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# Arcanis the Omnipotent



Adrian Sullivan · Single-Card Strategies  
Wednesday, September 1, 2004

There are a lot of Legends out there. Soon, thanks to *Champions of Kamigawa* [there will be even more](#). They weren't fooling around when they named Arcanis "the Omnipotent" – some Legends cast spells like **Overrun**, some cast **Break Open**. Arcanis actually casts **Ancestral Recall**.



In terms of pure card advantage, tapping Arcanis to draw three cards is more akin to casting **Opportunity** (once it resolves, you are up three cards from when you started) than **Ancestral** (where you are up only two). Of course, Arcanis isn't restricted and doesn't need to be. It simply isn't anywhere near as powerful as **Ancestral**. **Ancestral Recall** is fast and cheap, whereas Arcanis can take a while to be ready. Even in Type 1 and [5-color](#), casting an **Ancestral** usually doesn't spell the end of the game.

However, it's a very rare game indeed where an active Arcanis doesn't mean "game over". Essentially, unless you have already gotten to a point where winning is nearly impossible for you it will quickly become nearly impossible for your opponent. The question becomes simple: how do you make that happen?

## We need an Arcanis with a quickness...

When it comes to spells, six mana is about the upper end for most tournament worthy spells. Some people consider four mana the beginning of "expensive", and at six mana most people expect that whatever you cast should be a game-ender. In the current tournament magic scene this can be easily illustrated by a glance at all of the decks being played. Almost every deck is full of incredibly cheap spells with only one exception, **Tooth and Nail**, a deck that fudges things a little bit and essentially "cheats" its expensive cards into play. We'll talk about cheating (sort of), but in a little bit.

The simplest speed-up method is only a single card. Way back in *Urza's Block*, Patrick Johnson added a set of **Grim Monoliths** to his mono-Blue control deck. It was a revolution. The new deck,

PatrickJ.dec (sometimes called Accelerated Blue) became the new template. I quote Michael J. Flores:

In an environment where the blue creatures were strong but the blue counterspells were expensive, Pat chose to emphasize the color's strengths and tried to get around its weaknesses.

While other players sat about trying to activate **Veiled Serpent**, or waited until 6 or even 9 mana to bust out their **Morphlings**, Pat threw them into play from turn 3 with the power of **Grim Monolith** [...] PatrickJ.dec ended up being very influential and ruled Type II for months after Urza's Block was an archaic format.

**Grim Monolith** does the exact same thing with Arcanis as it does with **Morphling**. A turn 3 **Morphling** was so good because it could be made untargettable for the low, low cost of one blue (which coincidentally is available on that turn). A turn 3 Arcanis is still vulnerable to the opponent, but is no less potent once it gets going.

Of course, there are other ways to accelerate it out as well. There are whole classes of mana acceleration that can apply. Things like Talismans, **Fellwar Stones**, **Birds of Paradise**, **Birchlore Rangers** (and other elves), and Medallions can all help get you the necessary mana to get the card out more quickly. Essentially, they all have the same thing in common: you invest a single card to get another mana.

A slightly different way to get the mana going is to get land into play faster. The most powerful method here is probably **Fastbond**, but only slightly less powerful (and far more playable in many formats) is **Exploration**. A third-turn Arcanis still requires six land (and the **Exploration** itself), but it is entirely feasible. In addition, subsequent turns with Arcanis are liable to be even more supercharged than other Arcanis decks are capable of being.

Most people don't simply cast an Arcanis, however. Instead, they cheat.

## Legal cheating

Making broken **Magic** decks is almost always about breaking the rules. When Wizards of the Coast designs a card, they try to make the card mostly fair. It's in their contract: make fair cards, and if you don't you get forced to answer every single piece of mail complaining about how "unfair" a card is. This is a big incentive, and only occasionally do the **Skullclamps** and **Yawgmoth's Bargains** of the world escape the notice of a complaint-fearing R&D.

The job of the plucky deck designer is to find ways to get around the inherent drawbacks to a card. Arcanis has only one drawback. He's hard to cast. So, rather than cast him, let's get him in play another way.

The sneakiest way to be a cheater is pretty simple in my opinion. It is **Sneak Attack**.

Oh, **Sneak Attack**, how clever and fantastic you are! Now, for a simple investment of a single Red mana, that Arcanis in your hand not only comes into play, but it comes into play *with haste*. That's a pretty big deal. Now there is no waiting around to get your cards back. Sure, he's going to be removed from the game, but you get an **Ancestral Recall** effect for only a single red mana. Of course, the rules let you be trickier yet. Since you can use the "Waylay" effect I've mentioned in [previous columns](#), if you wait until after "At end of turn" effects trigger to place Arcanis into play, you get *two* activations of Arcanis before he goes away!

Of course, it gets better yet! Arcanis does have another power: returning to your hand. He can do this all by himself for **♣♣♣2**. This ability to dodge death from the **Sneak Attack** is definitely useful. That is a pretty hefty investment, of course. You can always use another card to avoid the loss. Try **Man-o'-War**, **Wizard Mentor**, or **Cavern Harpy** to pop him out simply by activating the **Sneak Attack** again!

Reanimation is another great way to get him into play. A simple **Entomb** or **Buried Alive** can get him into the graveyard, and nearly any reanimation effect will have him at the ready. Especially good here are cards like **Reanimate**, **Resurrection**, **Stitch Together**, and **Beacon of Unrest**. Unlike an **Animate Dead**, they put the creature right into play and aren't vulnerable to



enchantment destruction. One incredibly powerful play available in Extended is to **Buried Alive** an **Arcanis the Omnipotent**, **Anger**, and another card to potential reanimate, and then use **Reanimate** or **Stitch Together** to have him active immediately.

**Volrath's Shapeshifter** is an excellent (if difficult to use) method to getting out an "Arcanis". The Shapeshifter itself is chock full of sneaky tricks to go with it. At its simplest, activating the Shapeshifter to get an Arcanis in the graveyard is an easy way to get 3 cards. Should they try to kill it, it's not too unlikely that you'll be able to have some other creature that will survive the attempt. Imagine this scenario:

You have a ready Shapeshifter in play. You discard a **Morphling** to it, make it untargettable, make it flying, and put a few untaps of it on the stack. Before you do any untapping, you change it into an Arcanis. With your huge handful of cards, you somehow manage to find a **Psychatog** to discard before you attack, and flying, untargettable death finishes off the opponent. What fun!

Essentially, to cheat out the Arcanis, just hunt for any ability that allows you to avoid casting it. From **Summoner's Egg** to **Fold into Aether** (on your own spell) to **Elvish Piper**, there are a ton of ways to get around the high cost of the card. Keeping it safe is another issue.

## Keeping the dream alive

As I've already mentioned, Arcanis is more than capable of looking after himself. The problem is, of course, that it costs a lot for him to be his own keeper. Granted, with his 4 toughness, a lot of the more commonly played spells are *not* going to be able to take him out, but still, there are certainly plenty of cards that will. Here are a few simple methods that can keep him safe:

### *Karakas*

I've always been partial to this card. As a land, it dodges annoying things like counterspells. While it is still vulnerable to **Wasteland** and other land destruction, it is still pretty resilient over all. Besides being an incredibly cheap way of protecting the Arcanis, you can always turn around and use it on the opponent's Legends. And with *Champions of Kamigawa*, you can expect to see some more of those...

### *Lightning Greaves*

Probably the most powerful way to protect Arcanis, the **Lightning Greaves** also gives the fantastic ability Haste to him. It could be said that the mana cost is not the only thing hindering Mr. Omnipotent – the turn delay to make use of him is also a bit of a hindrance. **Lightning Greaves** not only protects your investment but nixes this "secondary" hindrance as well. If you're especially bold, you can always swap the Greaves off of Arcanis onto some other creature to make its effect immediate before bringing it back to protect Arcanis again.

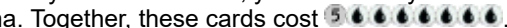
### *"Bounce" spells*

Any old bounce spell will keep Arcanis from being killed, but two of the best choices are cards that will sit in play. **Seal of Removal** and **Aether Spellbomb** are both the equivalent of an "on the board" **Unsummon**. This can help you get your cards into use immediately rather than discard your excessive card advantage. **Seal of Removal** is especially good here; the mana investment is only one-time, so there is no need to hold back mana. While not quite bounce, **Reality Ripple** is another good means of protecting the Arcanis, phasing it out of reality while danger is about.

## Things that make you go "Boom!"

Untapping Arcanis multiple times is a pretty ridiculous thing to pull off. Each untap effect is yet another **Ancestral Recall**. One of the great things about playing with massive card draw in a deck is that if you are able to do something once, since you are drawing so very many cards, you are liable to be able to pull it off again. Take **Reanimation**. If you are able to get a reanimated Arcanis going, in no time flat you'll be able to reanimate several other creatures as well. While I already mentioned the **Volrath's Shapeshifter/Morphling/Arcanis** trick, there are two other combos that bear mentioning.

### *Mind Over Matter*

This is a straightforward two-card combo. With only these two cards, you can draw your entire deck. There is a huge problem, however: mana. Together, these cards cost **5** . Even with a **Mirari's Wake**, this can be a prohibitive venture. With nearly infinite cards, you can untap all of your permanents (including land). With some final card to use as a kill (say

**Kaervek's Torch** or something similar), you should be able to end the game as soon as both are in play.

### *Intruder Alarm*

By using cards like **Birds of Paradise** and (especially) **Birchlore Rangers**, you can provide yourself with some mana acceleration to get out an Arcanis. Add in an **Intruder Alarm**, and you can (likely) draw your entire deck! Each additional creature you draw not only allows you to draw 3 more cards, but probably will also provide you with mana acceleration from the untapping of all of your mana creatures. Throw in a finisher (say **Kamahl, Fist of Krosa**), and say "Good game!" to your opponent!

## The Wrap-up

For your perusal, I have put together a little Extended Arcanis deck. Using **Sneak Attack** to cheat at mana, regular old mana acceleration in case I can't cheat, and some useful tricks like **Wizard Mentor** and **Eternal Witness**, this deck can get an Arcanis going without breaking too much of a sweat. If you get an Arcanis with a **Sneak Attack** going, it's quite likely to be the end for your opponent. After drawing a mitful of cards, sneaking out two **Darksteel Colossus** can end the game in double-quick time, but even without that, there are plenty of ways to wrap it up.

### Sneaky Extended Arcanis

60 cards

4 <b>City of Brass</b> 3 <b>Island</b> 6 <b>Forest</b> 4 <b>Mountain</b> <hr/> 17 land	4 <b>Arcanis the Omnipotent</b> 4 <b>Wizard Mentor</b> 4 <b>Darksteel Colossus</b> 3 <b>Crater Hellion</b> 3 <b>Eternal Witness</b> 4 <b>Yavimaya Elder</b> <hr/> 22 creatures	4 <b>Sneak Attack</b> 4 <b>Exploration</b> 4 <b>Gamble</b> 2 <b>Final Fortune</b> 3 <b>Mox Diamond</b> 4 <b>Chrome Mox</b> <hr/> 21 other spells
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I hope that you enjoyed this week's column. Last week, I proposed a potential Challenge Card for **Bosium Strip**, depending on how much interest there was. While there was a little bit, there was not enough to warrant a Bosium Strip Challenge. Thank you very much those of you who did send in a submission.

Enjoy the rest of the week!



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