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For Instant Week, I'm going to build some decks around some of the new and exciting *Scourge* instants. Since the *Scourge* previews ended, I've been so caught up in Rock & Roll decks and Reject Rare decks that I haven't been paying too much attention to the new expansion. That's unfortunate because *Scourge* is heaping helpings of fun—it's just chock full of neato-keen stuff that helps tribal decks, combo decks, fattie de

As many of you have suspected for months, "Mark Gottlieb" is merely a composite character serving as a front for the Wizards of the Coast Marketing and PsiOps department. His "columns" are spit out by the Sarcastron supercomputer, and his "photo" is a rejected Hurloon Minotaur prototype. As a tool of the Wizards Sales team, the column is being used this week to highlight *Scourge* cards that you, the reading public, are being brainwashed into buying. The focus on these new cards has nothing to do with their novelty, power level, or fun quotient. In fact, each second you remain logged in to our website just gives us greater access to tap into your bank account and your brainstem. Unfortunately, revealing this information to you constitutes a fatal error in the Sarcastron's programming. Emergency protocols activated. Self-destruct sequence initializing . . .

cks, and just plain goofy decks. Let's take a look-see.

Attack of the Everything

Wing Shards was the first *Scourge* instant I decided I had to build a deck around. It might seem like a poor choice at first. It's a purely reactive card (it doesn't do anything unless your opponent does something first), so how can a deck be centered on it? Well, the deck doesn't quite revolve around Wing Shards. It revolves around the delightful Wing Shards-Grand Melee combo. When all of your opponent's creatures have to attack each turn, it becomes much easier to pick them off by (apparently) throwing really pointy feathers at them.

Another fantastic way to bend Grand Melee to your advantage is with Ageless Sentinels. It would be an undercosted 4/4 flying creature if it didn't come with a new twist on the Elder Land Wurm drawback. But since Big Bird (sorry, *Giant* Bird) is in no rush to join the battle, it gives some control to your opponent: he or she can normally choose to sit back and not wake up the Sentinels until it can be dealt with. That's really not a very helpful attitude, so Grand Melee takes away the option of not attacking. Grand Melee has other ramifications, of course. Your creatures are forced to attack each turn as well, which is why many of the creatures in this deck don't tap to attack. Why leave yourself defenseless? We've got the original (Serra Angel), the new and mighty (Noble Templar, who cures mana screw in his spare time), and the ridiculous (Akroma, Angel of Wrath). Lieutenant Kirtar is also a two-way star; it picks off attacking creatures as well.

But enough about creatures. This is Instant Week! This deck has a full complement of Shocks and Lava Darts, which serve a couple of purposes. See, your opponent can avoid attacking with utility creatures by tapping them for their effect before combat. If they're tapped, they can't run headfirst into Ageless Sentinels. Shock and Lava Dart take care of a wide range of these pesky creatures, such as Merfolk Looter, Llanowar Elves, and Sparksmith. The other thing these cheap red instants do is power up your Wing Shards. Lava Dart is especially great, because for the cost of 1WWR and a

mountain, you can potentially pick off *five* creatures: two 1/1 guys and three attackers. If any creatures are left after that, your defense can easily handle it.

Spicy Wings

Standard-legal Grand Melee deck

Into the Woods

Next up is Hunting Pack. Finally, an uncommon green instant that creates multiple surprise 4/4 Beasts! We haven't seen anything like that since—oh, I seem to be sitting on a *Beast Attack*. Which is 2 mana cheaper. Huh.

The cost difference between the two cards is hard to judge. On its own, Hunting Pack only gives you one Beast for 7 mana. But if you wait until your opponent plays a spell (which seems pretty likely in a **Magic** game), then it's a pair of Beasts for 7 mana. But you can't count on it. Maybe the person you're playing is in solid control of the game by the time you get 7 mana and decides to stop playing cards unless you provide a clear opening. No, you've got to take the initiative to unpack the most Beasts from your Pack. That means playing other spells on the same turn as a 7-mana card, so that means access to lots (and I mean LOTS) of mana.

There is another way to go: free spells. Play Land Grant by revealing your hand, play Invigorate by giving your opponent 3 life, play Vine Dryad by pitching a card, then spend 7 mana to get 4 Beasts. There's a neat deck in there, but I'm not going to build it all the way. If you have older spells with alternate play costs (and there haven't been any since *Mercadian Masques*), dig them out and see what you can do with what's in your collection. I'd be interested in hearing the results.

But back to mana generation. Sprouting Vines is another green *Scourge* instant with storm, so that fits right in. Elvish Aberration provides a forest early in the game or GGG later on. You can't go wrong with Llanowar Elves (they'll rotate out of Standard soon, but I bet they'll never rotate out of your living room). And the Wood Elves-Wirewood Symbiote combo lets you repeatedly return Wood Elves to your hand so you can fetch a fresh forest from your deck each turn. Vernal Bloom doubles the forest mana available to you, but Explosive Vegetation is a fine substitute if you don't have any.

Now that you have eight million green mana, what do you do with it? This is where Hunting Pack comes in, of course, and it goes well with any of the sixteen 1-mana and 2-mana spells in the deck (ten of which are instants). Uktabi Wildcats threatens to be colossal, and Ambush Commander turns your forests into an army. (Just watch out for deforestation techniques like Earthquake or Nausea.)

Blanchwood Armor is a great way to suit up Wood Elves, and Vitality Charm (when not pumping Hunting Pack) can provide a breakthrough trample effect.

Forestry Service

Standard-legal Hunting Pack deck

Futurama

Blue gets some wacky instants in *Scourge*. Long-Term Plans (called Lazy Tutor in playtesting) is wacky. Three cards from the top? That's never been on a **Magic** card before. Metamorphose is wacky.

One card goes from Zone A to Zone B, then another goes from Zone C to Zone A. Brain Freeze is wacky, and oh-so-tempting. The opportunity to mill 15 cards or so in one shot is spine-tinglingly delicious. It also lets you permanently dispose of whatever you may have Metamorphosed to the top of your opponent's deck.

The natural engine for busting out blue instants is Future Sight. You can keep playing 1-mana and 2-mana instants off the top of your deck until you hit a land or one of the few spells that isn't a 1-mana

