

Zombies as card advantage SCS: Corpse Harvester

Bennie Smith

Thursday, March 06, 2003



- [Bennie Smith Archive](#)

Some zombies are natural-reborn leaders.

I'm pleased that Single Card Strategy gets a spot in Zombie Week! Since printing [Lord of the Undead](#) in the *Planeshift* set, Wizards of the Coast has churned out lots of quality Zombies for theme decks to be built around. The *Onslaught* set kicked it up a notch with great cards like [Rotlung Reanimator](#) and [Undead Gladiator](#). Can things get any better in *Legions*?



Well since you asked, the answer is yes. How about black's version of [Yavimaya Elder](#)? Say hello to my little friend [Corpse Harvester](#).



Okay, so it's not quite as good as [Yavimaya Elder](#), but in a dedicated Zombie deck, it comes pretty darn close. Five mana is a bit pricey for a [Hill Giant](#) body, but when its ability is active, it really starts to shine. Let's break down the card's text to really examine the possibilities.

1B, T, SACRIFICE A CREATURE

Surrender your soul to me.

Many of the sacrifice ideas I presented in my article on [Cabal Therapy](#) (in the "Treatment -- Take One for the Team" section) apply here. The main idea to keep in mind when maximizing [Corpse Harvester](#)'s effectiveness is that sometimes sacrifice is a good thing. The most common occurrence is when you have a creature that's already going to die due to combat damage or a removal spell. Go ahead and sacrifice it to activate the Harvester and you could be gaining up to three-for-one card advantage. Better yet, a targeted removal spell on a creature of yours guarantees three-for-one card advantage in your favor.

Keeping with the Zombie theme, there are a few sac-worthy creatures of note: [Festering Goblin](#)'s sacrifice can take down any annoying 1-toughness creature at instant speed, which can be particularly helpful when dealing with a [Blistering Firecat](#) or a pesky [Merfolk Looter](#). With a [Rotlung Reanimator](#) out there, any sacrificed Cleric replaces itself on the spot, and there are a handful of good Clerics who are also Zombies (in keeping with your theme), including [Withered Wretch](#), [Boneknitter](#), [Shepherd of Rot](#), and Rotlung itself. There are even some Clerics that support the Zombie theme (without being Zombies themselves) that can join in the fun, such as [Deathmark Prelate](#) and [Infernal Caretaker](#). There's a very powerful Zombie that can sometimes wear out its welcome, the mighty [Graveborn Muse](#). Getting rid of your own Muse at the right time could be vital, especially in a Zombie theme deck.

Lastly, keep in mind that the [Corpse Harvester](#) can sacrifice itself to its effect and put itself into the graveyard. This can be particularly noteworthy in a deck featuring the creature recursion of [Corpse Dance](#) or [Dawn of the Dead](#), turning [Corpse Harvester](#) into a card-drawing machine every turn.

SEARCH YOUR LIBRARY FOR A ZOMBIE CARD AND A SWAMP CARD

Plague and death wrapped in one convenient package.



Fetch two cards from your library and put them into your hand. Ah, at the worst you just got two-for-one card advantage, not taking into account the card invested in [Corpse Harvester](#) itself. So what Zombies should you look for? Well, in addition to another [Corpse Harvester](#) or any of the Zombies I've mentioned so far, don't forget situational targets like [Balthor the Defiled](#) (particularly good to get in the late game), [Gempalm Polluter](#), [Gravedigger](#), [Crypt Creeper](#), [Skinthinner](#), [Soulless One](#), [Noxious Ghoul](#), [Zombie Trailblazer](#), [Haunted Cadaver](#), and [Gravespawn Sovereign](#). If you have

an [Unholy Grotto](#) and the Zombie you want is in your graveyard, just activate the Grotto, put the Zombie on top of your library, and then search for it with the Harvester. You can do the same thing with [Volrath's Stronghold](#).

Fetching a swamp is sweet icing on the cake. Just think of how many cards you can play that rely on a steady supply of Swamps: [Cabal Coffers](#), [Mutilate](#), [Mind Sludge](#), [Nightmare](#), [Strands of Night](#), [Lake of the Dead](#), [Corrupt](#), [Hecatomb](#), [Kormus Bell](#), and [Outbreak](#). You can also fetch dual lands that are swamps such as [Bayou](#), [Badlands](#), and [Underground Sea](#). Just make sure that in your swamp-fetching fervor you watch out for jokers playing with [Karma](#). They'll tend to rain on your hit parade.

Keep in mind that this ability also "thins the deck." This concept basically means your odds of drawing particular cards remaining in your deck improve for every card you fetch out in this manner. After two or three activations you've just shrunk your library by four to six cards, making it more likely you will draw a game-breaking card.

Last but not least, note that [Corpse Harvester](#) fetches two cards with its ability. How many cards do you need to pitch to activate Zombie Infestation?

SHUFFLE YOUR LIBRARY

Her voice is damnation, unyielding and certain.

This effect is worth keeping in mind when designing your deck. Cards like [Brainstorm](#), [Sylvan Library](#), and [Scroll Rack](#) all improve significantly when you have a regular way to shuffle your library, as do effects that put cards on the bottom of your library like [Soldevi Digger](#) and [Impulse](#).

There's also the superstition that sometimes, if you're not drawing the cards you need, a good shuffle will yank your deck back into line!



THAT'S ONE TOUCHY-FEELY ZOMBIE!

[Corpse Harvester](#) touches a lot of play zones when it's out and active: the in-play area, your library, your hand, and your graveyard. Any card that affects so many zones is worth exploring and exploiting. I've created two decks featuring the Harvester, one "Lite!" with no rares, the other more of a "power" build for those of you who have access to some of those cards. Enjoy!

Dead Man's Party *Lite!*



Main Deck
61 cards

25 [Swamp](#)

2 [Chainer's Edict](#)

25 lands

2 [Corrupt](#)
4 [Smother](#)

4 [Boneknitter](#)
4 [Corpse Harvester](#)
4 [Festering Goblin](#)
2 [Gempalm Polluter](#)
2 [Gravedigger](#)
1 [Shepherd of Rot](#)
4 [Skinthinner](#)
2 [Soulless One](#)
1 [Withered Wretch](#)
4 [Zombie Trailblazer](#)

8 other spells

28 creatures



Dead Man's Party Power Remix



Main Deck *60 cards*

22 [Swamp](#)
2 [Unholy Grotto](#)

2 [Chainer's Edict](#)
4 [Smother](#)

24 lands

6 other spells

- 1 [Balthor the Defiled](#)
- 4 [Boneknitter](#)
- 4 [Corpse Harvester](#)
- 4 [Festering Goblin](#)
- 1 [Gempalm Polluter](#)
- 2 [Graveborn Muse](#)
- 1 [Gravedigger](#)
- 2 [Nantuko Husk](#)
- 4 [Rotlung Reanimator](#)
- 1 [Shepherd of Rot](#)
- 1 [Skinthinner](#)
- 1 [Soulless One](#)
- 4 [Withered Wretch](#)

30 creatures



Bennie may be reached at singlecardstrategy@email.com.