

A look at the original Deconstructing Angry Hermit

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One of the most exciting decks to come out of Pro Tour Houston was a reanimation deck called [Angry Hermit: Part 2](#). This of course prompted the question: What was Part 1? Long before Aaron Forsythe became the venerable editor of this very site, he was a **Magic** player with an invite to Nationals. Aaron was associated with some pretty good players in the Pittsburgh area but had yet to achieve any notoriety on the national stage. That would change with his Top 8 performance and his rogue Standard deck, Angry Hermit.

Angry Hermit



Main Deck

60 cards

11 Forest	4 Arc Lightning
2 Gaea's Cradle	4 Plow Under
4 Karpplusan Forest	_____
2 Mountain	8 other spells
4 Rishadan Port	Sideboard
2 Treetop Village	2 Ancient Hydra
_____	4 Blastoderm
25 lands	2 Boil
4 Avalanche Riders	1 Masticore
4 Birds of Paradise	1 Splinter
4 Deranged Hermit	3 Thran Foundry
4 Llanowar Elves	2 Uktabi Orangutan
3 Masticore	_____
2 Rofellos, Llanowar Emissary	15 sideboard cards
3 Skyshroud Poacher	
3 Yavimaya Elder	

27 creatures



The deck came out of left field and was the darling of the tournament. It was a hybrid between two popular mana denial decks that were popular at the time. Trinity was a mono-green deck that relied on getting early [Plow Under](#)s to leave its opposition floundering for mana. The other was Ponza, a mono-red deck that used [Stone Rain](#) and [Avalanche Riders](#) to similar effect.



“The deck started out as pure land destruction with [Deranged Hermits](#) as finishers. I quickly swapped out the [Stone Rains](#) for [Arc Lightning](#) once I realized I couldn't beat other decks that had Birds and Elves. People laughed at the card, but it could kill lots of stuff, including a handful of [Rebels](#), [Thieving Magpie](#), [Skittering Horror](#), and [Skirge Familiar](#),” explained Aaron.

“The deck was built for my brother for States the year *Masques* came out. He wanted a green/red LD deck featuring [Darwin](#) and [Plow Under](#), and he left the rest up to me. I played a [Wildfire](#) deck at States that year and did significantly worse than Neil.”

The [Avalanche Riders](#) could come down on turn three thanks to ten mana accelerators in Aaron's build. Following that with a turn four [Plow Under](#) meant most opponent's had little chance of

recovering. Not only are you set back two turns in your mana development (three if you include the Riders) but ironically you are only going to draw land for the next two turns.

[Rishadan Port](#) is such a powerful land that it was actually banned in Block Constructed. Whether it was being used in the early game to forestall opponents from reaching the critical amount of available mana for their decks to strut their stuff or later in the game to lock out a color, the Port was a key card to the this deck's success.

Capable of killing up to three mana creatures in one fell swoop, [Arc Lightning](#) was also a form of mana denial. [Arc Lightning](#) was not generally considered a constructed-worthy card prior to this tournament. After Nationals there was no denying its flexibility and tournament worthiness in sixty card formats—providing a huge boost in morale for rogue deck builders worldwide.

I guess the [Masticore](#) could also kill mana creatures but let's face facts... The [Masticore](#) kills everything including your opponent. While the drawback of the [Masticore](#) is steep, it is softened by the presence of [Yavimaya Elder](#)—otherwise known as the [Ancestral Recall](#) on wheels.

While the deck denied mana to its opponent it gorged itself with eight one-drop mana creatures. You know them, you love them... Yes, Ladies and Gentlemen, let's give a big hand to the ubiquitous [Birds of Paradise](#) and [Llanowar Elves](#). In addition to the oldsters, the deck ran [Rofellos, Llanowar Emissary](#) and [Gaea's Cradle](#) which provided the potential for terribly explosive early turns. On turn three with a Bird, Elf, Rofellos, two Forests and a Cradle the deck could generate NINE mana. That is enough to cast both [Avalanche Riders](#) and [Plow Under](#) leaving a smoldering crater where the opponent's mana used to be.

I love so many cards in this deck—[Plow Under](#) and [Yavimaya Elder](#) are both Top 10 faves—but my favorite part of this deck is its "Rebel chain." [Skyshroud Poacher](#) is an unlikely green Rebel that seems overcosted at first glance. Where most Rebels can only search out other Rebels, the Poacher searches for Elves. [Deranged Hermit](#) (also on my all time Top 10) is an Elf that brings his friends—four Squirrels to be precise—with him when he comes into play. [Gaea's Cradle](#) can pay the echo on the Hermit perfectly so the squirrels usually stick around as 2/2's thanks to his built-in [Crusade](#) effect. Often they will attack as 3/3's with four friends staying back to join the attack next turn after another activation of the Poacher.

Aaron posted an eight-place finish, lost in the quarter-finals to Jon Finkel, and went on to defeat Mike Long and teammate Mike Turian in the loser's bracket to earn a spot on the US National team alongside Finkel, Chris Benafel, and Frank Hernandez.

SAME IDEA, NEW PIECES

I have attempted to capture the fun of Aaron's deck with the current pool of Standard cards, but I fear that I can't match the raw power. Think of this as a fun deck with a more serious attempt at a similar deck that veers away from Aaron's original to follow.

Angry Townsfolk



Main Deck
60 cards

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 6 Forest | 4 Astral Slide |
| 4 Forgotten Cave | 3 Grizzly Fate |
| 4 Mountain | 4 Lay Waste |
| 1 Plains | 3 Lightning Rift |
| 4 Tranquil Thicket | 1 Slice and Dice |
| 4 Windswept Heath | _____ |
| 2 Wooded Foothills | 15 other spells |

25 lands

- 1 [Anarchist](#)
- 4 [Birds of Paradise](#)
- 2 [Cartographer](#)
- 4 [Krosan Tusker](#)
- 4 [Llanowar Elves](#)
- 2 [Pardic Arsonist](#)
- 3 [Petrvark](#)

20 creatures



The deck plays off of the currently popular [Astral Slide](#) decks while trying to recreate some aspects of Angry Hermit. My deck has fast mana, a 2/2 red creature that attacks land, a way to make lots of green tokens, and a burn card with "Lightning" in its name. Not a bad approximation, really. [Astral Slide](#) is very powerful when combined with creatures that have come into play and leave play effects like [Faceless Butcher](#), [Mesmeric Fiend](#) (see the deck listing below) and [Petrvark](#). When the [Petrvark](#) comes into play you can cycle a card and remove it from the game with [Astral Slide](#) so that its leaves-play effect resolves first. There is no land to return to its owner's control, and then the come-into-play effect resolves, removing a land from the game permanently, never to return. At the

end of the turn, the [Petravark](#) will return; if you have mana and another cycling card you can repeat the process, or merely “sit” on your opponent’s mana and leave him two lands down to start his turn.



When the [Cartographer](#) comes into play you can return a cycling land from your graveyard to your hand. With [Astral Slide](#) you will have an invulnerable blocker that draws you an extra card every turn. The [Anarchist](#) returns sorceries and has the same interaction with [Slice and Dice](#) and [Lay Waste](#), allowing you to cycle them to remove the [Anarchist](#) and then pick them back up when he comes into play again. He also combos nicely with [Grizzly Fate](#), allowing you to cast the sorcery multiple times, creating an army of 2/2 bears.

[Pardic Arsonist](#) does three damage to a creature or player whenever he comes into play if you have threshold—this deck always seems to have threshold with eight fetch lands and cycling. Once you have him going with [Astral Slide](#) you can make short work of your opponent. Add [Lightning Rift](#) into the equation the math becomes much simpler. [Lightning Rift](#) gives you a way to kill your opponent while you are having fun removing creatures from the game and drawing cards. The deck is a lot of fun but probably not tournament worthy. There are a number of cards that are just too expensive to be very good—of course that’s what they told Aaron about his deck, I’m sure! Sadly, in this case it's probably true, but the deck can still give you a lot of enjoyment and presents a number of exciting challenges if you are looking for something that is fun to play.

A DIFFERENT TYPE OF CREATURE-BASED DISRUPTION

I was talking about various builds of [Astral Slide](#) decks with some members of my playtest group and almost universally they dismissed any build because it could not beat any of the [Mirari's Wake](#) decks that are popular in my area. That got me to thinking about using the [Astral Slide](#)’s ability with Nightmare creatures—specifically [Mesmeric Fiend](#). The result is the following deck:

Fiendish Slide



Main Deck 60 cards

4 [Barren Moor](#)

4 [Astral Slide](#)

6 [Forest](#)
2 [Plains](#)
5 [Swamp](#)
4 [Tranquil Thicket](#)
4 [Windswept heath](#)

25 lands

2 [Cartographer](#)
3 [Exalted Angel](#)
2 [Faceless Butcher](#)
4 [Krosan Tusker](#)
4 [Mesmeric Fiend](#)
4 [Undead Gladiator](#)

19 creatures

4 [Living Wish](#)
4 [Smother](#)
4 [Swat](#)

16 other spells

Sideboard

1 [Auramancer](#)
1 [Aven Cloudchaser](#)
1 [Braids, Cabal Minion](#)
1 [Cartographer](#)
3 [Circle of Protection: Red](#)
1 [Faceless Butcher](#)
1 [Genesis](#)
1 [Gravedigger](#)
1 [Nantuko Tracer](#)
2 [Naturalize](#)
1 [Phantom Centaur](#)
1 [Silklash Spider](#)

15 sideboard cards



Like the Angry Townsfolk version did with [Petravark](#), this deck exploits the effects generated when [Faceless Butcher](#) and [Mesmeric Fiend](#) come into play—and leave play with [Astral Slide](#). You can stack the effects so that you remove creatures and cards in hand from the game permanently. I played a long game the other day in which my opponent had me down to two life but he had no cards in hand and no creatures on the board. I had a [Faceless Butcher](#) in play that was sitting on my own [Mesmeric Fiend](#). I drew and played an [Astral Slide](#) with two [Undead Gladiators](#) in hand and

enough mana to cycle them both and get them back each turn. I was able to lock him down so that he never could play another non-land card. Each turn, after he drew his card but before he went to his main phase, I would cycle my Gladiator and remove my Butcher from the game. When the Fiend came into play I cycled the other Gladiator, and if he had drawn a non-land card I would remove it from the game permanently. At the end of his turn the Nightmares would come back and the Butcher would nestle in on top of the Fiend and swing in for two. My opponent did a quick recollection of his decklist and couldn't come up with any instants that would disrupt me and scooped once I demonstrated that I could recur the Gladiators.



There are a lot of other fun things this deck can do and it has access to a number them out of the sideboard thanks to [Living Wish](#). Most entertaining of all is keeping a [Braids](#) out of play on your turn so only your opponent sacrifices anything to it. It involves cycling and removing Braids after your opponent has announced his "at end of turn" effects. Any creature removed at this point won't return until the next player's end of turn—namely yours.

[Astral Slide](#) is an interesting card with a myriad of possibilities. Don't let the naysayers keep you from trying them all out. I'm hoping that some of you out there can prove me wrong and make Angry Townsfolk into something workable. If so drop me a line along with comments, suggestions, and the inevitable criticism at brian@fightlikeapes.com.

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