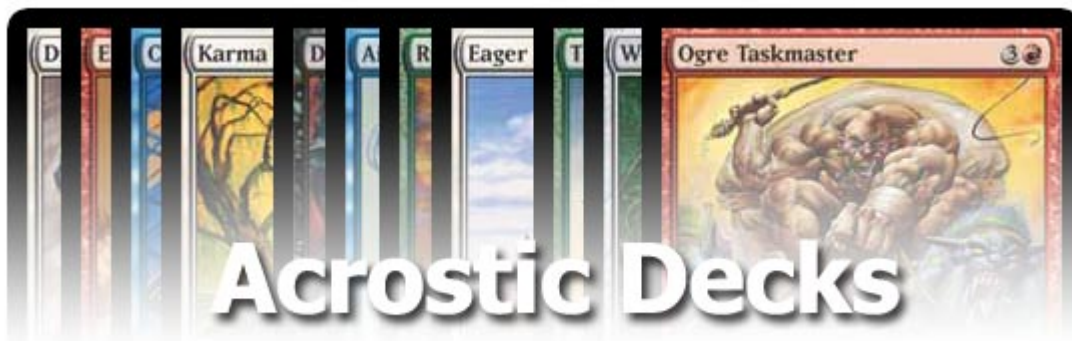


Mark Gottlieb

Thursday, November 13, 2003

Last week I presented the first wave of Acrostic Deck Dare deck submissions. This week I will present the second (and, sadly) last wave. There were so many great decks that I could easily write another column or two just to show them off. But it's time to move on. As I've said, there were hundreds of submissions, and I thank each and every person who sent one in. Acrostics paid tribute to **Magic** artists, films, books, historical events, video games, and more. HANDEL'S MESSIAH sat alongside ROB ZOMBIE MUSIC. James Groth-Olson made a J. GROTH-OLSON autobiographical deck. Glenn Davis and Sylverfang, picking up on a jab I made in my Dare column, both made the HOMELANDS acrostic deck—and they differed by only three cards. Nick Azer's LEON CZOLGOSZ deck took its theme from President William McKinley's assassin. Jack Oldsteel's SAPROLINGS ARE AWESOME deck competed with Fednis48's SAPROLINGS ROCK effort. Benn Freeman presented a symptom-by-symptom analysis of BIPOLAR DISORDER, while Lars Node asserted that GLOWSTICKS ROCK in his rave deck. And Tad Whitmore broke the 60-card rule for his Battle of Wits acrostic deck (THE WIZARD WHO MEMORIZES A THOUSAND BOOKS IS INSANE). Each card in that deck was related to Wizards, studying, or insanity.



Some individual card highlights? In Q Ball's SUPER SMASH BROS. deck, Pikachu was represented by Razortooth Rats. Nile Fox-Priebe's FORD PREFECT deck had Reiver Demon as the Ravenous Bugblatter Beast of Traal. Chris M's COLORADO AVALANCHE deck wouldn't be complete without Ophidian (the snake of an agent). Stephen Kovalcik's SPIDER-MAN COMICS deck included Aeolipile as a Green Goblin pumpkin bomb, while Scott Jones's I AM SUPERMAN deck ended with Nut Collector because "Superman rounds up crazy villains."

After three rounds of sorting still left me with 75 decks in my "really good" category, I went through one final time with a single criterion for judging them: To get into this column, the deck had to knock my socks off. I hope they knock your socks off too.

## So Bad It's Good

Here's the submission from Peter Ingraham (though he's threatening another acrostic deck based on the acrostic decks I post in my column). His theme is VERY BAD CARDS, and he's not kidding.

Very Bad Cards



### Main Deck

60 cards

2 Forest

10 Mountain

10 Swamp

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22 lands

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0 creatures

4 (A)ether Flash

2 (A)gility

4 (B)urning Sands

4 (C)yclopean Mummy

4 (D)arigaaz's Caldera

3 (D)ivining Witch

2 (E)arthlink

3 (R)ain of Daggers

3 (R)eckless Assault

2 (S)tangg

4 (V)archild's War-Riders

3 (Y)avimaya Scion

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38 other spells

Each of these cards is pretty horrible on its own. However, when combined, they form an intricate, disruptable, but very evil 3-card combo! Varchild's War-Riders keeps giving your opponent more and more Survivor tokens. Earthlink and Burning Sands mean that if we can knock off the hordes of people fleeing from Varchild's grasp, we can make our opponent sacrifice his or her lands! That's where Aether Flash comes in: get the whole combo in place and your opponent has "Cumulative upkeep: Sacrifice a land." Reckless Assault and Rain of Daggers are hideous creature control cards that keep you alive (sort of) while you set up your combo. Divining Witch is a miserable way to find your combo pieces. Agility is awful—but less so when you consider all the 1/1 creatures you're giving your opponent. The rest of the deck consists of subpar creatures and land. Cyclopean Mummy was even voted the worst card in *Fourth Edition*!

### That's Her

Like with my first Deck Challenge, I got a lot of music-themed decks this time around. (Of course, last time music was the theme.) The most stunning musical submission was Keith Bogart's deck. I was reluctant to include it because it's so long... but I had to because it's so good.

### Elvis Costello's "She"



### Main Deck

60 cards

6 Island

11 Plains

6 Swamp

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23 lands

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0 creatures

3 (C)hill Haunting

3 (E)ternal Dragon

4 (E)xalted Angel

3 (E)ye of Ramos

2 (H)ell's Caretaker

2 (I)vory Mask

3 (L)ast Breath

2 (L)ilting Refrain

1 (L)uminous Angel  
 2 (O)pt  
 2 (O)versold Cemetery  
 1 (S)elenia, Dark Angel  
 2 (S)erra Angel  
 1 (S)pirit Mirror  
 2 (S)ustaining Spirit  
 3 (T)wisted Abomination  
 1 (V)esuvan Doppelganger

37 other spells

In fitting with the song, this deck is filled with Angels. Early-game options include landcycling, mana acceleration, or a face-down Exalted Angel in preparation for casting large, efficient fliers. Oversold Cemetery can fetch your landcyclers back, and Hell's Caretaker combos with Spirit Mirror to put those landcyclers directly into play.

### "She," by Elvis Costello

She may be the face I can't forget  
 The trace of pleasure or regret  
 May be my treasure or the price I have to pay  
 She may be the song that summer sings  
 May be the chill that autumn brings  
 May be a hundred different things  
 Within the measure of a day

She may be the beauty or the beast  
 May be the famine or the feast  
 May turn each day into a Heaven or a Hell  
 She may be the mirror of my dreams  
 A smile reflected in a stream  
 She may not be what she may seem  
 Inside her shell

She, who always seems so happy in a crowd  
 Whose eyes can be so private and so proud  
 No one's allowed to see them when they cry  
 She may be the love that cannot hope to last  
 May come to me from shadows of the past  
 That I remember 'til the day I die


She may be the reason I survive  
 The why and wherefore I'm alive  
 The one I'll care for through the rough and ready years

Me, I'll take her laughter and her tears  
 And make them all my souvenirs  
 And where she goes I've got to be  
 The meaning of my life is  
 She....She....Oh, she....



## Show of Force

As I stated last week, there were lots of movie submissions. Monty Python and *Terminator* had their proponents. Fans of the *Evil Dead* movies married an acrostic theme with a Zombie deck (as did fans of *Night of the Living Dead*, *Resident Evil*, and *Rob Zombie*). There was a neat little PIRATES OF THE CARRABEAN deck that, unfortunately, had quite a fatal flaw. The most popular movie submission after *The Matrix* and *The Lord of the Rings* was, not too surprisingly, *Star Wars* (the good ones, not the new ones).

The Empire Strikes Back			
<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards			
5 Island	_____	1 (A)talya, Samite Master	
11 Snow-Covered Plains	0 creatures	2 (B)ounty Hunter	
8 Swamp	_____	2 (C)old Storage	
24 lands		1 (E)mpty City Ruse	
		3 (E)radicate	
		1 (E)scape Routes	
		3 (E)xpendable Troops	
		1 (H)arsh Judgment	
		1 (I)hsan's Shade	
		1 (I)nfernal Genesis	
		1 (K)armic Guide	
		1 (K)arn, Silver Golem	
		2 (M)eddling Mage	
		1 (P)redator, Flagship	
		1 (R)amirez DiPietro	
		3 (R)eborn Hero	
		3 (S)olar Tide	
		1 (S)tratadon	
		3 (T)ethered Skirge	
		4 (T)hermal Glider	
		_____	
		36 other spells	

This deck is basic black-white beats with a trick or two up its sleeve. Use efficient evasion creatures (Glider, Skirge) to deal early damage while Bounty Hunter and Meddling Mage secure a long-term advantage. Solar Tide spares your little or big creatures as necessary, while Cold Storage and Karmic Guide bring them back.

Card explanations:

**Snow-covered Plains:** Hoth

**Swamp:** Dagobah

**Island (*Mirrodin* #291):** Bespin, Cloud City

**Thermal Glider:** X-Wing

**Harsh Judgment:** Vader captures Han and Leia  
**Escape Routes:** Escape from Hoth  
**Eradicate:** "Apology accepted, Captain Needa"  
**Meddling Mage:** Yoda  
**Predator, Flagship:** *The Executor* Super Star Destroyer  
**Ihsan's Shade:** Darth Vader  
**Reborn Hero:** Luke Skywalker  
**Empty City Ruse:** Evacuating Cloud City  
**Stratadon:** AT-AT Walker  
**Tethered Skirge:** TIE Fighter  
**Ramirez DePietro:** Han Solo  
**Infernal Genesis:** "Luke, I am your father..."  
**Karmic Guide:** Obi-Wan Kenobi  
**Expendable Troops:** Storm Troopers  
**Solar Tide:** In the depths of space  
**Bounty Hunter:** Boba Fett  
**Atalya, Samite Master:** Princess Leia (just look at the hair)  
**Cold Storage:** Carbonite freezing chamber  
**Karn, Silver Golem:** C-3PO



## Double Acrostic

What really pushed Simon's submission over the top is that he included an bonus acrostic goodie for me: A deck that spells out the message "Using **Magic** cards, also do me a double acrostic"... while doing just that. It's an astonishing feat of construction that, he says, plays a bit like Psychatog, using Nightstalker Engine as the 'Tog.

### Double Acrostic

#### Casual Acrostic deck – Simon Watson

13 Island  
 11 Swamp  
 2 (U)nfulfilled (D)esires  
 1 (S)age (O)wl  
 1 (I)ron (M)aiden  
 3 (N)ightstalker (E)ngine  
 2 (G)lowing (A)nemone  
 2 (M)ind's (D)esire  
 1 (A)rcanis the (O)mnipotent  
 1 (G)lasses of (U)rza  
 2 (I)nnocent (B)lood  
 3 (C)ircular (L)ogic  
 4 (C)hainer's (E)dict  
 2 (A)scending (A)ven  
 1 (R)ay of (C)ommand  
 1 (D)iminishing (R)eturns  
 2 (S)nuff (O)ut  
 3 (A)Ether (S)pellbomb  
 1 (L)ost in (T)hought  
 3 (S)hadowmage (I)nfiltrator  
 1 (O)versold (C)emetery



## Fowl Play

Apparently overwhelmed by the Michael J. Fox quote "Nobody... calls me... a chicken!" in the Deck Dare column, Graham Herrli went insane. This is not the best acrostic deck I received. But it is the weirdest.

### Wild Mobs of Super Fire Chickens



#### Main Deck

60 cards

4 Forest	_____	1 (B)ogardan Phoenix
7 Island	0 creatures	4 (C)hicken a la King
8 Mountain		2 (C)hicken Egg
3 Plains		2 (D)ingus Egg
_____		1 (E)arnest Fellowship
22 lands		1 (E)bony Horse
		1 (E)lvish Farmer
		1 (F)irestorm Phoenix
		2 (F)ree-Range Chicken
		2 (H)enge of Ramos
		1 (I)llusions of Grandeur
		1 (I)nsidious Bookworms
		1 (I)nvasion Plans
		1 (K)razy Kow
		1 (L)ichenthrope
		2 (M)esa Chicken
		1 (N)imble Mongoose
		1 (O)rcish Farmer
		1 (O)wl Familiar
		1 (P)ygmy Razorback
		1 (R)oc Hatchling
		1 (R)ukh Egg
		1 (S)hard Phoenix
		1 (S)hivan Phoenix
		1 (S)kycloud Egg
		3 (U)nnatural Selection
		2 (W)ildfire
		_____
		38 other spells

Wild Mobs of Super Fire Chickens are conspiring to take over the world with this 5-color deck! Turn all of your creatures into Chickens using Unnatural Selection, and watch as Chicken a la King supersedes your order. If you get into trouble you can always turn chicken (yes, terrible pun intended), and force a draw with Wildfire and Dingus Egg.

Card explanations:

**Wildfire:** "Shiv hatched from a shell of stone around a yolk of flame."

**Invasion Plans:** For the Chickens to take over the world!

**Lichenthrope:** Has "hen" in its name  
**Dingus Egg:** Chickens lay eggs (duh)  
**Mesa Chicken:** SUPER FIRE CHICKEN!  
**Orcish Farmer:** The witless owner of our future world rulers (Chickens)  
**Bogardan Phoenix:** SUPER FIRE CHICKEN!  
**Shivan Phoenix:** SUPER FIRE CHICKEN!  
**Owl Familiar:** Chicken's barnyard ally  
**Firestorm Phoenix:** SUPER FIRE CHICKEN!  
**Shard Phoenix:** SUPER FIRE CHICKEN!  
**Unnatural Selection:** If Fire Chickens are not unnatural, I do not know what is.  
**Pygmy Razorback:** Chicken's conspirator from the farm  
**Ebony Horse:** One of many chicken barnyard allies  
**Roc Hatchling:** SUPER FIRE CHICKEN!  
**Free-Range Chicken:** SUPER FIRE CHICKEN!  
**Illusions of Grandeur:** People think that humans are going to stay in power  
**Rukh Egg:** SUPER FIRE CHICKEN EGG!  
**Elvish Farmer:** Another witless chicken "owner"  
**Chicken Egg:** SUPER FIRE CHICKEN EGG!  
**Henge of Ramos:** Has "hen" in its name  
**Insidious Bookworms:** Chicken food!  
**Chicken a la King:** SUPER FIRE CHICKEN!  
**Krazy Kow:** Chicken's barnyard ally  
**Earnest Fellowship:** Has "nest" in its name  
**Nimble Mongoose:** Chicken ally & cobra protection  
**Skycloud Egg:** SUPER FIRE CHICKEN EGG!

Yeah. I'm flabbergasted too.

## The Scottish Play

How about a faithful retelling of *Macbeth*... in **Magic** deck form? Shawn Main provides a monoblack deck steeped in murder and ambition whose card choices are so dead-on, playing it should give you high school English credit.

### Shakespeare's *Macbeth*



**Main Deck**  
60 cards

<p>20 Swamp</p> <hr style="width: 100%;"/> <p>20 lands</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>0 creatures</p>	<p>3 (A)byssal Gatekeeper          3 (A)mbition's Cost          2 (A)scendant Evincar          4 (B)raids, Cabal Minion          3 (C)ackling Witch          4 (E)bon Stronghold          1 (E)mpyrial Plate          1 (E)ndless Scream          1 (E)radicate          2 (H)atred          1 (H)aunting Echoes          1 (K)aervek's Spite</p>
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1 (M)ind's Eye  
3 (P)romise of Power  
3 (R)oyal Assassin  
4 (S)engir Autocrat  
1 (S)keletal Scrying  
1 (S)laughter  
1 (T)ortured Existence

---

40 other spells

Card explanations:

**Sengir Autocrat:** King Duncan and his attendants

**Hatred:** Macbeth: My name's Macbeth.

Young Siward: The devil himself could not pronounce a title more hateful to mine ear.

Macbeth: No, nor more fearful. (Act V, Scene 7)

**Ambition's Cost:** Ross: Thriftless ambition, that wilt ravin up thine own life's means! (Act II, Scene 4)

**Kaervek's Spite:** Second murderer: I am one, my liege, whom the vile blows and buffets of the world have so incensed that I am reckless what I do to spite the world. (Act III, Scene 1)

**Eradicate:** Macbeth tries to kill both Banquo and his son Fleance to eliminate the lineage that would eventually become king.

**Skeletal Scrying:** First Witch: Round about the cauldron go, in the poison'd entrails throw. (Act IV, Scene 1)

**Promise of Power:** Third Witch: All hail, Macbeth, thou shalt be king hereafter! (Act I, Scene 3)

**Endless Scream:** Lennox: And as they say, lamentings heard i' the air; strange screams of death. (Act II, Scene 3)

**Ascendant Evincar:** Macbeth himself

**Royal Assassin:** The three murderers

**Empyrial Plate:** Macbeth: I'll fight till from my bones my flesh be hack'd. Give me my armour. (Act V, Scene 3)

**Slaughter:** Ross: Your castle is surprised; your wife and babes savagely slauguhter'd. (Act IV, Scene 3)

**Mind's Eye:** Macbeth: Art thou but a dagger of the mind, a false creation, proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain? (Act II, Scene 1)

**Abyssal Gatekeeper:** The porter

**Cackling Witch:** The three weird sisters

**Braids, Cabal Minion:** Lady Macbeth

**Ebon Stronghold:** Dunsinane and Inverness

**Tortured Existence:** Macbeth: Better be with the dead, whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace, than on the torture of the mind to lie in restless ecstasy. (Act III, Scene 2)

**Haunting Echoes:** Macbeth's vision of the dead Banquo.

As it should be, Lady Macbeth (Braids) drives the action, forcing you into murder. She'll keep the opponent's resources low while you sacrifice Serfs from Sengir Autocrat or your Abyssal Gatekeeper to do away with even more of the opponent's creatures. The Assassins, Slaughter, and Eradicate deal with any creatures that remain. Ebon Stronghold works surprisingly well to let you cast Hatred early. Ambition's Cost, Promise of Power, and Skeletal Scrying keep your hand full, and Ascendant Evincar, Endless Scream, Promise of Power, and Cackling Witch provide appropriate finishers.

**'Tis the Season**

I started recounting the acrostic deck submissions with a Halloween one. It seems fitting that I end with a Christmas one. Tom Laflin couldn't wait to start jingling his bells and candying his canes, so get ready for Christmas in November!

## Most Wonderful Time



### Main Deck

60 cards

8 Snow-Covered Forest  
8 Snow-Covered Island  
8 Snow-Covered Plains

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24 lands

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0 creatures

2 (D)ismantling Blow  
1 (E)lf Replica  
2 (E)nergizer  
2 (F)odder Cannon  
1 (I)ridescent Angel  
2 (L)evitation  
3 (M)addening Wind  
3 (M)etalworker  
1 (N)orth Star  
3 (O)blation  
3 (O)ppportunity  
1 (R)evered Elder  
2 (S)now Fortress  
3 (T)icking Gnomes  
1 (T)oymaker  
4 (U)topia Tree  
2 (W)all of Junk

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36 other spells

This deck runs pretty simply: creature beatdown supported by mana acceleration and removal. Elf Replica and Dismantling Blow provide utility, and Oblation lets you deal with anything really nasty. Utopia Tree and North Star (powered by Metalworker) help stabilize the three-color mana base. If all else fails, Iridescent Angel puts your opponent on a 5-turn clock. Have fun spreading the Christmas spirit!

Card explanations:

**Metalworker:** Santa's special work team.

**Oblation:** Giving presents.

**Snow Fortress:** The base in a snowball fight.

**Toymaker:** The workers in Santa's workshop.

**Wall of Junk:** The huge pile of boxes and wrapping paper that builds up at Christmas.

**Oppportunity:** The 20% off Christmas sale at Best Buy.

**North Star:** The star followed by the three wise men.

**Dismantling Blow:** What happens when little Suzy sees she got the green doll house, not the pink one.

**Elf Replica:** What Santa uses when he needs more workers.

**Revered Elder:** Santa himself.

**Fodder Cannon:** The Nerf gun little Bobby gets and uses to trash the house.

**Utopia Tree:** The Christmas tree.

**Levitation:** Santa's little secret, cause reindeer sure as hell can't fly normally.

**Ticking Gnomes:** Wind-up toys.

**Iridescent Angel:** Gloria presiding over the manger scene.

**Maddening Wind:** Harsh winter weather. Plus, the guy looks like he's doing some last-minute shopping.

**Energizer:** Batteries not included.

Until next week, dare to deck!

Mark

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*Mark may be reached at [houseofcardsmail@yahoo.com](mailto:houseofcardsmail@yahoo.com). Send rules-related **Magic** questions to [ask@wizards.com](mailto:ask@wizards.com).*

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