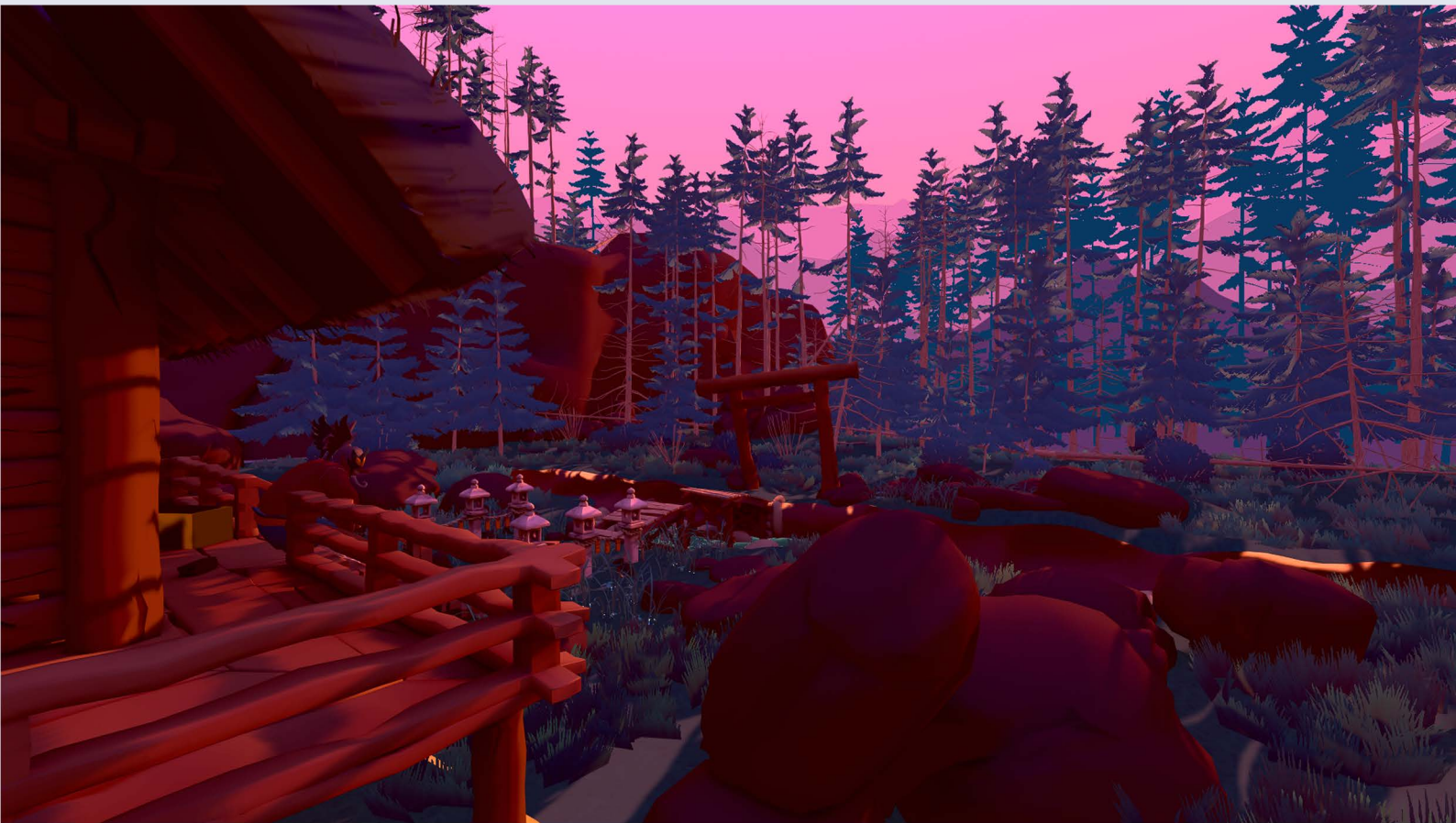


# Design Document for **Tales from the Rift**

A Japanese folklore inspired third person adventure game



Kamal Shaddad

## Overview

**Tales from the Rift** (ToR) is a third-person adventure game for Desktop PC and consoles. Players assume the role of **Kaida, a tiny explorer** in a massive and dangerous world. Her friend **Hitoshi** was kidnapped by a **giant Dai-Tengu** and will soon be eaten.

Based upon **Japanese folklore**, players must clamber over plants and stones. Navigate the deep waters of a river and **sneak amongst the groaning eves** of the Dai-Tengu's shrine, all to save Hitoshi. ToR is a **vertical slice** of a much larger story, with the aim to have an average playtime of around 15minutes.



## Genres & Keywords

Action-Adventure    Japanese Folklore    Single Player    Casual  
3D Platformer    Fantasy    Stealth    Atmospheric  
Small    Beautiful    Puzzle    Stylized  
Exploration    Exciting    Indie    Curious

## Similar Games & Films

Okami    RIME    Uncharted: The Lost Legacy  
Tomb Raider    Little Nightmares    Shadow of the Colossus  
Ico    AER: Memories of Old    TLoZ: Breath of the Wild  
Epic    Brave    FernGully: The Last Rainforest  
The Borrowers    Spirited Away    The Tale of Princess Kaguya  
A Bug's Life    Antz    The Rescuers: Down Under

## Target Audience

Ages

10+

Family friendly



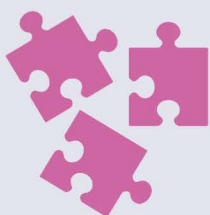
Fantasy fans



Anime fans



Platformer fans



Puzzle fans



Japanese Culture fans



Short free time



Curious / Inquisitive players




## Storyline

With this game being a vertical slice of a greater story, it starts in the prologue so as to keep descriptions and world building to a minimum. Players will then be able to **experience the world and its lore and the same pace as the characters.**

The story is set in the mysterious land known as **Chisana Sekai**, deep in in one of its forests. Beneath the canopy, hidden amidst the flowers and grasses of the woods, is a **small village housing the Koro-pok-guru**. A small folk who stands at **4 inches tall**. They live in simple harmony with the undergrowth of the forest, avoiding predators like mice and birds, whilst hunting bugs and farming fungi. All is well until one day a young frail bookish boy by the name of **Hitoshi** suddenly goes missing.

For nights past, Hitoshi would complain of **dark, tormenting dreams**. Of a being calling out to him, **luring** him away. The elders, believe that Hitoshi simply fled into the woods, **too afraid** of this 'fake threat'. **Kaida** a young and headstrong woman and Hitoshi's best friend knows better. Believing that something **fowl has befallen** her friend, she strives out into the undergrowth, **tracking and searching** before discovering a **giant footprint** in the earth. Following them, she reaches a clearing with a large run-down looking **shrine**.

Catching a glimpse of some giant around the back of the shrine, Kaida knows she has to be **careful, avoid its gaze and find Hitoshi** before it is too late.





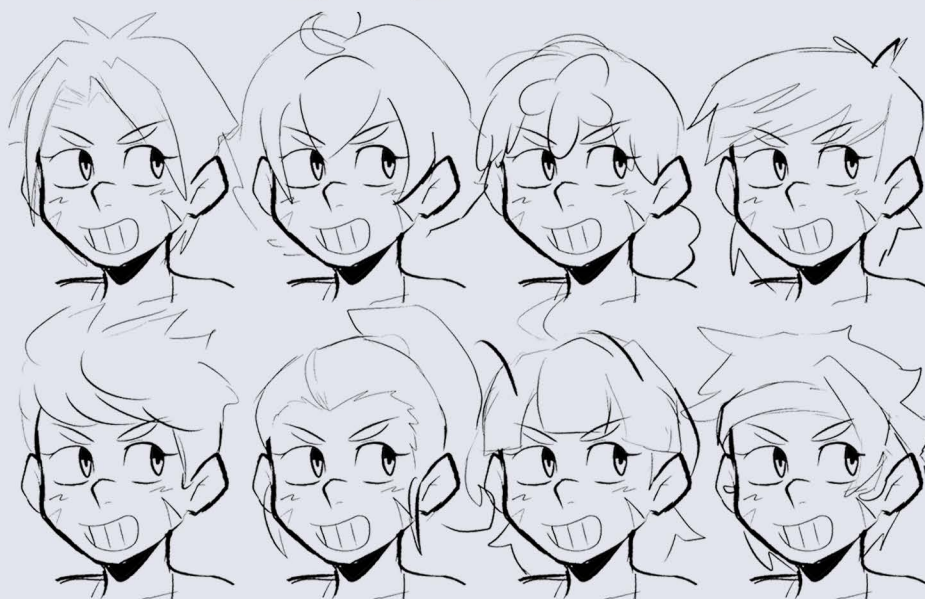
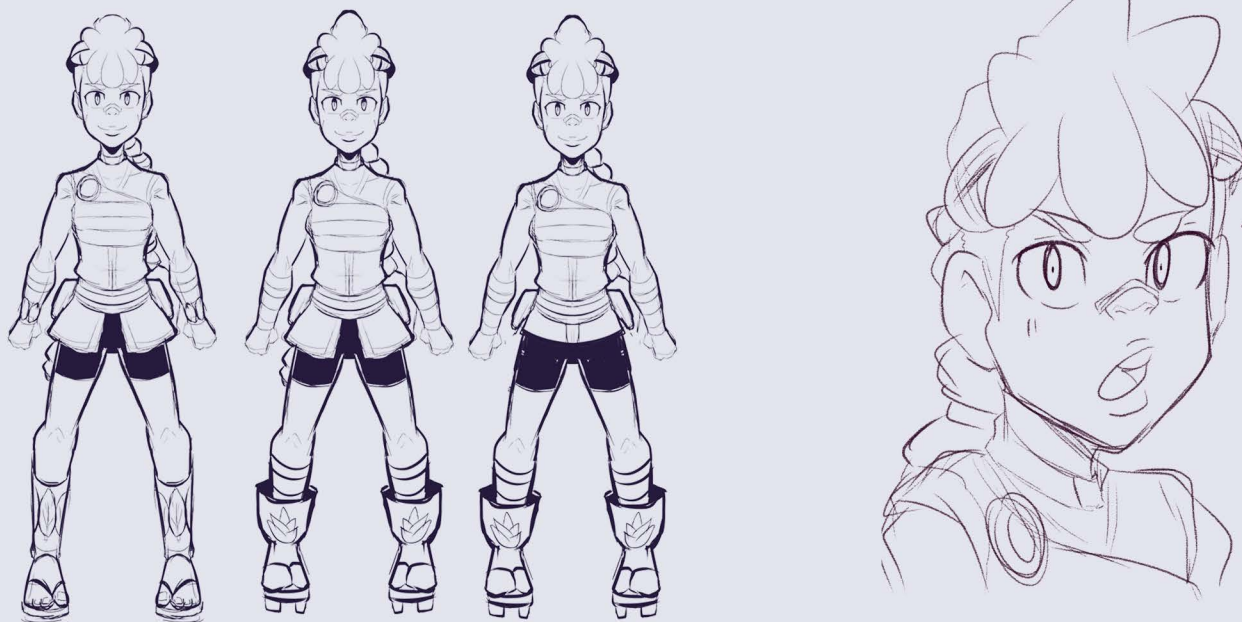
## Characters

# Kaida

**Main and only** playable character. 20 year old, **she/her** pronouns. 4 inches tall, wears practical garments that don't impede movement.

She can be **obnoxious and headstrong**. Kaida has very few friends but has a good heart. Having grown up on the forest floor, is naturally **resourceful and athletic**.

Having full freedom of movement, she will comment on points of interest of solutions on the fly should **time elapse**.



## Characters

# Hitoshi

Non-playable character. 18 years old, **he/him** pronouns. Quite frail looking, a bookish type that **tries** to put on a brave face.

**Quiet and nervous**, Hitoshi is really Kaida's **only** friend. He puts up a lot with her bull-headedness but is **rewarded** by seeing her softer side.

A background character used for narrative purposes. Will comment when the **Dai-Tengu** is approaching Kaida as a **warning to the player**.





## Characters

# Dai - Tengu

Non-playable character. **Antagonist** for the game. Despite large beer belly is still quite muscular.

**Once noble**, this Tengu has fallen to drinking and has become a **cruel Yokai**. He spends his days singing crude songs and being lazy, but will use his **magics to claim his next meal**.

Simple looping animation-based behaviour. Depending on player position, Tengu will be in a different searching animation state. Will **'feel'** like it is reaction to player actions.





## Gameplay Overview


The game takes similar trends from **existing** action-adventure games within the genre. Players have a full range of movement and climbing abilities whilst also able to interact with objects in the environment. The gameplay loop is quite **simple**, reach a location, observe/ be given clues as to what is needed to progress, **take action** on information and navigate the environment.

The main selling feature for the game is its **scale**, and how we **recontextualize** a player's understanding of it. People get used to imagery and space quite quickly, so dotting the environment with familiar objects they must overcome, or will see from a new angle will help keep things fresh and interesting to see.

## Objectives & Rewards

The narrative objective is to **save Hitoshi**, Kaida's best friend from being eaten by the Dai-Tengu. If the game continued on after this objective it would lead the pair to trying to **escape and hide** as the Dai-Tengu chases after them.

The objective for the gameplay from a design standpoint is for players to **enjoy just the simple act of navigating** through the environment. Since mechanically the player has no special abilities, they can only just move, climb and interact.





## Actions & Behaviours

### Kaida



Third-person movement capable of climbing and moving objects similar to Uncharted.

### Hitoshi

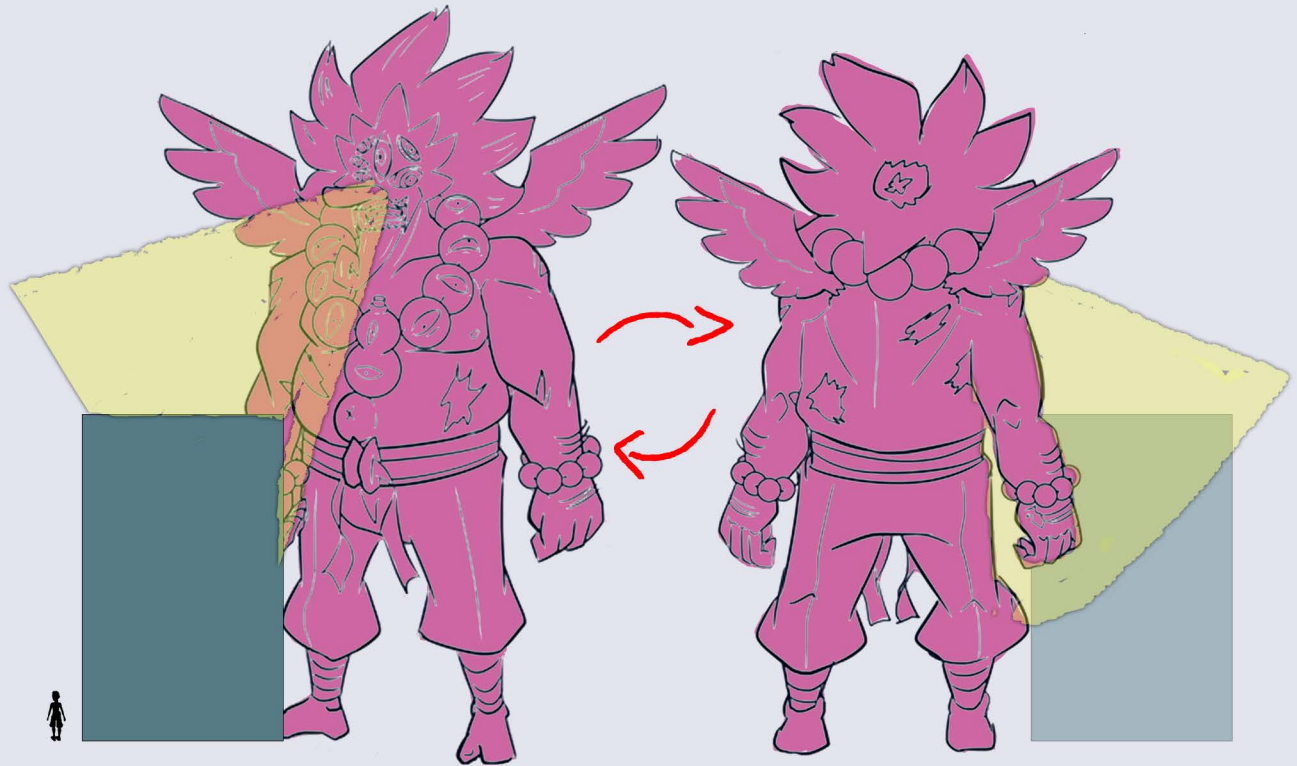


No movement, instead drops dialogue hints for threats and puzzles when Kaida reaches certain trigger points

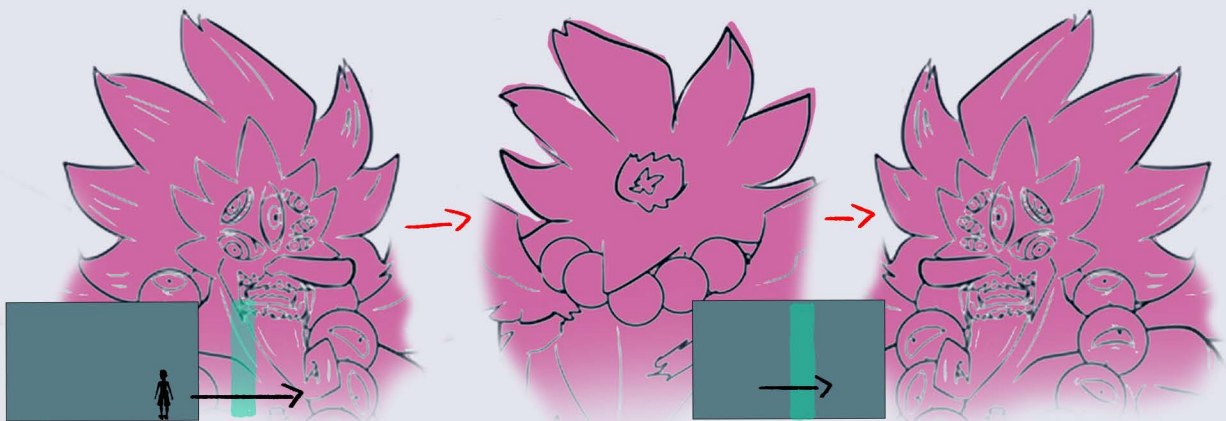


## Actions & Behaviours

### Dai-Tengu



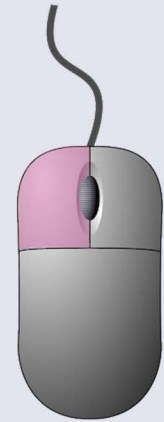
Simply put the Tengu is controlled by an animation state machine. Each state is a looping animation. It's animation state only changes if a player moves through a trigger zone, or if they are caught within the Tengu's eye-sight.



As the player moves through the trigger, the Tengu updates its animation state. This allows for really controlled behaviour.



## Control Scheme



W = Move forward [**Grounded**]  
Lean upwards [**Climbing**]  
Push forwards [**Grabbing**]

S = Move towards camera [**Grounded**]  
Look behind stationary [**Climbing**]  
Pull forwards [**Grabbing**]

A = Turn left [**Grounded**]  
Side left [**Climbing**]

D = Turn right [**Grounded**]  
Side right [**Climbing**]

Space = Jump up [**Stationary/Grounded/Climbing**]  
Jump forward [**Grounded**]  
Hop side left/right [**Climbing**]

Left Mouse Click + Hold = Enter Push & Pull ability





## Level Design

For a more detailed breakdown of the level design, please see the 'Tales from the Rift LDD'. This is more of a summary of the locations and the goals behind them. The entire game is meant to be one seamless environment, no loading screens between levels.

### **First Level - Far River Bank**

With the river running through the middle of the clearing. This bank sits closer to home for Kaida, the last part of the forest she knows before venturing towards the Dai-Tengu's rotting shrine. Surrounded by small rocks and overgrown grasses, it's the perfect spot to prepare.

This is the 'tutorial' area that teaches the player the controls;

Movement -> Jumping -> Climbing

It is a risk-free environment, that allows player experimentation.

### **Second Level - The River**

Far below the banks runs the deceptively calm river. To us tall folk, the river is slow and sluggish, but to Kaida it roars at a quick pace, threatening to drag her down should she fall in.

Luckily its summer and the water has receded, revealing a multitude of moss-covered stones for her to use as platforms. At the far side the remnants of a broken bridge seem like an ideal place to help her climb out.

The player consolidates all they have learnt in this section. They jump across stones and clamber around them to test and reinforce these skills. Before being given a new challenge, timed lily pad platforms.

Should they fall into the water they will 'die' and be sent back to the last checkpoint.







## Third Level - Shrine Foreground

The Dai-Tengu's shrine looms impossibly tall over Kaida. The grounds have not been kept well; moss grows over the stone lanterns. Grass and wood litter the ground and it rumbles with each of the Dai-Tengu's footfalls. Unless Kaida gets to higher ground, she is at risk of getting crushed.

The player is introduced to the Tengu and enters their first stealth challenge. All they have to do is climb between the lanterns avoiding his gaze. This is a 'fake' threat, the Tengu can't actually fail them, and is more used to teach the player about timing.

## Fourth Level - Shrine Interior

Aside from a fallen paper lantern and the fire cooking the stew in the middle, this interior is very dark. Clothes, pots, cups and a whole range of furniture litter the inside of the shrine. Hitoshi, sits in a bird cage alone and afraid. The floor is full of holes and there are places that even Kaida can't reach normally. She will have to sift through and move the litter to build herself a path.

The player is finally introduced to pushing and pull mechanics, to build new platforming paths and to help them in avoiding the Tengu. Quick mobility is discouraged and climbing and stealth is the goal for the final portion of the game.



## Game Aesthetics

Tales from the Rift visually takes lots of inspiration from stylized / cel shaded games like Okami and Wind Waker. Okami's art style is visually gorgeous, with its 3D representation of calligraphy.





A difference between Okami and Wind Waker is their lighting. Okami is fully unlit, where is Wind Waker mixes hard edge shadows with soft ambient lighting. I think the latter approach is stronger for the style I want ToR to have. However, I don't want the hard stepped shading of Wind Waker, ToR would benefit with more steps to help add more shadow detail.

RIME by Tequila Works has that softer look that I want to emulate.



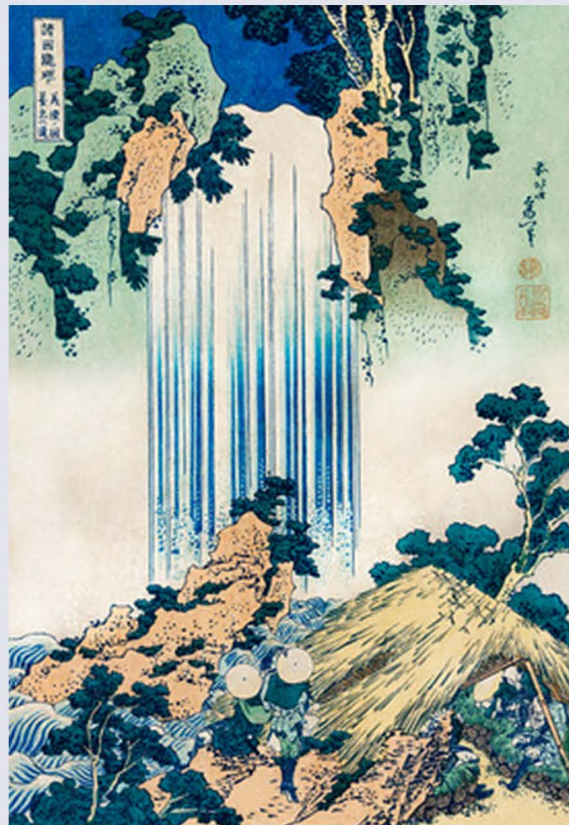


The general style is mainly using block colors with step shading layered upon characters and objects. Main character model texturally is simple but has some slight motifs in the clothes worn. The environment for cliffs and stone at most has simple gradient noise patterns, with randomized decals to help sell what kind of material it is.

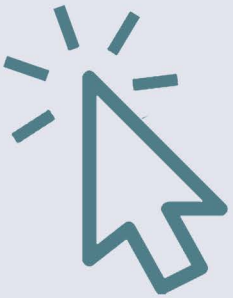




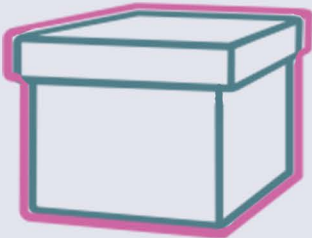
The color scheme of RIME is a lot brighter than what I intend with ToR. Since the game is based on Japanese folklore and set in a forest, I am thinking of taking my color pallet from traditional Ukiyo-e block painting. The colors are bold and striking similar to RIME but they are restricted in their use. You're likely to see mainly 4 colors repeated throughout which I think will help give the game some authenticity.



## Usability Rules



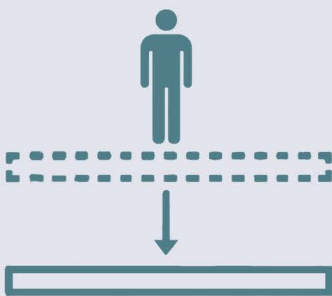
One click menus



Highlighted interactable objects



Vision cone to help players 'see' Tengu's eyesight



Visual indicators for falling platforms



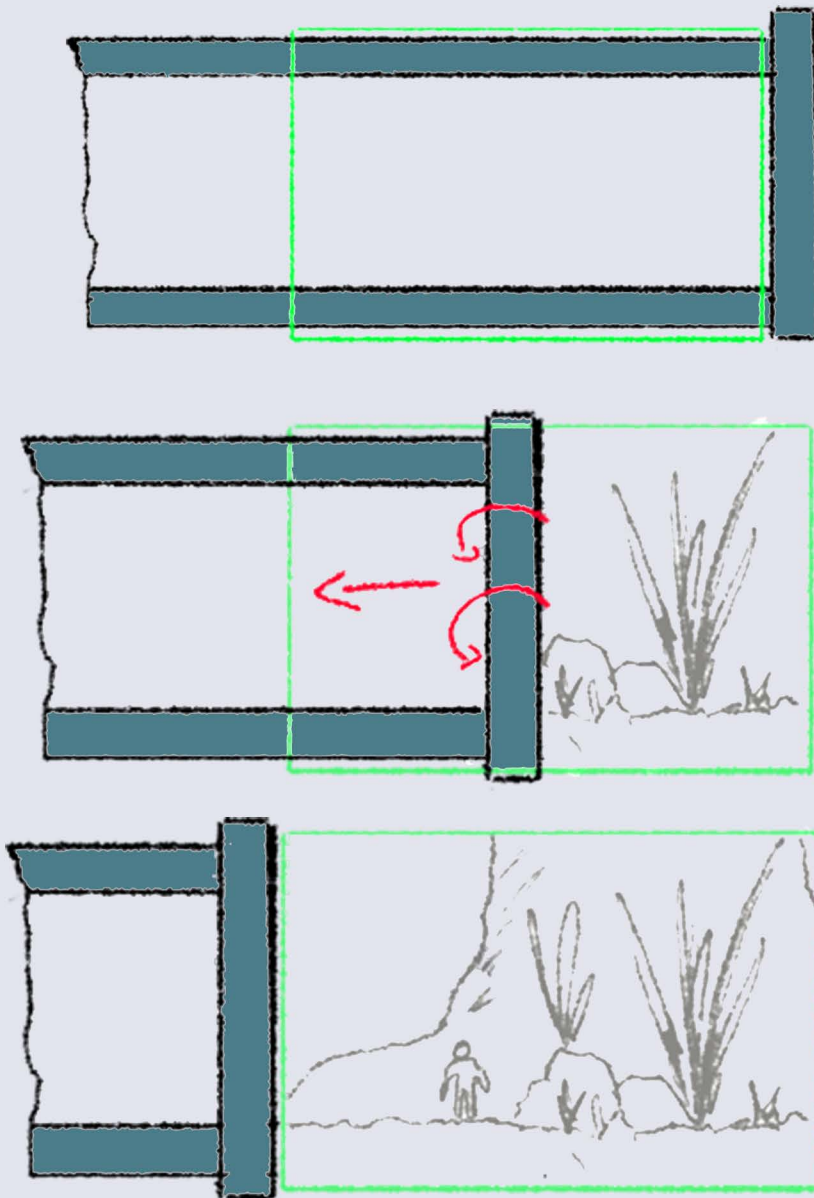
Climbable ledges have clear visual indicator




## Transitions

Transitions from death states and between cutscenes need to feel **quick** as this is such a short demo. A 'quick restart' philosophy that helps make **exploration easier and enjoyable**. I also want them to be more than just a fade to black, I want them to feel **cohesive with the experience**, and to always remind the player they are part of this story.

Japan is known for having long scrolls; '**emaki-mono**' that housed their written literature. So, I think creating a scroll that rolls on and over screen could fulfil this type of transition.





The scroll starts on screen before it rolls off revealing the game underneath. Functionally it can roll back on as well. This can be used for more than transitions; the scroll fully on can have cutscenes playing upon it. Or a small scroll can roll on for tutorial text.

