

FOX IN THE BUSH

Design Document

Game Concept

Fox in the Bush is a 3D third-person action/stealth game mainly for PC and Switch, with ports for Xbox Series X and Playstation 5. The protagonist is a humanoid fox named Kitsedo, who learns the way of the ninja to dive into shadows and tight spaces, coming out only to advance and inflict harm on the yo-kai menaces that have invaded his village to spread sorrow.

Description

Fox in the Bush is a new I.P. that places the player in a rural Japanese-style village, seemingly in its own world with the common trope of animals as people. This is also part of its charm, however, and some references to their different abilities as animals may be part of the narrative. When the yo-kai army attacks, it is the player's job to unravel the mystery of their origins while freeing affected areas of the village, avoiding getting caught at all costs. Throughout, they will talk to villagers and family members, who will give hints at the root cause of the yo-kai, that being the villagers' undying love and willpower that threatened the planet.

Key Features

- Skill based stealth and combat
 - The main mechanic of this game relies on movement among shadows. Kitsedo is able to aim in a direction and zip!/zoom!/woosh! in towards the thing they are aiming at. If that thing has a tight space wherein Kitsedo can hide, their body will transform into a shadow and hide there. While in hiding, yo-kai will not be able to find them visually, though audio can cue them on their location. Kitsedo can jump out and surprise attack them with a slash of their blade, retreating into another nearby hiding spot, or choose to flee by zipping from spot to spot.
- Cute animals
 - With plenty of villagers to save from sorrow, the player will encounter a diverse cast of different humanoid animals that call the village home.
- A unique culture
 - With heavy inspiration from the Japanese Edo period, the culture of the village will stay rooted in tradition, but have many unique elements that twist it to be its own strange misinterpretation. Similar to games like

Splatoon and *Arms*, this culture is vibrant and rich, mixing traditional art and values with a bit of funk and glamor. A direct juxtaposition to the dark, serious style of the yo-kai.

- An emotional, compelling story
 - *Fox in the Bush* will tell a deeply emotional story that unravels the relationships between progress, love, and our connection to the planet we live on.
- A detailed village to explore
 - Throughout the game, as the player frees areas of the village, which are spread into chunks, from the yo-kai menace, they may find interesting NPCs to interact with, hidden items or areas, hints of narrative, or other unknowns that could help with their adventure. There are also cosmetic and upgrade shops one would get by freeing certain chunks of the village.

Genre

The game falls somewhere between stealth and action games, with some emphasis on exploration over a medium-sized map. While the player may face short to long bursts of stealth and action while freeing areas back from the army, those areas they free hold many pockets of secrets to explore—from narrative snippets, to special weapons, and even secret side-missions.

Core Gameplay

The core gameplay of *Fox in the Bush* will be a mix of exploration using the main mechanics, spliced with bursts of action and stealth when fighting yo-kai.

Fighting and Stealth — The player will use the main mechanic of quick movement, dodging, and “zipping” to and fro between hiding spots. Combat should focus on the avoidance of damage or even being seen, thus Kitsedo starts out with incredibly low health. While they are able to tank about two hits at the beginning, this may change as they find upgrades. If witnessed hiding, a yo-kai may search for them in that location, which can put the player in a lot of danger. An adherent strategy is to cause a diversion and kite enemies to areas with less witnesses, only to finish them off quickly; this is not the only way to play however. When yo-kai move near a player, and if a player is facing them, the player may see a target drawn over the screen in the area of the enemy: this is their weak spot, and aiming towards it with a melee attack can deal immense damage, in some cases taking them down in one hit. For example, you could be running down a grassy slope one second, see a scary apparition of a one-eyed umbrella, and target a bush nearby to hide, to which you would immediately zip towards. Moving slower in that space as a mere shadow, you can aim your next zip, deciding to hit the enemy directly,

which would slow down time slightly and give you a moment to attack, or zip towards the town bell right behind them to hide inside it, slicing the enemy along the way. As the creature moves around searching for you, the time may arise when you must move along in the shadows, or decide to zip back and forth between hiding spots to defeat it. If you are not careful, however, the creature could catch you mid-movement and defeat you with a single, well-timed strike.

When you defeat a yo-kai, they drop Sorrow, which you can purify at the village center for upgrades. Future upgrades the player could find include higher movement speed, multiple attacks in one “zip”, and momentary invisibility that can help when in a pickle. However, each upgrade that makes Kitsedo more powerful also brings him closer to the edge of sorrow, which can have visual and narrative implications as the story progresses.

Exploration — Each area of the village that must be freed will be treated as its own level, with obstacles and interesting level and area design akin to *Super Mario Odyssey* but with much less vertical platforming and more grounded in reality. As Kitsedo progresses through each area, they will encounter villagers who are too filled with grief and sorrow, so devoid of love, that they cannot do anything except deliver lines of dialogue between weakened breaths. At the end of the main path will be a boss, which is a fight with a stronger-than-usual yo-kai in an arena with plenty of tight spaces and shadows wherein to hide. Defeating it will free the area, changing the color of the sky from a dark purple to a bright blue again, and freeing the affected villagers from their Sorrow. From here, the player is free to explore, communicate with villagers, and discover other secrets the area may be hiding.

Game Flow

While the game flow of *Fox in the Bush* will be quite linear, akin to *Splatoon*’s story modes, players are free to explore areas of the village they have freed to their content. Each section will play out first with a narrative reason to explore a new area of the village, usually because that area is still in peril, but there may be other reasons, such as rescues, later on. Then, the player will venture out as Kitsedo to that section of the village, complete the level, and be granted rewards from it, such as upgrades, shops, and more places to explore. Finally, they will explore until they are satisfied or believe they can handle the next challenge, upon which the narrative will point them in the direction of the next level.

This sequence will repeat throughout the progression of the game, and then break around the final act, wherein they discover a story secret or the Sorrow catches up to them. At this point, Kitsedo’s powers would be strained, and after undergoing a

narrative change, their powers will transform to be one with Sorrow, giving the player a free upgrade. The endgame follows soon after as its own level—a giant culmination of all the skills and techniques the player has learned, with a big boss near the center of the level throwing obstacles in the way of the player.

Backstory and Setting

Unknown to the player, *Fox in the Bush* takes place on planet Earth millions of years after humans died off due to pollution, climate change, and war. In this world, the Earth itself is very much a living being with sentience and strong emotions. After seeing this race rise to power so quickly, seeing their strong emotions of love and passion, she had allowed them to live upon her. It was supposed to be a mutual relationship; however, it did not take long in her celestial lifespan, likely less than a week in her eyes, for them to start taking advantage of her. They took, and took, and took. Shortly after, their hatred spread. Their strong passions had become disasters in of themselves. She fought back with storms and quakes, but as they took more from her she became weaker. Eventually, once the dust had settled from the final wars, when Earth was at her weakest, her love for humans became a deep disdain. A wave of malice rocked her surface, and the final survivors noticed. These short dark ages marked the final echoes for the human race, the Age of Goodbyes. They apologized to each other and to the Earth, praying and hoping that their voices would be recorded so life would not disappear from the beautiful planet. Their final cries became golden scripts embedded in stone.

Millions of years later, animals across the planet, their evolution catalyzed by radiation from the final wars, began to rise as sentient creatures. They began forming societies, homes, and villages. They began living alongside the planet, which they dubbed Sokoku (Homeland). But the planet, Earth, Sokoku, whichever, became afraid that in all the time she had to heal, these new people would hurt her again. She felt their strong emotions and misunderstood it as the beginning of the same pattern. Her fear became malice, and so her purge began.

Meanwhile, in one large village near the sea, a town of anthropomorphized animals lives in sweet harmony. Anything they take, they cement into permanence with art. Chalk murals and paintings adorn the town, depicting anything from trees they cut down to the vegetation, bugs, and krill they eat. Sculptures line their buildings showing off their love for their planet. Ink paintings hang from the walls of their homes and schools, and wind chimes play the beautiful song of nature. And just outside the village is a grand wilderness, forests and plains that grew and shifted over the ruins of the long lost people. A wilderness much too treacherous to cross.

Characters

- **Kitsedo**
 - The main character of *Fox in the Bush*, he is a rascal fox kid who loves their family and village with all their heart. Their family isn't very wealthy, but they show their strength through love.
- **Hagoromo**
 - Kitsedo's mother. The essence of hope in the village, Hagoromo is a strong activist. Throughout her time in the village, she has majestically danced along the edge of disasters, taking the front lines whenever a problem arises.
- **Maigo**
 - Kitsedo's little brother and best friend. Maigo is the youngest of the family of foxes, and a huge scaredy-cat. Kitsedo learned to protect him from people and things that would do him harm, be it bullies or bugs.
- **Ayumikaze**
 - Kitsedo's father. A poor, lonesome farmer, Ayumikaze found love at home. The small wooden house he built by hand, detailed and crafted imperfectly, housed his wife, Hagoromo, and their kids. His strength lies in honesty, pure heartedness, and good intentions.
- **Lord Shio**
 - The village head and a sika deer, Shio has control over most decisions in the village, including finance and research decisions.
- **Shopkeeper Natsu**
 - A shopkeeper at village square, Natsu, a giant salamander, sells all kinds of general goods. He's known Kitsedo since they were a baby, and acts as a kind of uncle of sorts.
- **Mushionen**
 - A raccoon kid in the village around the same age as Kitsedo, and a bit of a dope. He constantly teases them about the childish clothes they wear, or the way they run, or even their interest in childish things like bugs.

Enemies: Yōkai

Based on the supernatural entities and spirits from Japanese folklore, these are the main enemies the player will fight in *Fox in the Bush*. As these spirits are, in reality, reflections of the unexplained, painful, and scary, they are perfect enemies for a game about love and togetherness. Not all Yokai are harmful, however, and the player may encounter some that wish no harm. Gameplay-wise, they each have different attack and movement patterns, which can make each enemy a challenge.

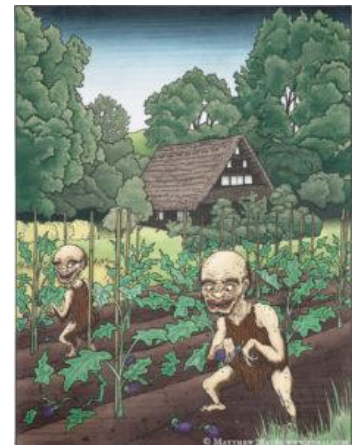
- **Kappa**

- The river child, these enemies appear near rivers and ponds, and walk, back hunched over, searching for prey. Their head has a divot for holding water, which is the source of their life force. They attack with immense strength, using martial arts and sumo stances. Their weak spot is their head, as knocking the water off their heads can defeat them.



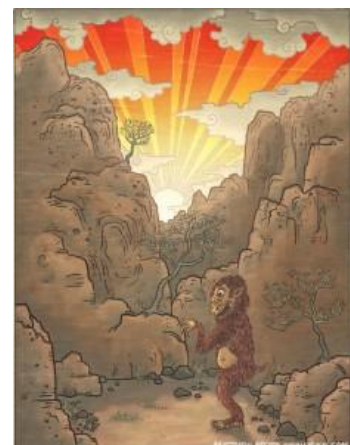
- **Hyosube**

- The laughing spirit, and symbols of dirtiness and greed, these enemies are cousins to the Kappa and invade farmlands in search of food to steal, such as eggplants. Their laugh is contagious, and can spread a fever-like disease.
 - Hiding around them for too long can cause Kitsedo to laugh, revealing their location and poisoning them.



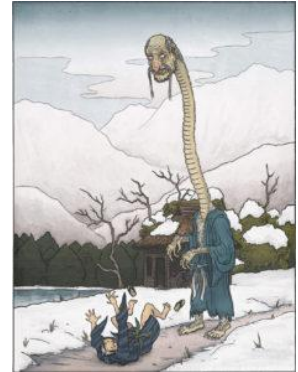
- **Hiderigami**

- The drought spirit, these enemies appear in dry areas and make the area around them void of humidity. Thus, they can never appear in the same place as a Kappa in-game. They appear as one-armed, one-legged, one-eyed creatures covered in fur, and while they are pretty short, they are surprisingly fast. When in chase, they will fall to their foot and hand, and they will run horizontally.



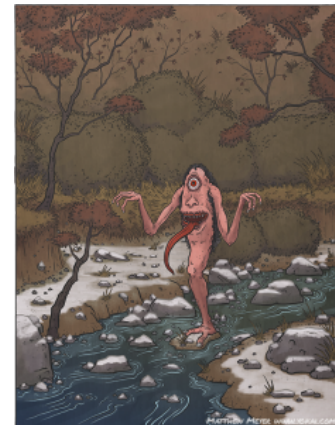
- **Mikoshi**

- The trickster priest. Symbol of deception. It appears as a sickly humanoid creature with clammy, scaly skin. It moves slowly, and is often walking alone in the village. If it is approached and it sees Kitsedo, its neck will extend incredibly high, revealing snake-like skin. It has incredible range and attacks with its claws and teeth. Its weak spot is its throat, so going high is the name of the game when it comes to defeating it.



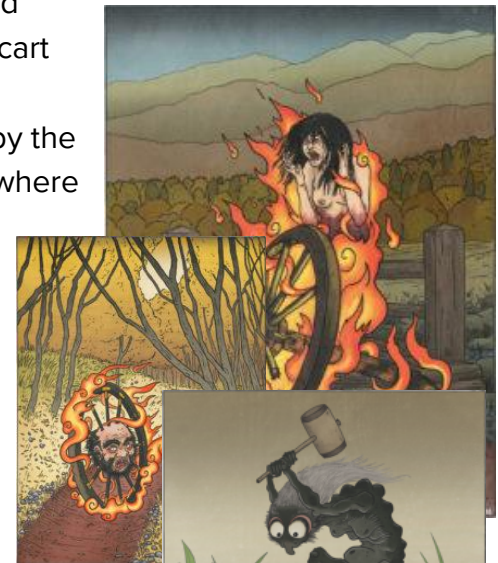
- **Ippondatara**

- The one-legged bellow. Symbol of grueling labor. Usually appearing in the mountains, these one-eyed, one-legged pinkish creatures are said to resemble a blacksmith whose work ruined one eye from the heat and one leg from the labor. As such, they are able to create clouds of smog to hide in, and use their long tongue and strong foot to attack.



- **Katawaguruma**

- The burning creature. Symbol of regrets and sins. A creature intertwined with a burning cart wheel, it seeks the souls of sinners and punishes bad deeds. However, controlled by the Sorrow of the planet, it spreads pain everywhere it goes. Fighting this creature is especially difficult, as its flames can damage Kitsedo. It is better to avoid them completely.



- **Okka**

- The little monster. It appears as a small, mouse looking creature. Easy to defeat, though they can be hard to hit due to their size. They can be found being chased by Oari.



- **Oari**

- The hammer-wielding priest. A symbol of crudeness and cowardice, it is thought to haunt cowards. A small humanoid creature with long hair, buggy eyes, and a beak-like mouth. It is easy to defeat, but hard

to hit due to its size, and can often be found waving its mallet furiously while chasing an Okka. Will run away from Kitsedo, but chase them if they avoid combat.

- **Karakasa**

- The tattered umbrella. A symbol of things left behind. They are not particularly dangerous, but their long tongues can pose a danger if left unchecked. In the time of the Sorrow they have become much more aggressive than the tales would imply.



- **Koto**

- The forgotten koto. A symbol of art long forgotten. They seek to play their ancient harmonies when no one is around, and if they see Kitsedo, they will stop and search for them.

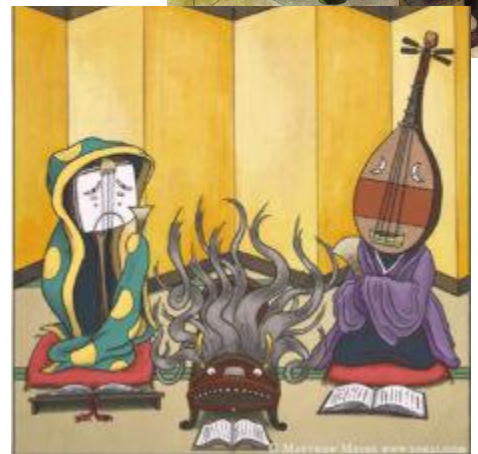
- **Shami**

- The forgotten strings. A symbol of art long forgotten. They hang around Kotos and play with them, attacking Kitsedo if they see them.



- **Biwa**

- The forgotten lute. A symbol of art long forgotten. They hang around Kotos and play with them, attacking Kitsedo if they see them. They have the head of a lute and body of a humanoid creature covered in robes.



Enemies: Bosses

- **The Giant Spider**

- Based on the Tsuchigumo, a giant trickster spider. It took over a watch tower and made a nest there, where Kitsedo will have to fight them in order to save Mushionen.



- The Snake Girl
 - Based on the tale of Ohatsu, this yokai is usually peaceful. However, the Sorrow has tainted her, and made her aggressive. This half-snake, half-girl creature sits at 8 feet tall and floats in a pond, surrounded by lily pads and cattail bushes. In order to defeat her, Kitsedo must move along these areas quickly, cutting her down to release the Sorrow within.



- The Scroll Dragon
 - Based on the Kyorinrin, a dragon yokai born from forgotten and untouched scrolls and books. When the Sorrow seeped into Lord Shio's records, it came to life and began guarding the area.



- The Emperor
 - Based on the tale of Sutoku Tenno, a real-life would-be emperor who cursed Japan after living a horrible life. This is a sentient yokai, and he recalls the abuse people showed him, and his own mistakes in life. He attacks with lightning and storms, and flies high in the air. He is guarding something.



- The Killing Stone
 - Based on the Sessho Seki, a spirit of a vengeful fox that overtook a stone; anyone in the vicinity of the stone would immediately perish, and it wasn't until a Buddhist priest talked to it and had the fox admit its sins that it found

peace. This is the final boss of the game, and represents the planet itself. Its first stage will appear as a floating stone that damages Kitsedo through waves of energy, and its final stage will be of a Kitsune, a fox spirit, that attacks with falling stone shards and meteors, storms, and spawning other yokai.



Plot

Kitsedo is a regular, go-lucky, clumsy fox kid who everyone thinks is childish and needs to mature. One day, the skies split and the world is bathed in a purple fog that consumes all joy; however, it only seems to affect adults at first. It also calls upon an army of monsters, inspired by yo-kai, to invade the village.

Kitsedo searches for some way to help, taught well by their mother, and seeks out their Uncle Natsu, a shopkeeper who explores ruins in his pastime. Though they find him consumed by Sorrow, they find some tablets that he had found, and somehow, a tablet of wind connects with Kitsedo, giving them the power of speed. They use this ability, as well as Natsu's own blade, to defeat the monsters that invaded their town, starting with a giant spider that took a child hostage in a watchtower.

After recognizing that defeating these giant monsters frees certain areas from the Sorrow's control, Kitsedo aims to find more of them and defeat them. Area by area, Kitsedo defeats yo-kai after yo-kai until they reach a bigger monster to fight. The first boss reveals that the black beads Kitsedo collects from the yo-kai can be exchanged to strengthen Kitsedo's powers. The second boss reveals that some monsters are sentient,

such as the Snake Girl, who explains that the rage she feels is not her own. After the third boss, the Scroll Dragon, Kitsedo finds a secret room under Lord Shio's office that holds all of her research into the ruins. They confront her, and she explains how dangerous the information would be if it were public; but Shio explains it to Kitsedo anyway, seeing as they saved her life.

It is at this point that Kitsedo learns a deeply conflicting truth—this has happened before. The monsters are like the medicine to get rid of a disease, and they are the disease. On the walk back, Kitsedo notices the chain of black beads they carry, a remnant of every yo-kai they defeat that sticks onto them, feels incredibly heavy. The weight of every kill takes a new meaning, and Kitsedo's mind starts to fill with Sorrow as he rethinks things. Kitsedo takes Shio to Natsu and his family, where they make a plan of attack. They point towards the tallest mountain in the area, on the very outskirts of the village where only few dare to live due to the cold. They believe, through Shio's research and Natsu's tales, that in order to communicate with the higher power causing this, they must reach a higher area. That area is being controlled by a storm, anyway, which means there must be something to fight. Kitsedo agrees, but even after exchanging beads from the chain for more power from Natsu's runes, any new beads Kitsedo gathers feel heavier. This slows down their movement, making gameplay more difficult the more monsters they fight.

When Kitsedo makes their way up that mountain, fighting treacherous monsters and the environment, they find that the peak has been hollowed into an arena of sorts. Lightning strikes and from it spawns The Emperor. This is significant because it is the first fully "human" figure that Kitsedo runs into, a deep echo of the past. A terrifying fight ensues that uses all the elements, and requires all the knowledge Kitsedo has learned. All the while, they understand that a creature of this power must be protecting something. This is not the final boss, but the bodyguard. Upon defeating it, the Emperor explains his life. He had lived a life of war and agony, a family that hated him, and a country he cursed and dishonored. He allowed sorrow to push him to hatred, and the ripples from his actions caused dreadful pain. Protecting the world he desecrated from others that would become like him is the only way to make things right. With newfound understanding, Kitsedo lays the man to rest, freeing the area. With the fog cleared, a staircase forms from the purple smoke that leads inside the mountain. Kitsedo walks inside, intending to have a conversation with the entity.

Inside the mountain is a stone, roughly the shape of a fox, which speaks to them about how the trust between her and people had been broken before. She knew love was a ruse, and so she shared her pain, if not to make people understand, to rid herself of them. Kitsedo attempts to explain that things are different, that they understand her pain, that the gravity of their actions and her trust being broken weighed down on them.

She sees the chain around their waist, the end flowing like a scarf, and attacks. After a difficult battle, wherein the stone reveals itself to be a Kitsune spirit, an avatar of the Earth, she explains that every bead is a soul that lived on her and suffered greatly. From every animal that died to the toxicity of those that came before Kitsedo, to every person who brought death upon themselves. To use them like tools is to be just like the destroyers, those who cared not about the souls they were hurting, but how to better their own lives. Kitsedo understands. They take off the chain and repent. On their knees, they offer their soul as an act of gratitude, for the beautiful world she is. She is taken aback by this offer, and thinks about it thoroughly. A true act of love in her favor, asking for nothing in return. This act gives her hope. In the end, she rejects it, saying that if his soul truly is pure and good, she will see it eventually; for now, she asks them to become a paladin of love. To spread the beauty they see every day. Kitsedo agrees, and they embrace.

STORY BIBLE

Characters - Extended

- **Kitsedo**
 - The main character of *Fox in the Bush*, he is a rascal fox kid who loves their family and village with all their heart. Their family isn't very wealthy, but they show their strength through love. Other villagers see him as a bit of a nuisance because he runs around town so much, clumsily knocking things over or running into people in his excitement. Other kids have grown up faster than him, and have held his childishness against him. However, regardless of all this, their soul is strong and passionate, and like an endless flame, his heart is ever-burning against all that could cause it to waiver—be it bullies, mean shop-owners, or the fact that their family is moving away to look for more opportunities. However, when everything is lost to the Sorrow, his soul will face his harshest challenge yet: growing up to save the people he loves.
- **Hagoromo**
 - Kitsedo's mother. The essence of hope in the village, Hagoromo is a strong activist. Throughout her time in the village, she has majestically danced along the edge of disasters, taking the front lines whenever a problem arises. Whether it be a missing dish for a cookout, a problem with funding, or an infestation of bugs at town hall, she has been the person people go to for help. However, with them moving away soon, she worries for her village and how it could cope without her. How can she leave her friends behind?
- **Maigo**
 - Kitsedo's little brother and best friend. Maigo is the youngest of the family of foxes, and a huge scaredy-cat. Kitsedo learned to protect him from people and things that would do him harm, be it bullies or bugs. Maigo copies Kitsedo as a way to try to be strong like them, often with less success. One day, tired of being afraid and having seen Kitsedo explore the woods outside the village, Maigo got lost and was almost frozen in the cold of the winter. Kitsedo, alongside his father, reached out to him with a torch in hand. Shivering, Maigo vowed to listen to his big brother and never again run off. He still hopes to rid himself of fear, however.
- **Ayumikaze**

- Kitsedo's father. A poor, lonesome farmer, Ayumikaze found love at home. The small wooden house he built by hand, detailed and crafted imperfectly, housed his wife, Hagoromo, and their kids. His strength lies in honesty, pure heartedness, and good intentions. It is through him that Kitsedo learns to enjoy the little things, from the sounds of a string instrument to the light poking through the wooden panels of their ceiling in the morning. He would often point up at the sky and tell stories of people long gone—ancestors that built the world long before them. Tales of kindness and loyalty, betrayal, heartbreak. Ayumikaze built Kitsedo's adventurous, heroic soul. Now, he only wants to see his kids grow up with better lives than his own—to explore the world and appreciate what they haven't had the chance to see.
- **Lord Shio**
 - The village head and a sika deer, Shio has control over most decisions in the village, including finance and research decisions. Though she deeply cares about the villagers, and is kind, even with wealth, her intentions became muddled when she discovered ancient ruins just below their feet. These ruins showed evidence of cities long gone, made of a metal stronger than iron and rocks harder than stone. Below City Hall, Shio had a library built—a vault of sorts—wherein to conduct her research. Discovering an awful secret, she took a vow of silence so as to not panic her people. Unfortunately, she could not keep them safe for long, as the Sorrow returned.
- **Shopkeeper Natsu**
 - A shopkeeper at village square, Natsu, a giant salamander, sells all kinds of general goods. He's known Kitsedo since they were a baby, and acts as a kind of uncle of sorts. Every morning, when Kitsedo runs by, he will give him fresh fruit and bread, even when Kitsedo knocks down his sign or produce. Natsu has a knack for exploring, and tends to show curiosities he finds on his little adventures to kids as a way to intrigue and entertain them, inventing a little story alongside every relic. When the Sorrow strikes, Natsu points Kitsedo towards some relics he has hidden away; scrolls, tablets, ancient books on martial arts and guerilla warfare—stuff of real value. This is how Kitsedo first learns their ninja skills.
- **Mushionen**
 - A raccoon kid in the village around the same age as Kitsedo, and a bit of a dope. He constantly teases them about the childish clothes they wear, or the way they run, or even their interest in childish things like bugs.

Mishionen is definitely NOT scared of bugs! Not one bit! It's just childish! In reality, he is jealous of Kitsedo and their homelife, as he feels a bit neglected at home, and lashes out for attention. Perhaps all he is searching for is a friend.

Opening Section

From love are cast two sides to a coin: empathy and suffering. To suffer is to need another's empathy, and to empathize is to feel another's suffering. It is through love, with arms outstretched and unwavering, however, that such feelings find purpose. As such, a grudge was born. Lost in its purpose and immaterial, the force of a worried, once dying planet, imbued itself with Sorrow, determined to bleed the world dry of love. It seeped into the darkest thoughts of the village people, taking their fears and angers and birthing an army.

In that village, a small fox child watches as his home is torn away from its innocent life. A dark wave of malice and conflict shakes their world and throws it on its head. His happy home becomes filled with Sorrow, as everybody around him begins to feel sad, and then painfully depressed, and then numb. They watch as their town burns to the army of fears, the yo-kai. Kitsedo, the fox child, is left standing against an immeasurable challenge, feeling their joy already being drained. His father says to him, mumbling under foggy breath:

"Kitsedo, my beautiful kit. Allow me to view your lovely face again. That's my kid. I believe I am sick, though I know not what ails me." He gives a weak smile. "But you, my child, are my light. Take care of your brother. I must take your mother to rest."

With that opening scene, Ayumikaze walks weakly towards Hagoromo and picks up her arm and shoulder, putting her weight on him. They sit on their bed and stare blankly at the floor. Maigo looks up at Kitsedo, crying. "Kit, I'm afraid."

His orange face glows a slight purple from the devilish flames the yo-kai have spread throughout the village. Kitsedo grabs his hand.

"Let's see if Uncle Natsu has some medicine."

Kitsedo and his brother make their way past the yo-kai, crouching to hide behind obstacles and avoid their view. Kitsedo tries his best to keep Maigo calm and cover his eyes from the monsters. As they reach a rugged wooden stand with a green cloth ceiling,

Natsu comes into view, his skin shining over with a film of fear-induced sweat. He watches the kids run towards him, his head peeking over the edge of the cart. Getting closer, they notice the same purple aura that overtook their parents, and it's growing on Natsu's body.

Kitsedo panickedly grabs his attention. "Natsu! Our parents, they're sick, their eyes are all purple, and my dad was limping, and—"

Natsu interrupts them, his voice becoming shallow and mundane. "Kid. The runes. The relics I found... they are *real*. They were not stories. The Sorrow has returned. We should have heeded their warning." He falls weakly to the ground, his hands on his knees, his head looking down. "Take whatever you need, kid."

Kitsedo: "Uncle Natsu! Get up, please! What warning? What is the Sorrow?"

Natsu can't even muster a word. Looking around for supplies, the player finds a box. Kitsedo opens it to reveal medicines, fruits, and other supplies; but hidden under it all are stone tablets with symbols inscribed on them. These are tablets Natsu had found on his expeditions, which he would often show to kids around town, telling them stories about a wave of malice that brought a people to the brink of a sorrowful war. These stories were told through metaphors, using a small town as a symbol for a whole planet, and the internal conflict of the characters as analogies for grander conflicts. In an attempt to warn future generations, tablets were made imbued with the final hopes, prayers, and sparks of love from a dying race. Of course, nobody knows this just yet.

Kitsedo grabs one of the tablets, a symbol of wind inscribed on it. As he touches it, it floats in the air for a moment and flashes from the inscription. A yellow field appears around his body for a moment, and dissipates. Suddenly, Kitsedo teleports in a shroud of golden smoke and appears under a stack of baskets nearby, hitting his head and knocking it down. An apple tumbles towards Maigo, who watches with wonder.

Maigo: "Kitsedo? What is that?"

Kitsedo: *Looking at his hands as they manifest to and from reality.* "W- what- How am I not dead!?"

Maigo: "Kitsedo?"

Kitsedo: "I mean, I feel incredible! Like I could jump up this building in one leap!"

Maigo: "KITSEDO!"

Kitsedo: “We could use this to fight those weird creatures! We can save our parents! We can fight back, Maigo! Maigo?”

Kitsedo turns around searching for their brother and hears a distant scream. A Karakasa has taken Maigo, picking him up with its umbrella. Kitsedo grabs a nearby blade that belonged to Natsu and chases after.

This acts as the tutorial, with Kitsedo having to chase down the yokai with his new powers, zipping through a linear path covered in junk they can use to move faster and hide from other yokai.

As they approach to strike it, the Karakasa falls to the ground and turns into a purple smoke. Kitsedo catches their brother and lands on the ground. Maigo doesn’t say a word. His eyes fill with tears as he holds his sibling.

Kitsedo holds him close. “Maigo...it’s not safe for you now. I don’t know what is happening, and I don’t know how to help our parents or Natsu, but I promise you I will. I’m going to figure this out, but you have the most important job between us. Stay with mom and dad. Take care of them.”

With that, Kitsedo sits him at home, makes him a meal, and pets his head. “Be brave. I’ll be back soon!”

Full Plot

Before the Sorrow invades, we get a glimpse of life in the village. We see Kitsedo running through the village, speaking to people. They grab some bread from a baker and fly through small crowds of guards and villages. They jump from stones and carts, treating the shared space as their playground. Kitsedo runs into Lord Shio, who asks to thank their mother for recent help at a potluck. Kitsedo nervously agrees and keeps their pace. They reach Natsu’s cart, where it seems he has already started telling his tales. On the ground, watching his puppetry with old dolls and relics, are the village’s children. Among them are Maigo and Mushionen. Kitsedo sits down next to Maigo and offers him some bread, which he takes. Mushionen jabs at Maigo with his elbow and takes a piece from him without asking, causing Maigo to sob and Kitsedo to look at Mushionen with a deep glare. When Natsu ends his story, he packs up and the kids run off. Kitsedo pushes

Mushionen over when they all get up, telling him never to lay a finger on Maigo again. Mushionen responds with a dopey line about them defending a baby, and finishes his bread. Kitsedo grabs his brother and walks home, where their parents have cooked a warm soup.

After the village succumbs to the Sorrow, with its villagers becoming almost lifeless husks that barely utter a word in their trance, and Kitsedo gets his powers from Natsu's tablets, Kitsedo sets out to find a solution. They leave their brother, Maigo, with their parents, promising to return quickly. Once again, Kitsedo is overly optimistic in the face of great hardship, whether it be from their innocence, or simply the way they were raised. Curiously, the Sorrow had not seemed to affect him or his brother, but neither knew for how long. While back home Maigo worries about this, and how to help his parents, Kitsedo rushes out into the village square. They do not know how to stop this, or even if they can, but they understand that everything in life has a balance—a lesson taught by their father—and if something can start as suddenly as this, it can end quickly, too. However, as Kitsedo reaches the square, their vision is filled with purple glow. A deep, violet flame has overtaken the giant fountain at the center, its tendrils dancing upon a dark, starry backdrop. Strange creatures roam the area everywhere, as if invaded by hell itself. It is total and utter chaos.

As a monster passes near Kitsedo, they panickedly shroud themselves in golden smoke, and hide under a nearby bush—and in that moment, something sparks inside of them. As if propelled by intuition, they hop out of the bush with a blast of wind and cut the monster down as its back is turned to Kitsedo. It falls to the ground and wisps away into strings of smoke, leaving glowing black beads in its place. The smoke floats off into the air and in the direction of a watch tower, a stoney spire pointing straight into the dark-clouded sky. Kitsedo knows where he must go.

Kitsedo picks up the beads and chases after the wisps of smoke, zipping between bush, bucket, bell, and barrel—anything with a space to hide in—killing off any monsters in their way. With little clue if this would be a dead end or not, with no idea why they were handed this power, they pushed on regardless. He zips past shops and homes, crossing between people they'd seen their whole life. Tailors, bakers, guards, artists—all these people with a deep passion for their crafts and duties now stand or sit motionless in Sorrow. Their murmurs can be heard under their breaths.

Reaching the gates in front of the tower, Kitsedo is forced to a stop. A kappa holds a raccoon guard's arm near the wall, hoisting their body with labored movements. The guard does not resist. Not knowing where this guard was being pulled, and fearing the worst, Kitsedo slays the kappa, and sits the guard down against the wall. Then they hear whimpers. Moving around the corner reveals a raccoon boy, sobbing on the floor. The boy reveals himself to be Mushionen as he looks up to meet their gaze, and he tries to

put on a tough face. He stands up, upset, and projects his fear onto them as anger, to which Kitsedo responds with a proper shove.

Mushionen: “Ugh, what do you want from me? Go away! Just leave me alone!!”

Kitsedo: “Shut up, Mushionen! Stop screaming, you’re gonna get us caught by the monsters!”

Mushionen: “Whatever, I hope the monsters catch you!! And then maybe eat you up! And leave us all alone because they’ll be so full from eating you.”

Kitsedo: “Can you calm down for one second?? Just stop!”

At that moment, a shadow whisks by the pair, and suddenly, Mushionen is gone. Cries can be heard from above, and as Kitsedo looks up at the watchtower, they see a giant brown spider crawling up the sides and onto the top, holding Mushionen in a cocoon of spider silk.

After defeating the Giant Spider in a burst of hidden slashes, it puffs up into purple smoke that moves in the direction of the next boss. Kitsedo holds Mushionen by the collar, almost seeming taller in comparison, and lets him down. It becomes pretty evident after this that Mushionen would like to be left alone, annoyed that Kitsedo of all people saved him, or that he got snatched up at all.

As the smoke moves away from the area, it pulls at the seams of the fog like loose fabric, and the thick purple smog that covered the main square starts to dissipate. In this area, the sky returns to its natural blue, and Kitsedo notices that everyone's aura has changed. They begin to stand tall, one by one, as if brought back to strength. Kitsedo excitedly watches from the watchtower, realizing they have actually helped! He runs back down, passing by the guard from earlier to tell him about Mushionen, who is sitting alone in the tower. They rush home to find their little brother trying to feed their parents some soup, but they don’t seem to comply. They sit up tall as Kitsedo opens the door, the final seams of fog dissipating around their very ankles. Ayumikaze gives Kitsedo a smile, looks down, and takes a spoonful of soup from Maigo, patting him on the head. Kitsedo hugs his mother.

—End Act 1—

A few hours pass and Natsu knocks at the door. He gives Kitsedo his gratitude, and kneels down to meet their eyes. In his hand, he holds a rune from the box.

Kitsedo: Uncle Natsu, you’re okay!

Natsu: Thanks to you. But I'm afraid this attack is not over. Our neighborhood is okay, but everyone around us is still in the Sorrow.

Kitsedo: Those monsters?

Natsu: An army of the Sorrow. They feed on our joy and destroy it, at least, according to the tales I found in the forest's ruins. But I never thought something like that could actually exist.

Kitsedo: Okay... Well for some reason those runes gave me the ability to fight them. So what do I have to do next?

Natsu: Control your eagerness. These powers are still new to you. We got lucky on your first attempt, that may not be the case next time. We do not know how this works yet.

Natsu shows him a rune with a symbol of a feather.

Natsu: I want to try something. Touch this rune, remember what you felt the moment you got these powers. The desperation. The fear.

As he asks them to touch the rune, Kitsedo complies, and remembers the deep void of anxiety and fear they felt earlier in the day. These moments flash before them, and the black beads they had gathered from the monsters swirl around the rune before colliding with it in a sudden burst of purple light. The feather fills up with that color, and turns a harsh gold. That familiar gold armor covers Kitsedo's body and dissipates, making him feel much lighter. (This introduces the player to the upgrade system, which takes in Sorrow the player collects to strengthen Kitsedo's abilities. At this same moment, a piece of UI appears reading "Sorrow: - -").

Natsu celebrates as Kitsedo tests his new power, which grants him the ability to run faster and jump further. Ayumikaze chimes in with a thatta boy and is visibly proud. Hagoromo (Kitsedo's mother) hesitantly grants them her blessing. Maigo seems a bit scared.

Before they go back out, Kitsedo and their mom have a brief conversation.

Hagoromo: I am not sure why you, *my* son, were handed this duty out of anyone. This is too much for a kid to bear. Just be careful.

Kitsedo: Well, I've come this far haven't I! For you, ma, I will vanquish this evil!

Hagoromo giggles as Kitsedo runs out. Even now, he's still so childish.

This section of the village has now sprawled back to life. The flames have dissipated naturally, and people have already started to help each other and rebuild. But the sky is split in sections and other areas are yet to be saved. Kitsedo runs out to do so.

The next area is near a massive pond called the Mezumi, where parts of the village are separated by small islands connected by thin wooden bridges. Zipping through the level and defeating monsters, Kitsedo notices they can squeeze into large floating lotus flowers for cover, though falling in the water slows them down. With each slay, every draw of the blade, black beads attach themselves to Kitsedo like a long chain, and with it, the “Sorrow” bar in the UI increases. At the end of this long stretch is an arena made of water and lily pads. As Kitsedo approaches, a ferocious beast breaks the calm seal of the surface with a bellowing hiss. In front of them stands the figure of the Snake Girl, currently in the form of a great serpent. The lily pads start to swirl around the monster as its base becomes a whirlpool in the water, and a fight between them begins.

Kitsedo stands over the defeated serpent and for a moment glimpses empathy. Dark beads chain around the snake girl’s arms, and it almost seems like the poor thing is suffering. Kitsedo breaks the chain, keeping the beads for themselves, and instantly sees a change. The serpent rises to meet their gaze, nose to nose, and exhales.

Snake Girl: Thank you, young fox.

Kitsedo: You’re welcome, weird snake.

Snake Girl: I see this world has changed. There is sympathy in your eyes where once upon a millennia I saw only suffering and anger.

Kitsedo: You’ve been here before?

Snake Girl: Yes, however, everything looked different. I felt a rage that was not mine, and I saw horrible suffering, some caused by my hand.

Kitsedo: Sounds like a bad time. Do you want to talk about it?

Snake Girl: Not particularly. It has been eons since I have felt this calm. I would prefer to be left to my devices. But I thank you again. Perhaps we will meet once more.

The serpent lowers down back into the water and disappears. With it, the purple haze surrounding the area dissipates and moves away in swirling streaks of smoke. This area of the village is saved.

Kitsedo returns home to inform their parents of their victory, and to attempt to connect to another rune. People stare as they see Kitsedo moving through town, partially because they recognize their actions and how much they underestimated them, and because they are dragging a large chain of black beads along the ground with every step. Kitsedo runs into Mushionen again, who makes a snide comment at his expense, but disregards him without troubling him further. Other than that, they find that the village

is quickly rebuilding, but there is still panic over Lord Shio, who has not been heard from since the attacks began. They fear the worst.

Upon his return, Kitsedo can talk to their family, wherein they will receive tips and general advice on how to compose oneself in difficult situations. Hagoromo can be found helping people rebuild and talking to other villagers; Ayumikaze can be found fixing up the house; Maigo can be found near the entrance to the forest, thinking and drawing in the dirt. Each has an optional side quest—helping gather materials for the villagers, fixing up homes around the village, and collecting bugs for Maigo. These are intended to teach the player, and Kitsedo, other values of being a hero. Not everything is fighting, sometimes you must put down the blade and help out in other ways. Sometimes for the sake of your community, or just to see your little brother smile.

Kitsedo can also talk to Natsu, who will give them a selection of runes to attempt to connect with. The more beads Kitsedo has, the more likely it is they connect to a certain upgrade rune. Natsu also continues the main plot.

Natsu: The dark clouds parted over the Mizumi, Kit!

Kitsedo: I fought a really old snake with a weird face. But she was sweet. I think she was being controlled by these beads, but I cut them off and she went back into the water.

Natsu: Hmmm... Is it possible you have made an ally monster? Perhaps she knows more about the Sorrow.

Kitsedo: She seemed pretty happy to be left alone right now. I don't want to pester her with questions.

Natsu: Well, regardless, I am afraid our job is not complete. Do you see those clouds over west? That is the main square. Right now, the invasion has taken a hold of our dear Lord Shio. Our next move should be to retrieve her. This is her village to lead, after all. But first, take whatever you need.

After upgrading and purchasing any required materials or items from Natsu, a player will notice that the chain has gotten shorter, but the GUI that reads "Sorrow" has not changed. This is intentional and has narrative implications.

Kitsedo dashes in the direction of the dark storm in the west, towards the main square's business district. They pass vendors seeped in a sorrowful aura and increasingly bigger buildings that tower over them. As they speed through this crowded place, they must discreetly move between crowds of people, zipping between barrels, bushes, and the like, being careful not to hit innocent bystanders. Some yo-kai can be seen carrying or running off with people that Kitsedo can save with a swift slice of their blade. Through the thick sea of buildings and people, Kitsedo finally reaches the town hall. Swooping in through a window, Kitsedo finds the building rotting with a dark aura, and it seems empty.

A sound can be heard from Shio's office, which leads Kitsedo down a secret passageway into a huge lair, the walls lined in books, scrolls, and relics of a time once passed. Bottles, cans, bikes, car engines covered in vines, and other strange machines sit in display cases covered in notes and markings. In some cases, too, are some of those strange tablets that Kitsedo has been using. At the center of the lair, encased in glass, stands a newspaper reading:

"Despair. Repent. The End Has Come:**Dec. 12, 2089**

It has been 159 days since the bombs fell. 355 days since the oceans consumed our cities. 672 days since the war began. If you can read this, you are lucky. Spend these days with the ones you love. The monsters will find you. Pray for retribution. This will be our final print."

Shio is sitting in the corner, overcome by despair.

Upon entering the area, the papers and scrolls on the walls swirl around in a breeze, which moves in a snakelike pattern until it becomes the shape of a dragon, its eyes a deep purple. The dragon attacks with paper scrolls and books it moves almost through psychic power, and with energy beams that come from its mouth.

After fighting the large scroll dragon, the newspaper becomes legible, and the fog dissipates once more. It is at this point that Kitsedo learns a deeply conflicting truth—this has happened before. After talking to Shio, they learn that the monsters are like the medicine to get rid of a disease, and they, as people, are the disease. And if they are the disease, then is Kitsedo hurting the body they live on?

On the walk back, Kitsedo notices the chain of black beads they carry, a remnant of every yo-kai they defeat that sticks onto them, feels incredibly heavy. The weight of every kill takes a new meaning, and Kitsedo's mind starts to fill with Sorrow as he rethinks things. The UI that reads "Sorrow" now reads 99%.

Kitsedo takes Shio to Natsu and his family, where they make a plan of attack. They put their heads together, with Shio pointing out where the first recorded attacks occurred in the past, which was from the mountains. They point towards the tallest mountain in the area, on the very outskirts of the village where only few dare to live due to the cold. They believe, through Shio's research and Natsu's tales, that in order to communicate with the higher power causing this, they must reach a higher area. A dark cloud encapsulates the mountain, which means those few people living there are under the effects of that sorrow. Kitsedo hesitantly agrees, saying:

“I have been fighting these monsters for a while now, and their onslaught is endless. I will do this because I have to, because I can’t stand by while my village suffers. But something this determined to get rid of us must have a reason.”

But even after exchanging beads from the chain for more power from Natsu’s runes, the beads feel heavy on their body, and any more beads they gather add onto the weight. This slows down their movement, making gameplay more difficult the more monsters they fight.

Kitsedo makes their way up that mountain, fighting treacherous monsters and the environment. Small homes stack against the sides of the snowy peak, where cold-climate animals like polar bears and penguins live. When they reach the summit, it is struck by a powerful lightning that comes from the dark cloud, creating an arena of sorts. Lightning strikes again and from it spawns The Emperor, a giant human figure with bluish skin and control over the weather. This is significant because it is the first fully “human” figure that Kitsedo runs into, a deep echo of the past.

A terrifying fight ensues that uses lightning, ice, fire, water, and sand to slow and hurt Kitsedo. It requires all the knowledge Kitsedo has learned up to this point, in training, and as a person. All the while, they understand that a creature of this power must be protecting something. This is not the final monster, but the bodyguard.

Upon defeating it, the Emperor explains his life. He had lived a life of war and agony, a family that hated him, and a country he cursed and dishonored. He allowed sorrow to push him to hatred, and the ripples from his actions caused dreadful pain. Protecting the world he desecrated from others that would become like him is the only way to make things right. With newfound understanding, Kitsedo lays the man to rest, freeing the area from the smoke and taking the black beads it left behind. With the fog cleared, a staircase forms from the purple smoke that leads inside the mountain. Kitsedo walks inside, intending to have a conversation with the entity.

Inside the mountain is a hollow room with rocks placed around in a star pattern. A stone, roughly the shape of a fox, sits in the middle of the room, about 6 feet tall. As Kitsedo approaches, it floats into the air, controlled by an unseeable force. And it speaks.

Stone: I felt your presence approaching. Have you come to die? Everyone comes to me to die.

Kitsedo: Are you the one controlling that army of misery? I need you to stop, please. My people are suffering.

Stone: Do not speak to me of suffering, child. I have lived for eons, every so often putting my trust in people like you, only to suffer the consequences.

Kitsedo: So you retaliate? You make others suffer for your pain?

Stone: I AM SUFFERING, CHILD. I am everything that is good and everything that is bad. I am all the joys and all the pains you could ever experience—all the love and all the suffering. But that Love has come with a price. They have taken and taken—your kind. They treated each other with love, and I gave them love. They treated each other with suffering, and I responded in question.

Kitsedo: But we were not suffering before this. We were happy.

Stone: Maybe now. But love is a ruse. I thought, might as well nip this in the bud.

Kitsedo: I understand your pain. I understand your fear, I do. My actions have weight, too. You taught me that. No one is perfect, not even you. Your actions have hurt me and the people I love.

She sees the chain around their waist, the end flowing like a scarf, and attacks.

The fight is a difficult one, with few places to or reasons to hide at first. The best option is to teleport from place to place, as even running feels slow with the chain of beads. The Stone can attack with waves of energy, spawn enemies, and has a second stage where the stone breaks apart and reveals a Kitsune spirit inside, after which she attacks with beams of energy that create rubble Kitsedo can hide in. The fight is also sprinkled with cinematic dialogue that makes her feel very powerful and adds to the player's understanding of the backstory—most importantly that this form is just an avatar of the planet, and defeating her would not stop her rampage. After the battle, the avatar speaks to Kitsedo.

Earth: You speak of peace but promote only suffering. The beads you wear as a badge of strength are but the souls of every suffering creature—every being that succumbed to the damage of those like you. Every animal that suffered unjustly, every tree that was felled too soon, and every person that fell to another, came to me to be reborn in my service. To use them like a tool for your own desires is to be like those before you.

Kitsedo: I... had no idea.

Kitsedo understands. They take off the chain and repent. They fall on their knees, and offer their hands out.

Kitsedo: Sokoku, our dear home, creator of all that is beautiful, take me and my infinite love for your valleys, forests, seas, and skies, know that we will not repeat the mistakes of our predecessors. I don't know much about your past, and I know I am young, but I am strong, and I want to protect my village. I just want everyone to be happy again, like they used to be. That includes you. We love you, Sokoku. Won't you accept my soul as a sign of our gratitude?

She is taken aback by this offer, and thinks about it thoroughly. A true act of love in her favor, asking for nothing in return. This act gives her hope. In the end, she rejects it, saying that if his soul truly is pure and good, she will see it eventually; for now, she asks them to become a paladin of love. To spread the beauty they see every day. Kitsedo agrees. Kitsedo hugs his mother Earth.

Side Quests

1. Rebuilding the Village!
 - a. Ayumikaze, Kitsedo's father, has asked them to help rebuild the village. He teaches Kitsedo how to nail wood, drill holes, etc. What follows is a minigame based on building that repeats after each subrequest is filled, and gets harder the more requests Kitsedo completes around the village. Small side characters, who make remarks on how Kitsedo is getting big, or that he's maturing quickly, like their father, make the requests, making the village feel more connected.
2. Helping Out!
 - a. Hagaromo, Kitsedo's mother, has asked them to help villagers. Much like the quest above, Kitsedo will talk to side characters to help them, this time with various simple tasks or gathering requests. Each request grants small items that give buffs or can be used for healing.
3. Bugged about Bugs
 - a. Maigo, Kitsedo's little brother, is having trouble with his collection of bugs. He asks Kitsedo to bring him certain bugs, and when they do, Maigo tells them a joke! Once all the bugs are collected, Maigo gives them a lucky coin that increases critical hit chance.

Backstory and Setting

Unknown to the player, *Fox in the Bush* takes place on planet Earth millions of years after humans died off due to pollution, climate change, and war. In this world, the Earth itself is very much a living being with sentience and strong emotions. After seeing this race rise to power so quickly, seeing their strong emotions of love and passion, she had allowed them to live upon her. It was supposed to be a mutual relationship; however, it did not take long in her celestial lifespan, likely less than a week in her eyes, for them to start taking advantage of her. They took, and took, and took. Shortly after, their hatred spread. Their strong passions had become disasters in of themselves. She fought back with storms and quakes, but as they took more from her she became weaker. Eventually, once the dust had settled from the final wars, when Earth was at her weakest, her love for humans became a deep disdain. A wave of malice rocked her surface, and the final

survivors noticed. These short dark ages marked the final echoes for the human race, the Age of Goodbyes. They apologized to each other and to the Earth, praying and hoping that their voices would be recorded so life would not disappear from the beautiful planet. Their final cries became golden scripts embedded in stone.

Millions of years later, animals across the planet, their evolution catalyzed by radiation from the final wars, began to rise as sentient creatures. They began forming societies, homes, and villages. They began living alongside the planet, which they dubbed Sokoku (Homeland). But the planet, Earth, Sokoku, whichever, became afraid that in all the time she had to heal, these new people would hurt her again. She felt their strong emotions and misunderstood it as the beginning of the same pattern. Her fear became malice, and so her purge began.

Meanwhile, in one large village near the sea, a town of anthropomorphized animals lives in sweet harmony. Anything they take, they cement into permanence with art. Chalk murals and paintings adorn the town, depicting anything from trees they cut down to the vegetation, bugs, and krill they eat. Sculptures line their buildings showing off their love for their planet. Ink paintings hang from the walls of their homes and schools, and wind chimes play the beautiful song of nature. And just outside the village is a grand wilderness, forests and plains that grew and shifted over the ruins of the long lost people. A wilderness much too treacherous to cross.