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Extending Rath

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House of Cards
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PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

The [recent announcement](#) of the Extended set rotations started me thinking a lot about older cards and new decks. Don't get me wrong: I won't play in any Extended tournaments, nor is this column meant to prepare you for tournament **Magic**. However, a new format means a blank canvas for deckbuilding. As such, I can't help but wonder what kind of funky ideas might work in an Extended without **dual lands**, *Fifth Edition*, and every set from *Ice Age* to *Weatherlight*. (If you want a great idea for a pre-rotation deck, check out BDM's [Griffin Canyon masterpiece](#).)



Today I take a look at a few oft-forgotten cards from the Rath Block (*Tempest*, *Stronghold*, and *Exodus*). These cards either interact in interesting ways with newer sets or suggest loads of fun tricks all on their own. Prior to November, expect some time when I focus on similarly quirky cards from *Urza*, *Masques*, *Invasion*, and *Odyssey* Blocks.

Until then, sit back, relax, and let your mind wander to a time long ago. It was a time of buyback and shadow, a time when **licids**, **slivers**, and **spikes** roamed Dominaria, a time before we were sick of **Gerrard Capashen** and his silly ship...

TOOTH AND CLAW

Just so you can be sure I'm talking crazy here, I start with **Tooth and Claw**. Who starts a look at cards from Rath Block with **Tooth and Claw**? I do, buddy. And I'll say "booby" before this is all over, too. Take your **Hatred**, **Oath of Druids**, **Tradewind Rider**, and **Ensnaring Bridge** somewhere else, because I don't want them cluttering up my dining room table.

For the trivia minded, only four cards in the new Extended are going to be producing tokens with power greater than their toughness. **Penumbra Bobcat** is the obvious one. Theoretically, **Echo Chamber** and **Dual Nature** can make tokens of any size (thanks to Ben for pointing these out to me, by the way). **Tooth and Claw**, meanwhile, pumps out 3/1 Carnivores for the "low" price of two creatures.

This cost may not appear worthwhile at first blush, but it doesn't look so bad if either a) your creatures are going to die anyway because of, for example, combat damage, or b) your creatures are 1/1 or 0/1 and need an ego boost.

Enter **Firecat Blitz**, a card from *Judgment* that not only makes little 1/1 dudes with a short lifespan, it potentially makes a LOT of 1/1 dudes with a short lifespan. After your Cats have attacked, they are more than happy to become Carnivores before the end of turn.

Thus a foundation for a deck might include both **Tooth and Claw** and **Firecat Blitz**. After that, I would think that mana acceleration, and especially mana-creating creatures, would be useful. Really, though, **Tooth and Claw** is fun with many different cards: **Battle Screech**, **Goblin Marshal**, **Nether Spirit**, **Sengir Autocrat**, the aforementioned **Penumbra creatures**, cantrip-creatures like **Multani's Acolyte**, leaves-play cards like **Aven Fisher**... the list goes on.

Here is a way I might try a **Tooth and Claw** deck. Keep in mind that although technically this deck will be legal in Extended in November, it doesn't use goodies from the upcoming set *Onslaught*. In addition, I imagine my own thinking will mature about this uncharted format in the coming months. So think of these decks -- as with all decks on Thursdays -- as early thought experiments.

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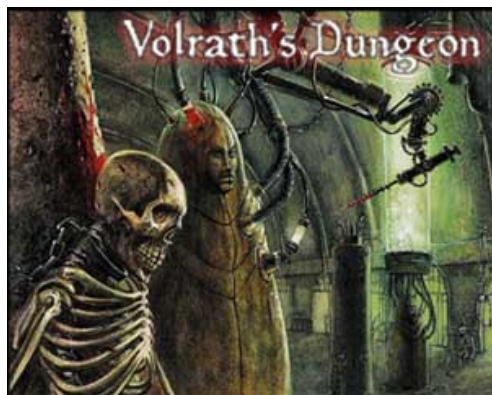
Oh, and I used a couple copies of **Bind** simply because of how sad both **Pernicious Deed** and **Powder Keg** would be to our poor 0-cost creatures.



Cheshire Cat		
Tooth and Claw/Firecat Blitz - New Extended deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
4 Karplusan Forest	4 Druid Lyrist	4 Firecat Blitz
1 Gaea's Cradle	4 Birds of Paradise	4 Overabundance
11 Forest	4 Wall of Blossoms	4 Tooth and Claw
6 Mountain	4 Deranged Hermit	2 Bind
22 lands	3 Skizzik	14 other spells
	2 Llanowar Elves	
	2 Penumbra Wurm	
	1 Verdant Force	
	24 creatures	

VOLRATH'S DUNGEON

Volrath's Dungeon is a terrific example of an evil black card and is faintly reminiscent of the new "punisher" spells like **Browbeat**. When you slap the Dungeon onto the table you are essentially saying, "Hello, let's trade. I'll get rid of these two **Swamps** and **Duress** in my hand in exchange for your next three turns. Don't worry, in a few moments you can kill my enchantment by having me punch you in the gut."



A couple of strategies work well with **Volrath's Dungeon**. First, if you can find a way to get rid of cards from the top of an opposing library -- **Millstone** is a good example -- then your opponent will never see those cards in her hand again. The net effect here is basically a discard from you equals a discard for your opponent. To enhance this effect a little, try something splashy like **Traumatize**.

Even better, thanks to cards from *Odyssey*, *Torment*, and *Judgment*, you don't necessarily have to trade your own cards. Dump cards with flashback or madness and you -- unlike your opponent -- haven't really lost a thing. In addition, **Volrath's Dungeon** might be the quickest way for you to reach threshold. Imagine a black/green deck with **Basking Rootwalla**, **Arrogant Wurm**, **Roar of the Wurm**, etc. and you get the idea. In fact, *any* older card with the word "discard" in it should require a few moments of reflection from you thanks

to **Magic's** three most recent sets.

Below is a deck that tries both of the above approaches. **Traumatize** is there along with its stepbrother **Haunting Echoes**. Using **Deep Analysis**, it's possible you can run an opponent out of cards before ever winning with lethal damage. More likely, however, the damage from the Dungeons (the assumption being that your opponent will want to take the 5 instead of drawing the same card over and over) and the lone **Avatar of Will** are the paths to victory.

I Hate You

Volrath's Dungeon - New Extended deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
4 Salt Marsh	4 Nightscape Familiar	4 Obsessive Search
4 Underground River	4 Shadowmage Infiltrator	4 Deep Analysis
2 Darkwater Catacombs	1 Avatar of Will	4 Volrath's Dungeon
9 Island		4 Traumatize
7 Swamp	9 creatures	3 Recoil
26 lands		2 Cunning Wish
		2 Lobotomy
		2 Haunting Echoes
		25 other spells

AURATOG

Tempest: When **Auratog** roamed the planet with his beady-eyed, wide-legged strides. **Auratog** was the last Atog prior to *Odyssey*, and in my mind stands second to **Atogatog** as the most fun.

In particular, **Auratog** is scary in combination with **Rancor**. Your happy little lizard-thing effectively reads "☠: +2/+2 until end of turn" with **Rancor** on its back, plus the additional +2/+0 and trample once the enchantment actually sticks. It's crazy, but if you start your turn with two **Forests**, a **Brushland**, and an **Auratog** enchanted with **Rancor**, you can attack with a 9/8 trampler.

Add an **Argothian Enchantress** or **Verduran Enchantress** to the party and you can also draw a card for every ☠ you pay. Add **Elephant Guide** and **Nomad Mythmaker** -- a trick I stole directly from the [Deck Challenge II](#) -- and you start to have one crazy deck.

Toga Party		
Auratog - New Extended deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
4 Brushland	4 Birds of Paradise	4 Rancor
3 Krosan Verge	4 Argothian Enchantress	4 Sterling Grove
2 Nantuko Monastery	4 Auratog	3 Elephant Guide
8 Forest	4 Verduran Enchantress	2 Seal of Cleansing
5 Plains	3 Nomad Mythmaker	1 Pariah
22 lands	3 Thaumotog	1 Worship
	1 Endless Wurm	15 other spells
	23 creatures	

BOOBY TRAP

Any card that allows you to scream "BOOOOBY! BOOBYBOOBYBOOBY!!!" while simultaneously inflicting 10 points of colorless damage to an opponent is worth a deck (or several, actually). Similarly, any card that can claim the title of Anti **Goblin Spy** Technology is also tops in my book.

Booby Trap was one of the first "bad" rares I built a deck around years ago, largely because I somehow ended up with five copies of it. The deck wasn't terribly creative; I tried -- on an opponent's turn -- to either return a card to the top of an opposing library or know what my opponent would draw. Then I would untap and play **Booby Trap**. If I remember correctly, I even took the deck to a local tournament and won a match or two.

I'm not sure enough cards supported my strategy back when **Booby Trap** first appeared. Today, however, I'm willing to give it another shot. Why? I did it all for the Booby.

The Booby Deck		
Booby Trap - New Extended Deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
3 Faerie Conclave		4 Whispers of the Muse
20 Island	0 creatures	4 Sky Diamond
23 lands		4 Memory Lapse
		4 Predict
		4 Counterspell
		4 Legacy's Allure
		4 Repel
		4 Booby Trap

3 Propaganda

2 Bamboozle

37 other spells

Don't let me stop you from other fun ways of making a **Booby Trap** deck. After all, what better use for **Tahngarth's Glare**? Or **Aven Windreader**? You might even give **Plow Under** a peculiar new use.

So ends a bizarre look at Rath. If I could keep writing, I would. Even at a glance, several other cards deserve weird decks:

- **Dirtcowl Wurm**, because as we know with **Mr. Babycakes**, +1/+1 counters are fun.
- **Dracoplasm** and **Volrath's Shapeshifter** have always suggested fun creature-based tricks that undoubtedly got better with **Odyssey Block's** focus on the graveyard.
- **Fugitive Druid**, meet **Elephant Guide**. Oh, and **Seton**, **Krosan Protector**.
- **Pegasus Stampede**, where tokens and threshold collide.
- **Dream Halls**, **Oath of Scholars**, and **Mindless Automaton** love **Odyssey**, **Torment**, and **Judgment**. Just ask them.
- **Mogg Maniac**, who will always be crazy.
- **Pursuit of Knowledge**, along with the many cantrips of recent sets, almost assuredly mean an ability to draw 7 cards.
- **Rootwater Matriarch** and **Rootwater Shaman** may actually be my favorite cards in all of Rath block, especially together.

Possibilities abound. And since thousands of heads are better than one, I encourage you to really dig into **Tempest**, **Stronghold**, and **Exodus** to see what cards you've forgotten -- or maybe never knew -- existed. If your goal is to have fun and do something different, only good things can happen.

Next Week: Get a life.

-j

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