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A Dirtier Deed?



Anthony Alongi · Serious Fun
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Mono-black decks destroying **Skullclamps**.
 Red-blue decks eliminating **Oath of Druids**.
 Green-white decks wiping out **Fog Banks**.

"Cats and dogs...living together! Total chaos!"

Bill Murray had it right in *Ghostbusters* – there are certain signs of the apocalypse. This may be one of them.



As we sometimes do with more complex card previews, let's handle some rules interpretation issues first (and see Mark's column yesterday for additional discussion of "sunburst"):

- Sunburst will never be more than five. This is because there are only five colors in **Magic**. Each color counts only once.

- You are still welcome to pay six for this thing. Heck, pay twelve. Pay a million. But it's still not going off for more than five, unless you find a way of moving charge counters onto it.
- You may change the number of charge counters on Engineered Explosives with something like **Power Conduit**. Of course, you must do this before you pay for its destructive ability.
- Adding or subtracting charge counters once your Explosives are in play does nothing to the value of "X" – when it's in play, X is always equal to zero, regardless of how much you paid.
- Please note the phrase "equal to." Not "equal to or less than." Equal means equal. This is a precision tool, much like **Powder Keg**.
- "Nonland permanents" means you don't hit artifact lands, even if you pay 0 (or one colorless mana) and bring this out with no charge counters at all. (Incidentally, this is a fine way to wax token creatures.)

With sunburst, *Fifth Dawn* is inviting us to crack open our dusty box of *Invasion* block tricks and let them shine again. Much like the "domain" cards of that block, sunburst rewards you for playing more than one or two colors.

But there's something new happening here as well. In *Invasion* block, players *had* to play certain colors in certain proportions to get simple things done. For example, a five-color deck would usually have to start with a bunch of green mana fixers, lead through a variety of red and white creatures, and splash in stuff like **Probe** with kicker to take advantage of the best capabilities of all five colors. You didn't get to play that **Probe** until you had both blue and black mana.

But here in *Fifth Dawn*, you can generally play the sunburst artifacts whenever you want – even if your sunburst isn't as high as you'd like in certain situations, these cards will never be stuck in your hand. And even better, if you're willing to play low sunburst value, it doesn't matter which two or three colors you have.

So getting back to Engineered Explosives: if you have a five-color deck, and wish you could get rid of that pesky **Dueling Grounds**, *it doesn't matter* if you haven't seen a single forest or plains. You can pay $\{1\}$, get the Explosives into play, and then pay 2 at your earliest convenience to blow up the offending enchantment (and anything else with a converted cost of 3).

When's the last time you played **Pernicious Deed** without green mana?

Not Pernicious, Yet Still Delicious

Engineered Explosives has a wonderful bloodline, a high pedigree. Listed among its ancestry are such sackable board-wreckers as **Nevinyrral's Disk**, **Powder Keg**, **Oblivion Stone**...and the mighty **Pernicious Deed**.

Regular readers know that I'm a big fan of **Pernicious Deed** – I rank it second to no card for multiplayer value. I've been waiting these past few years to see if any new card might supersede the Deed. Nothing yet.

Upon scanning the *Fifth Dawn* spoiler, however, the Explosives caught my eye. I asked myself: might there be a card even dirtier than the Deed?

Each card has slight advantages over the other in different situations – it's not correct to say that either card is "strictly" worse or better. For example, there will be times when **Pernicious Deed** will go off with X=5 and destroy low-cost items you wish would stay on the board – maybe something of your own, or something a teammate had, or maybe even an opponent's **Howling Mine**. There, you wish you could have played Engineered Explosives, which for a lower total converted cost ($\{1\}$ + 2 = 7, vs. $\{1\}$ + 5 = 8) would have *only* destroyed the **Serra Angel**, **Rushwood Elemental**, and **Shivan Wurm** – you know, the stuff that probably made you set the Deed at 5 in the first place.



But I feel the Deed will likely remain the overall champion, by a fairly comfortable margin. It fits into more decks (including any deck that can give a full sunburst to the Explosives), requires a

lower initial investment, and is an enchantment instead of an artifact. (That last point may not sound like much; but at last count, there are only two colors – white and green – with multiple, flexible Type I tools to remove enchantments once they hit the board. There are three colors – white, green, and red – that can do so for artifacts.)

Here's a comparative rundown of the two cards:

	Pernicious Deed	Engineered Explosives
Casting Cost	Low, requires two specific colors	Low to high, requiring zero to five colors
Activation Cost	Variable (and sacrifice)	2 (and sacrifice)
Permanents Defined	Artifacts, creatures, and enchantments. Will destroy artifact lands and activated “man-lands”	Specific to “nonland” permanents. Leaves all lands untouched.
Potential Destruction	Unlimited	Cannot exceed 5cc permanents without help
Collateral Destruction	Varies – can be quite high	Varies – should remain low
Deck Fit	Any deck with at least green and black gives full power	Any deck, but requires four or five colors for reasonable power
Off-Color Destruction	Does not allow	Allows
Speed	Cast as permanent, activate instant speed	Cast as permanent, activate at instant speed
Vulnerability	Medium to low – only two colors can reliably destroy it	Medium – only three colors can reliably destroy it
Flavor Text/Illustration	Not bad, as <i>Weatherlight</i> storyline stuff goes	None – but with Ron Spears on artwork, who needs it?

Setting **Pernicious Deed** aside, how would we build a deck with the Engineered Explosives? The question's a bit of a trick in my mind, since destructive utility tends to go in any deck that wants it. In that sense, you could put Engineered Explosives into any deck that might use **Powder Keg**, and you'd do okay. But there are ways to take slight advantage of the sunburst and/or other elements.

Here's one way you could go: since an ideal Engineered Explosives will go off for four or five, we could set up our deck to avoid major losses at that point. That doesn't mean we necessarily sacrifice power:

DestructiveDomain.deq		
Casual/multiplayer deck 60 cards		
1 Dust Bowl	3 Veteran Explorer	4 Engineered Explosives
2 Plains	3 Weathered Wayfarer	4 Harrow
2 Island	4 Emblazoned Golem	3 Collective Restraint
5 Mountain	2 Arcbound Slith	1 Enlightened Tutor
7 Plains	4 Thornscape Battlemage	
7 Forest	4 Rukh Egg	12 other spells
	2 Stratadon	
24 land	2 Draco	
	24 creatures	

The **Collective Restraint** is the only card truly at risk from an Explosives. The only other permanent at four mana is the **Rukh Egg**. The **Dust Bowl** is there to handle the only type of permanent threat the Explosives can't handle: non-basic lands.

There are many sunburst creatures coming that would play well in this deck. Some are very large. Keep your eyes open!

Upping The Charge Counters

There may be some of you who feel five charge counters is not enough to deal with the stuff you see at your table. If you must use Engineered Explosives but (to paraphrase Spinal Tap) "must go to eleven," here's a list of ways I know to get there, and there may be more ways coming in *Fifth Dawn*.

- **Coretapper**
- **Power Conduit**
- **Dismantle**
- **Giant Fan**

There might be a deck there, but you're on your own!

Arm Yourself With Explosives?

As with last week, the question will arise: how hard should casual players try to get four of these?

For now, the best point of reference is probably **Oblivion Stone**, since the two cards do similar things and are in a similar tournament environment – and as we know, perceptions of tournament utility can make a card harder (and pricier!) to find. I don't think I need to do a long analysis here: **Oblivion Stone** enjoys status as a solid, but not exceptional, rare. It was a bit overhyped. I'd expect the same of Engineered Explosives – but any hype might be true, if "sunburst" decks become popular.

But if I were looking for rares that might help my decks right now, and if I took sunburst seriously for casual play, I'd look pretty long and hard at two rares *not* in *Fifth Dawn*: **Sundering Titan** to hurt opposing sunburst strategies; and **Global Ruin** to complement my own. I don't know that they'll see visible price changes for traders; but casual players may want to consider decks that use them, if they're handy.

Bottom line, you will see Engineered Explosives in a variety of environments. They'll be challenging to use correctly, and I'd recommend building decks that use even one or two copies of them, just to get a feel for how they force you to think strategically. Here's to good luck and a long enough fuse!

You may contact Anthony at seriousfun@wizards.com. Anthony cannot provide deck help, no matter how many charge counters you manage to get on your Engineered Explosives.



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