

Design a Dante's Inferno Game-Inspired Dark Flaming Hell Scene in PhotoShop

In this tutorial, I will show you the steps I took to create this really awesome looking, dark flaming hell scene in Photoshop, inspired by the **Dante's Inferno** game artworks.

Along the way, we will be using tons of layer blending techniques, filter effects, image adjustments, and various tools from the toolbox. You will learn how to combine those techniques into one and make awesome looking artwork in Photoshop.

Here is a preview of the final effect:



Alternative version which I adjusted the color saturation:



Before we begin, I'd like to introduce a bit of concept behind this artwork:

1. our hero arrives in hell, in front of him is a flaming river filled with lava
2. he must somehow get across the river and reach the island in the far distance, guarded by fearsome monsters,
3. he then has to get inside the castle on top of the island to rescue his lover.

Ok once you understand the concept, let's get started!

To complete this tutorial, you will need the following assets (they're on the website):

Foggy Plain

Cloud

Cliff

Castle

Dragon

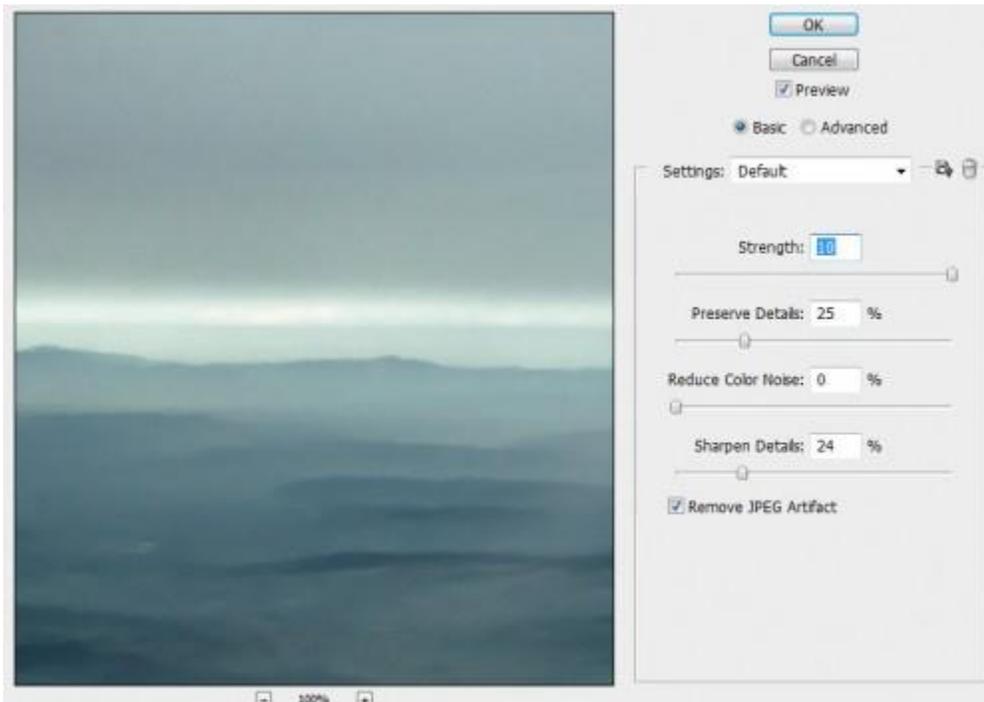
Skull

Warrior

Step 1

Create a new document size 1400px * 800px, fill the background layer with black. Load the “Foggy Plain” image into Photoshop, then copy and paste the entire image onto our document, resize it to fix the canvas size.

Name this layer as “plain”, apply the following “Reduce Noise” settings to it to get rid of the noisy bits and add some gloomy effect to it:



And you will have the following effect:



Use the Spot Healing tool to remove the dots on the image:



And you will have the following effect:



Duplicate this plain layer once, change the blending mode of the duplicated layer to “Multiply”, this way will darken the image. Add a layer mask to the duplicate layer to hide the top sky portion so it remains bright:



And here is the effect so far:



Step 2

Now let's load the "cliff" image into Photoshop, then drag the entire image onto our canvas, resize and position it as shown below:



Here comes the interesting bit: grab a really soft (0% hardness), big round brush, erase the ocean part and the edges of the cliff off – the ultimate goal is to try and blend the cliff into our image as seamless as possible:



Now we have the cliff texture here, however it looks quite boring to me with just a single bit sort of sticking out. So I decided to extend it a bit to cover the entire lower portion of the canvas.

This is probably the most tricky part of the tutorial – The goal we got to achieve is to take this cliff texture and somehow make it longer to cover the lower portion.

To do this, following the following steps:

1. make several duplicates of the original cliff layer
2. use the same method as described in the previous step to erase the edge portion
3. **on each duplicated layer**, use Ctrl + T to free transform them so they look different.
4. Then drag them to across the canvas to form a joint cliff

You can make as many duplicated layers as you want.

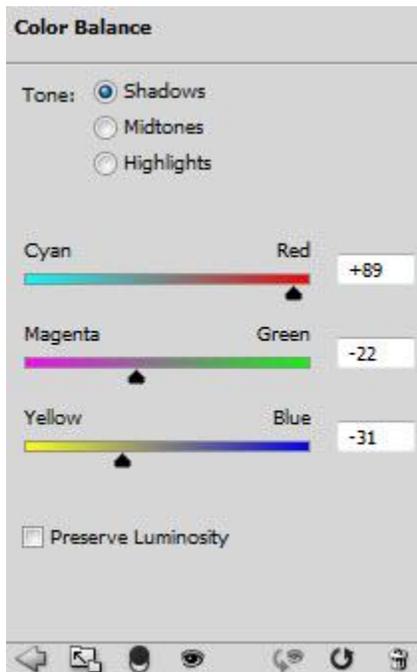
Also try to experiment layer blending mode with each layer, you will discover how powerful those layer blending modes are.

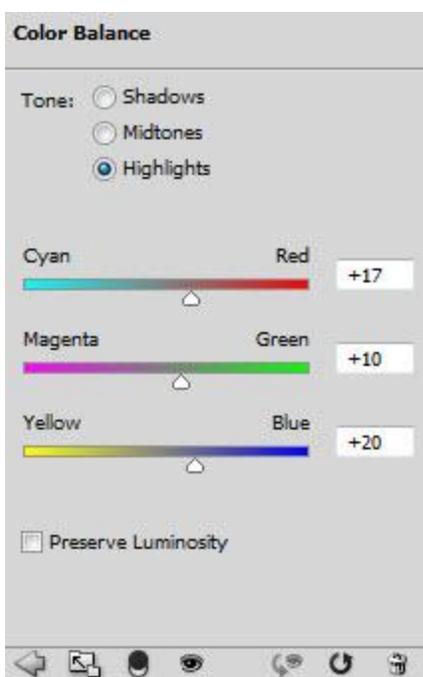
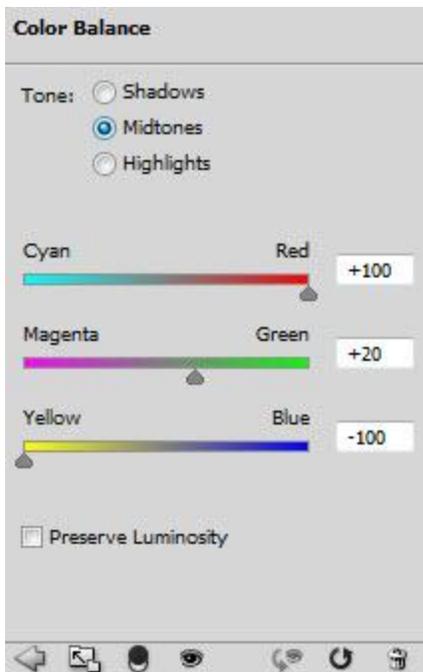
Here is my effect after the blending and duplicating: (This effect is made by around 10 duplicated cliff layer texture)



Add the following three image adjustment layer and their respective layer mask to it:

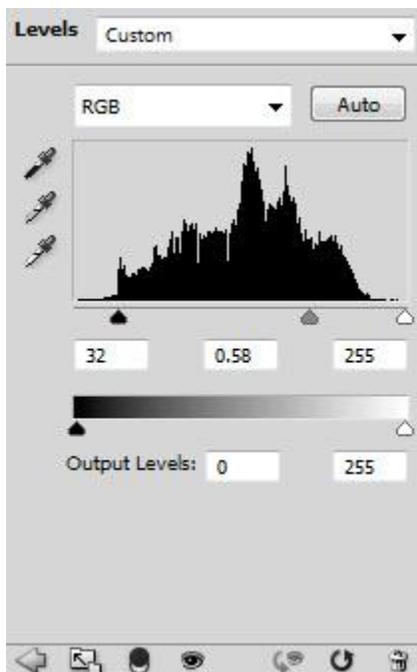
Color Balance (Drop opacity to 70%)





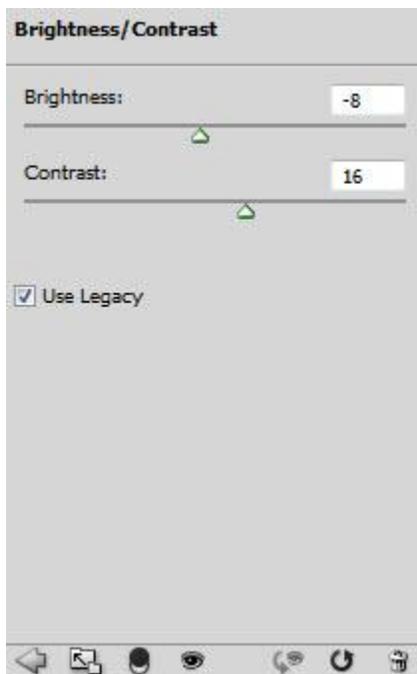


Levels





Brightness and Contrast



and here is the effect so far:



You can see I deliberately produce those color and lighting dynamics through layer masking and blending options – they will be used in future steps.

Step 3

Now let's load the "cloud" image into Photoshop and drag it onto our document, name the new layer as "cloud". Desaturate this cloud layer

and use a big soft brush to erase the outer portion of the cloud, leave the bits as show below:



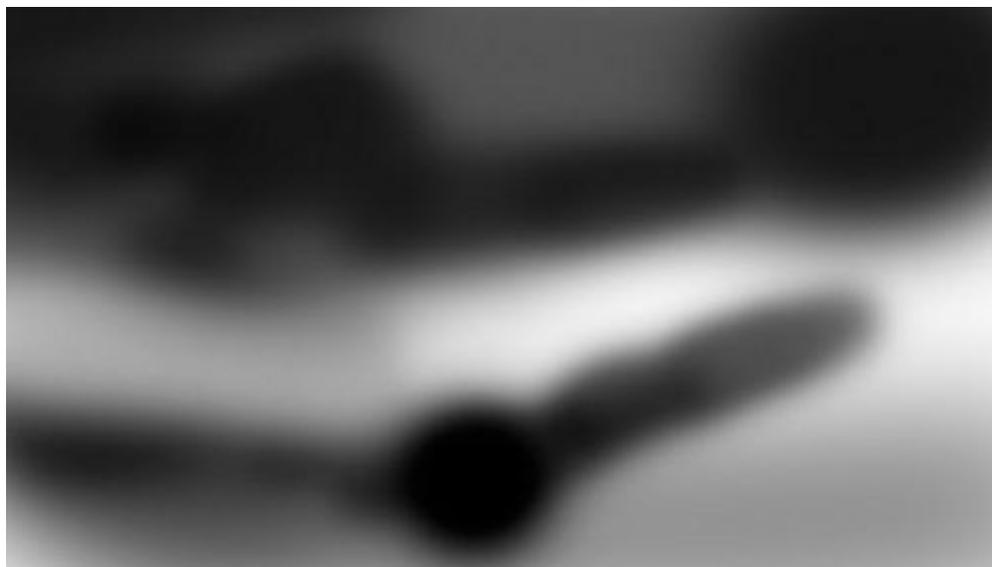
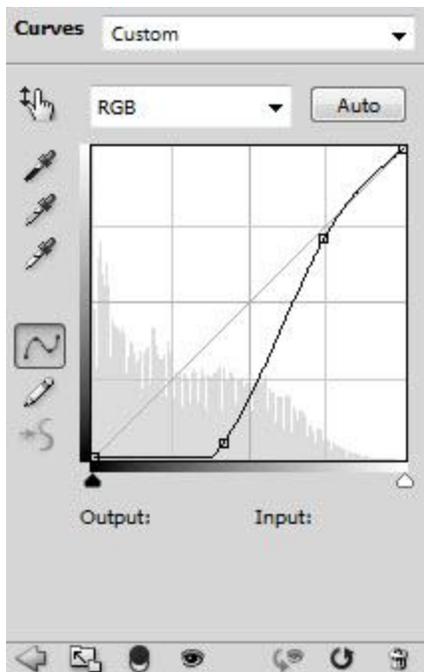
Change the blending mode to “color burn” and you will have the following effect:



Duplicate this cloud layer a few more times, position the duplicated layer around the edge of the cliff, adjust their blending mode as shown below:



add a curves adjustment layer to it with mask as shown below:

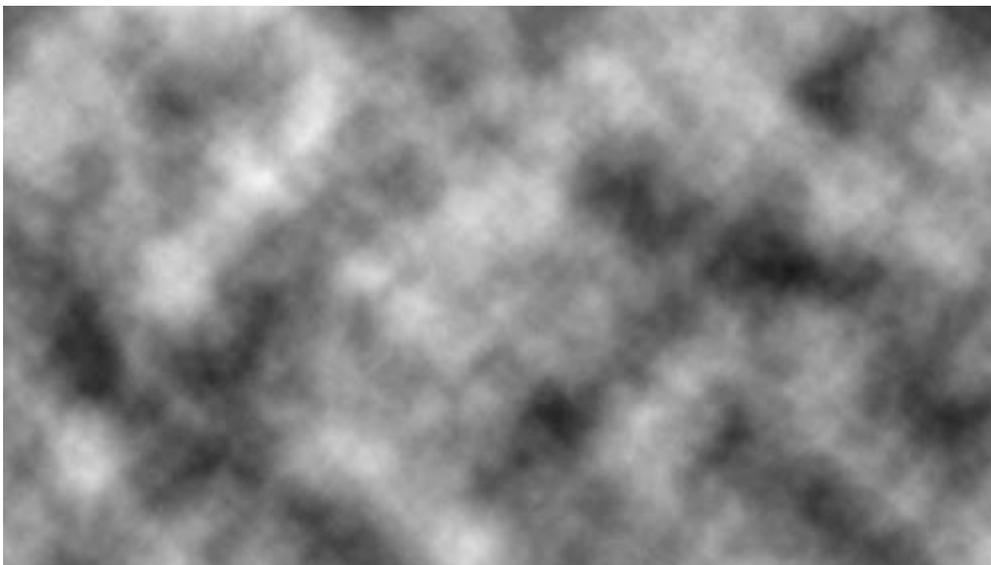


You will have the following effect:

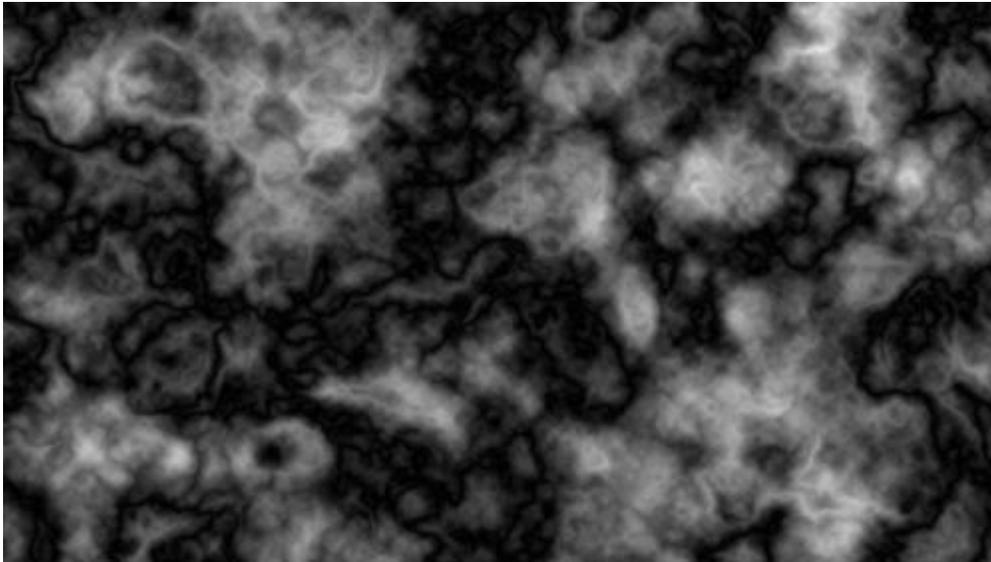


Step 4

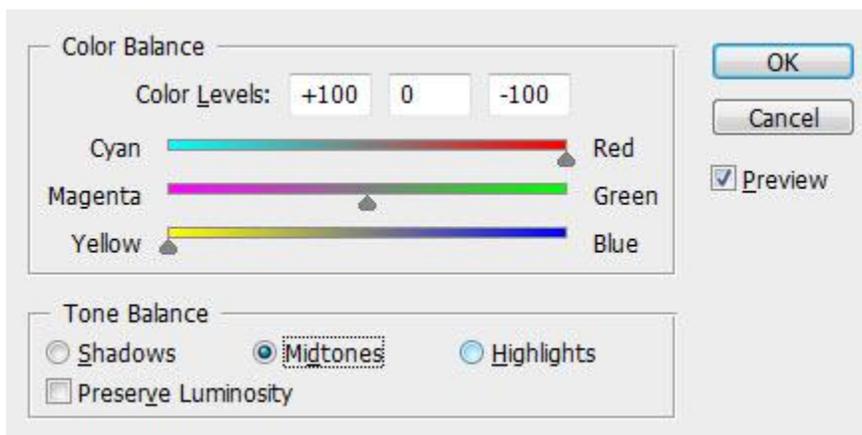
Now let's produce some Lava and Flaming effect to the image. Create a new layer called "lava" and fill it with Black, render some cloud using the cloud filter, as shown below:

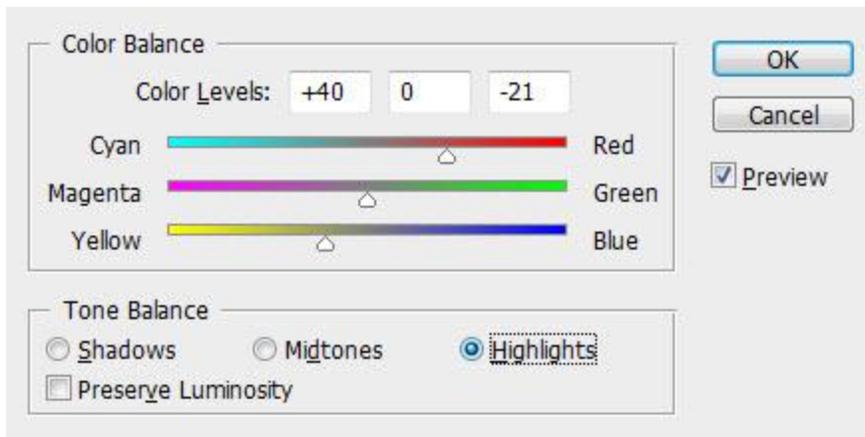


Then render some difference cloud afterwards: (try press Ctrl + F a few more times for different result)



Apply the following colour balance settings to it:





Then resize this layer “lava” to a very small size and position it into the centre of the canvas, erase the edges with a small soft brush, you will have the following effect:



change its blending mode to “color dodge”, you will have the following effect:



Again we duplicate this lava layer, rotate and resize the duplicated layer, until it covers the center area:



Step 5

Now load the “castle” image into Photoshop and select the upper portion of the image without the lake, copy and paste it onto our document. Desaturate it and change its layer blending mode to “hard light”, you will have the following effect:

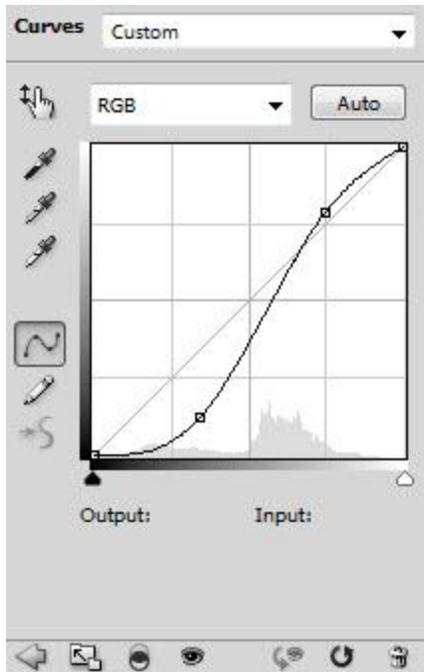


erase the edges off with a soft brush:

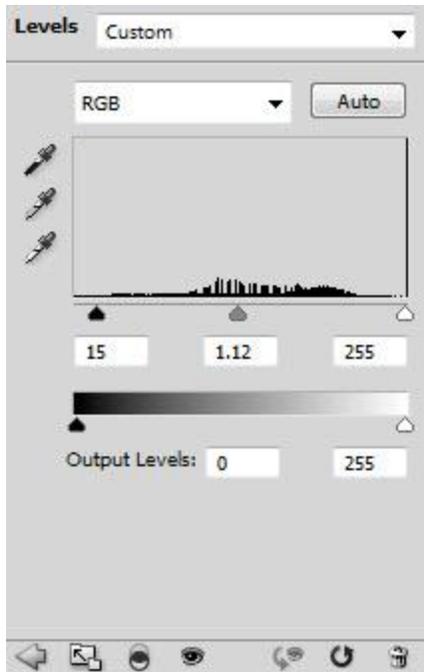


add following three image adjustment layer with relevant mask attached to them, to the castle layer as clipping mask:

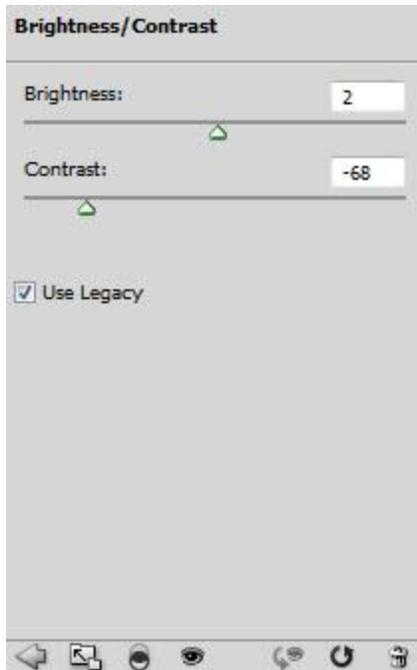
Curves



Levels



Brightness and Contrast



Go back to the original “lava” layer and make a few more duplications, drag those duplicated lava layer on top of the castle layer, change their layer blending mode to “soft light”, apart from the one on the bottom – set it to “screen”:



Now we can add some smoke effect to the image. To do this, create a new layer called “smoke” and render some cloud on it, add a lens flare in the centre top:



Add the following mask to this cloud layer:



Change the blending mode of this cloud layer to “color burn”, you will have the following effect:



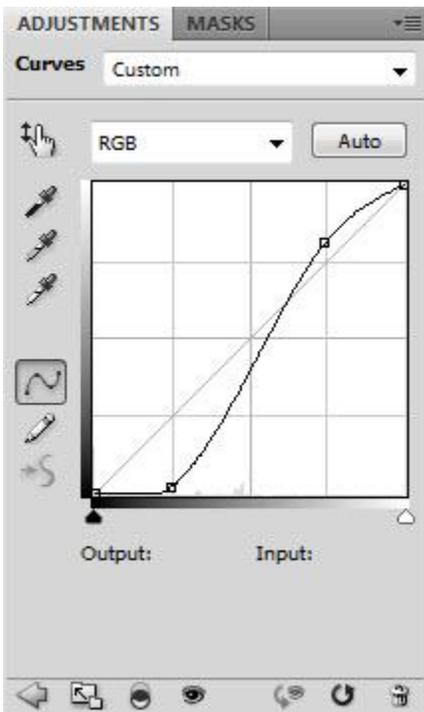
Step 6

Now let's add some skulls to the scene. Load the “Skull” image into Photoshop, drag it onto our document, resize and position it as shown below: (I have already erased the edge off and desaturate it)

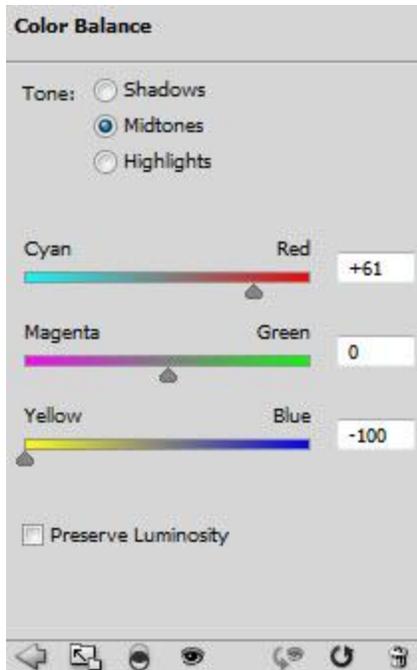


Add the following two adjustment layer to it as clipping mask:

Curves



Color Balance



Create a new layer called “skull shadow” below the skull layer, use a black brush with 30% flow and opacity, gently paint some shadow for the skull:



Put those skulls stuff into a folder, then duplicate the folder and scatter the skull around the canvas (make sure to adjust the shadow position accordingly)

You can duplicate as many as you want, I only did it once for demonstrate purpose here:



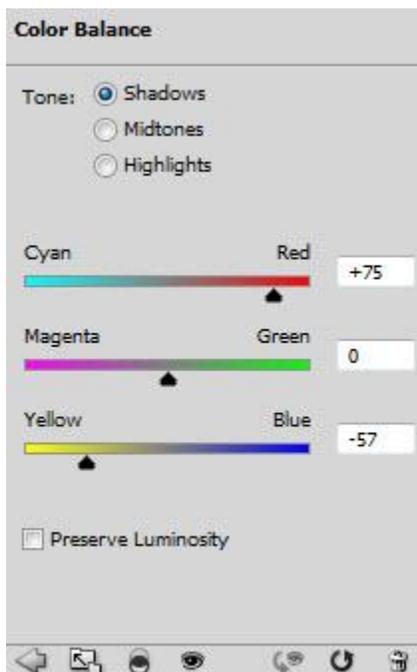
Step 7

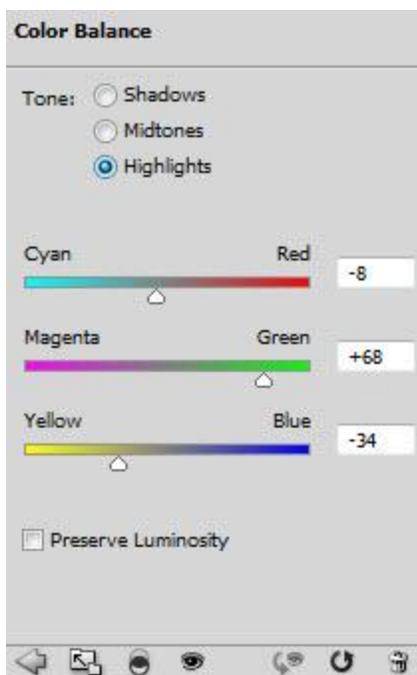
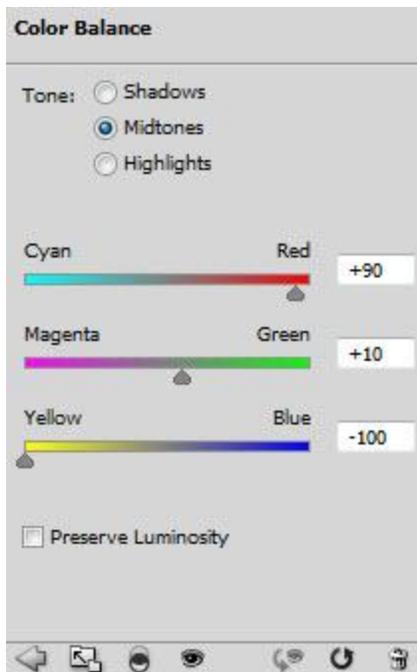
Now let's add some flying monster to the image. Load the "Dragon" image into photoshop, drag it onto our document on name the layer "dragon". Desaturate the layer and change its blending mode to "Hard Light", you will have the following effect:



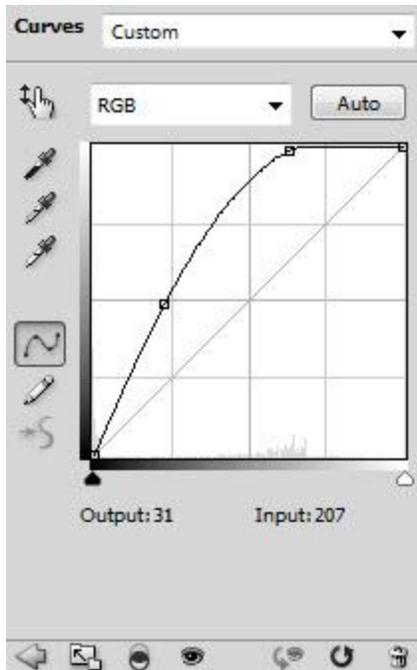
Add the following two adjustment layers as clipping mask to the dragon layer:

Colour Balance





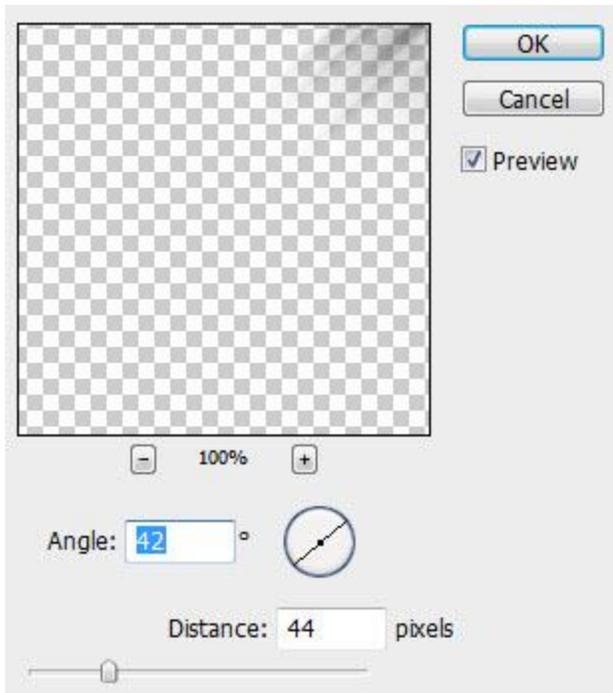
Curves



You will have the following effect:



To add some motion to the monster, we can duplicate the dragon layer once and put it on top of the adjustment layers, apply the following motion blur settings to the duplicated layer:



change the blending mode to “color dodge” and duplicate it a few more times:



Make a folder and put all dragon layers into it, duplicate the folder and resize and rotate it, position it to the left, as show below: (don't forget reduce the opacity of the dragon a bit, because it's a bit further away)



Step 8

Now let's add our hero onto the image. Load the "Warrior" image into Photoshop, drag it onto our canvas and name the layer "hero", resize it and put it to the position as shown below: (erase and desaturate as usual, set blending mode to "Vivid Light")



Duplicate this layer twice, keep the blending mode as “vivid light”. You will have the following effect:



Use the same method as used for the skull, paint some shadow under the hero by make a new layer called “hero shadow”:

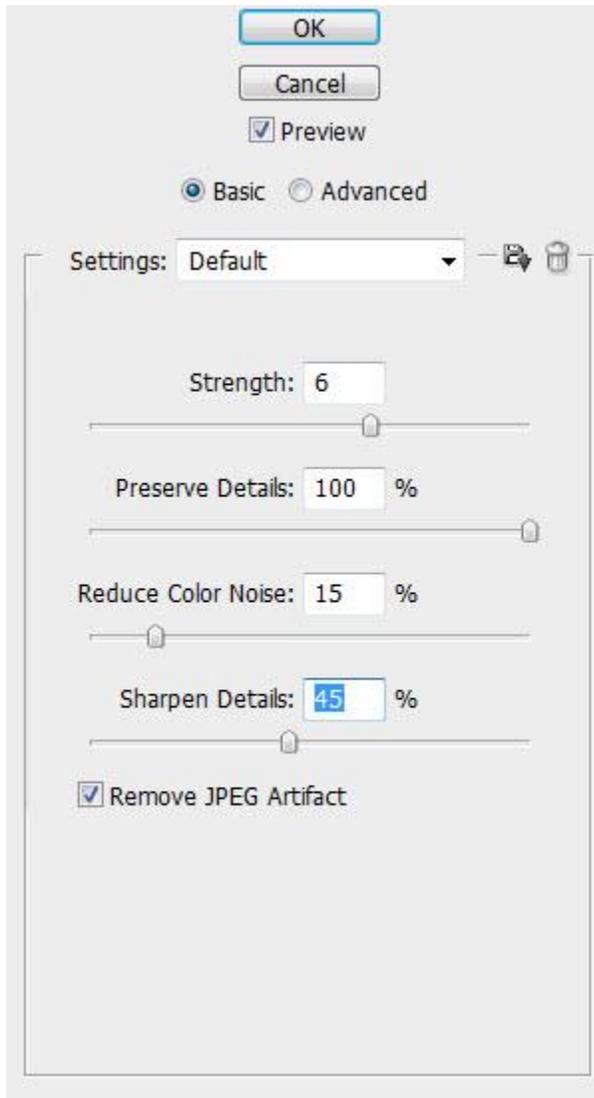


Step 9

That's pretty much it! To spice up the image a bit, I added a few more lighting layers by simply creating a new layer with the overlay blending mode, grab a white big soft brush, and paint over the following areas:



Finally I flatten the image, reduce the noise of the image a bit with the following settings:



and here is my final effect for this tutorial: (click to enlarge)



Alternative version which I adjusted the color saturation: (click to enlarge)



That's it for this tutorial! Hope you enjoy it and find it useful!