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Common Combo

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Building on a Budget
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PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

Even beyond just 2004, this article is one of my all time favorites. When Jay challenged me to build a combo deck using only commons, at first I thought it couldn't be done, especially not from recent sets. But behold, I managed to pull it off, which I'm sure is one of the reasons I like this one so much. It just goes to show that you can make some crazy stuff happen, even if you are only using common cards! This combo is also so bizarre that it will be fun to watch what your opponent says while you continue to "go off" by playing golem after golem, right up to the point that they realize *Temporal Fissure* is on the way to put them away.

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Combos are awesome. The feeling that you get when you go off with a combo deck is like no other feeling in **Magic**. Now, they can sometimes be an unhealthy thing when too powerful, but in moderation they are simply fantastic. Making a combo work is like being a kid in a candy store, or more accurately, Timmy in a Dragon store.

It is rare to get the same feeling in any other non-**Magic** aspect of life. The only thing that makes me feel like I have **Bargain** out and 18 life to spare is, well, nothing. It must be how the evil genius feels before he unveils his diabolical laser beam. I felt that way playing a board game this weekend, when we found out that we were playing the rules wrong and it allowed me to 'go off' and run up the tech tree like I had a Storm count of 12 and a Desire in hand. It was awesome. I'll say it again; Combos are awesome.

And Flashy.

And Cool.

And Techy.

I didn't always feel this strongly about combos. Once upon a time, the dreaded combo winter descended upon **Magic**, teaching us that combos should never get out of hand. When combos get to the point of consistent non-interaction with your opponent, **Magic** is no longer **Magic**. So, beware when meddling with combos!

At any rate, Jay Moldenhauer-Salazar contacted me at some point and asked me about doing a "combo article" between us for combo week, combining [Into the Aether](#) and [Building on a Budget](#). The idea was to have me build a deck, and then he would write [an article about playing it](#), followed by a strategy article on the deck in my column. I am always up for cool ideas, so I was on board. Then, to my horror, he asked me to build an all commons combo deck.



Wrong bargain!

Now, Budget decks I can do, but all common decks? That was a challenge. I had never even heard of anyone attempting such a feat. Some quick research got me nowhere, and I decided to grease my elbows and get into the fray. The best way to make a combo deck is to search the card lists for parts that make an engine. An engine is a combo-deck term that describes how you convert one resource into another. After you find a way to do that, you need to figure out how to profit on the transaction, thus netting you more stuff. Convert that stuff back at an equal rate via a second card, then run it back through the engine to get more! Rinse and repeat.

A good example of this was **Yawgmoth's Bargain** and **Skirge Familiar** with **Soul Feast**. The engine is the Bargain and the Familiar. You pay life to draw cards, pitch cards to make mana, and use mana to gain life. End result? A dead opponent.

After an agonizing review of all the commons, this was the engine I could come up with. I will note that some people came close to guessing it in the forums from Jay's article. (Yes, I read the forum comments. Surprise!) Anyway:

- Enchant Land mana producers like **Dawn's Reflection** and **Fertile Ground**
- Untappers like **Twiddle** and **Dream's Grip**
- Card Drawers like **Rush of Knowledge**

So, once you get a couple enchant lands on one of your land (easier than playing out a Bargain at any rate), you can begin to produce a lot of mana by using cards like **Twiddle** and untapping it. This converts cards to mana.

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Then, you use the mana to cast a **Rush of Knowledge**, drawing a ton of cards. This converts mana back to cards.

As long as you have enough land enchantments or have a big enough **Rush of Knowledge**, you should be able to go through most of your deck like this, with the end result being that you have a ton of mana in your mana pool and most of your deck in your hand.

So what do you do then?

Well, my friend, anything you want. I decided to go with **Temporal Fissure**, mostly as a nod to [Adrian Sullivan's](#) love of the card. This will let you bounce every single one of your opponent's permanents while you play out 20+ power worth of creatures and win the next turn while they play their first land in the meantime.

What you ask? How am I playing all of these creature in my combo deck, and how am I drawing 7 cards off a **Rush of Knowledge**? The answer to both of these questions lies in the following two cards:



Yes – Both **Tangle Golem** and **Spire Golem** allow you to play an early creature if you need to, and cast huge **Rushes of Knowledge**. My original Standard legal version of the deck ran **Krosan Tusker** as well (along with **Serum Visions**), but Jay modified the deck to date back to older sets, adding **Harrow** and **Opt**. While **Harrow** is probably better than the Tusker, I think the **Visions** is better than the **Opt**.

Here is the decklist he played for his article:

Building on a Budget: The Big Bounce (about 1 ticket?)		
Online Pauper deck (all commons)		
	Main Deck 60 cards	Sideboard
13 Forest	4 Dream's Grip	4 AEther Burst
7 Island	4 Opt	4 Deconstruct
20 lands	4 Twiddle	4 Moment's Peace
4 Spire Golem	4 Fertile Ground	3 Reclaim
4 Tangle Golem	4 Harrow	15 sideboard cards
8 creatures	4 Dawn's Reflection	
	4 Rush of Knowledge	
	4 Temporal Fissure	
	32 other spells	

The deck plays out by setting up for the first few turns. It casts a **Fertile Ground**, and then a **Dawn's Reflection** on the same land. Then, when you think the time is right, start to go off. You do this by casting as many untappers you can on the enchanted land, casting a heavily discounted **Tangle Golem** (you might want to do this the turn before you go off), and casting **Rush of Knowledge**. Hopefully you will draw some more untappers and another **Rush of Knowledge**, and do it all over again for another cycle. If you don't draw another **Rush**, you will probably draw at least **Temporal Fissure**, and you can make a little more mana and return most if not all of their permanents back to their hand and play out more big guys of your own.

Simple, elegant, fun to play and interesting to watch...but like all combo decks, slow to actually perform on **Magic Online**. Get that F2 key ready!

Tips on Playing the Deck

- Try to cast your Golem the turn before you go off, as you will want to save as much mana as possible for your big turn.
- Don't be afraid to do a quick **Temporal Fissure** for three on all of their lands or creatures. This doesn't really set you back, since you plan on drawing another copy later when you go off, but it can buy you valuable time to set up.
- When **Opting** (or casting **Serum Visions**), search for those Rushes of Knowledge! They are crucial!
- Don't forget that you can win via smashing their face – sure you are a combo deck, but that doesn't mean you don't have angry Golems!

Adding Money to the Deck

This is a tough question, because I really designed the deck to be an all-common deck and compete in a field of Pauper decks. I don't know if this deck could stand up to regular decks, but I did play it in the casual room and it was doing ok, so that gives me hope. The best card to add to this deck is obviously **Mind's Desire**. This deck really wants to be a Mind's Desire deck, but all it got was **Temporal Fissure**. **Thirst for Knowledge**, **Gilded Lotus**, and more card drawing in general (**Trade Secrets?**) would probably help it out as well.

Until next time, may you **wish** for a **wish**.

-Nate Heiss
BuildingOnABudget and nateheiss on **Magic Online**



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