
CHARACTERS:

PROTAGONIST

The Kami: Tanuki

Looking over a small patch of forest, overgrown and abandoned by the neighbouring village, stands an empty shrine to the Tanuki. The spirit has slept for many decades. Before, the Tanuki would be known to be feared. If not pleased by food, drink, and entertainment, the spirit would find its own. Scaring naive wanderers, often with unlucky and dire consequences for the villagers. They would leave offerings in the shrine to have safe passage in the woods. But with time the route through the forest was abandoned for others.

ANTAGONIST:

THE YOKAI

The Yokai are evil treacherous spirits. They speak as one always as “we”. Before, they shared the forest with the Tanuki. Scaring, baiting, sometimes killing travelers who left no offers. The Yokai will try to convince the Tanuki of his old self. Or to let him fail his mission and put him back to sleep.

Premise

Recently, the nearby village changed. The major roads have been taken over by Yokai, leaving no alternative to go through the forest again. The Tanuki is asked for help to protect the coming processions and create a new path to the outside world. Before the child who asked is taken by the Yokai.

The Tanuki will be haunted by the Yokai and confronted with his old ways in an attempt to demoralize his support of the villagers. They will grow in their anger and push to extremes to lead the villagers or take them from the path.

When all things go well, the Tanuki can lead the procession, through the forest, past the mountain, recovering his former shrine, along the steps, down the mountain, to the village on the other side. To reunite sibling villages in a time of strife.

INTRODUCTION: CINEMATIC

EXT. NIGHT. Forest Edge

A child (9) walks with a dim lantern to the edge of the forest. She waits at the edge, reading the warnings nailed on the Torri gate.

Here in the mist hides the hound masked by night. Come with offers of food and wine, or be taken by the claws from the clouds, lost to time.

A roar sounds from where she came. Gripping her lantern tight, she continues into the woods, where no roads mark the soil.

EXT. NIGHT Tanuki Forest

The child walks through the forest, only seeing where the lantern lights her path. Whispers sound from the woods. She pauses. A shrine with a broken statue stands at the base of a barren tree. She kneels down and lights two sticks of incense. Her hands clap twice.

CHILD

(practised)

Tanuki of the forest, I ask for your help.

For the light I bring, can you guard the path. I know your stories when you joined us for festivals and feasts, when the path was lit.

The yo... (yokai) – **They**... take us from the roads, the things in the mist. We have no way to go. Please can you light our way once more?

The whispers pick up. The child looks around. Silence. A claw cuts. The light of the lantern snuffed.

Sparks flare. The light of the thin incense grows. Cracks in the statue fill with golden light. They move. One by one they form back in the shape of the Tanuki, the raccoon dog.

TANUKI

(yawning)

Tenuki was having the best nap. Who wakes Tanuki from napping. Who is this?

The light grows around the statue. A torn lantern lies on the floor.

TANUKI

(sad)

No. Oh no. Little thing.

Tenuki owes you FAVOR as asked. He will protect who follows. Tenuki will make sure.

OUTRO: CINEMATIC

EXT. SUNRISE. Fields End

The procession runs through waving fields as the mist recedes. Rooftops point through first, then the lights in the windows that shine with the Gold of daybreak. Last, the people coming through their doors, waking to the sound of their visitors arriving and the first rays of sunrise. FIELD'S END is in sight.

TANUKI

Till Field's End. They got it from here. Don't they, little one?

The light of a wisp appears next to the Tanuki. They turn, heading back down the path. Lanterns dim as they pass. Past the fields, mountain, back to their forest. Behind them the mist returns.

INT. NIGHT Tanuki Shrine

The Tanuki statue glows as it once did. Yet today he doesn't stand alone. Next to him stands a small stone shape of a raccoon-dog.

CHILD

(smiling, sleepy)

Here we go again.

The mists surround and roll over the statues, the golden light of their eyes peer through. Till they fade.

TITLE SCREEN: MATSURI

- THE END -

ROLL CREDITS

[PLAY AGAIN]

EVENTS: RUN and PANEL START

AT RUN START:

Starting some runs trigger dialogue highlighting progression in fighting off the TANUKI at night.

FIRST RUN: FOREST

TANUKI

(sleepy)

How the woods have grown. FAVOR to keep. Feet are drawing near. Taniku must prepare for guests to arrive.

YOKAI

(demeaning)

Why have you risen, Tanuki of the Woods? We have things handled here. Go back to your naps before you make a fool of yourself. We all know you're good at that.

TANUKI

(determined)

No thank you whisper things. Guests are coming.

YOKAI

(grinning)

We better prepare...

COMPLETED: FOREST

TANUKI

(proud)

This is how Tanuki remembers home. It looks pretty does it not?

YOKAI

(demeaning)

Prrrrretty indeed. We find it disgusting.

TANUKI

(determined)

Tanuki and We are welcome to find peace in this garden.

YOKAI

(grinning)

You will find yours in the Path to come.

FIRST RUN: MOUNTAIN

TANUKI

(calm)

How clean the air. But no view to see. The clouds ate the mountain I see.

YOKAI

(grinning)

We did.

TANUKI

(laughing)

Tanuki gets hungry too sometimes. Oh Tanuki must not lie, all the time!

YOKAI

(grinning)

Oh Tanuki you lost your touch. Lie and eat. Two things you do best.

COMPLETED: MOUNTAIN

TANUKI

(proud)

The view! How far TANUKI can see! And there, the village. Mere steps to go.

YOKAI

(demeaning)

Too bright. Cover it! NOW!

TANUKI

(determined)

No hiding this beauty. Take it in.

YOKAI

(grinning)

You will not reach the village. We promise.

FIRST RUN: FIELDS

TANUKI

(calm)

The wind, how it dances in the grass. How precious it would be to see the hills dance.

YOKAI

(grinning)

Careful. Something might hide within.

TANUKI

(laughing)

No need to be shy. Tanuki will dance with We as well.

YOKAI

(grinning)

We end your dance here Tanuki. You should have stayed asleep in the forest.

COMPLETED: FIELDS

TANUKI

(proud)

The hills! Dance with Tanuki!

YOKAI

(demeaning)

Still... The... Fool...

TANUKI

(determined)

A happy one.

YOKAI

(grinning)

And soon... Forgotten again.

FESTIVALS:

When Festivals Events are started it grants a permanent bonus to the influence of the Tanuki. This angers the Yokai and in the following run they will act more aggressively.

FESTIVAL VARIATION 1:

YOKAI

(hungry)

We smell... food. No... joy.

TANUKI

I am hungry already!

YOKAI

So are WE!

FESTIVAL VARIATION 2:

YOKAI

(angry)

We see... light.

TANUKI

I am hungry already!

YOKAI

So are WE!

FESTIVAL VARIATION 3:

YOKAI

(heated)

What is that noise?! Is that, muuuuuusic? Is that laughter? How dare you bring that into OUR home?!

TANUKI

(Joyful)

Isn't it great?

YOKAI

(tired)

We make it stop. RIGHT NOW!

EVENTS:

Special events can be triggered by finding Points of Interest on the map. When the procession reaches the location the player is offered a choice.

HAUNTED SITES

Abandoned tea house:

A half collapsed building stands at a pond's edge. An old wooden table stands in the middle of the single open room. A teapot stands on top, steam coming from it.

Pour a cup of tea: A pilgrim pours a cup and drinks it slowly. They collapse. From them, their shadow rises. [YOKAI SPAWNS]

(Spend 1 FAVOR) Purify the tea: Light glows in the teapot, escaping at its edges. The steam turns dark, turning to smoke. With a weiling cry a Yokai is expelled from the spot. [TEA CEREMONY SHRINE added to the PATH]

Leave

Lone Gate:

Standing right in front of the procession spans a Torri gate. Lanterns swing unlit on its beams.

Walk through the gate: The procession continues down the path marked safe. With each person passing you feel emboldened. The procession stops, as they lost sight of their fellow travelers. [PILGRIMS LOST]

(SPEND 2 FAVOR) Bless the Torii gate: The lanterns on the gate ignite and stop swaying. A tension hangs in the air. Three human faces appear in fog and shadow to lunge at the pilgrims. [YOKAI SPAWN; TORII GATE added to your PATH]

Leave

The Peach Tree:

In the center of a clearing stands a large gnarled tree without leaves. It bears large purple fruit.

Pluck the fruit: A brave pilgrim reaches high to pluck from the tree, its smell sweet as blossom and honey. The juice runs along his cheeks as he bites into it. He looks to see his face staring back with his own shocked expression. He collapses, no longer with a face of his own. [PILGRIM LOST, FRUIT GROWS]

Bless the tree: The pilgrims clear the dried dead branches and pluck the weeds from the soil surrounding the base of the tree. The moss and grass of the ground turns greener as they water the cracked soil. Shadows rise from the fruit in a choir of relief. Blossoms bloom from the branches. [HAUNTING LIFTED; BLOSSOM SHRINE added to the PATH; DELICIOUS SNACK added to the PATH]

Leave

Words of prayers past:

*A red stained building appears from the mists, the rattling of wood breaks the silence.
Dozens of cards hang from string and twine, writing visible on them.*

Read the cards: The writing on the cards shifts, the ink moves as if still wet, reading: "Let the mists be free of harm, let the Tanuki slumber, our journey calm."

TANUKI

(sad)

TANUKI wasn't good at times. If hungry or lonely or bored. TANUKI can be better.

[LOSE 3 FAVOR; PRAYER CARD SHRINE added to the PATH.]

Write prayer cards: The pilgrims spend time to write prayers, their own or others. The ribbons are tied with care and intent. The ink dries, taken on a golden sheen.

[3 FAVOR GAINED; PRAYED CARD SHRINE]

Leave

Ivory Cliff:

In a cave at the bottom of a jagged cliff, the rock reflects a pale white. When approaching to see clearly, the rock moves. Dozens of skulls rattle and shake. They speak:

SKULL MOUNT:

(raspy)

Yokai! How dare you return! We will make you pay for your deeds.

Collapse the cave: The pilgrims hack and pry at loose rocks above the cave.

SKULL MOUNT:

(angry)

Not without a fight! Not again!

The skulls roll together, forming a giant version of themselves. A towering jaw closes on the followers inside the cave, before it collapses.

[PILGRIMAGE ENDS; FAVOR LOST]

[SPEND 2 FAVOR] Cleanse the cave: The pilgrims approach with lanterns of golden light in hand.

SKULL MOUNT:

(scared)

NO Closer!

TANUKI

(calm)

TANUKI doesn't harm bones. Bones seem tired. Mine get tired.

SKULL MOUNT:

We are... But the Yokai will return! We must be watching!

TANUKI

TANUKI will watch. Pilgrims will remember. Dead things rest.

[SKULL SHRINE added to the PATH]

Leave

Stranger on the Bridge:

A bridge crosses a dry brook. A man stands tall. He turns, eyes glowing red.

Face the Stranger: *The lanterns glow bright and golden.*

TANUKI

TANUKI asks if he and we can pass.

STRANGER

You may try.

Horns grow and teeth burst from the stranger's mouth when he draws a club.

TANUKI

You are?

ONI

Death.

[YOKAI spawn in the area. BLOODY BRIDGE added to the PATH]

>>> NOTES: Bloody bridge reduces FAVOR when the procession passes.

[SPEND 1 FAVOR] Bless the Stranger: Motes of light drift to light the creaks between the paved stone.

TANUKI

(calm)

TANUKI wishes Stranger a safe journey. May you find peace on your path.

STRANGER

Peace is not what I seek.

TANUKI

It is what you found.

A shadow with horns and teeth drift from the man as he collapses. [BLESSED BRIDGE added to the PATH.]

>>> NOTES: Blessed bridge increases FAVOR when passed by the procession.

Leave:

STRANGER

No one turns their back on me.

>>> NOTES: Return to other options in the event.

DRAGON'S JOURNEY

(FOREST) *Whispering Pond:*

A murky pond lies still, thick with mud and green. Bubbles rise and whisper when they surface, too soft to hear what is said.

Throw a rock in the water: A big splash brings up roaring foam and silt. Spoke gathers on the surface. [YOKAI SURFACES; **DRAGON'S WRATH** IGNITED]

(Spend 1 Favor) Clear the pond: A drop of light touches the surface and ripples to every edge. The water turns clear. A whispering sigh of relief sounds. Koi surface and circle the pond. [**DRAGON'S FAVOR** GAINED; MIST CLEARS; KOI SHRINE added to the PATH]

Leave site

(MOUNTAIN) *Roaring falls:*

A thin stream falls from the jaws of a Dragon's statue on top of a jagged cliff. The stream below roils with koi.

(End Procession) Get to work: To wanderers get to work. Rubble and debris is cleared from the Dragon's Jaw. Some swear the eyes observed them while they worked. Water now roars from the stream, clashing in the water below. The koi swim up the waterfall. The scales and eyes of the statue glow with golden light. [**50 FAVOR** Gained, **Dragon's Favor** Gained]

[SPEND 2 FAVOR] Block the stream: The stream trickles to a halt, revealing a hidden shrine behind the waterfall. [**DRAGON'S WRATH** IGNITED; SHRINE added to the Path]

(FIELDS) *Drake's Bellow:*

A shrine of brass bell and horns resembling a dragon, stands above an active flame withstood the tests of time.

[SPEND 1 FAVOR] Sound the bell: A need rumbling shakes the mountain. All flames dim. The darkness recedes. (One **Dragon's Favor** Gained)

[SPEND 1 FAVOR] Light the furnace: Trumpets roar, flames flare, the call is answered. All lanterns are lit and the protective area is increased, Yokai presence increased. (Dragon's Wrath ignited)

Leave site

ENDING: DRAGON'S JOURNEY (FAVOR)

Dragon's Favor (triggers when 3 Dragon's Favor Gained): *A golden glow streaks through the clouds. A second sunrise through the night's sky. The Orichi (Dragon) joins each following procession, emitting a large safe area for surrounding pilgrims.*

Dragon's Wrath (triggers when 3 Dragon's Favor Gained): *Nearby lanterns flare, flames turning red. The air grows uncomfortably hot. Yokai grow bolder, appearing more and some gain an increased movement speed. (Their mist turns red)*

PATH OF THE KITSUNE:

(FOREST) Hidden den:

Birds have gone quiet. Even the wind has died down to a halt. Eyes shine silver from a den under a fallen tree.

Close up the den: Branches and rocks roll in front of the den. The three pairs of silver eyes vanish in the shadow. Three elusive Yokai (less visible) will appear throughout the night.

(Fox' Spite Gained)

(Spend 1 FAVOR) Lighting the Den: A small golden sprite floats into the den. Three young foxes are illuminated, their silver fur turning golden when the light reflects. They run out of the den, into the dark. Three **FAVOR** gained. **(Fox' Favor Gained)**

Leave

(MOUNTAIN) Stranger on the rock:

Looking down at the procession, a wanderer stands tall on top of a large boulder. Following them with his gaze as they pass.

(Spend 1 FAVOR) Bless the Stranger's Pass: The ground under the feet of the Stranger glows. The human silhouette shrinks to that of a fox, who nods and vanishes. Three **FAVOR** gained. **(Fox' Favor Gained)**

Leave

(FIELDS) Abandoned Kitsune Statue:

A statue, broken and covered with moss stands in the shadow of a small hill.

(Spend 1 FAVOR) Recover the Statue: The moss retracts and the cracks of the statue glow, the pieces drifting together and fuse. Standing is the shape of a fox. One could swear, it smiles. Yokai will be less active the next night. (Three **FAVOR** gained. **Fox' Favor Gained**)

(Spend 1 FAVOR) Shape the Statue: The rock creaks and melts like mud, taking the shape of the Tanuki. Flowers bloom and the air feels just a little warmer. However an unsettling feeling can't be shaken. Yokai will be more active the following night. **(Fox' Spite Gained)**

Leave

ENDINGS: PATH OF THE KITSUNE:

Fox's Favor (triggers when 3 Fox' Favor Gained): Three foxes cross your path. They turn to look. In a blink a human figure with a fox' mask stands where the foxes stood. The figure nods.

>>>Notes: Kitsune pilgrims can join the procession. They repel Yokai without Tanuki interference.

Fox' Spite (triggers when 3 Fox' Spite Gained): Mist rolls in along the path. A chilling feeling creeps. Something is watching.

>>> Notes: Yokai are illusive from now on, making them harder to spot and more likely to harm.

MATSURI

Overgrown and worn with time, your shrine stands along a forgotten path in an ancient forest. When a brave young traveler asks for help, you – the Tanuki, a trickster spirit of joy and celebration, awaken from your slumber to protect travelers from the dangers within the mist. Can you reach the village over the mountain in time?

Matsuri is a management game where you protect a procession of travelers through Yokai haunted locations, sanctifying the ancient gardens. Uncover abandoned holy sites and gain favor to grow your influence.

Matsuri was made during the 10th edition of the Epic Megajam, in 2025.

Credits:

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APPENDIX A:

LIST OF DEFINITIONS:

Japanese Folklore

Yōkai (妖怪; Japanese pronunciation: [joː.kai]^[1]) are a class of [supernatural](#) entities and [spirits](#) in [Japanese folklore](#). The [kanji](#) representation of the word *yōkai* comprises two characters that both mean "suspicious, doubtful",^[2] and while the Japanese name is simply the Japanese transliteration or pronunciation of the Chinese term *yāoguài* (which designates similarly strange creatures), some Japanese commentators argue that the word *yōkai* has taken on many different meanings in Japanese culture,^[3] including referring to a large number of uniquely Japanese creatures.

Yōkai are also referred to as [ayakashi](#) (あやかし), [mononoke](#) (物の怪) or [mamono](#) (魔物). Some academics and [Shinto](#) practitioners acknowledge similarities within the seeming dichotomy between the natures of *yōkai* and most [kami](#), which are generally regarded as relatively beneficent in comparison, and class the two as ultimately the same type of spirits of nature or of a mythological realm.^[4] Their behavior can range from malevolent or mischievous to benevolent to humans.

Yōkai often have animal-like features (such as the [kappa](#), depicted as appearing similar to a turtle, and the [tengu](#), commonly depicted with wings), but may also appear humanoid in appearance, such as the [kuchisake-onna](#) (口裂け女). Some *yōkai* resemble inanimate objects (such as the [tsukumogami](#)), while others have no discernible shape. *Yōkai* are typically described as having spiritual or supernatural abilities, with [shapeshifting](#) being the most common trait associated with them. *Yōkai* that shapeshift are known as [bakemono](#) (化け物) or [obake](#) (お化け).

Ayakashi (アヤカシ) is the collective name for *yōkai* that appear above the surface of a body of water.^[1]

In [Nagasaki Prefecture](#), the [atmospheric ghost lights](#) that appear above water are called ayakashi, and so are the [funayūrei](#) in [Yamaguchi Prefecture](#) and [Saga Prefecture](#).^[1] In western Japan, ayakashi are said to be the vengeful spirits of those who died at sea and that they are attempting to capture more people to join them.^[2] On [Tsushima Island](#), they are also called "atmospheric ghost lights of ayakashi (ayakashi no kaika)",^[3] and appear on beaches in the evening, and are said to look like a child walking in the middle of a fire. In coastal Japan, atmospheric ghost lights appear as mountains and obstruct one's path, and are said to disappear if one does not avoid the mountain and tries to bump into it intently.^[4]

Mononoke (物の怪) are vengeful spirits ([onryō](#)), dead spirits ([shiryō](#)), live spirits ([ikiryō](#)), or spirits in Japanese classical literature and folk religion that were said to do things like possess individuals and make them suffer, cause disease, or even cause death.^{[1][2]} It is also a word sometimes used to refer to *yōkai* or *henge* ("changed beings").^{[3][4]}

Kami (Japanese: 神; [ka⁺mi]) are the [deities](#), [divinities](#), [spirits](#), mythological, spiritual, or natural phenomena that are venerated in the traditional [Shinto](#) religion of [Japan](#). *Kami* can be elements of the landscape, forces of nature, beings, and the qualities that these beings express, and/or the spirits of venerated dead people. Many *kami* are considered the ancient ancestors of entire [clans](#) (some ancestors became *kami* upon their death if they were able to embody the values and [virtues](#) of *kami* in life). Traditionally, great leaders like the [Emperor](#) could be or became *kami*.^[1]

In Shinto, *kami* are not separate from nature, but are of nature, possessing positive and negative, and [good and evil](#) characteristics. They are manifestations of [musubi](#) (結び),^[2] the interconnecting energy of the universe, and are considered exemplary of what humanity should strive towards. *Kami* are believed to be "hidden" from this world, and inhabit a complementary existence that mirrors our own: *shinkai* (神界; "the world of the kami").^{[3]:22} To be in harmony with the awe-inspiring aspects of nature is to be conscious of *kannagara no michi* (随神の道 or 惟神の道; "the way of the kami").^[2]

TRICKSTERS: KITSUNE and TANUKI: In Japanese folklore, there are certain animals that possess supernatural or spiritual powers that are believed to influence the affairs of humans. These creatures are considered to be a type of *yōkai* ([referred to in an earlier Kokoro Insights](#)) called Henge, or shapeshifters. Among these animals, the most famous are the trickster animal spirits of the Kitsune (fox) and the Tanuki (Japanese raccoon dog). According to Japanese legends, these are the only two animals that naturally occur with magical powers. In many legends, the Tanuki and the Kitsune change shape into a human to commit mischievous acts against humans simply because they enjoy tricking humans in any way they can.

While the Kitsune is associated with sharper intelligence and either a dignified or malicious intent behind its usual trickery, especially because of its association with the Shinto god Inari, Tanuki are often described as unclever and humorous in its trickery. In Shinto legends, the foxes serve as sorts of messengers or familiars of the God Inari, who is the god of rice said to protect the rice harvest and a god said to watch over the prosperity of farmers and merchants. Because the fox is said to have supernatural powers, the fox is also said to hold the ability to either ward off or allow demonic and evil influences on Inari and thus on the harvest of rice (rice also being associated with fertility in Japan). Thus, the fox spirit has become associated with either being benevolent or malicious in its use of powers. On the other hand, because of the association of the Tanuki with many humorous stories and probably simply because they are such cute animals in reality, the Tanuki is a popular animal in stories across Japan and is popularly often kept as a statue or stuffed animal in Japanese households.

The tanuki, sometimes called the *bakedanuki* (化け狸) when referring to its supernatural abilities, contains the ability to shapeshift into just about anything. In old Japanese stories, the tanuki represented the haunting of people and was often associated with bad omens. Gradually, the tanuki became associated with a mischievous intent in using supernatural powers, as in many stories the animal would transform to play its "belly drum" to scare and almost play with unsuspected hunters, travelers, and monks. This change in mood towards the tanuki probably comes from the tanuki's actual habitat being deep in the woods, and thus

unsuspecting travelers' stories of mysterious sounds and experiences came to be blamed on the trickster tanuki. Gradually, the tanuki even began to be associated with benevolence, prosperity and fun, as the tanuki became associated in stories with transforming into humans to drink, party, and have fun alongside them. The tanuki is even a popular mascot in Japan, as having statues or drawings of tanuki outside bars and restaurants invites people to come in and just indulge in spending money and having a good time just like a tanuki spirit.