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Living a Double Life: Eight Mana to Paradise (Part 3 of 3)

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Building on a Budget
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Welcome to the final installment of Double Life – the deck built around **Beacon of Immortality** and **False Cure**. In [part one](#), I got my teeth kicked in by anyone who wanted to come and take a shot. In [part two](#), I sent my deck to be doctored by myself (long story – please don't call the men in the white jackets to take me away!) and ended up with three distinct builds. In [part three](#), you've just clicked a link that took you back to this article.

Now I'm not the only one living a double life.

Double Life 5 (Build 3 – Control) dec

Main Deck	
60 cards	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Island 2 Orzhova, the Church of Deals 4 Orzhov Basilica 7 Plains 5 Swamp <hr/> 22 lands	0 creatures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Beacon of Immortality 3 False Cure 3 Journeyer's Kite 4 Kirtar's Wrath 4 Orzhov Signet 3 Ribbons of Night 4 Sensei's Divining Top 4 Sun Droplet 3 Terashi's Grasp 4 Wayfarer's Bauble 3 Vanish into Memory <hr/> 38 other spells

The first deck I decided to playtest was the control version of Double Life. I wanted to see if the deck could support a three-color manabase, and I really just wanted to fiddle around with **Vanish into Memory**. It seems like it should be a good card to move through my deck, plus act as a roadbump in my opponent's quest to put a damper on my twenty life.

Game 1: Seabear0 (Burn)

Seabear0 ramps up to fifteen mana with his acceleration, and proceeds to burn the pants off of me with X spells. Even though I get off a **Beacon of Immortality**, I end up with a **Sensei's Divining Top**, three lands on top of my deck for several turns, and no way to shuffle things up.

Record: 0-1

Game 2: Bemihovich (Mono-Black Control)

I'm finding that I have some dead cards vs. creatureless decks. **Vanish into Memory** and **Ribbons of Night** sit in my hand as I end up getting destroyed by **Cabal Coffers** plus a lot of Black burn.

Record: 0-2

Game 3: Blue Lightning (Dimir)

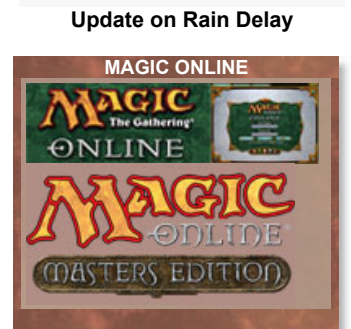
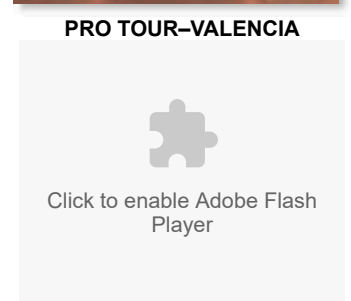
Blue Lightning brings a mill strategy to the table, and gets me down to four cards before I get my combo off. However, this is really a pyrrhic victory, because A) I had no cards in my hand with those four cards left in my library, and had to use **Sensei's Divining Top** to get both the **Beacon** and the **False Cure** in the same turn. It's nothing more than complete luck that, with only four cards left in my library, I still had one of each of those left, and B) Blue Lightning was new with his deck, and forgot to mill me several times with his **Duskmantle**, **House of Shadow**, so I should have lost anyhow.

Record: 1-2 (but easily could have been 0-3)

Wow, how discouraging. I'm pretty much right back where I started – I have a combo deck that can't win, gets run over by everybody, and is not even fun to play. Let's try a different build of the deck.

Double Life 5 (Build 1 – Test of Endurance) dec

Main Deck



Orangeman3		
4 Orzhov Basilica		3 Beacon of Immortality
10 Plains	0 creatures	4 Castigate
8 Swamp		3 False Cure
		4 Genju of the Fields
22 lands		3 Infest
		3 Journeyer's Kite
		4 Orzhov Signet
		4 Sensei's Divining Top
		3 Test of Endurance
		3 Tower of Eons
		4 Wayfarer's Bauble
		38 other spells

Unlike the control build of this deck, the **Test of Endurance** build seeks to proactively win the game. Instead of focusing on controlling my opponent's board, I mix up threats (**Genju of the Fields**), discard (**Castigate**) and two separate win conditions (both **Test of Endurance** and **False Cure**).

Game 1: Orangeman3 (Slivers)

I cast **Castigate**, and I shift **Shifting Sliver** into his removed-from-game area. He casts **Farseek**, and accelerates into a third-turn **Essence Sliver**. I drop **Genju of the Fields**, and he drops a freshly-drawn second **Shifting Sliver**. Frown. This sends us into race mode – I attack the Genju into his territory to gain life (remember, if you activate **Genju of the Fields** multiple times in one turn, you gain life for each activation!), while he starts beating me with five points of Spirit-Linked damage a turn.

Orangeman3 looks to break the stalemate with **Brood Sliver**, but I have **Infest**, which allows my Genju to block safely. He drops **Sigil of the New Dawn**, and I draw into **Beacon of Immortality** and **False Cure**, and cast it for the win.

Record: 1-0

Game 2: Joe b 1 (Mono-Black Control)

It looks like the game is going to go in my favor – I get up to seven lands, and have **Beacon of Immortality** and **False Cure** in hand, with a Divining Top on the board. Unfortunately, Joe b 1 drops **Phage the Untouchable** via **Cabal Coffers**, and my only way to deal with it is **Genju of the Fields**. I have one turn to get an 8th land, but the top three cards of my library are all spells, and I end up having to chump block with my Plains. Without the ability to get to fifty life or eight mana, I lose the game.

Record: 1-1

Game 3: King6666 (Clerics)

On back to back turns, I **Castigate** out **Rotlung Reanimator** (which would have wrecked me) and **Proclamation of Rebirth**. He casts a couple of one-drop Clerics and **Cabal Archon**, which I **Infest**. We both build up mana for a bit, and he eventually casts **Patriarch's Bidding**, bringing into a play a cycled **Scion of Darkness**. I cast **Tower of Eons** and **Journeyer's Kite**, and start gaining ten life plus a land a turn. King6666 doesn't put on additional pressure, and eventually I just draw into **Beacon of Immortality** and **False Cure** for the win.

Record: 2-1

That's much better – proactively gaining life (**Genju of the Fields**, **Tower of Eons**) seems to work better than reactively killing creatures, but the presence of **Infest** helped me win two of the three games. Clearly removal is needed, but what type? The answer might be found in the last build.



Double Life 5 (Build 2 – Wall of Shards)		
	Main Deck	
	60 cards	
2 Orzhova, the Church of Deals	4 Wall of Shards	3 Beacon of Immortality
4 Orzhov Basilica		4 Duress
8 Plains	4 creatures	4 Faith's Fetters
8 Swamp		3 False Cure
		3 Hideous Laughter
22 lands		3 Journeyer's Kite
		4 Orzhov Signet
		3 Pulse of the Fields
		4 Sensei's Divining Top
		3 Terashi's Grasp
		34 other spells

This last build of Double Life tries to abuse **Wall of Shards** as both a blocker, and as a way to recur **Pulse of the Fields**. It seeks to stall the game in a null-state until the combo of Beacon plus Cure can be drawn.

Game 1: Slavetrader (White Weenie)

I **Duress**, and get **Lightning Greaves**. His hand was **Leonin Elder** and Skyhunter. He drops his creatures, and I use **Hideous Laughter** to clear away his board. I go into Beacon Recursion mode casting the spell three times in a row (thanks to **Sensei's Divining Top** and **Journeyer's Kite**). He gets a couple more creatures onto the board, but I have enough of a life cushion that I can leisurely draw **Beacon of Immortality** for a fourth time, and pair it this time with **False Cure**.

Record: 1-0

Game 2: Xavier12 (B/G)

He **Duresses** me, taking **Terashi's Grasp**. He then proceeds to cast double **Rampant Growth** for Swamps, and drops three(!) **Cabal Coffers**. Unfortunately for Xavier12, that's all he does this game. He literally never casts another spell, and my **Sensei's Divining Top** and **Journeyer's Kite** go unanswered. I am able to get my combo shortly thereafter, and win.

Record: 2-0

Game 3: Kohtah (R/G/B Aggro)

Kohtah gets a fast start with turns 1 and 2 **Raging Goblins**, followed by **Reckless Charge** on turns 3 and 4. I am on the draw, and I **Hideous Laughter** the board away after taking thirteen damage from his only-three spells. I **Duress**, and his hand is a pair of Black flyers. This gives me time to get down **Journeyer's Kite** and **Sensei's Divining Top**, but I can't seem to Top into anything good. A **Blaze** for five puts me on an immediate clock, but I respond like a whiz by drawing **Pulse of the Fields!** This brings me back up to eighteen life in short order, and with that much of a cushion, I have no problem finding the time to get a Beacon plus a Cure for the win.

Record: 3-0



All right, so let's put it all together. The **Wall of Shards** build did the best, even though I literally never needed to cast **Wall of Shards**. The **Test of Endurance** build did second best, even though I never needed to cast **Test of Endurance**. The worst record was put up by the control build, even though control elements such as **Hideous Laughter** and **Infest** were what won me most of my games with the other two decks.

What does this all mean?

A) I don't need a full Wrath effect, such as **Kirtar's Wrath** – I just need a smaller, **Pyroclasm/Infest** type effect, to buy me enough time to get to my larger spells. **Wall of Shards** is unnecessary, as is an alternate win condition – I need to focus on **Beacon of Immortality** and **False Cure**, and not **Test of Endurance**. Some spot removal, such as **Faith's Fetters**, can't hurt, so that I'm not hopeless against larger threats like Phage.

Putting it all together:

With all of these in mind, I decide to build off of the **Wall of Shards** build, as it had the best record. I take out **Hideous Laughter** in favor of **Infest**, and take out the **Wall of Shards** for **Night's Whisper** – a card which will help me draw further into my deck, and whose loss of life will be offset by **Pulse of the Fields**.

Out: 3 **Hideous Laughter**, 4 **Wall of Shards**

In: 3 **Infest**, 4 **Night's Whisper**

Double Life 6 (Combined)		Main Deck 60 cards	
4 Orzhov Basilica		3 Beacon of Immortality	
9 Plains	0 creatures	4 Duress	
9 Swamp		4 Faith's Fetters	
22 lands		3 False Cure	
		3 Infest	
		3 Journeyer's Kite	
		4 Night's Whisper	
		4 Orzhov Signet	
		3 Pulse of the Fields	
		4 Sensei's Divining Top	
		3 Terashi's Grasp	
		38 other spells	

Game 1: Tevesh_Szat (Pro Tour Dredgeatog deck)

This game is kind of annoying, because Tevesh_Szat is playing a slightly-modified Pro Tour Top 8 deck ([Billy Moreno's Madness Tog deck from Pro Tour LA 2005](#)), and refuses to acknowledge that, just maybe, this isn't a deck for the casual room. He proceeds to drop *Wild Mongrel*, counters my spells with *Circular Logic*, dredges back to get several *Deep Analysis* into his graveyard...and then plays badly, leaving no cards in hand so I can *Infest* his *Wild Mongrel*, which in turn leaves me enough time to combo him out.

Guys, I've said it once and I've said it again – I don't mind seeing all sorts of decks in the casual room. I don't mind playing against decks that have five hundred dollars worth of rares. What tweaks my grinders is seeing someone take a deck that finished in the Top 8 of the Pro Tour, and having them try to get their jollies by steamrolling people who are playing much less competitive decks.

Record: 1-0

Let's think of happy trees, and move on.

Game 2: Slappylittleworld (R/G Aggro)

He curves nearly perfectly with *Kird Ape*, *Slith Predator*, *Burning-Tree Shaman*, and *Rumbling Slum*. I Fetters the Shaman and keep afloat with *Pulse of the Fields*, with the full combo in my hand. On the seventh turn, I end up at three life, and he casts *Yamabushi's Flame* to kill me after his attack. I had *Duressed* him two turns earlier, and he had nothing of the sort at the time – and the top card of my library was the 8th land I would have needed to win. So the cookie crumbles sometimes!

Record: 1-1

Game 3: Crisis909 (R/B Burn)

Crisis909 keeps a hand with only a single Swamp, and all Red cards. I Duress him three straight turns, after which he still discards until turn seven. He *STILL* wins, as I can't draw a Top, Kite or a combo piece, and he eventually gets two *Slith Firewalkers* on the board that grow to 7/7 and 8/8 before my *Pulse of the Fields* can't hold them back no more.

Record: 1-2

All right – when your opponent would effectively have been discarding until turn 7 with only one land on the board, and you still lose, something's wrong with your deck. I keep getting stuck with junk in my hand that can't help me combo out (such as *Pulse of the Fields* and *Terashi's Grasp*), and not enough ways to draw through my deck. In addition, why is there so much White in my deck? I decide to move the deck towards more of a Black build, with substitute life gain that can double as creature kill, and more card drawing.

Out: 3 *Terashi's Grasp*, 4 *Orzhov Basilica*, 3 Plains, 3 *Pulse of the Fields*
In: 3 *Corrupt*, 7 Swamp, 3 *Skeletal Scrying*



Double Life 7 – Black		Main Deck 60 cards	
6 Plains		3 Beacon of Immortality	
16 Swamp	0 creatures	3 Corrupt	
22 lands		4 Duress	
		4 Faith's Fetters	
		3 False Cure	
		3 Infest	
		3 Journeyer's Kite	
		4 Night's Whisper	
		4 Orzhov Signet	
		4 Sensei's Divining Top	
		3 Skeletal Scrying	
		38 other spells	

Game 4: Armyless (Firecat Blitz)

Armyless drops three consecutive *Howling Mines*, and follows it with *Coat of Arms*. I get up to eight mana, can't draw anything but mana and card-drawing cards to save my life, and end up getting comboed out by *Firecat Blitz* and the Coat.

Record: 1-3

If you can't tell, I'm pretty darn frustrated at this point. Even after all of the tweaking I've given the deck, I still keep losing games in frustrating manners. Once I've drawn ten extra cards with my deck (such as in game 4), I should be in every position to have my combo drawn.

Game 5: Gerca (B/W Control)

I **Duress** him out of a **Loxodon Warhammer**, leaving him five lands and a **Nekrataal**. He drops **Sword of Kaldra** and **That Which Was Taken**, and proceeds to start hitting me with a 6/6 Indestructible **Weathered Wayfarer**. I get to seven Swamps, and my hand is, get this, three **Corrupts** and nothing else. I start shooting straight for Gerca's dome, but he drops **Mourning Thrull**, makes it indestructible, and starts slapping me around with a 6/6 **Spirit Linked** guy the turn before I could kill him.

Well, I have somewhat of a padded life total thanks to the first two **Corrupts**, and I get to use the third **Corrupt** on **Blazing Archon**, when Gerca tries casting it without being able to make it indestructible the same turn. This gives me just enough time to draw into **False Cure** and **Beacon of Immortality**, and I kill Gerca the turn before he kills me.

Record: 2-3

Game 6: Rocore1 (B/W/G)

I get completely worked over by **Forgotten Ancient**, as I have no real way of removing it once it gets going. It makes **Exalted Angel** and **Eastern Paladin** ridiculously large, and even my **Corrupts** and **Faith's Fetters** are to no avail against his **Naturalizes** and constant onslaught of fatties.

Record: 2-4

All right, I've had it. I really, really, really wanted the draw engine of **Journeyer's Kite** and **Sensei's Divining Top** to work – it's the pair of cards which inspired the deck in the first place – but they aren't working. I keep getting stuck with the Top, and no ways to shuffle my deck – and I keep getting the Kite, and no cards to go with all the mana. I need a direct way to get my combo pieces – such as **Diabolic Tutor**, because in a two-card combo, **Diabolic Tutor** is a wild card for either half.

I also put back in a single **Kirtar's Wrath** (as a Tutor target, against fattie decks), and put back in three **Basilicas**, since I don't have three **Kites** and four **Tops** to help land selection in-game anymore.

Out: 3 **Journeyer's Kite**, 4 **Sensei's Divining Top**, 1 **Faith's Fetters**
In: 4 **Diabolic Tutor**, 1 **Kirtar's Wrath**, 3 **Orzhov Basilica**



Double Life 8		Main Deck 60 cards	
3 Orzhov Basilica	0 creatures	3 Beacon of Immortality	
6 Plains		3 Corrupt	
16 Swamp		4 Diabolic Tutor	
25 lands		4 Duress	
		3 Faith's Fetters	
		3 False Cure	
		3 Infest	
		1 Kirtar's Wrath	
		4 Night's Whisper	
		4 Orzhov Signet	
		3 Skeletal Scrying	
		35 other spells	

Game 7: DaveB29 (Elves)

He accelerates into eight **Forests**, and then drops **Wirewood Herald** plus **Blanchwood Armor**. I can't race a 9/9 creature on turn 5, and I scoop up my cards.

Record: 2-5

This might go down as the world's quickest change, but I'm tired of losing to spells that I could prevent early on. **Duress** has worked great, so I want more of the same – **Infest** goes out the door in favor of **Castigate**, giving me seven ways to cripple a hand in the early game. Plus, if I should face a deck with counter magic, this would give me a way to force through my combo a lot more easily.

Out: 3 **Infest**
In: 3 **Castigate**

Double Life 9		Main Deck 60 cards	
3 Orzhov Basilica	0 creatures	3 Beacon of Immortality	
6 Plains		3 Castigate	

16 Swamp	3 Corrupt
25 lands	4 Diabolic Tutor
	4 Duress
	3 Faith's Fetters
	3 False Cure
	1 Kirtar's Wrath
	4 Night's Whisper
	4 Orzhov Signet
	3 Skeletal Scrying
	35 other spells

Game 8: Age_of_Kings (B/G Masumaru Deck)

I Duress him twice, taking Sink into Takenuma and Inner Calm, Outer Strength. I cast Night's Whisper, Diabolic Tutor for Skeletal Scrying, Scrye for four, Castigate/Rending Vines, Faith's Fetters his Masumaru, and then combo out on turn 8.

This game, for the record, is the textbook way I'd like this deck to work – strip the hand of threats, neutralize the board, and use extra card drawing to get the combo working.

Record: 3-5

Game 9: Folkdsb (G/W Aggro)

We go back and forth for a little while, with him casting creatures and me drawing cards. I get up to six mana with the combo in hand, but he casts Thought Prison(!), taking the False Cure away. I can't get another one before I die to Leonin Skyhunter, the Thought Prison (I need to cast Black spells like Corrupt to kill his creatures), and Foratog.

Record: 3-6

I'm finding that A) I want more acceleration so I can combo off earlier, and B) I want to get more cards into my graveyard for early Skeletal Scryings.

Wayfarer's Bauble fits both of these bills, and I also swap out Faith's Fetters for Innocent Blood – I just want early creatures dead, dead, dead, and Innocent Blood is another card to feed Scrying early.

Out: 3 Faith's Fetters, 3 Orzhov Basilica, 1 Orzhov Signet

In: 3 Innocent Blood, 4 Wayfarer's Bauble



Double Life 10		
6 Plains	0 creatures	Main Deck
16 Swamp		60 cards
22 lands		3 Beacon of Immortality
		3 Castigate
		3 Corrupt
		4 Diabolic Tutor
		4 Duress
		3 False Cure
		3 Innocent Blood
		1 Kirtar's Wrath
		4 Night's Whisper
		3 Orzhov Signet
		3 Skeletal Scrying
		4 Wayfarer's Bauble
		38 other spells

Game 10: joeUCLApv (Standstill/Megrim/Warped Devotion)

I Duress, and get Recoil. He has triple Diabolic Tutor, double Boomerang, and lands. He uses a Tutor to get Future Sight, which I Castigate out of his hand. He drops Standstill, breaks it to cast Megrim, and then casts another Standstill. I respond to that turn by killing him with the combo – the first time in three weeks that I cast Beacon/False Cure on someone else's turn for the win.

Record: 4-6

Game 11: Rokk (Mono-B Control)

I get Wayfarer's Bauble to cast Castigate and Duress, and then use Diabolic Tutor for Skeletal Scrying. I Scrye and end up drawing four lands, and I follow that with more lands. He casts double Kokusho, one of which I Innocent Blood, and the other of which I Corrupt. He then drops Cabal Coffers, and casts two Laquatus's Champions in a single turn, killing me.

Record: 4-7

Game 12: Crook (B/R Burn)

I **Duress** a first-turn **Shock**, **Castigate Chainer's Edict** (nothing better to grab), Corrupt him to stay out of burn range, Scrye for a lot of cards, and then combo off.

Record: 5-7

Well, I did manage to get the deck to nearly a .500 record, but all-in-all, I don't consider this deck a success. Yeah, it took three weeks to get there, but the point isn't always to win – it's to understand why certain choices are made in deck building, and why certain decks don't work. In short, an eight-mana combo, based around two cards that don't help you win in-and-of-themselves, is not the way to build a deck. You can't build a deck to have no weaknesses (witness my fluctuation between **Infest/Kirtar's Wrath/Faith's Fetters/Terashi's Grasp** – a.k.a., weenie horde removal, fattie horde removal, spot removal, and artifact/enchantment removal), and sometimes, even though you work a deck into the ground, it still doesn't measure up.

But don't worry – I've already got a 6-0 record with my deck for next week!

Next week: How Vexing.

*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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