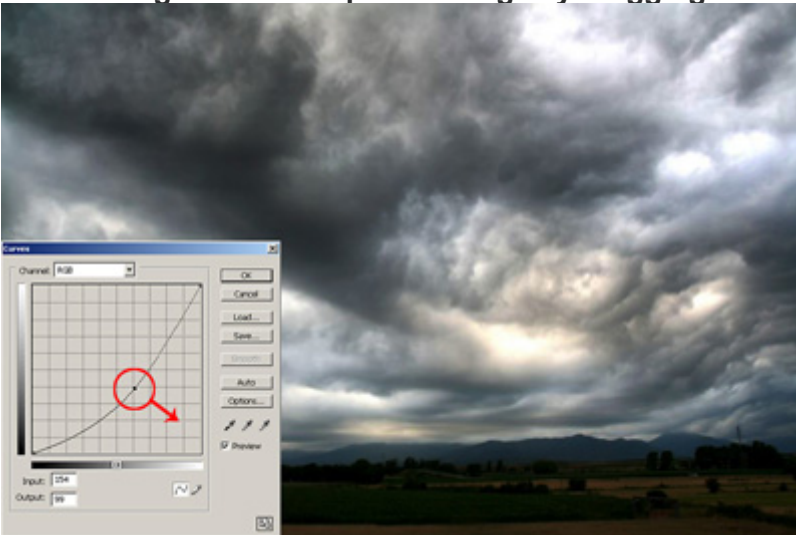


See the image below? Transform this cloudy country side picture into a stormy and dramatic evening by adding simple lightning effects!

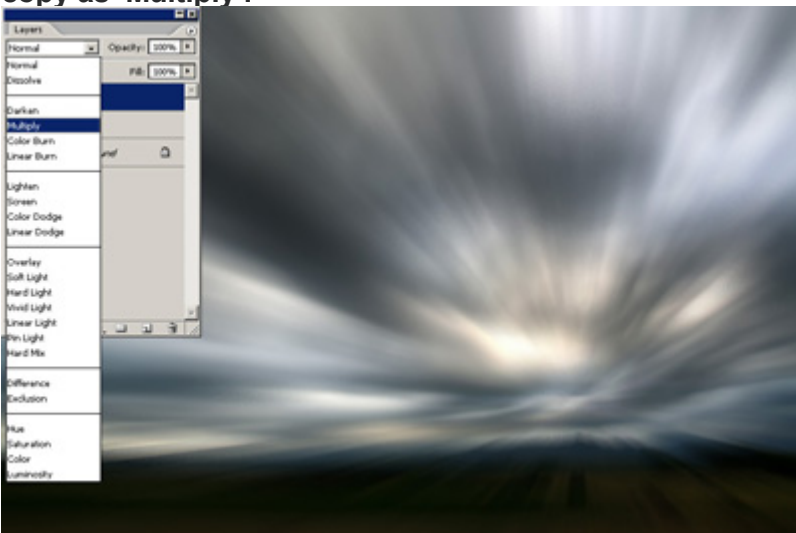


Start off by duplicating the default layer (CTRL+J) as Layer 1.

Reduce brightness of duplicate image by dragging center point of the Curves tool (CTRL+M).



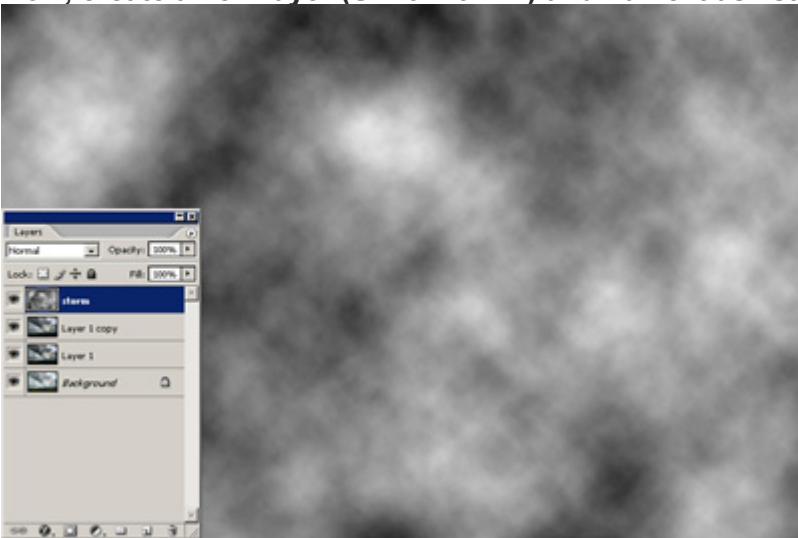
Duplicate Layer 1 as Layer 1 copy. Go to **Filter > Radial Blur > Zoom : 80**. Set the blend mode for Layer 1 copy as 'Multiply'.



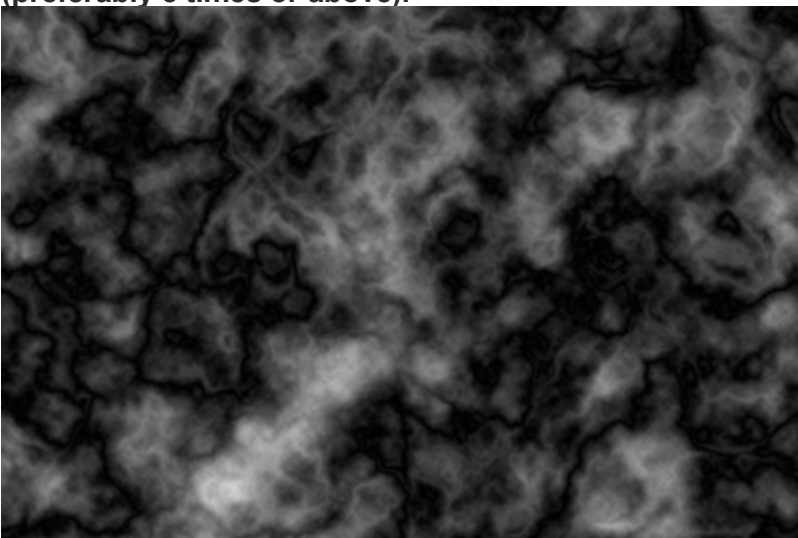
You should get something like this:



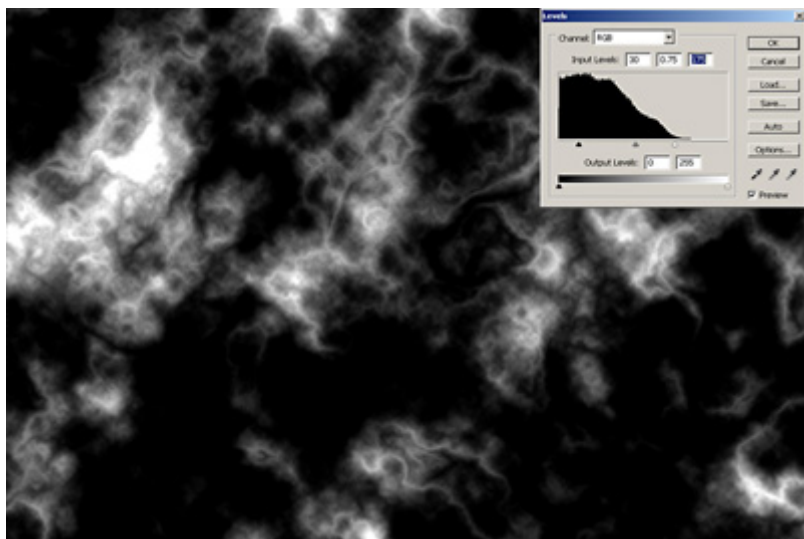
Now, create a new layer (Shift+Ctrl+N) and name it as “storm”. Go to *Filter > Render > Clouds*.



Next up, select *Filter > Render > Difference Clouds*. Apply the same filter (Ctrl+F) several times (preferably 5 times or above).

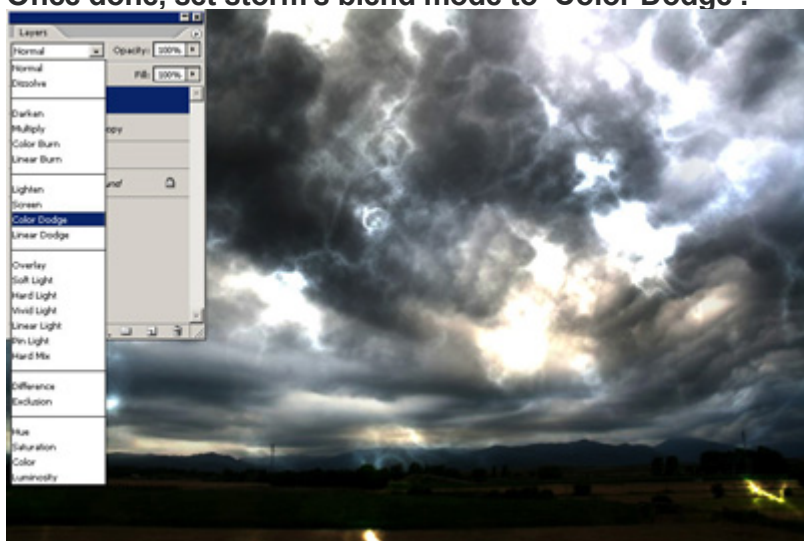


Bring out the Levels Window (Ctrl+L) and apply settings until you see lumps of clouds appearing (*Input Levels: 30/0.75/175*).

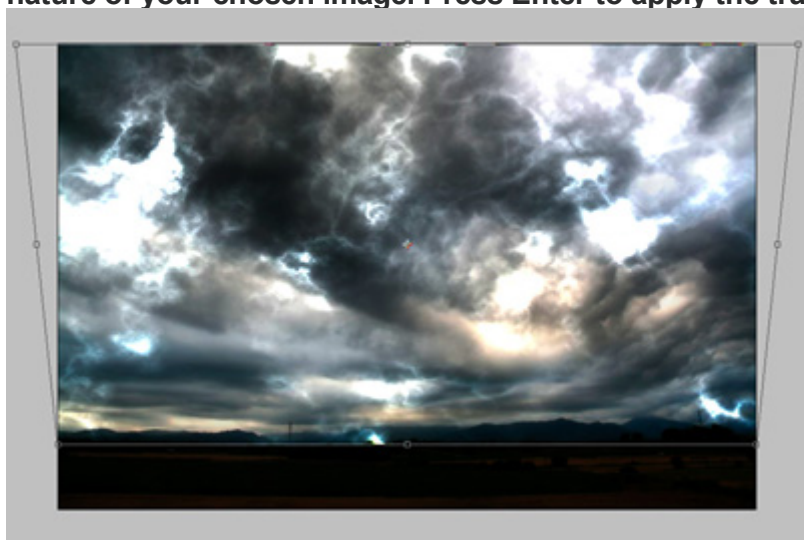


NOTE: Results/settings may vary as each clouds/difference clouds rendered may differ.

Once done, set storm's blend mode to 'Color Dodge'.



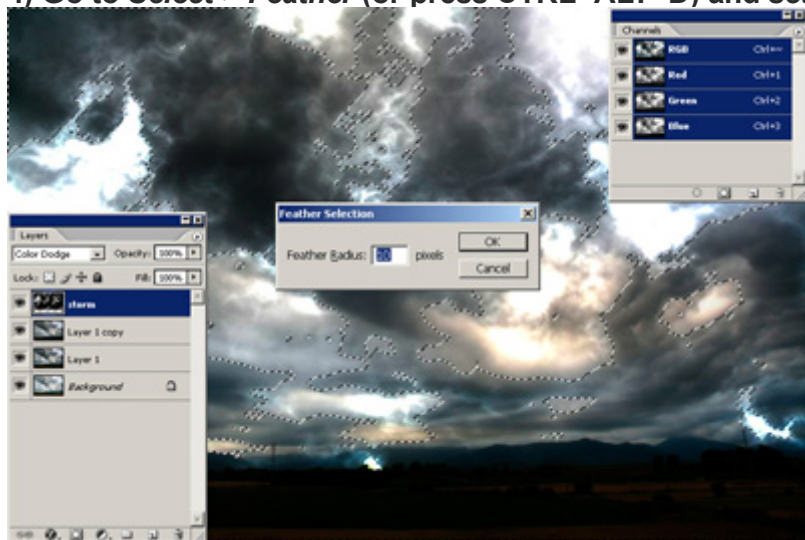
Transform (CTRL+T) and scale the image. You can also adjust the perspective a little, based on the nature of your chosen image. Press Enter to apply the transformation.



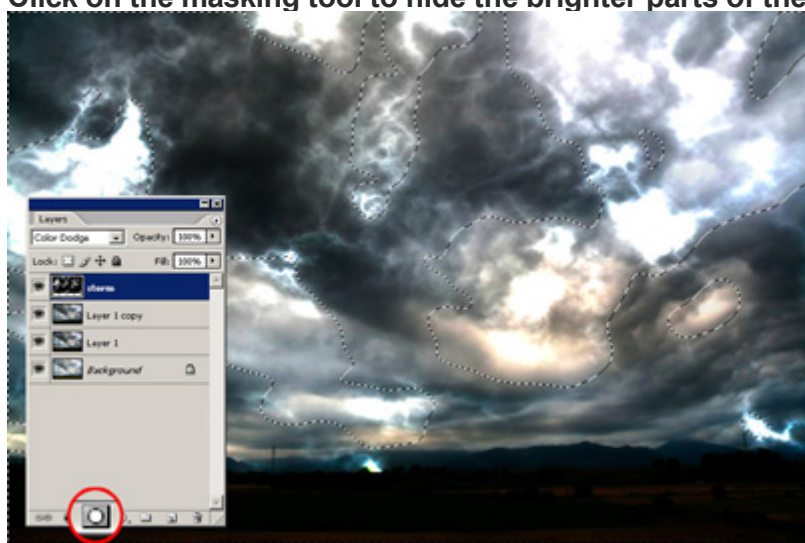
Next, we should remove areas which are too bright. Follow these sub-steps:

- 1) Go to *Windows > Channel* (to bring out the channels window).**
- 2) Hold CTRL and click on Red channel (to make a selection).**
- 3) Go to *Select > Inverse* (or press Shift+CTRL+I) to invert the selection.**

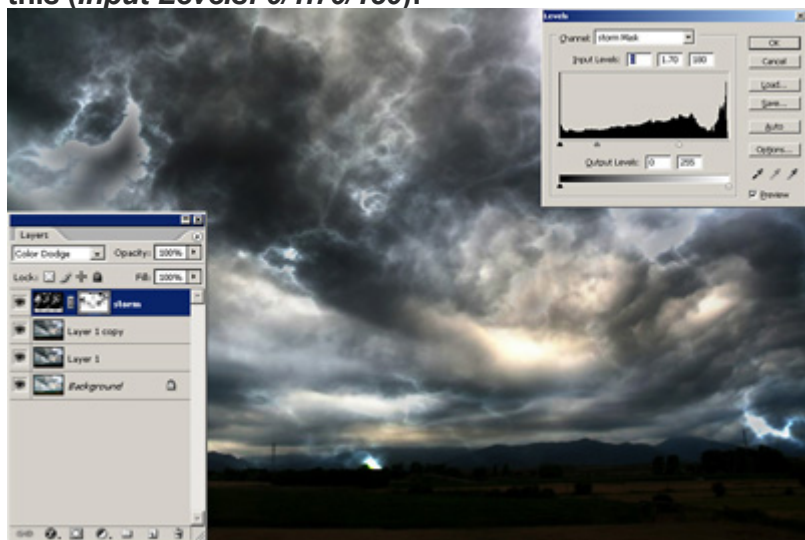
4) Go to **Select > Feather** (or press **CTRL+ALT+D**) and set **radius : 10 pixels**.



Click on the **masking tool** to hide the brighter parts of the layer.

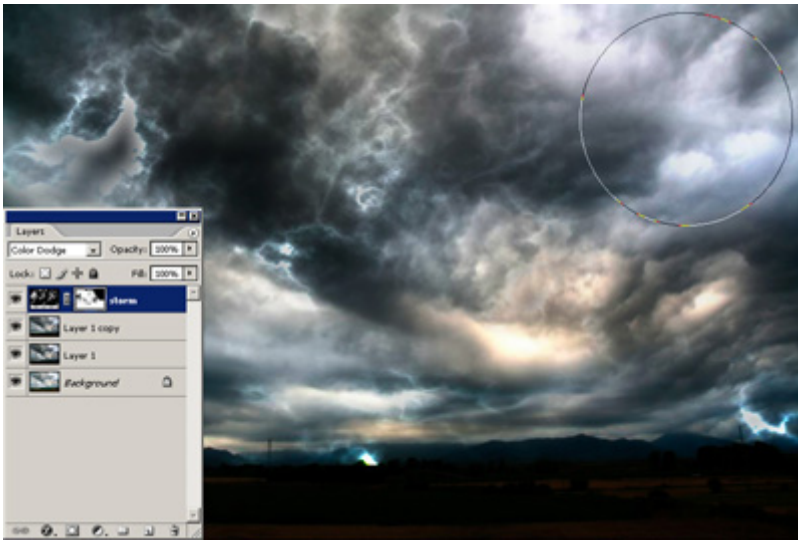


Select layer mask of 'storm' layer and further adjust the levels (**CTRL+L**) until you have something like this (**Input Levels: 0/1.70/180**):



NOTE: Again, results/settings may vary as each clouds/difference clouds rendered from previous steps may differ.

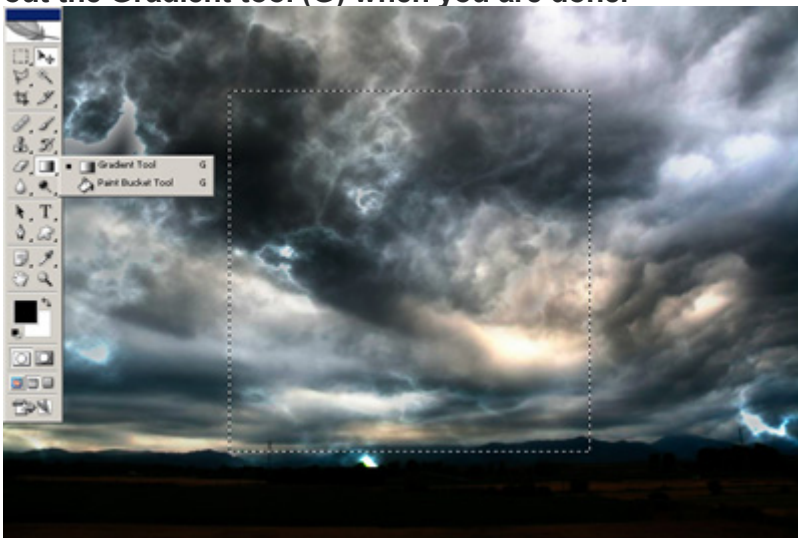
I've decided to remove some bright areas of the storm by brushing over the layer mask with a soft black brush.



Now that we have got the storm going, lets add a few bolts of lightning.



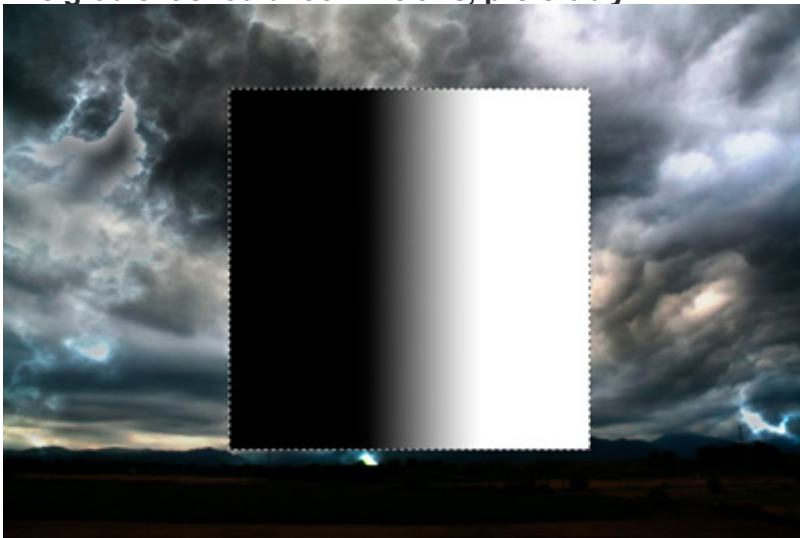
First, create a new layer (Shift+CTRL+N) and name it as 'lightning'. Using the Rectangular Marquee tool (M), select a square box (holding down the Shift key while dragging will create a perfect square). Bring out the Gradient tool (G) when you are done.



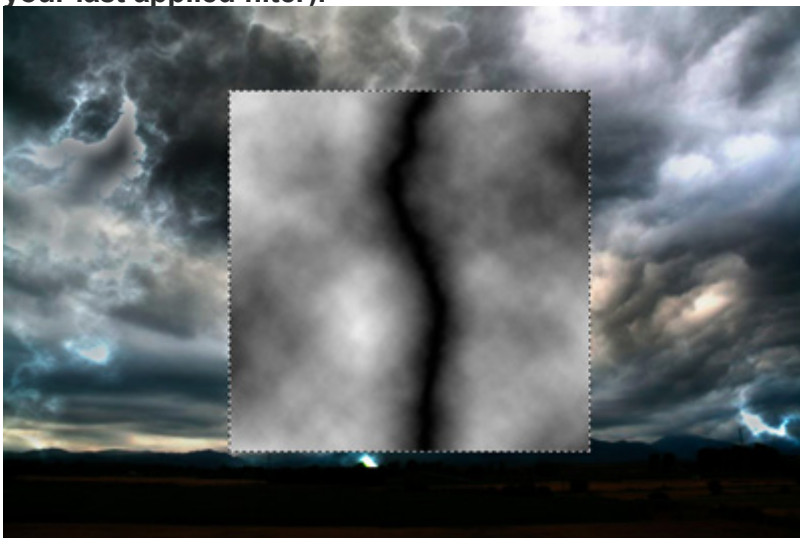
Create a gradient by dragging through the center of the selection.



The gradient should look like this, preferably.



With the selection still active, go to *Filter > Render > Difference Clouds* (or just press CTRL+F as it is your last applied filter).

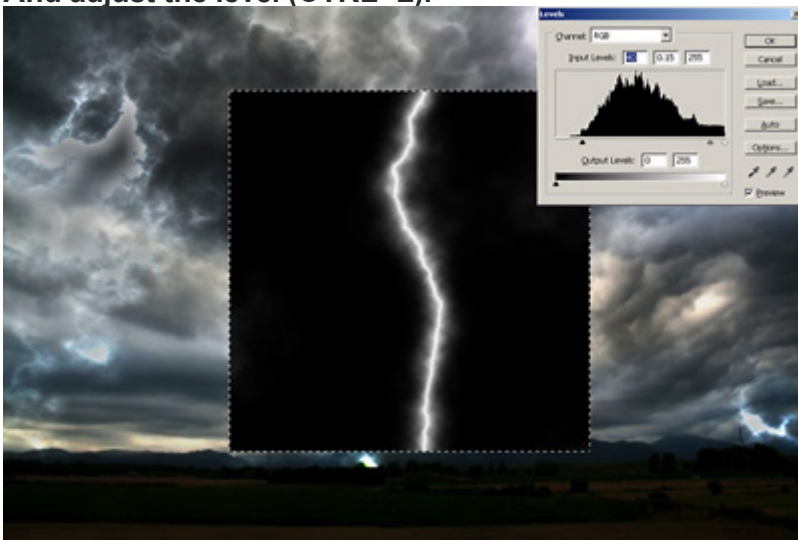


NOTE: Difference Clouds rendered differs as it is randomly generated.

Press CTRL+I to invert it.



And adjust the level (CTRL+L).



Apply the lightning's blend mode to 'Screen'.



Next, use the eraser tool to remove any hard edges. Make sure the hardness is set to 0%.



Transform (CTRL+T) the bolt of lightning to which ever way you like.



I've tweaked mine a little bit more; adding glows, reducing brightness, and etc. This is my final image.



Before & After

