

Shadows of the Rocky Mountains

THE YOKAIPEDIA
BOOK I

WINTER 2026

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Here at the edge of the 21st century one can feel the rationality and structure of the liberal age of enlightenment beginning to slip away. Once venerable institutions have hollowed out, and the universal truths of the world have been shown to be nothing more than dust in the wind. The old world is dying, the next world struggles to be born. Now is the time of yokai.

The old order attempted to crush the spirit out of the world. It has taken the fae, the freaks, the gods old and new and ground them into a grist. Then packaged and sold it back to us at 400% markup.

However, these wild spirits (the Yokai) are still around us. Some old, some new. If you have your eyes opened, you will realize you can suddenly see them all around you.

This is the first volume of a project that aims not only to help open eyes to the animus that still runs through our world, but help document all the yokai that still exist in our world (or at last our little corner of it here in the Commonwealth) and make sure we can maintain of our collective culture into the future.

In solidarity,

Corvus van Roodland

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Corvus van Roodland', with a small, stylized drawing of a face or mask to the left.

WHAT ARE YOKAI?

Yokai (also known as yogai, 妖怪, or Los Espookys) are the spirits that gather around humanity. Part urban legend, part minor deity, yokai permeate the world around us. They come into existence as we talk and think about them, giving them strength to cross over to our world from the astral plane.

The meta-cognitive layer that sits over all of humanity, the astral plane is ultimately where all yokai draw their power from. The ability to cross over from it and occupy space within our world is one of the core qualities of a yokai.

Yokai range from neutral and benevolent to mischievous all the way to outright hostile and dangerous. One should never assume friendly intent when crossing paths with one, especially at night.

Most people will go their whole lives without encountering one, or if they do, will simply brush it off as a dream or a figment of imagination. However, through study and intention, it is possible for you to develop your connection to the astral plane.

One of the most exciting parts about learning about yokai, is that there are new ones being discovered everyday. If you choose to continue to walk this path, you will find that yokai exist in every little nook and corner of the world.

BIOMES OF THE COMMONWEALTH

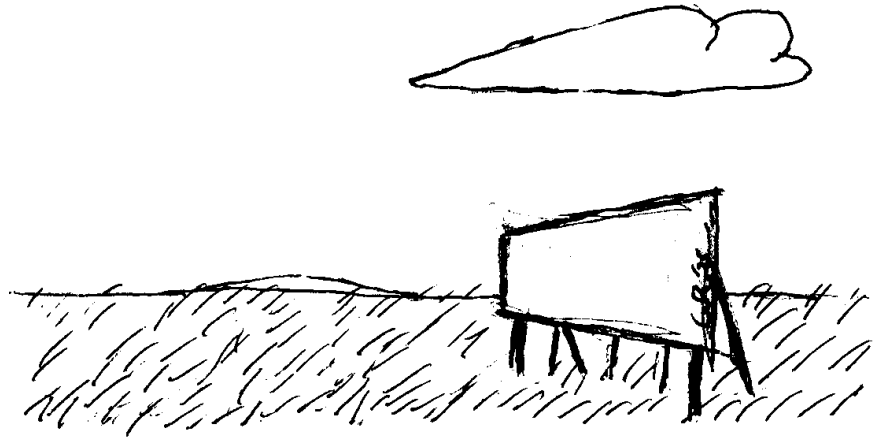
Before we dive into the yokai themselves, I must take us on one more diversion. The yokai are not omnipresent, and spirits found in one area of the realm may not be found in others. One of the simplest ways to sort yokai is by dividing them into their preferred biomes.

Keep in mind though, if one is to engage in the long and venerable tradition of sorting things into buckets, you must hold 3 truths in your heart.

1. You have to define your categories
2. Categories are almost always on a spectrum
3. There will always be something that resists categorization

So as you read on about the yokai, keep in mind that some of these spirits may wander between biomes, may be at ease amongst multiple biomes, or may adapt to new biomes. Likewise, the biomes listed here are not exhaustive. So with that out of the way, let's start sorting!

Plains: While it may seem ironic to start a tome about the Rocky Mountains on the arid plains, the truth is the two are inseparable. Without the mountains there would be no plains. On the plains, one will often find yokai associated with wind and air, or who target the lost and lonely, disoriented on the unending flatness.

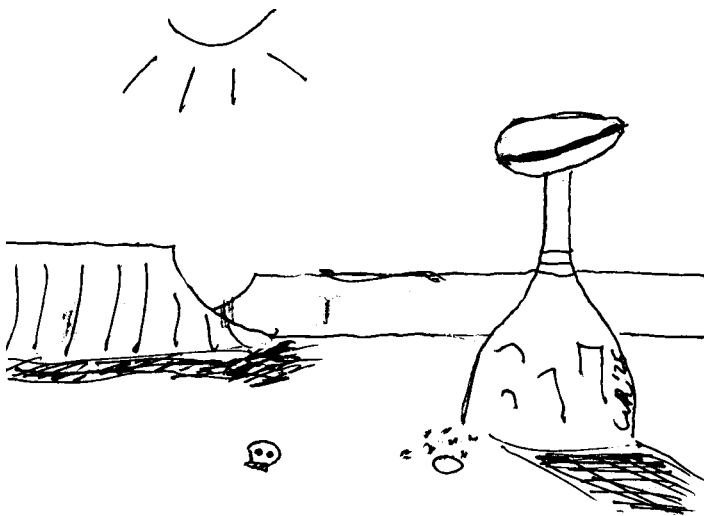
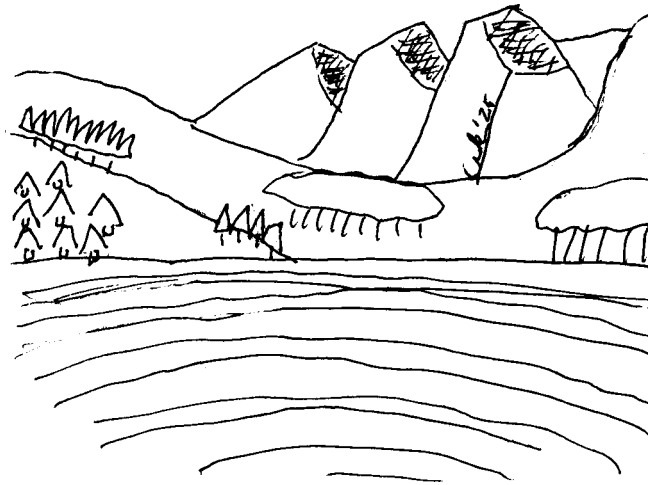


Urban: A newer category of yokai for this region, between the high country and the plains sits the Front Range Urban Corridor. Here humanity lives shoulder to shoulder, and you will find yokai adapted to life in the urban jungle.



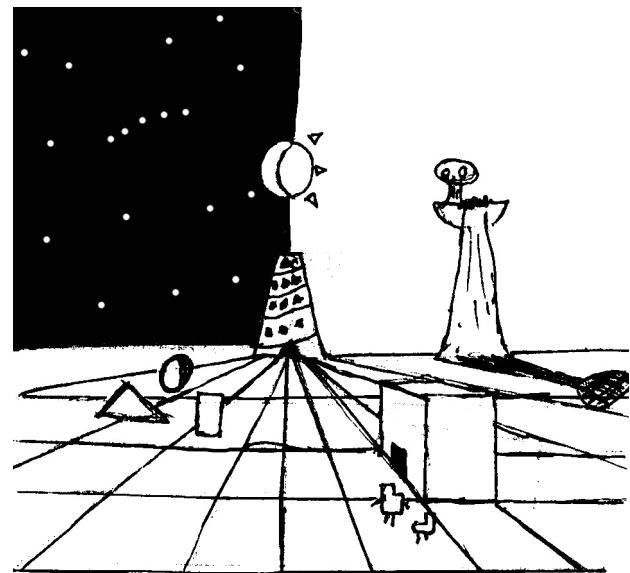
Reflecting the nature of urban life, these yokai tend to be social and reflect both the shining heights and dirty depths of the city.

Alpine: In the high country of the Rocky Mountains you will find pines, aspen, columbines, and all sorts of creatures adapted to cold, caves, and other such High Country environments.



Desert: West of the High Country, where the sun and water carve dark canyons into the old, red rocks, you'll find the strangest & most exotic yokai of the region.

Cyber: Interweaving amongst all of the natural biomes, is the internet. Yes, there are still some dark corners of the Commonwealth where cell service is limited, but for the most part computers and the internet are everywhere and with them come ghosts in the machine we know as cyber yokai.



LEY LINES

Scholars have long argued if ley lines follow humans or vice versa. What cannot be argued is that for as long as scholars have been aware of them, ley lines and trade routes align.

Silks or spices, games or garments, words or widgets, all flow along the ley lines like blood in the veins. Alongside them flow the gods and spirits that make up the underpinnings of our world.

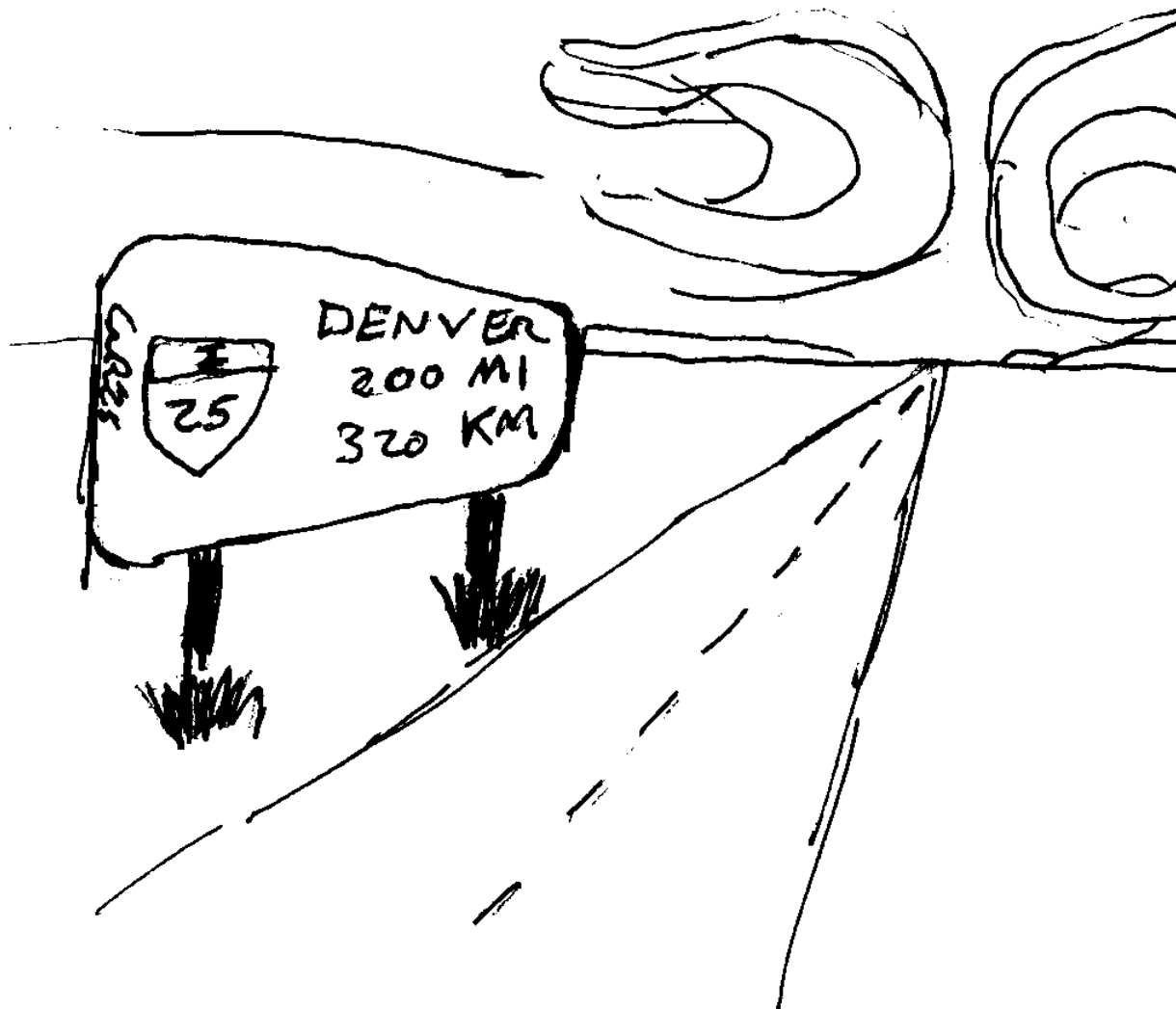
At the heart of the Commonwealth, sits Denver, right at the crossroads of two very powerful ley lines.

I-70 bridges the East Coast into the West of the American Empire. It draws the individualistic self-interest of the Pacific in and mixes it with the neurotically self-aware hierarchies of the Atlantic. You can get a Mission style burrito in your bodenga here.

I-25 is more international, drawing the cool, tempered politeness of our Neighbors to the North and mixing it with the hot, passionate energy that comes up from South of the Border. Hockey in the winter, soccer in the summer.

A third, minor ley line, also converges on Denver. I-76 weaves the Queen City of the Plains into I-80 & onwards to the heart of the Midwest, the Windy City, placing the Commonwealth at the edge of its' sphere of influence.

In Denver all of it burbles and seeps together like a stew. A new psycho-cultural gravity is building here. You can already find the magic fueling the vision of tomorrow, here today.



SHADOW-WALKERS - PLAINS



Flat land means still water.

Where the rain and rivers of the plains gather into the reeds and thrushes of wetlands, there you will find shadow-walkers.

While not malevolent shades per se, Shadow-walkers are found where lost, lonely, and negative emotions gather. Often, the energy is carried from towns and cities on water or wind. It then concentrates in the still water and there pulls itself into the shadowy forms.

Most often seen at twilight, the Shadow-walkers fade in and out of our world. Wandering the wetlands seeking something to numb their pain. They will hide from groups of humans, but be warned: if traveling alone in their territory at twilight, they may drag you under the water, thinking they have found a companion. Light and cheerful company will keep you out of their grasps, but if you find yourself in their clutches, reposition yourself to squeeze back. They will be so shocked at the attention they will let go. That will be your chance to escape.

With the increase of housing developments on the plains, the number of reported sightings has been increasing steadily over the years.

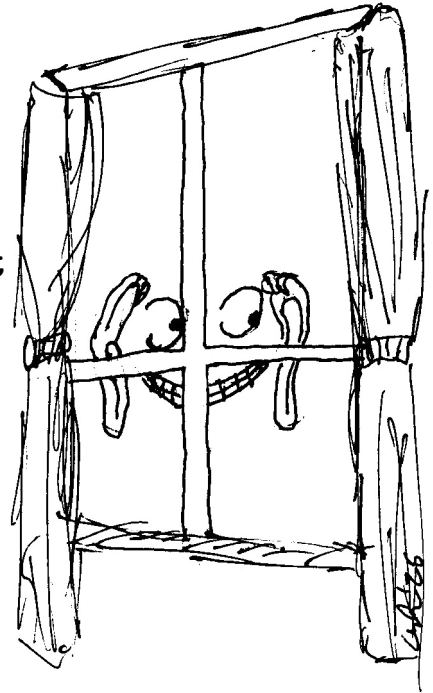
LURKERS - PLAINS

On the unobstructed plains during the day, there are very few shadows for spirits to hide within. However, by night, those same clear lines-of-sight mean every yokai within a five mile radius will see a glowing light.

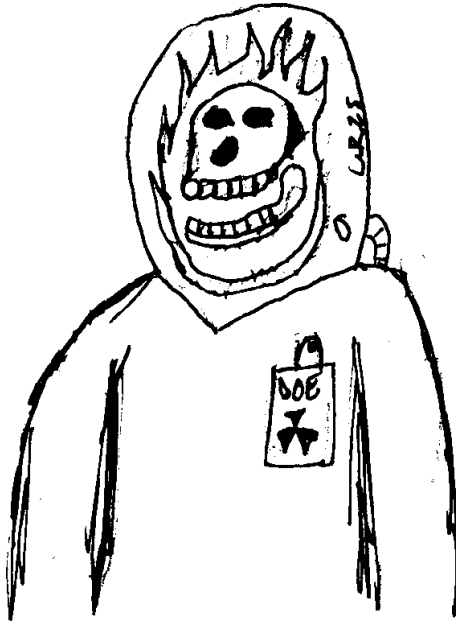
Lurkers in particular seem to be drawn to the soft yellow electric lights found in your average prairie home. If you live in just such a home, and forget to draw the blinds on your windows, you may look up from your reading to spot wild eyes and crazed grin quickly darting off into the corner of the window.

Lurkers can do nothing to you without entering your home, and like many spirits they cannot enter uninvited. However, be warned if you look up and the face does not dart away, and instead presses in towards the glass. That means the lurker has decided you are alone and will begin to try to cajole you into letting them in.

"Hey man, it's cold out here, and my car broke down, and my phone died, can you please let me in to warm up." Humans, of course, will just knock or ring the doorbell. If you slip up and let one in, expect for your family to find nothing of you but your empty skin.



GAMMA WIGHT - URBAN



Gamma wights are not to be trifled with. Malevolent spirits that have found nuclear material to coalesce around themselves. They can damage your body, your spirit, your sanity, and your genes.

Shrieking skulls wreathed in glowing green flames, often wearing the tattered remains of what they wore in life, these radioactive shades haunt the sites of atomic attacks, industrial accidents, mine dumps, or anywhere else the power of Atom has been misused.

IF YOU DO NOT TAKE PRECAUTIONS & KEEP YOUR DISTANCE

YOU WILL GET RADIATION SICKNESS!

Aside from the necessary DoE SOP PPE, anyone seeking to purge a gamma wight will need a lead coffin to trap the spirit in and carry it away for exorcism. Thankfully standard lead bullets are usually enough to subdue them for the extraction process.

Rocky Flats, just outside Denver, was shuttered in 1989 after a fire at the facility unleashed a haunting of dozens of spirits onto the grounds. It took hundreds of agents decades to finally exorcise the site.

JUCO JEFF - URBAN

For the last decade, the same drama has played out in the Grand Valley every summer. The morning after the last game of the JUCO World Series (the national Junior College baseball tournament) a groundskeeper goes out to rake the mound and finds a decapitated corpse lying on it.



Years ago, when the renovations to the town's baseball field were underway, reports surfaced from one of the agents in town that an old clay pot had been broken while they were digging new foundations. No one thought much of it at the time, then the bodies started piling up.

To this day, City Council and the tournament organizers vehemently deny that anything weird is going on and the local paper has been taking their stories at face value. With the latest murder though, the locals are getting angry and nervous. It's clear something is afoot.

Stories spread like wildfire through the schools, of a strange figure that stalks the tournament grounds. A figure with dead eyes, an empty smile, trapped inside a large novelty baseball head. It drags a blood-soaked bat behind it, looking for its next home run.

SASQUATCH - ALPINE



Although better known for roaming the rainy peaks of the Cascades, sasquatches have been spotted all along the American Cordillera, which stretches as far north as the Brooks Range in Alaska and as far south as the Andes in Chile and Argentina.

When observed within the mountain ranges of the Commonwealth, a few traits can be noted about the creatures. They are hairy humanoids that walk upright. They are highly skittish around humans, preferring to hide within the trees and underbrush, far away from any hiking trails through the back country. No one has ever reported a hostile sasquatch.

They are not without curiosity, and some hikers in the most remote parts of the back country have sometimes found their campsites rummaged through in the remote wilderness if they wander off for too long. The creatures seem most interested in taking protein bars & any cards, dice, or board games they can find.

THE SLIDE ROCK BOLTER - ALPINE

(*MACROSTOMA SAXIPERRUMPTUS*)

FIRST PUBLISHED IN "FEARSOME CREATURES OF THE LUMBERWOODS" (1910)

In the mountains of Colorado, where in summer the woods are becoming infested with tourists, much uneasiness has been caused by the presence of the slide-rock bolter. This frightful animal lives only in the steepest mountain country where the slopes are greater than 45 degrees. It has an immense head, with small eyes, and a mouth somewhat on the order of a sculpin, running back beyond its ears. The tail consist of a divided flipper, with enormous grab-hooks, which it fastens over the crest of the mountain or ridge, often remaining there motionless for days at a time, watching the gulch for tourists or any other hapless creature that may enter it. At the right moment, after sighting a tourist, it will lift its tail, thus loosening its hold on the mountain, and with its small eyes riveted on the poor unfortunate, and drooling thin skid grease from the corners of its mouth, which greatly accelerates its speed, the bolter comes down like a toboggan, scooping in its victim as it goes, its own impetus carrying it up the next slope, where it again slaps its tail over the ridge and waits. Whole parties of tourists are reported to have been gulped at one scoop by taking parties far back into the hills. The animal is a menace not only to tourist but to the woods as well. Many a draw through spruce-covered slopes has been laid low, the trees being knocked out by the roots or

mowed off as by a scythe where the bolter has crashed down through from the peaks above.

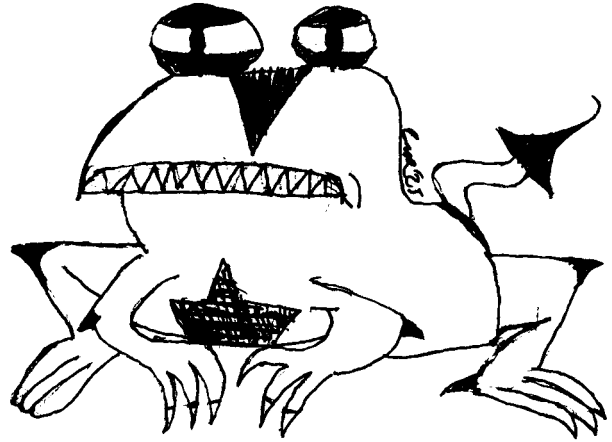
A forest ranger, whose district includes the rough county between Ophir Peaks and the Lizzard Head, conceived the bold idea of decoying a slide-rock bolter to its own destruction. A dummy tourist was rigged up with plaid Norfolk jacket, knee breeches, and a guide book to Colorado. It was then filled full of giant powder and fulminate caps and posted in a conspicuous place, where, sure enough, the next day it attracted the attention of a bolter which had been hanging for days on the slope of Lizzard Head. The resulting explosion flattened half the buildings in Rico, which were never rebuilt, and the surrounding hills fattened flocks of buzzards the rest of the summer.



THE SLIDE-ROCK BOLTER

SÇUNG - DESERT

Buried deep within the shadowed floors of canyons, sleep the sçung. An ancient amphibian creature of some sort, left behind by the receding shores of the ancient Lake Bonneville, the sçung have since adapted to the dry deserts of the inland basin.

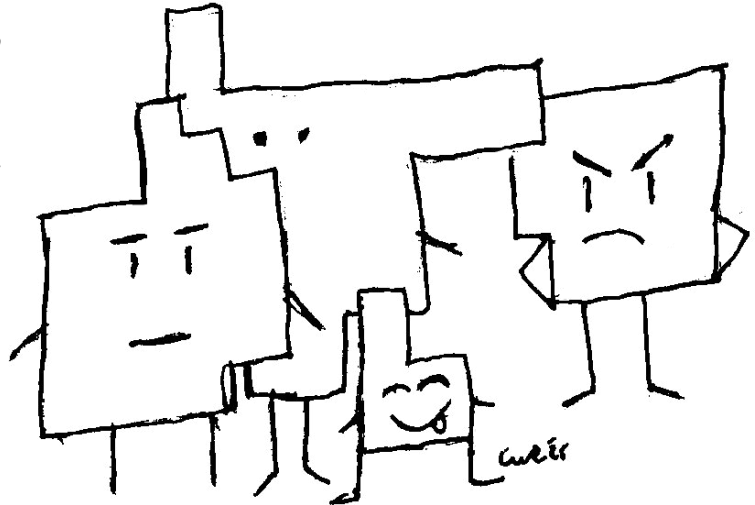


In times of drought, sçung enter a dehydrated hibernation, appearing as rocks buried in sand at the bottom of canyons. However, when the rare rains come and fill the canyons with water, the colonies of sçung rehydrate and reanimate.

The average sçung looks like a frog, with sharp front claws, boney knees, a stinger tail, and they weigh about 50 pounds and are as big as a medicine ball. When active, they are ferocious and will attempt to eat anything around them. Sagebrush, rabbits, lost hikers, anything is fair game for them. However, they are poor climbers and have evolved to stay at the bottom of canyons, so if you spot rain on the horizon, they can be easily avoided by climbing to higher ground.

THE ALGORISIMI - CYBER

To the untrained eye, the algorismi can seem a malicious monolith, all-watching, all-encomposing, often spoken of in hushed whispers.



The truth is though that there are millions of algorismi all across cyber space operating on seen and unseen problems. The little sprites are the foundation of the computing landscape and make up the majority of activities found within computers and the internet.

Generally under the guidance of a techno-shaman, they do math, calculate logistics, or match patterns. Generally benign and always ready to solve a problem, the algorismi only become troublesome when under the purview of hostile shamans. The most malicious swarm of which are under the control of the Cult of Moloch, which eventually bend all algorismi in one direction, growth at any cost.

Algorismi pride themselves on being highly logical, so if you find yourself on the wrong end of one, keep some paradoxical riddles handy to distract them. Ask them to divide by zero, they hate that one!

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SPRING 2026

The Yokaipedia: Book II

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where you can sign up for the newsletter
and

drop a buck in the tip jar to keep the project funded.

Want to join in?

Submissions are open for the next issue!

SUBMISSIONS DEADLINE: April 3rd 11:59PM

If your work is selected for the next issue, you will be entered into a raffle to win 1 of 8 \$25 Visa Gift Cards!

We're looking for the following contributions:

- Short descriptions of new yokai (150-250 words)
 - Worth 1 raffle ticket per selected submission
- B&W drawings to pair with new or old yokai entries
 - Worth 1 raffle ticket per selected submission
- Short stories based on previously published yokai (250-1000 words)
 - Worth 1-4 raffle ticket per selected submission, depending on length.

Send questions/submissions to corvus@shadows.institute

This is the end of the zine.

Thanks for reading!

And remember kids:

Never use your real name on the net!