

# The Deck

## What is hFEB?

Hermit Full English Breakfast (hFEB) is a combo deck built around **Volrath's Shapeshifter** and a series of tools to manipulate the top of the graveyard, allowing you to exploit Shifter's ability to the maximum. hFEB relies on two combos: the **FEB combo** (the original combo from the Classic FEB deck) and the **Hermit combo** (the one that adds the "h" in the deck's name).

These two combos share a similar structure, each composed of three fundamental pieces: an engine that sets up the board, a first creature that consumes game resources to increase the size of Shifter, and a second creature that uses that size to inflict lethal damage.

## The FEB Combo



**Survival of the Fittest**



**Phyrexian Devourer**



**Triskelion**

The engine is **Survival of the Fittest**, which lets you discard creature cards from hand and tutor creatures from the deck, changing Shifter's form and cycling through threats. The two combo pieces are **Phyrexian Devourer** and **Triskelion**.

When Phyrexian Devourer is on top of the graveyard, Shapeshifter can exile cards from the top of the library to add +1/+1 counters based on each card's CMC. With 95 total CMC in the deck, Shifter can grow very quickly. Shifter can't stay big for long though: Devourer's trigger forces a sacrifice when its power exceeds 7. That's where Triskelion comes in: by discarding it to Survival, Shifter converts its +1/+1 counters into 1-damage pings for lethal.

## The Hermit Combo



**Hermit Druid**



**Psychatog**



**Akroma, Angel of Wrath**

The engine is **Hermit Druid**, which mills the entire library since all your lands are non-basic. With a full graveyard, **Psychatog** takes the role of Devourer: exiling graveyard cards in exchange for +1/+1 pumps. Since these are not counters, Triskelion can't be the finisher, so **Akroma** closes the game in combat instead. Her haste, evasion, and trample are essential to convert those pumps into lethal damage.

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## The Bridge: Battlefield Scrounger



**Battlefield Scrounger**

The newest addition to the deck: **Battlefield Scrounger** bridges both combos.

It allows using Hermit Druid as a setup tool for a FEB kill, and it gives the deck a powerful way to play around Graveyard Hate without actually having to remove it from the board.

You'll see a lot of Scrounger action throughout this guide!

# The Toolbox

Beyond the combo pieces, hFEB runs a curated set of support cards that smooth out the deck's mana, recursion, disruption, and recovery.

Click on any card to jump straight to its breakdown.



**Birds of Paradise**



**Cabal Therapy**



**Unearth**



**Squee, Goblin Nabob**



**Palinchron**



**Karmic Guide**



**Animate Dead**



**Krosan Reclamation**

## Mana Creatures

**Birds of Paradise**, **Wall of Roots**, and to a lesser extent **Elvish Spirit Guide**, are here for the simplest and most important reason: they make the deck faster and smoother.

They accelerate your early turns, fix your mana, and help you reach the key setup turns where *Survival of the Fittest*, *Volrath's Shapeshifter*, or Hermit-related lines become active. There is nothing fancy about this role, but it matters a lot: hFEB is a technical combo deck, and having an extra mana at the right time often means turning a slow setup into an immediate kill.

**Wall of Roots** is especially important because it can generate mana without tapping, which matters in turns where mana efficiency is extremely tight.

## Cabal Therapy

**Cabal Therapy** is one of the most important interaction spells in the deck.

It gives you information, strips away relevant answers, and clears the way before committing to a combo line. In Premodern, it is already one of the strongest discard spells, but hFEB uses it especially well because the deck naturally plays creatures that can be sacrificed profitably.

Mana creatures that are no longer needed, creatures with enters-the-battlefield value, or creatures you actively want back in the graveyard can all become flashback material. This makes Cabal Therapy both disruption and synergy: it protects your combo while also helping you manage your own board and graveyard.

In practice, Therapy often lets you turn two mana and one expendable creature into two discard effects. For a deck trying to resolve a fragile but powerful engine, that is extremely relevant.

## **Unearth**

**Unearth** is one of the most efficient recursion spells in the deck.

Most importantly, it brings back Volrath's Shapeshifter, which is often the central piece of both the FEB kill and the Hermit kill. It also cycles, which means it is rarely completely dead, even in games where recursion is not immediately needed.

A key interaction is that Unearth can reanimate Shapeshifter while the top creature card of the graveyard has an enters-the-battlefield ability. If Shapeshifter enters while copying that creature, the ETB ability will trigger. Then, once Unearth finishes resolving, Unearth itself will be on top of the graveyard and Shapeshifter may become a blank 0/1, but the triggered ability is already on the stack.

This makes Unearth much more than a simple reanimation spell. It can create important timing windows and enable lines that depend on Shapeshifter entering as the right creature for just a moment.

## **Squee, Goblin Nabob**

**Squee** is almost an auto-include in any serious Survival deck.

With Survival of the Fittest, Squee turns every turn cycle into a repeatable creature tutor. You discard Squee, search for a creature, then get Squee back during your upkeep and do it again. This gives the deck inevitability, improves bad hands, and lets you turn even a single creature in hand into multiple resources over time.

One of the most important patterns is the end-step setup: if you have Survival and only one creature in hand, you can discard that creature to find Squee, discard Squee to find another creature, untap, return Squee to your hand, and suddenly start the turn with two usable creature cards. This greatly improves your ability to assemble a combo from very limited resources.

Squee can also act as graveyard bait. Against cards like Tormod's Crypt or other graveyard interaction, the opponent may be forced to respect the recursion engine, sometimes opening a window for the real combo.

## Palinchron

**Palinchron** is one of the cards that helps the deck speed up its winning turns.

Its main role is mana generation. When combined with Volrath's Shapeshifter, Palinchron can effectively double or greatly increase the amount of mana available in a turn, especially if you have another creature in hand to continue a Survival chain. This makes it much easier to move from setup into a full combo turn.

Palinchron also has a relevant role in **Battlefield Scrounger** lines. When you need to shuffle back exactly enough mana value for a Devourer-style kill, Palinchron, Battlefield Scrounger, and Akroma, Angel of Wrath add up to exactly 20 mana value. That makes Palinchron not just a mana engine, but also a useful piece in deterministic Scrounger setups.

## Karmic Guide

**Karmic Guide** is one of the key cards for winning through Hermit-based lines.

After a Hermit Druid activation, Karmic Guide often provides the bridge between a fully loaded graveyard and an actual win. It can reanimate Volrath's Shapeshifter, recover a missing creature, or turn a graveyard position into a lethal board state.

It is also useful outside of pure Hermit kills. Sometimes Karmic Guide lets you win FEB-style with only one creature in hand, or simply reanimates a high-impact creature such as Akroma or Triskelion. Even when it is not part of a deterministic kill, it gives the deck a strong recovery tool and a way to convert graveyard resources into battlefield presence.

## Animate Dead

**Animate Dead** is one of the newer additions, and it is extremely interesting in this shell.

Its strongest interaction is with Karmic Guide, but it also functions as a flexible recursion piece for Volrath's Shapeshifter or other key creatures. One of the main differences from Unearth is that Animate Dead does not put itself on top of the graveyard after resolving. This can matter a lot, because it lets you reanimate a creature without immediately disturbing the top of your graveyard in the same way Unearth does.

Because of this, Animate Dead can sometimes turn a messy or awkward graveyard order into a clean, deterministic win. It gives the deck another way to convert graveyard access into battlefield access, especially in situations where the exact top card of the graveyard matters.

## **Krosan Reclamation**

**Krosan Reclamation** is one of the most important utility cards in the deck, especially in Hermit Druid lines.

If you activate Hermit Druid during your upkeep, Krosan Reclamation can let you shuffle specific cards back into your library before your draw step. Instead of drawing from an empty library, you draw one of the cards you intentionally put back. This makes it a key tool for post-Hermit planning.

It can also increase the number of cards left in the library for Phyrexian Devourer or Battlefield Scrounger lines, letting you create enough resources for a kill. It is not only a self-targeting tool either: Krosan Reclamation can target the opponent, which can matter against opposing graveyard strategies or specific graveyard-based setups.

Another important detail is that Krosan Reclamation targets a player and up to two cards in that graveyard. This means it can be used flexibly, even when you only need to shuffle back one card, and in some situations the shuffle effect can still matter even if the number of cards being returned changes before resolution.

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## **The Mana Base**

**Llanowar Wastes**

**Yavimaya Coast**

**Gemstone Mine**

**City of Brass**

**Reflecting Pool**

**Undiscovered Paradise**

**Treva's Ruins**

**Underground River**

The mana base is one of the biggest deckbuilding costs of hFEB.

Because the deck wants Hermit Druid to be deterministic, it cannot play basic lands. If the deck contained even a single basic land, Hermit Druid could stop before milling the entire library, making the Hermit kill much less reliable. This means the whole mana base has to be built out of nonbasic lands while still supporting a very demanding multicolor shell.

## The Core Sixteen

The core sixteen lands are, in my opinion, the non-negotiable foundation of the deck:

- 4x Llanowar Wastes
- 4x Yavimaya Coast
- 4x Gemstone Mine
- 4x City of Brass

These sixteen lands are not really interchangeable. They give the deck access to the colors it needs early, enter untapped, and allow the deck to function without compromising the Hermit Druid plan.

## Reflecting Pool

To these, the deck adds **3 Reflecting Pool**. Reflecting Pool is especially valuable because it often turns painful mana into clean mana. When paired with a painland or City of Brass, it lets you produce the colors you need without repeatedly taking damage. In long games, that matters a lot: hFEB can spend several turns sculpting a hand or setting up a graveyard, and saving two or three life over the course of a game can easily change a race.

## Undiscovered Paradise

The deck also plays **Undiscovered Paradise**. This is not one of the strongest lands in the deck, but it has a specific role. It helps you continue making land drops when you otherwise might miss one (I'm not sure when this is relevant, maybe if the opponent has a Horn of Greed in play). It is a little awkward, but the flexibility is useful enough to justify the slot.

## The Lair Slot

Then there is the **Lair slot**, usually **Treva's Ruins**. In most versions, the deck is primarily interested in the Treva colors: green, white, and blue. That said, this is one of the more flexible land slots in the deck. Depending on the sideboard and the exact color requirements of the 75, Treva's Ruins can become **Darigaaz's Caldera** if you want better access to black-red-green, or **Crosis's Catacombs** if the deck needs blue-black-red instead. For example, if your sideboard leans harder on red cards like Pyroclasm, changing the Lair can be a clean way to support that plan.

## The Flex Painland

The final, twenty-second land is usually another painland: effectively the ninth painland of the deck. This slot is very customizable. It is often **Underground River**, giving access to blue and black, but it can change depending on the sideboard configuration.

If the deck wants more red, **Karplusan Forest** becomes attractive. If it wants more white and black, especially for cards like Swords to Plowshares or other white spells, **Caves of Koilos** is an option. If the list wants more white and green, **Brushland** can fill the role instead.

So while the first sixteen lands are fixed and the three Reflecting Pool are very close to fixed, the last few slots are where the mana base can adapt to the exact version of hFEB you are registering. In practice, these lands should be chosen by looking at the full 75, not just the maindeck.

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Mastering hFEB is less about memorizing fixed patterns and more about understanding how to adapt its engines to the game at hand. This guide will help you develop both the technical knowledge and the strategic intuition required to pilot the deck to its full potential.

▮ *For a complementary introduction, check out the [CrazyCarl Primer](#).*

# Core Lines

In this section, you will find the main lines the deck is built around: the cleanest, most common, and most frequently used sequences to win games with hFEB.





These are the baseline patterns you should learn first. They are not always the most complex lines available, but they are the ones that define the deck's core game plan and come up most often across different matchups.

## Hermit Kill with Akroma

The typical combat kill assembled with Hermit Druid.

 **Gravestone order (top to bottom):** Karmic Guide



- 1   Activate Hermit Druid
- 2 (If you are in your upkeep  cast Krosan Reclamation and shuffle up to two Unearth in the deck and go to draw step)
- 3 Put Karmic Guide on top of your graveyard
- 4  Cast Unearth targeting Shapeshifter

- 5 Shifter enters as Guide and targets Guide itself  
*(do this if you want an extra body for Therapy)*
- 6 Guide enters and targets Psychatog
- 7 Sacrifice Psychatog with Cabal Therapy
- 8 Activate Shifter/Tog to pump it (at least 14 times)
- 9 Reveal Akroma on top of graveyard and attack




## Hermit Kill with Devourer — 20 Damage

If you can't go into combat to kill with Akroma, you can still use Hermit and shoot with Triskelion. If you need more than 20 damage, use Animate Dead to bring back two Shifters and shuffle more cards back into the library, or you can activate Shifter/Scrounger once in your turn and once in your opponent upkeep.

 **Graveyard order (top to bottom):**


Karmic Guide  
Battlefield Scrounger  
Phyrexian Devourer  
Triskelion



- 1  Activate Hermit Druid
- 2 *(If you are in your upkeep 1  cast Krosan Reclamation and shuffle up to two Unearth in the deck and go to draw step)*
- 3 Put Karmic Guide on top of your graveyard
- 4  Cast Unearth targeting Shapeshifter
- 5 Shifter enters as Guide and targets Guide itself *(do this if you want an extra body for Therapy)*
- 6 Shifter/Guide enters and targets Psychatog
- 7 Remove Unearth + Guide with Psychatog
- 8 Reveal Battlefield Scrounger on top of graveyard
- 9 Activate Shifter/Scrounger to shuffle Scrounger + Palinchron + Akroma back into the library (20 CMC)
- 10 Reveal Devourer on top of graveyard
- 11 Activate Shifter/Devourer 3 times
- 12 Remove Devourer with Psychatog
- 13 Reveal Triskelion on top of graveyard
- 14 Shoot the opponent with Shifter/Triskelion



### Shifter Combat Kill — with Hermit Druid

A simple line using both Hermit Druid and Volrath's Shapeshifter on the battlefield. Go to combat, activate Druid to put Psychatog on top of the graveyard, pump Shifter/Tog, then reveal Akroma for flying and attack.

 **Graveyard order (top to bottom):**

Psychatog  
Akroma, Angel of Wrath  
Wrath



- 1   Activate Hermit Druid
- 2 Put Psychatog on top of your graveyard
- 3 Activate Shifter/Tog to pump it
- 4 Reveal Akroma on top of graveyard
- 5 Attack with Shifter/Akroma

This line can be performed by attacking with a 0/1 Shifter and then activating Hermit in combat for an unexpected kill.

**Side note:** If you have both Psychatog and Hermit in play without summoning sickness, you can attack with Psychatog, activate Hermit, and eat the graveyard to pump Tog directly.

Shifter Combat Kill — with Devourer

Activate Shapeshifter/Devourer while retaining priority, then discard a card so that the Devourer sacrifice trigger never goes on the stack. You end up with a gigantic Shapeshifter ready to attack. You can use Psychatog, Survival or the Shapeshifter itself to discard any cards to prevent the sacrifice trigger to go on the stack.



**Graveyard order (top to bottom):**

Akroma, Angel of Wrath  
Wrath  
Phyrexian Devourer





- 1  Discard Devourer from your hand
- 2 Activate Shifter/Devourer and hold priority
- 3  Discard a card from your hand
- 4 Let the triggers resolve
- 5 Attack with Shapeshifter

Discard a flying creature — ideally Akroma — to make Shapeshifter lethal. You can also remove the last counter from a Gemstone Mine instead of discarding a card to achieve the same result.

## Classic FEB Kill

The basis of Full English Breakfast. Straightforward and uninterrupted when assembled.



- 1 Start with Survival and Shapeshifter in play
- 2  Discard Phyrexian Devourer to Survival
- 3 Activate Shifter/Devourer X times until it has enough counters  
*Let each activation resolve before the next one*
- 4  Discard Triskelion to Survival
- 5 Shoot the opponent with Shifter/Triskelion

With all pieces in hand and in play the opponent has no chance to interact. Just be sure to have enough CMC left in the deck to kill: this is not infinite damage!

## FEB Kill with Palimpsest

A mana-efficient line using Palinchron to cheat on mana costs.  
Can be started on the opponent's turn.






**Graveyard order (top to bottom):**




Palinchron  
Volrath's Shapeshifter



- 1 Start with Survival in play and Palinchron in hand
- 2 Discard Palinchron to Survival
- 3 Get Volrath's Shapeshifter
- 4 Discard Volrath's Shapeshifter to Survival
- 5 Get Phyrexian Devourer
- 6 Cast Unearth targeting Shapeshifter
- 7 Shapeshifter enters and you untaps up to seven lands
- 8 Discard Phyrexian Devourer to Survival
- 9 Get Triskelion
- 10 Activate Shifter/Devourer X times until it has enough counters  
*Let each activation resolve before the next one*
- 11 Discard Triskelion to Survival
- 12 Shoot the opponent with Shifter/Triskelion

In this line, Shapeshifter and Palinchron are interchangeable, one can be discarded to get the other.

You only need 2 lands: at least one producing  for Unearth and then   to activate Survival twice.

If not using Unearth, pay    to cast Shapeshifter and then untap at least 2 lands to discard Devourer and Triskelion.


## FEB Kill with Only One Creature to Pitch






Useful when you have Survival of the Fittest out but only one creature in hand. This line can be started on the opponent's turn, discarding creatures and sculpting your hand.



**Graveyard order (top to bottom):** Karmic Guide  
Phyrexian Devourer  
Triskelion



- 1 Start with Survival out and a creature in hand
- 2  Discard Triskelion to Survival
- 3 Get Phyrexian Devourer

- 4  Discard Phyrexian Devourer to Survival
- 5 Get Karmic Guide
- 6  Discard Karmic Guide to Survival
- 7 Get Volrath's Shapeshifter
- 8    Cast Volrath's Shapeshifter — it enters as Guide
- 9 Guide targets itself
- 10 Guide enters and targets Triskelion
- 11 Reveal Phyrexian Devourer on top of graveyard
- 12 Activate Shifter/Devourer X times until it has enough counters  
*Let each activation resolve before the next one*
- 13 Activate Triskelion dealing damage to itself
- 14 Triskelion dies and goes on top of graveyard
- 15 Shoot the opponent with Shifter/Triskelion

If you have Unearth in hand, you can fetch for a Psychatog before Karmic Guide and then discard the Shapeshifter to reanimate it. In this way you need less Blu mana and its easier to set up if you start in your opponent's turn.

# Advanced Lines

In this section, you will find more complex lines involving Battlefield Scrounger and other unusual interactions within the deck.

Some of these lines depend on very specific timing, graveyard ordering, or rules interactions. If a line includes a Rules Disclaimer, it means that the interaction is still being discussed or has not yet received a final, universally accepted ruling — especially regarding how Volrath's Shapeshifter interacts with multiple abilities that can only be activated once per turn.

## Hermit vs Phyrexian Furnace

Scrounger means you are no longer limited to a single avenue of lethal. Here is a line to deal with a Phyrexian Furnace using only Hermit Druid in play.

**Scenario:** Hermit Druid in play, opponent has Phyrexian Furnace with a mana up (or Withered Wretch).








**Graveyard order (top to bottom):**

Karmic Guide  
Psychatog  
Battlefield Scrounger  
Phyrexian Devourer  
Triskelion



## 6 mana — 1 turn kill / 3 mana — 2 turn kill:

- 1   Activate Hermit on upkeep
- 2 Order graveyard: Guide, Tog, Scrounger, Devourer, Trike (if under 6 mana available, activate on opponent's EOT instead)
- 3 1  Cast Krosan Reclamation targeting two Shapeshifter (if under 6 mana, do this on opponent's EOT)
- 4 Draw Shifter and 1   cast it. Opponent sees Guide trigger coming: if they exile Guide, Shifter enters as Tog and you pump for a lethal Akroma attack. Assuming they don't exile Guide...
- 5 Shifter enters as Guide and targets Guide. If opponent exiles Guide, Shifter becomes Tog. If they exile Tog instead, Guide enters and targets Triskelion. Use Shifter/Scrounger to put Scrounger + Squee + Akroma (16 CMC) into library. Combined with Shifter already in library = 19 CMC. With Devourer on top, activate Shifter/Deevourer to exile the whole library for 19 counters. Shoot opponent twice with Triskelion, shoot Triskelion to put it on top, deal the remaining 19 damage.
- 6 Assuming Tog enters, you now have Hermit, Shifter, Guide, and Tog in play. Check whether opponent has exiled any card up to now: if they have (and it wasn't Akroma), sac Tog to Therapy, pump, and attack for lethal. If Akroma was exiled, use Scrounger to put Palinchron + Squee + ESG (16 CMC) back. Next upkeep put Scrounger + WoR + WoR (25 CMC total) and FEB for lethal.
- 7 Assuming opponent still has Furnace up: Scrounge Palinchron + Akroma + ESG (21 CMC) and pass the turn. If opponent tries to exile anything, use Tog to reveal Devourer and kill with the 21 CMC. Otherwise on their upkeep, Scrounge Scrounger + Squee + WoR (10 more CMC) and attempt FEB kill.

## Survival & Shifter vs Multiple Graveyard Hate

A Scrounger-based line that works around most graveyard hate without needing a second creature in hand. Requires Shifter to be non-summoning sick. The key idea: pitch Hermit Druid to Survival repeatedly until one resolves with Hermit still in the graveyard.

⚠ If the opponent has more than four mana and Withered Wretch, committing to this line is not 100% safe.



**Graveyard order (top to bottom):**


Battlefield Scrounger

Psychatog

Phyrexian Devourer



- 1 (♣) *discard a creature to Survival to get Hermit Druid*
- 2 (♣) Discard Hermit to Survival
- 3 Get Triskelion  
*(If Hermit is removed before Survival resolves, get another Hermit and repeat this step)*
- 4 Activate Shifter/Hermit and put Scrounger on top of graveyard

- 5 Activate Shifter/Scrounger to shuffle Scrounger + Akroma + Palinchron back into library (20 CMC)
- 6 Let the +3/+3 pump from Scrounger resolve
- 7 Activate Shifter/Psychatog at least 3 times for a total +6/+6 pump. The opponent can use all the graveyard hate they want here: **keep pumping in response until +6/+6 is achieved**
- 8 Exile Psychatog and another card to reveal Devourer
- 9 **Shifter/Devourer will have 7+ power, so the Devourer sacrifice trigger goes on stack**
- 10 Activate Shifter/Devourer 3 times exiling Akroma + Palinchron + Scrounger for 20 counters total
- 11  Discard Triskelion to Survival and shoot

Every action in this line is part of an activation cost. The opponent has no window to meaningfully interact once the sequence begins. Pre-triggering the sacrifice clause guarantees all Devourer activations resolve above the sacrifice trigger — none can be covered!

## Survival & Shifter vs Tormod's Crypt — without Tog ▼

With a non-summoning sick Shapeshifter and Survival of the Fittest, you can generate a hate-proof chain that wins cleanly. This line works against any one-shot graveyard hate and requires 5 mana.



**Gravestone order (top to bottom):**

Battlefield Scrounger  
Phyrexian Devourer



- 1 (♣) discard a creature to Survival to get Hermit Druid
- 2 (♣) Discard Hermit to Survival
- 3 Get Triskelion
- 4 (♣) Activate Shifter/Hermit
- 5 Put Battlefield Scrounger on top of graveyard
- 6 Activate Shifter/Scrounger to shuffle Scrounger + Akroma + Palinchron back into library (20 CMC)
- 7 Activate Shifter/Devourer, letting each trigger resolve before the next. If opponent activates Crypt here, spend 1 (♣) to cast Krosan Reclamation and put Karmic Guide + Squee (8 CMC) in library, then activate Shifter/Devourer again to reach lethal
- 8 (♣) Discard Triskelion to Survival and shoot











Scrounger's library-filling is part of the activation cost, so the opponent cannot prevent those cards from going back. There is no relevant window for the opponent to use a single Furnace or Crypt to stop this sequence.

With Survival of the Fittest and two Volrath's Shapeshifters in play, Battlefield Scrounger enables an infinite pump loop. Useful against decks that can generate infinite life or otherwise block a normal hFEB kill. This line does not exile deck cards like Tog or Devourer, keeping your options open for future turns.







Start with two Shifters in play, Survival in play, WoR in hand and a creature with toughness 3+ top of graveyard (WoR or Pali - NOT Akroma as Shifters will die to the Legend rule).

- 1 Discard WoR#1 to Survival → get WoR#2
- 2 Shifter1 produces (which we abbreviate as S1-> ). The P/T increments of both Shifters are now [0/-1] and [0/0]. We have in our pool.
- 3 Use to pitch WoR2 to get Battlefield Scrounger (BS).
- 4 S1-> , S2-> , [0/-2, 0/-1], in pool
- 5 Use to pitch BS. In response use S1 to scrounge WoR1, WoR2 and BS. Let 3/3 pump resolve and get WoR1 from library. [3/1, 0/-1]. in pool.
- 6 Pitch WoR1 for WoR2
- 7 S1-> , [3/0, 0/-1], in pool.
- 8 Pitch WoR2 for BS

- 9 S1->  , S2->  , [3/-1, 0/-2],   in pool.
- 10 Pitch BS, scrounge top 3 cards with S2, let pump resolve and get WoR1. [3/-1, 3/1].
- 11 Pitch WoR1 for WoR2
- 12 S2->  , [3/-1, 3/0],  in pool.
- 13 Pitch WoR2 for BS
- 14 S1->  , S2->  , [3/-2, 3/-1],   in pool.
- 15 Pitch BS, scrounge top 3 cards with S1, get WoR1. [6/1, 3/-1]. G in the pool. Go back to step 6.

Every round toughness increments oscillate from -1 to 1 and viceversa and we get +3 on power on one or the other Shifter. Final result are two [inf, +1] Shifters (but only one Shifter/Akroma will survive).


If you have hermit druid in play at the start of the line (or top of graveyard), you can activate it to make the Shifters a Tog and pump them to guarantee them surviving all the negative counters along the line (makes math easier). You can also use the AD+Karmic Guide tech to bring two shifters into play and set up the board for the infinite line.

To use this line for combat, in step 10 use Scrounger to put Scrounger, Akroma and WoR1 into the library and get WoR1. Use the last  in the pool to pitch WoR1 for Akroma and use both Shifters to add   to the pool. Finally use  to pitch Akroma to get Scrounger. One of the Shifters must die to the legend rule, choose the one with the [X/-2] P/T delta, and a single Shifter will remain with a [X/0] P/T Delta. Use the last  to pitch Scrounger and in response put Scrounger, the top Shifter and something else in the library, revealing Akroma and attack for lethal.






## Shifter Kill with Library Rescue

A finite but large pump that also reshuffles most of your graveyard back into the library. Compared to the infinite line, it only requires a single Wall of Roots instead of three — useful as a backup when two Walls have been exiled.

 **Graveyard order (top to bottom):** Wall of Roots

 **Rules note:** See the [Rules](#) page for details on the legality of activating Wall of Roots multiple times via Shifter.



-  (Discard a creature to Survival → get Scrounger)
-   Activate Hermit and put Wall of Roots on top
- 3 Activate Shifter/WoR to add 
- 4  Discard Scrounger to Survival: **in response**, activate Shifter/Scrounger and shuffle itself + 2 more cards for a total +3/+2 pump
- 5 Resolve Survival trigger → get Scrounger itself. Back to step 1.

This loop produces a **+1.5/+1 pump per card in the graveyard** — 3× more efficient than Psychatog and without exiling cards. For a 40-card graveyard this leads to a +50 pump.






Note: positive Scrounger pumps last until EOT while negative counters are permanent. Have a plan for when Shifter dies at end of turn.

## Aura Thief vs Enchantress Lock

Aura Thief can beat Solitary Confinement and most other Enchantress locks.

 **Graveyard order (top to bottom):** Karmic Guide  
Aura Thief



- 1   Activate Hermit Druid
- 2 (If you are in your upkeep  cast Krosan Reclamation and shuffle Animate Dead in the deck and go to draw step)
- 3   Cast Animate Dead targeting Shapeshifter

- 4 Guide targets Shapeshifter and both Guide and Animate Dead triggers go on the stack
- 5 Animate Dead trigger has to resolve first, so that Guide will go back to the graveyard on top of the Animate Dead
- 6 Shifter/Guide enters and targets Shifter #2
- 7 Shifter/Guide #2 enters and targets Guide itself
- 8 Guide enters and targets Psychatog
- 9 Use Psychatog to clean the top of graveyard and reveal Aura Thief
- 10 Sacrifice Shifter/Thief #1 with Cabal Therapy
- 11 **Aura Thief triggers and you gain control of all the enchantments your opponent control**
- 12 At this point you have both Shifter and Psychatog in play
- 13 Kill with the Shifter/Akroma or the Scrounger/Trike line

This line can also be a pass-the-turn line if you want to play around enchantment removal. In this case you shuffle two Unearth in the deck and you *reanimate* Aura Thief with the first one and then sacrifice it with Cabal Therapy.

# Matchup Spread

## Introduction to the Matchup Guide ▼

hFEB is an extremely versatile deck. One of its most important traits is the ability to quickly adapt to the opponent's plan, shifting axes based on the opening hand, the matchup, and the early information gathered during the game.

The deck has eight true engines: **four Hermit Druid** and **four Survival of the Fittest**. These cards don't do exactly the same thing, but they both represent ways to turn an opening hand into a winning line.

**Hermit Druid** is the faster plan. When uninterrupted, it often closes the game on turn three or four, sometimes even earlier with the best hands. It's an explosive, direct plan, and it's very strong against opponents who can't remove the Druid right away or don't apply enough pressure to force you to change direction.

**Survival of the Fittest**, on the other hand, is a slightly slower but much more flexible plan. It can still win quickly, even on turn three or four with the right cards, but its real value lies in its adaptability: it tutors specific creatures, builds alternative lines, plays better around hate, and turns nearly every creature in hand into a useful resource.

In general, there are two main approaches.

The first is a more **conservative** approach. This applies especially when your hand contains multiple discard spells, like **Duress** or **Cabal Therapy**. In these cases, you can use the discard first to learn the opponent's hand, strip the most problematic cards, and only then deploy your combo piece. It's a slower plan, but it reduces the risk of losing to a single interaction.

The second is a more **explosive** approach, built around bypassing the opponent's interaction before they have time to develop it. A classic example is using **Elvish Spirit Guide** to play Hermit Druid on turn one and try to close the game the very next turn with

**Unearth** or an equivalent line. It's a riskier plan, but in some matchups or with certain hands, it's the best way to win.

## The Role of the Opening Hand

Every matchup depends heavily on the opening hand.

hFEB mulligans fairly well and can win even on a four-card mulligan. That said, keeping five, six, or seven cards significantly increases your chances of winning. For this reason, you need to carefully evaluate which hands are actually functional and which only look playable but lead nowhere.

In general, a hand without any of the eight main engines, meaning no **Hermit Druid** and no **Survival of the Fittest**, is usually a mulligan. There are exceptions, especially post-board or in very specific matchups, but as a rule the deck needs a card that turns its resources into a concrete plan.

The catch is that not every good hand lines up well against every opponent.

You may keep a hand with one or two **Hermit Druid** and then sit down across from Sligh or Goblins, where the Druid is much more fragile due to removal, Mogg Fanatic, or immediate pressure. Likewise, you may keep a hand with **Survival**, maybe great against a midrange or control deck, and discover you're facing Reanimator, where the opponent's clock can be faster than your setup.

For this reason, evaluating an opening hand is never abstract. A hand can be powerful and still not match the plan the matchup demands.

## Switching Plans Mid-Game

One of the most important skills with hFEB is knowing how to switch plans.

Imagine a hand with:

| Hermit Druid, Unearth, land, land, Survival of the Fittest.

In the abstract, the plan is simple: play Hermit Druid on turn two and try to close on turn three. But if the opponent opens with **Mountain, Mogg Fantic**, that plan changes immediately. Hermit Druid is no longer a reliable line, because the opponent already has a clean answer on board.

At that point, you have to recognize that the game is no longer being played on the Hermit plan but on the Survival plan. The same hand that looked like a fast-kill hand now becomes a setup hand, where Survival lets you build a more resilient line.

Likewise, if you have Hermit Druid but no Survival, it isn't always automatic to play it as a blocker or an immediate threat. Sometimes it's correct to hold it, watch your draws, and see whether you can develop another plan. If you draw a wall, for example, you can use it to buy three or four turns. If you draw Survival, then Hermit Druid in hand can become a creature to discard and start the chain.

The strength of the deck lies exactly here: a card that's a combo piece in one context can become bait, a blocker, a discard fodder, or simply a way to buy time in another.

## Sequencing Your Lands Correctly

Another fundamental aspect is land sequencing.

hFEB's manabase is powerful, but it can deal you a lot of damage. Against some decks this detail is minor; against others, like Sligh or Goblins, it can decide the game.

You'll often open hands with **Reflecting Pool** and another land. If you have no turn-one play, it can be correct to lead with Reflecting Pool to optimize your colors in the following turns and reduce damage taken from painlands.

In general, you want to take as little damage as possible from your own lands. This matters especially when using **Survival of the Fittest**. Even if you have access to two green sources, you aren't forced to activate Survival twice in the same turn if the second activation doesn't actually improve your plan.

Every life point is a resource. Sometimes paying two extra damage to accelerate a line is correct; other times, it's just a way to walk into the opponent's range with no real upside.

The question to ask is:

Does this extra activation actually change my line, or am I just spending life because I can?

## Post-Sideboard Versatility

The deck becomes even more versatile after sideboarding.

Post-board, Survival improves further because you have access to more specific creatures to tutor for. This lets you answer many different categories of permanents and interactions.

Depending on the configuration, you can have:

- **Monk Realist**, to remove problematic enchantments;
- **Uktabi Orangutan**, to destroy artifacts;
- **Ghitu Slinger**, to remove low-toughness creatures;
- **Xantid Swarm**, to protect your lines against counters and removal;
- other creatures or specific answers depending on the metagame.

This means post-board you're not just a more protected combo deck. You're also a deck capable of tutoring for targeted answers, switching axes, and forcing the opponent to respect multiple plans at once.

The opponent can prepare for Hermit Druid and lose to Survival. They can prepare for Survival and leave a window open for Hermit. They can bring graveyard hate but find themselves having to handle a hardcast creature or a more midrange line.

## How to Read This Section

The matchup sections that follow are not meant to be read as rigid instructions.

hFEB is not a deck that's piloted by always following the same line. Each matchup requires you to figure out which plan is most suitable in that specific context: sometimes you need to be explosive, sometimes you need to slow down, sometimes you use a combo card as bait, and other times you simply need to survive long enough to draw the right piece.

For each matchup, then, the goal is not just to say which cards come in and out, but to explain:

- which plan you want to follow;
- which opponent's cards you have to respect;
- which hands are keepable;
- how the game changes post-board;
- which mistakes to avoid.

The most important thing to remember is that hFEB rewards **adaptability**. It's not just about knowing the combo. It's about understanding, turn after turn, which of your lines has the best chance of going all the way.

## The Matchups



**Deadguy Ale**



**Dreadnought**



**Enchantress**



**GAT**



**Goblins**



**hFEB Mirror**



**Landstill**



**Mono Black**



**Ponza**



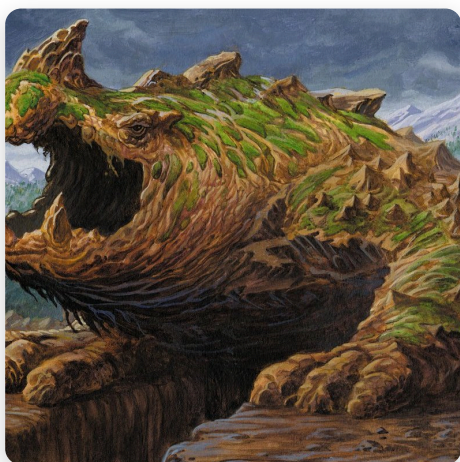
**Replenish**



**Sligh**



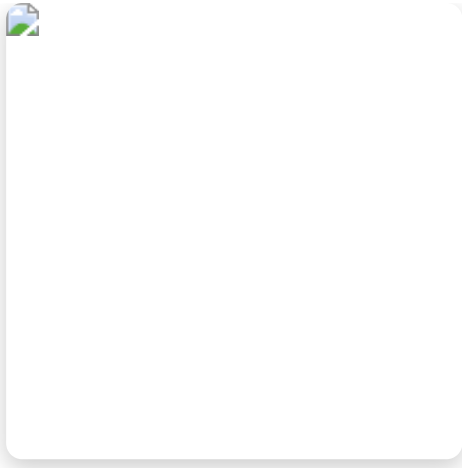
**Stasis**



**Terrageddon**



**UB Psychatog**



**The Rock**

# Deadguy Ale

## General Plan

**Deadguy Ale** and **B/W Control** are similar matchups. They're both black-based midrange/control decks that share the same fundamental tools: discard, removal, and a steady (though not lightning-fast) clock.

They share these key elements:

- discard, like **Duress**, **Cabal Therapy**, or **Gerrard's Verdict**;
- creature removal, like **Swords to Plowshares**, **Smother**, **Vendetta**, or edict effects;
- permanent removal, like **Disenchant**;
- a more or less significant clock;
- post-board hate against the graveyard, activated abilities, or Survival.

The main difference compared to blue decks is that these decks **cannot counter your spells**. This is a huge point. When you cast **Survival of the Fittest**, **Hermit Druid**, **Volrath's Shapeshifter**, or a utility creature, you know that spell will resolve.

The problem is different: you don't know whether it will stay in play.

If you play Survival, the opponent can have **Disenchant**. If you play Hermit Druid, they can have **Swords to Plowshares**, **Smother**, **Vendetta**, or an edict. If you go through the graveyard, post-board they can have **Phyrexian Furnace**, **Tormod's Crypt**, or **Withered Wretch**.

So the matchup isn't "free," but the fact that your spells resolve gives you a slight structural advantage.

## The Key Principle

Against these decks you have to try to resolve the right spell at the moment when the opponent's interaction against that specific spell is at its minimum.

You shouldn't only ask:

"Can I play Survival?"

but rather:

"Can the opponent's hand beat Survival?"

Or:

“Is Hermit Druid the right plan, or am I walking into a Swords?”

These matchups reward the ability to read the opponent’s hand and pick the right axis.

If the opponent has creature removal but no enchantment answer, Survival becomes the best plan. If the opponent has Disenchant but no creature removal, Hermit Druid can be the correct line. If the opponent only has discard and pressure, sometimes all you need is to draw a high-impact piece and force the game.

## Duress and Cabal Therapy

In these matchups **Duress** is often even more important than **Cabal Therapy**.

In general you shouldn’t sideboard in too many discard spells against decks that already run discard, because you risk entering a resource war where both hands empty out. But Duress has a special value: it gives you precise information.

And information is fundamental.

Imagine you have both **Hermit Druid** and **Survival of the Fittest** in hand, without knowing what the opponent has.

In the abstract, Survival is often the safer plan, because there’s less interaction against Survival than against Hermit Druid. On top of that, Survival can generate value even if the game goes longer.

But you have no certainty.

If you cast **Duress** and see **Disenchant**, you understand that the best plan is probably Hermit Druid. If you see **Swords to Plowshares**, you understand that Survival is much safer. If you see both, you have to figure out which line you can protect, which card you can strip, and which plan loses to the fewest interactions.

This is why Duress is so valuable: it guarantees to strip a card and it lets you choose the right plan.

## Survival vs Hermit Druid

### Survival of the Fittest

**Survival** is often very strong against these decks.

If it isn't removed immediately, it lets you generate value, find utility creatures, build alternative lines, and adapt to the board. Against non-blue decks, a resolved Survival can immediately start converting creatures in hand into concrete resources.

The problem is that many versions have access to enchantment removal: **Disenchant**, **Seal of Cleansing** and **Aura of Silence** are what do you have to expect from B/W decks.

So Survival is strong, but you shouldn't always treat it as a card destined to stay in play. If you can use it right away to gain value or build a line, you should.

## Hermit Druid

**Hermit Druid** is more exposed to removal, but it can close quickly and punish opponent's hands that are too slow or too oriented against Survival.

Against Deadguy Ale and B/W Control you mostly have to respect **Swords to Plowshares**. You should also consider black removal and edict effects.

Hermit is particularly good when you know the opponent has no immediate removal, or when you can force it at a moment when their hand has already been emptied by discard.

The point isn't to always choose Survival or always Hermit. The point is to figure out which of the two plans goes through fewer answers in that specific game.

## Deadguy Ale

**Deadguy Ale** is the more aggressive version of this category.

It can apply pressure fairly early with efficient creatures and discard. A sequence like land, discard, threat can force you to play faster than you would against pure B/W Control.

Its creatures are often small or medium, so post-board **Pyroclasm** is particularly interesting against Deadguy Ale, because many of those have toughness 2. Even **Exalted Angel** while morphed is a 2/2, so it can be hit before flipping.

Against Deadguy, you want to avoid wasting too much time. The opponent's discard can dismantle your hand, and the clock can become relevant and fast if they have a **Dark Ritual**.

Post-board, you should consider:

- creature removal;
- possibly **Pyroclasm**;
- answers to artifacts or enchantments if you've seen hate;
- keeping enough combo pieces to avoid becoming a deck that's too reactive.

## B/W Control

**B/W Control** is slower, but often has more interaction in hand.

What you should expect that's different from DGA? Maindeck graveyard hate, sweepers and general heavier control effects.

Against B/W Control, the game can go longer and is often played on the quality of resources. Here Survival is very strong if it stays in play, but you always have to respect Disenchant.

**Phyrexian Arena** is a card not to underestimate. If it stays in play for several turns, it lets the opponent find more discard, removal, and hate. For this reason, post-board enchantment removal can be valuable beyond just protecting against Disenchant or lock permanents.

## Why the Matchup Is Favorable

These matchups are often considered sufficiently favorable precisely because the opponent doesn't run counters.

The fact that your spells resolve changes a lot. This means you can set up lines where a key spell, once cast, isn't stopped on the stack or force the opponent to already have the right answer in hand or to draw it in the following turns.

This is the main limit of non-blue decks: they can't dig as much as blue decks to find the perfect interaction. They have to rely on what they have in hand or on natural topdecks.

If their hand isn't redundant, a single discard spell from you can win the game. If you strip the only Swords, the only Disenchant, or the only hate piece, you can often follow the plan you'd chosen without fearing further immediate interaction.

## Why You Can Still Lose

Even though the matchup is favorable, it's very easy to lose if you pick the wrong plan.

You can lose because:

- you keep a hand that's too fragile against discard;
- you play Survival into Disenchant without capitalizing on it;
- your hand gets emptied and you don't draw a payoff;
- you underestimate a creature clock;
- you lose to post-board hate like Crypt, Furnace, or Cursed Totem.

These decks don't do anything particularly "unfair," but they're good at trading resources. If you help them by picking the wrong line, they can drag you into a messy game where it becomes hard to rebuild.

## Post-Sideboard

Post-board you have to expect more hate.

The most common cards are:

- **Phyrexian Furnace;**
- **Tormod's Crypt;**
- **Cursed Totem;**
- additional Disenchant;
- more removal.

For this reason you want to have access to versatile answers:

- **Naturalize;**
- **Ray of Revelation;**
- **Monk Realist;**
- **Uktabi Orangutan;**
- creature removal like **Githu Slinger** or **Swords to Plowshares**.

Artifact answers are important because Crypt, Furnace, and Cursed Totem can be very annoying. **Uktabi Orangutan** is particularly useful because it's tutorable with Survival and can remove a hate piece while leaving a body on board.

Enchantment answers are useful against Phyrexian Arena and other problematic cards.

### Matchup Summary

Deadguy Ale and B/W Control are matchups with a similar approach, because they share a plan based on discard, removal, and problematic permanents, but without counters.

The keys to the matchup are:

- use Duress to figure out which plan is safer;
- choose between Survival and Hermit Druid based on the interaction you've seen;

- remember that your spells resolve, but don't necessarily stay in play;
- don't underestimate discard and the clock;
- bring in versatile artifact/enchantment answer.

In short: against non-blue midrange/control decks, your advantage is that your spells resolve. The game comes down to figuring out which resolved spell the opponent can no longer beat.

These are favorable but not automatic matchups. You can win them with relative solidity if you use discard to gather information, pick the right axis, and don't let yourself be dragged into a back-and-forth game where every combo piece is exposed to the perfect answer.

# Dreadnought

## General Plan

The matchup against **Mono U Dreadnought** depends heavily on the opponent's hand.

That's because Dreadnought can approach the game in two different ways: as a control deck, trying to slow you down with counters and interaction, or as a combo deck, trying to quickly put a **Phyrexian Dreadnought** into play.

The problem is that the opponent's combo is extremely compact. It's essentially two cards, and once the Dreadnought is resolved you have very little interaction in Game 1. A 12/12 with trample closes the game in two attacks, and if you've already taken damage from your manabase, it can drastically shrink your available time.

For this reason, the matchup is a very technical race: you have to figure out whether you can afford to play around counters, or whether you have to prevent the opponent from resolving the Dreadnought at all costs.

## Game 1

### How You Interact with the Dreadnought

In Game 1, your main way to interact with the Dreadnought plan is through discard spells:

- **Duress**;
- **Cabal Therapy**.

If you cast **Cabal Therapy** in the early turns and don't have specific information, the natural call is often **Phyrexian Dreadnought**. This is especially true if you don't yet have an immediate win plan and you just want to slow down the opponent's combo.

If instead you have a card in hand that, once resolved, can quickly win the game, like **Survival of the Fittest** or **Hermit Druid**, the choice changes. In these cases, it can be more correct to name the card that would prevent your key piece from resolving or functioning.

The most common calls are:

- **Counterspell**;
- **Foil**;
- **Gush**, in some situations;

- **Chain of Vapor**, if you suspect the list still runs it.

Lately you see fewer versions with **Chain of Vapor**, but it's still a card to consider. It's important to remember, though, that once the opponent has a Dreadnought in play, Chain of Vapor becomes riskier for them too. If they use it to bounce a lethal **Volrath's Shapeshifter**, you can sacrifice a land, copy Chain of Vapor, and bounce their Dreadnought back. From there the situation can get much more complex for both sides.

## Your Main Plans

In Game 1, as in many other matchups, both **Hermit Druid** and **Survival of the Fittest** are valid plans. The difference is that here both of them have to be fast enough. You can't afford a long game if the opponent can resolve a 12/12 in the early turns and protect it with counters.

**Hermit Druid** is very strong if you can open a clean window, but it's also fragile against some matchup-specific interactions.

**Survival** is often very good because, once resolved, it's impossible for Mono U to interact with. It can quickly become a source of advantage and a kill line.

The point is that resolving an engine isn't enough: you have to convert it into a win before the Dreadnought kills you.

## Cards to Respect

### Counterspell, Foil, and Classic Interaction

The first category of interaction is obvious: counters.

Mono U Dreadnought can stop your key pieces with:

- **Counterspell**;
- **Foil**;
- **Daze**, if present in some versions;
- **Miscalculation** or other situational counters, depending on the list.

These are the easiest interactions to read: if the opponent leaves or not mana open, you have to ask yourself whether you can afford to walk into a counter, or whether you should first go through Duress or Cabal Therapy.

## Stifle

**Stifle** is one of the most important cards to respect.

It doesn't just serve to make Phyrexian Dreadnought work. It can also interact with many of your lines.

It can shut off:

- the activation of **Hermit Druid**;
- the trigger of **Karmic Guide**;
- the untap trigger of **Palinchron**;
- other relevant triggered or activated abilities during the combo.

This means that even when you think you have the line ready, you have to ask whether you lose to Stifle.

For example, if you try to win with Hermit Druid and the opponent has Stifle, they can simply shut off the Druid's activation. In that case you don't win that turn, and if there's already a Dreadnought on the other side, you may not have another turn.

Likewise, if you cast Volrath's Shapeshifter with Palinchron on top of the graveyard and you're counting on the trigger to untap your lands, a Stifle on that trigger can completely break your sequence.

## Vision Charm

**Vision Charm** is a particularly problematic card, and often a less intuitive one.

Everyone thinks of Vision Charm as part of the Dreadnought plan, but its mode that mills four cards can interact very well against you.

The most important case is with **Hermit Druid**.

If you activate Hermit Druid and then use **Krosan Reclamation** to put two cards back on top of your library, the opponent can use Vision Charm to mill those cards. At that point, if you have to draw in your draw step, you have no cards left in your library and you lose the game.

So Vision Charm can turn an apparently safe line into an immediate loss.

It can also interfere with Volrath's Shapeshifter. For example, if you have **Palinchron** on top of the graveyard and cast Shapeshifter counting on the untap trigger, the opponent can use Vision Charm to mill cards and change the creature on top of the graveyard. If Palinchron is no longer the relevant creature at the right moment, you lose the trigger or the line doesn't work as planned.

Against Mono U Dreadnought you therefore have to respect Vision Charm not just as the opponent's combo card, but as real interaction against your lines.

## Brain Freeze

Some versions can play **Brain Freeze**.

It's not always in the list, but it's a card to consider because it can punish lines where you end up with few or zero cards in your library after Hermit Druid. Like Vision Charm, Brain Freeze can make a full-mill plan very risky if you aren't sure you can win immediately or protect yourself from losing on the draw step.

## Managing Life Total

In this matchup it's important to take as little damage as possible from your manabase.

Against a 12/12 trampler, every life point matters. The goal is to make sure the opponent needs at least two attacks to win, not just one.

It isn't always possible, because your deck needs specific colors and often has to use painlands or City of Brass. But you should avoid unnecessary damage, especially in the early turns.

The question to ask is:

Does this painful mana source actually accelerate my win, or is it just pushing me into Dreadnought range?

If one extra point of damage doesn't change your line, it's often better to avoid it.

## Post-Sideboard

Game 2 and Game 3 change significantly because you have access to more interaction.

The cards that usually come in are:

- more discard spells, **Duress**;
- **Xantid Swarm**;
- artifact removal, **Naturalize** or **Crumble**;
- **Uktabi Orangutan**;
- at least one **Swords to Plowshares**, if available.

**Swords to Plowshares** is very reasonable in this matchup. Giving the opponent 12 life is rarely the main problem: if you've removed the Dreadnought, you've probably bought enough

time to win with one of your combos.

## Post-Sideboard Plan

Post-board your plan is similar to Game 1, but with more tools.

You want to use discard to prevent the opponent from resolving Dreadnought, then try to close in the following turns, ideally protected by **Xantid Swarm**.

The difficulty is that the opponent often shifts too. Post-board, Dreadnought tends to become even more combo-oriented: the opponent may try to put a 12/12 in play very early, as soon as turn two or turn three, forcing you to have an answer right away.

In these scenarios, Naturalize or Swords alone isn't enough. You also have to figure out whether the opponent has a counter to protect the Dreadnought.

An ideal sequence can be:

Duress or Cabal Therapy to strip Counterspell/Foil. Then Naturalize, Crumble, or Swords on the Dreadnought. Then use the window you've earned to assemble your kill.

If you simply try to remove the Dreadnought without first checking the opponent's hand, you risk losing to a single counter.

## Xantid Swarm

**Xantid Swarm** is very strong in the matchup because it forces Mono U Dreadnought to interact preemptively.

If Xantid attacks and the trigger resolves, you can try to win that same turn without fearing Counterspell, Foil, Stifle, or Chain of Vapor. This is especially important because most of the opponent's interaction is instant-speed.

Xantid also works as a psychological threat: the opponent has to decide whether to counter it, bounce it, or let it resolve, knowing that if it sticks they might lose the ability to interact on the decisive turn.

## Back to Basics

Post-board you also have to consider **Back to Basics**, present in some lists.

It's not a card you'll always see, but it can be very annoying for your manabase. For this reason, when you have multiple answers in hand, you also have to think about how to preserve them.

For example, if you have both **Swords to Plowshares** and **Naturalize**, and you need to answer a Dreadnought, it can be correct to use Swords on the Dreadnought and save Naturalize for a potential Back to Basics.

It depends on the spot and on the opponent's hand, of course, but it's an important detail: post-board your answers don't just remove the Dreadnought, they also keep you from losing to problematic permanents.

## A Resolved Survival

A resolved **Survival of the Fittest** is very strong in this matchup.

Mono U Dreadnought can interact with Survival on the stack, or try to bounce it with Chain of Vapor if they play it, but once Survival sticks it becomes hard to deal with. Without normal access to Disenchant or similar effects, the opponent has to win fast or stop you from using it decisively.

For this reason, when you have Survival, you have to figure out whether it's better to force it now or protect it with discard. If you think it can resolve, it can become the best plan of the game.

## Don't Be Too Aggressive

One possible mistake is playing too aggressively with Hermit Druid without respecting the matchup-specific interactions.

Cards like **Vision Charm**, **Brain Freeze**, and **Stifle** can punish lines that would be safe in other matchups. This doesn't mean Hermit is a bad plan, but it means you have to know exactly which cards make you lose.

Sometimes it's better to slow down by one turn, use discard, or switch to Survival, rather than activating Hermit Druid in a window that looks fine but is vulnerable to a single card.

### Matchup Summary

Mono U Dreadnought is a matchup that depends heavily on the opponent's hand. They can play as control, trying to stop your pieces, or as combo, quickly putting a Phyrexian Dreadnought into play and forcing you to answer immediately.

The keys to the matchup are:

- respect **Stifle** on your key abilities;

- remember that **Vision Charm** can mill the cards put back on top with Krosan Reclamation;
- don't underestimate **Brain Freeze**;
- minimize damage from your manabase;
- post-board, bring in artifact removal, Xantid Swarm, and possibly Swords to Plowshares;
- save Naturalize when it might be needed against Back to Basics.

In short: against Mono U Dreadnought speed isn't the key. You have to be fast in the right way, respecting the cards that can turn an apparently safe line into an immediate loss.

The matchup demands a lot of precision. Every turn should be evaluated on two questions: how quickly you can win, and how quickly the opponent can put a protected 12/12 into play.

# Enchantress

## General Plan

The matchup against **Enchantress** is, in my view, fairly favorable. That doesn't mean it's impossible to lose, but in general you start from a positive position because you're usually one or two turns faster than their setup.

Enchantress is a deck that needs to assemble multiple pieces: card-draw engines, mana, protection, and lock pieces. hFEB, on the other hand, can win much earlier, especially when you can land **Hermit Druid** or **Survival of the Fittest** with even minimal protection.

The opponent's main interactions are:

- **Seal of Cleansing** or **Aura of Silence**;
- **Swords to Plowshares**;
- **Parallax Wave**;
- **Solitary Confinement**;
- **Abeyance**, in some lists already main deck.

The counts on Seal and Swords can vary, but they often sit between three and four copies. You rarely see just two.

Your general idea is simple:

| You're faster, but you have to use discard to strip the card that beats your specific plan.

## Game 1

### Why You Are Favored

In Game 1 you're often favored because Enchantress doesn't apply immediate pressure and doesn't have a huge amount of direct interaction. Their cards are powerful, but they need time to become really oppressive.

You, on the other hand, can build a relatively fast kill.

**Hermit Druid** can close before Enchantress has assembled its engine. **Survival of the Fittest** is very strong if you can protect it from Seal of Cleansing, because it lets you build a kill line with great consistency.

The best path is often to use a discard spell before resolving your combo piece.

With **Cabal Therapy**, the most common calls are:

- **Seal of Cleansing**, if your plan is Survival;
- **Swords to Plowshares**, if your plan is Hermit Druid;
- **Argothian Enchantress**, if your hand looks slow but can develop an engine;
- **Abeyance**, if you suspect that card and your plan goes through Hermit Druid.

You don't have to name the same card every time. The choice depends on which plan you're following and which card prevents you from winning.

## Argothian Enchantress

**Argothian Enchantress** is a card that deserves attention.

If your hand is slow and you need more turns to assemble the combo, it can be correct to use **Cabal Therapy** naming Argothian Enchantress. It's probably the opponent's best turn two: if it resolves, it starts their engine, and since it has shroud, you won't be able to remove it easily later.

This means that even a **Triskelion** can't solve the problem. An Argothian left on the board for several turns can draw enough cards to let the opponent find Seal, Swords,...

So if you can't win quickly, stopping the opponent from starting to draw cards can be more important than stripping a single answer.

## Seal of Cleansing and Swords to Plowshares

**Seal of Cleansing** and **Swords to Plowshares** are the most linear interactions of the matchup.

Seal is the main problem for **Survival of the Fittest**. If Survival resolves but gets destroyed immediately, you risk wasting time and mana without having built a real line. For this reason, when your plan is Survival, Therapy on Seal can be the right call.

Swords, instead, is the most important card against **Hermit Druid**. If your plan is simply to play Druid and activate it the following turn, you have to know whether the opponent can remove it.

The important thing is not to use discard automatically. You always have to ask:

┆ Which card beats the line I'm about to follow?

## Solitary Confinement

**Solitary Confinement** can be a problem, especially if you don't see it coming.

Sometimes it isn't a card that wins immediately, but it can buy the two or three extra turns Enchantress needs to stabilize. This is especially important if you've already activated Hermit Druid and think you have the game under control.

If the opponent can resolve Confinement with enough draw engine in play, they can turn it into a real lock. From there, the game can become very hard to close unless you have access to a specific answer.

For this reason, you shouldn't think of Confinement only as a defensive card: in certain positions it's the way Enchantress completely flips the tempo of the game.

## The Most Dangerous Card: Abeyance

In my view, the most insidious card of the matchup is **Abeyance**.

The reason is that Abeyance can win the game in response to a **Hermit Druid** line.

The key scenario is this:

You activate Hermit Druid. You put your entire library into the graveyard. In upkeep, you want to cast Krosan Reclamation to put cards back into the library. The opponent casts Abeyance. You can no longer cast Krosan Reclamation. On your draw step you lose because you can't draw a card.

This makes Abeyance an extremely dangerous card. It isn't just a card that slows you down: in certain spots it's a real win condition against you.

For this reason, you always have to watch the opponent's mana. If they're representing white mana and you think they might have Abeyance, you have to decide whether it's worth the risk, or whether it's better to wait a turn, use discard, or switch to a different plan.

The key question is:

Can I afford to lose to Abeyance in this spot?

If the answer is no, you have to find a way to strip it or work around it.

## Post-Sideboard

Post-board the matchup stays generally favorable, but the way it plays changes.

From the Enchantress side, you can expect:

- additional **Abeyance**;
- **Tormod's Crypt**;
- more enchantment hate.

On your side, you want to bring in all the enchantment removal you have:

- **Ray of Revelation**;
- **Naturalize**;
- **Monk Realist**;
- any other answers available.

You should also gladly bring in **Uktabi Orangutan**, because it can remove **Tormod's Crypt**. In this matchup, having two **Naturalize** in the sideboard, rather than a split between Naturalize and Crumble, can be more useful precisely because Naturalize is more flexible: it answers both enchantments and artifacts.

## The Value of Discard Post-Board

Post-board, discard is extremely valuable.

Many Enchantress players, knowing they're against hFEB, tend to keep slower but more interactive hands, aiming not to lose in the early turns. This means your discard spells become even more important, because they can strip the single card that holds their hand together.

It isn't uncommon to use **Cabal Therapy** naming **Tormod's Crypt** if your plan is Hermit Druid. Even if Swords to Plowshares is a strong card, sometimes Crypt is the bigger problem because it doesn't just shut off one turn: it can make an entire line difficult or impossible.

┆ Swords can stop a Hermit Druid. Crypt can make an entire line difficult or impossible.

So here too, the call has to follow the plan:

- if you want to win with Hermit and you can't beat Crypt, name Crypt;
- if your plan loses to Swords, name Swords;
- if you're going through Survival, you have to respect Seal or Ray;
- if the risk is Abeyance, you have to seriously consider that call.

## Elvish Spirit Guide and Speed

In Game 1, using **Elvish Spirit Guide** to accelerate the game makes complete sense.

If you can speed up Hermit Druid or Survival and put the opponent under pressure before they develop the engine, it's often correct to do so. Enchantress doesn't always have immediate interaction, and if it doesn't start fast, it risks being simply too slow.

Post-board, instead, this approach becomes riskier. The opponent knows that need answers, using Spirit Guide to accelerate can expose you to a 2-for-1 or a line that's too fragile. It doesn't mean you should never do it, but it isn't automatically correct anymore.

Post-board you should often prefer a more protected approach, based on discard and answers, rather than a blind race.

## Serra's Sanctum and Counting Mana

A common mistake against Enchantress is underestimating how quickly they can generate mana.

With **Serra's Sanctum**, **Exploration**, and a few enchantments in play, your math can fall apart completely. You think you have another turn, but the opponent suddenly produces enough mana to play multiple pieces, stabilize with Confinement, or build a position you can no longer get through.

This is one of the reasons the matchup, while favorable, can't be played carelessly. Enchantress can look slow, but some of its openings transform the board very quickly.

When the opponent has Sanctum or Exploration, you have to constantly re-evaluate the real clock of the game.

### Matchup Summary

Enchantress is a generally favorable matchup, because you're often faster and you have effective ways to protect your combo with discard.

The keys to the matchup are:

- use Cabal Therapy based on your plan;
- respect **Abeyance**, especially in lines with Hermit Druid and Krosan Reclamation;
- don't underestimate **Solitary Confinement**;
- post-board, bring in all enchantment removal;
- consider Uktabi Orangutan as an answer to Tormod's Crypt;
- carefully count the mana generated by Serra's Sanctum and Exploration.

In short: don't treat the matchup like a goldfish. You have to be fast, but not blind.

# GAT

## General Plan

**GAT** and the **3C/4C Psychatog** versions share some elements with UB Psychatog, but they add a much stronger tempo component.

Compared to pure UB Tog, these decks dig more, have access to **Mox Diamond**, play a better removal package and on top of that they have Armageddon to seal the deal. This makes them harder to approach, because while they're looking for answers to your combo plan, they can simultaneously apply pressure to the board.

The most important case is **GAT**, which you should consider the main reference for the category. The 4C or Esper Psychatog versions are, in my view, less linear or more "simplified" variants of the same concept: decks based on Gush, card advantage, and efficient threats, but with some structural issues tied to manabase and consistency.

GAT, on the other hand, has a very clear plan:

- **Gush**;
- **Mox Diamond**;
- **Accumulated Knowledge**;
- low-cost cantrips;
- **Quirion Dryad**;
- **Psychatog**;
- counters + efficient removal;
- **Armageddon**.

The main problem is that the deck isn't simply drawing cards to defend itself. It's drawing cards while a **Quirion Dryad** grows, or while **Psychatog** sets up to become lethal.

This means the time available to you can shrink very quickly.

## The GAT Shell

GAT is built to convert low-cost spells into value and pressure.

**Quirion Dryad** is one of the most dangerous threats, because it grows while the opponent does things they want to do anyway: drawing, filtering, protecting themselves, and finding interaction.

**Psychatog**, instead, plays the classic role of a threat that converts hand and graveyard into a huge attack. In this deck, though, it's supported by Gush and Accumulated Knowledge, so it can become lethal faster than it seems.

## Why the Matchup Is Complex

The matchup is complex because GAT can do two things at the same time:

- dig to find interaction against your combo;
- increase its own clock while doing so.

This is the worst possible scenario for you.

If the opponent has **Quirion Dryad** in play and is casting cantrips, Gush, and Accumulated Knowledge, every extra turn makes the game harder. They aren't just finding counters and removal: they're turning those same spells into damage.

This often forces you into forced plays. Sometimes you have to try to resolve Survival or Hermit Druid even into possible counters or removal, simply because waiting a turn means dying to Dryad or Psychatog.

The fundamental question is:

| Can I afford to wait, or is the opponent's clock already forcing me to push?

Against pure UB Psychatog you often have time. Against GAT, much less.

## Game 1

### Fire // Ice

In Game 1 you have to be very careful about **Fire // Ice**.

It's one of the cards that lines up best against your development, because it can easily create a 2-for-1. The most common scenario is:

| Birds of Paradise + Hermit Druid.

If the opponent can use **Fire** to kill both creatures, you lose acceleration and a combo piece to a single card.

For this reason, you shouldn't automatically expose multiple 1-toughness creatures unless forced to. Playing around Fire // Ice sometimes means slowing down slightly, but avoiding a 2-for-1 can be decisive.

## Meddling Mage

Some versions run **Meddling Mage** main deck.

If Mage resolves, you have to be ready to change plans. Depending on the chosen name, you may have to adjust the line:

- if it names **Volrath's Shapeshifter**, you can look for alternative lines or remove it;
- if it names **Hermit Druid**, you can switch to Survival;
- if it names **Survival of the Fittest**, you can force a creature-based line;
- if it names **Unearth** or **Animate Dead**, you can look for a hardcast plan or another sequence.

The important thing is not to stay stuck on the original plan. Against GAT, the opponent's deck applies pressure, so every turn lost on "not being able to do your line" is very expensive.

Sometimes you have to use more creative lines: instead of casting Shapeshifter from hand, you can use **Unearth**; instead of activating Hermit Druid in the classic way, you can have Shapeshifter become Hermit Druid and change the angle of attack.

## Counters

GAT runs a counter package that can vary, but you should normally expect:

- **Counterspell**;
- **Foil**;
- **Daze**;
- sometimes **Mana Leak**;
- sometimes **Miscalculation**.

**Foil** is particularly important because it can be cast even when the opponent looks tapped out. This is a crucial point: you shouldn't think that an opponent with no mana up is automatically without interaction.

This applies especially to lines with **Hermit Druid** and **Krosan Reclamation**. If you activate Druid in upkeep and then Reclamation gets countered by Foil, you lose the game on the spot.

## Survival in the Matchup

**Survival of the Fittest** is strong, but it isn't as free as it is against UB Psychatog.

GAT can have **Disenchant** or similar effects main deck, and post-board it can further increase the number of answers (usually **Ray of Revelation**). On top of that, even when Survival

resolves, you have to convert it into a line quickly, because Dryad and Psychatog can close in a few turns.

You can't always afford to use Survival as a slow engine. Sometimes you have to use it as a card that builds an immediate kill or a position that's very hard to beat.

The question to ask is:

| Is Survival buying me time, or is it winning me the game?

If the answer is only "it's getting me value," you may be too slow.

## Post-Sideboard

Post-board you want to increase the amount of targeted interaction, especially discard and removal.

The cards to prioritize are:

- additional **Duress**;
- **Xantid Swarm**;
- **Swords to Plowshares**;
- **Ghitu Slinger**;
- possible enchantment/artifact answers, like **Naturalize**, **Ray of Revelation**, **Monk Realist**, or **Uktabi Orangutan**, depending on the version.

The goal isn't to become a control deck, but to figure out which plan the opponent is following and open a window for your combo.

## Duress and Cabal Therapy

Discard spells are very strong because they give you information.

Against GAT this is particularly important, because lists can vary a lot and post-board the opponent can have several "cheap" or situational interactions.

A very strong line can be:

| Duress to see the hand and strip Gush. Cabal Therapy as backup to strip Psychatog or Quirion Dryad.

This sequence can slow the opponent down significantly, especially if you can strip both the card-advantage card and the threat or interaction. You should prefer having Duress post-board exactly because it lets you understand which version of the plan the opponent is following:

are they trying to protect themselves? Trying to apply pressure? Do they have removal? Counters? Hate?

The more information you have, the better you can pick the line.

## **Swords to Plowshares and Ghitu Slinger**

**Swords to Plowshares** is very strong because it answers all the opponent's main threats:

- Quirion Dryad;
- Psychatog;
- Meddling Mage.

Against a tempo deck, removing the threat often means gaining more turns than it might seem. If the opponent is using cantrips and Gush to grow Dryad, a well-placed Swords can turn all that work into wasted time.

**Ghitu Slinger** is particularly useful against **Meddling Mage**, since it can't always remove Quirion Dryad.

## **Pyroclasm**

**Pyroclasm** is debatable.

On one hand it can answer multiple **Meddling Mage** or sweep some small creatures. On the other hand, it isn't always easy to fit into the matchup, and Quirion Dryad often grows too fast to be removed by Pyroclasm.

Personally, I'm not a big fan of Pyroclasm here. It can be correct in some configurations or if you know the opponent is heavy on the Mages plan.

## **Xantid Swarm**

**Xantid Swarm** is a card you want in the matchup, but it has to be played carefully.

If Xantid resolves and attacks, it can make a combo line much safer against counters and instant-speed interaction. The problem is that the opponent has efficient removal.

If Xantid absorbs a **Swords to Plowshares** or a counter, fine. But if the opponent can use **Fire // Ice** to kill Xantid and another 1-toughness creature, the result can be terrible for you.

So Xantid shouldn't be used automatically. It's strong, but you have to avoid turning it into a free 2-for-1.

## The Opponent's Sideboard

GAT is a deck that often has many cheap and flexible interactions post-board. The cards can vary a lot from list to list.

You can expect:

- **Engineered Plague**;
- **Ray of Revelation** and/or **Seal of Cleansing**;
- more situational counters like **Annul**;
- possible graveyard hate;
- Meddling Mage, if it wasn't already main.

**Engineered Plague** has to be taken into account, especially against your smaller creatures. Since **Sylvan Library** is another important card you might see, cards like **Naturalize**, **Ray of Revelation**, or **Monk Realist** can become interesting.

## Killing the Mox

Against versions with **Mox Diamond**, artifact removal can be valuable.

GAT is a fairly color-intensive deck. In some versions it runs four Mox Diamond, four City of Brass, one Plains, and then mostly Islands. The black and green sources to cast threats are relatively few.

For this reason, destroying a **Mox Diamond** can be a very strong play, especially if that Mox is providing a key color. It isn't always your main plan, but in certain spots take it in consideration.

Cards like **Uktabi Orangutan** or **Naturalize** can therefore have applications beyond just Plague/Library/hate.

## Armageddon

Many versions of GAT run **Armageddon**.

This is very important because it changes how you have to sequence lands and mana dorks. You can't take for granted that the game will simply go long in a control style.

You have to ask:

- do I really need to play another land?
- can I prioritize mana creatures or Wall of Roots?

- can I win before Armageddon resolves?

Obviously **Wall of Roots** is very good here too, because it lets you maintain access to mana after a potential mana denial and buys time against the opponent's creatures.

## 4C / Esper Psychatog Versions

The **4C** or **Esper Psychatog** versions are similar to UB Tog, but with additional splashes for sideboard and broader interaction.

Compared to GAT, they can have a less explosive plan but a richer set of toolbox cards.

You can see:

- **Call of the Herd**;
- **Pyroclasm**;
- additional removal;
- specific sideboard cards;
- **Intuition** packages.

**Call of the Herd** is important because it creates a more stable clock and makes **Wall of Roots** even more relevant. Walls can buy many turns against elephants and prevent the opponent from turning a slow game into a simple race.

### Intuition and Flashback

Some Psychatog versions run a small **Intuition** package with flashback cards.

The piles can include:

- **Deep Analysis**;
- **Call of the Herd**;
- **Ray of Revelation**;
- **Accumulated Knowledge**.

This is important because it makes discard less definitive. If the opponent has flashback cards, discarding them doesn't necessarily solve the problem.

**Ray of Revelation** is particularly relevant if your plan revolves around **Survival of the Fittest** or **Animate Dead**. If you suspect Intuition and your plan loses to Ray, it can be correct to discard **Intuition** itself when you have the chance.

Here too, discard has to be used to protect the window in which you win, not just to strip a strong card.

# Hermit Lines Against Decks with Foil

Against these decks you have to be very careful with **Hermit Druid** lines.

A play I often consider very strong, when possible, is activating Hermit Druid in your **main phase**, not in upkeep. After milling the library, you can flash back a couple of **Cabal Therapy** to clean up the opponent's hand and then use **Krosan Reclamation** to put **Animate Dead** or other pieces back into the library.

The reason is simple: against a deck with counters, even if the opponent looks tapped out, that doesn't mean you're safe. **Foil** can counter Krosan Reclamation even without available mana. If you activate Hermit in upkeep, cast Krosan Reclamation, and it gets countered by Foil, you lose the game immediately on the draw step.

So against blue decks with Foil, you can't rely just on open mana. You have to build lines that reduce dependence on a single vulnerable Reclamation as much as possible.

## Matchup Summary

GAT and 3C/4C Psychatog are harder matchups than pure UB Psychatog, because they add a real tempo component.

The keys to the matchup are:

- respect **Fire // Ice**;
- don't let Quirion Dryad grow unchecked while the opponent looks for answers;
- remember that Psychatog can become lethal with Gush and Accumulated Knowledge;
- bring in Swords and Ghitu Slinger for threats and **Meddling Mage**;
- consider hitting Mox Diamond to cut colors;
- respect Armageddon;
- against Intuition, remember that discarding a card isn't always enough.

In short: against GAT you aren't just playing against a control deck. You're playing against a deck that finds answers while it's already killing you.

This changes the rhythm of the matchup. You can't be too patient like you are against UB Psychatog, but you also can't force randomly into counters and removal. You have to figure out when the opponent's clock forces you to act, use discard to open a window, and pick the line that loses to the fewest possible interactions.

# Goblins

## General Plan

The matchup against **Goblins** is often harder in **Game 1**, mostly because it depends heavily on the opponent's opening.

Goblins can have relatively slow hands, built around cards like **Goblin Piledriver**, **Goblin Matron**, **Goblin Ringleader**, **Rishadan Port**, or **Wasteland**. These hands are dangerous in the long run, but they don't always interact with your creatures right away. In those cases, it's pretty realistic to win with **Hermit Druid**, especially if you can break the mana parity with a **Wall** or a **Birds of Paradise**. Sometimes all it takes is a small acceleration, dropping Druid on the board, and forcing the opponent to find a specific answer in a very tight window.

**Survival of the Fittest** is also an excellent plan, slightly less safe than it is against Sligh. The reason is that the versions of Goblins running green can play **Naturalize**. Survival always resolves, because Goblins doesn't interact on the stack, but you never have full certainty about how long it'll stay in play.

So the general plan is simple: in Game 1 you can quite often win with Hermit Druid if the opponent doesn't have an explosive start or immediate removal. Survival is very strong too, but it has to be treated as a powerful engine, not necessarily a permanent one.

## Game 1

In Game 1 the game is tied closely to the quality of the opponent's opening.

There are Goblins hands you can beat fairly well: hands with slow development, too many utility lands, Matron without immediate pressure, or hands that can't remove your key creatures right away. In these scenarios, your walls are very important: they can buy enough time to let you reach the kill. If the opponent doesn't have direct burn and can't remove the wall with **Gempalm Incinerator**, it will stay on the board for several turns and blocks the 2/2s very well.

The critical point is that you always have to evaluate how quickly the opponent can convert from board presence into lethal damage. Goblins isn't just a linear aggro deck: with **Goblin Lackey**, **Goblin Warchief**, **Goblin Piledriver**, **Siege-Gang Commander**, and **Goblin Ringleader**, it can go from a manageable board to an unmanageable position in a single turn.

# Goblin Lackey

The most important card to respect is **Goblin Lackey**.

Some Goblins openings are almost unbeatable, especially Game 1. A sequence like:

Mountain, Goblin Lackey Pass Wasteland, Mogg Fanatic Lackey connects, putting Siege-Gang Commander into play

is extremely hard to beat for your deck, especially pre-board, when you don't yet have access to enough removal or sweepers.

This kind of start is particularly problematic because hFEB isn't built to play a traditional board-control game in Game 1. You don't have many clean answers to Lackey, and if the opponent can immediately turn it into a Siege-Gang Commander or a Matron/Ringleader chain, you can be overwhelmed before you assemble your line.

For this reason, when evaluating your opening hand against Goblins, you have to ask:

“Does this hand automatically lose to turn-one Lackey?”

If the answer is yes, especially on the draw, the hand should be evaluated very cautiously.

## The Role of Survival

Survival is one of your best cards in the matchup.

If it stays on the board, it lets you quickly build a kill line or find useful creatures to slow the board down. The main problem is that the opponent can have 2/3 **Naturalize** in the main deck, with 1/2 **Naturalize** and 1/2 **Tranquil Domain** in the sideboard, so you shouldn't always set up the game assuming Survival will stay active for many turns.

Against Goblins, Survival often has to be used pragmatically: as soon as you have a window, you have to convert it into concrete value. That can mean assembling the combo, finding a wall, finding an answer, or building a line that closes before the opponent can remove the enchantment.

The question isn't just:

“Do I have Survival?”

but also:

“What can I get out of Survival before the opponent finds Naturalize?”

## Post-Sideboard

In **Game 2** and **Game 3** the matchup changes significantly, because you have access to more removal and can interact better with the opponent's aggressive openings.

Personally, the plan is to cut a number of **Cabal Therapy**, but not all of them. Therapy is stronger against Goblins than it is against Sligh, because it can hit revealed cards. For example:

- it can name the creature just fetched by **Goblin Matron**;
- it can hit the Goblins revealed by **Goblin Ringleader**;
- it can strip **Naturalize** before resolving Survival;
- it can strip **Pyroblast** or **Red Elemental Blast** before resolving Volrath's Shapeshifter.

**Duress**, on the other hand, is generally less interesting, because it hits a narrower set of cards. In Game 1 it can basically grab Naturalize if it's there, while post-board it can find Pyroblast or Pyrokinesis, but overall it's less flexible than Therapy.

## What to Bring In

Post-board you want to bring in all the removal available.

Depending on the list, this can include:

- **Swords to Plowshares**;
- **Ghitu Slinger**;
- **Pyroclasm**;
- other removal or sweepers available;
- **Uktabi Orangutan**, since you expect Tormod's Crypt.

**Pyroclasm** is one of the best cards in the matchup post-board. Goblins can develop very wide boards, and often your goal is to let the opponent add resources to the board and then punish them with a sweeper. It's not uncommon for a Lackey to connect once or even twice, but if the opponent overcommits, you can answer with Pyroclasm and turn the game around with a 3-for-1 or 4-for-1.

This is an important difference from Game 1: post-board you don't necessarily have to prevent every single point of damage or every Lackey connection. You can let the opponent extend, as long as you have a way to clear the board and then win from that position.

## Uktabi Orangutan

**Uktabi Orangutan** is an interesting card because it has two roles.

The first is removing hate artifacts, particularly **Tormod's Crypt**, which is a card you can expect post-board from Goblins.

The second is very practical: it's a solid body that can block several problematic Goblins. Against a deck that tries to win through the board, even a utility creature tutorable with Survival can become relevant if it buys a turn or absorbs pressure.

It's not just an answer to Crypt: it's also a piece that lets you stay alive while you build your line.

## How to Evaluate Hands

Against Goblins, especially post-board, you want to keep hands that have one of these two traits:

- **enough removal density;**
- **a concrete plan to win by turn 4.**

This doesn't necessarily mean forcing a super-aggressive hand with **Elvish Spirit Guide** and turn-one Hermit Druid. Especially post-board, the opponent knows your plan and can have more ways to punish a key creature played too early.

It means, instead, having a coherent plan. For example:

- a removal spell for Lackey;
- a wall to stabilize;
- Pyroclasm to punish a wide development;
- Survival as an engine;
- Hermit Druid with enough protection or time.

A good hand against Goblins doesn't have to be explosive. It does, however, have to do something concrete against the opponent's first threats and have a realistic way to win before Goblins rebuilds with Matron or Ringleader.

## Walls and Defensive Creatures

Walls are very important in the matchup. A 0/5 body blocks most of the opponent's basic creatures very well. Unlike Sligh, Goblins doesn't always have direct burn to remove a wall. If the opponent doesn't have **Gempalm Incinerator** or a way to push through combat, the wall can stay in play and buy several turns.

This time is critical, because it lets you use Survival, assemble Hermit Druid, or simply reach the mana needed for a safer line.

It serves a perfect dual role: it slows the clock and accelerates your plan.

## Cards to Respect Post-Sideboard

Post-board you have to expect Goblins to improve its interaction.

The main cards to consider are:

- **Naturalize** and **Tranquil Domain**, against Survival;
- **Pyroblast** and **Red Elemental Blast**, against Volrath's Shapeshifter;
- **Pyrokinesis**, against your small creatures;
- **Tormod's Crypt**, against graveyard lines.


For this reason **Cabal Therapy** stays important. It shouldn't be seen as just generic discard, but as a tool to protect your line on the key turn.

The ability to turn the opponent's information into precise discard is one of the reasons Therapy is stronger here than against Sligh.

## Pyroclasm and Board Management

With Pyroclasm in the deck, the way you play changes.

In Game 1 you often want to prevent the opponent's board from getting too big. Post-board, however, you can sometimes let the opponent commit more creatures, knowing you have a card that can rebalance everything.

The important thing is not to use Pyroclasm too early if you aren't under immediate pressure. A Pyroclasm that kills only a Lackey can be correct in certain spots, but if you can afford to wait and turn it into a 3-for-1 or 4-for-1, the game often changes completely. Remember to hold your land producing  in hand to prevent it to get hit with Wasteland.

After an effective sweeper, Goblins can still rebuild with Matron and Ringleader, so you have to use that window to advance your combo plan. Pyroclasm doesn't just have to keep you alive: it has to buy the turn in which you start winning.

### Matchup Summary

The matchup against Goblins is generally playable and, with the right sideboard, can be favorable. That said, there are very explosive openings from the opponent that can be hard or almost impossible to beat, especially in Game 1.

The keys to the matchup are:

- evaluate hands based on removal or a kill by turn 4;
- exploit Survival quickly, without assuming it stays in play for many turns;
- keep some Cabal Therapy to hit Matron, Ringleader, Naturalize, and Pyroblast;
- use Pyroclasm not just as an answer, but as a way to create a winning window.

In short: Goblins can have very strong burst openings, but it's not a matchup where you start at a disadvantage. If you survive the early turns you can easily convert Survival, Hermit or removal into a combo window.

# hFEB Mirror

## General Plan

As hFEB becomes more played and better understood, the **mirror** has to be taken seriously.

Personally, this isn't a matchup I particularly enjoy. The reason is simple: the mirror is very often decided by speed. As I often say, winning the die roll is almost equivalent to "winning turn one", because being on the play lets you develop your plan first and forces the opponent to chase.

In Game 1, the matchup is often a race to whoever assembles the kill first. Interaction is minimal, the windows are tight, and many games come down to who finds a hand capable of closing by turn three.

The problem is that, in Game 1, you don't always know you're in the mirror. If you're playing blind, you can't realistically mulligan every hand that doesn't have a turn-three kill. You could be against Goblins, TerraGeddon, Sligh, or another deck in the format, and a slower but solid hand might be perfectly reasonable in those matchups.

This creates the most frustrating part of the mirror: sometimes you keep a hand that's correct against the field but too slow against hFEB, and you simply lose because the opponent was faster.

## Game 1

### Whoever Is Faster Often Wins

In Game 1 the summary is fairly brutal:

| Whoever is faster often wins.

It's not that there are no decisions, but the number of real interactions is very low. If both players are trying to assemble a fast combo, the game often comes down to:

- who won the die roll;
- who mulliganed better;
- who has acceleration;
- who can close by turn three;
- who has a Cabal Therapy at the right moment.

If you have **Cabal Therapy** in the early turns, you should often name **Hermit Druid**. It's one of the most important cards to slow down, because it lets the opponent win quickly without needing many setup turns.

Naming Druid isn't always perfect, but it makes sense because:

- it's one of the cards that enables the fastest starts;
- it punishes hands built around a single threat;
- it reduces the chance the opponent closes before you do.

If instead you have no interaction, you simply have to lean on the fastest plan available in your hand.

## Post-Sideboard

Game 2 and Game 3 are slightly slower than Game 1, because both players have access to a few more cards to interact with.

That said, the matchup is still very speed-oriented. You don't want to turn yourself into a control deck, nor dilute your combo plan too much. You just want to add interaction that hits the opponent's main lines without compromising your ability to win quickly.

Post-board, look for hands that have both:

- **disruption or interaction;**
- **a fast win plan.**

A hand with only answers and no pressure risks losing to Survival or to a rebuilt line. A hand with only speed and no interaction can lose if the opponent is faster or has a Therapy at the right moment.

## Play/Draw Post-Board

The way you approach post-board also changes based on play/draw.

If you're **on the draw**, especially if you won Game 1, expect the opponent to try to go as fast as possible. In this case you want ways to slow them down: spot removal, Cabal Therapy, answers to Survival, or cards that can interfere with Hermit Druid.

If you're **on the play**, you should more often expect the opponent to keep a hand built to disrupt your plan. In this scenario you can want to be the one forcing an immediate threat: turn-one Hermit Druid, turn-one Survival, or a Therapy that protects your plan or hits theirs.

The decisions aren't automatic. They depend heavily on the opening hand and on which role you want to take in that specific game.

## Cabal Therapy in the Mirror

**Cabal Therapy** is one of the few truly important pieces of interaction in the mirror.

The most common names depend on the spot, but they often include:

- **Hermit Druid**, if you want to slow the fastest kill;
- **Volrath's Shapeshifter** or **Unearth**, if you're in a position where the opponent can already assemble the line.

In Game 1, naming **Hermit Druid** is often the most natural choice. Post-board, the choice opens up much more because the opponent can have more interaction and more answers.

The rule stays the same as in other matchups:

Name the card that makes you lose this specific spot, not necessarily the strongest card in the abstract.

## Sideboarding

In the mirror you don't want to sideboard too heavily.

I don't think it's correct, at least in most metagames, to dedicate specific sideboard slots only to the mirror, like pure graveyard hate. If the format were to shift significantly, you could reconsider including more explicit graveyard hate. But in general you don't want to bring in cards that are too narrow just for this matchup.

What you want to do is bring in cards that are already useful elsewhere and that also have concrete applications in the mirror.

Interesting cards can be:

- **Swords to Plowshares** and **Ghitu Slinger**;
- **Ray of Revelation** and **Naturalize**;
- possibly **Pyroclasm**, if you want to slow down mana creatures and Hermit Druid.

The important thing is not to dilute the core of the deck too much. If you cut too many creatures or too many functional pieces, you risk becoming a deck with mediocre answers and not enough speed to close.

## What to Cut

In the mirror, you should often make small adjustments rather than radically change the deck.

For example, you can consider sideboard lines like:

- cutting a **Duress** to bring in **Ghitu Slinger**;
- cutting a **Cabal Therapy** to bring in **Swords to Plowshares**;
- cutting a less relevant card, like a wall in certain spots, to bring in **Ray of Revelation**;
- evaluating an answer to Survival without lowering the creature density too much.

If you bring in Pyroclasm, the idea of cutting some **Birds of Paradise** makes sense, but in the mirror speed remains fundamental. So you have to be careful not to slow down too much.

Cutting a land can also be an understandable choice in some configurations, because the matchup tends to be fast and you want to maximize relevant draws. That said, it's a delicate decision: lands are still needed to double-spell, to activate Survival, and to build protected lines.

In the mirror many sideboard decisions depend on which role you want to take:

Do I want to be as fast as possible, or do I want to slow the opponent down enough to win one turn later?

Both answers can be correct.

### Matchup Summary

The hFEB mirror is a matchup heavily dependent on speed, the die roll, and mulligans.

The keys to the matchup are:

- look for hands with speed and at least minimal disruption;
- don't sideboard too heavily;
- don't turn into a mediocre control deck;
- bring in flexible answers.

In short: in the mirror there isn't always an elegant line. Often you simply have to **be faster**.

It's a matchup that can feel brutal, and in part it is. But post-board you can at least shift it from a pure race to a game where your small interactions actually make a difference.

# Landstill

## General Plan

The matchup against **UW Landstill** can be approached in two different ways.

The first approach is trying to be faster than their interaction: pressuring their removal and counters before they can stabilize, sculpting your hand, and reaching the turns where they don't have mana open for multiple answers in the same turn.

The second approach is almost the opposite: becoming the "control" deck of the matchup. This means slowing down, letting the opponent accumulate cards in hand, and then using **Duress** and **Cabal Therapy** at the most effective moment, trying to hit multiple resources at once or open a safe window to resolve the combo.

The choice between these two plans depends on:

- play/draw;
- how much discard you have;
- how quickly the opponent can represent Counterspell, Swords to Plowshares, or Fact or Fiction;
- the presence of problematic cards like **Humility** or **Dust Bowl**.

UW Landstill doesn't put much pressure in the early turns, so you have more time than in other matchups. But the longer the game goes, the more the opponent turns that time into cards, mana, and interaction windows.

## Game 1

### Fast Plan

In Game 1, the most natural plan is often trying to be faster than their setup.

An ideal opening can look like:

Turn 1: land, **Birds of Paradise**. Turn 2: **Cabal Therapy** naming **Swords to Plowshares**, flashing back Therapy if necessary, then **Hermit Druid**. Turn 3: activate Hermit Druid and try to close with **Unearth**, **Animate Dead**, or an equivalent line.

In this kind of game, the goal is to force the opponent to interact right away. If Therapy strips their main removal, Hermit Druid becomes an immediate threat. If instead the opponent

spends a removal on the Druid, you can try to rebuild with Unearth, Animate Dead, or Survival, depending on the available resources.

## Therapy and Card Naming

With **Cabal Therapy**, the choice of name is complex because UW Landstill runs many different interactions.

The cards to consider are:

- **Swords to Plowshares**;
- **Counterspell**;
- **Prohibit**;
- **Mana Leak**;
- **Miscalculation**, in some lists;
- **Fact or Fiction** in later turns;
- **Decree of Justice** when the game goes long;
- **Humility**, which is one of the most dangerous cards in the matchup.

In the early turns, naming **Swords to Plowshares** is often a smart choice, especially if your plan goes through Hermit Druid. That said, it isn't an absolute rule. If the opponent clearly represents two blue mana, or if your plan involves resolving a key spell, it can be correct to name **Counterspell**.

The practical rule is:

With Therapy you don't always have to name the most likely card. You have to name the card that makes you lose this specific spot.

If your plan loses to Swords, name Swords. If it loses to Counterspell, name Counterspell. If the game is going long and the opponent is trying to get to four mana open, it can become correct to name **Fact or Fiction**. Remember that having a creature to flashback Therapy right away can be game changing in many different spots.

## Hermit + Krosan Reclamation Line

An important line in Game 1 is the one that goes through **Hermit Druid**, **Cabal Therapy**, and **Animate Dead**.

After activating Hermit Druid, you can use Cabal Therapy to strip the opponent's hand of relevant counters or removal. At that point, **Krosan Reclamation** can put **Animate Dead** back into the library, creating an additional safety layer for the following turn.

This line doesn't necessarily close on the same turn, but it forces the opponent to find a specific answer in a very tight window. If their hand has been emptied by discard, the following turn you should be able to finish the game.

## What Can Go Wrong

### Multiple Counters

The first problem is that UW Landstill runs many different counters. This makes it hard to always pick the right name with Cabal Therapy. Even if you strip a Counterspell, the opponent may have Prohibit, Mana Leak, or Miscalculation. On top of that, they can use **Impulse** and **Fact or Fiction** to dig for an answer.

For this reason, against UW Landstill you can't just ask "can I win?". You have to ask:

| "How many interactions can I beat, and which ones make me lose immediately?"

### Standstill

**Standstill** is a card to respect a lot. If you have Hermit Druid in play and the opponent controls Standstill, you have to be careful not to create a situation where you activate Hermit Druid, the opponent breaks Standstill with an instant, you're forced to draw three cards, and you have no cards left in your library.

This is one of the most dangerous scenarios in the matchup: after a full mill from Hermit Druid, drawing cards becomes lethal. So Standstill isn't just a card-advantage engine for the opponent; it can turn into a real kill condition against you if you handle the timing poorly.

### Humility

In Game 1, the only problem you often can't solve is **Humility**.

The longer the game goes, the more Humility becomes a real threat. Once resolved, it can shut off all of your lines. For this reason you have to be very surgical with discard when you suspect the opponent might have it in hand.

If you have a window to strip Humility with Duress or Cabal Therapy, you often have to take it seriously, even if there are other cards that look more immediate at that moment.

## The Control Plan

The second approach to the matchup is trying to control UW Landstill yourself.

This doesn't mean becoming a true control deck, but it means slowing down enough to force the opponent to play inefficiently. The goal is to build a turn where you can cast multiple spells, use discard before the threats, and force the opponent to spend as many resources as possible.

In practice, instead of casting your key piece as soon as you have it, you can wait one or two turns to:

- draw a discard spell;
- have mana for a double spell;
- flash back Cabal Therapy;
- force an answer on a smaller threat.

This plan is harder to explain than to show in a game, but the concept is simple: you want to create turns where the opponent can't answer everything.

## The Dust Bowl Problem

The main problem with the long plan is **Dust Bowl**. If your idea is to play land-go for several turns, reaching turn 5, 6, or 7 can become dangerous. The opponent starts having unused mana, and that mana can be converted into Dust Bowl activations.

Your manabase is fragile against Dust Bowl, especially because you need specific colors. If the opponent manages to turn the game into a mana war, you can find yourself in a position where you have the right cards but can no longer cast or combine them in the same turn.

So the control plan is valid, but it can't become passivity. Waiting one or two turns to build a window is correct; waiting too long can give the opponent time to take real control of the game.

## Fact or Fiction, Impulse, and Decree of Justice

The longer the game goes, the more the opponent's card-advantage cards become a problem.

**Impulse**, **Accumulated Knowledge**, and especially **Fact or Fiction** let UW Landstill sculpt a much stronger hand than yours. Even if they don't kill you immediately, these cards dramatically increase the chance that the opponent finds the right mix of counters, removal, and hate.

**Decree of Justice** is another concrete problem. In late turns, a Decree cycled for four or five soldiers can put a real race on the board, especially considering your manabase has often already dealt you a fair amount of damage.

For this reason, in long games, Cabal Therapy shouldn't only name the cards that stop you immediately. Sometimes it's correct to name the cards that let the opponent outresource you.

## Survival in the Late Game

A very important aspect of the matchup is that the longer the game goes, the more **Survival of the Fittest** can become a one-turn kill.

If you reach six or seven mana, you can build very explosive turns. For example:

Duress or Cabal Therapy to clear the opponent's hand. Survival of the Fittest. Discard a piece, tutor Palinchron. Reanimate or cast Volrath's Shapeshifter. Untap the mana and close in the same turn.

In this kind of scenario, **Unearth** is fundamental because it significantly reduces the mana needed to win. The opponent may think they have another turn because they assume you need more mana or more setup, but Unearth shortens the sequence and can completely throw off their math.

This is one of the reasons **you shouldn't be afraid of going slightly longer** in the matchup, as long as you're still controlling the opponent's resources.

## Post-Sideboard

In Game 2 and Game 3 the matchup changes significantly.

Several important cards come in, especially:

- additional discard spells, like **Duress**;
- **Xantid Swarm**;
- answers to **Meddling Mage**;
- answers to **Humility**;
- possibly answers to artifacts like **Phyrexian Furnace**, **Powder Keg**, or similar.

The post-board plan becomes more solid and more controlled: you want to make sure your combo pieces do exactly what they're in the deck for. You don't want to cast Hermit Druid or Survival "hoping" it's enough; you want to create a window where the opponent can no longer interact effectively.

## Xantid Swarm

**Xantid Swarm** is one of the best cards in the matchup post-board.

Its role isn't just protecting the combo: it also forces the opponent to misuse their resources. If the opponent has to use **Swords to Plowshares** on Xantid Swarm, that's one fewer Swords for Hermit Druid or Volrath's Shapeshifter.

On top of that, when Xantid sticks, it enables very strong lines:

Attack with Xantid Swarm. If the trigger resolves, the opponent can no longer cast spells that turn. At that point you can activate Hermit Druid, use Unearth or Animate Dead, and close without fearing counters or removal.

This makes Xantid particularly strong alongside Hermit Druid, because it turns a fragile line into a much safer one (*Same is true with Survival of course*).

## Don't Always Play Xantid on Turn 1

An important tip, especially **on the draw**, is not to automatically play Xantid Swarm on turn 1.

If the opponent leads on a land that produces white, it can be correct to wait. If you have a discard spell, you can open with that instead. Otherwise, sometimes it's correct to just play a land and pass.

The reason is that UW Landstill really needs to optimize mana in the early turns. If you play Xantid right away and the opponent uses Swords on turn 1, they've perfectly converted their mana into an efficient answer.

If instead you wait, you can force them to use that same Swords on a turn when they wanted to do something else. Even just pushing the opponent into making on turn 2 a play they wanted to make on turn 1 is a small tempo gain.

## Meddling Mage

Post-board you have to expect **Meddling Mage**.

Mage can name many relevant cards:

- Hermit Druid;
- Survival of the Fittest;
- Volrath's Shapeshifter;
- Unearth;
- Animate Dead;
- other key cards depending on the state of the game.

For this reason it's advisable to bring in at least some specific answers, like:

- **Swords to Plowshares**;
- **Ghitu Slinger**;
- **Pyroclasm**, if you also want a broader board answer.

Meddling Mage isn't always lethal by itself, but it can buy enough time for UW Landstill to find Humility, Fact or Fiction, or a hand full of counters. Also remember that if the opponent taps out for **Meddling Mage** a window opens to resolve a favorable sequence of spell, and this can easily happen in the early turns.

## Answers to Humility

Post-board it's fundamental to have answers to **Humility**.

Cards like **Ray of Revelation** and/or **Naturalize** are very important because they give you real outs to one of the most problematic cards in the matchup. Ray of Revelation is particularly interesting because it represents two answers in a single card thanks to flashback. This lets you play the long game with more peace of mind.

## Graveyard Hate Post-Sideboard

UW Landstill usually isn't the deck with the most oppressive graveyard hate.

It can have **Phyrexian Furnace**, often already in the main deck. That said, with both Hermit Druid and Survival you can often play around this kind of hate, especially if the opponent has to keep mana up or if you can force them to tap out.

In this matchup it's important not to always show how constrained you actually are by Furnace. Sometimes you can look more scared than you really are, slow down slightly, or use the way the opponent reads your caution to push them into tapping out or using the hate at the wrong moment.

Especially in paper, bluff and game pace can have real weight. hFEB is a combo deck, but it doesn't always have to openly declare when it's ready to win.

## Other Sideboard Cards

Some configurations can justify bringing in **Pyroclasm**, especially if the opponent has Meddling Mage or can cycle a huge Decree.

**Uktabi Orangutan** is interesting if you want answers to:

- Phyrexian Furnace;
- Powder Keg;

- any annoying artifacts.

It isn't always an essential card, but it has the advantage of being tutorable with Survival and of interacting with a category of permanents that can slow your lines.

## **Matchup Summary**

Against UW Landstill you have to choose whether to be faster than their answers or play a more patient game, based on discard, double spells, and carefully built windows.

The keys to the matchup are:

- use Cabal Therapy to name the card that makes you lose this specific spot;
- respect Humility;
- don't wait too long against Dust Bowl;
- remember that Survival in the late game can win in a single turn.

The matchup is technical, but very playable. The more information you have on the opponent's hand and configuration, the more you can turn the game from a counter war into a controlled sequence where you decide the exact moment to win.

# Mono Black

## General Plan

The matchup against **Mono Black** is very interesting because it isn't played just on combo speed: it's mostly played on the ability to identify **which plan has the highest chance of going all the way**.

Mono Black is a midrange deck with a very solid base: discard, removal, creatures that apply pressure, and post-board several types of hate. It isn't a deck that kills you immediately like Sligh or Goblins, but it's very good at dismantling your plan piece by piece.

The hard part of the matchup is figuring out whether the game should be played through:

- **Survival of the Fittest;**
- **Hermit Druid;**
- or a grindier plan.

Your opening hand often contains multiple possible plans. In most cases the opponent chooses for you: if they open **Swamp, Duress** and strip your Survival, the plan automatically becomes Hermit Druid. Other times, though, the opponent may open with a less informative play, like land-go or **Cabal Therapy** without knowing what to name, and then it's up to you to decide which threat to present.

The general rule is:

Against Mono Black, you have to follow the plan that wins by going through the fewest possible opponent interactions.

The fastest plan isn't always the best. The most powerful plan isn't always the safest. You have to figure out, game by game, which axis is least exposed.

## Game 1

### Survival vs Hermit Druid

In Game 1, **Survival of the Fittest** is often the best plan. The reason is that Survival lets you play a more flexible game. You can tutor different creatures, adapt to the board, build a less fragile line, and not depend entirely on a single Hermit Druid activation.

**Hermit Druid** can still be excellent, but its lines are often more complex and more exposed. Mono Black can interact in several ways:

- removal & edict effects;
- discard spells;
- graveyard hate, especially **Withered Wretch**;
- board pressure that shrinks your available time.

The main problem is exactly **Withered Wretch**. It's a card that can make it very hard to rely on clean graveyard lines, because it threatens to remove the key pieces right when you try to assemble the combo.

## When Hermit Druid Is the Right Plan

Hermit Druid is still a very strong plan, especially when you can activate it in a way that makes the opponent's removal less relevant.

One of the reasons Hermit can be good is that, once activated, you can build a line that goes over many traditional removal spells. If you use **Krosan Reclamation** to put **Animate Dead** back into the library and then sacrifice the creatures you have on board with **Cabal Therapy**, you make cards like the following less effective:

- **Smother**;
- **Vendetta**;
- **Chainer's Edict**;
- **Funeral Charm**,...

This way, the opponent may have interaction in hand but can't always use it effectively against your position.

The point is that Hermit Druid shouldn't be treated as just "I play it, if it untaps I win." Against Mono Black you have to ask:

┆ After the activation, which interaction can still stop me?

If the answer is "few" or "none," then the Hermit plan is great. If instead the line loses to **Wretch**, to a removal spell, to an edict, or to something already in play, it's better to look for another axis.

## Post-Sideboard

Game 2 and Game 3 change a lot.

Mono Black tends to increase the amount of hate, especially against the graveyard. It may sound strange, but post-board the deck often has even more tools to interact with your lines: **Phyrexian Furnace**, **Withered Wretch**, **Tormod's Crypt** or similar effects.

For this reason, post-board you should slow down and slightly change the way you keep hands.

## What to Cut

In general, post-board you can consider cutting:

- some discard spells;
- often one **Hermit Druid**;
- a number of **Birds of Paradise**, if you're bringing in **Pyroclasm**.

The reason for cutting some discard is that against Mono Black you don't necessarily want to play a symmetric resource war. They're built better than you for that kind of game. Your discard spells can be useful, but they aren't always the best way to win.

Cutting one Hermit Druid makes sense because post-board the Hermit plan is more exposed to graveyard hate. It doesn't mean abandoning it completely, but reducing dependence on that line.

When **Pyroclasm** comes in, you should cut a number of **Birds of Paradise**, because you don't want to increase the risk of killing your own acceleration on the turns when you need to clear the board.

## What to Bring In

Post-board you want to increase the density of cards that let you play a more robust game.

The cards to consider are:

- **Enlightened Tutor**, as an additional Survival;
- **Pyroclasm**, **Githu Slinger** and **Swords to Plowshares**, to handle the creature package;
- **Naturalize** and **Ray of Revelation**;
- **Monk Realist** and **Uktabi Orangutan**.

**Enlightened Tutor** is very important because it works almost like a fifth Survival. Against a deck full of discard, increasing the virtual number of copies of your key cards is fundamental.

**Naturalize**, **Ray of Revelation**, and the respective creatures are mainly there to handle cards like **Dystopia**, **Engineered Plague** or **Masticore** (if you saw it game one), which all can be problematic sideboard cards.

## Mulligans and Post-Board Hand Selection

Post-board you should significantly change the way you evaluate hands.

With hFEB you're often used to mulliganing until you find a combo piece, like Survival or Hermit Druid. Against Mono Black, though, this approach can be very risky.

If you mulligan to five looking for a hand with Survival, and then the opponent Duresses away that very Survival, the game can be practically over.

For this reason, against Mono Black it's often better to keep **playable** hands, even if they don't have an immediate combo piece. Hands like:

┆ Four lands and three spells.

Or, more generally, hands with a good distribution of lands and *removals*, can be better than explosive but fragile hands.

The idea is to accept that the game can come down to the top of the deck. It isn't the kind of game you always want to play, but against Mono Black it can be one of the best ways to avoid losing immediately to the first discard.

## The Midrange Plan

Against Mono Black, especially post-board, you should remember that your deck can also win by playing a midrange plan.

It isn't the main plan, but it exists.

You can hardcast creatures like:

- **Triskelion**;
- **Karmic Guide**;
- even **Akroma, Angel of Wrath**, in very long games.

Likewise, you can win with simpler lines: resolve **Volrath's Shapeshifter**, discard a relevant creature, and either attack or build a threat that's hard to deal with.

Your creatures cost a lot, but they're more powerful than Mono Black's average creatures. If you can resolve them, they can often win the game on their own.

This is important because it lets you not always depend on the pure combo. Sometimes all you need is to survive, reach enough mana, and turn a single strong card into a decisive threat.

# Problem Cards

## Withered Wretch

**Withered Wretch** is probably the most important card to respect.

It interacts directly with your graveyard and can break many of the cleanest lines. Against Wretch you can't take for granted that the graveyard stays intact, nor that a Survival or Hermit sequence is automatically safe.

It has to be removed, worked around, or forced into spending mana inefficiently. If it stays on the board too long, every graveyard-based line becomes much more complicated.

## Dystopia

**Dystopia** is one of the most dangerous post-board cards.

It hits many of your most important permanents, including **Survival of the Fittest**, and can force you to sacrifice fundamental resources turn after turn.

For this reason, when you have Survival in play, try whenever possible to also have another green or white permanent to sacrifice. It isn't always easy, and sometimes it requires unintuitive plays: not blocking, taking damage, or not pitching **Elvish Spirit Guide** but paying three mana to play it as a creature.

These plays can look inefficient, but they often save Survival.

A typical example:

You have Survival in play. The opponent resolves Dystopia. You have another green or white creature to sacrifice. You keep Survival. You use Survival to tutor Monk Realist. You remove Dystopia. From there you can win the game.

This line is very important. Protecting Survival for just one more turn can be all it takes to turn a difficult position into a win.

## Discard and Pressure Creatures

Mono Black also runs the classic package of discard and creatures that apply pressure.

Cards like **Duress**, **Cabal Therapy**, **Hypnotic Specter** and **Ravenous Rats**, and other similar threats can create games where you progressively lose access to your resources.

**Hypnotic Specter** is particularly annoying because it combines pressure and random discard. If it starts connecting, it can dismantle both the combo plans and the midrange

plans.

For this reason, post-board removal and Pyroclasm aren't just there to handle Withered Wretch: they're also there to prevent the opponent's creatures from turning the game into a value spiral.

## Playing Off the Top

One of the most distinctive parts of the matchup is that you often have to accept playing off the top.

It isn't an ideal situation, and personally it isn't the most fun way to play the deck, but against Mono Black it can be correct.

The reason is simple: if both players trade resources in the early turns, you have many draws that can flip the game immediately. A Survival, an Enlightened Tutor, a Shapeshifter, a key creature, or a recursion line can turn an apparently empty game into a sudden win.

Mono Black is very good at stripping resources from the hand, but it isn't always equally good at beating a single high-impact draw, especially if the board is under control.

So don't be afraid of keeping more solid, less explosive hands if they let you reach a stage of the game where every strong draw of yours is live.

### Matchup Summary

Mono Black is a hard but beatable matchup.

The main difficulty isn't just the amount of interaction, but the fact that the opponent can interact on many different axes: hand, creatures, graveyard, and permanents.

The keys to the matchup are:

- figure out which plan goes through the least interaction;
- respect **Withered Wretch** and prepare for **Dystopia** post-board;
- don't mulligan too aggressively toward a single combo piece;
- remember that the hardcast/midrange plan is real.

In short: against Mono Black the fastest plan doesn't always win. The plan that best survives their interaction wins: be flexible, patient, and ready to switch axes mid-game.

# Ponza

## General Plan

Under the **Ponza** umbrella you can include several variants, mainly **GW Ponza** and **RG Ponza**, but also some hybrid versions with extra splashes or Oath packages.

The common trait of these decks is the **mana denial** plan: Ponza attacks lands directly with many dedicated spells.

You should usually expect:

- **4 Wasteland**;
- **4 Rishadan Port**;
- about **7–8 sorceries** that destroy lands;
- **Sphere of Resistance**;
- manlands like **Mishra's Factory** and **Treetop Village**;
- **Oath of Druids** as a way to apply pressure with Terravore;
- **Sylvan Library** as a source of advantage;
- various hate permanents post-board.

This makes the matchup complex because your mana isn't just slowed down: it gets systematically attacked from multiple directions.

Sometimes you can still develop. A sequence like:

| Land, Birds of Paradise. The land gets destroyed. New land, wall.

can give you enough time and mana to assemble a line. Other times, the game becomes very hard because you're forced to sequence cards suboptimally.

In this matchup you often have to choose between casting a discard spell or playing a combo piece right away, knowing that next turn you may no longer have the mana to do it. This is one of the hardest parts of the matchup: you can't always afford the theoretically correct play, because the mana may no longer exist a turn later.

## GW Ponza vs RG Ponza

### GW Ponza

Against the **GW** versions you should expect more direct interaction with your key permanents.

The main cards are:

- **Swords to Plowshares;**
- **Naturalize;**
- **Disenchant;**
- **Seal of Cleansing;**
- post-board, cards like **Aura of Silence** and **Ray of Revelation**.

This means GW is very good at interacting with **Survival of the Fittest** and with your key creatures. If your plan goes through Hermit Druid, you have to respect Swords. If it goes through Survival, you have to respect Disenchant, Naturalize, or Seal.

## **RG Ponza**

Against the **RG** versions, the matchup can be slightly better.

The reason is that RG tends to have less direct interaction with creatures once you're already comboing in your turn. You should expect cards like:

- **Pyroclasm;**
- **Earthquake;**
- **Naturalize;**
- post-board, **Pyroblast** and artifact/enchantment hate.

These cards are very strong against mana creatures and small setup, but less effective at stopping a combo assembled in the same turn. If you can build a window where you put together the plan and close immediately, RG often has fewer ways to interact than GW.

For this reason, in general, you should consider RG a bit more favorable than GW. Not because it's easy, but because their interaction lines up slightly worse against your most explosive lines.

## **The Mana Denial Problem**

The core of the matchup is mana development.

**Sphere of Resistance** is particularly annoying because it turns every sequence of yours into something slower. Survival costs more, discard spells cost more, Unearth costs more, post-board removal costs more. Even when you have the right cards, Sphere can prevent you from using all of them on the same turn.

This is a huge problem for hFEB, because many lines require not just resolving a card, but chaining multiple actions on the same turn.

The question to ask is:

| Can I afford to wait a turn, or will my mana be too compromised by then?

Against Ponza, waiting isn't free. Every extra turn can mean one less land, one more active Port, or a Sphere that makes the sequence you had in mind impossible.

## The Opponent's Pressure

Unlike TerraGeddon, Ponza often needs to use a lot of mana to apply pressure.

The main threats are often manlands:

- **Mishra's Factory**;
- **Treetop Village**.

This can mean the game goes slightly longer, because the opponent has to spend mana to attack. That said, this doesn't mean you have plenty of time: the mana used to attack is the same mana that could be used for Port, land destruction, or interaction.

The real way Ponza puts on enormous pressure is through **Terravore**, often with **Oath of Druids**.

## Oath of Druids and Terravore

**Oath of Druids** is one of the most important cards to respect.

Against Ponza, playing a mana creature like **Birds of Paradise** can feel natural, because you need mana to play around Wasteland and land destruction. But if the opponent answers with Oath of Druids, the situation can change completely.

Oath can put **Terravore** into play, and the size of Terravore can vary a lot.

Sometimes it'll be a 3/3, but it easily becomes a 5/5 with trample after a Wasteland. Other times it'll already be a 10/10 or 12/12, effectively becoming worse than a Phyrexian Dreadnought, because it grows naturally as the game goes on.

For this reason, you have to be very careful about when you commit creatures to the board. It doesn't mean you should never play Birds or walls, but you have to ask:

| If the opponent plays Oath, can I punish it?

If your follow-up is strong (a double Hermit Druid, a Survival that immediately finds a useful answer, or a line that closes quickly) then you can accept the risk. If instead you're simply playing a dork without a plan, you may be giving the opponent the best way to kill you.

# Game 1

Game 1 depends heavily on the opponent's variant. Against **GW**, you have to play around Swords and removal for Survival. Against **RG**, you can be slightly more confident in building a combo on the same turn, because their interaction is more often sorcery-speed sweepers.

In both cases, though, you have to respect mana denial. This means that sometimes you have to make seemingly premature plays: casting Survival before you have a creature to discard, or playing Hermit Druid before you're perfectly protected, simply because next turn you may no longer have the mana. Often you have to pick the least fragile line among several imperfect ones.

## Post-Sideboard

Post-board your plan is fairly similar against both variants: you want to bring in answers to key permanents and increase your ability to survive long enough to assemble a combo.

The cards to consider are:

- **Naturalize**;
- **Uktabi Orangutan**;
- **Swords to Plowshares**;
- **Ray of Revelation**;
- **Monk Realist**;
- any other artifact/enchantment answers.

Artifact removal is useful against:

- **Mox**;
- **Sphere of Resistance**;
- **Cursed Totem**, if present;
- any other hate permanents.

Enchantment removal is useful against:

- **Oath of Druids**;
- **Sylvan Library**;
- **Aura of Silence**.

## Opponent's Sideboard

## RG

Against RG you can expect:

- **Pyroblast**;
- additional sweepers like Pyroclasm;
- **Tormod's Crypt**;
- **Naturalize** or other ways to break Survival.

Cabal Therapy calls are often more straightforward against RG. Since Naturalize is the main way they can break Survival, naming Naturalize becomes a very clear line.

## GW

Against GW the post-board is heavier.

You can expect:

- **Aura of Silence**;
- **Seal of Cleansing**;
- **Ray of Revelation**;
- **Tormod's Crypt**;
- possible hate permanents.

This makes GW more complicated. Their answers are more numerous, more distributed, and often harder to name with Cabal Therapy.

The Survival plan becomes more fragile, but the Hermit Druid plan isn't free either, because you still have to respect Swords, Crypt, and Oath.

## Eladamri's Vineyard

**Eladamri's Vineyard** is an interesting card in this matchup, more so than against TerraGeddon.

Against GW, though, it's hard for it to stay in play long. Cards like **Ray of Revelation** are particularly annoying because they can remove Vineyard and then remain available from the graveyard to hit a future Survival. Many GW lists run at least a couple of Rays, so you can't take it for granted that Vineyard survives.

That said, if Vineyard sticks, it can be very strong. In general, you convert green mana better than they do. You can use that mana for Survival, to develop multiple spells on the same turn, and to recover from mana denial. Ponza's lands enter tapped, only produce colorless, or

require mana to activate. Plus, they don't have many creatures to cast naturally. This makes Vineyard more asymmetrical in your favor.

The limit is that Vineyard helps you put pieces on the board, but it doesn't help them stay there. If the problem is resolving Survival, Vineyard can help. If the problem is protecting it from Naturalize, Disenchant, or Ray, then a discard spell can be better because it covers both phases: it can strip a land destruction spell or a removal.

For this reason, you shouldn't consider Vineyard an automatic answer. It's powerful in some games, but it has to be evaluated based on the opponent's variant and your hand.

## The Lobstercon Version

A special note has to be made about the Ponza version that Top8 at **Lobstercon**.

That list is basically GW, but post-board it splashes blue for **Meddling Mage** and red for **Pyroclasm**. From your point of view, this makes the matchup even harder to read.

It isn't fully clear how the opponent should sideboard against hFEB, because they have many potentially strong cards but not all of them fit perfectly together. **Meddling Mage** and **Pyroclasm** aren't cards you always want to see in the same hand. That said, the combination can still be effective: Pyroclasm clears the board, and then Mage can shut off a line by naming a key combo piece.

It's possible that the opponent cuts some **Sylvan Library** to make room for Meddling Mage or other interaction. In any case, this version can be even harder than the traditional GW variants, because it adds another axis of hate.

Against Meddling Mage you have to consider bringing in removal like:

- **Swords to Plowshares**;
- **Ghitu Slinger**;
- **Pyroclasm**.

## Oath / Quiet Speculation

Within this category you can also include the **Oath / Quiet Speculation** version, a sort of hybrid between TerraGeddon and Ponza.

These lists combine several very annoying elements:

- **Armageddon**;
- **Cataclysm**;
- **Quiet Speculation**;

- **Volcanic Spray** with flashback;
- **Ray of Revelation**;
- **Call of the Herd**;
- **Swords to Plowshares** main deck;
- post-board, **Meddling Mage** and additional interaction.

The Quiet Speculation package is particularly problematic because it gives access to flashback cards, so your discard spells become less clean. If you discard Ray of Revelation or Volcanic Spray, you haven't really solved the problem: those cards stay usable from the graveyard.

Post-board, these lists often replace part of the Oath plan with **Meddling Mage**, making specific removal necessary. Here too, cards like Swords and Ghitu Slinger become important.

This matchup doesn't need to be treated as a completely separate section, because the general approach stays similar: it's a middle ground between TerraGeddon and Ponza. But you have to recognize that it combines some of the worst aspects of both.

## Cabal Therapy and Duress

In these matchups **Cabal Therapy** calls aren't always clear.

Against RG they can be simpler, because often the truly problematic cards are easier to identify: Naturalize, Pyroblast, Oath or Pyroclasm depending on the spot.

Against GW and Oath/Spec, the problem is that the answers are more distributed. The opponent can have Seal, Naturalize, Ray, Swords, Oath, Library, Armageddon, Cataclysm, or Meddling Mage. On top of that, some of these cards have flashback or are tutorable with Enlightened Tutor.

**Duress** can be useful, but here too it isn't always easy to figure out how much. It can strip a relevant card, but the opponent has so much redundancy. So resolving a discard spell isn't enough: you have to figure out whether that discard actually opens a window.

The general rule is:

Use discard to protect the window in which you win, not just to strip a strong card.

### Matchup Summary

Ponza, in all its variants, is a hard matchup because it combines mana denial, hate permanents, and pressure.

The keys to the matchup are:

- figure out when you have to force a combo piece before your mana gets destroyed;
- use discard to open windows, not just to trade resources;
- against RG, exploit the fact that their interaction is less effective against a same-turn combo;
- post-board, bring in artifact and enchantment answers.

In short: against Ponza you aren't just playing against land destruction. You're playing against a deck that tries to keep you off your mana, and then punishes you for every creature or permanent you try to use to recover it.

It's a complex matchup, often very spot-dependent. Sometimes you have to push the combo before your mana disappears; other times you have to first strip Oath, Sphere, or a removal. There's no standard line: you have to identify which of the opponent's axes is most dangerous in that moment and pick the plan that can win before all the others close.

# Replenish

## General Plan

**Replenish** is probably one of the most iconic examples of a near fifty-fifty combo matchup. Both decks can be very fast. hFEB can virtually have a turn two or three kill with **Hermit Druid**, while Replenish can quickly assemble its graveyard and resolve a single spell that completely flips the game.

The main difficulty of the matchup is that many of Replenish's combo cards naturally interact with your plan. These aren't simple sidebar cards or dedicated answers: they're pieces of their deck that, while advancing their game plan, also disrupt yours.

For example:

- **Opalescence** turns **Survival of the Fittest** into a creature, exposing it to **Swords to Plowshares**;
- **Seal of Cleansing** can destroy Survival;
- **Parallax Wave** can exile Hermit Druid or other combo pieces;
- **Swords to Plowshares** cleanly interacts with every creature;
- **Meddling Mage**, main or side depending on the list, can shut off a key piece;
- **Abeyance** can be lethal against Hermit lines.

This is what makes the matchup complicated: Replenish doesn't necessarily have to deviate from its own plan to interact with you. Many of its best cards are already good against hFEB.

## Game 1

### A True Race Matchup

Game 1 is often a race.

If the opponent doesn't have an answer to **Hermit Druid**, you can win very quickly. In many games, Druid is your best way to stay ahead of the Replenish plan, because it forces the opponent to immediately have some form of relevant interaction.

The problem is that Replenish, even in Game 1, has many cards that can answer both of your main plans.

Against **Hermit Druid**, they can have:

- Swords to Plowshares;
- Parallax Wave;
- Abeyance, if present;
- Meddling Mage, in some versions.

Against **Survival of the Fittest**, they can have:

- Seal of Cleansing;
- Opalescence + Swords to Plowshares;
- Meddling Mage;
- counters in the lists that run them.

This means that, even in Game 1, the opponent can interact with both the Hermit plan and the Survival plan. That's where the fifty-fifty feel comes from: a significant portion of games is decided by how well the opponent's answers line up against your initial plan.

## Cabal Therapy and Discard

Discard spells are fundamental in the matchup. With **Cabal Therapy**, the most common Game 1 call is often **Swords to Plowshares**. The reason is that Swords always interacts with Hermit Druid and with Survival lines. On top of that, many lists run more copies of Swords than Seal of Cleansing: statistically Swords is often the most likely and most transversal card.

That said, you shouldn't always name Swords automatically.

If your hand is slower and the plan goes through **Survival of the Fittest**, it can be correct to name **Seal of Cleansing**. This is especially true if you need more turns to use Survival and assemble a line. In that case, Seal is the card that can make you lose time and resources before you manage to convert Survival into a win.

As always, Therapy has to name the card that beats your specific line, not just the strongest card in the abstract.

## Abeyance

**Abeyance** is one of the most dangerous cards to respect.

The main problem arises in **Hermit Druid** lines. If you activate Druid in upkeep and the opponent responds with Abeyance, you can no longer cast **Krosan Reclamation** to put cards back into the library. At that point, you mill the entire library and lose on the draw step.

To be clear, this is a scenario that can happen:

You activate Hermit Druid in upkeep. The opponent casts Abeyance in response. You can no longer cast Krosan Reclamation. The library ends up in the graveyard. You go to the draw step and lose.

For this reason you shouldn't die to Abeyance unless forced. If the opponent isn't applying immediate pressure and you aren't required to force a risky Hermit line, it can be correct to wait, use discard, or look for a different plan. Always keep an eye on how your opponent is tapping his mana.

The presence of Abeyance varies a lot by list. Some versions run three main deck, others two in the sideboard, others none. But it's a card to always keep in mind when the opponent represents white mana.

## Mana Leak and Miscalculation Versions

Some versions of Replenish run light counters, like:

- **Mana Leak**;
- **Miscalculation**.

They aren't always present, and in general they aren't the center of the matchup. For this reason, you usually shouldn't consider **Xantid Swarm** a fundamental sideboard card in this matchup. It's often not relevant enough, but if you know the opponent has many counters, the evaluation can shift slightly. In general you should prefer increasing discard, enchantment answers, and removal for Meddling Mage rather than leaning on Xantid.

## Meddling Mage

**Meddling Mage** is one of the main post-board problems, and in some lists it can already be present main deck.

Mage is annoying because it does two things at once:

- it shuts off a fundamental piece of your plan;
- it puts a clock on the board.

The clock seems unimportant, but it isn't. A 2/2 attacking every turn forces you not to lose too much time, especially because your manabase can deal you damage and because you still have to find cards to prevent Replenish from assembling its plan.

If you don't remove Mage quickly, you can find yourself in the situation where you simultaneously have to:

- resolve the name Mage chose;

- protect Survival or Hermit;
- prevent Replenish;
- not die to the clock.

For this reason, post-board you want dedicated removal.

The best cards are:

- **Swords to Plowshares**;
- **Ghitu Slinger**;
- possibly *Pyroclasm*.

Pyroclasm can answer multiple Meddling Mage, but it isn't a great fit because it can be situational and doesn't always line up well with the rest of the plan. Personally, more targeted or tutorable removal is preferable.

## Post-Sideboard

Post-board the matchup becomes more complicated for both players.

On your side, you want to bring in:

- additional discard, **Duress**;
- **Monk Realist**, **Naturalize** and **Ray of Revelation**;
- removal for Meddling Mage, like Swords or Ghitu Slinger.

**Naturalize** is particularly useful because it can answer both problematic enchantments and possible artifacts like Crypt.

**Ray of Revelation** is strong because it can break two enchantments over the course of the game, but you have to remember that Replenish is a deck that can interact a lot with the graveyard and with the timing of your resources.

**Monk Realist** is very interesting because it's a tutorable answer with Survival and can remove key enchantments.

Remember that instant speed disenchanters can break the Opa-Wave lock. When Parallax Wave target itself, it is exiled, and there is a trigger on the stack: in this moment you can destroy Opalescence. Once Parallax return it can't exile creatures forever anymore.

## Gloom

**Gloom** is one of the best sideboard cards against Replenish.

All the opponent's problematic cards are white.

Gloom makes it much harder for the opponent, *almost impossible*, to chain their interactions and develop the combo plan. If you can resolve it, it can dramatically slow down the Replenish deck and open a very favorable window for you.

It isn't a card that always wins by itself, but it's one of the few sidebar cards that attacks all of the opponent's most important axes at once.

## Enchantment Removal

Enchantment removal is important because it lets you interact with their plan even after something has resolved.

If the opponent resolves **Opalescence** but hasn't yet brought back or resolved **Decree of Silence**, you can destroy Opalescence at instant speed and try to stall the board.

This can be very important: removing Opalescence can turn a lethal board into a set of enchantments that are no longer creatures, buying time or even flipping a combat step.

You can't always answer everything, but having access to Naturalize, Ray, or Monk Realist lets you not depend exclusively on speed.

## Tormod's Crypt

Some opponents can have **Tormod's Crypt** post-board.

It isn't always the most problematic card, but it has to be respected because it can interfere with your Hermit lines and with some Survival lines. Naturalize is useful precisely because they can also answer this kind of card.

If your plan goes through the graveyard and you have no way to remove Crypt, it can be correct to name it with Cabal Therapy or build an alternative plan.

## Attunement and Frantic Search

One of the reasons the matchup is hard to read is that the opponent's hand can change very quickly.

Cards like **Attunement** and **Frantic Search** let Replenish see many cards, discard combo pieces, and turn an apparently slow hand into a lethal hand.

This means the information you get from Duress or Cabal Therapy is important, but doesn't always stay valid for many turns. You can see a hand without Replenish, and then the

opponent digs quickly and finds it.

For this reason, when you open a window, you have to try to capitalize on it. You can't always afford to wait many turns after stripping a key card.

## Ancient Tomb and Counting Mana

Another important detail is the presence of **Ancient Tomb** and a high land count.

Replenish often runs 25 or 26 lands, including four Ancient Tomb. This means it can generate extra mana suddenly and pull off sequences that looked impossible a turn earlier.

When you count the opponent's clock, you always have to consider the possibility that Ancient Tomb accelerates every ② spell: Attunement, Parallax Wave, Opalescence, etc.

You shouldn't reason only in terms of the current untapped lands with a linear curve, but also if a spell can be cast earlier than usual.

### Matchup Summary

Replenish is a matchup very close to fifty-fifty: you're both fast and resilient combo decks.

The keys to the matchup are:

- be fast, but not blind;
- respect Abeyance in Hermit lines;
- consider Gloom one of the best cards in the matchup;
- remember that Replenish can change its hand very quickly.

In short: against Replenish you have to win the race through cards that are combo pieces and interactions.

It's a very technical matchup because every card of the opponent's can have multiple roles. Seal isn't just protection. Opalescence isn't just a kill. Parallax Wave isn't just a combo piece. And Abeyance isn't just a tempo effect: against Hermit Druid, it can be a real kill.

# Sligh

## General Plan

The matchup against **Sligh** is one of the trickiest, especially in **Game 1**. The difficulty depends heavily on the opening hand and on whether you're playing **blind** or already know what you're sitting across from.

The main problem is that **Hermit Druid isn't a reliable plan** in this matchup. Sligh plays a high number of cards that, on top of contributing to the clock, also function as removal: **Lightning Bolt**, **Mogg Fanatic**, **Incinerate**, and in general almost every burn spell can answer Hermit Druid effectively. This makes it very risky to base the game on a line that requires you to untap with it or protect it across multiple turns.

On top of that, there's a second important issue: your **manabase deals you a lot of damage**. Without access to "painless" sources like Reflecting Pool or Treva's Ruin, you're often forced to lean on **painlands** and **City of Brass**. Against Sligh every life point matters, and just developing mana can push you dangerously close to the opponent's burn range.

For these reasons, the main plan should almost always be **Survival of the Fittest**.

## Game 1

You want to build the game around **Survival**, looking for a line that's as resilient as possible against the opponent's removal.

Hermit Druid can still have a role, but more often as a tempo card than as a real combo plan. For example, against an aggressive start with **Jackal Pup**, you can use Hermit Druid as a blocker or as a card that forces a removal spell. If you know the opponent will have to spend a burn spell on it anyway, you can turn it into a small defensive resource, buying time and temporarily reducing pressure on the board.

The ideal Survival plan is to build a line that **cast Volrath's Shapeshifter** instead of relying on lines with **Unearth**. If you can put a creature like **Palinchron** on top of the graveyard, Shapeshifter will enter as a much bigger body and will be much harder to remove with a single burn spell. This is very important because against Sligh you never want your Shapeshifter to be vulnerable for free. If it enters as a 0/1, or if it passes through a window where it's a X/1, any removal from the opponent becomes lethal.

Another important line involves **Phyrexian Devourer**. By discarding Devourer and having Shapeshifter copy it, you can often load up some counters without immediately reaching the threshold that triggers the sacrifice. Even just 3 or 4 counters can be relevant for moving out

of certain burn-spell range or for forcing the opponent to have multiple interactions at the same time.

Even better if you have access to **Psychatog** or **Battlefield Scrounger**, since these cards let you manipulate the graveyard or power/toughness at instant speed, working around damage the opponent can deal in response to a Survival activation or a discard.

## The Role of Survival

Survival is the most important card in the matchup because it lets you turn every creature in hand into a useful piece: virtual protection, a bigger body, recursion, or a kill line.

The key thing is not to look for the most elegant line, but the safest one. Against Sligh you often don't have the luxury of building a slow combo over multiple turns: your life total drops quickly, and your own manabase contributes to the opponent's clock.

The question to ask is:

┆ "Does this line lose to a single burn spell?"

If the answer is yes, you probably need to find a different line with more margin.

## Watch Out for Uneath

**Uneath** is a very versatile card in the matchup, but it has to be used carefully.

On one hand, it can be excellent in defensive situations. For example, you can block with a wall, let the opponent spend a removal on it, and then bring it back with Uneath to recreate a blocker and buy time. In this sense, Uneath can become a form of positive attrition: the opponent spends burn, you rebuild the board.

On the other hand, Uneath can create dangerous windows in combo lines. If you're building a sequence with **Karmic Guide**, **Palinchron**, or other creatures with triggers on the stack, you have to remember that at certain moments **Volrath's Shapeshifter can revert to being a 0/1**. In those windows, Sligh can easily punish you with any burn spell.

So Uneath shouldn't be treated simply as a shortcut to the combo. It's a powerful card, but against Sligh every step of the line has to be evaluated based on the vulnerability windows it opens.

## Post-Sideboard

In **Game 2** and **Game 3** the plan is more straightforward, the general idea is to cut the less reliable cards and increase the density of cards that help you survive or assemble Survival

more quickly.

You can usually consider cutting:

- a number of **Hermit Druid**, because the Hermit plan is fragile against their amount of removal;
- some discard spells, **Duress** and **Cabal Therapy**, especially if the matchup is being played more on the board and on tempo than on the hand;
- possibly **Krosan Reclamation**, since the main plan isn't full-mill with Hermit Druid.

The cards to bring in depend on the configuration, but they can include:

- an additional **Enlightened Tutor**, to increase access to Survival or other key cards;
- removal like **Swords to Plowshares**;
- sweepers like **Pyroclasm**;
- **Eladamri's Vineyard**, if it's in the sideboard.

**Eladamri's Vineyard** is particularly interesting because it gives you green mana that doesn't deal damage. That's very relevant against Sligh: it lets you use Survival multiple times without continuing to pay life with painlands or City of Brass. Paired with Survival, Vineyard can win you the game in two or three turns, dramatically accelerating your engine.

## Key Creatures

The most important defensive creatures are the **Wall of Roots**.

Walls have two fundamental functions:

- they block the opponent's aggressive creatures effectively, thanks to the 0/5 body;
- they produce mana without dealing you damage.

This combination is exactly what you want in the matchup: slow down the clock while developing your plan without losing additional life.

## Price of Progress

Post-sideboard you have to respect **Price of Progress** a lot.

It's very easy to die to two Price of Progress, or to a single lethal Price for 8 or 10 damage at a moment when you think you're relatively safe. For this reason, you shouldn't play unnecessary lands just because you have them in hand.

The practical rule is:

If you don't need that land and you can't use the mana right away in a meaningful way, it's probably better not to play it.

Managing the number of nonbasics on the battlefield is a fundamental part of the matchup. Against Sligh you're not just playing against the board and burn spells: you're also playing against the sudden range of Price of Progress.

## Matchup Summary

Against Sligh the main plan is **Survival**, not Hermit Druid.

Hermit Druid is too exposed to removal and often works better as a tempo card or as bait. Survival, on the other hand, once resolved can't be removed.

The matchup is played on three main axes:

- minimize damage from your own manabase;
- avoid windows where Shapeshifter is a 0/1;
- assemble a Survival line that's fast but resistant to removal.

Don't look for the prettiest line: look for the line that wins before your life total becomes a depleted resource.

# Stasis

## General Plan

**Stasis** is a very interesting matchup because the opponent's deck doesn't necessarily try to kill you fast: it tries to bring you to a spot where you can no longer win.

The opponent's typical plan is to wait for the moment when you've tapped out on your turn to try to resolve a threat that gets countered. In that window, when you're low on mana or completely tapped out, the opponent can land **Stasis** and turn the game into a lock.

Your main goal is therefore very clear:

| Stasis must not resolve at the moment when it can completely lock you out.

You don't always have to prevent Stasis from being cast at all. Sometimes you can even beat it if you have continuous mana, answers, or an adequate board. But you can't let the opponent resolve it when you're out of mana, out of useful permanents, and out of ways to respond.

In general, you should consider the matchup fairly favorable, mainly because the opponent's "removal" is often more tempo play than definitive answers. Cards like **Chain of Vapor** buy time, but they don't actually remove your plan. The opponent often has to stop your threats on the stack, and that means discard, double spells, and sequenced pressure are very effective.

## The Main Versions

You can split Stasis into three main families:

- **Mono U Stasis**;
- **U/G Stasis**, with **Root Maze**;
- **U/R Stasis**, with red removal like **Fire // Ice** and **Pyroclasm**.

The general approach stays similar: you want to prevent Stasis from resolving at the wrong moment, and you want to build a window where one of your important threats can get through.

The differences lie mostly in the kind of interaction you have to respect.

## U/G Stasis

The **U/G** version runs a variable number of **Root Maze**, sometimes one, two or even three copies.

This version can feel almost more “combo” than prison, because Root Maze significantly accelerates the opponent’s ability to turn Stasis into a real lock. That said, from your point of view, the approach doesn’t change radically compared to the mono blue version.

**Root Maze** by itself isn’t the main problem. It’s symmetric, and losing a turn by playing a tapped land isn’t necessarily lethal. The problem arises when Root Maze combines with Stasis and actually prevents you from getting back into the game.

In Game 1, if the opponent can quickly assemble Root Maze + Stasis, it can be an almost complete lock. In these spots you want to have mana that doesn’t rely on lands, or a window to close the game asap.

Cards like **Birds of Paradise** can help if they stay untapped before Stasis resolves, but they aren’t a perfect solution. Post-board, **Elvish Spirit Guide** can sometimes let you cast a **Naturalize** even under the lock, and that’s an important detail to keep in mind.

The U/G version is seen less often, but it has to be respected because it can make Stasis lock much harder to beat once assembled.

## U/R Stasis

The **U/R** version requires different attention.

Here you have to play around cards like:

- **Fire // Ice;**
- **Pyroclasm.**

These cards can easily turn your creatures into a 2-for-1 for the opponent. For example, playing two mana creatures on the board can look correct to develop mana, but if the opponent answers with Fire // Ice or Pyroclasm you can lose both time and resources.

Against U/R Stasis, then, you shouldn’t commit creatures unnecessarily. **Birds of Paradise**, in particular, is often a more fragile resource than it seems: not only if Stasis resolves it can be used only once, but also a perfect removal target.

In many spots, holding Birds in hand can have more value than playing it right away. It can become a discard target for Survival, a post-removal resource, or a way to avoid exposing yourself to a 2-for-1.

## Mono U Stasis

The **Mono U** version is probably the most representative of the matchup.

Here the opponent's plan is more linear: counter the relevant spells, buy time with Chain of Vapor or similar effects, then resolve Stasis at a moment when you can no interact.

The main cards to respect, other than **Stasis**, are:

- **Counterspell**;
- **Daze**;
- **Thwart**;
- **Chain of Vapor**;
- **Brain Freeze**;
- **Cursed Totem**, **Annul** and **Essence Flare** post-board.

The important thing is that many of these cards don't beat you on their own. Stasis is the real problem, but it often needs to be accompanied by time, counters, or support permanents. This gives you room to build turns where the opponent can't answer everything.

## Your Best Cards

### Wall of Roots

**Wall of Roots** is one of the best cards in the matchup: it produces mana without tapping. This is fundamental against Stasis, because it lets you keep accessing mana even when you don't have an untap step.

Unlike Birds of Paradise, Wall of Roots can generate mana multiple times across multiple turns. This makes it one of the most important resources for staying operational and, in certain cases, for casting an answer or completing a line.

### Eladamri's Vineyard

**Eladamri's Vineyard** is very strong against Stasis.

It gives you green mana continuously, without requiring you to tap lands or creatures. This is exactly what you want against a deck trying to lock the untap step.

On top of that, the opponent often doesn't convert that mana as well as you do. They can use it for some generic spells, to pay additional costs, or to cast some cards more easily, but they still need blue mana for most of their important interaction.

In the worst case, they can convert that mana into **Black Vise** or some sideboard spell; but in general Vineyard is much more asymmetrical in your favor than against other green decks in the format.

With Vineyard in play you can use Survival, cast Naturalize, develop multiple spells, and stay alive under Stasis much better than in a normal game.

## Discard

Discard spells are very important, but they shouldn't always name **Stasis**.

With **Cabal Therapy**, the call depends on the spot. If you're in a position where Stasis completely locks you, then naming it makes sense. But in many cases, it's more correct to name the card that prevents your plan from resolving.

Frequent calls can be:

- **Counterspell**, especially if the opponent represents double blue;
- **Chain of Vapor**, if a resolved threat of yours can win but loses to a bounce;
- **Thwart**, if the opponent's setup makes it plausible;
- **Stasis**, if you're vulnerable to the lock;
- **Annul** post-board, if your plan goes through Survival or Animate Dead.

The rule is always the same:

| Don't name to hit. Name the card that beats you.

## Counters and Tempo Plays

### Counterspell

**Counterspell** is the most natural call when the opponent keeps double blue up.

It's also one of the cleanest cards against you, because it can stop any key spell regardless. If you want to build a turn around an important threat, stripping Counterspell can be the first step.

### Daze

**Daze** has to be respected if you know or suspect that the opponent runs it.

Not all lists run the same number, but when present it can punish your more aggressive sequences. Against Stasis you often want to use all available mana, so Daze can be stronger than it seems.

If you can play around Daze without losing too much time, it's often worth doing so. If instead waiting exposes you to Stasis, you have to evaluate whether to force anyway.

## Thwart

**Thwart** is a very heavy card for the opponent.

It can be strong, but bouncing three Islands against a deck like yours is a real cost. Even if the opponent has four mana available, a four mana counterspell can lose a lot of time.

This means that sometimes you can force a spell knowing that Thwart, while being an answer, will slow them down enough to give you a new window the following turn.

## Chain of Vapor

**Chain of Vapor** is one of the most important interactions to consider.

It isn't a definitive removal spell, but it can break your sequence on the turn you try to win. It can bounce Survival, Shapeshifter, or a relevant piece, buying the time needed for Stasis to stabilize.

If your plan loses to Chain of Vapor, it can be correct to name it with Therapy. This is especially true when you've already resolved a threat or when the opponent no longer has enough mana to counter but can still interact at low cost.

## Brain Freeze

Some lists run **Brain Freeze**, usually in small numbers.

It isn't always a central card, but it can be a problem if your plan goes through **Hermit Druid** or through lines where you end up with few cards in your library. As in other matchups, any card that punishes a full mill has to be taken into account.

If you're planning a Hermit line, you have to ask whether you can beat Brain Freeze, whether you can strip the card with discard, or whether it's better to switch to Survival.

## Essence Flare

Some blue versions can run **Essence Flare**, which works as a kind of delayed removal.

It isn't the biggest problem in the matchup, but it has to be known. If the opponent puts Essence Flare on **Hermit Druid**, you can still activate Druid in response to the trigger in upkeep. This makes the card less definitive than other removal, but it can still create uncomfortable windows.

## Post-Sideboard

Post-board you want to increase the cards that interact with Stasis, Black Vise, Cursed Totem, and the other problematic permanents.

The cards that usually come in are:

- **Duress**;
- **Xantid Swarm**;
- **Naturalize**;
- **Ray of Revelation**;
- **Monk Realist**;
- **Uktabi Orangutan**.

Disenchant-like effects are very strong because they can answer **Stasis** directly. Naturalize is particularly versatile because it can hit both Stasis and problematic artifacts.

**Uktabi Orangutan** is interesting because it can remove:

- **Black Vise**;
- **Cursed Totem** post-board;
- any other support artifacts.

Removing Black Vise can gain a lot of time, especially in games where Stasis tries to lock you while Vise kills you slowly.

## What to Cut

You should usually consider cutting a number of **Birds of Paradise**.

Birds is useful before Stasis resolves, but under Stasis it becomes a one-shot source of mana. This doesn't mean Birds is always bad, but post-board, when more answers come in and you want to increase the quality of your draws, cutting some is reasonable.

Speeding into **Hermit Druid** lines also isn't always the right approach. If you find yourself activating Hermit in upkeep and then having to resolve **Krosan Reclamation**, you have to be aware that the opponent can counter it. If Reclamation gets countered, you can simply lose on the draw step.

For this reason, post-board the Hermit plan has to be used with precision. It shouldn't be abandoned, but you can't treat it as an always-safe line.

## Annul and Cursed Totem

Post-board you have to respect **Annul**.

It's a very common card, often at least one or two copies, because Stasis also uses it to improve other matchups, like Elves. Against you it's very effective because it can counter:

- **Survival of the Fittest**;
- **Animate Dead**;
- some other relevant enchantments or artifacts you might have (*because you hate Stasis*).

This makes your Duress and Cabal Therapy even more important.

You also have to expect **Cursed Totem**. Totem is very strong against you because it shuts off many activated abilities of creatures, including Hermit Druid and several Shapeshifter lines. Luckily you have answers like Naturalize and Uktabi Orangutan, which are already strong cards in the matchup.

## How to Win the Matchup

Against Stasis you want to build a sequence where the opponent is forced to answer too many things.

The Stasis player tends to handle threats on the stack with counters. If you can create a turn with:

- discard plus threat;
- double threat;
- threat plus answer to Stasis;
- Xantid Swarm plus combo piece;

then the opponent can find themselves in a position where they can no longer cover everything.

Every card you bring in post-board is very relevant: Naturalize, Monk Realist, Ray of Revelation, Uktabi Orangutan, Xantid Swarm, and Duress are all cards that can solve a specific problem or open a winning window.

This is why the matchup tends to be favorable. Your deck has many different threats and many post-board answers, while Stasis often has to have the right combination of counters, lock pieces, and tempo.

## Matchup Summary

Stasis is a technical but generally favorable matchup.

The central point is preventing **Stasis** from resolving at the moment when you're completely vulnerable. You don't have to play terrified of every copy of Stasis, but you have to know when that card becomes a real lock.

The keys to the matchup are:

- don't tap out unnecessarily;
- give a lot of value to **Wall of Roots**;
- use Cabal Therapy to name the card that beats your line;
- respect Annul and Cursed Totem post-board;
- don't lean too casually on Hermit + Krosan Reclamation.

In short: against Stasis you don't just have to be faster. You have to avoid handing the opponent the perfect turn to resolve Stasis and turn a neutralized spell of yours into a lock.

With discard, double threats, and post-board answers, you can often force a decisive card and turn the game even before they see it coming.

# Terrageddon

## General Plan

**Terrageddon** belongs to the **land destruction** family of decks, and for this reason it's one of the hardest matchups for hFEB.

The problem is that Terrageddon interacts with you on many different axes. It doesn't just apply pressure, it doesn't just remove Survival, it doesn't just attack the mana: it does all of these things at once.

In Game 1 it can already have access to several enchantment-removal effects, like:

- **Disenchant**;
- **Naturalize**;
- sometimes **Seal of Cleansing**.

This makes **Survival of the Fittest** less reliable than usual. Even if you can resolve it, there's no guarantee it'll stay in play long enough for you to build a safe line.

On top of that, there's the mana-denial package: **Weathered Wayfarer** with **Wasteland** and **Rishadan Port**. Since you don't run basic lands, every Wasteland is extremely relevant, and Wayfarer can turn into a repeatable source of pressure on your manabase. If you don't keep drawing lands or developing mana through creatures, you can easily get locked out of the game.

Plus, the deck runs **Swords to Plowshares**, *sometimes* **Fire // Ice** too, **Sylvan Library** to find resources, and of course **Armageddon**, which often closes the game on the spot.

For these reasons, Terrageddon is probably one of your most complex and unfavorable matchups.

## Game 1

### A Matchup Without a Simple Plan

Game 1 is already hard because there isn't a single, always-correct approach.

The general instinct is to try to be as fast as possible, without wasting resources. This means combining discard, mana development, and blockers, trying to commit combo pieces only when you have a concrete window to win immediately or *almost* immediately.

Against Terrageddon, just playing **Survival of the Fittest** on turn two isn't always correct. If in the same situation you have access to **Duress** or **Cabal Therapy**, it can be much more important to first strip Disenchant, Naturalize, Swords to Plowshares, or Armageddon.

A Survival cast without protection can easily turn into wasted time and mana, especially if the opponent removes it and then starts destroying your lands.

The key question is:

Does this combo piece let me win by next turn, or am I just handing the opponent a target?

If you can't capitalize right away, it's often better to first use discard, develop mana, or wait for a better window.

## Reading the Opponent's Board

The right plan depends a lot on the state of the board.

If the opponent has **Weathered Wayfarer**, you're under particular pressure. Wayfarer can find Wasteland, and Wasteland is one of the best cards against you. In this scenario, it can make sense to push the combo faster, because you know your mana may not stay available for many turns.

If instead the opponent has a creature like **Nimble Mongoose**, you can evaluate the situation differently. Mongoose takes a few turns to become really threatening. The same applies, in part, to **Werebear**. This can give you a few extra turns to build a plan.

When the opponent plays **Terravore**, instead, you should start strongly suspecting **Armageddon**. Terravore followed by Armageddon is one of the most dangerous sequences in the matchup: the opponent puts a huge threat on the board, destroys all the lands, and leaves you with almost no way to recover.

In most spots, a resolved Armageddon at the right moment is nearly lethal. Your deck isn't built to easily rebuild from zero mana, especially if the opponent already has pressure on the board.

## Armageddon

**Armageddon** is the card that defines the matchup.

Even if you can lose to Wasteland, Disenchant, or Swords, Armageddon is the card that makes every decision harder. You always have to ask whether you're playing into a position that loses immediately to Armageddon.

This influences many choices:

- how many lands to play;
- when to use discard spells;
- whether to develop mana dorks or keep them in hand;
- whether to force Survival;
- whether to try to close immediately with Hermit Druid;
- whether you can afford to wait a turn.

Against other decks, you can often think: *"I'll wait a turn and build a better line."* Against Terrageddon, that wait can turn into a loss if the opponent resolves Armageddon.

## Post-Sideboard

Game 2 and Game 3 don't become easy. The matchup stays extremely complicated because the opponent also improves significantly post-board.

You want to bring in as many answers as possible without losing your ability to win fast.

The cards to consider are:

- additional **Duress**;
- **Swords to Plowshares**;
- **Naturalize** and **Ray of Revelation**;
- **Uktabi Orangutan**;
- **Ghitu Slinger**;
- possibly **Pyroclasm**.

The challenge is finding the right balance. You need interaction, but you can't turn into a deck full of situational answers without a win plan.

Post-board you definitely want ways to interact with the opponent's enchantments. **Sylvan Library** is one of their main sources of advantage. If it stays in play for several turns, it lets the opponent find all the hate and threats they need.

## Artifact Removal and Cursed Totem

Post-board you also have to respect hate artifacts.

Terrageddon often have **Cursed Totem**, which is one of the most annoying cards against you because it hits most of your plans.

For this reason, cards like **Naturalize**, **Crumble**, and **Uktabi Orangutan** are important. Orangutan is particularly interesting because, on top of removing artifacts, it also leaves a body to chump block.

Remember that in some spots, removing a Mox can completely cut a color off the opponent. This can be very relevant, especially if it forces them to delay any key spells.

## Pyroclasm

**Pyroclasm** is a borderline card in the matchup. It can be very good if the opponent develops a board of small creatures.

The problem is that when the opponent starts putting bigger creatures on the board, especially **Call of the Herd** or similar threats, Pyroclasm becomes much less effective. Against elephants, Terravore, or out-of-range creatures, it risks being a dead or near-dead card.

So Pyroclasm can come in, but it has to be evaluated based on the opponent's list and on what you've seen. It isn't a universal answer.

Terrageddon have their own Pyroclasm in the sideboard, keep that in mind! They can cut some of the small creatures to fit those in.

## Mana Dorks, Walls, and Eladamri's Vineyard

The post-board build is also complicated by how your creatures line up against their cards.

**Birds of Paradise** are useful because they help you play around Wasteland and Armageddon, but they die easily to **Fire // Ice**. **Walls** are more resilient to Fire // Ice and help you develop mana, but they're still shut off by **Cursed Totem**.

This makes sideboarding very difficult: you want more interaction, but you can't cut too much mana; you want to keep the dorks, but you know some of the opponent's cards punish them; you want answers to Totem, but you can't have too many reactive cards.

**Eladamri's Vineyard** is an *ambitious* card against Terrageddon. On one hand it can give you the mana needed to push a line faster, and if it stays in play it can let you win in situations where you'd otherwise be strangled by Wasteland or Armageddon. On the other hand, the opponent uses green mana very well. They can convert it into creatures, Sylvan Library, interaction, board development, or even keep mana up more easily to answer your turn.

The biggest risk is that Vineyard lets the opponent do both things: apply pressure and hold interaction.

## Gorilla Shaman

If present in the sideboard, **Gorilla Shaman** is interesting because it can remove the opponent's Mox and other cards like Furnace or Crypt.

This can be relevant in games where the Mox is fixing a specific color or letting the opponent curve out too efficiently.

The limit is that Gorilla Shaman doesn't remove **Cursed Totem**, so it doesn't solve the main problem for your activated abilities. On top of that, it's a situational card: very strong in some spots, mediocre in others.

### Matchup Summary

Terrageddon is probably one of the worst matchups for hFEB, because it attacks all your main axes at once.

The keys to the matchup are:

- don't play Survival without being able to capitalize on it quickly;
- use discard surgically keeping in mind Armageddon;
- don't underestimate Sylvan Library;
- don't trust Eladamri's Vineyard too much;
- accept that there's no standard sequence that's always correct.

In short: against Terrageddon you aren't fighting a single form of interaction. You're fighting a combination of mana denial, removal, hate, and pressure. The most important thing is to quickly recognize which resource the opponent is attacking — mana, Survival, graveyard, or board — and pick the plan that loses to the fewest possible cards.

# The Rock

## General Plan

**The Rock** is a black-green midrange deck that shares some traits with Deadguy Ale and BW Control, but it has its own distinct character. It's probably the grindiest and most versatile version of this archetype family.

The Rock's toolkit can include:

- discard, like **Duress** and **Cabal Therapy**;
- **Pernicious Deed** and **Dust Bowl**;
- black removal and **Naturalize**.

The Rock can apply pressure with creatures and, at the same time, have very flexible answers to your permanents.

The main difference compared to blue decks is that The Rock **cannot counter your spells**. When you cast **Survival of the Fittest**, **Hermit Druid**, **Volrath's Shapeshifter**, or a utility creature, you know that spell will resolve.

The problem is different: you don't know whether it will stay in play.

If you play Survival, the opponent can have **Naturalize** or **Pernicious Deed**. If you play Hermit Druid, they can have a removal. If you go through the graveyard, post-board they can have **Phyrexian Furnace**, **Tormod's Crypt**, **Withered Wretch** or **Cursed Totem**.

So the matchup isn't "free," but the fact that your spells resolve gives you a slight structural advantage.

## The Key Principle

Against The Rock you have to try to resolve the right spell at the moment when the opponent's interaction against that specific spell is at its minimum.

You shouldn't only ask:

"Can I play Survival?"

but rather:

"Can the opponent's hand beat Survival?"

This matchup rewards the ability to read the opponent's hand and pick the right axis. If the opponent only has discard and pressure, sometimes all you need is to draw a high-impact piece and force the game.

## Duress and Cabal Therapy

Against The Rock, **Duress** is often even more important than **Cabal Therapy**.

In general you shouldn't sideboard in too many discard spells against decks that already run discard, because you risk entering a resource war where both hands empty out. But Duress has a special value: it guarantees to hit something. This is important since many answers can be redundant. And information is fundamental.

Imagine you have both **Hermit Druid** and **Survival of the Fittest** in hand, without knowing what the opponent has.

In the abstract, Survival is often the safer plan, because there's less interaction against Survival than against Hermit Druid. On top of that, Survival can generate value even if the game goes longer.

But you have no certainty.

If you cast **Duress** and see **Pernicious Deed**, you understand that Survival is much more exposed than usual. If you see only black removal, Survival is probably much safer than Hermit Druid. If you see both an enchantment answer and creature removal, you have to figure out which line you can protect, which card you can strip, and which plan loses to the fewest interactions.

This is why Duress is so valuable: it doesn't just strip a card, it lets you choose the right plan.

## Survival vs Hermit Druid

### Survival of the Fittest

**Survival** is often very strong against The Rock. If it isn't removed immediately, it lets you generate value, find utility creatures, build alternative lines, and adapt to the board. Against non-blue decks, a resolved Survival can immediately start converting creatures in hand into concrete resources.

The problem is that The Rock has access to multiple enchantment answers:

- **Naturalize;**
- **Pernicious Deed;**

- **Nantuko Vigilante;**
- possibly other answers post-board.

So Survival is strong, but you shouldn't always treat it as a card destined to stay in play. If you can use it right away to gain value or build a line, you should.

## Hermit Druid

**Hermit Druid** is more exposed to removal, but it can close quickly and punish opponent's hands that are too slow or too heavy on discard.

Against The Rock you have to consider black removal, edict effects, and **Pernicious Deed**. Deed is particularly problematic because it can answer Hermit Druid and your mana creatures at the same time, in a single card.

Hermit is particularly good when you know the opponent has no immediate removal, or when you can force it at a moment when their hand has already been emptied by discard.

The point isn't to always choose Survival or always Hermit. The point is to figure out which of the two plans goes through fewer answers in that specific game.

## Pernicious Deed

**Pernicious Deed** is one of the most important cards to respect in the matchup.

Unlike a simple Disenchant, Deed isn't just a one-for-one answer: it can completely reset the position. It can hit many categories of permanents at the same time:

- mana creatures;
- Survival;
- small setup pieces;
- in certain spots, even more developed boards.

For this reason, when you play against The Rock you can't just think about protecting Survival. You have to think about how exposed your **entire board** is to a Deed activation.

A typical situation is the one where you have Survival, a couple of mana creatures, and maybe a small body in play. From the outside it looks like a solid board, but a Deed for 2 or 3 can sweep all of it away in a single turn.

So sometimes it's correct **not** to develop everything you could play. If you can afford to keep Survival without surrounding it with vulnerable permanents, you reduce the impact of a Deed activation.

# Sylvan Library

**Sylvan Library** is another card to respect.

If it stays in play, it helps the opponent find the right interaction and balance discard, removal, and pressure more easily. It doesn't kill you directly, but it tilts the long game in their favor.

For this reason, post-board enchantment removal earns value beyond just answering Deed: it can also strip Sylvan Library if it shows up.

## Why the Matchup Is Favorable

The Rock is often considered sufficiently favorable precisely because the opponent doesn't run counters.

The fact that your spells resolve changes a lot. This is the main limit of non-blue decks: they can't dig as much as blue decks to find the perfect interaction. They have to rely on what they have in hand or on natural topdecks.

If their hand isn't redundant, a single discard spell from you can win the game. If you strip the only Pernicious Deed, the only Naturalize, or the only hate piece, you can often follow the plan you'd chosen without fearing further immediate interaction.

## Why You Can Still Lose

Even though the matchup is favorable, it's very easy to lose if you pick the wrong plan.

You can lose because:

- you keep a hand that's too fragile against discard;
- you play Survival into Naturalize or Pernicious Deed without capitalizing on it;
- you play Hermit Druid into removal;
- your hand gets emptied and you don't draw a payoff;
- you underestimate a creature clock built around Call of the Herd;
- you don't respect Pernicious Deed and overextend your board;
- you lose to post-board hate like Crypt, Furnace, or Cursed Totem.

The Rock doesn't do anything particularly "unfair," but it's good at trading resources. If you help them by picking the wrong line, they can drag you into a messy game where it becomes hard to rebuild.

## Post-Sideboard

Post-board you have to expect more hate.

The most common cards are:

- **Phyrexian Furnace**;
- **Tormod's Crypt**;
- **Cursed Totem**;
- additional Naturalize;
- more removal;
- possibly specific cards against Survival or the graveyard.

For this reason you want to have access to versatile answers:

- **Naturalize**;
- **Ray of Revelation**;
- **Monk Realist**;
- **Uktabi Orangutan**;
- creature removal.

Artifact answers are important because Crypt, Furnace, and Cursed Totem can be very annoying. **Uktabi Orangutan** is particularly useful because it's tutorable with Survival and can remove a hate piece while leaving a body on board. Enchantment answers are useful against Sylvan Library, Pernicious Deed, and other problematic cards like Engineered Plague.

## The Role of ETB Creatures

One of the positive aspects of the matchup is that you can make good use of creatures with immediate effects.

Cards like:

- **Triskelion**;
- **Ghitu Slinger**;
- **Uktabi Orangutan**;
- **Monk Realist**;
- **Karmic Guide**;

can generate value even if the opponent has removal afterward.

Against non-blue decks, these creatures resolve. You can therefore use ETB effects to remove creatures, break hate permanents, manage partially complicated boards, and build incremental advantage.

This is particularly important in post-board games, where you can't always win with a clean, immediate combo.

## Matchup Summary

The Rock is a midrange matchup that shares an approach with Deadguy Ale and BW Control: based on discard, removal, and problematic permanents, but without counters.

The keys to the matchup are:

- choose between Survival and Hermit Druid based on the interaction you've seen;
- remember that your spells resolve, but don't necessarily stay in play;
- respect **Pernicious Deed** and avoid overextending the board;
- bring in versatile artifact/enchantment answers;
- exploit creatures with ETB triggers, because against non-blue decks they're very reliable.

In short: against The Rock, your advantage is that your spells resolve. The game comes down to figuring out which resolved spell the opponent can no longer beat.

It's a favorable but not automatic matchup. You can win it with relative solidity if you use discard to gather information, pick the right axis, and play around their few but very effective answers.

# UB Psychatog

## General Plan

**UB Psychatog** is a matchup similar to UW Landstill, but without many of the problems tied to white.

This is a fundamental point. Against UB Psychatog you don't have to worry about cards like:

- **Swords to Plowshares;**
- **Disenchant;**
- **Humility;**
- **Meddling Mage.**

This difference significantly changes how you can approach the game. In particular, **Survival of the Fittest** is much stronger, especially Game 1, because the opponent has very few ways — often none — to remove it once it resolves.

For this reason, your main approach should be to try to resolve **Survival** and build the game from there.

UB Psychatog has no manlands and no particularly fast clock, other than **Psychatog** itself. Even Psychatog, though, isn't always an immediate kill: it often has to clear the board first, handle any chump blockers, and then attack in a spot where the opponent can convert hand and graveyard into lethal damage.

This gives you time. And against a control deck that can't easily remove Survival, time is often on your wincon.

## Game 1

### Survival Is the Best Plan

In Game 1 the best plan is almost always to try to resolve **Survival of the Fittest**.

If Survival sticks, UB Psychatog struggles a lot to keep you under control: the opponent has to interact on the stack. This means the game often gets decided the moment you try to resolve Survival. If it goes through, you can build a line patiently, force the opponent's resources, and pick the best moment to win.

The Hermit Druid plan can still exist, but it's less central. In a matchup that tends to go longer and where the opponent has counters, instant-speed draw, and possible ways to punish a full mill, you should generally lean on Survival.

## Psychatog as a Clock

**Psychatog** is the opponent's main threat, but it has to be evaluated correctly.

You don't always have to treat every Psychatog attack as lethal. Often an attack takes three, four, or five life, maybe even for two consecutive turns, but doesn't immediately close the game.

This is important because you don't always have to chump block automatically. Sometimes taking an attack is correct if keeping that creature lets you win the following turn or build a better line.

You do, however, have to watch out for cards that can throw off the math in combat:

- **Gush;**
- **Accumulated Knowledge.**

These cards are often run in four copies and can suddenly increase the number of cards in hand, and therefore the potential Psychatog pump. So when you decide whether to block, you have to consider not only the visible hand and graveyard, but also the possibility that the opponent draws or refills resources at instant speed.

The question to ask is:

┆ If I don't block this attack, am I actually dying, or am I just taking damage I can afford?

If not blocking lets you win the following turn, it can be the right choice. *But..* **always do the math!**

## Discard and Resolution Windows

As against all control decks, discard spells are very important.

In Game 1, a **Duress** or **Cabal Therapy** in the early turns can open the window to resolve Survival or Hermit Druid. The difference from UW Landstill is that here you don't necessarily have to strip Swords or Humility: often you have to strip the counter that prevents your key card from resolving.

The most common calls depend on the spot, but they can include:

- **Counterspell;**

- **Circular Logic** or **Mana Leak**;
- **Smother**;
- **Gush**, in some spots;
- **Psychatog**, if the game is set up on the board.

The principle stays the same:

| Discard has to open a window, not just strip a strong card.

If your hand has Survival, you want to strip what prevents Survival from resolving. If you're planning a Hermit line, you want to strip what can stop or punish that line.

## Cards to Respect

### Gush and Accumulated Knowledge

**Gush** and **Accumulated Knowledge** are important for two reasons.

The first is that they let the opponent find counters and interaction. The second is that they suddenly increase Psychatog's potential in combat.

A Psychatog that looks non-lethal can become lethal if the opponent draws more cards or increases the resources available to exile/discard. For this reason you should never count Tog's clock too statically.

### Chain of Vapor

Some versions run **Chain of Vapor**.

It isn't a definitive answer, but it can break your sequence on the key turn by bouncing Survival, Shapeshifter, or a relevant creature. It has to be respected especially when you're trying to close in a single turn.

### Green Hate

Some lists may have **Hibernation** or **Perish**.

Both are cards to keep in mind because can make you lose time in spots where you thought you had a stable board. They aren't always present, but these are one of those "one-of" or situational sideboard cards UB can use to buy time.

## Cephalid Coliseum

You have to be very careful about **Cephalid Coliseum**.

The practical advice is simple:

| Don't die to Cephalid Coliseum.

If you've activated Hermit Druid and have no cards left in your library, the opponent can activate Coliseum at instant speed and make you draw. If you can't put at least three cards back into your library, this can be lethal.

So Hermit lines against blue decks with access to Coliseum have to be planned very carefully. It isn't enough to say "I activate Druid and then fix it with Krosan Reclamation"; you have to consider whether the opponent can make you draw before you manage to stabilize your library.

## Counters on Krosan Reclamation

As against many blue decks, activating **Hermit Druid** in upkeep can be dangerous.

If the plan is:

| Upkeep, activate Hermit Druid; mill everything; cast Krosan Reclamation;

then you have to remember that **Krosan Reclamation can be countered**. If the opponent neutralizes Reclamation, you lose the game on your draw step.

For this reason, against blue decks, an often safer line is to activate Hermit Druid in your main phase, use any **Cabal Therapy** from the graveyard to clear the opponent's hand, and then put **Animate Dead** or other relevant cards back into the library with Krosan Reclamation.

This line reduces the risk of losing immediately to a counter on Reclamation in upkeep.

## Post-Sideboard

Post-board the matchup stays generally favorable, but the opponent gains more situational cards.

You can bring in:

- additional **Duress**;
- **Xantid Swarm**;
- **Swords to Plowshares**, especially for Psychatog;
- any versatile answers to problematic permanents.

You don't particularly need cards like **Pyroclasm** or **Ghitu Slinger**, unless the opponent's list shows specific creatures that make them relevant.

**Swords to Plowshares** is very good because it directly answers Psychatog, which is their real clock. Removing Tog often means stripping the opponent's main way to close the game.

## What to Cut

Post-board you should cut:

- **Elvish Spirit Guide**;
- a number of **Hermit Druid**;
- a number of **Birds of Paradise**;
- some cards that are less relevant in the long run.

**Elvish Spirit Guide** is less important because you don't necessarily want to play a game based on maximum speed. The matchup tends to go longer, and you prefer cards that stay relevant even after the early turns.

**Hermit Druid** can be reduced because it isn't the main plan. You don't want to eliminate it entirely, but you also don't want to depend too much on a line that can lose to counters, Coliseum, or instant-speed interaction.

**Birds of Paradise** isn't fundamental and can be vulnerable to cards like **Engineered Plague**. Even if Plague on Birds isn't necessarily the opponent's best play, it can still 2-for-1 you or shrink your development. Since you don't desperately need to accelerate, you can afford to cut some.

## Opponent's Sideboard

UB Psychatog often has many sideboard cards in single copies or in small numbers. This makes the matchup a bit peculiar: you don't always know exactly which card you need to beat, but you have to expect a wide range of interactions.

The possible cards include:

- **Engineered Plague**;
- **Phyrexian Furnace**;
- **Tormod's Crypt**;
- **Zombie Infestation**;
- **Infest**;
- **Chain of Vapor**;

- **Hibernation**;
- **Perish**;
- additional spot removal.

**Engineered Plague** can hit some of your smaller creatures, particularly Birds of Paradise or other support creatures. It isn't always devastating, but it can generate value.

**Furnace** and **Tormod's Crypt** have to be respected if your plan goes through the graveyard.

**Infest** can work as a real wrath against you, sweeping mana creatures, Hermit Druid, and other small creatures. So you should avoid exposing the entire board unnecessarily.

**Zombie Infestation** is an important card because it can become an alternative plan for the opponent, creating pressure and making the game harder to manage just around Psychatog.

## Shapeshifter and Black Spot Removal

A point in your favor is that many black removal spells don't deal well with your bigger creatures.

Cards like **Smother**, **Vendetta**, or edict effects can be relevant, but they don't always handle a **Triskelion**, a big **Volrath's Shapeshifter**, or a creature with a mana value out of range.

This means you can often play Shapeshifter in a way that changes identity and makes it harder for the opponent to use their removal correctly.

You shouldn't ignore removal, but compared to UW Landstill the interaction is less clean and less universal. Not having Swords to Plowshares is a huge difference.

## Why the Matchup Is Favorable

You should consider UB Psychatog a fairly favorable matchup for three main reasons.

First: it isn't white, so it doesn't have the most efficient answers against your plans.

Second: it doesn't have a fast, consistent clock. Psychatog is dangerous, but it requires setup and often doesn't kill immediately.

Third: **Survival of the Fittest** is very hard to remove. If it resolves, the opponent has to make up for it with counters, tempo plays, or sideboard cards, but they don't have a clean, natural answer.

This lets you play a more patient game than other matchups, picking the line that loses to the fewest possible interactions.

## Note: UB Zombie Infestation

A similar argument applies to **UB Zombie Infestation**.

The deck is similar to Psychatog in many ways, but the clock revolves much more around **Zombie Infestation**. This slightly changes how you count pressure.

Zombie Infestation can build a more consistent board in certain games, especially if the opponent has enough "air" cards to discard, like **Krovikan Horror** and **Squee**. This can make the race more concrete than against pure Psychatog.

That said, the general principle stays similar:

- Survival is very strong;
- discard opens windows;
- you have to respect sideboard cards;
- don't die to effects that punish a full mill;
- versatile enchantment answers can be valuable if Zombie Infestation is central.

Against Zombie Infestation you just have to be slightly more careful about the fact that the clock can become more stable and less tied to a single attack.

### Matchup Summary

UB Psychatog is a generally favorable matchup.

The keys to the matchup are:

- resolve Survival;
- don't overestimate Psychatog's clock, but count Gush and Accumulated Knowledge carefully;
- don't die to Cephalid Coliseum after Hermit Druid;
- don't lean too much on upkeep Hermit lines;
- cut some cards that are too oriented toward pure speed.

In short: against UB Psychatog you want to play a more patient game than against other control matchups: don't get caught off-guard and pick resilient lines.

It's a matchup where the fact that the opponent isn't running white changes everything. Fewer clean answers means more time for you, and more time for hFEB often means a Survival that sooner or later turns any hand into a win.

# Beyond the Basics

**Tips & Tricks**

**Missing Items**

**Activation Covering**

**CMC Distribution**

**Beating Hate**

**Rules**

# Activation Covering

## What Is Covering?

One of the seldom-discussed aspects of graveyard hate is how it can functionally stifle Devourer activations through a process we call **covering**. In short, covering means creating combo-breaking events on the stack above an unresolved Devourer activation, so that we never get to resolve those activations if we aim to win the game.

Covering activations hasn't been an issue in traditional FEB lines, where the library is full and we have more than enough cards to deal lethal: not being able to resolve a single activation is rarely a barrier to winning, since we can simply activate Devourer again.

In **Scrounger-FEB lines**, however, the ability to fill the library after a Hermit activation is usually limited to one or two Scrounger activations, where the CMC of every single card counts. Getting a single activation covered can very well mean coming short of lethal, and with perfect knowledge (opponent has seen which cards you have put back on the library), the opponent will know which activations to cover to reduce our chances the most (usually Akroma or Palinchron).

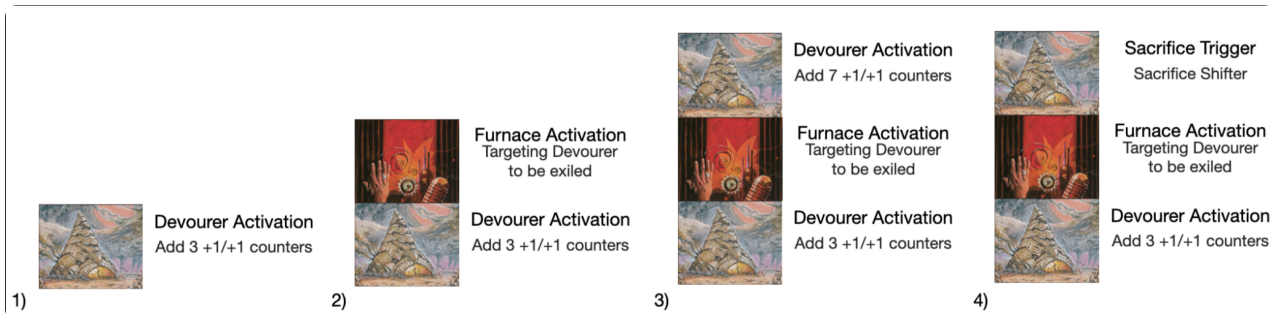
In order to navigate these scenarios, it is good to define and work through the different ways activation covering can affect us, and how to work around them.

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## A Simple Example

Consider this sequence:

1. We put a Devourer activation on the stack by exiling a 3 CMC card.
2. The opponent responds by activating Phyrexian Furnace targeting our Devourer in the graveyard.
3. We don't want to lose Devourer yet, we haven't exiled all the cards we intended to, so we activate Devourer in response to the Furnace.
4. After this second activation resolves, the sacrifice trigger of Devourer goes to the stack on top of the Furnace ability.



The Devourer activation on the bottom of the stack has now become **unreachable**: in order to resolve it, we would need to sacrifice the very creature that would receive those counters. We call such an activation a **covered activation**.

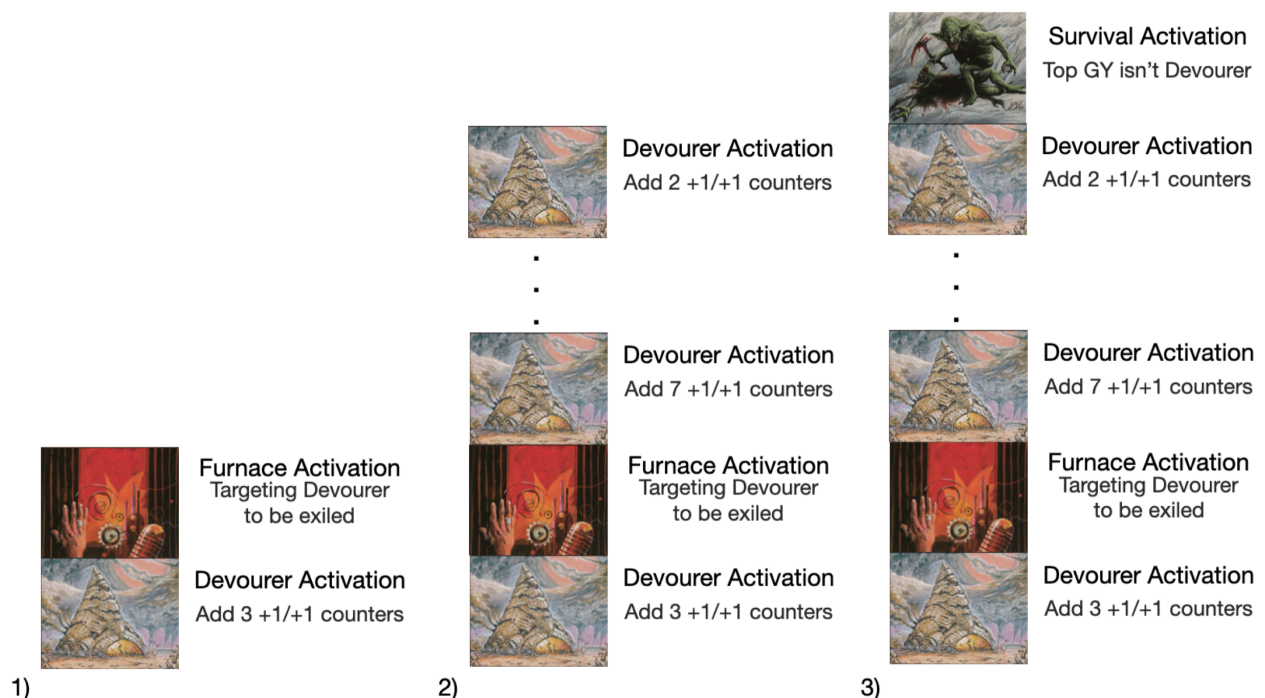
## Solution 1: Stacking Activations

A usual solution is to **stack activations**. This means holding priority and putting Devourer activations on the stack without resolving them.

After stacking them, we do something to put a new card on the top of the graveyard:

- a Survival activation
- using Tog or Shifter's discard ability
- depleting a Gemstone Mine or Wall of Roots in play

This changes the text on Shifter, so that when we resolve the Devourer activations the sacrifice clause is not there anymore to trigger. In that scenario, we can let the stack resolve all the way down to the last activation: the exiling of Devourer is no longer relevant, because we have already put all the activations on the stack.



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## Solution 2: Pre-Triggering the Sacrifice Clause

A second strategy is to **pre-trigger the sacrifice clause**. This is done by pumping Shapeshifter with Psychatog or Battlefield Scrounger so that, when Devourer is revealed, Shifter already has power 7+ and the sacrifice trigger goes directly to the stack.

This trigger won't trigger again until the existing sacrifice trigger in the stack resolves, so we are guaranteed that all the Devourer activations will now exist on top of the sacrifice trigger. Knowing that, we can just activate Devourer in response to any effect that intends to exile it, and keep resolving activations until we allow Devourer to be exiled and resolve any activations beneath that effect.

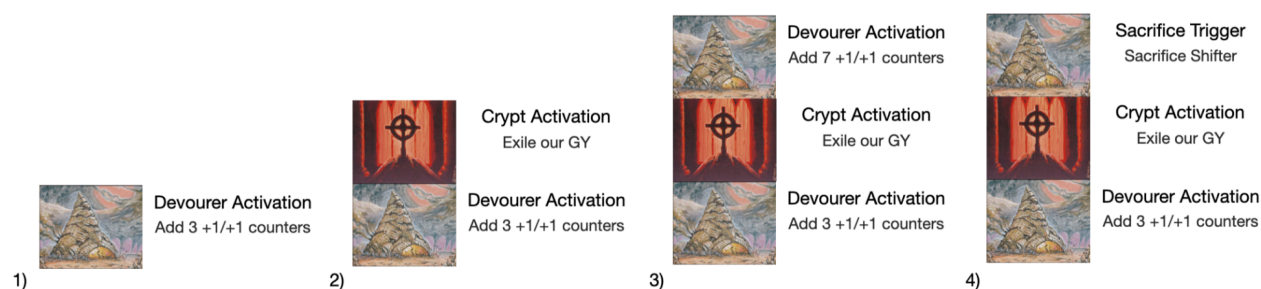
| Just discard a Triskelion on top of the graveyard before the sacrifice trigger resolves!

---

## A Worrisome Scenario: Hate on Triskelion

A different and more worrisome scenario for Hermit lines, where both Triskelion and Devourer are in the graveyard, is when the graveyard hate is **not directed at Devourer itself, but at Triskelion**. This happens either with a Furnace activation targeting Trike, or by using a Tormod's Crypt.

In this scenario we end up with two "can't resolve" events: the sacrifice of Shifter, and the exiling of our graveyard. The stacking of activations discussed above can work around the sacrifice trigger, but if we aim to use Triskelion for lethal, we can't afford to have our graveyard exiled: so the bottom activation becomes de facto covered.



To solve this, we will need a way to either:

- **Rescue Triskelion from the graveyard** (Scrounger it back into the library and either Survival for it or mill it with Hermit)
  - **Start the line with Triskelion already in our hand**
-

Activation covering is the most subtle way an opponent can disrupt a Scrounger-FEB line. Recognizing the patterns, and knowing which counter-strategy applies to each, is what turns a "I had it!" loss into a controlled, deterministic kill that survives any single piece of interaction.

# Beating Hate

hFEB is a combo deck, and like every combo deck it pays a price every time the opponent brings in disruption. Knowing **which hate matters**, **when to play around it**, and **how to pivot** is one of the biggest skill checks of the deck.

This section collects the recurring patterns: how to deal with and how to navigate lock pieces like Engineered Plague, Null Rod, Ensnaring Bridge, and Cursed Totem.

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## The Answers

The most direct way to deal with these threats is removal. The deck has access to four key cards depending on the situation:

**Uktabi Orangutan**

**Naturalize**

**Ray of Revelation**

**Monk Realist**

When you have access to one of these in time, the game often plays out normally. When you don't, you have to navigate around the hate piece: that's where the rest of this section comes in!

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## Engineered Plague

### Engineered Plague

Engineered Plague directly attacks several of hFEB's most important creatures. Opponents will usually name **Druid** or **Phyrexian** to shut down Hermit lines or Devourer-based kills respectively.

**If they name Druid:** Hermit Druid immediately dies to Plague. Removing the enchantment becomes mandatory before committing to any Druid-based plan.

**If they name Phyrexian or Construct:** You can still win through careful graveyard management. Shapeshifter copies the creature types of the top card of the graveyard: as long as that card is not a Phyrexian (or Construct), Shifter is unaffected. Keep a non-Phyrexian creature on top, pump Shifter with Psychatog or Scrounger to survive the -1/-1, then transition into the lethal line.

 With Engineered Plague in play, lines involving Unearth stop functioning normally. Shifter will see Unearth on top of the graveyard once the spell resolves, become the named type, and die to state-based actions before the line continues.

**Niche exception:** If you have Psychatog, Battlefield Scrounger, or Krosan Reclamation available, you can remove Unearth in response to the Guide ETB trigger: Shifter will have already died and gone to the graveyard, making it a valid reanimation target for the Guide trigger.

---

## Null Rod

### Null Rod

Null Rod shuts down the FEB kill (Devourer and Triskelion are artifact creatures) but does not disrupt the rest of the deck. Shift your win condition to classic Hermit Druid lines and combat with Akroma.

Null Rod also guarantees Crypts and Furnaces won't disrupt your Hermit lines, treat it as a **speed bump, not a hard lock**.

---

# Ensnaring Bridge

## Ensnaring Bridge

Bridge's impact depends on cards in hand and creatures available. The FEB portion of the deck is unaffected: Triskelion can always ping for lethal without combat.

For combat wins: declare attacks with a Shifter not affected by summoning sickness, then pump with Psychatog after attackers are declared. Psychatog itself can grow above the Bridge threshold during combat and reset at end of turn.

Scrounger pumps can also turn a harmless Shifter/Birds of Paradise into a lethal Akroma: cycle the same Scrounger 5 times with Survival for a 21/21 Akroma!

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# Cursed Totem

## Cursed Totem

The most disruptive of the three: shuts down both primary kill plans and disables Birds of Paradise and Wall of Roots, slowing mana significantly.

Deploy Survival only when you have enough mana to immediately fetch Uktabi Orangutan, even under removal pressure.

If removal is unavailable, buy time, develop mana, hard-cast threats, and use Karmic Guide to reanimate Akroma.

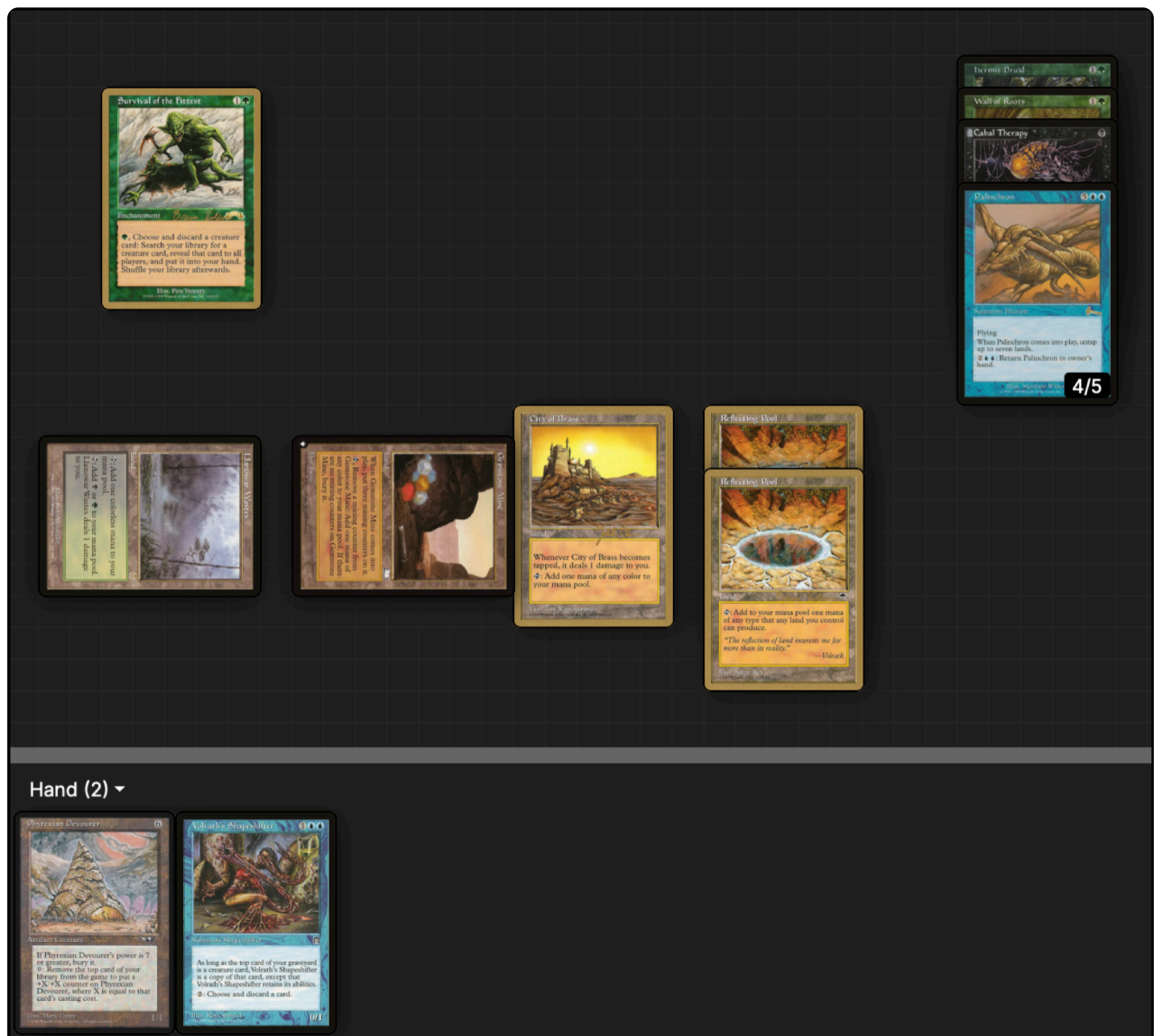
# CMC Distribution

## All In On Devourer

We have seen in this guide multiple ways of playing around graveyard hate, arguably the most effective way of sideboarding against us. Another form of interaction that also requires discussion is **burn**.

As an example, consider this real (approximate) board state from a recent game played in the Discord:

The opponent is playing a BRG deck with a mountain open and a Bolt in hand (known thanks to a Therapy). The hFEB player just resolved that Therapy and pitched Palinchron for Shifter, with Devourer and a couple of unknowns in hand.



The hFEB player played Shifter as Palinchron, and the opponent Bolted it with the untap trigger on the stack — dealing 3 damage to Shifter and preventing the combo that turn (Devourer would have died to state-based actions with that 3 damage). The hFEB player waited until the opponent's upkeep, discarded Devourer for Triskelion, and pinged for lethal.

An **alternative line for the opponent** would have been to save the Bolt for later, betting that the hFEB player had only a single creature in hand (which he did). Without Triskelion and Devourer in hand, we have to fetch something with Devourer (either Triskelion or Akroma) to win: in that small window between pitching Devourer and resolving the Survival tutor, the opponent has a chance to wreck us.

Of course, as the FEB player, we could wait to draw a second creature and respond to any burn with a second Survival activation pitching Devourer for Triskelion. But here we assume we want to win this turn.

## So, what are our odds?

If we pitch Devourer to get Triskelion and the opponent Bolts Shifter in response, we need to activate Devourer to pump it so it survives. We need at least an accumulated 3 CMC to become a 4/4 and survive. But if we exile 6 CMC or more, the sacrifice trigger goes on the stack and we lose Shifter, significantly reducing our chances of winning. Beyond the sacrifice clause, another risk is exiling either Triskelion or Akroma during the process, which further hurts our chances of recovery.

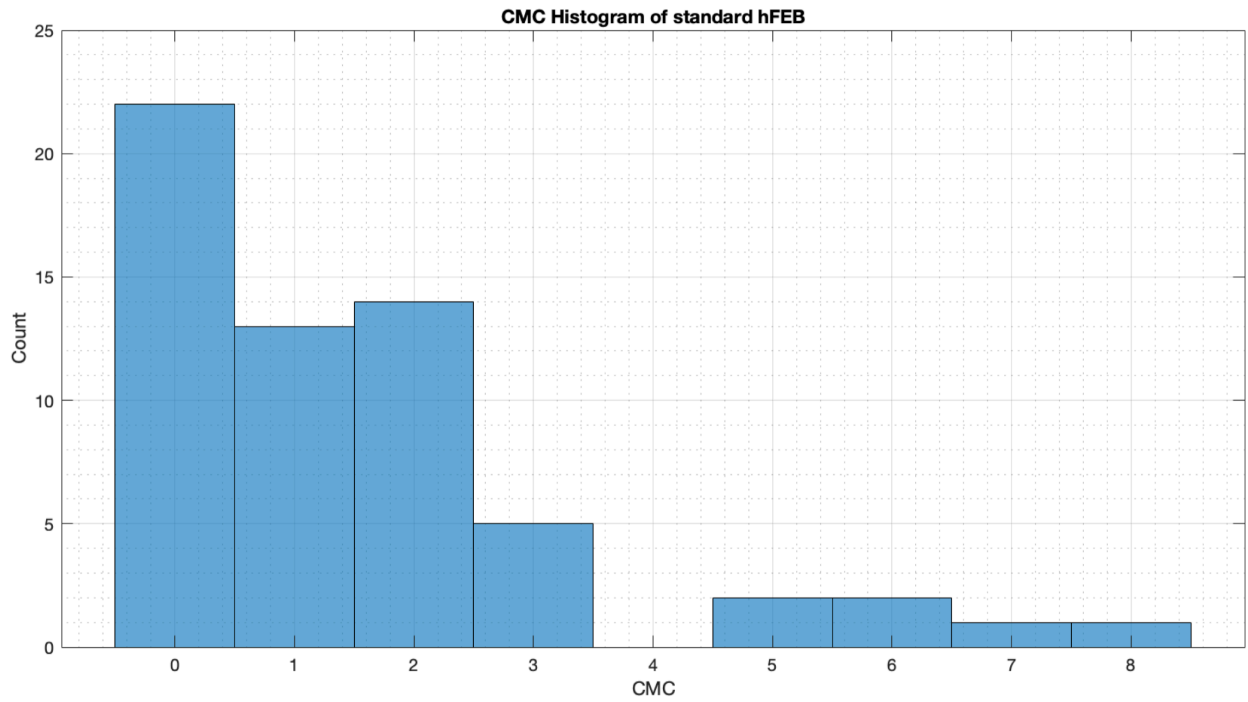
How probable is it that Shifter survives the Bolt? How probable is it that we overshoot? What if it's a Shock instead of a Bolt? Double Shock? Bolt and Seal?

Let's run the numbers.

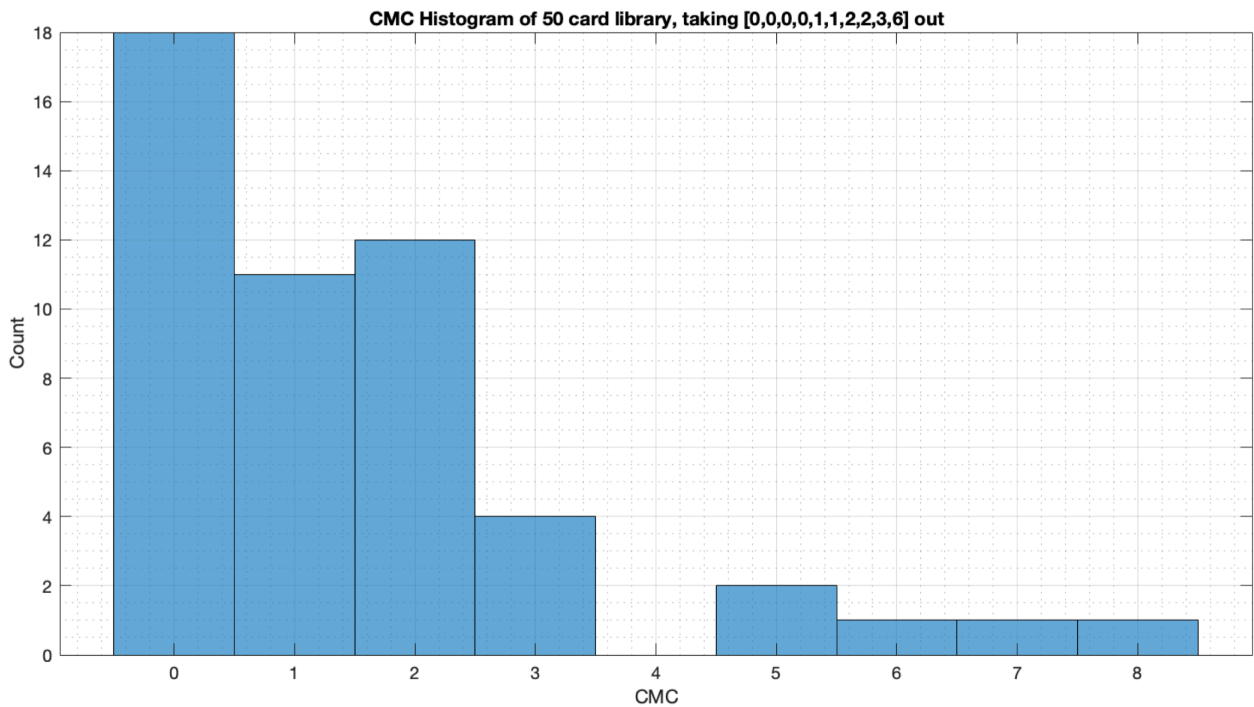
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## Setting Up the Simulation

We start with the standard hFEB CMC distribution: **22 lands**, **13 one-drops** (Therapies, Birds, Unearths, Duress), **14 two-drops** (Wall of Roots, Survival, Hermits and others), **5 three-drops** (Shifters, Tog, Squee, ESG), **2 five-drops** (Karmic Guide and Scrounger), **2 six-drops** (Triskelion and Devourer), with Palinchron and Akroma at the tail end.

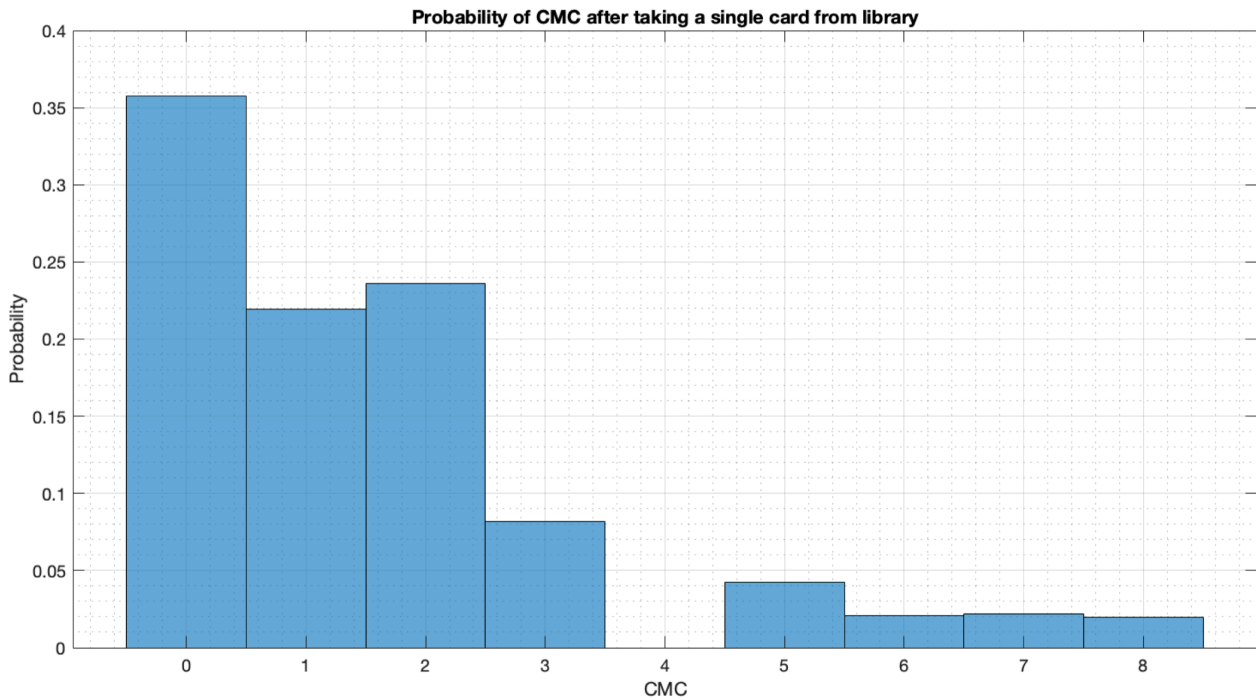


As a representative board state, assume we play 4 lands, a couple of 1-drops and 2-drops, Shifter and Devourer, leading to a 50-card library skewed toward the low end of the curve.



## One Activation

To see what we should expect when activating Devourer once, we shuffle the library 10,000 times and look at the top card. The resulting histogram approximates the true probability distribution.



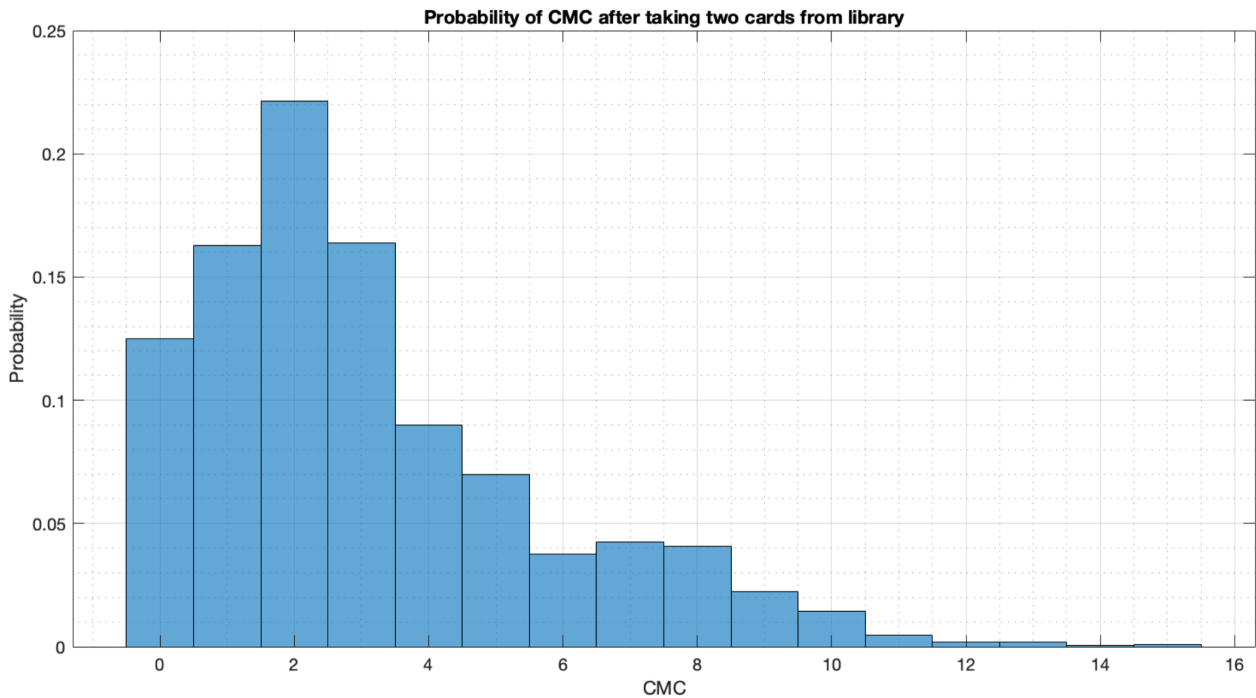
The highest probability is showing a land, which makes sense, since that is the most common CMC in the deck. Trying to survive a Bolt with a single activation is tricky: a 0, 1 or 2 CMC card is not enough, and that is the bulk of the distribution.

We'd need either a **3** or a **5 CMC** to survive without triggering the sacrifice clause, which happens around **12%** of the time (8% for a 3 CMC and 4% for a 5 CMC).

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## Two Activations

Luckily, we are not limited to a single activation. The peak of the distribution shifts to the right: the more cards we exile, the higher the cumulative CMC.



Our chances of Shifter surviving a Bolt have now increased to **32%**, 16% probability of seeing a cumulative CMC of 3, 9% of 4, and 7% of 5.

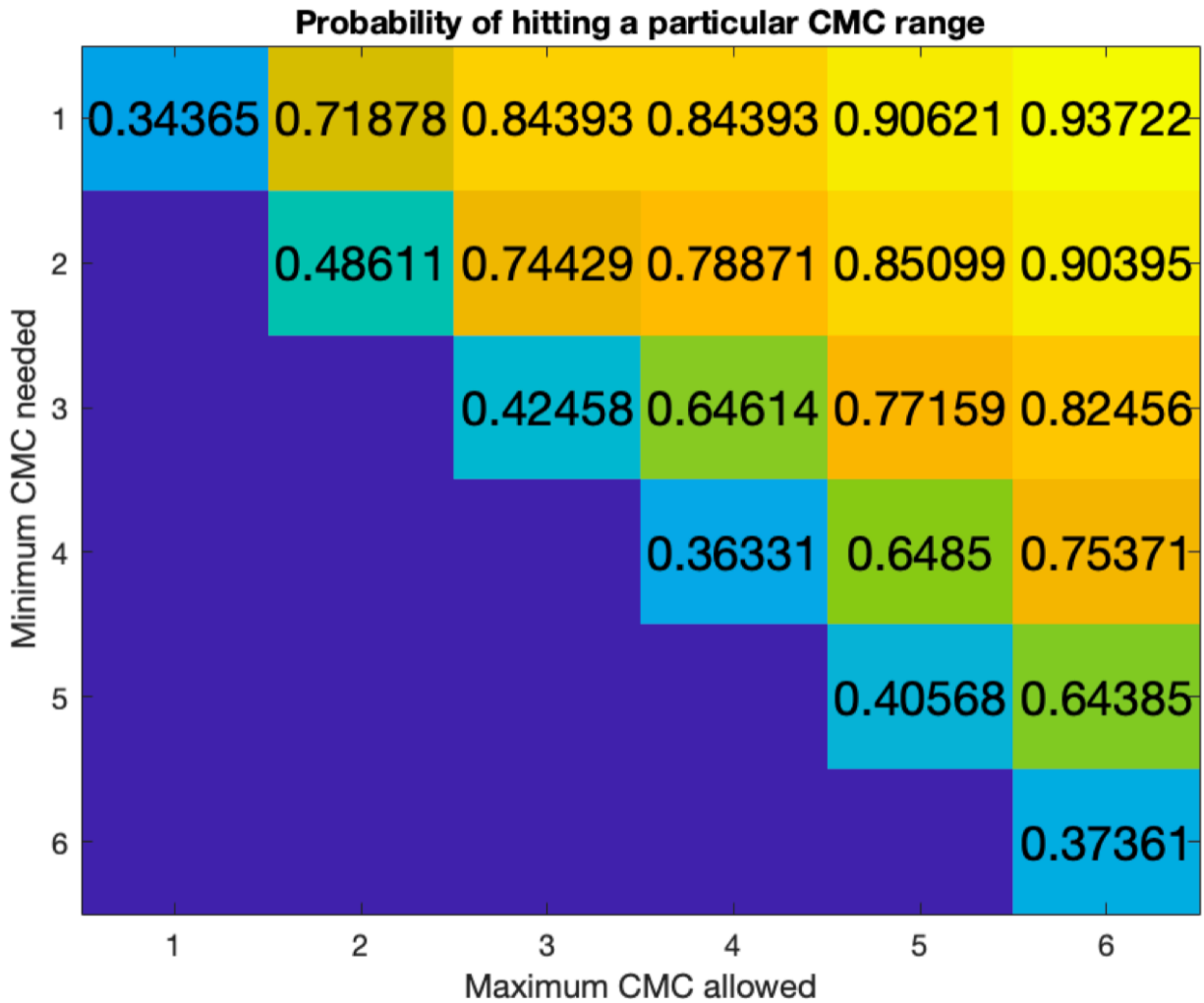
## Multiple Activations: The Full Picture

These numbers are illustrative, but in a real game we are not limited to 1 or 2 activations. We keep activating Devourer until we reach a comfortable cumulative CMC.

In other words, we have a **minimum CMC** we aim to get (enough to survive whatever interaction is thrown at us) and a **maximum allowed CMC** (the upper bound, so we don't trigger the sacrifice). Running a million library permutations, in our Bolt example we need a minimum CMC of 3 to keep Shifter alive and a maximum CMC of 5 (since 6 would trigger the sacrifice). The probability of reaching that range is **77.1%**.

Under the same conditions:

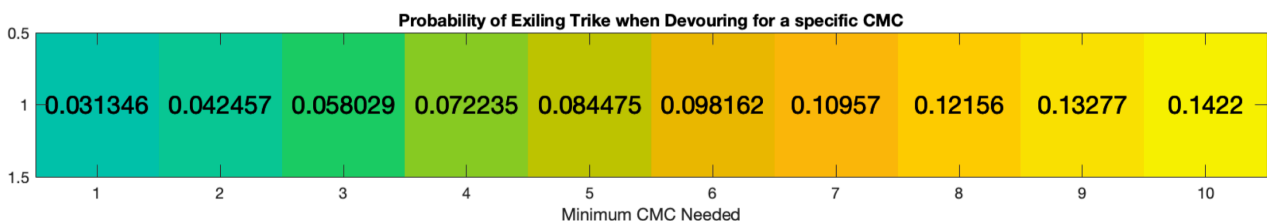
- Survive a **Shock**: ~85%
- Survive **Lavamancer + Seal**: ~64%
- Survive **Bolt + Shock**: ~40%



## The Risk of Exiling Triskelion

It should be noted that just YOLOing it with Devourer is not the only way to go about this scenario. If we have mana open and some random cards in hand, we can stack activations until reaching the appropriate CMC (even if we overshoot) and discard a card through Shifter before activations resolve so the sacrifice never triggers. Getting Tog or Scrounger with the Survival trigger and pitching them for Triskelion would allow us to clean the graveyard and combo.

In that scenario, the only risk is **exiling Triskelion or Akroma during this process**, cutting our chances of finishing the game. The chance of exiling Triskelion when trying to survive a Bolt is around **6%**. Since the CMC of Triskelion is 6, exiling it and resolving that activation would trigger the sacrifice clause anyway — so Shifter wouldn't survive the Bolt. It follows that this 6% probability falls **outside** of the 77% chance of surviving Bolt.



In other words: of the 23% of times we won't survive Bolt, around 1 in 4 of those times we will exile Triskelion in the process. Similar math applies to Akroma.

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The numbers tell us that **Devourer activations are more resilient to burn than they feel**. With a representative library state, even a single Bolt threatens us only 23% of the time, and many of those scenarios still have outs through stacking activations or discarding through Shifter.

Knowing the odds doesn't change the game, but it changes the **mindset**: when you commit to a Devourer-pump line under burn pressure, you are usually doing the right thing.

# Missing Items

During a game, you cannot always assume that every creature required to execute a clean combo line will be available. Key pieces may be exiled by Swords to Plowshares, removed or locked out by graveyard hate, or intentionally sideboarded out for specific matchups. Because of this, hFEB games sometimes evolve into scenarios where the “ideal” line is no longer accessible.

In these situations, success comes from recognizing when to abandon a rigid combo plan and adapt to the resources still available. The deck is built with enough redundancy and overlap that alternative paths to victory are almost always present. Stay flexible, reassess the board state, and identify which engines are still functional.

Even seemingly modest interaction can be game-winning when timed correctly: spotting opportunities is what separates a functional pilot from a truly strong one.

## Missing Psychatog

The worst-case scenario: you lose instant speed graveyard manipulation. Stockpile reanimation spells in hand or aim for Volrath’s Shapeshifter plus Survival of the Fittest on the battlefield, and pivot toward any viable FEB kill line.

A small reminder: if you want to execute a FEB kill via Hermit Druid, you can reanimate Battlefield Scrounger first and then Triskelion with a second spell. Alternatively, if you have access to another active Hermit Druid (maybe you activated it end of opponent’s turn), reanimate Battlefield Scrounger to add some cards to the library, sacrifice it to Cabal Therapy to add some more cards including itself and Triskelion to the bottom of the library, then activate Devourer for all cards but the last (Triskelion!) and mill that to the top at instant speed with Hermit for the kill.

## Missing Akroma, Angel of Wrath

Without Akroma, you have no other way to grant Volrath’s Shapeshifter haste: that’s the main issue. Aside from that, you can still grant flying through Palinchron, Karmic Guide, or even Birds of Paradise.

As we have seen before, Akroma is also a key piece in many Scrounger-FEB lines where it is required to reach twenty counters on Shifter/Devourer and close the

game. Keep this in mind: it is a very important detail. You may find ways to reshuffle additional cards into the library, but you must not be caught off guard without enough counters to finish with Shifter/Triskelion.

### Missing Phyrexian Devourer

If you do not have Phyrexian Devourer in the deck, you cannot execute any FEB kill. Its absence also means that the only ways to pump Volrath's Shapeshifter are Psychatog or Battlefield Scrounger. In most games, however, you can still pilot the deck in the right direction without too many issues.

The real problem arises when Devourer is removed while you are setting up an FEB kill, often due to graveyard hate. In this case, changing plans is not always straightforward.

Remember: as long as the sacrifice trigger is not on the stack, you can always change the top of the graveyard to ensure that Shapeshifter keeps its counters indefinitely.

### Missing Triskelion

Missing Triskelion is very different from missing Phyrexian Devourer. Triskelion is only necessary when combat is not a viable way to win: for example if Ensnaing Bridge is in play (though even in that case, we can still attack with a 0/1 Shapeshifter and pump it during combat).

Triskelion is also useful for clearing the opponent's board, but it is not mandatory. As we have already seen, there are several lines that do not require Triskelion at all. As long as you have time and the ability to win through combat, Triskelion is not essential.

### Missing Karmic Guide

Many lines involve the use of Karmic Guide, but it is not an essential card for winning the game. There are numerous alternative paths to victory.

First of all, the main FEB combo does not require Karmic Guide at all: you can always cheat on mana with Palinchron or assemble the combo with Volrath's Shapeshifter already on the battlefield. Likewise, Hermit Druid lines do not depend on Guide: with Krosan Reclamation you can put a Shapeshifter on top of the library, cast it, and as long as Psychatog is on top of the graveyard you are lethal in combat with Akroma. Even using two reanimation spells can be enough to secure a win without involving Guide.

Rather than being a mandatory combo piece, Karmic Guide is a card that smooths and accelerates certain lines. Its absence should not be a concern to navigate alternative paths.

### **Missing Volrath's Shapeshifter**

If neither Volrath's Shapeshifter are available, you cannot execute any combo lines. The most relevant plan then becomes to generate mana, deploy the creatures still in the deck, and win through combat.

Akroma is the primary threat, but Palinchron, Triskelion, and Psychatog are also excellent win conditions that can carry the game on their own. Karmic Guide becomes especially important here, both for reanimating creatures from the graveyard and for cheating threats onto the battlefield at a reduced mana cost.

# Rules

## The Unique Nature of Volrath's Shapeshifter

**Volrath's Shapeshifter** is one of the most unique cards in the game in terms of the wording of its ability: it is the only card that "copies" another card by taking its text as a **text-changing effect**, rather than as a copy ability.

This uniqueness goes back to the introduction of layers in the game's rules, when Shifter was reworded as a text-changing effect — instead of the original copy ability — to maintain its interaction with controller-changing abilities (see [this](#)).

A perhaps unintended result of this change is that the interaction between Shifter and **"Activate once each turn"** abilities is nebulous.

If Shifter is a Wall of Roots and we activate its mana ability, under which conditions can we activate it again?

- If we discard a card on top of the graveyard so Shifter is no longer Wall of Roots, and we later remove that card revealing Wall of Roots again, does it count as a *new* Wall of Roots?
- What if we discard a new Wall of Roots instead to the top of the graveyard, can we activate it?

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## Copy Effects vs Text-Changing Effects

Copy effects would make this interaction much easier: they are governed by the **timestamp** of the copy effect and thus "forget" who they were every time a new copy effect is applied.

The use of a text-changing ability, however, makes this more difficult. After consulting with multiple judges (10+) and getting a variety of opinions, we went directly to the **MTG Rules Architect**, Jess Dunks (see interaction [here](#)).

We presented 3 different scenarios for when Shifter is in play and we want to activate a "once a turn" ability twice:

**Scenario A** — Wall of Roots is on top, we activate it, we discard a card and exile that card (making Shifter the same Wall of Roots again), and we activate it.

**Scenario B** — Wall of Roots is on top, we activate it, we discard a new Wall of Roots, and we activate it.

**Scenario C** — Wall of Roots is on top, we activate it, then we Unearth it and sacrifice it to Therapy to have Wall of Roots on top again, and activate it.

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Dunks's response was that **scenarios B and C should probably be legal**, as the Wall of Roots that provide the ability to Shifter are all different graveyard objects across activations. We could use rule **602.5c** to justify that the "once a turn" limitation wouldn't apply to abilities granted by different objects (This ruling is similar in nature to other rulings like the ones for **Necrotic Ooze** and **Koh**, but not a 1:1 match, as the text-changing nature of Shifter muddies the comparison).

Regarding **scenario A**, as of now Dunks is of the opinion that the current rules cannot offer a unique solution to that question — so it would be up to the judge of the event.

Until we get an official rules update that resolves this scenario, the head judge of each event is responsible for setting the ruling framework that governs these interactions. Some of the judges we have consulted are of the opinion that the most sensible option would be to allow A and this has been the ruling for some tournaments (e.g. Danish Nationals), while some others have issued rulings that allow B and C but not A (e.g. North American Nationals).

So, how does this affect you? We only use these interactions in a limited number of lines, those that either try to activate the same Wall of Roots multiple times (e.g. the infinite damage line) or when we want to introduce more than 3 cards to library in a Hermit Scrounger line by covering and uncovering Scrounger with a Psychatog discard+exile ability. Luckily not only are these scenarios sparse but we have solutions for both, so in the meantime learn how to play without them and make sure you ask your event's judge how he would rule beforehand to prevent any misunderstandings.

# Tips & Tricks

## Karmic Guide Has More Text!

Karmic Guide has **protection from black**. This matters most for its interaction with Animate Dead. When Guide targeted by Animate Dead enters the battlefield, a state-based action causes the enchantment to fall off, generating two triggers. You want the Animate Dead trigger to resolve first: Guide's trigger is placed on the stack first, targeting Volrath's Shapeshifter. This ensures that Shapeshifter sees Karmic Guide on top of the graveyard when it enters.

This is true as long as you are killing through combat with Akroma. If using Triskelion instead, you need Battlefield Scrounger above Phyrexian Devourer, and both must be above Triskelion.

## Hold Priority Between Devourer Activations

Phyrexian Devourer's ability lets you look at the exiled card and only add counters once the ability resolves. If your Shifter/Devourer is attacking, blocking, or targeted by a Lightning Bolt, you can activate the ability while retaining priority and ensure the top of the graveyard is no longer Devourer before activations resolve. The sacrifice trigger never goes on the stack and Shifter keeps its counters.

You have multiple cards that can change the top of the graveyard at instant speed, including Volrath's Shapeshifter itself for just two mana.

## Hold Priority with Scrounger and Survival

When Survival and Shifter are in play but the creature you need is buried under other graveyard cards, discard Battlefield Scrounger to Survival and, while retaining priority, activate Shifter/Scrounger to shuffle the needed creature back into the library (assuming threshold). The same Survival activation then lets you fetch it directly.

This trick can also save cards targeted by graveyard hate without giving the opponent an interaction window.

**Remember:** Scrounger lets you choose the order of the cards you put back into the library!

## Discard Creatures at the Right Time

Knowing when to keep certain creatures in hand is critical: Shifter becomes a copy including mana value!

- Discard **Palinchron** in response to a Smother targeting Shapeshifter
- Discard **Akroma** in response to Snuff Out
- Discard **Wall of Roots** in response to Pyroblast

For Psychatog and Survival of the Fittest, discarding is part of the activation cost: the opponent cannot prevent you from changing Shifter's form. For Shifter's own ability, it must resolve first.

Always activate Shifter without a creature in hand to force the opponent to use two removal spells. You do not need to reveal which card you are discarding until the ability resolves: bait your opponent with hidden information!

## How to Use Krosan Reclamation

Most commonly used to put any card on top of the library after activating Hermit Druid without a reanimation spell in hand, whether Shapeshifter, Unearth, or Animate Dead. Beyond this, it can manipulate the top of your graveyard or interact with an opponent's Reanimate, Quiet Speculation or Replenish.

It is also phenomenal against **Tinker Fling**: with Duress and Cabal Therapy you can name Fling, leaving Altar of Dementia as their only win condition. If they mill your entire deck, you choose the order cards go to the graveyard, build the pile you need, and use Reclamation to put reanimation spells back on top.

## How to Never Lose Against Brain Freeze

Deploy Volrath's Shapeshifter as early as possible: with Shifter on the battlefield you never have to worry about losing to mill. Experienced pilots will try to force

draws with Deep Analysis or Stroke of Genius. With Shifter in play you can activate Shifter/Psychatog to increase toughness, Shifter/Wall of Roots for mana, and Shifter/Scrounger to shuffle cards back into the library. Forcing you to draw six or more cards is usually the only way to stop you.

## How to Use Psychatog

Psychatog is one of the most versatile cards in the deck. It can function as a real clock, stall the board by threatening to become the largest creature in play, or pick off attackers one by one.

Useful tricks:

- Discard it before casting Shapeshifter and pump it to prevent dying to Engineered Plague once Phyrexian Devourer is discarded
- Discard it to remove cards covering the creature needed to combo
- Cast it when both Phyrexian Devourer and Triskelion are already in the graveyard with Triskelion underneath Devourer
- *If already on the battlefield, use it to reset Shifter/Scrounger a number of times equal to cards in hand [check [Rules](#)]*

Psychatog in play guarantees instant speed, uncounterable discard and a way to manipulate the top of the graveyard at will.

## How to Use Cabal Therapy

Name counterspells if the plan is to combo with Hermit Druid, or disenchant effects if Survival of the Fittest needs to stay on the battlefield. Removal, opponent's combo pieces, or problematic creatures like Withered Wretch are all valid alternatives. If you have both Cabal Therapy and Duress or Mesmeric Fiend, always use the guaranteed discard effect first.

Tricks not to forget:

- Target yourself to name a card you have in hand (Akroma, Psychatog) so it ends up on top of the graveyard
- Target the opponent with multiple Therapies before using Animate Dead

These are a couple of really interesting articles about Cabal Therapy that might help a lot understanding how to use the card: [Article#1](#) and [Article#2](#)

### Should I Cut Hermit Druid?

Post-board, cut a couple of Hermit Druids against decks with multiple forms of interaction (counterspells, removal, graveyard hate). Since there are several lines involving Druid when you have Shifter + Survival in play, it is never correct to remove them entirely.

Against other combo decks (Enchantress, Storm, etc.), Druid gives you the speed advantage to win: never cut even a single copy.

### How Does Unearth Work?

Beyond combo execution, Unearth can reanimate a Hermit Druid that was countered earlier, or bring back a Wall of Roots to block Elephant tokens again.

The most important interaction: if the top card of the graveyard is Palinchron, Karmic Guide, Uktabi Orangutan, Ghitu Slinger etc., reanimating Shapeshifter will still produce the ETB trigger, even though Unearth itself becomes the top graveyard card once it resolves, the trigger has already been generated.

The **Cycling** ability makes Unearth an instant-speed discard effect that cannot be interacted with: useful for pumping Shifter with Devourer counter activations.

### Why Is Enlightened Tutor in My Sideboard?

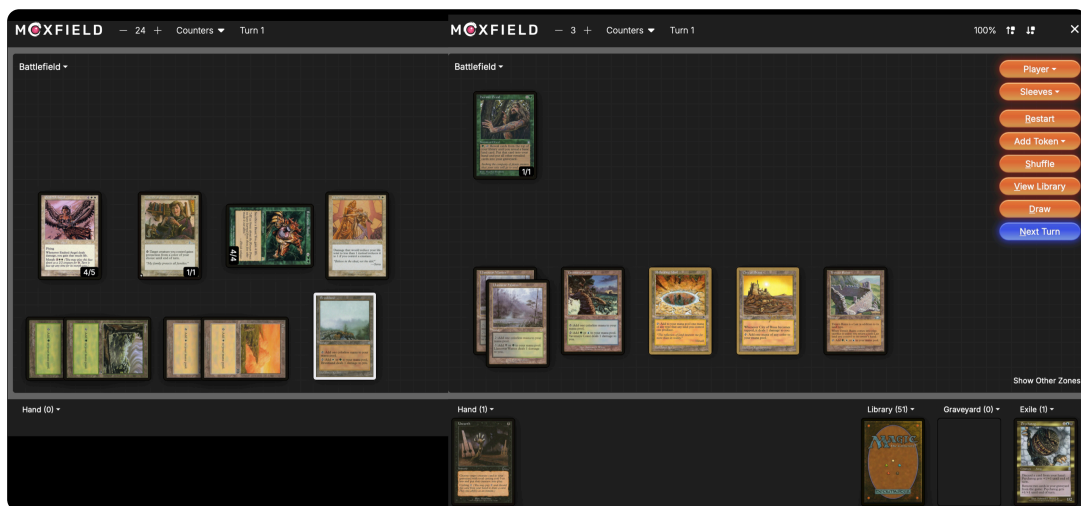
Mainly used as Survival of the Fittest #5, brought in against true races like Sligh or heavy discard decks like Moneyball Black. But it finds any enchantment or artifact, including Triskelion, Phyrexian Devourer, or Animate Dead in the late game.

Avoid siding it in against decks with enchantment removal, counterspells, or Annul: it is easy for the opponent to turn it into a two-for-one.

# Puzzles

## Puzzle 1

Opponent is at 24 life with a nice board and a Worship. You are at 3 in your upkeep. Tog was STP'd a couple turns ago and this is G1 so you don't have any Monk Realist or Ray of Revelation from the SB.








What's the play?

### Show solution #1

1. 🌳🔄 Activate Hermit Druid using Reflecting Pool.
2. Put Karmic Guide > Devourer on top of the graveyard.
3. ① 🌳 Flashback Krosan Reclamation using Treva's Ruin and Coast targeting two Unearth.
4. 💀 Cast Unearth targeting Shapeshifter using Llanowar Wastes (down to 2 life).
5. Shifter enters as Guide, which brings back Guide, and brings back Scrounger (graveyard is now Uneart, Devourer).
6. Activate Scrounger and put Palinchron, Akroma and ESG back in the library.
7. Sacrifice Karmic Guide to Cabal Therapy.
8. 💀 Cast Unearth targeting Shapeshifter using Llanowar Wastes (down to 1 life).
9. Shifter enters as Guide, which brings back Guide, and brings back Triskelion.

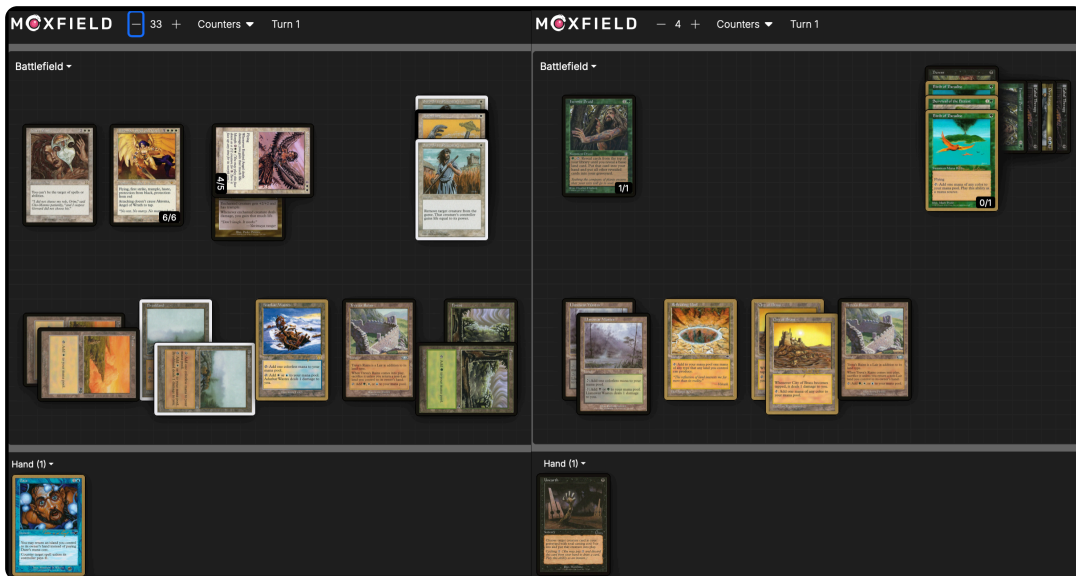
10. Sacrifice Karmic Guide to Cabal Therapy.
11. Sacrifice Scrounger to Cabal Therapy.
12. Use both Shifter/Scroungers to put back Hermit Druid, 2 Unearths, Squee, Karmic Guide and Scrounger in the library.
13. Reveal Phyrexian Devourer on top of the graveyard.
14. Activate Shifter/Devourer to put 36 counters on it.
15. In response to the sacrifice trigger, use Triskelion to ping itself once, resolve, then ping opponent twice (down to 22).
16. Use 6 counter to kill Angel and Mom. Use 21 counters to ping opponent (opponent down to 1, counters down to 9).
17. Ping Baloth one ping at a time, opponent will sac Baloth in response to last ping (5 left) and we can ping opponent in response to the sac trigger with 4 more pings to spare.

## Show solution #2

1.   Activate Hermit Druid using Reflecting Pool.
2. Order Guide > Devourer > Triskelion on top of the graveyard.
3.  Cast Unearth targeting Shapeshifter using Llanowar Wastes (down to 2 life).
4. Shifter enters as Guide, which brings back Scrounger.
5. Activate Scrounger and put Akroma, Uneath and Guide in the library.
6. Sac scrounger to therapy.
7. Activate Shifter/Scrounger to put Palinchron, Squee, ESG in the library.
8. Pass the turn.
9. On opponent's upkeep activate Shifter/Scrounger again to put 2nd Shifter and 2x Hermit in the library.
10. Activate Shifter/Devourer letting each trigger resolve and responding to the sac trigger. (after 9 exiles at 34 counters)
11.   Flashback Krosan Reclamation to put Devourer in the library.
12. Reveal Triskelion on top of the graveyard.
13. Ping them down to 1 life (shift-dev at 11 counters).
14. Ping Mom and Angel (down to 5 counters).
15. Ping baloth one at a time, if they try to sac we can ping them the last dmg.

## Puzzle 2

The opponent is at 33 with an imposing board. They have sworded Psychatog and Hermit on previous turns and disenchantd Survival. You have flashbacked 2 Therapy already and you know he has a Daze in hand from the last therapy. Last turn he topdecked an Ivory Mask! You are in your upkeep.



What's the play?

### Show solution

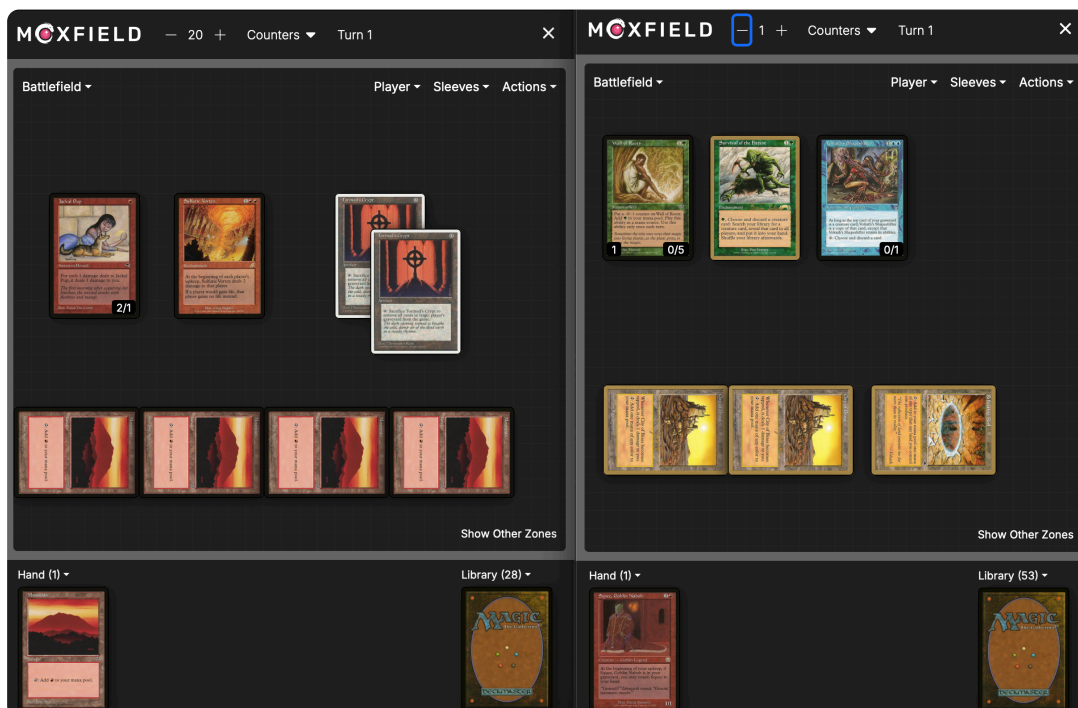
*Always leave one Wastes untapped to play around Daze*

1. **Upkeep** 🌳🔄 Activate Hermit Druid using Treva's Ruin.
2. Put Karmic Guide > Devourer on top of the graveyard.
3. **1** 🌳 Flashback Krosan Reclamation using City of Brass and Llanowar Wastes targeting Unearth (down to 3 life).
4. Draw Unearth. You have 2 of those in hand.
5. 🦴 Cast Unearth targeting Shapeshifter using Reflecting Pool.
6. Shifter enters as Guide, which brings back Scrounger (graveyard is now Unearth, Guide, Devourer).
7. Activate Scrounger to put back in the library: Unearth, Palinchron and Triskelion (14 CMC).
8. Graveyard is now Guide and Devourer.
9. 🦴 Cast Unearth targeting Shapeshifter #2 using City of Brass (down to 2 life).
10. Shifter #2 enters as Guide, which brings back Akroma (graveyard is now Unearth, Guide, Devourer).

11. Sacrifice Scrounger with Cabal Therapy.
12. Activate Shifter/Scrounger #1 to put back in the library: Uneath, Guide and Squee (9 CMC).
13. Activate Shifter/Scrounger #2 to put back in the library: Scrounger, WoR and ESG (10 CMC).
14. Let pump from Shifter/Scrounger #2 resolve and it become a 4/4 Shifter/Devourer.
15. Stack 8 devourer activations for Shifter #1.
16. In response, activate Shifter #2 to exile the last card in the library (ESG).
17. Let that resolve, Shifter #2 becomes 7/7 and the Devourer sacrifice trigger goes to the stack.
18. Let the sacrifice trigger resolve.
19. Shifter #2 dies and it covers Devourer.
20. Shifter #1 is now a plain Shifter. Let the 30 counters resolve, which means a total of **+33/+33**.
21. Sacrifice Akroma with Cabal Therapy.
22. Attack with a 39/39 Shifter/Akroma for lethal.

## Puzzle 3

It's opponents EOT and they have you at 1 and just dropped a Crypt and a Sulfuric Vortex. Your WoR has 1 counter and hasn't been used yet this turn.



What's the play?

Show solution

This is the puzzle created by Biel that gave birth to the Crypt:proof line.

You should be able to figure out the solution on your own 😊.

## Puzzle 4

We are in opponent's EOT and he has Ensnaring Bridge in play and 0 cards in hand, can you win on your turn? Bonus: maximize damage you inflict.



What's the play?

Show solution

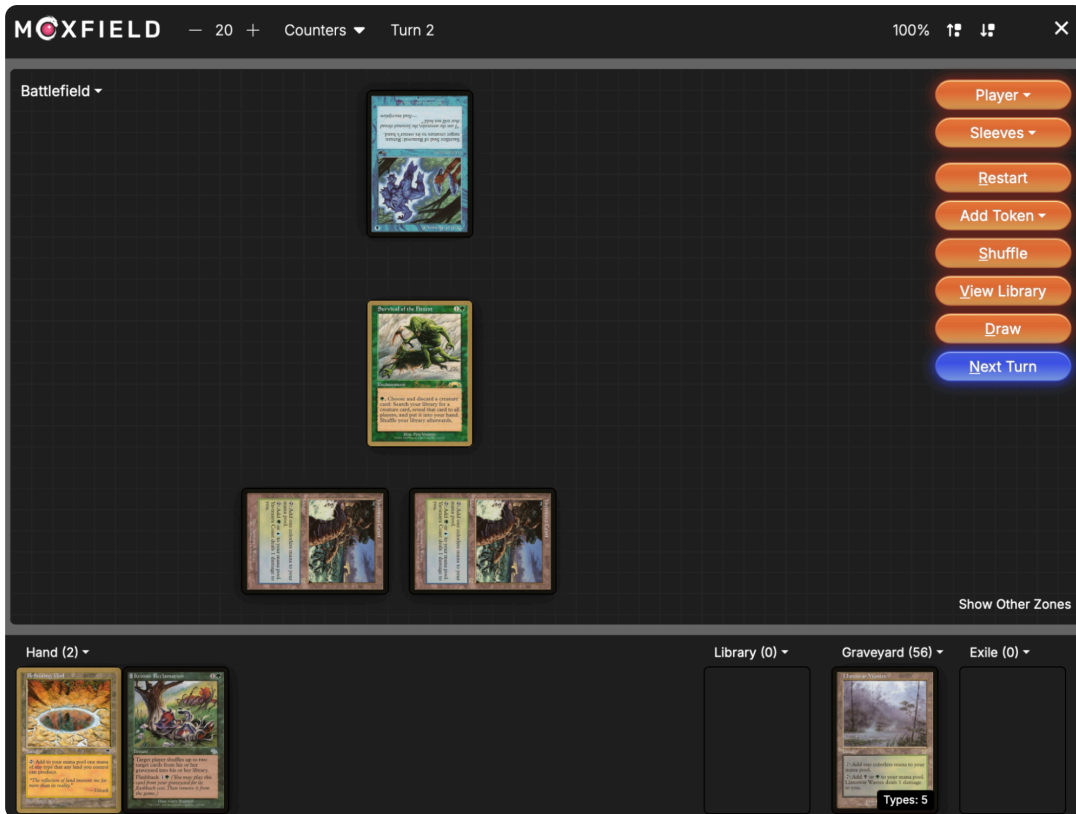
1. EOT 🌳🔄 Activate Hermit Druid
2. 1 🌳 Cast Krosan Reclamation targeting Animate Dead.
3. Order graveyard as Devourer > Trike.

4. Untap and draw Animate Dead.
5. ①👁️ Cast Animate Dead on Guide.
6. Shifter#1 enters as Guide and targets Shifter#2
7. Shifter#2 enters as Guide and targets Pyschatog.
8. Discard Scrounger with Pyschatog.
9. Activate both Shifter/Scrounger to put 6 cards in the library:  
Pali, Guide, AD, Squee, ESG, Scrounger (Scrounger last).
10. Reveal Devourer on top of graveyard.
11. Activate Shifter#1/Devourer 5 times (20 CMC).
12. 🌳🔄 Activate Hermit #1, milling Scrounger.
13. Activate both Shifter/Scrounger to put 6 cards in the library: 4  
Survivals, WoR, Scrounger (Scrounger last).
14. Reveal Devourer on top of graveyard.
15. Activate Shifter#1/Devourer 5 times (+10 CMC).
16. Discard Akroma with Pyschatog. One Shifter dies to SBA.
17. 🌳🔄 Activate Hermit #2, milling Scrounger.
18. Activate Shifter/Scrounger to put in the library: Akroma, Shifter  
and Scrounger.
19. Reveal Devourer on top of graveyard.
20. Activate Shifter#1/Devourer 3 times (+16 CMC).
21. Reveal Trike with Tog and shoot the opponent.

Total: 13 cards fed to Devourer including all the fatties = **46 damage.**

## Puzzle 5

It's opponents EOT, we are fully tapped and they just milled our entire library in the worst possible order (*with brain freeze*). They have a Seal of removal in play, and no more interaction. Assume the most adversarial gy order.



What's the play?

## Show solution

### Turn 1:

1. **1** Cast Krosan Reclamation targeting a land producing and Animate Dead.
2. Play land and pass.

### Turn 2:

1. Return Squee in hand.
2. Play land.
3. **1** Cast Animate Dead targeting Guide.
4. Guide enters and targets Shifter.

- **Bounce 1 — they Seal Guide with AD trigger on stack:**

5. Discard Guide with Survival, get Akroma.
6. Shifter enters as Guide and brings back Tog.
7. Sac Tog to Therapy.
8. Pump Shifter/Tog.
9. Discard Akroma and win.

- **No bounce:**

5. Shifter#1 enters as Guide and targets Shifter#2.
6. Shifter#2 enters as Guide and targets Scrounger.

7. Activate Scrounger to put back WoR, Tog, Akroma.

- **Bounce 2 — they Seal Scrounger here:**

8. Seal resolve.
9. 🌳 Discard Scrounger with Survival, get Tog.
10. 🌳 Discard Tog with Survival, get Akroma.
11. Pump Shifter/Tog.
12. Discard Akroma and win.

- **No bounce:**

8. Sac Scrounger to Therapy.
9. Activate both Shifter/Scrounger to put 6 cards in the library: Scrounger, Devourer, Trike, Pali, Guide, AD.

10. 🌳 Discard Squee to Survival.

- **Bounce 3 — they Seal one Shifter:**

11. Seal resolve.
12. Get Tog.
13. 🌳 Discard Tog with Survival, get Akroma.
14. Pump Shifter/Tog.
15. Discard Akroma and win. get Akroma and win.

- **No bounce:**

11. Get WoR.
12. 🌳 Discard WoR with Survival: **Combo can no longer be interrupted.**

13. Add 🌳🌳 from both Shifter/WoR.
14. Get Phyrexian Devourer.
15. 🌳 Discard Devourer with Survival, get Trike.
16. Activate Shifter/Devourer.
17. 🌳 Discard Trike with Survival.
18. Shoot the opponent and win.

## Puzzle 6

Last turn opponent sworded your hermit, so you activated in response. Feel free to alter the graveyard order to the one you would've used. This turn you

flashbacked K-Rec using Birds and WoR and put 2 Uneaths back. Can you win this turn?



What's the play?

### Show solution #1

1. 🦴 Cast Uneath on Shifter.
2. Shifter enters as Guide and targets Scrounger.
3. Sac Wall of Roots to Therapy targeting yourself to discard Tog.
4. Tog exiles Uneath and discards Pali. Scrounge Pali, Guide, Akroma for 20 CMC.
5. Shifter becomes Tog again, discard Devourer.
6. Graveyard is now: Devourer, Tog, Wall, Trike.
7. Pass turn.
8. On their upkeep, activate Shifter/Devourer
9. Activate Scrounger to shuffle back Devourer.
10. Reveal Triskelion on top of the graveyard and shoot for lethal.

### Show solution #2

1. Put WoR between Trike and Scrounger in the graveyard order.
2. 🦴 Cast Uneath on Shifter.
3. Shifter enters as Guide and targets Guide.
4. Guide enters and targets Scrounger

5. Sac Guide to Therapy to discard Pali.
6. Activer Scrounger for 20 CMC.
7. Graveyard is now: Uneath, WoR, Trike.
8. Sac Scrounger to Therapy targeting opponent.
9. Activate Shifter/Scrounger to put back in the library: Scrounger, Uneath and X.
10. Reveal WoR on top of the Greveyard
11. Activate Shifter/WoR to add 🌳.
12. Sac WoR to Therapy targeting yourself.
13. In response, activate Shifter/WoR to add 🌳.
14. Resolve Therapy discarding Devourer.
15. With 🌳🌳 in pool, activate Shifter/Devourer for 20
16. Use Shifter's ability to discard Tog.
17. Anctivate Shifter/Tog and reveal Triskelion on top of the graveyard.
18. Shoot for lethal.









## Puzzle 7

We are in opponent's EOT. Can you win on your turn?





What's the play?

## Show solution

1. *End of turn*   activate Hermit Druid, ordering the graveyard as Scrounger > Tog > Trike.
2. **Opponent activates Crypt after Hermit resolved:**
  3. Activate Shifter/Scrounger and put Palinchron, Akroma, Scrounger on top of the library.
  4. Discard Devourer to Tog.
  5. Put three Devourer activations on the stack.
  6.   Flashback Krosan Reclamation targeting Triskelion and Devourer.
  7. After everything resolves: graveyard is exiled, Trike and Devourer are in the library, Shifter has 20 counters.
  8. *On upkeep*   activate Hermit Druid and put Triskelion on top of the graveyard.
  9. Ping for lethal with Shifter/Triskelion.
3. **Opponent doesn't Crypt and pass back priority:**
  3. Activate Shifter/Scrounger and put Palinchron, Akroma, Scrounger on top of the library.
  4. Attempt to pass to our turn.
  5. *If opponent Crypts now, proceed as before and win.*
  5. You get to your upkeep.
  6. Holding priority: discard Devourer with Tog, exile Palinchron with Shifter/Devourer, and in response   activate Hermit Druid. Then pass priority.
  7. If the entire stack resolves: Shifter has 7 counters.
  8. Graveyard is Scrounger > Akroma > Devourer > Tog > Trike.
  9. Activate Shifter/Scrounger and put Akroma, Scrounger and Guide on top of the library.
  10. Reveal Tog on top of the graveyard.
  11. Activate Shifter/Tog 20 times and then exile Tog to reveal Triskelion.
  12. Shoot all blockers and attack for lethal.

Opponent must interact somewhere. Two options:

**Option A:** Opponent Crypts in response to Hermit.

7. Hold priority and activate Devourer two more times.
8.   Flashback Krosan Reclamation on Devourer and Triskelion.
9. Shifter gets 13 counters.

10. Let the stack resolves and the graveyard is exiled.
11. Library is milled with the Hermit activation (*put Trike on top*) and then the 7 leftover counters are added to the Shifter.
12. Activate Shifter/Triskelion to shoot for lethal.

**Option B:** Opponent allows Hermit to resolve but Crypts before the Palinchron counters resolve.

7. Order the graveyard as Scrounger > Akroma, followed by Devourer > Tog > Trike that were already there.
8. Activate Shifter/Scrounger in response to Crypt to put back in the library: Akroma, Scrounger and Devourer.
9. Shifter is now a Shifter/Tog.
10. Pump a lot, then let Crypt resolve.
11. On draw step, you draw Akroma.
12. ② Discard Akroma with Shifter and attack for lethal.







## Puzzle 8

It's opponent EoT. You are at 4 life. The opponent has some goblins, all lands tapped and a Mogg Fanatic ready to explode.



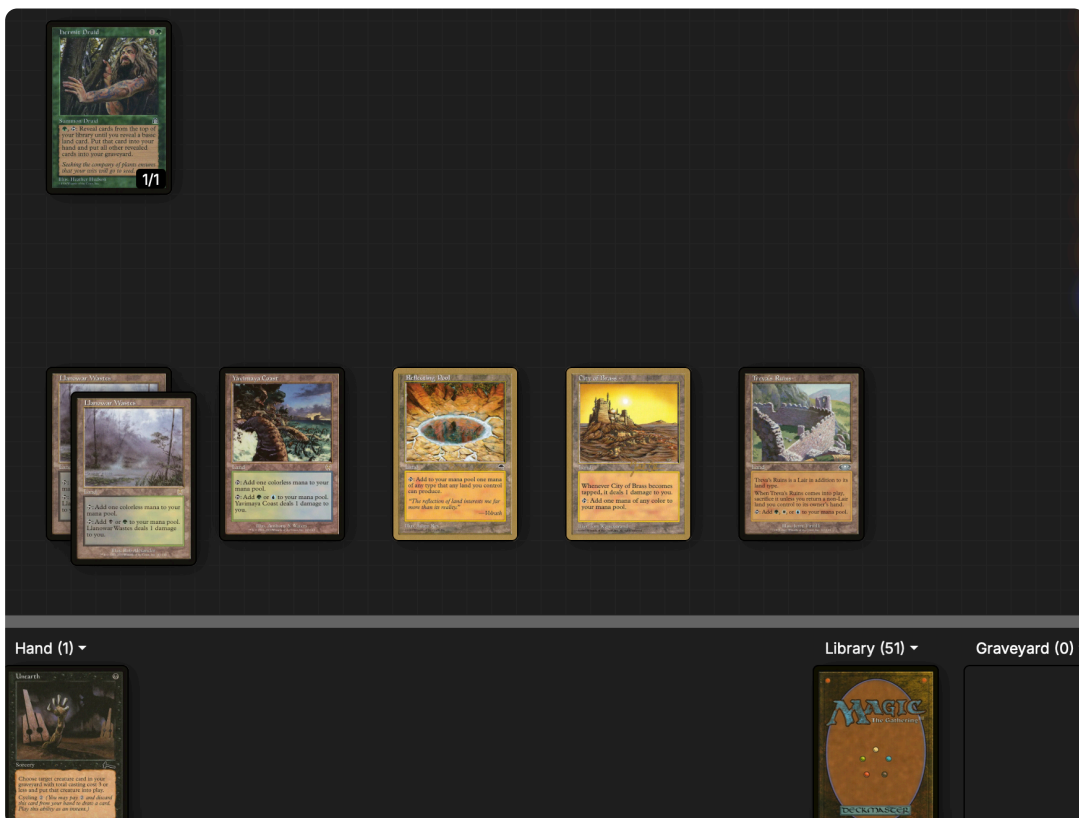
What's the play?

### Show solution

1. Untap and draw.
2.  Discard Pali with Survival, get Shifter.
3.  Discard Shifter with Survival, get Psychatog.
4.  Cast Uneath targeting Shifter.
5. Palinchron untap trigger goes on the stack.
6. **Opponent activate Mogg Fanatic targeting Shifter**
7.  *with ESG*. Discard Psychatog with Survival, get Devourer.
8. Activate Shifter/Tog for a +1/+1 pump.
9. Palinchron untap trigger resolves.
10.  Discard Devourer with Survival, get Triskelion.
11. Activate Shifter/Devourer
12.  Discard Triskelion with Survival.
13. Activate Shifter/Triskelion to shoot the opponent and win.






## Puzzle 9

As simply as it can be.. find the maximum amount of damage possible!



The screenshot shows a Magic: The Gathering game interface. At the top, a card titled "Survival" is visible, with a "1/1" indicator. Below it, a row of five cards is shown: "Luminous Motif", "Luminous Motif", "Verdant Grove", "Uneath", and "Whispering City of Banes". The "Uneath" card is highlighted. At the bottom, the "Hand (1)" section shows the "Uneath" card, and the "Library (51)" section shows the "MAGIC THE GATHERING" logo. The "Graveyard (0)" section is empty.

Show solution

1.   Upkeep activate Hermit Druid.
2. Order graveyard as: Guide, Scrounger, Devourer, Akroma, Trike.
3.  Flashback Krosan Reclamation targeting two Uearth.
4. Draw one Uearth.
5.  Cast Uearth targeting Shifter.
6. Shifter enters as Guide, which brings back Guide, and brings back Tog.
7. Tog exiles the Uearth on top. Reveal Scrounger on top of the graveyard.
8. Activate Shifter/Scrounger to put in the library: Pali, ESG and Squee (13 CMC + Uearth = **14 total**).
9. Sacrifice Shifter to Cabal Therapy #1.
10. Sacrifice Guide to Cabal Therapy #2.
11.  Cast Uearth targeting Shifter,
12. Shifter enters as Guide and targets second Shifter.
13. Before Shifter/Guide trigger resolves, Tog exiles Uearth from the top of graveyard.
14. Shifter #2 enters as Guide and targets Guide.
15. Guide enters and targets Scrounger on top of the gy.
16. Before Guide trigger resolves, activate both Shifter/Scrounger to put in the library: 4 Survivals and 2 Hermits (**26 total** and +3/+3 pump).
17. Guide trigger resolves and Scrounger enters.
18. Sacrifice Guide to Cabal Therapy #3.
19. Activate Scrounger to put in the library: Guide, Hermit and WoR (**35 total**).
20. Sacrifice Scrounger to Cabal Therapy #4.
21. Activate both Shifter/Scrounger to put in the library: Animate Dead, 3 Wall of Roots, 1 Bird of Paradise and Scrounger (**49 total**).
22. With the two +3/+3 pump on the stack, Devourer is revealed on top of the graveyard.
23. Shifter #1 puts all activations on the stack and in response you exile Devourer with Psychatog.
24. Akroma is revealed on top of the graveyard and you sacrifice Shifter #2 to the legend rule.

25. Exile the top Shifter with Psychatog.
26. Shifter/Akroma is a **61/61** (base 6 + 2 Scrounger pumps + 49 counters).
27. Attack with Shifter/Akroma (61 dmg) and then use Psychatog to reveal Triskelion on top of the graveyard.
28. Use Shifter/Trike to shoot 49 times for a total of **110 damage**.

## Puzzle 10

You had Krosan Reclamation in hand, so your graveyard is now a mess. You used a Cabal Therapy to peek at your opponent's hand and the coast is clear. How do you win from this spot?



What's the play?

### Show solution

1. 🦴 Cast Unearth on Psychatog.
2. 🌳 Flashback Krosan Reclamation targeting Akroma and Palinchron (15 cmc).
3. Activate Tog to clean the top of the graveyard.
4. Reveal Devourer on top of the graveyard.
5. Activate Shifter/Devourer\*
6. Activate Psychatog to reveal Triskelion on top of the graveyard.
7. Shoot the opponent with Shifter/Trike.

*And thank him for their sylvan activations.*

You can work around Naturalize. Put Devourer activations on the stack and exile Devourer with Tog: Shifter becomes Triskelion. If they naturalize before the activations resolve, discard Squee to make Naturalize fizzles, and then activate Tog again.

## Puzzle 11

You are in your upkeep and you have 3 life left. Opponent is at 16 life and 0 cards in hand. Last turn they had Memory Lapse for your Shapeshifter, so that's your draw for turn. Both Psychatog and Akroma has been previously exiled and you only have 2 Cabal Therapy left.



*What's the play?*

### Show solution

1. Draw the Shifter.
2. Sacrifice Monk with Cabal Therapy targeting yourself, discard Shifter.

3. 1 ☠️ Cast Animate Dead to bring back into play 2 Shifter and Scrounger.
4. Activate Scrounger to put back into the library 3 cards.
5. Hold priority and sacrifice Scrounger with Cabal Therapy targeting yourself.
6. Activate both Shifter/Scrounger to put back into the library 6 cards. **Make sure that Triskelion will be the last card on the bottom**
7. Let Cabal Therapy resolve and discard Devourer.
8. Activate Shifter/Devourer #1 eight times.
9. 🌿 ↻️ Activate Hermit Druid and mill Triskelion on top of the graveyard.
10. Shoot the opponent with Shifter/Triskelion and win the game.

## Puzzle 12

You are playing against Goblins and facing a Crypt and a Fanatic, can you win this turn?





What's the play?

### Show solution

1. Exile the top two cards of the graveyard with Tog.
2. Reveal Hermit on top of the graveyard.

3.   Activate Shifter/Hermit.


**If opponent pings in response to stop the Hermit activation:**

4.   Activate Survival twice in response and fetch Devourer and Trike. *Crypt is irrelevant.*
5. Discard Devourer and Trike for free with Tog.
6. Activate Shifter/Devourer and then Shifter/Trike and win.


**Assume opponent doesn't ping, so Hermit resolves:**

4. Put Scrounger on top of the graveyard.
5. Activate Shifter/Scrounger to put Trike, Guide and Akroma back on the library.
6. Attempt to resolve the +3/+3 pump. Two sub-scenarios:

**Sub-scenario A — Pump resolves cleanly or ping with Fanatic:**

7.  Discard Hermit to Survival to get Trike.
8. Use Psychatog in play to manipulate the top of the graveyard to reveal Devourer and activate Shifter/Devourer to exile Akroma and Guide (13 CMC). With Tog in play you can make sure that Crypt wont cover any activation of Shifter/Devourer
9. Discard Trike and shoot the opponent with Shifter/Trike.

**Sub-scenario B — Opponent Crypts:**

7.  Discard Palinchron to Survival to get Trike.
8. Use Psychatog in play to manipulate the top of the graveyard to reveal Devourer and activate Shifter/Devourer to exile Akroma and Guide (13 CMC). With Tog in play you can make sure that Mogg Fanatic wont cover any activation of Shifter/Devourer since you can exile cards down to a creature with toughness >1.
9. Discard Trike and shoot the opponent with Shifter/Trike.

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## Puzzle 13

It's your turn and you have an active Shapeshifer in play against two open mana for Withered Wretch. Can you win this turn?



What's the play?

## Show solution

1. Discard Hermit with Survival.

### If they don't exile Hermit:

2. Get Triskelion.
3. Do the Crypt-proof line.

### If they exile Hermit:

2. Get Devourer.
3. Discard Devourer with Survival.

### If they exile Devourer:

4. Activate Shifter/Devourer holding priority and cover it with Gemstone Mine adding .
5. Let Withered Wretch exile Devourer.
6. Survival search resolve and you can get whatever (Trike or Akroma if still in the deck).
7. Attack with a huge Shapeshifter.

### If they don't exile Devourer:

4. Get Triskelion.
5. Activate Shifter/Devourer.

6. 🌳 Discard Triskelion with Survival.

7. Shoot the opponent and win.

## Puzzle 14

You are in your main phase. Find a winning line assuming no Vision Charm or Counterspell in hand.



What's the play?

### Show solution

1. 🌳 Discard Birds with Survival to get Palinchron.
2. 🌳 Discard Palinchron with Survival to get ESG.
3. ③ 🌳🌳 Cast Guide with ESG.
4. Guide enters and brings back Shifter as Palinchron.
5. Shifter/Pali triggers goes on the stack and you untap 7 lands.
6. ② 🌵🌵 Return Shifter/Pali to hand.
7. Sacrifice Guide with Cabal Therapy.
8. ① 🌵🌵 Cast Shifter.
9. Shifter enters as Guide, which brings back Guide itself.
10. Guide enters and brings back Palinchron.
11. Palinchron triggers goes on the stack and you untap 7 lands.
12. ② 🌵🌵 Return Pali to hand. You have 3 mana.

13. 🌳 Discard Palinchron with Survival to get Psychatog.
14. 🌳 Discard Psychatog with Survival to get Triskelion.
15. Activate Shifter/Tog to exile cards from the graveyard until Devourer is on top.
16. Activate Shifter/Devourer enough time to add lethal counters.
17. 🌳 Discard Triskelion with Survival and shoot the opponent.

If needed, add a WoR between Pali and Tog for an extra mana.  
 You can also go Tog → Akroma and deal lethal with how big the  
 gy is.

## Puzzle 15

We are playing against Iggy Pop and opponent has an untapped Cephalid Coliseum and threshold, and no other interaction. Can you win this turn?



What's the play?

### Show solution #1

1. Play Shifter naked. Pay 🌳 to activate Hermit — order: Scrounger, double WoR.
2. Activate Scrounger, put back WoR, Akroma, Scrounger (3 cards). Get G from top WoR.
3. Pitch Tog for Scrounger.

- **If they Coliseum:** Put Scrounger on top, back to library, and combat kill.
4. Get Scrounger.
    - **If they Coliseum now (2 cards left, danger of decking):** Pitch Scrounger and scrounge Scrounger, WoR and ESG. Inflate as Tog and either put Akroma on top if drawn, or get it with Survival from a Scrounger pitch, then discard to Tog for lethal.
  5. If no Coliseum: pitch Scrounger and scrounge Scrounger, WoR, ESG. Library is: WoR, Akroma, WoR, Scrounger, ESG.
  6. Get WoR. Grow Tog, become second Wall we hermitted and generate G. Use it to pitch WoR to Survival. We get Akroma and use the current top Wall to pitch Akroma and fail to find.

Library is exactly 3 cards, we have threshold and Scrounger is among those 3 — we are invulnerable to Coliseum. Attack for lethal.

## Show solution #2

1. Play Undiscovered Paradise, cast Volrath's Shapeshifter (leaves 2 Wastes untapped).
2. Activate Hermit (1 Wastes untapped) — stack: Scrounger → K-Rec → WoR.
3. Scrounge the Scrounger, K-Rec, and WoR.
4. Cabal Therapy yourself, sacrificing Hermit, naming Tog.
5. Tog pump all the way down to Akroma. Attempt to go to attackers.
  - **If no Coliseum:** Win.
  - **If Coliseum:** Stack WoR → Scrounger → K-Rec. Use the untapped Wastes + make a G with VS/WoR to flashback K-Rec targeting Scrounger and WoR — leaving Akroma on top again.

## Puzzle 16

On our main phase, we have a hermit in play without summoning sickness, 4 lands available with 3 counters on the Mine and 2 Shifters in hand. Opponent has an untapped land and an untapped Furnace. Can you win this turn?



Hand (2) ▾



\*What's the play?\*

## Show solution



**Setup:** Activate Hermit — order graveyard as: Guide, Tog, Scrounger, WoR, WoR, Devourer, Trike, Akroma. Once Hermit resolves and the stack is empty, we cast Shifter. Our goal is to bring back Guide with Shifter, and Guide will bring back Tog. Two scenarios open up: either opponent interacts with this process at some point (A) or opponent doesn't interact or interacts with some other piece in the graveyard and we end up with Shifter, Guide and Tog in play (B). Let's review each:

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### A — They interacted with Furnace:

- **A1 — They exiled Guide before it could enter:** Shifter is a Tog. Pump, become Akroma, kill.
  - **A2 — They exiled Tog after Guide entered:** Shifter is a Tog. Pump, become Akroma, kill.
  - **A3 — They exiled Tog before Guide enters:** Guide enters and brings back Triskelion. Shifter is a Scrounger — scrounge double WoR and Pali. On upkeep, scrounge Scrounger, Akroma and ESG. Shifter is a Devourer, add all the counters and suicide Trike for the kill.
- 

### B — Guide and Tog are both in play:

- **B1 — They exiled Akroma at some point:** Shifter is Scrounger — scrounge Scrounger, Pali and ESG (15 CMC). Resolve the 3/3 pump. Get G from WoR, exile WoR, get G from second WoR, exile WoR. Cast K-Rec to put back Squee and WoR. *(If needed: sac Guide to Therapy and K-Rec Squee + Guide instead for 3 more CMC.)* Shifter is Dev, we add the counters and exile Dev to become Trike and win.
- **B2 — They exiled something non-Akroma:** Sac Tog to Therapy and combat kill.
- **B3 — They haven't exiled anything yet:** Shifter is Scrounger — scrounge Pali, Scrounger and ESG. Resolve pump, generate GG mana and K-Rec Squee + WoR (20 CMC). Now as Devourer:
  - If they have only exiled non-Akroma so far: kill with Akroma.

- If they have exiled Akroma: add counters to Devourer and kill.
- If they haven't used Furnace yet: add 20 counters to the stack and exile Devourer to resolve counters as Trike. If they exile Trike, attack with 26/26 Akroma. If they exile Akroma, add counters to Devourer and kill.

## Puzzle 17

You are in your main phase one, there are two lines that start in two different ways, find them both!



What's the play?




### Show solution #1

1. 🌳 Discard Shifter with Survival to get Psychatog.
2. 🦴 Cast Untaxed targeting Shapeshifter.
3. Palinchron untap goes on the stack.
4. 🌳 Discard Psychatog with Survival to get Devourer.
5. Hold priority and activate Shifter/Tog to exile 2 cards for a +1/+1 pump.

6. Activate Shifter/Tog to discard Scrounger for a +1/+1 pump.

Opponent have no window to ping with our shields down: Shifter is Scrounger until resolving pumps. 7. Once we untap, combo.

## Show solution #2

1.   Cast Shifter for the untap.
2.  Discard Scrounger with Survival to get Devourer.
3. If opponent has pinged shifter before the Survival ability resolves, wait to combo on opponent's upkeep.
4. If opponent has not pinged shifter, then combo after the untap resolves with Devourer and Trike in hand.

## Puzzle 18

You are in opponent's end step and he has been abusing his Library :D With his life total at 6, can you find a line to win this turn? What if he had been at 10? And what if he was at 14? Assume opponent will try to port you on your upkeep.



What's the play?

## Show solution — 13 damage line

EOT: 🌳 Discard Hermit with Survival to get Psychatog.

In your upkeep, opponent uses Rishadan Port.

1. 🌳 Discard Uktabi with Survival to get second ESG.
2. ① 🌳🌳 Play Shifter as Uktabi with two lands and one ESG.
3. Destroy Cursed Totem.
4. 🌳 Use second ESG to discard Tog with Survival to get Akroma.
5. Discard Scrounger with Shifter/Tog for a +1/+1 pump.
6. With 8 cards in graveyard, activate Shifter/Scrounger to shuffle Scrounger and two bottom cards for a +3/+3 pump.
7. With 5 cards in graveyard, activate Shifter/Tog to remove the bottom 4 cards for a +2/+2 pump.
8. Discard Akroma with Shifter/Tog Tog for a total of **+7/+7** pump.
9. Attack with Shifter/Akroma for a total of **13 damages**.

### Show solution — 14 damage line

EOT: 🌳 Discard Hermit with Survival to get second ESG.

In your upkeep, opponent uses Rishadan Port.

1. 🌳 Discard Uktabi with Survival to get WoR.
2. ① 🌳🌳 Play Shifter as Uktabi with two lands and one ESG.
3. Destroy Cursed Totem.
4. 🌳 Use second ESG to discard WoR with Survival to get Tog.
5. Activate Shifter/WoR to add 🌳
6. 🌳 Discard Tog with Survival to get WoR#2.
7. Shifter/Tog is a 1/1.
8. Discard WoR#2 to Tog. Shifter/WoR enters as 0/4, then gets +1/+1 to 1/5.
9. Activate Shifter/WoR to add 🌳
10. 🌳 Discard Scrounger with Survival to get Akroma.
11. We have 10 cards in graveyard (4 originals + Hermit, Monkey, WoR, Tog, WoR #2, Scrounger).
12. Activate Shifter/Scrounger and shuffle Scrounger, WoR #2 and Hermit. Top card is Tog.
13. Scrounger pump resolves for a total of +4/+2 pump.
14. With 7 cards in graveyard, activate Shifter/Tog to remove bottom 6 for a +3/+3 pump.

15. Discard Akroma to Tog for a **8/6 pump** and attack for 14.

# Resources

## Download the Guide

The full hFEB primer is available as a PDF for offline reading.

↓ [Download the HFEB Guide \(PDF\)](#).

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## The Decklist

 View Decklist ⌵

[View the current list on Moxfield](#)

```
MAINBOARD
1 Akroma, Angel of Wrath
1 Animate Dead
1 Battlefield Scrounger
4 Birds of Paradise
4 Cabal Therapy
4 City of Brass
1 Duress
2 Elvish Spirit Guide
4 Gemstone Mine
4 Hermit Druid
1 Karmic Guide
1 Krosan Reclamation
4 Llanowar Wastes
1 Palinchron
1 Phyrexian Devourer
1 Psychatog
3 Reflecting Pool
1 Squee, Goblin Nabob
4 Survival of the Fittest
1 Treva's Ruins
1 Triskelion
1 Underground River
1 Undiscovered Paradise
4 Unearth
```

3 Volrath's Shapeshifter  
3 Wall of Roots  
4 Yavimaya Coast

#### SIDEBOARD

1 Auramancer  
1 Duress  
2 Eladamri's Vineyard  
1 Ghitu Slinger  
1 Monk Realist  
1 Naturalize  
2 Pyroclasm  
1 Ray of Revelation  
2 Swords to Plowshares  
1 Uktabi Orangutan  
2 Xantid Swarm

## Useful Links

### Other Primers

- [Premodern hFEB Primer — CrazyCarl](#)

### MTGO Leagues & Channels

- [MoxlessGuy — YouTube](#)
- [Impulse Crew — YouTube](#)
- [Dunkers — Twitch](#)

### Honorable Mentions

- [BoshNRoll trying hFEB](#)
- [LSV trying hFEB](#)
- [Lannyny — First try](#)
- [Lannyny — Second try](#)

 Facebook Monthly Elimination Round Matches ▼

Paper Matches

- [February 2025 Premodern Monthly - Top 8 - Hermit FEB vs Aluren](#)
- [February 2025 Premodern Monthly - Final Match - Hermit FEB vs Aluren](#)
- [February 2025 Premodern Monthly - Top 4 - Hermit FEB vs Hermit FEB](#)
- [February 2026 Premodern Monthly - Top 4 Match (Best of 5) - GW Enchantress vs HFeb] (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MS1q9nqTeR4>)
- [February 2026 Premodern Monthly - Top 4 Match \(Best of 5\) - GW Enchantress vs HFeb](#)
- [January 2026 Premodern Monthly - Final Match \(Best of 5\) - Oath Spec vs HFeb](#)
- [HFEb Mirror - Galen vs. Biel February 2026](#)
- [HFEb Mirror #2 - Galen vs. Biel February 2026 Top8](#)

 Impulse Crew Matches ▼

- [Burn vs hFEB](#)
- [Elves vs hFEB](#)
- [Stasis vs hFEB](#)
- [Mono White Prison vs hFEB](#)
- [Terrageddon vs hFEB](#)
- [Terrageddon vs hFEB - Deck Discussion](#)

 Lobstercon 2026 ▼


- [hFEB vs UW Control](#)
- [hFEB vs Elves](#)
- [hFEB vs Balancing Tings](#)
- [hFEB vs Oath Ponza](#)

 Lobstercon 2025 ▼

- Replenish vs hFEB

 New England Regionals ∨

- Mono U Dreadnought vs hFEB

 Neon Mushroom Matches ∨

- Sligh vs hFEB
- Dr.Teeth vs hFEB
- MonoG Stompy vs hFEB
- Machine Head vs hFEB
- UB Reanimator vs hFEB