# A Strategic Deep Dive into the Kashtira Archetype: Engine, Combos, and Competitive Analysis

## Anatomy of an Interdimensional Threat: The Kashtira Core Engine

The Kashtira archetype operates as a highly synergistic, Xyz-focused strategy centered on Rank 7 monsters.1 Introduced in the *Darkwing Blast* set, its core gameplay revolves around a control-oriented playstyle, systematically dismantling an opponent's resources through face-down banishing and locking their field zones.1 The engine's consistency and power are derived from a small, interconnected group of main deck monsters and potent spell cards that facilitate rapid board presence and resource acquisition.

### The Pillars of the Realm: The Level 7 Starters

At the heart of the Kashtira main deck are three Level 7 Psychic-type monsters: Kashtira Unicorn, Kashtira Fenrir, and Kashtira Ogre. Their shared, non-once-per-turn ability to be Special Summoned from the hand while the player controls no monsters is the foundational mechanic that enables the deck's explosive starts.1 Each of these monsters serves as a primary starter or extender, with distinct ignition effects that search for different categories of cards within the archetype, creating a versatile and resilient opening strategy.

**Kashtira Unicorn** is the quintessential combo starter. Upon being summoned, its ignition effect allows the player to add one "Kashtira" Spell card from their Deck to their hand.3 This is the most critical search for initiating the deck's primary combo lines, as it provides access to either Kashtiratheosis for extension or Kashtira Birth for recursion and an additional summon.1 Beyond its role as a searcher, Unicorn applies pressure through a trigger effect: when it declares an attack, or if an opponent activates a monster effect, it can target and banish one card from the opponent's Extra Deck, face-down.3 This effect serves as a potent form of resource denial, capable of removing key Extra Deck monsters before the opponent has a chance to summon them.4

**Kashtira Fenrir** is widely regarded as the most powerful standalone monster in the engine, to the extent that it sees play in a multitude of other strategies as a generic, self-summoning threat.6 Its ignition effect allows the player to add any "Kashtira" monster from the Deck to the hand, except another copy of itself.3 This provides flexible access to Kashtira Unicorn to begin the spell-searching sequence or to Kashtira Riseheart to extend a combo.1 Its trigger effect is a formidable piece of interaction: when Fenrir declares an attack, or if an opponent activates a monster effect, it can target one face-up card the opponent controls and banish it face-down.3 This non-destruction removal is exceptionally difficult for many decks to counter, as it bypasses destruction protection and prevents the targeted card from activating any Graveyard effects.5

**Kashtira Ogre** is the least utilized of the main trio but fulfills a specific niche. Its ignition effect searches for a "Kashtira" Trap card, typically fetching Kashtira Big Bang to enable combo lines or Kashtira Preparations for additional summons and disruption.3 Its trigger effect is also unique; upon an attack declaration or opponent's monster effect activation, it allows the player to excavate the top five cards of the opponent's Deck, banish one face-down, and return the rest in the same order.3 This provides valuable information about the opponent's upcoming draws while simultaneously removing a potential resource.1

The design of these three monsters creates a nearly perfect, self-contained search loop. Unicorn can search a Spell like Kashtiratheosis, which in turn can summon Fenrir from the deck. Fenrir can then search for another monster, like Riseheart, to continue the sequence. This interconnectedness provides the deck with remarkable consistency and resilience; if an opponent disrupts one search, another monster in hand can often pivot to an alternative, but equally effective, line of play. This structure ensures that most opening hands containing one of these Level 7 monsters or their dedicated searcher can develop into a full and threatening board state.8

### The Catalyst of Chaos: Kashtira Riseheart

While the Level 7 monsters establish the board, Kashtira Riseheart is the crucial catalyst that ignites the deck's most oppressive mechanics. As a Level 4 Warrior, it stands apart from its Psychic-type brethren.3 It possesses an effect to Special Summon itself from the hand if a "Kashtira" monster is on the field, but with the important restriction that the player cannot Special Summon monsters from the Extra Deck for the rest of the turn, except for Xyz Monsters.3 This is a common design feature in modern Yu-Gi-Oh! to channel a card's power into its intended archetype and prevent its abuse in generic Link-climbing strategies.9

Riseheart's primary function is activated once it is on the field. Its main ignition effect allows the player to banish one "Kashtira" card from their Deck (except another Riseheart), and if they do, banish the top three cards of the opponent's Deck face-down. Upon this effect's resolution, Riseheart's Level becomes 7.1 This effect is the central mechanism for enabling the deck's signature zone-locking strategy. The "cost" of banishing a card like Kashtira Big Bang is, in fact, the activation of a powerful secondary combo piece, turning a requirement into a direct advantage.

### The Support Framework: Spells & Traps

The consistency and extension capabilities of the Kashtira monsters are amplified by a suite of powerful Spell and Trap cards.

**Pressured Planet Wraitsoth**, while not a "Kashtira" card by name and thus unsearchable by Unicorn, is the archetype's Field Spell and a premier consistency tool.10 Upon activation, it allows the player to add any "Kashtira" monster from their Deck to their hand, effectively serving as additional copies of the deck's best starters.1 It also possesses a secondary trigger effect: if Kashtira Shangri-Ira activates its effect, Wraitsoth can target and destroy one card on the field, providing an additional layer of removal.1

**Kashtiratheosis** is the deck's most important extender spell. It targets a "Kashtira" monster on the field and Special Summons another "Kashtira" monster with a different Attribute from the Deck, though the summoned monster's effects are negated for the turn.1 This is the most common method for assembling two Level 7 monsters on the field to perform the initial Xyz Summon into Kashtira Shangri-Ira.11

**Kashtira Birth** is a Continuous Spell that offers immense utility and recursion. It has three distinct and powerful effects. First, it provides a Lingering effect that allows Level 7 monsters to be Normal Summoned without Tributing.3 Second, its ignition effect can Special Summon one non-Xyz "Kashtira" monster from the Graveyard or, crucially, the banished pile, allowing the deck to recover its resources for subsequent plays.1 Third, it has a disruptive trigger effect: if an opponent activates a Spell Card or effect while the player controls a "Kashtira" monster, Birth can target three cards in the opponent's Graveyard and banish them face-down, providing further resource denial.3

**Kashtira Big Bang** is a Normal Trap that is almost never used for its on-field effect. Its true purpose lies in its Graveyard/Banished effect. When Kashtira Big Bang is banished, it can be activated to target a "Kashtira" Xyz Monster on the field. The player then adds one of that Xyz Monster's materials to their hand and can then Special Summon that monster.1 This effect is the key interaction with Kashtira Riseheart. By banishing Big Bang with Riseheart's effect, the player can immediately resolve Big Bang to detach a monster from the newly summoned Kashtira Shangri-Ira and summon it back to the field, generating an additional body for further Xyz plays or on-field pressure.11

| **Card Name** | **Card Type** | **Primary Function (Search/Summon Target)** | **Enabling Card** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Kashtira Unicorn | Monster | Searches "Kashtira" Spell (e.g., Kashtiratheosis, Birth) | Self-Summon / Wraitsoth |
| Kashtira Fenrir | Monster | Searches "Kashtira" Monster (e.g., Riseheart, Unicorn) | Self-Summon / Theosis / Wraitsoth |
| Kashtira Ogre | Monster | Searches "Kashtira" Trap (e.g., Big Bang, Preparations) | Self-Summon / Theosis / Wraitsoth |
| Pressured Planet Wraitsoth | Spell | Searches any "Kashtira" Monster | Activation |
| Kashtiratheosis | Spell | Summons "Kashtira" Monster from Deck | Unicorn Search |
| Kashtira Birth | Spell | Summons "Kashtira" from GY/Banished | Unicorn Search |
| Kashtira Riseheart | Monster | Enables Shangri-Ira trigger by banishing Big Bang | Fenrir Search |
| Kashtira Big Bang | Trap | Summons a "Kashtira" monster when banished | Riseheart Effect |

## The Commanders of the Field: Kashtira's Xyz Boss Monsters

The main deck engine serves a singular purpose: to efficiently summon the archetype's two devastating Xyz Monsters. These commanders work in tandem, establishing a board that attacks the opponent's resources from multiple angles, creating a state of proactive denial that can shut down entire strategies before they begin.

### Kashtira Shangri-Ira: The Zone-Locking Fortress

Summoned using two or more Level 7 monsters, Kashtira Shangri-Ira is the central pillar of the Kashtira strategy and the first Xyz Monster summoned in nearly every combo.3 Its primary role is to facilitate the deck's signature zone-locking mechanic. This effect is not an activated ability but a continuous one that is triggered: each time a card the opponent owns is banished face-down, Shangri-Ira allows the player to choose one of their opponent's unused Main Monster Zones or Spell & Trap Zones, rendering it unusable as long as Shangri-Ira remains face-up on the field.1

In addition to its control element, Shangri-Ira generates resources. During each Standby Phase, it can Special Summon one "Kashtira" monster from the Deck, providing a continuous stream of threats and disruption for subsequent turns.3 To ensure its persistence on the field, it possesses a built-in protection effect: if it would be destroyed by battle or card effect, it can detach one of its Xyz Materials instead.3 However, its most critical function is often unwritten on the card itself: its successful effect activation is the condition required to summon the archetype's true boss monster, Kashtira Arise-Heart.3

### Kashtira Arise-Heart: The Macro Cosmos on Legs

Kashtira Arise-Heart is the ultimate expression of the archetype's resource-denial philosophy and its primary win condition. While it can be summoned conventionally using three Level 7 monsters, its far more common and efficient summoning method is via its own inherent ability: "Once per turn, you can also Xyz Summon 'Kashtira Arise-Heart' by using 1 'Kashtira' monster you control, if an effect of 'Kashtira Shangri-Ira' was successfully activated this turn".3 This is almost always performed by overlaying it directly onto Kashtira Riseheart immediately after Riseheart has triggered Shangri-Ira's zone-locking effect.11

Arise-Heart's power is multifaceted and oppressive:

* **Floodgate Effect**: Its most devastating ability is a continuous effect that transforms the entire game state: "Any card sent to the GY is banished instead".3 This effect, functionally identical to the classic floodgate Macro Cosmos, single-handedly shuts down the vast majority of modern Yu-Gi-Oh! strategies that rely on the Graveyard for resources, combo extension, or effect activation.4 Cards like Forbidden Droplet or Ghost Ogre & Snow Rabbit become unusable, as their costs cannot be met.4
* **Material Absorption**: Arise-Heart sustains itself through a mandatory trigger effect: "Once per Chain, each time a card(s) is banished: Attach 1 banished card to this card as material".3 This allows it to constantly refuel its own Xyz Materials, using both the player's and the opponent's banished cards as ammunition. This also serves as a form of permanent resource removal, as it vacuums key cards from the opponent's banished zone, preventing them from being recovered.4
* **Disruption Effect**: As a Quick Effect, Arise-Heart can detach three materials to target one card on the field and banish it face-down.3 This is a premium form of interaction that bypasses destruction immunity, targeting protection (if the material cost is paid), and prevents the banished card from being recurred from the Graveyard or banished pile.

The strategic approach of Kashtira is fundamentally different from many other top-tier decks that focus on building boards of reactive monster negates, such as Baronne de Fleur. Instead, Kashtira's game plan is one of proactive resource denial. Arise-Heart denies the Graveyard, Shangri-Ira denies physical space on the field, Unicorn denies the Extra Deck, and Fenrir denies a specific on-field threat. The entire strategy is designed to systematically dismantle the opponent's ability to access their own game pieces. Where a control deck might aim to say "no" to an opponent's specific actions, Kashtira aims to create a game state where the opponent lacks the fundamental resources to take any meaningful action at all. This makes the archetype exceptionally potent against decks reliant on complex setups or Graveyard synergies, but it also creates a key vulnerability: it has few tools to interact with an already-established board or to counter plays that do not involve the Graveyard, such as the tribute-summoning of a Kaiju monster.10 This defines its often-cited "glass cannon" nature, where it can establish an almost unbreakable board but can crumble to specific, targeted counters.15

## Standard Operating Procedures: Foundational Kashtira Combo Lines

The power of the Kashtira engine is best demonstrated through its consistent and linear combo paths. These sequences are designed to be repeatable, allowing a skilled pilot to reliably establish a dominant board from a minimal investment of one or two cards. The following combos represent the core strategic playbook of the archetype.

### The One-Card Full Combo (Unicorn/Wraitsoth)

This is the archetype's most fundamental and well-known sequence, showcasing how a single starter can translate into a multi-faceted board of threats and floodgates. This line is the standard by which the deck's power is measured.1

* **Starting Hand**: Kashtira Unicorn OR Pressured Planet Wraitsoth.
* **Step 1: Initiate**
  + If you control no monsters, Special Summon Kashtira Unicorn from your hand.
  + *Annotation*: This is the deck's primary opening play. If starting with Wraitsoth, activate it first to search for Unicorn, then proceed with its summon.
* **Step 2: Search Extender**
  + Activate the ignition effect of Kashtira Unicorn to add Kashtiratheosis from your Deck to your hand.
* **Step 3: Extend**
  + Activate Kashtiratheosis, targeting your Unicorn. Special Summon Kashtira Fenrir from your Deck.
  + *Annotation*: This places a second Level 7 monster on the field, fulfilling the requirement for your first Xyz Summon.
* **Step 4: Search Catalyst**
  + Activate the ignition effect of Kashtira Fenrir to add Kashtira Riseheart from your Deck to your hand.
* **Step 5: First Xyz Summon**
  + Overlay the Level 7 Unicorn and Fenrir to Xyz Summon Kashtira Shangri-Ira into an Extra Monster Zone.
* **Step 6: Summon Catalyst**
  + Activate the effect of Kashtira Riseheart in your hand to Special Summon it to your field.
* **Step 7: Trigger the Board**
  + Activate the ignition effect of Kashtira Riseheart. As cost, banish Kashtira Big Bang from your Deck. This effect banishes the top three cards of your opponent's Deck face-down and changes Riseheart's Level to 7.
* **Step 8: Chain Link Resolution**
  + Two effects have met their trigger conditions: Shangri-Ira (because a card was banished face-down) and Big Bang (because it was banished). You may build the chain.
  + **Chain Link 1**: Kashtira Shangri-Ira's effect to lock a zone.
  + **Chain Link 2**: Kashtira Big Bang's effect from the banished zone.
* **Step 9: Resolve the Chain**
  + Big Bang resolves first. Target your Shangri-Ira. Choose one of its materials (e.g., Fenrir) to add back to your hand, then Special Summon that monster to the field.
  + Shangri-Ira resolves, locking one of your opponent's unused Monster or Spell/Trap Zones.
* **Step 10: Summon the Boss**
  + The condition for Kashtira Arise-Heart's alternate summoning method has been met. Use its effect to Xyz Summon it by using your now-Level 7 Riseheart as the sole material.
* **End Board**: The result is a formidable field consisting of Kashtira Arise-Heart (with Riseheart as material), Kashtira Shangri-Ira (with Unicorn as material), and a Special Summoned Kashtira Fenrir. You have one of your opponent's zones locked, a continuous Graveyard banish is active via Arise-Heart, and you have Fenrir ready to banish a card. During your opponent's Standby Phase, Shangri-Ira can summon another Kashtira from the deck (e.g., a second Unicorn) for further disruption.11

### Advanced Line: The Nibiru-Proof Combo

A significant weakness of the main combo is its vulnerability to Nibiru, the Primal Being, as it requires more than five summons. A crucial adaptation for competitive play involves ending on Arise-Heart as the fourth summon, establishing a powerful floodgate while remaining under the Nibiru threshold.1

* **Starting Hand**: Kashtira Unicorn OR Pressured Planet Wraitsoth.
* **Summon 1**: Special Summon Kashtira Unicorn.
* **Summon 2**: Activate Unicorn's effect to search Kashtiratheosis. Activate Theosis, targeting Unicorn, to Special Summon Kashtira Fenrir from the Deck.
* **Summon 3**: Activate Fenrir's effect to search Kashtira Riseheart. Special Summon Riseheart from your hand.
* **Summon 4**: Activate Riseheart's effect, banishing any "Kashtira" card from your deck (e.g., Kashtira Ogre) to become Level 7. Immediately, use Arise-Heart's effect to Xyz Summon it using Riseheart as material.
* **End Board**: This safer line ends with Kashtira Arise-Heart on the field as the fourth summon, alongside Unicorn and Fenrir. The continuous Graveyard banish is active, and you have two Level 7 bodies for pressure or defense. While this board forgoes the zone lock from Shangri-Ira, it is significantly more resilient to one of the deck's most common and devastating counters.14

The user's request for a visual-friendly format highlights an intrinsic characteristic of the Kashtira strategy. Its combo lines are remarkably linear and predictable, closely resembling a flowchart where Step A consistently leads to Step B.7 This quality is a double-edged sword. For the Kashtira player, it translates to high consistency and clear, repeatable game plans. For the opponent, however, it means the deck's critical choke points are equally transparent and predictable. Unlike more complex, non-linear combo decks that can adapt their lines on the fly, disrupting Kashtira is less about anticipating an unknown path and more about possessing the specific hand trap for a known, critical junction in their sequence.21 This makes the matchup highly dependent on the opening hands of both players. If the Kashtira player has an extender to play through a single point of interaction, they can often proceed unhindered. Conversely, if the opponent has the correct disruption for a key choke point and the Kashtira player lacks a backup plan, their turn can end abruptly.

## The Battlefield Ecosystem: Matchups, Synergies, and Counter-Strategies

A deck's viability is not determined in a vacuum but by its performance within the broader competitive landscape. Kashtira's unique strategic identity—proactive resource denial—gives it highly polarized matchups and makes it a potent, if sometimes inflexible, force in the meta.

### Hybridization and Synergistic Engines

While the pure variant of Kashtira is prized for its consistency, the engine's small size and the fact that its main starters do not require a Normal Summon make it an excellent partner for other archetypes.1

* **P.U.N.K. Kashtira**: This is a popular hybrid that leverages the powerful Normal Summon of the P.U.N.K. engine, typically Noh-P.U.N.K. Ze Amin, to generate Synchro monsters. This allows the deck to build a more layered board, supplementing the standard Kashtira setup of Arise-Heart and Shangri-Ira with powerful negates like Baronne de Fleur or extenders like Chaos Ruler, the Chaotic Magical Dragon.1
* **Runick Kashtira**: This variant attempts to combine Kashtira's on-field control with the Runick engine's strategy of banishing cards directly from the opponent's deck. While synergistic in theme, this build suffers from a critical conflict: Runick Quick-Play Spells force the player to skip their next Battle Phase, which deactivates the powerful trigger effects of Kashtira Fenrir and Kashtira Unicorn that require an attack declaration.1
* **Comparative Context (Zoodiac & Raidraptor)**: Kashtira's role as a self-contained engine can be contrasted with other prominent Xyz archetypes. The Zoodiac engine is famously compact, capable of using a single main deck monster to "stack" multiple Xyz monsters on top of each other, culminating in the disruptive Zoodiac Drident and providing an easy path to the board-wiping Divine Arsenal AA-ZEUS - Sky Thunder.25 This makes it a highly splashable engine, as seen in variants like Zoodiac Tri-Brigade.27 Raidraptors, conversely, are a more insular archetype focused on using their "Rank-Up-Magic" Spell cards to evolve their Rank 4 Xyz monsters into progressively more powerful, higher-Rank boss monsters, making them a dedicated strategy rather than a splashable engine.28

### Identifying the Choke Points: How to Dismantle Kashtira

Due to the deck's linear combo structure, knowing precisely when and where to apply disruption is the key to defeating it. A well-timed hand trap can halt the Kashtira player's turn entirely.

* **Primary Choke Point - Kashtiratheosis**: This is widely considered the most effective point of interaction. Using Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring to negate the activation of Theosis prevents the second Level 7 monster from being summoned from the Deck. This typically stops the summoning of Kashtira Shangri-Ira, and by extension, Kashtira Arise-Heart, often ending the turn on the spot.18
* **Secondary Choke Point - The First Searcher**: Applying an effect negation like Effect Veiler or Infinite Impermanence to the first monster summoned, whether it be Kashtira Unicorn or Kashtira Fenrir, can stop the combo before it gains momentum. This forces the Kashtira player to have an additional extender in hand to continue their plays.4
* **Tertiary Choke Point - Kashtira Riseheart**: If the opponent has successfully summoned Shangri-Ira, the next critical point is Riseheart. Negating Riseheart's effect to banish a card from the Deck prevents Shangri-Ira from triggering its zone-locking effect. This, in turn, prevents Arise-Heart from being summoned via its easier, alternate method, forcing the opponent to commit two more Level 7 monsters to the field if they wish to summon it.31

### The Counter-Play Toolkit: A Guide to Siding Against Kashtira

Because Kashtira's end board lacks traditional omni-negates, it is particularly vulnerable to a category of cards known as "board breakers." A well-constructed side deck is essential for any player expecting to face this matchup.

* **Board Breakers**: These cards are designed to dismantle an established field.
  + **Tribute Removers**: Kaiju monsters, Lava Golem, and The Winged Dragon of Ra - Sphere Mode are the most effective counters. By tributing the opponent's monsters as a cost for their own summon, they bypass all forms of protection and do not trigger any of the Kashtira monsters' effects.10
  + **Mass Flipping**: Book of Moon and Book of Eclipse are exceptionally strong. Flipping Arise-Heart and Shangri-Ira face-down deactivates their continuous effects, immediately restoring the use of the Graveyard and unlocking any sealed zones.4
  + **Mass Removal/Negation**: Dark Ruler No More negates the entire monster board, allowing for an easy clear, while Evenly Matched can banish their entire field face-down, leaving them with just one monster.10
* **Key Hand Traps**:
  + Nibiru, the Primal Being: As detailed in the combo section, this card punishes any line that extends beyond five summons, which the optimal Kashtira combo does.14
  + Droll & Lock Bird: After the Kashtira player performs their first search, Droll & Lock Bird prevents any further cards from being added from the Deck to the hand for the rest of the turn, crippling their ability to assemble combo pieces.8
  + Artifact Lancea: This card can be chained to the activation of a key Kashtira effect to prevent any cards from being banished for the rest of the turn. This shuts down the core mechanics of Riseheart, Arise-Heart, Fenrir, and Unicorn.16
* **Floodgates**:
  + Gozen Match: This Continuous Trap is devastating against Kashtira, as the core Level 7 monsters all possess different Attributes (Unicorn is WIND, Fenrir is EARTH, Ogre is WATER, and Arise-Heart is DARK). This prevents the Kashtira player from controlling more than one of them at a time.10
  + Imperial Iron Wall: This Continuous Trap completely shuts down the archetype by preventing any cards from being banished, turning off their primary game mechanic.10

## Conclusion

The Kashtira archetype stands as a formidable example of modern Xyz strategy, defined by its proactive, multi-pronged approach to resource denial. Its strength lies in its exceptional consistency, driven by a core engine where nearly every piece can search for another, allowing for reliable one-card combos that establish an oppressive board state. The synergy between Kashtira Shangri-Ira's zone-locking and Kashtira Arise-Heart's Graveyard banishing creates a lockdown effect that can preemptively dismantle an opponent's entire game plan.

However, this focused power comes with inherent fragility. The deck's combo lines are highly linear, creating predictable and exploitable choke points for savvy opponents armed with the correct hand traps. Its end board, while powerful in its floodgate capabilities, lacks traditional monster negates, leaving it vulnerable to non-engine board breakers like Kaijus, Book of Eclipse, and Dark Ruler No More.

Ultimately, Kashtira embodies a "glass cannon" philosophy within the competitive meta. It presents a severe threat that demands specific answers, and a duel against it is often decided in the opening turns. If the Kashtira player can execute their combo uninterrupted, the resulting board can be insurmountable. If the opponent can successfully disrupt a key chokepoint or draw a decisive board breaker, the Kashtira strategy can collapse just as quickly as it was assembled. Mastering Kashtira requires not only an understanding of its own intricate lines of play but also a keen awareness of its vulnerabilities and the specific counter-strategies it is likely to face.

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