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Pristine Angel



Adrian Sullivan · Single-Card Strategies
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For the writers of [magicthegathering.com](#), last week began by several of us calling dibs on an angel for Angel Week. As you already from yesterday, Anthony quickly shotgunned the [Copper-Leaf Angel](#) for [his article](#), and I hopped onto [Pristine Angel](#) just as quickly. For my purposes, [Pristine Angel](#) was the only one to choose, other than maybe [Reya Dawnbringer](#). There may be angels that are far more powerful ([Exalted Angel](#) springs to mind), but [Pristine Angel](#) is the one that seems to offer the most to play around with.



[Pristine Angel](#) is one of those cards with a *really* interesting ability. The card itself starts out simple enough. Spend 6 mana and receive a 4/4 flyer. Then, however, comes the hum-dinger. The dictionary defines Pristine, among other things, as remaining “in a pure state” or “free from dirt or decay”. Well, whoever chose the name for [Pristine Angel](#) did a great job, because as long as [Pristine Angel](#) is untapped, nothing can touch her. Keep your dirty mitts off, she says.

Of course, she still does get down and dirty then and again. If you're going to attack with her, she's nearly always going to have to get tapped. On the defense, you're sitting pretty. With protection from basically everything, blowing up the world is one of the only ways that is going to kill her while she's untapped. Attacking into the [Pristine Angel](#) requires a bit of sacrifice from all but the biggest army of attackers, as she is likely to take out one of the best guys unless they're *all* huge. Thankfully, even after she's attacked, she can come back home good and ready to defend everything, because whenever you play a spell, you may untap her.

Those are the basics. Where do we go from here?

Untapping Manually

Two little green men do a great job of keeping an angel untapped. [Quirion Rangers](#) (by returning a forest) and [Wirewood Symbiote](#) (by returning an Elf) both pull off the trick of untapping any creature. This is a pretty good trick. At any time, you can be assured that you'll have an untapped angel, should you want it. With the Symbiote, you have the added bonus of



having an Elf in your hand to relay on the following turn if you want to untap the angel at a creature-paced Sorcery speed.


Three cards that might come to mind at first to keep the **Pristine Angel** up are **Eternal Warrior**, **Instill Energy**, and **Serra's Embrace**. The problem, of course, is that these cards simply won't stay on the angel. **Pristine Angel** doesn't care who's trying to muss her hair, she just won't let it happen. At least with any of these enchantments, you could cast it on *another* creature, and she'd untap, but any old spell will do that, so that's not much to write home about.

The card you're actually looking for here is **Serra's Blessing**. With **Serra's Blessing**, *all* attacking creatures do not tap to attack. If your opponent happens to be sneaky and chooses to try to blow up **Serra's Blessing** during your attack, you'll be in fine shape; either you'll have the choice to attack with your angel (or not), or you'll have an already attacking angel who won't have tapped. It all depends on when your opponent casts their spell, but regardless *you'll* never be stuck in a jam with this combo. By the same token, a card like **Awakening** or **Seedborn Muse** can do a similar trick.

Lots of Cards, and Fast

Pristine Angel is a mean card because of how tricky it can be to kill. The best ways to keep it from being killed involve having lots of cards to cast at the right times. This means having the ability to cast instants, and it also means that it is good to have lots of cards. By herself **Pristine Angel** can create card advantage by foiling attempts to kill it, but one of the reasons I like it is that other card advantage cards make it even easier to foil attempts to kill it.

Any instant card, as old as **Lightning Bolt** and as new as **Oxidize** can get your angel back online. Card drawing, then, is a great way to be able to have more of it. Even something as simple as **Concentrate** can do the trick. With the slow Sorcery spells, it is usually best to hold back the **Concentrate** until after you attack so you can have another use out of it. Another slow card drawing spell to think about is **Balance of Power**. It won't be unusual for certain opponents to be sitting on cards that they can't use to kill your angel. **Balance of Power** will let you draw your hand up to whatever they might happen to have in their clogged hand. For Extended, **Deep Analysis** is fantastic when playing against other decks with Blue.

 Better than these slower spells, of course, are *instants* that draw cards. There are certainly plenty of these, but not surprisingly, the oldies are the goodies. There isn't much better than **Ancestral Recall**, but I don't expect we'll see too many Ancestrals running around with **Prismatic Angels**. A bit more realistic are some of the older card drawing and library manipulation cards. **Brainstorm**, **Accumulated Knowledge**, **Fact or Fiction** - these three spells are often found together in Blue-based control decks, simply because they work so well in helping to get you cards now and yet more card drawing for later. In addition to these, **Mystical Tutor** (to find your best available card draw), **Intuition** (to find multiple **Accumulated Knowledge**), **Skeletal Scrying** (a non-Blue card!), and **Opportunity** are good older cards to use for cards. There are certainly others, but we'll get to a few of them soon. When it comes to newer cards, you're a bit more limited to sorceries, but there still is **Thirst for Knowledge** and **Read the Runes**, both of which are liable to help you find more cards.

Making Use of Mechanics

Thankfully, card advantage and library manipulation are serious standards in the game. Wizards of the Coasts keeps on making mechanics designed to let you have extra and better spells. There is more than one way to be able to continuously cast cards.

Buyback

Any buyback spell will do here. Pay the buyback cost, and the spell is back in your hand, with an angel untapped at the ready! **Whispers of the Muse** is bound to be the best one here, but any of these cards will do the trick. My personal favorites are **Capsize**, "infini-Fog", a.k.a. **Constant Mists**, and "Poke", a.k.a. **Searing Touch**.

Flashback

Every flashback card in hand is like two spells. **Quiet Speculation** is a great choice to get out a whole slew of these cards from your deck to your graveyard, but even without it, there are plenty of useful choices. **Moment's Peace** and **Flash of Insight** both are great instants here, but the slower **Deep Analysis** gets a second mention here as well.

"Recurring" cards

Many cards just want to come back to your hand. From **Hammer of Bogardan** to **Grim Reminder**, these cards usually cost a wee bit of mana to get out of the graveyard and back into your grip. **Death Spark** is one of my favorites here, but it might not fit into a deck that includes **Pristine Angel**. Likely better are **Undead Gladiator** and **Gigapede**, both of which come back to hand for a small cost.

Pulses

Each of the five colors of Pulses has a clause that can bring the card back to your hand. Probably the best of these for our purposes is **Pulse of the Fields**. Since an angel might be a bit slow getting out, it wouldn't be surprising if you'd have lost a bit of life before getting it out. **Pulse of the Fields** can probably be recast a few times, being doubly annoying every time you cast it.

Scry

This one is simple library manipulation. Find those spells! **Magma Jet** can be a great trick here, potentially taking out an opponent's creature, untapping your angel to foil their plan to kill it, and searching a little bit into your library for another spell. **Condescend** and **Serum Visions** are also fantastic here.

Tricks to Save the Day

Of course, not every attempt to kill the angel is going to be a targeted attempt. The ones that work best are going to be avoiding targeting your angel altogether. The most likely candidates here are going to be cards like **Wrath of God**, **Diabolic Edict**, or **Obliterate**. There are plenty of variations on these cards, so what do you do if this is how your opponent plans to kill your **Pristine Angel**?

To get around the rascally sacrifice effects, you can always simply play other creatures in your deck. If they've been clever and taken these creatures out already, you still have options. **Raise the Alarm** and **Decree of Justice** are both spells that can make surprise token creatures. There are plenty of creatures you can cast as an Instant as well, though. **Caller of the Claw**, **Simian Grunts**, and **Defender of Law** will all do the trick too. If you're being hit by a **Barter in Blood**, just hope you get enough creatures out to save the angel, otherwise your two creatures might as well have just died to **Wrath of God**.



Speaking of **Wrath of God**, how do we dodge this? Any spell can be countered of course, but all of the things that make the angel so good can really work against saving it yourself. You can't **Unsummon** it. You can't **Boomerang** it. If you've "planned ahead" by untapping it on your own turn, you can't use a **Seal of Removal** or a **Keeper of the Nine Gates** to save it either. Thankfully, if you choose to use it, there is a card to save the day. Curfew.

Getting around mass removal can be tricky...

Getting That Little Extra...

One other thing to consider with the angel is that maybe you can use its ability to untap to get something more. Using an **Earthcraft**, **Pristine Angel** can be used as a mana-producing engine, with every spell you cast allowing you to untap your best land (which, who knows, might just be enchanted to make 4 or more mana). Using a **Symbiotic Deployment** puts you halfway towards drawing a card. **Kyren Negotiations** lets you get in a little ping for every spell you cast. **Opposition** makes your angel a tap-down machine! The angel itself can be incredibly hard to kill. Why not include **Worship** so you are as hard to kill as your angel?

Wrapping Up from the Real World

Pristine Angel is one of those cards that you might not think has quite enough snuff to really make it in the cutthroat world of tournament games. Leave it to Japan, however, to show everyone a new way of looking at things.

Earlier this month, Japanese Nationals was held. In the Top 8, there were 4 decks abusing the Affinity mechanic, two Red decks, a fairly regular seeming Blue/White deck, and a **Pristine Angel** deck running Green and Blue in addition to White. The deck was played by Tomohiro Yokosuka, and received a variety of names over the weekend, "Crazy 26" being one of them.

Tomohiro Yokosuka		
Crazy 26 old		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
7 Plains	3 Renewed Faith	2 Mycosynth Lattice
6 Forest	4 Wrath of God	2 Worship
1 Island	3 March of the Machines	1 Pulse of the Fields
4 Elfhome Palace	4 Oxidize	4 Wing Shards
4 Windswept Heath	3 Naturalize	4 Purge
1 Flooded Strand	2 Pulse of the Fields	2 Tooth and Nail
1 Grand Coliseum	1 Mycosynth Lattice	
24 land		15 sideboard cards
20 other spells		
3 Pristine Angel		
3 Viridian Shaman		
4 Silver Knight		
4 Krosan Tusker		
2 Solemn Simulacrum		
16 creatures		

His deck makes use of all of the principles that can make **Pristine Angel** tick. He includes card advantage in the form of **Krosan Tusker** and **Solemn Simulacrum**. He has a Pulse to repeatedly cast. He has a large number of instants. He even has access to Worship, so the right decks will be hard-pressed to win the game.

Good work by Tomohiro Yokosuka! While he didn't make the National team, he did place well at 5th in a very difficult tournament.

I hope everyone enjoyed this week's article. Until then, may your angel always be untapped.



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