MONSTER COMPENDIUM

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BY JUSTIN HALLIDAY

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HERO KIDS

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CREDITS

Designed and written by Justin Halliday

Monster and cover art by Eric Quigley http://ericquigley.com

Additional monster art by James Shields Daniel Woods

Printing Authorization: This PDF may be printed for personal use.

PDF Version: 1.0 (Build 46)

Changelog:

- Monster descriptions, tactics, and hooks
- Added monster cards
- Created Monster Compendium



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JUSTIN HALLIDAY

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INTRODUCTION

From their earliest years, the kids of Rivenshore are trained to survive in a wild and dangerous world.

While the warriors and sword-maidens of their clan are away from the Brecken Vale protecting it from distant threats, it's up to the kids to deal with any emergencies that arise in the vale.

Each of the kids specializes in a different area, training and practicing so that they are prepared for the regular calamities that plague the inhabitants of the town.

Whether they're exploring the foreboding Darkenwold Woods, rescuing lost miners from the abandoned Mines of Martek, saving their friend from the lair of giant rats, or venturing into a fearsome minotaur's maze, the kids of Rivenshore are always ready for action and always the first to volunteer to help a friend who's in trouble.

These are Hero Kids!



BATS

Gliding silently on leathery wings, bats swoop through the darkness to prey on unsuspecting victims.

Wings in the Dark

These nocturnal creatures commonly inhabit subterranean caverns, decrepit buildings, abandoned mines, and dark forests. They sleep during the day, then take wing at dusk seeking food.

Blood-Sucking Opportunists

In the absence of ample food, bats become ravenous opportunists that lurk in dark spaces.

When presented with the chance of a meal, bats swoop on their targets to attack. Once blood is spilled, these creatures continue to attack the same target with rabid fervor. They swoop in and out of reach and harry their targets with frenzied bites.

Blackened Skies

Warding tales tell of a great flight of bats that settled in the forests of the Brecken Vale. These foul visitors stripped the crops bare, felled livestock, and feasted on the sick and frail.

When a band ventured into the forest to investigate, they found the bats roosting in withering trees. At the center of this diseased colony stood a cave, its yawning entrance black and menacing. Overcome by fear, the townsfolk burned the trees and fled the forest.



BEGUILERS

Levitated by arcane forces, beguilers are solitary creatures, scornful and vicious in their disdain of others. Beguilers are highly intelligent, but communicate in an ancient language lost to all but the most learned scholars.

Distant Relations

True beguilers unleash devastating magical attacks from their central eye, or attack multiple enemies at once with their eye stalks. The deep beguiler is a distant cousin of the true beguiler, but life in the inky ocean depths has transformed this breed into terrifying aquatic monsters.

Lurker in the Deep

In the deep waters of the Brecken Bay lies the shattered hull of the merchant ship Marni Crest. She sailed from port to port laden with goods both mundane and exotic.

On the Marni Crest's final voyage she carried a single metal container. It stood six-foot tall and heavy chains held it fast. Some crew swore they heard movement from within. When a storm claimed the Marni Crest, the box lay in the depths until time finally broke the chains and set free its cargo.

Tribute and Tyranny

Greed and pride can drive beguilers to assert their will over lesser creatures. Ruling with uncompromising authority, beguilers take control of bands of creatures. The creatures are sent on raids to nearby settlements, with instructions to bring back valuables for the beguiler's glory.



BOARS

Boars roam the dense forests and open plains of the vale. These adaptable creatures will feed on any food available.

Thundering Hooves

Whether driven by hunger or defending their territory, boars are fierce combatants that fight to the death. Thick hide protects them from many attacks and when an attack does strike home, it only serves to enrage the beasts. Boars use their bulk and speed to charge at enemies and impale them with vicious tusks.

River of Red

When miners recently reopened an abandoned pit high in the Druinhowe Mountains, they discovered a rich vein of iron ore. In mining and refining the raw ore, the miners dumped the mine's tailings into a nearby stream, turning its once-clear waters blood-red.

This spoiled stream runs from the mountains into the Darkenwold Woods. The forest creatures that rely on the stream are corrupted by the contaminants that foul the water. Mutated and enraged, the creatures now carry nature's fury to nearby settlements.



BRIGANDS

Brigands, bandits, outlaws, road agents, highwaymen, robbers, blaggards, operators. No matter what they call themselves, or what others name them, brigands prey on travelers and isolated settlements for their own gain.

Humans Gone Rogue

Brigands are normal folk who, by choice or circumstance, take their living by force. Some take to banditry through moral weakness, sadism, or greed. Others are forced to extreme measures by misfortune and dire circumstance.

Cowardly Combatants

With greed and spoil as motivation, brigands target weaker enemies and demand payment as an alternative to violence. In combat, brigand melee fighters attack in groups to bolster each other's morale. Brigand archers prefer to keep their distance and strike enemies who are distracted or caught unaware. If the brigand's victims prove more capable than

they appear (like many of the young heroes of the Brecken Vale), these bandits flee the fight to save their own lives.

Wolves on Two Legs

Brigands often enter the bounds of the vale seeking easy pickings from farmers and common folk. Others set their ambushes in the narrow mountain passes that cross the Druinhowe Mountains.

Trading caravans crossing the mountains are regularly joined by groups of travelers for safety on the dangerous roads. Nefarious brigands pose as travelers to infiltrate those caravans, then turn on their fellow travelers.





Male Names	Female Names
Abel	Apona
Bren	Bern
Crax	Caris
Darin	Denia
Earnst	Edarn
Franc	Fran
Galt	Grey
Holt	Hill
Igmar	Ingar
Jarn	Jaq
Karl	Kat
Llaryn	Lethia
Marco	Marta
Nott	Norelle
Omar	Onagh
Peirs	Peta
Quinn	Quelin
Ralph	Rach
Sten	Somia
Timmon	Tess
Ulf	Unka
Vern	Vaness
Wellan	Wilma
Xi	Xarma
Yurgen	Yumi
Zaph	Zoe

BUGBEARS

Bugbears are the bigger and uglier cousins of common goblins.

Petty Tyrants

Bugbears use their strength and relative intelligence to corral and command other goblinoids. In spite of their strength, and probably due to their intelligence, bugbears have a higher understanding of their mortality. They prefer to send their minions into battle and flee when in danger.

Raiding Season

Goblins normally inhabit the hills and mountains in the northern reaches of the Brecken Vale. The melting snows and blooming flowers of spring signal raiding season. In a 'good' season, the raids are sporadic and uncoordinated. But in 'bad' seasons, the goblin war bands are joined by ferocious bugbears, who lead these parties in devastating raids.





COMMONERS

The Brecken Vale is home to many settlements.

Under Pressure

The common folk of the vale are stalwart under pressure. On their own, they are no match for malicious humans or horrific monsters. But when fighting alongside others from their communities, they find deep resolve and surprising strength.

Heart of the Vale

Rivenshore, situated on the east bank of the Camarva River, is the largest settlement in the Brecken Vale and home to almost two-hundred common folk.

The town lies at the intersection of the valley's two main roads, the east-west road that runs from mountain range to mountain range, and the north-south road that runs from the isolated settlements in the north to the very tip of the eastern peninsular that encloses the Brecken Bay.

The heart of Rivenshore is the town square, which is fronted by two large buildings; the Block and Tackle tavern to the north, and the town's great hall to the east. The square features a statue of warrior king Rothgar.

Points of Light

While Rivenshore is by far the largest town in the vale, there are numerous settlements nestled in the wide valley. The largest villages are Willowsdell and Bayhaven, which both lie on the western shore of Brecken Bay.

Further afield are scores of working farms, fishing shanties, riverside mills, crooked towers, hillside homesteads, and forest-bound huts.



CONSTRUCTS

Constructs are ordinary materials animated by magical forces.

Bumbling Servants

Powerful mages create constructs as loyal and literal servants. Constructs assist with magical experiments, cook, clean, and protect their masters. When protecting their masters, constructs fight willfully, but clumsiness and fragile construction make them easy to defeat.

Literally Speaking

When a construct is animated, its master gives it instructions, which it follows to the best of its ability.

These instructions are usually mundane and followed without incident. But mages are notoriously absent-minded and often give incomplete or ambiguous instructions, with hilarious or dangerous results.



COOT AND CRONE

Twisted by misfortune or mistreatment, coots and crones fill their lives with the pain and suffering of others.

Outcasts

Crones and coots are cast out of society and live in isolation. When intruders chance upon them, they pretend to be friendly until their true evil nature is revealed.

Repairing That Which Was Broken

The townsfolk of Rivenshore know not to venture into some parts of the Darkenwold Woods. One such forbidden place is the home of a crone. This crone was once named Margret, and grew up young and beautiful in Rivenshore.

As a young woman, Margret wooed and married her sweetheart, and together they raised a sun-bright daughter, Ingret. One fateful day, Ingret wandered from home and, by all reports, simply disappeared.

Torn with regret, and wracked by suspicion and mistrust, Margret's heart shriveled and filled with blackness. Soon, her face and body twisted and stooped with this same hate. Margret fled town for the forest, where piece by piece the hate consumed the woman she once was.

Yet even a broken and hate-filled heart can be mended. And that which was lost can be found. Ingret is alive.

Long ago, she wandered into the forest. Frightened, lost, tired, and hungry, she was found by a wolf which adopted and raised her with its own pups.

Now she's the leader of a pack of wolves deep in the forest.



CULTISTS

In all corners of the varld live those who devote themselves to the worship and advancement of beings of great power.

From the Shadows into the Light

Cultists work to advance the plans and power of their masters; whether they are mythical creatures, powerful elder gods, or simply charismatic mortals.

At the beginning of their plans cultists work in secret, hiding their activities. Once schemes are more developed, the cultists' plans are revealed, and their true power – and danger – is demonstrated.

Beyond the Last Breath

Cultists are smart enough to know when to hide their power, when to fight, and when to flee. Their fervor and dedication to their task is so strong that they find the energy for a final retaliatory attack when struck down.

Cult of Hydraxis

The Cult of Hydraxis works tirelessly and fervently to discover the remains of Hydraxis, a legendary creature renowned for its strength, guile, and intelligence. The cultists are preparing to investigate an abandoned temple deep in the forest. Finally, could this be the tomb of their idol?

From the Depths

Brecken Bay's waters are usually calm and placid, unlike the roiling ocean beyond the southern headlands. Salt-crusted fishers claim the bay is protected by a massive leviathan that patrols the ocean to the south. If the leviathan is not sated, they believe it will enter the bay and wreak havoc on the settlements that rely on the bay's bounty.





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DRAGONS

Legendary reptiles that inhabited the varld before civilization, dragons will inherit the varld after our fall.

Creatures Malign and Benign

Like humans, dragon-kind also embody both chaos and law, and destruction and order. Unlike humans, a dragon's inner character can be discerned from their appearance. Chromatic dragons – black, blue, green, red, and white – are evil and destructive, while metallic dragons – brass, bronze, gold, silver – are inquisitive and good-tempered. Amid this variety, all dragons are intelligent and crave treasure for their hoards.

Drexanathon: Protector, Destroyer

It is centuries since dragons last laired in the vale. But high in the Druinhowe Mountains lairs Drexanathon, an adult gold dragon who tends a clutch of eggs with his mate, Algoxarth.





ELEMENTALS

Elementals are the fusion of matter and spirit.

Elemental Forms

Air, Earth, Fire, and Water are the four primary elements, and each is represented as an elemental creature. The elements also combine to form hybrid elementals like the sand elemental, which is a combination of water and earth.

Elemental Power

Elementals are summoned by powerful arcane magic. Once summoned, their controller must assert power over the elemental, or else it will break free of their control and exact terrible revenge. Those elementals that have freed themselves (or been freed) from their magical shackles wander the lands seeking revenge or release.





Crucible of the Elements

Buried deep within ancient mountains stand two monolithic doors, each carved with elemental runes and imbued with arcane magic. The doors open to any who approach, welcoming them into the dark corridor beyond. Once they cross the threshold, the doors close fast.

Behind these massive doors is the Crucible of Elements, a demanding rite of passage for heroes of ages past. The crucible pits heroes against four elementals, demanding that they defeat each in turn before the doors open again.

An Alabaster Tower

To the north of the Druinhowe Mountains lie lands cursed by endless blue skies. Beneath this endless sky lies an equally endless expanse of parched sand; the White Sea.

The White Sea is dotted with islands of green, oases. Those surrounded by sand remain isolated spots of green. Where there is rocky ground, villages and trading towns develop.

Travelers crossing the desert roads have long reported seeing a marble-white tower through the haze. Such reports are dismissed as mirages, evidence of heat stroke, or tall tales.

Those brave, greedy, or foolish enough to investigate are battered by fierce sandstorms, and driven away, pummeled by shapes that loom out of the sandy maelstrom.

What lies within the Alabaster Tower? Surely a great treasure; one requiring powerful magical wards and elemental protection.



FIRESTARTER

No one knows how or why certain individuals develop their magical power.

Born of Magic

In some cases, they are born from parents who themselves can control magic. These children of magic exhibit their ability at an early age, then with nurture and training control and develop their power.

Born of Fire

In others, magical power is not immediately apparent, and it's not until later in life that their true power is revealed. Often this magical power surges uncontrollably in times of great stress or danger.



FLAMING SKULL

The rulers of old sought enduring protection for their tombs.

In the Darkness

What better protection than a disembodied skull, fueled by malevolent arcane forces, compelled to destroy all intruders?

Barrow of the Dead

On the southern headland that borders the Brecken Bay lie four mounds in a line, each larger than the last. These are barrows, burial tombs of a line of ancient queens and kings. The tombs are protected by superstition, devious traps, and

fearsome arcane guardians.

The dusty stone corridor stretches into blackness. In the distance a light appears, warm red and flicking. With it comes a sharp chattering sound...



FOXES

Deep in the Darkenwold Woods exist societies of woodland creatures that are more human than animal.

Cunning and Ruthless

Fox-kind see themselves as the natural and correct rulers of all animal-kind. But their combination of scornful intelligence and terrible ruthlessness makes them cruel masters.

In the Henhouse

While all animal-kind prefer the sanctuary of the Darkenwold Woods, their skirmishes can spill from the woods into the wider vale. The foxes, along with their weasel and ratling allies, wage continuous war against the peaceful animal-kind tribes; mice, ferrets, badgers, otters, shrews, ocelots, wombats, squirrels, and turtles. These antagonist's attacks drive the other animal tribes from the forest to seek sanctuary.





FROGLINGS

The low-lying swamps of the Brecken Vale are home to amphibious froglings.

Tribal Society

Froglings live in tribal groups, led by a strong chief. Frogling society values prowess in battle above all else, and although they lack the means to work metal, they claim weapons and armor from defeated foes.

Aquatic Builders

Family groups of froglings construct huts and lodges in the swamps and use elevated walkways, pools, and underground rivers to quickly traverse their settlements.

Scourge of the South Road

The south road from Rivenshore passes close to a great swamp on the east side of the bay; the Singing Marsh. Tired travelers might be tempted to make camp here, reassured by the distant melody of frog-calls. They are wrong.

Spawning Pools of the River Gods

As the froglings' time of spawning nears, they leave their communities and strike out to find distant pools, ponds, and swamps where they lay their eggs.

Hatchlings grow quickly, and within months this new band of froglings emerge from the spawning pools to build a new settlement.

Frogling Names		
Bloz	Burp	
Clob	Derp	
Duth	Ergh	
Gaph	Glurt	
Glumph	Klup	
Lutz	Mott	
Plurb	Rurb	
Whuz	Zub	





GARGOYLE

Gargoyles are guardians that hide in plain sight; flanking stone doors, crouched on battlements, amid overgrown statuaries.

Minor Elementals

Much like their bigger cousins the earth elementals, gargoyles are animated stone. While neither truly alive or dead, they can remain motionless for millennia, then spring into deadly action in a single moment. The enduring tedium of their task is released explosively and cruelly when an intruder finally crosses their path.

Masters of Disguise

Gargoyles have as many forms as there are statues. Their traditional form is of a crouching monster, but they disguise themselves to fit in with their surroundings and other statues.



GHOST

The path to the far realm is not always straightforward, and the spirits of some creatures hold tight to this varld.

Spirits of the Dead

When a creature dies, its spirit travels to the far-varld. In some cases however, the spirit remains attached to this varld, unable or unwilling to pass from this varld to the next.

Haunting

Regret, remorse, and guilt torture the ghost and bind it to their tomb, or the area close to the cause of their obsession. Ghosts can be defeated through physical force, but this is usually temporary, with the ghost soon manifesting again. The most effective way to cleanse a haunting is to find and resolve the cause of the ghost's lament, freeing its spirit.



GIANTS

Giants are the living vestiges of ages before this one. Their forebears crafted titanic statues, constructed bridges spanning dizzying crevasses, and carved soaring vaults from solid rock.

Turn of the Wheel

But the great wheel of time turned, the age of the giants waned, and new races and species rose in the varld. Their soaring edifices and deep tombs fell to ruin. Then, after an age, their monuments were rediscovered and reclaimed.

High and Low

Displaced by the rise of other cultures, giants retreated to the hills and mountains, where their altitude reflects their status.

Lowland giants are dull-witted and ill-treated, while those that inhabit the snow-covered and storm-wracked peaks are quickthinking and powerful leaders.

Giant Names

Lowland giants choose short, guttural names, while the names of higher giants are more complex, yet still raw and jagged.

Male Names	Female Names	
Brog	Brega	
Ersus	Flula	
Glockus	Grentha	
Jurg	Loka	
Slogar	Rabas	
Vilbos	Tiba	

Cyclopean

Cyclops are giant-kin. In ages past, a clan of giants schemed and plotted against their god, the All-Father, seeking to raise their station. For their crime, the giants of this clan each lost an eye, and with it the All-Father took back from them the gift of foresight.

Bereft and aimless, cyclops wander the foothills, hunting and raiding, yet forever incapable of raising their station.

Monocular Vision

Cyclops' single eye robs them of the combat prowess of their brethren, yet they remain formidable enemies. Those normal folk who have faced cyclops in battle and lived, learned quickly to keep moving or be subject to their full strength.



Ettins

Like cyclops, ettin are giant-kin. And like their kin-folk the cyclops, ettins tried, but failed, to treat with the gods.

Dissatisfied with their lot, they came up with a plan, like this: "Problem iz, weez not smart enough. We go to da All-Father, and he'll make us least twice as smarter!"

The results of their earnest petition were entirely predictable.

Bickering Cretins

The ettin's extra head has created a belligerent and argumentative figure, even on their own. Maddened by their constant antagonistic companionship and yearning fresh company, ettins are unusually talkative.



Hill Giants

Hill giants are the lowest of true giants, just marginally higher than ettin and cyclops.

Brutal and Brutish

Lairing in the hills and mountain foothills, hill giants live in damp caves or rough-made mountain steadings.

From their bases, hill giants strike out at any and all targets; lonely farmsteads, passing caravans, and even palisade-ringed hill towns. They raid for food and the satisfaction of their own brutal self-importance.

Hill giants have a simple life philosophy; if it's smaller than you, take its stuff and eat it.



GLADIATORS

From timeless stone stadia to dusty sand pits, gladiators fight for money and glory.

Free Folk and Fair

The ruler of the vale and surrounding lands is distant, but some decrees reach across the leagues.

Gladiatorial battles operate under franchise, with strict rules that guarantee all combatants are free-folk, of sound mind, and that the battles are to submission, not to death.

Exotic Entertainment

Gladiatorial games comprise a variety of themed entertainments, including marquee duels between champion and villain gladiators, battle-royales of half-a-dozen or more combatants, re-enactments of historical battles, chariot races, and battles against exotic beasts.

Travelling Shows

The smaller gladiatorial troupes are travelling circuses, moving between towns and villages. In larger cities, circuses hold regular events in huge stadia. In both cases the games are a mix of contract combatants and brave locals who seek to make their name in front of the masses.

Trial by Combat

Local community courts can direct the guilty to pay reparations to their victims. If the guilty cannot pay, they may choose to enter the games to work off their debt.





GOBLINS

What goblins lack in size, they more than make up for with sheer concentrated evil.

Never Trust a Goblin

While goblins value life little, they will also do almost anything to preserve their own even for a moment longer. They will lie, cheat, flee, and even throw their friends and allies in front of a blade (or fireball).

Ruled By the Biggest and Meanest

Goblins only respect size and strength. Goblin bands are ruled by the largest and fiercest of their number, by one of their larger kin, or even by a human depraved enough to exert their will over such creatures.

Lairing in Caves and Tunnels

Goblins prefer to lair in labyrinthine caves, which they defend with elaborate traps and snares. Goblins set up staged sentry points, then they fall back deeper into their lairs to lure enemies into their traps. However, goblins are also incredibly lazy, so sentries are as likely to be asleep at their post as they are to be doing their jobs.

Expendable Foot Soldiers

Goblins are a seemingly endless resource, somehow spawned from pure chaos and evil and strewn across the varld to engage in wanton destruction until their own glorious demise.

Goblin Names			
Brak	Crot	Crump	
Gleer	Glyg	Gnax	
Gon	Gresh	Grox	
Hik	Keeg	Krez	
Kug	Nox	Nub	
Pic	Pelk	Pok	
Puk	Pun-Pun	Shosh	
Slag	Smax	Smet	
Snard	Splunt	Strag	
Thag	Thras	Tubs	





GORILLAS

Creatures large and small inhabit the forests and jungles of the varld. In the thick and steaming jungles of the west, the most fearsome creatures are the gorillas.

Defenders of their Home

Fiercely territorial, gorillas are ferocious fighters whose prowess only increases as their enemies grow in number.

Gorillas are equally at home on the ground and in trees. They make their homes in caves, cliffs, and towering treetop canopies deep in the jungle.

King of the Jungle

In bustling jungle ports and trading towns, locals and visitors speak of a legendary gorilla unlike all others; white of fur instead of black, towering twice the height of a normal man, and with four arms each strong enough to tear the limbs off mature trees.

The legendary creature – the gorillian – is said to live in a lost temple deep in the jungle. The temple's ancient secrets await whoever can find a way past its guardian...



GUARDS

While small settlements rely on sheriffs and constables to maintain law and order, large towns and cities employ guard companies. Private guards are also hired to protect travelling caravans and nobles with an abundance of gold and enemies...

The Preservation of Order

By their nature, guards work to preserve the power and position of their paymasters. In towns and cities, they maintain the order of the status quo. In traveling caravans, they work to ensure the safe passage of their employers. In the service of nobles, private guard contingents protect their wealthy employers from the anger of the poor and downtrodden, or the machinations of rich rivals.

Corruptible

Guards come to the service from all stations. Some are lowborn, seeking a decent living; others are born to high station, but down the line for an inheritance.

The low, the high, and those in the middle are all corruptible. Whether through greed or by blackmail, guards can be compromised and bent to the will of others.

Watchers by Day and by Night

City guards maintain posts and patrol both day and night. By day they patrol the streets, watch from walls, and guard the gates. At night, the gates are closed, but men and women of the city guard look out from walls and patrol the streets, alert for any sign of lawbreakers working under the cloak of darkness. Distant screams, breaking glass, or quickening footsteps draw their attention.





HELM KNIGHT

Like other constructs, helm knights are created by powerful mages who imbue ordinary armor with potent magic.

Tireless Guardians

Due to the enormous resources required for their crafting, helm knights are reserved for the most important tasks. The creator of a helm knight uses a secret password to instruct it. Instructions may be to guard the inner sanctum of a mage's tower, protect a tomb filled with the riches of an extinct family line, or tirelessly escort a living person.

Relentless Hunter

When fearing for their lives, mages have programmed their helm knights to relentlessly track down and kill an individual in the event of the mage's death.



HYDRA

Hydra are monstrous three-headed magical reptiles.

Versatile and Formidable

Fearsome enemies, hydra can attack up to three opponents with crackling magic, streaking fireballs, or rending bites.

Dormant, Not Dead

Hydraxis is known by many names; scourge of the vale, eater of the future, and the slumbering one.

One-hundred and twelve years ago Rothgar, the last warrior king of the Brecken Vale, did battle with Hydraxis. Rothgar managed to sever two of the beast's ravenous heads, but could not finish the job before the beast fled.

Hydraxis has lain dormant for a hundred years. Its growing power now draws other creatures, who search for its lair.



KNIGHTS

Knights, both titled and self-styled, dedicate both sword and life to the service of their principles or lord; whether kings, queens, or another form of leader.

Under a Banner

Titled knights are traditionally given titles and lands by their lord or inherit from their family. With the title comes the knight's banner, which is the graphical symbol of their title. Knight's banners may be a family coat of arms, a graphical device such as a fleur-de-lis or rampant dragon, or a combination of shapes on a colored background.

Questing and Errant Knights

Heroic knights undertake arduous and dangerous quests to prove their bravery and worth. While some quests seek to recover powerful relics from distant lands, knights have entered the vale to tackle more immediate dangers, such as to end the scourge of a rampaging wyvern.

Unlike questing knights, knights-errant rove the land in search of adventure and worthy opponents.

Black Knights

Black knights paint their armor and conceal their banner. These mysterious knights may be doing the evil bidding of their lord, or have lost their lord, leaving them masterless. A black knight is a formidable adversary, well trained, well armed, and without fear of retribution.

Knightly Orders

Ordinary warriors and titled knights may join orders like the Knights of Bane or the Order of the Invincible Sun. Such orders, when large and wealthy enough, rival the standing armies of established nation-states.

On the Hunt

Astride a white horse, Ser Anjon Morton rode into the Brecken Vale. His quest had taken him across hundreds of leagues, from mountain peak to mountain peak, following a trail of destruction left by the beast.

Now, ringed by towering mountains, he guides his mount towards the distant town. There he will seek assistance – from any able-bodied soul – to track the creature to whatever lair it now darkens.









KOBOLDS

Kobolds are tiny sniveling dragon-kin who worship their larger dragon cousins.

Swarming Bullies

While a single kobold is little more than a nuisance, these creatures travel in large packs that band together to bring down larger foes.

Dragon-Winged Scrappers

While most kobolds have few hints of their draconic lineage, some rare few are born with leathery wings. While their brethren stay on the ground, these airborne kobolds harry their enemies from above.

Within the Dragon's Lair

Kobolds are slowly yet inexorably drawn to the power of the nearest dragon.

Metallic dragons who find their lairs infested with kobolds barely tolerate their presence. However, when these kobolds find and inhabit the lair of a chromatic dragon, they are put to work to do the dragon's vile bidding.

Tributes

Kobolds raid and steal to gather tribute for their dragon masters. But greed also compels them to take for themselves, building tiny hoards in imitation of their kin.




LIZARDKIN

Lizardkin are primitive scaly reptilian humanoids who inhabit steaming jungles and swamps.

Primitive Societies

Lizardkin society is similar to human society, albeit in a primitive form. Kinfolk harness fire to forge crude, yet effective, weapons and armor, and adorn themselves with charms and talismans to gain favor from their gods.

Varied Scales, Varied Societies

The tribes of lizardkin are characterized by the color of their scales, with greenscale kin living in jungles, blackscale in swamps, and dragonscale for those who inhabit mountainous regions close to their dragon cousins.

Lizardkin are neither inherently good or evil, nor creatures of chaos or order. The one defining characteristic of their societies is that most lizardkin reject contact with other groups, preferring to remain with their own kind.

Rare Adventurers

Lizardkin commonly speak draconic. A rare few leave their communities to trade or venture with other races. These lizardkin learn the common tongue, but live with rampant xenophobia from other races.

River Raiders

Like many reptiles, lizardkin are comfortable in water and can hold their breath for several minutes. These scaly kin use this ability to stage raids on riverside settlements.

Fierce Marauders

Unlike some belligerent inhabitants of the vale, lizardkin are almost as intelligent as human-folk. In times of strife, their war chiefs are cunning strategists, and the battle-prowess of ordinary lizardkin is legendary. Many an opponent has been felled by an unexpected strike from one of these creatures' whipping tails.

Shaman Leaders

While warriors lead raids and defense of lizardkin settlements, shamans are the true leaders of each tribe. These shamans claim divine guidance from their scaled gods. Normal lizardkin are highly superstitious, and their fear of magic makes them easy to manipulate.





MINOTAUR

Minotaurs are fierce beasts whose sole purpose is to hunt and devour those who trespass in their infernal mazes.

Mythical Beasts

The origin of these beasts is lost in the mists of time. Perhaps they are the abominable fusion of man and beast, the physical manifestation of infernal rage and ferocity, or the monstrous result of a failed ritual that sought to imbue beastlike power into mortal men.

Masters of Mazes

Minotaurs care for only one thing; the thrill of hunting other creatures. They retreat to tangled cave systems, overgrown forests, winding alleys, and maze-like ruins. Here, minotaurs use treasure to lure the brave or foolish into their labyrinths.





MUMMIES

Mummies are the petrified remains of pharos, pharae, and their protective guardians. They lie dormant for hundreds or even thousands of years, until disturbed.

Terrifying Remnants

Most who venture into the great tombs are never seen again. Some lucky few emerge alive, reporting terrifying creatures that wield vile arcane power. Still fewer emerge alive bearing precious jewelry, lost scrolls, and ancient scepters.

White Peaks on White Sea

At the far northern reach of the White Sea lies the fertile river delta of the Gyptian people. In ancient times, the pharos and pharae of the Gyptians built soaring temples and monuments to inter their dead.

These temples and monuments were constructed from shining white marble. Quarried in distant lands, it was hauled and shipped across roads and seas, then stacked into gleaming white edifices.

Temples and Tombs

Gyptian tombs were constructed with trap-laden passages and hidden chambers to protect the innermost treasure chambers and burial rooms.

Gold-gilt sarcophaguses are tempting lures for greedy graverobbers, but they contain a terrifying surprise.





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PIRATES

Whether running black sails or flying a skull flag, the signs of a pirate vessel strike fear into seafarers and landlopers alike.

Rabble

Pirates come from all corners of the varld. Pirate bands are places where anyone can find their place, where strength, skill, guile, and flexible morals are more valuable than family lineage or authority from remote rulers.

The Land with No Lord

The civilized lands are places where order has displaced chaos, pushing back the darkness just far enough to carve out a farmstead, a hamlet, a village, a town, or a city.

But the sea knows no order, and no king has tamed its chaos.

Sea Wolves

Pirate crews ply the open seas, preying on shipping and, occasionally, venturing onto land to raid coastal settlements. Pirates spend their plunder carousing at 'free' ports, before setting sail to again raise their fortunes.

Those pirate ships that don't dock at free ports hold other harbors, whether hidden coves, cliff-bound caves, or floating raft-wrecks.

Ghost Ships

One side effect of stealing and spending a great deal of looted treasure is that pirates accumulate a huge range of boons, banes, and curses.





RATLINGS

Ratlings are either rats mutated into humanoids, or humanoids mutated into rats; no one knows for sure.

Pink-Footed Soldiers

In the depths of the Darkenwold Woods ratling swarms live in burrows and caves. Like their smaller brethren, ratlings are easily controlled by larger and meaner creatures. Ratling swarms are often pressed into the service of other woodland kinds for their own nefarious ends.

Vermin of the Highest Order

The problem with ratlings is that their cowardice is legendary. While a battle is in their favor they are formidable warriors, but the moment the tide turns they turn tail and scamper.





RATS

Rats are ubiquitous vermin, the bane of basements everywhere.

Expand to Fill Available Space

Rats exist at the fringes of civilization, in dark corners of basements, ship holds, and sewers, where they scavenge for scraps, and occasionally snatch a cat or small child.

The Bigger the Badder, and Worser in Pairs

Normal sized rats are a pest. Giant rats, however, are more than a pest. More dangerous still are giant rats corrupted by the chaotic forces, dire rats, and those unique rats that have attained a semblance of intelligence and cunning; the king rat. The danger posed by powerful large rats is multiplied when they are encountered in numbers, as each encourages the other to heightened viciousness.





SCORPION

Scorpions, both normal-sized and giant, are endemic to the sandy wastes of the White Sea.

Giant Predators

Travelers of the trade roads across the White Sea are ever-alert for the tell-tale skittering of these predators. Giant scorpions bury themselves under the sand then emerge when they detect the tremors of creatures moving nearby.

Underground Lairs

Giant scorpions have been known to bring down entire caravans, but prefer to snatch up a quick meal then retreat to their underground lairs. Once there, giant scorpions paralyze their prey and leave them on high ledges or in deep pits while they deal with any other intruders.



SEA SERPENT

The waters south of the Brecken Vale belong to Leviathan.

Bane of the Ice-Bound Sea

Ships plying the frigid waters to the south of the Brecken Vale contend not just with drifting icebergs, but also the scourge of the Ice-Bound Sea; Leviathan. Some make grizzly offerings to this terrible beast in a desperate attempt to appease its hunger.

Ice-Bound Lair

Leviathan lairs in a massive drifting iceberg, its interior hollowed out to form an enormous crystalline cavern. The cavern is filled with the remnants of Leviathan's fury; shattered hulls of unlucky ships, crates spilling precious cargo, and the carcasses of half-finished meals.



SKELETONS

Animated by dark necrotic magic, skeletons rise from their graves and stalk the dark corridors of ancient tombs.

Stirred By Malevolent Forces

Intentionally or unintentionally, these skeletal remains are infused with necromantic magic which animates their bleached bones and weeps from their empty eye sockets.

This necrotic power can be the result of a blood ritual to raise skeletal guardians to tirelessly guard a rich family's tomb.

In other cases, residual magic, treacherous deeds or pervasive evil spontaneously manifest in nearby remains.

Tireless Guardians

When raised by necrotic magic, skeletons are given simple instructions which they follow to the best of their ability.

Skeletons that rise unbidden have no master, nor any instructions to follow. Such skeletons have only one goal, to find and destroy living creatures.

Undead Armies

Human skeletons are those most frequently raised, usually due to abundant and convenient supply. Other types of skeletons are raised by creative necromancers or by circumstance, such as in the aftermath of ancient battles where fields are strewn with unusual beasts and animals.





SLIMES

All manner of foul creatures inhabit the varld. Most foul creatures walk on two legs, some on four, but a rare few have forms more bizarre.

Overgrown Mould

Slimes are primeval creatures, a legacy of the earliest times when forgotten gods imbued simple moulds with a mocking semblance of life.

Slimes roam the dank and dark places, devouring anything in their path, living or dead. Once fed and grown large, these creatures split in half and slink away to find more food.

Introduction to Alchemy

Alchemists and apothecaries have long sought the secret ingredients of life. Many naïve dabblers conduct their failed experiments and then break the cardinal rule of brewers: Never pour potions into the sewers.

Darkness 'Neath Rivenshore

Rivenshore is built on the ruins of an older town, which was in its turn built on the ruins of an ancient city destroyed in a turn of the great wheel.

Beneath these fossilized town layers lie the ancient sewers, viaducts, and cisterns of that extinct city. Unbeknownst to the common townsfolk, the water that feeds Rivenshore's town well flows from these ancient works.

And there, in those antique vaults, mired in putrid sludge and discarded magical ingredients, move primordial creatures in search of something to fill their hunger.



SNAKES

Giant snakes inhabit the jungles and forests of the varld.

Venomous Species

Smaller snakes may not pose a physical danger to larger creatures, but all snakes – large and small – have venom powerful enough to bring low even the strongest foes.

Feared and Worshipped

The largest and most powerful of these terrible animals are feared by those who live in their domain, but worshipped as gods by snake cultists and people of scale.

Snake cultists capture wild snakes, the bigger the better, and bring them to their temples. Here, the revered snakes are offered gruesome sacrifices to gain favor for their fervent worshippers.





SPIDERS

It is an unfortunate traveler who fails to notice the thick webs that warn they have stumbled into a spider's lair.

Web-Bound Lairs

Giant spiders – eight-legged freaks that they are – hunt in their lairs to provide food for their queen's brood.

Their prizes are paralyzed, wrapped in webbing, and laid close to pulsating egg-sacs. When the sacs hatch, hundreds of tiny spiders emerge and feast on their waiting meals.

Scurrying Legs

Spider colonies include a single spider queen, a grotesquely grown spider of immense power. In spite of her size, this spider queen, like all of her brood, is equally mobile on the ground and on cavern walls and ceilings.





TENGU

These winged creatures are the harbingers of war.

Nests in the Clouds

Cloud-bound peaks are the tengu's home. Here, they soar on gusting winds to hunt their prey, roost in massive nests, and brood clutches of eggs.

From these mountains, tengu war-bands fill the skies as they descend from the heights to join battle.

Warbringers or Guardians

The appearance of tengu preceding war raises the question; do they bring the war or protect the peace. When tengu are spotted, some turn their spears to their mountain homes while others turn their spears away in search of the real threat.







WATER BEAST

In oceans, bays, and rivers, in dark still lakes, in gentle ponds, and in bright oasis waters, swim beasts with vicious jaws and ravenous appetites.

Safe Shores

Many travelers believe they are safe from these creatures if they stay on dry land. Those travelers, whether relaxing by the shore of a lake, tending the rigging of their boat, or fishing from a riverside outcrop, may not notice the water beast's head as it rises from the water. And then it's too late.

Toxic Maw

The bony maw of the water beast festers with toxic secretions. Anyone bitten by the creature, or struck by its arcing globs, is immediately weakened by the vile substance.





WEASELS

Weasels, along with foxes and ratlings, are power-hungry woodland creatures.

Woodland Scourges

Weasel-kind are fierce warriors who think nothing of the other woodland kinds. Bands of weasels roam the deep woods, raiding villages, stealing and burning all they find.

Raids complete, weasels retreat to their caves and warrens, split their spoils and laze with full bellies. Soon enough their loot is spent and their bellies begin rumbling once more.

Tussle for Power

All agree the ratlings are sniveling minions. Weasels and foxes, however, are both allies and rivals in their ambition to rule their woodland realm.





WEREWOLF

The clouds part, a rounded moon shines through for a brief moment before the clouds close in again. Scant light fades, replaced with a deep growl that rumbles from the closing darkness...

The Beast Within

Werewolves, like other lycanthropes, are folk infected with a plague that loosens the bars that cage their inner animal. Unleashed, the animal erupts in frightening rage and hunger.

In the Light of the Full Moon

Lycanthropy is transmitted when an infected animal injures a normal person. The curse first manifests in the light of the full moon. Over time, those infected can exert control over their curse, and may even learn to master the ability to shift between humanoid, hybrid, and full wolf forms.



WOLVES

Wolves, and chaos-grown dire wolves, roam the varld.



WRAITH

Wraiths are ghost-like undead strong enough to manifest a terrifying physical form.

Endless Desecration

Like ghosts, wraiths are the remnant spirits of the living. In life, these fiends dedicated themselves to a malevolent goal. In death, when this task is left unfinished, their spirit rises to continue its foul work.

Defiler of the Living

The wraith's shadowy cowl is enough to terrify even the bravest of heroes. Heroes know true fear when they witness a wraith's spectral hand draw the life force from a living creature and twist that vitae to heal their own evil bodies. How do you defeat a creature that rebuilds its strength as yours wanes?



WYVERN

Wyverns are two-legged flying dragon-kin with a piercing tail that drips with potent venom.

Unbridled Power

The longevity and intelligence of dragons mitigates their sheer power, preventing them from simply razing nearby settlements and devouring all inhabitants. Wyverns, however, are wild creatures with animal intelligence and a ravenous hunger, so their power is unrestrained.

Apex Predators

Wyverns are the ultimate predators, their lairs overflow with the shattered remains of their prey. Their only threat is from humanoids, and even then it takes several extraordinary individuals (or an entire town) to bring down such a beast.



ZOMBIES

Necrotic magic compels these dead bodies into ghastly life.

The Wakened Dead

When the living are struck down by dark powers, or where necromancers weave their vile magic, the dead shake loose their shackles and rise to slake their insatiable hunger.

Relentless and Hungry

Zombies wander in search of any creature to devour, be it birds, beasts, or humans. They cannot be reasoned with, and they never tire.

The only way to stop these relentless creatures is to destroy their bodies. However, their bodies are already dead, so zombies can only be downed by an attack that destroys what remains of their rotting brains.





