

Mark Gottlieb  
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**H**eh heh heh. Oh, goody. It is time—finally—for intercolumnar war.

I've halfheartedly tried to strike up spats, feuds, and/or rivalries with my fellow columnists for ages, but they've never taken hold. Rosewater has too many other enemies to pay attention to the likes of me. Nate Heiss ran away in fear; the subliminal taunts (notice how I never openly mentioned him in any derogatory way) snapped him like a twig. I still can't touch Forsythe because although I broke into his house and recovered the negatives, I'm pretty sure he's got a set of prints stashed away. I've had to make do with being a menace to the greater **Magic** community as a whole.

And then one of my columnar mentors (he ranks #2, right behind Jamie Wakefield) went and did the most foolish thing he could have imagined. You want to bring it, Alongi? Well then, consider it brung. It is *on*.

In his last column, Anthony Alongi (a man who will soon lose the distinction of being able to truthfully say "I have never been attacked by a synchronized swarm of albino cyborg chipmunks") leveled a humongous dis right at me. I know he was talking about me because he defined one of his Multiplayer Monsters as someone afflicted with "Center of the Universe Syndrome." Syndrome? *Syndrome?! I call it "keen insight,"* buddy. Sharp self-awareness.



How perfect for Discard Week that it starts with a dis. Let's break down Mr. Alongi's playa-hatin' statements sentence by sentence.

- "Combo decks are not, in and of themselves, bad for multiplayer."

Naturally. They're not bad for any format.

- "If you can come up with a nifty mousetrap that shows creativity and complexity, that's nothing to be ashamed of."

Uh, right. Was anyone here assuming it was something to be ashamed of?

- "Of course, there's a difference between building decks that can overcome obstacles and pull off a deft feat, and building a deck whose only purpose is to force the entire table to wait for and watch you go through some endless sequence of cardboard gyrations."

I agree. It's called panache, pal. Style. Elan. Verve. *Genius*.

- "You think it's cool to make your buddies wait for you to finish your Ultimate 10-Minute Turn of Amazing Mana Loops?"

Duh.

- "Think again."

What what what???

- “There are too many parallels between arbitrarily large combos and the widely practiced art of sensual self-gratification for anyone to be completely comfortable publicly indulging in the former.”

*Did he just say what I think he just said????*

- “In my experience, the ones who get the most satisfaction out of these boorish decks are the players who have the least to offer the **Magic** community in terms of creativity or passion.”

Is that so? We'll see how passionately creative he finds my 5-part loop of the Alongi-Sized Dunkenator that feeds the Creamed Corn Gyrofuge that drains into the Inverted Wedgie-Mo-Tron, which exits directly into the chamber of the Blackboard Fingerscratcher 5000, whose trap door sits above the Random Odor Generator, which runs right back into the Alongi-Sized Dunkenator.

- “That's one reason why Wizards hasn't made many cards for this particular market segment since Urza's block—they kill sales.”

Now it starts to make sense. I had heard that Anthony had fallen into a coma that caused him to miss the entire *Mirrodin* block, but I thought that was just bad PR.

- “Honestly, how much fun is it playing with someone who kills sales of **Magic**, so they can amaze themselves?”

It's totally fun! Super fun! Extra-duper-frabjous fun! For me. Which is clearly the whole point.

The most egregious part of this whole charade? This was ranked #7 on his list. Dead last! The only proper place for Center of the Universe Awareness is #1!

### III Communication

There was some poor communication between Scott Johns and myself about what this week's theme would be. It went a little something like this...

**Scott:** Write about discard.

**Mark:** Which card?

**Scott:** Discard.

**Mark:** You're not holding a card.

**Scott:** Not a card, discard. It's Discard Week!

**Mark:** Wait—Do you want me to write about cards whose costs or effects cause players to put cards from their hands into their graveyards?

**Scott:** Yeah! Dat's what I been sayin' da whole time!

The most obvious card that combos with discard effects is Megrim. I have mixed feelings about that card. I don't quite know how to describe why; for some reason, Megrim embodies the kind of meanness that I *don't* find fun. What really turned me off to Megrim were the multiplayer decks that were running around in **Magic Online** a year or so ago (and, for all I know, may be there still). You couldn't start a 6-player Free For All game without at least one person running the Wheel and Deal-Megrim-Phyrexian Tyranny-Teferi's Puzzle Box-Howling Mine deck, which would defeat the entire rest of the table simultaneously about 6 turns into the game. Wow. Real big fun. What I couldn't understand is why, once you won a couple of games that way, you would ever need to play that deck again? Those decks were unfun enough to make me take a long hiatus from multiplayer formats in favor of formats like Prismatic, Singleton, and Rainbow Stairwell.

I wish some kind of multiplayer expert would step up and take these people to task for that kind of noninteractive, game-smashing, fun-depriving behavior.

## Head in a Vise

For my initial Discard Week foray, I'm going to get basic. Real basic. The goal of this first deck is to make your opponent discard as many cards as fast as possible, then punish him for having an empty hand. You'd think that Megrim would be good in here. I think it's too slow. I want to pick apart my opponent's hand on the first couple of turns of the game—before Megrim would be able to compound the pain—with Duress, Wrench Mind, Chain of Smog, and even Necrogen Spellbomb. I want to spend turn 3 making my opponent discard something, not playing an enchantment. By turn 4, I want my opponent's hand to already be empty (or close to it), so cards like Skullcage and Lavaborn Muse are more appropriate. Those deal damage based on discard effects that have already happened, not on discard effects that are coming up in the future.



An especially potent combo, as I'm sure everyone knows by now, is to pair Nezumi Shortfang with Stabwhisker the Odious. Those two follow the exact same game plan: the Shortfang causes discards, and Stabwhisker punishes your opponent for having an empty hand. That's why it's so convenient that they share a card.

If you're building a deck like this, there are tons of discard spells to choose from. Distress is quite good. Cabal Therapy is a tournament staple. Ostracize, Blackmail, Addle, Cabal Interrogator, Bog Down, Waking Nightmare... to say nothing of the Specters running around. How do you choose? Step 1: Close eyes. Step 2: Spin around. Step 3: Toss dart. I went with Necrogen Spellbomb because it has two advantages if your deck is stacked with other discard effects. One benefit is that you can essentially cycle it away for another card if you don't need it; the other benefit is that unlike most such effects, you can use it on your opponent's draw step to make him discard a freshly-drawn card. Nezumi Shortfang can do that trick as well. I put the rarely-seen Chain of Smog in here because it's unusual, it's the most efficient 2-cards-for-2-mana discard spell, and you'll be thrilled if your opponent bounces it back to you! You get to pitch two discard spells you won't need later because you're emptying your opponent's hand right now, and chain the spell right back to your opponent. You've just played your next two discard spells for free.

**Main Deck**

60 cards

|                     |                    |                           |
|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 4 Bloodstained Mire | 4 Lavaborn Muse    | 4 Chain of Smog           |
| 2 Mountain          | 4 Nezumi Shortfang | 4 Duress                  |
| 2 Sulfurous Springs | 2 Ravenous Rats    | 2 Geth's Grimoire         |
| 12 Swamp            | _____              | 4 Honden of Night's Reach |
| 4 Tainted Peak      | 10 creatures       | 4 Necrogen Spellbomb      |
| _____               | _____              | 4 Skullcage               |
| 24 lands            | _____              | 4 Wrench Mind             |
| _____               | _____              | _____                     |
| _____               | _____              | 26 other spells           |

Very basic and very annoying. I like it because it contains some cards you don't get to see too often. The Geth's Grimoires might not be optimal in here for the same reason the Megrims wouldn't be; you might want to swap them out for more Ravenous Rats. Or for Megrims.

**The Joint is Jumpin'**

That deck attacked the hand and dealt damage to the head, but that's all it did. It had no way to affect anything that snuck through the discard to make it into play. The next deck takes the opposite tack. I started out by looking for a bizarre, underused card with a discard effect on it. Two captured my attention: Warped Devotion and Hisoka, Minamo Sensei. I tried putting them both in the same deck, but that didn't work out too well. It led to a weird deck evolution: Hisoka wants more card drawing, so Honden of Seeing Winds and Jushi Apprentice stepped in. Warped Devotion wants bounce, so Aether Burst and Recoil ambled on over. I looked at Sunken Hope, but it was no good because of my own creatures. I tried Mana Breach, but it hurt me too often. On the other hand, I didn't have enough creatures to support Equilibrium. With the card drawing and the incentive to avoid playing spells lest Mana Breach breach my mana, Zombie Infestation was the primary victory condition, with Jushi Apprentice as backup. I tested the deck, and Hisoka got cut. Then Mana Breach got cut. The deck was still struggling, though it won some games, and I realized I had committed the worst offense of all—the deck was *boring*. Sure, it was based around Warped Devotion, which is somewhat kooky... but that's just not enough. I started over.

I went back to the plan that I liked: Warped Devotion and Mana Breach. Any time anyone played a spell, they'd have to bounce one of their own lands, then discard a card. The two enchantments combined into a bad Tainted Aether. This time, though, because I was starting from a point without any creatures, Sunken Hope joined the party. Now my imaginary opponent's cards were starting to jump around like fleas. With all three enchantments on the table, playing a creature meant you'd have to bounce a land and discard a card, and then on your next upkeep, you'd have to bounce that creature and discard another card. That's not boring, but it took Storm Cauldron to make things really insane. This ridiculous contraption hits me as badly as it hits my opponent, but once all the pieces are set up, all I have to do is wait.

Right?

Yes, but only if my victory condition is already out. It can't be a creature, obviously. It can be Skullcage again—that plus Honden of Night's Reach puts pressure on my opponent to do something with her spells, which would then push the "on" button of Storm Cauldron, Mana Breach, etc. But the best permanent to add to the mix of crazy zone-changing shenanigans is, of course, Megrim.



## Warped Breach



### Main Deck

60 cards

9 Island  
 2 Polluted Delta  
 4 Salt Marsh  
 5 Swamp  
 4 Underground River

24 lands

0 creatures

2 Aether Spellbomb  
 4 Honden of Night's Reach  
 3 Honden of Seeing Winds  
 4 Mana Breach  
 4 Megrim  
 4 Recoil  
 2 Skullcage  
 2 Storm Cauldron  
 3 Sunken Hope  
 4 Talisman of Dominance  
 4 Warped Devotion

36 other spells

This web is so tangled that sometimes you'll catch yourself in it too. If you can't laugh at the insanity as you're hoisted on your own petard, this isn't the deck for you.

## Roar of Pain

When Scott Johns notified me of Discard Week, he suggested that, being the contrarian goofball that I am (I'm paraphrasing), I might want to explore decks in which *I'm* the one doing the discarding. That seemed cool as kind of a backwards take on the topic. I searched for cards that gave me some sort of bonus when I discarded a card, and found a couple of little-known creatures called Wild Mongrel and Aquamoeba, as well as a silly card disadvantage spell called Careful Study. I supplemented them with cards that don't mind being discarded (Deep Analysis), cards that get better when they're discarded (Wonder, Arrogant Wurm, Basking Rootwalla, Roar of the Wurm), and even cards that like having a full graveyard... *and* get better when they're discarded (Circular Logic). Put them all together, and I had a quirky, original, totally rogue deck that liked it when you made yourself discard cards.

Unbelievable. I've done it again! Who else thinks up goofy stuff like this?

For some reason, that deck didn't pass muster. I don't understand why; I tested it a couple of times and it seemed reasonably competitive. Since I sure as Shinobi wasn't going to make another deck, I poked my head into the ol' mailbag. As luck would have it, Phobeus had sent me a combo deck that set itself up through a lot of self-discarding. Aaahhh. Laziness wins again.



The deck spends its turns playing land, Wrathing away threats, and cycling itself into your graveyard as fast as possible. The primary way to do the latter is with giant Read the Runes. You draw X cards, you discard X cards (or sacrifice some lands or needless permanents). You want to get those cards in the graveyard! Serving as mini-Read the Runes while you're building your X potential are Thirst for Knowledge and Compulsion. More filtering; more self-discard.



What are you building up to? Eventually, you'll have just about all of your library in your graveyard, which is when you play Roar of Reclamation. It will return to play all your Solemn Simulacrums (not that important at this stage), Wayfarer's Baubles (also irrelevant), Lantern of Insight (aha), Psychogenic Probes (oho), and Sculpting Steels, which become either more Lanterns or Probes. Then you sac all your Lanterns to make your opponent shuffle his library numerous times. Each Lantern causes 2 damage from each Probe, meaning the deck can get off a maximum of 60 damage in one shot. To deal just 20 damage, you only need to find the relevant artifacts in a 2/2/3 distribution, and it doesn't matter which one you have 3 of.

Although the goal is to get the Psychogenic Probes into your graveyard to Roar them back out, don't be shy about straight-up playing them. Depending what kind of deck you're playing against, you can get in some early damage via your opponent's Sakura-Tribe Elders or Kodama's Reaches or whatever else. (Just be careful with your own Simulacrums and fetch lands in the meantime.) If your opponent spends mana and a card to get rid of the Probe, great—it winds up in your graveyard, right where you want it.

Once you finally play Roar, how do you decide whether to copy Lantern or Probe with your Sculpting Steels? To maximize the damage, try to wind up with an equal final number of those artifacts. 2 Lanterns/4 Probes deals 16 damage. 4 Lanterns/2 Probes deals 16 damage. But 3 Lanterns/3 Probes deals 18 damage. If you have more Probes than Lanterns, for example, make your first Sculpting Steel a Lantern. If you have the same number of each, then it doesn't matter what the odd one is.

This deck is my version of Phobeus's deck, but the combo and the means to pull it off are his. I just changed some numbers and some support cards. Phobeus noted that Boseiju, Who Shelters All can be a good addition to make sure your key spells (Wrath, Read, Roar) don't get countered. And make no mistake—if you try this deck out, expect to be discarding a lot of cards.

**Main Deck**

60 cards

4 Flooded Strand

10 Island

10 Plains

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24 lands

4 Solemn Simulacrum

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4 creatures

2 Akroma's Vengeance

1 Compulsion

2 Final Judgment

4 Lantern of Insight

4 Psychogenic Probe

4 Read the Runes

2 Roar of Reclamation

3 Sculpting Steel

4 Thirst for Knowledge

2 Wayfarer's Bauble

4 Wrath of God

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32 other spells

Until next week, have fun with discard.

Mark

