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No one expected this. No one. ☠☠☠, printed ages ago, powerful enough to have been restricted in Type 1, and it's back. Against all odds, the *Skull* is being reprinted in *Eighth Edition*!

I'm referring, of course, to the completely separate cards of Underworld Dreams and Skull of Orm. Did you think I meant something else?

Skull of Orm is the "old favorite" I picked to write about this week. That description is half right, I guess; it certainly is old. I have to say that I feel a little foolish. When I was scanning the *Eighth Edition* cards looking for a topic for this column, I didn't pay much attention to the abilities. I was just looking at the art. I picked the coolest possible card: a gnarly artifact skull with a glowing eye, mini-tusk things, pointy chin spikes, a gold half-helm, and what look like tribal engravings. That had to be the most badass card in the set, right? Right? After learning the awful truth, I frantically read through Paul Barclay's *Eighth Edition* rules update. I was desperately hoping there was a slight tweak to the rules that said, "If an artifact's activated ability costs 5, T, you may pay 1, T instead." No luck.



Vapor Ops

Nah, none of that's true. (I specify this because I've received some scary email recently. Some people foolishly have their sarcasm detectors set to "low" when reading this column.) I wanted to write about Skull of Orm for two reasons: 1) Some people are decrying it as the worst card in *Eighth Edition*, and 2) It makes a pretty cool combo with Lethal Vapors.

That combo's not foolproof, of course. At some point, if your opponent ever wants to play creatures, he or she will give up a future turn to drop as many creatures onto the table at once as is possible. Then you have two turns to deal with them. If they're small, Ormable enchantments like Crown of Suspicion and Infectious Rage can sweep them away. If they're a little bigger, enchantments such as Patriarch's Desire and Clutch of Undeath do the trick. And perhaps my favorite bit of recursion is to bring back Lingering Death over and over. I know what you're thinking. The two-card combo of Skull of Orm plus Lingering Death does in two turns what the single card Predator, Flagship does in one. That's true. But Predator doesn't have cool mini-tusk things, now does it?



As long as we're recurring enchantments, Planar Chaos and Uncontrolled Infestation seem like fine goofy additions to the deck. All this malarkey pretty much adds up to an oddball way to replace Ensnaring Bridge in a Hammer of Bogardan deck - which is really strange, because Ensnaring Bridge reappears in *Eighth Edition*. Hey, if my top priority was to make sense, would I be making *Skull of Orm* decks?

Orm Harm		
Main Deck 60 cards		
2 Mountain	4 Twisted Abomination	2 Clutch of Undeath
13 Swamp	4 creatures	2 Crown of Suspicion
4 Tainted Mountain		4 Hammer of Bogardan
1 Temple of the False God		2 Infectious Rage
4 Urborg Volcano		4 Lethal Vapors
24 lands		4 Lingerin Death
		4 Patriarch's Desire
		1 Planar Chaos
		4 Skull of Orm
		1 Sulfuric Vortex
		1 Traveling Plague
		3 Uncontrolled Infestation
		32 other spells

Head Games

How else can you have fun kicking around the Skull? Easy! Let's take a look at blue, where options for enchantment recursion range from Standstill to Confiscate to Decree of Silence... you're playing a **Magic** variant where mana costs are free, right? You're not? Let's move right along to green and white then!

Green and white both like playing around with enchantments. Green has Enchantresses, an enchantment that can attack, and the always-fun-to-recur Lure. White has crazy enchantments that combo with Skull of Orm to create a lock under which you take no damage. (Though Pariah bypasses the Skull in the *Core Set* like two ships passing in the card pool, check out what happens when you put them together.) And together, green and white provide the enchantment-munching Thaumalog, which is a great way to put enchantments into your graveyard so you can put them into your hand with Skull of Orm so you can put them back into play.

The optimal strategy you want to use when playing this next deck (or whatever better version you come up with) is to have fun. It's built around a slow, expensive, slo-o-ow card, so it's not intended to be a world-beater. In fact, the scattershot card quantities are intentional because I'm laz-er, because it seems to fit the deck better. The more randomness built into the deck, the more each game will have a unique feel to it because you'll be drawing different cards. It's a terrible design strategy if you want to win, but it's a good way to build a deck if all you want to do is goof around with your freaky Skull.



Main Deck

61 cards

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 4 Elfhome Palace | 1 Cantivore | 1 Elephant Guide |
| 8 Forest | 4 Elvish Aberration | 4 Enchantress's Presence |
| 4 Krosan Verge | 2 Serpentine Basilisk | 4 Fertile Ground |
| 7 Plains | 1 Stone-Tongue Basilisk | 1 Floating Shield |
| 1 Temple of the False God | 2 Thaumalog | 2 Force Bubble |
| 24 lands | 1 Verduran Enchantress | 2 Guilty Conscience |
| | 1 Yavimaya Enchantress | 2 Lure |
| | 12 creatures | 4 Skull of Orm |
| | | 1 Solitary Confinement |
| | | 1 Spirit Link |
| | | 2 Still Life |
| | | 1 Testament of Faith |
| | | 25 other spells |

Permanent Permission

Y'know, maybe I dismissed the Skull of Orm-Decree of Silence combo too quickly. Using the Decree's cycling ability, the combo gets you a cantrip counterspell every single turn for the low, low price of only 9! Forbid's buyback cost was to discard two cards. Convert that into an equivalent cost in mana, add it to Forbid's 1 cost, and tack on whatever you'd have to pay for cantrippingness, and you're probably pretty close to eleven mana. Finally, a situation where Skull of Orm's activation cost is reasonably costed! And you thought permission decks were dead in Standard because Counterspell is gone. Hah!

Until next week, have fun with Skull of Orm.

Mark

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