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We seem to have gotten into a sweet range of chronological territory for all Johnnies looking forward to *Eighth Edition*. This week's card previews come from the time of *Tempest* block and *Urza* block, with the *Portal* sets thrown in as well. We lose Opposition from this era, but that card was always too cruelly efficient to be truly fun. What we get in return, though, is a cavalcade of comborifficness. For example:

- **Death Pits of Rath** turns Goblin Sharpshooter into a Hyper-Visara
- **Intruder Alarm** has infinite combo written all over it
- **Fecundity** is exactly the kind of card I love building decks around
- **Grave Pact** is the multiplayer card to end all multiplayer cards (literally)
- **Curiosity** makes an eerily redundant one-two punch with One with Nature

What a bonanza! I was supposed to just pick one card to preview, but how could I? Instead, I'll pick one card to focus on-but all the rest get a few rays of glamorous spotlight reflected their way.

Pact to the Gills

Grave Pact is one of the sickest multiplayer cards ever printed. It currently holds its rightful spot as the #1 black multiplayer card of all time in the fantastic Multiplayer Hall of Fame posted by our Tuesday columnist Anthony Alongi on the StarCity Games website. Heck, this is the card that inspired Anthony to create the Hall of Fame in the first place. Grave Pact has the ultimate rating in "rattlesnake," is extremely high in "pigeon," and, from what I understand, does really well in the "wallaroo" and "sea cucumber" categories. It's not my preview card because it's clearly better in multiplayer games than duels, but it's a heck of a card nonetheless. It's especially vicious when you combine it with cards that let you knock off your own creatures so you can use its ability proactively. Phyrexian Plaguelord, Carrion Feeder, and Doomed Necromancer are fine choices for a Grave Pact deck, and there are plenty more willing victims where they came from.



Fertile Fertilizer

Those of you who read my column frequently know that I love cards that reward you for sending your own creatures to the graveyard. Those kinds of decks are subversive and counterintuitive, which mesh with my iconoclastic crank attitude. I'm a Wizards of the Coast insider, yet I still want to break their rules in anarchic glee. A statement professing the personal joys of sowing anarchy against my employers - on their own website - is pretty risky, but that's the kind of anarchist I am. Plus, none of my bosses read my column. I hope.

[Actually Mark, we do read your articles. But don't worry, your subversive undertones have been duly noted and compensated for. =) Daniel Stahl, Managing Web Producer]

What was I writing about before revolutionary fervor swept over me? Right, Fecundity. It's another card that goes great with Phyrexian Plaguelord, as well as Oversold Cemetery and Ravenous Baloth.

In fact, it goes perfectly with just about everything in the Standard green-black Oversold Cemetery deck Brian David Marshall wrote about yesterday. Not wanting to repeat yesterday's deck, it's not my preview card.

One with Curiosity

Here's a little **Magic** analogy for you. Curiosity : One with Nature :: cycling : landcycling. One lets you draw a card; the other lets you fetch a basic land. It's not an exact analogy, since One with Nature lets you put the land card into play while landcycling puts the land card into your hand, but it's close enough. It's an interesting choice - the specificity of getting a basic land is restrictive and deprives you of some options, but it helps your resource development and replaces randomness with definitive knowledge. Playing with both of these creature enchantments and some evasive weenies (Escape Artist, Treetop Scout, and Sage Owl come to mind) can net you a lot of extra cards in a hurry. Creature enchantments are inherently risky, of course: if your opponent destroys an enchanted creature, you've set yourself up for card disadvantage. But these two promise so much card nondisadvantage (uh, otherwise known as card advantage) that the gamble is very tempting. This may lead to a deck in a future column, but not today.

Life's the Pits

How cool is it that Death Pits of Rath and Death Pit Offering are in the same set? It's very rare that a *Core Set* offers more continuity than the expansions do, but sometimes it happens. Oddly enough, they work very poorly together. Death Pits of Rath's ability means that your Offering-enhanced critters can still be picked off with just one ping. Oh well. That's great for flavor, but it's not the relevant combo. The best way to use the Death Pits is with 1-toughness pingers like Embermage Goblin and Goblin Sharpshooter. If all your creatures can be destroyed by 1 damage anyway, you break the symmetry of the Death Pits, though in a weird way. It's kind of like cutting off your foot to avoid the itching powder someone put in your sneaker - but the important thing is that it will frustrate your opponent no end. Other cards that become dynamos of destruction with Death Pits of Rath in play are Scattershot, Violent Eruption, and the otherwise awful Pyromania. That's a worthy topic for another column, but it's not what heads today's list. Not when Intruder Alarm is back.



Danger! Danger!

Intruder Alarm is the bizarro Opportunity. It's a blue *Core Set* enchantment that keys off of creatures, but this one untaps everything instead of tapping everything. It has one other key similarity to Opportunity: It wins the game. It doesn't take much to set up an infinite combo with Intruder Alarm. Some blasts from the past include Tradewind Rider & mana-producing Elves (such as Priest of Titania), Skyshroud Poacher & mana-producing Elves, or Birds of Paradise & Shrieking Drake. The victory condition was either to build up infinite mana and finish off your opponent with Stroke of Genius or to have a Prodigal Sorcerer that kept untapping and pinging your opponent.

What are the best options in the upcoming Standard environment? Voice of the Woods provides a simple way to create millions of 7/7 Elemental tokens at the end of your opponent's turn (and who doesn't like having millions of 7/7 Elementals?) If you also happen to be creating infinite mana at the same time thanks to a Wirewood Channeler or a Birchlore Rangers, you can use your unlimited mana and creatures to bounce all your opponent's permanents with Dispersing Orb. I know, it's not necessary - but it'll get you style points out the wazoo.

Elvish Intruders



Main Deck

60 cards

13 Forest
8 Island
1 Lonely Sandbar
2 Tranquil Thicket

24 lands

4 Birchlore Rangers
4 Elvish Aberration
3 Taunting Elf
4 Timberwatch Elf
4 Voice of the Woods
3 Wirewood Channeler
4 Wirewood Herald

26 creatures

4 Deep Analysis
2 Dispersing Orb
4 Intruder Alarm

10 other spells

I know I'm not the first person to present this combo. And I know that this deck is not optimally tuned by any means. Plus, there are other ways to pair Intruder Alarm with green. Did you think Early Harvest was gone? With Intruder Alarm and Ambush Commander in play in a deck that's as monogreen as possible, a Forest is an Early Harvest. A Diligent Farmhand would be as well. I'm sure that you folks have some better and/or weirder ideas than this, and the message boards seem like a fine place to discuss them. If you've got a new Intruder Alarm deck, show off how smart you are and post it.

Nine Million Gales

What about an update of the Tradewind Rider-Intruder Alarm deck? We've got a new Rider in the form of Keeper of the Nine Gales, and it hasn't proven itself to be useful for anything yet. Maybe Intruder Alarm was just what it was waiting for. To go infinite, you need to have Intruder Alarm, the Keeper, two other Birds, a mana-producing creature, and a 1-mana creature (which may be one of the other Birds helping out the Keeper). How hard can that be? A Blaze or a Sharpshooter will finish off the game.



Main Deck

60 cards

3 City of Brass	2 Aven Envoy	3 Blaze
5 Forest	4 Birds of Paradise	4 Deep Analysis
13 Island	2 Goblin Sharpshooter	4 Intruder Alarm
3 Shivan Oasis	4 Keeper of the Nine Gales	-----
-----	4 Sage Owl	11 other spells
24 lands	3 Shoreline Ranger	
	2 Skywing Aven	
	4 Vine Trellis	

	25 creatures	

Again, I invite you to do better; the message boards are waiting for your decks. Until next week, have fun with Intruder Alarm.

Mark

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