

# Nifty interactions with *Onslaught* cards MagicTheGathering.Combos

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*MagicTheGathering.Combos* got an amazing amount of reader feedback; it seems to be the level of strategy you guys are looking for. I have the follow-up halfway done, and I promise I'll get cracking on it so that it can be more of a regular feature in the new year.

—Aaron

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We often take reader surveys here on MagicTheGathering.com regarding the look, feel, and quality of the site. And there are two things people always want: more updates and more strategy.

Well, we're listening, and here are the two things we've come up with:

**1)** Sometime before the end of this month, we will debut "Saturday School," a rules Q&A column with level 4 judge Rune Horvik, which means we'll have new content six days a week. Since over half the questions sent to "Ask Wizards" are rules-related, it seems a regular rules column is in the best interest of most of our audience. There can never be enough rules knowledge.

**2)** So what about strategy? Well, MagicTheGathering.com is not really a strategy site, at least not in the way [Sideboard Online](#) or myriad independent sites like [StarCity](#) and [Brainburst](#) are. So we'll leave the PTQ and Pro Tour decks and analyses to them. But there is a level of strategy more geared toward all players that we can provide, similar to the type of material that appeared in *The Duelist* magazine years ago.

With that, I present **MagicTheGathering.Combos** (that's "Dot-Combos"), a new regular feature akin to the old "Duelist Picks & Tricks." MagicTheGathering.Combos will cover interesting two- or three-card combos (usually using newer cards) that should inspire deckbuilding.

This installment covers some nifty tricks involving *Onslaught* cards that I, and some of the guys in R&D, have been playing around with. Maybe you've thought of them on your own already, and maybe you haven't. But in each one there's a kernel of a nifty deck that should surprise your friends and may even get you some wins at Friday Night Magic some day down the road. Enjoy, and if you have any cool combos of your own, send them in!

## **Buried Alive + Patriarch's Bidding**

There was a deck in Standard during the *Mirage* and *Tempest* blocks that would use Buried Alive to put huge creatures with haste into the graveyard (such as Spirit of the Night and Volcanic Dragon), and then exhume them all at once with Living Death. You can relive those days with the "new" Living Death, Patriarch's Bidding.



Want a quick and dirty kill? Bury three Blistering Firecats, and then bid them back for a 21-point attack on turn five. Want something with more staying power? Try three Laquatus's Champions; your opponent will be stuck facing three 6/3 regenerators with two life to spare. My favorite? Using Buried Alive to get Arcanis the Omnipotent; Visara the Dreadful; and Rorix Bladewing. Naming "Legend" never felt so good!

### Enchantress's Presence + Words of Wind

Words of Wind seems like the worst of the five Words because it is symmetrical; both you and your opponent must return a permanent to your hands when its replacement effect happens. The trick to making it work for you is to return a permanent that you want to recast... preferably something that will let you draw a card so that you can repeat the process *ad nauseum*.



That's where Enchantress's Presence comes in. With both cards in play, you can play an enchantment like Wild Growth or Telepathy and activate the Words before you draw the card for the Presence. Your opponent will have to return a permanent to his hand, and you get to return another enchantment, ready to do it all again. With two copies of Wild Growth this combo becomes "1: Each opponent must return a permanent to his or her hand," which can empty the board in a hurry.

### Gustcloak creatures + Overwhelming Instinct

Overwhelming Instinct requires you to attack with three creatures in order to net a card, but it's hard to keep three attackers on the board when the little ones keep dying in combat. That's why the Gustcloak creatures are so important -- they know when to run away from a fight. You can send a team of Gustcloak Runner, Gustcloak Harrier, and Gustcloak Sentinel into battle without a care in the world... Draw a card, and then pull back the potential casualties. Eventually you'll be able to build up a massive force.



Don't forget to attack with your Birds of Paradise once in a while as well; Overwhelming Instinct doesn't say you have to attack for *damage*!

### Nantuko Husk + Faceless Butcher

This combo involves a complicated "stack trick" and a good understanding of the rules (Rune will be going over it in his column, I'm sure.).



The basic trick is this: play Faceless Butcher and chose a target for its comes-into-play effect. Before that effect resolves, sacrifice the Butcher to the Nantuko Husk, making the Husk a 4/4, and putting the Butcher's leaves-play effect on the stack *above* its comes-into-play effect. The creature targeted for removal is still in play, so it can't be *returned* to play. The last thing to resolve is the Butcher's comes-into-play ability, removing the intended target from the game permanently. Then you get to attack for four! (The [Torment FAQ](#) goes over the rules involving Nightmares and the stack in a little more detail.)

Before the Husk came out, you could simulate this combo in Standard using Faceless Butcher and an enchantment like Malevolent Awakening or Animal Boneyard, but those cost mana and don't give you a 4/4 attacker. You can substitute Mesmeric Fiend, Slithery Stalker, or even Gravegouger for the Butcher depending on what you feel like annihilating.

### Astral Slide + Cartographer

Astral Slide, an enchantment that lets you temporarily remove a creature from the game when a card is cycled, is a great combo piece because it doesn't cost any mana to use.



Removing creatures from the game has many applications. You can use Astral Slide to remove a blocker temporarily, or to prevent an attacker from hitting for damage. You can save your own creatures from removal spells, or destroy opposing token creatures (which can't come back once they're removed from the game).

But my favorite use is with creatures that have reusable comes-into-play effects. The most easily abused of these is *Odyssey's* Cartographer. Cycle a Secluded Steppe to draw a card and remove the Cartographer from the game. When the Cartographer returns to play, you get the Secluded Steppeback in your hand, ready to be cycled again. It's like an enchantment that reads "W: Draw a card" that can attack and block!

### Wirewood Savage + Beast Attack

Wirewood Savage is but one of several *Onslaught* cards that lend themselves to a "Beast Deck." But when most players search for cards of the type "Creature - Beast," they inevitably miss Beast Attack, the powerhouse green instant from *Odyssey*.



The Savage lets you draw a card whenever any Beast comes into play, even token Beasts. So Beast Attack becomes a flashback

cantrip Beast-maker! With two Savages in play, the card advantage becomes almost ludicrous, and your opponent will be begging for mercy.

## Weathered Wayfarer + fetch lands

Back before the timing rules were ironed out, the powerful *Legendscard* Land Tax had an activated ability instead of a triggered one. If you and your opponent each had four lands, you could use a Strip Mine on one of his, and then respond to your own effect by activating Land Tax.

That no longer works, but you can simulate it with the new "Land Tax on Legs," Weathered Wayfarer. Image this: You go first, and play a plains and a Wayfarer. Your opponent lays a land and passes. On your second turn, you play a new fetch land, such as a Flooded Strand, and pass. Your opponent plays his second land and passes. Now you get all tricky. Sacrifice the Strand to search for an island or plains, but don't let it resolve just yet. Respond by tapping your plains and activating your Wayfarer.



Does that work? Yes. You have one land in play to your opponent's two; your Strand is in the graveyard with its ability on the stack waiting to resolve. Free land!

And the best part? You can get *another* fetch land with the Wayfarer, and repeat the process for another three turns or more!

## Chain of Plasma + Fiery Temper

The new *Onslaught* Chain spells are sort of a risky proposition because your opponent has the option of copying them back in your direction. Well, you can tilt the odds in your favor and dare him to continue the chain by playing with cards you want to discard!

Let's say you cast Chain of Plasma at your opponent. You have an annoying little Grim Lavamancer in play. Now, your opponent takes three damage and then has the option of discarding a card to continue the "chain," dealing three to either you or your Lavamancer.

Maybe he really wants to kill the Lavamancer, so he opts to continue and discards a card. Now it's your turn to decide whether or not to continue the chain. You decide to, and discard...Fiery Temper. For another R, you can play the Temper with its madness cost, dealing six total back to your opponent! That's nine damage for three mana and two cards!



Needless to say, your opponents probably won't elect to continue the chains very often against you once you torch them with this little number, which is still a fine outcome. It effectively removes the drawback from Chain of Plasma altogether.

## Biorhythm + Evacuation

Biorhythm essentially reads "Kill all players that have no creatures in play." The goal with the card, then, would be to remove all of your opponent's creatures but not your own, and then cast Biorhythm to end the game. But a Wrath of God, a new creature, and Biorhythm all on the same turn will run you upwards of thirteen mana, which is a bit out of hand. And if you try casting them on different turns, your opponent may sneak some creatures out and ruin your plans.



The answer is a little-used instant from *Seventh Edition*, Evacuation.

For five mana, you can empty the board of creatures at the end of your opponent's turn, clearing the way for a fatal Biorhythm on yours. All you need to do is get one creature in play in the meantime, and Squirrel Nest or a cheap Llanowar Elves will take care of that requirement. Anurid Brushhopper can also hide from the Evacuation, reappearing at just the right moment to win you the game.

## Life/Death + Aggravated Assault

Life/Death, a split card from *Apocalypse*, is no longer legal in Standard, and that's probably a good thing. With six mana sources and an Aggravated Assault in play, casting Life gives you access to infinite mana and infinite attack phases.



How? Cast Life for one mana, and now all your lands are 1/1 creatures. Tap the other five to activate Aggravated Assault. All six of your lands untap, and you get an extra attack phase. Tap all six lands, spend five to activate the Assault again, and your lands all untap, leaving you one spare mana in your pool. Repeat until satisfied.

So what can you do with this? Well, if your opponent is creatureless, you can attack him 20 times with your sixth land. If he has blockers, you can add an X-spell, like Blaze, and do an arbitrarily large amount of damage to him with your stockpile of mana. Or, if you have a "pinger" like Embermage Goblin or Goblin Sharpshooter in play, you get to untap it as many times as you want, killing your opponent slowly.

My favorite "over-the-top" way to win involves Squirrel Nest and Fires of Yavimaya, untapping the Nested land a billion times to make a billion hasty Squirrel tokens. Sprinkle in Enchantress's Presence, Sterling Grove, Natural Emergence, and Mirari's Wake, and you have the makings of one wacky enchantment deck.

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I'll close with a November Standard deck I've been playing a lot lately, which uses two of the combos above -- Astral Slide/Cartographer and Weathered Wayfarer/fetch lands. Actually, the whole deck is like a giant combo revolving around the *Onslaught* lands:

Tend the Land

## November Standard

Besides Cartographers, Teroh's Faithful is another great card to continually remove from the game, as you get four life every time it comes back. The deck eventually wins with a thresholded Mystic Enforcer or a massive Terravore (thanks to Wildfire or just sacrificing your own lands to Sylvan Safekeeper). The Lightning Rifts in the sideboard are against decks that like to counter things; if you get one to resolve on turn 2, you can easily deal 20 damage without casting another spell thanks to cycling. Is Tend the Land a tier-1 deck? Not exactly. But, man, can it do some crazy--and powerful--things.

Do you have any good two- or three-card combos involving *Onslaught* cards? Send them to me at [editor@wizards.com](mailto:editor@wizards.com), and I'll do a follow-up column using ideas from the readers.

Until next time,

...Nah, I'll leave the snappy endings to Rosewater.

Aaron

Send questions, comments, and combos to [editor@wizards.com](mailto:editor@wizards.com).