

GARAPPA

Garappa are a species of Kappa that live on the southern islands of Amami Oshima and Tokara. They have a thin body and long arms and legs. When they sit, their knees are higher than their heads. They have a plate on their heads, and are constantly drooling, giving them a fishy smell.

They live in the rivers in spring and the mountains in autumn. If you're wandering a mountain trail and suddenly get lost, or hit your head on a tree, or have a sudden stomachache, get dust in your eyes, or hear strange noises—it is the work of Garappa. That's why in the mountains you must not speak ill of Garappa. It's said if you wear sandals you are safe, but if you walk barefoot the Garappa will hear you and take vengeance.

Other tales claim befriending them will bless you with huge catches of fish. Garappa have more magical or divine powers than ordinary Kappa. This is probable, as they are more similar to mountain kami and primitive deities.



AKANAME

An Edo period book, *Kokin Hyakumonogatari Hyoban*, tells of a creature called Akaneburi that is probably the same as Akaname who sneak into dirty bathrooms at night and lick the scum off unwashed bathtubs. Even though this is all they do, Akaname are unwelcome in homes. In order to keep them out, bathtubs must be kept clean. Telling someone an Akaname is coming is a surefire way to get them to clean the bath.

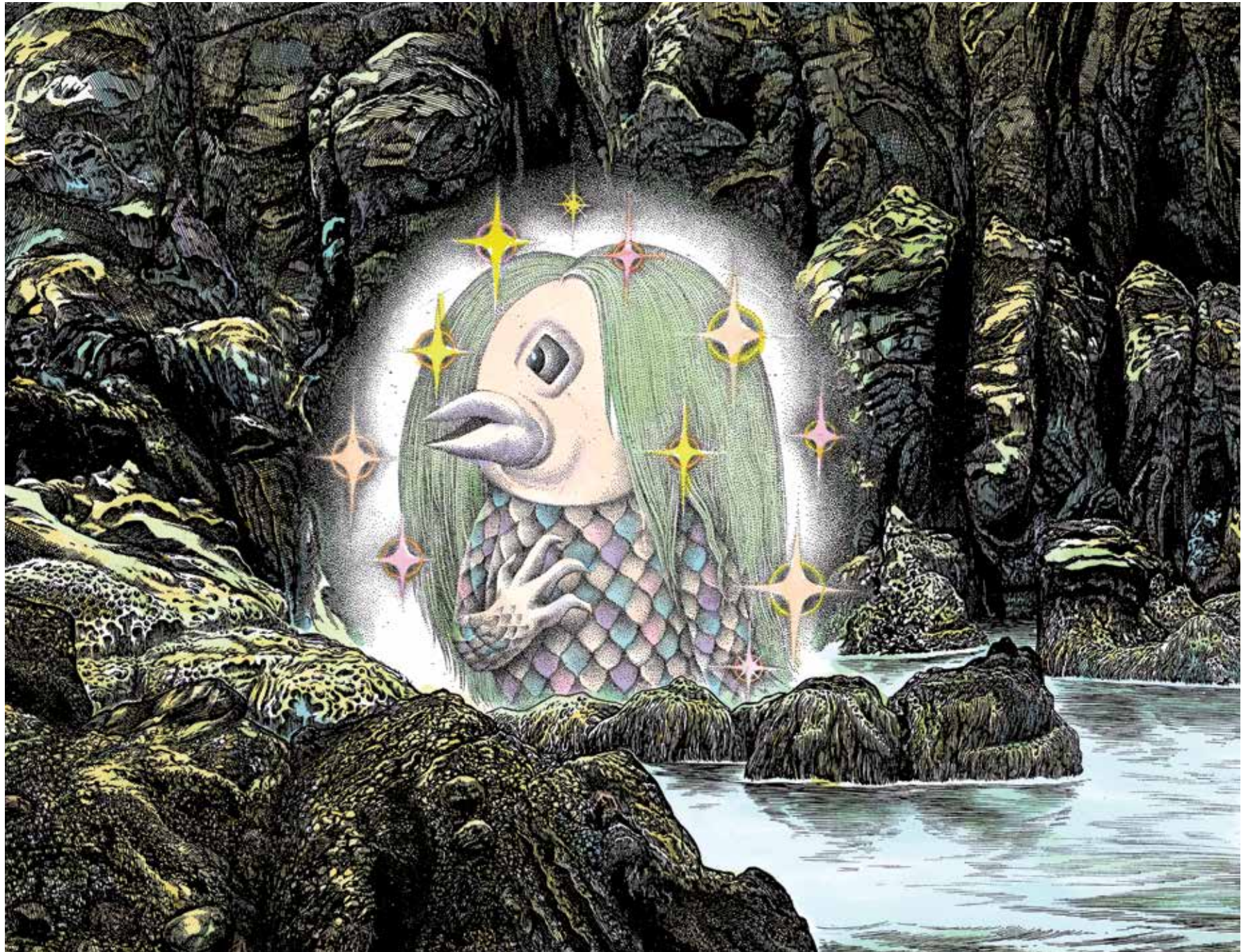
In this way, Akaname serve as a cautionary tale. In the olden days, bathtubs were made of wood and did not get much sunlight. The wood got slippery and inhabited by snails and frogs. Toilets and bathrooms were considered the most likely place for yokai to dwell. Growing up as a country boy, I was afraid to take baths because of this.



AMABIE

In 1846, a glow appeared every night off the shores of Higo (modern-day Kumamoto Prefecture). When a local official investigated, a creature was there who introduced itself: “My name is Amabie. The next six years will be a time of abundance. However, should illness arise, show my picture to as many people as possible!” Its prophecy having been spoken, the Amabie sank again into the sea.

There are many different kinds of prophetic yokai, such as the mermaid-like Jinjahime and the Kudan who is born from a cow. Amabie is most likely related to them. A creature that comes out of the sea to deliver a prophecy is more like a kami than a yokai. Perhaps we should call them shinkai instead, meaning sacred mysteries.



TE NO ME

A blind man was passing through an isolated field. A group of bandits cut him with their swords and stole what little money and goods he had. The innocent man died a pitiless death. As the saying goes, "Deceive a blind man and be cursed for seven lifetimes." The man's spirit rose each night, seeking revenge on the miscreants. Much to his chagrin, even his spirit was blind and could not find them. But with great tenacity for vengeance, he grew eyes out of the palms of his hands. Every full moon, he would rise and open his palms to seek his killers.

Those murdered do not easily find rest in the afterlife. Their souls become Onryo, spirits of vengeance. Te no Me is one such yokai. A terrifying force, we don't like to talk about hatred, but whenever and wherever humans dwell, hate is always swirling among them.



KENMUN

Kenmun are a species of Kappa on the Amami Islands of Kagoshima. Also known as Kenmon, they are similar to the Kijimuna of Okinawa and live in banyan trees. They have an oil-filled dish in their Kappa-like heads. At night, they light fires in the oil and go to the shore. But if they spill the oil, they die. Kenmun are sumo fans and will immediately challenge anyone they meet to a friendly match. They have sharp eyes and a red face but otherwise don't look much different from a human six-year-old.

There are many Kenmun on Kakeromajima Island. There is a story told of an old man who could summon them and would show them to children. When people were evacuated to Kakeromajima during World War II, many reported having encounters with prankster Kenmun, even though they couldn't see them. When people took shelter under trees during air raids, the broth they had made for lunch would be gone when they returned. Some say Kenmun are deities that traveled to the islands from the south.



ZASHIKI WARASHI

In the Tohoku region, Zashiki warashi reside in some houses. Childlike in appearance, while dwelling in a home, they bring prosperity, but should they leave, the family fortunes will decline. Though rarely seen, even by the master of the house, their presence is recognized by mysterious noises in the night. When you are sleeping and you mysteriously change positions, or if your pillow is turned over, this might be Zashiki warashi. When they do appear, however, it is because they are already leaving the house. There are many stories of a family suddenly spotting an unknown child in their house, only to be followed by ruin and poverty.

Although originally a house spirit, in the summer of 1910, a Zashiki warashi was said to have appeared in an elementary school in Tsuchibuchi, Tono (modern-day Tono city). Only visible to the first graders, the children would say “there is a little boy standing right there!” But any of the older children or teachers could not see the mysterious yokai.

There are variations of Zashiki warashi. The splendid Chipirako are said to bring the greatest fortune, while the Usutsukiko and Notabariko are said to be the lower class of the species.

