

Five-times-three for the price of one **SCS: *Onslaught* Charms**

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I guess the title of today's column is a misnomer, as I get the pleasure of discussing *five* new *Onslaught* cards -- the Charms! The *Onslaught* Charms follow in the footsteps of their *Mirage*, *Visions*, and *Planeshift* predecessors, but they have their own distinct, creature-themed flavor.

Rules Corner: Modal Spells

The *Onslaught* Charms are called "modal" spells because each Charm has three different modes, or ways to use it. You can tell a spell or ability is modal if it includes the phrase "Choose one --."

Immediately after announcing that you are playing a modal spell, you must choose the mode you want to use (Rule 409.1). For example: first you announce that you are playing [Piety Charm](#), then you say that you are using the +2/+2 to target Soldier mode, then you choose an appropriate target. You can't switch modes once one has been chosen. If a modal spell is copied (by a card like [Mirari](#), [Fork](#), or [Radiate](#)), the copy

The beauty of the Charms is their flexibility. While they typically aren't undercosted for their effects, they make up for it in versatility. The trick is to find a good use for one of the abilities and keep an eye out for other opportunities where the Charm can shine. For instance, the *Visions* card [Emerald Charm](#) was often used as instant, pinpoint, global enchantment removal, but it was known to occasionally untap a [Gaea's Cradle](#) or bring down a [Serra Angel](#) in its day.

As I've got five Charms to cover, I'll probably zero in on what I think is the most useful of the three abilities, then mention uses that may crop up for the other abilities.

always uses the same mode as the original (Rule 503.10). That means you can't play a [Fever Charm](#) to give one of your creatures +2/+0 and then make a copy with [Mirari](#) that will do three damage to a Wizard.

Easy As Piety

First, let's look at [Piety Charm](#). Of all the abilities, the mini - [Giant Growth](#) for Soldiers seems to be the strongest ability. The fact that *Onslaught* is chock full of Soldiers makes this extremely playable. The [Gustcloak Soldiers](#) (including [Gustcloak Runner](#), [Gustcloak Harrier](#), [Gustcloak Sentinel](#), and [Gustcloak Skirmisher](#)) are all perfect candidates for the boost, by either attacking en-masse and nailing your opponent with the unblocked Soldier or using the Charm to kill a blocker that you want dead. Daru Cavalier's first strike also loves the power boost. Dipping further into the current Standard card pool, we've got [Longbow Archer](#) lurking over there in *Seventh Edition*, and it's more than willing to boost its first strike or fly-swatting abilities.



[Piety Charm](#) also allows you to attack with all of your creatures without tapping them. While this may not be as strong as the power/toughness boost, it's a lot more fun. If you stick with the Soldiers, there are several cards that would greatly benefit from this. First is [Catapult Squad](#), which makes blocking your untapped Soldiers a bad idea. [Whipcorder](#) can act as a little [Tahngarth](#): declare it an attacker and then tap a creature down before blockers are declared. [Intrepid Hero](#) can do similar tricks against big enough creatures. And [Kjeldoran Royal Guard](#) gets to run on the raid this time and *still* gets to play defense like it wants to. [Pearlspear Courier](#) gets to join in on the attack *and* give a target Soldier a

boost, including itself! Of course, you can do all of this with a [Mobilization](#) on the board too, but what fun is that? Another benefit of keeping your attackers untapped is that you can use them later to pay flashback costs for cards like [Battle Screech](#) and [Prismatic Strands](#).

Don't forget that [Piety Charm](#) can also handle pesky creature enchantments like [Elephant Guide](#), [Pariah](#), or [Psionic Gift](#). Let's look at a deck featuring [Piety Charm](#). Many of you have asked me to cut back on some of my rare-heavy deck creations, so the decks featuring the Charms will be heavy on the commons and fun and light on the rares. I'll borrow Jay's **Lite!** icon for this first one, which means the deck contains no rare cards.

Onward Pious Soldiers **Lite!**



Main Deck

60 cards

20 [Plains](#)

20 lands

4 [Catapult Squad](#)

4 [Daru Cavalier](#)

4 [Gustcloak Harrier](#)

4 [Gustcloak Runner](#)

4 [Longbow Archer](#)

2 [Pearlspear Courier](#)

4 [Whipcorder](#)

26 creatures

2 [Battle Screech](#)

4 [Daru Encampment](#)

4 [Piety Charm](#)

4 [Unified Strike](#)

14 other spells



Note: If you're able to get 'em, a good Soldier deck would do very well to have a few copies of [Harsh Mercy](#) and [Mobilization](#), but because they're rares, I didn't include them.

Trickery or Treat

Next up is blue's [Trickery Charm](#). This little gem has all sorts of potential in the new Standard environment. Even its "throw-away" [Jump](#) ability will prove useful with [Wonders](#) living in every other deck's graveyard. In fact, if you build an antiflying deck -- chock full of [Hurricanes](#), [Silklash Spiders](#), [Wing Snares](#), and [Femeref Archers](#) -- to face off against your opponent's Angel deck, packing [Trickery Charm](#) will help you ambush a creature your opponent thought was safe on the ground.



I went over changing creatures types in great detail in my [article](#) on [Artificial Evolution](#). But now we have all of *Onslaught* to play with and [Trickery Charm](#)'s ability to change a creature's type for a turn matters more than ever. What if you're playing [Callous Oppressor](#) and would very much like to snag your opponent's [Merfolk Looter](#), but "Merfolk" was called when Oppressor came into play? No problem -- trick that Merfolk into joining the Cephalid cause. One really cool thing about [Trickery Charm](#) is that you *can* turn a creature into a Legend or Wall -- buy yourself a turn by making that [Roar of the Wurm](#) token into a 6/6 Wall. You can also improve the effectiveness of cards like [Harsh Mercy](#), [Peer Pressure](#), and [Endemic Plague](#). A nifty thing would be to enchant one of your beatdown creatures with a [Crown of Suspicion](#). When it's about to die, use the Charm to change its type to match the 1-toughness creatures your opponent is running (say, Squirrels or Clerics), then sacrifice the enchantment to get rid of them all.

The ability to stack your deck at instant speed, which works particularly well with the new *Onslaught* fetch lands like [Flooded Strand](#) (and other cards that shuffle your deck), lets you draw the best card on your next turn and shuffle away the not-so-goodness. [Trickery Charm](#) also works well with [Future Sight](#), [Predict](#), [Kaboom!](#) (love that card's name), [Zoologist](#), and [Bloodline Shaman](#). Heck, if you're the kind of player that cringes whenever your [Millikin](#) dumps a power card into your graveyard and you can't retrieve it, stack your deck so that you won't hit it.

Here's a deck that might make decent use of the [Trickery Charm](#):

The Snatch and Sac Trick



Main Deck *60 cards*

12 Island	4 Crown of Suspicion
12 Swamp	2 Engineered Plague
_____	4 Imagecrafter
24 lands	4 Smother
	4 Trickery Charm
4 Callous Oppressor	_____
2 Mistform Shrieker	18 other spells
4 Mistform Wall	
4 Nantuko Husk	
4 Wretched Anurid	

18 creatures	



Note: The Oppressors are rare, but you can probably pick them up from uptight tournament players pretty easily. If you have them, [Underground Rivers](#) and [Polluted Deltas](#) can also help fix the mana.

It Loves Company



Next up is black's [Misery Charm](#). Right away you can see a way to use this as a cheap [Terminate](#) -- combine it with an [Imagecrafter](#) to turn the target into a Cleric, and then pop off the surprised creature. Not to mention, it's a great card to fight against possible Cleric-themed decks. Of course, with its second ability, you might want to be playing a Cleric deck of your own. [Rotlung Reanimator](#) seems like the best possible Cleric to raise from the dead, but I could see wanting to reuse [Doomed Necromancer](#), too. Dipping into white, we see all sorts of Clerics dying for the cause, many of which, like [Benevolent Bodyguard](#), [Defender en-Vec](#), [Pilgrim of Justice](#), [Pilgrim of](#)

[Virtue](#), [Reliquary Monk](#), and [Sacred Guide](#), you wouldn't mind fetching back. In fact, stroll through an online spoiler for all the cards listed as "Creature -- Cleric," and you'll be surprised at how many there are.

Check out [Misery Charm](#)'s little finisher ability. Sometimes your opponent will have locked up the game with a card like [Worship](#), preventing you from dealing that last little damage it takes to win the game. Unfortunately for those players, black has the ability to rob them of life points directly, bypassing the whole damage-dealing nuisance. Keep track of the life totals -- some times you'll rip a [Misery Charm](#) from the top of your deck and just win.

Here's a deck using [Misery Charm](#):

The Naive and the Corrupt



Main Deck

60 cards

10 Plains	4 Dirge of Dread
4 Starlit Sanctum	4 Misery Charm
10 Swamp	3 Profane Prayers

24 lands

11 other spells

4 [Beloved Chaplain](#)
4 [Benevolent Bodyguard](#)
3 [Cabal Archon](#)
4 [Doubtless One](#)
2 [Nova Cleric](#)
4 [Rotlung Reanimator](#)
4 [Shepherd of Rot](#)

25 creatures



Note: Sorry about the Rotlungs, but a black-white Cleric deck has to run them. They're just too sweet.

Taking Your Temperature

Next up is red's [Fever Charm](#). Unfortunately, [Fever Charm](#) suffers in comparison to [Reckless Charge](#), an *Odyssey* common that has flashback *and* gives creatures haste and a power boost. So, why in the world would you play [Fever Charm](#) instead? Well, [Fever Charm](#) *does* act as a [Lightning Bolt](#) against Wizards, and as we've seen, there are ways to make your opponents' creatures Wizards. It can also be your insurance for running [Thoughtbound Primocs](#), a very efficient red flier.



But it's really the fact that the Charm's an instant and [Reckless Charge](#) is a sorcery that gives you a reason to play it. For instance, what if you've just cast a [Sparksmith](#) and your opponent has no creatures in play, but you know he's likely to drop one during his turn? Targeting the [Sparksmith](#) with

a [Reckless Charge](#) will do nothing more than smash your opponent for 3 during your turn. With [Fever Charm](#) in hand, wait until your opponent's end step, Charm your [Sparksmith](#) with haste, ping the newly-played creature, and then [Sparksmith](#) is ready to ping again during your turn. The power boost ability works quite nicely in tandem with red's scores of throwaway creatures (such as Goblins) to take down bigger beasties, first strike brigades ([Jeska, Warrior Adept](#); [Sabretooth Tiger](#); [Halberdier](#); [Pardic Collaborator](#)), or even a trampling [Blistering Firecat](#). It can also really enhance the ability of [Butcher Orgg](#). Basically, it comes down to whether you want [Reckless Charge](#)'s raw power or [Fever Charm](#)'s flexibility.

Here's a sample deck using [Fever Charms](#):

Fever Slinger



Main Deck

61 cards

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 4 Barbarian Ring | 4 Embermage Goblin |
| 20 Mountain | 4 Ghitu Fire-Eater |
| _____ | 4 Sabretooth Tiger |
| 24 lands | 2 Savage Firecat |
| | 4 Sparksmith |
| 4 Fever Charm | 4 Thoughtbound Primoc |
| 4 Flame Burst | _____ |
| 4 Shock | 22 other spells |
| 3 Solar Blast | |
| _____ | |
| 15 creatures | |



Note: You can probably snag a couple of [Savage Firecats](#) from that same uptight tournament player you got the Oppressors from. And if you happen to have some [Blistering Firecats](#), they'd go pretty well in this deck too.

Vital Information



Last up is green's [Vitality Charm](#). Probably the best ability of the bunch is the mini-[Berserk](#); +1/+1 and trample at instant speed is a pretty darn good combat trick. Basically, this combines quite nicely with just about any really big creature you wish had trample, such as [Ravenous Baloth](#), [Beast Attack](#) tokens, [Werebear](#), [Erhnam Diinn](#), and [Phantom Centaur](#), and that's just dipping into green. The ability to generate a 1/1 token Insect creature at instant speed isn't anything to sneeze at either. I've had some attacks disrupted in *Onslaught* Limited when I attacked thinking my opponent had no blockers available.

Keep in mind the regeneration ability the Charm can give target Beast. Obviously, look for creature type Beast and you have your combo; green has tons of Beasts but don't overlook black ([Wretched Anurid](#)), red ([Avarax](#)), or even blue ([Aquamoeba](#)). Regeneration can combine nicely with [Contested Cliffs](#) to make sure your Beast comes out of the pit alive while your opponent's creature goes down in flames.

Here's a sample deck using [Vitality Charm](#):

Vitality Brutality



Main Deck 60 cards

2 [Contested Cliffs](#)

4 [Firebolt](#)

12 [Forest](#)
10 [Mountain](#)

24 lands

4 [Vitality Charm](#)
4 [Volcanic Hammer](#)

12 other spells

4 [Avarax](#)
4 [Ember Beast](#)
4 [Leery Fogbeast](#)
4 [Ravenous Baloth](#)
4 [Snarling Undorak](#)
4 [Wirewood Savage](#)

24 creatures



Note: Probably the most rare-heavy of all these decks, a proper Beast deck just begs for both [Ravenous Baloth](#) and [Contested Cliffs](#). If you have any [Karplusan Forests](#) or [Wooded Foothills](#), they'd obviously help fix your mana.

Thanks to everyone who wrote in regarding my [last column](#) on [Artificial Evolution](#). I've run out of space to talk about it here, but next time I'll present you with some cool ideas sent in that I didn't touch on.

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