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Building Blocks with *Torment*

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Howdy and welcome to "Building Blocks," what I hope will be a regular post-prerelease feature here at House of Cards (how much do I like talking about myself in the pseudo third-person? And asking questions only I can answer? Wheee!).

At the end of this column, there's a little challenge, so make sure to read all of it! But first, here is how Building Blocks works:

After a new base set is unveiled, I'll make five decks using only cards from that set. For example, had there been a "Building Blocks with *Odyssey*" article, you would have seen five decks using only *Odyssey* cards. Then, when the next set is released, I'll list five new decks based on cards from that set and the previous one (as in this article, *Torment* and *Odyssey*), while updating the decks from the previous article using the new cards. Finally, when the third set is released I'll do it all over again using the full block.

Confused yet? Stick with me, because this all means that Building Blocks articles will be fairly decklist-intensive. In the first one you'll get five decks, then ten, then fifteen. I will try, however, to give enough explanation for each deck to make the decklists meaningful. Just so you don't feel short-changed, this article will include ten decklists even though it is the first one of the *Odyssey* Block.

So why do this at all? The overall goal, of course, is to get you thinking in creative ways about deckbuilding. More specifically, here are some reasons I like this approach:

1) Focus on the new cards

I simply don't have time, as much as I might enjoy it, to focus on every single card in a set to fully explore its implications for deckbuilding. By making multiple decks with the new cards, I hope to fully embed your mind into the new set and what it offers and start you thinking early about cards you may have otherwise ignored.

2) Novel deck ideas

Since the decks will all be using new cards, some of them will look kooky. Hopefully as a result you will start to consider entirely new deck forms. Instead of looking at *Torment* and thinking "Hmmm... what does this offer my *Fires of Yavimaya* deck?" you may begin to ask "How the heck would I make a deck around *Cephalid Vandal*?"

3) Deck evolution

In this column I throw a lot of deck ideas your way. Normally, I don't spend the time to revisit those ideas and refine them. Here you will see multiple decks go through multiple iterations, since decks will get updated with each new set. In addition, the early decks will almost assuredly get changed to accommodate any playtesting I've done.

4) Fun and challenging

If there is one thing that you probably know about me by now, it's that I like a deckbuilding challenge. Limiting myself to a small group of previously-untested cards can be great fun. If you agree, you should enjoy these forays.

Okay, enough preamble. Let's jump into it, shall we?

Below are some decks made using only cards from *Odyssey* and *Torment*. Specifically, the first five are decks inspired by *Torment* cards (indeed, I'm not sure the concepts are viable given only *Odyssey* cards) and the last five are decks inspired by *Odyssey* cards, updated with *Torment*.

I avoided the concepts I personally consider the "obvious" decks to be made in this Block. These concepts include:

- *Psychatog* (or *Zombie Infestation*) + *Upheaval*
- Aggressive red/green with *Reckless Charge*
- *Traumatize* + *Haunting Echoes*
- Mono-green Squirrels with *Overrun*
- White Weenie

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Certainly there are some interesting, fun, and potentially powerful decks in that list, but I have full confidence that other people will explore those ideas. Instead, I've tried to pick concepts that will push your creativity a little.

Sit back, enjoy and for goodness' sake--see what kind of craziness **you** can create.

Deck 6: BLACK ATTACK

Alright, let's get the mono-black idea out right away. It's just too tempting to be given so many black cards in *Torment* and not use them. In particular, I am enamored with the idea of a nearly creatureless deck while loading myself up on the anti-creature cards. It's important that **Mutilate**, **Chainer's Edict**, **Rancid Earth**, and **Innocent Blood** take care of opposing creatures so that **Morbid Hunger** can target my opponents. I do, however, have **Hypnox**, **Caustic Tar**, and stealing creatures via **Shade's Form** as backup plans.

Notice that black is actually given a bevy of good critters. **Nantuko Shade**, **Mesmeric Fiend**, **Ichorid**, **Faceless Butcher**, **Carriion Wurm**, **Shambling Swarm**, **Mortivore**, yadda yadda yadda... These creatures combine into a wicked monoblack deck. Just not a near-creatureless one.

I don't use **Mind Sludge** because I just can't decide how good (or not) it is. **Insidious Dreams**, too, might be a no-brainer when I look back on this deck. For now, though, the deck is about mana acceleration and Big Impact Spells That Make Opponents Cry.



Black Attack

Deck 6

3 Cabal Coffers
21 Swamp

1 Hypnox

4 Innocent Blood
4 Cabal Ritual
4 Chainer's Edict
4 Rancid Earth
4 Mutilate
4 Haunting Echoes
4 Morbid Hunger
3 Shade's Form
2 Diabolic Tutor
1 Skeletal Scrying
1 Caustic Tar

Deck 7: LOCO

You know, it seems like only a week ago that I was thinking of decks built around the new madness mechanic.

Oh. Right.

A madness deck might be relatively obvious in this block, but which colors do you choose? There are interesting implications for both self-discarding and Madness spells in almost every color combination. Probably the most disgusting choices use **Zombie Infestation**, and you should expect to see Madness + Infestation + the aforementioned yummy black spells coming to an opponent near you. But certainly decks built around the madness mechanic are not limited to using black.



In fact, I'm quite enamored with all of the cute little synergies in this deck. The deck is basically a hodge-podge of madness spells, other-cards-that-are-fun-to-discard (**Roar of the Wurm** and **Aether Burst** specifically), and cards that "let" me discard. And it is one of the most headache-producing decks during the combat phase I can imagine. In fact, there's too much darned math... let's move on.

Loco

Deck 7

12 Island
10 Forest

4 Basking Rootwalla
4 Wild Mongrel
4 Thought Devourer
4 Arrogant Wurm

4 Obsessive Search
4 Aether Burst
4 Call of the Herd
4 Roar of the Wurm
3 Careful Study
3 Turbulent Dreams

Deck 8: DROOL.dec

In looking through *Torment*, I started to notice a **lot** of usable life-gaining, damage-preventing, and otherwise I-Refuse-To-Die cards. In fact, I think this block tries very hard to make these cards not suck as much as they have previously. What would happen, I mused, if all of these cards went into the same deck?

The result, when it works, is one of the most annoying decks in history. The massive lifegain allows for the deck to really mature its mana base.

The problem, of course, is that white isn't given many game-ending fatties. *Angel of Retribution* makes an appearance, but I think the deck is just as likely to win via dinky Spirit tokens. Another option would be to splash blue for *Iridescent Angel*. Usually, however, your games will end in a time-restricted draw as your opponent's drool pools around your shoes. Oh well.



Drool.dec

Deck 8

4 Nomad Stadium
2 Petrified Field
18 Plains

4 Confessor
4 Reborn Hero
4 Teroh's Faithful
1 Angel of Retribution

4 Equal Treatment
4 Life Burst
4 Embolden
4 Kirtar's Wrath
3 Vengeful Dreams
3 Ray of Distortion
1 Ancestral Tribute

Deck 9: SHROOMIE

Here's a little secret: *Alter Reality* is my single favorite card in *Torment*. Really. I was dying to mention it in my [very first article](#), and it does appear that I have an unhealthy fixation with color-changing cards. Shroomie (or "An Ode to Amsterdam") tries its very hardest to exploit *Alter Reality*'s cheap cost and reusability.



I wish there was some way in the deck to a) better exploit discarding *Obsessive Search* and *Aether Burst*, and b) to reliably find *Alter Reality* when needed. The countermagic is also lighter than I'd like. Despite these wrinkles, you get the basic idea: Change the text of my creatures to respond to opposing decks. Besides, I get to finally use those four awful *Shadowmage Infiltrators* taking up room in the back of my collection (cough).

Shroomie

Deck 9

| | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| 4 Darkwater Catacombs | 4 Shadowmage Infiltrator | 4 Peek |
| 16 Island | 4 Possessed Aven | 4 Syncopate |
| 5 Swamp | 4 Treetop Sentinel | 4 Aether Burst |
| | 3 Repentant Vampire | 4 Alter Reality |
| | | 4 Compulsion |

Deck 10: THE SHOVEL

The interesting thing about *Odyssey* Block is the huge emphasis it puts on the graveyard. Flashback, threshold, madness and the tome of spells with "discard" in their text box means that you and your opponent are bound to be constantly checking, counting and otherwise staring at each other's graveyard. Thankfully, *Torment* supplies the tools for banishing this silliness at its source by removing everything from an opposing graveyard altogether.

At first, the deck splashed white for *Morningtide*, a card I consider immensely intriguing. But in some playtesting, there was actually *too* much graveyard destruction and a general problem dealing with ubiquitous spells like *Zombie Infestation* and *Squirrel Nest*. Now that white mana provides the much-needed *Ray of Distortion*.

Kill it,
Remove it,
Wish it a good afterlife...

...these are the tenets of The Shovel. (Egads... did I just say that?)



The Shovel

Deck 10

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 4 Tainted Field | 4 Carrion Rats | 4 Coffin Purge |
| 16 Swamp | 4 Zombie Cannibal | 4 Chainer's Edict |
| 3 Plains | 4 Crypt Creeper | 4 Gravestorm |
| | 4 Nantuko Shade | 3 Ray of Distortion |
| | 3 Shambling Swarm | |
| | 3 Carrion Wurm | |

Those are some *Torment*-based decks. Below you can check out my original *Odyssey*-only decks, updated to include *Torment*. After the release of *Judgment*, expect five new decks and updated versions of all ten of the decks listed here. As always, use these ideas to jumpstart your own mental cogs and wheels... there are plenty of deck ideas yet untested and waiting to be discovered.

Last week, I warned you of the First Ever House Of Cards Deck Challenge! No, it's not a contest... but every now and then I will throw down the deckbuilding gauntlet to see how creative you are. Think of it as a way of gaining fame and recognition for your obvious genius. Or just giving you something to do at school/work. Whatever.

Here are the rules for Deck Challenge #1:

- Decks must follow "normal" constructed rules (60 cards minimum, 4 of each card maximum, etc.).
- Use **only** cards from *Torment* and basic lands.
- Provide a brief description of how the deck is supposed to play and win with your decklist. Without this description, I'm not lookin' at the deck.
- Submit as many decks as you want (as long as each has a description).

BIG PLEA: Try and get the card names correct. I know they're new cards so accuracy can be tough, but sometimes it's *really* hard for me to figure out what you're talking about. A recent example: Compulsive Search. Are you talking about *Obsessive Search* or *Compulsion*?

Deadline for submissions: Next Thursday, February 7th. When my next article goes up, the polls close.

Submit decks to me at: houseofcards@wizards.com

In two weeks I'll discuss the coolest decks that people sent in. I'm eager to see what you can create! Knock my socks off! (But don't hit me. That would be mean.)

Next week: Squid-a-licious.

-j

Deck 1: FLASH!

The lean, mean, green flashbackin' machine

| Flash! | | |
|-----------|----------------|----------------------|
| Deck 1 | | |
| 24 Forest | 4 Wild Mongrel | 4 Catalyst Stone |
| | | 4 Ground Seal |
| | | 4 Rites of Spring |
| | | 4 Sylvan Might |
| | | 4 Call of the Herd |
| | | 4 Beast Attack |
| | | 4 Parallel Evolution |
| | | 4 Roar of the Wurm |

Deck 2: SHORT PACT

The wacky Tainted Pact discard-burn deck

| Short Pact | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Deck 2 | | |
| 3 Barbarian Ring | 2 Longhorn Firebeast | 4 Tainted Pact |
| 3 Cabal Pit | 1 Grim Lavamancer | 4 Dwarven Shrine |
| 2 Shadowblood Ridge | 1 Rotting Giant | 2 Firebolt |
| 1 Tainted Peak | 1 Gloomdrifter | 2 Chainer's Edict |
| 8 Mountain | 1 Hell-Bent Raider | 1 Shadowblood Egg |
| 6 Swamp | 1 Gravedigger | 1 Blazing Salvo |
| | 1 Possessed Barbarian | 1 Ghastly Demise |
| | | 1 Innocent Blood |
| | | 1 Overmaster |
| | | 1 Reckless Charge |
| | | 1 Skull Fracture |
| | | 1 Skeletal Scrying |
| | | 1 Molten Influence |
| | | 1 Recoup |
| | | 1 Skullscorch |
| | | 1 Crippling Fatigue |
| | | 1 Fiery Temper |
| | | 1 Temporary Insanity |
| | | 1 Diabolic Tutor |
| | | 1 Violent Eruption |
| | | 1 Mind Sludge |

Deck 3: THREEBORN

The plodding deck that laughs at even Kirtar's Wrath

| Threeborn | | |
|-----------|---------------|--------------------|
| Deck 3 | | |
| 15 Forest | 4 Reborn Hero | 4 Sungrass Egg |
| 9 Plains | 3 Auramancer | 4 Call of the Herd |
| | | 4 Squirrel Nest |
| | | 4 Far Wanderings |
| | | 4 Still Life |
| | | 4 Kirtar's Wrath |
| | | 3 Holistic Wisdom |

- 1 Bearscape
- 1 Ancestral Tribute

Deck 4: THE COG
Announcing a flying 15/15 beatstick near you

The Cog

Deck 4

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 3 Cephalid Coliseum | 4 Cephalid Looter | 4 Obsessive Search |
| 21 Island | 2 Cognivore | 4 Peek |
| | | 4 Syncopate |
| | | 4 Aether Burst |
| | | 4 Rites of Refusal |
| | | 4 Repel |
| | | 4 Persuasion |
| | | 2 Liquify |

Deck 5: OMNIVORE
Build... Epicenter... Win.

Omnivore

Epicenter

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| 4 Ravaged Highlands | 4 Werebear | 4 Firebolt |
| 10 Mountain | 4 Terravore | 4 Insist |
| 9 Forest | 4 Magnivore | 4 Overmaster |
| | | 4 Tremble |
| | | 4 Call of the Herd |
| | | 4 Epicenter |
| | | 1 Seize the Day |

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