

ENCOUNTER 27: SKY ROBBERY

Encounter Level 4 (875 XP)

SETUP

1 blue dragon sky bandit (D)

After the PCs take to the air for their trip to Sharn, read:

You lift off into clear skies, quickly leaving the town of Graywall behind. You head east across the sprawling plains of the frontier toward the pass between the Graywall Mountains.

Delan plans to take *Kordanga* back to Darguun, but he's more than willing to help the PCs get back to Sharn. The skies become cloudier as *Kordanga* moves southeast.

Halfway through the journey, read:

You cruise just below the clouds, passing over the gloomy landscape that abuts the mountains. Suddenly a dragon plummets through the clouds, pulls up sharply, then hovers above the fore-castle deck. The crew panics and scatters.

"Give me what you carry—all valuables and food. That will be sufficient tribute for me to allow you to live," says the dragon. It snarls, and its mouth and horns dance with lightning as it lands on the deck.

When the dragon attacks, show the players the illustration "Death from Above" (see *Adventure Book One*, page 32). Airships are rare enough above the borderlands that this dragon has taken *Kordanga* for a rich merchant vessel or a diplomatic envoy laden with loot. It is youthful enough to consider securing such loot "fun."

KORDANGA

Delan puts *Kordanga* into an emergency dive in a futile attempt to shake off the dragon. It remains anchored to the deck, its sharp claws digging into the planks. The PCs must hang on through 3 rounds of near free-fall, then make DC 12 Acrobatics checks as the airship levels off. On a failed check, a character is knocked prone before combat begins.

Delan pulls out of the dive 30 feet above the ground, but he keeps the ship moving at twice its speed. Because the dragon can't fly as fast as the ship, it can spend no more than 1 round in the air without losing the momentum the ship grants it and being left behind. If the PCs can force the dragon to become airborne and keep it in the air for 2 consecutive rounds, it falls 20 squares behind, and the airship can safely escape the encounter. Award full XP no matter how the dragon's threat is overcome.

For the purpose of combat, consider the airship deck to be standing still while the ground rushes past at 40 squares per round. Characters who are forced over the

Blue Dragon Sky Bandit (D)	Level 4 Solo Artillery
Large natural magical beast (dragon)	XP 875
Initiative +4	Senses Perception +8; darkvision
HP 232; Bloodied 116; see also <i>bloodied breath</i>	
AC 21; Fortitude 19, Reflex 16, Will 16	
Resist 15 lightning	
Saving Throws +5	
Speed 8, fly 10 (hover), overland flight 15	
Action Points 2	
⚔ Gore (standard; at-will) ♦ Lightning	
Reach 2; +9 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 plus 1d6 lightning damage.	
⚔ Claw (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +8 vs. AC; 1d4 + 4 damage.	
⚔ Draconic Fury (standard; at-will)	
The dragon makes a gore attack and two claw attacks.	
⚔ Breath Weapon (standard; recharge ⚡ ⚡) ♦ Lightning	
The dragon targets up to three creatures with its lightning breath; the first target must be within 10 squares of the dragon, the second target within 10 squares of the first, and the third target within 10 squares of the second; +9 vs. Reflex; 1d12 + 4 lightning damage. Miss: Half damage. This attack does not provoke opportunity attacks.	
⚔ Bloodied Breath (free, when first bloodied; encounter) ♦ Lightning	
Breath weapon recharges, and the dragon uses it.	
⚔ Frightful Presence (standard; encounter) ♦ Fear	
Close burst 5; targets enemies; +9 vs. Will; the target is stunned until the end of the dragon's next turn. Aftereffect: The target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends).	
⚔ Lightning Burst (standard; at-will) ♦ Lightning	
Area burst 2 within 20; +9 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 3 lightning damage. Miss: Half damage.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Draconic
Skills Athletics +16, Insight +8, Nature +8	
Str 20 (+7)	Dex 15 (+4) Wis 14 (+3)
Con 18 (+6)	Int 12 (+3) Cha 13 (+2)

edge of the deck can make the normal saving throw to hang on.

Anyone who fails that saving throw can make a DC 12 Athletics check or Acrobatics check to grab a binding strut or the rigging hanging along the airship's hull. On a successful check, the character takes 1d10 damage, but can make a DC 12 Athletics check to climb back onto the deck in the following round.

A PC who falls takes 3d10 damage. The airship moves away at a speed of 40 squares per round, most likely taking that character out of combat even if he or she survives. *Kordanga* comes back after the battle to pick up those who were thrown overboard.

KORDANGA'S CREW

During the combat, Delan and the crew focus on keeping the vessel in the air and steady at its low altitude. Delan hopes to minimize damage and loss of life if the dragon forces a crash. The five crew members on duty don't fight the dragon—if the PCs had not been aboard, they probably

would have complied with the robbery demands. The other crew members in the hold prepare for the worst and stay below to avoid the dragon.

Feel free to have the dragon kill a few of *Kordanga's* crew to add tension to the scene. Treat them as minions. *Kordanga* can be flown by only five crew members, and you can give the PCs an opportunity to pitch in.

TACTICS

The dragon starts with *frightful presence*, then spends an action point to unleash its *breath weapon*. It uses its *draconic fury* against the closest PCs until its breath weapon recharges. When that happens, it uses its *breath weapon* against the characters that have dealt it the most damage. It then alternates *lightning burst* and *draconic fury* attacks while it waits for its *breath weapon* to recharge again. If the dragon is adjacent to a PC on the outside edge of the ship, it passes up its regular attack to bull rush the character over the edge.

The dragon does not voluntarily use its fly speed (because it doesn't want the ship to leave it behind). It can be forced into the air by a power that subjects it to forced movement. In such a case, it attempts to land on the ship again at the start of its next turn.

The dragon is smart enough to recognize that the PCs are the greatest threat, and it focuses its attacks on them. However, the creature has no great interest in dying. If reduced to 50 hit points or fewer, it takes to the air and flees the battle.

Kordanga, Kech Volaar Airship

Gargantuan vehicle

HP 600

AC 4; Fortitude 25, Reflex 2

Speed 0, fly 20 (hover), overland flight 25 (hover); If *Kordanga's* speed is reduced by 20 or more, the pilot must use every action on his or her turn to keep the ship from going out of control.

Pilot

The pilot stands at the control wheel, on the helm near the stern of the ship.

Crew

Kordanga requires a crew of five, in addition to the pilot. It normally carries 12 crew in addition to the pilot. Reduce speed by 4 for each crew member under the minimum five.

Load

Twenty-five Medium creatures; five tons of cargo.

Out of Control

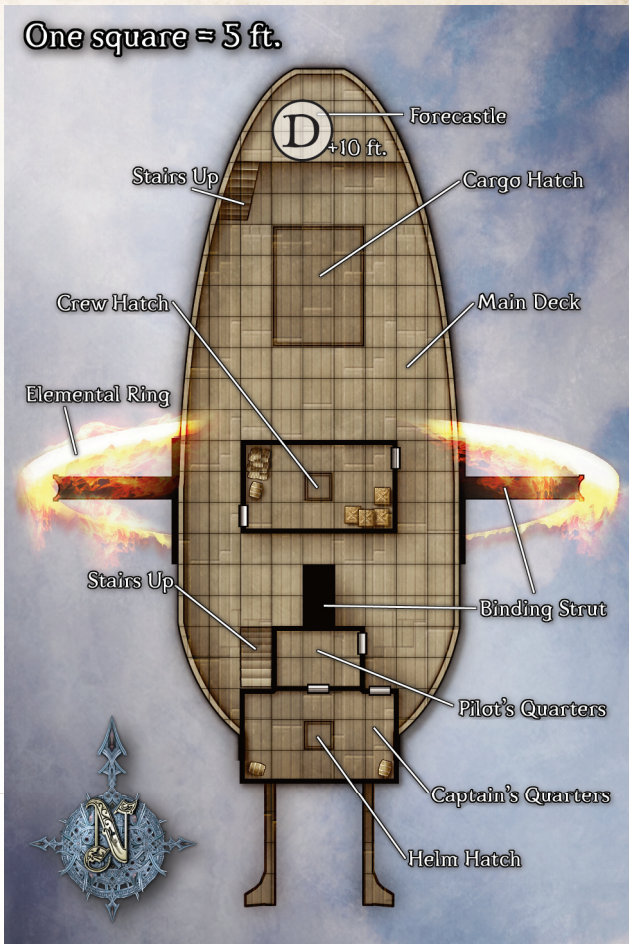
If forced to speed 0 by damage or loss of crew, or if without a pilot, *Kordanga* goes out of control. It moves forward at half speed, and it descends 5 squares per round. If it hits the ground after descending more than 20 squares, it is destroyed.

Decks

Kordanga has three decks. Topmost is the main deck that includes a forecastle, a central observation platform, and the aftcastle on which the helm sits. Under that is the crew deck, for passengers and crew. Below that is the cargo deck.

Fragile Propulsion

For every 30 damage *Kordanga* takes, it loses 1 square of speed.



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FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: Daylight (bright) or moonlight (dim).

Binding Strut: Two great struts arch forward from the deck and the keel, and two others extend out from the sides of the hull. These buttresses house the bound elemental that propels the airship. The squares that protrude forward of the pilot's quarters are blocking terrain and can be cover terrain.

Cargo Hatch: This area is 3 feet above deck level. Moving onto it takes 2 squares of movement or a DC 10 Acrobatics or Athletics check.

Crew Hatch: This trapdoor covers a stair to the lower decks. It opens as a door, and the stairs leading from it are difficult terrain.

Elemental Ring: The ship's bound elemental forms this ring near the binding struts. Flames arc 25 feet above the deck and extend 20 feet from the hull. A creature that enters, or begins its turn in, a ring square takes 3d6 fire damage.

Pilot's Quarters: Delan steers the airship from this raised area 10 feet above the main deck.

Stairs: These steep staircases are difficult terrain.

Treasure: If the PCs kill or drive off the dragon. Delan gives them a prized level 8 magic item in thanks.