

*But I will want for nothing more*

The first time Giyuu doesn't think anything of it, because it's not like they only invited *him*.

Tanjirou turns up with his household, the four of them loud as ever. Seeing Nezuko as noisy and rambunctious as the boys, happily arguing along about something that absolutely does not require that level of passion... that's a treat. Not all the Pillars can make it — Gyomei is on some sort of temple pilgrimage while Shinobu is busy with the students she know surrounds herself with (allegedly they drive her up the wall, but Giyuu thinks she likes still having youngsters around to terrorize — though he is pleasantly surprised to see that Shinazugawa is already there by the time he arrives. The man seems decidedly more at peace than when he'd last seen him, though Shinazugawa does nothing more than give him a sour nod. Both of them opted to bring along their former kasugai crows, although Shinazugawa's Sourai seems to have grown much more undomesticated than old Kanzaburo, who is more than content to live out his retirement perched precariously on Giyuu's shoulder. The two birds quickly (that is, Kanzaburo has his own version of quick) make for the eaves of the Sound Pillar Estate to join Uzui's Nijimaru for some gossip.

That's good too. It's a good day in general, the news joyous but in no way unexpected. Kanroji practically squeals his ears off. Jokes are made about how Uzui didn't waste any time, and about the likelihood of another one of his wives falling pregnant even before the time comes for Suma to give birth to the child inside of her. The woman in question is beaming and weeping in turns — sometimes simultaneously — though Giyuu doesn't know her well enough to gauge whether that's a pregnancy thing or not. He has been in her company a few times, back before everything ended, although they'd never spoken directly to each other past the initial introductions. From Giyuu's limited knowledge, the gratuitous tears and mood swings seem... not out of character, necessarily.

She isn't showing yet, stomach still flat, although her chest is— well. It might've always been like that. Giyuu hadn't looked closely before and he's not about to do so now. He finds her out in the gardens, a few hours later, whilst taking a much-needed break from the volume of the celebrations inside. Suma looks so peaceful listening to the distant laughter spilling out from the other side of the plum trees and lilac bushes, resting her palm against the bump that isn't there yet. It feels natural to sit next to her, albeit a reasonable few feet away.

"Congratulations on your motherhood."

Giyuu had said something to the same effect earlier, only everyone else had too, at the same time, and he felt fairly confident no one had heard him. He had not opted to raise his voice.

The smile he receives is blinding for such a small nicety.

"Thank you, Giyuu! Even though I'm not actually a mother yet."

"I think you are. Fatherhood starts at the birth, but motherhood begins far earlier. You're already caring for your child by eating well for it... Presumably," he falters at the end because honestly Giyuu has no idea whether Suma is eating well, nor indeed what eating well really entails during pregnancy. All the same, the woman looks touched nearly to the point of more waterworks going off.

The words are of course not at all his own but rather something he'd overheard Shinobu tell a patient once. She would have even better things to say if she were here now, though Giyuu has no doubt the woman will follow up on Suma's pregnancy throughout its entire duration (whether the woman wants it or not) once the news reaches her. His train of thought, however, is interrupted by the sound of a shoji door being slid open with an alarming amount of force, followed by Uzui— by *Tengen*, because as was pointed out, there are too many Uzuis at this party to go by surname — happily, aggressively, (drunkenly) asking what the hell is going on out here.

"Giyuu says I'm a mommy but you're not a daddy," Suma reports dutifully, making Giyuu blanch. Tengen's mildly sadistic tendencies must have rubbed off on this sweet woman over the years.

"Not the daddy, eh?" Tengen sits down heavily in the space between them, placing his left arm at Suma's back while clamping his right hand down on Giyuu's shoulder with enough force to make his collarbone creak. "Got somethin' to tell me, Tomioka?"

Logically, Giyuu knows that this is all in jest and that he should really make some sort of quip back at Tengen. But all he can do is sit and stare up (and up, and *up*) at the man, somehow even bigger the closer you find yourself to him, grinning even as he's trying to appear threatening. His face is flushed from sake and shining with domestic bliss. Giyuu is so happy for him. So much so that the words seem woefully inadequate, and so he does not say them.

Tengen is accustomed to not receiving a reply from him, luckily, and so the man merely releases his shoulder to mess up his already messy hair.

"It's good to see you again."

"Likewise." That one comes easy, and earnest.

The rest of the party starts spilling to the gardens as well, to see where the future parents have gone, but Tengen stays put between Suma and Giyuu even as he hounds the boys and laughs so hard he jostles Giyuu's shoulder all over again. Only once he sees Iguro lean over and mumble something into Kanroji that makes her look between himself and Tengen with a strange expression on her face does he realize that he's being rude. When Makio and Hinatsuru sit down in the grass opposite them, Giyuu makes to get up and give them room by their husband, but he gets immediately shot down by both Tengen and the two women. So much for politeness. The Uzui family seems to genuinely enjoy having him in their midst however, and Giyuu finds the feeling is mutual.

He never spent so much time in such close proximity to the four spouses during all the years that they worked together, but the thought isn't bittersweet. *That's* over but this isn't. The

Giyuu back then wouldn't have been able to let himself enjoy a celebration such as this, while demons roamed the mountainsides and backroads... This Giyuu agrees when Tengen says they should spend more time together, his voice warm in the early spring evening.

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The second time is at an onsen, and, full disclosure, Giyuu is struggling. It's not like he hasn't experienced mixed bathing before — hell, it's not like he hasn't experienced bathing with *Tengen* before, after a joint mission once got them both covered in unspeakable fluids, but never in his life has Giyuu experienced bathing with Tengen *and* his wives. And *only* Tengen and his wives.

The onsen they invited him to is in a remarkable location, high up on the side of a mountain still covered in white even as the cherry blossoms are in full bloom far down below. The snow banks almost reach the edge of the large rocks lining the hot spring, only held at bay by the constant steam pouring off the yellow-brown water, coloured so by iron and salt bubbling up from the roots of the mountain ("They call it the gold spring," Tengen had said, "Now what is that if not flamboyant?"). It's a breathtaking place, to be sure, very out of the way and therefore very, very secluded. To the point where they have the hot spring entirely to themselves.

Giyuu likes to think the quad would be reeling it back a tad if they were bathing with strangers present, but they certainly don't see him as a stranger in this regard. To be fair, it's not as though they're doing anything particularly salacious. The way they touch and look at each other is simply... more than friendly. And there's nothing wrong with married people appreciating the bodies of their spouses, it just— especially with no one around but the five of them— also serves to make Giyuu... appreciate the bodies.

Even the mental phrasing makes him squirm.

Without the use of his left hand, Tengen needs help washing parts of his body. Ostensibly. Giyuu imagines the four of them were accustomed to washing one another anyway, even before Tengen was injured— that is to say, he imagines it *conceptually*, not vividly— ugh.

Most of the quad's attentions are focused on Suma, who has to keep getting out of the water in intervals, because apparently it might overheat the baby in her growing belly (her chest has definitely undergone some pregnancy-related changes since he last saw her. That child will be well fed.)

Giyuu feels almost angry with himself, and even more immature than Zenitsu was when Tanjiro first introduced him to the (very noisy) boy. To be a grown adult and sit here flushed to the roots of hair over the sound of the woman having the sore muscles of her shoulders tended to by her wife, and at the sight of Tengen, a mix of sweat and condensate from the steam forming a single bead that runs from his forehead down his strong jaw, only to drip down his impossibly broad chest—

This has gone on for long enough.

He's planning on calling it an early night, to retire (hide) in his room and write a letter to Tanjirou, to go with the hair trinket he bought for Nezuko in the little town at the foot of mountain (Giyuu still can't look at his haori without thinking of how meticulously the girl mended it after their final battle; she's as much a part of the garment now as the two people he made it to honour). His plan is thwarted when Tengen drags him back into the conversation.

"What about the area around your estate, Giyuu? Any flamboyant springs around there?"

"It's not my estate anymore," Giyuu answers before processing the rest of the question.

"Though I wasn't aware of any notable ones while I lived there."

Tengen straightens up with a small splash.

"What do you mean you don't— What the hell happened to the Water Pillar Estate?"

Giyuu frowns. "I passed it onto the family that has been taking care of it for generations."

Judging by the four faces staring at him, a bit more information seems to be expected. "After the Corps disbanded, I initially stayed out of duty. It's among the oldest estates of the organization. But I... had never been happy there." This is what you call an understatement. "And it certainly felt more like Kikuchi's than mine. Even though her family didn't live on the grounds, they've been tending to the place since before Urokodaki became a pillar, so. It's theirs now."

Kikuchi had been a bit too stunned to form many words when he first gave her that bit of news, but she had written Giyuu a lengthy letter shortly afterwards. Apparently they have plans to convert the main building into a place of healing. Inside his head, Giyuu can clearly hear Shinobu's snide comment about how big an improvement this will be from the huge estate being one man's place of moping.

"But, Giyuu, where do you live now?" Hinatsuru asks, sounding genuinely concerned that he might be roughing it in a forest somewhere.

"With Urokodaki."

He hasn't been this content about his living situation since he was made pillar. Walking around in the memories of his youth turned out to be far more sweet than bitter once their goal had actually been accomplished. And there are tasks that no longer come as easily to his old teacher, though the man would never admit it; tasks that Giyuu is thrilled to be able to assist him with. "He's very set in his ways after living alone for so many years. But I think the both of us are better off not being alone."

"I'm glad to hear it," Tengen states decisively, striding through the water to clamp his hand around Giyuu's bicep. That's... that's a lot of chest, very close. "So what sort of flamboyant plans have you got now that you don't have that old shanty to worry about?"

Giyuu's mind turns blank as he fails miserably at averting his eyes from all the skin on display in front of him. Still some part of him starts speaking on autopilot: "I always thought, when everything was over, that I'd like a family of my own. Do what... what so many other slayers never got the chance to do."

He realizes the words are true only as they leave his mouth. When it came down to it, Giyuu had barely ever allowed himself to actually think that far. In all honesty he hadn't had much hope that the Demon Slayer Corps' goal would be accomplished within his lifetime at all. That belief — lack of belief is probably more accurate — never changed anything. Their cause had always been the best, sanest thing he was willing to die for. But now he doesn't have to. And deep down, that desire is apparently something that's been inside of him all along. The idea of a small face looking up at him, looking like his own—

"Hey."

He almost startles as Tengen's pecs come back into focus — he really wasn't staring on purpose this time, entirely lost in his own head — and the man rubs his thumb soothingly up and down the arm he's still gripping, completely frying Giyuu's brain. "We got plenty of time for that."

'We' as in Tengen thinks he needs help finding someone..? Not untrue, probably, some distant wry part of Giyuu thinks, but he can't quite gather himself, mind slipping back into how he doesn't want to explain how much he *does not* want to have someone make that sort of connection, that sort of relying attachment to him, for such a brief amount of time — much less some civilian who wouldn't understand— Giyuu finally manages to reign in his rampant train of thought. No reason to start ripping off those perfectly good scabs.

"Let's just enjoy today," Giyuu says, to himself more than anything, more or less quoting the spirit of Tanjirou's letters. "Thank you for inviting me here." There's something grounding about pleasantries like that. A sense of accomplishment from correctly executing a human interaction. And he does enjoy the rest of the day, actually. The ryokan they're staying at has delicious food, the Uzuishares decidedly less lingering touches once they're all fully clothed again. A good day.

The night however.

Giyuu hears his own name being spoken softly on the other side of the wall. He can't quite tell whether Hinatsuru or Suma is the one bringing his name into conversation, and he can't help shuffling closer either. It's as if the quad purposely lower their volume, well aware of how the walls are literally paper-thin, but he swears he hears it again, this time in Tengen's unmistakably deep voice. Giyuu's chest tightens with the unwelcome and equally pervasive thought that the four of them are discussing his social ineptitude, complaining about his uncomfortably fatalistic (factually correct) attitude towards himself and how he brings everyone around him down as well.

It must be a short discussion however, or Giyuu only caught the tail end of it, because even though he struggles to make out any individual words, the topic has clearly shifted.

The high moan is a pretty dead giveaway.

Giyuu practically throws himself away from the wall, but not without hearing someone utter the words “That’s it, Hina,” and he really wishes they hadn’t, because he truly has no escape from his mind adding a visual to the sounds he’s hearing.

Other voices join in, and Giyuu resigns himself to a long night. He tries to lay as he normally would, in dignified stillness, but there is only so much of Tengen’s rhythmic grunting he can take before he shoves his pillow over his head in a futile attempt to muffle the noise. There seems to be no end in sight — when the sounds of one or two people crest and then fall quiet, it is barely a matter of minutes before someone else is ready to carry on where they left off.

Giyuu goes to sleep frustrated by his own body and how badly it seems to have mixed things up.

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The third time is at a festival, and Giyuu is determined not to ruin any moods. It turns out to be a relatively easy task actually. The evening is warm, humidity hinting at the impending rainy season, but nowhere near as cloying as it will be in just another week or two. Still he sighs pleasurably as a breeze comes dancing down the street, cooling the sweat already beading at the nape of his neck, rustling the myriad paper lanterns and making every bell softly chime.

“You really do clean up well, Tomioka,” Tengen says.

“We already knew that from the onsen though,” Makio reminds her husband dryly.

Giyuu determinedly does not blush. The onsen was months ago now and not at all the last time he’s met with the quad; family dinners and days spent lounging on their engawa littering the time between then and now. The Uzuis had even made the trip to visit him and Urokodaki, bringing with them Nijimaru so that Kanzaburo could get some socialization. Giyuu was thrilled for his dear friend, although Nijimaru seemed less than excited for a visit to the “old folk’s home” as he called it.

Somewhere in the space of that time, Giyuu came to the unfortunate discovery that his attraction towards the four spouses doesn’t seem to be wearing off no matter how clothed they are or how inane activities they do together. He only briefly feels any guilt about it, though. Knowing Tengen, the man wouldn’t be uncomfortable in the slightest if Giyuu were to tell him, only smugly flattered and more than willing to tease him about it at every opportunity. No, Giyuu does not feel bad about withholding this information.

They look painfully good in their boldly coloured yukata, all four of them. Suma wears hers with a pair of soft-looking hakama, tied below her chest and framing the now very sizable

bump. Her second trimester is nearing its end and she's already complaining about the heat and the aches in her hips and lower back. The problems aren't anything Giyuu can solve, nor offer advice for or even relate to, and so he feels uselessly sympathetic, tentatively placing his palm square in the middle of her back the way he's seen Nezuko do to calm the two excitable boys the Kamado siblings share their home with.

It seems effective — Suma turns happily to take his arm with her own, her other hand placed atop her unborn child, and thus they trail after Hinatsuru, who holds onto her husband and wife with each of her arms.

The smells wafting down the street are mouth-watering, and Giyuu can feel more than hear the drumming up ahead. Tengen stops everytime he sees something shiny, like the magpie he is. It's all a bit much and he is grateful to accompany Suma when she needs to stop and rest. Among the vendors of more traditional foods, Makio is quick to spot a yoshoku stall and the five of them squeeze into the corner of the yatai to enjoy some flamboyant fusion cuisine.

The procession comes by as they eat, although the performers are hidden behind the throngs of people. No one makes a move to duck back out into the street, adhering to a silent agreement not to burst the invisible bubble that seems to have formed around the five of them. Giyuu has sake with his food, but more intoxicating still is the way everyone has to lean in and talk directly into his ears over all the noise, the way the unseen drums pound in his chest. Tengen makes a comment about a passerby's choice of dress that is so scathing that Giyuu has to look up from his food and stare, helplessly amused, at the owner of that sharp-tongued mouth.

He recognizes the character of the tension between his own face — or rather, his own *mouth* — and Tengen's (Giyuu isn't *dense*) and is too surprised at what's about to happen that he doesn't do anything except simply... letting it happen.

It makes a certain sort of sense, that someone used to kissing multiple people would... Well, no, perhaps that's judgemental of him. In any case, Giyuu certainly doesn't mind, and thus sees no point in making a comment.

The point of contact is only brief, warm, and damp from the sake coating both their lips. It feels like a dumb thing to take note of after knowing him for so long, but Tengen really is a large man. Giyuu has known this for years and yet it's different to acknowledge from afar and then to experience at this distance, or rather, extreme lack thereof.

Tengen pulls back only a fraction, to perform a quick study of his face and affirm the nature of his silence. Then he goes in for a second time, just as brief but simpler to enjoy without the element of surprise. Giyuu lets himself return the pressure with his own lips, and gives Tengen a smile when the man pulls away once more, small but genuine.

Unsurprisingly, the grin Giyuu receives in return is much bigger than his own, toothy and crooked and Tengen's wives all giggle around them, Suma holding Makio from behind and squeezing her with giddiness.

"Oi, you can't do that anymore! Don't crush my kid, Suma!"

“Bwuh— I’m the one carrying the baby!!”

Tengen and Hinatsuru both laugh as Makio kneels down to pat at Suma’s belly, soothingly (and loudly) promising to protect its inhabitant from ‘the mean lady squishing you’ to which the mean lady in question blusters, “Obviously / can tell when it’s too much!?”

The antics are so familiar now, so *them*, that Giyuu huffs out a laugh of his own. It’s hardly audible above the bustle of the festival, yet Tengen catches his eye and sends him another beaming grin before turning back to calm his girls by guiding everyone further down the rows of booths lining the street. Giyuu follows without remorse, feeling pleasantly floaty and somewhat self-congratulatory about being able to accept a kiss without overthinking anything. It was nice. It *is* nice, the lights and the atmosphere, even in spite of the bustling crowds which Giyuu would have struggled with not very long ago at all. The Uzuis seem to have acclimated him to a certain level of bustle.

Up ahead, Hinatsuru cranes her head around to check on him and he gives her another smile — they seem to flow out easily tonight — receiving a bright wink in return before she turns back to reply to something Makio is saying. With absolutely zero intention of contributing anything to their conversation, Giyuu strides forward to catch up and hear what they’re talking about. He’s truly blessed to have such good friends.

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The fourth time is at a beach. It’s really the only place it makes sense to exist in the July heat. The salty breeze is not just nice, it is crucial to their survival. Makio and Tengen are out amongst the waves in the blink of an eye, while Giyuu helps Hinatsuru and Suma find a shady spot to set out the towels they brought with them, now held in place by baskets of food. With Suma settled in nicely with a solid mountain of fruit, Giyuu crosses the remaining distance to the ocean.

He enters the shallow waters at a safe distance from where his two friends are splashing up a storm and then simply lets himself... float away. Drift until the chill from the water has thoroughly seeped into his bones. The sun is still hot on his face, but nowhere else. And all Giyuu hears is the ocean, from within.

Then something grabs him from below.

Two somethings, one with five digits and the other decidedly more cylindrical and rounded, the former grabbing onto his left shoulder while the latter supports the weight of his right. Giyuu opens his eyes to squint and smile up at Tengen’s face, upside down as it is. He is lifted up slightly, so that his ears are no longer below surface.

“You on some sorta migration route there?”



Pushing his wet hair backwards and rubbing at his water-logged ears, Giyuu stands and sees that, indeed, the gentle current has taken him so far down along the beach that he can't immediately recognize the terrain.

"Where are the girls?"

Tengen points — only he does it the way one might do for a young child who isn't very good at spotting things; crowding in close behind him to line up their sightlines and point his finger exactly where Giyuu can't possibly miss seeing them. They're not even that far away, actually. More importantly, Tengen's *entire* front is now plastered along Giyuu's *entire*—

"Fuck, you're cold!"

Ah, not anymore.

"Are your lips blue?"

Giyuu experiences a brief but legitimate moment of concern that Tengen might do something like *check for himself* in some insane way that also requires physical contact, but he does not. Only looks at him in a way that tempts Giyuu to spill out the whole embarrassing truth about his crush, teasing be damned. He wouldn't even know how to begin though, and so only tries for an especially good smile before they both start heading for their little base. Along the water, not the shore, because Giyuu can already feel the sun beating down on his shoulders.

Tengen keeps ahold of his arm, ostensibly to "make sure he doesn't float away again". Giyuu wonders how likely it is that the man already does know about his crush and is deliberately taunting him.

Makio is already almost dry again by the time they reach the three women, although it's clear that neither Hinatsuru or Suma have been anywhere close to the water yet.

"C'mon Suma, you wanted to cool down, right?" Tengen says, only bending down to pop a grape into his mouth while Giyuu is happy to take a seat between Makio and Hinatsuru, both of them patting at the spot in invitation.

"I don't wanna move though," Suma whines, not even bothering to open her eyes. "I know I'll feel lighter in the water, but then it's just ten times worse when I have to drag myself back out again."

The way Tengen's face twitches has become familiar enough to Giyuu that it is with a complete lack of surprise that he (and Hinatsuru and Makio) watches Tengen pick up Suma in spite of all her protests about being heavy as an oxen and wanting her baby's father to not break his back before even getting to meet his child. He sweeps her up bridal-style as if she weighs nothing and carries her squealing into the very not-warm ocean, letting go all at once when the water reaches his waist and laughing at the shriek she lets out.

Next to Giyuu, Makio frowns, arms and back tensed as though she's keeping herself from standing up and going to them.

"Are you alright?" Giyuu asks her.

"Yeah," she replies, not taking her eyes off the pair in the water. Suma is doing her best to drown Tengen, barely succeeding in making him move an inch out of place. "I just— ... He should be more careful with her. And he should *know* that too."

"He does, Makio, don't worry," Hinatsuru smiles, "Tengen knows what she can take."

Makio looks doubtful at best, eyes full of what is apparently concern for her wife and unborn child. Giyuu is so bad at reading people.

"Ah. I thought... it might have been something like jealousy."

The two women look at him with surprise, he's sure of that much.

"Do you never have any difficult feelings about... how your husband has made a child together with Suma — just the two of them?" It's a sensitive question, probably, but Giyuu experiences curiosity too, and none of the Uzu's have ever made him feel out of line.

Makio only snorts.

"I do *not* want to give birth," she says, bringing her arms up to pillow her head as she lays back down on the now fairly sandy towel. "Babies are great once they're out, but no stomach parasite for me, thanks. You two get to do *all* the work for me in that whole department." She flaps her hand absently in Hinatsuru's direction. "It's not like I won't be the babies' parent anyway."

Giyuu takes a moment to process her statement, accepting the logic of it. Then he turns to Hinatsuru.

"How about you?"

Hinatsuru looks at him with a strange little smile, hesitating for a beat to bite at her own lip as the smile only grows bigger. Finally she blurts it out, with a huge grin and a hushed, secretive voice:

"I'm pregnant too."

For a moment Giyuu can only stare at her starry eyes; at the obvious wonder in her face. These words are miraculous for Hinatsuru even though she's the person speaking them.

"Congratulations," he says, with the utmost sincerity. "How... how far along are you?"

"Not much at all, not yet three months I don't think." Her brow furrows. (Giyuu tries very very hard not to do the math and end up with the result that their joint onsen trip was in fact nearly

three months ago.) “There’s a lot that could still go wrong. I’d almost rather have put together the signs later, like Suma, so I didn’t have so much time ahead of me to worry...”

“Suma didn’t figure it out ‘later’, she literally didn’t realize and Hina had to tell her,” Makio informs Giyuu, before turning to her wife and speaking in a voice infinitely more gentle, “And you’re both gonna be just fine. We’re gonna take care of you. Right?”

This is directed at Giyuu, and as surprised as he is to be included, he means it all the same when he answers, “Yes.”

Hinatsuru takes his hand.

It’s not the first time she has done so — the Uzui household as a whole has what Giyuu can only describe as a strong culture of being very free with physical affection, but Hinatsuru is particularly generous even by their standards — and Giyuu returns the grip, making her smile. It took a while for him to get acclimated to, but he’s getting there.

“How about you, Giyuu? I understand if this is all a bit much for you. How do you feel?”

“Happy.” Giyuu replies, though admittedly he’s thoroughly confused by the question. “I wouldn’t accept all your invitations if I didn’t want to. That won’t change when you have children.” On the contrary, he’ll be surprised if the family still wants him hanging around all the time once they have little ones to care for. He wonders if maybe Hinatsuru is in fact trying to indicate this in a tactful manner, but judging by her facial response and the warm squeeze his hand receives, his answer is something that pleases her.

He goes back into the water not long after, unable to decline Makio’s swimming challenge once she spots a distant lone rock jutting out of the water out to the east.

It’s a tie.

Giyuu tells himself this means it would have been a win for him just over a year ago, but then he looks at Makio and none of that matters at all.

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The fifth time isn’t really a single time at all. It quickly becomes clear that Hinatsuru’s pregnancy is headed in a completely different direction than Suma’s relatively uncomplicated experience.

It seems the bags under her eyes grow deeper every time Giyuu visits, nausea and joint pain stealing her sleep even as the pregnancy fatigue is as strong with Hinatsuru as it is with Suma, now at the end of her 8th month of pregnancy. Unable to keep anything down, Hinatsuru is actually losing weight while her wife’s belly grows impossibly larger by the day. A doctor is called, and recommends as much rest as is possible.

Neither of the two women are therefore in condition to get much done around the Sound Pillar Estate, and either Makio or Tengen are constantly keeping close by to watch over them rather than doing the chores and errands that the estate as big as theirs really demands.

Supposedly this is why Giyuu ends up sort of simply... sticking around.

It barely feels as though he's doing them a favour, more the exact opposite, in fact, seeing as "keeping watch over the girls" often ends up involving dozing off with Hinatsuru and Suma when they nap (Giyuu sleeps lightly, he *would* be wide awake if either woman so much as groaned — and he does, multiple times, only to be dragged back down onto the veritable nest of pillows and futons by warm and sleepy arms). Even the more laborious tasks around the estate are a welcome challenge after Giyuu kind of ran out of things to fix around Urokodaki's little old house. His former mentor does not appreciate having his day-to-day routine of chores being taken over by anyone else.

"You know," the man says one day, face as unreadable as ever behind the mask but tone of voice clearly amused, "you keep bringing more stuff over there than what comes back again. Is there something I should know?"

Giyuu doesn't know if there's something he should know. He keeps mentally reminding himself that the Uzui family might not be up for having Giyuu in their space once the space is filled with babies, but on the other hand, if he can find things to help out with now then surely there will only be even more to do once new people enter their household.

'Their' as in the Uzuis', of course.

At the very least there should be lots more washing to be done.

It's not that he consciously sets out to learn where everything is though, it just... happens. One day a kamoi in the kitchen is dented by one of Tengen's occasional bursts of overly enthusiastic door opening, and Giyuu is already headed down the hallway to retrieve what he needs to repair the rail by the time Makio calls out, "Oi, it's not the same place we keep the shoji paper, it's—"

"I know," he replies, making a left and not a right turn.

Truly there was never any awkward adjustment phase of not knowing where or how to exist in the house, because by the time Giyuu gives in and sends Kanzaburo off with a letter to Urokodaki (the one location his old friend reliably does make it to) informing the man not to expect him back until otherwise stated... Giyuu has already had so many overnight visits due to bad weather, or exceptionally, pleasantly late nights, or simply because he was asked nicely, that their morning and evening routines are as familiar to him as how each spouse prefers to take their tea.

That's not to say that Giyuu's extended stay with the quad is without any bumps at all. While the days are generally easy, if often fairly chaotic, the nights are... Well. It's not as though these things happen every single night, and certainly less often the further along both Hinatsuru and Suma get, but things definitely do still... happen. Giyuu is mortified to admit

(in his head, not out loud, not to anyone, *ever*) that he can now identify which noises belong to each spouse without any names being spoken aloud at all. Tengen should be easy to single out, naturally, but sometimes the women will do something to the man that makes his voice go so high and needy and desperate that the first time Giyuu heard it — his head groggy from being woken up in the middle of the night, his body already so alive it was practically *buzzing* — he hadn't been able to pinpoint who he was listening to at all.

That particular moment of realization is something Giyuu fears he'll carry with him forever.

And then, one night, there's a knock on his door.

Once again, he's asleep when he hears it. But then it comes again, a soft tap-tap-tap that's definitely against Giyuu's door. He listens apprehensively for other sounds, but all lights are off and the only thing he can hear is a chorus of snoring, no groaning at all, neither from labour pains or... otherwise.

"Come in," he says quietly, though it feels very loud in the dead of night.

And in comes Makio, yukata rumpled from twisting around on the futons, eyes clear and very regretfully awake.

"They're so loud."

It's true. Tengen's soft snuffling sounds almost cute compared to Suma's ear-shattering snores. Something about the baby putting pressure on her lungs from below. It would keep Giyuu up as well if he hadn't gotten accustomed to Urokodaki rattling the foundations of the house every night.

"And sweaty. And gassy. Hina's are getting more rank by the fucking week."

Giyuu has nothing to reply to this.

"Do you want to sleep here?"

It's a genuine question more than an invitation. One that Makio replies to by entering his room and sliding the door shut. He tries not to feel... cornered. In his own room. In *their* house.

"Should you get another futon?" he whispers.

"I don't think you understand how much those assholes spread out. Besides, they're all damp at this point," Makio wrinkles her nose. "... and I don't want to wake anyone. If anything wakes Hina up, she can never go back to sleep."

"Tanjirou is the same way."

"Doesn't surprise me."

For a beat they simply look at each other. No part of this conversation explains why Makio can't go to the very real closet that does exist in the estate and is full of spare futons.

"... Do you mind?" she asks.

"No."

Giyuu inches to the very edge of his single futon as Makio settles down on the other side, her body touching his despite his best efforts. He wiggles a bit further, rolled onto his side and facing away, deciding it's not so bad to have his knees hanging out just one night, except Makio places her hand on his back and says,

"Oi, don't roll onto the fucking *floor*. We're not gonna do anything but sleep, it's okay."

Not overanalyzing that sentence is harder than it should be, but Giyuu forces himself to relax, pretending to be already half-asleep the way he normally is when Suma or Hinatsuru sometimes rearrange him to make themselves more comfortable during their naps. But in the dead of night, this feels nothing like that.

"Can I have your arm?"

He hums in reply, watching her as she lays her head down on his bicep. It's not that it's uncomfortable to have Makio curled up against him. Hearing someone else's breathing close to him at night isn't odd either. Giyuu is used to sleeping futon-to-futon with Urokodaki in the modest mountain home.

This is all just *nothing like any of that*.

"I was a little jealous," Makio mumbles into the darkness, already slipping into sleep if her slurred enunciation is anything to go by. "Bout you napping with the others."

"Haven't napped with Tengen," he rasps out.

"Mmh. That would be nice."

And then she's off, huffing out soft, barely-there puffs of air against Giyuu's collarbone. His body is motionless and going absolutely haywire.

He doesn't know how long he lays there, eyes open and staring determinedly at the ceiling because closing them only enhances his other senses, which are already plenty hyperfocused as it is.

Fabric shifts between his legs, causing Giyuu to realize that he's just around halfway hard.

It's not horribly difficult for him to untangle his arm and roll back onto his side, except that Makio follows, curling up against his back instead, knees slotting into place behind his own and reminding him, with graphic clarity, of noises he's heard her draw from Tengen.

And so they lay.

Only once the sky outside has begun to lighten does Giyuu somehow wills himself asleep.

It feels as though his cheeks have remained in a state of permanent blush all night, even though Giyuu doesn't initially remember *why* when he slowly drifts back into the waking world. All he knows is warm pressure across his waist and all along his back. He absently pushes back against it, half to figure out what it is and half because it simply feels good. The pressure around his waist increases, five slim fingers uncurling from it, dipping in where his yukata has slid open, to brush down his stomach.

At the same time a door slides open, an echo of the sound that he's now realizing is what woke him in the first place.

"Awwwwhh."

Giyuu is all at once very *very* awake.

Before he has time to think of anything to do or say, Suma is already across the room and clambering down to join in, albeit maneuvering at a decidedly slower pace and with a lot more groaning than Makio. Without thinking Giyuu one-handedly bundles up his thin blanket for Suma to stuff between her thighs to support her aching pelvis — despite how this causes Makio to grumble in displeasure. Suma makes a grateful noise, almost kneeling him in the groin as she shuffles even closer. Only once the blanket is off does Giyuu think of his own disheveled state, yukata rucked up and slipping open, just like Makio's behind him, he would imagine. He does not want to imagine.

But all Suma does is burrow in close, placing her own small hand on his chest, "Mmm you're so warm," and bump the rounded tip of her stomach against his (it would be hard not to). It's not even bad. In fact, it's all very very *nice*, in a way that is more than a tad dangerous precisely because it is so easy to simply accept and go along with. An increasingly large part of Giyuu keeps waiting for the proverbial other shoe to drop; to one day take the Uzuis' lack of boundaries for granted and finally make some misstep too egregious to move on from. Such as being caught half undressed in the middle of two sleepy wives with their hands on the bare skin of his torso.

"Well, well, well," says yet another voice from the doorway. "Looks like someone's gotten lucky."

"Me. I got lucky." Makio rumbles from behind Giyuu's ear. "Slept like a fucking baby, *finally*." That makes one of them, Giyuu thinks guiltily.

"I wish the *actual* baby would sleep like a bab— oohp! There he goes again. Did you feel that, Giyuu?"

"I do." The baby does it again, kicking him in the abdomen through Suma's belly. It's barely a tap, but still so clearly *there*. Giyuu has felt the baby's kicks before, with his hand, pushing down ever so slightly so he wouldn't miss the sensation. That clearly wasn't necessary.

Suma is giving him a blinding smile, her eyes impossibly blue and only inches away from his face. He can't help but return the smile, and to think that if the baby inherits those eyes, along with Suma's night-black hair...

And then suddenly he needs air. Actual fresh air, all around him, not pleasant-smelling skin and bodies touching his own and an unborn child *kicking him*— nor Tengen, hair flamboyantly ruffled from sleep and probably still warm from the covers, standing against the doorframe and looking at the three of them — four, counting— no.

“Giyuu, where are you going?”

“He kicked me in the bladder.”

“Oh, he does that to me, too!”

He'll come back inside in a second. He's not *leaving*-leaving, Suma could start having contractions any minute. He just... needs to rub at his face a bit. And breathe. And remember his place.

—

Much to her mother's outrage, the baby does not come during August at all. In spite of all Suma's pouting and whining and increasingly pitiful threats to her own stomach, the baby stays inside, completely unsympathetic to the many undignified rounds of her mother *hopping* around the estate in an attempt to get things rolling, looking like a bunny rabbit that swallowed an ostrich egg.

On the last day of the first week of September, the poor woman is ready to give up and resign herself to be eternally expecting.

On that night, the baby is born.

And Giyuu gets to hold her.

She doesn't look particularly like either of her parents, her newborn face too red and squished and wrinkly to invoke any of Suma or Tengen's features. Her eyebrows remind him of Tengen only in that they are barely there at all, delicate lines of peach fuzz. Her head is bald as an egg with no indication of whether her hair will be silver white or blue black.

All the same she is *perfect*. And incomprehensibly, terrifyingly small. As the sun sets on her first day of life, she looks nothing less than celestial, her sleep undisturbed by the last rays of light setting the room ablaze. The angle of the light emphasizes how her chest rises and falls at a speed that looks frankly alarming; Giyuu has to remind himself that this is simply because it takes almost no time at all for oxygen to travel around her tiny body's circulatory



system. He also finds that he is completely incapable of not *smelling* her, as bizarre as that might be. She already smells of milk, and of the soft wool blanket that loosely swaddles her.

And then she opens her still-puffy eyes to look straight inside his soul.

There is no way Giyuu could have predicted the tears that form in the corners of his eyes, yet they blur his vision all the same, obscuring the tiny features of the bundle he holds. Without taking his eyes off her slate grey baby ones, he carefully grips her hand, feeling how her five fingers can barely wrap themselves around the width of his singular thumb, and marvelling at the way her softly dimpled knuckles feel under his index finger.

“Giyuu, are you *crying*?”

Nothing drips down from his eyes as he blinks to clear his vision, and so he shakes his head.

“Have you settled on a name now?” he asks instead, voice gravelly from the words having to force themselves around the lump in his throat.

“Mirai.” He nods roughly. That’s a good one.

Giyuu still hasn’t looked away from the baby for a second, but with the context of her name it feels like she changes before him, becoming more tethered to the realm of the profane, a real human person. He’s never held a person as young as Mirai. Not even close.

Finally he wrenches his eyes away from her to look at her mother, now with eyes as damp as his own. There’s too much he wants to express to her about the being she’s just brought into the world. Every word he can think of seems an unforgivable understatement. Luckily she’s learned to read his silences, and with a snuffle she sends him a watery smile so bright that Giyuu truly feels like Suma understands everything he wants to communicate.

And then Suma, sweet, exhausted, wonderful Suma, who gave birth not 24 hours ago and is currently still tripping on all the hormones of that insane feat, says, “Maybe the next one could be yours.”

“... What?”

“Suma, you maniac,” Makio says to her left, practically melting with affection.

“What.”

The smile on Suma’s face falters slightly.

“Well I thought— I know you’re not really that interested in the whole process of making one, but... the end result would—”

“*What*,” Giyuu tries for a third time, practically begging for a shred of understanding.

“*What* what?” Tengen asks, clearly starting to get annoyed. “Use your words, Giyuu.”

"I'm not— you're the—" he tries, frown deep and brows furrowed and not a single clue where to start.

"I wouldn't want a child," even saying this, he feels his arms tighten their hold around Mirai, "without being together with the other parent... the way you are together." He says the words slowly, painstakingly, willing them to make sense, for anything to make sense — for 'together' to encapsulate the kind of love he sees every day between the four of them, not the mere physical proximity that he's been sharing with the quad simply by being in their home.

He fails, clearly, judging by the round of "what"s that erupt from the wives, making Tengen's eye twitch.

"... Aren't you?" Suma asks tentatively. Giyuu opens his mouth.

"If you say the word 'what' one more time—" Tengen says, pointing a stern finger at him. Giyuu closes his mouth, staring at the man with eyes he hopes are pleading enough to warrant some answers. Makio speaks first.

"Haven't we been going out for months?"

"On outings? Yes," Giyuu says apprehensively.

"And we *live* together."

"...Yes." For the time being.

"Giyuu." Tengen looks close to popping a vein. "I kissed you."

"Yes?" He says again, increasingly exasperated.

"Well what the hell did you interpret that as?"

Giyuu wants to answer 'friendly' but he is getting the distinct feeling that this answer would not be well-received. Then, before he opens his mouth to insert his own foot into the orifice, Hinatsuru puts her hand on his arm. She rubs at the sleeve of his plain yukata only for a moment before giving in to the temptation of reaching further, brushing her fingers lovingly against the bundle in his arms.

"We all care about each other, don't we?" she smiles, voice patient and reassuring. Giyuu cares about her greatly.

"There's different ways of caring about each other," he counters. "The four of you are in a marriage. It's not... the same." At all.

Tengen cuts in, looking much more understanding than just moments ago. "That's because we grew up in what was essentially a cult, Giyuu. We were all married by the time I was 16.

It wasn't exactly our own choice — though I couldn't have possibly been blessed with better partners. Marriage or not, though, that was never why we stayed together after leaving the clan; we did that for love. And there was never any agreement between the four of us that our relationship had to stay closed."

That last bit is said with a significant-looking eyebrow raise that would have made no sense to Giyuu not too long ago, but he thinks he's eventually starting to get the picture here. Even if the picture is nothing less than mind-boggling.

"So you—..?" The words are so elusive. Hinatsuru seems to pick up something hopeful in his tone all the same.

"We care about you. It's wonderful to have you here — to have had you here for so long, if you want to go back to Urokodaki again. It won't change anything, if you want more space, sometimes, and if... if you're not interested in the same sort of intimacy that we have with each other. That's not a factor in this at all." Giyuu doesn't miss Tengen's facial response to his wife downplaying the importance their sex life. He feels the corners of his mouth twitching upwards at the sight, but then processes the rest of that statement and frowns. And *blushes*. Oh god. He's really going to have to *communicate* this.

"It's really okay, Giyuu!" Suma reinforces, flapping her hands at his pink cheeks as if she can wave away his agitation. "Forget what I said about making a baby!"

Makio slaps her own forehead.

"I do." Giyuu's voice is about as smooth as the surface of a gnarled old tree, rough and rigid. "I am."

"What?" asks Makio, slowly lowering her hand from her face until only her index finger presses temptingly against her soft-looking mouth.

"Interested. In... intimacy."

Oh god. The grin broadening on Tengen's face makes him want to *squirm*.

"*Well*," The man says, his voice literally dropping an octave, "That changes things."

"Yeah, why didn't you say so earlier?" Suma sounds downright offended, while Makio outright laughs at him, "Forget that, I still can't believe you thought we were just being good buddies with you."

The only justification he can think of is basically gesturing to his own person, because they really should know him by now. As if sensing his distress, Mirai starts to squirm in Giyuu's arms, making a soft hiccuping noise that even to his own untrained ears sounds like a pre-cry. He hands her gingerly back to her mother and tries not to start flushing all over again at the sounds of Suma feeding her baby.

"Husband, could you get me something to drink?"

"Of course," Tengen smiles gently. "You should eat something as well. You're still eating for two, after all."

As soon as she agrees, Giyuu is up and offering to help, needing urgently to move, to do something, to leave the room so stuffy with a domestic bliss that *he's* apparently a part of. His head feels as though it's about to spill over with thoughts.

"Wait," Hinatsuru says, and by the time Giyuu has turned around to see what she wants, her face nearly fills his entire field of vision.

Her thin fingers come up on either side of his face to brush at his cheeks, skirting past them to his temples, fingertips dipping just past his ears and hairline. She pulls his head down slowly, giving him ample time to pull back, but all he can do is stare at the pleased curve of her mouth and let her guide his face to hers— and then slightly past hers. Hinatsuru places a gentle kiss on Giyuu's forehead. Then she lets him go, just as slowly, softly dragging her fingertips back down his face. He hesitates in pulling back, feeling... not disappointed, but wondering if it would be too forward to...

She reads him.

Giyuu hasn't kissed many girls. It always surprises him a little, how small and sweet her mouth feels compared to his own. At least until he gets used to it. He's not yet, but he supposes he will.

It already feels less strange when Makio pulls him over next, mouth equally small but full of lingering hunger. Even though she only kisses him chastly, his head spins with how she kneads at the back of his neck at the same time, the callouses on her fingers snagging at the soft hairs there. She smiles at him with such blatant appreciation that his heart skips a beat. And then it's *Tengen*, huge and warm and suddenly Giyuu is the one who feels tiny and safe and close to needing the assistance of those enormous arms to keep himself upright. His head is woozy with the whiplash of different sensations, dynamics, all overlapping and interwoven to form a pattern that includes him.

By the time Suma beckons him over to lay one on him while still feeding Mirai, it feels almost ritualistic; some sort of devious initiation ceremony designed specifically to give Giyuu an aneurysm.

Her stomach growls.

Right.

Tengen is all business once they get to the kitchen, nothing less than a veritable banquet of healthy snacks is good enough for the mother of his child and her two beautiful wives.

They get to chopping vegetables without speaking a word, both equally well-versed in where everything is and also in the dance of how to move around the kitchen without getting in the other's way. But the air between them is so unmistakably different that Giyuu has a hard time

not smiling — has what feels like a hard time even breathing normally. He knows it's dumb, and that there are a lot of things that still need to be said, but it doesn't feel urgent in the least. For now this is... so much more than enough. Every time Tengen shifts behind him, his stomach swoops and flutters in the most absurd way. The kitchen, the house, the people in it; everything that was already there looks suddenly new and shining.

Tengen chuckles at the giddy aura of his silence. He pulls Giyuu in by the shoulder, still standing side to side, but the gorgeous man is more than tall enough to lean over and press his face into the crown of Giyuu's messy hair.

"I'm glad you used your words, Tomioka."

—

*Thank you for reading the thing!!! Feel free to leave a comment back on ao3 — the final scene is the exact same in both versions so you won't spoil anything for yourself if you jump down to the end* ❤️❤️❤️