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Poor, poor *Scourge*. It gets a few short weeks in the spotlight before it's rudely shoved aside by the attention-hogging *Eighth Core Base Edition Set*<sup>™</sup>. Last week I made some decks around *Scourge* instants, so this week I'm taking a look at some of the other card types.

First, my failures. I'm still trying to puzzle out possible uses for Grip of Chaos and Dimensional Breach (in separate decks, of course). In a Grip of Chaos deck, do you want untargetable creatures or not? Do you pack your deck with spells and abilities that have either no targets or multiple targets so you're completely unchaoticized, or do you do the exact opposite to get as much wacky random-targeting fun as possible? I have no answers yet. If you have the answers, let me know! As far as Dimensional Breach goes, what permanent do you want to pull back from the Breach first so you own the game? And if it's that good, why would you ever want to remove it with the Breach in the first place? The best ideas I had were Tainted Aether and Lethal Vapors, but I didn't get too far with the deck. And Tainted Aether didn't make it into *Eighth Edition*; it was apparently cut to make room for a good card.

Next, my successes. There first is a new deck that *Scourge* sets up very nicely. It's so obvious that I feel silly even having to point it out. It's the get-good-effects-by-flipping-things-over deck. There are plenty of decks that value morph creatures because they flip over into impressive, undercosted beatsticks like Exalted Angel. This deck values morph creatures just because they flip over. The acrobatics are more important than the creatures you're left with, which are often less impressive than their face-down versions.

## Over Easy

The two cards that make this deck hum are Aphetto Runecaster and Bonethorn Valesk. Once you start the theatrics, those two are card-drawing and damage-dealing engines. And now that we have all the morph creatures that we're going to see for (presumably) years to come, we can be as selective as possible in our choices of masked combatants. Proteus Machine was the third card I grabbed four of; its morph cost of 0 is a great surprise and its type-changing ability is both useful (it can be a Zombie against the Zombie deck, negating Skinthinners and Cruel Revivals) and fun (it can be a Phelddagrif or a Leper the rest of the time). This deck is really built around tricks, as your opponent can't possibly play around your flurry of overturned Willbenders, Echo Tracers, and Skirk Volcanists (another card you can flip when you're tapped out), all while the Valesk is pinging and the Runecaster keeps your hand full.

Backslide shines because just when it seems you're out of tricks, it's a trick that lets you reuse a trick! While testing this deck online, I played against a fine fellow with a Beast deck. I spent most of the game chump blocking and hanging on by my fingernails, but I kept drawing new cards and sneaking in damage with the Valesk whenever possible. While I was at 3 life, my opponent decided to finish me off with a Chain of Plasma to the head. I flipped over Willbender and sent it to one of his Beasts instead. But wait—he had one card in his hand! He pitched it to copy the Chain and send it back at my head again, and I had no more face-down guys. Had I made a mistake? Me? Impossible! I played Backslide, flipped Willbender back down, flipped it back up, and sent that Plasma at one of his other Beasts. That was a turning point that let me hang on long enough to lose the game later . . . on a mistake.

The deck is rounded out by some other creatures with cheap morph costs, including Wall of Deceit, which can flip itself both up *and* down, and Aphetto Alchemist, which lets you get two shots in with your Lavamancer's Skill-enchanted Wizard. If you like an overstuffed arsenal of tricks, you'll enjoy playing this deck. I know I do.

Flip Out

### Standard-legal morph deck

Some people have written in asking about the .dec files that you can download from this column. Those are **Magic Online** files (and it only gives you the decklist, not the cards!) Now that *Scourge* is available online, I've been testing decks there again under the handle Doctor Wombat—but that will stop for a while as I shift my attention to *Eighth Edition* next week.

### Limited Skulls

I'd like to say that Skulltap reminds me of a funny thing that happened to me once . . . but for some reason, I can't seem to remember that story. As those of you who remember my Accursed Centaur deck know, I'm drawn to bad cards that require you to sacrifice your own stuff. I'm compelled to try to make them work, and one of the best ways to do that is for me to steal *your* stuff and sacrifice that. The combo I started with here is Chamber of Manipulation and Skulltap: once the Chamber is in play, an investment of two cards and two mana gets you two cards and a creature in your opponent's graveyard.

Once you establish sacrificing your creatures as a deck theme, you should throw in more cards that do that: Carrion Feeder, Stronghold Assassin, etc. And once you have cards that sacrifice creatures, you need some fine creatures to sacrifice: Rotlung Reanimator, Death's-Head Buzzard, etc. And since you intend to fatten your graveyard, you might as well take advantage of that with the 4/4 black flier for 2UU (at threshold), Possessed Aven, and one of my all-time favorite cards, Oversold Cemetery. And as long as you want to toss creatures into your graveyard, Twisted Abomination can only help. And once you have four swampcyclers in the deck, you can safely max out on Tainted Isles as blue mana sources. It's all quite logical.

Take One for the Team

### Standard-legal Skulltap deck

Remembered Ancient

The last *Scourge* card I want to focus on is the most famous one: the one you made. Forgotten Ancient can get very big very fast, and perhaps more importantly, it can make anything else you've got very big as well. Rather than going the well-trodden Quirion Dryad route of pairing the Ancient with cheap blue instants, I decided to stay deep within the forest and let the Ancient hang out with its buddies, the Elves. Elves are cheap and, thanks to Wirewood Symbiote, replayable.

The Symbiote seems like it's printed backwards. Its ability says that for the cost of returning an Elf to your hand, you can untap a creature. But in this deck, the result of the *cost* is usually more important than the result of the *ability*. Even better, costs can't be countered or responded to. So what does the Symbiote do here?

- It protects your Elves. Whenever one is targeted by a removal spell, up it goes to your hand. That means that your opponent will always have to take care of the Symbiote first (or wait until after you've used its ability).
- It gives you more spells to play. After it pops an Elf back to your hand, you can play it again to put another +1/+1 counter on Forgotten Ancient and put another Insect token into play with Wirewood

Hivemaster.

- It untaps your Timberwatch Elf. Timberwatch Elf is insane, so you'd think that using it twice is insane x 2. It actually comes out to insane x 7.3 for some reason. I've done the math.

Another *Scourge* card the deck takes advantage of is Primitive Etchings. Thirty-six of the deck's 60 cards are creatures, so the odds are in your favor for drawing extra cards. They'll help you out in the long game, if you ever get into one. The Elves can be explosive. The fourteen 1-mana Elves are great for replaying and are strikingly useful. Birchlore Rangers and Llanowar Elves provide mana acceleration, Taunting Elf provides a breakthrough or is an assassin when you have a Timberwatch Elf out, and Treetop Scout is one of the prime victory conditions of the deck—it's the most likely recipient of Forgotten Ancient's generosity. Attacking with hordes of expendable Insects, courtesy of the Hivemaster, is another way to end the game. Some fun Elf lords (in the loose sense of "lord") complete the deck.

Ancient Elves

## Standard-legal Elf deck

Until next week, have fun with *Scourge*.

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