

# Forbidden Crypt

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The first time I tried out Forbidden Crypt, I was trying out one of my first combo decks, Mike Long's ProspBloom deck from Pro-Tour Paris. I had spent the entire season trying to qualify for that Pro Tour, and by the end of the season, all I had to show for my efforts was a Type 1 rating (for some reason I can't fathom, the Paris qualifier season ended up there rather than on the Standard ratings). I worked on decks for my friends that were going, and after everything was over I revisited the format, confident that my particular build of a bizarre Sands of Time/Equipoise/White Weenie could beat Mike's deck. But I was wrong. Very, very wrong.

Picking up Mike's ProspBloom deck was a new experience. Nowadays, there are plenty of good combo decks out there, but back then the very idea of serious combination-based decks was merely cute. There were plenty of combo decks that had been made, but none that really ever had teeth.



For reference, here is his decklist:

Mike Long's ProspBloom deck:



Main Deck  
60 cards

3 Bad River	4 Cadaverous Bloom
7 Forest	1 Drain Life
5 Island	1 Elven Cache
6 Swamp	1 Emerald Charm
4 Undiscovered Paradise	4 Impulse
25 lands	4 Infernal Contract
	2 Memory Lapse
	4 Natural Balance
	1 Power Sink
	4 Prosperity
	4 Squandered Resources
	1 Three Wishes
	4 Vampiric Tutor
	35 other spells

The deck was groundbreaking, yes. And who was I to try and improve it?

Well, I was always a tinkerer, and something about that Drain Life bothered me. Maybe it shouldn't have, but I didn't like the fact that it didn't actually do anything other than kill the opponent. That one Elven Cache could be a useful way to keep things going if it went wrong (a timely Coercion, for example), but I wanted a card that could be a kill card and would also help the deck get going if it was stuck. In a fit of "inspiration" (some might say I made the deck worse, and I'm not sure they're wrong), I put in a Forbidden Crypt.

What would this mean? Well, here was a deck that would combo you out by drawing lots of cards, building up mana, and getting off a large Drain Life. Instead, the deck would draw lots of cards (holding back any one card draw spell), lay a Forbidden Crypt, and then use the Crypt to win by casting another Prosperity for the second time. Once your graveyard was the size of your opponent's

deck (not that hard with all of the Prosperity-ing and Squandered Resourcing of land going on), you would easily win.

## Entering the Forbidden Crypt

So maybe it wasn't actually all that good an "improvement". Forbidden Crypt's reprint in *Sixth Edition* means that it is available in every large format other than Standard. So what is it exactly that a Forbidden Crypt offers you?

First of all, here is the official Oracle Text of the card.

If you would draw a card, return a card from your graveyard to your hand instead. If you can't, you lose the game. If a card would be put into your graveyard, remove that card from the game instead.

Essentially, for the rest of the game, a Forbidden Crypt makes your graveyard into your new "library" and you don't get to add any new cards into the grave. In exchange for this, you get to choose whatever card you like from your new library. You can "Vampiric Tutor", if you will, every turn from this new library right into your hand, for no extra mana cost. Vampiric Tutor by itself was always pretty powerful, so getting to do it every turn (without all the downsides) seems like a great deal. The problem? Well, this new library really is like a library. If you can't draw a card from you graveyard, you lose the game.

Clearly, you can't just cast a Forbidden Crypt on turn five (unless, of course, you're sacrificing a bunch of land and drawing a bunch of cards and winning the game). Since you're not going to simply drop it the turn you cast it, chances are you won't be playing four of this card, but rather two or three. Also, when the Forbidden Crypt comes into play, you're going to have to actually have cards in that grave that you want to recast. Maybe you got those cards there by just casting them or maybe you put them there some other way. Whichever way it is, once you drop the Crypt, all you have to work with is those cards already in your yard. Good luck.

## "Just" Replaying Cards



Of course, replaying cards is generally a great thing. There is a reason that Regrowth was restricted for so long. There is a reason that Eternal Witness is a valuable card for dealers. If you already would have wanted to play a card, that must mean it is good, and playing it again is going to be good too.

For the most part, one of the big weaknesses of a card like Forbidden Crypt is land. There isn't likely to be very much land in your graveyard that you can replay when you feel like you need more land.

One way to get some in there is to play with land that sacrifices for a useful effect. The most obvious ones are also the best ones: the *Onslaught*-block "fetch" lands like Bloodstained Mire and Polluted Delta. There are plenty of reasons why you might want to have more lands in play as the game develops, and if you're going to go about simply replaying cards, land that gets "used up" somehow is great. Of course, you could also be bringing back cards like Dwarven Ruins or City of Traitors that were expended in some other way, but these aren't nearly as likely to be useful in developing

long-game mana. Wasteland, on the other hand, is great here. Not only is it likely that a Wasteland in your graveyard pre-Crypt is a good thing (as you did get to kill a land), but you can choose later on whether you want to develop your mana or hinder theirs. Dustbowl is great for the very same reason.

For simply replaying pre-Crypt spells, suffice it to say that if you've used it before against some opponent, using it again will probably be good. If a Diabolic Edict is useful once, it will be useful a second time. If a Duress is useful once, it will be again. If you're playing good cards in your deck, they won't cease to be good that second time around.

## Fill 'er Up!

There are a bunch of ways to fill a graveyard besides just casting spells. The key with Forbidden Crypt is to have any card you use not be unwieldy. Tolarian Serpent can fill the graveyard incredibly quickly, sure. On the other hand, if you're casting a Tolarian Serpent, I bet you can find something better to do with seven mana that might get you to simply win the game. Similarly, if you're putting your entire library into your graveyard with a Cephalid Illusionist/En-kor combo or an activation of a Hermit Druid, you'll probably be winning the game.

Even a card like Traumatize, while it can fill your graveyard quite well, doesn't actually do anything else. A cheaper card or a card that helps keep you in the game in the meantime - that's what you're looking for. Of course, there are a lot more options than these few cards, but these four are pretty great at doing the job.

### *Avenging Druid*

This card has been one of my all-time favorites for a long time.

Avenging Druid is a fairly cheap creature that can be a real threat in any deck that can take advantage of a bigger graveyard. Letting it through unblocked is similar to letting an Ophidian thru. Sure, you're not getting a card draw, but the additional land resources can help you build up to a big turn. Just casting a Forbidden Crypt can be hard enough, but if you get resisted in some way (say by a Counterspell), a few turns of the Druid can make it so that you can cast another threat first to draw out that counter and then follow up with the Crypt.

After the Crypt has hit the table, the Druid's earlier work should leave you with an incredibly full graveyard to work with.

### *Cephalid Vandal*

All that the Vandal can really do for you is to fill your grave fairly quickly. Each turn, the Vandal will mill one more card than the last turn. For most decks, eventually, this milling of your own library would quickly spell the end (a turn two Vandal will empty your library in nine turns). A Crypt player, on the other hand, doesn't have to actually worry much about being decked. At any point after you've laid the Crypt, you don't really care that you're losing the top cards of your real library, as your new "library" built out of your graveyard isn't being touched. For fun, you could always include a copy of Donate or two to give your opponent a Vandal with a ton of counters on it, and see how they deal with it.

### *Dreamborn Muse*


A four-mana 2/2 isn't all that great on its own, but what the Dreamborn Muse does have going for it is the dual purpose of killing your opponent and filling your grave in the meantime (and it does it for free every time!). Like with the Vandal, laying a Crypt will keep you from being hurt by the Muse. It should become pretty likely that your opponent will kill the Muse before it does them in, but if they do it before you drop a Crypt, you'll have it right back to start attacking their library. This does require that they have cards in their hand, so I do recommend packing cards like Prosperity, Capsize, Cowardice, or other things that might keep the hand full.



## Fact or Fiction (and friends)

Now here is one of those cards that is simply great to play in conjunction with the Crypt. Card drawing is always good, but after the Crypt is out on the table Fact or Fiction lets you actually see new cards from inside your deck! Any card that skips actual drawing will do this (take Diabolic Tutor, for example), but Fact or Fiction has the added bonus of also filling your graveyard in the meantime if you don't have a Crypt out yet. Reviving Vapors and Three Wishes are two other fun cards that make use of the same principle. After the Crypt hits you might not be able to fill the grave any more, but maybe those new cards can get you out of a pickle.

## Breaking the Crypt

For numerous reasons it can sometimes be time to get rid of a Forbidden Crypt you already have in play. 

It could be that you just needed to lay a Crypt quickly to make use of a particular card in your graveyard or it could be that you've had the Crypt out too long and you are nearly out of a graveyard for the Crypt to use. It could be that your opponent is actively attacking the Crypt with Phyrexian Furnace or Tormod's Crypt. Maybe you just need access to something new because the cards you've already used won't get the job done. Whatever the reason, it's time to get rid of it. Now, this isn't to say that every Crypt deck wants to kill a Crypt. Sometimes, though, it is nice to be able to have that option available.

Now, you can use cards that are dedicated to destroying your own things. A Claws of Gix or Despot's Scepter can trash your own stuff quickly and easily. The better choice, however, is cards that can get rid of your Crypt and also have some other utility.

Pernicious Deed is one of the most powerful spells of all time. Not only can this card get rid of your own Crypt, it can also be very good at getting rid of anything that your opponent might throw at you in the meantime. Because the effect is so useful, drawing a Deed early is almost never going to be dead. Replaying the Deed off of a late-game Crypt gives you the choice of either immediately answering your opponent or waiting for that moment later, when you're ready to get some new cards.

You can also run dedicated "point-and-click" kill for a Crypt. Of course, if you are going to do this you really are going to want to have something that might have use against an opponent's card. A Naturalize, for example, might have use against an opponent before you reuse it from your graveyard to kill your own Crypt. An Erase is simply less good than a Disenchant just because you are less likely to use it. A reusable source like a Devout Witness is better yet if you're planning on having it be a Crypt-killer.

## Wrapping Up

To bring a lot of these concepts together, I put together the following three-color control deck.

BUG Control/Crypt



Main Deck

60 cards

2 City of Brass	4 Avenging Druid	4 Cabal Therapy
4 Forest	2 Meloku the Clouded Mirror	3 Chainer's Edict
2 Island	2 Undead Gladiator	2 Engineered Plague
4 Llanowar Wastes	8 creatures	4 Fact or Fiction
4 Polluted Delta		3 Forbidden Crypt
5 Swamp		4 Pernicious Deed
4 Underground River		4 Recoil
		3 Vicious Hunger
25 lands		27 other spells

The deck packs a bunch of versatile cards that can answer a real variety of problems. With Deed, Edict, Recoil, Vicious Hunger, and Engineered Plague it can knock out many different permanents. Avenging Druid can fuel both the graveyard and give the deck the mana to make more expensive turns (like casting a Fact or Fiction and other spells in the same turn, or flashing back a Chainer's Edict). When you are finally ready to end the game quickly, Meloku should have been fed enough by the Druid that it will be over in just a few turns.

The Avenging Druid isn't the only option to fill the grave. The other minor feature graveyard-filler of the deck is the Undead Gladiator.

Getting rid of cards that aren't useful yet is good by itself, but in the late-game you can use the Gladiator in a last huzzah, cycling it to get anything useful from your graveyard thanks to the Forbidden Crypt. In addition, you can get an extra shot of hand-disruption with Cabal Therapy and the Gladiator.

This deck is about resource building (Druid/Fact) and resource stripping (Therapy/Deed/Recoil). With the Forbidden Crypt, you can take these cards and return them to the fight. As long as you have a good selection of cards in your graveyard, the Crypt will guarantee you a good draw. When things start getting thin, Recoil or Deed will let you get something new, if it even comes to that.

Hopefully this will inspire you to try your own ideas out with this interesting card, as there are many different ways you can go about building around the Crypt. Have fun, and I'll see you next week!

