

A Comprehensive Guide to BW Death and Taxes

Or: How I learned to stop worrying about Doomsday and love the Delver match-up

By Cooper W.



Table of Contents

General Overview.....	3
Deck Construction.....	4
Sideboard Construction.....	27
Sideboarding (WIP).....	32
Mulligans.....	32
Closing Thoughts.....	33

I. General Overview

Since Legacy's inception, Death and Taxes (DnT) has existed as an archetypal pillar of the format. At its core, the deck is built around mana denial cards such as Wasteland, tempo all-star Aether Vial, and efficient removal like Swords to Plowshares. DnT is a white creature-based proactive control deck that preys on fair blue strategies. The deck often fluctuates between tier-1 and high tier-2 as the overall Legacy meta shifts. The bottom line is that if the basic blue tempo shell persists, DnT will be relevant. Assuming format staples Force of Will, Daze, Ponder, and Brainstorm don't get banned or fall out of favor, DnT will exist in one form or another as an "evergreen" deck. On the contrary, the deck's hardest matchups are against non-blue hyper-aggressive/stompy strategies and most forms of combo.

At an initial glance, it may seem that DnT is a weak deck full of do-nothing cards. In a vacuum this is partially true but, the deck draws most of its strength from its unique resilience and skill of the pilot. The latter of which is an extremely important aspect to the deck--to quote G.I. Joe, "knowing is half the battle." DnT gets better with its pilot's knowledge of their own deck and the decks of their opponents. When first picking up the deck have patience because, with time it will become possible to crank out flawless wins. It is unrealistic to expect free wins or to easily spike tournaments behind the wheel of DnT, but with perseverance the deck is more than capable of placing well or even taking down events.

II. Deck Construction

As mentioned in section I of this writeup, DnT is base-white. Often but not all the time, people splash for a secondary color. This can be for any reason but typically, is done to make the deck better at beating something specific. As of early December 2024, the most popular splashes are red or black. As for which is better, there is not really a clear answer, they are both better at doing different things. Red offers a more aggressive strategy playing cards like Ajani Nacatal Pariah, Magus of the Moon, and most importantly Broadside Bombardiers. On the other hand, decks with a black splash gain access to hand disruption spells such as Thoughtseize, Emperor of Bones, and Orcish Bowmasters. Before going in depth on the actual construction of the deck I would like to lay out a short notation key for cards with longer names as I will be referring to by acronyms: Swords to Plowshares = StP, Mother of Runes = Mom, Emperor of Bones = Emp, Orcish Bowmasters = OBM, Recruiter of the Guard = RotG, Stoneforge Mystic = SFM, Thoughtseize = TS. Also, for reference below is [the full 95](#) that this primer is based off.

Companion (1)	Sorceries (4)	Lands (31) - 33 including mdfc	Sideboard (15)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Yorion, Sky Nomad 🐾 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Thoughtseize 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Arid Mesa 4 Karakas 4 Marsh Flats 4 Plains 2 Prismatic Vista 2 Scrubland 2 Shadowy Backstreet 1 Silent Clearing 1 Snow-Covered Plains 1 Swamp 4 Wasteland 2 Windswept Heath 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Cabal Therapy 2 Extirpate 2 Grafdigger's Cage 1 Containment Priest 2 Stony Silence 2 Wrath of the Skies 1 Faerie Macabre 1 Peacekeeper 1 Plague Engineer 1 Yorion, Sky Nomad 🐾
Creatures (33)	Instant (4)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Mother of Runes 2 Emperor of Bones 1 Lion Sash 3 Orcish Bowmasters 4 Stoneforge Mystic 4 Thalia, Guardian of Thraben 1 Boggart Trawler 2 Flickerwisp 4 Recruiter of the Guard 3 Skyclave Apparition 1 Witch Enchanter 4 Solitude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Swords to Plowshares 		
	Artifacts (8)		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Aether Vial 1 Pre-War Formalwear 1 The Aetherspark 1 Phantom Blade 1 Kaldra Compleat 		

The Core:

The core of any DnT deck revolves around Wasteland, Aether Vial, and disruptive creatures. The primary gameplan involves interfering with your opponent's using an early well-placed Wasteland or another disruptive spell backed up by things like Aether Vial for a tempo advantage or, a SFM for early pressure. Like most control decks, DnT has some level of inevitability. Generally speaking, the longer the game goes, the more of an advantage the player on DnT will have. But “how does the deck win???” The primary way that DnT closes out games is through combat damage either with an army of hate-bears or via SFM putting Kaldra Compleat into play.

The overwhelming majority of lists play Yorion, Sky Nomad as a companion. Doing so does several important things for the deck. In longer more grindy matches, Yorion provides top-end stability as you enter the later game. Yorion can also be sent to hand for use as pitch-fodder in a pinch when evoke casting a Solitude. Beyond this, Yorion offers lots of utility to the deck in being able to flicker an entire board of permeants with enter the battlefield (ETB) abilities. This combined with Karakas gives DnT a great deal of end-game inevitability and card advantage. Speaking of which, Yorion's deck building constraint requires players to fill their deck with an additional 20 cards—this is both a blessing and a curse. This allows for DnT to fill more of its slots with “silver bullet” type creatures and general toolbox cards which in turn make primary tutor of the deck, RotG, extremely valuable. The importance of RotG to the deck is so high that all creatures in the deck are chosen specifically for their ability to be tutored by RotG. Furthermore, most



cards in the deck can be flickered by Yorion and Flickerwisp. On the other hand, the obvious downside of playing with 20 extra cards in variance. Yorion's companion condition for example, makes mulligans much less reliable and significantly decreases the effectiveness of sideboarding.

Splashing Black and Addressing Phelia/Overlord:

Firstly, for the last year or so I would be willing to argue that the black splash variant of DnT has seen the most success as compared to mono-W and RW builds. All three variants of the deck have their strengths and weaknesses but, BW is much better tailored for the faster, combo-hell route that the format has been heading down. Cards like TS and Cabal Therapy offer the deck early hand disruption and creatures like Emp/OBM perform very well against many combo decks.

It has become customary for nearly all BW lists to run an 8-card package with Phelia, Exuberant Shepard and Overlord of the Balemurk. Although this pair has proven itself across multiple formats, it does not belong in an 80-card DnT list. To elaborate on this I want to briefly go over 3 things. 1). Phelia/Overlord doesn't make any of your bad matchups better, it primarily makes games into fair blue decks more favorable. To put it simply, it is "win-more." 2) Phelia/Overlord has negative synergy with what DnT is trying to do writ large. Very frequently Overlord will mill over key cards such as Swords to Plowshares or pieces of Equipment. This may not seem like the worst thing on paper but, when it happens (which is often), it can be game ending. 3) Both Phelia and Overlord are not individually powerful cards. Each of the two rely on other cards in the deck

to be good. Although this is true for other cards in the deck like Kaldra Compleat, Phelia and Overlord take up 8 slots in the deck. Not only is this a lot of space to take up in a deck but, both cards do not immediately impact the game upon cast or resolution. DnT's margins for winning are frequently very thin which means that every card in the deck MUST be able to carry its own weight, something that Phelia/Overlord don't do. For Phelia to make an impact it must attack which is not guaranteed and although Overlord theoretically replaces itself on resolution with its ETB but, this does not always find a target/does not do anything as a card until flickered or taken off suspend. If you are planning in playing in a large tournament with BW DnT, consider not including Phelia and Overlord. Also, if you are decided that you want to play with Overlord, I would suggest trying it with 4x Flickerwisp instead of 4x Phelias. That being said, this primer will not cover versions of the deck that use Phelia and Overlord.



Aether Vial:

Aether Vial is one of the most iconic cards in DnT and has made up for a large part of the deck's identity for quite some time. Given that DnT is composed of mostly creatures, it makes sense that a card like Vial would shine here as much as it does. Vial does several very important things for DnT other than put creatures into play. Firstly, Vial “combos” with Wasteland creating a massive tempo advantage with played in tandem. Secondly, Vial allows you to put creatures into play at instant speed or as though they had flash. This allows for some crazy lines and combat surprises for opponents. It can also be used throughout the game to gain small incremental amounts of tempo by putting creatures into play on opponents end steps, forcing untimely removal spells or inefficient usages of mana. Finally, Vial effectively makes all your creatures uncounterable—I don't think I need to explain why this is good.

Deciding when or when not to add counters to your Aether Vial can be tricky. As a rule of thumb, you never want to set Vial to more than 5 counters. 5 mana will always be the ceiling of DnT if Yorion, Sky Nomad is being played. Occasionally you may find yourself with more than a single copy of Vial in play. When this is the case, you want to get your first Vial to 5 counters ASAP and eventually your second Vial to 3 counters. This is the sweet spot that you ideally want to be at with multiple copy of Vial in play. On the note of adding counters to Vial, for those playing in paper missing Vial triggers in your upkeep can happen a lot. The solution others and I have taken to is putting an extra dice on top of your deck. Doing so will remind you of your Vial trigger before drawing each turn:



As a final tip for using Vial effectively I want to talk about the actual timings of activations. For example, let us assume it's turn 4 and your Vial is currently set 3 counters and you put a RotG in on your opponent's end step tutoring a Flickerwisp. It is now the untap step of your 5th turn and you have no 4 mana creatures that you want to put in with Vial. You can respond to you own Vial trigger in your upkeep and put that Flickerwisp in play while still progressing your Vial to 5



counters. This may seem obvious, but many people often overlook this aspect of sequencing especially when concerned with RotG and putting tutor targets into play uncounterably.

Removal:

DnT is home to a diverse suite of removal. Arguably the best removal spell of all time, StP, appears in all lists regardless of color splash. Its only two drawbacks are the life gain it provides and that it cannot be reliably tutored off recruiter. DnT supplements the latter of these two issues with playing many creatures that have removal effects stapled to them. These cards are Skylave Apparition, Solitude, and the newly printed Phantom Blade. Depending on the situation Flickerwisp and OBM can also be effectively used as removal.

Skylave Apparition: Skylave is incredibly useful due to its utility/broad scope of what it can hit. Skylave is typically able to exile most critical pieces that your opponent's deploy against you in fair matchups. One must be wary of the illusion token that Skylave generates opponents upon leaving play. Although less of a problem when only a 1/1 or 2/2, Skylave illusion tokens can often hit hard as 4/4s and force you into a bad exchange of resources. If proving troublesome, Flickerwisp is often a solid way to clear illusion tokens out of play as once tokens leave the battlefield, they are permanently removed from the game. This is just to say sometimes you need to plan ahead before casting a Skylave.



Solitude: Solitude functionally offers DnT copies 5-8 of StP.

Furthermore, it gives DnT some pre-sideboard match insurance against explosive creature-based strategies such as initiative. Often, it is best to sandbag Solitudes until they can be hard cast for their mana cost but there may be instances in which you have to snap-off an evoked Solitude on turn 1 or 2 to deal an early game-ending threat. The reason why this is so important is because DnT lacks forms of direct card advantage which makes 2-for-1s hurt quite a bit. Often, an early evoked Solitude can be game ending several turns later for the DnT player—Solitude is best played conservatively. With the deck having such tight margins for winning, it is critical to conserve resources at all available opportunities.



Phantom Blade: Finally, there is Phantom Blade. It may seem like a silly piece of draft-chaff but is deceptively powerful. Additionally, the card is not on many player's radars, so it has a level of surprise factor going for it. Being an equipment, it can be found using Stoneforge Mystic's ETB ability in addition to being deployed at instant speed with her activated ability. This opens interesting combat-trick lines that are frequently game ending for opponents. Unlike other pieces of the Stoneforge package, Phantom Blade is somewhat castable making it situationally good as a late-game top-deck. Beyond killing an opponent's creature, Phantom Blade is also flicker-able with Yorion and Flickerwisp in addition to providing a stat boost/evasion to an equipped creature. A Flickerwisp suited up with a Phantom Blade has won me many games.



Proactive/Reactive Disruption and Hate-bears:

DnT has two primary single-use disruption “spells” in the form TS and Wasteland. TS is a

generically good hand disruption spell that is played in nearly every single format that it is legal in. The power of TS will change largely on match-up and game-state within each game you play. Obviously, TS is very strong into any opponent who is on combo. The ability to 1-for-1 the best card out of their hand on turn 1 can be particularly devastating in any match up. TS also provides a good deal of utility outside of the early game in the form of checking opponents hands for counterspells before casting a spell or, reactively responding to tutors. The only thing to be cautious about



regarding casting TS is the life cost. If let's say, on turn 1 you got fetch cast TS, that is 3 life you are down. In some matchups this 3-point difference in life can matter a lot. Also, most DnT lists also play copies of Witch Enchanter and Boggart Trawler, both of which can enter untapped as lands for the cost of 3 life. Turns where you go Trawler, take 3, TS lose 2, can also set you up for trouble with early game pressure from opponents. More often than not casting a turn 1 TS is strong enough to justify the life loss but it is something to certainly be wary of. There are some matchups where casting TS is actively bad for this reason, see the Burn match for example.

The other aforementioned disruption card is Wasteland. The card is shockingly complex and can decide games as early as turn 1 if played correctly. The following advice about Wasteland goes for most Legacy decks, not just DnT. Like TS, Wasteland gets better or worse depending on what

deck your opponent is playing and at what point in the game you are in. Against greedy 3-4 color control piles, Delver, and some lands-based strategies Wasteland is one of the strongest cards you can lean on. If on the play, it is bad practice to play out a Wasteland when your opponent has not yet played a land. Concealing your Wasteland can often lead to your opponent playing into a turn 2 Wasteland which can lock some decks/hands out of the game. DnT specifically is a deck that wants to use its copies of Wasteland very aggressively, especially when one can be followed up with an Aether Vial. Doing so creates a massive tempo advantage for the DnT player and again, can be a way to ride an easier win. Always turn 1 Wasteland your opponent when on the draw with DnT. There is some nuance to this but most of the time, it is objectively correct to do this.

In the mid to late-game, Wasteland fulfills more of a utility role for DnT. The ability to take your opponent off mana at this point becomes much less important as most cards in Legacy that are being cast have a lower mana-cost than other formats. At the time of writing this (May 2025), the bottleneck for more fair decks is 3 mana. With this, it becomes crucial that you hold your Wastelands for opponent's own utility lands like Karakas or Maze of Ith, or exposed tertiary colors. The latter of which is very important in control matches. Most UWx control decks play Prismatic Ending which gets better the more colors are put into it. These UWx decks are often constructed with 1 and sometimes 2 splash-color duals specifically for their Prismatic Endings. It is best to hold these late Wastelands for their Volcanic Islands or Trimones. Just to illustrate this here are some average UWx mana-bases (Left-UWr & right-5c Beans):

Land [20]

- 2 Plains
- 4 Flooded Strand
- 1 Tundra
- 4 Island
- 1 Scalding Tarn
- 4 Prismatic Vista
- 1 Volcanic Island
- 1 Mountain
- 1 Mystic Sanctuary
- 1 Meticulous Archive

Land [22]

- 4 Flooded Strand
- 1 Forest
- 1 Hedge Maze
- 1 Island
- 1 Meticulous Archive
- 3 Misty Rainforest
- 1 Mystic Sanctuary
- 1 Plains
- 1 Savannah
- 2 Tropical Island
- 2 Tundra
- 1 Underground Sea
- 1 Volcanic Island
- 1 Wasteland
- 1 Xander's Lounge

As for the actual hate-bears of the deck, what is or isn't played is very meta/pilot dependent as there are a lot of options to pick from. The list that this primer is based on employs Mom, Emp, Lion Sash, OBM, and Thalia, Guardian of Thraben. I will briefly go through how to effectively play each of these.



Mom: The primary function of Mom is to serve as a lightning rod for removal. Similar to blue decks using Tamiyo, Inquisitive Student, if a turn 1 Mom is left unanswered, she will run away with the game. The idea is that your opponent will be forced into using removal on your Mom thus clearing the way for a follow up threat. If a Mom manages to survive, she becomes basically unkillable though the use of her activated ability. This ability is best used defensively while blocking or reactively to a removal spell targeting one of your creatures. Mom can also target herself with her ability making her one of the best blockers in all of Magic.



Emp: Emp is the cooler child of Shallow Grave allowing you to tax graveyards and cheat out creatures from the graveyard. Emp is super effective into decks that rely on their graveyard such as tempo shells with Dragon's Rage Channeler and Murktide Regent. Emp combos with a bunch of cards in your deck but namely Solitude. A very good line that you can take with the two is at the start of combat with your Emp exile trigger on the stack, you can evoke a Solitude, exile it, then adapt Emp in your attack step reanimating the Solitude for an additional trigger + a life linking attacker. Versions of this line can be replicated with other cards like RotG and SFM which become more potent with a Vial in play.



Lion Sash: This card is very simple acting as a white Scavenging Ooze. It can be found off both RotG and SFM and has a power and toughness that scale as you invest mana into it. Beyond taxing the graveyard, it can be equipped to an evasive threat in the late game to push large amounts of damage.



OBM: OBM is a severely fucked up Magic card. This dude basically does everything you need it to in DnT. It can be cast proactively in an opponent's end step, reactively to a Brainstorm (often game winning), as removal for opposing creatures, or flickered a bunch to push damage through a board state that has been bogged down. Seriously, this card is really good and is hard to mess up—if you are casting it you are probably doing the right thing.



Thalia, Guardian of Thraben//Spirit of the Labyrinth: How the mighty have fallen. Thalia used to be one of the best cards in DnT but over the years has been a victim to format power creep. The primary reason that it is still played is due to a lack of good white 2 CMC creatures. This is not to say that she is a bad card but, compared to the 2 CMC cards available in other colors, she is quite weak. Depending on what the overall metagame looks like, Thalia is frequently substituted for Spirit of the Labyrinth. Thalia and Spirit are best played early and often. A Wasteland backed up by a Thalia is completely backbreaking. It is good to get Thalia out early as she becomes less relevant as the game progresses in high-resource matches.



The only trick of note here is that you can protect your own Thalia with a Karakas activation. Also, be wary that her taxing effect is symmetrical and will make your non-creature spell cost more as well.

SFM and Equipment:

SFM makes up for ½ of DnT's toolbox package alongside RotG. Most conventional DnT lists play roughly 1 piece of equipment for each copy of SFM they are playing. Across all builds of the deck it is fair to expect Kaldra Compleat, Pre-War Formalwear, and Lion Sash to be included often with a fourth or fifth secondary color equipment. The list that this primer is concerned with is playing Kaldra Compleat, Pre-War Formalwear, Lion Sash, Phantom Blade, and the Aetherspark—all of which will be covered in a similar fashion to the above heat-bears.

Before that it is important to understand SFM as a card itself. There are



3 important things to know about SFM that will dictate how exactly you play the card in any given match. Firstly, SFM does not need to untap for an ability activation to generate value as she replaces herself with a piece of equipment upon resolution. It is often correct to tutor for cheaper/more castable pieces of equipment off SFM's ETB ability. I will elaborate more on this during the actual equipment breakdown that is to follow. Secondly and perhaps most straightforward, SFM makes all equipment castable at instant-speed and uncounterable. This opens simple lines involving surprising opponents with SFM activations in combat. Lastly, SFM is a flickerable card which means that after it has entered play, represents any equipment remaining in your deck.

Kaldra Compleat: Kaldra exists in the deck for a single reason: to get opponents dead. This card is a complete death machine and acts as a removal check for opponents. If you search for/telegraph a Kaldra opponents must answer the SFM within a single turn cycle or else will likely die. Kaldra is also very strong against removal as it has indestructible and can be flickered to create a fresh germ token if plowed. If you know that your opponent is sandbagging a removal spell and you need to get a relevant hate-bear through, you can cast SFM and grab Kaldra to force said spell from your opponent thus clearing the way for whatever other thing you may want to put into play.



Pre-War Formalwear: Formalwear is easily the single best equipment in the deck. It generates immediate value on resolution, can pitch to an evoked Solitude, and is a flicker target. Where this card shines in against any deck that played counterspells or non-exile-based removal. Not only does Formalwear resurrect a creature from your graveyard, but it also will re-trigger any ETB ability that creature may have had. In combination with cards like SFM or RotG, Formalwear can be used to generate card advantage which, is something that DnT sorely lacks. Furthermore, Formalwear opens insane game-winning lines and makes for very good bluff-material. Let's say for example, you cast a SFM on turn 2 and tutor for your Formalwear and no creatures in your graveyard. This bluffs to your opponent that you have



another splashy equipment like Kaldra in hand already. When this is the case and not a bluff, you are answered exactly by StP or Pithing Needle. Against decks not playing StB this bluff forces the opponent into killing the SFM just for it to be resurrected on your next turn and presumably followed by a Kaldra. To make this line more clear I will lay it out step-by-step, this is something that works regardless of if you have other equipment in hand or not:

1). Cast SFM tutor for Formalwear. 2). Opponent falls for bluff and casts Fatal Push on SFM during your end step. 3). On your next turn you cast Formalwear targeting SFM in your graveyard, SFM then tutors for Kaldra and is put outside of range of some removal like Lightning Bolt.

If your opponent calls the bluff, and doesn't push the SFM, you still have insulation against that removal spell they are holding up for the next threat that you deploy. I have personally used this bluff to very high success as most opponents often do not call it and even if they do, you still have an uncounterable Formalwear that you can hold up. Formalwear also scales as the game goes long and becomes better with better with time.

Lion Sash: See writing with the same name under "Proactive/Reactive Disruption and Heat-bears."

Phantom Blade: See writing with the same name under "Removal"

The Aetherspark/Umezawa's Jitte: Both the Aetherspark and Jitte are interchangeable but serve as the answer to what exactly your goal is playing DnT. Both cards do relatively the same thing but are better in different board states, something that you as the DnT pilot should have control over. If as a DnT player decide you want to play a faster more aggressive game, Jitte is probably the correct option as it machine-gun's down small creatures and can quickly increase your clock. The Aetherspark on the other hand allows you to more comfortably settle down for a grindy game. At this point, I think that Aetherspark is much better suited for the BW build of DnT whereas Jitte does better in the more aggressive RW version of the deck. The Aetherspark is a card that has been relatively overlooked since its printing in Aetherdrift but after LOTS of testing, I personally believe it to make the cut. The obvious downside of the card is that it is bad into combo but, so is Jitte. Games where the Aetherspark does hit play, quickly become completely played around the card. Beyond this, it is very hard to deal with as it protects itself and gains tons of loyalty counters. Where this card does the best against fair decks and frequently is a better top-end SFM tutor target when playing against other white decks.



RotG and the Toolbox (Flickerwisp):

DnT is built around RotG's 2 toughness or less requirement for finding a valid tutor target—this means that when searching for a creature off RotG every creature in your deck can be pulled.

This is both a blessing and a curse as it makes DnT very consistent outside of the 80-card variance problem but sets the bar of DnT-playable super low. To put it bluntly, most cards that are good in DnT are severely bad outside of the deck.



On the flipside, having a way to consistently tutor silver bullets out of your deck's toolbox is VERY powerful. What the DnT toolbox looks like will differ from deck to deck and meta to meta. The deck has a lot of flex-slots which makes it very easy to include random 1-of creatures to blowout certain strategies pre-sideboarding. The list that this primer is focuses on does not really utilize 1-of bullets as much as other builds instead leaving those bullets in the sideboard. RotG functionally represents every creature in your deck and packs both a ton of utility and

value. Like most other things in DnT, RotG can be flickered by Flickerwisp and Yorion to create lots of card advantage as the game goes on.

Knowing what exactly to grab off RotG's ETB can prove challenging for newer players. RotG can be played either proactively or reactively similarly to other spells in the deck. A reactive RotG play might look like tutoring for a Skyclave Apparition in response to an enemy Teferi, Time Raveler. A proactive play might look like tutoring for a SFM to apply life-total pressure to an opponent or grabbing a disruptive heat-bear. It would be impossible for me to give a list of what RotG targets are the best options in different situations as every game/moment will be different which in turns changes the RotG tutor process. I will now provide a very over-generalized account of what to get and when but, please take it with a grain of salt as resolving RotG involves lots of nuance.

- SFM for when you need to kill an opponent quickly or need access to your graveyard
- Skyclave Apparition for when you need to take out a lower CMC permeant
- Solitude for larger creatures or emergency insurance against creature-based combos
- Emp for proactive graveyard hate or access to your own graveyard
- Lion Sash for graveyard hate
- OBM for small-creature removal or proactive disruption
- Thalia for proactive disruption for an opponent who is already behind or combo
- Boggart Trawler/Witch Enchanter for either reactive disruption and removal or hitting a land drop

- Mom for proactive hate against opposing creature strategies (it is very rare to use RotG for this)

The effective use of RotG is complicated further when you have an Aether Vial in play. I will not go into details on it as it is very case-by-case but, with a Vial in play it is correct to play/time RotG around your Vial. When tutoring for a creature, many if not all your options will do the same thing, it is just a matter of figuring out how to do it most efficiently. As I wrote previously, DnT's margins are very small and it is critical to conserve resources when possible. To lay out a very simple example of this I would like to pose a hypothetical situation:

Your opponent on UR Delver played out a Dragon's Rage Channeler which has since become delirious. You cast RotG to find a removal spell for the creature, what is your best option? A) Solitude, B) Skyclave Apparition, or C) SFM

There is a lot of subjectivity and nuance involved in this decision but in a vacuum Skyclave Apparition is likely the best option. Although every choice can get rid of the opposing creature, it is a matter of expending the least number of resources as possible. Unless hard-castable, Solitude means active card-disadvantage through an evoke cast. SFM would take several turns and on average more mana to deploy a Phantom Blade. Additionally, it is also a matter of leaving cards

available for later in the game. For example, it is better to save you Solitudes for a Murktide Regent as other cards in the deck can't deal with bigger threats.



The only creature that I did not include on the above list of RotG targets is Flickerwisp and that is for a very good reason. I firmly believe that Flickerwisp is by far the hardest to play card in the deck. Flickerwisp is relatively unassuming at first but is the glue that hold advanced DnT tutor lines together. Functionally Flickerwisp represents additional copies of any creature that you already have in play as flickering a creature will cause its ETB ability to trigger again. Often, finding a Flickerwisp is better than most other obvious RotG targets. To lay out another example, let's say that you want to tutor for a SFM to get your Aetherspark but already have a SFM in play—is it better to tutor for another SFM or Flickerwisp in this situation? Again, there is a lot of nuances involved but often it is better to tutor for Flickerwisp in this situation as it is more resource efficient and leaves more copies of SFM in your deck to be drawn/tutored for later. Flickerwisp also can kill lots of creatures via blinking tokens or resetting counters on cards like Murktide Regent. This overall gives the card lots of utility in almost every match-up.

The last thing that I want to say on the front of Flickerwisp is how it interacts with Yorion, Sky Nomad and Karakas. As it has been established, Yorion + Karakas provides you with a potent late-game value engine that can quickly turn the tides of games. When a Flickerwisp is inserted into the equation, the DnT player can go “infinite.” Yorion and Flickerwisp can repeatedly flicker one another and by extension, your entire board. Every time Yorion is flickered by Flickerwisp you can exile Flickerwisp + any other permanents that you want to flicker for repeatable value. Karakas provides this loop a layer of protection by being able to bounce Yorion back to hand in response to a removal spell or combat ambush.



Manabase:

The last thing that I want to cover and perhaps most straightforward element of DnT's construction is its manabase. BW DnT's manabase is comprised of mostly basic Plains and white fetch lands. As a control deck it is best to curve out and make your land drop every turn during the early/mid game. If you are playing against an opponent who is playing Wasteland, fetch basics when you can. Beyond this the deck plays a single basic Swamp, 2 Scrublands, 2

Shadowy Backstreets, and a single Silent Clearing. All of these lands are important as they give you access to black mana. Shadowy Backstreet is also very useful just like all other surveil lands in its ability to optimize turns where you are not able to efficiently use your mana. There are also very niche scenarios in which Shadowy Backstreet can be used to set up reanimation lines with Emp or Pre-War Formalwear. Lastly there is Karakas. Karakas is a utility land that can either bounce opposing legendary creatures or protect your own legends such as Thalia, Guardian of Thraben or Yorion, Sky Nomad. Not much else to say here.



III. Sideboard Construction

I would like to start this section with saying that there isn't really a stock DnT sideboard (SB) and that your SB becomes a lot worse when playing Yorion, Sky Nomad. This is simply because your deck contains an extra 20 cards which makes the likelihood that you draw an important SB card in your opening hand very unlikely. It is for this reason that I believe cards such as Leyline of the Void are generally unplayable in DnT. What you include in your SB will always be tailored to the meta you are trying to beat whether that be your LGS' local-meta or the more broad MTGO meta. The important thing to know when constructing your SB is what your "bad" match-ups are and how you plan on approaching them. The current catch-all SB card for Oops! All Spells that most decks are packing is Leyline of the Void. As explained, this is not really a card that DnT can reasonably play. So, what to do? In situations like these you need to plan your SB around maximizing consistency which often comes at the cost of speed. For example, rather than Leyline many DnT lists will opt for several copies of Faerie Macabre as their primary form of anti-combo/graveyard hate as it is tutorable with RotC. With this being said, I will proceed with giving a breakdown on the SB of the list that this primer is based on.



Sideboard (15)				
2	Cabal Therapy	♣	✓	▼
2	Extirpate	♣	✓	▼
2	Grafdigger's Cage	1	✓	▼
• 1	Containment Priest	1 * ♣	✓	▼
2	Stony Silence	1 * ♣	✓	▼
2	Wrath of the Skies	X * * ♣	✓	▼
1	Faerie Macabre	1 ♣ ♣ ♣	✓	▼
1	Peacekeeper	2 * ♣	✓	▼
• 1	Plague Engineer	2 ♣	✓	▼
• 1	Yorion, Sky Nomad	3 ♣ ♣ ♣	✓	▼

Cabal Therapy: Therapy has a lot of different uses in many matchups. Firstly, in combo games it serves as extra copies of TS and can be flashed back for extra value when games go long enough. The card is also great in the mirror or against other decks that play lots of tutors. Some lists even run copies of Therapy in their main deck.



Extirpate/Surgical Extraction: Extirpate and Surgical serve a near identical role in DnT's SB. They are both great options when playing any sort of combo deck and can also be played in more grindy matches as value pieces. As of which you should play in your SB, is dependent on what you are trying to beat. Things like Surgical are good against fast combo decks whereas Extirpate is often better into slower combo decks that play counter magic such as Cephalid Breakfast. As a rule of thumb, always cast Extirpate/Surgical in your opponent's draw step.



Grafdigger's Cage: Like the last few cards, Cage is great against combo decks that care about their graveyard. It is also a good option against decks that play Green Sun's Zenith/Natural Order such as Nadu Elves, (actual) Elves, or Cradle Control. The card also has lots of text in fair matchups like Painter.



Containment Priest: Again, this is a card that shines against many combo decks that rely on Dread Return to win the game. It is a must have against said combo decks but also for things like Show and Tell and Green Sun's Zenith decks. Beware that when resolving a Containment Priest, your Vials and blink effects will be turned off for as long as she remains in play. Containment Priest is also an amazing card in the mirror/other faith matchups where your opponent is not directly casting creature spells with mana. Keep in mind that she can be played both reactively and proactively.



Stony Silence: This card shouldn't require too much explaining other than its good against decks that use artifacts. It can often be impossible for decks like Painter to answer and can be easily rode to victory in these games. Similar to Containment Priest, just be wary that Stony Silence can turn off certain cards in your deck like Aether Vial.



Wrath of the Skies: Wrath is a generic sweeper that can hit a very wide array of targets. The card namely helps a lot against opposing Urza's Sagas which can be a major nuisance for DnT. The card also has its uses against control decks depending on what their finisher looks like. For decks with lots of tokens or low-CMC permeants, this is your card.



Faerie Macabre: Faerie is probably the best piece of SB graveyard hate that DnT has access to for a few reasons. Most importantly, Faerie is "uncounterable" as it uses its activated ability from hand rather than needing to be cast like Surgical. Also, it can be tutored for with

RotG which proves very helpful in longer games centered around the graveyard (i.e. any deck playing Life from the Loam).



Peacekeeper/Plague Engineer: These two cards are very much examples of what a local-meta tuned SB looks like. These cards are very bad into most metas that you might see online that reflect Legacy as a whole. The reason why I am playing both cards is because my local-meta sees lots of Elves and Goblins players. Neither of these are cards that I would recommend playing in a blind meta. In their place I would suggest increasing your combo hate for whatever the best decks are.



IV. Sideboarding

WIP; WILL BE DONE LATER

V. Mulligans

As it has been thoroughly discussed already, DnT has some variance issues because of playing 20 extra cards, by extension this makes mulligans on average worse than your typical deck.

When it comes to mulliganing with DnT there are a couple of factors to consider: a) what is my opponent on and, b) what role to I need to fulfill for this matchup. One of the keys of success for any DnT player is being able to identify what your opponent is playing as quickly as possible as early game choices tend to matter a lot. There are some signals and identifiers that should let you get the read on your opponent very early, even sometimes before the game starts. There is no advice that I can give regarding this skill, it is simply a matter of learning and internalizing the format at a pretty deep level. DnT as an archetype of deck has the ability to change its role or function as a game progresses. This is something to consider when assessing if an opening hand is keepable or not. It boils down pretty quickly to “do I want to be the aggro deck or the control deck?” In choosing one of these options, you also need to decide what the game will look like in terms of resources. Although not entirely up to the DnT pilot, you can leverage early game decisions to force a high or low-resource game. Again, what combination of these is correct for each match is highly subjective and down to the individual card that your opponent is playing in their deck. Lastly, this should go without saying but don’t keep hands that either/or can’t cast spells and don’t have a real game plan. No amount of writing can teach someone to learn this fully, it is a matter of getting enough actual games in.

VI. Closing Thoughts

DnT is by far one of *the* most difficult decks to learn and play in all of Magic. How good the deck is directly scales with the skill of the player. This skill is a combination of knowing the format and knowing your own deck. My hope is that the latter of these two has been covered by this primer. As for learning the format, if you are reading this and new to Legacy all I can recommend is start playing games. You don't need to buy the cards to play the format, proxy up meta decks and play with your friends. If you are unable to play in paper, there are a handful of free online clients where you should be able to find other Legacy players. Another piece of advice that I can give is to have perseverance. Legacy can be unrelenting, and it doesn't feel great to lose every match you play. With DnT, as you improve you will immediately notice tangible differences between games. This feeling of slowly progressing one's own abilities is extremely satisfying and alone should justify learning DnT if that is your kind of thing. To give a personal anecdote on the matter, at the time of writing I've been playing DnT for the last 3-ish years. It took me a good 6 months before I could consistently go 2-2 at my local FNM. I recall a definitive moment in which I was playing against BUG Beans and DnT just "clicked." This moment was by far the most gratifying part of my 12+ year-long Magic career. I haven't looked back since.

Lastly, we are not all perfect and I am confident that I missed some important stuff in my guide. If after reading you have noticed something you would like added, changed, or removed please get in touch with me! My hope is that this will be a living document that I can improve on over time. I am most easily reachable via. Discord DM @Der Verschollene. Generally, too if you have

any DnT questions please also feel free to reach out and I'll see if I can help or clarify. If you are appreciative of the work I've done and would like to support me, I'll provide a link to my Venmo below. Thank you for reading!

[Venmo tip-jar](#)