

MAGESTORM

A Warhammer novel by Jonathan Green

LORD ARCHAON'S dark hordes of Chaos are rampaging across the Old World and all good men of the Empire must heed the call to fight against the encroaching evil. Standing to the fore is fire wizard, Gerhart Brennend – a loner whose mysterious past is drenched in tragedy. As the Storm of Chaos approaches the Imperial city of Wolfenburg, a desperate battle looms and blood will be spilled like never before! Wolfenburg must not fall!



Jonathan Green works as a full-time teacher in West London. By night he relates tales of Torben Badenov's Kislevite mercenaries and the adventures of the Underhive bounty hunter Nathan Creed for *Inferno!* magazine. He became one of the Emperor's scribes in 1994 and has since penned a number of articles for *White Dwarf* and an ever-growing number of short stories for the Black Library.

Magestorm can be purchased in all better bookstores, Games Workshop and other hobby stores, or direct from this website and GW mail order.

Price £5.99 (UK) / \$6.99 (US)

Bookshops: Distributed in the UK by Hodder. Distributed in the US by Simon & Schuster/Pocket Books.

Games & hobby stores: Distributed in UK and US by Games Workshop.

UK mail order: 0115-91 40 000

US mail order: 1-800-394-GAME

Online: Buy direct care of Games Workshop's web store by going to www.blacklibrary.com/store or www.games-workshop.com

PUBLISHED BY THE BLACK LIBRARY

Games Workshop, Willow Road, Nottingham, NG7 2WS, UK

Copyright © 2004 Games Workshop Ltd. All rights reserved.

Reproduction prohibited, in any form, including on the internet.

ISBN: 1 84416 074 2



This is an excerpt from MAGESTORM by Jonathan Green. Published by Games Workshop Publishing, 2004.

Copyright © Games Workshop Ltd 2004. All rights reserved.

Reproduction prohibited, in any form, including on the internet.

For more details email publishing@games-workshop.com or go to the Black Library website www.blacklibrary.com

from MAGESTORM

THUNDER BROKE ACROSS the tortured heavens loud; it seemed to shatter the sky. It was as if the hammer of Lord Sigmar had smote the firmament and, at its thunderous impact, the storm broke. Rain fell down from the grey-black clouds in a torrential downpour. Lightning sparked throughout the roiling thunderheads that covered the dome of the sky from one horizon to the next: from north to south, east to west. Even though it was only mid-afternoon on a spring day in Jahrdrung, the cloud cover was so dense that it was almost as dark as night.

Rain lashed the scrubby moors of this wild wilderness that lay in the shadow of the Middle Mountains, with Hergig a clear six leagues to the south. Gale-force winds drove fat greasy raindrops through the thick canopy of darkly brooding forest, and tore leaves from their branches. The deluge pounded the ground, turning turf to a sodden bog and churning the tracks that passed for roads in these parts into a sucking quagmire. Runnels formed all over the uplands, newly birthed streams brought forth by the cloudburst, and went coursing down the hillsides. These fed rain-swollen streams that in turn fed rushing tributaries. They all converged to become a raging torrent of white water that plunged over the jagged boulders of rapids through the gorge at the foot of a rugged, storm-scarred hilltop – the highest piece of land for several leagues around.

Stark against the horizon, at the summit of the craggy hill, a lone black tower pierced the storm-wracked sky like an

accusing finger pointing at the heavens – furious that the storm should obscure the heavens from the gaze of the observatory at its summit.

The storm crashed around the tower, as if it were the focus for the tempest's wrath. Lightning split the sky again, bathing the hilltop in a momentary dazzling light. The lightning glittered from each leaded pane of the tower's glass dome.

Rain drummed down on the roof of the observatory and the flat roof of the tower next to it. It had been raining heavily for the last five days and there was no sign of it abating.

There was another vivid flash of light only this time it came from the top of the tower itself, blazing out from inside the glittering dome. It turned the observatory into a beacon of light in the middle of the grey-black wilderness.

With a crash of splintering glass, part of the star gazing dome exploded outwards as a figure smashed through it and slid to a halt on the wet stones of the tower's flat roof. Rain pelted down, heavy as a monsoon, soaking the figure's scorched and ruddy robes before the straggly-haired man could raise himself groggily.

'Curses!' the man muttered. Gerhart Brennend hated the rain.

Looking back towards the glass dome he could see the figure of his rival clearly framed in the shattered broken panes. In front of it splinters of glass shone on the rooftop like a thousand sparkling diamonds.

Gerhart made a hasty assessment of his situation. His sword-belt was still securely fastened about his waist, and his sword was in its scabbard at his side. His staff had landed close by. Taking hold of the gnarled and knotted rod of oak he got to his feet and prepared to face the force of the celestial wizard's wrath. The astromancer, Kozma Himmlisch, was striding out into the gale to face him.

Years of experience fighting upon battlefields across the length and breadth of the Empire helped him focus, despite the distracting rain that drove into his face and the injuries he had already suffered. The storm winds howled around him but now he could feel other winds blowing their own course about him. Many followed the howling path of the gale but

some flowed contrary to the rest, whirling in eddies and battling against the vortices of the storm.

Despite the steady, striding approach of his opponent, Gerhart closed his eyes.

He pictured a black void in his mind, and there – in the heart of the darkness – a flame flickered into life. The yellow and orange tongue of flame, white-hot at its core, writhed and grew. Gerhart could feel its warmth in the palms of his hands where he clutched the staff. He opened his eyes again and, glancing down at the backs of his hands saw that the hairs were beginning to dry out.

Kozma Himmlisch halted. Gerhart stood hunched, ready to defend himself, favouring his right leg, his left knee having been smashed as he hurtled through the dome of the observatory. The celestial wizard stood tall, his stance suggesting an unwavering arrogant trust in his own abilities.

Where Gerhart's robes were a deep red, his rival's rich blue garments, picked out with gold-embroidered stars and silver-threaded crescent moons, seemed to shimmer and glisten in the rain, making them appear more regal and luxurious.

Where Gerhart appeared bedraggled and unkempt, his long greying black hair matted against the side of his face, Kozma seemed invigorated by the energy of the storm, as if he had drawn power from it. His white curled beard was immaculately trimmed, not a hair was out of place. Gerhart's almost white drooping moustaches and the point of his beard sagged under the weight of water.

The celestial wizard's crown-like sorcerer's hat, also blue and trimmed with gold, was emblazoned with a crest of the comet of power at the front. It sat securely on the wizard's head, despite the clash that had just taken place in the observatory. Gerhart's own pate was bald, except for one last stubborn tuft of black hair. The rain was making it glisten. Water ran into his thickly curling eyebrows and from there into his eyes.

The astromancer took a step forward and glared at Gerhart, his gaze as piercing as the stars glittering against the cloth of night. Gerhart met his opponent's stare and raised his staff, holding it defensively across his body.

'Enough of these games,' the celestial wizard said, his voice clear and sharp as it carried to Gerhart over the wailing of the wind and the ominous rumbles of thunder. 'Now we battle to the death.'

'That is your choice,' Gerhart growled, the flickering flame in his mind growing in size and intensity.

'Or should I say, your death?' Kozma went on, as if he hadn't heard his opponent.

Quick as lightning, Kozma Himmlisch stabbed his fingers towards Gerhart. Blinding bolts of light burst from their tips, zigzagging their way through the downpour. Several bolts struck the rooftop in front of Gerhart, exploding tiles and blasting shards of stone from the tower. The rest of the miniature lightning strikes slammed into Gerhart's body, hurling him backwards.

His mind-flame guttered in the darkness, but did not go out.

'Your move, I believe,' Kozma sneered over the drumming of the rain.

Steam rose from his soaking robes where he had been struck by the sorcerer's spell. Gerhart rolled onto his side and got to his feet once more. He ached all over. He had suffered some small cuts when he had gone through the dome, and they stung in the rain. His right knee flared with pain every time he put weight on it. His left shoulder felt as if it was at best badly bruised, at worst grazed.

Every point on his body felt like it had been hit with a blacksmith's hammer. The pain did not trouble him unduly. He had suffered worse in his years as a battle wizard among the armies of the Empire, before his untimely exile from the Bright Order. And besides, another emotion was helping him to suppress the pain of the injuries: he could feel himself beginning to lose his temper. And Gerhart Brennend's temper was a dangerous thing indeed.

'Kozma, you go too far,' he told the celestial sorcerer through gritted teeth. He began to swing his staff around his head. 'I warn you, do not provoke me.'

As the blackened oak staff described a circle through the rainy air above him, Gerhart focussed on the flame flickering

in his mind, feeding it with the fuel of his rising fury. A spark fizzed and died at the swinging end of the staff.

Kozma had been watching Gerhart's efforts with an expression of mild amusement. At this he let out a laugh.

'What's the matter, old friend?' he sneered. 'Is the rain affecting your ability to spell-weave?'

Barely suppressed rage bubbled beneath the grim set of Gerhart's gaunt features. He glared at Kozma and swung the staff harder and faster.

With an audible whoosh the end of the staff burst into flame. Gerhart kept the oak rod moving and instead of the wind and rain putting the flame out, the staff began to leave a trail of fire in its wake.

The atmosphere around the top of the tower was, after all, saturated in magical power. It was merely a case of isolating the current he required and drawing it into himself. His natural propensity for manipulating fire could do the rest.

Gerhart could feel the wind of Aqshy blowing gently against his face, warm as a homecoming hearth on his cheeks. It was drying the strands of hair at his temples. Admittedly, the flaming trail left by the burning end of the staff was not as great as he had hoped, but to conjure such a flame in the middle of a thunderstorm required great expertise.

With one last great effort, Gerhart swung the blazing end of the staff towards the celestial wizard, extending his reach in only one hand. A stream of orange fire roared from the red-coal tip, eating up the oxygen in the air between the two sorcerers and casting its orange glow over the top of the tower. The fiery blast hit the rain-slicked robes of the celestial wizard and obscured Kozma Himmlisch from Gerhart's view momentarily.

The fire in his mind's eye blazed brightly for a few seconds and then subsided to a flickering candle flame once more. With a wet hiss the rain doused the burning brand of the fire wizard's staff. The orange reflections from the rain-slicked roof vanished to be replaced by the night-like gloom of the glowering storm, punctuated by bursts of acid white light along the horizon. The warm wind blowing on

Gerhart's face cooled too, until only the chill of the damp air remained.

Gerhart looked up at the celestial wizard, uncertain of what to expect. What little hope he might have had for his opponent's demise faded as he saw Kozma Himmlisch smiling back at him, seemingly untouched. Gerhart's spell had had no effect; how could he have been so foolish to expect otherwise in such weather? His powers as a fire mage were severely weakened thanks to the rain.

Gerhart's anger at his own naive thoughts fed the flames of his fury. But before he could put it to good use there was another retina-searing explosion of light and Gerhart flew backwards once more. The blast was the strongest the celestial wizard had produced yet. Gerhart's arms were flung outwards from his body in an involuntary spasm, as the massive surge of electrical energy coursed through his body. His staff flew from his hand.

Some small part of Gerhart that was still aware of what was going on told him that this was it. Kozma's attacks had steadily pushed him back towards the edge of the tower's battlements. This last almighty blast would surely send him over the edge and down to his death on the rugged crag top one hundred feet below.

There was the sound of cracking mortar and Gerhart came to an abrupt halt as he slammed into something cold and hard.

In his mind's eye the flame was slowly extinguished.

Weakened by Kozma's relentless attacks the fire wizard almost blacked out. Pain that even his furious temper could not quash stabbed through his spine. His head sagged onto his chest, as he lay stricken at the edge of the roof, his back resting awkwardly on something behind him.

Gerhart looked up, his head lolling back on his neck. Blinking the rain from his eyes he tried to focus on what it was that had stopped his death-plunge so abruptly. He saw a tall copper rod protruding from the side of the tower, glinting in the flickering epileptic light of the tempest. A lightning conductor, its tip fashioned in the form of an arrowpoint.

The metal pole swayed violently in the wind. Gerhart's collision with the lightning rod had almost smashed it completely free of its mounting. Next to it a battered weather vane spun crazily in the tornado winds.

'You would come here,' Kozma was saying, the pitch of his voice rising, 'to my tower, to my home, and attempt to kill me? Then you are an idiot as well as a traitor! Where would I be better able to protect myself than here, surrounded by the very source of my power?'

Shaking his head to help bring him to his senses, Gerhart turned back to the astromancer. The sorcerer was advancing towards him across the rooftop, the sparkling dome of the observatory behind him. Raw blue-white energy crackled from his fingertips and sparked from the coal-black orbs of his eyes. The glass shards scattered across the flat roof reflected the lightning like a myriad of tiny mirrors, dazzling Gerhart.

Gerhart could see the sorcerous winds swirling around him in a dancing vortex of power, like ribbons of some multi-hued substance. He glimpsed images within the whirling eddies and pulled on the currents, like faces briefly captured in thunderclouds or esoteric runes of mystical power.

'Now you will pay for your insolence!' Kozma spat. 'It is time to die, old friend.'

This was it, Gerhart realised. The celestial wizard's next attack would surely mean the end for the fire mage unless he did something quickly. It was now or never.

Aware of a low chanting coming from Kozma, Gerhart hauled himself to his feet, using the metal shaft of the lightning conductor for support.

He prayed desperately to whatever deity might be listening that, in spite of the storm raging around him, that an unexpected lightning strike would not strike the conductor while he was clinging to it.

The metal pole rocked unsteadily as the suffering wizard put all his weight against it.

Through the dark rain, Gerhart could see that the pole rising above the top of the tower was merely the tip of the lightning conductor, a patina of verdigris covering its surface. The

rest of the metal shaft was attached to the outside of the tower and descended all the way to the ground, where it would earth all lightning strikes. An iron staple hammered into the stone of the roof connected the two parts. The arrow-point tip of the lightning rod had also been mortared into place at the top of the crenellated battlements.

Only half aware now of the dull chanting voice of the celestial wizard, and drawing on the last reserves of his strength, Gerhart hugged the lightning conductor and then let his tired body sag. With a tortured rending of metal, the rod bent over at its base. Gerhart could feel the hairs on the back of his neck begin to rise as a massive static charge built around him. Kozma Himmlisch was obviously determined that the fire wizard wasn't going to walk away from this final, fatal blast.

Gerhart gave the broken mortar around the base of the pole a vicious kick, the heel of his leather boot pounding the ancient lime to powder. He gave the lightning conductor another sharp tug, sending renewed daggers of pain stabbing through his spine, and the tip came away from the battlements in his hands.

With his hair now standing out from the sides of his head, Gerhart turned to face the astromancer. Kozma was charged with the power of the heavens, his hair too standing on end. The sorcerer yelled the last words of his incantation over the wailing roar of the storm and drew his arms back, ready to fling his spell with full force.

The lightning conductor gripped firmly in his right hand, Gerhart brought his arm back before hurling it forwards again sharply. Just then Kozma unleashed the full fury of the tempest at him. Pain tore through his shoulder but Gerhart's aim was true.

The metal shaft twisted through the air, glittering in the light of the energy streaking from the celestial sorcerer's hands. A jagged bolt of forked lightning streaked down from the tormented sky above.

The spear-tip point of the lightning conductor pierced the wizard's chest below the sternum and burst from his back in a gout of black blood. An eye-bulging expression of horror

briefly appeared on Kozma's face before the full force of the storm was drawn inexorably to the lightning rod.

Kozma Himmlisch was destroyed in a blaze of blinding white light. It bathed the entire tower in its cold, burning brightness. It also blazed the image of the celestial wizard being burnt to a crisp onto the back of Gerhart's eyes so that it was all he could see until the glaring light faded back to normal.

Lightning continued to course down from the broiling clouds above, channelled by the lightning conductor. Kozma's spell was now horribly out of control. One whole side of the tower was exploded by the blast. With a boom that Gerhart felt through his feet. Masonry tumbled from the battlements and crashed onto the sodden ground below. The wind and rain swept into exposed chambers within the tower like hungry animals. They ravaged the shelves of books and scrolls in the astromancer's library in their fury, sending sheaves of papers flapping out in a savage squall.

Gerhart surveyed the devastation as he teetered on the brink of a crumbling precipice. His body was shaking, pain seeming to split his body apart from the inside out and the outside in. He had not been left unscathed by the devastation around him. Blood ran from his face and hands where splinters of stone had struck his exposed skin.

As well as the structural damage suffered by the tower, the observatory had caught fire, though this was the result of the lightning rather than any spell cast by the fire wizard. The fire raged in spite of the harsh ferocity of the storm. The rain now whipping in through the shattered glass dome had yet to douse the ravenous flames.

Kozma's body lay a few feet from Gerhart, an unrecognisable fire-consumed carcass, the twisted and melted spear of the lightning rod still transfixing it.

The fire wizard stumbled forwards as the roof of the tower shifted beneath him. He picked up his fallen staff and hurried into the relative safety of the burning observatory. He heard a number of stones skitter down the side of the tower as they came free from where he had been standing moments before.

Flames were licking around the shattered crystal dome of the astromancer's lair, the lightning strikes having set light to the rugs and the dry dusty tomes cluttering the bookshelves against the stone wall of the chamber. This wall was Gerhart's means of escape. An unassuming archway in the middle led to the spiral stone staircase that descended the levels of the tower to the ground.

Hot air swept around him, carrying glowing orange embers out into the still raging storm. The bright wizard drew some comfort from the presence of the conflagration but he still felt drained after the expulsion of so much magical energy. And his body was wracked with pain.

But for one educated at the renowned colleges of magic in Aلدorf, the destruction of the observatory cut Gerhart to the core. To see such precious and rare books and scrolls, which had been collected by Kozma Himmlisch over many decades, being consumed by the flames, not to mention the knowledge they contained, did nothing but fuel Gerhart's own abating anger.

A huge baroque telescope dominated the observatory. An amalgamation of lenses, mirrors, calibrated measures and gleaming polished tubes, the telescope was as big as the legendary steam tanks of the Imperial gunnery schools, and its main scope looked even more impressive than the cannon-muzzles of the incredible war engines.

The whole contraption had been carefully counterweighted so that it could be manoeuvred on a series of cog-toothed rails. Caught in the heart of the blaze consuming the observatory dome, the delicate labour of skilled engineers and artisans was being lost to the fire. Delicate brass scopes melted and warped amidst the flames and finely ground lenses cracked under the intense heat.

There was not much Gerhart could do for the telescope. But there were other, greater prizes awaiting him amidst the papers covering the large desk that dominated the chamber. Staggering over to it, Gerhart began to rummage through the open books and unrolled scrolls littering its surface, as yet barely touched by the flames. Amidst the volumes concerning the movements of celestial bodies and star charts there were

scraps of parchment that bore the scrawl of a hasty, desperate hand. They contained peculiar diagrams and images that appeared to be those of a twin-tailed shooting star, as well as hurriedly drawn maps of the Old World with sweeping arrows descending from the north.

As he searched, sparks whirled around him from the swelling, hungry fire, threatening to ignite the flammable materials covering the desk. Gerhart slapped at the embers as they tumbled towards the precious papers, quenching them with the sodden sleeves of his rain-soaked robes. The ink on the pieces of parchment began to run but the fire wizard did not seem to care.

A hasty search of the tower room uncovered a battered, leather scroll case. Gerhart snatched up as many of the handwritten notes as he could find, stuffing them hurriedly into the case, until the flames began to lick around the legs of the desk.

Then, stumbling through the flames, the fire hissing as if in frustration as it came into contact with his sodden robes, Gerhart made his flight from the observatory. He lurched down the worn steps of the spiralling stone staircase and out into the wind and rain of the unforgiving storm.

Behind the fleeing wizard the observatory resembled a beacon blazing on the desolate moors.

Follow the Gerhart Brennend as he wages a personal war against the Dark Powers whilst being persued by those he is trying to save in

MAGESTORM

Also by Jonathan Green

The Dead and the Damned

A Warhammer novel

BADENOV'S MERCENARIES are a group of hard-bitten fighting men. Drawn from the length and breadth of the Empire, they are held together by a lust for gold and a thirst for glory. Vampires, ghouls, rat-men and the Dark Knights of Chaos all abound in this land, but Badenov and his men will battle on until the last of them joins the dead or the damned!



CRUSADE FOR ARMAGEDDON

A Warhammer 40,000 novel



Battle-weary Marshall Brant of the Black Templars returns home after leading his Space Marines to victory through countless campaigns. But all hopes of respite soon fade when they find their planet, Solemnus, under savage attack from battle hungry orks. After a desperate struggle, Brant finds his forces are all but destroyed and the honour of the Chapter stained with blood. His vow for revenge takes him to the fiery shores of Armageddon, a sulphurous world synonymous with war, and into the heat of battle!

— www.blacklibrary.com —