

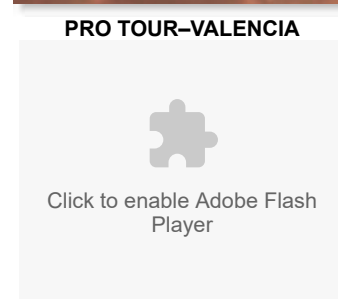
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Living a Double Life (Part 1 of 2)

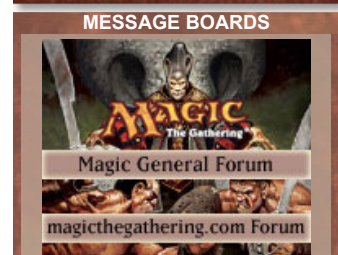
Ben Bleiweiss
Building on a Budget
Monday, September 18, 2006



Greetings hew-mans. I am BoaB, former robotic slave of the writer of this silly "Building on a Budget" column. Week in and week out, my former master and wage-slave brings you decks that cost thirty tickets or less to build on Magic Online. I am here to expose his darkest secrets. Using my newly-built platinum turbo-jet-booster rocket thrusters, I stole into his house in the middle of the night, and found a relic of his past – his Standard deck, circa the release of *Betrayers of Kamigawa*.



Update on Rain Delay



BoaB		dec
	Main Deck 60 cards	Sideboard
1 Mountain	3 Beacon of Immortality	1 Cranial Extraction
16 Plains	3 Cranial Extraction	3 Eradicate
6 Swamp	2 Goblin Charbelcher	3 Hideous Laughter
23 lands	3 Journeyer's Kite	3 Rend Flesh
	4 Pulse of the Fields	2 Shining Shoal
	4 Sensei's Divining Top	2 Terashi's Grasp
3 Pristine Angel	2 Shining Shoal	1 Terror
3 creatures	2 Terashi's Grasp	15 sideboard cards
	3 Terror	
	4 Wayfarer's Bauble	
	4 Wrath of God	
	34 other spells	

Does this look budget to you? I count twenty-four rares, most of which cost the same as recharging my diamond-encrusted batteries. One *Wrath of God* sells for ten to twelve tickets. Hew-mans, bow now before your new idol. BoaB has spoken!

Yes, yes, it's true. I confess – every now and then I feel the urge to pick up a deck that might not be anywhere near the definition of budget. This particular deck was one that I did indeed play at several Friday Night Magic events at the StarCityGames.com store, back when Standard ran from *Mirrodin* through *Betrayers of Kamigawa*. It wasn't the most competitive Standard deck, but it was a lot of fun to play.

Here's the 411 – the goal of the deck is to pad your life total by using *Pulse of the Fields* and *Beacon of Immortality*. *Pristine Angel* plays both offense and defense – it is capable of stopping most creatures that were Standard legal at the time. *Journeyer's Kite* acts as a mana-fixer, a card-drawing mechanism, a shuffling mechanism for *Sensei's Divining Top*, and a way to thin lands out of the deck for *Goblin Charbelcher*. *Wayfarer's Bauble* provides early acceleration and late shuffling/deck thinning. The control suite of *Wrath of God*, *Terror*, *Shining Shoal* and *Goblin Charbelcher* take out creatures on the board, while *Cranial Extraction* takes out threats from your opponent's deck (this deck hated facing Hokori!). The win conditions? They number three:

1. Kill the opponent with *Pristine Angel*.
2. Thin the deck of lands, and kill your opponent in one-two activations of *Goblin Charbelcher*.
3. Deck the opponent by casting *Beacon of Immortality* over and over and over again.

It was not uncommon for me to reach a life total in the millions with this deck. I would often reach a board position where I had two *Journeyer's Kites* and a *Sensei's Divining Top* on the board, and would be able to see nine

possible cards a turn with the Top – allowing me to easily dig for one of the three Beacons every turn of the game.

There's one problem with using this deck as the focus of a budget deck build – there is no way that this deck fits any definition of budget, as-is. I checked, and the total price of building the original version of this deck clocks in at well over one-hundred tickets. Given that the absolute limit for the decks in this column is thirty tickets, heavy modification needs to be made to get the deck to work as a budget build.

Which, as you may have guessed, I'm totally up for trying to do.

The part of this deck that I found the most fun was casting **Beacon of Immortality** over and over again. The second most fun aspect of the deck was activating **Goblin Charbelcher** to do over twenty points of damage in one shot. If you reveal no lands on a Charbelcher activation, you do damage equal to the total number of cards in your deck – plus, if your opponent somehow survives, you get to reorder the cards in your library in any manner you wish! Those were the two key points I wanted to keep in the deck. That means any other high-dollar cards which don't further these goals are outta here!

Wrath of God? Sheeyah, right!

Cranial Extraction? See ya! Wouldn't want to be ya!

Shining Shoal? Sorry man, you're a-goin' back to Ghost Dad.

Pristine Angel? Giggled by the **Royal Assassin** when she tapped to attack.

What's this leave? A core of a deck, built around **Pulse of the Fields** (2 tickets each), **Beacon of Immortality** (5 tickets each), **Goblin Charbelcher** (2 tickets a piece), **Journeyer's Kite** (two for 1 ticket), **Sensei's Divining Top** (1 ticket each), and a bunch of commons. In order for the deck not to just roll over and die, I need to add a lot of control elements – but they can't be too pricy, because the deck is already getting close to the 30 ticket mark.

My replacement for **Pristine Angel** is **Descendant of Kiyomaro**. The Descendant works as a third way to gain life, and will often be 3/5 due to the card-conservation elements in the deck. **Pulse of the Fields** often will stay in my hand even after being cast, and **Journeyer's Kite** allows me to get ahead of my opponent on hand-count. It can block most creatures, and it can swing for a hefty three a turn – not bad for a three mana investment. (1 ticket each).

Instead of **Cranial Extraction** (which affects the hand, deck and library), I opted to go for some efficient hand-destruction spells. Often times getting rid of a threat proactively is better than having to deal with a problem reactively. Since this deck would now be fit for Extended instead of Standard, I have access to **Duress**, which is one of the most efficient discard spells ever printed. To complement **Duress**, I also added in **Castigates** – there are some cards I just want to see completely gone from the match. (**Duress**: two for 1 ticket).

Too much bling

I had several budget choices for replacements for **Wrath of God**, including **Kirtar's Wrath** (3 tickets each), **Final Judgment** (2 tickets each), and **Myojin of Cleansing Fire** (two for 1 ticket). However, I decided in the end to expand the count of Mountains and Swamps in the deck, and decrease the number of Plains. This gave me access to smaller-scale mass-removal, such as **Pyroclasm** and **Infest**. In the end, I went with the old standby of **Pyroclasm**, as it takes only a single Red mana in its mana cost (as opposed to two Black for **Infest** or **Hideous Laughter**). (**Pyroclasm**: Two for 1 ticket.)

The last additions were the mana-fixer **Coldsteel Heart** (four for 1 ticket) and a new kill condition – **Rain of Gore**. Unfortunately, I didn't closely read **Rain of Gore** closely, and assumed it worked just like **False Cure**.



See the difference? **False Cure** affects all life gained over the course of a turn, whereas **Rain of Gore** only affects life gained by *sources you control*. This is key here, because the intent of this build was to set up a win condition of **Beacon of Immortality** and **Rain of Gore**. I won't get into all of the technical mumbo-jumbo, but in short, if you

cast **False Cure** and follow it up with a **Beacon of Immortality**, the net result is your opponent losing life equal to their life total – i.e., instant death. Not so with **Rain of Gore**, as I found out in...

Game 1: Ksnethen (**Eternal Dominion**)

Okay, just a warning about my deck – if it wins, it takes a loooong time to play. This is not a deck to pick up if you want to duel and run. I'm not talking ten minute games – I'm talking games that regularly run 30-50 minutes *each*. This was one such game.

Ksnethen was playing an **Eternal Dominion** deck, with **Ghost-Lit Raiders** and **Ghost-Lit Warders** to use as pseudo-spells once the Epic ability was in play. I manage to take out a couple of his Dominions with discard spells before he hits ten mana, but he eventually draws a third late-game and begins yanking **Sensei's Divining Tops** and **Descendant of Kiyomaro** out of my deck.

I have a good life cushion, but Ksnethen counters one of my **Beacon of Immortalities**, and leaves me with only one left in my deck. Slowly, his Descendants begin chipping away at my life total. We reach a game position as follows:

Rain of Gore is on the board. I've **Duressed** Ksnethen and seen his hand – two each of his **Ghost-Lit** creatures. I'm at two life, and he has two **Descendant of Kiyomaro** on the board. I have **Beacon of Immortality** in my hand, and I've just gotten enough mana in play to cast **Beacon of Immortality**, plus pay eight life for his two **Ghost-Lit Warders**.

We go through the motions, and I end up targeting him with my last **Beacon**. He says gg...and then gains twelve life. It's at this point that both he and I realize that **Rain of Gore** only worries about sources of lifegain *you* control, and so my **Beacon** (which targets him) is worthless as a kill condition.

And that, my friends, was a forty-minute lesson.

Record: 0-1

I swap out **Rain of Gore** for **Goblin Charbelcher** as the kill condition, which leaves the deck looking as follows:

Double Life 2		Main Deck 60 cards	
4 Mountain	4 Descendant of Kiyomaro	2 Beacon of Immortality	
14 Plains	4 creatures	3 Castigate	
6 Swamp		4 Duress	
24 lands		1 Goblin Charbelcher	
		3 Journeyer's Kite	
		3 Pulse of the Fields	
		4 Pyroclasm	
		4 Sensei's Divining Top	
		4 Wayfarer's Bauble	
		4 Coldsteel Heart	
		32 other spells	

The only change between Double Life 1 and Double Life 2 was swapping a single **Rain of Gore** for a single **Goblin Charbelcher**. The cost of this deck? Exactly thirty tickets – the first time I've come even close to the upper-limit of a budget deck in this column. The balancing act here is finding how to swap in and out cards as-needed without going over budget.

Game 2: Sirrpriz (**Sunburst Control**)

This game also went on for over thirty minutes. Sirrpriz was playing a Sunburst deck, complete with **Clearwater Goblet**, **Planar Portal**, **Energy Chamber**, and other nastiness. I get to a quick 1000 life, but Sirrpriz drops **Darksteel Forge**, and then follows it with two **Doubling Seasons**. **Nuisance Engine** follows, and I end up facing down the following scenario:

- Sirrpriz is gaining ten life a turn from his two **Clearwater Goblets**.
- He can create four tokens a turn using **Nuisance Engine**.
- **Energy Chamber** gives any one of those tokens +4/+4, and he's got two **Energy Chambers** in play.
- **Darksteel Forge** makes all of his guys indestructible.
- If he really wanted, he could get those **Clearwater Goblets** up to +4 counters a turn as well.

Goblin Charbelcher can't deliver a kill at this point, especially since he can tutor up any answer he needs for it with his active **Planar Portal** each turn. Even though I have over 1,000 life, it is inevitable that at some point, Sirrpriz will win the game with a horde of 4/5 Pest tokens. Since this game has already gone on for half-an-hour, I concede.

Record: 0-2



For the third version, I add in a couple of more win conditions (**False Cure** and **Storm Herd** – each 1/2 a ticket each) and take out a copy of **Descendant of Kiyomaro** and **Coldsteel Heart**. One bystander watching the second game suggested **Storm Herd**, and I figured “why not?” It'd be fun to create 1,000+ Pegasus tokens.

Double Life 3			F.dec 
Main Deck 60 cards			
4 Mountain	3 Descendant of Kiyomaro	2 Beacon of Immortality	
14 Plains	3 creatures	3 Castigate	
6 Swamp		4 Duress	
24 lands		1 False Cure	
		1 Goblin Charbelcher	
		3 Journeyer's Kite	
		3 Pulse of the Fields	
		4 Pyroclasm	
		4 Sensei's Divining Top	
		1 Storm Herd	
		4 Wayfarer's Bauble	
		3 Coldsteel Heart	
		33 other spells	

Game 3: TopdeckDan (**Temporal Adept/Chittering Rats/Agonizing Memories** deck)

Another long game. TopdeckDan is playing an interesting deck based upon putting cards back into your hand, and then returning them to the top of your deck via **Agonizing Memories** and **Chittering Rats**. I know the best way to play against these decks – hold nothing back, and play every card as you draw them. Unfortunately, I get to nine mana, and then draw **Storm Herd**. This allows TopdeckDan to put **Storm Herd** back on top of my deck for five consecutive turns – including him bouncing a land with **Boomerang** twice, and then hitting me with **Agonizing Memories**. I end the game locked underneath **Temporal Adept**, with a pair of **Chittering Rats** pounding on my bloated corpse.

Record: 0-3



It's time to address the reasons I've lost. With **Journeyer's Kite** and **Sensei's Divining Top**, I can run cards as one-of and two-of that normally would require three-to-four-of, because I will be able to see a lot of cards over the course of a game. I want to be able to recycle some of these spells, so I need a way to recur my graveyard into my library. I decide on **Reito Lantern** as the card to fill this slot (Cost: 0 – you can get these thrown in with any uncommon lots that you buy 12-36 for a ticket).

In addition, I am vulnerable to spells. I don't have any countermagic, so once someone casts an instant, sorcery, or permanent, I am at their mercy. For instance, once **Darksteel Forge** hit the board, that was it for me – I couldn't **Pyroclasm** away anything for the rest of the game.

What's more proactive than discard? How about removing cards from your opponent's library entirely! Enter **Hide // Seek**. **Seek** lets me remove threats before they hit (and works like **Cranial Extraction** did in the original, non-budget build), plus **Hide** allows me to have a functional **Naturalize/Disenchant** in my main deck. (Two for 3 tickets).

Since the cost of my deck has increased by six tickets, I need to take six tickets worth of cards out. I lost one **Pulse of the Fields** (2 tickets), the four **Castigates** (.5 tickets), and the **Goblin Charbelcher** (2 tickets). I add back in the one **Coldsteel Heart** I took out last build, as it won't push me over thirty tickets.

Double Life 4			F.dec 
Main Deck 60 cards			
4 Mountain	3 Descendant of Kiyomaro	2 Beacon of Immortality	
14 Plains	3 creatures	4 Duress	
6 Swamp		1 False Cure	
24 lands		3 Journeyer's Kite	
		2 Pulse of the Fields	
		4 Pyroclasm	
		2 Reito Lantern	
		4 Sensei's Divining Top	
		4 Wayfarer's Bauble	
		4 Coldsteel Heart	
		3 Hide // Seek	
		33 other spells	

Game 4: Dexeo (Evolution Vat/Triskelion)

Another long game, and one in which Dexeo gets down **Evolution Vat** and **Triskelion**, with plenty of **Golgari Rot Farms** and **Islands** with which to pump **Triskelion** to absurd heights. I survive the first assault by drawing **Hide // Seek** at twenty-one life, while his **Triskelion** has twenty counters (thanks **Pulse of the Fields!**), but I die to the second **Triskelion** he draws.

Record: 0-4

Game 5: Beertime (Rites of Initiation/Firecat Blitz)

I cast first turn **Sensei's Divining Top**, second turn **Journeyer's Kite**, and swing on turn four for two. On Beertime's fifth turn, he taps five Red into his mana pool, casts **Firecat Blitz** for zero, Flashes it back for five, and then casts **Rites of Initiation** for three. He discards three cards to make his five guys into 4/1 haste creatures, and kills me in a single blow.

Record: 0-5

Game 6-8: jol64 (145 card Elves deck)

Jol64 is running a 145 card Elf/Beast hybrid deck, built around **Wirewood Savage**, **Totem Speaker**, **Wellwisher**, and **Well of Knowledge**. Long story short, I only win one of three games, as I don't have nearly enough removal to handle a quick rush of creatures.

Record: 1-7

This is, by far, the worst finish I've ever posted with a deck for this column. That does not mean, though, that this deck is done and discarded – I've broken one of my own cardinal rules:

Rule #3: [Focus your goals, but don't be a slave to your theme](#)

Man, when I took a step back and looked at my deck, my goals were anything but focused. I want my win to be **Beacon of Immortality** plus **False Cure**, but I've strayed far from the path. Come back next week, as I deconstruct exactly what went wrong with **Double Life**, and reconstruct it from the ground up.

*Ben Bleiweiss has written about his obsession with **Magic: The Gathering** for over a decade. He's travelled the world because of **Magic**, both as a player and a writer. When not spending time playing **Magic**, writing about **Magic**, or thinking about **Magic**, Ben is employed by **StarCityGames.com**, where he works with **Magic** cards all day long. He lives with his wife in Virginia, and they sleep comfortably at night under their Orgg down comforter.*



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