Magic’s latest set has turned me into a monster (and I like it)



I need help.

I haven’t logged into *Marvel Snap* for about a week now — just when the new *Quantumania*-themed season has begun. Now what, you ask, could be powerful enough to drag me away from a game I have made my ministry since its launch?

The big daddy, the OG, the original *Magic: The Gathering*.

Magic’s latest set, , has gotten to me in a way that defies even my expectations. I play paper *Magic* in casual in-person games with friends pretty regularly and have been content with that. But there’s something that’s irresistible about this set, with its horrifying flesh creatures with too many teeth, that has compelled me to play the digital version, *Arena,* non-friggin’-stop.

This all started when I told my husband that I wanted to do a

prerelease event. I've been playing *Magic* off and on for about 13 years now, and the last prerelease I remember going to was likely for the Core Set 2011. Even though I can get my fix playing with friends as I normally do, I wanted the challenge of playing against people who aren't going to look at me with big puppy eyes and ask for a gentleman's mulligan. So, our group of *Magic*-playing friends got together for a Phyrexia prerelease at the local game shop.

It was awful.

I don't remember prereleases in the past being as strict with time as this one was, but I was all out of sorts trying to put together a cohesive deck in the time allotted. I didn't feel good about it. My deck was bad (so bad that I took the time to make another deck that was *still* bad), and I ended the night with an ignominious 1–2 score – that one win the result of a lucky bye. Usually, getting whooped like that turns me off. When I get on a losing streak in *Snap*, I usually don't want to look at the game for a standard 24 hours. But even after that atrocious prerelease, I still hopped on *Magic Arena* the first day Phyrexia was out, and I haven't stopped drafting since.

It definitely helps that Phyrexia favors my preferred archetype – playing big-ass creatures that do nasty things (i.e., your typical green ramp) – and that the archetype I don't like – blue anything – isn't that strong. But I think the problem is worse than simply that.

I think I might be… compleated?

From its definition on the MTG wiki (its lore definition, not its keyword meaning):

> *Compleation entails the replacement of much of a person's organic parts with artifice, which typically causes the death of their original organic body. The being retains its memory and personality, but loses its soul and is endowed with a fanatical desire to serve Phyrexia.*

That pretty much describes the fanaticism with which I have pursued playing this set.

There's something about the H.R. Giger-like monsters in Phyrexia – the horrific Sheoldred, the tooth-filled arms of the Mandible Justiciar, or the haunting allure of the Mother herself, Elesh Norn – that are so friggin' cool to look at that I can't stop playing. Also, the many synergies of this set seem to work for me better than mechanics in other sets. I love toxic damage that allows me to kill my opponent whenever they accumulate 10 poison counters. I also enjoy the various neat things you can do with the oil mechanic. Equipment cards are not typically my jam, but the new For Mirrodin mechanic that allows equipment cards to, essentially, come with their own creature to wield them, is very nice. Who wants to spend mana to play an equipment card and then spend even more to attach it to something? Not me!

Phyrexia is my favorite set in a long while. It might be my favorite set ever. I have so much fun drafting, picking cards like this nasty, evil thing that lets me do double damage, that even when I lose (and, somehow, I lost with this deck), I just want to get back on the fleshless, bony horse and start again. And when I win? Whew. One of my first successful draft decks was one where I let this chonky boi run over every creature on the board to poison my opponent until they died.

In another draft, my opponent commanded the board with a horde of creatures I could not get through. I was dead in the water until I pulled a creature that allowed me to fly over a wall of monsters to damage my opponent directly. Even then, I was still dead, but my opponent conceded, granting me the win because they likely did their math wrong. I was one point of damage short of winning. I knew it; my opponent didn't. My husband was hootin' and hollerin' as though *he* had won.

Phyrexia is somehow uniquely fun compared to most other *Magic* sets I've played. I have become a monster, so I feel right at

home with Phyrexia: All Will Be One.

https://www.theverge.com/2023/2/11/23594139/magic-the-gathering-phyrexia-all-will-be-one