

# Wars of the Clouds

Wherever a storm rages, so does a war.

There are billions upon billions of water-sprites in our atmosphere; sapient, almost entirely unaware of our lives and we of theirs, and busy with their own affairs and conflicts. Some of their sages are aware that *things* have been seen in the cloud-world, over the last century; those sages have generally kept silent on the subject, because the *things* cannot be countered or even affected, so knowledge of the *things* would do more harm than good. Besides, there are other things to focus the attention of water-spirits, such as their constant state of war.

What do they fight over? Resources that are significant to them, if more or less intangible to us. They're definitely worth fighting and dying over, from the water-sprites' point of view: vast wars take place up in the clouds, which are constantly wracked with conflicts great and small. Sometimes the struggles are so titanic that the clouds cannot hold the corpses -- which then fall to the ground in one final journey.

Yes. Every drop of rain, every ball of hail, every snowflake is a slain warrior, and the ground is their afterlife. Eventually they will rise again to the air and a new life of war and slaughter, but until then the water-sprites are swept through all the myriad ways that water can be used and abused on the ground. If there is any consolation to this, it is that the sprites apparently do not remember any of this. Or that at least they don't remember it after they reincarnate.

Human occultists discovered all of this about one hundred years ago, by the way, thanks to the rise of aviation. Airplanes in flight were producing odd, and somewhat disturbing, ripples in the aetheric plane; once one human sage made the conceptual leap that the ripples were essentially hundreds of thousands if not millions of sapient beings being suddenly flung all over the atmosphere the rest immediately made an awful kind of sense. As did the somewhat quieter and still faintly disturbing hum that occultists had noticed earlier coming from the heavens; once people knew where to look, they could see what the situation was.

Those same people have spent the last hundred years trying to figure out what to do about it, though. Give up air travel? That just cedes control of the skies to people and

groups who don't care how many water-sprites are being splattered against the windshield. Get the water-sprites to stop making war? That means no rain. Pretend that it's all merely an elaborate metaphor, and thus not think about it? That solution's fairly popular, actually.

Unfortunately, there's one particular occultist who doesn't think things through entirely, and he's ready to try to stop the Wars of the Clouds, or at least get them to stop fighting as much (and humanity's crops be damned). He's gone rogue, in fact. Fortunately, the things that he'll need in order to contact the water-sprites are kind of difficult to acquire. Here's the list.

Sort this all out, would you? And don't start a war with the water-sprites, either. They can throw lightning bolts, remember? ...Yes, that's the equivalent to nukes, to that species. The wars up there can get **really** nasty.

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