

YOKAI 101

Pilot
(revision 2023.02.22)

"Something Wicked This Way Comes"

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Genre: Action-Adventure/Supernatural/Horror/Drama

Logline: When a Yokai spirit warrior battling an ancient evil in feudal Japan is mysteriously transported into modern LA, he must team up with the young woman who finds him, in order to stop the demon from breaking free and destroying the world as they know it.

TEASER

AN ANCIENT SCROLL

The scroll UNRAVELS -- reveals Japanese WOODBLOCK PRINT (ukiyo-e) images of monsters and demons that ANIMATE--

A serpentine DRAGON drowns a village with a tidal wave, stamped with a BLUE WATER KANJI.

AUTUMN (V.O.)

Be it ghost, goblin, god, or demon,
what yokai "are" and what they "are
not" is not easy to describe.

A red-skinned horned DEMON devours women at a hedonistic party, stamped with a RED FIRE KANJI.

AUTUMN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Think of them as cousins to the
"Big Bad Wolf" in all those Grimm
Fairy Tales.

A large WEASEL within a tornado chases travelers and cuts them to ribbons, stamped with a YELLOW WIND KANJI.

AUTUMN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Although, some of them are more
"monster" than others.

A giant TARANTULA fights several samurai and covers them in spewed spider webs, stamped with a GREEN EARTH KANJI.

AUTUMN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And the cruelest of them all, was a
cursed creature known as the Nue.

An OWL surrounded by a black cloud, stamped with a PURPLE VOID KANJI, ATTACKS a GOLD-CLAD SAMURAI - a LEGENDARY HERO.

AUTUMN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But as the Nue ravaged the lands,
hope arose. A warrior was summoned
from the heavens to end the
calamity and restore peace.

We ENTER the printed image of a SHINTO SHRINE--

A PRIESTESS dressed in red and white lights a candle. The SMOKE wisps and rises up to the CLOUDS ABOVE--

Several GLOWING FIGURES gather. At their center, a WHITE FOX with nine tails appears in a brilliance of light.

ACT ONE**EXT. RIVER (REALITY) - SUNSET**

THUNDER rumbles nearby, as a THICK FOG covers the river.

AUTUMN (V.O.)

As destiny foresaw, the warrior
defeated the Nue.

From within the fog emerges a small wooden flatboat.

A lone figure stands at the back, the setting sun behind him.

For one brief serene moment, we see cherry blossom petals
gently fall in the breeze, as--

Blood DRIPS to the wooden floor, trickles down his arm.

AUTUMN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But the warrior did not rejoice for
the battle had cost him dearly.

SUPERIMPOSE: KYOTO, JAPAN. 1560 C.E. (EIROKU 3, 3RD MONTH)

SHINJIRO MYOBU, late-20s, seemingly meek, but unyielding,
wears simple traditional Japanese clothes covered in both
dried and fresh blood, and a WHITE FOX HALF-MASK.

His GLOWING GOLDEN VULPINE EYES peer through the mask, scan
the shoreline.

AUTUMN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Having sent the Nue's immortal body
to Yomi, the Underworld, the
warrior trapped its soul in a
magatama stone.

He glances to the BLACK LACQUERED BOX seated in front of him.

Covered in bookmark-sized paper talismans with strange
writing, the box gives off an other-worldly energy.

He tightens his grip, holds his katana low, when--

LIGHTNING CRACKS! The shoreline EXPLODES, chunks of rock fly.

Shadowy FIGURES wear grotesque ogre masks -- AKUMA NINJAS --
leap out of the shadows, launch themselves at the boat.

SLICE! BLOOD SPLATTERS as the katana finds its mark. An Akuma
Ninja drops into the river.

SWISH-SWISH-SWISH. More blood and Ninjas fall.

AUTUMN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 But he knew the magatama wasn't
 strong enough to contain the Nue's
 soul forever, so he devised a plan.

He shifts slightly, winces at his left shoulder as more blood
 drips from his open wound.

AUTUMN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 To protect mankind, he would seal
 the Nue within a sessho-seki, a
 "killing stone," even if that meant
 sacrificing his own life.

Suddenly, METAL NEEDLES FLY through the air!

With lightning fast reflexes, Shinjiro deflects the needles
 mid-air. They THUD-THUD-THUD to the bottom of the boat.

A ninja leaps and YELLS.

SLICE! Shinjiro cuts the ninja, blocks an attack from another
 one, flings them both off the boat.

A third ninja KICKS -- Shinjiro flies backwards.

Shinjiro stands, struggles to defend himself -- he's tiring.

AUTUMN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 The warrior refused to allow any
 more lives to be stolen by the
 Nue's curse. It had already taken
 the one soul most precious to him.

A ninja knocks Shinjiro's sword out of his hand. The katana
 CLATTERS into the boat, hits the black box, and flings it to
 the front bow.

Shinjiro LUNGES for the box, when--

A ninja SLICES Shinjiro's back.

Shinjiro turns, eyes BURNING GOLD, IGNITES a BLUE FLAME in
 his hand, and sets the ninja on FIRE!

The ninja SCREAMS, falls out of the boat.

AUTUMN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Praying for death, the warrior had
 one last sacred mission. A final
 duty that he would not fail in
 fulfilling.

Shinjiro turns and reaches for the black box when-- CRASH!

LIGHTNING EXPLODES the bow of the boat!

Shinjiro flies backwards, hits his head on the boat deck, blood streams down the white fox mask.

An imposing samurai wearing the CREST of the "Thunder Beast", **AKITO RAIJU**, 30s, steps out of the lightning and smoke, picks up the black box, rises to his full sinister stature.

Lightning RIPPLES across his tall and darkly virile form -- quite the opposite of Shinjiro in so many ways.

He holds up the box and smiles viciously.

RAIJU

(in Japanese; subtitled)

There it is. Thank you for your hard work, Myobu-san.

Shinjiro painfully stands, his left arm useless now, holds out his remaining good hand to Raiju.

SHINJIRO

(in Japanese; subtitled)

It's been a long day. Give it back, Raiju-san, or help me finish--

RAIJU

(in Japanese; subtitled)

Finish what? Sealing the Nue? Why would I allow that?

He clicks his tongue with a "tsk, tsk."

Raiju points his finger up. ELECTRICITY sparks around it.

He touches a paper seal on the box. It BURNS, the ashes BLOW AWAY in the wind.

SHINJIRO

(in Japanese; subtitled)

Stop! Why would you release that demon? You know what they did to--!

Raiju smiles, ELECTRIFIES his finger, touches another seal.

Shinjiro lunges for Raiju. The two grapple and fight, but Shinjiro is too wounded and can't keep up.

Raiju hits and kicks Shinjiro, malicious and sadistic. It's too easy. He laughs, GRABS Shinjiro by the throat, LIFTS him one-handed.

RAIJU

(in Japanese; subtitled)

What did she ever see in you?

(sinister whisper)

The Nue will devour this world just
like your priestess' heart... and I
intend to be on the winning side
when they do.

The box loses another seal. A thick BLACK SMOKE leaks out.

Raiju TOSSES Shinjiro into the boat, broken & unable to move.

SHINJIRO

(in Japanese; subtitled)

What happened to you, brother? Why
are you doing this? Please, you
must stop.

RAIJU

(in Japanese; subtitled)

You never did know when to accept
defeat. Farewell... little brother.

Raiju reaches his hand upwards. Lightning CRACKLES overhead,
strikes his hand -- when he FLINGS IT at Shinjiro.

Shinjiro grabs his katana's scabbard, holds it like a shield,
REFLECTS the lightning back!

Electricity EXPLODES EVERYTHING in a ball of WHITE LIGHT.

The AIR CRACKLES. In an EXPLOSION of electricity and dirt,
Raiju stands on the shoreline, RAGES.

The last rays of sunlight disappear under burnt orange skies.

AUTUMN (V.O.)

When the day has ended and night
has yet to begin, the border
between our worlds narrows.

After a long moment -- with a HUGE GASP of air, Shinjiro
EMERGES from under the water on the opposite shore, the black
box held tight against his chest, heavily leaks dark smoke.

AUTUMN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Twilight. The hour of Omagatoki.
The hour of calamity. A time when
spirits can easily cross into our
world --

Raiju ROARS, hurls a LIGHTNING bolt at Shinjiro that hits
dead center of his back.

Lightning ARCS across his body, connects with the BLACK BOX.
 BOOM! The box EXPLODES and FRAGMENTS. An owl SCREECHES.
 A MASSIVE BLACK CLOUD erupts and SWALLOWS Shinjiro whole.

AUTUMN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 -- or someone can easily fall into
 theirs...

From inside the cloud, Shinjiro ROARS, fights back. BLUE
 LIGHT crackles inside the cloud like heat lightning, when--

RIP-RIP-ROAR! A gnarled DIMENSIONAL RIFT tears the fabric of
 space, warps the scenery around it like a black hole!

AUTUMN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Into the other world --

The mass of black cloud GROWLS, is PULLED into the tear.
 Shinjiro reaches out from the cloud, but he can't escape!

AUTUMN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 The world of the Yokai.

Raiju ROARS as the tear collapses, VANISHES. Victory stolen.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - PARK - SUNSET

AUTUMN FOSTER, 18, an upbeat, multiracial young influencer
 with a pure heart and a penchant for getting into trouble,
 chats with a homeless woman, pets her dog.

SUPERIMPOSE: LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA. PRESENT DAY.

Autumn snaps a PHOTO of the pair with her phone, shows her.

TIRED WOMAN
 That's the best I've looked all
 year. Not sure it'll get you that
 Pulitzer, though.

AUTUMN
 Doesn't matter. I've got the most
 beautiful subject out of the whole
 class. Thanks again for helping me
 with this, Marie.

She posts the image to her social media feed "@AutumninFocus"
 and types:

ON SCREEN: "Beautiful life in between the lines."

She scrolls her feed: portraits of life on the streets.

TIRED WOMAN

Stop it. After all you've done for us, it's the least I could do.

Autumn stares at one photo on her phone. The tired woman leans over, sees a photo of Autumn laughing with a friend.

TIRED WOMAN (CONT'D)

Still haven't found her yet?

Autumn half-smiles, wipes a tear from her eye, looks up with resolve, as a homeless man walks up, wrapped in a blanket.

AUTUMN

Not yet, but I will!

OLD WAR VET

Hey kid, your brother know you're out here again?

AUTUMN

(winks)

I won't tell, if you won't.

OLD WAR VET

(smiles)

That's a dangerous game you're playing, young lady.

AUTUMN

You know Frank worries too much. Besides, I've got you watching my back, right?

OLD WAR VET

Next time, bring me one of those melty cheese sandwiches...

TIRED WOMAN

They're called "grilled cheese" sandwiches, Ed.

The girls giggle as he waves them off, when--

The dog BARKS wildly.

Several streetlamps FLICKER and GO OUT. Wind WHIPS up, blows leaves off trees. Electricity CRACKLES--

TIRED WOMAN (CONT'D)

What's going on?

The old vet dives into his tent, the woman grabs her dog.

AUTUMN
Get inside! Quick!

Autumn helps the woman and her dog into the tent.

RIP-RIP-ROAR! The DIMENSIONAL RIFT tears opens--

She looks up, sees electricity SPARK around a BLACK MASS with two RED EYES on the other side of the park.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)
Stay here.

TIRED WOMAN
Don't!

AUTUMN
(smiles reassuringly)
It's okay. I'll be right back.

On her cell phone, she scrolls to the contact "**BIG BEAR**", holds her finger over the "call" button, approaches the black mass that's still sparking electricity.

THUD! Shinjiro is spit out of the rift, lands ungracefully.

The white fox mask CLATTERS to the ground beside him.

The rift SHRINKS and VANISHES, as a small BLACK COMMA-SHAPED STONE (magatama) along with fragments of the funerary box, drops to the ground. The wind calms down.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)
Oh my god.

TIRED WOMAN
What is it?

She looks back to the tired woman.

AUTUMN
Call 9-1-1!

Autumn flips to her social media app, starts live-streaming as she races to the park and Shinjiro.

Shinjiro stands defiantly, ELECTRICITY and BLUE FLAMES ripple across his fractured, bloody body.

He takes in the world, confused and disoriented, when--

A HELICOPTER flies overhead! The sound terrifying!

He staggers back, ready for a fight.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)

Hey! What happened? Are you okay?

He spins, golden eyes on the edge of consciousness, sees--

For a split-second, Autumn has long hair, wears a white kimono and red trousers, COVERED in blood.

SHINJIRO

Rina?

His golden eyes FADE to brown as he loses consciousness.

Autumn drops her phone, catches him, they sink to the ground.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Energy pulses, haze fills the air, lights flash... Bartenders mix drinks... A D.J. commands the room as it bounces and gyrates with the heartbeat of the music.

We follow a cunning Asian seductress, **KURAGARI**, around 20 who sees humans as nothing more than insects to feed upon, and an attractive, not-too-bright man, mid-20's, **ETHAN JONES**.

She pushes him up against a wall-- mouth pressed against his.

She INHALES deeply along his neck, grabs his hand, leads--

INT. NIGHTCLUB RESTROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A SMALL SPIDER crawls over the stall walls that SHAKE as GROANS and GRUNTS of pleasure emerge.

A couple of female patrons awkwardly smile to each other and quickly leave.

Ethan sits on the toilet as Kuragari straddles across him.

She leans forward and kisses--

ETHAN

Ouch!

She sits upright again, licks her lips. He touches his lip, finds a little BLOOD.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Oh, so you like it rough, huh?

KURAGARI
You have no idea.

Ethan smiles, shakes his head, feels a little woozy.

KURAGARI (CONT'D)
Everything alright?

ETHAN
Oh yeah, baby.

He grips her waist as she kisses down his neck.

She pulls back again, smiles viciously, several golden SPIDER WEBS dangle out of her mouth.

She wipes the webbing off her mouth, licks her fingers.

But Ethan is FROZEN in place!

ETHAN (CONT'D)
Wh-what the hell? I can't move!

KURAGARI
Shh, dear. Food should never talk.

The LIGHTS FLICKER. Kuragari smiles wide, TOO WIDE. Her cheeks start to SPLIT--

Ethan's eyes go wide and he SCREAMS!

The LIGHTS GO OUT as--

INT. NIGHTCLUB - CONTINUOUS

The party RAGES on in the club, drowning out his SCREAMS.

INT. LA GENERAL HOSPITAL ROOM - SUNRISE

The steady BEEP-BEEP-BEEP of the heart monitor is the only thing that breaks the silence of the room.

Shinjiro lays on a hospital bed. I.V. in his arm, nasal oxygen line across his face, and several electrodes attached on his chest and head. Bandages, stitches, and gauze cover parts of his neck, shoulder, chest, and arms.

The FOX MASK sits in a clear bag with Shinjiro's other clothes on top of the small end table beside his bed.

Autumn stands in the doorway, plays on her cell phone, but her eyes constantly flick up to watch Shinjiro sleep.

DET. FRANK FOSTER, 32, good at his job and projects the basic decency lacking in some officers, walks up behind her.

She doesn't notice him. Determined, she puts down her phone and starts towards Shinjiro when--

--Frank CLEARS HIS THROAT.

AUTUMN

Geezuz, Frank! Tryin' to give me a heart attack.

FRANK

Good thing we're in a hospital.
Come here.

He pulls her into a tight embrace. She relaxes into his hug, then steps back, meets his eyes.

He's definitely not happy with her.

She smiles hopefully, trying to diffuse the tension.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Don't-- don't do that.

AUTUMN

(innocently)

Do what?

FRANK

You know exactly what! Don't give me that face.

AUTUMN

What face? This is just my face.

FRANK

A call comes in over the radio about an explosion and an injury and then I find out that you're on the way to the hospital. Trying to give me a heart attack?

(deep breath)

How many times do I have to say it? Don't go to tent city -- at night - - alone! Isn't it a school night or something?

AUTUMN

Getting forgetful in your old age. Me: college. No curfew. And this was for a class project. And I told you I was going.

FRANK

What? When?

AUTUMN

Remember? You were on the phone and I said really quietly "Hey Frank, I'm working on my project tonight near the park." And you nodded.

Frank turns his big brother disapproval wrath on her.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)

Aren't you glad I did go? I saved a man's life!

(gestures to Shinjiro)

Come on... don't be mad.

She gives an exaggerated puppy dog face, pouts, but he's not buying it.

FRANK

Don't push me, Autumn. This is serious!

AUTUMN

I know! This is my serious face.

Her face contorts even more until he finally relents, cracks a smile, and pulls her into a HUG.

FRANK

Idiot. You're okay, right?

AUTUMN

Puppy dog eyes for the win! Yeah, I'm alright. Aren't I always?

FRANK

Killing me. You know that.

She playfully punches his arm just as, Dr. Bennet approaches.

DR. BENNET

Detective?

FRANK

Yes?

(indicates to Shinjiro)

How is he?

DR. BENNET

We did the best we could, but we won't know how he is until he wakes up.

(MORE)

DR. BENNET (CONT'D)

He has numerous broken bones,
severe electrical burns almost as
if he was struck by lightning, and
his left shoulder... I'm not sure
he'll ever have full use of it
again.

FRANK

Damn. What the hell happened?

AUTUMN

How is he still breathing?

DR. BENNET

By all accounts, he shouldn't be.
We're running some more tests now,
but after a lot of rest and intense
rehab, we're confident he should
pull through. He's lucky you were
there, Ms. Foster.

FRANK

Thanks, Doc. You'll call me if
there's any change?

DR. BENNET

Of course, Detective.

Dr. Bennet leaves.

FRANK

(to Autumn)

Sounds like he's gonna be fine.
Come on. Let's go. I gotta be on
shift in--

(checks his watch; ugh)

--30 minutes. Drop you at home?

(something nags at him)

Just-- please promise you'll wait
for me to be free next time.

AUTUMN

Won't hold my breath.

FRANK

You're still just a kid. It's my
job to be the hero, not yours.

AUTUMN

And just where do you think I
learned it from?

FRANK

Right, I forgot. You went through basic, two tours, and then the academy -- Oh no wait, that was me.

AUTUMN

Look, Detective. Sure, the city needs you, out there, saving the day. But it needs me too, and I have something way more important than you do.

FRANK

Oh yeah? And what's that?

AUTUMN

(with a flourish)
Style!

Frank gives her an "are you serious?" look.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)

Don't give me that look!

FRANK

What look? This is just my face.

Autumn playfully sticks her tongue out at him. Despite their different personalities, they grin fondly at each other.

She goes over, gives Shinjiro's hand a comforting SQUEEZE.

For a split second, the FOX MASK GLOWS, as--

SHINJIRO

Koko wa..?

They pause, watch Shinjiro WAKE UP.

FRANK

Autumn, quick! Go get the doctor.

She races out the door.

Shinjiro tries to move, finds the I.V. line in his arm.

SHINJIRO

Nanda..?

FRANK

Hey, it's okay. You're in a hospital.

Shinjiro blearily looks over at Frank.

SHINJIRO
 (in Japanese; subtitled)
 What happened?

FRANK
 Crap. Do you speak English?
 English? You're in a hospital. I'm
 Detective Frank Foster with the
 L.A.P.D. Can you tell me your name?

As his brain fog begins to clear, Shinjiro becomes aware of his surroundings, freaks out, tries to free himself.

SHINJIRO
 (in Japanese; subtitled)
 Release me! What is this? Where is
 the Nue? Release me!

He PULLS at the WIRES and tubes.

FRANK
 It's okay. Hey! It's okay. Just
 calm down. You're safe.

SHINJIRO
 (in Japanese; subtitled)
 You don't understand!

Shinjiro CRIES OUT in pain as he rips the I.V. out of his arm and TUMBLES OUT of the bed, caught in wires and sheets.

DR. BENNET
 (entering the room)
 What happened?

FRANK
 I don't know. He woke up and--

DR. BENNET
 (into the hallway)
 Little help in here!

Shinjiro tries to stand up, but is too tangled in sheets and wires. He SCREAMS as his left shoulder starts to bleed again.

Two male nurses rush in, try to pick Shinjiro up.

He SHOVES one of the nurses, sends him FLYING into the wall.

The overhead lights FLICKER. A wind BLOWS into the room.

DR. BENNET (CONT'D)
 Sir? I need you to calm down.

The two nurses grab Shinjiro's arms, struggle to control him.

SHINJIRO
 (in Japanese; subtitled)
 Release me! I must stop the Nue!
 Get off of me!

Shinjiro's eyes FLASH GOLDEN as he struggles. He'll make them listen. Electrical equipment SPARKS. The lights go OUT!

DR. BENNET
 I'm going to give you something to
 help you calm down.
 (to the nurses)
 Hold him still.

SHINJIRO
 (in Japanese; subtitled)
 What're you doing? Let go of me!

Shinjiro violently stumbles to his knees with a SCREAM when--

GASP! He FREEZES-- sees Autumn in the doorway. Or, is it--

For a split-second, he sees her once again with long hair,
 wearing a white kimono and red trousers, COVERED in blood.

He shakes his head, looks again.

Shinjiro and Autumn LOCK EYES, when--

The doctor INJECTS a SEDATIVE. Shinjiro loses consciousness.

SHINJIRO (CONT'D)
 (in Japanese; subtitled)
 I'm sorry...

The lights flick back on and the wind disappears.

ACT TWO**INT. NIGHTCLUB RESTROOM - DAY**

Looking like hell, Frank passes by several uniformed officers taking statements... technicians photograph and collect samples... He enters the restroom, coffee cup in hand.

His partner, **JOSH MORRIS**, a 29 y/o detective who only believes in himself, quickly joins up with him.

JOSH

Rough night?

FRANK

Long night. Autumn--

JOSH

Say no more, my friend. She is the baby sister no more. She's a full fledged woman now, ready to take on the world. Staying out past curfew. Bringing home all sorts of strange boyfriends that you can promptly terrify. Coming to her favorite, devilishly handsome B.F.F. Josh for advice--

(off Frank's reaction)

What?

FRANK

That's my little sister.

JOSH

And I'm the fun partner she goes to when you're a narc.

Frank is not amused, which amuses Josh to no end.

JOSH (CONT'D)

I know you knew exactly where she was and she can handle herself.

(avoiding Frank's wrath)

Right. Got a weird one for ya.

FRANK

Actually weird or L.A. weird?

Josh gestures to the open restroom stall.

Frank looks in, sees a SPIDER NEST completely FILL the stall. Dense golden spider webs hang from floor to ceiling.

FRANK (CONT'D)

What the...? L.A. weird it is.

Mildly annoyed, **DR. ANAHITA DRAGO**, 30s, exotic with a slight unplaceable accent, talks with a nearby technician.

FRANK (CONT'D)

What exactly am I looking at here?

DR. DRAGO

A deceased young man showing significant signs of desiccation.

FRANK

(surprised)

Where? In there?

JOSH

Told you it was weird.

Frank peers into the spider nest and sees the DRIED OUT HUSK of what was once Ethan Jones, wrapped in spider webs, still seated on the toilet, mouth agape.

FRANK

What the--? What's up with the--?

JOSH

Spider webs? Yeah, I got nothing.

DR. DRAGO

Shocking.

JOSH

One time! I told you I'm not good with the trivia night pressure, Ana-- Doc.

FRANK

Play nice, you two.

DR. DRAGO

There are--

JOSH

Pluto's a planet!

FRANK

You good?

JOSH

Mhm. Just-- wanted that out there.

FRANK

Can we move on with the murder now?
 (to Dr. Drago)
 We are calling this a murder, yes?
 (to Josh)
 And no, it's not.

DR. DRAGO

Yes, Detective. Preliminary analysis indicates a homicide.

FRANK

(to a nearby tech)
 Make sure we get a sample of this.

Two techs enter the stall, lift the body out, and place it into a body bag. Dr. Drago inspects the body.

DR. DRAGO

We'll have to await the lab's report, but this may be the work of a female orb-weaver. Not only are their webs remarkably strong, but they have been known to devour their male partners after intercourse. Or during, if he is--
 (flicks a glance at Josh)
 Less than adequate.

JOSH

Why'd you look at me?

Frank side-eyes Josh.

DR. DRAGO

See these two punctures along the neck? That's a bite mark.

JOSH

Bite mark? Like a vampire?

DR. DRAGO

Any creature with fangs would leave marks like this. For example...
 (gestures at the webs)
 I'll have an official cause of death for you once I get him on my table. Now, if you'll excuse me.

Dr. Drago follows the techs, leaves Frank and Josh.

FRANK

Thanks, Doc. So, B.F.F.-Josh, what do we know?

JOSH

Catchy, right? According to the witnesses over there. This guy--

(checks notes)

Mr. Ethan Jones, 24, was here with friends last night when he caught the eye of a "hot Asian chick." Their words. Last they saw, the two were hot and heavy and then they disappeared. A couple hours later, a waitress found-- this.

FRANK

A couple hours? What kind of spider can spin this much that fast?

JOSH

A creepy one.

FRANK

Let's get the security footage and put a face to this--

JOSH

"Hot Asian chick"? Better stock up on bug spray, too. What? Spiders creep me out.

FRANK

Arachnids. Spiders aren't bugs.

JOSH

Nerd.

INT. LA GENERAL HOSPITAL ROOM - SUNSET

From across the hall Autumn watches a nurse check on Shinjiro's I.V. drip, notate his chart, and exit.

She sneaks into Shinjiro's room, pulls a chair closer to the bed, sees the FOX MASK and takes it out of the bag.

She stares, fingers trace its edges, positions it JUST SO--

Snaps a photo of the mask with her phone. Posts the image to her social media feed "@AutumnInFocus" and types:

ON SCREEN: "The masks we wear reveal our truths."

She leans in, brushes a strand of hair out of his face.

AUTUMN

Just what is your truth?

EXT. SHINTO SHRINE (DREAMSCAPE) - SUNSET

The sun SHINES brightly, almost TOO BRIGHT, on the engawa (covered wooden porch) of a small Shinto shrine.

The small furin (wind chime) gently RINGS in the breeze.

A woman, who looks a lot like Autumn Foster (same actress), dressed in the traditional priestess red hakama trousers and white kosode kimono, **RINA HIKARU**, early-20s, with long hair, sits in the sun.

Head in her lap, she strokes Shinjiro's hair. His FOX MASK beside them.

RINA
(teasing)
You can't sleep all day.

SHINJIRO
(smiles)
But it's a beautiful day. And, if I
wake up, I'll have to leave you.

RINA
And if you don't, I'll never get
any work done.

He rolls over, holds her happily.

SHINJIRO
Five more minutes.

RINA
You are hopeless.

Raiju approaches and waves with a smile.

RAIJU
Aren't you ready yet, idiot fox?

Rina laughs as Shinjiro groans, sits up, sees--

A thick BLACK FOG creeps low across the ground, when--

An owl SCREECHES as a huge black talon PIERCES his left shoulder and TOSSES him across the ground like a rag-doll.

Shinjiro SLAMS into the dirt, his left shoulder bloody!

He looks up, sees Akito Raiju tower over him, katana drawn, visible BLACK VEINS reach up from his chest to his neck.

Raiju PLUNGES his katana into Shinjiro's chest!

INT. LA GENERAL HOSPITAL ROOM (REALITY) - SAME

Shinjiro GASPS as he BOLTS UPRIGHT, soaked in sweat.

He WINCES at his shoulder, breathes heavily.

The steady BEEP-BEEP-BEEP of the heart monitor draws his attention as he struggles to focus.

Shinjiro eyes the medical equipment and looks around until--

His eyes land on Autumn, staring wide-eyed at him.

He tries to ESCAPE from bed, finds his wrists RESTRAINED.

Autumn gets up, pushes him back down.

AUTUMN

Hey! Be careful! You're going to pop your stitches again.

Shinjiro's eyes search Autumn's face for one heart-breaking moment. The memory too painful, he tears his eyes away.

Autumn quickly taps her phone, brings up a translation app.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)

So, I don't think you speak English, right?

(no response)

Thought so.

(taps phone, speaks into)

Hi! My name's Autumn. What's yours?

The phone translates and SPEAKS JAPANESE. Shinjiro double-takes, looks around for the source of the voice.

Autumn giggles and holds up the phone.

SHINJIRO

(in Japanese; subtitled)

Amazing! Is this magic?

AUTUMN

It can translate anything you say. Here. You try. Just say whatever--

Autumn reaches for his hand to show him how to press the app button, when he shrinks from her touch.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)

Hey, it's okay. You're safe!

He doesn't understand.

She repeats it into the phone and shows him the screen.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)
You're safe now. Safe.

He cautiously meets her eyes. She smiles reassuringly, when--

Autumn is PULLED INTO his gaze. For a moment, the world disappears around her. She's lost in the COSMOS within his eyes -- she sees galaxies, stars, nebulas -- a red thread weaves through space-time -- and then, his eyes SHIMMER GOLD.

Her breath hitches. Instantly, she looks anywhere else.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry. I'm uh-- I'm going to go let the doctor know you're awake. Just... one second.

She rushes out of the room.

He watches her leave and as soon as she's out of sight, he flicks his wrists, slips the restraints with ease, extracts the I.V. line from his arm, removes the nasal line, etc.

Shinjiro shakily stands, walks over to the BATHROOM DOOR and traces his good hand around the EDGES of the door.

SHINJIRO
(whispers)
Hirakegoma.

A BLUE LIGHT GLOWS around the edges of the door, reveals--

An ETHEREAL PORTAL! A stable black hole in place of the door.

Shinjiro looks around the room, spies his FOX MASK, grabs it.

He notices his hospital gown, thinks his robe is on backwards, takes it off, and turns it around.

From behind, we see BLACK VEINS reach out from under the left shoulder gauze, scars across his entire body--

RING!

Autumn GASPS from the doorway.

Shinjiro finishes securing the gown, as Autumn tries to apologize and quiet the phone.

Her phone RINGS again.

He turns to the portal, STUMBLES--

Autumn rushes over, helps support him.

AUTUMN
Let me help you.

Her phone RINGS again. Shinjiro pushes her away--

SHINJIRO
(in Japanese; subtitled)
Let go of me! I must...

He steps forward, but begins to FAINT.

Autumn drops her PHONE, reaches out to help him again, when--

He spins and stumbles backwards, his arm catches Autumn, and the two FALL INTO the portal together!

The portal COLLAPSES into a blue flame that FLICKERS OUT.

Autumn's phone CLATTERS to the floor.

RING.

ON THE PHONE SCREEN: Missed call from "Big Bear" with Frank's picture.

EXT. LOS ANGELES, PARK - SUNSET

Frank hangs up his phone, searches the area where Autumn found Shinjiro.

Frank stands and looks around. Nearby... people jog, several homeless tents are set up, someone plays with a dog, when--

A black OWL lands on a nearby tree and HOOTS at him.

Directly below the owl, an odd circular patch of DEAD GRASS catches his eye.

He squats down, brushes dead leaves away, sees a strange, small comma-shaped BLACK STONE (magatama).

He reaches for it--

HUNDREDS OF WHISPERS whip up around him!

He pulls his hand away, reaches for his gun, and stands.

The whispers SUBSIDE.

Frank looks around him, head on a swivel, and tries to locate the source-- joggers, tents, dogs... nothing suspicious.

Frank calms down, looks back to the black stone. MORE DEAD GRASS circles the stone.

He reaches a hand towards it again, as--

The WHISPERS ROAR like a tidal wave! Wind WHIPS UP. He drops to his knees, hands over his ears.

DEAD GRASS SPREADS away from the stone, covers the entire area, kills everything -- grass, trees, people -- everything.

Wind whips around him like a TORNADO. A BLACK CLOUD forms around the stone, GROWLS, RED EYES stare from within--

His cell phone RINGS! Frank FALLS backwards.

INSTANTLY, the wind and whispers STOP, as if nothing had happened. No black smoke. No wind. Only a small circular patch of DEAD GRASS under a small black stone.

RING. Frank gets up and looks around in disbelief.

RING. Without looking, he pulls out his phone and answers.

FRANK

What?

JOSH

(on phone)

Hello to you, too. Where are you?

FRANK

Out. Why?

JOSH

(on phone)

Touchy. We got something.

FRANK

I'll be right there.

JOSH

(on phone)

You okay? You sound more grumpy than usual. Were they out of apple fritters again?

Frank HANGS UP.

He grabs an EVIDENCE BAG out of his pocket, picks up the stone, shoves it into his pocket.

EXT. YOKAI WORLD, FOREST PATH - NIGHT

An isolated WORN STONE PATHWAY surrounded by fog and darkness, lined by softly-lit stone lanterns.

Out of nowhere, Shinjiro and Autumn land with a THUD.

AUTUMN

Owww... That sucked! What the hell just happened?

Shinjiro, now dressed in a simple dark kimono, GROANS underneath her. She quickly scrambles off--

AUTUMN (CONT'D)

Omigod! I'm so sorry!

SHINJIRO

Get off me!

Autumn's eyes go wide.

AUTUMN

You can speak English?! Wait, were you wearing that before?

SHINJIRO

Why did you follow me here?

AUTUMN

Excuse me, point in fact, you grabbed me, sir.

SHINJIRO

Go back, while you still can.

AUTUMN

Are you threatening me?

Shinjiro staggers upright, starts off down the path.

SHINJIRO

It's a warning. Exit's that way.

She glances behind, sees the path disappear into a DARK VOID.

AUTUMN

See, I promised my brother I'd stop going off to dark and creepy--

She looks back, sees Shinjiro DISAPPEAR into the fog.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)

Hey! Wait for me!

EXT. LOS ANGELES, PARK, SIDE STREET - SUNSET

The streetlights FLICKER ON as Frank heads towards his car.

He pauses to check his phone, scrolls his contacts to "Autumn", holds his finger over her name to dial, when--

A SMALL SPIDER drops onto his phone.

He quickly flicks the spider off, puts the phone in his pocket, and continues on.

He pulls the phone back out and notices--

A thin SPIDER WEB attached to the phone.

He stops to remove the webbing, but it sticks to his hand as he tries to flick it off.

TAP-TAP-TAP.

He quickly looks around, but doesn't see anything.

TAP-TAP.

He starts walking towards his car again, gets his keys out.

BLOOP. A new text. He looks down at his phone as--

ON THE PHONE SCREEN: New Message: "BFF-Josh"

He walks INTO a large SPIDER WEB stretched between two cars.

TAP-TAP-TAP.

He furiously brushes off the webs.

TAP-TAP.

The hairs on the back of Frank's neck stand on end. He looks around, sees nothing.

A SMALL SPIDER climbs onto Frank's shoulder.

Unnoticed, it quickly scurries up and under his collar and leaves a thin GOLDEN SILK THREAD dangling.

TAP-TAP-TAP.

Frank hurries into his car, starts the engine.

A LARGE SPIDER LEG slides up into the tree above his car.

ACT THREE**EXT. YOKAI WORLD, FOREST PATH - LATER**

Autumn PAUSES to catch her breath.

AUTUMN

I hate running. How long is this?

She steps forward when--

A massive, ancient-looking illuminated Torii gate APPEARS.

Beyond the gateway, from within a fog, EMERGES a thriving, busy SHOPPING DISTRICT.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)

(startled)

Holy--! I so need a pic of this--

(reaches for phone)

Oh God! Where's my phone?

(looks back, road is gone)

Nope. Guess it was time for an upgrade anyways.

Autumn squints at the BRIGHT LIGHTS, steps through the gate.

Bold signs advertise teahouses, shops, restaurants, and brothels as floating lanterns blaze under eaves.

She weaves through the crowded streets full of half-human, half-animal denizens. Some people wear masks and modern clothes, others more traditional or exotic attire.

Autumn ogles the trinkets & sweets, talks to the shopkeeper.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)

Gah! This is so cute. Actually reminds me of this one gig I did. It was this crazy sci-fi webisode. Very limited following, but the fans were really supportive--

The shopkeeper stares bewildered, as Autumn BUMPS into--

SNARKY DEMON

Hey! Watch it!

AUTUMN

Sorry, excuse me.

She sees two DEMONS wearing grotesque horned masks.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)

Wow. I love your masks! Did you buy those around here?

SNARKY DEMON

Huh?

ANXIOUS DEMON

(sniffs her)

Are you human?

AUTUMN

Weird ask. I'm actually looking for my friend. He had a mask like yours, but it was more like a white fox or something. Is there a shop around here that sells them? Do you, by any chance, know him? Maybe you've seen him around?

SNARKY DEMON

(smiling)

Oh yeah. The white fox guy. He actually told us to find you. Just... follow us.

EXT. YOKAI WORLD, STREET - SAME

Shinjiro staggers down the street, leans against the wall, forced to STOP and REST.

The pain in his shoulder threatens to overwhelm him.

He checks under the kimono, BLACK VEINS spread across his shoulder and chest, creep up his neck.

SHINJIRO

(to himself)

Dammit.

He starts off again, when he smells something on the breeze.

EXT. YOKAI WORLD, BACK ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

Autumn stands in front of a solid wall, demons behind her.

AUTUMN

Hey fellas, not to be rude, but I don't think my friend is here, nor does this look like a mask shop.

The demons snicker to each other.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)

Sigh. You don't actually know him,
do you?

SNARKY DEMON

Nope.

AUTUMN

Are you comic con rejects really
gonna try to start something?

Snarky Demon PUSHES Autumn against a wall, leans in. Autumn
YELPS.

SNARKY DEMON

Do you know how long it's been
since we had anything so delicious
looking to eat?

AUTUMN

Judging by your breath, I'd say
it's been awhile.

Snarky Demon STOPS and LAUGHS, turns to Anxious Demon.

SNARKY DEMON

I like this one!

Autumn smiles, a glint in her eye.

AUTUMN

Hey, turd gremlin, keep your hands
to yourself. See, I have this very
over-protective brother and he
wanted to make sure I would be safe
no matter where I went.

SNARKY DEMON

Oh yeah, and where is he now?

AUTUMN

Who said anything about needing him
to protect me?

Autumn LAUNCHES herself off the wall, CLOTHESLINES Snarky
Demon, surprising both demons!

She turns, CHARGES at Anxious Demon who turns to run, jumps
onto his back, pulls him down into a backwards bridge.

She grabs one of his legs and puts him into a LEGLOCK.

ANXIOUS DEMON

Help! Get her off me! Get her off!

Snarky Demon gets up and reaches for her, but she grabs his arm and KNOCKS him into Anxious Demon.

AUTUMN

Ha! That should teach you to be more respectful to women!

Autumn proudly turns and starts to leave when--

Snarky Demon GRABS her leg, DRAGS her to the ground.

He flips her over, PINS her. Autumn struggles, but can't break free.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)

Get off me! Let me go!

SNARKY DEMON

I was going to take my time, but now-- I'm mad.

The demon mask ABSORBS into his face, as he TRANSFORMS--

His skin turns RED, nails become talons, and his mouth opens wide, flashing several FANGS, and DROOLS.

AUTUMN

What the--? Help! Somebody--

Snarky Demon SLOBBERS in her ear, tears her shirt, presses in against her.

Autumn SHUTS HER EYES, struggles.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)

Get off!

SNARKY DEMON

No one's coming to save you now--

SUDDENLY, the entire alley is covered in a THICK WHITE FOG.

Both demons STOP, look around.

ANXIOUS DEMON

What's going on? Who's there?

A LOW GROWL echoes down the alley.

SNARKY DEMON

What is that?

The GROWL gets LOUDER. From within the fog--

A hand PUNCHES Snarky Demon, he flies off of Autumn.

Autumn scrambles away, finds cover, hides.

Something GRABS Anxious Demon, pulls him into the fog.

Snarky Demon scurries away, is CAUGHT, DRAGGED into the fog.

THWACK-CRUNCH-SCREAM!

The demons are thrown down the alley. They race away, SCREAMING.

The fog EVAPORATES, reveals--

Shinjiro COLLAPSES against the back wall, pants hard, slides to the ground, as BLACK VEINS stretch up his face.

Autumn races over to Shinjiro.

AUTUMN

It's you! Thank--

She goes to hug him, he shoves the fox mask in her face.

SHINJIRO

Put this on.

AUTUMN

--you. What? Why?

SHINJIRO

Just put it on. It'll hide your presence. I thought I told you to go home. Why are you still here?

AUTUMN

Because I lost my phone somewhere and I suck at directions on a good day. Where even are we?

SHINJIRO

The Other Side.

AUTUMN

The other side of what? Omigod, please don't say "the Valley."

SHINJIRO

This is the land of Yokai -- the Hidden Realm? The realm between the world of the living and the dead.

AUTUMN

What the hell does that mean?!

SHINJIRO

Quiet! We need to move before those demons come back with friends.

He tries to stand, but his legs BUCKLE. Autumn catches him.

SHINJIRO (CONT'D)

Release me!

AUTUMN

I would if you would stop falling over!

SHINJIRO

Let me go. I'll be fine.

AUTUMN

Look, I've played a nurse on four different webisodes and every time someone says that, they are most definitely NOT "fine."

SHINJIRO

I just--

AUTUMN

Not-- fine!

She STARES HIM DOWN. He relents, no strength left.

SHINJIRO

I'll be fine. I just need to get to Sensei.

AUTUMN

Then let me help you. Stop being a butthead about it.

(offers handshake)

I'm Autumn, by the way.

SHINJIRO

(slightly nods)

Shinjiro.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Frank calls Autumn on his cell as Josh sits at his desk, pouring over the case. A photo print out of Kuragari's face from the security camera sits on the case files.

FRANK

(on the phone)

Hey Little Bear, talk to me. I'm going over to the hospital to check on that John Doe. Let me know if you want to meet up. Love you, bye.

JOSH

"Little Bear." You two are adorable.

FRANK

Lay off. It's from when she was a kid. After our parents died and I finally managed to get her out of foster care, we'd watch *Smokey and the Bandit* every night. She'd call me Smokey Bear since I would always catch her sneaking out.

JOSH

Wouldn't that make her "Bandit"?

FRANK

Shut up, we're adorable. Did we get an I.D. on our suspect yet?

JOSH

Not yet. Facial recognition came up empty. I've got uni's canvassing.

Frank leans back in thought.

Soft voices WHISPER to him.

Absent-mindedly, he puts his hand in his pocket, pulls out the evidence bag with the BLACK STONE in it.

He lets the stone roll around in the bag, mesmerized by the whispers, he OPENS the bag, when--

JOSH (CONT'D)

What's that?

The whispers STOP.

FRANK

Huh? Nothing. I'll be back.

He shoves the black stone into his pocket.

JOSH

Yeah. No worries. I'll just stay here and focus on the murderer, Big Bear.

FRANK

Thanks!

EXT. YOKAI WORLD, DRAGON'S GROTTO - NIGHT

Half-carried by Autumn, Shinjiro KNOCKS on a door in a side alley, breathes heavily, his wound taking a toll.

AUTUMN

Are you sure she's here?

SHINJIRO

She better be.

He KNOCKS again. The door opens, reveals--

A young raccoon-faced child, CHIKAKO, peers out. Her RACCOON TAIL and EARS showcase her yokai nature.

She sees Shinjiro, her eyes LIGHT UP with joy! She HUGS him.

CHIKAKO

Shinjiro-sama!

SHINJIRO

Hi, Chikako-chan. Is Sensei in?

INT. YOKAI WORLD, DRAGON'S GROTTO - CONTINUOUS

Chikako leads them down through a winding wooden hallway, past stacks of books, jars of odd specimens, and a room full of herbs. Somewhere inside, the sound of WATER softly runs.

Chikako leads them into an empty room. Autumn helps Shinjiro sit on the bed.

From the shadows, Dr. Drago speaks.

DR. DRAGO

I heard some fool brought a human here, I never would have guessed you'd be that stupid, Myobu-san.

She steps into the light.

SHINJIRO

Good to see you too, Sensei.

DR. DRAGO

You myobu. Always thinking the rules don't apply to you. I'm glad to see the rumors of your death were exaggerated--

(sees the black veins)

Though, not by much from the looks of it. Is this why you've returned after so long?

SHINJIRO

Sensei...

(distracted)

I let the Nue escape. They're in the human realm, but I still have time to- to--

Suddenly, Shinjiro SEIZES -- the black veins spread into his eyes, turns them PURE BLACK.

AUTUMN

Shinji!

CHIKAKO

Shinjiro-sama!

ACT FOUR**INT. YOKAI WORLD, DRAGON'S GROTTO - NIGHT**

Autumn helps hold Shinjiro on his side as--

Dr. Drago steps back, flicks her hands into mudras (Buddhist prayer hand signs), WEAVES the signs over Shinjiro--

A soft TEAL LIGHT GLOWS, descends on Shinjiro.

He STOPS seizing.

AUTUMN

What was that?

DR. DRAGO

Quickly, child.

Dr. Drago lays Shinjiro on his back, removes the BLACK-SOAKED GAUZE. Chikako covers her nose at the rotten smell.

Dr. Drago cleans the wound, when something catches her eye.

She grabs a pair of TWEEZERS.

DR. DRAGO (CONT'D)

(to Autumn)

Hold him still.

Autumn braces Shinjiro. Dr. Drago DIGS into the wound--

Shinjiro SCREAMS in pain and begins to THRASH.

DR. DRAGO (CONT'D)

I said HOLD HIM!

Autumn leans in harder. Chikako tries to hold his legs.

FINALLY, Dr. Drago pulls out a CURVED BLACK CHIP, the tip of a talon, and drops it into a PETRI DISH, seals it tightly.

He stops thrashing, stops breathing.

DR. DRAGO (CONT'D)

He should be fine now--

AUTUMN

He's not breathing!

DR. DRAGO

Something's not right. He should be healing. Unless--

Dr. Drago places her hand over Shinjiro's shoulder wound, closes her eyes.

TEAL LIGHT races up along the black veins under his skin.

She concentrates harder, her fingers dance over his wound, ebbing and flowing, work their magics.

DR. DRAGO (CONT'D)

There!

The teal light CONNECTS and PULSES with his heartbeat.

The BLACK VEINS RECEDE. Shinjiro inhales, his body relaxes.

Dr. Drago breathes a sigh of relief, grabs a suture needle and thread, begins stitching Shinjiro's shoulder.

DR. DRAGO (CONT'D)

He needs to rest. Chikako, bring us some more tea.

Chikako bows and leaves.

AUTUMN

What was that light?

DR. DRAGO

You could see that? Aren't you a curious one. I prompted his natural life force to regenerate. What little he had left. I'm amazed he made it here.

AUTUMN

Well, he did fall over a lot.

DR. DRAGO

He is a stubborn fool. Anyone else would have been dead ages ago.

AUTUMN

(raises her hand)

Can I ask a question? What exactly is this place? I mean, where are--?

DR. DRAGO

You're in our world, child. The world between worlds and the monsters you'll find here are very much real. For instance...

(looks to Shinjiro)

There are not many yokai that can do that to him.

AUTUMN

What's a "yokai"?

DR. DRAGO

(considers)

What yokai "are" and what we "are not" is not easy to describe. Think of us as cousins to your "big bad wolves" in all those Grimm Fairy Tales you humans love so much.

(looks at her curiously)

You seem to be taking this all rather in stride, child.

AUTUMN

Really? Eh, I guess so. I mean, no use in freaking out. What happens, happens. You just have to live in the moment and make the best decisions you can moving forward.

DR. DRAGO

Interesting.

AUTUMN

Wait... I know you, don't I?

DR. DRAGO

Do you?

AUTUMN

You work with my brother! Frank Foster. We met at the precinct's Christmas party last year.

DR. DRAGO

Ah yes, the Detective. And just what would he think he if knew you were here, I wonder...

(Shinjiro stirs, wakes)

Welcome back, Myobu. How do you feel?

SHINJIRO

Like I just went hand-to-hand with Takemikazuchi-- and lost.

DR. DRAGO

And yet, the kami smile. Now, what do you mean "the Nue escaped"?

SHINJIRO

Sensei, I--

DR. DRAGO

--It has been centuries since the Nue vanished.

SHINJIRO

What?

DR. DRAGO

And you along with them. Everyone presumed you destroyed one another, but I had faith in you, Myobu. So tell me, how is it possible the Nue has escaped after all this time?

AUTUMN

What's a "Nue"?

DR. DRAGO

An ancient and powerful demon. Myobu, what happened?

EXT. KYOTO IMPERIAL CASTLE, 1560 C.E. - FLASHBACK - AFTERNOON

FIRE CRACKLES as SMOKE BILLOWS within the Imperial Courtyard. Bodies of dead samurai, along with monsters of all kinds, lay everywhere-- the aftermath of a bloody battle.

SCREAMS and CRIES resound as FIRE SPREADS across the city.

SHINJIRO (V.O.)

The plan worked. We had won. The Nue was defeated.

Shinjiro, dressed in the same blood-spattered Japanese clothes and FOX MASK from before, stands in the wreckage.

SHINJIRO (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But the Nue had taken-- everything.

At his feet, Rina sits against a column, bloody and lifeless.

Tear-streaked, Shinjiro turns towards the giant mass of black feathers, grips his katana, PLUNGES it into the Nue.

SHINJIRO (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I sealed its essence in a magatama, as you taught me.

He brings his left hand into a mudra (Buddhist prayer hand sign), WHISPERS a magical chant.

Black smoke BURSTS from under the katana, FUNNELS into a small BLACK COMMA-SHAPED STONE (magatama).

INT. YOKAI WORLD, DRAGON'S GROTTO - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Drago eyes the petri dish with the black chip in it--

A BLACK MOLD SPREADS and covers the inside of the dish.

SHINJIRO

But I wasn't strong enough. I knew
it needed to be sealed within a
sessho-seki.

AUTUMN

What's a session sucky?

DR. DRAGO

A sessho-seki is known as a
"killing stone." It traps
supernatural beings like yokai and
drains them of their spiritual
energy -- their life force -- and
seals their very essence: their
names. Some say it's a fate worse
than death.

Agitated, Shinjiro's anger wells up.

SHINJIRO

I couldn't allow any more lives to
be lost to that-- that curse! Not
after it had taken--

He stops, glances at Autumn, turns away from her.

Dr. Drago picks up the FOX MASK, offers it to him. He doesn't
want it, but he takes it.

DR. DRAGO

Myobu, the only way to seal
something that powerful, is by
offering something of equal power.
(reproach)
Did you plan to--

SHINJIRO

It's my sacred duty. My final one.

He sets the mask down.

DR. DRAGO

Do you think that's what she would
have wanted? What she sacrificed
herself for?

SHINJIRO
 (self-restraint)
 Sensei, I appreciate you saving my
 life, I do. But I must find the Nue
 and finish what I started.

DR. DRAGO
 You need to rest. Your spiritual
 energy is practically non-existent.

SHINJIRO
 I have enough.

AUTUMN
 You almost died! Give yourself a
 break. Take a nap.

SHINJIRO
 I have hunted this demon for too
 long! I will not allow them to
 escape now.

DR. DRAGO
 If you leave now, you will die! And
 then what will happen?

AUTUMN
 What does that mean?

DR. DRAGO
 The Nue doesn't crave something as
 simple as power or wealth. They
 only desire death, destruction, and
 chaos -- for human and yokai alike.
 There's no telling the impact they
 could wield in today's world. The
 Nue corrupts anything it touches.

SHINJIRO
 Which is why I will end this war --
 with or without your help.

Shinjiro storms out of the room. Autumn starts after him,
 pauses as--

DR. DRAGO
 It particularly likes to feed on
 those of strong spirit, after
 finding a way to mortally wound
 their soul.
 (to Autumn)
 You'll watch over him for me, won't
 you?

INT. HOSPITAL PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Frank PARKS his car, reaches for his coffee cup, when--
DING-DING. His cell phone CHIMES.

He puts the coffee cup down, grabs his phone.

The SMALL SPIDER crawls down his arm, up the side of the coffee cup, and sneaks into the lid's drinking hole.

He taps on the screen and pulls up his email. Sender shows as "Josh Morris" with a subject line of "Lab Analysis."

Frank taps on the email and reaches for the coffee--

He brings it to his mouth, the spider staring out from the hole. Just as he is about to take a sip--

His phone RINGS.

FRANK
(answers the phone)
Hey.

INT. POLICE STATION - SAME

Josh sits at his desk, taps on his computer keyboard, and cradles the desk phone in his ear.

JOSH
(on phone)
You see this report?

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

FRANK
You literally just sent it to me.

JOSH
So the Doc was right. Those spider webs were from--
(checks notes)
--a golden orb-weaver. Also known as a "joro spider."

FRANK
Are they poisonous? Could they be used to incapacitate someone?

JOSH

According to the internet, no. Low toxicity at best. But the vic had bite marks on his neck and was drained of most his blood, which is why he looked so-- dried out.

FRANK

Please don't tell me you're about to suggest we start hunting vampires.

JOSH

Dude, I would be an epic vampire hunter, but no-- these spiders wrap their prey in silk and drain them, just like we saw.

FRANK

Wait-- So, we are saying that he was killed by spiders?

JOSH

What? No. Well, not exactly. It's a spider. A freaking giant spider, like size of your hand spider, but still just a spider. To create a nest that big in that short of a time, the spider would be like 100 times bigger, which is seriously terrifying to think about.

FRANK

Get to the point.

JOSH

Report shows only one set of bite marks. Human-sized. So, unless we're looking for a mutant or an actual vampire...

FRANK

It's a distraction.

JOSH

Right.

FRANK

Great. Why don't you go ahead and put out an A.P.B. on Spider-man and let me know if anything pops.

JOSH

Suspect is a chick. So it'd be
Spider-Gwen. Come on, man.
Embarrassing yourself.

Frank hangs up the phone, half-laughing to himself and
finally goes to drink his coffee when--

The spider SCURRIES OUT!

He SCREAMS, SPILLS the coffee. The spider vanishes.

FRANK

Dammit! Freakin' Spider-Gwen.

EXT. YOKAI WORLD, STREET - LATER

Dr. Drago leads Shinjiro and Autumn through the streets, back
towards the Torii gate.

Easily distracted by food stalls and shops, Autumn trails.

DR. DRAGO

What I still don't understand is
how both you and the Nue arrived in
Los Angeles in 2023.

SHINJIRO

What's a "Los Angeles"?

DR. DRAGO

Exactly. Now, if the Nue is hiding
in the human realm, we must find
them before they recover too much
energy. Luckily, most humans lack
any amount of spiritual energy
thanks to organized religion. That
should reduce the Nue's options.

AUTUMN

What can I do?

DR. DRAGO

About what?

AUTUMN

It's my world; where I live and all
my friends and family live. If my
home is in danger, I'm going to do
whatever I can to help.

SHINJIRO

No.

AUTUMN

My brother's a cop. He'll help. And I can always rally my followers. We can get the word out--

SHINJIRO

Just stop! I don't want your help.
(to Dr. Drago)
Where's the fragment? Perhaps it can lead me to the rest.

Dr. Drago holds out the PETRI DISH, when Autumn SNATCHES it.

SHINJIRO (CONT'D)

What're you--?! Give that back!

AUTUMN

Not until you say I can help. Ouch!

Autumn drops the dish as the BLACK MOLD inside the sealed dish HEATS, BUBBLES, VANISHES!

AUTUMN (CONT'D)

Damn that stings! What the hell was that? My hand's all tingly now.

DR. DRAGO

(smirk)
I agree with the girl.

SHINJIRO

(baffled)
What?

AUTUMN

(perks up)
Really?

DR. DRAGO

It's a different world than the one you left, Myobu. It's been several hundreds years since you interacted with humans. They've changed.

SHINJIRO

Doubtful.

DR. DRAGO

Work together with her. I have a feeling she'll be useful-- at least until you can speak their language. It's called "English" and it makes no sense. You'll get used to it.

AUTUMN

Oh, that is legit. English is hella weird. Wait, aren't we all speaking English now?

DR. DRAGO
The magics here allow speech to
flow freely, child.

AUTUMN
See, you guys say stuff like that
and I still don't know what any of
that means.

SHINJIRO
(snatches the petri dish)
It means you should go home.
(to Dr. Drago)
And you-- you expect me to work
with this human girl?

AUTUMN
Hey! Rude.

DR. DRAGO
I seem to recall you working quite
well with a particular human girl.

SHINJIRO
And we both know what happened.

AUTUMN
I don't. What happened? Hey, what
happened?

INT. LA GENERAL HOSPITAL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Frank stands at the nurse's station with a wet rag, wiping
off the spilled coffee.

The small spider crawls UP Frank's pant leg.

NURSE
(carrying Autumn's phone)
Excuse me, Detective? Your sister
left her phone.

FRANK
She what? She never goes anywhere
without that thing.

ACT FIVE**INT. LA GENERAL HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT**

The edges of the bathroom door GLOW with a TEAL LIGHT. The door DISAPPEARS and REVEALS--

A DARK ETHEREAL PORTAL.

EXT. YOKAI WORLD, FOREST PATH - MOMENTS LATER

Dr. Drago, Autumn, and Shinjiro stand outside the Torii gate, the DARK ETHEREAL PORTAL open -- hospital on the other side.

Autumn inspects the portal, holds Shinjiro's fox mask.

AUTUMN

That is so cool! You just--
 (snaps fingers)
 --and then-- Is this for real? You
 gotta show me--

DR. DRAGO

Talk less.
 (to Shinjiro)
 You've been given a second chance,
 Myobu. Take advantage of it.
 (off his reaction)
 Why are you Myobu always so eager
 to meet your death anyways? This is
 why there are none of you left.

A phone RINGS in the hospital.

AUTUMN

Omigod! I missed that sound.

Without a second thought, Autumn steps through the portal.

Shinjiro looks over to where Autumn has already vanished--

SHINJIRO

Unbelievable. Sensei, you can't
 expect me to work with her! She's
 impulsive, stubborn--!

DR. DRAGO

Sounds like someone else I know.
 (Shinji glares)
 Then, for now, just protect her.
 You owe her that much for saving
 your life.

Shinjiro doesn't like that answer, but it's one he can at least accept. He steps towards the portal, looks back.

SHINJIRO
You're not coming?

DR. DRAGO
I have a few things to take care of here. You'll be fine. And Myobu-- I am glad you're safe. You have been dearly missed.

Shinjiro nods his thanks, enters the portal.

INT. LA GENERAL HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Shinjiro steps into the empty room. The portal CLOSES.

FRANK (O.S.)
Where the hell have you been?!

Shinjiro peers out of the doorway, sees Frank EMBRACE Autumn.

AUTUMN
(obviously lying)
You know me. Just fell into a new rabbit hole and lost my phone.

FRANK
Don't ever make me worry like that again. Promise me!

AUTUMN
(genuine)
I'm sorry. I promise.

He hugs her again. Autumn notices Shinjiro in the doorway, breaks free of Frank, rushes over to Shinjiro.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)
Hey! Frank, I want you to meet Shinji. Shinjiro.

She excitedly drags Shinjiro over to Frank.

FRANK
Shinjiro? The John Doe from the park? Are you sure he should be standing?

AUTUMN
Oh, he's fine now. I think.

Autumn sees her phone in Frank's hand, SQUEALS, grabs it and kisses it.

Fascinated, Shinjiro watches Autumn.

FRANK

Nurse said she found it. How the hell did you lose it this time?

AUTUMN

Got sucked into a black hole-- I mean, I-- got distracted?

FRANK

Unbelievable.

(shakes Shinji's hand)

Good to see you're okay, Shinjiro. When you're up for it, I'd love to get your statement--

Shinjiro notices several golden spider threads cascade off of Frank's shirt, picks off a thread.

SHINJIRO

(in Japanese; subtitled)

This is...

FRANK

Was that on me? Sorry.

(brushes off shirt)

Wait, do you speak English? Autumn, how did you two talk?

Shinjiro smells the threads, then suddenly looks everywhere on high alert. Sensing. Searching.

AUTUMN

What's up?

He holds the threads up to Autumn.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)

What is that? A spider web? Gross.

SHINJIRO

(in Japanese; subtitled)

It's from a jorogumo yokai.

AUTUMN

A yokai?

SHINJIRO

(in Japanese; subtitled)

Yes. A yokai.

FRANK
Since when do you speak Japanese?

AUTUMN
I don't. Shh.

Shinjiro shuts his eyes, breathes in. When he opens his GOLDEN VULPINE EYES, they see beyond the physical.

SHINJIRO'S POV: We see different colored AURAS glowing around the staff and patients.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)
Shinji?

Autumn moves into his field of view--

She radiates a BRILLIANT WHITE light, Shinjiro shields his eyes, looks down and away, sees--

A swirl of dark red ENERGY rise at the end of the hallway.

He shuts his eyes and points--

SHINJIRO
(in Japanese; subtitled)
There.

FRANK
What's going on?

The LIGHTS FLICKER and GO OUT! Emergency lights turn ON.

FRANK (CONT'D)
What the--?

AUTUMN
We need to get everyone out of here. Now, Frank!

DING! The elevator doors open. Kuragari casually steps out.

KURAGARI
Detective. I hear you're looking for me, but lucky me, I found you first.

FRANK
Everyone back.

Frank draws his sidearm and aims it at Kuragari, as--

Large red and gold SPIDER LEGS begin to slowly EMERGE from her back, filling the hallway.

FRANK (CONT'D)
 (under his breath)
 What in the name of Spider-Gwen?
 (shouting)
 Everyone back! Now!

A nurse SCREAMS.

AUTUMN
 Whoa.

Autumn taps her phone, starts live-streaming as she directs doctors, nurses, and terrified patients to escape.

Shinjiro places himself in front of Autumn.

SHINJIRO
 (in Japanese; subtitled)
 Stay behind me.

Kuragari slowly approaches.

KURAGARI
 Just give the Nue to me, human.

FRANK	SHINJIRO
The what?	(in Japanese; subtitled) What?

KURAGARI
 I know you have it.
 (sniffs the air)
 Wait. What's this? I haven't
 smelled something this delicious in
 centuries!
 (here eyes land on Shinji)
 You? It really is my lucky day.

Kuragari hungrily eyes Shinjiro. He tenses, ready to fight.

Frank places himself in front of Shinjiro, when--

A spider leg SWIPES at Frank and sends him flying sideways.

AUTUMN
 Frank!

Autumn races over to Frank, but Kuragari gets in between. Her top two SPIDER LEGS raise high, ready to STRIKE!

AUTUMN (CONT'D)
 Back off, freak!

Autumn holds her hands up ready to fight, as--

Shinjiro grabs her wrist and spins her behind him.

SHINJIRO
(in Japanese; subtitled)
I said, "stay behind me."

AUTUMN
What? Look out!

Kuragari's spider leg POUNCES toward Shinjiro's back--

Without looking, he reaches back, GRABS her leg mid-air,
STOPS IT just before it hits him!

AUTUMN (CONT'D)
Damn. Okay, I admit, that was cool.

He takes one more frustrated look at Autumn, turns to face
Kuragari, never releases his grip.

SHINJIRO
(in Japanese; subtitled)
Crawl back into whatever hole you
came from or I will end you.

Shinjiro YANKS Kuragari's leg, FLINGS her against the wall.

She LEAPS up to the ceiling & SHOOTS WEBS from her mouth.

Shinjiro PUSHES Autumn to the side, dodges.

A spider leg side-swipes his abdomen and another HITS his
left shoulder. He lets out a slight CRY, when--

Another LEG STABS at him!

AUTUMN
On your right!

He dodges, grabs another LEG that tries to swipe his legs,
BREAKS it with a CRUNCH.

Like a trained martial artist, he DUCKS IN and OUT of spider
legs. His reflexes improving, but with too many limbs
attacking--

Kuragari GRABS his collar and PULLS him close.

Her mouth suddenly EXPANDS with FANGS, she CHOMPS down on his
neck, and DRINKS.

He SCREAMS out in pain, pries her off.

Shinjiro KICKS her away, breathes heavily. Clearly tiring.

A SPIDER LEG SWIPES him and SLAMS him into the wall. HARD.

BANG-BANG!

Frank FIRES two rounds at Kuragari. She staggers a moment, then turns to SCREAM at Frank.

FRANK

Seriously?

STAB-SWIPE-STAB! Frank struggles to dodge Kuragari's legs, he's not quite as agile as Shinjiro.

Kuragari grabs Frank's neck and LIFTS him off the ground. She opens her jaw wide, ready to CHOMP when--

Autumn dives, TACKLES Kuragari, who drops Frank.

The FOX MASK falls out of Autumn's hand. Shinjiro sees the mask, slides over to it just as Autumn reaches for it--

A spider leg SPRINGS DOWN--

Shinjiro and Autumn both TOUCH the mask. In a FLASH of WHITE LIGHT, the fox mask REPELS Kuragari's attack.

Kuragari SCREAMS, staggers away, blinded.

Shinjiro looks from the mask to Autumn, shaken.

AUTUMN

What the hell was that?!

SHINJIRO

(in Japanese; subtitled)
What the hell did you just do?

From the wall, Kuragari SPITS WEBBING at them.

The webbing HITS and sends Shinjiro FLYING sideways.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)

Shinji!

Spewing MORE and MORE WEBBING, Shinjiro is quickly drowned in a mass of silk web.

Kuragari, web stretches from her mouth to the pile, CRAWLS over to Shinjiro.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)

Leave him alone!

Kuragari pauses. She TURNS towards Autumn. Smiles wide, large curved fangs escape her lips, when--

Blue fire DISINTEGRATES the webbing covering Shinjiro.

Shinjiro brushes himself off, stands tall, wears the MASK.

He spits out blood and webbing from his mouth, eyes BURN GOLD behind the mask.

SHINJIRO
(in Japanese; subtitled)
This ends now.

Kuragari turns, SCREAMS with her WIDE-FANGED MOUTH, lunges!

Shinjiro side-steps, grabs her bottom jaw with his left hand, and grabs her stomach with his right.

He FLIPS her onto her back with a CRUNCH, dents the floor.

SHINJIRO (CONT'D)
(in Japanese; subtitled)
Tell me where the Nue is, spider!
(she SCREAMS at him)
Tell me!

KURAGARI
(laughs)
The Nue will never be yours. They
will devour this world.

CRACK! He plunges his hand into her chest! POP-SQUISH!

She SCREAMS as her spider legs flail, curl in the air-- dead.

Shinjiro withdraws his bloody hand as Frank helps Autumn up.

AUTUMN
Is-is that it? Is it over?

Frank gestures for Autumn to stay back. He carefully approaches Kuragari.

Frank readies his gun as Shinjiro peers over, sees an odd MOVEMENT under Kuragari's skin.

FRANK
What is that?

Her skin shifts, SQUIRMS. A SMALL SPIDER emerges from the hole in her chest.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Gross.

Shinjiro leans in closer, suddenly--

Her torso EXPLODES, sends HUNDREDS of SPIDERS swarming out.

Spiders go EVERYWHERE -- attack nurses, patients, climb the ceilings, cover the desks, etc.

Autumn SCREAMS, squishes everything in sight. Frank tries to protect Autumn and barricades a room door to protect the people huddled inside.

Shinjiro looks around. He hears the SCREAMS, CRIES, & PLEAS.

He closes his eyes, and SHOUTS--

SHINJIRO
(in Japanese; subtitled)
Stop!

Blue flames BURST out from his core like a nuclear shockwave, SPREADS out across the room!

The flames wash over people, spiders, into the vents, and out the windows and doors.

Kuragari's body, the masses of spider webs, and all the baby spiders are CONSUMED in blue fire -- DISINTEGRATE to ASH.

The people look around in disbelief, completely unhurt as the fire washes over them.

Shinjiro breathes heavily, exhausted, walks over to Autumn, lifts off his mask.

SHINJIRO (CONT'D)
(in English)
Safe. Yes?

AUTUMN
Yeah.

Like a puppet whose strings are suddenly cut, Shinjiro passes out exhausted and falls.

Autumn catches him and the two sink to the floor.

INT. COUNCIL ROOM - NIGHT

A large table surrounded by FIVE CHAIRS -- each with a faintly glowing kanji etched into them -- sits in the center of a stately board room, all rich woods and dark leathers.

Emerging from the deepest shadows, FOUR FIGURES appear.

Dressed in a bespoke dark blue suit, a refined Japanese man, **MIZUCHI RYU-O**, 70s but ageless, takes a sip of tea and sits in the chair marked with a BLUE WATER kanji.

RYU-O

Why did you summon us?

A hairy demon with four horns protruding from his wild red mane, dressed in animal skins and golden armbands, **SHUTEN DOJI**, early-30s, leans forward in his chair marked with a RED FIRE kanji.

SHUTEN DOJI

This better be fast. I was busy.

A vicious, weaselly boy in his teens, **KAMA ITACHI**, laughs and looks over his small sunglasses from his chair marked with a YELLOW WIND kanji. He plays with a KNIFE.

ITACHI

I'm sure your whores can wait.

SHUTEN DOJI

Still jealous, little Itachi? I'm sure I can spare one or two of the sicklier ones if you're lonely.

Itachi FLINGS his knife at Shuten. It grazes Shuten's cheek before it sticks into the chair back.

ITACHI

I'd rather dip my eyes in bubonic plague than touch one your leftovers.

Annoyed, Ryu-O sips his tea as--

A large, black man in his late-40's, **DAICHI TSUCHIGUMO**, CLEARS HIS THROAT.

Tsuchigumo sits in his chair marked with a GREEN EARTH kanji.

Shuten grabs the knife, smiles.

The fifth chair, marked with a VIOLET VOID kanji, remains empty.

TSUCHIGUMO

Thank you all for coming on such short notice.

ITACHI

Is this because of that Jorogumo spider-bitch you let run wild?

TSUCHIGUMO

She has been dealt with.

ITACHI

Not by your people, from what I hear. Eh, Tsuchi-chan?

Shuten snorts in amusement.

TSUCHIGUMO

That's no longer important. There's something greater we need to discuss.

RYU-O

The Sessho-seki?

Tsuchigumo silently nods.

SHUTEN DOJI

The what?

RYU-O

I'm sure you all felt it. The killing stone has broken. After a thousand years, she has escaped.

SHUTEN DOJI

Who?

RYU-O

Tamamo-no-Mae.

SHUTEN DOJI

Shit. That crazy bitch?

ITACHI

You would know crazy.

SHUTEN DOJI

What was that?

ITACHI

Gentlemen, I have a proposition: Why don't we fight fire with fire?

SHUTEN DOJI

Who, me? No way! That's suicide.

ITACHI

No, you idiot. That spider that was running wild in Los Angeles? My sources say she was killed with-- divine blue flames.

Tsuchigumo looks over to Ryu-O who holds his stare.

SHUTEN DOJI
 (eyes light up)
 There's still one left?

TSUCHIGUMO
 It's only a rumor.

ITACHI
 A rumor I thought we should verify,
 which is why I sent our best man.
 Should the rumor prove to be false,
 then we throw this idiot at her and
 pray he doesn't start a war before
 we're ready.

SHUTEN DOJI
 What?!

ITACHI
 But, should the rumor prove true,
 we will have a potent weapon at our
 disposal, one powerful enough to
 defy even that nine-tailed demon.

EXT. L.A.X. AIRPORT PICK-UP LANE - NIGHT

A refined Akito Raiju, now wearing a sleek, dark suit, exits the airport doors.

A chauffeur nods, opens the door of a stylish black sedan.

Raiju sits, smooths his suit, adjusts his "Thunder Beast" crested cufflinks.

The chauffeur gets in, looks into the rear-view mirror.

CHAUFFEUR
 Where to, sir?

RAIJU
 (smiles)
 L.A. General. To see an old friend.