

Scourge combos to build around MagicTheGathering.Combos

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MagicTheGathering.Combos is a feature reminiscent of "Picks and Tricks" from the old *Duelist* magazine. Its goal is to present uses for cards you may not have thought of in ways that will encourage deckbuilding. Most experienced players will have thought of most of these already, but who knows; maybe one will surprise you.

This installment will focus on combos involving cards from the recent *Scourge* expansion. Everyone should be familiar with [Scornful Egotist + Torrent of Fire](#) by now, and [Pemmin's Aura + Wirewood Channeler](#) has gotten lots of press as well. So here are some new ones. Some of these were inspired by games from either the Future Future League or "real life" **Magic**, others have simply come up in conversation or email, and the rest are out of my notebook. Enjoy!

Carrion Feeder and Festering Goblin

Randy talked about creating another good one-mana Zombie [a few months ago](#), and Carrion Feeder fulfills the prophecy. And good things happen when you combine the Feeder with his one-mana buddy, Uncle Fester.

With both in play, the Feeder acts as an enabler for the Festering Goblin, allowing you to sacrifice it to generate its -1/-1 effect on a whim. Opposing Llanowar Elves and Merfolk Looters are dead meat. And the two team up in combat nicely as well. If you attack with both and your opponent has a 2/2 blocker, he has no good blocks. If he blocks the Feeder, you sac the Goblin to make the Feeder 2/2 and his blocker 1/1. If he blocks the Goblin, you put damage on the stack then sac the Goblin to your Feeder and kill his blocker with the -1/-1 ability.



These two make a fine start to any aggressive Zombie deck, especially ones with Oversold Cemetery.

Sulfuric Vortex and Transcendence

I pulled this one from our [Saturday School column](#); it was thought up by one of our readers. The skinny on the combo is this: with these



two enchantments in play, you can't lose to damage or loss of life, and your opponent takes two damage per turn.

How? Transcendence normally gives you life each time you take damage, and then kills you when you hit 20. But the Vortex says that you can't ever gain life—even from Transcendence—so you will never get back to 20 life and thus you'll never die. As the game progresses, you and your opponent will each take two per turn. You're free to go below 0 life, but as soon as your opponent hits 0, it's lights out.

Aphetto Runecaster and Wall of Deceit

Aphetto Runecaster allows you to draw a card every time a creature is turned face up, so the obvious combo with it would be creatures that morph cheaply or more than once. Wall of Deceit does both, and gives you a durable body to boot. Once you get the combo rolling, it will feel like you have a 2/5 Treasure Trove in play.



For those that haven't had the pleasure of playing with Wall of Deceit, here's what it can do: It can attack face down as a 2/2, then flip over to a 0/5 once damage is on the stack. That allows you to take down opposing 2/2's in combat for only U, or you can keep the Wall face down until someone tries to kill it with a Shock or an Infest. And all that flipping becomes quite lucrative with a Runecaster in play.

If you do make the Wall 0/5 after it has taken damage, remember not to turn it back into a 2/2 on the same turn. You won't be happy.

Ambush Commander and Coat of Arms

One question that repeatedly finds its way into the Ask Wizards mailbox is, "What happens when I animate my lands using Kamahl/Nature's Revolt/Life and I have Coat of Arms in play?"

And I always have to answer, "Not much; the lands don't have a creature type so they receive no bonus from Coat of Arms," and then some poor kid has to rip his deck apart.



Well, all you poor kids out there should stock up on Ambush Commanders, because they do exactly what you're looking for. Not only do your forests become creatures with this guy in play, but they are assigned the creature type Elf, which interacts beautifully with the Coat.

Let's say you put out Coat of Arms on turn 5, then play a sixth forest on turn 6 and then an Ambush Commander. Suddenly you have seven Elves in play, and each gets +6/+6. That means you have six 7/7 forests in play, plus an 8/8 Commander. Makes for a short game.

Long-Term Plans and Mental Note

Okay, this one's pretty simple. At the end of your opponent's turn, play Long-Term plans and put the card you need third from the top. Then play Mental Note, putting the top two cards of your library into the graveyard, and draw the bomb. Voila! Instant-speed blueDiabolic Tutor!



You can also hold both cards until your opponent plays a devastating spell, then play them both in response to tutor up the perfect counterspell for the situation.

Wirewood Symbiote and Caller of the Claw

Quick explanation on Wirewood Symbiote... Returning an Elf to your hand is the cost to use the Symbiote's ability. It appears before the colon, which means it happens pretty much instantaneously, and your opponent cannot respond to it. What your opponent *can* respond to is the effect the Symbiote generates, which is the untapping of a creature. So what does all that mean? One, the Symbiote is amazing at protecting your Elves. Two, if you don't fully understand what I wrote above, you should have a heart-to-heart chat with a local judge or other experienced player about how costs and effects work in **Magic**. It gets a little confusing.



Moving on... Elves with comes-into-play abilities go up in value with a Symbiote in play, since you can return the Elf to your hand at any time and replay it later. Recent Elves with such abilities include Sylvan Messenger, Fierce Empath, and Wood Elves. Elvish Vanguard and Wirewood Hivemaster are good complements to the Symbiote as they will also benefit from Elves being played repeatedly. And if you look through older cards, you'll find Multani's Acolyte, Yavimaya Granger, and the awesome Deranged Hermit as possibilities for an Elf/Symbiote deck.

But my favorite Elf right now is Caller of the Claw, and he works great with the Symbiote for two reasons. One, he gives you tokens when he comes into play if other creatures have died, and two, he can be played as an instant, which means you can return and replay it on your turn then return and replay in on your opponent's turn, provided you have enough mana. Or you just return it in response to a Wrath of God and replay it after the Wrath resolves.

And while all this is going on, you are get to untap another creature each time you activate the Symbiote. And what would that other creature be? How about Llanowar Elves, Wirewood Channeler, Timberwatch Elf, Bloodline Shaman, or Wellwisher.

The remaining combos use Extended-legal cards.

Stifle and Hecatomb

Stifle—the newest wacky permission spell—probably has more uses than there are **Magic** cards, but it's always fun to talk about new ones. Most people are likely to use Stifle as a defensive measure against cards like Pernicious Deed, Strip Mine, and Decree of Annihilation that are otherwise hard to stop. But that's no fun; I'd rather use it as a combo piece with a card that would normally hurt me.



The combo of Stifle and Phage the Untouchable has been discussed plenty recently (you can use a card like Sneak Attack to put Phage into play, Stifle her comes-into-play ability, then attack for the win), so I'm going to offer up a more obscure card.

Hecatomb is a black enchantment from *Ice Age*, *Fifth Edition*, and *Sixth Edition* that basically turns all your swamps into little pingers. The problem is that it has a comes-into-play ability that requires the sacrifice of four creatures if you want to keep Hecatomb in play. Who wants to sacrifice four creatures when a simple Stifle will do? Just play the Hecatomb, put its comes-into-play triggered ability on the stack, and Stifle it. Then get to ping the way you want to.

Siege-Gang Commander and Goblin Lackey

When *Legions* was released, there was a buzz among fans of the Extended format about how good it would be to accelerate outGoblin Goon using the ability of Goblin Lackey. Well, *Scourge* gives such a deck another weapon in the form of Siege-Gang Commander.



With the first hit of the Lackey, bring out the Commander and his three little buddies. Then you'll have plenty of surplus creatures to make sure you always have "Goon advantage" once the big boy comes out, and you can use your mana to throw Goblins for extra damage. Cards are so much better when you get to play them for free!

Twisted Abomination and Exhume

Speaking of playing for free... Okay, this isn't free, but it's really cheap, which is even better. Cycle Twisted Abomination for a swamp on turn 2, then on turn three play Exhume to put it into play (with a swamp untapped for regeneration purposes). Of course, any big creature that cycles cheaply works here, but most of the big fellows cycle for 3 (like Scion of Darkness) or aren't really worth reanimating (like Slipstream Eel). Eternal Dragon would be another fine choice for the cycling-Exhume combo.



If you want to take it back to the old school, you can play Dark Ritual or turn 1, cycle either theAbomination or the Dragon, and play Reanimate on the same turn. Look, a first-turn five-power creature that won't fall over to Shock (like Phyrexian Negator would). Not bad.

Forgotten Ancient and Spike Weaver

What combos with Forgotten Ancient? If you said "playing spells" you'd be right. But I'm going to be more right with my answer.

Moving +1/+1 counters onto other creatures just to make them bigger is nice and all, but it's more fun to move the counters onto creatures that give you some utility. The *Tempest*-block Spikes are just what the doctor ordered.



Play a bunch of spells, then ship the counters from the Ancient to Spike Weaver during your upkeep. You are now the proud owner of a giant monster that can "Fog" a bunch of times and even move the counters onto other creatures in a pinch. Spike Feeder makes another great target, as you can cash the counters in for life immediately. Spike Soldier is another good option; if your opponent ever lets a giant Soldier through, he's probably dead.

Spikes aside, there are a decent number of other creatures that can make better use of the Ancient's counters than the Ancient can, from the recent Daru Stinger and Canopy Crawler to the ancient Triskelion.

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I'll leave you with a July Standard deck that contains both Elf combos I mentioned above. Wirewood Symbiote is a key card in this deck, and there is a lone Ambush Commander that can be used as a finisher if you're feeling especially greedy.

Symbiotic Elves

Standard-legal Elf deck

My version is more for fun, but there is a very competitive deck hidden at the core of this monstrosity. Simply strip out most of the expensive cards and go up to four copies of the cheaper ones (except maybe Elvish Vanguard) and you'll have a deck that should rip up Friday Night **Magic**.

Do you have any good two- or three-card combos involving *Scourge* cards? Send them to me at editor@wizards.com, and I'll do a follow-up column using ideas from the readers. I promise this time.

Aaron

Send your Scourge combos to editor@wizards.com.