

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns

# Orzhov Visions

*Bennie Smith*  
*Into the Aether*  
 Thursday, March 30, 2006



In honor of Orzhov Week and the fact that *Visions* is going to be released on *Magic Online* very very soon (tune in next week for details!), I thought I'd take a peek at *Visions* through a lens Dark and Light.

## VISIONS BLACK

**Rares** - *Aku Djinn*, *Forbidden Ritual*, *Kaervek's Spite*, *Necrosavant*, *Pillar Tombs of Aku*, *Vampiric Tutor*

*Vampiric Tutor* obviously jumps out of this list as one of the best Tutor cards ever printed; its instant speed and cheap cost can arguably make the case for it surpassing the original classic *Demonic Tutor*. *Mirage* had *Enlightened Tutor*, *Mystical Tutor*, and *Worldly Tutor*; after *Visions* and *Vampiric Tutor*, speculation was high about what the Red tutor card would be like in *Weatherlight*. Would it fetch only lands? Maybe it would be like *Vampiric*, but at sorcery speed. Of course, the joke was that the Red tutor randomly decided not to show up... until *Gamble* in *Urza's Saga* years later. *Gamble* did turn out to be the perfect Red Tutor card.

For long-time players who devoured tournament reports on Usenet and The Magic Dojo, another card on the list stands out. Ah, *Kaervek's Spite*! Mike Flores' old crew Team Discovery Channel coined a funny little catchphrase for this highly risky card that quickly caught on as **Magic lingo** (as did so many other things from Flores and Company). From [The Tao of TDC](#), a very funny read by Charles "Tuna" Hwa that might be a bit dated, but is bound to elicit chuckles from old-timers:

1) You are at 4 life, your opponent is at 5. You are playing a monoblack deck, while you opponent is playing PT jank. Even though you know your deck is superior to his, since black is, well, strictly better than white, you have no cards in hand, while your opponent has 2 *White Knights*. You draw *Demonic Consultation*, but have only 10 cards left in your library. Knowing you cannot drain for more than 4, You:

- a) Consult for one of your four *Steel Golem's* you have left to draw.
- b) Consult for one of your four *Drain Life's* anyways to stay alive.
- c) Consult for your one *Kaervek's Spite*.
- d) Consult for your one *Kaervek's Spite* while chanting "Spring forth, my *Burly Protector*, and save me!"



The answer, of course, is d. Now, MTGO players will be able to get their hands on their own *Burly Protector*, going all in for that instant-speed five points of damage! What more could you possibly need?

Another old favorite is *Necrosavant*, who has quietly undergone a metamorphosis recently, changing from *Summon Necrosavant* to *Creature — Zombie Giant*. I suppose being the only *Necrosavant* in existence (other than *Mistform Ultimius*) was a little bit lonely, even for a dead guy. *Visions* will be legal for Tribal Wars, and *Zombies* aren't a bad little tribe to join.

**Uncommons** - *Blanket of Night*, *Brood of Cockroaches*, *Crypt Rats*, *Desolation*, *Necromancy*, *Nekrataal*, *Suq'Ata Assassin*, *Vampirism*

Two of the best cards here, *Nekrataal* and *Crypt Rats*, have already seen play on MTGO for those who want 'em, but it will be nice to have the original black-bordered versions available. *Desolation* is a nasty bit of disruption that can complement a beatdown strategy, and *Suq'Ata Assassin* gives poison aficionados another weapon, this time with Fear. Accumulate those poison counters, sir!

*Necromancy* is a fun and flexible reanimator card that also happens to combo with *Worldgorger Dragon* to give you infinite mana. You have been warned!

One thing I stumbled across when checking *Necromancy* on Gatherer is something called *substance*. Have you ever heard of it? Neither had I. Here's what it said (with italics added by me):

**Rules Text (Oracle):** You may play *Necromancy* any time you could play an instant. If it was played any time a sorcery couldn't have been played, it gains *substance* until end of turn and when it loses *substance*, sacrifice it.

**PRODUCTS**

*Planar Chaos*     *Time Spiral*  
 All Magic products

**RULES**

*Core Game*  
 Basic Rulebook  
 Comprehensive Rules  
 All Magic Rules

**MESSAGE BOARDS**

All Magic message boards  
 magicthegathering.com forum  
 Rules Q&A forum  
*Magic Online* announcements

**MAGIC ONLINE**

Download Now!  
*Magic Online Academy*  
*Magic Online* FAQ

**NOVELS**

*Time Spiral*  
*Time Spiral Cycle*, Book 1  
 by Scott McGough

When Necromancy comes into play, if it's in play, it becomes an Aura with enchant creature. Put target creature card from a graveyard into play under your control and attach Necromancy to it.

When Necromancy leaves play, destroy enchanted creature. It can't be regenerated.

Substance appears to be a property exclusive to the *Mirage/Visions* "instantments," enchantments that can be played at instant-speed but end up being sacrificed at the end of the turn if you do so. The [Comprehensive Rulebook](#) mentions Substance twice:

502.49. Substance  
502.49a Substance is a static ability with no effect.

Substance  
Substance is a static ability with no effect. Certain older cards have received errata that give them substance for a brief period of time.



Weird, huh? Brings to mind The Bard, William Shakespeare who said, "The very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream."

**Commons** – *Coercion, Dark Privilege, Death Watch, Fallen Askari, Funeral Charm, Infernal Harvest, Python, Tar Pit Warrior, Urborg Mindsucker, Wake of Vultures, Wicked Reward*

*Fallen Askari* saw some play in beatdown decks, and *Funeral Charm* is a great little package of options: weenie creature-kill, boost your larger creature's power or let him swampwalk in, or take advantage of the very rare instant-speed discard spell. I remember getting a lot of mileage from *Funeral Charm* in an old Extended *Pox* deck that fought the *High Tide* menace back in 1999:

Pox		
60 cards		
14 Swamp	1 Steel Golem	4 Dark Ritual
4 Wasteland		4 Pox
4 Mishra's Factory	1 creature	4 Duress
22 land		4 Hymn to Tourach
		4 Funeral Charm
		4 The Rack
		4 Cursed Scroll
		3 Yawgmoth's Will
		4 Urza's Bauble
		2 Demonic Consultation
		37 other spells

*Funeral Charm* could squeak in two extra points of damage on the back of *Mishra's Factory* or *Steel Golem*, or another point under *The Rack*, and then wait around for reuse under *Yawgmoth's Will*.

## VISIONS WHITE

**Rares** – *Archangel, Equipoise, Eye of Singularity, Retribution of the Meek, Tithe, Zhalfirin Crusader*

With the printing of *Visions*, much of Randy Buehler's [Sandsipoise](#) deck is now legal, with all its oddball *Equipoise* action. I posted a decklist last time but neglected to include the lands... hm, perhaps they were phased out? Here's the list again with the lands included.

Sandsipoise by Randy Buehler		
60 cards		
3 Lotus Vale	2 Sage Owl	4 Impulse
4 Gemstone Mine		2 Disrupt
4 Undiscovered Paradise	2 creatures	4 Dark Ritual
4 Crystal Vein		4 Vampiric Tutor
3 Swamp		2 Desolation
3 Plains		4 Equipoise
2 Island		2 Mangara's Blessing
23 land		1 Gerrard's Wisdom
		4 Enlightened Tutor

4 Sands of Time  
 2 Misers' Cage  
 2 Wand of Denial

35 other spells

**Tithe** is an incredible powerhouse card that saw a ton of play in formats where dual lands were legal, fetching two for one card advantage and enabling White/X color combinations, all at instant speed. **Tithe** gets a shot in the arm with *Ravnica* - not only are there new duals now that count as Plains (**Temple Garden**, **Sacred Foundry**, **Godless Shrine**), but the "Karoo" lands also help get your land count down in order to maximize **Tithe's** Plains-tutoring power. **Tithe** played an important role in "Pro Tour Jank" or "Richmond Gun" decks that employed a strategy way back in the day reminiscent of modern day Boros. Check out this old chestnut:

White Weenie Tithe by Olle Rade		
Pro Tour-Rome 1998 Top 8		
<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards		<b>Sideboard</b>
2 City of Brass	4 Mox Diamond	4 Warmth
4 Wasteland	1 Armageddon	2 Red Elemental Blast
4 Plateau	2 Swords to Plowshares	2 Pyroblast
7 Plains	4 Tithe	1 Disenchant
2 Gemstone Mine	4 Aura of Silence	1 Suleiman's Legacy
2 Kjeldoran Outpost	4 Lightning Bolt	2 Karma
21 land	3 Cursed Scroll	1 Swords to Plowshares
	22 other spells	2 Serrated Arrows
3 Paladin en-Vec		15 sideboard cards
4 White Knight		
4 Jackal Pup		
4 Savannah Lions		
2 Soltari Priest		
17 creatures		

**Uncommon** - *Daraja Griffin, Honorable Passage, Longbow Archer, Miraculous Recovery, Peace Talks, Relic Ward, Teferi's Honor Guard*

**Honorable Passage** was a potent weapon to fight against the Fireblast scourge; your opponent just sacrificed two of his Mountains to hit himself in the face for 4, ouch! **Longbow Archer** often played as Knight #5-8 in decks looking to take advantage of the first strike ability, and the Archer was particularly helpful in controlling pesky **Frenetic Efreet**s.

**Commons** - *Freewind Falcon, Gossamer Chains, Hope Charm, Infantry Veteran, Jamuraan Lion, Knight of Valor, Parapet, Remedy, Resistance Fighter, Righteous Aura, Sun Clasp, Warrior's Honor*

When I first started getting the competitive itch to play outside of my multiplayer circle, I started running a mono-Red deck very similar to the Sligh/Geeba decks that had been popular on Usenet. **Freewind Falcon** was my own personal nightmare, especially after **Empyrial Armor** came out in *Weatherlight*. Turn 2 Falcon stopped whatever early offense I had, and then turn 3 Armor suddenly put my on a much faster clock than anything I could muster. **Remedy** was also a nice trick that can turn combat math around in your favor, or save you from a deadly alpha strike.



## VISIONS WHITE/BLACK

### *Righteous War*

As luck would have it for Orzhov Week, *Visions* features one Black and White card in the set and it is appropriately named, don't you think? When Orzhov fights Orzhov, the side that fights with **Righteous War** is going to come out on top!

## Ravnica Block Constructed 4x Open (715154) Recap

Saturday, March 25 2006

100 players mustered out for the event that was both a 4x payout and a qualifying tournament for the E3 Championship this weekend. The unholy alliance of Golgari and Orzhov seems to hold sway over the format currently, with powerful early removal spells ramping up to late game powerhouses like **Skeletal Vampire**, **Angel of Despair** and **Debtors' Knell**. Cephalid\_PL's aggro deck had some success pushing through enough damage to win before control's inevitability set in, using efficient damage dealers from the Gruul and Boros guilds.

way2Sleazy4u went for a more focused Orzhov strategy, utilizing Teysa, Dark Confidant, Skeletal Vampires and the slow drain of Orzhova. AlexH and zyklone went nuts with the mana fixing, utilizing cards like Farseek and Civic Wayfinder to assemble four-color behemoths of good cards like Firemane Angels, Loxodon Hierarchs, and Ribbons of Night. AnssiA's deck had similar elements to the G/B/W control decks, but ran Vinelasher Kudzu for some early beatdown.

Here were the final standings:

1st Place: Kirushi, G/B/W Control  
 2nd Place: Zom, G/B/W Control  
 4th Place: Cephalid\_PL, Gruul Zoo  
 4th Place: ubermike, G/B/W Control  
 8th Place: way2Sleazy4u, B/W Orzhov  
 8th Place: AlexH, 4cGoodstuff (no blue)  
 8th Place: zyklone, 4cGoodstuff (no red)  
 8th Place: AnssiA, G/B/W Aggro Control

The top four players were willing to share their decks and thoughts on the *Ravnica* metagame. The winning deck was the same as one of the 4th place decks.

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Forest	2 Congregation at Dawn	2 Culling Sun
4 Godless Shrine	4 Farseek	3 Debtors' Knell
4 Overgrown Tomb	3 Ghostway	2 Hex
3 Plains	4 Golgari Signet	3 Leyline of Lifeforce
3 Swamp	4 Mortify	1 Orzhov Pontiff
4 Temple Garden	4 Rolling Spoil	3 Seize the Soul
22 land	21 other spells	1 Trophy Hunter
4 Angel of Despair		15 sideboard cards
4 Carven Caryatid		
1 Helldozer		
4 Loxodon Hierarch		
4 Skeletal Vampire		
17 creatures		

Kirushi:

"When we started testing Ravnica block after Guildpact was released, it became clear that the format, at least for now, could be split up into G/W/B control decks and decks that lose to G/W/B control decks. Knowing this, I built the deck with the intention of focusing on the mirror as much as possible.

"The mirror match, generally speaking, is won by the player who gets to seven mana and starts casting Angel of Despair first, but when it comes down to it, it's really more who gets to four mana and starts casting Rolling Spoil first, as they're going to get to seven first too. As a result, we played a full 4 Golgari Signets on top of 4 Farseek to power out Rolling Spoil, the card that really defines the format being a strong weapon against both control and aggro. Also, we played Congregation at Dawn to line up the Angels when you reach seven mana. Finally for some protection against removal, along with a great way to end a board stalemate, we played a few copies of Ghostway to go along with all the comes into play effects.

"Between myself and clanmate ubermike who played the same maindeck, the deck was 14-3-1 in matches.

"The name Got Rice comes from a spoof song that circulated on the internet several years ago. For MTGO, my clan uses the more family friendly name Got Rice Barn, and Bat seemed to fit naturally. If that's inappropriate you can just call it Ghostway.dec or Ghostway Despair Control or something.

"Since Ravnica Block Constructed isn't used in tournaments in the paper Magic world (and therefore there is less strategy writing and netdecks), you see a lot of different decks from people just trying things out like Storm Herd or Savra or Mindmoil with Niv-Mizzet. The dominant archetype so far is GWB Angel of Despair-based control with many different variations sometimes including Red for Firemane Angel, or splashing for the Blue costs in Dimir Guildmage or Ribbons of Night. Right now



it seems like the aggressive decks are still finding out what colors they want to be, and how to deal with the **Rolling Spoil**, **Seize the Soul**, **Culling Sun**, **Mortify**, **Putrefy** and **Skeletal Vampires** being constantly thrown at them along with several good life gain cards. I'm sure no matter what colors the best aggro deck ends up playing, it will play **Dark Confidant** and it probably won't play **Rumbling Slum**."

Mike Laviolette (ubermike) had this to add:


"My team knows for a fact that hitting four mana (for **Rolling Spoil**) and seven mana (for **Angel of Despair**) quickly is the key to winning, hence the mad acceleration. The Caryatids work amazingly with **Ghostway** and they also buy me time vs. aggro decks, and **Mortify** is a very flexible removal spell.

"**Ghostway** is the heart of the deck, swinging stalemates dramatically in my favor. In round 4 I cast a **Ghostway** with 2 Caryatids and 3 Angels in play with damage on the stack, saving them all and then End of Turn draw two cards and destroying three permanents, for just three mana...ouch!

"**Congregation at Dawn** is another big game winner, setting up turn after turn of Angels or Hierarchs, or fetching the **Helldozer**.

"In the sideboard, the **Trophy Hunter** as a Congregation target used vs. birds/bats has come in handy a few times.

"Kirushi and myself decided to invest in RBC right after it came out and together we built a Glare deck splashing Black. After that it was all uphill! Every time one of us won a Premier Event, we would change decks to beat the metagame we helped set. Right now, there is a whole lot of Black/White/Green control, with a tiny bit of aggro mixed in."

G/B/W Control (Ravnica Block Constructed) by Zom		
<b>Main Deck</b> 61 cards		<b>Sideboard</b>
5 Forest	2 Congregation at Dawn	1 Carven Caryatid
3 Godless Shrine	2 Debtors' Knell	3 Castigate
1 Golgari Rot Farm	4 Farseek	4 Giant Solifuge
2 Orzhov Basilica	4 Mortify	2 Last Gasp
4 Overgrown Tomb	4 Putrefy	1 Nightmare Void
2 Plains	4 Rolling Spoil	2 Primeval Light
1 Selesnya Sanctuary	20 other spells	2 Privileged Position
3 Swamp		15 sideboard cards
3 Temple Garden		
24 land		
2 Angel of Despair		
3 Carven Caryatid		
4 Civic Wayfinder		
1 Grave-Shell Scarab		
4 Loxodon Hierarch		
3 Skeletal Vampire		
17 creatures		

Pierre-Jérôme Meurisse (Zom) said:

"I will be adding another **Angel of Despair**, **Temple Garden** and **Godless Shrine** in future builds, I didn't have them when the tournament started. For the sideboard I never used the 2 **Primeval Light** so I need to figure out what to replace them with."

Grουλ Zoo (Ravnica Block Constructed) by Cephalid_PL		
<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards		<b>Sideboard</b>
5 Forest	4 Char	3 Loxodon Hierarch
5 Mountain	4 Lightning Helix	2 Parallelectric Feedback
4 Sacred Foundry	3 Moldervine Cloak	2 Rumbling Slum
4 Stomping Ground	11 other spells	4 Sunforger
4 Temple Garden		4 Tin Street Hooligan
22 land		15 sideboard cards
4 Burning-Tree Shaman		
4 Dryad Sophisticate		
4 Frenzied Goblin		
4 Giant Solifuge		

2 Rumbling Slum  
 2 Scab-Clan Mauler  
 3 Scorched Rusalka  
 4 Watchwolf

27 creatures

Jakub Wudarski (Cephalid\_PL) said:

"It is not a secret that the most popular archetype in this block is G/B/W control with all its variations; other decks seem marginal. Trying to build a deck to beat G/B/W control is difficult, with the Caryatids, Hierarchs and **Angel of Despair** just being tough to break through. Our deck must beat the clock and finish the opponent before that Angel hits the table. Still, the format is very interesting and is still not stabilized, because we still have three more guilds to add to the mix. For me it is good fun so far."

## Tribal Wars 4x Open (706922) Recap

Sunday, March 26 2006

90 players came out for this event that was also both a 4x payout and a qualifying tournament for the E3 Championship this weekend. The old standard powerhouse, **Tooth and Nail**, continues to dominate in the hands of the Shaman tribe, but it was the Human tribe's **Auriok Salvagers** combo deck that took the brass ring, turbo-charged by **Mirage's Lion's Eye Diamond**. I'm not sure what Geoster's Human deck was trying to accomplish, I saw **Disciple of the Vault**, **Dark Confidant**, **Sensei's Divining Top** and **Aether Spellbomb**. It may have included the Salvagers combo too and used Disciples as "burn." Knights, Goblins and Clerics rounded out the rest of the Top 8.

Here were the final standings:

1st Place: Brusher, Human Salvager Combo

2nd Place: tankong, Shaman Tooth and Nail

4th Place: yorick, Knights

4th Place: Monbailly Olivier, Shaman Tooth and Nail

8th Place: Gula, Shaman Tooth and Nail

8th Place: tcarmody, Goblins

8th Place: Yeufann, Clerics

8th Place: Geoster, Humans (artifacts)

### Salvagers Combo (Tribal Wars - Humans) by Brusher

60 cards

4 Flooded Strand 1 Forest 1 Godless Shrine 1 Island 1 Overgrown Tomb 1 Plains 2 Polluted Delta 1 Sacred Foundry 1 Swamp 2 Temple Garden 1 Watery Grave 2 Windswept Heath 18 land	4 Auriok Salvagers 4 Dark Confidant 4 Disciple of the Vault 4 Thought Courier 4 Trinket Mage 20 creatures	4 Chromatic Sphere 4 Chrome Mox 4 Dark Ritual 4 Eladamri's Call 2 Lion's Eye Diamond 1 Pyrite Spellbomb 3 Worldly Tutor 22 other spells
--	--	--

### 3cWhite Weenie (Tribal Wars - Knights) by yorick

60 cards

1 Adarkar Wastes 4 Battlefield Forge 4 Flooded Strand 1 Mountain 5 Plains 4 Sacred Foundry 1 Steam Vents 3 Wooded Foothills 23 land	2 Exalted Angel 4 Galina's Knight 4 Leonin Skyhunter 4 Paladin en-Vec 4 Silver Knight 4 White Knight 22 creatures	1 Disenchant 1 Dismantling Blow 2 Earthquake 2 Glorious Anthem 3 Incinerate 4 Lightning Helix 2 Orim's Thunder 15 other spells
---	---	---

Mon Lee (yorick) had this to say:

“The deck is a straight forward White Weenie deck backed by burn to clear a path and finish the game. Efficient creatures and cheap burn have a good history. I had played knights in the first 4x tribal event and had some minor success. A few tweaks and some changes to the creature base got it to the current form. **Earthquake** is fantastic when almost all my creatures have protection from red or have flying. The current batch of top decks would either be one combo (Salvagers) or the other combo (**Tooth and Nail**) deck.”

Thanks to all of you who were willing to share your decklists. Check back next week as we give you information on the *Visions* Release Events!

*Bennie Smith has been playing **Magic** since Arabian Nights, and writing about it nearly as long. Several of his early musings appeared on the Magic Dojo, and from there he became a featured writer for Star City Games and a Contributing Editor for Scrye Magazine before he started writing for **magicthegathering.com**. While a casual gamer at heart, Bennie also thoroughly enjoys the competitive side of **Magic** and won the Virginia State Championship in 1999.*



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Bennie Smith](#) archive

---

[About Us](#) | [Jobs](#) | [New to the Game?](#) | [Inside Wizards](#) | [Find a Store](#) | [Press](#) | [Help](#) | [Sitemap](#)

---

© 1995-2006 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.  
[Terms of Use](#) - [Privacy Statement](#)

