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Postcards From LD

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Uncommon Knowledge
 Wednesday, April 3, 2002



Hello, we're in the middle of Land Destruction week here at MagicTheGathering.com. Before we get going, I'd like to thank everyone for all the letters they've sent me over the last month. I've tried to respond to all of them (Aaron dumped a ton of them on me all at once), and I really appreciate all the fine comments that you, the reader, have sent in. As so, I'd like to address a couple of topics. This will be quick, because we have a lot of Land Destruction goodness to cover this week!

1. Under current Oracle wording, **Zur's Weirding** does not cause a discard, but instead causes the card to be placed in the graveyard. While it still works well with flashback, it doesn't work at all with madness cards (frown!). My old article has since been edited.
2. It's been pointed out to me that Jaya Ballard was prominently featured in one of the *Ice Age* novels, where she's still alive and kicking as a planeswalker. You go girl!

What about the poll from [Flavor Text Week](#), you ask? It was a close one!

Who Is the Bigger Badass?

Jaya Ballard	2044	51%
Ertai	1961	49%
Total	4005	100%

Anyhow, onto the real deal: leveling **Mountains**, pulverizing **Plains**, burning down the **Forests**, sinking the **Islands**, and draining the **Swamps**. Presented for your enjoyment: Everything you wanted to know about Land Destruction but were afraid to ask!

A note for our newer readers: any time you see a card name in a different color, like this: **Sinkhole**, you can click on it to see the card.

SNOW-COVERED HOSE?



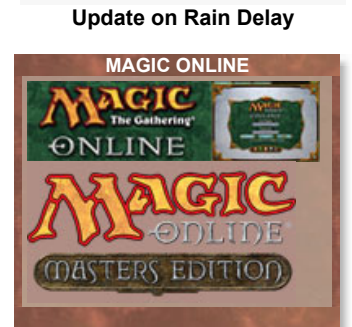
The *Ice Age* expansion introduced several mechanics to **Magic**, including **cumulative upkeep**, **cantrips**, and **snow-covered lands** (for those sticklers out there: **Cyclone** and **Jeweled Bird** from *Arabian Nights* were technically cumulative upkeep and cantrip cards before those terms existed). Since *Ice Age* was the first stand-alone set, Wizards wanted to see what would happen if you had basic lands that behaved differently than other basic lands. History will show that this was not the best card concept ever (who needs ten basic lands?), but that didn't stop the set developer from hosing snow-covered lands from here till Tuesday. **Icequake** added one point of insult to injury. **Thermokarst** took that one point back. **Avalanche** a whole load of snow-covered lands at once. To really make things sad, the one anti-land destruction card in the set couldn't even save your snow-covered lands! (**Hallowed Ground**)

HOW MAY I ENCHANT THEE?

Every color in **Magic** has an enchant land which can destroy lands, except for one: white. Red gets **Orcish Mine** and **Steam Vines**, green gets **Kudzu** and **Spreading Algae**, black gets **Blight**, and blue gets the oft-lamented **Erosion**. White does get the only enchant lands which PREVENT lands from being sent to the graveyard: **Consecrate Land** and **Equinox**. But the unique distinction of having the only enchant creature which doubles as a land destruction spell goes to red with **Destructive Urge**.

WELCOME TO THE JERRY SPRINGER SHOW!

Can't these lands just get along? While there are almost no artifacts in **Magic** which will destroy an opponent's land (the all-powerful **Chaos Orb** being the sole exception), all these lands are big player-haters in their own right. **Strip Mine** takes out land on the table, while **Wasteland** and **Dust Bowl** are choosier in destroying only those very special lands. And by last count, those non-basic lands numbered in the hundreds.



LAND DESTRUCTION NEVER KILLS, DOES IT?

Well, **Rancid Earth** and **Icequake** might hurt just a teensy bit. **Orcish Mine**, **Choking Sands**, and **Despoil** will hurt a bit more. And hey, **Dingus Egg** makes everything hurt! **Stench of Evil** and **Desolation** only hurt if you're one of those white mages. **Pox** makes it hurt all over at the same time. **Steam Vines** shares the pain, while **Aftershock** and **Fumarole** only pain you to play them. **Earthlink** and **Burning Sands** let you feel the pain of your creatures, while **Devastate** is a pain in everyone's butt. **Goblin Gardener** will only hurt you when he feels pain. It might be a pain to choose what to do about **Lava Blister**. **Wildfire** isn't pain; it's a complete stay at the hospital. **Pain/Suffering** really is more Suffering than Pain, though.

LESS FILLING, TASTES GREAT

Want to blow up all the lands at once? Try **Armageddon** for that quick, clean taste of land-free living. If old school isn't your style, you could just rid yourself of **Plains** (**Stench of Evil**, **Flashfires**), **Islands** (**Tsunami**, **Boil**), **Forests** (**Acid Rain**) or your choice (with **Wake of Destruction**). Can't decide to kill lands or creatures? May I recommend the new-improved taste of **Catastrophe**? Or for those who like starting over (and over and over), we have this tasty beverage known as **Jokulhaups** available for your consumption. Or you could try new **Jokulhaups**, **Obliterate**. Of course, you might have **Devastating Dreams of the Impending Disaster of Global Ruin** from all this carbonation. Just don't get caught in the **Epicenter of the Tectonic Break** when you hear the **Rumblings Crescendo** of an upcoming **Cataclysm**, or you'll surely find yourself without **Balance**. And for those who don't want to leave the party alone, be sure to bring the **Desolation Angel** with you.



TWO FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

Want to take out two lands for the piddling price of one card? Try **Dwarven Landslide**, **Earth Rift**, **Flowstone Flood**, or **Rain of Salt**. Some even use **Tornado** for the same effect, while others turn to **Orcish Settlers** and **Mine Layer**.

SO MANY CHOICES!

Befoul and **Minion of Leshrac** destroy a land or a creature.
Demolish and **Pillage** destroy a land or an artifact.
Creeping Mold kills a land, an artifact, or an enchantment.
Aftershock kills a land, an artifact or a creature.
Desert Twister, **Tornado**, and **Vindicate** kill all four types of permanents!

I SAID, SO MANY CHOICES!

Fumarole and **Goblin Grenadiers** kill both a land and a creature.
Nightscape Battlemage kills a land and also bounces creatures.
Decimate kills all four permanents, but only all at once!

WHO NEEDS CARDS?

Land destruction doesn't always put you ahead of the card count. **Dust Bowl** requires a land sacrifice to get going, while **Keldon Arsonist** takes two. **Raze** and **Tremble** both leave you down a card, as does **Flowstone Flood** should you buy it back. **Shivan Harvest** takes a hefty creature requirement (although this is lessened by any token creatures you might have in play). **Scorched Earth** might destroy the most lands selectively at once, but you'll always be down a card after you've cast it. You need to pitch cards to **Seismic Mage** (so counting himself, it's a 2-for-1...or 3-for-2...and so forth).

HOW MUCH PICKIER COULD YOU BE?


City in a Bottle will only destroy lands with the **Arabian Nights** symbol. I hope you aren't playing that mono-red deck with those vanity **Arabian Nights Mountains**! Likewise, **Golgothian Sylex** hits only those pesky **Antiquities** cards, while **Apocalypse Chime** nerfs a whopping five lands from **Homelands**. Remember, a card's expansion is determined by the expansion symbol on the card, so **Chronicles** Urza lands (the **Mine**, **Power Plant**, and **Tower**) will be destroyed by the **Sylex**, while **Fifth Edition** versions of these cards will not.

THE TABLES ARE TURNED!

Don't go using those **Rishadan Ports** and **Dust Bowls** to kill just any old land, because suddenly they might be countered -- and destroyed themselves -- by **Teferi's Response**. And as many red players have found lately, **Price**

of **Glory** might not be the best answer to a white mage: once he drops **Sacred Ground**, he has infinite mana during your turn! I've heard many a story about the white/red mage casting double **Urza's Rage** on turn 3 thanks to the opponent's **Price of Glory**.

IT'S COME TO THIS

The worst, absolute worst, bottom-sucking, soul-wrenchingly, horribly-headache-inducing worst land destruction spell ever came from *The Dark*. Let's not beat around the bush here; the card is **Erosion**. It costs  to cast. It doesn't outright destroy the land; you can choose to pay life to negate the effect each turn. All it basically does it simulate **Cursed Land** or force you to tap a mana to keep the enchanted land around. There are a few advantages to **Erosion** though, over let's say **Sinkhole**. Most of them involve having a higher casting cost for when you pitch cards to **Pyromancy**, however.

Well folks, I've barely got land to stand on at this point, so I think I'll head on off into this gaping chasm, and hopefully all these amazingly destructive spells will clear out in time for next week's column, where I promise safer footing and a distinct lack of unsafe ground.

Next Week: How they fixed **Magnetic Web**.



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*Ben Bleiweiss has written about his obsession with **Magic: The Gathering** for over a decade. He's travelled the world because of **Magic**, both as a player and a writer. When not spending time playing **Magic**, writing about **Magic**, or thinking about **Magic**, Ben is employed by StarCityGames.com, where he works with **Magic** cards all day long. He lives with his wife in Virginia, and they sleep comfortably at night under their Orgg down comforter.*



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