



# Sometimes They Come Back Again

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Learning Curve  
Wednesday, March 5, 2003



Like the undead, some of my favorite **Magic** cards come back from the graveyard. One of my all time faves is a card most people have never even heard of: **Whiteout** from *Ice Age*. While I have actually used its primary ability to ground a creature with flying in combat, I was originally attracted to this card's ability to return to your hand from your graveyard if you sacrificed a snow-covered land. I tried it in every possible deck that had an ability that required discard. I tried it with **Mesmeric Trance**, which would essentially allow you to sacrifice a land to draw a card, but I never found a deck in which that engine felt right. Shortly after the emergence of a deck known as Bugbind, I finally found a home for the unassuming green instant.



Snow-Bind		
<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards		
4 <b>Karplusan Forest</b>	4 <b>Birds of Paradise</b>	2 <b>Creeping Mold</b>
9 <b>Snow-Covered Forest</b>	4 <b>Deadly Insect</b>	4 <b>Incinerate</b>
8 <b>Snow-Covered Mountain</b>	4 <b>Llanowar Elves</b>	1 <b>Jokulhaups</b>
21 lands	2 <b>Storm Shaman</b>	2 <b>Lodestone Bauble</b>
	14 creatures	4 <b>Pillage</b>
		2 <b>Pyroclasm</b>
		4 <b>Stormbind</b>
		4 <b>Urza's Bauble</b>
		2 <b>Whiteout</b>
		25 other spells

I remember one game where I had no cards in my hand, a **Stormbind** in play, and eight lands on the board. My opponent had not seen the synergy of **Whiteout** and **Stormbind** before and assumed I could not deal 12 damage to him before his next turn, when he would assuredly defeat me. I tapped all of my mana and then proceeded to sac a land, returned **Whiteout** from my graveyard, used two mana to activate **Stormbind** discarding **Whiteout**, sac'd another land to return **Whiteout**. . . I sacrificed four lands and did 8 damage at the end of my turn. I finished him off during my upkeep with my remaining four mana.

**Shard Phoenix** is another card that I loved to bring back from my graveyard. I had a monored **Pyromancy** deck that used artifact mana and the underused red enchantment to deal five damage a turn to my opponents. **Squee**, **Goblin Nabob** would later return from your graveyard to your hand for free. **Survival of the Fittest**, **Masticore**, **Zombie Infestation**, **Meteor Storm**. There was no end to the ways in which **Squee** was -- and continues to be -- abused.

## Today's Lesson: Abusing cards that come back from the graveyard.

While there have always been cards that come back -- as we have seen above -- and there have always been **Zombies** -- as we have seen all week -- it seems like it is only with the advent of the "tribal" theme that recursive cards have been members of the undead tribe. While everyone has been all a titter about **Graveborn Muse**, I wanted to talk about two other **Zombies** and how you can take advantage of their ability to come back from the dead.

**Undead Gladiator** turns every card in your deck into a cycling card -- albeit for a total of four mana. While it does not draw you extra cards -- also known as card advantage -- it does allow you to speed through your deck to find the best cards to suit your game situation -- also known as card selection. In the early game, **Undead Gladiator** helps you dig for the cards you need, and in the late game, it turns extra lands into cards. Every once in a while, it even gets in the game to swing for 3 damage. **Undead Gladiator** interacts best with cards that exploit the cycling mechanic. **Lightning Rift**, **Astral Slide**, and **Invigorating Boon** all combo nicely with the **Zombie Barbarian**.



A card that nobody seems to be talking about at all is **Ghastly Remains**. While I have a hard time imagining anyone using its amplify mechanic to make it very big (although I have seen some interesting interactions with **Infernal Caretaker** in Limited formats!), I can see it being used and abused in Standard with many of the cards that have been exploited with Squee in the Extended format.

With **Compulsion**, you can draw an extra card a turn for  $\{1\}$ . In terms of the generic mana cost it is actually one mana cheaper than **Whispers of the Muse** with buyback. Sure the colored mana cost is pretty intensive. But if you play it in a mostly black deck, it should not be that difficult. You could play with swamps, **Tainted Isles**, and **Underground Rivers**. Every land in your deck would produce black, which would allow you to always be able to return **Ghastly Remains** to your hand while still giving you the blue mana needed to cast **Compulsion** and other blue spells.

**Zombie Infestation** would be a handy outlet for those extra cards and would also combo nicely with **Ghastly Remains** without a **Compulsion** on the board. Once you have  $\{3\}$  and a **Zombie Infestation** in play you could turn each draw step into a 2/2 Zombie token. I attempted to build a deck with these concepts in mind and came up with the following (as you can see I could not resist the call of the **Graveborn Muse** in a Zombie deck):

Remains of the Day (of the Dead)		
<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards		
1 <b>Island</b>	4 <b>Ghastly Remains</b>	4 <b>Aether Burst</b>
4 <b>Polluted Delta</b>	2 <b>Graveborn Muse</b>	4 <b>Chainer's Edict</b>
11 <b>Swamp</b>	4 <b>Undead Gladiator</b>	4 <b>Circular Logic</b>
4 <b>Tainted Isle</b>		4 <b>Compulsion</b>
4 <b>Underground River</b>	10 creatures	4 <b>Smother</b>
24 lands		2 <b>Upheaval</b>
		4 <b>Zombie Infestation</b>
		26 other spells

The deck has not been field-tested much yet, and a number of the cards should probably not max out at four copies. Three may be the right number for **Compulsion**, **Ghastly Remains**, and possibly **Smother**. This would allow you to play with three copies of **Cunning Wish** and all sorts of good stuff in your sideboard.

I received more mail last week than for any two previous columns combined. Next week's column will pit man against machine and address a topic that came up more than a few times in my correspondence with readers.

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