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The Best Budget Cards in Lorwyn

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Building on a Budget
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hello all, and welcome back to Building on a Budget. By the time you read this column, *Lorwyn* will be available on **Magic Online**. This week's column needed finishing a day before that, which left no time for playtesting with *Lorwyn* cards. Instead of evolving a deck that would face immediate obsolescence, I decided (thanks to a great suggestion from site manager Scott Johns) to dedicate a column to going over the best commons and uncommons in *Lorwyn*. Don't worry—for those of you who are wondering about the continuation of the Kithkin Militia theme deck evolution, that is coming next week. Poll results are at the end of this column. Feel free to scroll down now and see them, as long as you promise to come back up here!

As most of you know, this column is dedicated to building decks that cost thirty or fewer tickets using **Magic Online**. I've built decks mainly in Standard and Extended. My decks tend to run more heavily towards uncommons and commons, though I am not gunshy about adding rares to my deck if A) they fit the budget and B) they have a place in the deck. The problem a budget player faces with buying rares is that some rares tend to be heavily specialized. What do I mean by this? Let me give you an example.

Let's say I acquire a play set of **Harmonize** online. **Harmonize** is a card that almost any green deck can run—a simple effect of "pay four mana, draw three cards." It's neat, it's simple, and most green decks can benefit from a late-game hand size boost. Now, contrast this to **Wild Pair**. **Wild Pair** has a very powerful effect—but one that requires a deck built around it. You can't just throw **Wild Pair** in any old green deck you have. It wouldn't work well in a weenie deck where you're trying to kill your opponent before turn six is up. It's not great in a deck filled with creatures of different power / toughness totals. You wouldn't want to run it when your deck is very light on creatures to begin with. If you get a play set of **Wild Pair**, you're going to be using it almost exclusively in a **Wild Pair** deck. If you get a play set of **Harmonize**, you'll be using it your green-black control deck, your midrange green creature deck, your weenie deck (as the top end of the curve to refill your hand) or any other number of green-based decks.



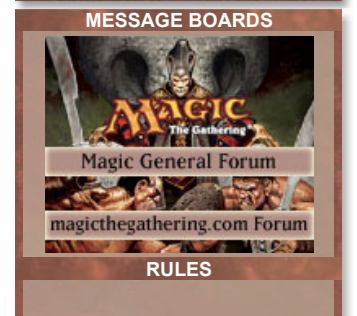
Enough explanation! Let's take a look at the best budget commons and uncommons that *Lorwyn* has to offer, shall we? Each section will be divided up by color, and I'll give an explanation about each card I choose for this list. Keep in mind—this list is for the *Lorwyn* commons and uncommons that I feel are powerful and have utility usage across multiple decks. These are the cards you should be trying to get for your toolbox to build any number of decks, because these are the cards that you build the foundation of multiple decks upon!

BLACK

Eyeblight's Ending: **Eyeblight's Ending** has a big advantage over **Terror**, in that it can kill black and artifact creatures. This makes it very similar to **Rend Flesh**, which saw a lot of budget play back during the Kamigawa era. The larger the card pool of your format, the less chance **Eyeblight's Ending** will have a drawback, since there will be fewer Elves in Standard than in Block, and fewer still in Extended over Standard. A very solid creature kill spell.

Final Revels: If you've read Building on a Budget for any amount of time, you'll know that I've complained about the lack of a good board-sweeping budget card for black for some time. **Final Revels** fills that hole, by taking the place of cards like **Massacre**, **Infest**, and **Hideous Laughter**. **Final Revels** is the worst of these four as a creature kill spell, because it is a sorcery, it costs five, and it doesn't lower power. However, it does have additional utility as a way to give all your offensive creatures +2/+0 (though it does also boost the power of your opponent's creatures). Even though it is weaker than some of the older alternatives, it is the strongest option available on a budget for mono-black decks to sweep weenies right now.

Footbottom Feast: This is the "fixed" version of *Mirage* favorite **Bone Harvest**. Instead of being a slowtrip (draw a card your following upkeep), it works immediately. Compare this to **Recover** from *Tenth Edition*: **Recover** is a cantrip **Raise Dead** at Sorcery speed for three mana. **Footbottom Feast** is a **Raise Dead** at instant speed for three mana—and one that can



also get zero creatures (if you just need to cycle it) or multiple creatures (if you need more than just one back). A very solid budget alternative to **Raise Dead**.

Marsh Flitter: The card I'd most compare this to is **Patagia Viper**, except mono-black. Instead of a 2/1 flyer and two 1/1 creatures, you get a 1/1 flyer (that can become 3/3) and two 1/1 Goblins. This still makes for three power of creatures for four mana, with the ability to make one of them 3/3 twice. That's not a bad deal at all, especially if you need to put multiple creatures to the board at once.

Nameless Inversion: The replacement for **Last Gasp**, and one that combos with any tribe because it is a changeling. This also lets you set up a soft lock with **Haakon, Stromgald Scourge**, since it's a Knight. You can simply give creatures +3/-3 for every **1** you have available. In a pinch, unlike **Last Gasp**, this can also allow you to pump up your own guys that have higher-than-four toughness.

Shriekmaw: One of the crown jewels of this set, and an uncommon that will probably be trading for a ticket to a ticket and a half online. It's well worth the investment—this is great creature kill that can go in any deck that plays black mana. Early in the game, you have a sorcery speed **Terror**. Later in the game, you get a 3/2 **Nekrataal** with fear. It's the versatility that makes this guy work so well.

In addition, **Shriekmaw** and his evoke friends have a great interaction with **Saffi Eriksdotter** and **Momentary Blink**. The "sacrifice this" ability of **Shriekmaw** goes on the stack, just like any other triggered ability. If you have a **Momentary Blink** (or a Saffi), you can save your creature from dying and get a second effect out of it.

Let's say your opponent has two **Call of the Herd** Elephant tokens in play. You evoke **Shriekmaw**. When it comes into play, its "destroy target non-black non-artifact" ability goes on the stack (targeting one of the Elephant tokens) and its "sacrifice **Shriekmaw** if you paid the evoke cost" ability goes on the stack. In response, you play **Momentary Blink** on **Shriekmaw**. When it comes back into play, its "destroy target non-black, non-artifact creature" ability goes on the stack again, but the "sacrifice **Shriekmaw**" ability does not, since Blinking him is not playing him with evoke. The **Momentary Blink** makes you treat **Shriekmaw** as a new copy of the card aside from the one that was pre-Blinked, so you do not have to sacrifice it to the first Evoke trigger. The end result? Your opponent has two dead Elephants, you have a live **Shriekmaw**, and **Momentary Blink** is in your graveyard for another go around!

BLUE

Broken Ambitions: The successor to the **Power Sink / Condescend** line of spells, except that clash effectively lets both players scry 1. The milling is just a side benefit—you're mainly going to use this as an early (or late) **Counterspell**.

Faerie Trickery: See **Eyebright's Ending**. The less chance you have of facing Faeries, the better this is than **Cancel**. Removing cards from the game is generally better than putting them in the graveyard, if you have a choice, due to reanimation effects.

Familiar's Ruse: A hard counterspell, but with the drawback (?) of returning a creature to your hand. And when I say drawback, I mean that you can return **Mystic Snake**, **Shriekmaw**, **Mulldrifter**, or any number of creatures with beneficial comes-into-play effects to your hand with **Familiar's Ruse**.

Mulldrifter: A fantastic draw spell, which also can be abused a lot with **Momentary Blink**. At the worst, **Mulldrifter** is **Counsel of the Soratami**. At the best, you are getting a 2/2 flyer and two cards for five mana, which is not a bad deal.

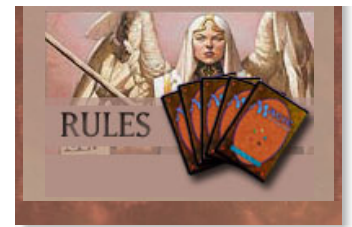
Pestermite: A 2/1 flyer with **Twiddle** attached, at an affordable three-mana price. This guy can spell the difference between winning and losing a combat race, since it can tap an attacker / blocker and then attack / block itself.

Ponder: A great card-selection spell. Do you want to play this over **Telling Time**? Well, Blue generally has a lot more to do at two mana than at one mana, so putting **Ponder** in the early draw slow (previously filled by **Sleight of Hand**) seems like a really good idea.

Tideshaper Mystic: It's been a while since blue got a good mana-fixing effect along the lines of **Dream Thrush**, but **Tideshaper Mystic** lets you get access to any color of mana (or any type of land) for your blue deck. While this can't deny your opponent access to the right color of mana the way previous incarnations could, it does help you in a pinch if you're playing three or more colors, creatures with landwalk, or a dedicated domain strategy (**Tribal Flames**, for example).

GREEN

Briarhorn: This guy is a decent body for four mana, but if it were just a 3/3 for four with flash, it'd still be nothing to write home about. Now, as a **Giant Growth** that gives you a 3/3 creature as well, that makes it a good man. Want a 6/6 surprise blocker? **Briarhorn** for the win! Need to get in 3 extra damage with your other creature? **Briarhorn** for the win!



Changeling Titan: Sometimes size just matters the most. There aren't many creatures that are going to be bigger than 7/7 for five mana. This guy is huge, and can be played in any deck that runs both creatures and green mana sources.

Elvish Harbinger: This is the only of the Harbinger cards from *Lorwyn* on this list, as the other Harbingers are generally narrow—they have a great use in a deck that is focused on their tribe, but don't have general utility. **Elvish Harbinger** also has a line of text at the bottom: Tap to add any color of mana to your mana pool. This is like **Birds of Paradise** and **Utopia Tree**, so it's good for acceleration or color fixing.

Fertile Ground: You probably already have these from *Eighth Edition* or *Invasion*, but if you don't, pick them up now. An old standby that lets you get multiple colors of mana, early, with acceleration included.

Imperious Perfect: Even if you're not playing Elves, **Imperious Perfect** is one of the cheapest token generators ever printed. This is a creature that effectively makes 2/2 token creatures for only 2 a turn. Plus, it only pumps up your Elves, so there's not really a chance of him accidentally pumping your opponent's Elves in a mirror match (unlike previous lords such as **Goblin King** and **Elvish Champion**).

Leaf Gilder: A 2/1 Llanowar Elves for two. If you want an extra power, and need to go from two mana to four (instead of one to three), this guy isn't a bad choice.

Lignify: A way for green to shut down large creatures it might not ordinarily be able to handle. Some of your creatures might have trouble getting around a four-toughness wall. Is that a big deal if you're bringing Akroma crashing down to earth? I don't think so!

Rootgrapple: **Creeping Mold**, except that it can also kill planeswalkers. This is one of the few Standard cards available which can just directly kill a planeswalker, and it can do so at instant speed. It's also more splashable than **Creeping Mold**. This is a great utility spell for green.

Woodland Changeling: A cheap changeling (2/2 for two) that can sub in for any tribal creature in any tribal deck, from Elves to Slivers to Knights to Goblins.

RED

Blades of Velis Vel: Four damage for two mana on your attacking creatures, plus it's a changeling to boot. Might be a little silly with Haakon, but it might not be silly when you drop your red aggressive creatures of choice in turns one and two, and then tack on 4 extra damage on turn three.

Changeling Berserker: A hasted **Juggernaut**, and one that can work with any deck that has creatures and access to red mana. I'm not sure that this is as strong as some of the other cards on this list (it's a little more focused on a red burn strategy), but it might be good in multiple red decks that achieve victory through attacking (versus just working in Goblins, or Elementals).

Ingot Chewer: **Shatter** (at Sorcery speed) for one mana, or a 3/3 **Shattering Monster** for five mana. If you're going to be battling artifacts, this guy is your man.

Inner-Flame Acolyte: At worst, **Inner-Flame Acolyte** is a 4/2 haste creature for three mana. At best, it's also an Elemental, and one that can give one of your other creatures a one-shot boost of +2/+0 and haste.

Lash Out: This is one of the most underrated cards in the set currently. For two mana, you do a minimum of 3 damage, killing a creature. Half of the time (maybe a little less), you'll tack on an extra 3 damage to your opponent, giving you an effective 6 damage for just two mana! That's a great bargain, and I expect to see this card popping up a lot.

Tarfire: Four more **Shocks**. Do you need four more **Shocks**? It depends on your deck, but some decks do—especially since **Tarfire** has the bonus of working better with a Goblin theme.

WHITE

Cloudgoat Ranger: Six power worth of creatures for five mana. I was all over this guy in [last week's column](#), and likely I'll be all over him in next



week's—three Kithkin and a 3/3 giant for five mana is just too good a deal to pass up!

Crib Swap: Takes care of any creature, no questions asked. Removes that creature from the game, which is important for reanimation and recursion purposes. Your opponent gets a 1/1 dude, but it's a 1/1 dude that most of the time won't have a relevant ability (changeling).

Goldmeadow Harrier: The cheapest universal **Master Decoy** ever. If you're playing white control, white aggro, or white midrange, this guy has a place in your deck.

Knight of Meadowgrain: A 2/2 first strike lifelink guy is a guy who will swing the damage race in your favor. Good in both control and aggro, because it gains you life, and early. I'd expect this to become the most-seen White Weenie creature online almost immediately, and it is that good.

Oblivion Ring: A removal spell that can pretty much take care of anything, with a drawback similar to **Faceless Butcher**'s. Still, people run a lot less enchantment removal than they do creature removal, meaning that **Oblivion Ring** has a much better chance of sticking to the board for the whole game. Plus, I'm going to be using the heck out of this card in my deck "**The Joke's On You**" right after the Kithkin evolution.

Wispmare: A more versatile **Cloudchaser Kestrel**—one that can be played either as a sorcery speed **Demystify**, or as a 1/3 flyer for three. Just like with **Ingot Chewer**, you want to play this guy if you're expecting to face a lot of enchantments.



ARTIFACTS

Moonglove Extract: **Seal of Fire**. Sure, it costs three mana instead of one. However, it's playable in any deck—blue, green and white don't get many direct damage spells (**Psionic Blast** raises its hand). I used to run **Aeolipile** in my black decks as a way to kill protection from black creatures in the early game. This would give a blue deck an easy way to kill **Scryb Ranger**, for instance, or white a way to kill **Blood Knight**.

Springleaf Drum: **Paradise Mantle** in reverse—you pay one to drop it and no mana to use it once it's in play. A good, budget card for mana acceleration and fixing, as it turns any creature you control, even if it is summoning sick (since **Springleaf Drum** is what taps the creature), into a **Birds of Paradise**.

Wanderer's Twig: **Lay of the Land** for any color. If you need to make sure you get certain colors of mana early, or want to thin your deck out of lands and you're not playing green, this is a good alternative.



LANDS

Shimmering Grotto: **Prismatic Lens**, but on a land. Doesn't accelerate you, but does fix your colors. I would consider this very heavily for a deck that runs more than two colors.

Vivid Crag / Vivid Creek / Vivid Grove / Vivid Marsh / Vivid Meadow: Budget versions of **Gemstone Mine**, with some benefits. In exchange for coming into play tapped and having two counters instead of three, each of these can tap for a specific color of mana without having to remove a counter, and each stays in play after its counters are gone.

I hope that this article has given everyone some ideas for decks for these cards, or ideas for these cards in their preexisting decks! Was this column helpful to you as a deck builder? Is this the type of column you want to see between the physical and online release of future sets? I want to know!

Do you want to see this type of column return in the future, between the physical and online release of a new set?

- Absolutely! I enjoyed this column a lot and want to see it again for future sets!
- No! I want to see Ben continue to build decks online, using the pre-new set Constructed format.
- No! I want to see Ben build decks using wacky formats (Singleton, Prismatic) during the set release gap!

Submit my Vote

See you all next week when we dive straight into the Kithkin Militia Theme Deck with the following poll results in mind:

How should Ben evolve the Kithkin Militia Deck?		
Straight Kithkin, with no sub-theme.	2902	33.8%
Kithkin and Giants. Giants like helping their little friends!	2654	30.9%

Kithkin / Soldiers. Let's see how big those guys can get!	2364	27.5%
Kithkin and Rebels. This would reallllly gut the Kithkin Theme deck though!	669	7.8%
Total	8589	100.0%

See you then!

*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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