

*ZERO ANGEL'S*  
War of the Ages  
Book 1

THE THRONE OF IIO

By Robby Richardson

An Apocalypse Designs Book

## **THE THRONE OF IIO**

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# PROLOGUE

## Control

He was slim and athletic, and ran the forest as one born in it. Although not an adult in the eyes of his village, he appeared able to take care of himself. He wore a hooded cloak that did not quite conceal the scimitar at his waist. His long straight black hair framed a face that would be considered handsome if it were not so gaunt after weeks in the wild with only the food he could catch as sustenance, his rations having run out long ago. His most striking feature was his eyes; they brimmed with an energy that was not natural and appeared as if with a glance he could slay.

It was not far from the truth.

Uriel Ardrest was an elemental in training—a hume that harnessed the magicks of the world of Ilo to affect the environment around him in extreme, often destructive, ways. His preferred element was lightning—one of the most destructive and unrestrained elements available to humes—it suited him.

Uriel frequently strayed into the wilds to train himself, but this time was different. He was searching for something, but he did not know what. Uriel had never found fulfillment back at the tiny, nameless village he hailed from. Already on this journey, he had been gone longer and traveled farther than he had ever dared before. Countless times, it had only been his quick wit and burgeoning magicks that saved him from certain doom. The wilds of the continent of Morin were not to be taken lightly by anyone.

The forest thinned as he traveled and he realized he had reached the foothills of the Elfwall Mountains. The border between Morin and the deserts of Aerth, the Elfwall was one of the natural defenses separating the lands of humes from that of the homeland of the high elves. Uriel briefly considered turning back, the Elfwall was home to all manner of dangerous creatures, but he disregarded the danger just as quickly. Uriel was quite dangerous himself, and the air had become charged with magickal energy. Lightning arced across the pupils of his eyes as Uriel began tracking the source of the magick.

He was more cautious now, fearing detection from the magick-users nearby. As he walked amongst the rapidly thinning forest, Uriel reached out

with all of his senses, physical and magickal, and almost cried out in surprise. The magicks he tracked were wholly alien to anything Uriel knew.

*What is this?* Uriel asked himself. Another hume might turn aside at the realization that the magicks were independent of everything he had ever known and even seemed to jar angrily against the planet of IIo as though fighting for control, but this knowledge just made Uriel more determined to discover its origins.

Sensing that the source of the magicks was beyond a small cliff ahead, Uriel ran out of the forest towards the base of the cliff. Seeing no easy way up, Uriel lifted his hands while running and began to channel magick. The alien magicks were everywhere and Uriel had to struggle against them in order to summon the wind to aid him. Although not his chosen element, wind was familiar to Uriel. The whirlwind that Uriel summoned forth did its job and Uriel flew up and over the cliff easily; too easily, in fact. Uriel soared several feet into the air above the cliff before crashing into a tree.

Uriel rushed to grab a branch before he falling and caught his breath before lifting himself solidly onto the branch and into the tree. Uriel was pleased with his magickal prowess. Such a spell would have sapped nearly all of his energy a few months ago; now he had overcompensated and barely felt the strain.

He did not have the control his master-in-magick was always stressing for him to find. He made a note to make sure to be careful not to put too much magick into his spells from now on—at least the ones that had him as a target. Figuring that while he was up in the tree he might as well make use of the vantage point, Uriel slowly made his way from tree to tree in the small copse on top of the cliff until he could see through to the valley below.

Uriel took in the view. He was on top of a large hill that led directly down to a small village surrounded on three sides by hills. The village was unlike any Uriel had ever seen with architecture that seemed from another realm of existence, but what struck Uriel most was the amount of magick being worked. Everywhere he looked that strange alien magick filled the air, objects, and people of the town. Machines running on magick instead of manpower were watched over by a strange, beautiful race of creatures. They were over six feet tall and slimmer than any hume. Their lithe frames belied a strength and athleticism that was apparent from the grace and confidence of every movement. Even the children of the village possessed this grace as they danced in the middle of the town square. Uriel thought they were dancing that is, but after a few minutes of observing them, he realized they were being trained to fight. Never had Uriel thought high elves could be so magnificent.

For that is surely what they were. Uriel had never seen an elf before, but all of the tales described them as tall, agile creatures that worked the magicks of

another world, and Uriel would have sworn that if he were to walk up to one, then it would have the telltale pointed ears and almond-shaped eyes of an elf. All of the tales also agreed on the fact that high elves were creatures of evil that desired nothing more than to enslave and destroy all other races...and here they were north of the Elfwall.

Suddenly, the wind changed and with it Uriel caught a snatch of words spoken in a language sounding more of music than speech; it was the only warning Uriel had before he felt the alien magicks to his side tense, swell and release. With the release, blades of pure force crashed into the branch he stood on and the trees nearby. Uriel dove from his falling branch and drew forth the essence of water from all around before pushing the energies towards the grass below him. A slide of water manifested and began rushing down the hill for several dozen feet. His breath was knocked out of him as he hit the ground, but the slide carried him until Uriel came to a sudden stop against a rock outcropping. Uriel prayed to any god that would listen for a way out. Hearing shouts, Uriel looked up to see over a dozen elves at the top of the hill. "Dammit!" he swore in frustration, and then again; seeing the elves gesturing in his direction before the hillside around him erupted from their spells.

Pelted with rocks and dirt, Uriel ignored the stinging sensations all over his body and began running sideways across the hill towards a small boulder that looked as if it could offer some protection. Uriel felt more than heard the next spell of the elves and dove behind the boulder at the last second. His breath ragged and coming in gasps, Uriel reached out with his magicks in every direction drawing on the elements until he could hold no more.

...And then he drew more.

"Enough!" he shouted in a voice many times deeper and magnified by the magicks within him. Thrusting his left arm out to the side, a sudden gale of wind threw him out from his hiding place as the elven wizards destroyed it. Uriel stopped himself several spans away with another gust of wind as he turned and faced the elves. With bowed head and arms outstretched, Uriel struggled to control the magicks within him as they raged against him to be unleashed upon his enemies. Slowly, he began to close the distance between his hands, but every inch was a battle against the magicks. Being this deep into his own magick, he could easily feel the universe around the elves bend and twist as they began to cast a new spell—one that would surely destroy him if they finished it. He let himself grin as he brought his fingertips to within an inch of each other. This one he would not let them get off. He closed his hands and his head snapped up as the magick coursed through him. At the sight of the white energy filling his eyes, every elf dropped their offensive spells in an attempt to erect some kind of magickal shield.

They were too late. The wind summoned by Uriel threw the elves in every

direction, but Uriel himself was not protected from the forces he unleashed. His head slammed against the ground and Uriel blacked out.

When he opened his eyes, Uriel was not sure if he could get up again. His head was throbbing and his vision was blurred. His right arm was bleeding badly and he had countless other wounds from the near misses of the elves. After a few minutes of lying on the ground, he was finally able to gingerly climb to his knees, but was filled with nausea and forced to empty his stomach. Uriel muttered, "So much for sun-blasted control."

He looked up and was even more surprised than when he had seen the elven town. His magickal gale had cleared the hillside in front of him of every obstacle: knocking over small trees, ripping out grass and even causing boulders to roll away. Uriel grabbed a nearby branch that had been torn off by his magicks and used it as a walking stick to prop himself up as he carefully made his way up the hill.

"By all the gods, who would have thought I'd be fighting elves today?" he muttered to himself as he crested the hill.

A voice beside him answered his question in his own language, albeit with a melodic accent that was as beautiful as it was terrifying to Uriel, "By all the gods hume, surrender now."

"Blood of the Sun!" Uriel swore again and stumbled forward to try to reach the edge of the cliff in front of him. The force blasts of the elves followed him over it as he threw himself off.

Midair, Uriel attempted to focus the wind beneath him to cushion his fall, but realized he had extended himself too much with his last spell. Desperately, Uriel tried to garner any amount of magick within him to do something—anything. Ever so slowly, the first tendrils of magick began to enter his system, but it was too late.

Uriel crashed against the ground and heard the sickening sound of bone crunching before he blacked out. His last thoughts were of the horror stories he had heard of elven torture.

