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DO SOMETHING WITH YOUR DISBELIEF

Posted in **Feature** on October 18, 2006



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Greetings, Johnnies and Johnnies-in-waiting! It's Suspend Week here at [magicthegathering.com](#), and I have to say, you're in for a treat. To better serve your thematic needs, I decided that this week I would embody the theme. Instead of doing what I usually do when I write this column (doing all the work at once, right around the time it needs to be done), I figured I would try a different, more thematic and poorly-thought-out tactic. This time, I did much less work, and I did it several weeks ago. If I wait long enough, I think I can achieve the same results.

I just hope you guys don't have a [Remand](#)!

I Halve Permanents like You for Breakfast

In the past, **Magic** cards have been banned and restricted – cards like [Ancestral Recall](#) and [Wheel of Fortune](#). It took ten or so years, however, before a card could be suspended – cards like [Ancestral Vision](#) or [Wheel of Fate](#). The difference between the two is that naughty cards get banned, while nice cards get suspended.

As I mentioned in my preview of [Hypergenesis](#), suspend is not all about paying a small fee to put your spell on the backburner and then twiddling your thumbs for several turns while your opponent licks his lips, [Remand](#) in hand. There are many things you can do to defend your suspended spells. You can protect them with countermagic of your own, attack your opponent's hand with discard spells, or, as Aaron Forsythe noted in the latest **Magic** Podcast, you can time it so that you have multiple suspend spells firing off during the same turn. Your opponent can't [Remand](#) everything.

Some of the suspend cards can even affect the board while they're removed from the game! One such card is [Curse of the Cabal](#). As a spell, the Curse will halve your opponent's permanents. While suspended, it acts like a quasi-[Braids, Cabal Minion](#)

(who, I have recently learned, is actually a woman). The question is: What can we do with it?

Faithful Johnny Noel deCordova noticed that Mark Rosewater performed a [special action](#) and “leaked” the fact that this week would be Suspend Week. What did Noel do? He took the opportunity to send me several suspend-based combos that were quite spiffy (and I wouldn't use such strong language if I didn't mean it). It was like coming home and finding out that your house had been cleaned, your homework completed, and your dinner prepared (in my case, boiled and salted). It was a very pleasant surprise. If this kind of thing is going to happen every time an upcoming week's theme is revealed, then I say, “Spoil ‘em all!”



Noel's brilliant scheme (part one) was to pair [Curse of the Cabal](#) with [Paradox Haze](#). Under normal circumstances, if your opponent doesn't want the Suspended Curse to resolve, it'll cost them one permanent every two turns. If you're enchanted with a [Paradox Haze](#), however, your opponent will have to sacrifice a permanent each turn to keep the time counters a-flowin'. That's more like it!

When [Curse of the Cabal](#) resolves, it's going to take half of your opponent's permanents with it to the graveyard. Now, I'm certainly no numberologist, but I'm pretty sure that half of a large number is greater than half of a smaller number. So, to get the most out of [Curse of the Cabal](#), to make the X in the X-for-1 the highest, you'll want your opponent to commit as much to the board as possible. How? I suggest that you threaten the security of their hand with things like [Mindslicer](#) and [Mindstab](#). The 'slicer has great synergy with Suspend, since the cards are removed from the game, safe from harm. Conveniently, [Curse of the Cabal](#) gives you a way to send [Mindslicer](#) to the bin. Also notice that the Curse, unlike Braids, allows you (and your opponent) to sacrifice Enchantments. Cue the [Hatching Plans!](#) [Phyrexian Totem](#) and [Claws of Gix](#) likewise allow you to sacrifice your [Hatching Plans](#) or [Mindslicers](#).

COCONUT BANGER'S CABAL – STANDARD LEGAL (ALMOST)



DECKLIST

STATS

SAMPLE HAND

SORT BY: Overview ▾

Creature (15)

4 Plagued Rusalka
3 Mindslicer
3 Riftwing Cloudskate
3 Errant Ephemeron
2 Deep-Sea Kraken

Sorcery (6)

4 Curse of the Cabal
2 Mindstab

Artifact (6)

3 Dimir Signet
2 Phyrexian Totem
1 Claws of Gix

Enchantment (11)

4 Hatching Plans
4 Seal of Doom
3 Paradox Haze

Land (22)

11 Swamp
9 Island
2 Dreadship Reef

60 Cards

The deck is a little rough and probably has too much going on. [Hatching Plans](#) is more cute than anything, and should probably be swapped for something that will keep you alive in the early turns. Something like [Last Gasp](#) or [Darkblast](#) or [Dream Stalker](#).

While You Were Out ...

As anyone with a knack for describing things in the dullest way imaginable will tell you, **Magic** is a game of resource management. While I still can't understand why no one mentions this in the **Magic: The Gathering** promotional materials, it is undeniably true. Once you have a friend and a deck, let the resource managing begin! The suspend cards just give you another resource to manage: time. For an inveterate procrastinator (and incorrigible thesaurus user) like me, time is the most easily mismanaged resource.



To give you an idea of how a timeline can be mangled, last week I wrote about Dom Camus' [Greater Gargadon](#) deck that used [Second Sunrise](#) to allow you to accelerate your Gargadon without ruining your board position (among other things). Due to a stunning lack of foresight, I failed to realize that this week was Suspend Week and that [Greater Gargadon](#) is a suspend card that also happens to combine well with another suspend card: [Restore Balance](#). Several readers picked up on this combo, including Jacois, Peter Wright, Noel deCordova (again!), Jordan "Fitz" Fitzpatrick, and David VanDusen. In addition, Jordan and David both suggested adding [Mogg War Marshal](#) to the deck. For two mana, the Goblin effectively provides you with three permanents, and therefore shaves three turns off of the Gargadon's Suspend time. Unfortunately, I have a feeling that the [Greater Gargadon](#) + [Restore Balance](#) deck would end up looking a heckuva lot like Dom's deck. As a result, I'm going to do something different.

The next idea also came from Noel deCordova. Sure, it's fun to manage your various Magical resources. We all know that. However, there are times when you'd just rather win in one turn and skip all the bean-counting. What if, for example, you started the game with a twenty-power haste creature in play on your side? That might simplify things and save you some number-crunching. And that's basically what happens when you play [Sway of the Stars](#) (or, to a lesser extent, [Decree of Annihilation](#)) while you have creatures suspended. With Sway resetting the life-totals to seven, all it'll take is one hit from a [Greater Gargadon](#) to kill your opponent. Some combination of [Keldon Halberdier](#), [Errant Ephemeron](#), and [Rift Bolt](#) will also do the trick. For the record, it's tough to [Remand](#) a cycled Decree, and even tougher to [Remand](#) the spells that follow it.

SWAY OF ANNIHILATION – EXTENDED LEGAL (IN A BIT)



DECKLIST

STATS**SAMPLE HAND**SORT BY: Overview ▼***Creature (11)***

4 Keldon Halberdier
 3 Errant Ephemeron
 4 Greater Gargadon

Sorcery (13)

4 Burning Wish
 4 Rift Bolt
 3 Sway of the Stars
 2 Decree of Annihilation

Instant (4)

4 Seething Song

Artifact (8)

4 Lotus Bloom
 4 Pentad Prism

Land (24)

10 Mountain
 8 Island
 4 Izzet Boilerworks
 2 Boseiju, Who Shelters All

60 Cards***Sideboard (15)***

1 Sway of the Stars
 1 Exhaustion
 4 Pyroclasm
 1 Volcanic Hammer
 1 Seize the Day
 1 Overmaster

1 Decree of Annihilation
 1 Compulsive Research
 1 Mana Geyser
 1 Slice and Dice
 1 Pillage
 1 Lava Spike

This basic concept can be reworked to include just about any dramatic board-sweeping effect like [Apocalypse](#), [Obliterate](#), [Upheaval](#), or [Soulscur](#). When I previewed [Paradox Haze](#), I mentioned a certain white “board sweeper” that would work well with the Haze, and that's [Dimensional Breach](#). Since [Paradox Haze](#) also has a great effect on suspend, I can definitely see a deck arising from these cards.

I'd Like to Buy a Vowel



One of my favourite cards ever is [Death Watch](#) from *Visions*. It's not that I play with it all the time, or that it's even particularly good. The reason I like it is that it's responsible for one of my fondest **Magic** memories. A friend of mine had a green deck that cheated all kinds of large creatures into play. Another friend had a mono-black control deck that featured all kinds of creature removal ([Innocent Blood](#), [Mutilate](#), [Nevinyrral's Disk](#), you name it). Friend A plays [Skyshroud Behemoth](#). Friend B looks at his hand, chuckles, and enchants the 10/10 Fader with [Death Watch](#). A twenty-point life-swing for one black mana, and it's not from [Disciple of the Vault](#)? Sweet!

The reason I brought this up again is because the suspendable [Phthisis](#) reminds me a lot of [Death Watch](#) + [Innocent Blood](#). Your opponent loses a creature, and there's a life-swing equal to the creature's combined power and toughness.

[Phthisis](#) is a very cool card, and you don't even have to be Daffy Duck to pronounce it, either. According to the Internet, [Phthisis](#) is an "over-consonanted Greek word meaning 'a dwindling or wasting away,'" and it's pronounced TIE-sis (rhymes with crisis). Over-consonanted? Really? In my opinion, a word can never have too many consonants. That's why I've recently changed my name to Phchris. The "Ph" and the second "h" are silent but completely necessary.

What I like about it is that it's one of a very few creature removal spells that can kill a player in one shot. If your pal Timmy plops down his much-mocked [Leviathan](#) (soon to be in Standard!), you can [Phthisis](#) him right out of the game. Of course, in real games of **Magic**, your opponent will not always conveniently play a 10/10 creature for you to kill. That's why we're going to give him one.

Most casual decks play creatures, but some don't. For those creature-lackers, we're going to have to get creative. [Forbidden Orchard](#) is always a fine option in such situations, but it'll be leaving Standard when *Time Spiral* hits the scene and, besides, it's been used a million times already. That leaves us with surprisingly few ways to ensure that our opponent will have a creature. The latest and (perhaps) greatest of

these is [Spike Tiller](#). That guy will allow you to give your opponent a 3/3 creature, in the form of an animated land. The only way to make it a 10/10 is to give it +7/+7. Hmm. How could we do that? I have an idea. You might [Might of Oaks](#) their tilled land! Or should I say, you *may* [Might of Oaks](#) it. You might not May of Oaks it, however.

The back-up plan is to pump the creature over time with [Sheltering Ancient](#). If you go the [Sheltering Ancient](#) route, you'll need some way to defend yourself from the giant creature you're giving to your opponent. I decided to go with a pair of Spiders: [Penumbra Spider](#) and the Akroma-neutralizing [Silklash Spider](#). These two are already fairly difficult to remove, but they become even more resilient with the help of *Time Spiral's* [Swarmyard](#), which is a tweak on [Elephant Graveyard](#) that regenerates Spiders, Rats, Insects, and Squirrels. As a bonus, the suspend-loving [Jhoira's Timebug](#) is an Insect.

Of course, if you suspend [Phthisis](#), your opponent will be able to see it coming and could very well decide that not playing a creature is their best plan. What do they do if they can also see a [Mindstab](#) coming? It's a tough decision. Your opponent could very well decide that playing creatures will lose him the game and that they're worth losing to [Mindstab](#). In that case, you always just win with [Might of Oaks](#)-enhanced Spider beatdown.

TIME SPIDER – STANDARD LEGAL (SOON)



DECKLIST

STATS

SAMPLE HAND

SORT BY: Overview ▼

Creature (20)

4 Wall of Roots
4 Jhoira's Timebug
3 Sheltering Ancient
4 Penumbra Spider
2 Silklash Spider
3 Spike Tiller

Sorcery (12)

4 Search for Tomorrow
3 Mindstab
4 Phthisis
1 Brainspoil

Instant (4)

4 Might of Oaks

Land (24)

7 Forest
6 Swamp
4 Overgrown Tomb
4 Llanowar Wastes
3 Swarmyard

60 Cards

The other day I realized that I've been writing for the site for many months and I haven't run a single poll! That's all going to change right now. Since my Johnny-o-meter is on the fritz (and you don't even want to know what happened to my Fritz-o-meter), I'd like to consult you, the reader.

Until next time, you decide!

Chris Millar

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