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The Coming Storm

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Learning Curve
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There are some dark clouds on the horizon... Looks like a storm is coming.

Rather than hide in the root cellar I am going to wait for it with open arms. You see, the storm I am referring to is part of *Scourge*, the final expansion in the *Onslaught* block. I love the countdown to the Prerelease of a new set. Without a doubt, previewing the cards from an upcoming release is the best part of my writing gig. Even more exciting than the specific cards is looking ahead to the new ways the game is played. Like every new expansion R&D concocts, *Scourge* introduces a couple of new mechanics—as well as some new twists on older ones. Today we are going to preview *Dragonstorm*, which features a mechanic—storm—that allows you make multiple copies of a spell based on how many spells have already been played that turn. To be more precise...

Storm is a triggered ability that functions while the card is on the stack. "Storm" means "When you play this spell, put a copy of it onto the stack for each other spell that was played before it this turn. If the spell has any targets, you may choose new targets for any number of the copies."

At first glance this might seem to create an infinite series of triggers that would allow you to continually copy the spell with each copy you make, not unlike the old children's fantasy about finding a genie in a bottle who grants you three wishes and continually using your third wish for three more wishes. Obviously storm doesn't work that way. That would be ludicrous. Look carefully at the rules for storm and you will notice the words "play" and "put." Those words were carefully chosen. The copies are put directly onto the stack—they aren't played. That means the copies aren't counted by other storm spells played later during the turn and that they don't actually trigger the Storm ability themselves.

The word "play" is also bad news for blue mages. Since all of the copies go on the stack when you *play* the spell—meaning when it is announced, not when it resolves—each of the copies will still be looming on the stack even if the original spell is countered. **Countering a storm spell won't counter the copies it makes.** The copies can be countered like any other spell on the stack—whether they were "put" there or played—but will require a separate counter for each copy.

The number of copies is set when the storm spell is played. Storm counts only spells that were played—by any player—before the storm spell was played. For example, if you cast *Dragonstorm* as your first spell for the turn and your opponent plays *Counterspell* and you counter back with *Force of Will*, you would not get the benefit of the additional two spells that were played and you would have to make do with one Dragon.

Storm Seeker

Now it is clear from looking at this card that no one is going to be content casting *Dragonstorm* for only one Dragon. For starters, it is more expensive to play than most Dragons! Besides, where would the fun in that be? As soon as I saw this card I started looking for my *Early Harvests* and began hatching plans for a fourth or fifth turn army of Dragons.



Storm (When you play this spell, copy it for each spell played before it this turn.)

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Storm of Dragons
Dragonstorm deck

Main Deck
60 cards

10 Forest	2 Anger	4 Dragonstorm
4 Karplusan Forest	4 Kilnmouth Dragon	4 Early Harvest
6 Mountain	2 Rorix Bladewing	2 Krosan Reclamation
4 Wooded Foothills	4 Shivan Dragon	4 Rampant Growth
24 lands	4 Wall of Mulch	2 Rites of Spring
	16 creatures	4 Wild Growth
		20 other spells

Wall of Mulch is to slow your opponent down and allow you to draw a card to replace it—this deck requires a handful of spells to exploit **Dragonstorm**. Without a lot of opportunity for playtesting—I can't tell anyone else about the cards prior to the article—I don't know if I want the **Krosan Reclamations** or just more Dragons. **Anger** and **Rites of Spring** are also question marks but I really wanted some way to kill an opponent the turn I played **Dragonstorm**.

With an **Anger** in your graveyard and two Dragons in hand you can get a turn five kill with this deck. On your fifth turn lay a land and play **Wild Growth**. Play another **Wild Growth** and then **Early Harvest**. Of the seven mana you had available this turn you will have used five so far and you can float two more. When you untap you will have nine mana available—seven in play and the two that you floated. Sounds like a good time to cast **Dragonstorm**. Let's pretend your opponent has two counterspells available and you only get to search for two **Kilnmouth Dragons** and put them into play—triggering their amplify ability. You reveal the two Dragons you have in hand, giving each **Kilnmouth** +6/+6 and attack for 22.

The kill requires seven specific cards in hand and a specific graveyard so that precise sequence of events is highly unlikely, but still possible. The trick to the deck—and to any deck that is going to exploit storm—will be to hold on to as many spells as possible until the turn you "go off." As an alternative, there will certainly be situations where you can bait your opponent into casting multiple spells in a turn. In a different deck with a more aggressive early game you can exert enough pressure on your opponent that he will be forced to **Starstorm** during combat or **Shock** your morph. Even baiting a counterspell will help your storm count. Remember it counts spells that are played; even your spells that are countered will count toward your total—in fact both your spell and the counterspell your opponent played will count.



I don't know that I will be deconstructing any **Dragonstorm** decks next year leading up to Regionals but I am sure that storm is an interesting new mechanic that will be a part of the constructed **Magic** landscape for the foreseeable future. Don't let **Dragonstorm** fool you; while it is a splashy fun card, it is also the most expensive storm spell by a large margin. Most of them are three mana or less, so keep those **Early Harvests** where you can find them, boys and girls—I have a feeling they are going to come in handy.

Next week the previews continue as an old mechanic morphs into something a little less comfortable.

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Brian David-Marshall has been involved in **Magic** since 1994 when he was violently shaken by someone searching for the game. He has organized tournaments, run a store, and is currently the Pro Tour Historian. His latest venture is Top8Magic.com, the publishing house that is releasing Michael J. Flores: Deckade.



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