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Tale of an Angry Wurm

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I'm an insane rabid raving incoherent delirious maniac! A delusional deranged daft lunatic! I'm totally and completely bereft of reason! I'm loco! Unhinged!

IT'S MADNESS WEEK, BABY!!!

That, and I apparently love my thesaurus.

Today I turn my attention to the new mechanic in *Torment* – madness – and its implications for deckbuilding. I also start a journey into *Odyssey* Block deckbuilding that will lead to very strange places next week. But alas, I'm getting ahead of myself. First, madness.

It turns out that madness is ridiculously easy to use in deckbuilding. Consider my favorite madness card: **Arrogant Wurm**.

On first blush, Arrogant Wurm doesn't look so spiffy. In another color, a 4/4 with trample for 5 mana might be something to crow about. But green already has access to the most efficient fatties around. For instance, **Kavu Titan** can be a 5/5 trampler for the same cost and can also come out on turn 2 if needed. Add a single in the casting cost instead of a and you have **Shivan Wurm**, a whopping 7/7 trampling machine. Even as recent as *Odyssey*, **Beast Attack** will give you two 4/4's, and at instant speed. So who cares? Toss Arrogant Wurm aside, right?

Ah, madness.

Consider the many uses for Madness in decks:

1) Anti-Discard

Is your "friend" Amy slapping you silly with her nasty **Specter**-discard deck? Throw a bunch of madness cards into your deck and I bet she doesn't play it again the following week. Madness makes any dedicated discard strategy a very scary proposition for an opponent – probably the most obvious use for madness.

2) Self-Discard

Most spells you play that force you to discard consider the discard to be a *disadvantage*. The spellshapers introduced in *Mercadian Masques* (**Devout Witness**, for example) trade a card for an effect. With madness, you get that effect AND you get to play a card. As long as you have the mana set aside, cards like **Gamble**, **Foil**, **Masticore**, **Null Brooch**, **Stormbind**, etc., start to look positively insane (mad??). Global discard spells, like **Bottomless Pit** and **Mindslicer**, become insidiously lopsided with madness.

3) Spells At Instant Speed

Often, madness also means that you can play your otherwise non-instant spells at instant speed. With **Wild Mongrel** on the table, you can drop a creature, enchantment, or sorcery with madness *at any time*. Oh, and your Wild Mongrel gets bigger too. And changes color. Neat.

4) Spells At Cheaper Cost

Then, too, is the fact that madness costs are almost universally less than the actual casting cost. The lower the cost, the more often you can play madness spells with something expensive like **Probe** with kicker. Even better, cheap madness costs mean that a good self-discard strategy will allow you to play your spells faster than before. Good spells for cheap are in pretty high demand.

And the best part? None of these uses for madness are mutually exclusive. You can build your Anti-Discard Deck and still reap the reward of self-discard spells without really changing your card choices at all!



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So now, after considering its madness cost, Arrogant Wurm starts to look pretty exciting after all. Oh sure, it doesn't have the sexiness of **Basking Rootwalla** with its amazing FREE madness cost. And it can't immediately kill an opponent like **Fiery Temper**. But Arrogant Wurm is potentially a 4/4 trampler for 2...

...That can drop into play because of an opposing **Ravenous Rats**.

...That can be played as an instant with Wild Mongrel on the table.

...That turns **Merfolk Looter** into "2, 2: Draw a card, then put a MIGHTY 4/4 TRAMPLING WURM INTO PLAY!!!!"

MUHAHAHAHAHA!



Even in *Odyssey*, there are enough fun discard spells to make an intriguing madness deck. Here is how a deck using just *Odyssey* and the three madness cards I've mentioned might look. Believe me: as you expand the card pool with which to make your decks, the possibilities only get crazier (more mad??).

Here is my thought process: First, **Arrogant Wurm** and **Basking Rootwalla** are green while **Fiery Temper** is red. My deck will be G/R. So there.

The green cards in *Odyssey* that "let" me discard are: **Crashing Centaur**, **Krosan Archer**, **Rites of Spring**, and **Wild Mongrel**. Wild Mongrel is one of my favorite Madness-enhancing cards because a) the discard effect is free and at instant speed, b) it causes massive combat headaches, and c) it's a common. Rites of Spring, too, seems like it is almost too good a deal to be true: play madness cards while securing your mana base and thinning the land from your deck. I am a little less excited about the other choices, Crashing Centaur because he is so darned expensive and Krosan Archer because he is too defensive for a deck with my aggressive madness cards.

The red cards in *Odyssey* that "let" me discard are: **Acceptable Losses**, **Dwarven Strike Force**, **Frenetic Ogre**, **Minotaur Explorer**, **Pardic Swordsmith**, and **Rites of Initiation**. The problem with red's discard is that it is more chaotic. Random discard isn't horrible with madness, but it isn't a sure thing either. Since the deck is aggressive, I like Minotaur Explorer and, to a lesser extent, Acceptable Losses. The others are worth skipping, being on average too expensive for their bang.

For artifacts there are **Junk Golem** and **Patchwork Gnomes**, both of which are fine but again don't fit the aggressive nature of the deck very well.

Between Wild Mongrel, Rites of Spring, Minotaur Explorer, and Acceptable Losses I think there is enough self-discard. In fact, with only 12 madness cards, there are some opportunities to do some other fun things with the deck's discard effects. Luckily, *Odyssey* has plenty of tools, even when limiting myself to green and red.

Roar of the Wurm is probably my favorite card to discard. Putting it into the graveyard allows for a turn-4 6/6 beastie. True, I only get to use it once, but then again, I get a turn-4 6/6 beastie.

Any aggressive deck would be remiss without **Reckless Charge**. Again, the flashback cost is very reasonable so I don't mind discarding it. And on the times I can play it twice, my creatures – especially the trampling Arrogant Wurm – become even scarier than before.

Finally, I will also add **Druid Lyrist** for two reasons. First, he is a quick creature that can do damage via Reckless Charge. Second, and more importantly, I imagine most people playing *Odyssey* will use **Zombie Infestation** because it's so darned good. And yes, the combination of Zombie Infestation and madness is very, very scary.

The deck looks like this:



The Angry Deck

G/R Madness

13 Forest
9 Mountain

4 Basking Rootwalla
4 Druid Lyrist
4 Minotaur Explorer
4 Wild Mongrel
4 Arrogant Wurm

4 Reckless Charge
4 Rites of Spring
4 Fiery Temper
4 Roar of the Wurm
2 Acceptable Losses

And unlike a lot of decks I list, it is also *very* inexpensive to build. Just remember to scream "MADNESS!" whenever you play a card.

As always, challenge yourself to make an even crazier madness deck. Even better, throw a Madness party when *Torment* is released and see what kind of kooky (mad??) stuff your friends make. Don't invite Amy, though... her decks are mean. Below are a couple other Madness decks I made for other formats, just to tickle your brain.

Next week, put on your knee-high boots because we are going to wade DEEPLY into wacky deckbuilding. Decks, decks and more decks! Yeehaw!

The *Torment* pre-release is Saturday and I hope you're suitably excited. Be paying close attention to the set and cards you like, because next week I'm throwing down the gauntlet. That's right: I want to see what kind of *Torment*-only decks you can build.

Good luck!

-j

Wurmy

Standard

4 Karplusan Forest
4 Shivan Oasis
4 Yavimaya Coast
2 Cephalid Coliseum
6 Forest
3 Island
1 Mountain

4 Basking Rootwalla
4 Birds of Paradise
4 Merfolk Looter
4 Wild Mongrel
4 Flametongue Kavu
4 Arrogant Wurm

4 Rites of Refusal
4 Fiery Temper
4 Roar of the Wurm

"Anti-Amy"

Extended

4 Bayou
4 Llanowar Wastes
8 Swamp
6 Forest

4 Basking Rootwalla
4 Squee, Goblin Nabob
4 Dodecapod
4 Krovikian Horror
4 Scandalmonger
4 Arrogant Wurm
1 Greel, Mind Raker

4 Duress
4 Zombie Infestation
4 Call of the Herd
1 Metrognome

Tale of an Angry Wurm

Theme Deck

4 Karplusan Forest
4 Shivan Oasis
4 Taiga
7 Forest
4 Mountain

4 Thundering Wurm
4 Wild Wurm
4 Arrogant Wurm

4 Rancor
4 Surge of Strength
4 Fiery Temper
4 Roar of the Wurm
3 Earthquake

- 2 Survival of the Fittest
- 1 Berserk
- 1 Bash to Bits
- 1 Decimate
- 1 Overrun

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