

Mark Gottlieb

Thursday, November 18, 2004

**B**reaking things. It's been a hobby of mankind for about five seconds longer than creating things has. We strive to break records—As you no doubt remember, Mark Gottlieb set the underwater violin-playing record in 1975. (A funny guy, Mark played Handel's Water Music.) We break the speed limit. We try to break up that hot girl from her unworthy, no-account, rich, successful, handsomer-than-you boyfriend. Then, when we fail to do so in spectacularly humiliating fashion on stage in front of the whole auditorium, we break into tears. (That's a universal experience, right?) Tennis players break serve. You can't make an omelet without breaking a few eggs. Stage actors and loan sharks break a leg. Spring break, coffee break, and bathroom break are all festive yearly occurrences. I have a mental breakdown about once a week. And, of course, sometimes we break cards.

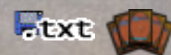
## Masking Tape

I decided it was high time someone broke Uba Mask (or at least put it to good use), and that someone was me. My first take on it was ridiculously complex: I'd turn Uba Mask into a creature with either March of the Machines or Animate Artifact. Then, during my opponent's draw step, I'd phase out Uba Mask with either Vanishing or Vodalian Illusionist! The card that my opponent would have drawn was removed from the game with the Mask. However, before he gets to his main phase, the Uba Mask disappears from play—and when it goes, my opponent's ability to play his removed-from-game card go with it. In effect, he never gets another draw for the rest of the game (though he can immediately play his instants). Meanwhile, Uba Mask phases back in before I untap each turn, so I can play all of my cards. Hey, no one's ever accused me of not being evil.

My second take on the card was to bring that combo into Standard. The same effect can be achieved with Uba Mask and Vedalken Mastermind. Instead of phasing out the Mask, I bounce it to my hand during my opponent's draw step and replay it during my main phase—after I've drawn my card for the turn. It's more expensive on a per-turn basis, more fragile, and there are fewer redundant combo pieces—but on the plus side, now it's just a 2-card combo and there's no phasing involved. The tricky part is gaining board control. So much of this deck is dedicated to the combo that it's possible your opponent can beat you with just his first ten cards. There's also not much room for a victory condition. I strongly considered Blind Creeper since its drawback seems pretty safe once you lock your opponent out of drawing any new cards, but I went with Nezumi Shortfang instead since it can win you the game without ever needing to attack.



Sit, Uba, Sit



**Main Deck**  
60 cards

2 Blinkmoth Nexus  
9 Island  
4 Salt Marsh  
2 Stalking Stones  
7 Swamp

24 lands

4 Nezumi Shortfang  
4 Vedalken Mastermind

8 creatures

2 Diabolic Tutor  
3 Echoing Decay  
4 Echoing Truth  
3 Fabricate  
4 Mind Rot  
4 Serum Visions  
4 Talisman of Dominance  
4 Uba Mask

28 other spells

## Hinged

As you can see, I don't have an *Unhinged* card to preview this week. Yeah, I'm disappointed too. Apparently that old fogey Mark Rosewater decided I'm not cool enough to double up. Only he gets to talk about *Unhinged* nonstop. That's fine, because there's still plenty of ground to cover with the card I got last week. I've gotten emails all week talking about insane things to do with Yet Another Aether Vortex. Why? *Because it's insane!* For example, Matt Somebody made a deck that lets you repeatedly sacrifice Zuberass off the top of your library for increasingly gargantuan effects. Various people suggested Obstinate Familiar or the like so you can skip your draw and keep whatever's on top of your library in play. (Finally, Necropotence is good!) But since I don't want to devote two whole columns to a single *Unhinged* card, I'm going to move off the topic... right after mentioning Justin Kay's paradoxical conundrum.

Justin came up with a scenario to show that Yet Another Aether Vortex is the only card ever printed that can exist in play only because it says it can. Specifically, there are no other permanents in play, neither player has any cards in hand, there are no cards in any graveyards affecting the game... but the top card of your library is face up. It's Yet Another Aether Vortex, and it's in play.

This sounds impossible, and it is in a vacuum. But here's how it could come to pass: You have a Yet Another Aether Vortex in play and another one on top of your library. The Vortex in play makes the one on top of your library be in play too, so now its abilities are active as well. (This is different than if the Vortex were revealed with Future Sight or Telepathy.) You play Obliterate, then (with mana floating) Demystify the Yet Another Aether Vortex in play. Er, in real play. The non-library one. The Vortex on top of your library is now your only permanent, and it's still in play *only because it says it's still in play*. Its ability keeps its ability active. This is, of course, useless; the card doesn't actually help you at the moment and you're just going to draw it next turn. The only purpose this serves is to *blow your mind*.

## Cantichant

Travis Martin decided it was high time someone broke Cantivore (or at least put it to good use), and that someone was him. The main deck interaction was between Cantivore, Femeref Enchantress, and



enchancements that sacrifice themselves, such as Seal of Cleansing. Travis's deck was also full of Runes of Protection, which act like cantrip Cantivore-specific Battlegrowths.

I took that idea and bent it around to the side, because the first thing I did was add Auratog to the deck. Auratog is clearly on good terms with both Cantivore and Femeref Enchantress. Next, I added Rancor and Cessation to serve as Auratog food. Those two enchantments are greatly beloved by the Enchantress—but Cantivore doesn't like them much at all. So that's a bit of dissynergy... um, asynergy? unsynergy? antisynergy?... but I can live with it as long as I'm drawing tons of cards off the Enchantress by repeatedly sacrificing and replaying Rancor with the Auratog. I also replaced the Phantom Nishoba that Travis hoped to fetch with his Defense of the Heart with Endless Wurms. Something kooky that I kept in was Cleansing Meditation. At threshold, and with an Enchantress in play, the card says "Destroy all enchantments your opponent controls and draw a card for each enchantment you control. Oh, and move your local enchantments around if you want." Can't argue with that.



## Cantiref Enchantroyf



### Main Deck 60 cards

4 Brushland	4 Auratog	3 Cessation
4 Elfhome Palace	4 Cantivore	1 Cleansing Meditation
7 Forest	2 Endless Wurm	1 Defense of the Heart
5 Plains	4 Femeref Enchantress	2 Enchantress's Presence
4 Windswept Heath		4 Rancor
	14 creatures	2 Rune of Protection: Black
24 lands		1 Rune of Protection: Green
		2 Rune of Protection: Red
		2 Seal of Cleansing
		4 Seal of Strength
		22 other spells

You'll note that this deck has no *Champions of Kamigawa* cards and no *Unhinged* cards. This is unfortunate, because the neural implant starts sending shocks rippling down my spinal cord until I mention a card from a recent set. Have you ever smelled burning ganglia? It's not pleasant. That's why I strongly recommend, uh, Vassal's Duty. Look, I'm never going to find a better use for that thing than shutting off this chip. Aw, man, it also has a setting for when I make fun of a card. Ow. Ow. Ow. Ow. How about this, chip: In a more creature enchantment-heavy build, Kitsune Mystic might have a place here. Or Ghostly Prison can slow down beatdown decks while you set up Endless Wurms or giant Cantivores. OK, it stopped. Aaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.

## Inversion 1.0

Robby Bullis decided it was high time someone broke Strange Inversion (or at least put it to good use), and that someone would have to be him. With Slagwurm Armor and Ensouled Scimitar running around, a creature could get to 11/1 or bigger without too much trouble. Defensive creatures like Kami of Old Stone or Silent Arbiter could bog down the game to a point where you could accumulate enough equipment, Strange Inversions (or just one and a spell to splice it onto), and fling effects to win the game from out of nowhere. Robby's original deck was Online Extended and featured Tireless Tribe and Order/Chaos. My riff on it is Standard, though it does miss the Falter effect that the Chaos half of the split card provided.

## Strangely Powerful



### Main Deck

60 cards

2 Blinkmoth Nexus	4 Bloodshot Cyclops	3 Blessed Breath
2 Mirrodin's Core	4 Kami of Old Stone	3 Ensouled Scimitar
10 Mountain	4 Leonin Den-Guard	3 Glacial Ray
10 Plains	2 Myr Quadropod	2 Grab the Reins
24 lands	4 Silent Arbiter	3 Slagwurm Armor
	18 creatures	4 Strange Inversion
		18 other spells

If you choose to play this deck, I highly recommend drawing at least one Strange Inversion at some point during the game. I tried it the other way—just to check, y'know—and can't recommend the results.

Until next week, have fun breaking things!  
Mark

