Red Rains

This collection focuses on the PvE version of Ashes.

- Beginners Guide to Red Rains Campaign
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Beginners Guide to Red Rains Campaign

Abominable Adventure: The Red Rains Campaign Guide for Ashes: Reborn

Guide for The Bloodwoods Queen against The Corpse of Viros

By Archivist

While all 6 of the Phoenixborn in the Master Set are interesting, Jessa Na Ni catches a lot of players' attention. And for good reason; you don't often see her theme in fantasy games, and very rarely do you get to play the blood-wielding villain.

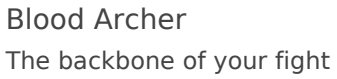
But if you've tried playing her deck, either in PvP or against the Corpse of Viros (or any other Chimera), you're probably wondering how it is she's supposed to win.

Well, while I can't give you a lot of guidance for playing her deck in PvP, this guide should give you some help in fighting the Corpse of Viros. I'm going to go through this under the assumption you have the bare minimum to play: the Master Set and the Corpse of Viros PvE expansion, and have at least read the rules, even if you don't understand the finer details. This guide is going to focus on her Master Set deck (The Bloodwoods Queen), not the one in the Corpse of Viros expansion. Lastly, since the rules in the Red Rains campaign expect you to modify your deck for any game other than Standard level 1, I will mostly address navigating Standard Level 1.

Starting off

All the official Chimeras place a heavy emphasis on the battlefield, since none of them have any action or reaction spells at this time. The Corpse of Viros, being our first Chimera, also doesn't have alterations or conjured aspects, making its gameplay somewhat straightforward. This means that the main part of our strategy needs to be maintaining a solid position on the battlefield. Unfortunately, the Bloodwoods Queen deck is weak at this.

Jessa herself is strong in PvP because her ability skips over the field and hits the opposing Phoenixborn (if you're new to card games, that type of effect is often called "burn"). That's extremely valuable when the opposing Phoenixborn has 15-20 life, but much less valuable against a 30 or higher life Chimera. Additionally, her 4 battlefield is the smallest battlefield any Phoenixborn can have, and her spellboard, also at 4, doesn't even get filled by her deck. In her favor is her high life, at 19 - just shy of the Phoenixborn maximum by 1.



Her deck has four units: Blood Archer, Blood Shaman, Living Doll, and the summonable Blood Puppet. Taking a quick look, you'll see that the only one with any attack value is the Archer; he forms the core of Jessa's strategy, both with his ability and combat values. Blood Shaman is usually going to be a target of one of your own sacrificial spells (like Fear), but he's also useful as a one time blocker. Living Doll is one of the ways Jessa can throw damage straight to the Chimera, but the Doll's ability will be lower priority in most cases. The Blood Puppets are where things get strange. The summon book says you can place it on "target player's battlefield," and in PvP, you will often place them on your opponent's field. Here, though, you're more likely to place it on yours, to eat an attack from the Chimera. Once you get the timing right, the Puppets will always be destroyed before their ability damages Jessa.

Next are the spells. Fear is your secondary removal behind the Archers, mainly because you only get 3 of them, and the Archers can be brought back using the ceremonial dice power. Ideally, you will use Fear with the Shamans, to regain 2 life (1 from the Shaman's recover value, and 1 from his ability), but the Dolls and the Puppets can also be used in a pinch. Archers should only be used if there is nothing else and you absolutely need to use one.

Final Cry is just a burn spell. At 1 die, it's efficient, and they will help you win, but if you have to choose between it and playing a unit, go for the unit. Redirect is a way Jessa survives longer - but note that using Redirect does not change the source of the damage, so hitting a Shaman with the redirect does not count as using "a spell, ability, or dice power you control," and you don't get the benefits of Blood Ritual 1.

She comes with 1 alteration spell: Undying Heart. This should be played on a Blood Archer, if able, to get them into hand faster after they are destroyed. Granting them 1 additional life also lets them use Blood Shot 1 more time before dying, which is a nice perk.

This leaves her spellboard, of which we've already gone over 1 card (Summon Blood Puppet). Blood Transfer is difficult to use in Red Rains due to being a side action, but if you can use it to preserve an Archer by sacrificing something less important, then you should.

Then there's Cut the Strings. The rules say we can replace 3 cards with up to 3 copies of Channel Magic. So replace all 3 Cut the Strings with Channel Magic. Cut the Strings is mostly for opposing alterations, and the Corpse has none, making it a card you'll never want to see. Channel Magic, even if you don't like it, will always do something, so is better.

The rules also say you can mix and match Phoenixborn unique spells, but I'm excluding Playtime because I regard it as part of the Corpse of Viros deck, not the Bloodwoods Queen deck. I also personally feel that Fear is the superior unique for fighting the Chimera, since it is not removed when the Ultimates trigger.

You are also allowed to change any of your 10 dice for any other dice, but I find that the mix of 5 ceremonial and 5 charm works well enough for Jessa's base deck. Maybe going to 6 ceremonial and

4 charm works fine, too, but anything beyond that and I think you'll struggle to pay costs.

The First Five

The first five cards recommended in the rulebook for the Master Set are Blood Shaman, Blood Transfer, Fear, Living Doll, and Summon Blood Puppet. I feel this is about as bad a set up as you can get against the Chimera, because it only removes 1 aspect, and ensures an Ultimate at the end of round 1. You also only use 7 dice in that hand, leaving the remaining 3 for either Screams or dice powers.

As such, my recommendation for the first five is Summon Blood Puppet, Blood Shaman, Fear, Blood Archer, and Undying Heart. While this also uses only 7 dice, the intent is to get the Blood Archer killed and returned to your hand via Heart, then replay him. Ideally, this will result in all 4 aspects being cleared in round 1. More likely, you'll get 3, with a Blood Archer in play for the start of next round. To play this opener, you need 2 ceremonial power sides (don't forget that Blood Shaman can raise a die 1 level if you kill him with Fear), 2 ceremonial class sides, and 3 charm class sides. This leaves your last 3 dice as 1 ceremonial and 2 charm to pay for basic costs.

Summon Blood Puppet Blood Shaman Fear Blood Archer Undying Heart

My recommended first five

The Corpse of Viros

If you're playing by pre-constructed aspects, the Corpse of Viros has 2: Fury and Shadow. Each one has certain aspects that are trouble, and I tend to break them down into the following categories.

Grunts: these aspects are ones that you can hit last. None of the aspects will make you happy to see them, but these are the least troublesome if left alone for a while. For Fury, this is Rampage and Whiplash. I'd put Constrict and Regenerate in here for Shadow. Whiplash falls into here due to its ability only triggering once; while that once can be devastating, it doesn't quite push it into the other categories for me.

High priority: these aspects are ones you should focus resources into removing, or they will quickly kill whichever Phoenixborn you're using, and Jessa is no exception. In my opinion, the high priority targets for Fury are Frozen Fear, Hunting Instincts, and Firebelly. For Shadow, it's Dark Descent and Stormcall.

Annoying: this is kinda where everything else goes. They're more obnoxious than the grunts, but not demanding of attention like the high priority aspects. Fury has only one here, Iron Scales, while Shadow has two: Lurk and Glare.

Lurk

"Just" annoying

If you're wondering why Lurk is in the "annoying" group, it's because I view it primarily as a rules check: do you understand the interaction between exhaustion and abilities? If you do, then Lurk's threat diminishes the more used to losing units you get. If you don't, then here's the interaction: exhausted units' abilities are treated as having no effect, unless they're in a yellow or green box (ie, Iron Scales and Stormcall). This means that after Lurk is exhausted, it can be

targeted by abilities like Blood Shot, Throw, or the natural dice power. Or, attacked, like any other aspect. Even before Lurk is exhausted, it can be hit by cards that affect units without specifically targeting them (Mist Typhoon and One Hundred Blades do this - this kind of card is often called an "area of effect," or "aoe" spell). So while a Root Armored Hammer Knight or Blood Archer will still survive a Lurk attack and be able to counter, it isn't the only way to kill the aspect. Sequencing your turns in preparation for a Lurk is also generally a good strategy; you usually want to see as many of the Chimera's cards as you can before you run out of your damage sources, so holding onto a single damage effect until late in the round becomes pretty natural.

Moving on to apply Jessa's strategies to handling the Corpse's aspects, we see that the high priority aspects are comprised of 3 aspects with 3 life, and 2 with 2. Of them, I'd say that Frozen Fear and Dark Descent are the highest priority, with Firebelly and Stormcall being next, then lastly Hunting Instincts. The reason for this ordering is that both Frozen Fear and Dark Descent will take massive chunks out of Jessa, and both can be difficult to block and kill effectively - Blood Archer is it for Frozen Fear, and you need at least 2 units to block the Descent. Firebelly will simply eat your units, and also cut down on the number of Blood Shots you get in a round. Since that's a large chunk of your damage to aspects, you want to avoid that as much as possible. Stormcall will eat through Jessa's life surprisingly quickly; one might not seem like a lot, but once there's two out, you start feeling the burn really quick. Hunting Instincts is a threat due to its 4 damage and Red Rain token generation - both of these can hurt Jessa's small board immensely if not handled promptly.

Ideally, you'll be attacking exhausted versions of the 2 bloods with your Archers. However, putting the Archers in front of them (when able) to counter is more reliable, even with losing your Archer as a result. You can often see when this is going to happen, so try to Blood Shot the Archer down to 1 life remaining to get the maximum benefit of the 3 dice you spent for him. Speaking of, those 1 bloods make great Blood Shot targets....

Blurriness in priority happens when you get to Lurk and Whiplash. Blood Shot can take them out with a mere 1 activation, and reduce the number of tokens the Chimera will get at the end of the round, so it might not be a bad idea to do that when you can't get a kill on a 2 life aspect, either due to a lack of main actions, or not having enough Blood Shots left in the round.

The grunts are somewhat of a "when you get to them" set. Your Archers will eventually get around to them, but it will take some time, or a bit of luck in revealing nothing else of higher priority.

When to scream and (Final) Cry

Before the round gets underway, count the dice you'll need to get a defense set up. If you have 1 or 2 dice left over, you have room to use Screams of the Departed or Final Cry. In my experience, you'll really only use Screams two or three times the entire game, and usually in the last round, when you're trying to push enough damage through to win. Final Cry is a little stronger, since it does 2 damage for 1 die, but you'll still probably find yourself holding onto it until near the end of a round, as that's when you'll have a better idea of how much defense you need.

Plan ahead

Due to Blood Shots, Pain Links, and meditations, The Bloodwoods Queen is very side action heavy. You need to try to predict what dice you'll need early so you can get your meditation out of the way early in the round, and not feel like you need to meditate mid-round instead of doing something that affects the field more directly, like using Pain Link so your Living Doll will survive the next attack.

Rules Clarifications

The Bloodwoods Queen has a few rules quirks that can be easily missed by newer players. There's the aforementioned Redirect interaction (or lack thereof) with Blood Shaman, which is even in the official FAQ.

Then there's Jessa's ability and Final Cry. Her ability is a "triggered" ability, not a "reaction ability," which, for Ashes, are two separate things. This does mean that you can use both Screams of the Departed and Final Cry (or Redirect) in the same turn. However, it must be in the Player Turns phase of the game - if the Chimera triggers the Ultimate during the Recovery Phase, you can neither activate Jessa's Screams nor play Final Cry, regardless of your dice, as the Recovery phase is not the Players Turns phase. Similarly, Redirect can't be used during the Recovery phase.

The Blood Puppets also provide some interesting interactions. Since you can play them to any battlefield, you can very easily end up with one on the Chimera's field. Fortunately, the rules for handling it are very simple: it's just a conjuration on the Chimera's field. Since it doesn't have defender, it doesn't block for the Chimera or guard for other aspects. If it is attacked, the player attacking it can determine whether or not it counters, as players make all decisions for the Chimera. A Puppet attacks the opposing Phoenixborn if it is the leftmost aspect and the Chimera takes an attack action (usually, this is Jessa, but if you're playing multiplayer, it could wind up on a field opposing a different Phoenixborn). As a conjuration, it is not an aspect, so does not count for adding Red Rains tokens during the Recovery phase, but that also means it doesn't count against the Chimera's Threat. It is theoretically possible to have the Chimera have all 5 Blood Puppets on its field, as well as the full threat of aspects. Lastly, the timing for the Blood Puppet's damage is after the Chimera has added Red Rains tokens - which means that the Ultimate would trigger before the Puppet would deal damage for a round.

Moving past Standard 1

Okay, that's a lot! But Jessa's deck is not a simple deck to pilot, so a lot needs to be said. Below here is a sample round 1 I've played using the base deck, with the changes I've listed above (Channel Magic and first five), but before that, what about games 2 and 3 of the campaign?

Corpse of Viros

Fortunately, the base set gives a lot of good cards to pull from, and most of the cards in the Corpse of Viros player deck will also bolster Jessa's game. It really depends on which direction you want to take her in. For more allies, you'll want to look at Coal and the Corpse's deck. For better summons, Aradel has two that can be brought in, but Noah's False Demons are a good choice, too. Until you get expansions, Aradel's deck is the only one with an importable "area of effect" card (Mist Typhoon) which Jessa can make use of. There's a surprising amount of usefulness in the cards, despite having so few by name.

Just as a note, Root Armor does not stop a Blood Archer from placing the wound on himself due to Blood Shot. This is due to what step the damage prevention of Armor 1 affects: deal damage (Root Armor triggers here) -> place wounds (Blood Shot starts here for the Archer). This can be found on page 16 of the Master Set's rulebook. Root Armor will, however, stop Firebelly from dealing any damage to him.

After that, it's entirely up to you what to do. Done with the game? Okay, hope you had fun! Want more? There's lots more, including more Chimeras (that also come with another player deck)! Either way, best wishes.

Example game (vs Fury)

First five: Blood Archer, Blood Shaman, Fear, Summon Blood Puppet, Undying Heart

Starting roll: 4 charm class, 1 charm basic, 1 ceremonial power, 3 ceremonial class, 1 ceremonial basic.

I opt to go first, but it doesn't much matter. Usually, I have the Chimera go first so I am more likely to have main actions near the end of the round. This matters more when the Chimera has more aspects.

With my roll, I don't need to meditate at all, so no side actions there. I lead with playing the Puppet book to my spellboard.

The Corpse rolls 11 (raise 1 die) and reveals a Whiplash. That's good for me.

I summon the Blood Puppet to my field; I want it to soak an attack, early if needed.

The Corpse rolls another 11 and reveals a Hunting Instincts. That's 2 power sides from his behavior alone, so I'm a little lucky none of the actual rage dice rolls have been power sides.

Back to me, I play the Blood Shaman. It's at risk from Whiplash, but Hunting Instincts and Iron Scales would hit the Puppet, and Frozen Fear would be unblockable. If I need to, I'll guard with Jessa to make sure I get the Fear to hit what I want.

Chimera rolls a 1, and reveals Frozen Fear.

So, I have 2 high priority targets. I think I'm going to Fear the Instincts, and use the Archer to block the Frozen Fear. This gives me the least number of red rains tokens, and since I'm not using Screams this round, I don't mind Jessa getting exhausted.

On my turn, I play the Archer and put a Heart on him. Yes, he's going to die because he'll Blood Shot the Whiplash and block the Frozen Fear, but putting the Heart on him makes sure that a

"reveal and attack" with a second Frozen Fear doesn't kill him. It also puts less strain on my main actions, because the Heart will send him directly to hand, whereas returning him with a ceremonial power will also require a meditation and another side action to actually use the dice power.

The Chimera rolls a 9, causing me to lower 2 dice. Since Blood Shaman is going to raise only 1 die up 1 level, I opt for the ceremonial class and a charm class. I need to meditate anyways thanks to this roll. It then reveals an Iron Scales.

This doesn't change what I'm doing much; I'll get to the Scales later, when it's exhausted. So, I Blood Shot the Whiplash, preventing it from attacking my Archer. Then, even though Jessa isn't wounded, I use Fear, sacrificing Shaman to hit the Instincts. That's 3 total damage to the Chimera so far. I raise a charm die to class to reduce the number of cards I need to meditate later.

The Corpse makes its first attack: Frozen Fear. I block with the Archer (remember, he's supposed to die in round 1 so I can replay him).

I could choose to not block, and just take the damage. But then I have to rely on the Archer not being guarded when he attacks the exhausted Fear. I also then need to make sure I have enough mains to hit the Iron Scales with Blood Shots. Both are valid routes, but that one will likely end with Jessa wounded and 1 aspect left untouched. This should end with, at worst, 1 aspect left with 1 wound. The best case scenario for both is a Blood Archer that recovers all wounds at the end of the round. In one case, he'll have an Undying Heart on him, and I'll have dice left for using Screams once or twice.

Resolving the battle puts the Archer back into hand. I need to meditate to get the power needed to replay him (and lose a Fear - that's unfortunate), so that's my side action for the turn. I replay him.

The Scales takes out the Puppet.

On my turn, I use Blood Shot on the Scales, then attack it. The Chimera rolls a 4 for the guard, so the Iron Scales is out.

And that ends the round - the Corpse of Viros has taken 7 damage and has no aspects left, Jessa has taken none, and has a Blood Archer who recovers the 1 wound and is fresh for the next round.

Hopefully, that sample gives you a good idea of what to expect from the first five and how to adjust. Thanks for reading!

Final Cry

Guide for The Shadows of Viros against The Corpse of Viros

By Archivist

Noah Redmoon does a fantastic job of looking the part of the evil, sword swinging wizard. Which is good, because he very much is, if you look into his lore (which can be found elsewhere on this wiki). You also might have noticed that he's labeled as the "Phoenixborn of Viros" on his card, which means that he and the Corpse of Viros share a stomping ground. But, "there can be only one" and if you're struggling with Noah fighting the Chimera invader, hopefully, this article will help.

My assumption with this is that you only have access to the Master Set and the Corpse of Viros. This guide will only specifically cover the Shadows of Viros deck.

Preface: rules interactions

Lurk
Lurk isn't the only Concealed unit

The Shadows of Viros has a few rules interactions that you need to understand before proceeding. The first one is around Noah's ability, Shadow Target. The Corpse of Viros - and all other Chimera so far - has only 1 Ready Spell: the Ultimate. The rules for an exhausted Ultimate are in the Chimera rulebook on page 12, or the Red Rains rulebook on page 17. Of importance to note is that this happens before red rains tokens are placed during the Recover phase.

Another interaction is that of Firebelly and Summon Sleeping Widows. As per the rules on page 17 of the Master Set rulebook, playing Summon Sleeping Widows after the Red Wrath 1 ability has triggered means that the new Sleeping Widows are not affected by the ability, and will stay around.

Stormwind Sniper is the last card that has any sort of tricky rules interactions, and he has several. The easiest one is that the Chimera counts as a Phoenixborn for the purposes of Ambush 1. The remaining interactions regard Concealed. If the Sniper is exhausted, Concealed is no longer in effect, as per rules on page 15 of the Master Set rules (or page 19 of the Red Rains rules). While unexhausted, however, abilities like Dark Descent do not affect the Sniper, nor does Whiplash, and attackers will skip over him and go to the next unit, or the Phoenixborn (Noah) if there are no other units (Red Rains, page 16). In contrast, Stormwind Sniper will be affected by the Firebelly ability regardless of exhaustion, as it does not target the Sniper.

Starting Off

The Corpse of Viros plays everything to the battlefield, boasting a solitary ready spell, and no conjurations or alterations. His base form is just aspect units from either of its two Aspect decks. This means it puts a heavy emphasis on the battlefield, but the Corpse does have a fair number of abilities that target the opposing Phoenixborn's life total directly (often called "burn" if you're new to card games).

The Shadows of Viros is in a somewhat unique position compared to the other Master Set decks, as all of its units have a 2 attack value. However, most of the units in it are fragile, like with The Mist Guardian (Aradel), and it shares many of the same vulnerabilities.

One of those vulnerabilities is Noah's low life. At 16, he's just a mere 1 life point higher than the lowest allowed for a Phoenixborn, and he doesn't boast any healing in his original deck. This puts him in a position of needing to guard infrequently, which, fortunately, is just fine. His ability, Shadow Target, is situational in both PvP and PvE; more often than not, you'll find yourself not using it against a Chimera, but when you do, it can stave off an Ultimate for just long enough to prepare for what happens after that Ultimate resolves.

In a stark contrast to The Bloodwoods Queen, The Men of Iron, and The Corpse of Viros player deck, Noah's ceremonial package is rather light on allies, bringing just the Stormwind Sniper. He is a decent ally for his cost, not outstanding, but thanks to his Concealed, can make for some interesting play lines, such as blocking a Dark Descent while he's the only unit on the field.

False Demon
Better than he looks

His other units are conjurations, which fits more in line with illusion, even if the Sleeping Widows are a ceremonial reaction. And, while he has a whopping 13 conjurations - the second most of the Master Set decks, behind Aradel - only two of those are spellboard conjurations, which means he's only capable of reliably producing two units a round. This, combined with the fact that the Wolves and Widows have only 1 life, make Noah struggle in rounds 2 and later. Ironically, their fragility means that there's very little reason to guard them. Most of the time, you're better served letting them counter and die than you are trying to protect them.

False Demon bears special mention here. The Nightmare 1 ability has a lot of utility in picking off wounded or 1 life aspects. Using its ability is somewhat circular; if you're doing well, then you'll have no trouble finding a target for it, making it easier to keep doing well, but if you're struggling, then the ability will often do nothing, and you'll lose the False Demon before you get a chance to do anything else with it.

His remaining spellboard cards are utility cards. Resummon works well with False Demon to serve as a heal, an exhaustion removal, and an additional trigger for Nightmare 1, but that's the peak Noah can do with it before he imports cards. Given how many of Noah's conjurations are 2/1/0s with no abilities, more often than not, you're simply removing the exhaustion for 2 class die - which is slightly more expensive than the "standard" 1 class, 1 basic costs to unexhaust. Small Sacrifice works as a way to deal a single damage, which is very useful, but unless you hit a False Demon, you're trading your unit for that 1 damage, which is not ideal. If you must use it that way, try to plan so that the unit is exhausted first, maximizing the value of the dice spent to get that unit.

Beyond his spellboard, he brings two actions spells: Bound Soul and Sleight of Hand. Bound Soul is very similar to the ceremonial dice power, but suffers from a lack of targets in the base deck. Due to this, it is possible that you'll draw a Bound Soul before you ever see a Stormwind Sniper. Sleight of Hand is often considered a bad card, but in Shadows of Viros, it helps Noah to get the cards he actually wants, since he will likely be looking for more units or more removal. Two dice for it is a hefty price, but for Standard 1, it will work.

Speaking of, his removal is actually pretty strong. Shadow Strike is a reaction that will take out most aspects for a single die, and Fade Away is similar, but slightly harder to use since it won't trigger until after the Chimera has placed red rains tokens for the round. Shadow Strike should absolutely be used to handle problem aspects when you draw it.

Channel Magic and Shadowblade

Let me be very clear: there is no easy choice on these.

You should absolutely run all 3 Channel Magics, the question is what cards to pull from them. Jayson, in his article, calls out Resummon, Sleight of Hand, and Bound Soul, stating "None of those three cards are gonna win the game for you, and Noah is going to be best with all 3 copies of Channel." He's not wrong, and I'd personally like to add Fade Away to that list due to the Ultimates clearing them out before they trigger.

Here's where my preference comes in. I actually think Bound Soul and Sleight of Hand are fine in the deck, if you shift your first five away from what's listed in the core rulebook. I'll get to my preferred first five after talking about Shadowblade, but for now, it's sufficient to say I don't think either of these cards are the best choice to cut. No, for me, the best cards are Resummon #3, because you will never use it (and probably won't use Resummon #2 for anything other than playing it to your board as a main action stall turn), and 2 of the Fade Aways. Yes, Fade Away is amazing when it triggers. But it has to trigger, and the higher in difficulty you go, the harder it gets. Noah's Shadow Target isn't good enough to make Fade Away reliable.

Alright, so what about the Shadowblade/Masked Wolves mix? This is another tough one, and I think this one is more a matter of preference. Shadowblade is absolutely amazing removal, and it draws you cards as a perk. But in Shadows of Viros, it fights for your other reactions' opportunity windows, and also takes away from Noah's ability to produce units to the field. Both of these are detrimental in my eyes, but I also see the value in having it, as I'm less likely to pull it in the campaign than I am the Wolves. My recommendation is to have at least 1 Summon Masked Wolf, and then have it be your call how many more you include. I typically either run all 3, or run 2 and 1 Shadowblade. Since Noah can't control when he'll draw Summon Sleeping Widows or additional spellbook cards, having more books in the deck for the first go is of higher importance to me.

First Five

The Master Set rulebook suggests Small Sacrifice, Summon Masked Wolf, Summon False Demon, Sleight of Hand, and Resummon as the starting first five. This makes sense in terms of setting up

the spellboard, but I find it to be a bit awkward against the Corpse, as you're relying on Sleight of Hand to draw into your other needed cards. This can lead to situations where you see Bound Soul before you draw any of the Stormwind Snipers, or draw multiple Resummons without enough units to Resummon. It also consumes 9 dice (10, counting Shadow Target) while only providing you with 2 units to block with - all the Chimera units deal at least 2 damage, so you won't even have a chance to Resummon. This would actually mean you're only using 8 dice (7 if you don't Shadow Target), but I don't trust the 3 new cards to give you the right outlets for those remaining dice.

All these issues lead me to adjust the first five by two cards: first, swap Small Sacrifice for Stormwind Sniper, and second, swap Sleight of Hand for Summon Sleeping Widows. This gives you 5 units in round 1, with 3 main actions (more if you attack) to stall out the Chimera so your False Demon can be your Resummon target. It also consumes all 10 dice without a single power side, and you don't really need Shadow Target round 1, barring unlucky rolls. It also provides you with a target for any Bound Souls you draw into; something I mentioned earlier as a potential issue with Noah's deck.

Summon Masked Wolf Summon False Demon Summon Sleeping Widows Stormwind Sniper Resummon

My recommended first five

The Corpse of Viros

The Corpse of Viros has 2 aspect groups meant for preconstructed play: Fury and Shadow. Each one has certain aspects that bring trouble, and I tend to break them down into the following categories. If you've read my other guides, note that Noah's breakdown is a little different than the other Phoenixborns'.

Grunts: these aspects are ones that you can hit last. None of the aspects will make you happy to see them, but these are the least troublesome if left alone for a while. For Fury, this is Rampage and Whiplash. I'd put Constrict and Regenerate in here for Shadow. Whiplash falls into here due to its ability only triggering once; it's basically a single unit removal that sticks around to remove another one.

High priority: these aspects are ones you should focus resources into removing, or they will quickly kill whichever Phoenixborn you're using, and Noah is more fragile than most. In my opinion, the high priority target for Fury is Firebelly. For Shadow, it's Dark Descent and Stormcall.

Annoying: this is kinda where everything else goes. They're more obnoxious than the grunts, but not demanding of attention like the high priority aspects. All of Fury's two bloods are here, while Shadow has two: Lurk and Glare.

I feel the need to call out that Lurk's placement is due to the rules interactions it has. Since you should be familiar with how Concealed and exhaustion work thanks to the rules section above, you've probably realized that things like Small Sacrifice and Nightmare 1 can take out an exhausted Lurk with no issues. And, since your units are disposable, letting it hit an exhausted leftmost unit is no big loss. Now, you don't want to leave it unblocked very often, as it takes a mere 4 hits to down Noah, but it's still not a big threat.

Firebelly
The worst thing to happen

What is a big threat is Firebelly. Only False Demons will survive the ability, and they'll die when they block (but it's worth the block, barring circumstances where you'll lose if you do). The only upside to Firebellies is that they are great for putting Widows into play, but really, all the Chimera's attacks are good at that, since Noah's units are so fragile. If you see a Firebelly late in the round, it can be worth using Shadow Strike on it to make sure you have units for the next round. That 1 "wasted" damage is a better loss than losing the game because you have no units available following the Firebelly's attack.

Next in line is probably Dark Descent, then Stormcall, then it's down to the annoying ones like Hunting Instincts, Glare, and Iron Scales, with Frozen Fear and Lurk taking up the rear before you get down to the grunts. The Descents will cause issues since Noah has very few units until you get his spellboard running, or luck into a lot of Widows, but you still don't really want to see them. Stormcall eats through Noah's sparse life total, and Channel Magic can only mitigate so much of that.

Hunting Instincts places fourth on the list due to adding red rains tokens that accelerate the Corpse into the 1 and 2 damage Ultimates. These tend to wipe Noah's board clean, and, unsurprisingly, you don't want that.

Everything else, you'll get to.

Handling these aspects is almost entirely a matter of blocking or attacking, then using the 1 damage effects from Nightmare and Small Sacrifice to clean up. You only have 3 Shadow Strikes, with no guarantees you'll draw any of them (but with Sleights and Channels, you have a good chance), so combat is your most reliable source. When able, use Small Sacrifice and Resummon on False Demons; this preserves your units as long as possible while still dealing that damage.

A key strategy in a lot of illusion decks is to go for your opponent's exhausted units. Shadows of Viros is no exception, but you want to be strategic about which units of yours you exhaust and when. I alluded to it before, but if you see a Lurk about to attack an unexhausted unit, there's no reason to not exhaust that unit before the Lurk attacks, even if you're just attacking the Corpse itself (while it has no Defenders). Get value where you can; my typical advice for campaigns is "try to spend 1 die per blood, or 1 die per 2 unit damage" so if you can make your units punch up, do so. And don't be afraid to lose any of them. Shadows of Viros is a lesson in disposable units.

Related to targeting your opponent's exhausted units is giving the opponent the opportunity to exhaust their units. I find that one way to do this is to have the Chimera go first in the game. While it isn't foolproof, it does give you a better chance of controlling the end of round 1 and setting up for a strong round 2.

Round 2 and beyond

As mentioned before, a lot of Noah's difficulty comes from surviving past round 1. Due to the high unit volume I've assembled in the first five for round 1, you should be able to make it into round 2 with 1 or 2 units left on Noah's board, and this is crucial, since, also as mentioned before, he only has 2 reliable units per round. You can ceremonial power a Sniper back into hand, and should if

needed, but you also want to get his Summons onto his spellboard as fast as you can. You'll likely never use the Wolves' focus ability, but having another 2/1 for 1 class is still useful enough. The rest, then, becomes a matter of managing the damage output you have and bleeding the Chimera down.

Once you've beaten Standard 1, you have a lot of good options for imports. If you want allies, all 3 of the other ceremonial decks have good ones to pull, and the Corpse of Viros player deck also has a good spellboard card in Chant of Transfusion (most likely replacing Small Sacrifice, since you have to pay attention to spellboard size). Even Saria's deck has good allies, but they're more 1 life units, so you don't fix your Firebelly vulnerability there. For more conjurations, you can look to Aradel's deck, but they, too, are 1 life units. On the other hand, they make building your board back easier, and removing 1 wound here and there is also helpful. And Root Armor can help almost any unit it gets placed on; Firebelly won't damage a Sniper with an Armor, and he'll survive any of the 2 attack aspects. Massive Growth can also make one of your units much bulkier, letting it tank a Lurk and something else (but you'll probably want to kill the Lurk with a ping damage instead of the Massive unit, so don't counter). There's a surprising amount of options.

Below here, I've included a sample round 1 using the deck and first five modifications above (so, 3 Channel Magics in, with 2 Fade Away and 1 Resummon removed - not that you see it with only 1 round). Other than that, best wishes!

Example game (vs Shadow)

First five: Summon Masked Wolf, Summon False Demon, Resummon, Stormwind Sniper, Summon Sleeping Widows

Cost requirements: 4 illusion class sides, 4 ceremonial class sides, leaving 2 basics (1 illusion, 1 ceremonial)

Starting roll: 1 illusion power, 2 illusion class, 2 ceremonial class, 5 basics (3 ceremonial, 2 illusion)

I want to shift the tempo in the game to having Noah play a little more reactive than proactive, so I opt to pass turn 1. While this does give the Chimera 1 power side, it also gives me a bit more control over the game, since I want options for False Demon, and at this point, Noah has life to spare. The Chimera opens with a power side and an 8, forcing me to lower 2. I opt for the illusion power, since I only need class, and one of the ceremonial class. I need to meditate anyways, this is just one more card.

And I get a Stormcall right off the bat.

This shifts my plan; normally, I'd want to hold the Sniper for later, but I want something to ensure I kill the Stormcall if it happens to attack. This means I play him now, resulting in the first damage of the game. I also meditate 4 cards from my deck: Shadow Strike, Summon Masked Wolf, Sleight of Hand, and Fade Away give me 3 ceremonial power and 1 illusion power. This should be enough to last me through any more spin downs and still get me the dice I need.

Noah takes 1 from the Stormcall, then has to lower 2 more dice due to a 9 roll. I opt for 2 ceremonial, before the Chimera reveals a Lurk.

Back to my turn, I use the illusion basic to play Summon Masked Wolf to my spellboard, and follow it with Summon False Demon.

Noah takes the second damage from Stormcall, and the Chimera gets a red rains token. It then rolls a power side and an 8, so there go my other two power sides, and it reveals a Dark Descent. This is looking to be a tough fight. I play the Resummon, and summon a Wolf using my side action and the Summon Masked Wolf spell I played on my last turn. I do that here despite the Dark Descent because of probability; I'm guessing that the Stormcall will attack before the Dark Descent, which means the Wolf will counter the Stormcall and die before the Dark Descent can attempt to exhaust anything. The last aspect could be another Dark Descent, and the Corpse could roll a "reveal and attack," but I'm gambling on the probabilities of both of those happening being low.

The Chimera rolls a basic and a 10, so spins that basic into the 3rd power side, before revealing a second Dark Descent. Well, I was half right; it didn't attack yet.

Again, this is off to a very rough start; I think Noah's going to take a bit of damage. Looking at what I have available, it looks like I can deal 14 total damage, and need 9 to clear the board. Unfortunately, the pair of Dark Descents is going to remove 2 of that in the best of cases.

Scenario 1: The Wolf is attacked by the Stormcall, and both die. I could Widows there. Then, the Lurk would attack a Widow on the next turn, killing it and leaving me with the Sniper and a Widow on the field. I could then play the False Demon to kill the Lurk, and have 3 blockers for the Dark Descents - and the Widows would be exhausted by the first one, while I block with the Sniper. Next would be using Resummon on the False Demon to remove the exhausted Descent, and the second Descent would then attack into said False Demon, killing it and staying alive at 1. This would leave Noah with an empty board.

Scenario 2: I let the Stormcall take out the Wolves, and skip the Widows for now. This forces the Lurk to attack Noah (which is probably fine), and the Sniper can then block the first Dark Descent, at which point, I could Widows. That means the first Descent is at 1, the second Descent only exhausts the 1st Widows instead of discarding it, and I still have the False Demon and Resummon available - which would let me use the unexhausted Widows to block the second Descent. At this point, before using the Demon or Resummon, there's 3 aspects with 1 life left, and, after I play the False Demon, I would have 1 unexhausted unit capable of attacking twice, thanks to Resummon. This would give me a chance to clear out the Chimera's board - and Nightmare 1 on the Demon would trigger twice, too.

I'm opting for scenario 2, so my sequence is to pass my next turn, let the Stormcall and Wolf kill each other. The Chimera didn't spin up any dice on my pass because all aspects were revealed.

Lurk attacks, and Noah's taken 5 damage. I pass main again.

Dark Descent attacks, but since its ability has no valid target, I don't exhaust anything. The Sniper blocks, and the Descent is heavily wounded. I use Summon Sleeping Widows here, dropping myself down to 1 ceremonial class, 2 illusion class, and 1 ceremonial basic.

On my turn, I play the False Demon using an illusion class and the ceremonial basic and kill the exhausted Descent. It's higher priority than the Lurk. I have 1 ceremonial class and 1 illusion class dice left - enough for the Resummon. Even if they were both basics, I have the space to meditate again.

Now, the second Descent attacks, exhausting my leftmost Widow. The other Widow blocks, because I want the Demon for Resummon. I could use the Demon to block and then Resummon the Widow, but this way, I'll have both the Widow and the Demon going into next round, so it's the better choice. It also gives me that chance to use Nightmare 1 again.

After that attack, it doesn't matter which one the Demon goes for; I have two attacks to get around the Chimera's guard. And if it does guard, I destroy the higher priority aspect (the Descent) with the Resummon. Regardless, I go for the Descent with the attack, and - the Chimera guards. Well, now it's taken 6 damage, and on my next main, I Resummon the Demon to kill the Descent and deal 2 more damage, for a total of 8. The turn after, the Chimera fails to guard the Lurk.

At the end of the round, I have a Widows and a Demon, with Noah at 5 wounds and the Corpse at 10 wounds and a single red rains token. But that's also half of the Chimera's high priority aspects out of the way.

Thanks for reading, and may your games go well!

Shadow Strike

Guide for The Goddess of Ishra against the Corpse of Viros

By Archivist

If you've looked at Jayson's guide, or been on the Discord at all, you've probably heard that Astrea 's original deck is one of the hardest decks to pilot against the Chimera. That's entirely true. As such, this guide is for those brave souls who want to make a go of it, and add the deck to your wins.

While Astrea does have a second unique card, this article assumes you have the bare minimum to play the Goddess of Ishra deck: the deck itself, some divine dice (or substitutes), the Master Set (for the charm dice), and the Corpse of Viros. If you also have the Blight of Neverset, the games against the Chimera become much easier thanks to Judgment. It is, however, winnable without.

Preface: Rules interactions

The Goddess of Ishra has a few strange rules interactions with the Chimera, and one of those should be cut from your deck in favor of Channel Magics (more on that in a bit). Two others deal with Light Bringer, and Imperial Ninja.

For the Light Bringer, the turn after it comes into play, the Chimera must attack if able. As per rules in the Red Rains rulebook on page 15, status abilities are still resolved, then, the Chimera takes the Attack main action, as though it had no face down aspects. If the Chimera has no aspects capable of attacking (either because the face up ones are exhausted, or it has no face up aspects at all), it takes a turn as normal, rolling or passing based on the number of face down aspects.

Ninja is a little trickier because there's two components to it, but still pretty easy. The first one is the choice of hand or deck; as a player, you choose. Given Astrea's difficulty, it's probably easier to look at the top 5 cards (the created hand - the other component to the Ninja's complexity - as per Red Rains rulebook, page 16), and decide if there's 1 particular aspect that will be problematic coming up, or if you want to just discard 2 aspects. I personally roll the behavior die, with odd being the discard from hand, and even being discard from deck. But you choose when you play.

The last ones all deal with **Concealed**, on Lurk. It does not protect against Kneel or Unit Guard (they don't target), nor Light Bringer's **Infatuate** (which targets the player), but does protect against Astrea's **Beguile**. Once Lurk is exhausted (via Kneel or attacking), it can be attacked, hit by Mark of the Goddess, or otherwise dealt with.

Astrea's Strategies

Unlike with the two Master Set decks, I'm going to focus on Astrea's deck's strategies instead of the individual cards. Individually, they're pretty abstract, and hard to understand in terms of game goals; as a strategy, they're much easier to understand.

One of her strategies is that of "discard from hand." Unfortunately, against the Chimera, the power of that tactic is dramatically reduced, since the Chimera never runs out of cards to play. While you can still accelerate a fatigue-based win with these plays, the strategy is definitely one of the weakest strategies that exists against the Chimera, since it doesn't have the same limitations a human player does. For example, it will never activate the side action of a Weeping Spirit, and it doesn't care to, because it doesn't have a battlefield limit. Similarly, Imperial Ninja isn't likely to hit a singular key card that would cripple the Chimera if discarded; at best, you'll weaken it for the next round. And then there's Kneel and Beguile, neither of which cause the Chimera to play more cards from hand to have units that can attack. So this strategy is one you should ignore.

Light Bringer
A hard card to use well

Her other strategy is controlling combat. Not just the outcomes, as cards like Royal Charm affect, but also what can attack and when. Kneel, Beguile, and Devotion stop units from swinging, Light Bringer forces the attack, and Steadfast Guardian dictates what actually gets attacked (usually Steadfast). And then Sun Sister can clean up the wounds on any of Astrea's surviving units, except herself. Speaking of surviving units, Call to Action can give one another attack, and you will have no trouble hitting the trigger condition for the reaction. Lastly, even Mark of the Goddess can be considered dictating an attack - just using an opponent's unit for the attack instead of one of hers. This strategy *does* work against the Chimera, even if the cards themselves appear quite weak at supporting it. It's also a lot harder than many of the other strategies that don't have the same level of combat control, because the decision making is more detailed and the units are on the small side.

Since hand denial is out, you want to put Channel Magic into her deck, replacing the near-useless Summon Weeping Spirit. While you can use the Spirits on your own side to absorb an attack every so often, overall, The Goddess of Ishra would rather have more Royal Charms and more Summon Steadfast Guardians than Summon Weeping Spirits, at least against the Chimera. Having the extra life point per Channel Magic drawn doesn't hurt, and probably the best thing about it is that it raises 3 dice up one level, which helps Astrea trigger dice powers more often, giving her greater control over combat outcomes.

As mentioned earlier, if you own Blight of Neverset, you can replace Mark of the Goddess with Judgment, and, well, no one will judge you for it. And, let's be real: if you're using Print on Demand to get The Goddess of Ishra, you probably want 3x Judgment over 3x Mark, anyways. You'll use Judgment in PvP and PvE; Mark sees much less play.

Lastly, Astrea's allies are limited in number; a mere 6, with no way to bring them back in deck or dice. As an option, you can swap out 1 die for a ceremonial die. This isn't something I really recommend, as she wants to minimize meditating in order to not lose Summon Steadfasts, and

with a single ceremonial, you'll probably be meditating to get that power side.

The First Five

The Goddess of Ishra is somewhat of a rarity in that the strategy needed in the First Five is actually different between the Corpse's aspects. However, that difference comes down entirely to 1 card and how you spend your last few dice.

The base of the First Five is her two summon spells: Guardian and Light Bringer. Since both of these are key to her deck, you want a copy of each. Additionally, she does want more than just two 1 attack units, so Ninja and Sun Sister are also added to the hand. With these four cards, and Astrea's ability, that puts you at using 3 divine class dice, 3 charm class dice, and 2 basic dice. You have 2 dice left.

So what to do with them? There's 6 cards left you can choose from, and only 1 of them will actually cause you to use all your dice: Devotion. That does remove an attacker from your field, and Astrea really wants those early on, making it a subpar choice. The remaining cards all cost 0 or 1 die (Royal Charm is the 0 cost), but all of them also tend to further her strategy.

This is where the differences between the aspects comes in. Against Fury, Mark of the Goddess is effective removal against all the 2 bloods, because they all have 3 or more attack, and can be targeted before they attack. Mark of the Goddess seems a logical choice here, and that would leave you with 1 die to use on dice powers (and it'd be your choice which die, since you have 3 basic costs in that hand). Your worst case scenario, that of a triple Iron Scales opener, is fairly rare, and if you're concerned about it, you can opt for a different card.

Shadow is somehow more resistant to Mark - Lurk can't be hit until after it has attacked (and is better removed by a Light Bringer or Guardian attack so as to minimize damage waste), and Constrict only deals 2 damage to another unit. Which means, for Shadow, you'd be hoping for a 2 or 3 Dark Descent opening for Mark of the Goddess to work. As such, I don't feel like there is a 5th card choice that stands out from the rest. The presence of Constrict means you are likely to lose the use of something - possibly Astrea - and wind up with more "spare" dice to use on dice powers, which makes Royal Charm a risky choice. Devotion's abilities would get shut off by Constrict, but you at least still get to use the dice (and the stat increases), but, unless you rush the Devotion play, Constrict is likely to hit something else anyways. Channel Magic gives you a random card, but also probably puts you into the position of using dice powers or having "dead" dice (you could draw a Kneel you can't use well, for example). And, Kneel in round 1 is usually not a great pick.

This leads my preference to be Channel Magic. While having the spare die isn't ideal, one thing Astrea does want is more summons, more often. Getting 2 or even all 3 of the Steadfast Guardian summons boosts her game by a surprising amount. Even getting more Royal Charms helps her game; making her dice go further is always good, as is having additional targets for Constricts that don't take away from your removal or unit production.

One final option is taking a Kneel into the First Five, and then discarding it before round 1 and hoping for a random draw that's better. This gets into some rules trickery, but there are similar strategies used in PvP to get a "6th" card in the Five. In this case, since you have no way to recover

the Kneel, it functions more as a "removing it from the deck so you don't draw it later" action. I don't actually recommend doing it, but you should know that it is an option.

Summon Steadfast Guardian Summon Light Bringer Imperial Ninja Sun Sister Channel Magic

My recommended first five

The Corpse of Viros

The breakdown for the Corpse's aspects interact differently with The Goddess of Ishra than against most other decks.

Grunts: the aspects you can hit last. Steadfast Guardian can usually soak them and stick around for another block or guard. For Fury, this is Rampage and Whiplash. For Shadow, it's Regenerate.

High Priority: these aspects should take the focus of your resources, so you have a better chance of surviving. Using Beguile on one of these is perfectly acceptable, so you can destroy it without losing any of your units. For Astrea, this list is Dark Descent in Shadow, and Frozen Fear and Hunting Instincts in Fury.

Annoying: the catch-all for everything else. For Fury, that's Iron Scales and Firebelly, and for Shadow, it's Lurk, Constrict, and Stormcall.

Lurk

Worse than usual

This is a bit of a different list than most other Phoenixborn, and that's somewhat due to Astrea's unique deck. Constrict and Iron Scales can be stifled by using Beguile, and then your attacks can focus on the bigger threats, while you chip away at these two with your units. If you have an empty board, you can also use a Light Bringer to force them to attack into it, essentially saving you a unit.

Firebelly is less of a threat here because the Guardian can get a divine die and block and kill it, and still be able to take 1 more wound, even before a Devotion. Additionally, Sun Sister can remove the wounds your units take from Firebelly's ability, preserving your units for longer. And, of course, the aforementioned Devotion can be put onto any unit to give it survivability even after blocking the Firebelly.

Lurk can be guarded against with the Steadfast Guardian. And then you can take it out with a Light Bringer without losing excess damage, but be careful about when that Light Bringer is played. Or, if you get somewhat lucky, you might be able to double Devotion a Guardian and block and counter the Lurk. But then you're likely to lose the Guardian and both Devotions to almost anything, even with a Sun Sister removing wounds.

Stormcall has trouble eating through Astrea's life, and, since she has two attackers capable of taking it out and surviving, shouldn't be much of an issue. What's more, you can slap a divine die on your other two units, and then they are strong enough to take out the Stormcall. Better still, you can time a Light Bringer to force the Stormcall into attacking when you want it to, ensuring you have a unit ready to counter and probably kill it.

Frozen Fear is probably your biggest worry aside from Dark Descent. Frozen Fear can exhaust Astrea, removing one of her primary ways of keeping herself and her units alive. You'll also usually want to boost a Steadfast Guardian with a divine die to be able to block it, as your allies are so few. Also, you can target it (or an Iron Scales) with a charm die to keep it from taking out an unwounded Guardian.

Dark Descent can also remove your units at a high rate. Astrea can have counterplay, though: if your leftmost unit is unexhausted, Call to Action can unexhaust the unit Descent would try to invalidate, but if the unit was already exhausted, Call can't do anything about it.

Those two are in different aspects, so if you're playing them unmixed, you'll only have one set of them to deal with per game.

Perhaps the most interesting thing is that, for The Goddess of Ishra, the harder aspect is actually Shadow. A lot of Fury can be handled through Beguile and careful attacks and guards, and Mark kills just about everything; Shadow removes a bit of that control due to the Dark Descents, and early Constricts can hurt Astrea more than a lot of other Phoenixborn because she is reliant on Beguile and her summons more than most of the preconstructed decks, which can get by without their Phoenixborn ability round 1. And there isn't a good First Five for her that can handle a double or triple Constrict round 1.

Round 2 and beyond

Most hands you draw in round 2 will work in some way, but you will occasionally get hit with a hand full of Royal Charms and Call to Actions, without enough units to use them on. Since Astrea plays a defensive slow game, this will still work for her, as she'll likely have multiple turns after the Chimera has finished. She'll also probably take a fair chunk of damage that round, so you should mitigate that the best you can with the Light Bringer, a well-timed Beguile, and the Steadfast Guardian. The next few rounds might be a little more strained, but they're manageable.

Unlike a lot of decks, The Goddess of Ishra will probably end the game in round 4, even against Standard 1. This additional round is usually a matter of cleaning up, as you should have control of the game at that point, and simply were not able to produce enough damage to the Chimera to actually close the game out in round 3.

This longer game closure also means the Corpse is more likely to hit phase 3 than against most other preconstructed decks. This is no big deal, as Astrea's limited battlefield is a boon here, preventing you from losing too many units to the extra Ultimate.

As far as deck picks, Astrea has a lot of good directions to go in, even with just the Master Set. Aradel can give her Mist Spirits and Typhoon, both of which are good at dealing that last damage needed to some aspects, even though they're not in her colors at all. Coal's Hammer Knight is a great Call to Action target, attacking an exhausted (perhaps Beguiled) unit and then unexhausting to counter another. Anchornauts are a good pick, too, as the divine power can also give them 1 attack and make them worthwhile. Noah's False Demon works well with Beguile, too, and he has Bound Soul, which could help with returning the Ninjas and Sisters. Saria can complement the fatigue plan with Enchanted Violinist, and also provide a heavy hitter in Rose Fire Dancer.

All in all, I recommend trying The Goddess of Ishra once or twice. She's a good way to learn to manage what seems like inferior resources in a demanding environment, and those lessons work for all other decks.