Gensokyo. It is a land filled with wonder and magic; a land packed with adventure, where humans, gods, and monsters all roam free. Some consider it a land of pure magic, others a wonderland that didn’t fit into the outside world. Few understand the truth of the matter, that Gensokyo is a place that was not simply found but was in fact created; it was designed from the ground up to be a place of spiritual haven, where those Youkai and humans who wanted nothing to do with the rapidly changing world of Men could go to live out their lives in relative peace.

A band of Youkai, some weak and some strong, rallied together and elected a leader amongst them; led by Yukari Yakumo, they approached a certain Shinto shrine whose faith had rapidly diminished in recent years and begged a favor. As Youkai of Borders, Yukari would be able to create an impenetrable barrier around a specific area, but in order to maintain it, it needed an anchor. The Hakurei family, along with a hardy group of humans barely fifty strong in a small village to the west of the shrine, agreed to create this land of peace with the Hakurei Shrine as its anchor, so long as the Youkai behaved; should they misbehave, the residents of the Hakurei Shrine were granted the right to intercede as necessary to keep the peace.

Using the shrine as the easternmost point, Yukari spread her powers wide, encompassing a much larger space than she originally intended. The border stood for moments before the anchor took hold, but then a most peculiar thing happened and the anchor seemed to split; half of it resided as the shrine itself, but the other half resided within the shrine’s maiden. It was an unexpected blessing, as it meant that the border could hold out should the shrine suffer immense damage, long enough to rebuild it.

The Youkai settled into their new land, the Hakurei Shrine enjoyed a resurgence of faith from both the humans and the Youkai within Gensokyo, and peace reigned for a time. The human village grew a little, some of the more human looking Youkai blended in well enough that they were able to socialize and even on rare occasions intermarry with the humans; Yukari kept an eye and an ear on the outside world, should any Youkai seek asylum from the world of Men within the land that was, even then, considered a legend.

Unfortunately, not every new Youkai that made it in played nice; the Hakurei family fought diligently for the peace, and with the natural spiritual powers granted by the Hakurei Shrine’s Spirit, they were able to consistently triumph. This, however, caused a downturn in faith from the Youkai population, and they started avoiding the shrine and humans over time. With more terrorizing going on rather than socializing, the humans began to fear their Youkai neighbors, so that even when a friendly one appeared they were wary and less welcoming than before.

Time passed, though, and over the course of more than 120 years, much of the lore of how Gensokyo was created has been forgotten. Even Yukari, who still has a link to the Great Hakurei Border, can no longer remember the specifics of what brought about the land she resides in; she no longer invites outside Youkai, as it’s more and more problematic to find them, and further they would likely have to adjust drastically to fit into the more traditional and old fashioned society that exists there.

As it was, Yukari had less and less to actively do in Gensokyo, and thus developed a habit of taking long naps, sometimes for whole seasons at a time; little could wake her, outside of an intrusion of the border.

And yet, that is exactly what happened on a particularly calm spring day…

To say the Border Youkai was annoyed at the sudden tingling feeling intruding on her senses would be an understatement. There she was, taking a particularly fine nap, when the telltale feeling of a penetration of the massive border surrounding Gensokyo made itself known. Unlike everything else, though, this was something that she would have to check out herself, as she couldn’t properly delegate this task to her shikigami, Ran.

Taking a moment to dress herself properly to leave the house, she homed in on where she felt the intrusion and opened a gap there, taking only a moment to step through and check the surrounding; it was a surprisingly empty landscape around her, and further, it looked almost empty. At first she thought that whoever had come through had immediately made a run for it, but then she saw what she almost missed lying in a very nearly camouflaged green blanket at her feet.

A baby; no more than an infant. This seemed highly unusual, even for Gensokyo. Yukari switched to a magical sense to see if there was any trace of how this child suddenly appeared here, and was taken aback; the infant was putting out more raw innate magic than she had ever sensed in anyone else previously. What was even more amazing was that the magic had a familiar tinge to it; someone else in Gensokyo had magic with nearly the same signature as this child.

“How very interesting…” Yukari mused, feeling a sense of déjà vu that this exact same sort of thing had happened somewhere once before; yet for the life of her she couldn’t remember when, who, or how. Either way, she felt it would at least be entertaining to see the look on her face when she presents the child to her…

Alice Margatroid was a Youkai Magician; once a human, her grimoire along with a couple of intense rituals changed her from the scared little girl in Makai to the much stronger and more confidant young woman she was today. She thought of herself as sensible, always trying to find practical uses for her magic, and could even rationalize that her power of Doll Manipulation could be put to practical use; articulated via her magic, they aided her in everyday tasks in keeping her house, protecting it from the occasional attacks by the fairies of the surrounding forest, and other mundane things that she wouldn’t normally be able to alone.

Being in a house by herself in the middle of the vast and marginally dangerous Forest of Magic, she rarely got visitors; those visitors she did get rarely bothered to knock, as well. When she heard the telltale sound of rapping on wood, she was startled from her morning routine and had to pause to even remember to answer the door. Needless to say, the visitor was one of the last people she would ever suspect.

The last time Yukari dropped in, she quite literally fell on to her couch through one of her infamous gaps that she uses to go wherever she wants to go. In fact, every time previous to now she had simply entered, reminding her somewhat of a sneaky, nosey neighbor of hers; to find the Youkai of the Border on her front doorstep was a little disconcerting.

“Good morning, Lady Alice; may we come in? I have something important to discuss with you.”

Alice blinked a couple of times before stepping back. “Please come in.” Alice was a little perturbed by Yukari referring to herself in the plural sense; it reminded her of a time her mother had tried out something similar after reading that some royalty in the outside world spoke in such a manner. Needless to say, Alice wasn’t impressed by it then, and she certainly wasn’t going to be endeared to it now.

Leading her guest into the formal sitting room, Alice prepared to shift her awareness to allow her helper dolls to run the usual chores on automatic with little input needed from her; as she reached out, though, she sensed something near Yukari that she didn’t before: a powerful, and apparently living, source of natural magic. Her eyes widened at the realization, and Yukari couldn’t help but to chuckle at the expression.

“Finally sensed it, huh? And take a peek at the signature; I’m sure you’ll find it enlightening.” Yukari’s smile couldn’t be wider as the color drained from Alice’s face; she could now sense that it was close to identical to the magic Alice had always had at her beck and call.

“How… where… No, I’ll start with what, precisely, is giving off that magic?” Alice fumbled for a proper opening question; she was still a little in shock.

“Ah, that would be this little one in the green blanket.” Yukari unwrapped it a little and angled her arm to allow Alice to see the child. It continued to sleep, oblivious of the attention they were paying to it. “And to answer where and how, I found her in the middle of nowhere after detecting a penetration of the border. Needless to say, I was curious, and after sensing her magic, I knew I had to bring her here.”

The look Yukari was giving her made Alice take a step back; the only interpretation that could be made was that she was being asked to take in the infant. To raise as her own and to teach how to properly control the magic that naturally flowed out of her body.

Alice waffled a little, debating to herself about her own capabilities and whether it would be right for a Youkai to raise a human child, and just about anything that she could think of to try to persuade herself this would be a bad idea. The more she watched the baby sleep, the more her resistance to the idea crumbled. Finally, she sighed in defeat and held out her arms to take the infant from Yukari in a sign that she would do as asked.

Somehow, that look of resignation made waking from that nap worth it to the now wide awake Border Youkai. She relinquished the child to her new mother and gave a small bow before opening a gap directly below herself, thus leaving Alice to fend for herself.

Alice stared at the space Yukari had just been and contemplated asking Reimu to punish her next time she saw Yukari, but then sighed and shook her head; Yukari would do what she liked and nothing would stop her, more than likely.

Taking stock of the sleeping baby in her arms, Alice noticed that she already had a head of blonde hair; she appeared to be wearing nothing but a cloth diaper of sorts within the green blanket. After a few minutes of staring, a sudden thought occurred to the young Magician; she had no means to care for an infant in this house, and further, what could you feed one so young that could be found in Gensokyo? She had heard of all kinds of advances in the outside world for caring for infants and small children, but nothing of that sort existed within the border.

Stumped for only a moment, she suddenly remembered that whatever the science and technology of the outside world could do, magic could likely handle it just as well, and sometimes more naturally at that. Steeling her resolve, she redirected her household dolls to modify some clothing so that she could freely fly to her destination with the little one; it would only take a quick trip and study session and she would at least be able to get a handle on her new responsibility!