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Phage the untouchable combo

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So the best way to look at it is probably as a deck combo: collect the right group of cards, cast the right spells, win the game. Of course, with the combo in Commander, we can't run four out of each piece, and that means there are plenty of slots remaining. We can do what we want with them. I think hyper-aggressive or even phage build tokens would be really neat. I'd like to see that deck. We could either sacrifice all the chips for fun and profit, or just aggressively attack the sums of life in every way possible (and in black, in many ways) and keep the Phage combination from time to time as a random hit. That would be cool. However, regulars of this column know that I am a fan of grindy, controlling Black builds, so if I'm going to build a Phage, I'm going to build it slow–down. Let's start with this tough commander. We have four ways to get out fagage. They are: To throw out of our hand, we need to get it in our hand. Command Beacon is dedicated to doing this. It is usually useful to avoid the commander's tax after many transformations, but in our case it allows us to avoid death. A Torpedo ball means that its entry into the battlefield effect (you're dying) doesn't start. (It also stops opposing Primordials and the like from doing anything other than showing up. Banisher Priest not banishing nothin.) The Infinite sundial ends the turn immediately, but importantly for us, it clears the stack. When Phage is cast, the spell checks where she was thrown from, and if she's anywhere other than our hand, her whole thing I'll kill you now goes to the pile. So, we can throw her out of the Command Zone, put her death to us ability at the stack, and then just–end the end of the turn, clearing the stack, including this ability. We don't die. Not you know, do nothing else that turns around, but we don't die. Platinum Angel, of course, means we just can't die, which is great when something tries really hard to kill us. That is, order of the best to the worst, too. Command Beacon is nice because it doesn't cost us any extra mana, it doesn't spin with the rest of our turn, it doesn't mess with anything else that we do and it can be done at an instant speed, which can make a difference at some point. Torpor Orb is too nice, but it tends to draw a lot of hate because people like to run creatures that do things in EDH and become spoiled when they stop. The sundial is unlikely to draw hatred (though it probably should in this deck), but it costs us extra mana, and that means we're done with a turn. There will be a whole turn-based cycle before we can do anything else, which is a lot of time and a lot of cards to draw to figure out how to deal with the now rather disturbing threat. Platinum Angel is our least good option because Krosan Grip, or Murderous Notch, or any of the other countless cards played in this format at all times that can destroy a creature or artifact at instant speed means they kill it with phage skills on the stack and you're done. (Though Lightning Greaves can help with that. I think.) So what else are we up to? Well, we have an expensive commander, so we're going to want some mana. We are far from any budget build here, so we can also lean over it and run the cards we want; along with the Swamps, we have cabal coffers/urborg, tomb of yawgmoth pack, in additiion to Vesuva, Thespian's Stage, and Abandoned Temple bump these even more. Nykthos, nyxa shrine too can do a few. The Temple of the False God helps a little, and Volrath's Fortress is a funny way if Phage dies to put it back in his hand (so maybe there are four and a half ways to fool Phague). Just let her go to the cemetery and then return her to the top of the library and pull her out. We also have several ways to double mana, such as Caged Sun, and add a lot more mana, like the Coffered Magus. And lots of mana rocks. This deck will be a lot of mana. You can take abacus with you. We have a few tutors here because, let's face it, we play Phage. We're not trying to make friends. Most of them can search any card, but the expedition map can get us command beacon or one of the mana pieces. While it will be tempting to catch this Torpedo Ball, we really want to start with a lot of mana. First, conquer the lands, then drag it into one of the solutions or look for it after the mana is humming. We have a lot of draws as well, from Sign in Blood and his ilk to Phyrexian Arena and friends, so we're already likely to pull out another teacher or one of the combo elements, but it will help to have access to the 7 mana we need to give away phage before we actually set up to donate it. Black's greatest weakness is his inability to destroy artifacts and spells. Some colorless spells can help, so we run Drive The Stone of Oblivion and Everything is Dust. A dangerous crypt would be good to add to an artifact or enchant heavy meta. What we can do is destroy the crap from so we have about a million ways to do it. Mostly we do mass removal, with some fun versions like Killing Wave (which is great when we can also make a million mana), but we have a few point removal spells as well for the occasional child problem. We have enough tutors who will most often be able to find what we need to solve the problem, unless it kills us now. We also have some cute cards with Fagem. Endless Whispers makes it a real problem to kill her, because most likely we'll just go back to the person who killed her and kill her, well, them. Temporal Extortion is a really funny card in black that sees very little play, but most often your victim will pay that living, because otherwise we're going to get a second hit with Phage. Rogue's Passage and Key to the City make our girl unobs lockable, and Swiftfoot Boots and Lightning Greaves protect her and, if possible, attack the bend she enters. Grim Discovery can redeem our Command Beacon if something happens really tragically. So we have a nice combo tray that will make all our friends very annoyed every time we want to play it. The idea is that we put some cash and resources into a pretty awesome stack, and we want to get into the game! So what if we change a few things and make it so Phage is there just for color identity, and we promise not to mess with it? Liliana, Heretical Healer Ob Nixilis, Unfettered Liliana from Liliana Liliana's Dark Krai, Death Wielder Ob Nixilis from Black Oath Ob Nixilis Reignited Sorin Markov Vraska, Scheming Gorgon Liliana, The Last Hope We're going to go for Mono-Black superfriends. We're rather limited because there are plenty of walkers in color, but we can do pretty well and give us enough cards to remove all our phage kitchy stuff. We pull out three enablers (extra style points if you bring the basic swamp to the exchange on the Command Beacon) plus Endless Whispers, Modern Extortion, then exchange in nine walker buddies and create pre-sparks reignited (though Karn Liberated or Ugin, Spirit Dragon will fit nicely and can serve as a reasonable win condition). We will play a much less focused game with this deck. The tutors are there right now just to get the answer we might need, while planeswalkers make our opponents nervous and ultimately try to defeat a Demon with rune scars or something. More often than not, playing this version of the deck will feel more like an endless level of video game: eventually you will lose, but how long can you stop the rest of the players before they can break through the wall of board wipes? How can you build a Phage? Is it worth running Withering Boon plus cemetery-to-hand stuff in more ways to get it out? Whether behind another way to get her out? Are there more teachers? Or should we simply remove them and let the deck work or not on our own? Hand? yet we should know? Write to us! Decks like this are a neat way to challenge yourself and the table, although I recommend caution because most people won't like it more than once in a while, and watching another player count to 47 mana can be annoying. But if you want to sweat your choices and make sure no one does anything unless you let them, this deck may be for you. Thanks for reading. Reading.

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