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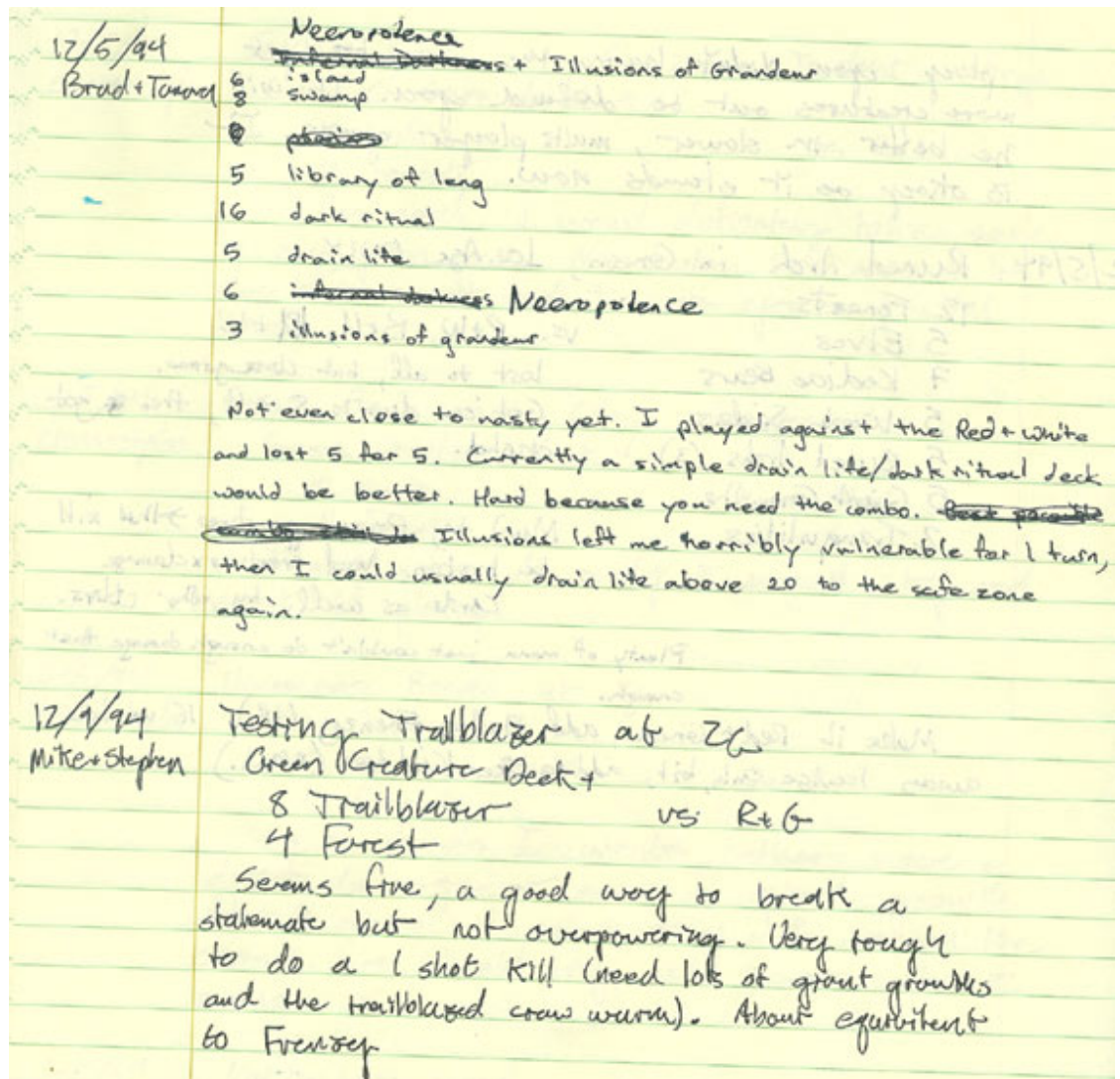
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# Necro's Earliest Days

Magic Arcana  
Monday, August 9, 2004

In [last week's feature article](#) from Skaff Elias about the design of *Ice Age* he mentioned fellow *Ice Age* designer Chris Page. Having read the article, Chris got in touch with us and forwarded these scans of two pages from the notebook he kept while playtesting that set. Here's the first:



It's a bit tricky to make out, but this list includes 16 **Dark Rituals**, 6 **Necropotence**, and 3 **Illusions of Grandeur**. In **Magic's** earlier days, playtesting philosophy was considerably different than today. Back then, designers would include as many copies of each spell as they wanted so they were more likely to be able to set up specific combos, making it easier to spot if certain cards or interactions were potentially degenerate since you could get them to come up more dependably.

Note that this early deck includes the **Necropotence/Illusions of Grandeur** combo, a deadly duo that would rise to prominence years later when **Donate** was printed.

With the benefit of hindsight, it's amusing to hear any deck with 6 **Necropotence** and 16 **Dark Rituals** described as "Not even close to nasty yet". It's also amusing to note that the second list on this page refers to making sure **Trailblazer** isn't too overpowering.

1/12/95 Chris Steve	16 Mountains 18 Lava Burst 6 Incinerate	Against RW, RG, WyuLi, Land Destruction
		Crashed WyuLi w/lt killed RW, RG unless out-died damaged. Lost to land destruction. Could fry all creatures that come out. And four mountains were generally fine. Direct damage is a very nice strategy currently (Pyroclasm superlulus in this deck.) X-1 or X-2 damage?
1/12/95 Bill, Chris Steve	4 Necropotence 5 Spoils of Evil 5 Howls from Beyond 6 Terrors 6 Dark Rituals 3 Drain Lives 4 Drudge Skeletons 6 Will o' the Wisp 13 Swamps 3 Library of Leng	Necropotence / Spoils of Evil BBB 2B
		Won 3 out of 4 to R+G deck. However, Steve generously Tranquilized my Necropotence allowing me to draw again. Howl/Spoils/Terror is a nice combo on its own, but not needed here. We need to test this with Drain/Dark Ritual/Necro. Split into a (Howl/Spoils/Terror deck - this should be nice) and a (Drain Life/Dark Ritual/Necro), we'd have two good test decks.

The Necro list on this page features a pretty cool combo involving **Necropotence**, **Spoils of Evil**, and **Howl from Beyond**. But the funny part comes where Chris suggests splitting the two combos in this version into two different decks: "We need to test this with Drain/Dark Ritual/Necro. Split into a Howl/Spoils/Terror deck and a Drain Life/Dark Ritual/Necro...we'd have two good test decks." Chris couldn't have known then, but a little over a year later that Drain/Ritual/Necro engine would evolve into one of the most powerful decks in Standard's history, bringing with it the dreaded "Black Summer".

Special thanks to Chris for being such a good sport and sending in these great glimpses from **Magic's** earliest days!

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