

proficiency with flying vehicles. This check is made with disadvantage if the lookout failed their check this event (or if the mechanic failed their check in the previous event), but is made with advantage if the crew has been steadied during this event. With a success, the battle balloon evades the storm without taking damage. If the check fails, the battle balloon's hull takes 5 (1d10) bludgeoning damage.

Mechanic. The battle balloon rigging is being torn apart by the strong winds. The character must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check or a Wisdom check making use of proficiency with flying vehicles to prevent further damage. If the check fails, the battle balloon's hull takes 5 (1d10) bludgeoning damage.

The sentient cloud moves along as the storm passes. But there's no time to relax ...

BATTLE IN THE SKIES!

Immediately after the last "Riders on the Storm" event ends, the characters come under attack by an airship controlled by the Six. If anyone needs healing, you could let the characters each have a round to cast a spell or drink a potion. But otherwise, the action is continuous.

Dropping out from behind a dark cloud is an airship held aloft by a large balloon—emblazoned with the sigil of the Six! A crew of hobgoblins and goblins can be seen swarming the deck, and a ballista and three harpoon guns are trained on your vessel. To arms!

If the battle balloon took more than 20 damage, the chaos of the storm has distracted the characters and crew. In that event, all creatures on the characters' battle balloon are surprised by the airship sent by the Six to engage the franchise—and to steal the franchise's orrery components. Use the battle balloon stat block from appendix C for the Six's airship, but substitute the following Blowout Ballista attack for the Green Flame Arbalester attack:

Ranged Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, range 200/800 ft. (can't hit targets within 60 ft. of it), one target. **Hit:** 16 (3d10) piercing damage and 22 (4d10) fire damage.

The airship's crew is made up of a female **hobgoblin captain** named Garla, six **hobgoblins**, six **goblins**, six **smoke mephits**, and a **hippogriff** (serving as the captain's mount). All these creatures are recent mercenary hires, so none of them have the iconic affiliate of the Six features. They employ the following strategy, hoping to distract the characters while they steal the orrery housing and as many of its components as they can.

ROUND 1

The Six's airship begins 100 feet away from the characters' battle balloon. Roll initiative for the airship and all the creatures on it, but the creatures intentionally take no actions this turn. The Six's airship keeps more than 60 feet away from the characters' battle balloon to allow it to fire all weapons. In this round, the Six operatives don't reel in the lines of their airship's harpoon guns,

content to attack at range and entice the characters to make counterattacks against the enemy ship. The hippogriff, the smoke mephits, and half the goblins and hobgoblins are below decks to avoid damage. One of the mephits activates a *wand of magic detection*.

ROUND 2

If any harpoons have hit, the Six's crew begin to reel them in using the airship's Harpoon Haul, pulling the characters' battle balloon closer. In this and later rounds, if the Six's airship and the characters' battle balloon are within 5 feet of each other, half the goblins and all the hobgoblins except the captain board the characters' vessel, hoping to draw the characters into one-on-one combat.

ROUND 3

A second airship drops out of the clouds! This ship has no visible crew and no weapons, but it does have an outrageously sized needle attached to its prow. This second airship does not attack or have any active crew. It simply deploys the needle in the hope of puncturing the characters' battle balloon.

If the characters are using their own mobile headquarters, adjust the mechanism as appropriate to that headquarters, making use of some obvious vulnerability. The mechanism's purpose should be immediately obvious. For example, if the headquarters is a walking statue, the mechanism might be an arm that deploys a huge bear trap.

It takes 2 rounds for the needle to reach the characters' battle balloon. When the needle makes contact, it automatically deals sufficient damage to the balloon to create a slow-leaking puncture. This doesn't cause a sudden crash, but the battle balloon begins to descend slowly to the ground. To prevent this from happening, the characters must destroy the needle (AC 10, 75 hit points, immunity to poison and psychic damage, and vulnerability to bludgeoning damage).

Hoping that the characters are suitably distracted, all four mephits slip overboard and fly around and under the characters' battle balloon, hoping to pinpoint the location of any strong magic on board.

ROUND 4 AND BEYOND

Any remaining goblins emerge to board the battle balloon and attack the characters. The hobgoblin captain rides her hippogriff into battle. The mephits assume that the strongest magic they detect on the battle balloon is the orrery components the characters have collected, and they undertake any combination of attacks and ability checks you determine to claim those components. One mephit flies away with each component claimed, attempting to blind characters trying to follow it with its Cinder Breath.

The hobgoblins and goblins protect the mephits, even as they obey orders to take out characters holding the orrery components. If all the orrery components held by the characters are claimed, any surviving Six operatives flee the battle.

Splugoth's Retreat. The airship with the needle disengages once the needle has been successfully deployed or destroyed. As it departs the scene, the characters