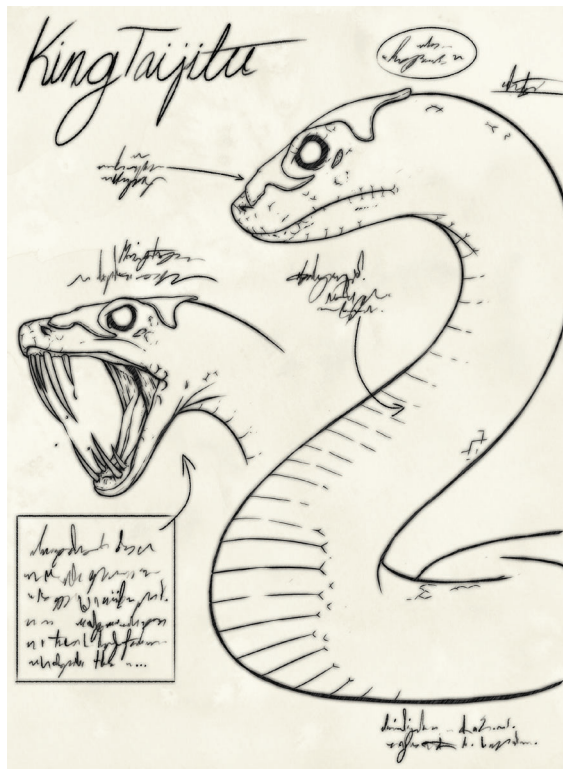
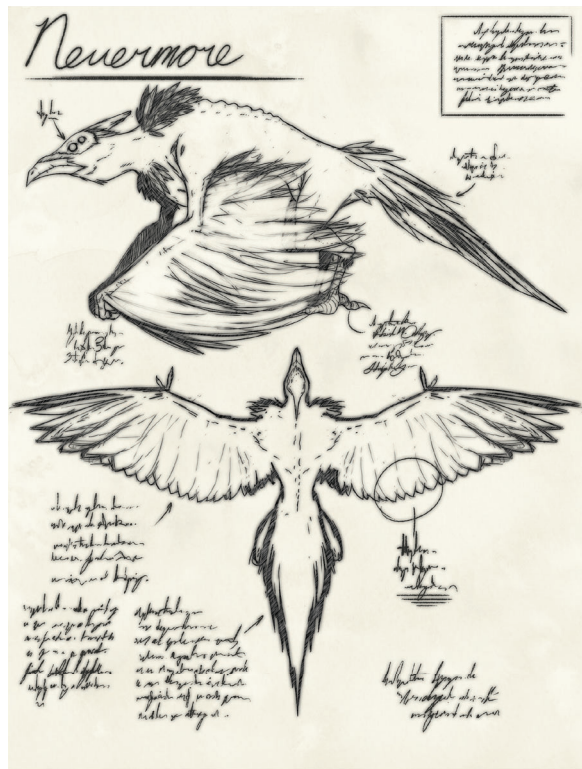
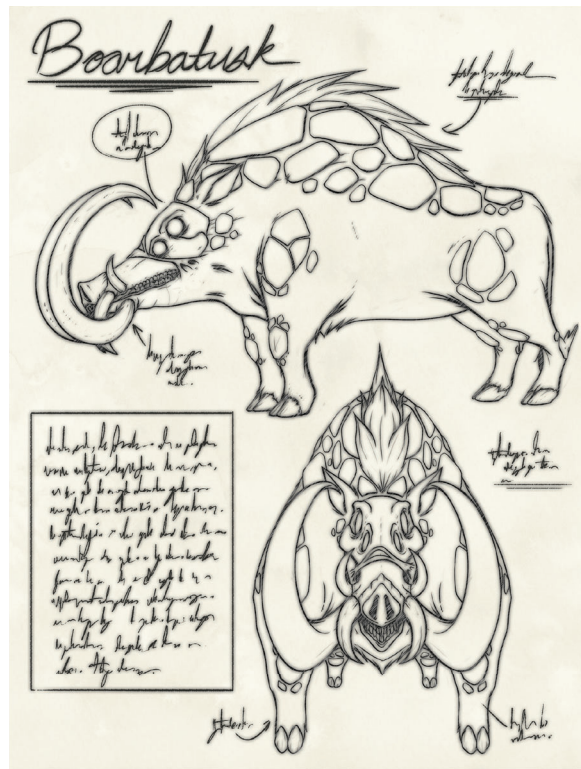
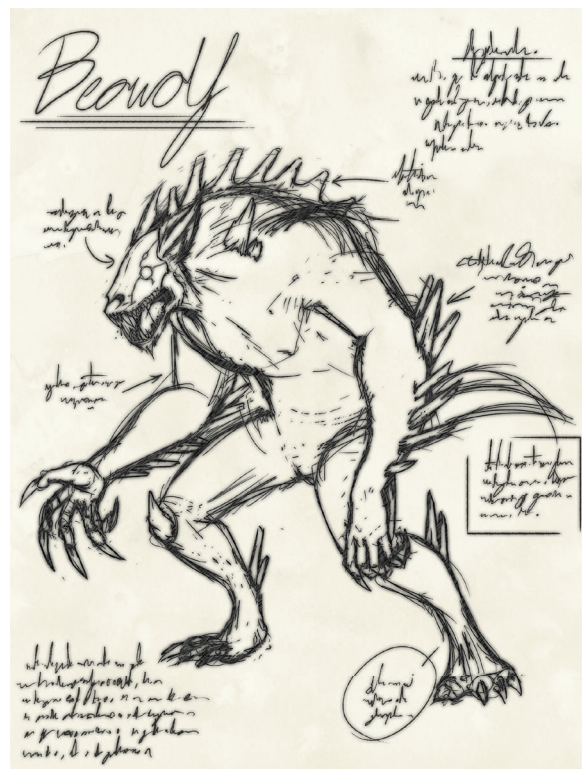
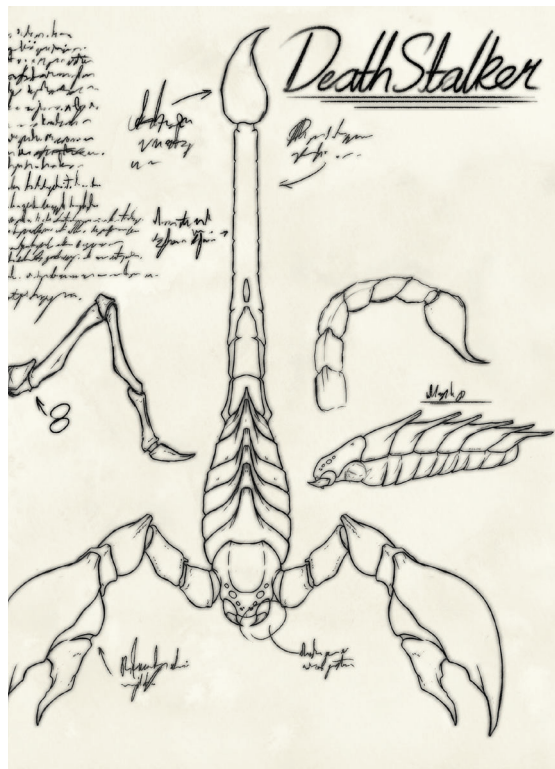




PART 3 | The Grimm



Ravenous and remorseless, the Grimm infest every wild space in Remnant. These beasts of the id are a load-bearing wall for RWBY's worldbuilding, as faceless adversaries that appear as sickening manifestations of primal fears.

In contrast to the colorful corps of Huntsmen and Huntresses, Grimm are cast only in stark shades of black and white. Occasional glowing red highlights suggest bloody viscera. The name evokes the historical Brothers Grimm—popularizers of the fairy tale—as well as the English word describing a thing as morbid or uncompromising.

According to Miles Luna, the Grimm endured heavy rewrites on the way to their final form. One concept suggested that Grimm essence could be bottled as a noxious ink. “We played with the idea that the black oil could be contained and that you could keep vials of it,” he explains. “It was something you could trade in the black market, or add to animals to ‘Grimm-ify’ them. And if you got two creatures together, you could use it to make a blasphemous hybrid.”

The final backstory of the Grimm went a long way toward cementing the lore of Remnant’s creation. Now

said to have emerged during prehistory as the God of Destruction’s response to his brother’s experiments with life, these monsters were engineered only to bring ruin. Grimm lack souls and turn into smoke when killed. Because they don’t need food, their attacks on humans can’t be chalked up to survival instinct.

Negative emotions like anger and fear are catnip to Grimm. Citywide panics draw them from miles around. And because a Grimm attack only triggers further terror, humans quickly find themselves caught in a feedback loop that ends with their deaths.

“That was an attempt to give these killers some motivation,” says Kerry Shawcross. “Most Grimm aren’t exactly smart, but they’re not zombies either. The intent was that they only wanted to destroy, so we set up some reasons for why they might zero in on specific people or areas.”

For every Grimm slain by a Huntsman, more are created via supernatural means. Salem’s realm is one

such place, where fresh beastlings crawl from dark pools. A different method is seen during the Battle of Beacon, when a Grimm Wyvern secretes gooey droplets that turn into battle-ready Grimm at the point of impact.

As of Volume 6, *RWBY*’s designers have spawned enough Grimm to fill a zoo. Early forms resembled the wolves, boars, and bears of European folklore, but newer specimens have assumed nightmarish configurations.

“When you’re in a city surrounded by guards, a couple of Beowolves don’t seem all that bad,” explains Miles Luna. “The audience might ask, ‘What’s the big deal? Why is humanity having such a hard time?’ But when you go outside and into the real wilds, you realize the danger of the things that lurk in the dark.”

Patrick Rodriguez clarifies, stressing the importance of raising the stakes. “We not only want to scare the audience, we want to scare our characters too,” he says. “That means we have to create peril, to give them something they’ve never seen before.”

Many Grimm encountered in later volumes of *RWBY* resemble legendary cryptids, deep-sea invertebrates, or humanoid horrors. “Some are based on animalistic

counterparts,” says Luna, “but others are inspired by mythological creatures, and still others might be special projects of Salem’s.”

That degree of genetic diversity requires the show’s character modelers to start from scratch whenever a beast is added to the bestiary. “Unlike with characters, we don’t have a base model of Grimm that we can dress up,” explains lead modeler Tim Reed. “There’s quadrupeds, bipeds, and dragons—everything you can think of. It’s a lot of fun, and we often fight over who gets to model a new Grimm.”

Shawcross adds, “There are some Grimm we’ve wanted to do for a long time, but we’re still waiting for the right moment. When it comes to the Grimm I don’t think there’s a limit on creativity.”

“We not only want to scare the audience, we want to scare our characters too...”



136 The World of RWBY

Beowolf

RWBY's first-ever Grimm debuted in the first-ever piece of *RWBY* media. The “Red” trailer saw Ruby Rose and her sniper scythe wordlessly mow down a pack of Beowolves. With their bipedal gait and their hunched, claws-out attack stance, these pack-hunting predators look like werewolves caught midtransformation.

The choice of enemy was no accident: given Ruby's conceptual genesis as a modern Red Riding Hood, it only made sense for her to face a legion of Big Bad Wolves. The name is also a reference to *Beowulf*, the monster-fighting epic written in Old English more than a thousand years ago.

In *RWBY*, Beowolves are usually low-risk encounters. Alpha Beowolves, however, represent a tougher “boss” variant, sporting longer fangs and more armor plating. General James Ironwood memorably squared off against an Alpha Beowolf during the Battle of Beacon.

Ursa

These bearlike Grimm encompass two distinct sub-species: the common Ursa Minor and the beefed-up Ursa Major. Despite sharing the names of stellar constellations, both varieties stay grounded within Remnant's old-growth thickets.

Monty Oum noted how the Ursai obey the overarching Grimm color rules, but with a touch of flair: “Red, white, and black, and a little bit of yellow,” he said.

According to Kerry Shawcross, the Ursa seemed like the next logical iteration after creation of the Beowolf. “They were wolves because of Little Red Riding Hood, so we started simple from there: because Goldilocks would probably fight a bear, let's make a bear Grimm.”



The Grimm 137



Boarbatusk

This little piggy went to...Vale? The Boarbatusk's porcine roots are obvious. Its name is even a portmanteau of "boar" and the boar's most distinctive feature.

With its bristled spine and hooked tusks, the Boarbatusk is a danger to anyone caught in the path of its charge. If cornered, the beast tucks itself into a ball to protect its belly and rolls forward at incredible speeds.

Boarbatusks appear to be one of the few Grimm that can survive in captivity. At Beacon Academy, Professor Port hauls out a caged Boarbatusk whenever he wishes to provide a hands-on lesson in subduing a Grimm.



King Taijitu

This regally dubbed megasnake is named after the swirled Taoist symbol of universal balance. Kerry Shawcross breaks down the inspiration further.

"A king snake is white and black," he explains. "So [then] we thought, maybe it's white and black because it's like Yin and Yang?"

Each King Taijitu has two heads, one on each end of its body. Its serpentine midsection is split into a black-scaled half and a photonegative, white-scaled counterpart. Each head has a mouth bristling with fangs and a darting, forked tongue.

Animator Austin Hardwicke treated the King Taijitu more like a force of nature than a living creature. "It goes offscreen and you don't even see it in its entirety," he says. "I pulled more from my history in motion graphics than my experience with animation."

The King Taijitu is formidable based on its size alone, but facing its twin heads is like battling two Grimm at once. In Volume 1, Lie Ren takes down a King Taijitu by snapping off one fang and using it to stab the enemy Grimm through its eye socket.



Nevermore

"*Quoth the Raven, 'Nevermore.'*" Edgar Allan Poe's 1845 poem lent one obvious inspiration to this black-winged barnstormer. Possessing all the features of a corvid plus the wingspan of a mythological roc, the Nevermore is the most notorious of Remnant's airborne Grimm.

Not every Nevermore is as big as the one that swoops down to attack Beacon's cadets in the Emerald Forest. Juvenile specimens are small enough to be shooed away as cawing irritants, but watch out—Nevermores grow up fast.

The silhouette of a mature Nevermore can block out the sun. Danger can come from every direction, with a Nevermore smashing obstacles with its bony head crest or firing barrages of feathers as razor-sharp projectiles.

Death Stalker

With its pointy tail coiled and ready to strike, the Death Stalker is a familiar arthropod writ on a grotesquely large scale. Because scorpions are common in most deserts on Earth, viewers can easily imagine

the damage a Death Stalker could do with gallons of injectable venom and pincers the size of automobiles.

The Death Stalker's exoskeleton makes it one of the toughest creatures of Grimm. Even veteran Huntsmen give them a wide berth unless they happen to be toting high-caliber firearms.

During Volume 1 of *RWBY*, a Death Stalker menaces the Beacon Academy cadets inside the Emerald Forest. This specimen is first glimpsed in a pitch-black cavern, waving its bioluminescent stinger like an anglerfish in the Marianas Trench.





Goliath

As Professor Oobleck explains to Ruby Rose, Goliaths have existed so long that they have concluded that discretion is the better part of valor. Because Goliaths don't attack humans without cause, their practical streak is a notable distinction from the countless Grimm known only for their reckless malevolence.

Elephantine Goliaths travel in herds and are as tall as multistory buildings. Though slow to attack, they are capable of triggering devastating stampedes, trampling anything caught underfoot.

In everyday usage, "Goliath" is applied to anything supersized. The name, however, is biblical in origin, and the tale of David versus Goliath, a Philistine giant, has entered common usage as the quintessential underdog metaphor.



Geist

Named after the German word for ghost, these intangible Grimm are largely harmless in their natural state. Yet Geists can inhabit any inert mass and puppeteer the pieces to approximate limbs, a head, and a torso.

Geists have the same bone-white markings as other Grimm and hover atop a wispy tail of black smoke. At least two types of Geist possession have been documented to date.

Arma Gigas

With a name incorporating the Latin roots of "weapon" and "giant," the Arma Gigas is a Geist inhabiting a suit of armor. In the "White" trailer, Weiss Schnee faced an Arma Gigas, and later drew upon her memories of the encounter as the selected manifestation of her Summoning ability.

Petra Gigas

Petra is Greek for "stone," and a Petra Gigas is formed whenever a Geist assembles a body out of boulders. At the start of Volume 4, Team RNJR fights a Petra Gigas that has positioned hovering rocks into the form of a giant. When RNJR scored a hit by severing the monster's arm, the Petra Gigas quickly replaced the lost limb with a tree trunk. Only a direct hit to the head dislodged the Geist, and Ruby easily dispatched the now-vulnerable phantom with a single shot.



Geists have the same bone-white markings as other Grimm and hover atop a wispy tail of black smoke. At least two types of Geist possession have been documented to date.



Beringel

With the addition of the Beringel in a Volume 4 character trailer, the ranks of the Grimm expanded to encompass animals beyond those from European fairy tales. The Beringel, which resembles the African silverback gorilla, is a tough and agile opponent that will use any means to gain an edge on its opponent—including picking up and hurling smaller Grimm as projectiles. Its name is derived from *gorilla beringei*, the Latin nomenclature for the mountain gorilla and the eastern lowland gorilla.

The Beringel is one of the few Grimm where motion-capture data proved useful for animation (the Beowolf is another). Lead animator Kim Newman approximated its forearm-loping gait by lurching around on tiny crutches.

“It was me and one other animator, and he brought in baby crutches,” she recalls. “We got into the mocap suits and put the crutches around our wrists so it seemed like we had longer limbs. I was honestly so embarrassed to do the mocap for my section in public that I came in super early!”



144 The World of RWBY



Lancer

The Lancer, a hornet-like buzzer with a wicked stinger, is the first insectoid Grimm seen in *RWBY*. They can fire their barbs like whaler’s harpoons, thanks to organic tethers that reel them back once they’ve been released. Lancers are known to cluster near Lake Matsu, where they present a danger to the airships that weave their way between Matsu’s antigravity islands.

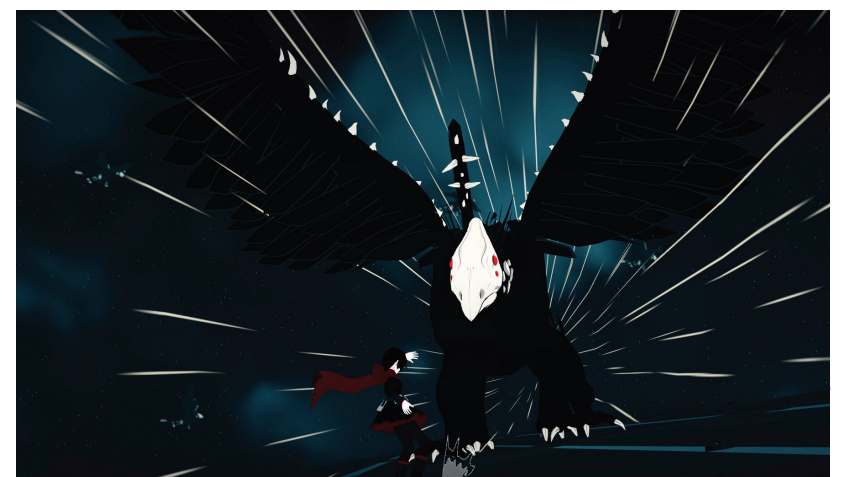
“Every time we create a new Grimm, we always try to make sure it’s adding something,” says Kerry Shawcross. “With the Lancers, we had a flying Grimm already with the Nevermore, so what could they add? Designwise, they were insects, which was something we hadn’t seen a lot of. And in terms of combat, they could hover.”

Queen Lancers are far larger than common warrior drones. Each Queen is the size of a cargo transport, and can shoot projectiles from its swollen abdomen to menace distant enemies.

Griffon

The griffons of Greek mythology combine an eagle’s head and wings with the hindquarters of a lion. *RWBY*’s Griffons don’t stray far from those of antiquity, exhibiting similar biology but with telltale Grimm touches like bony plates and glowing red eyes.

Griffons arrive on the scene in Volume 3 during the Battle of Beacon. They are the vanguards of a multi-species Grimm onslaught that soon overwhelms Amity Colosseum and the Kingdom of Vale.





Creep

These two-legged reptilians embody traits of both birds and dinosaurs. A Creep's stocky, clawed hind limbs are used for kicking and slashing, calling to mind the carnivores from Earth paleohistory known as "terror birds."

Creeps use their tails for balance and ram opponents with their thick-armored skulls. They can even keep pace with a runaway train, as demonstrated during the lead-up to the Grimm breach in Vale.



Wyvern

This apocalyptic creature of Grimm is unprecedented in its size and its destructive capacity. For uncounted years, the Wyvern slumbered within a Vale mountain-top until the negative emotions emitted during the Battle of Beacon grew too intense to ignore.

Art director Patrick Rodriguez acknowledges that the crew wanted to make something special for Volume 3's climax. "It's like, we have to be grandiose about this," he says. "And what's more fantastical than a dragon?"

Kerry Shawcross adds that, while the crew originally referred to the creature as a dragon, as soon as the episode aired fans pointed to its two-legged biology to offer corrections. "As the internet informed us," he jokes, "it is actually a wyvern."

With clawed hind legs and a pair of membranous, bat-like wings, the Grimm Wyvern is at home in the air where it can snatch victims and swallow them in its neck-splitting maw. The Wyvern can also secrete a foul liquid from its skin that spawns lesser Grimm wherever it lands.

During the Battle of Beacon, Cinder Fall uses the powers of the Fall Maiden to influence the Wyvern's instinctual behavior. Cinder spurs the beast into demolishing Beacon Tower's upper stories, disabling the Cross-Continental Transmit System and knocking her opponent, Pyrrha Nikos, off her feet.

The instant Ruby Rose arrives on the scene, she unconsciously unleashes the powers of a silver-eyed warrior to freeze the monster in its tracks. Though stasis-locked to the side of the tower, the Wyvern continued to passively attract Grimm to the site of its entombment.

The Wyvern can also secrete a foul liquid from its skin that spawns lesser Grimm wherever it lands.





Sea Feilong

Not even Remnant's oceans are Grimm-free, something that Blake Belladonna discovers the hard way when she crosses the seas from Vale to Menagerie. Though aquatic Grimm aren't unprecedented—as evidenced by the heavy cannon mounted to the ship's deck—a Grimm the size of the Sea Feilong is one for the record books.

The Sea Feilong resembles a classic sea serpent with an undulating body and a spike-studded spine. Bright red gills in its neck allow it to breathe underwater, and the beast can unfurl its wings to achieve low-altitude flight. An airborne Sea Feilong strafes targets by spitting lightning blasts from its mouth. Tremendously durable, a Sea Feilong can shrug off cannon bursts and casually shatter multiton rock formations.

"Feilong" comes from Chinese mythology and describes a legendary winged dragon that makes its home among the clouds.



These boneless bags come straight out of an old god's nightmares...



Seer

Grimm generally follow the principles of vertebrate anatomy, but not Seers. These boneless bags come straight out of an old god's nightmares, hanging in the air with their thin tentacles dangling beneath. Seers are similar to jellyfish, a fact that only deepens their alien vibe by evoking a branch of the animal kingdom that split from humanity hundreds of millions of years ago.

Salem prizes Seers as an organic end-run around the problem of long-range communication. A pair of Seers can relay information instantly regardless of the distance between them, allowing Salem to bypass the Cross-Continental Transmit System and keep tabs on her double agent at Haven Academy. And whenever Salem grows weary of the caller on the other end, she can simply command the distant Seer to act as her executioner.



Nuckelavee

On first glance, it looks like a mounted rider, but upon closer inspection, it turns out to actually have Grimm anatomy. The Nuckelavee is the fusion of two symbiotic Grimm, where only one entity is able to move at a time. Intentionally unnerving, the Nuckelavee upends the audience's idea of what Grimm are supposed to look like.

Borrowed from the mythology of Scotland's Orkney Islands—where the Nuckelavee is a horselike sea demon that spoils crops and spreads plagues—*RWBY*'s Grimm has an equine body and a human's torso topped with a crown of horns. The Nuckelavee's arms can stretch to impossible lengths, while its skin is studded with broken spears and arrow shafts worn as battle scars.

When presented with the concept, lead animator Kim Newman struggled to land on a signature expression for how this Grimm would carry itself. "I had a day to play around with it, and I mocked up a moment in

one of my shots where he was twitchy and creepy," she says. "When I got that approved by Kerry, he was like, 'Cool—let's do that for the entire fight!'"

Team RNJR's battle with a Nuckelavee is one of the most memorable confrontations in Volume 4. This particular monster exterminated Kuroyuri village years ago, orphaning Lie Ren and Nora Valkyrie in the process. Now the grown-up survivors of Kuroyuri seek revenge against the same Grimm when it returns to the scene of its crime.

"Because the characters go through some tough things, it felt like the Grimm should follow suit," says Patrick Rodriguez. "We didn't want to make the Nuckelavee look too humanoid where you might start thinking of it as a 'person Grimm.' The Grimm should always be frightening creatures, and you shouldn't feel sympathy for them when they get cut to shreds."



150 The World of RWBY



Apathy

First encountered in Volume 6, the Apathy are skeletal humanoids with attenuated arms and fingers. They wander in great numbers, exuding a psychic aura that drains their victims of the will to live. According to Miles Luna, this Grimm was partly inspired by the phlegmatic subject of Herman Melville's 1853 story "Bartleby, the Scrivener."

Leviathan

This beast from the depths gets its name from the Bible, and its appearance in the finale of Volume 6 seems to herald the end times. *RWBY*'s Leviathan walks on two legs but seems to have the skull of a porpoise, with a finned tail and a spiny dorsal crest adding to its vaguely cetacean appearance. Though capable of unleashing unimaginable destruction through sheer bulk, the Leviathan can also spit an energy beam powerful enough to cut through the hard-light shields of the port city of Argus.



"The Grimm should always be frightening creatures, and you shouldn't feel sympathy for them when they get cut to shreds."

The Grimm 151