

EPISODE 1.

FADE IN:

EXT. SHALLOW VALLEY - DUSK

A modest dip in the earth. Thorn bushes. Creeping green. Quiet.

In the center of it all, a HEDGEHOG, neither large nor small, sleeps curled beneath leaves. This is **YOSHI**.

Beside him, unmoving but present, a TORTOISE - THUMBELINA - her shell dappled with moss and dust.

They are close. Inseparable.

Silence, broken only by the wind brushing thorns.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

In the middle of the field, where the land bent into a shallow valley tangled with thorn and creeping bush, lived a hedgehog of modest size - one that rarely caught the eye. Beside him moved a tortoise named Thumbelina. The two were never apart.

EXT. VALLEY - LATER - EVENING

The sun sinks behind distant mountains. Shadows stretch. The heat loosens its grip.

YOSHI 's eyes flutter open. He blinks, alert now. His nose twitches.

He nudges Thumbelina gently.

YOSHI

(soft but eager)

Come. Rise. It's time to eat.

Thumbelina stirs. A slow groan escapes her.

THUMBELINA

Oh, you rush as if the world might vanish before your meal.

YOSHI grins - small, sharp, excited.

EXT. FOREST EDGE / FIELDS - NIGHT

They trudge together, leaves crunching beneath their feet. Early autumn. Cool air.

Above them, MAGPIES crowd twisted pear branches, feathers flashing.

MAGPIES

(sharp, mocking)

The swift-walkers are passing - beware! Beware!

From the fields, QUAILS scatter in a flurry.

QUAILS

Make way! Make way!

In a ravine nearby, BLACKBIRDS, dark and hidden, laugh thinly from briar and thorn.

YOSHI and Thumbelina keep walking, pretending not to hear.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

They passed the chatter and laughter of their neighbors, hurrying with all their might through the gathering dark.

EXT. VINEYARDS - NIGHT

Moonlight glistens on grapes.

Thumbelina pauses, delighted, crunching a small white snail. She savors fallen fruit, soft and sweet.

YOSHI darts ahead - quick, bold. A mouse disappears into the grass. A lizard vanishes.

He returns, sharing grapes with Thumbelina.

But then -

He freezes.

A faint CROAK echoes.

YOSHI 's eyes gleam in the dark.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

In secret, above all else, he cherished the taste of frog-meat. Even its scent could set his eyes shining like stars.

YOSHI listens. Smiles. Then darts off-screen.

Thumbelina sighs, shaking her head.

EXT. VALLEY - DAWN

The sky ales. Dew coats everything.

YOSHI and Thumbelina return - tired, damp, satisfied.

They curl beneath the greenery once more. The morning sun warms them as they fall asleep.

Peace.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Their life was gentle and full. And perhaps it would have remained so for many years -

EXT. VALLEY - DAY (LATER)

A PLOW tears through the earth.

Thorns rip free. Bushes collapse. Soil turns violent and bare.

The valley is undone.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

- if one day the villagers had not plowed the valley and uprooted the thorns.

YOSHI and Thumbelina watch from the edge, small against the destruction.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

From that moment on, they were haunted by troubles and sufferings...

stories told in the pages that follow.

FADE OUT.

EPISODE 2. - VICIOUSSELLA

FADE IN:

EXT. TANGLED WILDLANDS - DAWN

A LONE HILL rises sharply from a snarl of brush and shadow.

Its crown is smothered in WITHERING GRASS, old-gold and whispering.

The WIND is gentle. The DAY, deceptively warm.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

They did not know the hill was alive.

Beneath the grasses, something ancient stirs.

EXT. HILLSIDE SLOUGH - EARLY MORNING

The dew-silvered grass parts as THUMBELINA, a broad, time-worn TURTLE, and **YOSHI**, a small, sharp-eyed HEDGEHOG, trudge upward.

Exhausted, they sink into the reeds.

The reeds close around them - protective, quiet.

Too quiet.

YOSHI (half-asleep)

Strange... no birds.

Thumbelina only sighs and sleeps.

EXT. SERPENT'S DEN - CONTINUOUS

In a narrow earthen hollow, VICIOUSSELLA sleeps.

A massive ASH-GREY SERPENT, coiled tight. Her scales are pale stone - but her MOUTH GLOWS BRICK-RED, like buried embers.

Her tongue flicks once.

She dreams.

EXT. HILLSIDE - LATER

Sunlight breaks through the mist.

Viciousella emerges slowly, ceremoniously - an old queen greeting her throne.

She coils into the sun, drinking warmth.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

She belonged to shadow... but lived for light.

EXT. MILLET FIELD - DAY

Viciousella glides beneath bramble and leaf.

Above her, EAGLE-SPARROWS watch - dozens of glittering eyes.

A sparrow flutters down.

Viciousella's head rises.

Stillness.

The bird trembles... then drops.

SNAP.

Gone.

The other sparrows scatter in shrill panic.

Viciousella swallows. Sleeps.

EXT. MEADOW EDGE - LATE AFTERNOON

COW BELLS CLATTER.

A COWHERD appears, whip cracking.

Viciousella's eyes fly open.

She lunges.

The cowherd stumbles back, pale, breathless - staring into her FIRE-RED MOUTH.

She stops short.

Satisfied.

Vanishes into brush.

EXT. WOODLAND PATH - MORNING (NEXT DAY)

Mist coils low.

Viciousella slithers along the path, hungry.

A SHELL-LESS SNAIL inches nearby.

Her tongue flicks -

Then she freezes.

Ahead, beneath arching branches:

YOSHI and THUMBELINA, asleep side by side.

The forest presses in. Listening.

CLOSE ON VICIOUSSELLA

Her eyes harden.

A low, venomous HISS.

She coils.

Strikes.

ACTION SEQUENCE

Yoshi leaps - too late.

He's struck, tumbling, crying out.

Viciousella lunges again -

Yoshi curls tight, spines bristling - a living fortress.

They clash beneath shaking grass.

HISSES. SQUEALS. THRASHING STALKS.

EXT. PATH - CONTINUOUS

Thumbelina stirs.

Slow. Confused.

Then she sees it.

Yoshi in the serpent's coils.

Her eyes harden.

She rises.

The ground TREMBLES as she charges.

A thunderous IMPACT -

Viciousella recoils, furious.

Thumbelina vanishes into her shell.

Silence.

EXT. HILLSIDE - LATER

Sunlight breaks through the mist.

Viciousella emerges slowly, ceremoniously - an old queen greeting her throne.

She coils into the sun, drinking warmth.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

She belonged to shadow... but lived for light.

EXT. HILL - CONTINUOUS

She eyes harden.

A low, venomous HISS.

She coils.

Strikes.

EXT. HILL - CONTINUOUS

She eyes harden.

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EPISODE 4. - UNGRATEFUL NEIGHBORS

FADE IN

EXT. THE SLOG - DAY

Tall grasses ripple under a pale wind.
MAGPIES burst from the hedgerows, their black-and-white wings beating wildly.

MAGPIES (CACKLING, OVERLAPPING)

Crrrk—crrk—crrk!

Their cries race across the fields, over the riverbanks, into—

EXT. THE GLADE - CONTINUOUS

A sudden SHADOW cuts across the ground.

A KESTREL drops from the sky like a thrown blade.

TALONS clamp down on the long, scarlet-streaked body of VICIOUSSELLA, the snake.

With a powerful beat of wings, the kestrel ascends, carrying death skyward.

Silence returns.

Only the grass whispers.

EXT. GLADE EDGE - EVENTIDE

The light dims.

YOSHI, a small hedgehog with bright eyes and bristling spines, stands beside THUMBELINA, delicate yet resolute.

Yoshi exhales, hopeful.

YOSHI

I hope that from now on we will be at peace.

No one will challenge our right to live in the slog.

Thumbelina smiles faintly.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SLOG - TWO DAYS LATER - MORNING

A sudden flutter.

A FLOCK OF PARTRIDGES descends into the tall grass, busy, confident—settling as if summoned by fate.

They cluck and strut, making camp.

Yoshi marches forward.

YOSHI

You cannot stay here.

The partridges LAUGH—light, trilling, dismissive.

The ELDEST PARTRIDGE steps forward.

ELDEST PARTRIDGE

The slog belongs to no one.

There is room for all.

We will not hinder you.

YOSHI

It is not about ownership.

Where you settle, danger follows—

hunting dogs, foxes, hawks.

There are too many of you.

For your own good—leave.

The partridges turn away, uninterested.

CUT TO:

EXT. THORN TREE - NEXT DAY

A HARE lounges beneath twisted branches, eyes half-closed, ears drooping.

The partridges greet him warmly.

Yoshi watches from a distance, displeased.

MONTAGE - YOSHI'S MISCHIEF

—Yoshi scurries past, rattling grass.

—He knocks loose pebbles.

—He huffs and puffs, trying to startle the hare.

Nothing works.

The hare sleeps on.

END MONTAGE

Yoshi's eyes narrow.

EXT. THORN TREE - LATER

The hare sleeps deeply.

Suddenly—

YOSHI BLURS past him, grass SHUDDERING in his wake.

The hare JOLTS upright.

HARE

(startled)

What—what happened?

Yoshi leans close, whispering darkly.

YOSHI

Do you not hear?

Hunters are coming.

The hare's ears QUIVER.

HARE Where?

YOSHI

I have no time to guide blind eyes.

Yoshi turns sharply and trots away.

The hare hesitates... then slips back under the thorn tree, flattening himself into shadow.

HARE (MUTTERING)

He will be caught by his own trick.

He will linger... and the hounds will find him.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SLOG - SERIES OF DAYS

The land grows uneasy.

—A FALCON wheels high above.

—HAWKS skim low, wings whispering through grass.

—A WOLF'S SHADOW crosses the reeds.

—A WEASEL strikes a hare in daylight—blood on fur.

—Three partridges vanish into dusk.

Fear settles like fog.

EXT. THE SLOG - VARIOUS

Yoshi and Thumbelina RUSH toward danger whenever the OLD PARTRIDGE cries out.

They chase attackers.

They shout.

They distract.

Yoshi drags the wounded hare from death's edge.

The hare pulls free, proud.

No thanks.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

Yoshi faces the partridges and the hare.

YOSHI

Scatter across the fields!

Every day you remain, more killers come!

ELDEST PARTRIDGE

Then why do you not leave with your walking bowl?

The hare steps forward.

HARE

I do not need your help.

I can face my enemies myself.

Yoshi SNAPS.

YOSHI

Fool!

They circle above for you, not me!

The partridges exchange uncertain looks.

ELDEST PARTRIDGE

That is far from certain.

Yoshi's patience breaks.

YOSHI

Then go!

He drives them out with fierce words and flashing spines.

Above them—

SHADOWS FALL.

Hawks DIVE.

Chaos erupts.

THUMBELINA

(crying out)

Stop!

You send them to their deaths!

Yoshi turns away, exhausted.

YOSHI

There is no peace left here.

We must go.

CUT TO:

EXT. EDGE OF THE SLOG - DAYS LATER - DAWN

Yoshi and Thumbelina stand ready to depart.

FADE OUT.

EPISODE 5. - UNEXPECTED AIR JOURNEY

FADE IN:

EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE - DAWN

A distant MOUNTAIN, drowned in haze, turns a deep, misty blue as morning breaks.

Perched impossibly high—

A MIGHTY GOLDEN EAGLE

—regal, ancient—

rests in a vast EYRIE clinging to a sheer cliff.

The eagle spreads his wings.

WHOOSH.

He rises into the brightening sky, circling in smooth, stately arcs.

EAGLE (V.O.)

(calm, watchful)

The world is wide. And all of it is mine.

Below him: fields, river, forest.

EXT. FIELDS / THORN BUSH - MORNING

A HARE darts home, ears twitching, slipping beneath a thorn.

The eagle watches... then looks away.

EAGLE (V.O.)

Not yet.

A flutter of PARTRIDGES.

Ignored.

The eagle turns toward the mountain—

Then—

Something catches his eye.

EXT. SWAMP EDGE - CONTINUOUS

A dark, mottled shape in the damp earth.

THUMBELINA, motionless, breathing softly.

Beside her, curled in sleep—

YOSHI, clutching a TURTLE, her shell dull with rain and sun.

The eagle's gaze sharpens.

EAGLE (V.O.)

My eagle has never tasted such a gift.

With a decisive beat of his wings—

SNAP.

Talons seize the turtle.

SNAP.

Talons seize the turtle.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

The eagle climbs.

Higher.

Higher still.

Then—

He FOLDS his wings.

WHOOSH!

He dives.

EXT. SWAMP EDGE - SAME

A vast SHADOW sweeps across the ground.

Yoshi and Thumbelina RUSH toward danger whenever the OLD PARTRIDGE cries out.

They chase attackers.

They shout.

They distract.

Yoshi drags the wounded hare from death's edge.

The hare pulls free, proud.

No thanks.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

Yoshi faces the partridges and the hare.

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Scatter across the fields!

Every day you remain, more killers come!

ELDEST PARTRIDGE

Then why do you not leave with your walking bowl?

The hare steps forward.

HARE

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EAGLES still clash in the sky, shrieking.

Thumbelina and Yoshi huddle close beneath the rocks' shadow, barely daring to breathe.

At last—

With a final, echoing cry, the eagles break apart and **SOAR AWAY**, wings flashing toward the jagged peaks beyond.

Silence returns.

Yoshi trembles.

YOSHI

(groaning)

What are we to do now? How do we escape this treacherous water?

He peers into the dark, sucking mud.

THUMBELINA

(calm, steady)

Climb upon my back. We'll find firmer ground.

YOSHI

But where? Who guides us here? There's no life—only wind and dead reeds.

The turtle narrows her eyes, staring into the gloom.

TURTLE

Look. Something swims there. See how the water flickers?

Yoshi shivers.

The swamp stretches endlessly—but hope flickers with it.

Something **GLIDES** beneath the surface.

At first—small. Mouse-sized.

Then—

A **SHARP SNOUT** breaks the water. Glittering eyes. Cunning.

Yoshi stiffens, every spine on edge.

The creature rises—

A WATER-RAT.

SLY

(startled)

Ha!

He hops back at the sight of Yoshi's spines—then gathers courage and steps forward.

He shakes water from his sleek fur, revealing a well-kept, gleaming coat.

SLY (CONT'D)

Are you kin to my friend Yellow-Shelly?

The turtle blinks, puzzled.

SLY (CONT'D)

And you—

(to Yoshi)

—you're known to me as well.

YOSHI

We came by chance. I'm Yoshi. We barely escaped an eagle.

SLY

From the eagle?

(smiling thinly)

Strange, but I'll believe it. I'm Sly. A water-rat of these parts.

YOSHI

Cheerful)

Ah! Kin to voles and field-mice! I know them well.

SLY

I know you, too.

(beat)

Not kindly spoken of.

Yoshi shifts.

SLY (CONT'D)

I hear you eat mice.

YOSHI

They're... mischief-makers.

SLY

No need to apologize.

A CLAMOR rises from the reeds—

DUCKS, quarreling loudly.

YOSHI

Do ducks live here?

SLY

Proudly)

Of every kind. March ducks. Stilts. Clever devils—masters at hiding eggs.

He lowers his voice.

SLY (CONT'D)

Still... I do love eggs.

A SOFT, MUSICAL **WHISTLE** cuts the air.

A SHADOW passes overhead.

Sly **SPLASHES UNDERWATER**, vanishing.

A LARGE MARSH BIRD circles, crying mournfully, then strides into the reeds.

Yoshi's voice drops.

YOSHI

Nothing good awaits us.

The sun sinks. Shadows stretch.

They stand stranded as night creeps closer.

Birds pass overhead—some familiar, others strange and long-legged.

THUMBELINA

Let's swim for shore.

YOSHI

Wait. Sly may return.

The water **RIPPLES**.

A SERPENTINE HEAD rises.

Then—

A massive **YELLOW-SPOTTED TURTLE SHELL** emerges.

Thumbelina recoils.

Yoshi steps back.

Beside the turtle—

SLY resurfaces, grinning.

SLY

Your aunt.

AUNT YELLOW-SHELLY

(honeyed, warm)

I've long wished to meet you, sister's daughter.

The two turtles touch snouts gently.

AUNT YELLOW-SHELLY (CONT'D)

And who is this unpleasant little creature?

Yoshi, mud-spattered and miserable, bristles.

Introductions are made.

A tense pause.

AUNT YELLOW-SHELLY

You'll be my guests tonight.

YOSHI

(grim)

Better if you showed us the way out.

Her eyes glimmer.

AUNT YELLOW-SHELLY

Patience. The swamp keeps its secrets.

SLY

It's too late to travel. Stay. Tomorrow, we'll guide you.

The aunt nods.

They move.

Yoshi climbs onto Thumbelina's back. Sly and the turtle glide beside them, laughing softly.

They reach a **DRY HOLLOW**, sheltered.

AUNT YELLOW-SHELLY

I offer no supper. Sly will provide.

Sly returns with hoarded food, laying it out ceremoniously.

Night deepens.

Stars scatter across the water.

From the reeds—

CRYES. SHRIEKS. LAUGHTER. ROARS.

The swamp seems to breathe.

Yoshi stands alert, needles gleaming.

Thumbelina presses close.

They listen.

The voices rise and fall—haunting, alive—

As darkness fully claims the marsh.

FADE OUT.

EPISODE 7. - SLY

FADE IN:

EXT. SWAMP - DAWN

Pale light creeps across a vast, breathing marsh. Reeds whisper. Water glimmers like dark glass.

YOSHI and **THUMBELINA** stand at the water's edge, preparing for the journey. Nearby, their **AUNT** — ancient, calm, immovable — watches them with knowing eyes.

YOSHI

(quiet, uneasy)

Aunt... those cries in the night. What were they?

AUNT

(softly)

Through the reeds you must go. There you shall meet them.

(smiles faintly)

Fear not. They sound far worse than they are.

A ripple cuts across the water.

SLY, the **WATER-RAT**, emerges from the shadows — sharp-eyed, alert, worn by survival.

A SHADOW passes overhead.

Sly **SPLASHES UNDERWATER**, vanishing.

A LARGE MARSH BIRD circles, crying mournfully, then strides into the reeds.

Yoshi's voice drops.

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Night deepens.

YOSHI gasps as TALONS graze him.

He tumbles from THUMBELINA'S shell—

SPLASH!

The water pulls at him.

He claws his way back—

The harrier swoops again.

Another **SPLASH**.

A MOCKING SQUAWK rings out from above.

The REEDS rustle, almost laughing.

YOSHI

(grunting)

Rude bird!

They scramble desperately into the reeds.

The stalks clutch and drag at them, turning every stroke into labor.

SLY is gone.

Only the whispering reeds remain.

EXT. REED HOLLOW – MOMENTS LATER

A quiet basin hidden within the marsh.

Birds everywhere.

Eyes glimmer between stems—curious, wary, unfriendly.

DUCK (O.S.)

Quack! Quack!

DRAKE (O.S.)

Bzzzz! Bzzzz!

Ducks draw closer.

Then more.

Then many more.

YELLOW-SHELLY

(low)

They fear YOSHI. Long have enemies plagued them.

An **OLD DUCK** approaches.

AUNT

Ho there, Lighthead! Come closer. I'll tell you where the fattest snails lie hidden.

LIGHTHEAD

(suspicious)

I do not believe you. And what creature walks beside you?

(points at YOSHI)

AUNT

A friend.

LIGHTHEAD

You speak falsehoods! Your friends are cut from the same cloth as the water-rat!

OTHER DUCKS

(shouting)

That's right! Drown him!

The ducks surge forward.

WINGS BEAT.

WATER ERUPTS.

EXT. OPEN SHALLOWS – CONTINUOUS

The turtles are exposed.

YELLOW-SHELLY turns sharply.

YELLOW-SHELLY

Thumbelina! Back to the reeds!

Too late.

WAVES rise.

SPRAY lashes YOSHI.

THUMBELINA rocks violently.

YOSHI

(panicked)

I don't like this sea!

The quacking becomes a ROARING STORM.

Birds rush in from all sides.

Chaos.

Suddenly—

SLY APPEARS.

The ducks SCATTER instantly, fleeing in outrage and fear.

Silence falls.

EXT. STICK MOUND – LATER

A rough mound of sticks and packed mud near the reeds.

The four companions rest, exhausted, dripping, shaken.

The swamp breathes quietly again.

YOSHI

(softly)

They were very rude.

No one laughs.

They sit in uneasy peace, hearts still racing, as the marsh closes in around them once more.

FADE OUT.

EPISODE 9. - UNPLEASANT ACQUAINTANCE

EXT. MARSHLAND – MIDDAY

A vast **MOUND** rises from the swamp like a sleeping beast.

As the travelers approach, they see it clearly now—

HOLLOW INSIDE.

Small, round **WINDOWS** ring its sides, each **STUFFED WITH STRAW AND REEDS**.

At the rear, a **TIGHT-FITTED WOODEN LID**—a door, crude but deliberate.

The **TURTLES** begin their climb, shells scraping, slipping on slick green growth.

They struggle.

Above them, **SLY** and the **HEDGEHOG**, quicker and lighter, crest the top.

They shake themselves dry.

Droplets scatter, catching sunlight like sparks.

They sit.

Let the warmth soak in.

A moment of stillness.

SLY squints out over the marsh, a crooked smile forming.

SLY

(mocking)

This hut was built by people—for our friends, the wild ducks. From here, the hunters torment them all winter long. Mostly at night.

He rises on his hind legs, licking mud from his fur, shaking himself clean.

SLY (CONT'D)

The wild ones trust the welcome. They land.

Beat.

Then the rifles speak.

The **HEDGEHOG** shifts uneasily.

HEDGEHOG

Why don't they learn? Why do they still trust such scoundrels?

The **RAT** snaps, bristling.

RAT

They're short-minded. All of them. I've tried often enough to show them how foolish they are—but they never trust me. They only rage because I eat their eggs.

YOSHI, quiet until now, looks troubled.

YOSHI

Do they kill many?

SLY

Hundreds. Thousands, even.

(snorts)

Witless folk.

The **AUNT** speaks gently, sorrow in her eyes.

AUNT

No... not witless. People are clever—more cunning than any of us. But oh, how the poor creatures suffer.

She lowers her head.

AUNT (CONT'D)

When the shooting starts, hawks gather over the marsh. They strike the wounded and the whole alike. Feathers everywhere—grim signs of what's been devoured.

Yoshi listens. His expression softens.

Though the ducks once treated him poorly, compassion stirs.

NARRATION (YOSHI'S THOUGHTS)

They have suffered much. And suffering asks for mercy.

EXT. MARSHLAND – LATE AFTERNOON

The sun weakens as the travelers rise and prepare to move on.

Across the water—the **FAR SHORE**, closer now.

SLY scans the winding paths ahead, eyes sharp.

SLY

(grim)

Careful. Beyond this shallows, the water turns dark and deep. A dangerous tribe lives there—clever in swamp and shadow. One wrong step may summon trouble we won't see coming.

The air is heavy with damp earth and reeds.

A ripple disturbs the water—then stillness.

They move forward.

Slowly.

Measured.

Shadow lengthens, gathering like silent watchers.

The travelers press on, swallowed gradually by the deepening marsh.

SLY squints.

They sit.

A moment of stillness.

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SLY

(mocking)

This hut was built by people—for our friends, the wild ducks. From here, the hunters torment them all winter long. Mostly at night.

He rises on his hind legs, licking mud from his fur, shaking himself clean.

SLY (CONT'D)

They crouch inside. Peer through those little windows. To trick the wild ducks, they tether tame ones outside—poor, foolish things. When their wild sisters appear, they call out happily. Never knowing they're bait.

He pauses. Lets it land.

YOSHI

(softly)

They were very rude.

No one laughs.

They sit in uneasy peace, hearts still racing, as the marsh closes in around them once more.

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As the travelers approach, they see it clearly now—

HOLLOW INSIDE.

Small, round **WINDOWS** ring its sides, each **STUFFED WITH STRAW AND REEDS**.

At the rear, a **TIGHT-FITTED WOODEN LID**—a door, crude but deliberate.

The **TURTLES** begin their climb, shells scraping, slipping on slick green growth.

They struggle.

Above them, **SLY** and the **HEDGEHOG**, quicker and lighter, crest the top.

They shake themselves dry.

Droplets scatter, catching sunlight like sparks.

They sit.

Let the warmth soak in.

A moment of stillness.

SLY squints out over the marsh, a crooked smile forming.

SLY

(mocking)

This hut was built by people—for our friends, the wild ducks. From here, the hunters torment them all winter long. Mostly at night.

He rises on his hind legs, licking mud from his fur, shaking himself clean.

SLY (CONT'D)

They crouch inside. Peer through those little windows. To trick the wild ducks, they tether tame ones outside—poor, foolish things. When their wild sisters appear, they call out happily. Never knowing they're bait.

No one laughs.

They sit in uneasy peace, hearts still racing, as the marsh closes in around them once more.

FADE OUT.

EPISODE 10. - A BAD TRIBE

EXT. SHADOWED MARSH – DUSK

Reeds sway in a low wind. Dark water ripples.

Beneath the surface, BIRDS dive—sleek, silent—gliding like knives through glass.

YOSHI

(whispering)

SLY steps forward, bows low.

SLY

Forgive me—oh mighty chief of all herons.
I thought you slept—lost in contemplation of your magnificent beard.

The heron stiffens.

HERON CHIEFTAIN

I contemplate the stars. Not my beard.

I am a stargazer.

SLY

But how do you see the stars in daylight?

HERON CHIEFTAIN

(grave pride)

My sight is not as yours.

I see the night even beneath the sun.

Now speak—where do you go?

The TURTLES inch forward, awe and terror in every step.

The HERON looms—LONG BEAK raised, WHITE FEATHERS hanging like a stained beard. No neck—just mass and arrogance. Eyes closed in disdain.

The WATER-RAT raises a paw. Stop.

SLY

Great stargazer, we beg leave to pass through your kingdom.

HERON CHIEFTAIN

“We?”

Why do you count me among you?

SLY

I am not alone.

There are turtles—no kin of mine.

And YOSHI. A hedgehog.

The heron leans closer.

HERON CHIEFTAIN

A hedgehog?

Let this creature show himself.

YOSHI steps forward, trembling, bows low.

Silence. Wind through reeds.

HERON CHIEFTAIN

Where do you come from?

YOSHI swallows, then speaks—of the EAGLE. Of the fall from the sky.

The heron explodes.

HERON CHIEFTAIN

(roaring)

LIES!

None have ever bested the eagle!

He rules the skies as I rule this marsh!

YOSHI falters.

AUNT (O.S.)

Believe him.

HERON CHIEFTAIN

Who saw this fall?

Speak—or be branded thieves!

SLY leans in, whispering.

SLY

Hold your tongues. Do not contradict him.

SLY bows deeply.

SLY

My lord, we seek only passage.

And—if it pleases you—we bring news. Fortunate news.

The heron's eyes burn.

HERON CHIEFTAIN

What news?

SLY

We found the settlement of the grebes.

Their nests overflow with fish... with eggs...

Some already hatched.

A beat.

The heron SHUDDERS.

In an instant—TRANSFORMATION.

His body stretches LONG AND THIN.

A NECK unfurls like a serpent.

The proud chieftain collapses inward—

Now an OLD, HUNGRY BIRD.

Eyes glint with greed.

HERON (NOW OLD MAN)

Where are these nests?

SLY

(calm, precise)

Here... and here... beyond the reeds.

He speaks carefully—truth braided with lies.

The old heron nods, satisfied.

HERON CHIEFTAIN

You have shared much.

Yet I deny you passage.

Take the long road around.

He straightens—authority restored.

YOSHI opens his mouth.

The WATER-RAT silences him.

The HERON lifts his head—

A PIERCING CRY splits the swamp.

Heron's rise everywhere—

GRAY-BLUE, SNOW-WHITE, FIERY RED—

WINGS beating, circling their leader.

Their cries swell into a terrible chorus.

The HORDE takes flight.

CUT TO:

EXT. GREBE SETTLEMENT – MOMENTS LATER

The sky DARKENS with wings.

GREBES SCREAM, defending nests and chicks.

Chaos.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. SWAMP PATH – CONTINUOUS

Our travelers move on—quiet, steady.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Only then did Sly's cunning reveal itself—

By betraying the grebes, he emptied the swamp of herons...

And took quiet revenge.

The SWAMP HOLDS ITS BREATH.

EXT. NIGHT HERON NESTS – DUSK

Crooked NESTS woven of twigs and sedge.

UGLY NIGHT HERON CHICKS crane their necks, BEAKS OPEN, eyes glinting in twilight.

The sun slips below the horizon.

FADE OUT.

EPISODE 12. - MORE ACQUAINTANCES

FADE IN:

EXT. SWAMP – TWILIGHT

Mist coils above dark water. REEDS whisper.

SLY, the water-rat, stands half-submerged, eyes sharp, voice low.

SLY

(soft, firm)

I will leave you here.

He looks to THUMBELINA and YOSHI. A pause.

SLY (CONT'D)

Without water... without reeds to hide me... I am lost.

Travel well. And—

(ingers)

—forget me not.

He slips back into the willows. Gone.

Thumbelina and Yoshi exchange a glance. Fear settles between them.

YOSHI

(quiet)

How do we cross this place alone?

Beyond them, BLUE MOUNTAINS shimmer on the horizon.

THUMBELINA

We must... somehow.

The SWAMP answers with silence.

EXT. SWAMP PATH – LATER

YELLOW-SHELLY, the turtle aunt, moves carefully ahead.

THUMBELINA

(relieved)

She's coming with us.

Yoshi exhales. Courage flickers back to life.

Small BIRDS burst from the reeds—SNIPES—laughing, sharp and bright.

SNIPES

(laughing)

What fleet-footed companions!

Yoshi bristles and CHARGES.

YELLOW-SHELLY

(calm)

Do not chase them. They are jesters of the air.

The snipes scatter, mocking.

SNIPES

Kiz-kiz-kiz!

Yoshi stops, panting, offended.

EXT. SWAMP CLEARING

WARBLERS clash mid-air—beaks clattering, feathers flared like armor.

EXT. NIGHT HERON NESTS – DUSK

Crooked NESTS woven of twigs and sedge.

UGLY NIGHT HERON CHICKS crane their necks, BEAKS OPEN, eyes glinting in twilight.

The sun slips below the horizon.

FADE OUT.

EPISODE 13. - HOW THUMBELINA GOT LOST

FADE IN:

EXT. LOW FOREST – DUSK

A dense forest crouches under a bruised sky. The last light strains through tangled BOUGHS.

CRACK.

CRACK.

Dead leaves and brittle twigs snap beneath careful feet.

SLY, the water-rat, stands half-submerged, eyes sharp, voice low.

SLY

(soft, firm)

I will leave you here.

He looks to THUMBELINA and YOSHI. A pause.

SLY (CONT'D)

Without water... without reeds to hide me... I am lost.

Travel well. And—

(ingers)

—forget me not.

He slips back into the willows. Gone.

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YOSHI

(quiet)

How do we cross this place alone?

Beyond them, BLUE MOUNTAINS shimmer on the horizon.

THUMBELINA

We must... somehow.

The SWAMP answers with silence.

EXT. SWAMP CLEARING

Storks lift into the sky one by one.

Storks remain—PACE... PACE... HUNTING.

STORK.

(relaxed)

She's coming with us.

Yoshi exhales. Courage flickers back to life.

EXT. FOREST – NIGHT

Thumbelina drags herself onward, swallowed by darkness.

She forges thin thorns.

THUMBELINA

(soft, firm)

I will leave you here.

FADE IN:

EXT. WATERFALL GORGE - DAWN

A pale disk of SUN inches above jagged rocks. Mist hangs in the air like breath held too long.

On a flat stone near the pool lies THUMBELINA, small, weary, watching the light arrive.

A SHADOW cuts across her.

A GRAY-BLACK BIRD flashes past—swift, silent—then without hesitation—

PLUNGES STRAIGHT INTO THE WATERFALL.

Thumbelina GASPS.

THUMBELINA

(crying out)

No—!

The bird vanishes into the thundering veil. Water crashes. Foam churns.

Thumbelina stares, frozen.

Beside her, the **TURTLE** lowers her head.

TURTLE

(soft, mournful)

She must have drowned.

Thumbelina's heart sinks.

Then—

The WATER STIRS.

From behind the waterfall, the BIRD BURSTS FORTH, shooting out as if from a secret doorway in the rock.

Thumbelina's eyes widen.

THUMBELINA

Didn't she drown?

The bird lands on a smooth stone by the pond. She shakes once—alert, bright-eyed. Her breast is white as foam; her feathers dark, sleek, alive.

BIRD

(confused, cheerful)

What are you saying?

A slight tremor runs through her as she balances on the cold stone.

TURTLE

I feared you had been swept away. My heart was sorely troubled.

The bird lets out a MELODIOUS CHIRRUP, like water laughing over pebbles.

BIRD

Behind the waterfall lies my nest.

(smiling)

Hidden well. My little ones are safe there.

Thumbelina leans forward.

THUMBELINA

And your name?

The bird tilts her head.

BIRD

Do you not know me? I am companion to the water-blackbird—SNOOZE.

(beat)

He flew downstream. He may return at any moment.

But you—how did you come here?

CUT TO:

EXT. POND - CONTINUOUS

Thumbelina tells her story. As she speaks, the forest seems to listen.

The bird nods knowingly.

BIRD

The fox? I know her well.

Only days ago she came here—carrying a rag.

FLASHBACK - THE FOX

A RUSSET FOX slips into the pond, sleeve clenched in her jaws. Water rises around her. Slowly. Deliberately.

Only her MUZZLE remains above water.

She releases the rag—then LEAPS out, shakes herself violently, mutters, and disappears into the trees.

The rag floats.

The bird approaches, peers closer—

FLEAS. Dozens. Swarming.

BACK TO SCENE

BIRD

She drove the fleas down her sleeve, gave them refuge—then abandoned them.

(shakes her head)

A cunning fox, through and through.

Thumbelina trembles.

THUMBELINA

She treated me cruelly. I don't know how to escape this place.

The bird's voice is calm, steady.

BIRD

First, you must find your friend.

As for the path—I can guide you.

Wait for my husband.

A SHADOW SKIMS THE WATER.

SNOOZE arrives—sleek, quick—holding a BLACK STAG BEETLE in his beak.

BIRD

(delighted)

A stag beetle!

Snooze vanishes briefly behind the falls, then returns—agitated, wings quivering.

SNOOZE

The wild boars are coming. The whole family.

They're muddy the stream, digging everything up.

He notices Thumbelina.

SNOOZE (CONT'D)

(startled, polite)

Good morning. Forgive me—I didn't see you.

What brings you here?

The Turtle explains.

Silence settles thickly.

SNOOZE

You must hide.

If the boars find you, they may tear you apart.

Thumbelina nods, frightened.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREAM BANK - MOMENTS LATER

Thumbelina slips beneath a GREAT STONE.

From her hiding place she watches—

WILD BOARS tear at the banks. Snouts churn mud. Roots snap. Snails crack.

The LARGEST BOAR looms—mud-caked, tusks curved like sabers, eyes sharp and unsettling.

Piglets scramble beside their mother.

The forest holds its breath.

At last, the boars retreat into the thickets.

Silence returns.

Thumbelina emerges.

Snooze and his COMPANION gather around her.

MONTAGE - JOURNEY DOWNSTREAM

—Thumbelina swims, carried by the current.

—The birds glide overhead.

—They FOLD THEIR WINGS and DIVE.

Underwater, they WALK along the pebbled streambed, feeding on worms and insects.

They burst out again, flutter, dive—playful, effortless.

END MONTAGE

EXT. MEADOW PATH - DAY

The stream widens. The banks soften.

Snooze gestures to a winding path.

SNOOZE

This will lead you back—to the meadow where you met the fox.

The birds bow.

BIRD

Safe journey.

They part.

EXT. HILLSIDE - LATER

Thumbelina is alone.

She pauses. Listens. Then climbs.

Step. Rest. Step again.

The SUN beats down. Her shell feels heavier with every breath.

Exhaustion overtakes her.

She thinks of YOSHI. Tears fall—then fade.

Thumbelina crawls beneath a LOW-BRANCHED BUSH, into cool shadow.

She settles.

Her eyes close.

FADE OUT.

EPISODE .15. - WITH THE SQUIRRELS

FADE IN:

EXT. ANCIENT FOREST - DAWN

A pale ribbon of light slips through the trees.

YOSHI, a small hedgehog with sharp snout and bead-black eyes, stirs among the roots.

He SNIFFS the cold air. His stomach GURGLES softly.

YOSHI (V.O.)

Surely Thumbelina had a fine meal last night.

He looks around. No sign of a tortoise shell. Only roots. Shadows.

YOSHI

Thumbelina?

The forest answers with a LOW MURMUR.

A HARE hops between the trunks, pausing, ears twitching. Yoshi opens his mouth—

A distant SOUND. The hare STARTLES and vanishes into gloom.

Yoshi freezes.

A realization settles in, cold and absolute.

YOSHI (V.O.)

She is lost.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - LATER

Yoshi skirts the edge, avoiding the open center, and slips back into the trees.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - DAY

Towering OAKS loom like ancient wardens. Pale BEECHES catch thin light.

A MOUSE sleeps among roots.

FLASHI—Yoshi catches it. Eats. Moves on.

YOSHI (V.O.)

She could not have gone far. She rests often. She is slow.

Hope flickers.

A RUSTLE.

EXT. OAK GROVE - CONTINUOUS

EXT. SQUIRREL—bursts into view, tail blazing like autumn fire. A HAZELNUT clenched in her teeth.

She stops. Sits. CRACK—nut split cleanly. She eats.

Yoshi holds still, holding his breath.

Suddenly—

She starts. HAZELNUT.

SQUEAKY-HAZEL

peer from branches.

Yoshi chases her away! You'll steal our hazelnuts!

YOSHI

I don't eat hazelnuts.

SQUEAKY-HAZEL

Can you climb trees?

YOSHI

Yoshi opens his mouth—

YOSHI (V.O.)

She is lost.

EXT. GREAT OAK - NIGHT

Yoshi is alone.

She skirts the edge, avoiding the open center, and slips back into the trees.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - DAY

A massive oak riddled with small ROUND DOORWAYS.

UNCLE FUZZBALL (O.S.)

Through the hollows, a mouse-hunters like me.

YOSHI

She sniffs—then steadies herself.

UNCLE FUZZBALL

Through the hollows, a mouse-hunters like me.

YOSHI (V.O.)

CUT TO:

HIGH IN THE CANOPY — SAME MOMENT

The MARTEN lingers above — watching the OAK.

Silent. Patient.

She slips from branch to branch — never touching the ground.

CUT TO:

A SHRIEK, PITIFUL SCREAM SHATTERS THE NIGHT.

Chaos erupts in the oak above.

SQUIRRELS — black shapes — LEAP and SCATTER into darkness.

Yoshi GRUNTS, STAMPS the ground.

YOSHI

(shouting) Go! Go!

But the branches hide everything.

Then —

UNCLE FUZZBALL (O.S.)

(frantic cry)

The sound pierces Yoshi's heart.

YOSHI (V.O.)

I should have warned him.

The forest seems to LEAN IN.

A SHADOW descends — immense.

The GREAT EAGLE OWL swoops, FIERY EYES blazing.

With a hoarse cry, it vanishes upward — perching atop the oak.

Another SCREAM echoes.

Something DROPS near the roots.

Yoshi lunges forward —

Two GLOWING EYES stare back — a SQUIRREL.

In a blink, it melts into the forest.

Silence.

Leaves whisper.

Far off — wings. A fading cry.

The forest exhales.

YOSHI (V.O.)

Too late.

Guilt crashes over him.

Yoshi turns and RUNS — blindly — into the dark.

YOSHI

(gasping, broken) How long will I stay so foolish? So trusting?

Branches whip past.

YOSHI

How can I face them now? Uncle Fuzzball...

He stumbles toward a HOLLOW OAK — its mouth like a cave.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLLOW OAK — NIGHT

Dark. Suffocating.

Yoshi rushes inside.

A HOARSE CRY erupts —

Something STRIKES his nose.

Yoshi recoils.

Then —

He sees him.

UNCLE FUZZBALL — battered, bleeding, eyes fierce with life.

The old squirrel breathes heavily.

UNCLE FUZZBALL

(weak, resolute) You're late... but not too late.

Yoshi freezes — shame and relief colliding.

FADE OUT.

EPISODE .17. - THE DEAD OF UNCLE FUZZBALL

FADE IN:

EXT. ANCIENT FOREST — DAY

Sunlight filters through towering OAKS and BEECHES.

YOUNG SQUIRRELS tumble and chatter high in the branches.

A SHADOW FLASHES.

A MARTEN springs onto the ancient oak.

Chaos erupts above.

UNDER THE ROOTS — CONTINUOUS

UNCLE FUZZBALL, an OLD SQUIRREL, gray-furred and weathered, freezes mid-dig.

His claws rest in the MOSSY EARTH beneath the twisted roots of a FALLEN BEECH.

He listens. Knows.

UNCLE FUZZBALL

(quiet, resolute)

Winter will be long.

He resumes digging — careful, deliberate — hollowing a SECRET STOREHOUSE beneath a slab of gnarled wood.

MONTAGE — THE FOREST'S GENEROSITY

— Hazelnuts scattered thick on the ground

— Beech acorns carpeting the forest floor

— A distant WALNUT TREE, heavy with fruit

— Uncle Fuzzball caching each nut beneath roots and earth

Each movement is a small victory.

END MONTAGE

EXT. FOREST — LATER

A SHARP CRY — a LITTLE SQUIRREL screams.

Uncle Fuzzball bolts upright.

EXT. ANCIENT OAK — MOMENTS LATER

Uncle Fuzzball launches himself at the MARTEN.

Teeth bared. A fearless charge.

The marten recoils — then turns savage.

With a SNARL, she sinks her FANGS into Uncle Fuzzball's neck.

He collapses.

Leaves rustle. The forest holds its breath.

An OWL swoops suddenly from the darkness.

The marten flees.

But the owl's talons seize the SMALL SQUIRREL —

and carry it screaming into the deeper forest.

Silence.

INT. HOLLOW OAK — NIGHT

Uncle Fuzzball drags himself inside.

Blood darkens his fur. His breath trembles.

YOSHI, a young HEDGEHOG, appears beside him.

Uncle Fuzzball's eyes focus. He calms.

UNCLE FUZZBALL

(weak)

Go... call them to me.

Bring Squeaky-Hazel. The eldest ones.

Yoshi hesitates — then nods and runs.

EXT. GREAT OAK — NIGHT

The FULL MOON bathes the tree in silver.

SQUIRRELS cling to the trunk — silent, bowed, unmoving.

Yoshi steps forward.

YOSHI

Uncle Fuzzball... is wounded.

He calls for you.

Instantly — motion explodes.

The squirrels leap down in a flurry of tails and whispers.

INT. HOLLOW OAK — NIGHT

SQUEAKY-HAZZEL and THREE ELDER SQUIRRELS kneel close to Uncle Fuzzball.

Yoshi stands at the entrance, still as stone.

UNCLE FUZZBALL

(quiet)

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Yoshi stands at the entrance, still as stone.

UNCLE FUZZBALL

(quiet)

Go... call them to me.

MRAM disappears into the forest, guided by nothing but instinct, hunger, and the old wild laws.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. ANCIENT FOREST – DUSK

A forest unsettled.
Branches quiver. Wings beat in distant uproar.
WHISPERS ripple through leaf and bramble.

YOSHI, a small hedgehog, pauses in the shadows, listening.

YOSHI (V.O.)

The owl was dead. I knew it the moment the forest breathed wrong.
He peers toward the distant clamor—then retreats.

YOSHI (V.O.)

Curiosity bites hard. But prudence bites harder.
He slips deeper into the wood.

EXT. FOREST PATH – CONTINUOUS

Twigs snap softly beneath Yoshi's feet.

A FOUL ODOR drifts in.

Yoshi stops. Sniffs.

YOSHI

(low)

Mram.

He turns sharply off the path.

EXT. HORNBEAM TREE – MOMENTS LATER

A fallen branch lies beside a massive trunk.

Yoshi freezes.

On the branch—

A CREATURE, perfectly still. Gray. Ash-colored. Almost part of the wood itself.

A single BLACK EYE opens.

Yoshi recoils.

YOSHI

Hallo there...

What are you—creature... or wandering branch?

The creature CROONS, low and vibrating.

NIGHTINGALE

M-r-r... You have noticed me at last.

I am the Night Swallow.

The Night Swallow.

Yoshi squints.

YOSHI

Nightingale!

So it's true!

He beams, almost glowing.

The bird does not move.

NIGHTINGALE

Uncle Fuzzball is already dead, isn't he?

And the owl—punished by the birds?

Yoshi stiffens.

YOSHI

How could you know?

NIGHTINGALE

I know all that happens here.

By day I hide.

By night—I listen.

A beat.

NIGHTINGALE

The forest speaks freely when it thinks itself alone.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING – LATER

Yoshi steps closer.

YOSHI

I search for my friend.

Have you seen her?

The Nightingale SNORTS softly, amused.

NIGHTINGALE

I have seen a turtle.

Yoshi brightens.

YOSHI

Thumelina!

NIGHTINGALE

Perhaps.

I left her by the stream before dawn.

She seemed content to roll and idle... forever.

YOSHI

Please—take me to her.

The bird ruffles her feathers.

NIGHTINGALE

Not before night deepens.

The sun troubles me.

EXT. FOREST CANOPY – NIGHT FALLING

CROWS return to roost.

JAYS flit past, gossiping sharply.

JAY #1

If I find Mram, I'll lead the hunters straight to her.

JAY #2

Hunters don't hear us well.

Better to follow her. She leaves scraps.

They vanish into the dark.

A FOX emerges, sniffing.

NIGHTINGALE (O.S.)

Too late.

A crow might have paid dearly.

The fox disappears.

YOSHI

Everyone hates everyone.

NIGHTINGALE

Not the gentle folk.

They warn each other.

They survive together.

A pause.

YOSHI

Why do they hate the owl so?

NIGHTINGALE

Old blood.

He hunted while they slept.

Silence settles.

EXT. FOREST DEPTHS – NIGHT

The moon rises.

YOSHI

You fly.

I walk.

NIGHTINGALE

Then walk where the shadows lead.

She LIFTS—soundless—into the canopy.

EXT. DEEP FOREST – CONTINUOUS

Yoshi trudges on.

A RABBIT bolts.

A MOUSE-HOLE gapes between roots.

Moonlight fractures through leaves.

An OWL drops silently, studies Yoshi, then drifts away.

Suddenly—

A PIERCING SCREAM overhead.

Two BLACK SHAPES clash against the moon.

Yoshi dives into a bush.

NIGHTINGALE (O.S.)

Mur, mur.

Are you frightened?

She lands beside him.

NIGHTINGALE

Night-kites.

Two sisters.

Only one will fly by dawn.

Yoshi swallows.

YOSHI

The world is cruel everywhere.

NIGHTINGALE

Then one must work.

And sometimes—fight.

She lifts again.

NIGHTINGALE

Keep the moon before you.

EXT. WATERFALL RIDGE – LATE NIGHT

The ROAR of water.

Mist cools the air.

Yoshi's heart races.

YOSHI (V.O.)

Thumelina... please be here.

They search among thornbushes.

Nothing.

Yoshi calls out.

Only echoes answer.

The Nightingale lands beside him.

NIGHTINGALE

She is not here.

Yoshi sinks down, defeated.

The bird places a wing gently on him.

NIGHTINGALE

Do not despair.

I will ask the night-watchers—

Owls, bats, wanderers of shadow.

She lifts into the darkness.

NIGHTINGALE (O.S.)

Wait... we first.

At dawn—I will return.

(as they fly) ...he takes me.

Yoshi remains alone beneath the moon.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST – NIGHT

Moonlight threads through twisted branches.

The forest breathes soft, watchful.

YOSHI, a small hedgehog, slips into the shadows, careful and quiet.

His stomach GROWLS.

Yoshi again, Always hungry.

He noses through stones and briars.

A PAUSE.

YOSHI

I search for my friend.

Have you seen her?

The Nightingale SNORTS softly, amused.

NIGHTINGALE

I have seen a turtle.

Yoshi brightens.

YOSHI

Thumelina!

NIGHTINGALE

Old blood.

He hunted while they slept.

Silence settles.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING – NIGHT

The moon rises.

YOSHI

You fly.

I walk.

NIGHTINGALE

Then walk where the shadows lead.

She LIFTS—soundless—into the canopy.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREAM BANK – NIGHT

Crow water rushes over stones.

Yoshi walks along the bank.

He stops at an ANTHILL. Listens.

A faint SQUEAK.

Yoshi flattens beside a thorny shrub.

EXT. RAVINE SLOPE – NIGHT

They emerge and part ways.

Yoshi heads toward the forest.

The weasel slips into the underbrush.

WEASEL (V.O.)

If not partridge, then chicken.

Old ones, sleeping in plum trees.

Yoshi pauses, listening.

The night swallows the weasel completely.

Yoshi stands alone.

Ears twitching.

The forest waits.

FADE OUT.

EPISODE 22. - YOSHI FINDS THUMBELINA

FADE IN:

EXT. DEEP FOREST – PRE-DAWN

A pale shimmer of dawn seeps through a tangled canopy. Shadows writh between roots and thorns.

A SMALL HEDGEHOG, YOSHI, mud-streaked and weary, pushes forward.

Thunder MUTTERS far away.

The MOON vanishes behind swollen clouds.

RABBITS burst through the underbrush, panicked, vanishing into burrows.

Yoshi stumbles on.

EXT. OLD TREE – CONTINUOUS

The familiar, ancient tree looms.

Perched on a branch: a SMALL OWL. Still. Severe. Yellow eyes blinking—amber slits.

The owl RUSTLES her feathers.

OWL

(irritated)

About time! I have waited far too long. The Nightingale sent me. Your friend has been found—she needs your help.

Yoshi's eyes widen.

YOSHI

Then take me to her at once!

The owl tilts her head.

OWL

Dawn approaches. Rain follows. Keep pace—if you can.

Without waiting, she LAUNCHES into the dim air.

EXT. FOREST – RUNNING

Yoshi RUNS. Trips. Rolls. Scrambles up again.

Branches whip past.

Above—two YELLOW EYES appear, watching, waiting.

OWL (O.S.)

Hurry, hurry! Morning is upon us!

A flash of pale light through the trees.

EXT. FOREST EDGE – MOMENTS LATER

The owl perches on a leaning tree at the forest's edge.

She BOBS her head once.

Yoshi reaches the tree, panting—

—and FREEZES.

REVEAL: THUMBELINA

A SMALL TURTLE, overturned on her shell. Legs stiff in the air. Padding weakly at nothing.

THUMBELINA

(groaning)

Is that you? Or will you stand while I stand like this another two days?

Yoshi snaps into motion. He nudges her shell, then—overcome—LEAPS with sudden joy.

YOSHI

I feared you lost! Through every hollow I searched—yet here you are. Alive!

Thumbelina exhales bitterly.

THUMBELINA

A feather compared to my suffering. A she-wolf crushed me, near cracked my shell. When she left—over I went. One day. One night. I cried for you.

Yoshi lowers his head.

YOSHI

Thank the owl... she guided me.

A MOCKING TRILL floats from above.

NIGHTINGALE (O.S.)

Murm, murm...

The NIGHTINGALE flits among shadowed branches.

NIGHTINGALE

Do not forget your friends. Without me, you would never have found her.

YOSHI

Forgive me. I thank you—most of all.

The wind RISES. Leaves WHISPER. Branches CREAK.

NIGHTINGALE

Hurry. A storm is coming.

She vanishes into the gloom.

EXT. FOREST – STORM BEGINS

Rain falls—slow, heavy drops.

Then MORE. Louder. Faster.

Yoshi and Thumbelina move together, unsteady but united.

They pass a dark, torn place—what remains of the owl's fate.

Lightning FLICKERS.

Thunder GROWLS.

EXT. NARROW PATH – CONTINUOUS

They reach a strangely clean trail.

No hesitation.

They follow it.

EXT. EMBANKMENT – MOMENTS LATER

A well-trodden rise of earth.

At its base: a LARGE, DARK HOLE.

The sky OPENS.

Rain POURS like an overturned bucket.

Yoshi and Thumbelina exchange a look—

—and hurry forward.

INT. DARK HOLE – CONTINUOUS

They disappear into the waiting darkness.

CUT TO BLACK.

END SCENE

EPISODE 23. - THE LONELY DWELLER

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST DEN – DAY – RAINING

Cold rain slants through a dense forest. Branches thrash. Water drums on leaves.

INT. BADGER'S DEN – CONTINUOUS

Warm. Still. Immaculate.

The soil at the entrance is smooth and soft, not a hair, leaf, or cobweb out of place—recently swept, lovingly kept.

THUMBELINA

(whispering, uneasy)

Doesn't the fox dwell here?

YOSHI

(low, sniffing)

I know her scent. She is messy. Neglectful.

(pauses)

This place could never be hers.

He lifts his muzzle, searching the air. Whatever smell lingers is thin... unfamiliar... old.

YOSHI (CONT'D)

Come. We stay until the rain passes. Quietly.

(then, sharper)

And remember—we've lost two whole days already to your wandering.

Thumbelina nods—but cannot help herself. She begins to speak, softly weaving a story. Yoshi listens despite himself, drawn along.

SFX:

A distant, heavy THUMP... THUMP...

They freeze.

Another step. Closer.

From the darkness beyond the entrance, a PALE SHAPE looms. Two SMALL, BURNING EYES glow like buried coals.

A LOW, GRINDING GRUNT rolls forward.

BADGER (O.S.)

Out.

The BADGER emerges—huge, squat, powerful.

Dog-like. Boar-like. Bear-like.

Grey bristles. Long black claws. White bars slashed across his cheeks.

Yoshi bristles—THORNS SNAP OUT.

Thumbelina VANISHES into her thimble with a soft rustle.

BADGER

Get out, you scoundrels!

He SHOVES.

CUT TO:

EXT. EMBANKMENT – CONTINUOUS

Yoshi and Thumbelina tumble end over end down the steep slope—

—landing in a muddy heap.

EXT. LINDEN TREE ROOTS – MOMENTS LATER

Sudden. Bruised. Mortified.

They crouch beneath the twisted roots of an old linden tree, silent, avoiding each other's eyes.

Then—

SFX:

A THIN, CHIMING GIGGLE from above.

CUCKOO (O.S.)

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

YOSHI

(irritated, calling out)

Who mocks us from up there?

CUCKOO (O.S.)

Koo, koo, koo, koo!

The old hermit tossed you out beautifully!

A branch rustles. The CUCKOO flutters into view, bright-eyed, dripping rain.

Yoshi and Thumbelina exchange a look.

THUMBELINA

The Cuckoo...

YOSHI

(controlled)

Who was that creature? What is his name?

CUCKOO

Only a fool would ask!

He laughs, delighted with herself.

An old bachelor. Sour as windex stone. Keeps no company. Wants none.

She laughs, delighted with herself.

She laughs, delighted with herself.

CUCKOO (CONT'D)

Now he's got the girl, now he's got the girl...

Now he's got the girl, now he's got the girl...

Now he's got the girl, now he's got the girl...

Now he's got the girl, now he's got the girl...

Now he's got the girl, now he's got the girl...

Now he's got the girl, now he's got the girl...

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Now he's got the girl, now he's got the girl...

Now he's got the girl, now he's got the girl...

Now he's got the girl, now he's got the girl...

Now he

(to Yoshi)
Take the narrow trail down to the saddle of the ridge. Cross there.
Beyond is a bare slope—easy descent.
But beware the Wild Cat.
Yoshi nods solemnly.

YOSHI
How will we know your kin?

The DOE smiles faintly.

DOE
You'll feel them before you see them.
Great stags. Vast crowns of horn.
The females—like me. They are called hinds.

The STAG shakes his head.

STAG

They are proud. They will not greet you.

A beat.

Farewells are exchanged.

EXT. MOUNTAIN INSIDE FOREST - EVENING

The companions climb higher.
The forest thins. The trees grow ancient, forgotten.

Yoshi and Thumbleina seem impossibly small.

A JAY SCREECHES, flinging pinecones.

A WOOD PIGEON coos deeply from a beech tree.

YOSHI

(pointing)
Do you know him?

A HEDGEHOG peers up.

HEDGEHOG

A Wood Pigeon. We shared grain once.

A SHRIKIL CRY slices the air.

A massive BLACK WOODPECKER flies past—black as night, red-crowned like a burning ember.

Soon they are surrounded by a MOVING HOST OF BIRDS—long-tailed tits, kinglets, woodpeckers.

At their head: a confident SPOTTED WOODPECKER.

He HAMMERS at rotten trunks. Larvae spill free.

The smaller birds swarm joyfully.

The forest feels alive again.

SPOTTED WOODPECKER

(proud)
That black fellow with the red crown—my kin.
There's another too. Rusty. His voice hisses.

The birds whirl away, leaving silence behind.

EXT. HIGH MOUNTAIN CLEARING - DUSK

Fog coils between stunted trees.

Granite shoulders break through the earth.

Above, EAGLES circle in and out of cloud.

The ground is rough. Briars clutch at them.

Then—

BLUEBERRIES.

Thumbleina and Yoshi eat greedily, revived.

Thumbleina curls into a small hollow among stones.

Yoshi lies beside her.

EXT. MOUNTAIN INSIDE - NIGHT

Cold. Damp. Ancient.

The forest SIGHS endlessly.

Streams ROAR far below.

Wind races through treetops like a restless spirit.

Yoshi stares into the dark, burdened.

The mountain looms—vast, indifferent.

He curls into a tight ball.

Finally—

Sleep takes him.

FADE OUT.

EPISODE 25. - DEERS

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT (NEAR MIDNIGHT)

A faint NUDGE.

YOSHI, a small HEDGEHOG, stirs from troubled sleep.

He opens his eyes.

Before him stands THUMBLEINA, an OLD TORTOISE. Her shell TREMBLES. Fear shadows her dark gaze.

YOSHI

(hoarse, half-asleep)
What stirs you so?

THUMBLEINA

(whispering)
Listen—oh, listen. A great peril walks abroad.

Yoshi pricks his ears. Silence.

YOSHI

I hear nothing.

THUMBLEINA

Wait. He will call.

A DULL ROAR rolls in from the hills.

ROAR (O.S.)

Beeh... bee-ee-eh!

The sound BOOMS like thunder beneath the earth, echoes ricocheting through ravines.

Another ROAR answers from afar.

The GROUND SHUDDERS. Heavy FOOTFALLS. LABORED BREATH like wind through stone.

Yoshi and Thumbleina freeze.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAWN

Pale light bleeds into the sky.

Through mist and shadow, TWO GREAT STAGS emerge—broad-shouldered, crowned with massive ANTLERS.

They CHARGE.

ANTLER MEETS ANTLER — a CRACK like splintering wood.

They LOCK, PUSH, DIGGING HOOVES into the earth. Clods of moss and soil fly.

Silence grips the forest. No birds. No wind.

A sudden, PIERCING BELLOW of pain.

One STAG falters—drops to its knees.

The other REARS, towering—

Then CRASHES DOWN.

ANTLERS STRIKE TRUE.

The fallen stag SHUDDERS... STILL.

The victor ROARS, triumphant, then turns and vanishes into the trees, hinds following.

The forest exhales.

EXT. CLEARING - MOMENTS LATER

Yoshi and Thumbleina creep forward.

The FALLEN STAG still BREATHES—ragged, bloody foam at his mouth. His eyes are dim.

Yoshi lowers his head.

YOSHI

(soft)

We cannot help him.

A distant sound. Danger.

They turn away, heavy with sorrow.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SLOPES - DAY

Barren stone. Wind-swept grass. GRANITE BOULDERS like relics of giants.

Thumbleina STRUGGLES, scraping over rock.

A low MURMUR beneath the ground—running water.

Yoshi stops.

On a distant ridge, a GREY SHAPE moves with sure-footed grace.

A WILD GOAT approaches, flanked by TWO KIDS.

Sharp eyes. Pale muzzle. Hooked horns.

She studies them.

Steps closer. Sniffs Thumbleina.

YOSHI

Are you a goat escaped from the herd?

WILD GOAT

(calm, proud)

I am the Wild Goat. And these are my children.

Yoshi stares, awed.

YOSHI

What do you graze upon, here among the rocks?

WILD GOAT

(smiling)

Sweet grasses hide where only the lightest hoof may tread.

Here, I am as free as the wind.

She studies Yoshi.

WILD GOAT (CONT'D)

And you?

YOSHI

I am Yoshi. An eagle carried us far from home.

The goat's expression darkens.

WILD GOAT

The Eagle is an ancient enemy.

She gestures upward.

High on a ledge—A HERD OF GOATS. A GREAT CHIEFTAIN stands watch.

A SHRIEK WHISTLE cuts the air.

The herd STIRS.

The Wild Goat stiffens.

WILD GOAT (CONT'D)

The bear comes. She means no harm—to us.

Yoshi and Thumbleina TREMBLE.

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EXT. FOREST EDGE - NIGHT

They reach the lower slope.

Exhausted, they shelter beneath outlying trees.

Yoshi and Thumbleina struggle but are never abandoned.

At last, PINE WOODS.

They REST.

The goats turn back.

ANTLERS STRIKE TRUE.

The fallen stag SHUDDERS... STILL.

Wings rustle.
Stories flow.
The fire grows brighter.
Fame spreads like wind through wheat.

EXT. MEADOWLANDS – TWO WEEKS LATER

A COLD WIND slips south.
Rain falls—soft, then steady.
Fields turn brown under the plough.
Leaves fall in hurried drops.
SONGBIRDS rise and wheel away, fleeing south.

EXT. SLOUGH – MORNING

Yoshi and Thumbelina move slowly now.
Sleepy.
Quiet.
The air tastes of coming frost.
They stop.
They *know*.

EXT. BURROW SITE – DAY

With gentle, practiced care, they dig.
Earth yields.
A small, snug BURROW takes shape.
They curl together inside.

INT. BURROW – CONTINUOUS

Darkness.
Warmth.
The world fades.
Sleep claims them.

EXT. FIELD – SPRING (FUTURE)

Snow melts into rivulets.
Sunlight—golden, triumphant—warms the soil.
Beneath the earth, something stirs.
FADE OUT.

THE END