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**W**hew, I can stop refreshing my browser now. There I am.

In Anthony's column this week, he advocated going... um, let me check... outside. That's kind of strange, because I'm not sure I've ever been there. I looked it up in my atlas; I searched for it on my globe—no dice. I tried to find it on the Internet, and when I came up empty (*they* sure hadn't heard of the place), I became reasonably convinced that this "outside" location doesn't exist. OK, a fantasy setting. I can work with that.

The only concrete thing I could determine about "outside" is that's where the sun lives. Now I *know* it's a fantasy setting because I live in Seattle and we all learned long ago that the sun is imaginary. It's a myth created by the Florida tourism board; a friendly, fanciful marketing character like the Pillsbury Doughboy or Becky Bear Trap. (Though, let's face it, those things work! If it wasn't for the appealing antics of Bazooka Joe, I'd have seven fewer bazookas and four more fingers than I do now.)



*There's no such thing!*

But just like with Santa Claus, the propaganda machine covers up the dark, seedy side of the sun. The sun is not your friend! It entices you to stare directly at it by being bright and shiny... then, five or ten minutes later, your eyes hurt! It burns your skin, fades your colors, and even (from what I heard) insults your mother. Are you going to take that? No way! So, kids, do what I do—stay inside where it's safe and cool, venturing out of your home only via a labyrinthine series of interconnected sewer tunnels and storm drains.

## Burst-Case Scenario

The sun is good for some things, though. For example, it can burst all over your Skyreach Mantas and Etched Oracles. In a stunning discovery made by no one else on earth, I have realized that the sunburst mechanic from *Fifth Dawn* dovetails nicely with the domain mechanic from *Invasion*. That's right: My mighty powers of observation, inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning, subductive reasoning, transductive reasoning, duct tape reasoning, and duck farming have turned the game of **Magic** on its ear once again! Once you've achieved sunburst via a rainbow of basic lands, a number of interesting considerations pop up:

- Would you rather have a 5/5 flyer (Skyreach Manta) or five 1/1 flyers (Ordered Migration)?
- Which is better: A 3-mana 3/3 artifact creature (Suntouched Myr), or a 3-mana 3/2 red creature that can easily grow to be 5/2 (Kavu Scout)?
- Would you rather spend 5 mana now to draw five cards (Allied Strategies), or spend 4 mana now to get a 4/4 body and the 5th mana later to exchange that body for three cards (Etched Oracle)?

For all of the above questions, I gave the nod to the *Fifth Dawn* cards (as reflected in the deck below), but that might just be because they're new. I don't know the right answer, and, as always, you can personalize the deck however you prefer. Basic land searching comes in the form of Wayfarer's Bauble, Rampant Growth, and Harrow (though there are bazillions of possibilities for you to choose from), and the deck further takes advantage of its mana base with Evasive Action, Power Armor, and Tribal Flames.



### Main Deck

60 cards

7 Forest	4 Etched Oracle	3 Allied Strategies
4 Island	4 Skyreach Manta	2 Evasive Action
1 Krosan Verge	4 Suntouched Myr	3 Harrow
4 Mountain	_____	3 Ordered Migration
4 Plains	12 creatures	2 Power Armor
2 Swamp		4 Rampant Growth
1 Terminal Moraine		4 Tribal Flames
_____		4 Wayfarer's Bauble
23 lands		_____
		25 other spells

If you want to actually include *rare* cards in that deck, things get nutty. Bringer of the Whatever Dawn? Lightning Angel? Last Stand? Global Ruin? Engineered Explosives? There are so many ridiculous choices that trying to include them all turns the deck into my Legacy Weapon concoction that I use in the Singleton format on **Magic Online**—and that hasn't even been updated to include *Fifth Dawn* yet!

## Double Down

**\*\*SEGUE ALERT!\*\*** **\*\*SEGUE ALERT!\*\*** **\*\*SEGUE ALERT!\*\*** **\*\*SEGUE ALERT!\*\***

Speaking of rare sunburst cards, one of the most interesting ones is Solarion. That thing has a built in challenge: "How big can you make me?" Since I'm sick of Solarion (or the voices inside my head claiming to be Solarion) taunting me, I guess I'll just have to give it a shot.

The funny thing is that you don't need to tap it that many times to make it lethal. In fact, if you pull off the full sunburst when you summon it, using its ability a scant *twice*—meaning you only need to untap it *once*—will make it big enough to fling at your opponent's head for 20 damage. That's hardly fun, though. It should really be at least 80/80 before you toss it over with Grab the Reins... y'know, just in case your opponent has a Healing Salve.

This plan requires a marriage of the sunburst monstrosity and some untappers. I hear wedding bells for Solarion and Seeker of Skybreak, Aphetto Alchemist, and Puppeteer (which is also good on defense). Hm, I guess I probably should have mentioned that Solarion is a polygamist. Spells such as Gerrard's Command and Inspirit can also untap the Solarion so it can tap itself some more. They're defensively valuable as well; you can create a surprise blocker in the early game to take out one of your opponent's aggressive attackers while you're still setting up your board.



I suppose I guess I definitely probably should have mentioned that the Seeker, Alchemist, and Puppeteer are also polygamists, because love is in the air for them and a cadre of creatures with tap abilities. As long as the deck is full of cheap untappers, it might as well take advantage of them while waiting for the Solarion. There are plenty of choices out there; I went with card drawing (Archivist), card filtering (Thought Courier), damage prevention (Aven Redeemer and Master Healer), damage creation (Goblin Sharpshooter), and mana production (the sunburst-friendly Birds of Paradise).

Calisthenics		
<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards		
2 Adarkar Wastes	3 Aphetto Alchemist	4 Gerrard's Command
2 Brushland	3 Archivist	3 Grab the Reins
2 Coastal Tower	1 Aven Redeemer	2 Inspirit
2 Elfhame Palace	3 Birds of Paradise	1 Pemmin's Aura
3 Forest	1 Goblin Sharpshooter	10 other spells
2 Grand Coliseum	1 Master Healer	
3 Island	4 Puppeteer	
1 Karplusan Forest	3 Seeker of Skybreak	
4 Mirrodin's Core	4 Solarion	
2 Shivan Oasis	3 Thought Courier	
1 Yavimaya Coast		
24 lands	26 creatures	

## The Other Door to Nothingness

That's more than enough sunniness. Let's go the opposite direction: Time for a supermassive black hole. Possessed Portal is an interesting card. It grinds the game to a halt and starts deteriorating the board position until its controller chooses to—or is forced to—sacrifice it, restoring everyone's ability to draw cards and basically get on with things. As a permanent-attrition machine, it's twice as slow as Braids, Cabal Minion, and it's even slower when compared to the ramp-uppable Smokestack. But there's a big difference: The Portal's draw-nixing ability means that if your opponent doesn't already have an answer to the Portal, he won't find one. That ability also provides an extra window to break the symmetry.

Possessed Portal replaces all draws with non-draws. That goes for the card you normally get during your draw step, as well as cards you'd get with any other "draw" abilities like Jayemdae Tome. But there are loopholes. There are always loopholes. How can you get extra cards even though a Portal is out?



*The end of cards...for the unprepared.*

- **You can put cards directly into your hand.** Fact or Fiction doesn't tell you to "draw" cards; it tells you to "put one pile [of cards] into your hand." The Portal won't affect that. The same goes for Raven Familiar, Planar Portal, Journey of Discovery, etc.
- **You can get access to cards that aren't in your hand.** This is the Future Sight plan. Who needs to draw cards to play them?
- **You can use a different replacement effect to replace your draws.** Abundance combos well with Possessed Portal. Two different replacement effects want to replace your card draws with something else. You choose which one to use. Choose the Abundance effect, and you get to put a card directly into your hand.

Possessed Portal also forces discards and sacrifices. You can set yourself up well for this effect too. Spirit Cairn will let you turn both players' discards into creatures, which can be sacrifice fodder for later. Remembrance gives you a new card whenever you sacrifice a nontoken creature (assuming there are more copies of that creature left in your deck), letting you stay even. You'll come out ahead if those creatures have useful comes-into-play or leaves-play abilities, like Raven Familiar or Goblin Gardener. A pair of Myr Retrievers is another way to prevent board erosion, and Squee, Goblin Nabob can let you satisfy the Portal's discard requirement all day.

The problem with Possessed Portal is that it takes a lot of work to get out, and it takes a lot of work to abuse... leaving not much room left in your deck to do much else. By the time you drop the Portal on the board, if you're at 5 life and your opponent has three creatures out, I'm sure she'll happily sacrifice lands over the next couple of turns while she continues to smash you. You need to play the Portal when the board position is even (or in your favor) and you have the tools to break the symmetry... and that's a tall order. In fact, halfway through building the blue-green deck you'll see below, I abandoned it in favor of a monored version. To clear out any creatures, it had Pyroclasm, Flamebreak, and Slice and Dice. To stunt my opponent's development, it had Avalanche Riders, Dwarven Miner, Turf Wound, and Solfatara. (Wait, really? There's a card called Solfatara? *Solfatara?* Crazy. I love when the game surprises me.) To break the Possessed Portal symmetry, it had Squee and Planar Portal. I'd list the deck as it stood, but, well, that about covers it. Then, deciding that it wasn't shaping up to be very interesting or combo-oriented, I ditched it and went back to the blue-green deck instead.

I'm glad I did, because I found some neat little synergies. I added bounce to keep the board clear, including Aether Mutation—which creates Saprolings I can feed to the Portal. I upped the bounce to theft with Vedalken Shackles, and shifted the mana base heavily blue. That card can slow down early assaults (no one likes to have their creature blocked by their ex-creature), and it gets downright unfair with the Portal out because now I can feed *your* creatures to the black hole. The last change to the deck was the delightful discovery of Cephalid Broker.

The Broker is my favorite combo with the Portal so far. Before you get the Portal down, it says "☹️: Target player (you) draws two cards, then discards two cards from his or her hand," which lets you find what you need to stay alive and bring out the Portal. After the Portal has warped the game into a nightmarish world of despair, the Broker says "☹️: Target player (your opponent) *does nothing*, then discards two cards from his or her hand." Yikes! Since when can blue do that?

## Portal Kombat



### Main Deck 60 cards

5 Forest

3 Cephalid Broker

1 Abundance

14 Island  
1 Mountain  
4 Yavimaya Coast  

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24 lands

2 Raven Familiar  
2 Squee, Goblin Nabob  

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7 creatures

4 AEther Burst  
2 AEther Mutation  
4 AEther Spellbomb  
4 Explosive Vegetation  
3 Fact or Fiction  
1 Future Sight  
4 Journey of Discovery  
1 Planar Portal  
3 Possessed Portal  
2 Vedalken Shackles  

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29 other spells

I can't really vouch for that deck because I haven't tested it at all. It's got a lot of stuff going on (it's more of a stew than a gourmet meal), and it doesn't seem cohesive yet. But there are enough ideas in there for you (yes, you!) to follow any of its multiple paths and hopefully come up with something you like.

Until next week, make Anthony happy and have fun with the sun.  
Mark

