

Mark Gottlieb

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All right! Inner Demon Week! This is my time to shine. First up, clearly, is Compulsion. Then we'll get to Narcissism, Sadistic Glee, and Agonizing Memories. Traumatize is a shoo-in, and it all leads up to Brink of Madness... What? Just regular Demon week? I guess that's good too.

Sadly, yet happily, I am not at Wizards this week. As you read this, I am in Cambridge, Massachusetts, enjoying the best event of the year: the National Puzzlers' League annual convention. If you're local, and if you're a fan of pencil puzzles and word games, check out the Boston Marriott Cambridge Hotel the evening of July 8, 9, or 10. This event has absolutely nothing to do with **Magic** whatsoever, so don't show up expecting deck help or a gunslinging match—you'll get a cryptic crossword and a vowelless double crostic instead. It's also not the best place to ask for my autograph, lay gifts at my feet, and otherwise worship me. For that, as always, please visit my shrine in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan.

So why am I sad to be at the NPL Convention? Because I'm missing Demon Week back at the office. It's been a great Fourth of July tradition for ten years, when we pay tribute to our dark mast—EXPERIENCING TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES. PLEASE STAND BY. EXPERIENCING TECHNIC—and Scott finally synched up the website with the holiday. So as jazzed as I am about a week of puzzles, I hate missing pin-the-tail-on-the-succub—TECHNICAL DIFFICU—crifice, and, of course, the huma—TECH DIFF—becue. Good, wholesome fun.

Rocket from the Crypt

And I thought Angel Week was hard. Angels are tough to build a combo deck around because, for the most part, they're just giant beatsticks without bizarre abilities to exploit. Demons are much the same way. I'm sure they hate the comparison to Angels, but they're also giant in cost and they're also giant in size. Demons have more going on, ability-wise... but while there are over three dozen Angels, there are fewer than one dozen Demons. I was actually having an awful case of deck block until I signed a contract with a very helpful gentleman who visited me out of the dreamrealm. Then the ideas started flowing!

Let me get the obvious one out of the way first. Demons and Eon Hub. Get rid of the upkeep step, and Lord of the Pit becomes a 7/7 flying trampler with no drawback. No drawback on Minion of Leshrac! No drawback on Demonic Hordes! Or Minion of Tevesh Szat, Grinning Demon, or Yawgmoth Demon! Whee! What a crazy world, where Demons are your happy friends (not your harpy fiends), and behave like obedient Victorian-era schoolchildren—*yawn*. Sorry, but I am not enthused. It's a good combo, but it's not an interesting one. If you want to build the massive Demons, Eon Hub, mana accelerator deck, be my guest. I'm way too warped for that.

So I'll start off with the sanest Demon deck I can abide. I want to accomplish a couple of things. First of all, I don't want to pay full price for my Demons. ③④⑤⑥? ④⑤⑥⑦? No thanks. Secondly, I want to avoid having the Demons around during my upkeep step. Well, that sounds like a job for Sneak Attack. Wham, bam, thank you horrible manifestation of all things evil. Get a Demon out on the cheap, send it screaming at my opponent's head, then get rid of it before I start to regret my alliances.



A one-shot Demon is pretty sad. That's way too much oomph to use and toss. Bring in the flavor-appropriate Dawn of the Dead, and my Demons now get two shots at glory. I still avoid the Demons' major upkeep costs, though I've added a small upkeep cost anyway. (And the path down the dark side begins.) There's a nice life-death-life pattern now: Sneak Attack moves a Demon from my hand to play to my graveyard, then Dawn of the Dead moves it from my graveyard to play to the removed from game zone. Cauldron Dance brings the zone-changing Demon insanity to a peak. And all three of those enablers give my Demons haste for max attack's impacts.



Why pay full price?

If you're a regular reader of my column, you should know that's not enough. No, I've got to cheat death. Umm, actually, I've got to cheat undeath by using extra death. When a Demon is brought back via Dawn of the Dead, it's slated for oblivion at the end of the turn. If I can sacrifice it before then, it settles back into my graveyard, ready for the next turn's Dawn. Diabolic Intent exchanges one of my Demons for a tutor effect. Fling sacs a Demon for massive damage, and Burnt Offering sacs a Demon for massive mana.

Dawn of the Demons		
		
Main Deck		
<i>60 cards</i>		
4 Sulfurous Springs	3 Grinning Demon	2 Buried Alive
12 Swamp	4 Havoc Demon	2 Burnt Offering
2 Tainted Peak	3 Lord of the Pit	2 Cauldron Dance
4 Urborg Volcano	2 Yawgmoth Demon	3 Dawn of the Dead
<hr/>		1 Demonic Tutor
22 lands	12 creatures	2 Diabolic Intent
		2 Fling
		2 Howling Mine
		2 Phyrexian Arena
		4 Sneak Attack
		4 Talisman of Indulgence
		<hr/>
		26 other spells

Leshrac in Charge

The celebratory elixir Mr. Zebub gave me when I signed that contract seems to be going to my head. Things... don't seem right. Things don't seem... right. Why, if I didn't know any better, I'd say there were creatures with "Minion" in the title that were, in fact, *not* Minions! But that would be crazy talk. No one could confuse a Minion with a Demon. Except, I suppose, Tevesh Szat. And Leshrac.

At the moment, the spotlight is on Minion of Leshrac, which isn't a Minion. To keep it company (and feed it) is Sengir Autocrat, which is a Minion. That Minion comes into play with three minions of his

own that are, of course, not Minions—they're Serfs.

I loved Minion of Leshrac back in the day. I loved Demonic Hordes, and this was just better. "Tap to Befoul?!" I'd say. Well, I wouldn't actually say that because Befoul wouldn't be printed for another three years. And MoL's ability can wipe out any creature, not just a nonblack one. But it allows for regeneration. Still, despite the non-Minion Minion's confusing near-similarity to a card that didn't exist, I loved it. Not that I ever really got it to work. But I loved it.

Poor, poor Minion of Leshrac. It was printed before its time. Only now, supported by combo powerhouses Standardize and Faces of the Past, can its true might be unleashed! This three-card combo allows you to wipe out all of your opponent's creatures in one turn. Standardize all creature types to be Demon (or anything else), and whenever Minion of Leshrac taps to destroy a creature, Faces of the Past untaps it for more maniacal fun.



But that's not enough, is it? You've wiped out your opponent's creatures, but he still has all that tasty land. Yum. Well, with Faces on the table and a type-changing card (such as Standardize, Conspiracy, or Unnatural Selection) causing identity crises, MoL's upkeep snacking will cause it to untap—netting you a free activation of its ability. Enchant it with Pemmin's Aura for some extreme landscaping. Or, following the Faces of the Past + Standardize plan, sac your own Serfs and Pests—er, I mean tiny 0/1 Demons (or whatever creature type you've chosen)—to Spawning Pit (or whatever other sacrifice outlet you add to the deck) to untap Leshrac's humble annihilation-sowing servant.

The Serfs and Pests are there to be fodder, fodder, and more fodder. You need to feed Minion of Leshrac at the beginning of your upkeep. You want to sacrifice creatures to untap the big guy. And you can use Culling the Weak (and really, what's weaker than a 0/1 creature token?) to convert one of them into ☠☠☠☠ to bring Minion of Leshrac out as fast as you can.

Leshrac's Right



Main Deck

60 cards

5 Island	4 Minion of Leshrac	1 Conspiracy
1 Phyrexian Tower	4 Sengir Autocrat	3 Culling the Weak
2 Polluted Delta	_____	1 Demonic Tutor
4 Salt Marsh	8 creatures	3 Diabolic Tutor
8 Swamp		4 Faces of the Past
4 Underground River		2 Nuisance Engine
_____		2 Pemmin's Aura
24 lands		3 Spawning Pit
		4 Standardize
		4 Talisman of Dominance
		1 Unnatural Selection

		28 other spells

Tempting Whispers



I'm feeling it now. Bubba Lou's bubbling beverage seems to be boiling my internal organs. There was something about that guy I didn't trust, but I just couldn't put my finger on it... and now I really can't put my finger on it as it seems to have disintegrated from the inside out. I better finish typing before the other nine go.

When I was searching for Demon cards to write about, I hit all cards with "Demon" in the type line (hello, Lord of the Pit), "Demon" in the text (greetings, Boris Devilboon), and "Demon" in the card title (welcome, Demonic Tutor... and Pandemonium?) Pandemonium was a bit of a surprise. It shouldn't have been. Etymologically speaking, the word straight-up means "demon world," a fitting precursor to its current common definition of "tumult" or "chaos." OK. I can run with that.

I'd explain how I got from "I'll build a Demon deck with Pandemonium in it" to "I'll sacrifice my own Tempting Wurm while I have Endless Whispers in play, then at the end of the turn, when the Wurm comes into play on my opponent's side, I'll simultaneously drop Pandemonium and three giant Demons into play to instantly send game-winning damage to the dome," but I can't. There is no explanation. It must have been the contract.

This isn't as large a combo as it first appears, and there is versatility built in. You clearly need Endless Whispers and Tempting Wurm. You need a way to sacrifice Tempting Wurm, and I've chosen Diabolic Intent because it turns itself into whichever remaining combo piece you're missing. You definitely need Pandemonium. And you need any three Demons whose total power adds up to 20. Heck, even more Tempting Wurms are fine for that purpose. So in full it's a 7-card combo, but one of those cards fetches another, and three of them have some acceptable variance. Still, that's why the rest of the deck is filled with card drawing and tutoring, including the on-theme Demonic Tutor and Demonic Consultation.

This is a fine way to answer one of the riddles of **Magic**: How do I negate Tempting Wurm's drawback? In this case, just win on the same turn you play it! Don't play the Wurm unless Endless Whispers is in play and you're holding the rest of the combo. That shouldn't slow you down; since the Wurm and Diabolic Intent each cost just 2 mana, you can easily win on turn 5.

panDEMONium



Main Deck

60 cards

4 City of Brass	3 Havoc Demon	1 Demonic Consultation
4 Forest	4 Lord of the Pit	1 Demonic Tutor
4 Llanowar Wastes	3 Reiver Demon	4 Diabolic Intent
1 Phyrexian Tower	4 Tempting Wurm	4 Endless Whispers
9 Swamp	2 Yawgmoth Demon	4 Howling Mine

22 lands

16 creatures

4 Pandemonium

4 Phyrexian Arena

22 other spells

Of course, you can make the combo even easier by abandoning the Demon theme. Demons only go up to 7/7, so you need at least three of them to total 20 damage. Swap them out for Krosan Cloudscaper, Polar Kraken, Denizen of the Deep, Leviathan, Skyshroud Behemoth, and/or Lord of Tresserhorn, and you've got a 5-card combo: Whispers, Wurm, Intent, and any two of [Pandemonium, 10+ power creature #1, and 10+ power creature #2]. (The Intent fetches the missing bracketed piece.) But stripping Demons out of my Demon Week deck wouldn't be right. Why, that would be downright... evil...

Until next week, have fun with Demons! They'll have fun with you...

B.L. Zebub

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