

The debut of "Single Card Strategy"...

SCS: Forcemage Advocate

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"Jam-packed with ideas."

That's how my esteemed editor described my audition piece and is one of the reasons I got the job. So that's my goal here: to jam-pack this column with more ideas than you can shake a stick at. If I inspire you to build a deck, try a combo, raise an eyebrow, or even chuckle, I'll consider my mission accomplished. To kick things off, let's start with an interesting little *Judgment* uncommon called [Forcemage Advocate](#).

The Advocates are an interesting group of green or white *Judgment* cards. They produce a variety of effects, but as part of activating them you must return from one to three cards from your opponent's graveyard to his or her hand. At first glance, this seems like a severe drawback, because giving your opponent more cards is typically the last thing you want to do. But *Odyssey* block has mechanics that want cards in the graveyard, so kicking cards back to your opponent's hand can prove useful.



Arguably the easiest of all the Advocates to use is [Forcemage Advocate](#). At 2/1, it's cheap to play at two mana, and needs only a single card in your opponent's graveyard to use its ability: Tap it and

return target card in an opponent's graveyard to his or her hand. Put a +1/+1 counter on target creature (it can target itself). If nothing else, it's a decent "bear," offering 2 power for two mana for quick beatdown until you have need of its activated ability.

[Forcemage Advocate](#) affects three zones of play: your opponent's graveyard (by removing a card there), your opponent's hand (by giving him or her that card), and creatures in play. By looking at the zones this card can affect, we can really dig in and figure out why we might want to use this card.

Your Opponent's Graveyard

Say you've been playing *Judgment* with your friends, and they keep abusing the Incarnations, like [Wonder](#) or [Genesis](#). These creatures give special benefits to their controller simply by sitting in the graveyard, so you can use [Forcemage Advocate](#) to deny your opponents those benefits. Or what if your opponent is playing a "Reanimator"-style deck and is setting up for a [Phantom Nishoba](#) or [Verdant Force](#) to come into play the next turn? Your Advocate can put those cards back into their controller's hand, making it much harder for those cards to get into play. Similarly, what if your opponent has a pesky [Nether Spirit](#) that you can't seem to get around? Destroy it, put it back into your opponent's hand, and force him or her to spend mana to replay it.

Maybe your opponent is playing cards that gain a benefit from having cards in the graveyard. *Odyssey* block's threshold mechanic affects a lot of cards. But with a few activations of [Forcemage Advocate](#), you can take away threshold from your opponent, all the while pumping up your own critters. [Forcemage Advocate](#) can cut Lhurgoyfs down to size, too.

Your Opponent's Hand

Sometimes it doesn't matter if your opponent has extra cards in hand. Suppose you're using [Winter Orb](#) or [Rising Waters](#) to restrict mana, prohibiting him or her from playing those cards. Perhaps you've got a [Meddling Mage](#) out to prevent a spell in your opponent's graveyard from being played. Or maybe you've got reusable hand destruction like [Blazing Specter](#), [Disrupting Scepter](#), or [Scandalmonger](#), and you can simply knock the card returned by the Advocate right back out of his or her hand. If you build a deck around [Volrath's Dungeon](#), you might want to use the Advocate to fill your opponent's hand with cards to put back on top of his or her deck.

There are also strategies for which you want to keep your opponent's hand full. [Black Vise](#), [Viseling](#), [Iron Maiden](#), [Dark Suspicions](#), [Storm Seeker](#), and [Sudden Impact](#) all punish a player with too many cards in his or her hand. Maybe you're running [Oath of Scholars](#) and want to keep your opponent's hand full enough for you to reliably activate the Oath each turn. Or perhaps your [Gerrard Capashen](#) is netting you a lot of life, while your Advocate loads him up with +1/+1 counters.

Creatures in Play


Obviously, you can use the Advocate to pump up your creatures, saving them from removal or creature combat, or simply to get in extra damage. But that the Advocate adds +1/+1 counters means something special to certain creatures. The various *Judgment* Phantoms each get one counter removed each time they take damage, so the Advocate can keep them stocked. Going back to *Tempest*-era favorites, the Spikes can turn those counters into life, a [Fog](#) effect, or little 1/1 critters. The quirky but fun [Mindless Automaton](#) can take those counters and turn them into a half a card. [Triskelion](#), [Magmasaur](#), and [Spitting Hydra](#) can turn those counters into direct

damage; [Workhorse](#) can turn them into mana; and [Tetravus](#) and [Thopter Squadron](#) can turn them into flying 1/1 artifact creatures.

Giveth... then taketh away.

There are times when you might want to pump up your opponent's creatures. Suppose you've got an [Ensnaring Bridge](#), but your opponent has a small pumper that keeps slipping under it. There's the Advocate to the rescue. Maybe you're playing [Meekstones](#) but all your opponent's critters have 2 power or less--or [Reprisals](#) and none of his or her creatures have a power of 4. Or you want to get really tricky and need to squeeze 1 more damage out of a [Backlash](#) or [Delirium](#) (and you can double the fun if your opponent has a [Maro](#) in play).

Context Is Everything

Any of these effects might be worth giving a card back to your opponent under the right circumstances. Maybe you'll deal lethal damage and win before your opponent can use the card. Maybe you can turn it around to actually be card advantage. And maybe it will just be a really cool play worth loads of style points. The right creature for the job could very well be a little 2/1 Centaur for .

Last but Not Least . . . Multiplayer Games

If you like multiplayer games, [Forcemage Advocate](#) can really shine. Giving one opponent a card back from his or her graveyard can be both political ("Hey, keep me around and I'll feed you cards.") or practical ("Here's your [Disenchant](#) back so you can destroy that [Nevinyrral's Disk](#)."). A simple activation of the Advocate can send a strong signal to the other players and really increase the complex player interaction that makes multiplayer games so fun.

Here's a sample deck built to have loads of fun with [Forcemage Advocate](#).

Using the Force



Main Deck

60 cards

10 Forest	4 Disrupting Scepter
2 Gaea's Cradle	4 Oath of Ghouls
4 Llanowar Wastes	_____
8 Swamp	8 other spells

24 lands	

4 Birds of Paradise	
4 Forcemage Advocate	
2 Hypnotic Specter	

- 4 [Llanowar Elves](#)
- 2 [Scandalmonger](#)
- 4 [Spike Breeder](#)
- 4 [Spike Feeder](#)
- 4 [Thrull Surgeon](#)

28 creatures



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