bored or give up on completing them. By working under someone else, I hoped to avoid that issue. This, I told myself just as I had ten thousand times before, would be the one. This would be the project I would finish.

That was in June last year.

Alas, my vast intellect was far beyond that of my coworkers. Quickly, I found myself taking over the entire project. Denied of much input Multivac and Plipster, the other person to stick with the project, didn't have much to do. When I inevitably ran out of steam halfway through the project was left fallow. After months of no work being done, I was left with only one option. One disgusting, vile, awful option. I would have to actually *grow as a person* in order to finish this project.

In the end, my desperation for attention won out over my laziness. I buckled down and finished the designs. Plipster recruited the wonderful Agi to do all the boring grunt work I was too lazy to do. Agi ended up going far beyond what was asked, providing feedback that exhibited a fraction of my vast and unending wisdom and putting a ton of care into the aesthetics of every card.

So here we are. I'd like to thank Hussie for making Homestuck, Richard Garfield for making Magic: the Gathering, Mark Rosewater for teaching me practically everything I know about designing Magic cards, Agi for all his work, Plipster and Multivac for moral support, and all the random people whose excellent input I've completely forgotten about because I ignored it entirely.

> I skipped over all that, just get to the cards already

I'm going to be structuring this the same way official Magic sets are revealed, which means I'll be revealing a selection of cards each day over the course of the week. This way, I can provide commentary on the set's design process and also vastly multiply the number of worthless internet points I accrue. Today's going to be significantly lighter than the rest of the week on actual cards, instead focusing on explaining the set's core mechanics and design principles.

My goal when designing this set was more than just to make a set with cards of things in Homestuck. It was to make a set that *reflects* Homestuck. At the same time, I wanted to hew as close to the rules governing actual Magic set design as possible. That produced a lot of compromises, not helped by Homestuck itself rarely mapping cleanly to concepts in Magic.

[But as a very wise man once said](#), "*restrictions breed creativity*." The many restrictions trying to stay true to both Homestuck and Magic placed on me were also what led to some of my favorite designs. I can't say whether or not I succeed at creating something *good* given I barely playtested this set at all, but those restrictions produced some interesting ideas I never would have tried otherwise.

One of the first decisions I made was to restrict the Homestuck side of things to content from acts 1 through 5. There's only so much space in a set, and a lot of moments and characters that I wanted to represent.

> Experience Counters

Homestuck's narrative is that of a coming-of-age story. Though it often subverts our expectations of what growth means, it's still ultimately a story about growing up. SBURB reflects that theme of growth in a variety of ways, from houses growing taller to players growing stronger to universes growing to maturity. Experience counters are a mechanic that lends the player themselves a sense of growth.



Some cards will have placeholder art. For the initial release, I stuck purely to art from within Homestuck because I was lazy and also there's not actually that much art of Carapacians, Consorts, and Underlings. If you have, know of, or want to make art for the cards that are missing it, there will be a link in the full set release.

When designing a Magic mechanic, it's important to set limits. A mechanic that's too broad, like Kicker, feels bland and unfocused. The set Kaladesh used energy counters which were usually given to a player when casting spells and expended for various effects. Experience needed to feel functionally different. I also wanted to avoid experience being too much of a "parasitic" mechanic that relied on the player having other cards to generate experience counters.

With that in mind, I stuck to three different templates for experience cards.

The first template is a permanent that rewards the player with experience for accomplishing something, and then gives them a reward for doing so. Behatted Champion encourages you to play lots of creatures, something green decks usually want, and works fine on its own as an early creature that can grow more powerful later in the game. With other experience cards, it can reach full power much faster, and will keep generating experience to fuel other effects.

The second template is a card gives the player a set number of experience counters when played, and then produces an effect that scales based on how many experience counters you have. On its own, Sick Fires is a pretty ordinary red spell for removing enemy creatures. With other experience cards, it will quickly become powerful enough to kill even the biggest creatures.

The third template gives the player experience counters on being played, then rewards them every time they gain experience. On its own, Village Sage can be played as a 1/3 that lets the player scry when it enters the battlefield - a serviceable but unexciting card. However, it adds a free Scry 1 onto every single experience-generating effect the player has.

Experience cards appear in white, blue, red, and green. Mechanically all five colors can have access to experience counters so long as their effects fit that color, but excluding black in this set helps create a thematic divide between cards supporting SBURB's heroes and cards working against them.

> Prototype

While SBURB's players grow, its challenges are designed to meet them. Underlings and the carapacian royalty grow in power with each player that enters the medium through prototyping, a process which usually involves at least one dead body. The *Prototype* keyword mechanic loosely represents this dynamic.



Prototype N (You may exile up to N creature cards from your graveyard as you cast this spell. If you do, it enters the battlefield with an additional +1/+1 counter on it for each card exiled this way.)

Prototype does a lot more than serve as a loose representation of SBURB's prototyping process. It reinforces the set's central theme of growth. Creatures usually die over the course of a game of Magic, so prototype cards become more powerful the longer the game goes on. At the same time, it does so in a way opposite to experience counters. While experience counters grow *you*, Prototype creatures require you to feed *them* resources in order to grow.

Prototype appears in blue, black, red, and green. White is not normally allowed to use cards in its graveyard as a resource, but all four other colors have had mechanics that encourage graveyard interactions and any color can use +1/+1 counters. Those colors are also all able to support Prototype with ways to get creatures into the graveyard other than combat.

> Carapacian Tribal

“Tribal” is the term in Magic for cards that care about a specific creature type. One of the restrictions I placed on myself was to avoid inventing new creature types, but I made an exception for carapacians in order to make them one of the set’s major themes.



Carapacians from Prospit and Derse fight and die on the battlefield, a place that grows and changes with prototyping.

Carapacians are defined by the war between Prospit and Derse and its inevitable outcome. Their mechanical identity draws strongly on duality. Many carapacians have a mirrored counterpart from the opposite side, as with the two captains above. Many carapacians also either have effects that encourage sending carapacians to their death, or produce carapacian creature tokens as fodder for the first type. For example, with Dersite Captain on the board, a suicidal attack into enemy blockers could deal the damage needed to win the game.

In a rare case of Homestuck aligning well with Magic, carapacians appear in white and black. The philosophies of these colors align with Prospit and Derse almost perfectly, and the color combination is great for inevitability and incremental advantage mechanically. Combined

with experience counters and prototype, each color has access to two of the set's new mechanical themes.

> Transform Cards

There's still one more little mechanic to share. There are five mythic rare transform cards in the set. A transform card is double-sided. The side with the mana cost listed is played normally, and when the right conditions are met the card transforms.



God tiering is a transformative expression of a character's growth. Each of the four beta kids is represented by a transform card that upon death returns as a god tier version of themselves, alongside a fifth character that undergoes a transformation that you'll see later.

Beta kid designs went through a few iterations to find something that made all four kids feel connected while accurately reflecting their flavor. Each kid has a keyword and transforms when they die. Upon transforming, they gain an ability representing god tier immortality and flying. In addition, they each gain a unique ability representing their aspect.

I wanted this cycle (A Magic term for a set of mechanically related cards across colors or rarities) of transform cards to be equally spread across all five colors, with each color appearing on two cards. For John, I went with green and white. The value he puts on friendship fits well with white-green ideals of community.

Vigilance was chosen as his keyword to represent his leadership and him looking out for his friends, and is primarily a white ability. Dealing damage to fliers is a green ability and [is often used to represent strong winds](#), so it was a solid fit for his aspect.

> That was a lot of words and very few cards

Today's reveals were by necessity a little slow, in order to lay out the structure of the set. Tomorrow we'll be looking at the archetypes the set supports, as well as talking about how design principles influenced what got included and what got left out of the set. Until then, have one last card to tide you over.

