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# Promise of Power



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There aren't that many demons in **Magic**. Back when I first started playing, no one really owned a huge amount of cards, and so it was exciting when people played a big rare. I had seen a **Shivan Dragon** or two in my time, and I thought that was big, but I hadn't seen anything yet. One day, I was playing with some friends when out came the **Lord of the Pit**.

It was huge. It was awesome. It looked dark and evil. As we read the card, I remember someone swearing. That upkeep cost was pretty sinister. 7/7 Flying, Trampling goodness. All it cost you was one soul a turn.

Back when pretty much everyone was playing glorified sealed decks, it didn't matter that he was expensive to cast and upkeep, the **Lord of the Pit** would break games wide open. He sucked in our group games, but that was only because a player showing strength was liable to have every sling and arrow turn their sights toward them. **Lord of the Pit** isn't too forgiving when you can't feed him souls.

So it went. As time passed, there was a period where we lived in a world without demons, and I can't help but admit it annoyed me. Eventually, though, the demons returned to the game with **Grinning Demon**. And now, they've been given even more of a center stage here at **magicthegathering.com** for Demon Week.

We must truly live in evil times.

## The greatest of many evils

In an election year, every vote counts and if I had to make up my mind and vote for the Best Demon of 2004, it wouldn't be hard to vote for a sorcery, **Promise of Power**.





It seems like one of the defining characteristics of the various demon cards is that they are all ready to cause pain. And of all the demon cards, **Promise of Power** really feels like the pain is most worth it from a power perspective.

Obviously the card has its restrictions built into the design. The card costs triple black. That's no mean feat for a deck not prepared to have a big commitment to the Dark Side. Drawing cards is costly. 5 life is nothing to sneeze at, and oftentimes you'll find that you won't have time to use the 5 cards you draw if your life drops that significantly. Five life is like giving the opponent a free attack from a big creature or a free **Shrapnel Blast**. Finally, what about that demon? The demon, unfortunately, is not the most steadfast of friends; he likes more powerful allies rather than weak ones. For 5 mana, it is a possibility you could be getting a 7/7 flier, but it's also possible you could get a 2/2. Certainly, you can get both the demon and the 5 extra cards to pump him up, but that costs you a boatload of mana. Despite all the drawbacks, the key is that you get to choose which mode of the spell you're going to take based on how the game is going at the time. That versatility can go a long way.

## Power in cards

Lots of cards is a great thing, if you can make sure that you actually get a chance to use them. Generally speaking, if you can survive, drawing 5 extra cards is going to be enough to overwhelm most other decks. To offset the cost of life, there are a few things you can do.

1. Be able to use the cards you get
2. Be ready to kill things
3. Gain life

Drawing 5 cards is a lot. In fact, it may be so much that some of the cards that you do draw end up having to be discarded. The answer is to have a lot of access to cheap spells and spells that get you mana. Cards like **Chrome Mox** are a great example of this, providing more mana for no mana cost. However, you don't need to use cards that make use of both ideas. Anything that is cheap and does something useful is good to consider here. Cards like **Wayfarer's Bauble** and Handsome Jens the **Solemn Simulacrum** also are good, as they actually fetch you more land to work with. Essentially, what you're looking for are cards that can help ensure that you'll be able to actually make use of having a lot of cards when the time comes.

Being ready to kill things plays off of this. If you're going to be losing a fair amount of life to draw cards, you'd better be able to kill off everything that might be able to punish you for losing that life. Usually it's those pesky creatures that are responsible for making people lose life, so be ready to slap them. It's even better if you're able to cross-apply any of the previous rules. Cheap spells (like **Shock** and **Swords to Plowshares**, depending on what card pool you're using) are the best here, since they are so efficient at killing creatures and their cost often means you'll be able to cast many in a turn.

Gaining life is another way to deal with the pain of 5 life. Life is survival, and the more the merrier. **Pulse of the Fields** is a great way to offset the pain lost by **Promise of Power**. Cards like **Sun Droplet** won't help you with the loss from Promise, but they will help you with the damage your opponent sends your way. Of special note are cards that you can use to gain life *and* kill creatures, like **Consume Spirit**. **Vicious Hunger** gets an extra gold star for also being cheap.

Remember, if you can survive long enough, all of the cards you're getting can simply push you over the top.

## Power in demons

So, you want to summon a big, flying demon instead of drawing cards. It's quite simple, really; if you can get out a giant flying demon quickly it could prove quite insurmountable for your opponent. Even a moderately sized demon can hold the fort against any number of attackers. The problem is, even getting a single demon usually requires 6 cards (your 5 mana cards, and the **Promise of Power** itself). Generally, this means that the faster you can get a demon out, the less big it is.

It may not really matter that much, though. If you're just playing solitaire, it's simple to figure out how worth it making a bigger demon is, compared to a faster demon. Divide 20 life by the potential power of the demon (rounding up) and you have how long before the demon can provide you with a dead opponent. Every turn you might wait to cast **Promise of Power** can add a single power and toughness to the demon.

For a fast demon to be truly potent, you want to use cards that require less of an investment. A turn 1 **Birds of Paradise** (5 cards left), followed by a turn 2 **Talisman** or **Vine Trellis** (4 cards left), can add up to a turn 3 3/3 **Promise of Power**. This will kill them by turn 10. Wait one more turn though, to get a 4/4, and you'll have them dead on turn 9 (and a tougher demon in the process).

A truly fast **Promise of Power** can be cast on turn 2 (and a little luck). A turn 1 **Chrome Mox** and a land of a different color can be used to cast a **Pentad Prism** (so far, that's 4 cards used, 3 left). On the next turn, lay another mana and cast **Promise**. Here, though, it seems clear that 5 cards would be better than a demon.

That's the way it is often going to go. In essence, you'll generally decide to make a demon on two occasions: you either need a defender now or you are ready to start killing your opponent. It's in that second case that you might even start casting it with a kick and entwining **Promise of Power** to be able to have a truly huge demon (since the order of the wording means that you would draw the cards and *then* get the demon token).



## Other Promise of Power fun

There are plenty of other clever uses for **Promise of Power** besides these cards, but they definitely stand out...

**Mirari, Mischievous Quanan, Fork** – This asks that you have a lot of mana, but if you do, it is most certainly worth the investment. Dealing with 1 demon is tough enough, but 2 can be quite a handful. Drawing 10 cards is nothing to sneeze at either.

**Recoup** – **Promise** can be a costly spell to include in a deck, but with **Recoup**, you don't have to include that many copies to be able to use it multiple times. Save most of the space in your deck for **Duresses** and **Innocent Blood**!

**Burning Wish** – This is my second favorite card on this little list. Brian Davis kept wanting to run **Infernal Contract** in the sideboard of **When Sorceries Attack!** and it always seemed to me that he had an interesting idea there. 5 cards for 5 life seems a lot better than 4 cards for *half* your life.

**Spellweaver Helix** – Getting around having to cast the spell is great. It isn't hard to imagine this getting out of control. Combine this with **Vicious Hunger** to make the card drawing cheap and painless, or combine it with a cheap spell like **Overmaster** to keep your hand size up and make the demons big. Tons of possibilities here.

**Panoptic Mirror** – Easily my favorite option for the **Promise of Power**. A deck that includes **Promise of Power** is going to include all kinds of other cards that work well with the Mirror anyway, and the idea of having a free **Promise** every turn is more than a wee bit exciting.

## Wrapping Up and the Demon Elections of 2004

Hopefully this has given you a decent sense of what you can do with my favorite demon. What is your vote for best demon of 2004? Here are all of the Standard Type 2 legal demons. Voters, the choice is yours!

**Which is the Best Demon?**

Grinning Demon (the Smiler!)

Havoc Demon

Reiver Demon

Promise of Power

I leave you with this decklist, legal for *Mirrodin* Block Constructed (also called "MD5", if you prefer). It makes use of a number of the ideas that I mention in the article, and is a good first step in a block deck with demons.

### Election Promises 2004

60 cards

2 Mountain	4 Solemn Simulacrum	4 Promise of Power
14 Swamp	4 creatures	4 Consume Spirit
16 land		4 Magma Jet
		2 Fireball
		3 Echoing Decay
		3 Barter in Blood
		4 Echoing Ruin
		4 Chromatic Sphere
		4 Wayfarer's Bauble
		4 Talisman of Indulgence
		4 Chrome Mox
		40 other spells

Enjoy Demon Week, and while you're at it make sure to get in on the demon vs. demon vote over at [Selecting Ninth Edition!](#)



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