Aeons Of A Bleeding Heart

by FabulousFangirl

Summary

Kamado Tanjirou was a demon.
He was a member of the Twelve Demon Moons, occupying rank one, rumoured to be an ancient demon alive since the Sengoku period.
He was the biggest threat to Demon Slayers apart from Kibutsuji himself.

Giyuu Tomioka was a demon slayer. He only had one purpose in life, to kill demons, exterminate as many of them he could. If need be, even Kamado Tanjirou.
Chapter 1

Giyuu brought his sword down in a clean arc, cutting off the demon's legs. He walked around the crippled body of the creature, looking at the screaming demon with disgust.

"Just you wait, I'll rip you to shr-

The demon stopped speaking, going mute in but a split second, clearly extremely startled. Giyuu sensed a shift in the air, the night breeze suddenly turning cold and stale.

He clenched his sword and turned around.

Deep ruby eyes met his own. Eyes which had the number 'one' inscribed on them in dazzling white-gold. Giyuu was probably going to die. He was definitely not strong enough to take on an Upper Moon. Much less number one.

The eyes were set in a gorgeous face, framed by deep burgundy locks. Elegant earrings resembling hanafuda cards, swayed in the wind. He was clad in a simple rich maroon yukata and a checkered deep green haori which did nothing to deviate from his outworldly beauty. His only asymmetric feature was a dark curling mark, sprawled across his forehead. Giyuu could only barely maintain his composure against the magnificent aura the demon exuded. Total refined grace and coiled power.

He raised his sword, and the man smiled.

"Your sword is beautiful, lets not break it needlessly. Please do avoid charging at me, it will shatter." The man spoke softly, still smiling.

Giyuu felt disgusted at the perfect face, at the beautiful appearance that hid a hideous, heartless creature. He felt rage simmer in his veins, threading through his body. He wanted to fight, he wanted to defeat this demon.

But he couldn't. His body froze up, trembling at the Upper Moons presence.

He was going to die a pathetic death. A fitting death for a weakling, Giyuu supposed.

He was always treading on borrowed, stolen time anyway. If this was how it ended, then so be it.

He wanted to pass on already. At least he could apologize to Sabito. Apologize for being such a colossal failure.

For being able to accomplish absolutely nothing in all his years of life.

He'd wanted to help people. He wanted to save people, but he was always late, and always too weak. Always too late to learn, too late to change.

Too weak to save his sister, too late to save his best friend.

A roar emerged from behind him, the demon he'd immobilized previously having regenerated.
It lunged at him, screaming in fury and glee. It was obviously taking full advantage of the reprieve it'd gotten due to the Upper Moon. Giyuu still couldn't move. He braced himself for the pain. Pain which didn't come.

A chopped head fell onto the ground with a low thud. Giyuu jolted as a figure appeared right beside him. The Upper Moon, barely a foot away. He looked down at the chopped head on the ground and sighed. He'd killed it. He'd killed the demon. Killed one of his own kind without hesitation.

"You pitiful idiot, didn't I tell you to do exactly as I said? I warned you I'd kill you if you misbehaved." The Upper Moon mused softly, tone cold, apathetic.

The demon's chopped head blinked a couple of times, still not comprehending the situation. It happened too fast. Giyuu himself didn't realize what happened till it was done. The lowly demon's eyes widened as it started to crumble.

Giyuu was beyond confused, wondering why the Upper Moon didn't let the demon kill him. Surely even if the lowly demon had angered him, he could vent his anger on it after Giyuu was dead. What use was there in keeping him alive? Unless of course, he wanted to shred him to pieces himself.

"Please! Not like this, please! I wasn't trying to anger you! I beg you! I- It crumbled before it could finish the sentence.

The Upper Moon looked at the ashes for a moment, almost looking melancholy, sighing once again before clasping hands together. Giyuu stared at the demon bewildered, taken aback by the gesture. Was he praying?

He didn't get a chance to figure it out, as he was slammed into the ground. A hand pinning him down. Deep ruby eyes met his own again, a sharp smile decorating a sharp face.

Terror flooded through his body again, a visceral surge of panic. Mixed in with acceptance of course. In the end, this was his fate.

It wasn't like he could resist. He couldn't breathe at all anymore, the Upper Moon's hand cutting off his air supply. It truly was his fate, to die a disgrace. Giyuu could feel his vision going dark, until suddenly, he could breathe again.

He coughed, gasping to fill air into his lungs. The demon smiled at him again, a couple of feet away. Giyuu was starting to really hate that smile. The demure, uncaring smile. It had no emotion in it at all.

"Why? Why would you let me live?" Giyuu choked out hoarsely from the ground, glaring at the demon. "You don't want to live?" The demon inquired pleasantly, ruby eyes unreadable.
Giyuu gritted his teeth, as if he would ever answer that to the demon. He owed himself that much at least.

"Well, I just felt like it. Who knows, you might come in handy to me sometime, for some reason." The demon laughed mockingly.

Giyuu clenched his teeth in anger, still winded.

By the time Giyu managed to stand, there was no hint left, that the likes of an Upper Moon had ever been there.

He clenched his pristine sword in anger, blood boiling at the humiliation. Left to live due to a demon's whim. His sword wasn't even scratched, the demon had treated it like a toy.

Sorry Sabito, I'm always going to be the lowest of the low, aren't I? Giyuu thought viciously.

He clenched his fists as tears dripped down his face. Tears of guilty relief, or anger, Giyuu couldn't really tell. Either way it was pathetic.

Unreadable ruby eyes would haunt him for many nights.

Giyuu swore he would remember them. If he couldn't die, then he would train. Train to defeat that monster.
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Kochou Kanae failed. She would be killed. Even near her final moments, all she could feel was overwhelming pity, and sadness. Upper Moon Three was extraordinary, but he couldn't feel anything. He was an empty doll, nothing but a miserable creature. She was going to die, until she wasn't.

Kanae gripped her sword, blood dripping down her fingers. The Upper Moon smiled at her sickeningly, snapping his fan shut.

"Dear why do you still resist, I promise I'll take good care of you!" He spoke, amused, as the slashes she'd managed to land on him healed.

Kanae felt disgust rising in her stomach. He was truly a miserable creature.

She would never give up. If she was to die, she would die fighting. She would keep trying her best to win. Because that's what a demon slayer did. They had to keep fighting, they had to ruin their bodies, their lives, just so innocents didn't need to die.

"I'll keep fighting till my body can breathe." She replied, speaking through a mouthful of blood.

He laughed, opening his fans.

"Then let me make sure you can't. You're too worn to fight anymore anyway." The demon crooned, icy mist spreading through the air.

She could not inhale that. At any cost.

Kanae twirled back, swinging her sword with burning arms.

"Breath of Flower, seventh form: Scattering Sakura." She yelled, blowing away a majority of the mist.

The demon laughed, falsely amused, as she landed on her feet, trembling. She could hardly even use breaths anymore.

"So futile, isn't it?" A voice whispered in her ear. He was too fast, she couldn't keep up anymore.

"What a pity, right?" The Upper Moon continued, as he swung his fan.

Kanae's sword clattered to the ground, hand still attached tightly. She crumbled to the floor, screaming through clenched teeth, cradling the stump of her hand. It burned. It was excruciating.
Breathe Kanae, stop the bleeding, she thought, panicked.

"Oh look at that, you managed to deal with that, all for nothing though! It takes everything you have to stop the bleeding, how will you fi-
the Upper Moon cut off abruptly, spinning around.

He stared at a rooftop on their right, searching. Smile gone from his face.

Kanae felt the presence too.
It was cold.

The Upper Moon kept looking around, searching, till he stopped, looking at the figure across the street. A figure who'd appeared out of thin air.

The figure moved forward, stepping into the moonlight slowly.

Rich Burgundy hair came into view, framing an elegant handsome face.
He stopped, looking at them, expressionless.

Kanae swallowed as she met his ruby eyes, it was another Upper Moon.
It was Upper Moon One.

"Would you look at that! Such a coincidence Kamado-san! I never thought I'd run into you like this. It's been so long, last we met you were Upper Moon Two. Congratulations on taking the number one spot by the way!" Upper Moon Three finally spoke, coloring his words with falsified glee again.

The demon called Kamado smiled politely, "You make me sick, Douma."

He was still smiling softly. If Kanae didn't know better, she'd have believed in that false smile, set in that gorgeous face.

Upper Moon Three, or Douma, who she'd been fighting just laughed.

"Don't worry about his rudeness Kanae-san! He just hates everyone and everything. All humans, all of us demons, just about everyone. It's hard to tell due to his face though, don't fall for those beautiful eyes of his. Kokushibou-san is also just like that, except he doesn't hide his evident hatred." Douma continued blithely, eyes crinkling.

Kanae couldn't stop the terror seeping into her bones. The situation had gone from bad to the absolute worst.

There was something so intrinsically terrifying about Upper Moon One that she could hardly bear to look at him.

He began walking, heading straight for her and Douma.

She clenched her teeth down hard on her tongue as he neared.

His yukata swirled softly as he passed them by.

"What? You're leaving already? You don't even want to taste her? She's a pillar." Douma whined.

"Watch your useless mouth Douma. Do you think I ought to waste my time like you?" Kamado questioned, smiling. Intense bloodlust filled the air.
Douma dropped into an awkward bow, clearly afraid of picking a fight. Kanae coughed blood, trying to prevent the tremors wracking her body.

"Sorry, you know I just like some harmless amusement." Douma spoke apologetically, not looking at his eyes.

Kanae knew Douma didn't feel anything. He was only doing this out of a sense of self-preservation.

Kamado stared at them for a while, every second feeling like eternity.

She dared look at him in the eyes defiantly. There wasn't any point in getting scared if she was going to die.

Kamado looked at her with unreadable eyes. She couldn't sense anything. No malice, no goodwill, but, unlike Douma, she could at least tell he did feel emotions. His anger earlier was not false.

He was waiting for something.

Douma stood in silence, head bowed, till Kamado disappeared. He was gone too fast for Kanae to even know which direction he went.

Kanae felt the immense pressure of his aura disappear, lifting the wall of solid fear that surrounded her. Birds chirped as the sky grew brighter. Douma cursed and disappeared.

Kanae stared at her empty surroundings bewildered. The grew lighter with every passing second, as daybreak occurred.

She was alive. They ran out of time? Had they not realized how close to dawn it was?

No, Kanae knew that wasn't the answer. It was that demon. Upper Moon One.

Had he not arrived, Upper Moon Three would have killed her.

He was the one who let her live, he was very clever about it. Kanae's instincts were never wrong on such things, but why?

Kanae recalled those unreadable ruby eyes.

What motive did he have?

"Ne-san!" A voice screamed.

Kanae looked at Shinobu, as she jumped through the destroyed streets of the village.

She gripped Kanae's bloody arm, sobbing as she administered first aid.
"Now now Shinobu, I'm alive, I'll be okay." Kanae whispered through her bloody mouth, before she slipped into unconsciousness.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Giyuu was never good with people. He didn't know how to communicate, he was cold because he didn't really know how to talk. It was alright really, what right did he have to want friends after he failed Sabito.

Yet for some reason, he was now a pillar. One of the leaders of their organisation. A position he clearly did not deserve. Only for Urokodaki-sensei really. So he attended a pillar meeting, where he didn't belong.

A meeting where Kanae Kocho stepped down, and he learned the name of the ruby-eyed demon.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Giyuu stood in wait, as other pillars arrived.

Till now, it was only himself, Himejima-san, and fucking Sanemi there.

This wasn't their normal semi-annual pillar meeting. Giyuu supposed something major must've come up for Oyakata-sama to gather them all.

The other pillars trickled in one by one, some of them talking to one another. Giyuu stood in silence, close to the fish pond.

He'd really rather not talk. An idea clearly shared by the snake and wind pillars, who themselves stood alone as well.

Though Giyuu really wouldn't associate himself with them either. He avoided talking to them at all.

Whatever he said, was interpreted in the worst possible way by those two. It really was too much for him.

He turned as the Ubayashiki family members appeared in the veranda, heralding Oyakata-sama, and joined the others as they knelt.

"Rise, children." Kagaya Ubuyashiki spoke, softly.

As they all stood again, Mitsuri carefully piped up,

"Oyakata-sama, where is Kochou-san? Has she recovered yet?"

Kanae was injured? Giyuu hardly ever kept up with news from other people, so more often than not he had absolutely
no idea what was happening till Oyakata-sama or Urokodaki-sensei told him.

For a pillar to get injured, it must have had to be a member of the Twelve Moons.

"I'm here Kanroji, I'm better now." Kanae spoke cheerfully, as she walked in slowly with Shinobu supporting her.

Giyuu twitched as he realized she was missing her hand.

The other pillars themselves had expressions of varying shades of disbelief.
Kanae wasn't only a pillar, but one of the more experienced ones. Her strength was beyond doubt.

"As you can see, her spirit is strong, but she was unfortunately not able to recover without any consequences. She will be stepping down from the pillars, and the new pillar will be her successor, Shinobu Kochou. Shinobu has already proved her strength through her service record which speaks of more than fifty demon kills. Any reasonable objections?" Kagaya asked.

No one resisted. She was a well known demon slayer, and renowned as one of their strongest. Shinobu bowed to the pillars in greeting.

"Well then, the ceremony will be organised later with the adequate arrangements, but as for now, there is a certain rather more pressing issue we must address." Kagaya continued.

The pillars probably had realized it themselves as well. It was rare for a Lower Moon to cause enough pandemonium for a pillar meeting.
Either some exceptional case had come up, or it involved the Upper Moons.

The emergence of Upper Moons was a serious event for the Demon Slayers. No Upper Moon had been killed in the past 113 years. In fact, when he'd told Oyakata-sama about his encounter with Upper Moon One, he'd been shocked. Upper Moons hadn't been sighted for years. Those who did see them, never lived long enough to spread the information.

Oyakata-sama had asked him to keep their meeting confidential. It was highly possible that the demon had left him alive just to spread panic among the members of the Demon Slayers. Also, since Giyuu really didn't know anything useful about the demon from their meeting, Oyakata-sama did not see the point in informing the other pillars.

Knowing his appearance hardly made a difference, when all the Twelve Moons had numbers carved on their eyeballs.

"I lost my hand in confrontation with Upper Moon Three. A demon called Douma. I was unable to subdue him." Kanae spoke, voice getting steely.

"What exactly happened?" Himejima asked gravely, voice devolving into prayers.

"I was notified about the presence of some ritualistic cult, who's members were disappearing. The investigation led me to the Upper Moon. I could barely hold my own against him, and that too, only for about an hour. At the end of which I lost my sword arm altogether. I would have most definitely died had another demon not stepped in." Kanae continued grimly.

"What? Did you just say another demon?! A demon saved a demon slayer? That's bullshit!" Sanemi exploded.

"Calm down Sanemi, stepped in could mean a lot of things." Iguro griped.
"Please continue Kanae." Kagaya spoke.

Kanae nodded and continued, "It was Upper Moon One. A demon going by the name Kamado. He didn't save me per se. Apparently, he was passing through the region when he encountered us. In fact, I'm pretty sure he disliked Upper Moon Three. Their conversation told me that he detested demons, even though they were his own kind. The fact seemed true because he had wanted absolutely nothing to do with Douma, and left. But, his arrival itself stalled Upper Moon Three for long enough that daybreak arrived. Thus, I remained alive." Kanae finished.

Giyuu startled as he realized she was talking of the ruby-eyed demon he'd met. So his name was Kamado. He wouldn't have been surprised to hear of his apathetic nature towards other demons. He'd seen it first hand.

On the other hand, something about the fact that he hated demons, seemed wrong. Giyuu was sure he didn't care about the demons, but, he couldn't use the word hatred to describe his behaviour. Maybe Douma was a special case? Someone who made him angry? Maybe he was someone he actually hated?

Maybe Giyuu was wrong about the whole thing. Maybe his instincts were wrong, but, that wasn't something that made sense either.

His instincts hardly ever led him astray.

"I can understand demons hating one another, for that is their nature, but he ignored you completely? Hadn't he realized you were a pillar?" Rengoku mused.

Kanae frowned for a while, contemplating something.

"There was no way he didn't know. I'm pretty sure he knew already, not to mention Douma did also ask him whether he would like to eat a pillar. So even if he didn't know, which I highly doubt, he would've gotten to know." Kanae sighed.

That demon, was really abnormal wasn't it? Most demons no matter how picky they were about their prey, would never pass up the opportunity to consume pillars. He could understand if Kamado had ignored him due to being unwilling to waste time on weak prey, but ignoring even a pillar?

Kamado made no sense. He didn't like humans, he didn't like demons, but he killed one kind sometimes and let the other live? Or was Giyuu looking at the whole thing wrong?

"He still ignored you? Even though he knew you were a pillar?" Giyuu questioned, to confirm.

He'd assumed the Upper Moon had left him alive on a whim. If he didn't though, did he have a motive in regards to the demon slayers? If yes, it was probably some personal motive he had, then again, what motive was it?

The pillars around Giyuu startled, not used to hearing him interact with them at all. It sort of confused Giyuu. It wasn't as if he couldn't speak, he just chose not to, and as far as he was aware, they knew, so he couldn't understand why they got so shocked every time he spoke.

"Yes, he had no interest in me. If I was to venture a guess, the most logical option was probably that he didn't care. Maybe he didn't care about what other demons did. Upper Moons are notorious
for being detached from other demons anyway.” Kanae sighed.

Giyuu felt maybe it was close to the truth, but something clearly still didn't fit. He could tell Kanae felt the same.

"You don't think so." Giyuu continued, tilting his head.

The pillars around him jumped again, Giyuu gave them a look.

"You're right Tomioka, I don't think so. I couldn't understand him at all, but that didn't really seem to be the case to me. Though, I could most definitely be wrong.” Kanae finished.

"Maybe it was a matter of pride of prey? Are you sure Douma wasn't taunting Kamado for having caught a pillar? Maybe he was enraged at Douma because he couldn't interfere as he didn't want to fight him? I mean, the top Upper Moons have to be close in strength right?" Iguro asked.

Somehow Giyuu seriously doubted that Kamado was scared to fight.

Kanae shook her head.

"That can't be. Kamado got really irritated by Douma, and Douma was terrified of him. Not terrified in the sense he felt fear, because Douma was a demon who had no emotions, but terrified in the sense that he cared for his own survival. As if he knew Kamado would kill him. He didn't dare move carelessly in his vicinity. That's the reason I'm not dead, because Douma didn't dare do anything in front of him. By the time he left, daybreak had arrived, so Douma had to leave as well." Kanae spoke.

For some reason, Giyuu wasn't surprised to hear that Kamado was strong enough to terrify another Upper Moon, but he couldn't understand why he waited so long. Did he do it out of spite? Maybe he felt a fight wasn't worth his time, but wanted to make Douma lose his prey?

"That would mean the hierarchy in power division among the Upper Moons is steep.” Himejima concluded.

"Surely there must be some rule about not killing each other or fighting each other in the Twelve Moons?" Mitsuri asked.

"No dear, Muzan has no use for such rules. In fact, if the weak demons died, he could keep replacing them till he found stronger ones. Increasing the overall strength of the Twelve Demon Moons." Kagaya commented.

Brutal demons obviously. They didn't care for each other one bit. Still, their normal perception of demons just didn't explain Kamado.

"Oyakata-sama, may I?" Giyuu asked, referring to his own meeting with Upper Moon One. He wanted to let them know of the meeting he had as well. Perhaps it would help in coming up with a conclusion.

"Yes, it would be good to let them all know now." Kagaya replied.

"Kamado is ruthless in regards to other demons. When I met him, he slaughtered a demon carelessly in a split second just because it'd angered him. Still, I believe he was a demon who acted more on reason than blind hatred. I'm not surprised Douma was scared of him, because Kamado was unbelievably strong. So, I think if he wanted to, he would've fought Douma. If he didn't, he probably had a reason."
"Also, just like he ignored Kanae-san, he ignored me as well, and didn't kill me either. At that time, roughly about a year ago, I wasn't capable of doing anything to him, so it was merely child's play for him to kill me. Yet, he didn't." Giyuu spoke.

"When you met him!? You met him and you didn't tell anyone?" Sanemi screeched in his ear. Giyuu tilted backwards to avoid the white-haired banshee.

The other pillars turned to look at him as well, flabbergasted.

"It was a strange occurrence. I believed it was more sensible not to reveal the information on that encounter. Giyuu unfortunately didn't have any opportunity to find out anything about him except his identity, so there was no useful information to be shared. The only remarkable fact was that Giyuu wasn't killed. I feared it was some planned move by the demon, which needed to be regarded carefully." Kagaya continued.

"It sure seems like it. Now that we compare the two incidents. What's he after?" Himejima frowned.

Giyuu wanted to know the same thing. For some reason, he was feeling that he was definitely missing something.

He trusted his instincts. Something was wrong.

"We cannot come to any conclusion now. All that has come to light is that for some reason, the Upper Moons are becoming more active, for the first time in decades. So we all need to be prepared. Also, most of the Upper Moons are demons which are hundreds of years old. Kamado Tanjirou himself, has been an upper moon for centuries. We have old records that state his name. Same goes for Douma and Kokushibou, who I presume is now Upper Moon Two." Kagaya finished.

Giyuu suddenly remembers unreadable ruby eyes. Eyes that had seen the world for centuries.

For some reason, Giyuu felt it was probably a very sad existence. Going on for years, alone, never stepping in the sun.

"Is now Upper Moon Two?" Iguro asked, observant. Mindful of Kagaya's words.

"Our records say that he used to be Upper Moon One. Since Douma mentioned him in conversation with Kamado, he must still be alive. That could only mean Kamado replaced him as Upper Moon One." Kagaya smiled.

"So those guys switch ranks according to changes in power." Sanemi growled.

"Precisely. We all must know ready ourselves. The wind is changing rapidly. If we can force confrontation in this generation, I have no doubt all of you will be capable enough of ending this long war." Kagaya continued seriously.

"I'll crush them. Don't you worry Oyakata-sama, let's see those filthy demons try anything." Sanemi growled, half grinning.

"Please do not get overconfident. The Upper Moons are nothing like the demons we've faced before. If I was to make an accurate estimate, Douma was strong enough to have easily battled two or three of us at once. I don't even think he used his actual strength while he fought me." Kanae commented, face darkening.

The pillars stood in silence.
Once they were dismissed, Giyuu had planned to return to the road. To complete more missions.

For some reason, he stood and watched Kanae-san, who was seated, waiting for Shinobu to come, who was talking privately with Oyakata-sama.

His feet moved before he could think.
He needed to talk to her,
about Kamado.

Kanae blinked at him as he neared, smiling in greeting.

"Hello there Tomioka, can I help you?" She asked pleasantly.

Giyuu was glad she wasn't acting weird. Whenever he talked to other pillars, some of them acted quite strangely. Mitsuri usually started mumbling rapidly, waving around her hands, leaving him confused.

"Can I help you?" He asked her in return, quietly.

She stared at him, a bit confused.

"To... go back to your district? Shinobu might take some time." Tomioka clarified slowly, gauging her reaction.

Kanae blinked and smiled widely.
Tomioka blinked himself, at a loss. He didn't know why she was beaming at him.

"That would be wonderful! Are you sure you're not busy though?" Kanae replied.

Giyuu shook his head and held out his hand politely.

Kanae gripped it with her good hand, leaning on him a bit, apparently, still quite weak.

Kanae gave a message to an attendant, for Shinobu, and they walked out of Oyakata-sama's estate.

Even though Giyuu was usually quiet, out of all the pillars, there were a few Giyuu didn't mind talking to sometimes. Himejima-san was one, Rengoku another, and Kanae as well. All of them didn't have much problem in grasping his intentions.

Still, he had been slightly nervous at how Kanae might have reacted to his offer of help, but she seemed to be completely fine.
She didn't seem to have a problem with his quiet nature.

She was slightly taller than him, he noticed, as they walked out.
For a second he was reminded of Tsutako.

He shook off the memories and looked at the road ahead.

"So Tomioka, I don't want to bother you but would you mind telling me more about your encounter with Kamado?" Kanae inquired politely.

Giyuu nodded and spoke,

"I was fighting a demon, and I'd immobilized him. I was about to cut it's neck when he arrived. I was frozen, I couldn't do anything.
His aura was too strong, it was nothing like anything I'd faced before."
He didn't do anything initially, just looked at me amused. While I was frozen, the demon I was about to kill regenerated and..." Giyuu trailed off into silence.

He wondered how he could tell her that, as ridiculous is it sounded, Kamado had saved his life at that moment.

"You can continue Tomioka, I promise I'll try to understand to the best of my capabilities." Kanae spoke seriously.

Giyuu looked at her for a moment. She was really nice, and she really reminded him of Tsutako.

"He attacked me. Would've taken off my head, but, Kamado stepped in. Cut his throat before he could touch me.

He was apathetic towards the demon. I don't think he cared much about its death, but, even though he was ruthless towards it, I didn't feel he was cruel. It was a quick death. Also, I'm sure I saw him grasp his hands together, as if he was praying." Tomioka finished, well aware of how ridiculous it sounded.

"So, it might be that Kamado actually doesn't hate his kind, just some of them? Like Douma? Or maybe, he follows some set of morals, which would explain why he killed that demon you were facing, but didn't fight Douma? Maybe that's why he left us alive?" Kanae mused.

Tomioka stared at Kanae, surprised. He had expected her to regard the matter as rubbish. Had expected her to dismiss his discomfort regarding the demon.

She truly was, very sweet. Just like his sister, who used to listen to him all the time.

He smiled softly.

Kanae stopped walking, staring at him.

"What is it Kanae-san? Do you need to rest?" He asked softly.

"No, I, uh, you were smiling." Kanae replied.

"It's just that, you're very considerate Kanae-san. Anyone else would have regarded the matter as rubbish. They wouldn't have cared.

You're just, really kind. Thank you for hearing me out." Giyuu replied honestly.

Kanae laughed and beamed, "You're kinder than me Tomioka! I only gave my honest opinion. I also have an advantage as compared to others in understanding the situation since I met him, you give me far too much credit. Apart from that, you should visit me sometimes! I'd love the company."

Giyuu looked at her confused, she just smiled.

"Anyway Tomioka, I think we'll just need to do our best to fight all Upper Moons. So, lets do our
best to figure out Kamado Tanjirou before we face him!” Kanae concluded.

Giyuu nodded.

They made their way to the Butterfly estate, which stood close to Oyakata-sama's mansion.

"Thank you so much Tomioka! It was a lovely walk. Please come inside!" Kanae spoke, at the gate of her mansion.

Tomioka just shook his head, "It was no trouble, but I should go. Thank you for your company."

"Do visit Tomioka!" Kanae replied.

Tomioka nodded his head.

Kanae-san was really amazing. Shinobu was lucky to have her sister.
He was glad that she survived.

Maybe due to a demon, but a life was a life nonetheless.

Giyuu took his leave, returning to the road.
He was going to trust his instincts.
He was going to find Kamado Tanjirou.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you JelloMello san, my dumb ass by mistake, marked the fic as completed. I am in your debt lol.
But yeah, its definitely a longer story.
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Tamayo was a demon.
She wasn't innocent.
The past could not be changed,
but she could change the future.
So she would do all she could, to bring Muzan to his knees.

For her to achieve her goal, she would support Kamado Tanjirou.

Tamayo entered her empty clinic, checking one last time for anything left behind. They needed to leave immediately.

Muzan had unfortunately caught whiff of their whereabouts. His demons were already on the lookout.

They couldn't afford to make mistakes, even the smallest bit of evidence would allow him to hunt them down. They could only escape so many times.

"Tamayo-sama hurry! I've checked the place already, let's go! My wards will fail soon!" Yushiro yelled urgently, grabbing her hand and pulling her along.

Tamayo had tried to be careful, but one of her clients had spread news about her.

She rushed along with Yushiro, passing through the market towards the outskirts of the district. They had to reach the next town, where they had another safehouse.

Tamayo was sure that Muzan's demons had already taken over the roads, so they needed to cut through the forest instead.

Yushiro cringed suddenly, bending in half.

"Yushiro!" She panicked, supporting the boy. He seemed queasy, clearly affected by something.

It must've been his blood demon art.

"My wards collapsed, they were torn to shreds. We need to go now, they've caught our scent!" He gritted out.

Tamayo nodded as they tore through the forest.

They could not get caught, they could not let all these years of effort go to waste.

"They're catching up on us! I'll distract them while you run and find a place to hide." Yushiro spoke, turning.
She grabbed his arm, pulling him back, there was no way she could let him go.

"No Yushiro! If they come, we fight them together! Its too dangerous for you to face them alone, invisibility does not mean invincibility!" She frowned.

"There's no time! In the end, you're more important! You cant abandon your research! If I die, then I die! I don't care as long as you're safe!" Yushiro argued.

Tamayo slapped him.

Yushiro was the one of the only two people she had left, she refused to leave him behind.

"Do not, ever, speak like that. I will never let you go to your death!" She heaved.

Yushiro looked at her silently, conflicted.

Tamayo grabbed his hand resolutely and pulled him along.

"Even if we can't escape, we can buy time. I used a summon to call for help. Help will arrive." She spoke urgently.

They rushed through the forest together, dodging wayward branches, until she heard a distant roar.

Tamayo suddenly felt the wind whistle.

Yushiro pulled her down as a tree went flying over their heads, it crashed into another line of trees, uprooting them all.

"I missed!" A hoarse voice laughed.

Tamayo scampered up, running again. She turned to see a huge morphed demon uproot another tree.

It came flying towards them barely two seconds after.

She scattered towards the right as Yushiro went left, wincing as the tree exploded into splinters upon impact.

The demon could attack long range, they needed to restrain it if they hoped to run. They had to escape before reinforcements arrived.

Tamayo scratched her arm, releasing droplets of her blood. "Blood Demon Art: Flesh Seed." She spoke quickly, throwing a number of miniscule seeds crafted from her blood.

The seeds hit the demon, exploding into gigantic flesh trees, rooting it to the ground. It bellowed in anger as she turned and ran.

While the flesh trees were extremely strong, Tamayo knew they didn't last long. Yushiro placed his blindfolding misdirection wards on two trees before he joined her, securing his pack.

They'd barely moved forward before he screamed. She stared at him startled, as his arm fell to the ground, cleanly cut off at the shoulder.
"You weren't thinking of leaving were you?" A feminine voice sneered. Tamayo flinched, trying to dodge just when a knife embedded itself in her knee, causing her to collapse.

Yushiro growled, crouching in front of her protectively as his arm regenerated. A demon strolled forwards from the shadows, a tall bewitching female.

Tamayo gritted her teeth against the pain, as her body stitched back the damaged limb.

"Tamayo-sama! Are you alright?" Yushiro asked, anguish. She nodded shakily, watching the demon.

She was a member of the Twelve Moons. Tamayo could see the kanji for two in her left eye. If the engraving was real, this was Lower Moon Two, second strongest among all Lower Moons.

"Yushiro get back!" Tamayo screamed. She felt the demon laugh, already in motion. Tamayo knew before it happened, she was too late, the warning was of no use.

The knife would slice his head off.

Tamayo stared in horror as the knife touched his neck, and stopped.

The demon blinked in confusion, as her head slid off her body. Her headless body collapsed, straight into the arms of Kamado Tanjirou.

"Rest in peace, Mikoto." Tanjirou spoke quietly, as her body disintegrated.

"Kamado-san? What are yo-" The demon's pitiful, confused voice, faded before she finished her sentence.

Tanjirou clasped his hands once, respectfully, whispering a soft prayer.

Tamayo sobbed, grabbing Yushiro in a hug. She thought she'd lost him.

Tanjirou knelt beside them, gently touching their shoulders and pulling them into an embrace, wrapping them in his warmth. "I'm sorry it took so long." He muttered softly, kindly.

She sobbed in relief, thanking Tanjirou, as he comforted them.

He led them to the next town, slaughtering all the demons sent by Muzan. After they reached their safehouse, she finally calmed down, thanking Tanjirou profusely.

"Weren't you being too brash? Muzan will definitely realize that something is wrong. You killed all the demons he sent. Are you sure he won't realize it was your doing?" Tamayo asked worriedly. Tanjirou had too much to lose if Muzan were to find out that he was a traitor.

After all, Nezuko was still under his hold.
"You don't need to worry. I made sure I killed all of them just so no one could tell him. As for their memories, he didn't see them. He was too far away for the thoughts to transmit. As for his getting suspicious, I'll handle it." Tanjiro smiled, sitting beside them.

Tamayo looked at his peaceful face and nodded hesitantly. Even if he was in trouble, it wasn't like he would tell her. He hardly ever did, carrying everything upon his own shoulders.

"When did you become number one?" Yushiro asked quietly.
"Last year actually, sorry I sent no message. I had to do a lot of work. I was finally able to defeat Kokushibou, so I quickly needed to act. I think we'll be able to make our move soon. I'm sure even the Demon Slayers have caught whiff of the changing wind." Tanjiro continued, folding his hands.

Tamayo couldn't understand. It was time? But she hadn't even managed to find a cure! It seemed too soon to act.
"Tanjirou, I haven't found a cure, even though I'm close, I think it might still take time. How do you plan to act without that?" Tamayo spoke, anxious.

"It's time Tamayo-san, we won't get an opportunity like this in years. Also, I'm sure you'll be fine. I'll be able to give you some of Nezuko's blood soon." Tanjiro replied seriously.

Nezuko's blood?
"You found her?" Yushiro asked, surprised.
It truly was a miracle if he did. He'd been searching for her for years.

"I did. As I thought, Kokushibou had knowledge on her location. I was able to find out after defeating him. I had thought we'd need to wait until your medicine was developed, but now that I know where Nezuko is, I might be able to get her away soon. That would allow you to get a hold of her blood. It would speed up the whole process." Tanjiro concluded staunchly, staring at his clenched hands.

Tamayo felt her throat tighten, looking at his determined eyes. It had taken too long. It had cost so much.

She smiled as Yushiro grinned.
"I'm sick of him. We'll do it. You'll do it!" Yushiro clenched his fist.

Tanjirou smiled and ruffled his hair, "Calm down Yushiro."
Tamayo felt her heart lighten at the smile. She'd almost started to feel that he couldn't smile anymore.

"Anyway, I'd love to stay, but I have to go." Tanjiro sighed. Tamayo swallowed her grief, he never did have time to rest.

"Do you have some time? I think I want to braid your hair before you go." Tamayo smiled at him, motioning to his long hair in the back. He had beautiful hair, short and styled in the front, longer in the back. She knew he hardly took care of himself though. So she hoped that the small gesture would make him feel better.

Tanjirou looked at her, taken aback. Clearly not used to doing anything of the sort anymore.

He smiled, kind eyes twinkling.
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Kamado Tanjirou was a demon who had a demon sister, he hadn't heard her speak for hundreds of years. She was locked away in deep slumber, captive under Muzan.

He would not fail her. Hundreds of years he had struggled, and hundreds more he would if need be.

Tanjirou entered the Dimensional Infinity Fortress, landing beside Nakime. He hated this godforsaken place.

She strummed her biwa, altering the landscape immediately.

He suppressed his hate as Muzan appeared, sneering at him.

"You seem to take your freedom for granted nowadays, Kamado. I'm sure you know well enough that I've been unable to follow your location precisely, what have you done?" He spoke icily, getting straight to the point.

Tanjirou had expected Muzan to get suspicious but he hadn't expected it so soon.

"Maybe your blood is getting weaker." Tanjirou remarked flippantly, uncaring.

He coughed blood as Muzan sent him flying, crushing his lungs. Well, couldn't say he hadn't expected that.

Notes from the biwa emerged again, placing him at Muzan's feet.

Tanjirou coughed again as Muzan crushed his regenerating chest once more. He was going to enjoy tearing him to pieces one day.

"Have you finally lost your ridiculous love for your sister? I really wouldn't mind getting rid of her, useless as she is to me." Muzan continued viciously, crouching.

Tanjirou ignored the chill going down his spine. Two could play at that game. The time when he used to be scared was long gone.

After all, in the end, behind all the hype, Muzan was a coward.

"As if you would. I'm far too strong and I know way too much for you to risk it. After all, you wouldn't want to lose your greatest pawn." Tanjirou sneered back at him, baring his fangs.

Muzan stared at him icily.
"Go on try it, I'll go to Ubuyashiki the moment you so much as touch a hair on her head." Tanjirou continued, glaring at him.

"Don't try games with me boy, there are a million things I can do to your sister without killing her. You should think yourself lucky that I haven't considered it worth my time yet." Muzan laughed viciously, injecting a syringe and extracting blood from his arm.

Tanjirou growled at him, but did not resist. He glared at him for a while and backed off, bowing his head in submission, swallowing his anger.

As much as he hated to accept it, Muzan was right.

At the moment, both of them were at deadlocks with each other. He couldn't act too brash now. He'd waited for centuries, he could wait some more before making a move.

"I'm taking your blood to see how its qualities have been morphing again. It probably has the answer to why I have so much trouble with you. I don't particularly care what you get up to as long as you remember your place." Muzan ended, pocketing a vial.

Tanjirou scowled but nodded.

It never got easier, taking wretched orders from Muzan, but as long as he was docile, Muzan wouldn't suspect him. His overwhelming arrogance would be his failure.

"As you wish, Muzan-sama." Tanjirou replied coldly, kneeling.

It would all be worth it.
He only had to think of Nezuko.
As long as he knew she was alright, he could keep doing what was needed.

"Nakime, show him his sister.
It'd be good to keep her memory fresh in your mind.
Remember exactly how much you have to lose." Muzan sneered, warning him.

Tanjirou ignored his tone, waiting, as Nakime strummed her biwa.

A glass box appeared in front of him, encasing a sleeping figure.

Nezuko slumbered inside peacefully, detached from the entire world, still safe.

The terror and worry in his heart quieted down, he inhaled shakily, taking in her unharmed features.

She looked just the same, from all those years ago, when they both had been in a much better place.

Tanjirou yearned to hear her voice, her kind, sweet words.

"Take her away." Muzan spoke, coldly.
He only watched, chest heavy, as the box disappeared, along with the fleeting tunes of the biwa.

He'd find her. He'd find her soon.
She only needed to wait a little longer.

He clenched his fists, trying to shake off the body numbing pain.

Muzan smirked, as he bent down.

"I hope you've remembered what you have at stake." Muzan murmured, as he plunged his hand into Tanjirou's neck.

He gritted his teeth, sitting still, as Muzan's blood flowed into him, bringing along a sick influx of disgusting hunger and rage. Bringing along Muzan's disgusting influence.

He couldn't resist this.

He was Muzan's lab rat after all. A sturdy subject to experiment upon.

Tanjirou twitched on the ground, as Muzan retreated, his body struggling to deal with the substance, hopelessly numb.

He fell suddenly, the ground disappearing, as Nakime tossed him out of the fortress, straight into a deserted alley of some human city.

The abrupt scents of multiple humans assaulted his nose, bringing forth a litany of disgusting emotions,
rage, hunger, bloodlust.

Tanjirou clenched his teeth and folded in on himself.

He usually had enough self-control to walk among humans without wanting to hurt them, even if they were bleeding.
His blood had morphed enough to allow him that small mercy.

But it had taken years before he'd managed to gain that level of control, years of sacrifices, years of mistakes.
Years worth of experiments done by Tamayo-san.

Yet, every time Muzan injected him with his sick blood, his precious control got skewered.

Tanjirou knew Muzan was well aware of this fact, which was why he did it in regular intervals.
It was supposed to be a reminder, a sign of his superiority.

Of course, he would go back to normal, but he needed time.

He needed time to subdue the foreign blood in his veins.

He needed space, he had to get away.

Tanjirou slowly controlled his breathing, using his mouth instead of his nose, dampening his sense of smell.
As soon as he stabilized a bit, he jumped, moving to the rooftops of the bustling town.

He ran towards the borders, ignoring the bustling cacophony of the humans.

Thank god it was night at least. He didn't need to worry about being spotted.

Tanjirou had a couple of instances where Muzan had thrown him out in bright daylight, causing him to suffer painful fucking burns and many near death experiences.

Well, he'd caused Tanjirou to suffer through many near death experiences through a lot of means, to be very fucking fair.

He reached the outskirts, and jumped on a road, leaving behind the bustling human city.

It was easier to control his rage now, away from the huge group of humans.

He had to regain optimum control, and fast.
There was a lot he needed to do.

He scowled as the scent of humans became pronounced again after a while.

Must be a small village or some travelers.

He never got a break did he.

He turned, planning on moving through another path to avoid the humans.

Then a girl screamed,

Tanjirou stopped dead in his tracks, sighing.

For fucks sake.
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Giyuu found Kamado Tanjirou, only for him to slip away again.

But, in his hurry, he did leave something behind.
So, Giyuu would find him again.

Tanjirou sprinted towards the source of the scream, he hoped it was just a wandering demon.

So he could quickly kill it and leave.

It was a forested area, so it was most probably a demon.

He wasn't in his best senses at the moment, but he couldn't just ignore the yell.

The girl had sounded terrified, and Tanjirou could never stand to abandon those who needed help.

He clenched his teeth tightly as the human scents grew stronger.

Some of them were terrified, he could sense the fear in their smell.

Yet, he couldn't really smell any demon.

That, was really troubling.
If it wasn't demons causing trouble, it had to be humans.

Tanjirou really did not want to deal with bandits or thieves.

As long as he could differentiate between his own emotions and the ones forced by Muzan, he could maintain his delicate control.

But if he himself got extremely upset or angry over any human, it was very likely that he would lose control.

He paused slightly, he couldn't let that happen at all.

He wasn't in the right state of mind to go deal with the scum found amongst humans.

Normally, he'd just knock them out, yet, today he might even just lose control and kill them.

Maybe he'd be unable to help someone who was in trouble, but it would be better than ending up slaughtering humans.

He clenched his fists hard, and turned around,
he couldn't always help everyone.

His rage intensified as he stood still.  
He was such a failure,  
ever able to help all those he wished he could.

He forced himself to stand still as he heard distant scuffles. They people were on a road, probably from some nearly small village.

The girl was shrieking and screaming,  
probably getting robbed.  

It was a group of bandits, if Tanjirou had assumed correctly.  
About five of them. Ganging up on those weaker than them.

He bit his lips hard enough to draw blood,  

steady,  

he couldn't.  
He couldn't interfere.

Then he heard more screaming,  
a younger boy screeching at the thugs to unhand his sister.

Tanjirou seethed, barely holding control.  

How dare they?  
Sometimes, he felt that humans were just as cruel, if not more, than demons themselves.

How could anyone ever live with themselves, toying with others, stealing, hurting without reason?  

The girl sobbed, asking her brother to close his eyes, as the bandits leered at her.  

Something inside him snapped.  

Tanjirou sprinted through the trees.  

He saw the girl, pinned to the tree by a bandit, holding her hands captive, smiling sickeningly.  

Oh well, guess he needed to lose his hands.

Tanjirou cut his arms off, extending the claws in his right hand.  
He caught sight of the bandits face again, still stuck in the leer.  

Guess he needed to lose his head too.  
He felt calm, ears ringing loudly.

The blood spilled looked beautiful, he admired.  
Such a sick head was better separated from the body.

He smirked in satisfaction as the others turned towards him.  

Such scum.
Guess he'd get rid of them all.

He made clean slices, heads falling of their shoulders easily, of course, they were weaklings.

Such pathetic trash.

They were better off dead.

He looked at the remaining humans, a girl and a young boy, they were trembling, staring at him speechless.

Humans were all such useless, disgusting worms, why were they staring at him like dumb freaks?

They were all better dead.

He moved forwards slowly, it wasn't as if they could run.

He was feeling rather content, soon they would be gone too.

Everything was much better without them after all. They were all disgusting.

The girl pushed the boy behind her, moving backwards, away from him.

Such a pathetic attempt, they weren't even capable of running, were they?

She stared at him with wide eyes, pink kimono tearing over branches as she pulled her brother back.

Something about her appearance pissed him off. Why did it remind him of something? It was irritating.

Pink kimono.

Another girl used to wear a pink kimono.

She used to smile at him. Why did she smile?

'Tanjiro! Come back safe, wont you? There's so much snow on the mountain tonight!'

Why did he think that? Who told him that?

What mountain? Who was she?

She was bleeding when he found her, cradling a dead boy. Everyone was cold, only she was warm.

Who were they?

What was he seeing?

'Tanjiro!' She smiled, eyes crinkling, sitting in a box.
'I'll be back Nezuko! I'll always watch out for you, yeah!' He told her, smiling.

He would protect her. Why?

Nezuko smiled at him. She used to smile at him.

Tanjirou stumbled back in horror, his senses returning.

What had he done? What was he doing?

The girl stared at him, still terrified, tears dripping down her face.

He looked around, at the corpses spread about, at his dripping right hand.

Dripping with blood.

"Please, you can stop now, please." The girl spoke quietly, tears dripping down her face.

Tanjirou stared at her horrified. He had been about to kill her. Kill her and her brother.

"It's okay, really, we understand, but you can stop now." The girl repeated, ignoring her own tears.

He trembled, moving his clean left hand. The girl didn't move anymore, just staring at him, her eyes were so sad.

He tore a piece, off his spotless haori, raising the cloth slowly to dab her tears.

"I'm sorry." He whispered, wretchedly. For what it was worth, he had to say it.

She grabbed the item wordlessly.

He smelled breeze over a lake.

Tanjirou dodged as a blade swung at his neck. It was a demon slayer.

He glanced once at the figure, he'd seen him before. It was the water breath user he'd seen before.

The one with the calm scent.

Tanjirou inhaled, and left, he didn't want to kill anyone. He didn't want to fight.

He screamed by himself once he was far enough away.
Weak, he was too weak.  
He had no self control.  
He'd killed humans again.  
He screamed till his voice was hoarse, punching through rocks with his right claw,  
till the limb ripped off.

*****

Giyuu sensed it.  
He sensed the same pressure from that night, from the year previous.  
It wasn't controlled as it had been back then.  
It was raging, destructive. Wildly over encompassing. Like the demon was letting his power  
explode.  
It was just as horrifyingly magnificent as last time,  
the power of Kamado Tanjirou's presence.  
He followed the source, unsheathing his blade.  
He was stronger now. He'd been given the responsibility of being a pillar.  
Giyuu knew he didn't deserve it, but he wasn't a bastard who wouldn't try his best.  
Giyuu would not let him go, not like last time, not so easy.  
He burst onto a road, gritting his teeth at the scent of blood.  
Too late, he was too late.  
The ground was already littered with mangled, bloody corpses.  
Kamado himself was spotless, all except his right hand, which was soaked in blood, dripping red.  
He was bent towards a girl, a girl protecting a little boy behind her.  
Giyuu raged, putting all his strength into slicing with his blade.  
He would not let them die. His duty was to protect, and he refused to keep failing.  
Maybe he was a good for nothing, but he would try, no matter what.  
It was something he'd promised himself.  
After all, there was nothing left in his life, besides the goal of slaughtering demons.  
Kamado dodged easily, appearing a dozen feet away easily while Giyuu stood in front of the girl  
protectively.  
He watched surprised, at Kamado's face.  
Kamado was pale, his eyes looked terrible.  
Something about them seemed destroyed.  
He had none of the apathetic demeanour he previously possessed.
He almost couldn't believe he'd considered him emotionless last time.

Giyuu startled as Kamado tensed, and disappeared.
He didn't even try to fight.

Giyuu gritted his teeth in consternation,
he would get his answers today.

He was not getting away.

Already Kamado's presence was faded, barely present,
he had to rush, if he even hoped to follow him in the same direction.

Before he could move, hands grabbed his arm.

Giyuu turned around in utter bewilderment, staring at the girl who'd clenched her fingers onto his haori.

She stared at him resolutely, even though her eyes were red-rimmed.

Giyuu cursed inwardly as he tried sensing Kamado again.
Nothing.

He was gone, gone in split seconds.

Giyuu sighed and crouched beside the girl.

"Why did you stop me? You realized he was a demon, yes?" Giyuu asked matter of factly, glancing at the corpses surrounding his feet.

"Don't call him that!" The little boy behind the girl exploded.

Giyuu stared at him surprised as he continued, "These people were bandits! They were terrible! Everyone in the village hated them, so what if he killed them? They used to rob and steal, and used to drag out the women of the town whenever they could! That man was the one who saved sister and me!"

Giyuu frowned and spoke, "Even so, he cannot just murder humans. There are ways of dealing with such people."

The boy screamed in anger, "You don't understand! You don't understand anything! The strong don't have to worry! You can wield your sword to defend yourself, what about us, those who can't? We can't depend on anyone coming to save us in time! Why would we trust any system for such a thing? You act high and mighty, how would you have felt if it was your sister in place of mine, while you were in my plac-

"Enough Reijiro!" The boy was cut off by his sister.

Giyuu flinched, remembering Tsutako.

"It's alright. Let him be." Giyuu replied quietly.

The kid, was right.

In the end, bandits like these, did deserve to die.
Did it matter if they were killed by demons?
Still, this was only a matter of luck.

Kamado Tanjirou would have killed anyone he came across, the fact that he was lucky enough to come across bandits didn't make his actions good.

"Besides the bandits, I saw him do something to you, are you alright?" He asked the girl.

She looked at him sadly and shook her head.

Giyuu stared back at her perplexed.
Kamado had more than enough time to slit her neck, or hit her, he thought he must've been choking her neck or something but, it didn't seem to be the case.

Why?

"He didn't do anything?" Giyuu asked her, confusion colouring his voice.

"He tore cloth off his haori and dabbed sisters tears." The boy scowled at him, clearly protective of Kamado.

Giyuu was getting a headache.

He looked at the girl's hands, where a piece of checkered green cloth lay innocuously.
The boy was telling the truth.

"I think, he was struggling. He didn't seem malicious, he seemed angry. Like there was something hurting him." The girl spoke softly.

Giyuu seriously doubted that.

"He also seemed, really sad." The girl finished, looking into the distance.

Giyuu himself remembered broken ruby eyes.

"I need to go search for him. Please head back to your village. Excuse me." He spoke, turning to go.
He had to search for him immediately.

"Reijiro is right in a way though, I know he wasn't human, and your seemed to know what he is and called him a demon, but for us, he was a saviour.
You can have this, if it helps you. I don't think you're an unfair person, so you can do what you wish.
But, if you find him again, please thank him from us." The girl interrupts him softly, handing him the cloth.

Giyuu watches the siblings head back to their village silently, clutching the piece of fabric in his hand.

The logical thing to do now, was to immediately call for backup and hunt the demon with the other pillars.

He called his crow to him, telling him to stay alongside him, not to head to headquarters.
He wasn't going to do the logical thing.

He thought of ruby eyes, the request from the girl.

He had never met a demon who had not killed humans recklessly. He wanted to see whether or not Kamado Tanjirou actually was special, or had it been a string of good luck that allowed so many people and demon slayers that he met, to have lived.

He was doing something illogical, and suicidal, hunting down Upper Moon One himself, after getting a valuable lead. Of course he had always been searching for him, but now he had the means to find him. This was not what he was actually supposed to do, running off on his own.

Sabito would've been proud, he mused dryly.
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Tanjirou was being followed.
That water breath user must have tracked him using his haori cloth,
it had his essence.
What a blunder.
He was hoping to meet the demon slayers in his own time,
but he guessed they were probably already after him now.
It was way too early for his liking.

Tanjirou sighed as he caught the scent of fresh rain,
a calm lake, a rushing river.

It was that water breath user, no mistake.

He messed up terribly.

He'd lost control, gone emotional. He shouldn't have given the girl the piece of cloth from his
haori.
Now all the pillars were probably honing in on him using it.

Starting with that water pillar.

The first time Tanjirou had met him, roughly a little more than a year ago, he hadn't been a pillar.
But,
he had been strong.

Tanjirou had caught the scent of his willpower.
It was full of icy rage, tempered steel.

He'd been young, but he'd been strong enough to fight easily against Muzan's morphed demon pets.

Tanjirou always tried to kill any new demons Muzan gave a lot of his blood to,
better to let them die early, than become strong enough to become lower moons.

The boy had also smelled distinctly fearless, bordering on suicidal.

As if he didn't care about death.

Obviously, he'd shown fear when Tanjirou had shown his presence,
but then again, Tanjirou was Upper Moon One.
It was sort of given that his presence was strong enough to make even pillars freeze.

He had hoped to knock him out and leave him on the road, way back then.

But, he'd refused to fall unconscious. It was ridiculous. He'd nearly crushed his windpipe,
but the idiot somehow still managed to stay awake.
Some determination, he supposed.

So Tanjirou just let him be, letting him think he spared him on a whim. After all, he couldn't really tell him that he avoided killing humans.

Yeah, that would have gone well.

'Upper Moon One avoids killing humans.' What bullshit.

Well now, after barely a year, that stubborn brat was taking the front line in hunting for him.

What an idiot.

They should've left the heavy lifting to the older pillars. Ubayashiki was endangering him needlessly.

He still wasn't anywhere near as strong as him. Yet anyways.

Tanjirou wasn't dumb enough to believe that he would always remain strong. Unlike Muzan, he knew the payment came due.

It would take longer, but death came for all.

Tanjirou hid the numbers in his eyes, reverting them back to their natural form. Demons were hard to spot for average humans, but he doubted that they wouldn't find a man with a number in his eyeballs suspicious.

He made his way out of his rented room, in a hotel. It was finally evening, time to move.

He'd been travelling from cities for about a week, confirming the fact that the water pillar was actually tracking him, not just giving chase by some wild guess.

It was impossible for anyone to track Tanjirou. Not even Muzan could. The only possible method was if someone had an artifact that belonged to Tanjirou, that had been imbued by his presence willingly.

And he'd done that by mistake, when he was apologizing to that girl. He'd put emotions into it, he'd left an imprint of his spiritual core, his very being.

People did it often, all the time, everyone put their imprints on their possessions, whether it was a dress, a ball, or a blade.

But Tanjirou couldn't even afford to make a mistake like that. He'd worked on removing his presence, his essence for years, pushing his capability to interact with the see-through world properly, to the absolute limit.

All in order to prevent Muzan from tracking him, all in order to get stronger.

Not that he regretted apologizing, but he really shouldn't have given the cloth.

Anyway, while they could follow him using the item, they couldn't pinpoint him.
His presence was negligible till he strengthened it, or lost control.

But he wasn't going to wait around for them to try.

Tanjirou needed the demon slayers on his side, and they would scarcely believe him. So, he needed to force them to listen, needed to provide irrefutable proof.

For that, he would kidnap the water pillar. Absolutely perfect.

He didn't have any back up yet. So it would literally be no struggle to nab him.

By the time the others arrived, he'd have him in his possession. Then he could coerce them into listening.

Well, it was a bit of an extreme plan. He was sure the water pillar wouldn't really like it that much. What with how Tanjirou had smelled the extreme hatred he felt towards demons.

Yeah, he was probably going to be mad.

He wasn't very fond of his plan at all, himself. In fact, it was making him terribly uncomfortable. He didn't want to make anyone do anything against their will. But this was an urgent situation.

He literally had no other good ideas.

He planned to be respectful of course, and he would take care to apologize properly, he wasn't that big of an idiot. His mother had taught him manners after all.

Tanjirou sighed regretfully and followed the water pillars scent, finding him conversing him with a local in a market.

"seen any person with the number 'one', inscribed on his eyes?" The boy spoke, stoic.

Tanjirou stared at him, taken aback.

Surely, he wasn't.

"Mister are you alright? You're asking some really strange things?" A woman replied, awkwardly.

"No, I'm sure I was pretty straightforward. Are you at least sure there haven't been any cases of disappearing people?" The water pillar asked, frowning.

Last Tanjirou checked, humans and the government weren't actually aware of demons. Tanjirou had to suppress a sudden, long forgotten urge to snort as he stared at the boy, who was still utterly serious.

The woman cringed awkwardly, clearly uncomfortable. It was no doubt she felt he was a lunatic. An officer beside the road stared the scene suspiciously.

Tanjirou watched aghast as the officer intervened.

"Madam, any trouble?" He asked, staring at the water pillar dubiously.
The woman gave a sheepish, helpless gesture.

The officer nodded, turning to the boy with authority. Assessing his strange uniform and, and, the very obvious sword.

"May I know why you're carrying a sword, lad?" He asked gruffly.

"My name is Giyuu Tomioka. I'm a demon slayer." The water pillar, called Giyuu, spoke.

The officer and the woman were taken aback for a moment, clearly sensing his true presence, true power for a moment. Only for a moment.

They then frowned together, clearly concluding the boy was mad. After all, they had no knowledge of the demon world.

Tanjirou huffed out a laugh. He was one of a kind wasn't he, this Giyuu Tomioka.

He hadn't honestly laughed in a while. It was nice to remember the feeling.

He decided it was time to step in, before they arrested Tomioka. Tomioka wouldn't dare fight him such a crowded place anyway, so it was the perfect opportunity to move.

"Excuse my brother officer, he's a bit lost in the head. I usually keep track of him, I wasn't paying attention today!" Tanjirou rushed in apologetically, giving a sheepish smile, curling his hand around Tomioka's elbow.

He flinched, but didn't pull away. Well aware it wasn't the place for a fight.

The officer and the woman startled, staring at him with wide eyes. Tanjirou knew he was sort of pleasing to look at, sure came in handy at times like these.

He bowed slightly, strands of his hair fluttering, giving them an apologetic look from under his lashes.

"Oh, you better be more careful boy, he was almost becoming a nuisance." The officer coughed, turning away from Tanjirou, embarrassed. He'd apparently forgotten all about the sword. Just as Tanjirou had wanted.

Tanjirou smiled at them once more, crinkling his eyes. The woman blushed, "It's alright really! I'm sure it must be hard on you to keep track at all times."

"Thank you for understanding madam, you truly are very kind." He replied softly.

The woman flushed and stammered, shaking her hands.

Tanjirou smiled and pulled Tomioka along, taking the pause as the opportunity to escape.

"Lets get going, shall we, Tomioka? Let's find a nice place for dinner." He spoke softly, glancing at Tomioka from the corner of his eyes, still clutching his elbow tightly.
Tomioka himself clenched Tanjirou's hand in a death grip, trying to restrict his grip.

Tanjirou could smell the distrust, disgust and hostility from the water pillar.

It permeated the air even though Tomioka didn't say anything, glaring at him through vivid, unnerving cornflower blue eyes.
He tempered his presence, frigid like ice.

Tanjirou smiled, steel in his lips, challenging the boy.

Both made no moves to fight, traversing through the market, lead by Tanjirou.

Anyone watching them would've taken them as a staunch pair of friends. With how they walked, attached to each other.
The tension in their bodies was hidden by the folds of their clothes, yet, it was all too apparent to the ones in question.

"What are you doing Kamado." Tomioka demanded as Tanjirou pulled him into a bustling restaurant, teeming with humans.

"Why, I just saved you from a pickle there Tomioka, you could atleast be a bit grateful." Tanjirou smiled at him amiably.

"I'll stop you the moment you attack anyone." Tomioka warned, eyes predatorial.
The confidence was admirable, he had guts, picking a fight with him alone.
Or well, maybe he wasn't.

After all, the other pillars were probably coming soon.

"I'm not here to waste my time on that really, I'd like to talk about a few things before your friends arrive, if you don't mind." Kamado replied, still smiling.

"What friends." Tomioka narrowed his eyes, looking at him distrustfully.

Tanjirou sighed internally, did he really think that ruse would trick him.

"Your pillar friends Tomioka, the ones on their way here." He drawled.
Tomioka looked at him confused, a little irritated, "I never sent my crow back to headquarters to summon them. Your information of their incoming arrival is wrong."

Tanjirou nearly laughed with derision, as if.
Tomioka didn't budge, looking at him, wildly confused.

Tanjirou smelled bewilderment, actual confusion.

His smile died, lips freezing in a flat line.
Tomioka wasn't faking.

There was no way he ever sensed emotions wrong.
How?

Giyuu Tomioka was all alone.
"You followed me alone?" Tanjirou asked, perplexed.

"Yes." Tomioka replied, no sugar coating, no reason.

Was this guy actually suicidal?

"Why is that?" Tanjirou asked, serious. There was no smile he could muster. Something about the situation was unhinging him.

"You, you're not like the others."

Tanjirou stared at him, uncomprehending.

"I wanted to know why. My instincts aren't ever wrong. I had to find you."

He had cornflower blue eyes.

Giyuu Tomioka had unnerving eyes.

Eyes that saw through his lying smiles.

Tanjirou felt exposed.

Why?

He had no idea.

But this, changed things.
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

The water pillar was a moron.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Tanjirou sighed, what was he even supposed to do now.

Originally, Tanjirou had been planning to talk with the demon slayers after he managed to complete a few important tasks.

He'd thought that plan had failed, since he'd assumed Ubuyashiki would hunt him down soon, forcing him to reveal his true plan.

After all, he didn't want to kill the demon slayers, especially not the pillars. If they all fought with him, he'd need to lose to them, he wouldn't hurt them, while they wouldn't hold back.

That would also mean he'd have to die, which he couldn't do, he was the only one who could help them defeat Muzan. So, he'd have needed to tell them his true motives.

But, if Ubuyashiki really couldn't track him yet, then he could go back to his original plans and timing. He could make sure everything was in place before providing the necessary information to the demon slayers. The information that would let them defeat Muzan.

Well, only if could take the cloth back from Tomioka.

Seriously, this was ridiculous.

"Tomioka, are you really that eager to die? Seeking me out on your own?" Tanjirou asked, slightly annoyed.

Tomioka was being a moron. So what if he had a hunch that Tanjirou was different.

What made him think he was different.

He had no solid proof.

He could have been wrong. He could have been dead.

Why did demon slayers have to be so careless about themselves.

Did these idiots never realize that it was just as important to stay alive and get stronger?

They can't just protect everyone all the time by choosing to sacrifice themselves.

Tanjirou himself learned the hard way.

"If I die, there are various other slayers good enough to replace me. There's no point in giving my life too much weightage, its not that important." Tomioka replied, stoic.
Tanjirou frowned.
That wasn't the way anyone should be thinking, much less a pillar.

Did he not care about his friends? His allies? They would be devastated at his loss, won't they?
Did he not realize how blessed he was, to be able to live? When so many died, when so many
weren't given a choice.

Either way, life wasn't something to be joked about like that.

It was precious.

"No one should treat life like some casual item in possession. It doesn't matter if it's yours, or
someone else's." Tanjirou replied flatly.

Tomioka twitched.

Oh,

wait.

He wasn't supposed to say anything like that.

"Isn't that what you demon slayers believe in?" He added nonchalantly, rolling his eyes.

Tomioka didn't bother replying.

He was, really quiet.
Tanjirou couldn't remember the last time he met someone this calm.

He ignored Tomioka while the waitress came, asking for their order.

"I'm full I'm afraid, what would you like, Tomioka." He questioned.
Tanjirou smiled dangerously. Did Tomioka have no manners?
It was up to him to eat obviously, it's not like Tanjirou would.

Tomioka flinched as he glared at him, finally caving in.

"Just rice and miso soup would do, thank you." He spoke awkwardly, clearly not in that much of a
hurry to eat.

The woman nodded with a smile and strode off.
Tanjirou closed his eyes, quiet.

What was he even doing.

How did he end up in this situation.
He had so much work to do.

Tomioka was messing up so many things.

He needed to think of what to do soon, and how to deal with him.
He wanted to keep Ubayashiki unaware of his plans for a little while longer, it gave him more
freedom to operate.
To finish up the final strokes.

He needed to make sure Tomioka didn't go back to him after this meeting. Somehow. He also couldn't let Tomioka know anything more about him.

"You left me alive on purpose. You also left Kanae alive, and the children." Tomioka started.

Tanjirou opened his eyes, uncaring.

"Just because I don't go around killing everyone all the time doesn't mean I care about humans. Humans are like ants, weak nuisances that are present everywhere. I don't feel like crushing you lot all the time, it's frankly quite boring. Not worth my time." He replied.

"If that's the case, why did you save Kanae? Or the children?" Tomioka pressed on, narrowing his eyes.

"Nonsense, why would I do that? It was all a matter of chance I'm sorry to inform you. Your hunch was wrong." Tanjirou replied flippantly.

"Why did you give the girl the cloth from your haori then." Tomioka continued.

Tanjirou smiled mockingly.

"Why do you care, Tomioka? Does it matter? In the end, I am a demon. I ought to be killed, yes? All of these questions make it seem like you actually want us to be good. Isn't that against the rules of the Demon Slayings Corps? What do you think all of this will achieve?" He responded.

He just had to make sure Tomioka didn't figure him out yet.

Muzan monitored all the pillars.

If he found out that Tomioka knew something about Tanjirou, he was going to torture him to death personally.

Not a fate he was willing to let anyone suffer.

"You didn't answer my question." He continued still, stubborn.

Tanjirou slouched, not deigning to reply.

"I saw your face that day. There's no way I'm believing that you have no attachment to humans." Tomioka spoke again, still pressing the issue.

Tanjirou just didn't get this guy. Why was he pressing this. What did he have to gain.

"The kids were lying to you. I didn't give her anything. They only believed what they wanted to, since they were in a bad situation. My haori tore when I dodged your blade. They must've gotten it then. Trust me I would've killed them if you didn't arrive. As for my face. I assure you I'm capable enough of having a terrible temper. You were lucky I left last time, I was full by the time you arrived." He replied, matter of factly.

"Why aren't you killing me now?" Tomioka ended, vehemently.

Tanjirou leaned forwards in a flash, pressing his fingers against Tomioka's neck, letting his claws elongate.
Small beads of blood appeared, pooling at the cuts.

Tomioka froze. He couldn't reach for his blade.

They drew looks from the people nearby.

He knew exactly how they looked, the scene almost intimate.

"If you want to die Tomioka, why don't you come along with me. I'll make sure I'll give you a wonderful death, befitting that handsome face of yours." Tanjiro whispered slowly, right at Tomioka's ear.

He swallowed once, feeling the sharpness of the claws caress his pulse.

Tanjirou leaned back, removing his hand.

"You all are spectacular entertainment though. We would be bored without your drama though, after all, we live so long." Tanjiro smiled again, eyes crinkling.

He didn't know what Tomioka thought of him now, but it certainly wasn't not along the lines of, 'this guy doesn't kill humans'.

It was time to leave, he had swiped the cloth from Tomioka's waist. He couldn't track him anymore.

The waitress reappeared, putting down the food.

"Enjoy your meal Tomioka. Do remember there's a limit to how many times I'll let you live out of personal amusement." Tanjiro spoke with finality.

Tomioka stared at him wordlessly as he left.

He smiled at him again and left, after paying for the food.

Good riddance.

Giyuu Tomioka was way too perceptive, and a suicidal idiot.

Tanjiro couldn't remember meeting any slayer like him.

Tanjiro couldn't deal.

He walked out of the market slowly, reaching the end of a lane when Tomioka's scent reappeared.

Oh for god's sake.

Tanjiro was about to run away but Tomioka yelled, loudly.

Really loudly.

"Kamado-san! Please wait!"

All the people in the entire market turned at once, staring straight at Tanjiro, as Giyuu rushed towards him.
Tanjirou stared at Tomioka, smile frozen, as he reached him.

This little brat.  
After being so quiet the whole time, he had the ability to yell that loudly?

What even was wrong with him, for falling for such a shit stunt.

Tomioka clearly wasn't used to doing things like this.  
He was flushed, embarrassed and avoiding people's eyes as he grabbed Tanjirou's arm strongly.

He knew very well Tomioka had only made the scene just to catch him.

What did he need now? Hadn't Tanjirou been pretty clear on telling him to scram?

"Sorry, I had to finish the meal, I didn't want to waste it." He spoke curtly.

"Excuse me, what?" Tanjirou replied icily, still smiling.

"You told me to come along with you if I wanted to die right? Maybe I do want to." Tomioka spoke, eyes flashing, voice like steel.

What in the world.

"I'm coming with you."

Chapter End Notes

I have a really important french exam on monday, then another on friday, which is social studies,  
I haven studied anything.  
Please forgive me I dont think ill be able to update daily till end of next week.  
I'll try to put in updates in between, but I dont know how many...Sorry, I'll be back soon!
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Tanjirou ended up kidnapping a water pillar.
To be fair,
it was Tomioka's idea.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Why exactly don't you just go and get lost?" Tanjirou told the water pillar hanging on to his arm, seething through a smiling face.

Tanjirou always smiled, whether he wanted to cry, or scream, or frown. It was the only shield he could wear on his face.
Smiles were the best way to hide things after all.

He wasn't quite sure he could keep it up though. His lips were twitching, he wanted to snarl.

Why couldn't this demon slayer just get lost.
Why couldn't he just leave him alone.

He didn't want anyone along.

He didn't need company.

He couldn't have this.

His arm was warm, held by someone, held tightly.
Tomioka didn't let up even as they walked out of the city.

"You took the cloth, I won't be able to find you without it. So, I'm sticking with you." The water pillar replied blithely.

Tanjirou could tell he wasn't any more comfortable about this than he was, probably not used to contact at all.
The only reason he was holding on was most probably due to the fact that he was well aware that he'd get away.

Tanjirou exhaled, pushing down the urge to extend his claws.

That was a spectacular answer. Surely cleared up everything.

"Let me tell you, I'm going to get rid of you first chance I get. Which is very soon, I assure you." He gritted his teeth.

"Yeah, you wont kill me though." Tomioka agreed.

What?
Not this again.

"I think I already made it very clea-

"You should stop. Your act doesn't work on me, you're wasting your breath. All this time you've only threatened me. Crowds and humans shouldn't affect you. Demons don't care about collateral loss. You should've killed me already, but you haven't." Tomioka cut him off, frowning slightly.

Tanjirou wrenched his arm free, sending the pillar stumbling towards a tree.

His words were so very infuriating.

As if it was that simple. As if he actually knew anything.

As if he could just turn up and tell him how he was a fake.

He knew.

He knew, he didn't need a reminder.

He didn't want a reminder.

He couldn't afford to let anyone know.

All these years Tanjirou had struggled.

He'd struggled alone.

In the beginning, he used to hope so much, hope for anything, anyone,

just someone to help him.

It had been so many years of hardships and tears, and he'd hoped for so long.

Someone to help him out, to support him, lend him a hand.

No one did.

No one ever came to help him, no one wanted to understand him.

So he built himself from scratch.

All alone, all himself.

It wasn't like he could give up. He wasn't living for himself.

He was living for a purpose, he had to end Muzan.

That was all he had left in his life, his goals.

Sometimes he wished he didn't have to carry the burdens. The need to find a cure, for his sister and for others, the need to destroy Muzan, the responsibility of the hopes of the people who used to believe in him.

People long lead, but whose legacies lived on.
It would've been so much easier.
He could've given up.
He couldn't remember when he hadn't wanted to die.

To just get over with the hellish life he lived.

Now Tomioka, a demon slayer, who'd never known him as a human, who'd never even talked to him,
now he turned up and told him he cared?

As if.

It was never that simple. Never.

He wanted to know why Tanjirou did what he did?

Rubbish.

There was no hope left for Tanjirou.

What was even the point.
There was no way to salvage anything for him now.

If someone was finally here to help him, Tanjirou wanted nothing.
It was too late.
Too late to change anything.

Just because he had a good cause, didn't change the fact that he had long given up on his morals.

He'd killed humans.
He'd already crossed that step.
There was no going back.

For years he'd worked towards defeating Muzan,
years he'd spent reducing collateral deaths.
He'd spent so much time protecting as many humans he could from Muzan, from the Moons.

But it had never been a fairytale where he'd been able to protect all the innocents.

There was blood on his hands, it was never going away.

As if someone could just suddenly understand.

"Don't you dare talk to me as if you know better." Tanjirou finally snapped, grabbing Tomioka's
neck and slamming him into a tree. Too quick for the pillar to react with anything.

Tomioka stared at him defiantly, unafraid.

Why?

Just why?

He snarled intelligibly, squeezing his throat further.

"You don't have anything. You're lost. Being an Upper Moon, or Muzan's chosen doesn't matter to
you in the least." Tomioka gritted out at him, face pinched.
"Oh you would know loss would you?" Tanjirou growled, not letting up.

"I could tell by the look in your eyes that day. I've seen myself enough times in the mirror enough to know." Tomioka gasped, body trembling at the lack of air.

Tanjirou released him, stepping back, pressing his hands into his head.
He felt drained, empty.

Of course.

What was he cribbing about.
It wasn't as if others didn't suffer.

As if he was the only one to hurt.
He had no right to complain. No rights after all he'd done.

"I could never bring myself to smile. It hurt to even think of being happy, or moving on courageously, when I'd failed the one I'd loved.
If I didn't have some of my precious people left, I'd have quit years ago. But you, you're still struggling on, all alone.

You're not, you're not a typical demon. You're not a typical person.
I refuse to believe that someone who carries such loss in their eyes, could ever kill humans for fun. I refuse to.

If there's anything I've learned, it's that the only thing separating humans from demons isn't a need for blood, it's the emotions we feel.
No normal demon cares about those who he's killed.
I won't believe it."
Tomioka exhaled shakily, sitting on the ground.

Tanjirou collapsed to the ground, shoulders shaking.
It was all he could do not to sob.

How long had it been, since any human wanted to believe in something other than what he showed.
He hung his head between his knees. Arms curled around himself
He was so very done.

Chapter End Notes

pHew, a Bit RUshED woops.

Thanks for all the good wishes for the exams !!!
I'll see about making the chapters longer, this was a bit overdue, so I had to make it a bit short!
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Giyuu did not communicate all to well with people, but he was hardly wrong when he judged them.

It was always their eyes. Eyes always revealed the truth, even when words and actions were twisted and convoluted, eyes never lied.

They were funny organs, they could at most hide things for a while, but never lie. Just like someone could only keep their eyes open for so long before blinking.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Giyuu gasped on the forest floor, massaging his throat.

It was as he thought, Kamado Tanjirou would not kill him. No matter how much Giyuu pushed.

He'd definitely pushed them to his very limits though, the Upper Moon had been snarling at him, someone who seemed so calm and collected.

Fraying at the edges.

It was honestly, so difficult. This whole situation.

Giyuu could hardly understand why he himself was doing what he was doing.

All for that look in his eyes. Why was it so important.

Just why would a demon look that way?

He had seen those eyes. He was well acquainted with that look, that utterly devastated look, of failure, of loss.

He'd seen it on the face of every person who survived. Who survived when life had taken away from them so much, but left them with their measly lives. To live in desolation, sorrow.

He'd seen it on the faces of distraught fathers who'd been unable to save their families from demons. On the face of mothers who'd lost their children to the darkness of night.
On himself, when he lost Tsutako, when he lost Sabito.

It was painful.  
Giyuu found it so very painful.  
He was weak, and the pain always lingered.

Cold, deep in his bones.

Sometimes it was all he could do not to sob, clutching at his chest,  
at the pain, which just, never went away.

It hurt to keep going.  
It hurt to remember them, constantly, ghosts lurking in the shadows.

Colours muted, dull, everything was dull.  
Food was ash,  
sometimes even breathing was arduous.

He couldn't feel anything, without the severe backlash of feeling like a failure, the taste of self-loathing in his mouth.  
How could he smile, when the people he loved were dead.  
Gone, they were gone.

Giyuu knew they wouldn't have wanted him to be sad,  
but it wasn't something he could just do.  
He wasn't brave enough to move past and hold his head high.

He wasn't brave enough to smile, to be patient, to be firm, to be kind,  
to be anything like what they would have wanted him to be.

So instead he'd lived with the cold.  
The frost in his soul.

Because it was all he could do.  
It was all he could do.

This was why he hated demons.  
He was so similar to them after all,  
he hated himself.

Becoming a demon was losing the very capability of having human emotions.  
The notion was a familiar one to Giyuu.  
He was always in a muted haze, numb.

Apart from his principles, how different was he from them.  
Not very much.

He hated demons not only because what they did and felt was wrong,  
but because of who he'd become due to them.  
Giyuu was barely more than a shell.  
A shell of what he felt he might have been.  
They stole everything from him.

A demon would kill it's own family, it's closest people, all for blood, for nourishment.
They did not feel remorse.
They could not feel any remorse.

Giyuu had thought they could not feel remorse.

Then what was that look in his eyes.
Why did Kamado Tanjirou look so defeated, so lost, with blood dripping down his fingers. 
With remorse in the slouch of his elegant shoulders.

Why did he care for human customs.
For all purposes, they were nothing more than a source of food.

Why did he smile at a lady in the market, politely cooking up some story.

Giyuu was a human, yet even he didn't bother with such things.

But, this demon, why did he?
Why did he take him to a place for food, such a frivolous pointless action for a demon.

Kamado Tanjirou had told him all life was precious.
And Giyuu had not seen deceit in his eyes.
He'd paid the bill, and he'd left.

Like he left when he'd first met him.
Like he'd left when he'd seen Kanae.

Giyuu was not good with people.
He knew he couldn't communicate with them properly.
He could hardly bring himself to speak.

So he interacted with actions.
Choosing to speak less, sometimes not even getting the meanings in their words, it just didn't register.

Spoken words sometimes seemed just seemed so trivial.

So he looked at their eyes, and that's how he judged them.
Because eyes were simple, they were straightforward.
Eyes did not lie.

Giyuu could not believe he was mistaken.

Kamado Tanjirou's eyes looked nothing like a demon's that night. When he had tore his clothes, and had given a small, nameless girl, a cloth to wipe her tears.

Today again he had seen emotions, flash through his eyes, when he had talked with the demon. They came and went extremely quick, and very rarely.
Indecipherable due to their fleeting nature.

He would have never caught them had he not been searching for them.
He doubted normal people, even other demon slayers, or pillars, would have noticed.

It wasn't as if he doubted their capabilities, or condemned their judgement as wrong, but, everyone wasn't as damaged as him. They didn't depend on vision so much for communication.
Why would they, when most people had no trouble with words.

He’d developed his superior eyesight over years of practice, polishing the sense to its limits. He believed in his capabilities to see, and hopefully see well.

Kamado Tanjirou was an enigma, he hid everything, hid everything very well. And if Giyuu had not chanced upon him that night, even he might not have even realized it. Even he might not have seen through the facade.

If Giyuu hadn't chanced upon him that night, he might never have figured out there was something deeper driving the demon, apart from bloodlust and superiority. A hidden goal, hidden objective.

It was the final straw when Giyuu had chased after him and followed him. Kamado Tanjirou had not killed him, no matter how much he growled that he wanted to.

He hadn't even hurt him much, besides from choking him.

Giyuu had seen some hidden frustration bleed into his eyes. When Giyuu had refused to buy his charade.

He definitely had a goal, and all he did was in accordance with it. Giyuu wondered how much self control, how much courage someone needed to have, to be able to retain their humanity even after turning into a demon.

Not only that, but Kamado Tanjirou had been alive for centuries.

How much willpower would one need to have, not to succumb to primal urges that told one to kill. For so many years, for such a long time.

Giyuu couldn't even manage himself without struggling half the time, and he'd barely lived with the pain of loss only for a couple of years.

It was miraculous, and unbelievable, and Giyuu wasn't going to just ignore what he'd learned. He was committed to this now. He would get to the bottom of what drove Kamado Tanjirou.

So Giyuu had blurted out how he refused to believe his charade.

And Kamado Tanjirou had dropped his as if he were burnt.

Giyuu managed to get his breathing under control, the burn in his body which was caused by the lack of oxygen disappeared. He looked at the demon carefully.

Kamado Tanjirou was on the ground with him, utterly silent, curled up, head hidden between his knees, facing downwards.

Giyuu couldn't sense any more of the rushing frustration he’d been feeling just a few moments ago. He couldn't sense any of the burning tremendous pressure Kamado had exerted into the very air.

It was deathly still, weirdly silent, and just, very, sorrowful.
Kamado's hands were clenched, body slightly shaking.

Everything felt, just, so melancholy. As if the air itself was acknowledging the pain emanated by the trembling demon.

Giyuu could feel the anguish resonate.

Looking at someone who had been so very bright just a few moments ago, now curled up so devastated, so desolated, he couldn't, he couldn't believe he'd considered Kamado malicious.

He heard short strained breaths, resounding through the silent forest.

Giyuu moved forwards, unable to sit still.

This was all so wrong, so terrible.

How could someone who burned like fire, moved like whispers of flame, so rich in presence, be reduced to this.

He didn't know what to do.

"I don't know how to deal with you. Please leave, let me be, I beg you." A hoarse voice broke the silence.

Giyuu inhaled sharply, unable to associate the broken sound with the magnificent speech he'd heard earlier, when he'd smiled so coyly, and spoke words that charmed instantly the lady who they'd met at the market.

Something about him now, was so exposed, so raw.

It was so, very painful.
He wanted to make the pain stop. He some reason, he didn't want to see him suffer.
For some reason, Giyuu knew, Kamado Tanjirou was nothing but kind.
Even as a demon.

This suffering, he hated it. He couldn't let it be.
Not like this, no.
He couldn't.

He just couldn't.

So Giyuu did the only thing he could think of, he never had been good at speaking, so he always had preferred action.

He gently touched the demons hands, curling his own around the clenched fists.

He wished he was better at this.
He knew he wasn't a good person for comfort.

Tsutako had been the one who'd always been so dependable, who'd calmed people down.
But he couldn't do nothing. 
Kamado's hands trembled as he surrounded them with his own.  
He tried to wrench himself back from the hold in broken resistance, but Giyuu held firm.  

Ruby eyes, plain ruby eyes, glanced at him as Kamado raised his head in desperation.  
They looked beautiful without the numbers.  
And they looked completely devastated.  
Just like the time he'd seen them that night.  
But this time he knew, Kamado didn't have the strength to run away. 
To run away and hide again.  
To run away and rebuild a facade he probably didn't even want to keep up. 
To maintain a facade that no one saw though. 

All the emotions were blatant. So crystal clear, and for the life of him, Giyuu couldn't sense anything malicious, anything remotely evil. 
Giyuu squeezed his hands and whispered,  
"I see you." 
Because he did. Giyuu saw him.  
And he saw a miracle,  
something so very incredible.  

If Kamado Tanjirou wasn't a demon who worked on Muzan's principles, everything they knew about him was wrong. 
And for all that Giyuu had seen of him, he'd seen nothing but a damaged soul, someone who did not hurt humans unnecessarily.  
Not even after how much Giyuu had pushed him. 
Not only that, but someone who protected them even.  
He had absolutely no doubt at all now, that his actions which had allowed Giyuu and Kanae to live, were intentional. 
Kamado collapsed into his hold,  
head resting on Giyuu's shoulder, trembling. 
Giyuu gently let go of his hands and held his shivering shoulders tightly. 
Supporting his weight.  
It was the least bit of comfort he could provide. 
His chest twinged as he felt tears at his shoulder, as Kamado twisted his hands into his haori, grasping at him with despair.  

How long had he survived, renowned as nothing but the worst of monsters. 
It must've been, so utterly lonely. 
Giyuu clutched him tighter, holding him close.
Phewwy. Ok good job Giyuu and ok sometimes Tanjiro makes me so sad and I made this scenario oh jeez.
Not to mention, there's a reason I made him an ancient demon from the Sengoku period, fsffsfsfh. It's a sad reason oka.

Sad Tanjiro, guess Giyuu had good people sense but not good communication sense. Like lol, he knows when people are actually malicious or not, but for the life of him, TANjiro help him learn to speak pls.

He was genuinely surprised when Shinobu said people didn't like him poor boy. But it was more like they hated his lack of communication not him as a person heh.

On a completely serious note, thank you all, who support this story, especially the ones who wished me well. It's really amazing!
Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

Kamado Tanjirou never knew how sad he was. Not until he collapsed sobbing into the arms of Tomioka Giyuu.

Something about his blunt kindness was so utterly overwhelming.

It was so very tedious, never letting up. He could not remember the last time anyone had held him, and Tomioka Giyuu had just swept him in, unquestioning.

Tomioka Giyuu was something else.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Tanjirou removed his sandles, putting them aside as he entered one of his safehouses.

Over the years he had maintained such properties, not only for himself but also for Tamayo and Yushiro. They came in useful, one way or the other.

Tomioka followed him slowly, muttering out an apology for intrusion as he kept aside his own.

After Tanjirou had managed to gain some semblance of self-control, he'd lead him to the nearest place he could think of. They needed a quiet place to talk.

Honestly, Tanjirou still wasn't quite recovered from the ordeal he'd went through. He knew he still had damp eyes.

He was utterly grateful that Tomioka didn't comment even once, as they made their way. He didn't even know how to even begin to express his gratitude.

Tomioka had let him sob for a long while, holding him while he trembled. He'd supported him when he walked, his grip on Tanjirou firm and understanding.

Honestly, Tanjirou really needed the support. And Tomioka had just provided him with it, not even faltering once.

He hadn't felt this relieved in a long time.

There was only so much he could've handled everything by himself, he knew he would've broken down at some point. He just never thought there would be anyone who might help him through it.

Tamayo and Yushiro did reassure him, but, they were in the end demons like him,
it meant so much, in a much different way, when a human supported him out of their own choice, after knowing who he was. It was the first time any human had ever seen through him.

"Please be seated, I'm sorry I don't really have anything to offer in terms of food or drink." Tanjirou spoke lowly, exhausted, and he lit the charcoal in a kotatsu table.

His voice was absolutely wrecked, hoarse. Tanjirou wanted to cringe when he heard himself, but he was too tired to do anything.

"It's perfectly fine, thank you. Do you feel any better?" Tomioka asked, worried.

Tanjirou just nodded, exhausted. He wiped his eyes again because this guy was just so, goddamn kind, and he couldn't cope.

"I think I'm better than what I've been for a long time Tomioka." Tanjirou whispered, clenching his still trembling hands.

It was true. It just felt, so relieving to be able to cry, while someone supported him. Once, for just once, he didn't didn't need to worry about anything but what he felt.

It had felt so fucking safe, in his arms. Knowing someone strong was there for him. Knowing that a someone had finally seen through this mask he'd worn for so long.

"Thank you Tomioka, I owe you. It's just been so long since any human has seen me as anything but a monster, I suppose I've forgotten what it feels like." Tanjirou choked out, wiping his eyes yet again.

Gods, he was such a mess.

Tomioka startled slightly at the sudden tears, raising his hands slightly, at a loss for what to do. Tanjirou knew he was probably wondering whether to touch him again or not, while it certainly wasn't that necessary, he really didn't know why he wanted him to.

He ignored the disappointment when he didn't. Guess he was somewhat touch-starved. Nothing else really.

Well, even if he was, he needed to stop already.

He needed to calm down again.

"You don't purposefully hurt humans. I believe in you. I know you're different. I cannot hunt you." Tomioka confirmed quietly after Tanjirou calmed down somewhat.

"Yes Tomioka, I try not to. But, I'm not going to lie and say I always succeed." Tanjirou sighed softly.
He was surprised Tomioka didn't seem to have any apprehension towards him. After all, even though Tanjiro had avoided killing, and Tomioka had managed to figure that out, he'd also seen him when he'd failed.

He'd slaughtered those bandits he'd encountered, he was sure he'd seen him with the blood dripping down his hand.

"Why do you do that?" Tomioka continued, gravely.

"Why don't you tell me why you protect humans first?" Tanjiro asked quietly. He truly owed him some answers now at least, if not yet all the details of his situation.

"I'm a demon slayer and it's my duty. It's what must be done. Demons generally have no morals, and they usually do nothing but destroy lives." Tomioka replied without a pause.

"Well, similarly, I'm well aware of my duty, of what's right and what's wrong. I protect humans because that's the right thing to do, as life is precious. Being demons doesn't give us the right to just destroy life. Yet, it's also true that you're placing me on too high a pedestal. I've not always succeeded in maintaining this principle." Tanjiro responded grimly.

Tomioka was being far too kind to him. Even if he appreciated the support, he knew he didn't deserve it.

It was better that Tomioka understand that even if Tanjiro wanted to protect everyone, he'd never been strong enough to do that.

"So, you lose control sometimes? Or do you choose to kill certain humans?" Tomioka questioned.

"I lose control. Or I'm forced to by Muzan. I don't choose to kill any humans." He answered, voice as firm as he could make it to be. Because he truly, just did not believe, in the destruction of life.

"Why are you an Upper Moon then? Why work under Muzan?" Tomioka asked, confused.

"To bring him down."

Tomioka stared at him wide eyed, clearly not expecting that answer.

"Look, I know it sounds hypocritical, but there's clearly a reason Muzan has been alive for so long. He doesn't play fair. Never has, never will. It's not just enough to be strong to defeat him, otherwise demon slayers would have ended him years ago. It's definitely not as simple as just cutting him neck. I was forced to become his puppet, now all I can do is enable the demon slayers to kill him with whatever information I can provide." Tanjiro continued hoarsely.

Because it was true.

Muzan was the worst sort of monster there could ever be. It was definitely not possible to just kill him. Life wasn't that fair.

It just didn't work out like that.

His teacher had been stronger than Muzan, but he was dead. And Muzan was alive.
Because Muzan was well aware of how to twist circumstances for himself.

"So you've been stuck doing this, for hundreds of years? An Upper Moon who's been trying to bring him down?" Tomioka asked him, aghast.

"It wasn't anything close to that for a long time Tomioka, only now have I been able to start making actual actions. That's because of a couple of reasons I cannot reveal now. This is all I'm capable of telling you at the moment." Tanjirou ended firmly.

No matter how much Tomioka wanted to know, he couldn't reveal too much. Just a little slip up was all Muzan needed to catch whiff of such information.

To avoid that, it was better he didn't know anything important as of yet.

"You said you wanted to work with us to bring him down, yes? Why are you refusing to cooperate with me then? I am a pillar, if anyone can help you out it's one of us." Tomioka frowned.

"Tomioka I still need some time to bring things into place. It's too dangerous for you to know anything more right now. All I've told you is already putting you in danger. Its not that I don't trust in your capabilities as a pillar, its just, these things are too big to tackle abruptly and make mistakes. I want to avoid any unnecessary losses. I wasn't even planning on telling all that I have just now, its really not a wise choice. I would've refused had I not owed you answers. I promise I'll be contacting your organisation soon if all goes well." Tanjirou sighed.

"I am perfectly capable of choosing where I want to take risks." Tomioka argued, stubborn.

Tanjirou felt a twinge of anger.

Seriously?
Did this idiot think he would believe that?
After all the crap he pulled?

"You want me to believe a suicidal idiot like you knows when to take risks?" Tanjirou replied flatly.

"It is my life." Tomioka narrowed his eyes, "I want to do something. I can't just sit still now, knowing what you're actually doing, knowing what's going on."

"So, you're telling me you think your life is worthless? That you're willing to throw it away for some rushed plan that most probably would fail?" Tanjirou hissed at him.

Tomioka flinched, "It's not like my life means that much."

Tanjirou wanted to slap him, or pound him into the ground. Maybe it would fix his twisted head.

This guy had a serious inferiority complex didn't he?

It was wrong.

And just so heartbreaking.
It was terrible to see someone so kind just have no will to live.
Someone so amazing, losing their sense of self.

Tanjirou knew something probably had happened in his past for him to be this way, something
with demons, but,
he just couldn't stand to accept it.

This was the first person to see through his charade,
the first person who comforted him.

Literally the first human he'd talked to honestly in decades.

Someone who hadn't discriminated against him, and accepted his whole fucked up passage of life,
in but a moments notice.

He'd accepted Tanjirou, a demon, even though he clearly disliked his kind.

Someone just so wholesome and honest, so supportive he was blindsided.

Tomioka Giyuu was already precious to Tanjirou.
Like hell would he just accept this.

Tanjirou grabbed Tomioka, putting his hands on his face and dragging him forward to meet his eyes point blank.

"Do not ever dare say that again. If you wanted to be selfish you shouldn't have gotten involved with me. I've already staked you out, your life means a lot to me.

I won't accept this suicidal crap you pull. No matter what you've been through, no matter who or what you've lost, you need to keep moving on, because life is a precious gift. You cannot disrespect it so callously. You as a demon slayer should know very well how important human lives are, and you are included in that group. Do you understand me?" Tanjirou muttered into his face.

Tomioka avoided his eyes, eyes filled with an emotion he was all too familiar with.
Self-loathing.

Tanjirou would not let this be.

"Tomioka, do you understand me?" Tanjirou repeated, forcefully.

This time he received a curt nod, his eyes clearly full of reluctance.

"Please Tomioka, I haven't had any human friends in years. The ones I did, I failed them all. I can't fail you after you've helped me out." Tanjirou finally sighed, releasing his face slowly.

Tomioka just looked at him, surprised.

"Friends?"

"Of course we are! Now that you're so committed to me after all." Tanjirou smiled softly, only half joking.

He did remember the time when he used to have precious people, so very long ago, humans who were his friends, his helpers and comrades.

He really hadn't realized how much he missed them.

It was a never ending ache, and he just hoped they would all forgive him for the wrongs he'd done.
Forgive him for letting them down.

"Okay." Tomioka spoke, quietly.

Tanjirou froze, he hadn't really expect him to, just agree.

A feeling so utterly foreign, a sensation he'd long forgotten bloomed in his chest.

Tanjirou smiled again, this time, the motion coming so very naturally.
For the first time in so long, he was smiling with hope.

He was truly lucky to have met him.

He was glad that he was able to remember such a lost, humane emotion.

Tomioka looked at him and flushed slightly, ducking his head.

"You should head back to your headquarters Tomioka, I promise I'll keep in touch." Tanjirou continued, wistfully.

As much as it'd been lovely to have this moment, Tomioka really needed to go back before people actually thought he was kidnapped, or dead.

"At least tell me, what are you going to do now?" Tomioka asked, tilting his head and frowning slightly.

"I'm going to find my sister. I'm really close, but I don't know exactly where she is." Tanjirou admitted.
For some reason, he wanted him to know about Nezuko.

"You have a sister?" Tomioka asked, stunned.

"Yes. She's a demon too. But unlike me, she's never killed anyone. She's been in a deep slumber for a long time. It's crucial I find her." Tanjirou replied grimly.

Tomioka stared at him in bafflement. Cornflower blue eyes wide open.

"You don't know where she is?" Tomioka continued, frowning.

"Muzan hides her. She's the reason I can't just openly disobey him." Tanjirou revealed the truth.

Tomioka's eyes filled with mute horror, mouth going flat.

Tanjirou just stared at the ground. Sometimes he felt, he didn't have any right to even call himself her brother. He failed her.

"Get her back." Tomioka spoke.

Tanjirou looked up.

"Get her back."

He looked at flashing blue eyes and he nodded.

Chapter End Notes
here yuw go,
more pillars coming soon,
story moving now yay,
im just hype about the current fight with Muzan (manga).
Like WAo

Thanks for all the support, means the world.
Seriously, comments make my day.
^-^
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

There was nothing truly right in their world.
Nothing truly wrong.

Nothing was black or white.
Kanae knew they lived with varying shades of gray.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Kanae smiled as Shinobu ranted to Kanao, tying her hair.
They were both adorable.

Kanao would get better, she knew that.
Shinobu would get better too, much stronger, happier.

Sometimes all Kanae could think about was how lucky it was that she still had so many important people left.
That death hadn't yet grabbed everything from her.
Others weren't as lucky as her.

Death was common to most among the Demon Slayers.
They had all suffered repeatedly, continuously.

Now, again,
a fresh wound had been ripped open in all of them.
A pillar was dead.

There was nothing to do but move on.
There was never time to grieve.

They had a new pillar now. Taking up the mantle left behind by their fallen.

Muichiro Tokito.
A descendant from the family of the original breath user.

Kanae knew he was deserving and strong.
Extremely so.
He'd managed to become strong enough to be a pillar barely two months after picking up his blade.

But she'd seen him at the inauguration ceremony, and all she'd felt was cold.

Muichiro Tokito was a child.

Barely older than eleven? Twelve?
Kanao was probably as old or maybe older than him.

He had been but a tiny figure, holding his own proudly between all the other pillars. His aura no less stronger than any of them.

Muichiro Tokito had looked at her once then, nodding in greeting. His eyes were beautiful, a beautiful shade of green.

But they were, so very empty. She couldn't see anything in them at all.

Nothing.

Kanae had heard of how he'd lost all his memories, lost everything but didn't even know. Lost himself. Now he had nothing but his purpose left. Now he was nothing more than a cold machine.

Doing what he had to do.

But, he was still, he was still, so young.

Kanae had felt sick then. Felt sick about all the Demon Slayers for a moment. They trained children, gave them swords and sent them to fight. They sacrificed the weak, just to move on, to be strong. They never stopped to grieve.

Probably all of them were broken in some way or the other.

Mostly all of them were used to bloodshed.

It was all terrible. Just terrible.

But she'd clutched her chest and closed her heart. She couldn't think like that. She couldn't afford weakness.

None in the Demon Slayers could.

What they had lost, they had suffered, they had to make sure didn't happen to others. That was why they picked up swords. It was the reason why they played with blood.

There was no one else who could fight the demons, could fight Muzan.

So they would all dip their hands in red, grip cold steel tight in their hands, and they would move forward.

Ruthlessly.

Kanae had then stared at her sister.

Her sister who was just as caught up in this mess as she was.
Kanae couldn't protect her anymore.  
She wasn't strong enough.  
Not a pillar anymore.

Now it was her sister who held up their organisation alongside eight others.  
It was now her sister who was a pillar.

Kanae knew they'd signed up for this when they became demon slayers, but,  
it didn't make the circumstances any easier.

She still worried. It ate at her.

Kanae knew, the other pillars had felt the same way she did.  
They had stood grimly, supporting the new pillar, honouring the fallen.  

But not all the pillars had been present that day, Tomioka and Himejima being away on missions.

She remembered wondering how they would have felt.  
Then just as usual, she frowned at the twinge of anxiety in her stomach.  

Himejima had been sending regular reports but apparently Tomioka had gone off the radar.  
She just hoped he was alright.  

Kanae sighed, mood slipping further as Shinobu and Kanao moved on to sparring.

Kanao had now also picked up the blade.  
She would soon be entering the entrance examination in a few years.  

She would risk her life too.  

And there was nothing Kanae could do, except help her hone her strength.

She didn't want any of them to fight.  
But it was wishful thinking.  
The world didn't work that way.

Both Shinobu and she knew that Kanao would do anything to become a Demon Slayer.

If Kanae had to endure the fact that her family was working for the Demon Slayers,  
she would atleast want them to fight the best way they could.

So she would teach Kanao flower breathing,  
since she already had an affinity for the style.

Yet, deep in her heart somewhere, she yearned not to.

She broke out of her musings as Shinobu lowered her sword and sat next to her,  
giving Kanao a break.

"What are you thinking about?" Shinobu asked pleasantly, sheathing her blade.  

"Nothing of importance really." Kanae smiled helplessly.

Shinobu rolled her eyes, "You're always so absentminded."

Kanae just laughed softly.
Shinobu had always been more practical than her.

"Something interesting happened today." Shinobu began, smile going awry as her lips twitched.

She was mad.

Kanae wondered why.

"Yeah? What irritated you today?" Kanae grinned.

"That damn Water Pillar." Shinobu seethed.

Kanae raised her eyes in surprise.
Tomioka was back?
That was relieving.

"He's back?" She asked, curious.

Tomioka had always been an extreme workaholic.
Out of all the pillars he was the one who worked the most, barely staying at his estate.

But even then, he did make it a habit to routinely report back to Oyakata-sama.
But, in the past few weeks, they'd not heard from him at all.

She'd been quite worried.

She knew it was irrational but, she had wondered if he'd actually gone after Kamado Tanjirou.

"That's what you care about? Not about why he made me mad? You're supposed to be my sister you know!" Shinobu ranted.

Kanae just laughed.
She knew Shinobu had been pissed off at Tomioka since the day he walked her back to the estate.

For some reason, she felt that he was trying to woo her.
She barely needed a reason to get annoyed at him.

"Shinobu, I assure you I can very well handle myself with boys. You're my little sister, you're not supposed to be worrying about such silly things! Also, Tomioka only volunteered to help me back because of my injury. He wasn't trying anything." Kanae chortled.

She knew very well that Tomioka hadn't meant anything in that way.
Shinobu was over reacting.

"Have you seen how pretty you are?! Sister as much as you're usually smart, you have no idea what effect you have on people." Shinobu tsked.

Kanae just pinched her cheeks, making her yelp.
Adorable.

"Anyway, I ran into him at Oyakata-sama's mansion today. He just returned from a mission. Apparently his crow wandered off and he'd been finding him. How stupid.

How is he even a pillar?! He makes us all look bad." Shinobu frowned.

His crow wandered off?
That really wasn't what she was expecting. Kanae guessed that that wasn't something anyone expected.

It was so strange it was probably true.

Yet, for some reason she felt it wasn't the truth at all.

"Anyway, he had the audacity to greet me and inquire after you!" Shinobu continued resolutely.

"You mean he was being polite."

"And he sent you well wishes!"

"How kind of him."

"Then he said he would look forward to meeting you!" Shinobu finished, absolutely seething.

"I better invite him for tea then." Kanae replied demurely, motioning over a servant.

Shinobu gaped at her as she sent the servant to invite the Water Pillar from the Water Estates.

"Sister!"

"You're so cute when you get flustered!" Kanae smiled at her.

Shinobu flailed in horror and left, stomping over to stab a practice dummy with her sword.

Kanae looked at her fondly. As much as she was protective, she was always respectful.

She never stopped Kanae from doing whatever she wished.

Later, Kanae greeted Tomioka as he arrived for tea.

"Afternoon Tomioka!"

"Thank you for having me, sorry to disturb." Tomioka replied seriously, bowing slightly.

"Come in! It's no bother!" Kanae hushed.

He nodded politely and followed her.

Suddenly, Shinobu stalked out of her room.

She stopped and glared at Tomioka, still smiling.

He blinked confused as she stomped away again.

"Did she want to tell me something?" Tomioka asked her politely, puzzled.

Kanae grinned, waving her hand and shaking her head.

They sat around a table overlooking her garden, servants setting tea in front of them.

"You went missing for a couple of strange weeks Tomioka, are you aright?" Kanae asked, looking him over for injuries.

He seemed to be a bit bruised, but that was common among Demon Slayers.
Maybe the story of his crow going missing was true.

"I'm alright really. Thank you for asking." Tomioka replied mutely, looking at his tea.

He didn't look sad, but subdued. As if he were contemplating something important. Something had clearly happened.

She didn't believe the crow story too much.

"I heard it took you so long to come back because your crow went missing? Is he old?" Kanae continued, raising her eyebrow.

"Actually yes, he's very old. He does mess up and wander off. Sometimes he makes me very nervous." Tomioka replied honestly.

Almost honestly, she supposed.
She could tell there was still something that he wasn't saying.

Well, it was up to him.
She was sure he knew what he needed to do.
If it was something dangerous for the Corps, he would have informed them.

Most likely, it could've even been a personal matter.

"I know we haven't known each other for long, but trust me, if there's something bothering you, you can talk to me." Kanae responded seriously.

Tomioka regarded her slowly, cradling his cup.

"Have you ever met a demon who still retained emotions?" Tomioka asked her, soft.

Kanae twitched in surprise, not expecting the question.

Did he see something different?
Something that made him ask this question?

Kanae had to think about the question.

If she'd been younger she wouldn't have hesitated to answer in negative.

But, she wasn't young.
She was an experienced pillar.
She'd seen a lot many things.

And she'd realised a lot of things over time.

Things were never as black or white as they'd been lead to believe.
But looking at the world in that way, made it easier for demon slayers to do what they did.

Honestly speaking, demons were different from humans because they were stripped of their emotions, the things that made them human.
It was less about the physical transformations, more about how utterly ruthless they became.

They became unrepentant killers.
Whether they wanted to or not.

Once they were affected by Muzan's blood, there was no cure. They hadn't managed to find one in all these years.

Kanae had seen heartbreaking cases where humans slowly turned into demons, no matter how much they struggled.

In the end, they forgot almost everything.

Everything about what they used to be.

Atleast, in terms of their minds.

The were only a few times when she'd seen anything remotely humane from demons. Most of them when they were dying.

Death was common to all, even demons.

Kanae had seen some of them repent while they crumbled, had seen sorrow in their dying eyes. Has sensed the overwhelming feelings of loss.

Because when they were dying, demons questioned their lives, they were meant to be immortal.

Yet they were dying.

Which meant something was terrible wrong. Then they started to reminisce.

Most of the time they themselves didn't know for what reason they felt the extreme loss for. Choosing to consider it hatred against humans as they crumbled into dust. They died miserably, blaming everything.

Kanae knew better.

It was easier to believe none of them ever repented, because most of the time they didn't. Because they were usually too far gone.

But when they were dying, in those split seconds when their bodies were becoming ashes, sometimes, they remembered what life was about.

Sometimes they remembered what it meant to be human.

What it meant to fear death. To know there was an end to the brilliance, the beautiful journeys of life. How important humanity was.

She wished she could've helped them. But there was no cure. They were pitiable creatures.

The terrible reality of their lives was that death was their only release.

Even in the few exceptional cases where she'd seen some demons remember a sense of their human selves, they never had any choice to do anything about it.
Demons survived on flesh and blood.

Once they stopped getting that they were dead, but just as a starving man would reach towards a bowl of cooked rice, they would kill humans for nutrition when starved.

No one could keep them in check when that happened.

And thus the cycle would continue, no matter how much they tried to struggle and starve themselves. No matter how much they wanted not to kill humans.

It would always have the same result. It would always result in innocent human deaths.

The pain of such a process was probably exactly why even the people with the strongest of wills, crumbled into insanity when turned into demons.

The people who didn't have strong wills, ordinary people living ordinary lives, never stood a chance of resisting at all.

It was easier to not feel at all, than to regret everything. After all, they were inclined towards apathy.

Everything was against them.

Hence, they truly became monsters.

Thus it was kindness, that they let them out of their misery by death.

Yet, killing was still killing.

So Demon Slayers refused to acknowledge such truths.

For the demons who used to be people, and the sake of their own sanity. It was better to regard them as unrepentant monsters.

"Yes, I suppose I have." Kanae replied softly.

Tomioka glanced at her, eyes heavy.

"It's never been as simple as just simply losing all emotions." Tomioka gritted out, clutching his cup.

"No. I don't suppose it has. Not always. Definitely not always. It's a lie we tell ourselves because there's nothing we can do to help. Without help, they become the monsters that we describe them to be." Kanae continued mutely.

"What if we could help?" Tomioka spoke, frustrated.

"We haven't been able to find a cure all these years." Kanae replied, voice cracking.

"What if some demon manages to resist it. To overcome it." Tomioka met her eyes, his own cornflower blue eyes blazing.

"Then things would change. Then I suppose, I suppose,
we might even have hope.
Hope for ending things without bloodshed.

If there was any other way Tomioka.
Something which did't involve so many pointless deaths.

We would be fools not to use it."

Chapter End Notes

Late I AM LATE.
Sorrry if i disappointed anyone.

THerES sOI mUch wOrK iM sOrRY.
The thing is, I'm nearing the end of my course year which has a huge, HUGE,
important examination.
We prepare for it the whole year, we get one shot at it.
It counts for a really important document.

Its in end of feb, so we're beginning all practice schedules, tests etc from now, ill try to
update every sunday though.

Also, im going to get more poeples povs soon. Not too much, cuz we have out main
characters, but someone like,
Rengoku.

just to move along the plot properly i promise.
Tanjirou knew hate was destructive.
He'd been taught to follow justice, not vengeance.

But really, he'd failed years ago.
There was hate in his heart now, deep rooted, scorching.
He'd never wanted to be like this.

But it didn't matter.
As long as he did what was right, how did it matter.
Maybe he fought for vengeance, who cared.
He wasn't hoping for redemption anyway.
He didn't dare hope for it.

But hate was useful.
It felt like deep seated humiliation,
the utter urge to lash out.
It gave him strength.

So he would use it,
whether it was Muzan.
or Kokushibou.

As much as Tanjirou knew demons needed to be killed,
he didn't hate all of them.

Ruthlessness was his mask,
but he prayed for those he killed,
silent breaths whispering past his lips.

May they never suffer the same fate in the lives to come.

He just felt pity.
And sorrow.

Most demons were converted against their will,
their lives stolen by Muzan,
ruined.

The whole process was disgusting.
It tore at their emotions, causing pain, suffering,
so much grief.
It was no wonder most of them forgot their human lives. Or that most of them abandoned all traces of their humanity.

It was easier not to feel, as a demon. They were built that way.

Their existence was unnatural, punished by nature, unable to sit under the sun.

They festered in the darkness, clinging on to half-lives, depending on destruction for survival.

They were utterly cursed, resorting to despicable means for survival, killing and eating living humans.

The bloodlust in their veins shattered their humanity. All due to the sickening blood running in a single monster's veins.

It had been aeons, yet they had no cure for the condition.

The last shred of humanity in Tanjirou himself still wanted to find one. After all, finding a cure and killing Muzan had been his primary instinct even back when he'd been a human still.

Just to save Nezuko. The only living member of his family left after Muzan slaughtered the rest of them. Nezuko, who'd been turned into a demon.

Of course, back then, he'd had a lot of other things left in his life as well.

He'd found his teacher, who'd guided him through the tough times.

Tanjirou had become a demon slayer, reforged his life, built anew. Found so many amazing people. He used to have so much. His friends, comrades, the support all the people who used to believe in him.

Then of course, after being turned into a demon himself he'd had to slaughter most of them by his own hand. He'd lost everything, again.

All due to Muzan, and his band of Moons.

Again he had nothing left, Not even the capability to restart again.

He was a demon, he was one of them. He'd lost his humanity. Thus, he had nothing except for his purpose.

Now, even though he was a demon, it wasn't a self preservation instinct to find a cure. Tanjirou fully planned to die once his work was done. To end his life alongside Muzan's. After all, his hands were stained with so much blood, it would be an insult to hope for a shot at life. He didn't deserve the chance.
But there were others who did. Others like his sister.

Many others, he'd realised, after living so long.

The first time Tamayo had told him about the possibility of developing a cure, he'd been overjoyed.

He'd finally had some hope.

Hope that once he killed Muzan and died himself, there would atleast be a possibility that Nezuko would live a free life.

That there would be hope for all those struggling, the one's who weren't too far gone yet. That some demons could be saved.

Yet, most of all, he wanted a cure for Nezuko.

His lovely, sweet sister.

She'd been the kindest person he knew, even more forgiving than their mother.

Who'd been so astonishingly phenomenal, so amazing, that she'd protected him.

Even when she'd become a demon.

She'd never killed a living human soul, protected them with her flesh and blood, even as her body rebelled.

She'd used to sleep so much, small and curled up, on a box on his back.

Even now she slept. Resting in deep slumber, nearly a corpse, but, alive.

Alive still.

She was the only reason he'd managed to hold on, hold on when they'd lost everything. Over and over again.

If anyone deserved a true chance at life, it was his sister.

It turned out, in the end, there was no end to the miracles she possessed. It was her who guarded the possibility of a cure. Her miraculous resistance, her endurance. Her blood most probably held a scope for a cure.
Even though they shared the same blood, his blood had never shown the amazing transformations Nezuko's had. Him and Tamayo figured it was because of the blood demon art she had manifested.

Now was the time,
he was going to save her.
It was the one thing he would never again allow himself to fail at.

He'd already failed as her brother so many times,
he couldn't afford to,
not anymore.

It had taken him centuries to grow as strong as he was now.
Now the time when he finally had the power to challenge Muzan,
and the true fight would begin now, would all start,
with Tanjirou finding her.

He would have no inhibitions once Nezuko was safe.

He would rip him apart, and his despicable Moons.

While Tanjirou didn't hate all demons.
He hated Muzan,
and he hated the Moons who upheld his empire.

The ones who killed as a choice.
Who chose to discard human lives,
who considered themselves elite, beyond life, superior.

He would rip them all to pieces.

Starting with one who'd directly caused him almost as much suffering as Muzan.

Kokushibou.

The last time Tanjirou had fought Kokubshibou, he'd barely won with a slight margin.
He'd trained himself even further after the fight, waiting for a couple more years.

He couldn't afford to be that weak this time.

Last time it was the Upper Moon One position at stake, this time it would be Nezuko's life.

Because he was the one who guarded her under Muzan's orders.

This time, he wasn't going to just win, he would destroy him.

He had the means to track him, he'd ripped some of his sword essence back when they'd fought.
He was stronger than what he'd been the last time.

Now that he didn't have to worry about his business with the Demon Slayers, atleast for the moment,
he had all the freedom to go after him.

Which is why he was here, at the very temple which served as his home.

Kokushibou had always been traditional, Tanjirou wasn't surprised to find him at a place like this.
Tanjirou gripped his black blade, unsheathing it, relishing in the long forgotten familiar feel. He almost never travelled with it any more.

After he became a demon, there was no reason to defile such a great sword. His was a sword meant to cut demons, he as a demon, could not bare to wield it with his filthy blood.

Yet, now that the end was here, he would go all out, depending on it one last time, for the battle against Muzan.

Then he would let it go, let it leave his unworthy hands.

Till then, he would wield it with all the might of its purpose, to cut down what was wrong.

His blade sang, supporting him unconditionally, as a figure emerged against the light of the moon.

His was a great blade, supporting him even as he spoiled its pride.
He was grateful for it.

"I will do my best to do you justice." Tanjirou murmured against the edge of his blade, looking at Kokushibou with steel in his heart.

He looked at him, holding his own furiously disfigured sword. "So you finally make a move."

Tanjirou didn't deign to reply, holding his stance.

Kokushibou scowled, rage visible in his mad pairs of eyes. Tanjirou knew this man could never accept a defeat. He'd always been too bitter. Chasing a delusional dream of perfecting swordsmanship with immortality.

"So you think you can beat me. I must concede I was a fool to lose at our last battle, but you are a fool for thinking it would happen again." He hissed, readying his stance.

Tanjirou snapped, snarling back at him, "As if I would lose to the likes of you."

"You breath of the sun users are all the same. You think you're like my brother don't you? Think that no matter what happens you'll always be righteous? I would've thought you'd have lost that attitude, what with being one of us. You are no longer human now. Clearly you have a very developed sense of hypocrisy." Kokushibou spoke coldly, curt.

"I'm nothing compared to sensei. He would have forgiven you, I wont." Tanjirou replied harshly, swinging his blade.

Dance of the fire god - first form - Waltz. Tanjirou didn't bother speaking the name out.

His blade erupted in flames, striking Kokushibou's, who retaliated with quick thrusts.

They twirled around a pillar, slashing through an entire section of the building.

Tanjirou needed no time to think. He had no fear.

Once he had been no match for this demon.
Not anymore.
His life had crumbled when he'd lost against Kokushibou. He was the reason Tanjiro was a demon, this was the very demon that had dragged Tanjiro and Nezuko back to Muzan after defeating them.

Muzan had wanted Nezuko for experimentation. There was something clearly incredible about her immense power despite never having consumed human flesh. And Tanjiro had failed to protect her.

In fact, Tanjiro had become the very reason she couldn't struggle against Muzan. Weak as he was, Muzan had no trouble taking him hostage. He was only a defeated, spent demon slayer. She didn't even try to run, refused to leave him behind. She should've left him behind. But she didn't, no matter how much he begged her to.

Nezuko would've been used and discarded. Killed once her use was over, soon followed by himself.

He couldn't, he couldn't let that happen at all. He'd vowed to protect her. He had to protect her.

That was when he'd made the decision. He'd vowed to serve Muzan unconditionally, agreed for all types of experimentation, anything, anything in exchange for his sisters life.

That was how he'd ended up as a demon. And he wasn't going to forget the years of anguish any time soon.

Kokushibou would pay. Those who toyed with lives, who toyed with those who were weaker. Tanjiro could never forgive them.

What joy could one have from acting that way? What made it funny to see others weep? Why did they believe ambition justified everything? It was absolutely unforgivable.

It was a disgusting life.

Somewhere buried in his heart, Tanjiro lamented the fact that people went down that path, but it was in too deep.

At the moment, he couldn't care less. He'd suffered for too long. And he'd never been that strong either.
He wasn't strong enough not to hate.

And he hated this demon with a passion.
He just couldn't understand what had lead Kokushibou to choose a demons life.

What would ambition fulfill in the end? Who was he trying to win against? What use was immortality?

Life was precious because it ended, there was no point to living forever, forever forsaken, forever alone.

He twirled his blade, expertly, slipping into a form,

easily countering an attack from the moon breathing demon.

Last time they had fought, Tanjirou had barely held on, instincts pushed to the limit.
This time he barely felt anything.

His blood was rushing, too loud against his ears,
he could feel everything, see everything.

Too slow.

He dodged Kokushibou's unending barrage of needlessly created sword forms,
it wasn't hard.

He had a purpose,
and he was strong enough to fulfill it.

He had sacrificed everything to gain his strength,
he knew it wouldn't fail him.

Kokushibou wordlessly released attack after attack,
their speed too fast for spoken words.

It was a delicate balance, and in the middle of the fight it clicked, like always,
his vision settling into extremes.

Straight into the see-through world.

Every beat of kokushibou's heart, every flinch, every push, every pull, each muscle, all of the blood.
It was all visible.

Tanjirou knew they were fighting at speeds so extreme he was sure even pillars wouldn't have seen, let alone kept up.
This was the true extent of the power of the upper moons.

It had no boundary.

Yet, Tanjirou did not feel haste. His rage and his emotions pulsed through his body in tightly coiled bursts,
his movements impeccable.

'Train hard enough and you'll be able to stay, in that see-through world.' A voice emerged from his memories.
Red hair tied back with a tie, swinging earrings.

Yes, Tanjirou could.
Now he could do it at will, it was an accessible state.
One he had perfected.

A state he knew Kokushibou was also able to achieve.

They could see each other so thoroughly, nothing could be hidden.

But this state was a completely otherworldly capability. It was something derived of human focus.
A troubled mind had no place in it.

At first he'd never gotten anything but brief glimpses of the crystalline world,
failing to reach the extreme state of concentration that his teacher so easily slipped into,
lived in, all the time.

Kokushibou was snarling, eyes barely keeping up with the flurry of strikes.

The other demon was dismayed.

This fight was upsetting him.

Tanjirou didn't know why.

A fight could always end either way, victory was either achieved or it wasn't,
but in these states of extreme rushes, each person did the best they were capable of.

Most of the time the difference was made not by skill, or technique, but willpower and mental fortitude. How well one maintained their responses.
That was why, a person needed to be at their best.
Have no distractions.

Tanjirou himself had realised this after so long. He knew what needed to be done, how many times he'd need to fail, get up and try again. But that wasn't a problem,
Tanjirou wasn't afraid of failure.
Defeat did not mean the end to him, it meant that there was capacity to grow.
Because he could not give up,
he would not.

He would try till he died if need be, because that was what he believed in.

Someone as cynical as Kokushibou never understood it.
That's why he never defeated Yoriichi-sama.
He didn't know how to accept loss, or pain or bitterness. Things that were natural.

His personal beliefs were shaky, his foundation not solid.

He could never move past any defeat.
He didn't have it in himself to move forward, he always lived in the past.

Lived in the negative.

He didn't even believe in himself.

His pride wasn't strong enough to support him.
What use was pride when it didn't allow one to hole one's head high.

Where was his strength?
His mind was fragile.

It would not hold.

Time had flown past.
It was transcendent.

So many blows traded already, the moon was still walking across the sky.

He could not hold this.
The see-through world he so carefully wielded, would become dust in his eyes.
It would not stay.

It didn't.

Kokushibou swung backwards breaking free of their dance.
His clothes were in tatters, blood running down his arms even as the wounds refused to close.
Of course they wouldn't. His blade was glowing red, hindering regeneration.

Tanjirou was breathing hard, air empowering his very being, eyes wide.
But he was not hurt.

"Why is it that people like you, like Yoriichi, always make me feel so pathetic." Kokushibou heaved, disgust colouring every word.

"Why it it that no matter how much I do it's never enough. What puts you over me?" He seethed, continuing as his blade warped.

"ANSWER ME!"

Tanjirou pulled up his brilliant glowing blade as Kokushibou's blood demon art emerged fully. It exploded with supernova like pressure.

Their surrounding literally crumbling into dust.

Slashes from all directions sliced through the air.
Innumerous, destructive and screeching.

Tanjirou dodged backwards, parrying off the devastating blows, getting pushed back.

It wasn't too tough really.

Tanjirou could see the slashes emerging, the flow of the air being cut, he disappeared across the space, emerging right in front of the other demon, it was impossible to avoid the absolutely over encompassing storm of swipes this close.

He could sense his clothes getting nicked, small cuts appearing on his own body.

Trivial, it was all trivial. The point to winning wasn't to avoid all injury or strike the most devastating attack.
It was to be the one standing once the dance ended.

He would not lose. It was his purpose.
To defeat this demon. He would do what he needed to.
Nezuko was waiting.

He saw the terror in Kokushibou's eyes, the pain, agony and desperation.

He was really a,
pitiable soul.

All Tanjirou could do was bid him farewell.
In the end, he had nothing more than a sad existence himself.

His sister was waiting.

‘Get her back.’ Recent memories emerged, he could remember brilliant,
cornflower blue eyes.

He would.

He could almost taste himself telling Tomioka, as if he were right there.
Tanjirou did it.

"Blood Demon Art - Embers of Divine Peace." Tanjirou spoke softly, his body surrounded by sudden light.

Kokushibou's eyes widened and he striked as the flames exploded, so bright it almost seemed like daylight.

Tanjirou slammed backwards as the slices hit, his arms and torso neatly cut.

The Upper Moon Two flew back, burning.

Tanjirou collapsed to the ground heaving as his limbs and body stitched themselves back together.

It was over.

His sword stopped glowing, the bright night dimming into darkness again.

Tanjirou scrambled over to the crumbling demon, ignoring his own heaving body.
The battle had taken it's toll,
but,
he wasn't struggling. He was fine.

Tanjirou hated Muzan, and all the Moons.
Especially Kokushibou,
who'd caused him so much grief.

Ruined his life, Nezuko's life.
Who'd made sensei feel like a failure.
Who'd tortured his teacher with the fact that he'd chosen to become a demon.

Who killed by choice, served Muzan by choice.

Yet, he stared at the now still body of the slowly crumbling demon,
and he could smell the sadness.

He could smell the terror, anguish, the heartbreak.
Truly, what a sad existence.

Tanjirou knelt beside the crumbling demon, staring at the tears on his face.

It felt like utter despair. Choking the air around them, making his heart clench.

"I... could've sworn I saw the sun, in your... flames."

Tanjirou clenched his teeth, not replying.

The tears dripped to the floor, pouring out through distraught eyes.

Kokushibou choked out a final few words, and Tanjirou couldn't stop himself.

He caressed the demon's face, wiping off the tears, holding him gently.

Tanjirou could sense the gratitude from his tears as Kokushibou stared into the distance with failing eyes.

"In the end... I wanted to be you... Yoriichi."

"He loved you, till the very end." Tanjirou spoke softly, letting the demon hear his voice.

The demon's eyes clenched, pain distorting his features.

Tanjirou let Kokushibou hold his hands as all of his essence crumbled away.

He wondered if he would have learned to change himself, had he not become a demon.

Had he never met Muzan.

Who in the end, did nothing but use him.

Kokushibou never did get any chance to remedy himself, never realised what he was doing wrong.

He wondered if things would have been different, had he had that chance.

A small clattering sound from the robes drew his attention.

Tanjirou pushed away the cloth and inhaled sharply as two withered pieces of a broken flute came into view.

It was in pieces, but it was definitely the same flute.

The same flute his teacher had always carried with himself.

The flute he'd been unable to find with Yoriichi-sama's body after he'd completed the death rituals for his teachers dead corpse.

Turned out, Kokushibou had kept it.

"Hey sensei, maybe he did care, just a bit." Tanjirou spoke softly into the night, staring into the sky as he gently pocketed the broken pieces.

He muttered out a quick prayer and scrambled to his feet.

Nezuko.

His sister, he knew she was here.
Finally, after so many centuries, 
he'd get to, 
he'd get to see her.

He'd get to wake her up.

Tanjirou scuttled through the temple, sniffing at the air the best he could, he could smell her.

He removed the massive amounts of debris from the utterly collapsed temple and nearly 
environment, 
from his fight with Kokushibou, 
as he unearthed a stairway to a lower chamber.

Oh god, she was here.

Tanjirou scrambled down the stairs, heart beating like a drum, 
blood rushing through his ears again, 
because, 
because he was finally here.

He was finally here.

Everything fell into deathly silence as he stared at the box kept on a pedestal, at the centre of a 
room lit by burning orange lamps.

Nezuko.

He removed the lid and stared at the sleeping figure.

A pale girl, clad in a clearly crumbling old pink kimono, her favourite kimono.

Rough dark cloak.

Long dark hair tinted with orange.

She was a mess, just like the last time he'd seen her.

Last time, as Muzan had kept her so close yet so out of his reach.

He could hold her now, 
reach out for her.

Tanjirou could only feel ethereal disbelief as he stared at her sleeping figure, chest moving up and 
down slowly.

Then he slowly reached forward, grabbing her pale hands, with sharp perfect claws.

Warm, she was warm.

And, 
so very real.

Tanjirou instantly collapsed beside her, the delicate moment of silence breaking with his wailing 
sobs.
"Nezuko, Nezuko wake up, wake up, I'm here. I-I'm here. Its me Tanjirou, come on now. Wake up," Tanjirou sobbed into his hands as he knelt beside her.

Just when he'd been turned into a demon.

He'd told Nezuko to go to sleep.

To sleep for a long time.

He'd told her he would wake her up, and she would know, and she just needed to wait.

From that day, she'd been comatose, much to the ire of Muzan, who could not wake her, no matter how much of his blood he injected into her.

Her blood which had shown tremendous results, now showed nothing.

As if all her cells had gone into sleep with her.

Tanjirou knew Nezuko regained her strength by sleeping, so she had the capacity to sleep for long periods of time, in a coma like state.

He was glad she did as he asked, through sheer fucking will.

She did as he asked,
just as she always did, always miraculous.

It prevented Muzan from trying anything, and he'd shifted all his focus to Tanjirou.

He couldn't have been more grateful.

Now she could wake up, because he was here.

He was here.

He sobbed for god knew how long, crouching in a dusty underground chamber.

Hours went by and a cold hand gripped his heart.

She wasn't waking up.

Just as he was about to scream in panic, she jolted.

Tanjirou stared at her dumbly as she rubbed her eyes.

Pale pink orbs regarding him.

Awake.

"Tanjirou!" She grinned.

He very impressively grabbed her in a hug, still wailing.

Chapter End Notes

Im liking where this is going. Exams galore now, JESUS So many. News update, they last till end of march.
yeah i kno, greate life of mine.
Also, lol yay Tanjirot.
AND uh kokushibou, why you being so sad man.
Wish you had a better time, maybe if your father didn't raise you to be a douchebag.
'future head of the family bullshit'

I'm taking slight snippets from the manga but don't worry, no direct spoilers because this story has obviously got a different plot.
So if any of you is wondering, it's safe-ish I suppose. This might change in the future though.
Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

Urokodaki Sakonji had lived a long, regretful life. His days as a water pillar were far behind him, and teaching new slayers was just about the only thing he could do. Yet, he'd always failed as a teacher as well. He'd failed so many of his students. So many young lives, snuffed out before their time.

So he refused to teach any more, living an empty life. The only comfort in his life came from the students he still had left. Tomioka Giyuu was one of them. He was a magnificent slayer, a pillar. He couldn't have been more proud.

But, sometimes he worried. He wondered about Giyuu's sanity.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Urokodaki Sakonji led a simple life. His days consisted of chopping trees, chopping the occasional demon at night, replying to some letters every once in a while, and giving refuge to the occasional slayer.

His normal evenings did not have anything remotely exciting.

His boring evenings were not supposed to involve any of the demon Moons. Especially not Upper Moon One.

Sakonji calmed his fanatic heart and clenched his sword, staring down the magnificent demon, who had a regal air, as he simply walked towards him.

The number and rank in his eyes, were unmistakable.

This was ridiculous. More than fifty years as an active demonslayer, and he had to meet an Upper Moon after he was retired?

The burgundy haired demon smiled, walking forth with some sort of box on his back.

"Hello!"

Sakonji didn't reply, waiting for the demon to strike. The demon was far too cheerful, it was abnormal.
"Nice to meet you Urokodaki-san! I don't think we've officially met before!" The demon beamed, ignoring the sword Sakonji had pointed at him. How in the world the demon knew about him, he had no idea.

The demon walked straight into his hut and kept the box down, sitting down beside it. Just what in the world?

"You really should come in, it's your house after all!" The demon continued cheerfully.

Sakonji was wondering how probable was it that he'd finally gone mad. Surely, he'd have to have gone insane right?

"Alright, I am sorry for barging in like this, but really, times a bit thin, so if we could please get down to business?" The Upper Moon spoke, some of his good humour disappearing.

"I might be retired, demon, but I haven't forgotten how to use my sword." Sakonji replied icily, not lowering his blade.

"Surely you're curious? I'm sure you'd like some answers? Or would you like to try a bout first? It won't be very productive for you, Urokodaki-san." The demon continued, smirking apologetically.

Sakonji couldn't suppress the shiver that crawled up his spine. He mustered his courage and entered his home, staring warily at the incongruous being. He wasn't stupid enough to lower his guard even for a second as he himself sat. Well, both he and the demon knew who was going to win, if he was going to die, it was better to die with answers at least.

"My name is Kamado Tanjiro. I used to be Upper Moon One till yesterday. But frankly, the only reason I'd worked for him was because I used to have no choice. Now things have changed. I would like to help the Demon Slayer Corps to defeat him soon." The demon spoke, perfectly seriously.

What?

Did he think that he could toy with Sakonji? He was a seasoned slayer, as if he would fall for such nonsense. Even though his sense of smell wasn't revealing the scent of deceit, Sakonji could call bluff when he saw it.

"What reason do you have to sprout such rubbish, boy? Do you like toying with people? Does it give you some sick satisfaction?" Sakonji scoffed.

"Muzan knows that I'm going to try and work with the Demon Slayers Corps, but he can't let that happen at any cost. So, he'll start sending the other Moons to try and kill me or destroy the Corps, to do his best to stop us before I reveal his powers to you and we can attack him." Kamado continued, voice unwavering.

What absolute blasphemy. Such falsities. This demon should have been reeking of deceit. Yet, he somehow wasn't.

His stupid lies were worth nothing. He must've done something to ensure that Sakonji's sense of
smell wouldn't be active.
With the wide plethora of blood demon arts that the demons had, surely it was quite possibly easy for an Upper Moon to do something of the sort.
Hence, he wasn't getting the usual scent signals that allowed him to sense emotions, like deceit.

Yet, surely he must have known Sakonji would see through them, he was a former Pillar after all.
He wasn't quite so gullible.
Why was he still trying such a stupid ruse?

"Urokodaki-san, I'm really not lying. Surely your sense of smell can tell you I'm being honest."
Kamado spoke, voice urgent

"What guarantee is there that you haven't muddled my senses with some blood demon art? You should stop playing around. I'm not buying it. If you want to kill me then I'll be willing to give you a fight." Sakonji scoffed, narrowing his eyes.

"Blood Demon Art - Embers of Divine Peace." Kamado spoke softly, instantly bringing to life warm flames in his hands.

Sakonji startled, reaching for his sword and jumping back, but stilling as Kamado snuffed the lovely light out.

"Every demon, except Muzan, has only one brand of demon art, you can clearly see mine has nothing to do with coercion techniques or hallucinogenic substances. Both me and my sister have similar fiery, blood demon arts." Kamado spoke resolutely, staring at him with fierce eyes.

Sakonji was feeling, a bit lost.
What the demon had said was true. No demon possessed the capability to work with two different brands of demon arts, their techniques were limited to their own special branch only.

If this was true, then whatever the demon had said till now was true, because Sakonji hadn't smelted the bitter metallic tang of deceit.
Till now, as long as his senses weren't tampered with, his nose was never wrong.

"Anyway Urokodaki-san, I don't mean to undermine you, you are still truly very skilled, but I could've killed you the moment I saw you. If I had wanted to." Kamado admitted, albeit sheepishly.
As if he didn't want to disrespect Sakonji.

Sakonji stared at the, apparently earnest demon.
Somehow he'd never figured that the Upper Moon One would have been such a polite person, or been on their side.

He had no idea what to do. Was he supposed to believe him? Help him? A so called former Upper Moon? Someone who'd apparently been forced to serve Muzan?
But, in the end, he was a transformed demon. He'd lost his humanity. How could he differentiate between right or wrong?
What motive did he have for doing any of this?

Sakonji had a ton of questions, he wasn't even sure about what he needed to ask.
"Why are you here? Even if what you've said is true, I'm retired, why not talk to an active pillar? I'm not actively involved enough to help you plan anything with the forces anyway." He finally asked warily, settling for a sort of mundane question after the poignant silence.
"That's actually one of the reasons why I'm here. I was hoping you could call Tomioka here through your crows. I can't reach him as he's in your hidden village. Your village has too many wards and alarms for me to waltz it, it would cause way too much chaos." Kamado admitted softly.

Sakonji could have sworn his heart stopped beating.
Tomioka!?

He had a sinking feeling in his stomach.

Somehow, he had a feeling Giyuu had probably not been doing normal demon slayer missions if the Upper Moon One knew him.
That trouble child, oh god.

"Giyuu? Why exactly Giyuu? He's one of the younger pillars, it would be better to talk to the stone pillar." Sakonji managed to choke out.

Kamado shook his head slightly, smiling a bit.

This could not be good.

"I can't talk to anyone else, it won't be too productive. They won't believe me. Tomioka is the best choice, that's because he knows me. I won't have to waste any time convincing him, he's a friend after all. He helped me out once! Your former student really is very amazing, Urokodaki-san!" Kamado continued, oblivious to Sakonji's rising blood pressure.

Giyuu knew him.

Giyuu was a friend. Friend with an Upper Moon demon.

Giyuu had helped him.

Just what.
W H A T.

"Did y-you just, Giyuu?! What?" Sakonji screeched.

"Yeah, I know. I too, was pretty surprised when he stuck to me." Kamado nodded sagely.

Sakonji knew how he was going to die.

He would die due to a heart attack. Because he was pretty sure his blood pressure wasn't supposed to go this high.
Because he had an absolutely suicidal student who didn't care one bit about his teacher.

"Urokodaki-san?"

"Give me a moment brat." Sakonji wheezed.

"Anyway, I'm sorry to be so abrupt. Time is of the essence though, I want to make sure the least number of people die." Kamado continued grimly.

Sakonji gathered himself, focusing on the issue.

"You're a mystery boy, I can barely understand what you're doing, and why you're doing what you are. To be honest, I don't think it's logical that I trust you at all, even though my nose tells me you're not lying. So at least tell me this, boy, why? Why would a demon like you want to save
lives? Also, how are you saying his name, doesn't he place a curse on all demons to keep them under his thumb?" He asked, voice steely.

"Same reason as you really, I just know life needs to be protected. I understand what's right and what's not. Which is why demons need to be stopped. I agree, the situation needs to change. As for the curse, I'll put it this way. My blood has overcome it." Kamado replied, looking at his hands solemnly.

"Really? Your beliefs haven't matched your activities. You served him till yesterday, you said so! It's hard to believe a demon as strong as you, Upper Moon One was forced to work for him. It doesn't add up. To be honest its quit hypocritical, your story barely makes any sense. You can't expect anyone to believe that you've never killed anyone. Its your belief that life is precious right? Then why kill people?" Sakonji continued, skeptic.

Kamado didn't reply for a while, as if thinking of how to speak.

"My story is not easy to explain. And, in the end you're right, stories can't justify the consequences of my actions. For a long time, no matter what I believed in, I had to do whatever Muzan wished. I suppose I wasn't strong enough to uphold my beliefs, that was my fault. But, I won't give up on them. I have a chance to live with my beliefs now, so I will. I must do my part before dying. To validate my beliefs just a little, if nothing else. As for humans, yes, I have killed.

I have.

There's no denying it. I don't expect my crimes to be washed away even if I help you all get rid of Muzan. You demon slayers can all kill me in whichever way you want after we win. I won't dare to resist." Kamado finally replied, eyes catching the moonlight.

Sakonji felt something settle deep in his soul as he stared at the resolute ruby eyes.

If Kamado Tanjirou intended to do what he said, he had a terrible time awaiting him. What a sad fate.

Even if the demon slayers acquiesced to work with a demon an Upper Moon at that, which was a big 'if' in itself, they definitely wouldn't take to him with any kindness.

This was all probably a ruse in the end. Maybe Sakonji was falling for an elaborate trap to eliminate the current water pillar. Something to draw out Giyuu, to catch him defenseless.

Maybe Sakonji was making a huge mistake, a mistake that would ruin the demon slayers.

But, his instincts weren't warning him against Kamado. His instincts wanted him to trust him.

As a demon slayer, his instincts had saved his life and of many others. It was a honed quality in every active demon slayer.

His instincts has never failed him. So he'd take the risk.

Because if the demon wasn't lying, he was proposing a solution to end the reign of demons. To end the suffering and destruction wrought by the despicable demon father, Muzan.
"Fine. I'll summon him." Sakonji agreed gruffly.

Kamado startled, clearly not having expected for Sakonji to agree so easily.

He muttered out a grateful thanks and remained in the hut as Sakonji walked out of the hut, moving away a veritable distance before calling his Kasugai crow. Every demon slayer, retired or not, had these. It was a good means of communication, Sakonji supposed.

"Tell Giyuu I've asked him to visit me if and only if he has a demon friend. If not, ask him to stay put wherever he is. Tell him this is an express order. He must not disobey me." Sakonji murmured.

His crow looked him over with clever, expressive eyes before leaping into the night.

Sakonji was no fool.

Giyuu was honest and straightforward.

If he truly knew of Kamado, in the way Kamado claimed, he would come. If not, well, he wouldn't.

That would prove Kamado's lies, or refute them.

He walked back to his hut, only to find a girl sitting with Kamado.

He hadn't sensed her at all.

"Oh, Urokodaki-san, I'd like you to meet my sister, Nezuko! She rests a lot, so she travels with me in that box. She came out after she woke up." Kamado introduced enigmatically.

Travels in a box? That weird box he was carrying, had someone in it?

Also, sister? What in the world? A demon, someone to care for?

This was miraculous.

Kamado Tanjirou was an enigma. The more he got glimpses of the demon, the more confused he truthfully got.

It wasn't just a girl, he realised as he moved closer. It was another demon. Who smelled a lot like Kamado.

That was probably why he hadn't caught her scent, it was hidden by Kamado's.

The perplexing thing was that, she was extremely small, but still bigger than the box that Kamado had carried.

"She can shapeshift! Actually, she's really powerful! But, she still can't speak whole sentences yet. She's getting there though." Kamado continued, noting his confusion, obviously fond of the little girl as he pinched her cheeks, making the small demon giggle.

Sakonji was dumbstruck by how emotive Kamado was being. Till now while he had seen the demon being quite open, much more than any other he'd ever seen, now, his character was so much more plain and simple.
Kamado looked so wonderfully happy.

His and his sister's eyes were nearly shining with joy. Neither of them could keep grins off their faces.
He'd never imagined that demons were capable of feeling to this extent.

It was astonishing.
And heartbreaking.

Were all demons capable of developing such emotions? Such humane characters?
To love a sibling? A family member? Or even just another demon, human or any other person?

Did all demons carry with them, such feelings?

Probably not.

It was obvious that these two were big exceptions, because only very few demons managed to keep some shreds of their humanity after their transformed, actually keeping some semblance of real emotions.

Not only that, but Muzan had always prevented demons from working together.
They had overcome that barrier as well.

But, amazing as they were, they made his stomach clench.

What if many demons had such a capability. But, they never got a chance to manifest it?

Sakonji would be lying if he said that he'd always seen demons only pillaging and killing.

Over his long career, he'd seen conflicted ones, ones desperately trying to hold on to humanity. Even if they failed in the end.

But since they had no cure, Demon Slayers had to cut them down.

After all, they couldn't live without blood. They would go feral one day or the other. So the cost for their survival was the lives of other humans.
That wasn't something they could allow either.

Wasn't it wrong of them though? To deprive them of the capability to become anything better than what they were forced to become?
Demon Slayers killed them, they never had a chance to change.

Why wasn't there another way? This whole world was a mess.

What a vicious cycle.

"Is she your real sister?" Sakonji asked cautiously, sitting once again.

"She is." Kamado replied simply.

Sakonji inhaled sharply. This demon could not be serious.
Some lingering attachments to their lives as humans was already rare enough of an occurrence, but to have distinct memories and emotions left over from those lives...

It was bewildering.

"So, you were called Kamado Tanjirou, and Nezuko even as humans?" Sakonji asked perplexed.

Kamado nodded whereas his sister grew larger to nearly match his age.

This was probably her actual size, or well, the one she felt she was supposed to be in.

The female demon looked at him with curious pale pink eyes.

Intelligent eyes.

"How? How have you both stayed together? How do feel so much still? Don't most demons lose the capability to feel? What makes you different?" Sakonji questioned, frowning.

"It's a long story. Now isn't the right time for it. I promise I'll explain it to you and all the current pillars together." Kamado replied.

"To be fair, the only one remotely special out of us both is Nezuko. My sister has never eaten human flesh or drunk human blood." Kamado spoke, steel in his voice.

No.

That was ridiculous.

It just couldn't be.

A demon surviving without flesh and blood?

"You can't expect me to believe that." Sakonji responded, skeptic.

"I'll prove it. I have evidence. In the end, she's never done anything wrong, unlike me." Kamado replied seriously.

"It's never been a matter of choice! How has she not gone feral? How is she still alive then?" Sakonji argued.

"Nezuko sleeps. She has enough willpower to force her body to work without them. In fact, ever since she turned a human, almost all her time, she's spent sleeping." Kamado spoke, explaining.

Sakonji looked at the girl consideringly, she'd fallen asleep on her brother's shoulder.

The girl had a constant peaceful air, it was soothing. Her manner really did have no chaotic elements, she was quite calm.

It was absolutely impossible to think that there was a demon surviving like that, and yet,

if it was true,

it would change so much.

Sakonji thought about her clear eyes, intelligent eyes.

Maybe it would mean there's hope, even for those who get turned into demons.

He stayed awake the entire night, looking over the motionless siblings.
Kamado wasn't sleeping either, simply sitting politely, throughout the time that his sister slept.

When daybreak finally arrived, Sakonji immediately moved outside, tired.

As long as the sun was out, Kamado and his sister were trapped in his house.

They were vulnerable in there.

Sakonji wondered how much effort it would take to destroy the hut and let sunlight filter inside.

Probably a bit, but not too much.

But he wasn't going to.

What a wonder that was.

Sakonji sat leaning on a rock, sleeping for a while with the rays of the sun shining on his head.

Better to rest in the light.

When he came to, the sun was high up in the sky.

It was already afternoon.

He wondered if Giyuu would come.

He wondered if he wanted him to come.

What exactly that would mean for the Demon Slayers.

He drifted off again.

Next time he came to, a hand bathed in the colours of the fading sun was shaking his shoulder.

A familiar face was crouching beside him.

Sakonji immediately paled, staring at Giyuu with surprise.

"Are you alright, sensei?" The boy asked, in his same, curt manner.

"You came." Sakonji replied, astonished.

Giyuu just nodded, looking back at him confused.

Kamado hadn't been lying.

"Giyuu, how do you know Kamado?" Sakonji asked, narrowing his eyes as he stood up.

Giyuu stilled, staring at him carefully.

He probably knew Sakonji was mad.

"It's a long story sensei." He replied softly, not meeting his eyes.

"Sure is." A voice piped in.

Giyuu whirled, nearly pulling out his sword.

"Hello Tomioka." Kamado smiled, standing without abandon under the purple, violet shade of the late evening sky.

Clearly, this much sunlight didn't hurt him.
"Kamado." Giyuu exhaled, something unidentifiable colouring his words as he sheathed his sword. Sakonji watched as his student relaxed, clearly familiar with the man.

"You know Tomioka, I did it." Kamado continued, breaking into a grin.

Giyuu raised his eyebrows in surprise and then, he smiled, lips curling up slightly at the corners.

Sakonji was baffled, but holy god.

His stupid student, who barely smiled anymore, was smiling.

This demon was something else.

"Hey would you look at that, you should smile more!" Kamado immediately replied, poking Giyuu.

Giyuu just shrugged.

Wow, alright, Sakonji was missing a lot of stuff. They were definitely used to each other.

Apparently the thing about being friends wasn't a lie.

But, seriously, how his ridiculous student, who was never good at making any friends, or communicating with other, managed to befriend Upper Moon One, he did not know.

He didn't even have any idea of how that might have happened.

Yet, if Giyuu trusted this demon, he would too.

Because, of all the people Sakonji knew, no one was better at judging true character than Giyuu.

Kamado immediately pulled Giyuu into the hut and Sakonji followed them to find him introducing Giyuu to his sister.

He smiled himself as the girl, Nezuko, grabbed hold of Giyuu's hand, grinning at him.

Giyuu was clearly flustered, unused to such blatant adoration.

Seriously, goodness, Kamado and his sister were reducing him to a pile of mush.
Well, it was sweet.

Sakonji left the hut, giving the kids privacy, waiting outside as he stared at the twinkling stars.

Times were changing.

Sakonji guessed he did believe in Kamado, he had this plain, kind charm after all.

All straightforward bullheadedness.

Maybe he wasn't too bad of a kid after all.

He could definitely believe a lot was coming though, he could feel it.

His instincts were never wrong.

Suddenly, a figure joined him.

"Thank you." Kamado bowed to him respectfully, before immediately turning around and disappearing into the night.

Sakonji turned around to find Giyuu and Nezuko standing behind him.

Nezuko seemed gleeful, while Giyuu just seemed, red.

Sakonji raised his brow as Giyuu spoke sheepishly, "It's nothing."

He wondered where the burgundy haired demon had scampered off to. To spread more chaos no doubt.

Nezuko looked at them with her intelligent eyes, sticking close to Giyuu.

"He left her with me for a while." Giyuu explained, gently patting the girl's head.

"I don't think I'm too surprised." Sakonji snorted, remembering Kamado's happiness at seeing Giyuu.

No, he didn't think he was too surprised at all.

Chapter End Notes

Last chapter before new years, hope you enjoy!!!

GUYS. sOMe of yYU all are So freaking good at guessing. Its been a handful of times when im reading the comments and im like, dammit, thats getting very close To what I planned!! Im sorry tho, that i dont reply to you guys directly too much, i dont want to spoil the future events of thsi story. IM reAlly bad at keeping things a SEcret oka, so i try to avoid replying.

n ok
DAMMIT i really love all of your comments. It motivates me so much! iTs lovely to see when someone gives their thoughts on how my story made them feel! Do feel free to tell me, swear to god it makes my day.
Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

Genya was a terrible brother, and a shitty slayer.
But, he wouldn't give up.

Not until he did his best to make amends to Sanemi.

He would keep trying to get stronger,
to earn his respect.

But, he knew it himself that,
he wasn't really ready to face a moon yet.

So he was probably about to die.
But, no,
not like this,
not yet.

He couldn't die just yet.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Genya shot the worm like demon before it could snap down on the fallen demon slayer,
some no name idiot.

The demon disintegrated with an offended screech, unable to survive contact from his sun steel
bullets.
It was clearly a weak one, not able to offer much of a resistance.

He scowled as the slayer clambered up to him, screeching and simpering, loosely holding a nichirin
sword.
The sword was tinted yellow. So, he could use a breathing style,
and he still couldn't defeat such a feeble demon.

As if he wanted to talk to such a useless piece of shit. A clearly useless member of the Corps.

Genya couldn't use any breaths, but he wasn't anywhere near this useless.
"Fuck off." Genya growled out, turning around and storming off.

What a sorry excuse for a demon slayer.
Genya detested such weaklings, who couldn't even defeat the weakest of demons,
even after possessing the ability to use breaths.

What a waste of opportunity.

Genya himself couldn't use any breaths, and the only way he could participate in enhanced combat
was through the consumption of demon flesh.
It irked him that those who could use breaths, didn't use them to their full potential. It was unfair, and it boiled his blood, but it was what it was.

He would make do with his own strength, no matter what it took.

His crow flapped alongside him, silent glowing eyes in the dark.

"Anymore pathetic idiots to save? Or can I go back to the Wisteria house?" Genya asked snappishly.

He'd dealt with a much more challenging demon, earlier that night, and he needed to rest. But, obviously, he'd had to come as backup for some shitty slayer.

His crow didn't answer, flapping its wings, flying ahead and leaving him behind.

Of course it was quiet when Genya actually needed it to speak. Shitty bird.
But he supposed his silence was as good a confirmation as any. He'd most definitely gone to the Wisteria house.

Genya huffed and made his way towards the same, sitting on the outskirts of Karuizawa.

He'd arrived here a week ago, to kill some parasitic demon that preyed on travelers through a bustling trade route.
It hadn't been an easy fight, but Genya had defeated it.

All these short months he'd been a demon slayer, he could feel himself growing stronger. Strong in perhaps an unorthodox way, but stronger nonetheless. Slowly, but surely.

Genya did understand that a lot of his existing strength had only flourished because of the foundation given to him by Himejima-san. He was grateful to the man.
He'd trained him even though he had no capability to use breaths.
Now all that was left for him to do, was to keep getting stronger, till he could reach out to Sanemi and make him acknowledge him.

There was no way aniki would ever accept him as a brother after what he did, so getting stronger was his only option. Only option to earn his brothers acceptance.

There wasn't a day that went by, without missing him. Genya could feel the loss of his presence, like an everlasting injury. Like a constantly pulsating, aching scar.

Som edays it was so bad, it felt as if he were physically impaired, as if he'd lost a limb, and he knew how that felt.

As if his being was skewered, direction scattered, pointless, aimless. Like he was missing an integral part of himself.

And he was. He was missing his brother.
His precious aniki.

Someone who was so utterly important to him, someone he'd hurt so badly.

He loved Sanemi so much,
even now, he didn't understand why he'd been stupid enough to let those words leave his mouth that day.

His kind, protective brother, who always cared for everyone, put everyone else above himself, he didn't deserve those poisonous words.

He didn't deserve the treatment Genya had given him.

He should've understood, he should've realized, he should've have known better than to jump to conclusions.
How could he have ever doubted,
a person as loving as him?

It had all been the work of demons. He'd blamed his brother for no reason at all.
He was going to kill all demons, kill the creatures who destroyed happy lives, disrupted families, stole their loved ones.

But, no matter what he did in the future, the past couldn't be changed.
No point in dwelling,
he had to work for the future.
He had to mend the damage he'd done, or atleast,
try his best to.

He walked quicker, stomping his way through the silent streets,
silent, deserted streets.

A crawling night, seeping darkness.
It was really much too somber.
A grieving night, yet a dreamy night.

It was the outskirts, it was dumb to expect anyone else to be present.

Genya was being paranoid.

Until he wasn't.

He immediately reached for his gun, stopping dead in his steps as he stared at the scene spread out in front of him.

Travelers, a large caravan, scattered throughout the road.

All dead? No not dead, not dead.
No blood.

Asleep? Unconscious?

People were just lying there, men passed out on the streets, women slumped in a wagon.
A collapsed wagon.
It was missing its horses, or cattle, he had no idea.
But, the point was, the animals were missing.
The wagon was trashed in the front, deep hoof marks in the mud, as if the animals had went berserk, before stampeding off.

Genya stood motionless, wary, not daring to move closer to the scene. It was bizarre, too wrong. The air wasn't right.

There was a monster here. Crouching, waiting, waiting to pounce. He had to be careful.

He stared quizzically at the people, collapsed in awkward groups. Groups of two, bound by rope? Rope?

No, they weren't bound, the ties didn't look like bindings. They didn't restrain any mobility, just connected wrists.

The air was thick. It was unnatural, dulling him. Heady, wrong, dreamy. But it was peaceful.

Genya felt a shiver crawl down his spine as he stared at the fallen people, they were content. For some reason, they smiled, peaceful in oblivion.

But how? Did they not feel the wrongness? The sweet sick cloying feel to the clammy, yet fresh air.

"Do you want to join them?" Genya jerked, cocking his gun faster than the eye could follow. A slim boy faced away from him, stood at the middle of the scene. Fitting the scene. The conductor to the orchestra, the puppet master remarking upon broken dolls.

He was the one, he was the one who'd done this. When did he get there? How did he get there?

His gun was heavy, too heavy. It was too hard to breathe. The chair was choking, thick. Why was he so tired? Why was he so sluggish? Why so suddenly?

"What did you do to them?" Genya growled, well aware that the demon probably had some twisted Blood Demon Art.

Something that was making Genya slow, making him unresponsive. Something was scattering his brainpower, lulling him.

To sleep? Death?
"Don't be that way slayer, I've been so kind. Look at them, they seem happy don't you? They get to dream beautiful things. Don't you want to join them?" The boy replied demurely, shaking his slightly coloured hair and turning around.

Genya inhaled sharply as the boy smiled at him though pale blue eyes, one eye sporting a very distinctive numerical rank.

Lower Moon One.

No, he wasn't strong enough.
Not strong enough to face anything like that yet.

Genya had heard his fair share of stories about the Moons. The strongest of the demons, the ones who worked directly for Kibutsuji Muzan.
Himejima-san had told him about them, warned him about them, their immense strength.

Genya believed him. Even now the air choked him, pressing down upon him with vengeance, all this, just due to the demons presence and passive powers. He wasn't even attacking yet and Genya was already panting, exhausted.

He was afraid.
His fingers were trembling, his blood loud in his ears.

He would put up a fight, but he, he didn't have much hope.

He knew he was brash, and uncouth, but he was honest, and realistic. He understood his own power, understood his status, and he knew, it wasn't going to be enough, not nearly enough to fight this monster.

He wouldn't back down. Genya would fight, fight even if his muscles were shivering and his grip was failing. He refused to be a coward, he refused to be one, and yet, and yet, it wasn't going to be enough.

He would try, but, he wasn't sure he was going to make it.

Of all the demons he could've found, it had to be a moon.

This was absolutely one of the most terrible situations he could've landed in.

But, he couldn't just accept this.

He couldn't die.
No, not yet.
Not so soon, not without meeting his brother.

Sanemi, he had to, he had to meet him.
He had to apologize.

He had to live, he had to live, for his brother. For aniki. In any way possible.
Suddenly, a hand grabbed Genya.

He jerked, reflexes sluggish.
It was a girl. A human girl.
Staring at him with desperation.

Before Genya could do anything about the bizarre girl, an overwhelming scent hit him, and he collapsed, slumping onto the ground.

He was, losing consciousness.
He gritted his teeth, struggling with futility as darkness overcame his vision.

"Genya?"

Genya looked up, walking beside Sanemi slowly.

"Dad got stabbed and died. I know that It's better without him, but everyone will be helpless now that he's not here. Lets protect our family together. From now on, you and I will protect mom and our siblings. Okay?" Sanemi continued, pulling the cart of supplies diligently.

Aniki was right. But, there was no need to be worried.
That's how things always had been.

"Not just from now on. Because that's always been the case." "Right?" Genya finished, looking at Sanemi out of the corner of his eye.

He smiled as his aniki grinned.

They would be fine.
They would all be fine.

They returned home, to their lovely siblings, to their smiling mother.

His sister grabbed his hand, laughing, tugging him along.
Genya himself laughed softly, her cheerfulness infectious, about to speak-but,
his sister.

He looked at his cheerful sister, jarred.

What was her name?
Why did he not remember?

He stared at her limply, smile dropping off his face.

"Genya?"

He stared as Sanemi came closer.

"Are you alright? You don't look well." He spoke softly, pressing his palm against his forehead to check his temperature.

His aniki, had,
such kind eyes.

Eyes that,
weren't the same anymore.
Eyes that he had ruined.
He'd stolen the light from them.

Tears welled up in his eyes.

His precious aniki.

Sanemi startled as the tears fell, tremendously worried, as he wiped his tears.

No, not anymore.
It wasn't the same, anymore.
Sanemi wasn't there to wipe his tears anymore.

Genya lunged at Sanemi, clutching at him in a hug, sobbing.

"I'm sorry aniki, I-I'm such an idiot and I just want to apologise for everything I said, even though you're not real! I'm sorry, aniki!" Genya wailed, melting into the comforting hands that gripped him strongly.

He did not remember anymore,
how warm Sanemi's hands used to be,
and this was all a dream, to be blown, away into the dust.

"Genya, what are you talking about?" Sanemi questioned softly, worried.

Everything was so realistic.
The warmth felt so real.

But,

it wasn't real, was it?
None of it.

Because his others siblings were dead, so long gone he didn't remember their names properly.
His mother dead, brought to death as a demon.

And yet, even though he knew, knew all of this was fake,
a hallucination made by a demon.

He wanted to stay here,
forever.
In the comfort of his family,
in this time, where everything was still good.

Was he being selfish, that he wanted to stay here?

Just a little longer?

Suddenly, the air changed, one brief flicker, one brief disconnection.
That feeling of fakeness, of wrong, being wrong wrong wrong.

"Genya?" Sanemi pressed, urgently, confused.
He was so sorry.
That he had to leave.

"I'm sorry aniki, but you're not real. And I need to get out of here now." Genya sniffed, stepping back.

He broke into a run before Sanemi could react, slipping out of their house, running, aimlessly, he had to break out.

How?
How to get out? Everything was so real?

That brief moment of disconnect seemed like a hallucination instead, what was this place?

But, he could sense malice, wrong, clammy, cloying his throat.

Something bad was about to happen, he needed to stop it.

A scent wafted towards him.
That sickening sweet underlying scent of decay, of a demon.
The demon who trapped him.

But, it was getting fainter, disappearing as quickly as it had come, but Genya gave chase, following-

sudden heat.

Genya stared at his arm, which suddenly felt extremely warm.

What?

Then the flames emerged, erupting from his arm, consuming the air.

Burning, burning away.
Everything, burning.

In the distance, in this shattering world, Genya could see a girl wailing with shock. The same one who'd grabbed him in front of the moon.

But then he couldn't see, everything was too bright, too many flames, light everywhere and he had to shut his eyes.

He snapped open his eyes again.

Genya gasped loudly, blinking furiously as he realized he was back on the road, staring at a wagon. That demo-

"Calm down."
Genya flinched reflexly again, staring at the new figure now at the scene.

It was another man. Burgundy haired, wearing hanafuda earrings, sitting beside Genya on the ground, supporting his head.

"That demon is gone." He continued, looking at Genya.

Genya immediately jumped up, frantic.

Who was he? What did he mean the demon was gone? What was going on?

He was still breathing hard, blood still rushing through his veins with a loud rush, he couldn't have just upped and left!

He was shaking so bad, the warmth of Sanemi's hands still on his shoulders, like ghostly impressions, crushed him in equal parts of disappointment and confusion.

The rest of his entire body was now freezing, maybe from the cold of night, from the chilling experience, he didn't know.

The man sighed and grabbed his hands decisively.

Genya immediately tried to pull them back, but the man must've been ridiculously powerful, or Genya was weak, because his fingers didn't even budge.

"I said, calm down." The man repeated again, voice suddenly steely, powerful ruby eyes boring into his own.

The air became icy in two seconds and Genya trembled suddenly as an immense overwhelming force appeared, even greater than the demon from before, pressing him down, down, down-it abruptly disappeared.

Genya immediately stopped squirming, staring at the calm man in stunned shock.

"Good, calm down. Relax. I'm not an enemy. Yes, the demon really is gone, and all the people are fine. Half of them were being controlled by him, including that girl who entered your dreams, but I fixed that problem. Don't worry about anything now, focus on getting yourself together."

The man continued, now gently rubbing warmth into Genya's palms.

He had, really warm hands.

And a firm voice.

Genya knew it was fucking idiotic to listen to a stranger who had just appeared out of nowhere, but he was shaken, and terrible cold, he'd just seen his dead family and long gone brother and life wasn't fair.

He couldn't care less about anything, he was feeling as if he'd been ripped apart from the inside,
both literally and mentally.

He missed his brother, missed his family.

He'd had enough.

He broke down into sobs,

loud, ugly wails.

The stranger gently coaxed him into his arms, surrounding him in a warm embrace.
Genya didn't resist, sinking into the kind hold.

He sobbed into his neck, staining his haori with tears.

Chapter End Notes

Because i love Genya. Also, Tanjirou loves hugs.
AaLSO THEY (will) BECOME GOOD FRIENDS, AND TANJIROU IS THE
SLIGHTLY OLDER BRO DUDE.

NEXT CHAP IM SO EXCITED, theres a reason this chap had Enmu.(°_°)

Also, I had another exam this monday, and thats why i couldnt post yesterdat, welp.
So, i came home today, and i got this chap out!

I havent slept in over two days, so ima just go die.

Thenks for all support, bai
Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

Nothing in the world ever made sense.
As far as Genya was aware,
puppies were eating tigers and he was insane.

Sanemi was going to kill him. (The usual.)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The burgundy haired man was nowhere to be found.

Genya had been searching for him the whole day,
to absolutely no success.

No one had seen neither hair nor hide of the elusive man,
not one single person.

Genya hadn't had a chance to thank him, before he disappeared.

Well, he didn't disappear,
more like, Genya passed out on him.

To be fair, he hadn't passed out,
he'd fallen asleep while sobbing.

Which was so much more worse.

Yeah, falling asleep on a stranger.
(Sanemi would've killed him for being such an idiot.)

Long story short, he'd woken up at the Wisteria house.

It could've nearly been a weird dream,
except,
Genya was pretty sure his brain wasn't capable of cooking up that level of bullshit.

Apparently the lady of the house had found him passed out on the front porch of the Wisteria house,
wrapped in a huge dark cloak, with all his belongings neatly arranged nearby.

He'd woken up peacefully, to the ghost of protective hands,

warm hands.

The man sure had been kind,
had really gentle eyes.
He'd also been so strong.

Genya owed him.

He had no doubt that he would've been slaughtered alongside all the civilians had he not intervened. The civilians that were gone from the path when he'd ventured back to check. Even the wagon was gone.

They'd probably been taken back to the town by the man, just as Genya was taken to the Wisteria house.

He had no idea how the man did it, how he fended off Lower Moon One, but he did.

All while Genya had been useless, stuck in a hallucination.

Now, the least he wanted to do, was to thank him. He had some manners at least.

(Mom had been particular, before.)

Well, also to find out who he was. His identity was a complete mystery to him.

If Genya hadn't known all the current pillars, he would've assumed the man to be one. Such had been his strength. He had been able to tell from his aura alone.

But, he was sure he wasn't a pillar.

He might have been a Tsuguko, but as far as Genya was aware, only the Insect Pillar had one.

And she was a girl.

In fact, Genya knew about most of the well-known, strong slayers.

He'd never heard anything about this ruby-eyed man.

But, on the other hand, the man had clearly known about the Wisteria House. So it was most likely he was a demon slayer.

Yet, he hadn't worn the demon slayer uniform. Well, that wasn't too uncommon, some slayers didn't.

Or maybe he really hadn't been a slayer, because Genya couldn't remember if he had carried a sword or not.

All demon slayers carried swords for their breathing techniques after all.

(Except him. Unfair, so unfair it burned.)

The whole business was way too confusing.

It was probably a demon slayer only, some genius maybe.
Because how else could someone be that powerful, without using a breath?

Genya sighed as he finished a final sweep of the bustling market. He'd gone through the entire (admittedly small) town thrice now.

The sun was setting, the sky streaked with violet. Well, there was no point in searching at night.

He'd return the next day, and if he didn't find anything, he'd leave for the next town.

Genya knew he couldn't just keep searching for him for too long, but he hoped to find him, before it took too long.

Otherwise he'd have to quit.

A thought that didn't bode too well, he mused, as he made his way down a crowded street.

Suddenly, a loud crash echoed through the path.

Genya turned, to find a familiar girl.

The same one who'd grabbed him yesterday, the one he'd seen in his dreams. The one who had the clammy stench of the demon.

She'd dropped a huge pot, staring at him in horror and fear. She clearly knew something. She was also clearly about to run.

Genya moved towards her immediately, calling out,

"Hey you! Wait! Come bac-" he was cut off as a hand clamped down on his firmly, steering him away from the crowd.

He was about to squirm, before he noticed who it was.

It was him, it was that man. He stopped protesting.

"Let it go, leave her be." The man spoke calmly, letting go of his arm and leading him through a quieter alleys.

"She clearly knew something about that demon!" Genya replied, a bit chaffed at being led away like a child.

"Not really. She was manipulated by Enmu. That's the only reason she was involved in that mess. In fact, that's the reason half the people present yesterday were involved in that mess." The man replied, referring to the scene of the collapsed wagon.

"I don't get it? What exactly were his powers?" Genya asked confused, as they reached a deserted street, containing a row of abandoned houses and an old shrine.

"Enmu's powers aren't easy to explain quickly, come, let's sit." The man responded, perching on
the stairs of the shrine.

Genya took the chance to assess the man.

There was a magnificence to his person.
He was beautiful, moved with unearthly fluid grace.

And he carried a sword.

So he was a demon slayer after all.

Genya wasn't too surprised. Breathing techniques were the primary weapons against the demons.

(Disappointing. He'd hoped for the man to have a different power.
He wanted to believe, believe that he could be powerful without breaths.)

Suddenly the man smiled slightly, a bit wry.

Genya flushed.
What was wrong with him.

(Someone could kill him now, he was okay with it.)

He awkwardly rubbed his head with a hand and spoke, "Thank you for yesterday. I owe you my life, and I'm really sorry that you had to deal with me when I was crying."

His lowered his voice at the end.

That hadn't been his finest moment, to be sure.

Genya glanced at the man's eyes, expecting to find a little bit of cringe, or annoyance.

Ruby eyes glanced back at him kindly, gently, warm.

The man smiled wider, "Don't worry about it. Those hallucinations are no joke. Even I cried, the first time I was trapped in one."

That was relieving.
Genya didn't want to be the only one who bawled at something like that.

Also, oh wow, that smile was blinding.

"You fought him before yesterday?" Genya asked, curious.

The man hummed, as if contemplating his answer.

"Something like that I suppose." He finished.

Maybe the man had been able to fend him off this time because he'd had experience from their fight before.

"You saved me yesterday, you did something, the dream went up in flames." Genya probed hesitantly.
"I suppose you could say I burned the dreams away."

The man mused, swirling his finger.

Was the man a user of the breath of flame?

"But he ran away right? I felt his presence recede, like, a wave washing away?" Genya continued, describing the fading clammy stench.

"Yes, unfortunately, he did get away. He won't be so lucky next time." The man promised, voice hiding steel.

"I don't know who you are, but you must be a powerful demon slayer if you're that confident against Lower Moon One." Genya spoke honestly, a bit envious, sitting down beside the man.

A hand immediately ruffled his hair, "I have quite a bit of experience I'm afraid. But, you're plenty strong too. Very few people are able to recover from the mental backlash of Enmu's art that quickly. Soon, you'll be able to fight against stronger foes. Even someone like Enmu."

The man spoke, voice warm, almost proud.

Genya inhaled sharply.

Strong? Him?

He'd been the epitome of uselessness against that demon.

No matter how much he trained, there was no way, he was ever going to be strong enough to face Enmu.

After all, he had no breathing technique.

Yet, the way he'd said those words.

No one had ever believed in Genya to become that strong.

Not even Himejima-san, who'd supported him so much, had ever believed he'd go that far. That was the reason he wasn't a Tsuguko.

Genya could lie to himself, but it hurt.

It hurt so much when he didn't take Genya as a Tsuguko.

All because of his inability to use breaths.

He would take these words, and treasure them.

Because they'd never be repeated.

This man didn't know him, didn't know what a failure he was.

"I can't. I'm never going to be that strong. I can't use breaths, I'm the only slayer who can't." Genya whispered softly.

"I know you can't use breaths."

Genya stared at him sharply.

He knew?

He knew, and he still said that? Why would he be so insensitive?
"Then why would you say something like that? You know its not possible, and I'm not a fool, so I know too. I don't need reassurance like some little kid. I know how reality works." Genya immediately responded, upset.

"You are a fool. Only a fool would think there exists one path to strength. Breathing techniques are the most common paths to power, but they aren't the only ones." The man continued, voice unwavering, as he crouched in front of Genya.

Something warm expanded in his chest.

(Tiny flicker of hope.)

Someone believed that?

Genya stared at gentle ruby eyes and exhaled.

It was a quiet night, waiting night.

"Can I be a pillar?" He ventured softly, voice barely audible.

"I honestly don't see why not."

Warmth was a nice feeling to have.

"Help me, please! You're the first person to think someone like me could be strong, so please, can you guide me?" Genya continued, voice suddenly loud.

He didn't really know what he was thinking, but, this didn't feel wrong.

The man stared back at him, surprised.

Genya didn't relent his gaze.

He meant what he said.

"My god, you're so direct. Are you sure you want to do this?" The man finally broke out of his shock, laughing helplessly.

Clear ruby eyes, yet so vague.

"I don't think you actually want this." The man continued, a final soft warning in his deep eyes.

"I do." Genya replied stubborn.

The man gazed at him with an unreadable expression.

"Fine then. I'll do my best to help you hone your strength. Next time we meet a moon, you'll be standing your ground." The man promised, voice soft.

Genya grinned.

"But, let me just correct you, I think you're a bit mistaken on what I am." The man continued, exasperated.

"You're not a slayer?" Genya asked, confused.
"I'm a demon."

Genya looked at him.
"No you're not." He replied.

The man sputtered.
Genya nodded.

More sputtering, and exasperated huffs.

"You searched for me the whole day, I came out only at night and I didn't linger at your Wisteria House." The man stated dryly.

Genya had realised that.
In hindsight, it was pretty obvious now.

He fucked up big time didn't he.

"Sanemi is going to kill me." Genya sighed.

(Because how in the fucking world did he even end up in this situation.)

"That's a problem." The man agreed awkwardly.

"Not really. To be fair, he always says he wants to kill me." Genya replied, shrugging.

"So, that's it? You don't mind me being a demon?" The man asked, a bit wary.

Genya scowled, "Of course I do. It would've been helpful if you'd mentioned it earlier."

The man smiled sheepishly.

This smiling dude being a demon was the same as a puppy eating a tiger.
The heck.

Of course the guy was a demon.
The world was fucking wack.

But, Genya wasn't really dumb.
Maybe, as a kid, he would've jumped to conclusions.

But, not anymore.

He'd learned to patient, look at a scene with wider eyes.
After that incident with Sanemi, he'd always made sure to look at things deeply.

He wasn't going to go batshit crazy just because he was a demon.
Not after all the man had done.

No normal demon would save humans, let alone demon slayers.

This was no ordinary case.

And, a persons true nature was in the eyes.

No one would call Sanemi kind,
but he was.

He fed stray dogs crumbs for fucks sake, smiling at the puppies that nipped at his hands.

This man was the same. His eyes were gentle. He was warm, protective.

He already had more than enough reason to know that he wasn't a mindless killing machine.

(Honestly, had the demon wanted to kill him, Genya would've been long dead. He knew.)

"I'm coming with you and you better not make me regret it." Genya hissed at him.

The man stared at him in surprise again. Then he laughed, eyes crinkling.

"What's your name, slayer?" He asked.

"Shinazugawa Genya. You?"

"Kamado Tanjirou."

What the fuck. This motherfucker was Upper Moon One?

"Let's get a move on Genya." Kamado smirked, getting up.

"HOLD ON JUST A MINUTE."

Chapter End Notes

I wrote the whole chapter, then crossed it by mistake. Im a retard.
I died out of frustration, then set back to writing like a zombie.
If i was rewriting it, might as well make it better than before.
Im more pleased with it than the first version now.
Chapter 17

Chapter Summary

Zenitsu got roped into doing stuff he was too scared to do.
What else was new.

Nothing, he thought furiously,
absolutely nothing.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

To say that Zenitsu was freaked out by Genya, was quite frankly an understatement.
To say he was scared shitless, was much more accurate.

This guy was just too much coiled aggression, and he already had enough of that with Inosuke around.

Last he remembered of him was how he'd wrung that girl around by her hair during Final Selection.

One just never knew when someone like him blew up.

So, when he'd seen him stalk over to himself, murderous intent in his eyes, Zenitsu had balked, and bailed.

He was not ready to die, thank you,
and certainly not due to some overly aggressive shithead.

"Stop fucking running pipsqueak!" Genya roared behind him.

As if that was going to make Zenitsu stop.

Like seriously, what was this nonsense?
He was at the butterfly mansion to recover, not to run around for his life.

He'd had enough!

He'd nearly died just a couple of weeks ago! He deserved a break!
One would've thought that he deserved to be left alone what with nearly being converted into some gross mutated spider.

So why was this moron after his life now?!

"AOI SAVE ME!" Zenitsu screeched, immediately hiding behind the girl, spotting her behind a clothes line in the garden.

"What is going on?" Aoi asked, voice steely, already irritated.

No fair, it wasn't as if Zenitsu was trying to be difficult. Why did everyone only ever get irritated at
him?
Aoi scowled at him, probably guessing his thoughts.

Zenitsu winced internally, now she would give him hell during the recovery training session.

"I wanted a word with this bug, but for some reason, he keeps running!" Genya snarled at him.

Zenitsu cringed, "Talk? You clearly seem like you want to kill me!"

Genya exhaled furiously, mouth pinched tight, eyebrow twitching.
He probably... should not have said that.

Aoi rolled her eyes and stalked off, "Sort it out! Don't come back inside to cause chaos!"

Oh no. No no no no,
Zenitsu reached out to Aoi, only to be grabbed by the back of his Haori.

He was dead, so dead.

"Please don't leave me to die!" Zenitsu wailed, reaching out with his hands pointlessly.

"Quit the dramatics, or I really will kill you!" Genya hissed, eyes flashing.

Zenitsu shut his mouth and nodded furiously.

Genya released his grip, and he backed off to a safe distance.

"I need you to listen to me." Genya continued, voice settling down a bit.

"But what can someone like you want from me?" Zenitsu whined, flailing his arms.

"You and that friend of yours, that boar head, I need your help." Genya replied, voice stinted, as if admitting the fact was physically painful.

Now, Zenitsu had several questions.
The most pressing one being-

"Why would we help you?!" He screeched, but lowered his volume as Genya squeezed his gun with murderous intent.

"To do your duty? You dipshits are Demon Slayers too, so come with me to kill one." Genya responded, clearly exasperated.

A good argument, but well, they were still recovering!
(They weren't really, they been in good shape for a few days now, and had even started training but that was besides the point.)

"Hold on just a minute, why us?! There's dozens of free demon slayers milling around the village, go ask someone else!" Zenitsu replied flatly.

"Look here bug, you think I'd be coming to you if I had any choice? Unfortunate as it may be, you, that boar head, and that butterfly girl, you're the only ones having slightly good ranks. All the others are weaklings, and won't stand a minute against any Demon Moon.
At least, you all have some power and experience with those kind of demons."
Genya gritted out calmly, as if he hadn't just mentioned fighting a Demon Moon.

"Are you CRAZY?! You want us to come join you to fight a Demon Moon with you?! The last time, me and Inosuke nearly died on Mt. Natagumo! We survived only because of the water and insect pillars!
Also, if you know where a Demon Moon is, why don't you tell the PILLARS!" Zenitsu screamed.

"Look, I'm not asking you to fight a moon with me alone! I want us to go as backup for a pillar who I know is going to face one very soon. That's because, none of the pillars would agree to go as backup. They won't believe me without evidence, and by the time I can even explain to them about how I got the information, the flame pillar might even be dead!" Genya yelled back, just as exasperated.

"Look, firstly, a pillar won't die easily to a Moon, I'm pretty sure if the flame pillar gets in trouble, he should be able to hold out long enough to call for reinforcements! Secondly, have you tried telling any of the pillars? You don't know that they'll refuse to listen to you, unless you try! At least go to Shinobu-san?" Zenitsu hissed, absolutely done.

"I did! I tried telling the insect pillar, but all she said was that it wasn't easy for the pillars to abandon their posts without solid evidence. She said that sending one pillar to a location was already a huge commitment by the Corps, and that it's impossible to send another to the same place without proper proof." Genya sighed, voice annoyed.

"If you don't have proper proof, how do you know some Demon Moon's going to show up anyway?" Zenitsu argued, irritated himself.

"Look, I can't explain it, but you have to listen to me." Genya continued, stubborn.

"How can you expect people to take you up on your word like that! Also, my point still stands, pillars are strong enough to handle Moons!" Zenitsu finished icily.

"No they aren't! It's not that simple, at least, not this Moon. Please, you have to come with me. This situation will also involve innocents, and we can't let them die! Not when we know what's going to happen and we can prepare!" Genya gritted out, voice cracking.

Zenitsu opened his mouth but shut it as Genya leaned forward violently.

"Please! I beg you!" He continued furiously, bowing at the waist.

Zenitsu stared at the boy flabbergasted.
If someone had told him earlier that day, that this boy, of all people, would come begging to him for help, Zenitsu would have snorted.

Yet, something about him was different.

As much as Zenitsu wanted to ignore him, something inside him had been shaken by his conviction.
He seemed so sure.
What if he was right?

What if there was a chance that they would end up dooming a pillar, and countless civilians to their deaths?

"Please! You have nothing to lose if I'm wrong! But if I'm right, then we can protect people!"
People that might have otherwise died! Isn't this why we're demon slayers? To help people, if we can!" Genya continued, still bowing.

Zenitsu inhaled shakily.

Why was he a demon slayer?
He'd never wanted to be one.

He knew he wasn't cut out for it, wasn't brave.

Unlike people like Genya, or Inosuke, who were throwing themselves into fights to best demons, who flourished under the responsibility to act, he was nothing.

From Genya's voice alone, he could tell, that he was gladly ready to carry the weight of the lives of people on his shoulders.

But, Zenitsu wasn't.

He never was, and he didn't really think he'd ever be.

If what Genya said came to be true, he would be more hindrance than help.

"Look, fine, I'll talk to Inosuke, he'll go with you, but I'm not coming. If what you said is true, I wont be any help at all." Zenitsu muttered.

"What are you talking about, you think I'd have come to you for help if i'd thought that you were weak enough to be a hindrance? You think I'm an idiot?" Genya scowled.

Zenitsu startled.
Something about the raw honesty of his words surprised him, though he didn't know why.

He'd never really had people consider him remotely useful, only a weakling.

So, why was- how was Genya so sure in Zenitsu's strength when he himself wasn't.

Zenitsu heard the steady thump of his heartbeat, no inflections.

It was strong, and unwavering.

He wasn't lying, not as far as he could tell, so why- why was he so sure?

"I-

"Alright then, since you agree, then lets go! We don't have any time to waste!" Genya muttered, turning around.

"Wait-

"Meet me with boar boy at the entrance in ten minutes, I'll be waiting with the butterfly girl, she agreed to come as well, hurry!" Genya cut him off again, already stalking off, taking stock of his pouch, fiddling around with bullets.

Zenitsu stared at his retreating back, frozen.
Now? They were going NOW?
"Well, aren't you going to go? He seems to be pretty sure of his information." A voice spoke, jarring him back to reality.

He turned to stare at Kanae Kocho, sitting near the porch, who looked at him a bit gravely. If he was to guess, she seemed to have heard their conversation.

"Kanae-san, I didn't see yo-

"He's putting his trust in you, you know." She continued faintly, butting in, before smiling at him faintly, but it was intense. It was almost discomfiting, the look in her eyes.

"What will you do?"

Something twinged in his chest, huh.

So he was doing this.

For fucks sake.

Zenitsu scrambled to fetch Inosuke, fuming. He just had to get stuck in such situations didn't he.

Was it too much to much to want everyone to leave him alone?

He wasn't brave enough for this.

Chapter End Notes

OKay, im back, plz dont murder me...

So, my final run of yearly tests are concluding this coming week, i have one subject left, so the load is lesser now. In fact, i had some time free these two three days, but i got reattached to AC, so i kinda got distracted.

Then, I had to catch up on some manga, and rewatch some episodes to get back into the feel, cuz i didnt want to put out a chapter without making sure i wrote it with the feelzz.

Its probablty not a very good update, but i wanted to put it out, cuz its been so long, sorry for such a long wait again.

It gets better, probably :D
Chapter 18

Chapter Summary

Zenitsu had no idea what was happening.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Meeting Rengoku was a wildly bewildering experience. Zenitsu hadn't expected him to be so cheerful, for one.

He hadn't expected the warmth either. Both in a figurative and literal way.

It was kind of hard to explain, Rengoku radiated heat. It permeated through the air around him, constant wisps of curling incalescence that wrapped them in their embrace.

It felt like protection, like hope.

Accompanied by the steady deep thumps of his heartbeat, he reminded Zenitsu of gramps, of home.

He smiled at them as they surrounded him, taking the seats beside him on the train, piling into his vicinity, soaking into his warmth.

He was truly brilliant.

Zenitsu watched him as Genya spoke first and made their introductions.

"You are Genya? Himejima's boy?" Rengoku asked curious, in a deep lilting voice.

"Yes Rengoku-san." Genya nodded, voice respectful.

"He trained you well. Your foundation shows solidarity, strength of the earth." He hummed, staring at Genya with too-bright eyes.

Genya blinked and muttered out a hasty thanks.

"But that is not all of it. You have flames stitched into your soul." Rengoku continued, clearly not finished. What a strange phrasing of words, and what a strange question, Zenitsu mused.

Genya flailed awkwardly, wincing.

He watched him flounder with wonder. Very little truly ever managed to discomfit the hard-headed idiot.

"I trained with someone else for a while recently." Genya admitted a bit sheepishly, under Rengoku's insistent gaze.
The flame pillar hummed in response, clearly intrigued by something.

Zenitsu watched the exchange curiously.
He didn't have an exact idea on what Rengoku meant, but something about Genya did always sound different.

He was always steady, but complex. He sounded like a combination.

Unlike Inosuke, who had a simple sort of savage intensity, or Kanao, who had a slow peaceful melancholy, Genya seemed to rise and fall, drift and stand, sometimes bright, sometimes earthy, he never seemed... uniform.

He wondered if it was something related to his style of fighting, his lack of a breath style, that made his beat so compound.

Before the silence could stretch, Kanao picked up the conversation, "We came to offer our help Rengoku-san. We heard that you came to face a strong demon, someone- she looked at Genya pointedly-told us it was a Demon Moon."

"I am not sure if it is a Moon just of yet. But, it is undoubtedly, extremely strong, so it is a possibility." Rengoku agreed amiable, raising an eyebrow as he gave Genya a look.

Genya made a weak sort of shrug.

"Hey, you're strong, so train me. Train me till I can beat you." A voice snapped, butting into the conversation. Nearby, a boar head wiggled.

He'd been too quiet for a while now. It was a wonder really, that Inosuke hadn't tried to make a scene earlier.

"Could you try not to be rude on purpose!" Zenitsu hissed.

Rengoku scrutinized them both, slight smile on his face.

"I do not see why not, later." He agreed finally.

Zenitsu gaped at him, taken aback. He agreed? Surely he had better things to do than waste his time on some novice.

Rengoku chuckled at his incredulous look.

"Why not now?" Inosuke pushed, eyes narrowing. Zenitsu shoved him, exasperated.

Rengoku just shook his head, smile suddenly muted.

"We need to be careful, his blood demon art is probably already active." Genya spoke, cutting in.

"You know this demon's blood demon art? You recognize him?" Rengoku frowned, turning towards Genya.

"There's a stale stench in the air, I recognize it. It's him for sure, its Lower Moon One. I've met him before." Genya replied haltingly.
"Apparently, Genya ran into it one time. He says it has some mental manipulation powers from his
demon art." Kanao replied to the pillar.

"It will try to put us in some sort of thrall. Some hallucination or sleep maybe. It can happen
through various ways, sight, touch, smell. We need to be ready for when it does." Genya
continued.

Rengoku nodded, albeit hesitantly, frown still deep.

Zenitsu stared at them all a bit incredulously.
What? They were all really prepared?
How was one even supposed to be ready for something like that?

"Hold on, you can't be serious! Even after knowing how his powers work, we have to wait for him
to make a move?" Zenitsu hissed.

"He's hidden too well. He needs to reveal himself first." Genya rolled his eyes.
Zenitsu screeched at his nonchalancy.

They devolved into silence as Genya told Rengoku all he knew of the demon,
even his name.

The flame pillar frowned as he took the information, as if confused to how Genya knew all this, but
didn't interrupt.

He clearly had far more patience than any of them.

When Genya had told them about the things he knew of the demon,
they'd been highly bewildered, pestering him with questions.

Yet, no matter how many times he'd agreed to explain the powers and strengths the demon had,
he never revealed the source of his information. Never clarified on how he came to learn those
things.

They lapsed into silence as the night moved on. Everyone was on edge, for quite a while at least.

He didn't realize for how long they stayed vigilant, or when they started to let their guards down.
But, everything had seemed alright.

They hadn't seen a single passenger around them go missing.
Hadn't seen any sign of the demon.

Gradually, heads started to droop,
lulled into slumber by the rocking motions of the train.

Zenitsu stayed awake as Inosuke and Genya melted, leaning onto Rengoku's shoulders and going to
sleep.

It was quite fairly, adorable,
and he muffled his laugh as he shared an amused glance with Kanao.

Rengoku smiled at the idiots, his own eyes shuttering to a close, clearly tired.

Eventually, Zenitsu felt even Kanao nodding off, curled into the edge of the seat.

It was a heavy sort of silence that hung in the air, as everyone around him slept.
It felt forbidden to be awake, to witness the world when it went so still.

He needed to stay awake, at least one one them had to.

He was sure he could manage vigil for a while at least, or not-shit. He was too tired.

His eyelids pulled, so utterly heavy.

Then he was gone.

Zenitsu squirmed as his eyelids glowed red.

He snapped his eyes open-a big mistake, he realized, cringing away from the far-too-bright sunlight. Sunlight? Wasn't it night?

"Zenitsu! Will you get up already, Gramps is calling us!" A voice floated into his ears.

What was going on? How was it daytime? Where was he? Who was talking to him?

Actually, the voice was familiar but-

"Come on Zenitsu, wake up." The voice repeated, not unkindly.

Zenitsu squinted in the direction of the sound, mouth falling open at the view of Kaigaku. It was him, he'd thought so but-

"What is the matter with you today? You seem really confused, are you ill?" Kaigaku frowned at him softly, leaning forward and setting a palm against his forehead.

The concern in his eyes made Zenitsu stall speechless.

Zenitsu did actually feel faint, but it had less to do with feeling sick, and more to do with the fact that Kaigaku was acting so nice.

"Why are you so nice all of a sudden?" Zenitsu asked, wary.

Kaigaku raised an eyebrow at the question, looking a bit upset, "Why would I be rude to you?"

Zenitsu sputtered, too shocked to speak.

Kaigaku continued to stare at him with the same concerned expression-oh gods-this was so weird. Concern, sympathy, these weren't things Zenitsu was used to seeing on Kaigaku's face, at all.

An arm curled around his back gently, as Kaigaku pulled them both to their feet. Zenitsu was still too stupefied to resist.

"You've clearly had too much sun. Let's get you to your room and you can rest." Kaigaku muttered, pulling him along to their house.
Zenitsu exhaled shakily as the wind rushed through the field, making his hair whip in the wind. The weather was really nice. It was bright and windy. Too bad he felt so off, so confused.

Kaigaku's arm was warm against his shoulders.

"Did I fall asleep after training?" Zenitsu wondered out aloud. After all, he'd clearly been sleeping in the field.

"You did, but, I didn't think you were sick, I thought you were just tired." Kaigaku agreed softly.

"I don't think I'm sick Kaigaku." Zenitsu spoke, voice muted. He just felt severely off-kilter, he was missing something, there was something he didn't remember. Something important.

"You're still shaky on your feet." Kaigaku replied, frowning.

Zenitsu scowled as he realized, that yes, his knees were trembling.

"I don't know why I'm like this. Sorry." Zenitsu spoke, a bit frustrated. He didn't know what was wrong with him, why he felt so weak.

"It's fine. Calm down Zenitsu, everyone has bad days once in a while." Kaigaku smiled at him, comforting.

Zenitsu was taken aback yet again, a feeling of wrongness bitter on his tongue. His smile was beautiful.

Zenitsu felt a lump in his throat as his eyes prickled. His voice was so gentle. But why-why were his eyes tearing up-

"Oh no, wait, are you really feeling that bad? Don't cry, I can stop, we can stop and rest if it hurts to walk-

"Kaigaku it's alright." Zenitsu muttered as tears slipped past his nose.

Kaigaku stared at him anxiously, with worried eyes-and Kaigaku had never been so lovely.

Kaigaku was never this kind. Never to him, at least.

It was wonderful to see his turquoise eyes so warm.

All Zenitsu had wanted throughout his childhood, was to be close to him. But, he'd never-it wasn't true.

"You aren't real." Zenitsu spoke, tears dripping down his face. This place looked like his home, where he grew up, but it wasn't.

"Zenitsu what are you talking about?" Kaigaku questioned, voice anxious, breaking. His hands tightened on Zenitsu, as he stumbled.
"You aren't real, Kaigaku." Zenitsu continued, voice cracking, falling to the ground.

"Zenitsu what...?" Kaigaku muttered softly, slipping down beside him.

Zenitsu choked on a sob as Kaigaku gently wiped his tears away.

This was all a lie.
A hideous, perfect shell of a world.

It was all he'd ever wanted.

It was just, a delusion.

He needed to get out of here, he was probably dreaming.
This was the demon art Genya had warned them about, and he'd foolishly sunk into it.

Zenitsu grit his teeth, stumbled to his feet and pushed past Kaigaku.
It wasn't him, it was a lie, a false image.

Still, he sobbed as his voice called out to him in alarm.

Kaigaku sounded so worried, he'd never even heard him speak so softly to Gramps.

How would he get out?
What was this world, how was he supposed to break out from it?

Zenitsu just inhaled, and ran.

He crashed through the nearby foliage, maybe it had limits, some edge.
Maybe he needed to reach the ending and push past, surely the world couldn't be infinite.

He ignored the panicked cries behind him, it wasn't like Kaigaku was real.

The real Kaigaku was missing, and that was the truth.

A second voice joined the yells, and Zenitsu screamed in frustration as Gramps called out to him.

None of them were real, he'd just keep running, he'd leave them behind.

He had to get out.

Who knew what was happening in the real world,
he needed to help his real friends.

This world was sickening, far too perfect, and Zenitsu could smell the stench Genya had talked about.

It was cloying and thick, hidden under the far-too-fresh wind.

Suddenly, the smell receded, and it was warm.

Zenitsu screeched as he felt the flames, everywhere all of a sudden-
he stumbled back- vision exploding into flame-
and snapped his eyes open, breathing heavily.
He nearly stabbed Genya, who was kneeling beside him, holding him.
His arm was still burning, but why-
what?

There was rope around his arm?

He stared at the rope, which was burning.
It seemed to have been connected to a piece nearby,
a piece linked to some unconscious woman's arm.

He flinched, badly. Something about the rope was utterly wrong.

"Zenitsu calm down, its alright now!" Genya hissed at him urgently.

Zenitsu took a deep breath and stared at Genya, and screeched.

His nails were claws, eyes fucking maroon-were those fangs?

"You should shut up Monitsu." A boar head butted into his vision.

Zenitsu scrambled back the seats confused, how come Inosuke wasn't freaking out, what happened to Genya?

"Genya has the ability to manifest demonic powers by eating some part of them. Don't you remember? He told us. It's still him." Kanao clucked at him, rushing past.

Zenitsu finally realized that she was right, Genya had mentioned it.
He hadn't really expected the information to be true.

It had seemed utterly ridiculous, but of course it just had to be true.

He also suddenly realized that there was pandemonium all around them, sections of the train warping and shifting with flesh like goo.
Goo that was trying to wrap up people and drag them away.

Perplexingly, all the passengers were still asleep?

"I'll guard the people in the coaches with these two, move along and kill it, Genya, Inosuke!" Rengoku thundered, slicing through a fleshy arm that grabbed at an unconscious woman.

Genya and Inosuke wasted no time in rushing off, battling through the fleshy mass of the train.

"What's going on?!!" Zenitsu asked, utterly bewildered, as Rengoku pulled him to his feet.

"No time to explain my boy, I'm going to defend the last five coaches, you two protect the people in these two!" The flame pillar replied, calmly, before disappearing down the aisle in a flash of fire.

Zenitsu screeched but did as he was asked, pulling out his sword to fend off the fleshy masses attacking the people.

"Genya said the demon combined with the train, its his body now, he's trying to eat everyone inside." Kanao yelled out to him, somehow still staying calm, slicing through the fleshy constructs cleanly.

"WHAT?! So we're INSIDE it?" Zenitsu shrieked.

Kanao didn't even bother to reply.
Well, that was rude.

Hey, it wasn't his fault that he had a faint heart, not everyone could be brave!

"Were all of you caught in the dreams as well? How did you get me out?" Zenitsu gritted out the question bugging at him, trying to prevent a fleshy heap from swallowing a woman's legs.

"All of us were caught in it, except Genya, he got us out. I don't really know how he did it." Kanao yelled out to him from the nearby train coach.

What? But how? How come Genya wasn't affected?
What was going on?

"Just stop overthinking! We do our part, and we wait for those two to do theirs. They need to cut the demon's neck. We need to fight till then." Kanao muttered.

Zenitsu gritted his teeth.
So he would wait.

Those two had better hurry.

Chapter End Notes

wonder if anyone will die next chapter lol
...jk.
...unless?
Chapter 19

Chapter Summary

Rengoku Kyoujurou was prepared to die.
He wasn't meant to live.

But, he was alive.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

This demon was positively foul. Kyoujurou felt its hideous presence straight in his bones. There was something off about its aura that lingered in the air, far too cold.

Truth be told, he had no idea how the normal passengers of the train were breathing so normally, there was clearly something off in the train, the air had a bloody stench, it was foul.

Then again, they were hardly demon slayers. It was hardly an ordinary demon either.

It was cunning, wily, hiding from him, waiting to strike.

Kyoujurou could not tell where it was.

That wasn't a good thing at all. It spoke volumes about its strength.

Barely did he ever find demons he could not sense. They were almost never that powerful. It pointed greatly towards the probability of the demon being a Moon. There was high chance that the rumours were true.

Yet, Kyoujurou was a pillar.

This time, the demon would not kill him like he had, the other slayers sent before.

This time, it would die instead.

But, the death of the demon was not the only thing he could aim for. He had to guard others. This location was tremendously favourable to the crafty creature.

The train was full of innocents he needed to protect. He could not swing his sword around wildly.

Kyoujurou could not, would not, let anyone die.

In such a situation, where his hands were tied, he needed to keep the fight short. Let it come then, and he would end it all in one go.

The demon had the first move, he could only but prepare for it.

Idly, he watched the station through the train window,
the train had yet to move from its spot.

The lights were bright, and there was altogether too much hustle, people in modern dresses hurrying about.

A girl passing through the aisle gave him a look, staring at his sword, none too discretely.

Sometimes, Kyoujurou thought, as he smiled at her politely, he almost forgot what normal life was like.

He shifted the blade and pulled it under his clothes.

He almost forgot that carrying a sword around was so frowned upon nowadays, sometimes, almost forgot that the demons he spent his life hunting, were hardly more than fable to such normal people.

They did not know of his battles, would never understand his cause.

The lives of those in the Corps were thus severely disjointed from the conventional reality.

It wasn't a bad thing per say, it was necessary in their occupation, so they were willing to make the sacrifice.

Yet, sometimes he wondered, what their life, his life would have been like, had there been no demons.

A sudden clash and clamor occurred, a heavily familiar group entered the train cabin. Demon Slayer uniforms, young kids, probably novices.

Kyoujurou watched with a raised eyebrow and welcoming smile, as the demon slayers made their way to him.

Their presence was a bit mystifying. He hadn't really requested any backup?

Not that he wouldn't appreciate some extra help.

It was also, always wonderful to meet the younger generations. For Kyoujurou, they symbolised hope, a future secured.

Even if the elder slayers fell, the young would take up the fight. A cycle continued relentlessly, keeping demons in check.

A tough cycle, but necessary nonetheless. It was only their sacrifice, that allowed others to live without fear.

He beamed at them as they tumbled into the seats around him. Few of them were even striking some bells for him.

The girl, he was sure he had seen somewhere before, but couldn't quite recall. The boy with the pony on the other hand, he was Himejima's student, of that he was nearly sure.

The boy in question introduced his companions, ah so the girl was Shinobu's- and began introducing himself.
He cut him off.

"You are Genya? Himejima's boy?" Kyoujurou confirmed, asking.

The boy raised his eyebrows but for a moment, clearly taken aback that Kyoujurou remembered him.
Then he replied with a steady affirmation.

There was no way he was forgetting this one anytime soon,
Kyoujurou had seen Himejima train the boy, the boy without the capability to use breaths.

He'd been impressed by his foundations first, sure that his future held great prospects for him as a slayer,
till Himejima had told him of his condition, his strange ability.

Initially, he had been against it.
Had thought it pointless to drag along a boy into the profession when he had such a handicap.
Had argued, that it something like trying to teach one without hands to wield a sword.

Had also mentioned that the ability was not nearly enough to give him enough power to fight well.

Himejima had not argued, he rarely ever did,
just quietly refused and left.

Clearly he had been right and Kyoujurou wrong.

Kyoujurou had later learned that he had passed the entrance test,
that he'd taken to the job well.

Even now, as he regarded the boy, he regretted his previous, foolish assumption.
He had turned out better than what he'd thought him capable to become.

The boy used to show potential, now he exhumed far more, exuded strength.
It was surprisingly close to Himejima's presence.

But, even more interesting,
his eyes, they were determined with a spark of something he couldn't quite name.
A surety in ones own self perhaps, that usually took years to develop.

He was not used to seeing such staunch eyes on slayers so young.

Surprisingly, the resolve in his eyes reminded him of fire.
His soul seemed to burn like a flame.
Curious, for one trained of the earth.

"He trained you well. Your foundation shows solidarity, strength of the earth." Rengoku hummed.

The boy blinked and muttered out a hasty thanks.

"But that is not all of it. You have flames stitched into your soul." He continued.

The boy in questing flushed, clearly awkward about something.
Rengoku wondered why.

"I trained with someone else for a while recently." Genya admitted.
Someone with a red blade? Someone with flame attribute clearly. It was common for students to pick up pieces of different styles when learning from different teachers.

It was clear that whoever it was, had lent a fire to the youths eyes. Why was he so shy about it then?

"We came to offer our help Rengoku-san. We heard that you came to face a strong demon, someone- she looked at Genya pointedly- told us it was a Demon Moon." Butterfly girl spoke, reserved and perfectly calm.

Oh, interesting.

"I am not sure if it is a Moon just of yet. But, it is undoubtedly, extremely strong, so it is a possibility." Kyoujurou agreed amiably, raising an eyebrow at Genya.

How did he know something like that?

The boy was hiding something. Bless his awkward heart, he wasn't really good at deceit.

Genya gave a weak sort of shrug, and Kyoujurou resisted the urge to laugh.

Everyone had secrets, the boy was clearly afraid that whatever he was keeping from him, would make Kyoujurou mad.

Not that he would, Kyoujurou hardly had any use for anger. He believed more in forgiveness. Not to mention, he trusted the child. He seemed sensible enough.

"Hey, you're strong, real strong, so train me. Train me till I can beat you." A voice butted in.

Kyoujurou turned to look at the child dressed most curiously, it was boar-boy. A boar head seemed a bit excessive, but if he child liked it, then he didn't see why not.

He'd sensed a rather curious energy from this one. Quite unruly, definitely not a traditional breath user.

He was strong too.

Far stronger than novices usually were. In fact, the whole group seemed to be far stronger than the usual young bunch.

A strong lot, for sure.

The boy continued to glare at him aggressively through the mask, aura flickering absolutely everywhere, wild and unrestrained.

Kyoujurou had felt him assess him from the start, judging him the same way a wolf might have, he thought, amused.

"Could you try not to be rude on purpose!" The sunshine boy hissed.

The boy then gave him a deeply exasperated, apologetic look, clearly used to boar-boys antics it seemed.
Yellow boy seemed the polar opposite to him.
His presence as coiled and restrained, as his was wild.

The boys huffed at each other. Slamming elbows.

Oh dear, how amusing.

"I do not see why not, later. I can train all of you if you wish!" Kyoujurou agreed finally.
He did like training students after all.

Yellow boy gaped at him, and he chuckled.
This one was clearly a bit on the softer side, his determination was steady, but not very strong. He
was a bit muted.
Something of his hesitance almost reminded him of Senjurou.

"Why not now?" Boar boy pushed, eyes narrowing.
Sunshine shoved him, exasperated.

Kyoujurou just shook his head, smile suddenly muted.

Now was not the time at all, not with a heavy stench spread through the air,
like a hidden knife hanging over their necks.

"We need to be careful, his blood demon art is probably already active." Genya spoke, cutting in.

What?

"You know this demon's blood demon art? You recognize him?" Kyoujurou frowned slightly,
turning towards Genya.

"There's a stale stench in the air, I recognize it. It's him for sure,
its Lower Moon One.
I've met him before."
Genya replied haltingly.

Met him? What did the boy mean by 'met'?
Lower Moon One? The boy survived seeing a Moon? How was he even aliv-

"Apparently, Genya ran into it one time. He says it has some mental manipulation powers as his
demon art." Butterfly girl replied to him.

"It will try to put us in some sort of thrall. Some hallucination or sleep maybe. It can happen
through various ways, sight, touch, smell. We need to be ready for when it does." Genya
continued.

This was highly specific knowledge.
How did he know?

There was clearly more to this than the child revealed.
Kyoujurou had no idea any Moon had recently made any appearance to anyone in the Corps,
except Lower Moon Five.

He was almost sure Oyakata-sama didn't either.

He frowned.
He would have to ask later, it seemed.

But, Genya had clearly rushed over to him to deliver the information on this demon. He'd clearly meant to help Kyoujurou, even if he hadn't yet revealed the whole story. He definitely meant no harm, with whatever he was hiding.

Anyway, this was a matter to be concluded later. If accurate, the information held the capacity to be tremendously helpful.

He sharpened his guard as the boy specified the working of the blood demon art the train creature wielded.

Oh dear.

No wonder no one ever made it back. Such a twisted, underhanded blood art had probably overwhelmed all those slayers who'd came before. They probably hadn't even had a chance to raise their blades.

The kids bantered for a while, passing time as the train rattled down the tracks.

The demon was clearly biding its time. No wonder really, with so many slayers, including a pillar, it was probably hesitant.

But, the time was taking a toll. Everyone was getting tired, they were all only human after all.

Boar boy and Genya were the first ones to droop, clearly worn out.

Kyoujurou didn't have the heart to begrudge them in the slightest. It was already so late in the night, also, they'd probably rushed hard to catch up to him before the train left the station.

He only smiled as they leaned on him and went to sleep.

He would keep watch, it was fine.

Boy, was he so utterly wrong, he later realised.

Kyoujurou blinked slowly as the train continued on, the cabin deathly silent. Everyone falling slowly into sleep.

Something about the chilling air made him want to shutter down and sleep himself.

He shook his head tiredly, the light hitting his eyes hard, blinding.

Kyoujurou blinked and cleared his eyes, steadying himself as he stared at his father, lying on the mat, facing the garden.

What did he come here for?

He blinked as he realised- ah- father, he was here to see father.
To report that he became a pillar.

"So what if you become a pillar."

inhaled shakily, trying to ignore how the words seemed to have landed a crushing blow to his chest.

"This is pointless. None of this matters. We won't ever become great people anyways. Both you and me." His father continued, voice spilling vitriol.

There was nothing to be said.

Kyoujurou didn't know why he was even expecting anything else.

He got up and left.

His chest felt, utterly hollow.
He missed mother, so much.

She would've been proud, maybe.

"Ah... big brother!"
Senjurou emerged from his room sheepishly.

"Was father happy about it? When I become a pillar maybe dad will acknowledge me too!"

Kyoujurou was just so tired of this. He didn't want his brother to be sad.
He didn't want to see the inevitable tears on his face.

But, what could he even do?
What could he even do?

Kyoujurou knelt beside his brother, about to speak, but stopped as the air flickered.

Flames erupted in the corner of his vision, and he turned instantly, aghast, only to find the walls crumbling into flame, followed by darkness.

He turned to Senjurou, but he was gone-
what?

Everything was burning, how-
a stench hit him like a hammer.

A thick, chilling, disgusting scent.

"Rengoku-san wake up!"

He opened his eyes.

"Rengoku-san!" Genya shook him urgently.

He inhaled sharply as he looked at the boys altered appearance, claw-like hands, pointed teeth, ruby eyes.
Genya did not have ruby eyes.

His aura was blasphemous, demonic now.
So he was using his power?

That meant-
the demon was here.

And Kyoujurou-
gods, what a disgrace.

"Seems like things took a turn while I was taking a nap." He commented sheepishly.

Genya gave him a shrug.

"As a pillar, I'm ashamed of myself. If there is a hole, I want to go into it." He continued
apologetically.

"What?"

"To hide my face in shame."

"Rengoku-san." The boy muttered exasperated, moving on to wake up the others. Who were also
unconscious.

Kyoujurou finally took stock of his surroundings, all the passengers were asleep, clearly under
some enchantment.
The train was writhing violently, almost as if-
a curling mass of flesh shot out from the top, trying to grab him.

He reduced it to charred meat.

So the demon was controlling the train?

He watched silently as Genya burned some ropes tied to everyone's hands, flames emerging from
his fingertips. Some bastard version of a demon art?

Also,

how curious. The demon had used the ropes to influence their dreams no doubt.
They stank of demon blood, now that he paid attention to them.

They were also connected to some passengers, passed out themselves.

Very curious, but he would have to see to them later.

The people were in more danger of being consumed at the moment, than some sleep enchantment.
The train was trying to eat them.

Eight coaches to defend.
He would have to guard the lions share, the kids were simply not fast enough to defend everyone
on their own.

Thankfully they were powerful enough to provide support in other ways, if some of them could
help find it, its neck.

They stirred into action slowly, breaking free of the illusions. Boar boy the first one alert, followed
soon by butterfly girl.
He sliced at the demonic train, protecting them as they regained their senses.

"The demon fused with the train, it's his body now!" Genya informed them all, gritting his teeth.

Oh, tacky indeed.

"I'll guard the people in the coaches with these two, move along and kill it, Genya, boar boy!" Kyoujurou thundered, ordering the two, who were most definitely awake.

They needed to find its neck, fast. Hopefully, those two had a chance of finding it quick. Especially Genya, he clearly seemed to know what he was doing, somehow well prepared.

They wasted no time in rushing off.

He pulled the bewildered yellow boy to his feet, who had just awoken.

"What's going on?!

"No time to explain my boy, I'm going to defend the last five coaches, you two protect the people in these ones!" Kyoujurou muttered out calmly.

Then he shot down the aisle to move to the other cars, no time to waste. There were people to protect.

It was a bit eerie to see the passengers still asleep, but truth be told, it was quite better this way. No panic or confusion at least.

He flickered through the train, targeting it at multiple points, trying to cut it apart. No matter what the body of a demon was, it had to have a neck. They just had to find it.

Sooner or later, at least one of them would find its true neck.

He heard Genya and boar boy yell, screaming over the roof of the nearby cabin. Utterly loud.

"Don't order me around!"

"Work with me moron! You were listening to Rengoku-san, so why can't you cooperate with me?!

"No one orders me around! Not even googly-eyes! He's just... he's too awesome okay! That's why I'm listening to him!"

Googly-eyes? Did boar boy just call him...

Kyoujurou burst out laughing, despite the situation.

Next he heard his fading voice, yelling about the demon's stench near the front. Finally, their voices faded as they moved ahead. Seemed they were on to something.

A sudden explosion shook the train and he jumped sideways to avoid a flailing flesh limb.

Seemed that they'd hit the mark near the front. He hoped that the kids could cut through the neck, if they were to find it.

Another loud explosion rattled the train, which writhed viciously. It was clear the creature was panicking, flesh waving around in confused arcs.
Kyoujurou could now almost bet that they'd found its neck.

Before he could think of moving over to help, a terrible screech filled the air. A dying, vicious scream.

Oh, but how impressive. The children were wonderful, weren't they?

The entire train jerked and twisted, completely falling off the rails.

Kyoujurou reacted immediately, huffed and shot through the aisles, gathering those who were most in danger. He had to make sure they did not get crushed.

He twisted his sword and used his techniques, clearing the debris in a few short bursts, and made his way to the others.

A mass of demonic flesh crumbled away as he approached, bulging eyes glaring reproachfully at the two kids nearby. One of the eye clearly sporting a number. It was indeed, Lower Moon One.

Bested by some young children. They'd outdid Kyoujurous expectations by far.

Boar boy stood near Genya, both of them heaving. Both of them, surprisingly unscathed. One only had a few nasty bruises and small cuts, Genya seemed fine, actually.

What marvelous slayers!

"How do you stitch yourself back up like that? It's just like those creatures?" Boar boy demanded, swatting at Genya with his sword.

Genya rolled his eyes and stood straight, a wound on his stomach shutting close. "I already told you it's a unique ability I have. I use it since I can't use breaths."

He seemed to have recuperated already, not even winded. Fully adept at using his special ability, it seemed.

And what an ability it was. And how wonderfully well he had used it! To fight with a Moon without breaths, and win!

And boar boy, such keen senses! He'd found the demon's neck up front!

Absolutely amazing!

"Well done, you did wonderful, absolutely wonderful!" He beamed at them.

Boar boy went surprisingly quiet, as if confused how to deal with someone being nice.

Genya wasn't much better to be honest.

He ruffled their heads, how adorable.

"Everyone is safe, there are some injuries, but nothing life-threatening. Except that one, maybe."

Kyoujurou mused, moving towards the collapsed conductor in the front car.

His leg was crushed under the metal structure, no saving it.
"I say he can die. He stabbed Tenma. If he didn't have regeneration, he'd have had major injuries."
Boar boy muttered.

"It wasn't really his fault, he was probably manipulated by Enmu. I've seen it before. Also, its Genya, you blithering idiot." Genya sighed, waving it off.

"Then let's help him out." Kyoujurou spoke, carefully tearing his haori for cloth to bind the stump.

The boys moved to help him free the man, and watched him bind the injury.

"You guys! You killed it! You actually did it! I'm so glad!" A voice screeched at them as golden boy waved at them, sprawled out on the ground in the distance, surrounded by unconscious passengers, worn out, but clearly relieved.

Butterfly girl was beside him as well.
Both of them sported a few nasty cuts.
They were roughed up, but they would be alright.

She smiled at them as well, raising her hand in a good job gesture.

Kyoujurou turned to move towards them but stopped as an ominous feeling emerged from his stomach.
The air resonated suddenly, with an earth-shattering roar.

In the short distance, a figure landed with a boom, dust erupting from his feet.

The air was far too heavy, his intuition was tingling in immense warning.
He watched wordlessly as the dust cleared, revealing a well built man.

Man with quite distinct eyes, sporting the rank of Upper Moon Three. Another Demon Moon.
He smiled at them viciously, before disappearing from sight.

Kyoujurou felt the movement with his bones and rushed in response, no-
he would not let him touch the children.

"Breath of Flames, second style. Ascending Blazing Sky." He murmured, slicing apart his hand before he could take sunshine's head off.

The boy in question neatly fainted, clearly affected by the Upper Moon's staggering presence.
Shinobu's girl who was beside him fared only a little bit better, the blow while it hadn't connected, the concentrated attack power and presence had slammed into both of them terribly.
She gasped loudly and knelt over, heaving badly.

The demon in question backed off explosively, raising his hand and licking off a few trickles of blood, only a scratch remaining where he'd sliced the hand apart.

Such quick regeneration, and an intense sense of pressure and dread.
Such was an Upper Moon.
A despicable demon, to be sure, attacking the injured.

"I cannot understand why you're targeting a wounded person." Kyoujurou spoke calm, as boar boy and Genya took the two away. Both of the boys cursing lowly.

"I thought he'd just get in the way, between you and me." The demon replied, mocking.

"You and I have something to talk about? It's our first time meeting, but I already hate you." Kyoujurou replied, voice flat.

"Is that so? I really hate weak humans too. When I look at weaklings, I just feel disgusted." The demon continued, sneering at the kids behind him.

How dare he. These children were far from weak.

"It seems we have different views on things." Kyoujurou replied lowly.

"Is that so." The demon ridiculed.

He did not reply.

"I have a wonderful proposal." The demon began suddenly,

"I can sense your highly polished battle spirit, a pillar I'm sure. Such immense strength, for a human. Why don't you become a demon, so that we can sort out our differences, by fighting all eternity?" He continued, grinning wildly.

Absolutely ridiculous.

"Not a chance. I'm the flame pillar, Rengoku Kyojurou, and I will defeat you, as I am." He promised.

"I'm Akaaza. And I'm telling you, don't act so pathetic. You can hone your formidable strength to the epitome as a demon. You haven't been able to pass into the supreme territory, all because you are a human. A measly, weak human." Akaza sneered at him.

"Growing old and dying, is the beauty of the fleeting creature called a human being. Because they grow old, because they die. They are tremendous, lovable and precious. What they call strength, isn't just a word used in regards to the body. They children are not weak, do not insult them."

"I see." The demon narrowed his eyes.

Kyoujurou gripped his sword well.

"Technique deployment. Destructive Kill: Compass needle." Akaza roared, moving towards him with explosive strength.

Kyoujurou fought him at full strength, pushing his limits. There was no other way to face him.

Hi strength was too high, over encompassing. It took everything he had to match him blow for blow.
They were pushing it so hard, in fact, he was sure they weren't visible to the naked eye, at least not to any normal human.

But as hard as it was, he could fight. It was not over.

Yet, he was at severe disadvantage, even though they were equally powerful at offence, all the injuries he sustained weren't healing anytime soon, while Akaza regenerated in seconds.

So, he had to cut his neck and end the fight, before he was too worn down.

"None of the pillars I've fought have ever agreed to become a demon. Why is that? All this strength you all wield, it will face an unsightly decline!" Akaza growled at him, nearly taking off his elbow.

Kyoujurou returned in kind, expertly twisting his sword, severing half his waist.
It regenerated in barely a second.

"Same goes for your wonderful sword-style! It will be lost Kyoujurou! Isn't that just sad?" He sneered.

"It's nothing to be sad about! If one's a human, it's just natural!" Kyoujurou replied, not even a bit remorseful.
Why was life precious? It was precious because it was short, it had an end!

As humans, they had such little time, which was why what they did with it was so important.

He would never willingly become a demon, would never disrespect the human life he was given in this world.

"You are a fool! Too shortsighted to see the benefits of what I offer you! If you will not have my kindness, then die!
Destructive Kill: War Style!" Akaza snarled.

Rengoku blocked, "Fifth style. Flame Tiger!"

He was pushed back as the air churned around them violently.
Such raw power this demon wielded,
strength enough to twist the very air around them into explosive bursts of energy, with his fists.

It took so much to move.

 Barely fifteen minutes he'd fought, and Kyoujurou was beyond tired.

He had no time to straighten his footing as Akaza pursued relentlessly, no break in between attacks.
His next punch was already too far into his defenses.

Kyojurou was about to have his ribs shatter.

A large boom rattled the air, as something struck Akaza's hand with tremendous speed, exploding into flames, demolishing the arm.

Kjoujurou took the opportunity to slip back, putting up his guard.

"It's less than an hour to sunrise Rengoku-san! I'll back you up!" Genya yelled at him through gritted teeth, holding a gun steady.
Genya could see them fight? He could follow their movements to shoot so accurately?
"You weak brat! I'll tear you apart!" Akaza howled in rage, rushing at Genya.

Kyoujurou intercepted his swing, jamming his sword into his shoulder and twisting.

"You will not hurt any of them, as long as I'm here." Kyoujurou gritted out, chest heaving.

These children were his, and he would protect them with his life.

He could do this, he would protect them.

"You! Protect them for how long? I've already started to get through your defensee, you're weakening. Your organs themselves have started taking internal damage, the more you push yourself, the quicker you're killing yourself!" Akaza berated scornfully.

Kyoujurou lunged with his sword, uncaring, landing slashes upon slashes that healed in but the blink of an eye.

Akaza raged as he lunged through gaps Kyoujurou was starting to show, only to have his limbs explode due to the sheer power contained in Genya's bullets.

That child was half the reason why this fight hadn't ended yet.
He covered for the mistakes Kyoujurou was starting to make, guarding his back.

Slowly but steadily, they both could buy time if nothing else, daybreak was not far.
Kyoujurou would keep him here till the rays of the sun emerged.

But, they were both tiring, and tiring quick, he realised, as finally, one of Genya's bullets missed. The boy let out a gasp of horror as Akaza's hand lunged at Kyoujurou's exposed eye, too close.

This was going to cost him.

Kyoujurou braced for the pain, expecting his left eye to get smashed.

It was only an eye. He would still have the other.

The wind whistled, and the pain did not arrive.

Deep red, maroon hair swayed in the wind.
What-there was someone standing in front of him.
Kyoujurou hadn't even sensed anything.

The man had been too fast.

Akaza howled as his arm was crushed.
The man had grabbed Akaza's hand with his own, squeezing ruthlessly.
Bones and muscle crunched sickeningly, spilling out into the ground as the skin tore.

"Enough, Akaza." The man spoke, voice like steel.

Akaza shook his demolished hand free, retreating with a snarl, "Traitorous scum!"

"Koyuki wouldn't have wanted this for you, Hakuji." The man spoke again, voice ringing crystal clear, hanafuda earrings swinging.

Akaza stumbled back when he heard the names, as if struck.
The single sentence had clearly unhinged him completely.

"How did you-

"It's been long enough, you can rest now." The maroon haired man cut him off again, voice firm, disappearing, similar to Akaza's previous movement, but soundless.

Akaza turned around, eyes widening in terror and rage, as he searched for the man, but it was too late.

The man was already behind him.

Kyoujurou watched with something like muted wonder as he swung his sword in a clean arc, the blade glowing bright.

A head lolled onto the ground, body collapsing, listless.

Just like that, it was over.

The man sighed, and knelt beside the crumbling demon, holding Akaza's hand, mouth set in a pained, regretful twist.

"You never deserved what happened to you. May your next life be kinder."

Kyoujurou watched as he man wiped tears from Akaza's now pained, and hollow eyes. Then the demon was gone, ashes blown away by the wind.

Brilliant ruby eyes met his. They were soft eyes.

Kyoujurou exhaled as he collapsed, body at its limit, beyond exhausted. Arms caught him before he could hit the ground awkwardly, gently lowering him instead.

"The battle is over, good work Rengoku-san!" The man addressed him, smiling. His arms were warm, and Kyoujurou was almost overwhelmed by how safe he felt. He'd been prepared to die today.

It was like a miracle that he wasn't dead.

He wondered how this man knew him. Wondered who he was.

"I'm really grateful you helped us out, but who are you?" Kyoujurou asked, voice tired.

The man didn't reply directly, gently taking his sword from his hand. He realised he'd been holding the sword too tight, hands bloody.

Then he watched the man bind his injuries in bandages, slowly.

He worked very kindly, and the gentle touch was a shock after the whole fight.

This man was definitely not a Slayer, he would've known had there been such a strong member in the Corps.

"My name is Kamado Tanjirou. I'm a demon. Used to be Upper Moon One." He sighed softly, in
the end.

What?

A crow fluttered in from the distance.

"Message! Rengoku Kyoujurou, you are to escort the demon Kamado Tanjirou back to headquarters! Escort the demon back to headquarters. Rengoku Kyoujurou, you are to escort the demon Kamado Tanjirou back to headquarters."

"That's our summon." Kamado smiled, still kindly.

Chapter End Notes

My god this chapter, ugh.

Can i kill myself plz, took me so long to phrase it properly.
BUT RENGOKU LIVES BECause ofc, no one dies here.
IM NOT PULLING THAT SHIT here.

Watch out for Rengoku Tanjirou broship, but this time, its like Tanjirous older.
Im really upset that rengoku died ok, HE MY FAV. *Sobs*

Next chapter is gonna be a nightmare to write, lemme just tell you that.

Also, i just read the first few chapters of this fic and im like...
wow i was terrible at writin just four months ago.

Wonder if i should edit them later, to bring them to the quality the later chapters are in?
Or maybe im just overthinking.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!