

The netherworld's princess was never one to head out of her domain without reason. A carefree woman that simply drifted along the tides of time endlessly, aimlessly. She floated along the halls of her manor, lazily making her way through the lounge of Hakugyokurou. A room she was too familiar with, sights that – right now – were beginning to bore her.

"Youmu... Come here, Youmu!"

"Yes, my lady??" The half phantom rushes into the room, bowing deeply, expecting some sort of order to be thrust upon her... However, she's met with her lady holding a parasol over her shoulder. "Oh.. Lady Yuyuko, are you heading out?"

"Indeed, I've grown rather bored today of the walls here. I am going on a walk around Gensokyo." She offers that gentle smile towards her servant, who stares back at her with a concerned look.

"Do you need an escort? Just to keep you safe out there."

"No no. I'll be fine, thank you, Youmu." Yuyuko raised her hand at the half-phantom, shushing her. Yet, she continued to press on the matter.

"Are you aware of the predicted weather? I was told that it might rain in Gensokyo today... Will you *really* be–"

"Youmu..." She drifted closer to her worried servant and placed her hand onto Youmu's head. "Don't stress so much about me. I'm quite capable of handling myself. You just get some work done here, okay?"

Yuyuko tilted her head as she inspected Youmu's face. It remained anxious, stressing internally over the wellbeing of her lady. Yuyuko withdraws her hand and heads towards Hakugyokurous exit.

"Take care now, Youmu!" She waved politely as she exited into the cold air of the netherworld. The cold wind stung her cheeks as the ghost princess floated down the stairs to exit her realm, appearing over the skies of Gensokyo hidden amongst the clouds. Just from a cursory glance across the top of the clouds, Yuyuko could see the stormy greyness from above... It seems it's already raining down there. She descended down through the clouds, touching down onto the ground, unfolding her parasol to protect herself from the rain. Yuyuko floated along, her presence ethereal amongst the land darkened by the storm.

Her presence brought about death wherever she went. The flowers wilted and drooped downwards. The leaves turned brown and fell from their branches. She aimlessly made her way through the fields of rolling grass, coming up to the misty lake outside of the infamous scarlet devil mansion. Yuyuko let her gaze wander over the mansion's menacing exterior, before turning her attention to the water. The mist rolled across its surface, accompanying the ripples of raindrops in the lake. There was silence in the air, most youkai had returned home or taken

shelter, so not a soul dared to make a noise amongst the pitter patter of rain.

Across the lake, something caught the princess's attention. A feeling deeply familiar to her. Someone was out there, staring at her from the other side. There was a deep twisting in her gut as she stood motionless, gazing back across the water. Whoever was looking at her struck some subconscious nerve to elicit fear from presence alone... Not unlike Yuyuko herself.

Most seemed avoidant of the princess, or at least curious from a distance with no drive to actually converse with her. Yuyuko was not a fool however, she understood why. Even if she was so open to entertaining these menial conversations with anyone, she knew that very few were ever intent on staying long. Be it her deathly aura, or the way her words flew over the head of many... Yuyuko often felt rather alone. There was Yukari, of course. There was always Yukari. There had always *been* Yukari. For as long as she can remember, her dearest friend was there with her.

But Yuyuko needed something new. She had for a long time. And when she laid eyes on that figure across the water, she recognized her 'something new'. The same 'something new' that she had met previously, back at home as it invaded the serene calmness of the cherry blossoms. As it violently waded through the afterlife's cruel current chasing unfinished business. Her 'something new' that shied away from most others in Gensokyo due to their fear of it. Her 'something new' that, despite countless attempts on the life of an immortal, would never let up on an endeavour that seemed so fruitless from the outside.

Yuyuko found herself floating across the surface of the water, her reflection below warped by the rippling surface, obscured faintly by the ghastly glow of her spiritual body. A glow that was like a match stick in comparison with the light she wandered towards. In the dark overcast Gensokyo, it left a towering presence. The bright gleaming of seven magnificent, magenta tails of purified hatred. An extension of its form that stood motionless in the rain.

"Fancy seeing you here." Yuyuko spoke calmly, despite the feeling in her gut, she knew she had no real reason to be scared... What was the worst that it could bring itself to do to her? She almost *wanted* to see.

"Mhm." It responded, staring miles past the princess at the water. Was it ever looking at her? It simply stood there, perfect posture with its hands folded behind its back.

"You know it's raining, right? It's an awfully depressing look to see your hair covering your face like that." Yuyuko had approached enough that she hovered above the water in front of it. Its eyes did not meet her, but she continued to gaze into those sharp red pools. "Would you like my—"

"The rain is relaxing. It's a pleasant feeling to let it hit my skin." Yuyuko was interrupted as it spoke once more...

"I see." Was all Yuyuko could say in response. She thought about it for a moment as she looked upwards at the clouds... Was it really nice? As far as she can remember back she was always told to take umbrellas out when it rained, lest her pristine form be ruined. Perhaps it really does feel nice? "May I join you?"

"Do as you wish." Short and concise as usual, but the princess wouldn't let the opportunity slip by. She descended to the ground, standing politely next to it. She folded up her parasol and allowed the rain to hit her face as she looked upwards again. It turned its head to look at her now, clear confusion written upon its face. "What are you doing?"

"I wanted to see for myself how it felt." Yuyuko had a serene look on her face, quickly replaced by surprise as its hand reached over and grabbed her parasol, opening it back up. "Hmm?"

"... Maybe you should use that, since you have it."

"Perhaps." She closed it back up.

"...." It stared at her. Scrutinized her face. Every little detail. "Princess." Then it reached across once more, taking the parasol out of Yuyuko's hands. Once more it opened it up, now holding it above her head instead. "When you wear make up like that, it is better not to let it get wet and start to run down your face."

"Is that right?" Yuyuko turned her head to look at it. "And why do you care so much as to preserve my appearance, Junko?"

"... Hmm." The fox glares down at her. Its flaming tails thrash about behind it. "Suit yourself."

It let go of the parasol, which glided down gently into the water in front of them. The two watched as it floated there, flipped upside down, its canopy filling with rain water. Yuyuko laughed.

"Oh well. There it goes. How fun..." She watched it float along away from them, her attention turning back to Junko. "Care to share why you decided to come out here today? Surely you didn't come out here to just stand in the rain."

"Well..." Junko looked away. That actually was part of it, she really did enjoy this type of weather. "No, I just had been feeling rather pent up. A tad bit more frustrated than usual with things. I wanted to let off some steam away from anyone I don't want to hurt."

"I see. So go ahead, don't let me stop you." Gently, the princess patted Junko's damp silk sleeve.

"You do not need to hear the language that I wish to speak."

"You can curse out the people of the moon as much as you like. I wouldn't be one to stand in your way on it." She shook her head, her own hair now drooping down onto her face. "Please."

"No, no no." Junko muttered, "I've done enough. It's mostly out of my system."

"Oh well. That's good you got it out of you." Yuyuko pursed her lips as she stared at the water.. She tilted her head down to look at her own reflection standing beside Junko. "I like seeing you be so passionate about something... But I assume you have been out here for a while if you're calming down."

"Some time, yes." It sighed. "I do feel a bit bad. The residents of the mansion heard me yelling. The maid even came out into the rain to offer me a towel and a place to dry myself."

"Well that's kind of her." Yuyuko leaned into Junko. "Do you think they'd offer the same for me?"

"... That's an odd thing to ask me. I know next to nothing about those people." Junko was blunt about it. But she was truthful... "Maybe? Are they typically kind? I'm not aware of such things."

"Neither am I." She closed her eyes thoughtfully for a moment. Junko grimaced and directed her attention back at the rolling mist. "I wanted to come for a walk while it was quiet in Gensokyo."

"Figures that something odd like that is the reason you're here." It slumped forward slightly, a slouch returning to its posture. "Why wait until it's quiet? You always seem so desperate for conversation.."

"Only with those that can keep up. I have all the time in the world to wait for those that can't of course... But where's the fun in waiting for others to play catch up?" Yuyuko looked upwards at Junko now. She studied its expression. Its tired eyes, dreadful looking after hours of venting in nothing. It looked as if it was shivering even. "... Oh my, are you cold?"

"The air does grow colder around you."

"Blame it on me... How rude!" This response caused the princess to laugh once more.

"... Well it isn't just you. I've been out here for hours." It continued to avoid eye contact, knowing this response would prompt concern. And indeed it has, as Yuyuko leans in more, placing her hand on the chest of the spirit.

"Really? Oh, you should get out of the rain, silly. You could get sick, Junko."

"My body would purify itself before allowing that to happen."

"Well what about Hecatia? Or Clownpiece? You'll see them later, and if you get them all wet too they might get sick." Yuyuko tilted her head in a sweet way, attempting to look at the eyes of the

spirit. It shuddered slightly from the chilled breeze. "If not for yourself, for them?"

"... Hmm." It folded its arms. "Fine. I shall head home."

"Well now, I didn't say head *home*." She teased, "Why don't you come with me to Hakugyokurou..?"

"From this weather to the winter wonderland of the netherworld." Junko raised one brow, looking puzzled. "Is there a catch to this question? You wanted me to get warm, yet it seems like you're trying to freeze me to death."

"I can't kill what's already dead." She teased in return, "No, I'd like for you to come home with me. We have an onsen at the estate. It would be the perfect thing to warm the both of us right up." Yuyuko twirled the golden cord tied around Junko's collar. "And besides, it'd be nice of you to wash your hair after all this."

It took Junko a second to answer this question. What it was thinking about, well, that would be anyone's guess.

"... Maybe I can indulge just this once."

"Splendid! Well, I'll be sure to let Youmu know to prepare something hearty for the both of us while we relax in the warm water." Yuyuko was positively beaming now. "Come on, I'll take you to the netherworld quickly,"

"Wait a second." Something clicks in Junko's mind. "You aren't just using me here to get poor Youmu to make a second meal for you are you?"

"Me? Why, I wouldn't dream of it."

"Your mouth is watering, I can see it." The fox shakes its head. "You're very easy to read when it comes to food, princess."

"Hey..! It's not me.. It's just 'cause it's raining!" She gently pushes Junko, who smiles in response.

"I'd still like to indulge you, that onsen sounds nice."

"Then, let me take us there. Get you out of this rain." She gently interlocked hands as she began to lead it away. A long walk back home. A long fly up into the cloud. A long climb up the stairs to get to Hakugyokurou...

Well, Yuyuko was always ready to do anything for her 'something new'.